



## THE HAENKE COLLECTION FROM THE AMERICAN NORTHWEST COAST AND CALIFORNIA AT THE NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM IN PRAGUE

Kateřina Klápřtová

### The Historic Context of the Haenke Collection

In 1789 – 1794, naturalist Tadeo Haenke (1761 – 1716), a native of Chřibská in northern Bohemia participated in an expedition starting from the south and heading up north along the western coast of America to conduct research in selected locations. The mission was led by Admiral Alejandro Malaspina on the corvette *Descubierta*. The second in command, and captain on the corvette *Atrevida* was José de Bustamante y Guerra. Drawing on the model of James Cook and the French navigator le Comte de la Perouse, the Spanish explorer Malaspina drafted a proposal of a political and scientific journey to America and Oceania he called “The Plan for a Scientific and Political Voyage around the World”, which was endorsed by the King of Spain, Carlos IV. Among the expedition members was a team of specialists in astronomy, cartography and navigation: Dionisio Alcalá-Galliano, Cayetano Valdés, Ciriano Cevallos, José Espinosa, Juan Guttierrez de la Concha, Felipe Bauzá, painters José del Pozo, José Guío, José Cardero, Tomas de Suría, Fernando Brambila and Juan de Ravenet, and naturalists and botanics Luis Neé and Antonio Pineda. They were joined by a young Bohemian naturalist Tadeo Haenke, who was accepted into the expedition on the intercession of the famous botanist, Jacquin.

Although Tadeo Haenke missed the July 30<sup>th</sup> departure of the expedition from Cadiz, he at once embarked on a merchant ship to pursue the boat. But the vessel he was traveling on ended up in shipwreck at Montevideo, where all his equipment went down. Helped by Viceroy Vertiz, he set off across the pampas and the Cordilleras for Santiago, Chile where he arrived in 1790. Finally in Valparaíso he caught up with the expedition and boarded the corvette *Descubierta* that was under Malaspina’s direct command. The expedition, now with Tadeo Haenke on board of *Descubierta*, set sail along the shores of Acapulco, Mexico and continued north toward the Mulgrave (Yakutat) Bay. Here the research team lingered from late June through the entire month of July, interacting with the natives and conducting research, measuring and drawing. In addition to gathering botanical specimen, the expedition members acquired ethnographic artifacts, either as presents or as a result of bartering with products from the Tlingits. Then the group sailed south, reached Vancouver Island on August 13<sup>th</sup>, met with the Nootka and stayed

on throughout that month. On August 28<sup>th</sup> the two ships sailed the south. The explorers arrived at Monterey, California where they remained from September 11<sup>th</sup> until the 25<sup>th</sup>. The artists' drawings show that in California the members of the expedition spent very pleasant days and were able to enhance their observations and expand the collections. On the 26<sup>th</sup> they all journeyed away to Acapulco. The expedition continued towards the Pacific Ocean and concluded in Spain in 1794. Malaspina's intention in all these sightings and landing was to better formalize locations and establish the fact that they were „unoccupied lands“ properly claimed by the King of Spain. At the same time he confirmed his preconceived ideas, such as the aborigines leading a life that was in harmony with nature. After his return, Malaspina became involved in a political conflict in Spain, was incarcerated, and the spoils of his expedition were scattered throughout many archives.

## The ethnographic observations

In addition the explorers used their stay among the natives to accumulate the knowledge about the peoples of the regions they visited. Chats with the natives were friendly; contact between them and the Europeans was possible thanks to gestures and a language of the entire body in which the expedition members were undoubtedly trained in advance. A vital part of communication was a mutual exchange of gifts, which helped to create a pleasant atmosphere. That's how were created the ethnographic collections whose significance had endured over the centuries. The fact that their acquisition wasn't the main focus of the explorers' scientific interest has not diminished their value in the least. These collections have been a part of the oldest ethnographic non-European collections that were shipped to European museums.

Like Pineda the naturalist and Bauzá the cartographer, Haenke made many interesting sketches in his diary. That is how they produced during fairly brief stops a striking work containing among other things several dictionaries of native tongues. In Nootka, Cevallos and Espinosa developed a dictionary of the Nootka language from the Wakashan language family in the course of fifteen or sixteen days. It must be emphasized here that Tadeo Haenke was directly responsible for compiling a dictionary of the Tlingit Athapaskan language during their longest stay that lasted about one month in the port of Yakutat Bay. His manuscript of the dictionary in Tlingit and Spanish contains up to 150 terms.<sup>1</sup>

## The Haenke collections

The circumstances of inconcistencias and loses in the Haenke collections have resulted from historical events. Haenke himself never returned to Europe. He settled in Bolivia but sent his collections, mostly botanical, to Spain one at a time. Our information on these shipments has been rather hazy and the items that were supposedly incorporated into the collections in Madrid have been clearly identified only in part.<sup>2</sup> Altogether Haenke had collected approximately 2500 botanical specimens. Ethnographical collections that have

---

<sup>1</sup> Haenke: Vocabulario del Idioma del Mulgrave. Housed in the Museo Naval, Madrid.

<sup>2</sup> According to written documents, Tadeáš Haenke kept sending collections to Madrid where they were integrated into existing collections without any information about the collector. In 1791, Haenke probably sent 15 crates, in 1794 5 crates, and in 1799 more than 40 crates. Only one small herbarium has survived, attributed to Haenke (Skočdoplová 1996: 162).

reached Madrid at the time cannot be attributed to individual explorers.<sup>3</sup> Thus, some of Haenke's ethnographic contributions were not earmarked as his and instead were grouped together with those of the other members of the expedition.

A more fortunate fate was awaiting the material Haenke sent during an unspecified time prior to 1794 to the firm Hiecke, Ziencke et Co. which traded glass from the Haida (Nový Bor, Bohemia) based in Cadiz, Spain. This material had later reached the Czech lands. In the seven crates Haenke sent to this firm were primarily botanical collections, shells, and an indeterminate number of ethnographic items.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately the crates were stored in poorly chosen places, their contents damaged and documentation destroyed. After receiving the news of Haenke's death, the company's representatives commissioned a German biologist, Joseph Helmich to inspect the crates. He sorted out the damaged collections and packed the rest in clean paper. Then the crates were shipped to Hamburg. The administrators of today's Národní Muzeum, Count Sternberg and Count Kolovrat (Kaspar 1985:195) began negotiations to purchase the items. Only in 1821 did the Society of the Patriotic Museum make a decision to procure the collections. During the nineteen thirties, when the Náprstek Museum became a part of the Národní Muzeum, Haenke's ethnographic collection was transferred into its collections. Simultaneously it was recorded in the Inventory of the Land Depository but only sixteen items here were specifically credited to Tadeo Haenke. The researcher Josef Kandert in his article (1985: 202) had compared three different catalogues with the records from the Haenke collection: 1. Correspondence from 1826 (Carton XII, N/2/52, in the NM Archives) listing 42 items; 2. Roster of the Archeological Collection of 1863, naming 18; 3. Inventory of the Land Depository, recording 16. In conclusion the author arrived at the final sum of 26 items clearly recorded as having survived from the North American Haenke Collection. My file claims, a little optimistically, 27 items.

#### Ethnographic Material:

Despite the modest amount of artifacts, Haenke's ethnographic collection reflects many facets of life in the societies of the American Northwest. It has provided us with information on the stratification of the local clan society, the emblems of its aristocracy and the close tie of societal life with the symbols of animal beings. His collection has taught us about the natives' methods of catching halibut – an important source of nutrition, and their vital skills like basket weaving and knitting for which they used available natural resources with amazing creativity. The specimens from this collection document an original artistic style that links the worlds of nature and humans, as well as intense interrelations among the Tlingit and his northern Yupik neighbors.

---

<sup>3</sup> Today the collections are housed at the Museo de America and Museo Naval in Madrid. They have been publicized among others in a catalogue (Palau 1988) They probably came from the expedition of Admiral Alejandro Malaspina. He himself could not publish the results of his voyage because of his imprisonment.

<sup>4</sup> Altogether 7 crates and 84 packages containing 15, 000 plants, conchs, and several ethnographic items. (Skočdoplová 1996: 162).

## The Headdress Bear's Ears (Fig. 1.)

Inv. No. 21.373

Acquired in Yakutat Bay, Tlingit

The headdress, Bear's Ears is one of the most outstanding articles in the Haenke Collection.

The flat headdress sewn from several pieces of leather has the basic form of a belt with two rounded protrusions representing bear ears. Each ear shows a painted stylized motif of eyes and other elements of a zoomorphic face belonging to a bear spirit. The blank openings, based on comparing with other headdresses of the same type and provenience must have originally been covered with sewn on discs of the shell, *haliotis*, or *abalone shell discs* as attached eyes and nostrils. The rest of the painting on the stitched extensions on the sides suggests a sea creature, possibly representing a "sea bear".

According to an expert assessment at the Prague Institute of Chemical Technology, all parts of the headdress are made of bear skin, most likely the American black bear (*Ursus americanus*).<sup>5</sup> The fiber that threads together the individual segments is also of animal origin. The skin was prepared by tanning through mechanical means only: after being cleansed of meat and lard it was stretched, dried, and perhaps treated with oil.<sup>6</sup> The method of the infrared micro spectroscopy allowed classifying the chemical composition of pigment samples based on evaluation of infrared spectrums. Brown pigment composed of ferrous ocher and black pigment was applied in the painting but it was impossible to trace since it lacks a relevant spectrum here. The green pigment revealed the presence of copper rust which confirmed a common source of blue-green color produced in the northwest region by corroding copper in urine (Goddard 1924: 56).<sup>7</sup> Spectroscopic analysis of the headdress unfortunately also disclosed in all color samples the presence of acrylate used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to set in the layers of color on the headdress.<sup>8</sup>

Anthropological research maintain that a headdress of this type served two functions in the northwest. While in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was an emblem of a chief's rank or insignia of war chiefs, since mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, as wars became less frequent, such a mask was used by shamans during spiritual battles against harmful spirits.

---

<sup>5</sup> The arrangement of the right side of the skin was characteristic for the family Ursidae, which makes it impossible to determine more accurately the species of bear.

<sup>6</sup> The test for identifying the presence of natural tanning agents in the skin came out negative.

<sup>7</sup> "Black is produced with hemlock bark and yellow with the tree moss *Evernia vulpina*. Decoctions are made of these in urine... A green blue is produced by allowing copper to corrode in urine and boiling"...

<sup>8</sup> The analyses was carried out by Miroslava Novotná and Martina Ohlidalová of the Prague Institute of Chemical Technology.

## The Hat (Fig. 2.)

Inv. No. 22 236

Acquired in Yakutat Bay. Tlingit

A hat of the northern form with a wide brim and flat crown with an inside head strap. The conically shaped hat, tightly twined of spruce root, is waterproof. The brim with concentric diamond patterns is created by diagonal twining and painting in the centers of the diamonds. The crown has a smooth surface made of triple-strand twining. The surface of the crown is painted black, possibly blue-green on the eyes, and red on the mouth.<sup>9</sup> The principal motif of the design appears to be a representation of the beaver. This hat is apparently of Tlingit origin but similar hats were also made by the Tlingit' close neighbors, the Chugach Yupiks.<sup>10</sup>

These types of hats were very prestigious objects, worn by chiefs to display painted family crests.

## The Baskets (Fig. 3.-9.)

Inv. No. 21.060, 21.106, 21.138, 21.139, 21.140, 21.141, 21.142, 22.621

Acquired in Yakutat Bay. Tlingit/Chugach

Most of the baskets have a conical shape and a flat bottom. Only one has a highly unusual bottle shape (inv. no. 21.142). All baskets (with only one exception of Inv. No. 21.060) are finely woven using a technique of tightly twining spruce roots, adorned with false embroidery of dyed grass. The baskets are watertight when moist and therefore could be used as containers for cooking with stones heated in fire. The analyses of the infrared spectrum of the composition of basket inv. no. 21.106 revealed the inside mixture of amyloidal and sugar polysaccharides.<sup>11</sup>

The decorative false embroidery consists on most baskets (21.106, 21.138, 21.139, 21.141, 22.621) of parallel zigzag lines applied onto a broad ribbon (or two ribbons: 21.106) below the basket's brim. The wide ribbon is bordered at the top and bottom by two, always identical thin stripes of a simple pattern. The one exception is the bottle-shaped basket no. 21.142 that has zigzag lines applied onto four parallel-running ribbons, and basket no. 21.140 where the false embroidery creates an ornament of triple parallel meanders. So far the origin of the baskets has been unclear. Baskets no. 21.138, 21.139, 21.141, 22.621 have three bands, the top and bottom ones matching, as is common in Tlingit baskets (Lee 1981: 66-73). The material and a similar decoration of the baskets suggest the whole ensemble came from one source. The majority has concentric reinforcing rings of three-strand twining on the base; it is this feature that suggests most convincingly their Chugach origin. Therefore we must consider it likely that they came to the Tlingit world through bartering.

<sup>9</sup> Bill Holm, who analyzed the hat claims it originally had these colors. But analyses by Petra Vávrová at the Prague Institute of Chemical Technology has not proved their presence.

<sup>10</sup> There was purported hostility between the Chugach and northern Tlingit....Presumably the extent of technology and custom common to the Aleut, Koniag, Chugach, Tanaina, Eyak, and Tlingit indicates some amicable interaction (Clark 1984: 186).

<sup>11</sup> The analyses was carried out by Miroslava Novotná and Martina Ohlidalová at the Laboratory of Molecular Spectrometry at the Prague Institute of Chemical Technology in Prague.

### **Cedar wooden sticks game (Fig. 10.)**

Inv. No.21.106

Acquired in Yakutat Bay. Tlingit

This set of 45 cedar wooden sticks was a game people still play today. The sticks with painted symbols of red and black rings are concealed and only the unmarked ends show. The players might hunt for certain markings, guess which stick is unmarked, etc.

### **The Canoes (Fig. 11.-12.)**

Inv. no. 21.540, 21 576

Acquired in Yakutat Bay. Tlingit

The canoes (models) were carved out of wood and painted black (type a Head- canoe). They are probably the commemorative objects or toys of the late eighteenth century, carved in the northern style. Because their painted motifs are so abstract, it impossible to decide with absolute certainty what animals they represent.

### **Fishing Hooks (Fig. 13.-14.)**

Inv. no. 21. 603, 21. 634, 21. 635, 21. 636, 21. 637

Acquired on Vancouver Island. Nootka

The hooks have U-shaped, steam-bent hooks, characteristic of the southern and central peoples of the NW Coast.

These finely differentiated steam-bent hooks were used for catching halibut. They are made of yew wood, with bone barbs and cedar wood lashing. The fishing hooks collection comes from Vancouver Island and is of Nootka origin.

### **Coiled food tray and Coiled basket (Fig. 15.-16.)**

Inv. No. 22.015, 21.153

Acquired on the Californian Coast. Chumash

Coiled food tray basket decorated with a pattern of six double winding radial lines.

The Inventory of the Land Depository explicitly attributes this basket (21. 153) and tray basket (22.015) to Haenke. Both of them are made of *Juncus* reed and are characteristic products of the Chumash. They were used for acorn meal preparation. Tadeo Haenke most likely obtained them during the expedition's stopover in Monterey, California. However, because the Chumash territory is very far from Monterey, he couldn't acquire them immediately. "*Support was given to the scientists by Franciscan fathers at the San Carlos mission in collecting botanical ...specimens and native artifacts...;in addition items of Chumash culture were sent from south of Monterey to add the expedition's collections.*" (Kendrik and Inglis 1991: 14; Cutter : 1960).

### **Coiled basket (Fig. 17.)**

Inv. No. 21. 152

Acquired on the Californian Coast.

Coiled basket from plant fibres, under the bulging there is a decoration of five rows of brown triangles which are situated diagonally on a yellow-brown background.

## The small wooden carvings, "helmets". (Fig. 18.–21.)

Inv. No. 21. 638, 21. 639, 21.640, 21.641

Acquired in Yakutat Bay, Tlingit

The small wooden carvings that represent crests (21. 638 – Sun, 21.639 – Wolf, 21. 640 – Sea-lion, 21 641 – Eagle) are typically considered to be models of large wood helmets worn by Tlingit warriors going into battle to lend them the look of supernatural beings. Yet it is also quite likely that these carvings might have been the caps of warrior spears or, even more likely the tips of ceremonial staffs. That assumption is supported by the fact that the heads are hollow.

## Wooden dish (Fig. 22.)

Inv. No. 44.630

Acquired in Yakutat Bay, Tlingit

A ceremonial wooden dish carved in the form of a mythical whale. It was used during potlatches to hold fish and seal oils.

## The list of the inventory numbers:

1. 21.060 – Twined basket. Height 5 cm, diameter 5.5 cm
2. 21.106 – Twined basket. Height 14.5 cm , diameter 13 cm
3. 21 106 – Stick game consisting of 45 sticks. Length circa 12 cm
4. 21.138 – Twined basket . Height 14.5 cm, diameter (of the mouth) 16 cm
5. 21.139 – Twined basket. Height 19.5 cm, diameter(of the mouth) 18 cm
6. 21.140 – Twined basket. Height 11.5 cm, diameter (of the mouth) 23 cm
7. 21.141 – Twined basket. Height 12 cm, diameter(of the mouth) 17 cm
8. 21.142 – Twined basket/ bottle. Height 16.5, diameter (of the bottom) 9 cm
9. 21.152 – Coiled basket. Height 14 cm, diameter 19.5 cm
10. 21.153 – Coiled globular bowl. Height 13.7 cm, max. diameter 22.5 cm
11. 21.373 – Headress "Bear's Ears". Length 20.5 cm, height 21.5 cm
12. 21.540 – Dugout (model) of wooden canoe. Length 42.5 cm
13. 21.576 – Dugout (model) of wooden head canoe. Length 47 cm , height 8 cm
14. 21.603 – Wooden hook with point of bone. Length 31 cm
15. 21.634 – Wooden hook with point of bone. Length 22.5 cm
16. 21.635 – Wooden hook with point of bone. Length 21.5 cm
17. 21.636 – Wooden hook with point of bone. Length 18 cm
18. 21.637 – Wooden hook with point of bone. Length 10 cm
19. 21.638 – Miniature human head, which may represent the Sun (after B. Holm), wooden carving. Height 5.8 cm, diameter 3.8 cm
20. 21.639 – Miniature wolf's head with black painted features, wooden carving. Height 3.6 cm, length 6.5 cm
21. 21.640 – Miniature sea-lion's head, wooden carving. Height 4.9 cm diam. 3.3cm
22. 21. 641 – Miniature eagle's head, wooden carving. Height 4.9 cm , diam. 3.7 cm
23. 21. 644 – Harpoon toggle-head (model) consisting of a wooden neck and bone head with an inserted iron point. Length 26.5 cm
24. 22.015 – Coiled tray basket. Diameter 44 cm, heigh 9 cm
25. 22. 236 – Twined hat. Diameter 31 cm
26. 22.621 – Twined basket. Height 10 cm, diameter 13 cm

27. 44.630 – Wooden bowl. Length 16.1 cm, breadth 9 cm, height 6.9 cm.
28. 21.645 – Hook made of wood with backturned point – it hasn't be identified so far.
29. 21.719 – Rattle in the form of a bracelet. Diam. 8.5 cm- it hasn't be identified so far.
30. 22.237 – Hat twined from spruce root - it hasn't be identified so far.

### Selected bibliography:

- Cabello, Paz: 1989 – Materiales etnográficos de la Costa Noroeste recogidos en el Siglo XVIII por viajeros españoles. – In: *Culturas de la Costa Noroeste del América*, Ediciones Turner, Madrid.
- Clark, Donald W.: 1984 – Pacific Eskimo: Historical Ethnography. – In: *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 5, Arctic, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, pp. 185 – 197
- Cutter, Donald C.: 1960 – *Malaspina in California*. John Howell Books, San Francisco.
- Goddard, Pliny E.: 1924 - *Indians of the Northwest Coast*. Handbook Series No.10, New York.
- Holm, Bill: 1989 - Cultural Exchange Across the Gulf of Alaska. – In: *Culturas de la Costa Noroeste del América*, Ediciones Turner, Madrid.
- Lee, M.: 1981 - Pacific Eskimo Spruce Root Baskets. – In: *American Indian Art Magazine* VI, No. 2, Arizona, pp. 66-73.
- Loup Rousselot, Jean and Grahmmer, Veronika: 2004 - *Oltre Bering le Colonie Russe del Nord Pacifico 1741 – 186*. München.
- Pimentel Igea, Juan: s.d. - *La Expedicion Malaspina 1789 - 1794*. Antropología y Noticias Ethnograficas. Museo Naval, Madrid.
- Kendrick John and Inglis, Robin: 1991 - *Elightened Voyages. Malaspina and Galiano on the Northwest Coast 1791 – 1792*. Vancouver Maritime Museum, Vancouver.
- Palau, Mercedes ad.: 1988 - *El Ojo del Totem. Arte y Cultura de los Indios del Noroeste de America*, Madrid.
- Kandert, Josef: 1985 - Catalogue of Ethnographical Collections of Tadeáš Hänke. - In: *Annals of the Náprstek Museum* 13, Prague, pp. 201- 208.
- Kašpar, Oldřich: 1985 - Naturalista Tadeo Haenke y su interés etnográfico por América. - In: *Annals of the Náprstek Museum* 13, Prague, pp.187 – 196.
- Rüstov, A.: 1939 - Die objecte der Malaspina – Expedition im Archäologischen Museum zu Madrid. -In: *Baessler Archiv* XXII, pp. 173- 234.
- Skočdoplová, Blanka: 1996 - Historie herbářů Tadeáše Haenkeho a jejich z pracování v Preslově díle Reliquie Haenkeanea. - In: *Zpravodaj čs. botanické společnosti* 30, Praha, pp. 161 – 166.
- Stewart, Hillary: 1977 – *Indian Fishing*. University of Washington Press, Seattle.
- Sine: 1885 - *Viaje político-científico alrededor del Mundo, en las corbetas Descubierta y Atrevida, al mando de los capitanes de navío Don Alejandro Malaspina y don José Bustamante y Guerra desde 1789 a 1794*. Madrid.



Fig. 1. Headdress "Bear's Ears". Length 20.5 cm, height 21.5 cm, Inv. No. 21.373



Fig. 2. Twined hat. Diameter 31 cm, inv. No. 22.236



Fig. 3. Twined basket. Height 14.5 cm, diameter 13 cm, inv. No. 21.106



Fig. 4. Twined basket . Height 14,5 cm, diameter (of the mouth) 16 cm, inv. No. 21.138



Fig. 5. Twined basket. Height 19.5 cm , diameter (of the mouth) 18 cm, Inv. No. 21.139

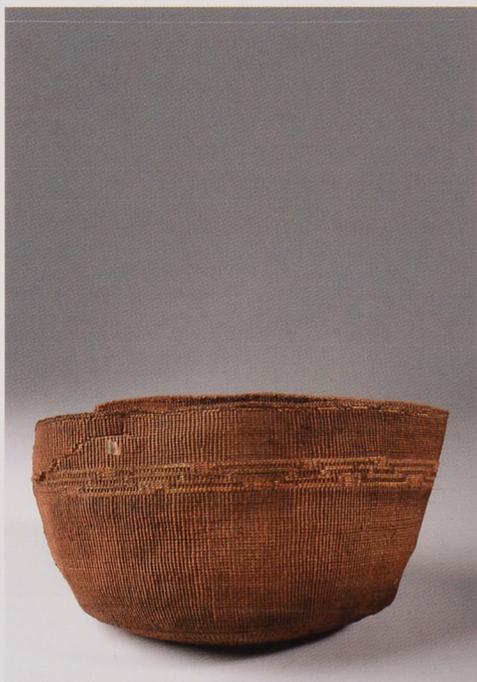


Fig. 6. Twined basket. Height 11.5 cm, diameter (of the mouth) 23 cm, inv. No. 21.140



Fig. 7. Twined basket. Height 12 cm, diameter (of the mouth) 17 cm, inv. No. 21.141



Fig. 8. Twined basket/ bottle. Height 16.5, diameter (of the bottom) 9 cm, inv. No. 21.142



Fig. 9. Twined basket. Height 10 cm, diameter 13 cm, inv. No. 22.621



Fig. 10. Stick game consisting of 45 sticks. Length circa 12 cm, inv. No. 21.106



Fig. 11. Dugout (model) of wooden head canoe. Length 47 cm , height 8 cm, inv. No. 21.576



Fig. 12. Dugout (model) of wooden canoe. Length 42,5 cm, inv. No. 21.540



Fig. 13. Wooden hook with point of bone.  
Length 21.5 cm, inv. No. 21.635



Fig. 14. Wooden hook with point of bone.  
Length 18 cm, inv. No. 21.636



Fig. 15. Coiled globular bowl. Height 13.7 cm, max. diameter 22.5 cm, inv. No. 21.153



Fig. 16. Coiled tray basket. Diameter 44 cm, height 9 cm, inv. No. 22.015



Fig. 17. Coiled basket. Height 14 cm, diameter 19.5 cm, inv. No. 21.152



Fig. 18. Miniature eagle's head, wooden carving. Height 4.9 cm, diam. 3.7 cm, inv. No. 21.641



Fig. 19. Miniature sea-lion's head, wooden carving. Height 4.9 cm diam. 3.3cm, inv. No. 21.640



Fig. 20. Miniature wolf's head with black painted features, wooden carving. Height 3.6 cm, length 6.5 cm, inv. No. 21.639



Fig. 21. Miniature human head, which may represent the Sun (after B. Holm), wooden carving. Height 5.8 cm, diameter 3.8 cm, inv. No. 21.638



Fig. 22. Wooden bowl. Length 16.1 cm, breadth 9 cm, height 6.9 cm, inv. No. 44.630