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## Crossroads of Culture

200 Years of Canadian Immigration (1800-2000)

[Introduction](#)
[Objects](#)
[Photos & Papers](#)
[Features](#)
[Youth Corner](#)

- Arts and Crafts
- Childhood
- Clothing
- Food
- Furnishings
- Medicine
- Mementos
- Music
- Religion
- The Journey
- Trades

### Clothing and Adornments

Late one October evening in 1870, Anna Vilhjálmsdóttir, the daughter of a wealthy land-owner in southern Iceland, was seen leaving her father's farmstead with a bundle under her arm. She was on her way to meet her suitor, the Reverend Oddur Gíslason, who waited for her with horses some distance away. Anna took this bold step to avoid being forced into a marriage arranged by her parents to someone they considered of more acceptable status. Anna and Oddur were married with her parents' belated blessing, had fifteen children, and in 1894 emigrated to Western Canada. Local folklore had it that Anna's bundle contained this festive costume, known as a skautbúningur, traditionally used only for special occasions, such as weddings. However, Anna did not in fact wear this costume to her wedding, for it was not complete at the time of her elopement. It took two seamstresses and a silversmith more than two years to finish it and another like it for her sister. The skautbúningur is always festooned with objects of gold and silver filigree, such as the belt and tiara, and also brooches, pins and chains. In a society where almost all wealth was tied up in land, the public adornment of wives and daughters was one of the few ways a man could display his surplus wealth. *(Icelandic)*



Costume



This Bukovinian multicoloured woven shoulder bag comes from the village of Slobodzija-Raranche. It was homespun and hand-woven with an intricate geometrical motif. *(Bukovinian)*

Shoulder bag



In traditional China every individual, however rich or poor, was entitled to be honoured on three occasions: birth, death and marriage. Among Chinese-Canadians marriage is similarly honoured, but the circumstances and ceremonies surrounding it now blend Chinese tradition with Western symbolism. Matchmakers and fortune-tellers are no longer consulted; Canadian born Chinese choose their spouses themselves, though some continue to avoid marrying persons of the same surname. Weddings are now usually conducted in a church, followed by a reception at home and a banquet in a restaurant. Newlyweds maintain the tradition of offering tea to parents and relatives, but the old custom of kowtowing to elders and worshipping heaven and earth and the

ancestors has waned. The traditional wedding costume, which is still favoured by many modern Chinese brides, is charged with symbolism. This bride's satin jacket and skirt is richly embroidered with sequins, rhinestones and glass beads, forming dragon and phoenix motifs. The phoenix, symbolizing beauty, was the favourite dress motif of Chinese empresses. On a bridal gown, the phoenix signifies that the bride is empress on her wedding day. The groom's coat is woven with the character shou, meaning longevity. Both these contemporary garments were made in Taiwan. Some traditional wedding gifts are chop-sticks, dates and lotus seeds, all symbolizing the wish that the couple have many children. **[Treasures]** (Chinese)



Costume 



Bag 

This crocheted plastic hand bag was brought over from Vietnam by Nguyen Hung. It was bought in Ho Chi Minh City (then known as Saigon). Nguyen Hung was refugee sponsored by the Hamilton B'nai Jewish Organization, and came to Canada in 1980. (Vietnamese)

The country of Tibet is divided into three main regions, Kham in the East, Amdo in the North East and Utsang in the centre. In each region the costume differ slightly, though the basic garments and styles remain the same.

There are two main types of costumes: Those worn for special ceremonies and festivals and those for everyday use. Silk and fine cotton are used for special clothes, with the silk being imported from China and cotton from India. The basic garment is a long-sleeved coat called chubba or chupa, which is folded across the body and held in place by a belt. Both men and women wear this garment and both have the draping from left to right, as is customary in Asia. The women wear the chubba to the ankle, two blouses (one long sleeved and one short sleeved) underneath. The two blouses have high necks, with one often rolled over the other to form a collar. Decorated boots in felt and leather are worn and are shown just below the skirt. Women from the Utsang region, where this costume is from, wear a chubba without sleeves which allows the long sleeves of the blouse to be shown. (Tibetan)



Costume 

Of popular style in Pakistan, Afghanistan and India, this purse is decorated with braided geometric and floral motifs and a small mirror in the middle. This type of machine stitched *appliqué* is found on many types of clothing, such as coats, vests and hats. (Pakistani)

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[New Search](#) | [List View](#)Cette page en : [Français](#)1 to 20 of 883 [next page >>](#)

boots  
77-205.1-2



boots  
77-206.1-2



slippers  
77-208.1-2



slippers  
77-210.1-2



blouse  
77-251.1



underskirt  
77-251.2



skirt  
77-251.3



apron  
77-251.4



blouse  
77-252.1



petticoat  
77-252.2



skirt  
77-252.3



skirt  
77-252.4



vest  
77-252.5



apron  
77-252.6



brooch  
77-396



purse  
77-405





kerchief  
77-423



kerchief  
77-425



handkerchief  
77-795



kerchief  
77-798

[New Search](#) | [List View](#)

Cette page en : [Français](#)

1 to 20 of 883 [next page](#) >>

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