

BELT CLOSURES



Bruce White photos



Top row and above left, an OBS belt buckle, 3.7 cm; above center, a buckle with Okvik engraving, 5.8 cm; above right, a Punuk belt buckle, 12.8 cm

The Bering Strait Eskimos made belt closures in a variety of styles. Shown at the top is a buckle with walrus and seal heads and inlaid baleen eyes that was found in an OBS II context. For similar "hook" portions of larger buckles, see the photo below. Also, Leskov and Müller-Beck, #304 and #306 (6.1 and 8.6 cm), and Bronshtein et al., #425, p. 154).

The Okvik buckle shown in the center above consists of a slightly conical portion terminating in an open socket, connected to a decorated portion with a 2 cm opening. The leather belt could be attached by winding when wet around the undecorated conical end, with the leather contracting and thus becoming tight after drying, and possibly secured further by fastening with sinew. For similar buckles (with triangular openings), see a Punuk example from Wardwell (#131, 9.3 cm, identified simply as a "fastener"), and OBS examples from Leskov and Müller-Beck (#305, 9 cm, and #307, 5.7 cm).

At the right above is a flat ivory buckle in the form of a whale, with a large keyhole-shaped perforation to engage a button-type closure, and with Punuk decoration on both sides. For an example of a typical belt button, see below.



Belt buckle from Ekven burial 214, OBS II, 8.6 and 9 cm. (Bronshtein et al., 2007, No. 408).



Probable button for a belt buckle from Ekven burial 250, OBS II, 5.8 cm
(Leskov and Müller-Beck, No. 308)

Literature:

Bronshtein, M.M, Dneprovsky, K.A., and Sukhorukova, E.S. (2007): *Mir arkticheskikh zverobojev: shagi v nepoznannoe* (World of Arctic Maritime Hunters: Steps into the Unknown). State Museum of Oriental Art and Department of Culture of the Chukotka Autonomous Region, Moscow-Anadyr.

Leskov, A.M. and Müller-Beck, H. (1993): *Arktische Waljäger vor 3000 Jahren - unbekannte sibirische Kunst*, v. Hase & Koehler Verlag, Mainz.

Wardwell, A. (1986): *Ancient Eskimo Ivories of the Bering Strait*, Hudson Hills Press, New York.