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CREE CULTURE HISTORY IN THE SOUTHERN INDIAN LAKE REGION*

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RÉSUMÉ

Les relevés archéologiques faits en 1965 et 1966 dans la région du lac Southern Indian dans le nord du Manitoba, ont fourni suffisamment de renseignements pour nous permettre d'appliquer la méthode historique directe à un groupe local de Cris. On ne possède pas de preuve évidente quant à leur occupation de la région avant le X^e siècle. Toutefois, à partir du X^e siècle, des données nous permettent de constater l'évolution culturelle traditionnelle et progressive d'une population identifiée, d'après des documents historiques, comme étant une tribu de Cris. Nous basons cette évolution sur deux sites, un de l'époque historique (vers les années 1700) et l'autre, de l'époque préhistorique, un site aux couches stratifiées.

SUMMARY

Archaeological surveys in 1965 and 1966 in the Southern Indian Lake region of northern Manitoba provided sufficient information to apply the direct historical approach to a local group of the Cree Indians. Evidence of a significant occupation of the region until the 10th century is lacking. From the 10th century to the historic period, however, data are available which indicate the gradual and conservative cultural development of a population identified by historical documents as one of the bands of the Cree. Two sites, one historic (*circa* A.D. 1700) and the other a stratified prehistoric site, are relied upon to trace this development.

INTRODUCTION

Information recovered during the archaeological surveys of 1965 and 1966 in the Southern Indian Lake region of northern Manitoba (Figure 1) appears to be sufficient to apply the direct historical approach to a local group of the Cree. The local aspect of the study is emphasized, since it is anticipated that a widely distributed population such as the Cree will possess a number of regional archaeological expressions. Of the 36 sites recorded, two are sufficiently informative to warrant detailed description. Data from other sites will be used in a supplementary fashion.

The main purpose of the surveys was to trace the northwestern distribution of the Laurel tradition: a Middle Woodland period assemblage occurring in east-central Saskatchewan, the southern half of Manitoba, northern Minnesota, Northern Ontario, and western Quebec. Fragments from one late Laurel tradition vessel were recovered. The paucity of Laurel tradition material was compensated for by the relative abundance of Late Woodland period sites assignable to the Selkirk focus (MacNeish 1958; Hlady MS.). Only two of all the sites located, however, could be profitably excavated. The remainder, including one stratified site, were characterized by a thin veneer of debris represented by firestone fragments, chipping detritus, bone

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Seven stone tools were recovered from Feature 1. These are as follows: three end scrapers, two random scrapers, a chitho, and an arrowhead. The chitho and one of the random scrapers came from the loosely consolidated portion of the feature whereas the remaining specimens were found in one of the compacted firestone concentrations appended to the main body of the feature. The three end scrapers came from one edge of the feature, and the random scraper and the arrowhead occurred at the opposite edge.

End Scrapers (Plate I, figs. 12 and 13)

Two of the scrapers are trianguloid, and the other is lacking its base. All three have some ventral retouch and high-backed retouched dorsal surfaces. Scraping faces are restricted to the end. Length ranges from 15 mm to 24 mm with a mean of 19.7 mm. Maximum width, which is at the scraping face, ranges from 16 mm to 20 mm, with a mean of 18 mm. Height of the end scraping faces ranges from 8 mm to 11 mm with a mean of 9.3 mm. One of these specimens also appears to have functioned as a burin (fig. 13). The end opposite the scraping face has had two or more flakes removed to produce the required sharp projection. There is a possibility, however, that this appended feature is fortuitous.

Random Scrapers

One random scraper possesses a single scraping face 32 mm long and from 3 mm to 5 mm high. The other random scraper has two scraping faces 19 mm and 13 mm long with face heights of 2 mm and 1 mm, respectively.

Chitho (Plate I, fig. 6)

The single chitho was made from a flat slab of schistose 11 mm thick. One edge, 70 mm long, had been unifacially bevelled by flaking to produce random scraper and the arrowhead occurred at the opposite edge.

Arrowhead (Plate I, fig. 10)

The arrowhead is side-notched, and both the basal and blade edge configurations are slightly convex. Although the tip is missing, the length is estimated to have been 35 mm. Basal width, width between notches, and shoulder width are 17 mm, 13 mm, and 20 mm, respectively. Stem length and thickness are 8 mm and 5 mm. The point possesses over-all fine bifacial retouch.

Chipping Detritus

Chipping detritus was very sparse and consisted of the following: quartz flakes 72 gm, quartz core 30 gm, igneous or metamorphic rock flake 5.5 gm, and flint flake 0.5 gm.

EUROPEAN TRADE ITEMS

Glass Bead (Plate I, fig. 15)

The single glass bead, which is split laterally, is an opaque white elongate spheroidal variety, which G. I. Quimby states (1966, appendix 4) is one of the diagnostic varieties of the Middle Historic period (A.D. 1670-1760).

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

MacBride Site

Fig.

- 1—Vessel 1
- 2—Vessel 2
- 3—Vessel 5
- 4—Vessel 4
- 5—Vessel 10
- 6—Chitho
- 7—Flake chisel
- 8—Problematical scraper-knife
- 9—Wedge
- 10—Arrowhead
- 11—Side scraper
- 12—End scraper
- 13—End scraper with possible burin at opposite end
from scraping face
- 14—Flattened lead musket ball
- 15—Glass bead
- 16—Copper rectangle

