



Parfleches

After the Fall buffalo hunt, great quantities of meat were sliced thinly and hung on racks to dry in the sun, sufficient to last every family through the winter. When dried, the meat was stored in rawhide cases called *parfleches*, which women made and painted in pairs with beautiful geometric designs. When on the move, a pair of parfleches was hung either side of a pack-horse, and in camp they were placed around the edge of the lodge, to keep the tipi lining in place. Parfleches, together with backrests, were the only furniture items that nomadic people carried with them.





Painting a Parfleche

Painting on rawhide was best done when the hide was damp. The lady, in the illustration, has draped an old tipi cover over a tripod of poles for shade to help keep the hide moist. She uses marked sticks to measure and draw straight lines. Her brushes are bones, some porous to paint large areas, others hard and sharp for drawing thin lines.

Later she will cut the hide to the parfleche shape and burn holes so that the case can be tied shut with thongs. Primarily parfleches held dried meat, but also clothes and personal belongings.

Note the small round pebbles tied into the lodge cover. These anchor the peg ties to the canvas and are much stronger than loops sewn to the canvas.

