Prehistory of the Canadian Shield

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The Precambrian Shield covers approximately one-half of Canada extending for some 600 miles both east and west of Hudson Bay and more than 300 miles north and south of it. Over this enormous region physiographic variations do exist but on the whole the area is characterized by a basic sameness except where the dominating boreal forest gradually fades into the northern tundra.

Exclusive of the coastal sections, the area under consideration in this chapter consists of the Precambrian Shield regions of Labrador, northern Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, extreme northeastern Alberta, and the southern half of Keewatin District and the eastern edge of Mackenzie District of the Northwest Territories (fig. 1). The prehistory of the northernmost part of the Subarctic Shield, which is historically of Athapaskan occupation, is treated in "Prehistory of the Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake Region," this volume. To some degree the archeological assemblages of the Subarctic portion of the Shield are also manifested in the southernmost sector of the Shield, which is within the Northeast culture area (vol. 15). The boundary between these two units is that between the boreal and the Great Lakes–Saint Lawrence forest regions.

The relatively close similarities of the archeological assemblages throughout much of the region under consideration is undoubtedly the most striking single characteristic of Shield prehistory. As a somewhat similar degree of cultural homogeneity appears to have existed among the historic Algonquians, who occupied approximately the same area, it would appear that the ethnological and ethnohistorical data are directly pertinent to a greater understanding of the prehistoric situation. Physiographic factors are, of course, an integral part of such an examination. A number of inseparably related physical and cultural phenomena can be proposed to explain the homogeneity of both prehistoric assemblages and historic Algonquians over the enormous tracts of the Shield. First, the river and lake network of the Shield provided not only effective routes of travel and communication, but also throughout most of the area the only feasible means of travel, by birchbark canoe in summer, and in winter (aided by snowshoes), on the wind-packed snow atop the ice. In addition, food resources were closely associated with the water systems. Second, two major food sources, caribou and fish, dominate the region. This is not to say that moose, beaver, small game, and local seasonal resources, such as migrating waterfowl, were not at times critical or even temporarily primary, but simply that without the caribou and fish it is very unlikely that humans could have occupied the total area on any permanent basis. Third, the enormous forest fires, which still characterize the region, not only displaced all animals including man but also resulted in a sequence of plant and animal reclamation of the burnt-over area. Fires covering more than 10,000 square miles are not uncommon, and people would have been forced to shift their hunting regions in accordance with the fires and their aftermath. Fourth, the small hunting groups and regional bands of the Algonquians with their flexible residence and marriage patterns and their relative freedom of personal choice favored wide-flung social connections. Women, in particular, appear to have been very mobile under this system. Fifth, the limitations imposed by the boreal environment on the subsistence patterns and attendant social organization inhibited culturally disruptive incursions of peoples and ideas from adjacent regions.

Although other factors had their varying effects it is these five conditions that are regarded as the basic underlying causes of the prehistoric cultural homogeneity seen throughout most of the Shield. In short, a relatively homogeneous physiographic region that could be traversed by interconnecting waterways and that was occupied by small bands of hunters subject to the vagaries of endemic forest fires and big game fluctuations and movements resulted in a degree of cultural uniformity perhaps unequaled in the rest of North America in terms of the square miles involved. In addition to cultural continuity through space the prehistory of the Shield is characterized by cultural continuity through time. From this it is assumed that the indigenous determining forces acting upon the early historic occupants of the region also acted upon their prehistoric predecessors. These generalizations are, of course, oversimplifications, and spatial and temporal variations and discontinuities do occur; however, such variations and discontinuities are minor and frequently explainable and do not seriously detract from the general tenet. Indeed, the Shield region clearly represents a discrete and old culture area. The available evidence strongly suggests that the northern Algonquians at the time of

Fig. 1. Archeological sites in the Canadian shield. Inset shows geographic regions discussed for the Terminal Woodland period and the distribution of pictographs (after Dewdney 1970).

initial contact with Europeans followed a way of life that had not changed significantly for more than 7,000 years.

These observations do not apply to the Hudson Bay Lowlands. This region appears to have been virtually unoccupied in prehistoric times and its historic Algonquian population is regarded as a recent phenomenon that is directly related to the establishment of European trading posts around the coast of Hudson Bay.

The prehistory of the Shield will be considered under four periods—Paleo-Indian, Archaic, Initial Woodland, and Terminal Woodland. These groupings are taxonomic conveniences whose major function is to break the time column into more manageable units. They do not represent stages of cultural development.

By Period

Paleo-Indian Period

It is the final portion of the Paleo-Indian period in North America, called Plano, that is pertinent to the Shield region. A number of regional and temporal varieties of Plano culture have been established on the basis of diagnostic projectile point types. The variety of particular importance to the prehistory of the Shield is called Agate Basin and has been most often dated between 6500 B.C. and 7500 B.C. from sites in northern Ontario, Montana, and Wyoming. Agate Basin projectile points are widely distributed throughout the northern plains, and campsites have been located in the eastern Mackenzie District and the southern half of Keewatin District (fig. 2). The sites in Keewatin District (Harp 1961) are associated with the major caribou crossing places that are also productive of fish. Therefore, it appears that at an early period big game hunters from the northern Plains had moved into the northern and western portions of the Shield and were exploiting the Barren Grounds on a seasonal basis. Farther to the south, in the closed forest, it is an increasingly difficult task to locate Paleo-Indian sites due to the forest cover and the fact that the sites would most likely be associated with the much larger water systems of that period that were produced by the melting of the continental glacier.

Agate Basin projectile points do appear to be the most common Plano point variety found in Manitoba, and similar surface finds extend into the extreme southwestern portion of Northern Ontario. Several quarry sites attributed to Plano culture have been located along the north shore of the Upper Great Lakes (Greenman and Stanley 1943; R.S. MacNeish 1952; T.E. Lee 1957), but no sites have been discovered in the interior of the Shield in Ontario.

As the continental glacier and the associated lakes contracted, early hunters penetrated to the east from out of the northwest, west, and probably also from the south. The Agate Basin point and generalized Plano lanceolate point forms gradually developed into the lanceolate projectile point of the early Shield Archaic, and other changes took place within the stone tool assemblage.

The differentiation of Paleo-Indian from Archaic is an artificial device formulated by the archeologist in order to create manageable units of time. In truth, these are the same people who followed the same way of life but whose stone tool complex was gradually changing through time.

By 4000 B.C. the transition of the late Paleo-Indian culture into the Shield Archaic culture appears to have been completed. The descendants of the Paleo-Indian population, the Shield Archaic, continued to exploit their old territories including the Barren Grounds, but at the same time some continued drifting eastward, along with the caribou, as the eastern portions of the Precambrian Shield were gradually released by the continental glacier and its associated glacial lakes.

Archaic Period

The Shield Archaic represents the first distinctive culture of the Shield as well as the first population to occupy a major portion of the Shield region. The fact that Paleo-Indian materials are largely restricted to the northwest suggests that the major penetration into Ontario and eastward took place after the transition from an Agate Basin culture to a Shield Archaic culture. Most of Quebec and Labrador appear to have been occupied somewhat later than regions to the west and, indeed, the Shield Archaic culture appears to have survived in much of this area until the historic period. Both decreasing game densities and increasing snow accumulations that were probably encountered as these small bands advanced eastward may well have been factors in the late and weaker penetration into the far eastern regions of the Shield. Some of the sparse material from the eastern Quebec and Labrador sites is tentatively placed within the Shield Archaic as many of the specimens involved fit well within a late Shield Archaic context.

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Fig. 2. Paleo-Indian period, Agate Basin artifacts. LeLd–2B site, Schultz Lake, Thelon River, Keewatin District: a-b, burinated Agate Basin projectile points; d, biface blade; e, uniface blade; h, end scraper. KkLn–2 site, Grant Lake, Dubawnt River, Keewatin District: c, Agate Basin projectile point; f-g, end scrapers. Length of a 5 cm, rest same scale.

The radiocarbon time depth of the Shield Archaic ranges from 3000 B.C. into the second millennium A.D. (for specific dates, west to east, see B.H.C. Gordon 1971; J.V. Wright 1970, 1972b; Byers 1959; D. Knight 1971; Harp 1964; Wilmeth 1969; Fitzhugh 1972). It is assumed that research will extend the range both earlier and later.

Eleven archeological sites, located in Keewatin District, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec, plus supplementary data, have been used to outline the general characteristics of the Shield Archaic stone tool assemblage (J.V. Wright 1972). Although the information from these sites was not all that could have been hoped for, some patterns have emerged that are generally consistent throughout the region. The most serious limitations of these data are the total absence of bone preservation due to the ubiquitous acid soils, the thinness of the archeological deposits, which made component separation a difficult or impossible task, and the fact that a number of the sites are solely represented by surface collections.

Shield Archaic sites are dominated by three artifact classes—scrapers, biface blades (knives), and projectile points (fig. 3). In terms of approximate averages, scrapers constitute 40 percent, biface blades 25 percent, and projectile points 15 percent of the total stone tool assemblage. Through time the frequencies of both the scrapers and projectile points increase whereas the frequency of the biface blades decreases. The most significant single trend within the projectile point varieties is the decrease through time of the lanceolate points with a corresponding increase of the side-notched points. Some of the scraper varieties also exhibit significant trends through time although the scrapers generally reflect a more regional character than is typical of the projectile points. Most of the other artifact classes

are too poorly represented to detect temporal trends although a certain amount of spatial information is suggested by these data. A significant negative trait is the nearly complete absence of stone grinding in tool manufacture. Throughout most of the region the tools decrease in size and in Ontario, in particular, there is a dramatic change that is the result of shifting from the use of massive siliceous deposits such as quartzite to small nodular flints resulting in a concomitant change in the size and variety of tools.

Fluctuations in climate would certainly have had a direct impact upon both the plant and animal occupants of the Shield, including man. There is evidence that several retreats and advances of the tree line have taken place, but the most significant event in terms of the Shield Archaic was the general cooling conditions beginning in 1550 B.C.or 1250 B.C. and lasting until A.D. 1 (Nichols 1971). Shield Archaic populations had occupied the Thelon River drainage in Keewatin District from earliest times, but sometime between 1500 B.C. and 1000 B.C. they abandoned the region. (The late Shield Archaic house structure at the Aberdeen site on the Thelon, for example, has been radiocarbon dated at 1075 B.C. ± 90 [S–506] and this is a minimal date inasmuch as it was obtained from peat within the house.) In the place of the Shield Archaic population a completely different archeological assemblage, the Arctic Small Tool tradition, appears. This assemblage has been equated with Paleo-Eskimo peoples, and their penetration out of the north is relatively well documented (Noble 1971; B.H.C. Gordon 1975). The radiocarbon dates obtained by Gordon for the newcomers are 1210 B.C. ± 95 (I–5978), 940 B.C. ± 125 (S–632), and 890 B.C. ± 95 (I–5975). All these data strongly suggest that the deteriorating climate forced the tree line too far south to permit the Shield Archaic hunters to commute from the forest to their old lands on the Thelon drainage. They were replaced by caribou hunters from the northwest, probably originating from the Coronation Gulf region (Taylor 1972). There is no evidence that a corresponding replacement of Indians by Eskimos took place under similar circumstances in northern Quebec (Martijn and Rogers 1969).

Significant cultural exchange between the Shield Archaic and adjacent and contemporaneous populations appears to be lacking. There is some slight evidence of contacts with the Laurentian Archaic (Ritchie 1965) populations to the southeast of the Shield in the Great Lakes–Saint Lawrence forest country. Such evidence consists of an occasional diagnostic Laurentian Archaic tool occurring in a Shield Archaic site. Evidence of contact with the Plains Archaic to the southwest is equally tenuous, and there is no evidence of contact with the Arctic Small Tool peoples despite their penetration into traditional Shield Archaic country between 1500 and 1000 B.C.

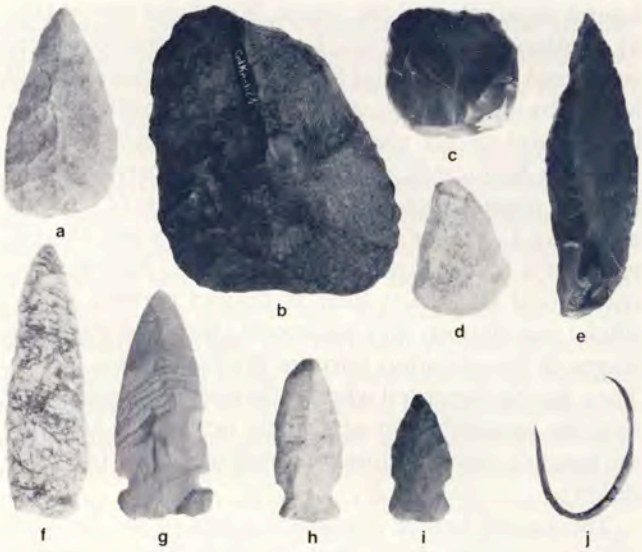

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Fig. 3. Archaic period, Shield Archaic artifacts. Drunken Point site, Ont.: a, biface blades; f-g, projectile points. Eaka site, Ont.: c, end scraper; e, side scraper; j, copper fishhook. Elk Island site, Man.: b, uniface blade. Aberdeen site, Keewatin District: d, end scraper; h-i, projectile points. Length of a 5.4 cm, rest same scale.

Initial Woodland Period

The Initial Woodland period, formerly referred to as the Middle Woodland period, is introduced by the appearance of pottery. This new period is, once again, an archeological convenience and the only thing that is really new about it is that some of the Shield Archaic people adopt pottery. It has been somewhat of a problem to determine from where this pottery came. It is not similar to any of the ceramic complexes to the south, and there exists a broad zone to the northwest completely lacking in ceramics and thereby precluding a possible Asiatic origin. The only reasonable alternative is that the idea of pottery was adopted from the south via stimulus diffusion and that Archaic populations of the Shield evolved a distinctive ceramic complex after they had acquired the essential techniques of manufacture. Such a possibility is reinforced by the evidence from the Transitional cultures of the northeastern United States where a distinctive ceramic complex was evolved after the introduction of the idea of pottery from the south (Ritchie 1965). It is suggested that the early pottery of the Saugeen and Point Peninsula cultures of Southern Ontario (J.V. Wright 1967) diffused to the Shield Archaic people and was subsequently modified into a complex distinctive to the Shield.

Once again, for the purpose of classification only, it becomes necessary to give a different name to the same culture tradition simply because it has adopted a single new trait—pottery. Thus in some areas the Shield Archaic population of the Archaic period becomes the

Laurel population of the Initial Woodland period (fig. 4). Within the Subarctic, Laurel sites have been encountered in east-central Saskatchewan, across most of Manitoba and Ontario, and into extreme western Quebec. Laurel culture also extended to the south as far as northern Minnesota and Michigan. However, the prehistoric populations of the major portion of Quebec and all of Labrador did not adopt pottery and thereby retained a Shield Archaic identification. Although archeological constructs such as distinct periods are artificial and clumsy, they are necessary during the initial stages of investigation into the prehistory of a region. They can be discarded when sufficient information permits the establishment of a single developing tradition or, possibly, several closely related traditions (a co-tradition).

The Laurel people continued a way of life basically indistinguishable from that of their Shield Archaic ancestors. However, along the Shield border region of Ontario and Minnesota south of the Subarctic zone, burial mounds appear for the first time (Wilford 1955). This particular burial trait was only marginally adopted by these southern Laurel people and its origins obviously lay to the south.

Although there is bone preservation in northern Minnesota and Michigan, only one of the major Laurel sites in Canada, the Heron Bay site on the north shore of Lake Superior, produced bone tools and refuse; and even in this instance the preservation was due to the neutralizing effects of the ash from the ancient hearths. At this site beaver incisor tools, awls, toggle harpoon heads, snowshoe netting needles, pendants, beads, pottery markers, and a few other miscellaneous items were recovered. Beaver and moose bones were most common although caribou, muskrat, hare, and bear were present. Fish remains were relatively sparse. Some interesting information bearing upon prehistoric trade networks was also obtained from the Heron Bay site. The items indicative of trade connections were obsidian from Wyoming (1,150 miles away), shell from southern Manitoba (460 miles), and Saugeen culture pottery from Southern Ontario (360 miles).

Within the Laurel development the manufacture of flint tools derived from small nodular cores, which began in late Shield Archaic times, continued, and was expanded. Indeed, the Laurel lithic assemblage could justifiably be referred to as microlithic. Some new traits appeared, such as net sinkers, but on the whole the lithic assemblage is clearly rooted in the previous Shield Archaic assemblage. In the area near the native copper deposits of Lake Superior, sites invariably contain copper implements such as awls, beads, gorges, knives, chisels, and an occasional projectile point, thereby carrying on the metalworking tradition of the earlier Archaic occupants.

Laurel sites have been radiocarbon dated between 300 B.C. and A.D. 500 (Wilmeth 1969; Bettarel and Harrison 1962; J.V. Wright 1967; Janzen 1968). If the Saugeen culture and the related Point Peninsula culture of Southern Ontario, the earliest dates for which range between 650 and 400 B.C., provided ceramics to Laurel via stimulus diffusion, then Laurel ceramics should prove to be earlier than these dates suggest. In the face of the evidence, the proposition of stimulus diffusion from more southerly Initial Woodland (Early Woodland) sites resulting in a distinctive ceramic complex that then diffused to the north is not the tenuous proposition it might first appear to be. Certainly it is no more tenuous than attempting to derive the Laurel ceramic complex from unrelated ceramics to the south that are most often dated later in time.

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Fig. 4. Initial Woodland period, Laurel artifacts from the Heron Bay site, Ont.: a, biface blade; b, snowshoe needle fragment; c, copper chisel; d, copper beads; e, rim sherd; f, projectile point; g, worked beaver incisor; h, net sinker; i, toggle head harpoon; j, linear flake; k, copper awl; l, hafted scraper; m-p, range of scraper varieties; q, end scraper; r, lance head. Length of a 6.8 cm, rest same scale.

Terminal Woodland Period

The ceramic-producing cultures of much of eastern North America have been temporally segregated into three periods—Early Woodland, Middle Woodland, and Late Woodland. Early Woodland manifestations are very marginal to Canada, and the vast majority of the earliest pottery has been equated with the Middle Woodland period even though the ceramics of eastern Canada and immediately adjacent portions of the

United States bear very little resemblance to the ceramics of most of the northeastern United States. In short, a taxonomic system developed specifically for prehistoric assemblages in the northeastern United States has been applied to distinctly different assemblages in eastern Canada and limited areas of the extreme northern United States and has understandably resulted in a very inadequate taxonomy for that region (R.J. Mason 1970). In order to provide at least a partial resolution of this problem, complexes formerly assigned to the Early and Middle Woodland periods have been placed under a new taxonomic unit called the Initial Woodland period, and the Late Woodland period has been replaced with the Terminal Woodland period (figs. 5–7) (J.V. Wright 1972a).

The separation of the Initial Woodland period from the Terminal Woodland period is unavoidably vague. In simple terms the Initial Woodland period begins with the first appearance of ceramics and only ends as various regional developments differentiate themselves from the Initial Woodland cultural base. The Terminal Woodland period, on the other hand, begins with this cultural differentiation out of a relatively common Initial Woodland base and ends with historically identifiable culture groupings.

When an archeological site contains both aboriginal and European artifacts in association, the ethnic identification of the original occupants can frequently be established on the basis of the historic documentation. Once the ethnic identification of an historic site is made, the direct historical approach (Steward 1942) can be used to trace the prehistory of the historic group involved back through time. Certain extrapolations based upon the ethnological information for the historic population can also be used to flesh out the archeological skeleton. A somewhat arbitrary figure of A.D. 600 is regarded as the approximate transition of the Initial Woodland period into the Terminal Woodland period. This date is based upon both the evidence for cultural differentiation out of the common Laurel cultural base of the Initial Woodland period and the distance back in time that various historic groupings can be traced by the direct historical approach. Once again, the division of the two Woodland periods is a necessary archeological convenience and is not to be regarded as an indication of any major cultural change or event.

The period under consideration covers approximately the last 1,000 years of prehistory in the Shield. In order to present most effectively the various cultural developments that appear to have taken place during the last prehistoric millennium the Shield has been divided into the following areas: Northern, Northwestern, Southwestern, Southeastern, and Northeastern (fig. 1 inset).

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Fig. 5. Terminal Woodland period. Northern area material from the Charlot River site, north shore of Lake Athabasca, Sask.: a, chitho; b-d, end scrapers; e, linear flake; f, projectile point; g-i, other scraper varieties; j, rectanguloid abrader. Length of a 13.2 cm, rest same scale.

By Geographic Region

Northern Area

Cultural discontinuities are evident with regard to the prehistoric developments within the Northern area. Indeed, since pottery is absent the area cannot even be placed within the Terminal Woodland period but must be regarded as a contemporaneous but unrelated development. The area will be considered only very briefly and with emphasis on the southeastern portions. For detailed information see "Prehistory of the Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake Region," this volume.

After the withdrawal of the late Shield Archaic hunters from the region due to deteriorating climatic conditions, the prehistory of the Northern area of the Shield becomes and remains basically unrelated to prehistoric developments throughout the remainder of the the Shield. It is uncertain how long the Paleo-Eskimo caribou hunters, who occupied much of the area around 1000 B.C., remained, but it appears that they retreated to the coast sometime before 500 B.C. Around A.D. 1 climatic conditions began to improve (Nichols 1971), but before this development a series of archeological assemblages, which have been traced by the direct historical approach to Athapaskan peoples (Noble 1971), began to expand to the east and southeast. Radiocarbon dates pertaining to the newcomers range from 400 B.C.

to A.D. 1450 on the upper Thelon River of the eastern Mackenzie District (B.H.C. Gordon 1974) and from A.D. 660 to 1730 in extreme northern Manitoba (Nash 1970).

Similar remains have been encountered along the northeast shore and eastern end of Lake Athabasca where one date of A.D.1340 is available. Both archeological and historical information indicates that the (Athapaskan) Chipewyan penetration to the south was a late prehistoric and historic event.

With reference to the Chipewyan the explorer David Thompson stated that "their lands, which they claim as their own country; and to which no other people have a right, are those eastward of the Rein Deer's and Manito [Wollaston] Lakes to Churchill Factory and northward along the interior of the sea coast; all other lands they hunt on belonged to the Nahathaways [Cree], who have returned to the South-westward" (Thompson 1962:126). Thompson also wrote that the Cree "made offerings to" the country around Manitou Falls on the Fond du Lac River between Lake Athabasca and Wollaston Lake at approximately 59° north latitude and 104°28′ west longitude, while they "possessed" it, but "they have retired to milder climates; and the Chepawyans have taken their place" (Thompson 1962:115).

In the 1820s George Simpson (1938:355) wrote of Lake Athabasca that:

> The Chipewyans do not consider this part of the Country to be their legitimate Soil; they came in large Bands from their own barren Lands situated to the North of this Lake, extending to the Eastern extremity of Gt. Slave Lake and embracing a large Track of Country towards Churchill. The Compys. Traders at the latter Establishment, made them acquainted with the use and value of European Commodities and being naturally of a vagrant desposition and those articles becoming necessary to their Comforts, they shook off their indolent habits, became expert Beaver hunters, and now penetrate in search of that valuable animal into the Cree and Beaver Indian hunting Grounds, making a circuit easterly by Carribeau Lake; to the South by Isle a la Crosse; and Westerly to the Banks of Peace River, and so avaricious are they, that the prospect of Gain I have no doubt would lead them much further, did not the more Warlike Tribes to the Southward and Westward intimidate them.

Finally, there is Tyrrell's comment regarding the aboriginal occupations of the Barren Grounds during his visit in 1893 in relation to Samuel Hearne's observations in the same country in 1770: "The conditions which I found were just such as he describes, except that the inhabitants had changed. The Chipewyan Indians, whom he found occupying advantageous positions everywhere as far as the north end of Dubawnt Lake, had disappeared, and in their places the country had been occupied by scattered bands and families of Eskimos, who had almost forgotten the ocean shores of the north, from which they had come" (Hearne 1958:5).

These historical references, which are in essential agreement with the available archeological evidence, indicate a series of population movements for which reasonable explanations exist. The Nahathaways or Cree were in early contact with Europeans and it is suggested that due to a reduction in population resulting from exposure to European diseases and a desire to be closer to the European trading locations the more northerly Cree abandoned their lands and moved south. At approximately the same time the Chipewyans had been drawn into the fur trade, and since their lands were poorly provided with valuable fur animals they expanded into the former Cree territory to obtain the furs necessary to meet their needs for European goods. The areas of the Barren Grounds vacated by the Chipewyans were then occupied by Eskimos in order to exploit the rich game resource.

Northwestern Area

A distinctive complex, called Selkirk, has a core area distribution north to Southern Indian Lake in Manitoba (fig. 6q–z), west to Lac Île-à-la-Crosse in Saskatchewan, south to the Saskatchewan River, and east into the northwestern portions of Northern Ontario (R.S. MacNeish 1958; Hlady 1970a, 1971; J.V. Wright 1971). The Selkirk complex is most readily recognized by its distinctive fabric-impressed pottery, which includes bowls and plates as well as pots. First named by MacNeish for sites in southeastern Manitoba, most of his sites equate more closely with the Blackduck complex of the Southwestern area. The Clearwater Lake and Grass River phases identified by Hlady are included under the more general term of Selkirk.

Radiocarbon dates from Selkirk sites in Manitoba and Ontario range from A.D. 810 to 1620. In addition a number of historic Selkirk sites have been reported from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. In every instance the historic documents indicate that these historic sites are attributable to the Cree. Arrowheads are small side-notched triangular or simple triangular forms that often consist of a simple flake with minor unifacial or marginal retouch. There is a wide range of scraper varieties although the small end scrapers are usually dominant. Bifacially flaked knives are present as well as bifacially flaked celts with grinding largely restricted to the bit edge. Hammerstones, manos, anvils, and abraders also occur, while wedges are very rare. The very few sites where bone preservation exists have produced awls, flaking tools, tubular beads, fleshers, and arrowshaft straighteners.

Archeological evidence strongly suggests that the Cree had a very long period of cultural development in the region under consideration and that they are not easterners who have pushed to the west and northwest in response to the fur trade. From whence they obtained their distinctive ceramic complex is unknown although

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Fig. 6. Terminal Woodland period. Southwestern Algonquian area Blackduck material from the north shore of Lake Superior, Pic River site: a, typical rim sherd; b-c, atypical rim sherds; d, end scraper; e, scraper; f, copper fishhook; g, linear flake; h, slot abrader; i, biface blade; j-k, projectile points; l, bone bead; m, stone amulet in the form of a beaver; n, stone pipe bowl; o, beaver incisor tool; p, unilaterally barbed harpoon. Northwestern Algonquian area Selkirk material from Southern Indian Lake, Man.: q, typical rim sherd; r, atypical rim sherd; s-t, projectile points; u, side scraper; v, end scraper; w, biface blade; x, flaked and partially ground celt; y, bone awl; z, scraping implement (chitho).

Southeastern Algonquian area material mainly from the northeast coast of Lake Superior, the Michipicoten site: aa, end scraper; bb, linear flake; cc-dd, projectile points; ee-hh, rim sherds representing 3 and possibly 4 different ceramic traditions; ii, chitholike slate implement; jj, copper awl; kk, catlinite stone pipe; ll, Huron-Petun pottery pipe. Length of p 14 cm, rest same scale.

some equivocal evidence suggests that a development out of the preceding Laurel ceramics is one possibility. Although changes through time and some spatial variations can be detected in the Selkirk assemblages, the development as a whole is characterized by a basic homogeneity.

There appears to have been an intimate relationship between Selkirk and contemporaneous developments to the south.

Southwestern Area

The core area of the Blackduck archeological assemblage straddles the ethnographic culture area boundary between Subarctic and Northeast culture areas (see "Late Prehistory of the Upper Great Lakes Area," vol. 15). It is distributed from the north end of Lake Winnipeg south into northern Minnesota, west to the Red River in Manitoba, and east to the Michipicoten River in Ontario. This distribution overlaps, to some degree, both the Northwestern and Southeastern areas. R.S. MacNeish's (1958) Manitoba focus is equated with the Blackduck focus, and much of his Selkirk material from southeastern Manitoba is also regarded as Blackduck focus. There is abundant evidence for a long and close interrelationship between the Northwestern area (Selkirk) and the Southwestern area (Blackduck) (fig. 6a–p).

Burial mounds occur in the Southwestern area but are restricted to southeastern Manitoba and the portions of northern Minnesota and southwestern Northern Ontario flanking the international boundary. The occurrence of burial mounds only in the southerly areas of the Blackduck territory, beyond the limits of the ethnographic Subarctic, parallels the case with the preceding Laurel culture. Indeed, there is increasing evidence that Blackduck evolved out of an earlier Laurel culture base (Evans 1961), and it is proposed that the presence of burial mounds in southern Blackduck simply represents the perpetuation of an earlier trait.

Radiocarbon dates from Blackduck sites in Manitoba, Ontario, and Minnesota range from A.D. 620 to 1560. A number of Blackduck sites in Ontario have also produced European trade goods.

A disagreement exists concerning the ethnic identification of the Blackduck complex. A number of archeologists (Wilford 1955; R.S. MacNeish 1958; Hlady 1964) have argued for an Assiniboin authorship. On the other hand, J.V. Wright (1965, 1967a, 1968, 1971) has argued that the Ojibwa are more reasonably equated with Blackduck culture on the grounds of direct archeological and historical evidence and supporting evidence from linguistics, ethnology, and physical anthropology.

The Assiniboin are a Siouan-speaking population who are closely related to the Yanktonai but appear to have split off from them in the mid-seventeenth century (Howard 1966, 1966a). A 1680 French map, for example, locates the Assiniboin in southwestern Manitoba. The prehistoric to early historic Dakota of central Minnesota and westward possessed a Mississippian culture (E. Johnson 1969) whereas Blackduck is purely a Woodland culture. Finally, as can be seen from the inset on figure 1, pictographs of a related style are distributed through the Northwestern (Cree), Southwestern (Ojibwa), and Southeastern (Algonquin) areas. If Blackduck is Siouan then the Assiniboin must have shared in a basic art style related to a common cosmological view with their Cree and Algonquin neighbors.

Further, the Blackduck cultural development has ancient roots throughout the lands occupied historically by various bands of Algonquian speakers referred to collectively as Ojibwa (for example, Thompson 1962:184). The Assiniboin, on the other hand, are the result of a late, probably historic, separation from the Dakota and cannot be equated with the Blackduck development in terms of either time or space.

The attribution of the Selkirk and Blackduck complexes, respectively, to Cree and Ojibwa peoples makes the demonstrable similarities between the two archeological complexes not surprising. The lithic assemblages of the two complexes are very closely related with the exception of the paucity of wedges in the Northwestern area, and a similar observation can be made with reference to the bone tools. In short, the Blackduck and Selkirk complexes are regarded as the products of two related Algonquian-speaking populations. The representation of both ceramic traditions on many sites is probably best explained by female mobility reflecting a situation where Cree men are marrying Ojibwa women and Ojibwa men are marrying Cree women. Generally one of the ceramic traditions dominates, but there are instances where the ratio of the two pottery styles is nearly equal, making the designation of a component as Selkirk or Blackduck a difficult task. Under the circumstances the boundary line between these two areas is somewhat amorphous.

Southeastern Area

Like the Southwestern area, the Southeastern area extends south of the Subarctic, encompassing the portions of the Shield in eastern Ontario and western Quebec. In terms of ceramics the Southeastern area is certainly the most complex area in the Shield. Ceramic complexes from Michigan, Wisconsin, and New York are found in direct association with Selkirk, Blackduck, and Ontario Iroquois pottery. The drawing of women from adjacent regions where they had participated in completely different ceramic traditions is regarded as the major reason for this bizarre heterogeneity of pottery

styles. Aside from pottery, the lithic and bone traits and general site features reflect a basically homogeneous culture (fig. 6aa–ll). Certainly the complex interplay of the various ceramic traditions throughout the region is of great value in determining geographic contacts through time, but there exists a danger of permitting the variability in pottery to submerge the basic culture continuity of the nonceramic traits. On the basis of ceramic styles alone eight or more discrete cultural expressions in the Southeastern area would have to be recognized. Further, there are the variable relationships of these different ceramic traditions to one another through both time and space. There also exists a geographic cline in terms of ceramic complexity. As one advances to the north in the Southeastern area both relative quantity of ceramics and the varieties of ceramic traditions decrease (Marois 1974). The temporal and spatial fluctuations of ceramic traditions in the southern portions of this region are clearly expressed at a number of stratified sites (McPherron 1967; B.M. Mitchell 1966; Ridley 1954; J.V. Wright 1965, 1969).

Radiocarbon dates from Terminal Woodland sites in the Southeastern area range from A.D. 710 to 1670. A number of sites containing European trade goods have also been encountered. Following the practice of lumping the various bands of Algonquian speakers under a covering term that possesses some vague degree of discreteness (such as the Cree for the Northwestern area and the Ojibwa for the Southwestern area), the Algonquin are equated with the Southeastern area. Arrowheads are the usual simple triangular and triangular side-notched forms frequently characterized by minimal retouch. Small end and side scrapers are prevalent as are stone wedges. Abraders, manos, hammerstones, and ocher or limonite paintstones are not uncommon; and when close to the natural sources, native copper beads, awls, and knives occur. Due to acid soil conditions limited bone materials have survived on the sites. Unilaterally barbed harpoons, awls, and beaver incisor knives have been recovered as well as dog burials. Some incipient agriculture was practiced along the shores of Lake Huron and the Ottawa River, south of the ethnographic Subarctic.

Northeastern Area

The Northeastern area encompasses Labrador and most of Quebec to the north of the Saint Lawrence River. Most of the Northeastern area is within the Subarctic ethnographic region, but its southern portions and particularly the area along the Saint Lawrence River reveal a close relationship with the Iroquoian populations of southern Quebec and Ontario and northern New York. Pottery is restricted to the southeastern portions of the area (Martijn 1969) and usually consists of Saint Lawrence Iroquoian pottery styles (Pendergast 1966) west of the Richelieu River, and northern New York pottery styles east of this point as far as the north shore of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence in the Anticosti Island area. Since the Saint Lawrence Iroquois occupied the upper Saint Lawrence valley until sometime in the sixteenth century and the eastern Iroquois of New York State had access to the Saint Lawrence valley via the Richelieu River, the prevalence of their respective ceramics on adjacent and contemporaneous Algonquian sites is not too surprising. However, an examination of the lithic and bone traits permits a ready separation of Iroquoian sites from Algonquian sites sharing an Iroquoian ceramic complex (J.V. Wright 1965).

The Saint Lawrence River has acted as a natural highway for the movement of peoples; however, as one progresses along the north shore into the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, pottery becomes an increasingly rare occurrence on Terminal Woodland sites, and pottery is completely absent from the interior of this area except from Lake Saint John and west. Two reports are available on historic Montagnais sites that also contain prehistoric components; one site is located at Mingan north of Anticosti Island on the north shore (Lévesque 1971) and the other on Lake Saint John (Simard 1970). Both sites contained Iroquois pottery and non-Iroquois lithic assemblages dominated by small end scrapers. Bone was preserved at the Metabetchouan site on Lake Saint John, and the most common bone tools were worked beaver incisors and bone awls. The most common animal species encountered in the faunal remains were moose, beaver, pickerel (walleyed pike), and caribou in descending order of frequency. The much richer site at Mingan, which was occupied from approximately A.D. 1000 to historic times, produced a wide range of corner-notched, side-notched, and simple triangular arrowheads as well as some stemmed points, many of which possess the minimal retouch so typical of Algonquian arrowheads. Some small biface knives, a few polished celts, and abraders were also present.

Assemblages similar to these identified Algonquian sites have been discovered at Brador (fig. 7) (René Lévesque, personal communication 1972) and in Labrador (Harp 1964; Fitzhugh 1972).

The ancestry of the Montagnais and related bands is poorly understood, but there is some evidence to suggest that they evolved from a late Shield Archaic base. With reference to the interior of the Northeastern area the best evidence comes from the Mistassini region, where the Wenopsk complex (circa 4000 B.C. to historic period):

> appears to have existed in relative isolation. No abrupt transitions show up in the artifact inventories of any of its major components which could be interpreted as large-scale movements into the area by outside groups. On the contrary, there is a sense of continuity through time. If migrations into the Mistassini Territory did take place during this

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Fig. 7. Terminal Woodland period. Northeastern area material from a site in the Brador area on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Que. Most of the specimens are manufactured from rama quartzite from Saglek Bay, northern coast of Labrador: a-c, projectile points; d, side scraper; e-f, end scrapers; g, bi-pointed scraper; h-i, large scrapers, j, flake knife. Length of g 11.2 cm, rest same scale.

> period they must have come from the Canadian Shield region to the west, rather than from the distant south or north, judging by similarities in artifact types and the scarcity of stone tools made of lithic materials other than quartzite. . . .
>
> The Wenopsk Complex apparently lasted until contact times, and was then transformed into the historical Mistassini Complex by the introduction of European trade goods . . . (Martijn and Rogers 1969:347, 348).

However, some caution is advised since no actual proof yet shows that the Mistassini are directly descended from the prehistoric Wenopsk population (ibid.:334).

Even at this very preliminary stage of knowledge of the Northeastern area it is apparent that there are some significant differences between the late prehistoric complexes of the Saint Lawrence drainage and the Hudson Bay drainage. Only future research can determine whether these differences reflect the cultural development of the Montagnais in the former area and the Cree in the latter area.

Summary

The major portion of the Canadian Shield represents a distinct culture area whose prehistoric antecedents clearly reflect the cultural and linguistic relationships seen to exist among the historic and present Algonquian-speaking populations of the area.

The cultural homogeneity through both time and space are the products of a number of physiographic factors that are collectively unique to the Canadian Shield.

From the earliest human occupation of the Shield to the historic period the way of life has remained basically unchanged and has revolved around a combination of big game hunting and fishing and, inferentially, the use of the bark canoe and the snowshoe.

The prehistory of the Subarctic Shield is essentially the prehistory of the northern Algonquian-speaking peoples.

In order to present this overview of the prehistory of the Shield it has been necessary to make many generalizations supported by very little documentation. Although much of the documentation can be drawn from the references cited, other supporting data have not been published. Due to the nature of the subject matter it has been necessary often to include discussion of areas south of the boreal forest, into the territory of the Northeast culture area, since a substantial portion of the Shield straddles the boreal forest and Great Lakes–Saint Lawrence forest boundary.

Since 1974, a marked increase in the pace of archeological research in the Shield has taken place. This research has further supported the major themes outlined in this article (see "History of Archeological Research in the Subarctic Shield and Mackenzie Borderlands," this vol.).