

An Ethno-Archaeological Study of Algonkian Rock Art in Northeastern Ontario, Canada

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A group of pictograph sites on Obabika Lake, one of a number of Indian rock painting sites in northern Ontario, provides a model for understanding several aspects of Algonkian aboriginal art. The pictographs were studied in 1981 and 1984 during comprehensive ethno-archaeological surveys. While many Algonkian rock art sites have been recorded in northern Ontario, few complete analyses of individual sites in their cultural setting have been published. Obabika Lake provides an opportunity for an in-depth study of a geographical cluster of rock art sites occurring in well-documented family hunting territories of an Algonkian band.

Introduction

The Temagami area is a cultural and physiographic region located in northern Ontario near the Ontario-Quebec border. Just after the turn of the century, it was the scene of some of the earliest archaeological and anthropological research in the northern Algonkian cultural area. The Diamond Lake and Lady Evelyn Lake pictograph sites were among the first sites recorded in Ontario (Philips, 1906). The noted ethnologist Frank Speck recorded the distribution and use of family hunting and trapping territories, as well as Temagami folklore and customs (Speck, 1915 a & b). Several decades later, archaeologists began to study the distinctive Archaic period settlements on the Montreal River (Ridley, 1957; Knight, 1972). Rock art research in the Temagami region continued in the 1960s with Selwyn Dewdney's field work (Dewdney & Kidd, 1973). By the mid-1970s, the Temagami cultural area became part of an intensive rock art recording project (J. Conway, 1979; T. Conway, 1979). Archaeological site surveys and excavations, which documented native land use from the Archaic to the Historic periods, intensified in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s (Pollock, 1975 & 1976; Conway, 1982b & 1983; Gordon, 1986). At the same time, ethnohistorians and ethnographers made detailed records of Temagami band documentary history, oral history, and folkways (Conway, 1982a; Macdonald, 1983; Morrison, 1983).

Our inventory of rock art sites was part of an

archaeological project initiated in the early 1980s in response to the proposed placing of a dam on Obabika Lake to control flooding on the Sturgeon River. This action would have raised the water level of the lake by several metres. A study of the environmental and recreational resources of Obabika Lake has also been completed (Belfry and Groves, 1984). For various environmental and engineering reasons, the proposed dam project was cancelled a few years later. At the time of fieldwork, all sites were threatened with permanent destruction. The research strategy for the pictograph sites followed the standard methodology of recording all visible art through direct, full scale reproductions and extensive photography (Brunet *et al.*, 1987).

Archaeological survey and test excavations revealed a variety of aboriginal sites on Obabika Lake including a stratified seasonal camp with occupations extending from the middle Archaic period to the 19th century AD, as well as several more prehistoric sites, two quarry sites, a sugarbush site, and several Historic period Temagami camp sites and permanent settlements (Conway, 1984). The journals of the Temagami Hudson's Bay Company outpost contain numerous references to the aboriginal use of Obabika Lake by resident Temagami families, as well as seasonal use of the rich fishery by other segments of the band (Morrison, 1984).

The Physical Setting

Obabika Lake lies west of Lake Temagami in the Temagami district of northeastern Ontario, and is a major part of the Sturgeon River valley waterway which flows into Lake Nipissing (Fig. 1). With an area of 3,156 hectares, Obabika Lake is one of the five largest water bodies in the original territory of the Temagami Indian band. Obabika Lake averages 12.5 metres deep, and its numerous lake trout spawning shoals provided an important aboriginal food resource. The lake has a diverse shoreline with several sand beaches and rocky points on which are situated a number of prehistoric and historic Indian

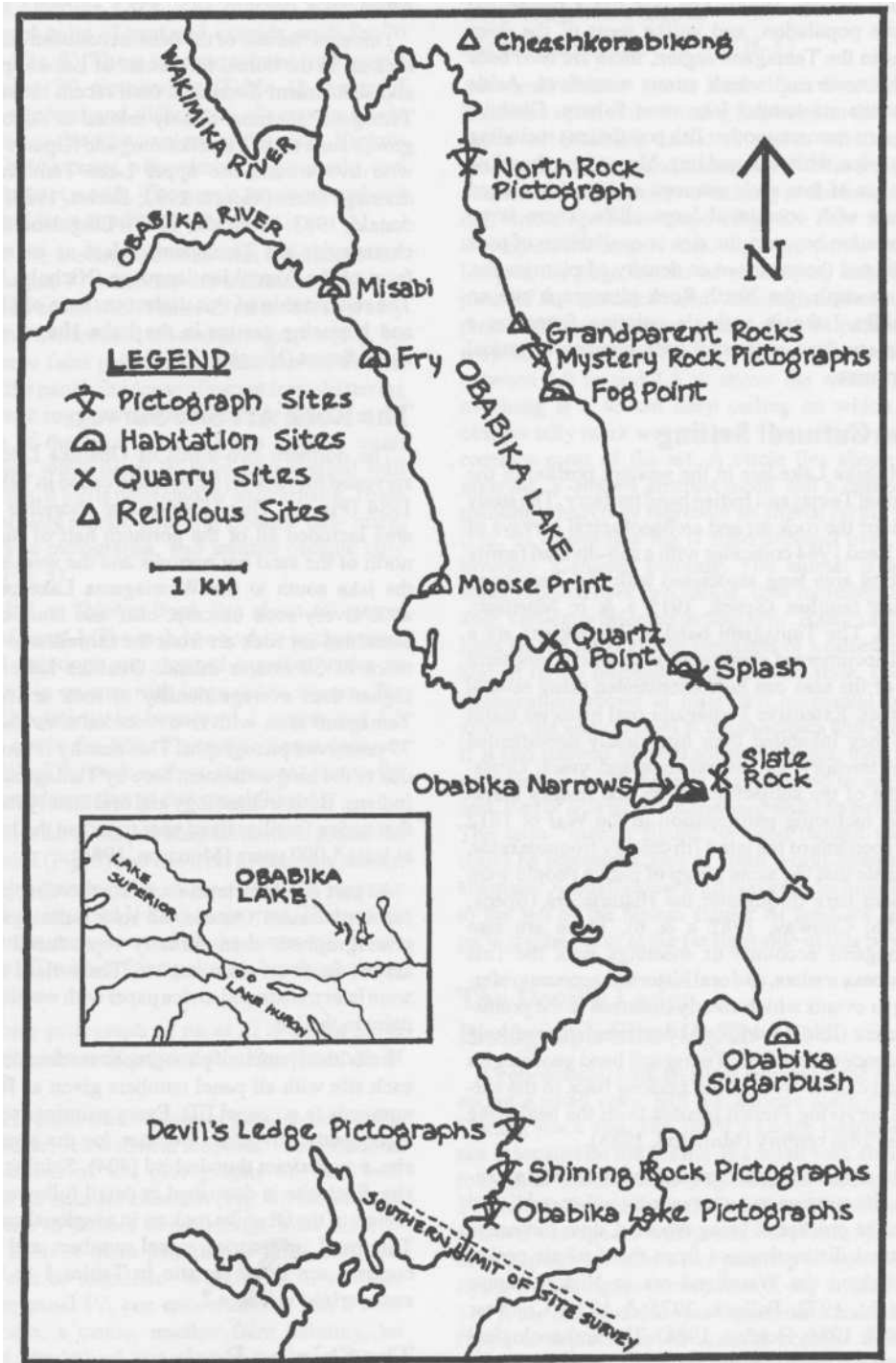


FIGURE 1

sites (Conway, 1984). The lake has a substantial moose population, and unlike most of the deep lakes in the Temagami region, there are reed beds at the north end which attract waterfowl. Aside from the substantial lake trout fishery, Obabika supports numerous other fish populations including bass, pike, whitefish and ling. Most of the shoreline consists of low rock outcrops and boulder edged forests with occasional large cliffs. There is no correlation between the size or availability of rock cliffs and the presence or density of pictographs. For example, the North Rock pictograph site on Obabika Lake is a single painting found on a kilometre-long rock wall with numerous vertical exposures.

The Cultural Setting

Obabika Lake lies in the western portion of the original Temagami Indian band territory. The study area for the rock art and archaeological surveys of 1981 and 1984 coincides with a sub-divided family hunting area long associated with two Temagami Indian families (Speck, 1915 a & b; Morrison, 1984). The Temagami band of Algonkians are a well documented aboriginal group whose long term use of the area can be demonstrated using several sources. Extensive Temagami oral histories claim that they inhabited the'r historically documented band territory for several thousand years. Cross-dating of the subject matter in oral history narratives, including participation in the War of 1812 and accounts of the late 17th century Iroquois raids, indicate that the same group of native people were present here throughout the Historic era (Speck, 1915b; Conway, 1982 a & b). There are also Temagami accounts of meetings with the first European traders, and oral historical accounts referring to events which clearly occurred in the prehistoric era (Ibid). Additional documentation of long residence comes from Temagami band genealogies which extend from living persons back to the earliest surviving French records from the beginning of the 18th century (Morrison, 1983).

The archaeological record, documented by extensive site surveys and excavations, either published or in the process of being reported, does indicate a regional distinctiveness from the Archaic period throughout the Woodland era to Historic times (Knight, 1972; Pollock, 1975 & 1976; Conway, 1983 & 1984; Gordon, 1986). The archaeological material culture appears to be sensitive down to the macro-band level in the area historically inhabited by the closely related Temagami and Temiskaming

bands.

This area has one of the densest concentrations of rock art in the boreal forest east of Lake Superior, and shamanism flourished until recent times. The Temagami are most closely related to Algonkian groups such as the Temiskaming and Kipawa bands who live around the upper Lake Temiskaming drainage basin (Moore, 1982; Eccles, 1983; Macdonald, 1983; Morrison, 1983). Linguistic studies characterize the Temagami dialect as an archaic form of the Algonkian language (Nichols, 1983). The relationship of this dialect to those of Ojibwa and Nipissing groups in the Lake Huron area is more distant (Higgins, 1982).

The Rock Art Site Survey

The northern two-thirds of Obabika Lake was surveyed for rock art by boat and canoe in 1981 and 1984 (Fig. 1). This 18 kilometre shoreline study *area* included all of the northern half of the lake north of the sand bar narrows and the west side of the lake south to the Wawiagama Lake portage area. Every rock outcrop, cliff and boulder was examined for rock art from the shoreline to a distance of 50 metres inland. **Obabika Lake** has a higher than average density of rock art for the Temagami area, with five recorded sites showing 77 preserved pictographs. This density is probably due to the long settlement here by Temagami band Indians. Both archaeology and oral history indicate that native families lived year round on the lake for at least 5,000 years (Morrison, 1984).

As part of a long term rock art recording project for northeastern Ontario, all rock paintings were photographed, then directly reproduced using acrylic paint on clear acetate. These field copies were later transferred to rice paper with watercolour paint in the lab.

Individual panels of pictographs are described for each site with all panel numbers given as Roman numerals (e.g., panel III). Every painting received a sequential inventory number for the particular site, e.g. abstract thunderbird (#24), Shining Rock site. Each site is described in detail followed by a review of the Obabika rock art in a regional context. The motif inventories, panel numbers and panel contents are listed by site in Tables 1 to 5 and summarized in Table 7.

The Shining Rock Pictograph Site (CgHb-5)

A series of rock paintings are located on the west

side of Obabika Lake. The outcrop starts at a northward point of land and extends south for 70 metres (Fig. 2). There are four painted rock panels containing 30 pictographs (Table 1), many of which are faint and difficult to observe in bright light due to the white colour of the rock. Various panels hold a canoe, a thunderbird, tally marks, and other abstract motifs. The panels are numbered and described from south to north.

Panel IA, a triangular rock with a modest overhang, begins 77 cm above the water and continues one metre up the wall. The main painted area is very faint, and it once held several pictographs (Fig. 3). Two more faint paintings can be seen on the left side of the panel. Evidence of recent frost shattering of the rock suggests that other pictographs lie at the bottom of the lake. Panel IA lies under a small overhang, while panel IB is another vertical wall above this. It too is protected by an overhang. There are four tally marks, a reverse oblique tally mark, three faint pictographs, and another oblique tally mark (Fig. 3).

Panel II at Shining Rock lies about 60 metres north of panel I. The rock has a white background, and all paintings are grouped together under an overhang in an area with large ochre smears. The panel II paintings lie between 1.1 metres and 1.3 metres above the lake. The painted area does not cover all of the rock surface at present due to the considerable erosion of this panel (Fig. 4).

An inverted U-shaped abstract motif is preserved on panel II (Fig. 5) and lies next to two tally marks. Two faint paintings lie above and to the viewer's right of the inverted U-shaped abstract. Three more tally marks are preserved on the lower left corner of panel II with a faint painting barely showing above them.

The only pictograph on panel III is a faint arc at the corner of a rock outcrop a few metres north of panel II.

Panel IV, nine metres north of panel II, runs along a low, white rock wall near the point. The horizontal arrangement of the pictographs on this wall presents an unusual situation (Fig. 6). No attempt was made to protect the paintings from the elements. Each of these paintings is faint, but most motifs can be identified. Working from south to north on panel IV, one encounters an arc, a faint pictograph, a canoe, another faint painting, an abstract thunderbird, two not quite horizontal lines, and a T-shaped abstract painting (Fig. 7).

The Obabika Lake Pictograph Site (CgHb-1)

A small rock art site is located just over half a kilometre south of the Shining Rock site on the west shore of Obabika Lake. A series of clearly preserved paintings and smeared red ochre designs occur under a protective overhang at the base of a cliff and large talus slope (Fig. 8). This site is located on the largest rock exposure on the lake. Despite the huge blocks of rock talus, only one panel of art was discovered. Although deliberately protected by an overhang, many of the 11 paintings are poorly preserved (Table 2). The panel is situated between 1.0 m and 1.8 m above the water. The overhang is a 43 cm deep ceiling on which an oblique tally mark was painted. The vertical panel contains most of the art. A circle lies above an inverted, V-shaped abstract motif and a complex painting which may represent an animal facing left (Fig. 9) whose rear leg is superimposed over the inverted V-shaped painting. The animal is also superimposed over two earlier, now indistinguishable, vertically oriented pictographs. A pair of long lines are the most visible remnants of a raised-arm human figure rendered in open torso style. Close examination shows at least two horizontal bars joining the vertical lines at the shoulders and waist. If it had painted internal torso attributes, they are not preserved. The vertical leg lines end in angled feet. Part of a circular outline head also can be seen. The term "human figure" is used though these could be representations of spirit world beings or shamans. A small canoe with two vertical lines lies to the left of the human figure. At least six faint pictographs occur at the far right side of this panel.

The Devil's Ledge Pictograph Site (CgHb-4)

A very unusual rock art site is situated at the north end of a small cove, half a kilometre north of the Shining Rock site. The Devil's Ledge pictograph site is located on the ceiling of a small rock shelter found near the shoreline (Fig. 10). The ceiling lies 3.3 metres above the water. Ten of the 17 paintings at Devil's Ledge are well preserved (Table 3). The ceiling group includes a rare painting of a possible flying human figure portrayed in X-ray style (Fig. 11). If the line near the eyes represents a nose, this figure is depicted in an unusual posture with a disproportionately large head thrust up and forward. Other paintings are a row of six dots and a unique motif showing two circles connected by a

MOTIF GROUP

- (1) Animal
- (1) Canoe
- (17) Abstract

(11) faint

SPECIFIC MOTIF

- 1 abstract thunderbird (#24)
- 1 multiple occupant canoe (#22)
- 4 grouped tally marks (#4 to #7)
- 1 tally with 3 faint paintings (#28)
- 2 tallies with U-shape (#11 & #12)
- 3 grouped tally marks (#15 to #17)
- 1 reverse oblique tally mark (#8)
- 1 inverted U-shaped abstract (#10)
- 2 arcs (#19 & #20)
- 2 nearly horizontal lines (#25 & #26)
- 1 T-shaped abstract (#27)
- 11 faint (#1, #2, #3, #9, #13, #14, #18, #21, #23, #29 & #30)

Total = 30 paintings

Panel IA =	#1 to #3
Panel IB =	#4 to #9 & #28 to #30
Panel III =	#19
Panel IV =	#20 to #27

TABLE 1
Shining Rock pictograph site motif analysis

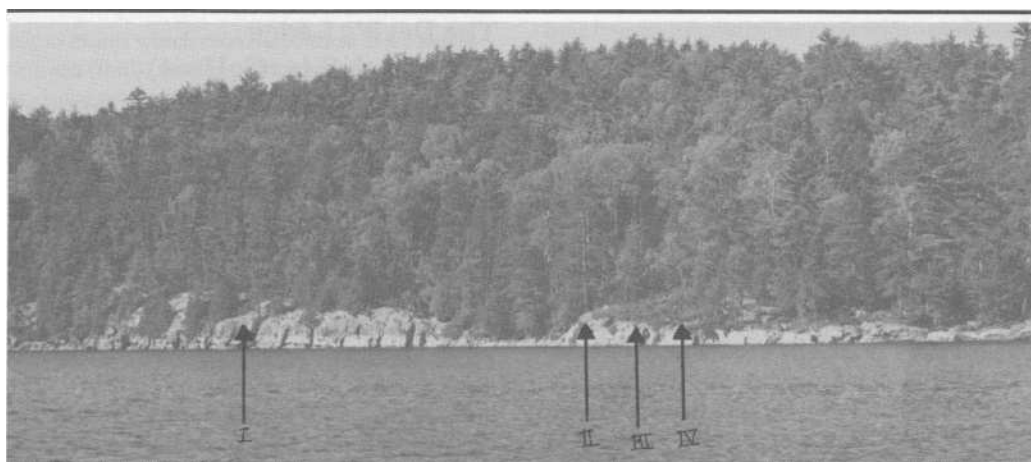


FIGURE 2

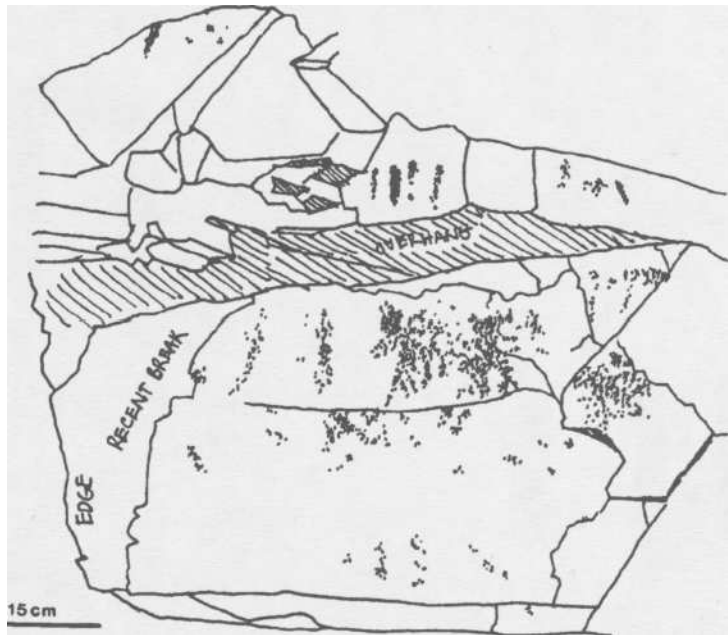


FIGURE 3

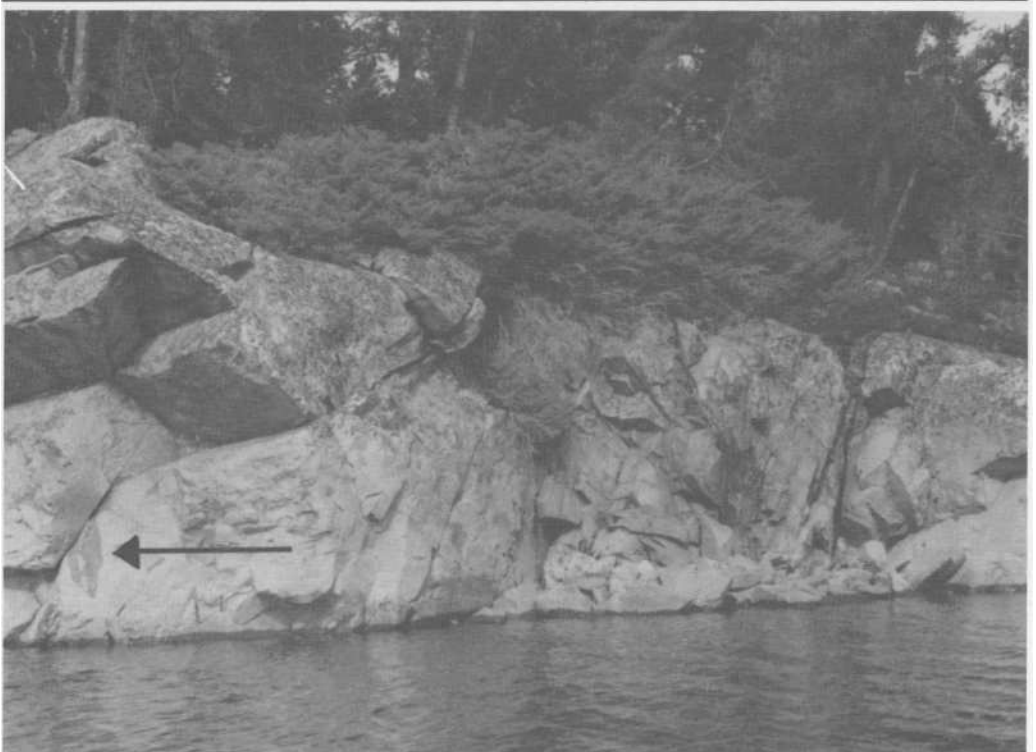


FIGURE 4

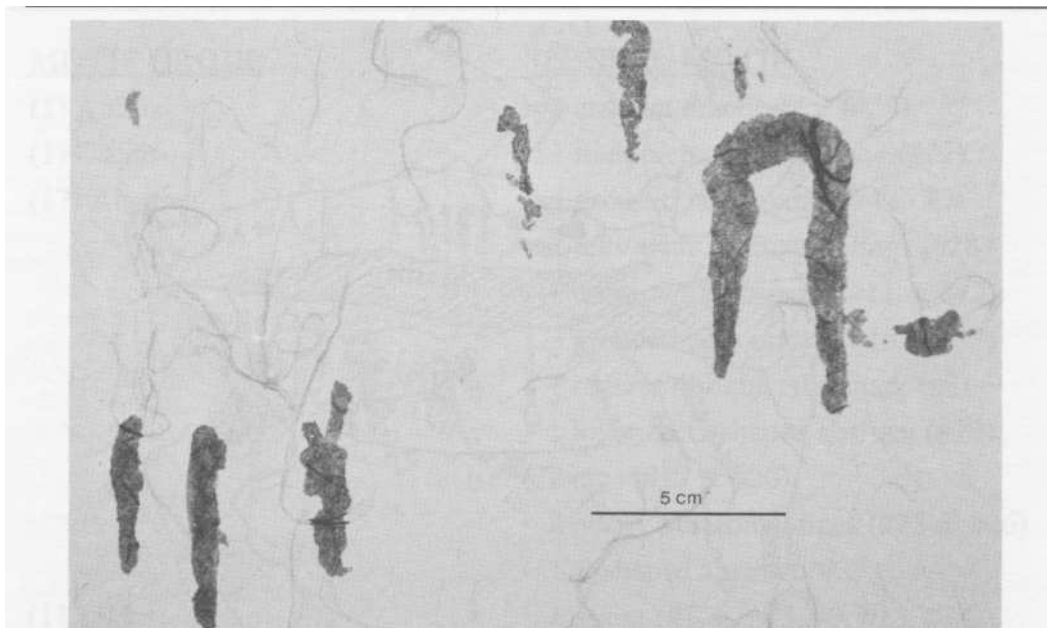


FIGURE 5

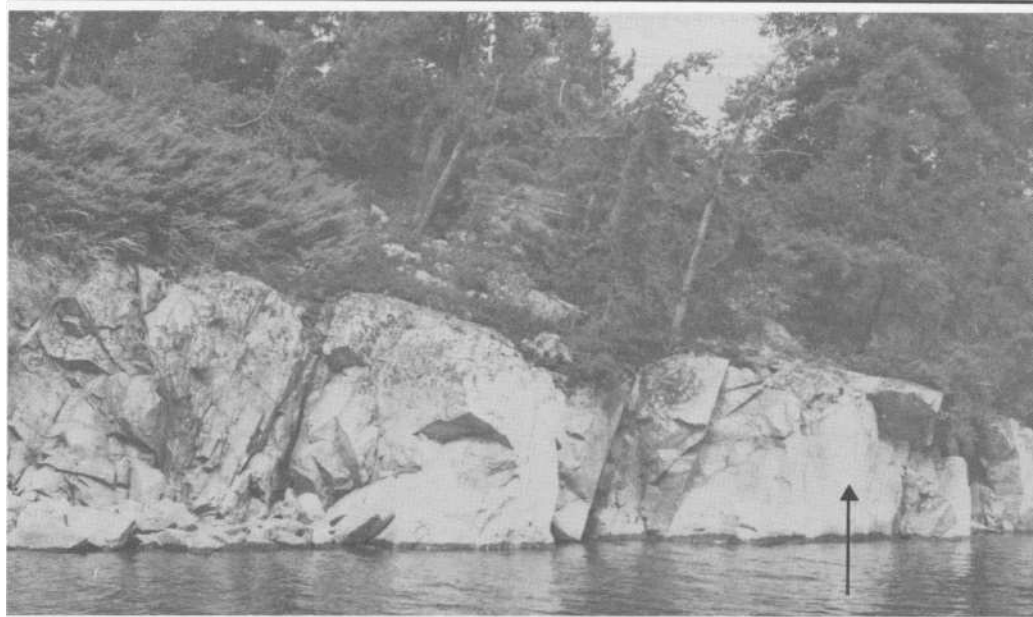


FIGURE 6



FIGURE 7

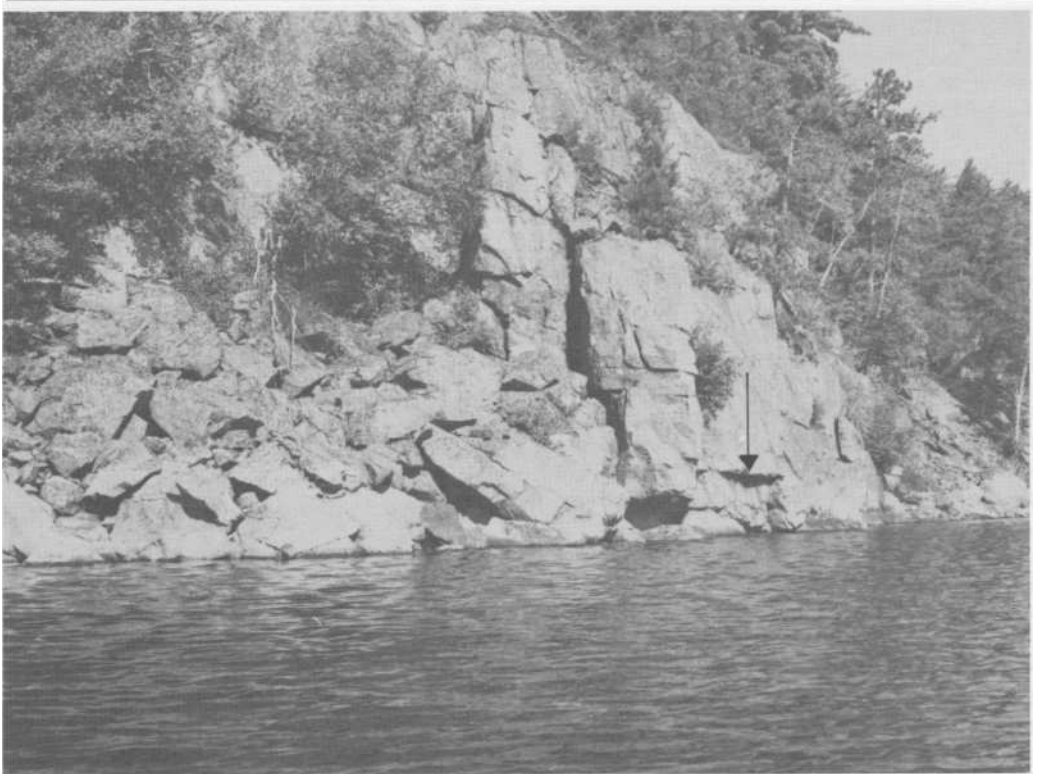


FIGURE 8

MOTIF GROUP

- (1) Animal
- (1) Anthropomorph
- (1) Canoe
- (3) Abstract

(8) faint

SPECIFIC MOTIF

- 1 complex cervid animal (?) (#4)
- 1 human figure with open torso (#5)
- 1 canoe with two lines (#6)
- 1 tally mark (#1)
- 1 circle (#2)
- 1 inverted V-shape abstract (#3)
- 8 faint (#7 to #14)

Total = 14 paintings

Panel IA = #1 (ceiling)

Panel IB = #2 to #14

TABLE 2

Obabika Lake pictograph site motif analysis

bar (Fig. 12). Several faint paintings are found on the ceiling, perhaps documenting earlier use of this site. A daub and a tally mark are situated a few feet away from the human figure.

The Mystery Rock Pictograph Site (CgHb-3)

A few rock paintings occur on a cliff near the north end of Obabika Lake on its eastern shore. The Mystery Rock site is located just north of a series of small islands and a gravel point (Fig. 13). Four panels are present and they are concentrated toward the north end of the cliff (Table 4). Overhangs occur high above the painted areas, but not close enough to provide protection. Panels were numbered from south to north. Panel I, situated two metres above the water, has three vertical lines joined at the base. A short distance below this high pictograph, a series of six horizontal lines are arranged in a vertical row (Figs. 14a and 14b). Panel H lies five metres north of panel I, and nearly three metres above the water. Two 17.8 cm long vertical lines were painted there. Panel III begins one metre above the lake. The five paintings include two thick bodied, horned serpents, another horned serpent which is superimposed over an earlier faint painting, a linear abstract angled arrangement of three lines, and a long heel bird track motif (Fig. 15). Panel IV has an isolated mammal facing left with its head now eroded away (Fig. 16).

The North Rock Pictograph Site (CbHb-11)

A single painting was discovered on a medium-sized cliff situated on the northeast end of Obabika Lake (Table 5) (Fig. 17). It is difficult to observe the pictograph, which is not protected by an overhang. Very close examination reveals an animal, apparently an abstractly depicted cervid, such as a moose or caribou (Fig. 18). The two short lines emanating from its chest are unusual attributes.

Site Settings

The five rock art sites on Obabika Lake share several characteristics. Each separate panel serves as a sub-site, or a possible record of individual activity at a site. At the five sites, there are 13 separate panels and sub-panels of rock art. Six of these panels lie under overhangs or are located on the ceilings of overhangs. The use of overhangs to protect rock art sites is a practice found intermittently across the greater Temagami cultural area,

and throughout the Canadian Shield in general. Although the use of sheltered portions of outcrops and cliffs is found in slightly less than half of the sample, some areas such as panel IV at Shining Rock or panel III at Mystery Rock lack any shelter from the elements. We have not identified the reasons for such selection. A broad regional motif analysis of the types of paintings located under overhangs as opposed to those on exposed locations might reveal further details.

None of the Obabika Lake pictographs incorporated natural features of the rock walls, such as cracks or quartz veins, to enhance their presentation, as is common elsewhere in northern Ontario (Steinbring, 1982; Lambert, 1985; Conway, 1989). Site orientation is varied with three sites facing east and two sites facing west. Since Obabika is a long, narrow lake oriented north to south, there are limited areas of north facing or south facing shorelines.

Motif Analysis

Nearly one-third of the 77 Obabika Lake pictographs are too faint to categorize. The majority of the 50 preserved paintings show a variety of motifs with many abstract designs (Table 6). Human forms and canoes are rare, but animals are more common. In the entire Temagami band territory, the same high incidence of abstract motifs prevails (Table 6). The frequencies of the major motif categories found at all the Obabika Lake sites are virtually identical to the other combined pictograph sites recorded in the Temagami band territory. These totals contrast well with the motif groups from the combined Missinaibi band territory rock art sites located 300 km northwest of Temagami and the combined Agawa sites from eastern Lake Superior. These data provide justification for assuming ethnographic continuity among rock art sites in a local area, which could be applied to the analysis of geographical clusters of rock art sites in areas lacking an ethnographic record.

Since the abstract art often occurs as groups of tally marks, paired lines, or rows of dots, its frequency can be calculated in two ways. One method gives equal weight to each individual painting regardless of the groupings: six painted dots on one panel is treated as six separate paintings. The alternate approach counts the spatially clustered, repeated abstract motifs as one painting. In Table 6, the data are presented using both methods. By splitting the abstract motifs, the abstract category forms 78% of the combined Obabika sites art. By



FIGURE 9

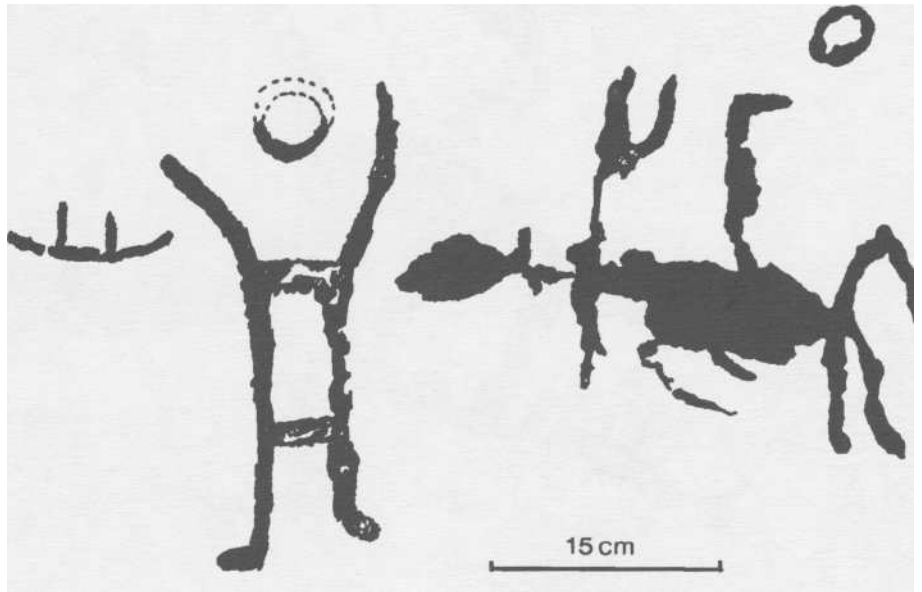


FIGURE 10

MOTIF GROUP

(1) Anthropomorph

(9) Abstract

(7) faint

Total =

SPECIFIC MOTIF

• 1 X-ray style person (#1)

• 6 dots in a row (#4 to #9)

• 1 tally mark (#17)

• 1 bar connecting circles (#2)

• 1 daub (#3)

• 7 faint (#10 to #16)

17 paintings (all on one panel)

TABLE 3
Devil's Ledge pictograph site motif analysis

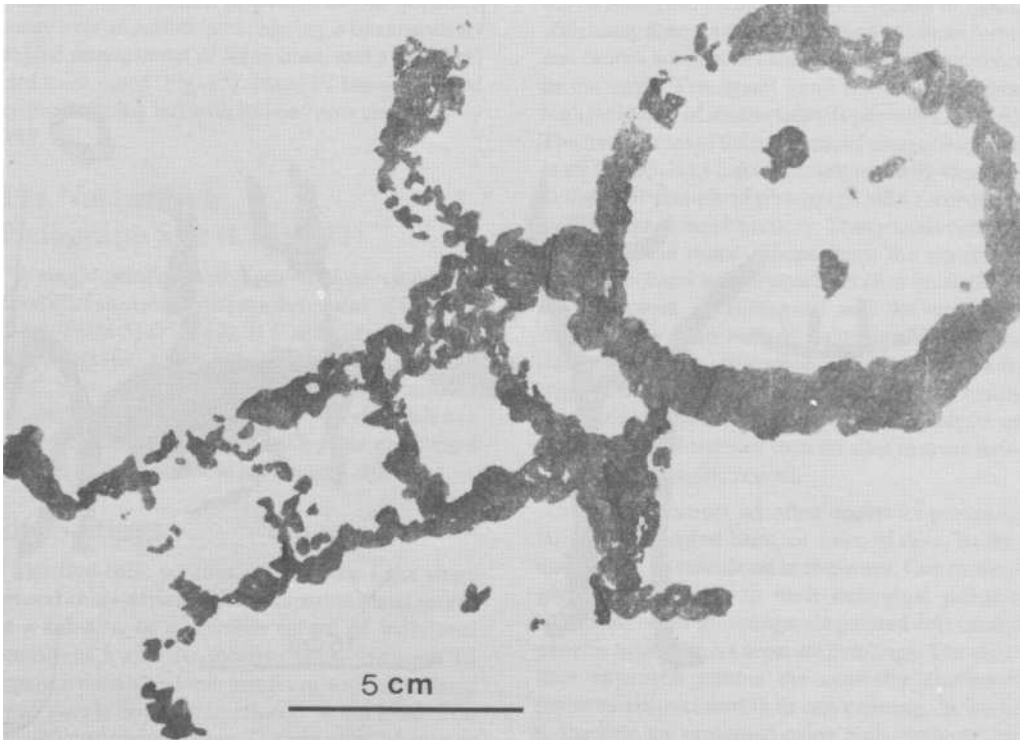


FIGURE 11

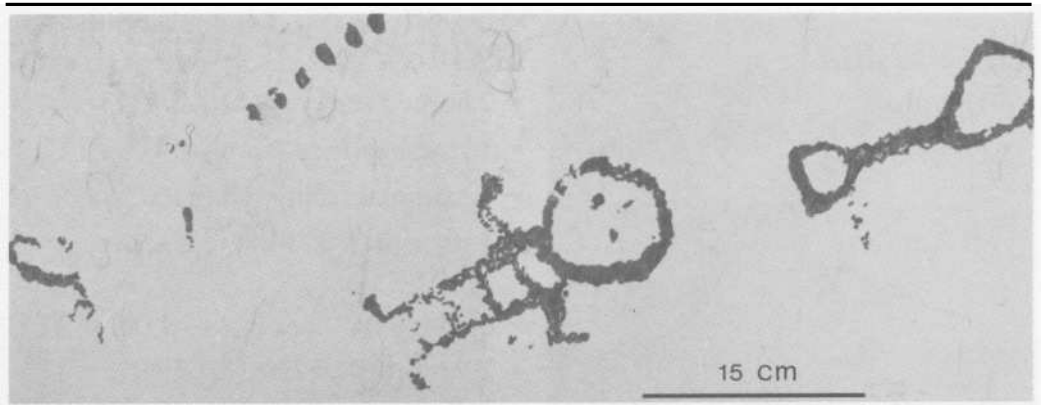


FIGURE 12

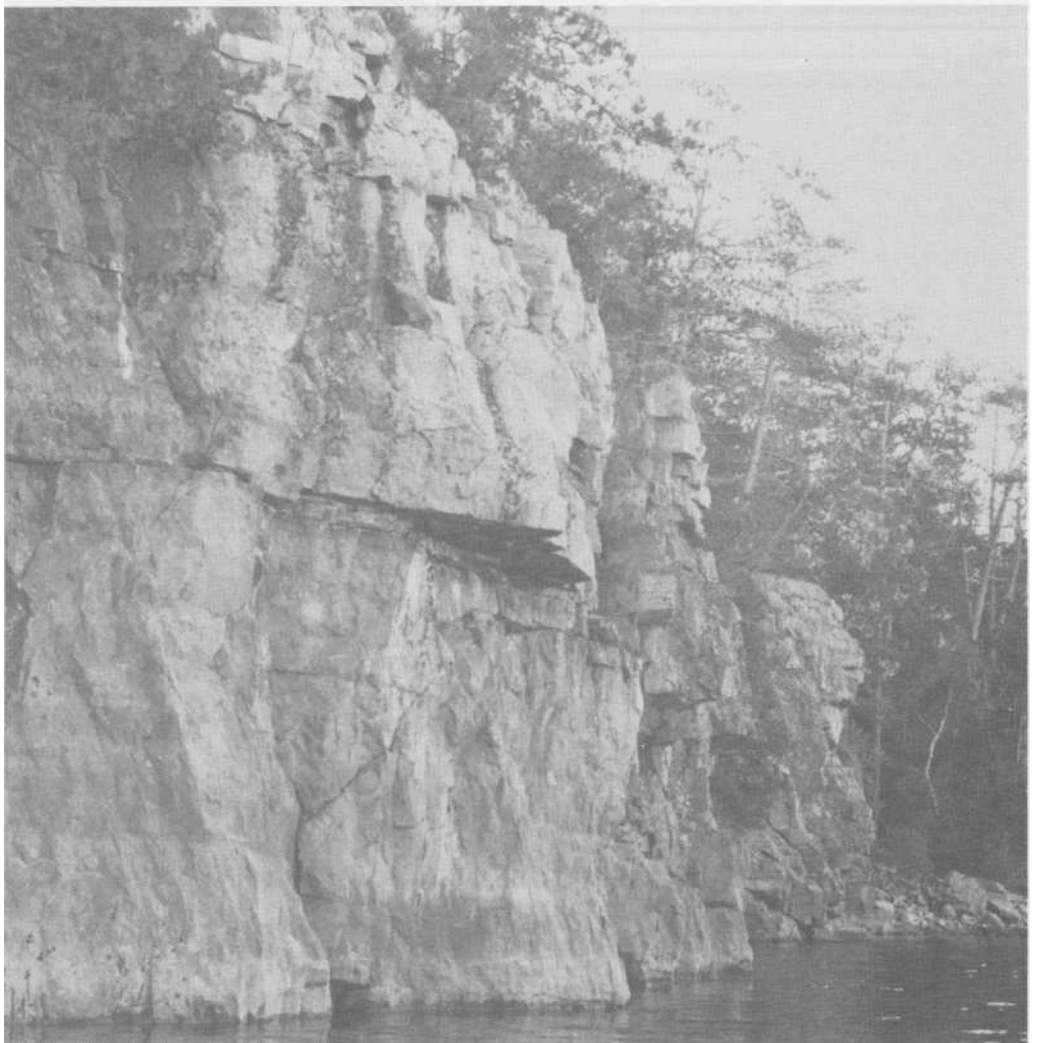


FIGURE 13

MOTIF GROUP

SPECIFIC MOTIF

(4) Animals

- 2 horned serpents (#10 & #11)
- 1 long heel bird track (#14)
- 1 mammal facing left (#15)
- 1 three vertical lines joined at the base (#1)

(10) Abstract

- 6 horizontal lines in a row (#2 to #27)
- 2 long vertical line (#8 & #9)
- 1 three joined angled lines (#13)
- 1 faint (#12)

(1) Faint

Total =

15 paintings

Panel I =

#1 to #7 #8

Panel II =

to #9 #10 to

Panel III =

#14 #15

Panel IV =

TABLE 4
Mystery Rock pictograph site motif analysis

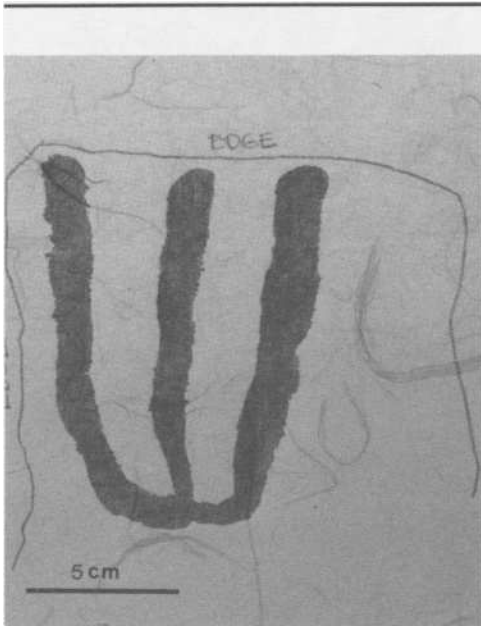


FIGURE 14a

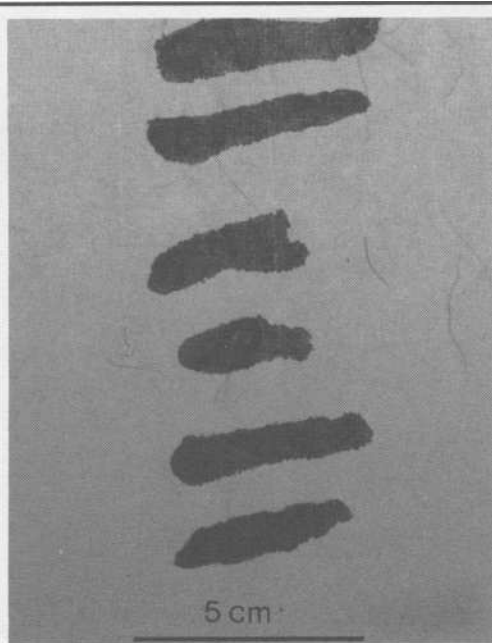


FIGURE 14b

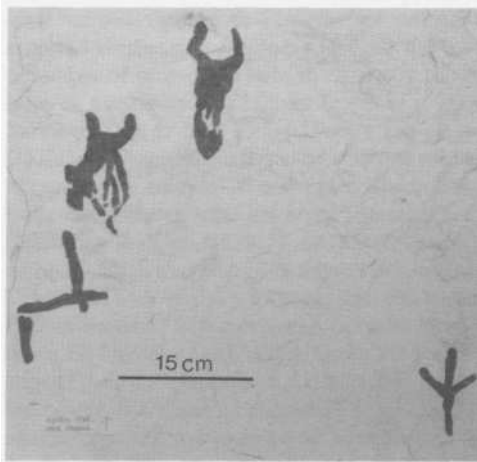


FIGURE 15

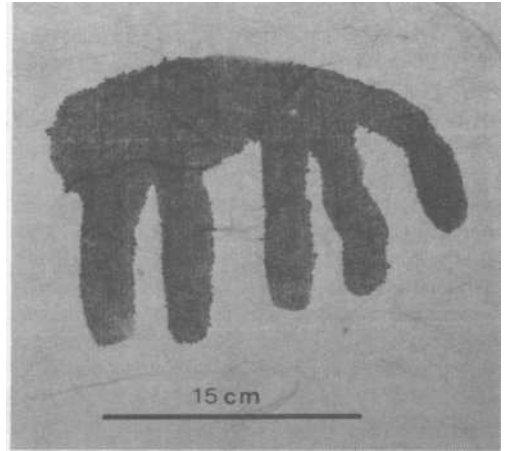


FIGURE 16



FIGURE 17

combining the grouped abstract motifs, the incidence is lowered to 66%. The proportional relationships between abstract art from different cultural areas remains the same regardless of the counting method used (Table 6).

Of the 13 Obabika rock art panels, six have only abstract paintings, four have combined abstract and other categories, one panel has unclassified faint paintings, and two panels lack abstract art. Interestingly, both of the latter are the single paintings of mammals at the North Rock and Mystery Rock sites.

Individual Motifs

Each distinct painting contains cultural inform-

tion related to Algonkian art in general and Temagami band art in particular. The authors' motif index is divided into six categories: Human Figures, Canoes, Animals (including real and mythological creatures), Plants, Celestial Objects, and Abstracts. Each category contains several or many motifs.

At the Obabika Lake sites, human figures and canoe motifs are rare. The small sample of seven animal paintings includes four different motifs. Since 78% of Obabika paintings are abstract art, it is not surprising to find 13 distinct motifs represented in that category (Table 7).

Human figures are common motifs on boreal forest rock art sites. However, the two open torso

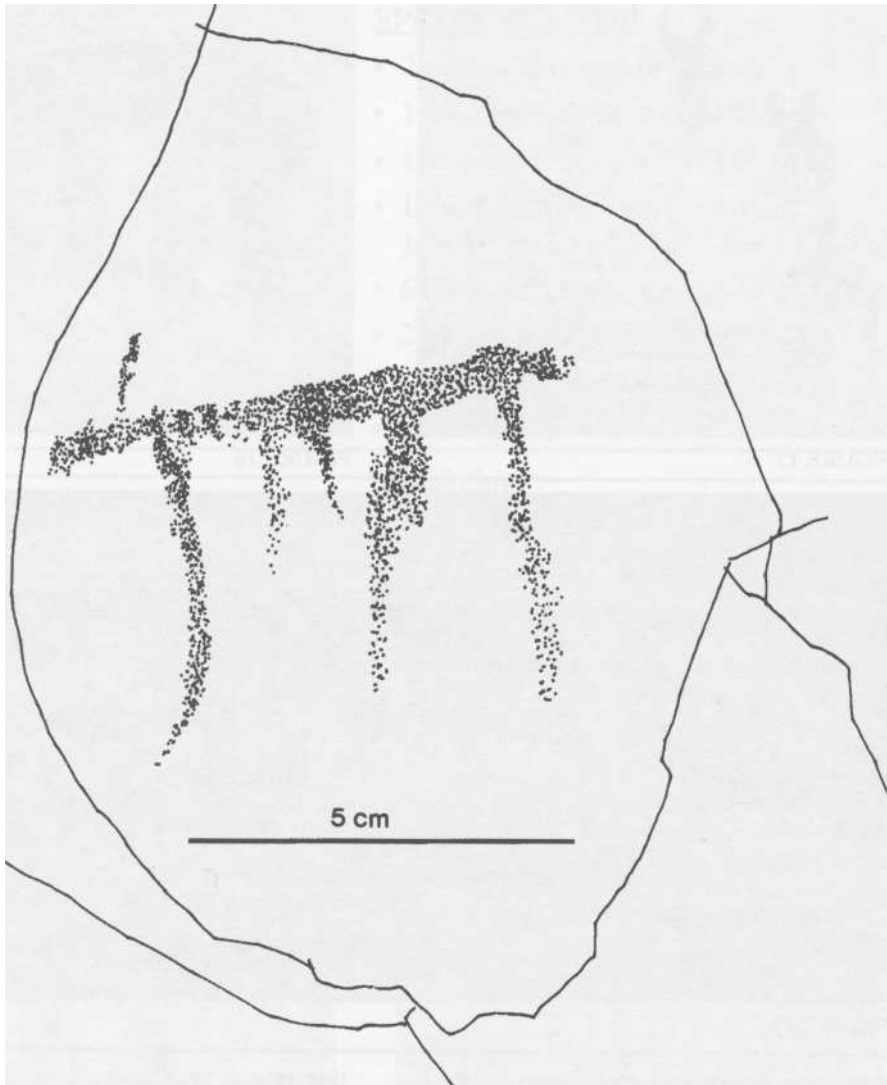


FIGURE 18

<u>MOTIF- GROUP</u>	<u>SPECIFIC MOTIF</u>
(1) Animal	• 1 cervid mammal facing left (#1)
Total =	1 painting

TABLE 5
North Rock pictograph site motif analysis

style human figures at Obabika are not often repeated at other sites. There is a tendency for quite a number of pictograph sites in northeastern Ontario to have only one human figure at a given location. This is true of the Devil's Ledge and Obabika Lake sites. Similar sites with one painted human figure include Wizard Lake, Scotia Lake, Lake 1895, Matagamasi Lake and Diamond Lake (Dewdney & Kidd, 1973:91 & 153; J. Conway, 1979:28-29). It may be significant that the only two Temagami band territory rock art sites with human figures executed in a rectilinear, open-body style occur on Obabika Lake which forms the western edge of the band's homeland. At Matagamasi Lake, the central body area of an outline style figure is also left open. It was placed over a seeping spring on the cliff. The exceptional human figure from Scotia Lake has a prominent heartline in the open chest area (Conway, 1989). The Scotia Lake and Matagamasi Lake sites occur in the Whitefish Ojibwa band territory immediately west of the Temagami band area. When compared to the Obabika Lake outlined figures, that from Matagamasi Lake shares the same motif rendered in a similar style. The Scotia Lake painting shows a similar motif, but it is the only true "X-ray" style example. It too has a rectilinear body and open, circular head as found at **Obabika**. The Scotia Lake painting also has curved arms which reinforce the observation that in this part of the world curvilinear and rectilinear elements are often part of the same artistic tradition. The use of both types of lines in one painting contrasts with the numerous "stick" style human figures also found in Algonkian rock art.

One canoe pictograph at the Obabika Lake site is in the "simple canoe" design: small in size with a curved bow and stern, and two vertical projections. Identical designs were recorded at the nearby Diamond Lake site, which is located in the Temagami band area, and at several more distant sites. This design may be a lunar symbol, not a canoe (Steinbring, 1976). The canoe at Shining Rock is only partially preserved. It represents the multiple-occupant canoe motif which is common across the Algonkian rock art area.

None of the mammal motifs from the Obabika Lake, Mystery Rock and North Rock sites can be identified as to species. These animals, which probably represent cervids such as moose or caribou, are common paintings in the Temagami area and elsewhere. The mammal at the North Rock site displays a pair of short lines, possibly legs, extending from its chest. A similar example was

recorded at Fairy Point on Missinaibi Lake, where a moose had a pair of short lines painted below its chest. The two horned serpents at Mystery Rock are portrayed in a vertical position. This posture is repeated at several other rock art sites, such as Diamond Lake, Wizard Lake and Longpoint Lake, as well as on birch bark *midewewin* scroll art (Philips, 1906; Densmore, 1929:91). Folktales about horned serpents have been recorded among the Temagami Indians and other Ojibwa groups (Barnouw, 1977:134). At rock art sites in northeastern Ontario, there is a tendency for vertical horned serpent paintings to be placed at the edges of panels. This pattern, found at Mystery Rock, applies to the Wizard Lake site in the Mattagami area, the Burntwood Lake site in the Mississagi band territory, and the Longpoint Lake site in the Temagami band territory. At the Diamond Lake site, however, a similar horned serpent was painted on a panel amid several other pictographs.

Thunderbirds are distributed across the Temagami area in many styles. Very minimal, abstract examples, like the one at Shining Rock, occur several times, as do other variations on this motif.

The Mystery Rock bird track painting is a motif repeated at a series of Temagami and Temiskaming band sites in the Ontario/Quebec border area (T. Conway, 1979:131-132). These two bands share several rock art motifs not used by neighbouring bands. These two groups were very close historically, linguistically and culturally, and they often intermarried (Speck, 1915 a & b).

The abstract art from Obabika Lake is quite varied. Twelve vertical tally marks, eight horizontal lines, one reverse oblique tally mark, a T-shape, an inverted V-shape, two long vertical lines, and an angled linear motif document the use of a linear abstract painting tradition. While these paintings belong to the simplest expression of linear abstraction, they are repeated quite often across the Temagami, Temiskaming and Mattagami band territories. Tally marks are the most common abstract motif and the most common motif overall in the Temagami area, occurring singly and in large groups (Table 7). While they are widely distributed across northern Ontario, tally marks form a larger percentage of the abstract art in the area between Lake Superior and central Quebec than in some other regions such as northwestern Ontario (Lambert, 1983 & 1985) or northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan (Jones, 1981). The inverted, V-shaped abstract painting at the Obabika Lake site is a local

Motif Group	Combined		Other Temagami		Missinaibi		Agawa	
	Obabika Sites		Sites		Band Sites		Band Sites	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Animals	7	14	55	14	69	18	27	28
Human figures	2	4	16	4	28	7	2	2
Canoes	2	4	15	4	31	8	16	16
Celestial Objects	-	-	6	1.5	18	5	-	-
Plants	-	-	1	0.3	2	0.5	-	-
Abstract (Split)	39	78	297	76	234	61	53	54
Abstract (Grouped) *RECALCULATED*	21	66	142	60	111	43	22	33
Total Sites	5		25		7		3	
Total Paintings	50		390		382		98	

TABLE 6
Pictograph motif group comparisons

General Motif Groups	f	Specific Motifs
Human Figures	2	open torso & X-ray styles
Canoes	1 1	simple canoe multiple occupant canoe
Animals	3 1 1 2	cervids (moose or caribou) long heel bird track thunderbird vertical horned serpents
Abstracts *	13 (7) 1 2 8 (2) 1 1 1 6 (1) 1 1 1 1 2 (1)	tally marks inverted U-shaped abstract arcs horizontal lines T-shaped abstract circle inverted V-shaped abstract dots circle connected by a bar angled three-line abstract daub vertical lines joined at base long vertical lines
* the numbers in brackets 0 indicate separate groupings of abstract motifs, e.g. the 13 tally marks occur in 7 distinct clusters		

TABLE 7
Specific motifs found at Obabika rock art sites

representation of the widespread use of V motifs at several Temagami area sites. Abstract pictographs based on circular elements show up as well. Two arcs, an inverted U-shaped abstract, a daub, six dots, two circles joined by a line, a circle, and three lines curved to join at the base incorporate circular and curved elements. Dots are not very common motifs in the Algonkian art of northern Ontario. Several dots occur on a highly abstract panel at the nearby Diamond Lake site (Fig. 19). Further afield, a series of dots decorate part of the Ninth Lake pictograph site on the East Spanish River (Dewdney & Kidd, 1973:91). But in a sample of 30 rock art sites in northeastern Ontario, there were only six locations other than those at Obabika Lake with painted dots. Only 26 paintings at these six sites, or 0.4% of the 694 pictographs, were dots. Painted dots are not present in a study of 27 sites from northwestern Ontario (Lambert, 1985:124). One area where the dot motif is prevalent is that of the Churchill River (Jones, 1981:57).

It is important to establish the true nature of Algonkian pictographic art. Some overviews of North American rock art have left the impression that there is a northern woodland rock art area, and that it is characterized by naturalistic paintings (Grant 1967 & 1983). Both of these concepts are without basis in fact. As the Obabika Lake and greater Temagami band area data demonstrate, over 75% of the pictographs are abstract art motifs. Current research points to the possibility of regional variation in Algonkian art that may ultimately reflect band, or macro-band, level differences in motif categories (Lambert, 1985). But abstract art remains a major component of the combined rock paintings across much of northern Ontario and Manitoba.

Style

How are the pictographs rendered and what does this tell us? As mentioned in the preceding discussion, the art on Obabika Lake shares stylistic ties between local sites on the lake, with other panels of Temagami area rock art, and with art in nearby band territories. At the local level, Obabika Lake art has some stylistic distinctiveness with the two open torso human figures and the repeated use of circular elements. By contrast, the more frequent human figure motifs in northwestern Ontario do not include examples similar to the Obabika Lake paintings (Lambert, 1983 & 1985). The human figures at the Devil's Ledge and Obabika Lake sites show strong similarity in stylistic attributes. Both have

bodies rendered in a rectilinear, open style with outlined, circular heads. Each is portrayed from a frontal view with raised arms and angled feet. This suggests that the Obabika human figures were painted by the same individual or, at least, by artists immersed in the same tradition. The use of circular and curved styles is thought to be uncommon in the pictographs of the upper Great Lakes region. Both of these Obabika Lake sites also contain other abstract motifs done in a curved or circular style. At Devil's Ledge, there is a row of dots as well as two circles joined by a line. At the Obabika Lake site, an isolated circle is found on the panel.

An abstract panel at the nearby Diamond Lake pictograph site also has a mixture of dots, a circle and V-shaped motifs, stylistically similar to those of Obabika Lake rock art (Fig. 19). Diamond Lake lies in the next Temagami family trapping ground northeast of Obabika Lake. Wizard Lake, located in the Mattagami band homeland, is one of the few pictograph sites elsewhere in northeastern Ontario with painted circles (J. Conway, 1979:28). The complex Wizard Lake panel shows some stylistic similarity to Obabika sites, but not as much as the Diamond Lake panel does.

Rectilinear elements as well as circular or curvilinear elements can occur in the same paintings, as is the case with both the Obabika human figures. This contemporaneity of linear and curved line usage logically extends to the other separate groups of curved or circular style art and linear art such as V-shaped abstracts and U-shaped abstracts. The evidence from associated motifs on the same panels supports this. By demonstrating the contemporaneity of curvilinear and rectilinear abstract art in the northeastern Algonkian rock art region, certain problems of stylistic analysis can be avoided. In the Great Basin area of the American southwest, these styles were sometimes arbitrarily separated despite their communal occurrence on the same panels. This led to a confusion over style which has only recently been addressed (Hedges, 1982).

One painting at the Shining Rock site (CgHb-5, panel IV) is believed to be an abstract thunderbird (Fig. 7). The curved wings and vertical body, basic elements that survive the abstraction process, form a universal Algonkian motif often rendered in different styles. Similar abstract style thunderbirds are recorded at Diamond Lake and Matagamasi Lake, both 20 miles north of Obabika Lake. At the regional level, Obabika Lake art shares a high frequency of linear abstract motifs, V-shaped abstracts, and abstract thunderbirds with other



FIGURE 19

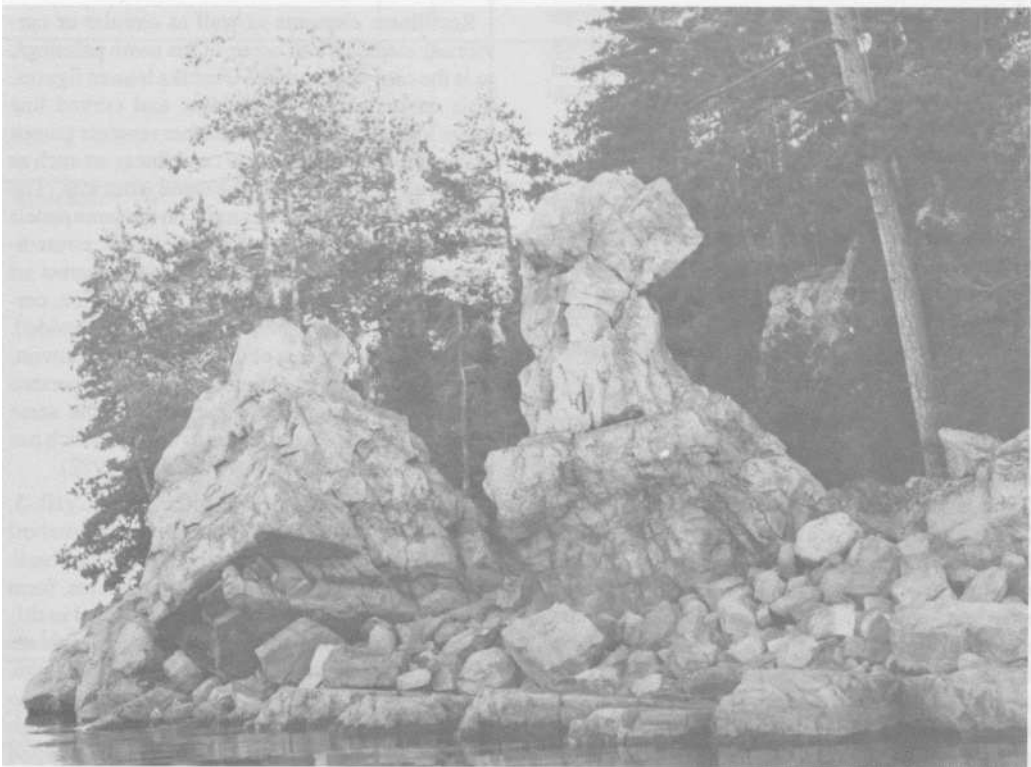


FIGURE 20

regional sites attributed to the Temagami Indians. A few motifs, such as the homed serpents, the generalized cervid mammals, and the simple and multiple canoe forms are more widely distributed across northern Ontario.

Pictograph Interpretations

Due to the co-operation of several Temagami band members, some interpretation is available for the Obabika Lake rock art motifs. Like several other Temagami area pictograph sites where local Indians have identified motifs and their functions, a few of the Obabika Lake sites are well known by the older Indians who once resided there.

The human figures found at two Obabika sites are uncommon motifs. The placement of one figure overhead on the roof of a rock shelter may have indicated flying. The Temagami Indians, like many Algonkian people, speak of Pagak the flying skeleton (Speck, 1915b:81). Recently, the authors interviewed a Temagami elder who told about his boyhood experience of seeing Pagak hovering near the roof of a bark wigwam. The fearsome skeleton could be heard roaring away through the air as it departed. Pagak was regarded as an omen of death and a metaphor for starvation. Rock shelter ceilings were rarely used for pictographs in northeastern Ontario, so the occurrence of a human figure with internal, possibly skeletal, lines on the ceiling appears to be significant. Since Pagak was always described as appearing overhead, and the only human figure painting ever found on a ceiling in the northern Algonkian culture area is rendered in an X-ray or skeletal style, it is reasonable to suppose that it is a representation of Pagak.

Multiple-occupant canoe pictographs have been identified by Temagami Indians as elements of destructive magic done to harm the Iroquois raiders who attacked the area in the middle and late 1600s (Conway, 1982b). One of Speck's (1915b) informants attributed local pictographs to Iroquois; but Temagami tribal elders, who are more conversant with shamanism and traditional lore, have stated that their ancestors were responsible for this rock art. There is strong evidence that primary knowledge of rock art rituals survives in the Temagami area today. Some of the informants who contributed to this study are shamans whose grandparents actually produced rock art. Their knowledge contrasts with that of other band members who have only a general, folkloric understanding of rock art. The Temagami band still has a conservative, traditionalist segment which pre-

serves its older cultural heritage. Furthermore, multiple-occupant canoe pictographs were made at the time of the Iroquois attacks to destroy the invaders through shamanic rituals. The permanent pictographs also served as a visual warning to future attackers (Conway, 1982a). While the multiple-occupant canoe at the Shining Rock site on Obakika Lake was not specifically identified by informants, an identical painting at the nearby Diamond Lake site was identified in this context by Temagami elder Mr. Donald McKenzie. Oral history of one wintertime raid by the Iroquois, which took place just northwest of Obabika Lake, was collected from Mr. Aleck Misabi whose family occupied Obabika Lake for several generations. They trace their ancestry to the Kekek family line who inhabited the area at least from the beginning of the 19th century. In a 1983 interview, Nipissing band elder Mr. John Fisher recalled an Iroquois attack that took place on Lake Nipissing. The Iroquois were forced to flee up the Sturgeon River and through the Temagami area to reach the Ottawa River valley. Obabika Lake lies on the traditional Indian canoe route between the Sturgeon River and Lake Temagami, and it is certain that at least one part of Iroquois raiders crossed Obabika Lake by canoe. Multiple-occupant canoe pictographs have also been identified by native informants from the Temiskaming, Nipissing, Saulteur and Amikwa bands as elements in shamans' rituals directed against the Iroquois. This information is now documented at several upper Great Lakes rock art sites. Not surprisingly, the Ojibwa/Algonkian word for the Iroquois invaders is *Nadoway*, "those who come in canoes".

Throughout Algonkian mythology, giant homed serpents appear as entrance-way guardians. The bridge crossing over a river into the land of the souls is a serpent disguised as a log (Bamouw, 1977:18). The log must be crossed with great skill. The entrance to *midewewin* lodges is often guarded by a serpent that the initiate must struggle against. Several shamans have explained to the authors how these homed serpents can appear in visions. While generally viewed as evil, their powers can be sought for benign use by a shaman (Jenness, 1935:40). The necessity of dreaming about a snake twice in order to obtain good power may be pertinent to the interpretation of the homed serpent panel at the Mystery Rock site. The two horned serpents appear to have been painted by the same artist, and they may represent the necessary successive dreams about the creature to receive good strength.

Cultural Setting

Unlike many parts of the boreal forest, the Indian history of the Temagami area is well documented by written and oral history (Conway, 1982b; Macdonald, 1983; Morrison, 1983 & 1984; Speck, 1915 a & b). Obabika Lake fell into two of the Temagami Indian band family hunting and trapping grounds (Speck, 1915a). The northern two-thirds of the lake originally belonged to Wabi-Kekek, "The White Hawk". He subdivided portions of his lands around Obabika Lake into two parcels. One part of the grounds went to Moses Misabi in the 1850s when Moses married Wabi-Kekek's daughter. Moses Misabi was well known for his skills as a plant medicine man, or herbalist. The Misabi lands extended from the northern tip of the lake near the outlet to a boundary a few kilometres south of the narrows and east to Upper Bass Lake. The Misabi family continued to live on the northern part of Obabika Lake until the 1960s. The central part of Obabika Lake, including the Devil's Ledge, Shining Rock and Obabika Lake rock art sites, became the territory of Ayandachkwe, or "Sun Passing Across a Cloud", who also may have been a son-in-law of Wabi-Kekek (Morrison, 1984). The Ayandachkwe family maintained their base camp on Wawiagama or Round Lake where they survived into modern times as the McKenzie family. The unsurveyed southern section of Obabika Lake belonged to a separate family territory headed by Cayagwogwzi also known as Shogasi or Shakosay, "Coming Up the Hill". This family continued to be well remembered into the 20th century through Shogasi's young wife "Stabbing Woman" and his nephew, Temagami Ned. Although the Shakosay family used the southern end of Obabika Lake, their base camp residences were located on lakes further south.

It is possible that some personal rock art motifs vary from family group to family group within a given band territory. All of the recorded Obabika Lake rock art sites fall into the southern section of Wabi-Kekek's territory. The North Rock and Mystery Rock pictograph sites lie in the portion of Wabi-Kekek's land used by the Misabi family in the 19th century. Both sites contain generalized mammal pictographs in contrast to the three other pictograph sites on the lake, which lie in the other 19th century subdivision of Wabi-Kekek's land used as the Ayandachkwe family trapping ground. There, the two distinct open torso style human figures were found. While the separation of certain motifs by families is suggestive, it is not con-

clusive; and the topic is further complicated by the presence of a public rock art site in the Misabi grounds.

Temagami informants indicated that some elements of the cultural context of rock art survive in their memory culture. There is a distinction between publicly known rock art sites, like the Obabika Lake and the Mystery Rock sites, and more private sites. This social context of rock art is now being analyzed with the help of Algonkian shamans, and the descendants of prominent medicine men (Conway, 1989). There is no doubt that the sacred site concept, which includes many rock art and all burial locations, forms the central organizing principle for these Algonkian bands. This group of sacred sites contributes to a spiritual bonding of the people to their homeland. The Temagami word for this band territory concept is *Ndakimenan*, "Our Land".

Much of the information concerning the aboriginal use of Obabika Lake is derived from recent oral history research conducted among the Temagami band elders. Earlier sources, such as Frank Speck's 1915 monographs, based on his fieldwork conducted in 1913, and archival French and Hudson's Bay Company records, can be used to cross-date events mentioned in present-day Indian oral history. Dated events indicate that the Temagami oral history extends at least 350 years into the past (Conway, 1982a). Interviews with Mr. Aleck "Shimmy" Misabi, the great-great-grandson of Wabi-Kekek, and with Temagami elder Mr. William Twain yielded important ethnographic information relating to Obabika Lake rock art. Both men identified an unusual rock formation on the northeast shore of Obabika Lake as *Shomis* and *Kokomis Wabikong*, "My Grandfather and My Grandmother rocks" (Fig. 20). These free-standing stones were viewed as an old man standing beside an old woman wearing a shawl. The site served as a major shrine for the Temagami Indians. Tobacco, coins, food and other items were left at the rocks to appease powerful spirit forces. This shrine is located beside the Mystery Rock pictograph site (Fig. 1). There are several more band level shrines, as opposed to personal shrines, in the Temagami band territory named grandmother or grandfather rocks. Each of the major shrines is located adjacent to a pictograph site. For example, the Granny Island standing stone shrine (CgHa-16) in north central Lake Temagami occurs near the Granny Bay pictograph site (CgHa-22). A similar group of related sites occurs on Lady Sydney Lake. In the past, the Indians painted the nearby cliff, not the actual

shrine, as part of their communication with the resident *manitou* or spirit.

The presence of the Grandfather and Grandmother rocks shrine established a focus for public votive activities within the Misabi family territory. The shrine was used by any Temagami Indian group who passed by the rocks. The location on a major travel route between Lake Temagami and the Obabika River caused the grandparents rocks to be well known. A similar situation existed in north-central Lake Temagami where another Grandmother Rock was located on an island beside a travel corridor.

Temagami Indian elders also recalled that the Mystery Rock pictograph site was named *Ka-Gaw-Gee-Wabikong* or "Raven Cliff on the Water". Many Algonkian pictograph sites have bird names. According to tribal shamans, large birds were viewed as metaphorical thunderbirds, or messengers to the spirits.

Native informants also identified the Obabika Narrows archaeological site (CgHb-9) as a seasonal, communal campsite which was designated for use by Temagami band families not necessarily resident on Obabika Lake. The resident Obabika families shared the extra abundant fish resources on Obabika Lake with other Temagami band families. The same situation applied to parts of Lake Temagami where there were also more fish than the local families 'could use. At the Obabika Narrows site, several families would congregate for a few weeks in the early fall to fish, and to perform group shamanic ceremonies. At that time, the Indians would visit the Mystery Rock pictographic site on Obabika Lake to make their paintings. These families would then disperse to their winter trap-ping grounds. According to the Temagami Indian informants, rituals involving rock art still took place in the 19th century. This is the first ethnographic account to imply a fall seasonal timing for some public rock art activity. Temagami oral history documents the fall gathering at the Obabika Narrows site as a yearly event that continued into the recent past. It is puzzling that the Mystery Rock site, which is associated with the seasonal rituals at the Obabika Narrows site, contains so few paintings. Informants were not questioned about this situation. The most reasonable hypothesis is the rituals did not often end with rock art activity.

Excavations at the Obabika Narrows archaeological site revealed its continuous use for several thousand years. Interestingly, red ochre is present in the cultural strata (Conway, 1984).

Aggregation sites are an important segment of hunter-gatherer seasonal rounds. These group oriented, public sites often rely on a particular seasonally abundant food resource, or combined resources, to support an entire band. In the Temagami band territory, several aggregation sites have been identified by native informants. The large size of the Temagami band, about 300 people in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, and the 10,360 square kilometres (4,000 square miles) of the band territory contributed to the existence of several contemporaneous aggregation sites. The Temagami Indians distinguished these resource based aggregation sites, generally located well within the band homeland, from inter-band meeting place sites situated at the edge of the homeland.

Placenames

Several Temagami informants were interviewed and 11 specific placenames were recorded for Obabika Lake (Conway, 1984:22). Since the information was collected from members of the Misabi family, these names probably represented most or all of the aboriginally named areas on the Obabika landscape. The Misabi family, descended from Kekek, has been living on Obabika Lake for nearly two centuries. Their knowledge of local geography is exceptional. For example, they know the location and size of every fish spawning shoal in the Obabika area, the species that frequents the shoal, and the approximate date that the spawning events occur on specific shoals.

Placenames offer insights into areas of local geography which received special recognition. Five placenames refer to archaeological sites including the Mystery Rock pictograph site, the Obabika Narrows seasonal aggregation site, and the Grandmother and Grandfather rock shrine. The other named sites are the Misabi family settlement, occupied until 1962, and the Quartz Point quarry and campsite.

It is important to note that the one ethnographically identified public aggregation campsite on Obabika Lake and the two closely associated public ritual sites are included among the placenames. This suggests that placename data for named rock art sites may allow the identification of public, band level rock art sites in areas where other ethnographic information is not available. This hypothesis is reinforced by information from other ethnographically identified public pictograph sites in northeastern Ontario, for example the Agawa pictograph site on Lake Superior and the Upper

Grassy pictograph site in the Mattagami band territory. Both examples are the only named rock art localities in their respective areas, even though several other pictograph sites exist close to both. Ojibwa informants spoke of the Agawa and the Upper Grassy sites as records of past group level rituals.

Chronology

Exact dating of the rock art on Obabika Lake is not possible. One can infer from the widespread presence of red ochre pigment at Obabika Narrows and other Temagami area archaeological sites that rock art activity may have reached a peak between 1200 AD and 1700 AD. Native informants recall that red ochre was also used as a wood stain by the Temagami Indians as recently as the 1930s. Most older band members can identify local ochre sources, and recall the techniques for its preparation.

The Obabika Lake paintings can be dated in a general manner by the oral history accounts of rock art continuing into the 19th century. Comparative dating evidence raises the possibility that the canoe motif at Shining Rock belongs to the Iroquois war period between 1650 AD and 1700 AD. The combined dating clues suggest that a viable rock art tradition existed as least as far back as the Late Woodland period, and that the tradition continued well into the Historic period to the recent past of the 19th century.

Native people are reluctant to communicate facts about rock art because of its shamanic associations. For the Temagami band, the last acknowledged person associated with rock art was Wendaban, a powerful shaman who died near the end of the 19th century. Wabi-Kakek, mentioned previously, was Wendaban's brother.

Site Preservation

In 1984, the entire Obabika Lake basin was considered for inundation by a dam to provide flood control on the lower Sturgeon River. There is evidence from several areas in northern Canada that flooding destroys pictographs through leaching of pigment, spalling of underwater rock surfaces, and scouring by built-up shore ice during the spring rise in water levels (Dewdney, 1970; Taylor *et al.* 1979). Obabika Lake was flooded for several decades in the middle of this century by a logging company dam which was removed in the 1970s. The water level was raised high enough to cause Obabika Lake water to run over the portage into

Wawigama Lake, according to the Indians who lived there. This previous flooding may explain the smeared, faint appearance of so many Obabika pictographs as compared to rock art sites on Lake Temagami which have not been flooded. The Obabika Lake rock art sites show a high incidence of faint or smeared pictographs. One-third of Obabika paintings are too faint or smeared for detailed study. This average of faint pictographs is much higher than a sample from nearby sites on Temagami, Anima-Nipissing and Diamond Lakes. Since the rock art presumably comes from the same time periods and cultural traditions, the only logical explanation for Obabika Lake's greater deterioration is the previous flooding and the weakness of the greywacke rock outcrops. The Diamond Lake pictograph site was also inundated for several decades because of a logging dam. The site was recorded before the flooding (Philips, 1906) and after the dam was removed (T. Conway, 1979). The paintings at Diamond Lake did not appear to deteriorate. This preservation can only be attributed to the different bonding between the quartzite bedrock at Diamond Lake as compared to a weaker bond between the slate-like, greywacke rock and red ochre paintings on Obabika Lake.

How significant is the sample of rock art on Obabika? The 77 paintings represent 14.5% of the 531 recorded paintings in Temagami band territory. This is a moderately meaningful portion of the rock art within a historic band territory. The recorded ethnographic association of two rock art sites on the lake with a major shrine and a seasonal campsite add new insights into our understanding of Algonkian rock art in general. One painting, the possible Pagak motif, is not replicated elsewhere within the greater culture area.

Summary

In summary, a series of pictograph sites from two historically documented Algonkian family territories were examined to determine their relationship to rock art from the collective band homeland. At the general level, the motifs are undistinguishable from a sample of related Temagami band rock art sites. Certain specific motifs may be restricted to extended family groups using Obabika Lake. Other motifs such as serpents, mammals and tally marks are widely distributed across the Algonkian cultural area.

An analysis of style indicated that linear abstract and curved elements were contemporaneous within individual figures and specific panels. Some

Obabika pictographs could be partially interpreted against recorded folklore. Ethnographic information was collected suggesting late summer authorship of the paintings at one public site in association with shamanic activities. Native informants provided a terminal date for rock art activity as well as insights into the relationships between communal sites. The general deterioration of many pictographs on Obabika Lake was analyzed by reference to modern disturbances. The Obabika Lake study is part of an intensive study of Temagami band archaeology.

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