

# Current Issues in Anthropology: The Invasion of Ukraine



**The Maxwell Museum of Anthropology  
at the University of New Mexico**

**A PDF based on the exhibition / March 2022**



# MAXWELL MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY STATEMENT ON UKRAINE

The Maxwell Museum joins with all others committed to democracy, rights of self-determination, territorial sovereignty, and human decency in strongly condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We extend support, sympathy, respect, and admiration to the people of Ukraine, at home and abroad, and acknowledge the deep history, rich cultural heritage, and sovereignty of the Ukrainian people and their land.

March 1, 2022





*Below is a recent statement issued by the Maidan Museum of Kyiv, a museum dedicated to preserving, presenting and spreading the history of Ukrainian struggle for freedom, to which we add images we used in the exhibition*

For the eighth year in a row, a war has been waged by Russia on Ukraine that began with the occupation of Crimea and parts of Eastern Ukraine.

At dawn on February 24th this year, the whole of Ukraine woke up to explosions from missile strikes hitting peaceful cities, both military and civilian infrastructure, from land, air, and sea. Ukrainian army along with civilians are offering decent rebuff to the Russian occupation forces, defending our country's territorial integrity and the freedom of our people.

Russian missiles and weapons directed against the Ukrainian army and the innocent population, are in fact aimed at exterminating Ukrainians as a national community with its authentic culture and history.

**And therein lies the initial cause of this war.**



*(Detail) Putin taking a bite of Ukraine, graffiti supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine and against annexation of the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea in Odessa, April 7, 2014. Photo Reuters/Yevgeny Volokin*

It is no coincidence that in his last speeches before the attack, in which Putin justified and explained the need for a military invasion, he was making a “retrospective journey into history”. Pseudohistory, the essence of which has been the assertion that Ukrainians do not exist as a nation and the state of Ukraine is, in a way, a historical misunderstanding and a failed state. Putin has publicly announced his “crusade” against the national identity of Ukrainians, not only seeking to seize our land but also to destroy our language, our history, our culture.

**The struggle for preserving our national identity** has been the experience of every generation of Ukrainians over centuries, especially in the days of Soviet (in fact, Moscovian) totalitarianism that had been taking systematical and purposeful actions to destroy any and all cultural heritage coming into contradiction with the “single nation” narrative.



And although we are facing the deadly battles taking place on the streets of our cities today, it is time to draw the world’s attention to the threat of **destroying the history and culture of Ukraine.**

*As the Russian’s bombard the city, staff at the Ukrainian National Museum, Kyiv is packing up collection objects to move them to safety. Photo: Fedir Androshchuk, director of the Ukrainian National Museum*



Various forms of cultural heritage are being under immediate threat: tangible as well as intangible, and people, who are the carriers of this culture, and especially cultural figures. To make sure we are not employing an exaggeration, it is enough to simply mention the persecution of Crimean Tatar cultural figures in Crimea following its occupation for the last eight years.

Architectural monuments, museum collections, monuments of history, art, and archeology are being threatened with destruction. We already have information about a museum destroyed by the occupants near Kyiv, about the architectural monuments used by the Russian military, under threat of artillery shelling is a church dating back to XI-XII centuries, in Chernihiv and Kyiv regions.

At these difficult times, **we are calling on the international cultural community to support Ukraine in its struggle for freedom and independence in every possible way.**

First of all, **we are asking to enforce the implementation of the Hague Convention by Russia and Belarus, in particular on the preservation of cultural heritage sites in the context of war and personal responsibility for the crimes.**



*Maria Prymachenko, Our Army, Our Protectors (1978). Invading Russian forces destroyed a museum in Ivankiv, a city northwest of the capital Kyiv, that was home to dozens of works by the Ukrainian folk artist Maria Prymachenko, on February 27, 2022.*

The best response to Russia's aggression in the cultural sphere is to increase interest in Ukraine's history and culture throughout the world. Thus we are calling on all cultural figures, historians, artists, public figures, community leaders, media in the world to reveal the truth about suppression, distortion of historical facts, erasure of Ukrainian cultural identity, to promote cultural heritage by all possible means, to ensure wider access to the genuine history of Ukrainians' path to freedom and democracy, our cultural identity and our devotion to universal human values.

Ukraine and the whole world need to refute the myths, stereotypes, and lies that formed the basis of Russia's imperial ideology, which is posing a threat to the entire free democratic world today.

We remember, appreciate, and express gratitude for the help and partnership from international institutions. Thuswise, we must act together to stop Russia's aggression and resolutely oppose the cynical destruction of the foundations of international law, security, and democracy in the world.



*Civilians are taking up arms and training to fight in the street in Ukraine. Rumia, 59, a member of Ukraine's territorial Defense Forces, trains near Kyiv, February, 2022. AP*

**Let's fight back  
military aggression,  
we are a power  
together!**

**#culture\_cannot\_wait**



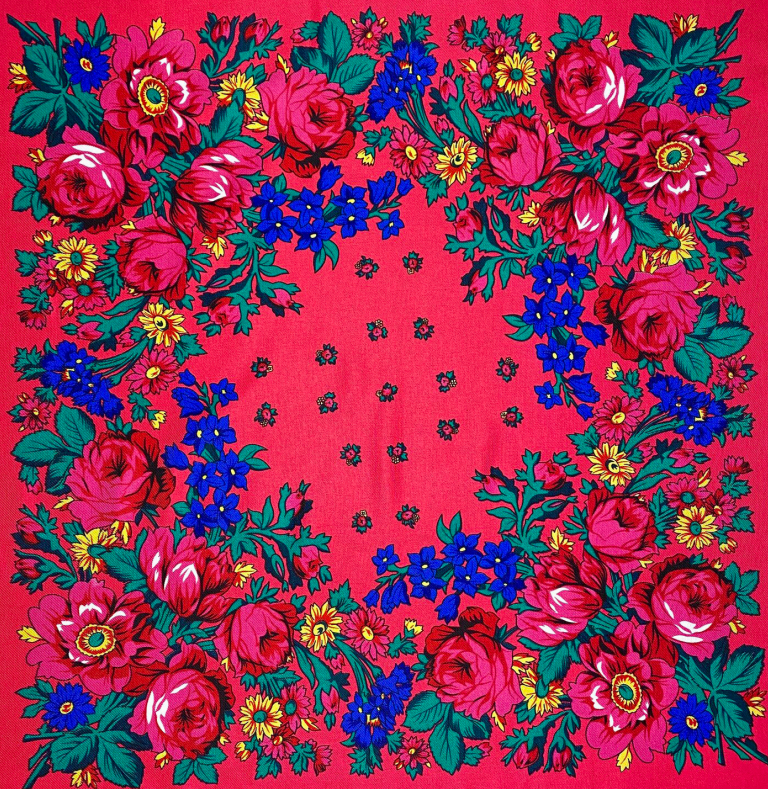
# A Ukrainian Scarf in Native America

Kokum / Masani Scarf (or "Sani")/ Khutska

2022

These scarves, known by several names, reveal deep connections between Ukraine and Native North America. The origin of this type of scarf, worn by Indigenous people throughout North America, is Eastern European and is most associated with Ukraine, where it is called a "khutska," "hutska," or "babushka." In the 19th century they were produced in Eastern Europe. Today they are typically made in Russia or China and are sold online as either Ukrainian or Native American fashion.

The yellow scarf was purchased at the Kewa gas station on the Kewa (Santo Domingo) Pueblo, as such scarves can often be found in general goods stores in Indian Country. The pink scarf was made in Albuquerque and, as seen for sale online, was labelled a "Navajo Grandma Scarf." "Masani" means grandmother in Diné Bizaad, or the Navajo language.



The brightly colored floral scarf, known variably in Native America as the “Kokum,” or among the Diné (Navajo) as the “Masani (grandmother) Scarf,” has its origins in Ukraine, where it is known as the “khutska,” “hutska,” or “babushka.”



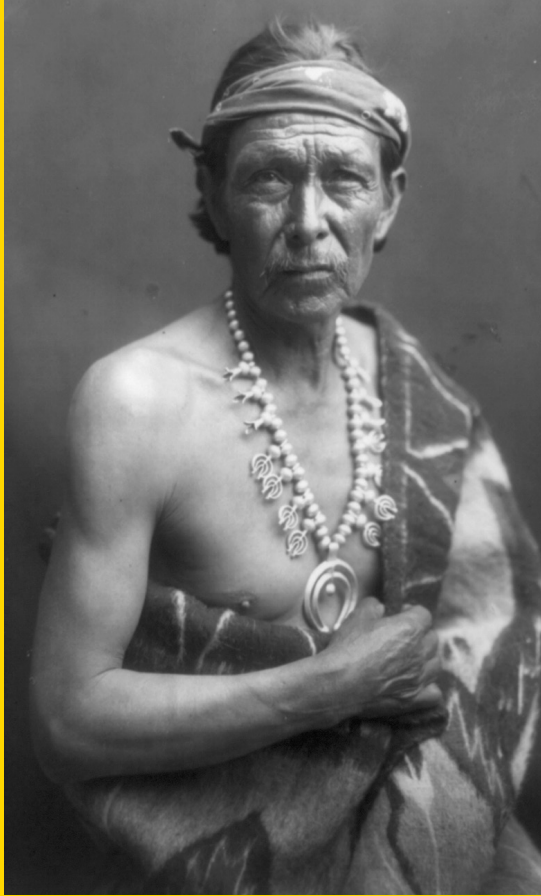
*A Ukrainian woman in traditional dress, including a khustka on her head, ca. 1910, Ukraine.*

The scarf made its way to North America with Ukrainian and Russian immigrants who came to Canada and the United States in large numbers in the 1900s, and with the import of Eastern European textiles in the same period. The headscarf, and a larger version sometimes worn as a shawl, were items of trade between Ukrainian-Canadian farmers and members of the Cree Nation in Alberta.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many Indigenous people across North America are wearing their kokum and Masani scarves in solidarity with the Ukrainian people and to protest the Russian assault on Ukrainian sovereignty. Others are sharing stories of the how these garments gained their importance in Native communities.

Leah Hrycun, a Ph.D. student focusing on Indigenous and Ukrainian relations at the Faculty for Native Studies at the University of Alberta notes that beginning in 1891, the Canadian government began recruiting Ukrainians to relocate and farm the lands of what is now Alberta.





*Hastiin Dághaa', a Diné (Navajo) singer wearing a pavlovo-style scarf as headband. Photograph by William Carpenter, 1915. Photograph: Library of Congress.*

“They really wanted to have white settlers coming to settle the land so that they could make it Canada and as a result then displace the Indigenous people who were already there,” Hrycun said. Over time, the Indigenous communities and the Ukrainians grew increasingly connected as both communities faced discrimination. “There’s a lot of stories of trade back and forth, of people sharing farm implements, people lending each other horses or teams of animals to work their lands,” she said, adding that many Cree now have Ukrainian last names.

Nicole Lefthand, a graduate of the Institute of American Indian Art (2020), and a contributor to the online publication “Indigenous Goddess Gang,” recounts how these textiles, with elaborate botanical designs, were originally woven by hand throughout Eastern Europe. By the 19th century, with increased industrialization, the textiles began being mass produced in factories, in particular in the Pavlovo Posad Textile Manufactory in Russia. The floral designs which were once handwoven were subsequently block printed, and these goods were exported around the world, including to North America.

Lefthand goes on to recount that by the 1930s, the Pavlovo scarves were integrated into Diné women's fashion here in the American Southwest. They were sold across Navajoland, including at the famous Hubbell Trading Post. She says:

"The scarf also was integrated as a men's headband which carried its own metaphorical and ceremonial significance. The floral design is an acknowledgement of mother earth. When the band is tied around the head to join in the back, it symbolizes the Hogan, the four directions, the duality of the world brought together into balance. When the band is knotted over the left ear - considered the North which is the direction associated with both enemy forces and protection- it symbolizes protection from enemies. (Lewis) This object becomes yet another accessory reflecting Navajo cosmology alongside other traditional handmade ceremonial objects of personal adornment."

From Eastern European headwear to Native American dress and ceremony to a contemporary symbol of protest and resistance, the story of this floral scarf tells a complex story of human expression and perseverance.



*A girl from Laguna Pueblo wearing a kokem, photograph by Charles F. Lummis, 1891. Image courtesy of New Mexico History Museum, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, 002881*

# Sources for how to help Ukraine:

Just hover over the link and click to learn more.

[The International Rescue Committee](#)

[Unicef](#)

[Doctors without Borders](#)

[Voices of Children](#)

[Sunflower of Peace](#)

[Care](#)

[International Medical Core](#)

[The Kyiv Independent \(Newspaper\)](#)

# Sources for Information:

Just hover over the link and click to learn more.

[The Maidan Museum](#)

[Article "Russia's War on Ukraine in Context"](#)

[Council on Foreign Relations, Conflict Tracker \(up to date statistical information and summary of the conflict\)](#)

[Article "Lesson of the Day: The Invasion of Ukraine, How Russia Attacked and What Happens Next"](#)

[Forum "Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, A Forum for Young People to React"](#)

[Article "Indigenous People are Snapping Selfies in Solidarity with Ukraine"](#)

[Article "The History of the Povlovo Posad Textile Manufactory and its Integration into Navajo Fashion"](#)

[Podcast "Native People in North America are in Solidarity with Ukraine"](#)



# Acknowledgements

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**Nicole Lefthand, graduate of the Institute of American Indian Art (2020), and contributor to the online publication "Indigenous Goddess Gang"**