

National Museums
of Canada

Bulletin 224

Contributions
to Anthropology
VI:

*Archaeology and
Physical Anthropology*

MICHIPICOTEN SITE*

BY J. V. WRIGHT

RÉSUMÉ

Le gisement archéologique stratifié de Michipicoten, sur la rive nord du lac Supérieur, contient neuf composantes bien distinctes qui vont de la période historique jusqu'au XII^e siècle de notre ère. Les preuves ethnohistoriques nous font croire que les composantes historiques appartiennent aux Ojibwas, et la manière directe d'aborder l'histoire nous permet de croire que les composantes préhistoriques sont une accumulation d'objets qui ont appartenu au même peuple. La céramique de toutes les composantes représente un mélange de diverses traditions et démontre une influence provenant du sud et du sud-est, mais non de l'ouest. Cependant, la céramique de l'époque Huron-Pétun en provenance du sud-est n'apparaît dans le gisement archéologique qu'à partir du milieu du XV^e siècle. Alors que l'assemblage de pierre est en grande partie indigène, on pense que la céramique offre un caractère d'emprunt. L'occupation relativement ininterrompue du gisement archéologique de Michipicoten pendant environ 700 ans jette une vive lumière sur le problème de l'expansion de la culture ojibwa sur la rive nord de la partie supérieure des Grands Lacs.

SUMMARY

The stratified Michipicoten site on the north shore of Lake Superior contains nine discernible components ranging in time from the historic period to A.D. 1100. Ethnohistoric evidence suggests that the historic components may be attributed to the Ojibwa, and the direct historical approach suggests that the prehistoric components are the cumulative product of the same people. Ceramics from all components represent a mixture of different ceramic traditions and indicate that influences were being received from the south and southeast but not from the west. Huron-Petun ceramics from the southeast, however, do not appear on the site until the mid-15th century. It is proposed that the ceramics represent borrowed traits, whereas the stone assemblage is, for the most part, indigenous. The relatively unbroken occupation of the Michipicoten site for approximately 700 years throws considerable light on problems of Ojibwa culture development along the north shores of the Upper Great Lakes.

*Submitted February 23, 1966.

excavation the black sand stratum diverged into as many as three thin and discontinuous black lenses separated by increasingly thicker deposits of sterile to semi-sterile sand. The European trade goods that occurred in this stratum were in direct association with an abundance of native artifacts. An estimated age of the stratum would be the first half of the 18th century. It is certain that a number of seasonal occupations are represented in stratum II, for what appears to be a single refuse mantle in the D-line diverges into a number of strata to the west and interdigitates with the windblown deposits in a most complex fashion. It is most likely, however, that less than a span of a hundred years is involved in the stratum. Indeed, it is not impossible that some of the complex deposits to the west were formed in a single season. Four features were encountered in stratum II, and these consisted of a fired hearth floor in square E-50, a firestone hearth floor in squares D-50 and D-55, a refuse pit in square K-55, and an ochre deposit in square G-25. Some of the post moulds may also have originated in stratum II, although the majority are definitely assignable to stratum III.

EUROPEAN ITEMS

Gunflints (2) — Both gunflints were of English manufacture (Plate V, fig. 6).

Iron knife (1) — This small fragment appears to be the haft of an iron knife.

Lead pendant (1) — A single lead pendant with a sharply bifurcated base and two suspension holes was found (Plate V, fig. 4).

Kettle fragment (1) — One small fragment from a brass trade kettle was recovered.

Metal triangle (1) — One triangle cut from trade kettle was recovered (Plate V, fig. 3).

Metal awls (2) — Two awls had been manufactured from strips of rolled trade kettle (Plate V, fig. 1).

Metal beads (28) — Twenty-eight small (4 mm long and 2 mm by 3 mm in cross-section) brass beads had been bent onto a leather thong, which the copper salts preserved (Plate V, fig. 2).

Trade beads (6) — All six glass beads are classified as seed beads. Four are blue, and two are white. These beads are 2 mm long and 3 mm in diameter with the exception of one of the white specimens, which measures 5 mm in both dimensions (Plate V, fig. 5).

CERAMICS

Rim sherds (30) — The thirty analysable rim sherds recovered from stratum II belong to four different ceramic traditions or categories. These traditions are as follows: the Northern division, Huron-Petrun branch, Ontario Iroquois Tradition; the Peninsular Woodland; and two undefined ceramic assemblages, tentatively regarded as separate traditions and referred to as Stamped and Push-pull after the dominant decorative techniques.

PLATE V

($\frac{1}{2}$ natural size)

Stratum II

Fig.

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 1 | Two rolled brass awls |
| 2 | Brass strips (beads) wrapped around a leather thong |
| 3 | Cut brass triangle |
| 4 | Lead pendant |
| 5 | Blue glass seed beads |
| 6 | English gun flint |
| 7, 8 | Triangular arrowheads |
| 9, 10 | End scrapers |
| 11, 12 | Side scrapers |
| 13 | Spokeshave |
| 14 | Small tool |
| 15-17 | Wedges |
| 18 | Native copper awl |
| 19 | Native copper finger ring |
| 20 | Ball of pitch |
| 21 | Anvil stone |
| 22 | Hammerstone |
| 23 | Abrader fragment |



1



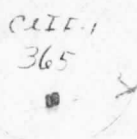
2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14



15



16



17



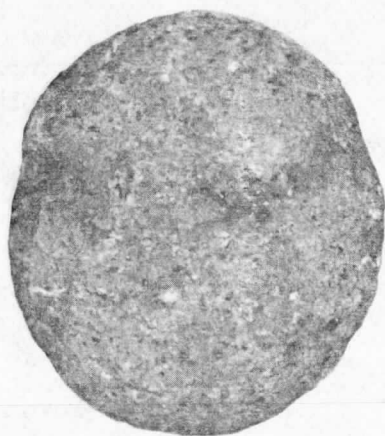
18



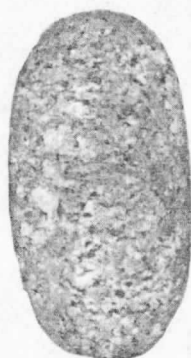
19



20



21



22



23