

LOCAL TYPES AND THE REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF POTTERY-BEARING CULTURES

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This report sketches briefly late archaeological activities in Wisconsin with specific regard to pottery types, their distribution, and the extent to which they have helped establish our present opinions on the classification and distribution of cultures. Comparisons are attempted with neighboring and other related areas to show the indications of wider regional manifestations of local phenomena.

Collections of potsherds obtained from camp and village sites scattered throughout Wisconsin contain at least two easily distinguishable types of pottery: (1) a rough, grit-tempered, cord-imprinted ware, named the Lake Michigan, and (2) a smooth, shell- or cell-tempered, incised ware, frequently equipped with loop-handles, named the Upper Mississippi. The first type is the more common and might be described as characteristic.

Lake Michigan culture.—The first intensive research in Wisconsin was concerned with the excavation of a compact group of effigy, conical, and linear mounds which were apparently the product of a single culture and are tentatively accepted as typical for the "Effigy Mound culture," probably a variant or subtype of the Lake Michigan culture. The pottery was rough, granular, low-fired ware, tempered with grit, decorated primarily with imprints from a cord-wrapped paddle, but with examples of a secondary intaglio ornamentation executed by means of cord-wrapped implements or, more rarely, by means of incising or indenting, the forms varying slightly from a single *olla*-shaped pattern. The absence of indications of European contact (such as glass beads and implements of iron, brass, or silver), warranted the tentative conclusion that the culture flourished in a locally prehistoric period.

Habitation sites on the Menomoni Reservation, a region long occupied by the Menomoni Indians, yielded materials illustrative of a practically pure culture complex including the Lake Michigan pottery industry. The widespread prevalence of Lake Michigan pottery in Wisconsin may then reflect the equally widespread dominance of a basic culture largely common to the ancestors of the historic Algonkins of this province, comparable to the known historic dominance of the linguistic and cultural stock.

Aztalan culture.—The Aztalan culture complex, the second to be determined in Wisconsin, was encountered at the Aztalan village site in the south central part of the state and differs markedly from that of the Effigy Mound culture. Aztalan pottery is relatively superior. The tempering is generally of shell; the paste for the best grade of ware is thoroughly mixed and of uniform texture; surfaces are smooth; the hardness varies between a fairly soft utilitarian product and a finer ware of maximum hardness for a low-fired product; shapes are various including vessels with angular shoulders, hemispherical bowls, bird-effigy bowls, bowls with contracted rims, shallow platters, vessels with handled covers and gourd-shaped ladles; both vertically placed loop-handles and laterally directed tab-handles are represented; entire surfaces or certain limited surface areas are covered with a red paint or slip or are dyed black; the

best of the black ware is highly burnished; geometric intaglio patterns include both straight and curved linear motifs.

An original deposit at Aztalan illustrating the Lake Michigan culture had been so disturbed and mixed with other detritus, due to cultivation, that the stratigraphic record has been lost, but a number of transitional potsherds that show mixed Aztalan and Lake Michigan influence illustrate lateral gradation and indicate that the two archaic groups were to some extent contemporary.

Upper Mississippi culture.—The third or Upper Mississippi culture was first encountered at a habitation site and associated group of low semi-spherical mounds. The pottery industry, which was well developed, was represented by many sherds and a number of entire vessels. This ware, illustrating the second most common pottery type found in the state, is characterized chiefly by such traits as shell tempering, flaky texture, light weight, smooth surfaces, roughly incised decorations employing a repetition of simple geometric motifs, shapes including hemispherical bowls, round-bottomed vessels often equipped with pairs of vertically placed loop-handles, beakers, and short-necked bottles. Simple undecorated rims and vertically notched rims are most common.

The most casual student may readily distinguish this pottery from Lake Michigan ware but plain sherds of the better quality may be at first confused with similar plain sherds of Aztalan pottery. Both are shell-tempered, smoothly surfaced, and of like texture, but rims, body shapes, and decorative motifs and treatments are distinctly different.

Later, three habitation sites on the Wisconsin banks of the Mississippi and three on the shores of Lake Winnebago supplied information for three variants which have been named, respectively, Grand River, Western Uplands, and Lake Winnebago.

Trempealeau culture.—The fourth distinct culture was first encountered in burial mounds and adjacent camp sites in Trempealeau County. The traits of the complex are distinct from those of the other cultures, although the pottery shows a pronounced similarity to that of the Lake Michigan culture. It is grit-tempered, has a granular texture, and not infrequently bears a primary surface decoration in intaglio effected by means of a cord-wrapped paddle, but the secondary decorative treatment is generally executed with a stamp or roulette, and the finer ware is smoothly surfaced, embellished in all known instances with an incised, cross-hatched outer rim, and radically departing in shape from the olla-form common to both the Lake Michigan and the utilitarian Trempealeau vessels.

Problems.—We have, then, four distinct cultures, of which close variants have been determined for the Lake Michigan and Upper Mississippi divisions. Our major problems are, briefly, who, when, and where. A general survey of historic Indian customs and a comparison of their culture traits with those known for the archaic groups convinces us only that we are dealing with the products of Indians; all the data cited indicates nothing more specific than a locally prehistoric time period for all four cultures; and available data regarding the geographical distribution, or center of distribution for each culture, are as yet meagre.

Two courses of research will contribute to their solution: (1) continued field research of stratified sites that may supply information bearing upon time sequences, and (2) laboratory research to determine the cultural grouping of pure basic traits to form characteristic culture-indicative complexes, followed by a comparison of local data with those available from neighboring fields.

The only stratified site investigated for Wisconsin gives evidence of an original Hopewell camp, probably contemporaneous with and later followed by Lake Michigan culture. The latter was finally contemporaneous with Upper Mississippi culture before disappearing to leave only Upper Mississippi culture. This time sequence applies only to the particular site studied and is not yet verified by findings at other sites.

A comparison of Lake Michigan and other pottery of the Woodland area makes it apparent that Lake Michigan ware, which is ascribed to some of the local Algonkians, is closely similar to so-called Algonkin pottery which occurs over an area that extends from Iowa to the Atlantic coast. A closely parallel complex of pottery traits is known for some of the proto-historic and historic eastern Algonkians. The distribution of the ware, in so far as we know it, corresponds to the distribution of historic pottery-making Algonkians. These suggestive facts do not warrant the postulation that only Algonkians possessed this pottery industry, but tend to support conclusions that it was a culture-trait of some of the Wisconsin Algonkians. The question as to whether or not the builders of the effigy mounds, with their Lake Michigan type of pottery, were related to Algonkian progenitors can not be determined on the basis of pottery alone.

A comparison of the basic Upper Mississippi culture complex with culture-indicative data from other fields yields the information that closely parallel traits are recognized in Illinois¹, Iowa², Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska³.

The Aztalan culture finds its near parallel in the earlier of the two variants⁴ represented in the Cahokia culture of Illinois. More distant comparisons serve to identify the Upper Mississippi and the Cahokia-Aztalan basic cultures as of Southeastern character and probably origin. There is reason to believe that both cultures are relatively late intrusions into the Woodland area.

The Trempealeau complex of traits is found to be extraordinarily like that of the Hopewell culture of Ohio. One of the most important of these trait similarities was that of pottery. Research in other states has revealed that the basic Hopewell culture was influential over an area extending from New York to Wisconsin and from Kentucky to Michigan. The place of the culture in the time sequence has been determined as relatively early for one Wisconsin site, as previously stated, and the tentative chronology for Illinois in Krogman's⁵ report also places basic Hopewell as relatively early in that state. However, accepting these chronological conclusions, it does not follow that basic Hopewell culture is to be identified with a definite time stratum wherever encountered; cultural relationship may involve cultural ancestors or cultural descendants as well as a single cultural generation.

¹ Langford, George, The Fisher Mound Group. *Amer. Anthropol.*, N. S., v. 29, No. 3, pp. 153-205, 1927.

² Keyes, Charles R., Prehistoric Man in Iowa. *The Palimpsest*, v. 8, No. 6, pp. 222-4, 1927.

³ Strong, Duncan, and Bell, Earl, personal communication.

⁴ Kelly, A. R., personal communication.

⁵ Krogman, W. M., in paper presented before Amer. Anthropol. Assoc., Central Section, Milwaukee, 1930.