Mide Rock-paintings: Archaeology by Formal and Informed Methods

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Rock-art research offers to archaeology a problem-oriented approach. A case study is presented on the interpretation of rock-art from informed ethnographic and formal archaeological perspectives regarding the origins of the Midewiwin, or 'Grand Medicine Society'. The evidence is twofold. First, some of the rock-paintings that are found over a wide range of the southern Canadian Shield appear to be representative of the Midewiwin. Second, the most probable age estimation of those rock-paintings indicates that the antiquity of Midewiwin is greater than generally presumed by the key anthropological reference literature of the region. Rather than a relatively recent 'revitalization movement', the origins of theMidewiwin began in remote antiquity. Broad theoretical and methodological issues of cognitive archaeology and the crisis of representation are addressed, particularly classification, colonialism and cultural linguistics.

Rock-art is archaeological (Chippindale & Taçon 1998). The term denotes imagery on semi-stable geological surfaces that is made by humans using various additive or subtractive techniques. Additive techniques may include painting and drawing, while subtractive ones can consist of incising, scratching, scraping, carving, drilling and abrading.

In the cognitive archaeology of rock-art, one of the most contentious issues is the identification of its graphic content (cf. Rajnovich 1994; D'Andrade 1995; Renfrew & Scarre 1998; Renfrew & Zubrow 1994). Chippindale (2001, 259) aptly describes this interpretive conundrum as the 'picture problem' — of what is it a picture? Classification is the initial stage of interpretation that guides all further analyses of the rock-art (Francis 2001). Rock-art typologies are often inferred from a combination of formal and informed methodologies (Taçon & Chippindale 1998). The formal methods may involve the multivariate statistical derivation of a numerical taxonomy from the clusters of attributes (e.g. Magne & Klassen 1991), but commonly they entail assigning intuitive categories based on some perceived morphological similarities in the rock-art (e.g. Maurer & Whelan 1977). The latter often includes the recognition of 'representational' elements, such as anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures, and 'abstract' or geometric designs, like concentric circles and spirals (e.g. Turpin 2001). The informed methods generally assist in the characterization of the rock-art by way of ethnographic analogies, and sometimes, directly from the insights of the contemporary descendant communities themselves (see Layton 2001).

Archaeologists seldom have the opportunity to conceptualize rock-art in terms of the 'cultural linguistics' (Palmer 1996) and 'emic' categories (Pike 1967) of the people who made them (see Keyser *et al*. 2006). A rare case exists in North America. Along the southern boundaries of the Canadian Shield, scholars attribute the *mazina' aazhibikoon*, or the 'picture-writing rocks' (cf. Nichols & Nyholm 1995, 20, 79; Schoolcraft 1851, 405; Conway 1993, 90) with near unanimity to the ancestors of the Central Algonquian speakers (see Goddard 1978) and to their descendants, particularly the Cree, Menominee, Ojibwa, Ottawa and Pottawatomie (Arsenault 2004b; Dewdney & Kidd 1967; Grant 1967; Jones 1981b; Rajnovich 1994; Steinbring 1998; Wellmann 1979). Most of the 'picture-writing rocks' are red-ochre paintings (Arsenault *et al.* 1996; Dewdney & Kidd 1967; Jones 1981b; Rajnovich 1994; Steinbring 1981, 246; 1998). The word for the paint is *onameshin*, meaning to leave 'signs of one's presence'

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(cf. Nichols & Nyholm 1995, 91; Conway 1993, 49; Jones 1981a; Rajnovich 1994, 14). The root of the word is *name* for the 'sturgeon' (Nichols & Nyholm 1995, 91). Ojibwa and Cree elders have consistently stated that sturgeon albumin is the vehicle and binder for the resilient red paint (Conway 1993, 67; Jones 1981a; Rajnovich 1994, 14).

In a handful of cases within the last few centuries, the rock-painters are known (Conway 1992; 1993, 50; Conway & Conway 1990; Rajnovich 1994, 42; Schoolcraft 1851, 406–7; Steinbring 1981, 245–6; Wheeler 1975) and they tend to belong to the Midewiwin (Rajnovich 1994; Steinbring 1998). The Cree, Menominee, Ojibwa, Ottawa and Pottawatomie all participate in the Midewiwin (Clifton 1978, 731, 736; Feest & Feest 1978, 783; Honigmann 1981, 223; Ritzenthaler 1978, 74–9, 754–5; Rogers 1978, 763; Spindler 1978, 710–11, 715–18; Steinbring 1981, 251–3), which is a society of men and women who are dedicated to maintaining the health of their people and promoting longevity through the use of holistic medicine. English names for the Midewiwin are 'Grand Medicine Society', 'Medicine Dance', 'Medicine Rite', 'Medicine Lodge' and 'Medicine Feast' (Angel 2002, 5).

Midewiwin is an Ojibwa (Chippewa) word (Hoffman 1891), however, similar terms exist among the Cree, Menominee, Ottawa and Pottawatomie (e.g. *Mitewiwin*, *Mitawin*, *Mite'owin* and *Mite'win* respectively), which can be spelled in a variety of ways. Likewise, Ojibwa words have many spellings in the literature (cf. Johnston 2007; Nichols & Nyholm 1995); hence for consistency, the Ojibwa terms herein follow the orthography of *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe* (Nichols & Nyholm 1995). Today, most Ojibwa live within the northern climes around the Great Lakes (Ritzenthaler 1978; Rogers 1978; Steinbring 1981). Like the Ottawa and Pottawatomie, they call themselves the *Anishinaabeg*, or the 'original people' (Warren 1885, 56).

Many of the rock-paintings in the Canadian Shield region share formal similarities with the imagery of the Midewiwin material culture (cf. Arsenault *et al*. 1996; Dewdney 1975; Dewdney & Kidd 1967; Lipsett 1970; Molyneaux 1987; Rajnovich 1994; Steinbring 1998). However, all of the rock-paintings are not necessarily attributable to the Midewiwin. They may constitute only a small fraction of the total number of known sites (Conway 1992). In her most recent synthesis, Rajnovich (1994, 9) states that 'over 400' rock-painting sites are documented in the Shield, but scholars are likely to find published illustrations of fewer than 300 (Weeks 2009, 569).

In the 1980s, an ethnoarchaeologist, Thor Conway, consulted with some of the elders from the Garden River First Nation of Ojibwa near Sault Ste Marie, northeastern Ontario. From their oral traditions, Conway (1992, 12) claims that the variability in the context of the graphic components and the frequency of the rock-painting sites corresponds to the work of four kinds of 'shamans', including the *Djiski*, *Mide*, *Mushkiki* and *Wabeno*.

Archaeologists tend to disagree about the relevance of oral tradition to their field (e.g. Anyon *et al*. 1997; Echo-Hawk 2000; Vansina 1985; Whiteley 2002). Some believe it offers valuable insights and a basis for designing archaeological inquires (e.g. Bernardini 2005). Others, however, find the two incommensurate and stress that oral traditions must remain estranged from archaeological research (e.g. Mason 2006). I argue that the oral traditions of indigenous descendant communities provide a viable theoretical framework for the archaeological investigations of the rock-art in North America, particularly in the Shield region. The Algonquian peoples of this area maintain strong ties to their ancestral rock-paintings. For many contemporary Indian communities, rock-paintings are a major part of their traditional education and religion (Arsenault 2004a; Conway 1993). Aboriginal people leave offerings of tobacco at these sacred sites signifying their respect for and their connection to a storied landscape (e.g. Conway 1993; Dewdney & Kidd 1967).

As a case study, I initiate an evaluation of the use of oral tradition in the archaeology of rock-art by concentrating on a significant part of Conway's model — the *mide*, or a member of the Midewiwin. The term may also be used as an adjective indicating a relationship to the Midewiwin. In particular, I will focus on two interpretive issues: (1) the identification of plausible Midewiwin rock-paintings; and (2) their presence among a large corpus of sites from which illustrations are available in publications. An important outcome of this research bears on the perennial anthropological debate on the antiquity of the Midewiwin's origins.

Four areas of general interest are also relevant to this case study:

1. It demonstrates that rock-art research is applicable to archaeology (recent debates have challenged whether or not it should be included within this domain of study: cf. Bednarik 2009; Montelle 2009; Querejazu Lewis 2009; Steinbring 2009; Taçon 2002).
2. Rather than simply studying rock-art for its own sake, analyses of this type of art can address two major anthropological issues (cf. Bednarik 2007; Weeks 2009): (a) the relationships and limits between the fields of ethnography, ethnohistory and archaeology; and (b) the crisis of representation, particularly in terms of classification, colonialism and cultural linguistics.

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3. When the archaeological record indicates considerable time depth of an indigenous North American sodality, their origins as 'revitalization movements' in response to the European conquest require further reconsideration and potential revision (cf. Weeks 2009; Schlesier 1990).
4. Without informed evidence, shamanistic theory that privileges universal 'neuropsychological imagery' over culturally specific forms may lead to erroneous conclusions; for example, Midewiwin ceremonial structures may appear to be a 'grid' through the eyes of a Western observer and thus be mistaken for 'entoptic phenomenon' (cf. Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988; Blakeslee 1890). In this regard, the pervasive etic distinction between 'abstract' and 'representative' rock-art elements is blurred.

Background and terminology

According to Conway (1992), Midewiwin rock-paintings are rare and they consist of certain motif types. As an example, he cites the Agawa site in Lake Superior Provincial Park. Based on the testimony of descendants, Fred and Dan Pine, Conway credits two panels to the Mide rock painter, *Shingwaukonse*, meaning 'Little White Pine'. In his popular writing, the antiquarian Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1851, 406–7, pl. 57) made Pine famous. Pine provided Schoolcraft with a sketch and a description of some of the paintings at Agawa. Although Schoolcraft never visited the site himself, in the mid-nineteenth century he is the first to link the Midewiwin to the rock-paintings. The father of Canadian rock-art studies, Selwyn Dewdney, discovered the site in 1958 (Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 148).

Paradoxically, Agawa does not seem to contain any of the signs, or configurations of them, that are unique to the Midewiwin. Drawing on the work of previous ethnographers, Conway identifies the association of a cruciform design with four discs in one of Pine's panels as being likely representative of the Midewiwin, but not necessarily diagnostic of it. Although not considered by Conway (1992), other researchers identify four varieties of signs and two kinds of sign-pairs that appear to be exclusively Midewiwin (i.e. Dewdney & Kidd 1967; Lipsett 1970; Rajnovich 1994; Steinbring 1998). I synthesize these disparate studies here. The six types of signs are the *midewigaan*, *midewigaanaak*, *mitigoon*, *miigis, makwa bima' adoo* and the oppositional *mishibiziwag*, while the two kinds of sign-pairs consist of the combination of the *midewayaan*-and-*bimojige* and the *mitigwakik*-and-*baaga'akokwaan* (Nichols & Nyholm 1995, 27, 31, 33, 76, 84, 88, 89).

Previous researchers identified three of the signs in Ojibwa terminology, i.e. *midewigaan*, *miigis* and *mishibizhiwag*. The rest were only recognized by their English names. From examination of some of the key sources on the Ojibwa Midewiwin (i.e. Angel 2002; Blessing 1963; 1969; Densmore 1910; 1929; Dewdney 1975; Hoffman 1891; Landes 1968), I present the other five signs and sign-pairs in their emic classification. In all cases, I attempt a preliminary effort to modestly convey the cultural linguistics of the Ojibwa Midewiwin. Future studies may consider extending the project to include other varieties of the Central Algonquian language family.

Out of respect, all of the Figures in this study are sketches. Opinions are diverse within and among the communities of the native North American peoples, however, as an American Indian (Echota tribe), my informal discussions over the past couple of decades with many Native Americans of the United States and with people of the First Nations of Canada, have led me to conclude that photographs of sacred sites and ancestral ceremonial objects tend to be frowned upon. Drawings, though, are generally acceptable. The affective presence and control over the knowledge of ritual are two major issues of concern among some contemporary native peoples (Brandt 1980; Conway 1993, 36–7, 108; Spielmann 2002).

As an example of relevant personal experience, in the summer of 2007 I visited a few rock-painting sites with about a dozen elders of the *Naotkamegwanning* community (Whitefish Bay First Nation) in the eastern Lake-of-the-Woods region, northwestern Ontario. We sprinkled our tobacco into the water as we approached the rock-painting sites in several small outboard motorboats. The elders politely asked me not to take photographs of the sites. Also, they told me that pointing at rock-painting sites is disrespectful. Conducting rock-art research in North America is as much about attitude, as it is about the gathering, analysing and reporting of the information.

The comparison of the pictography and material culture from commonplace and Midewiwin contexts formulates the basis of inferences. The *midewiigwaasan*, or 'mide birch barks' (Nichols & Nyholm 1995, 34 & 119), are the primary sources (Arsenault *et al*. 1996; Dewdney & Kidd 1967; Rajnovich 1994; Steinbring 1998). The glyphs are etched upon the interior surface of bark sheets and rolled into scrolls (e.g. Densmore 1910; Dewdney 1975; Hoffman 1891). I henceforth use the term 'scrolls' when referring to these items.

Figure 1 shows three varieties of the *midewigaan* constructions. Despite their structural differences, all of the *midewiigaanan* (plural) are long, rectangular

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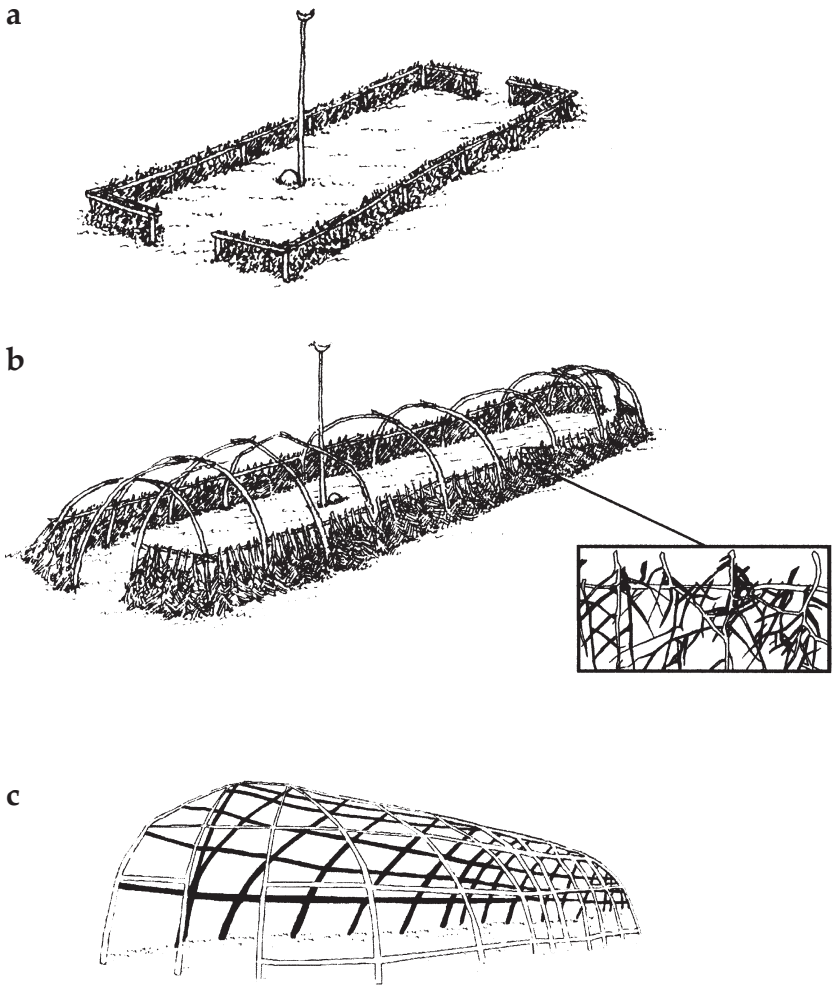


Figure 1. *Three varieties of the* midewigaanan. *(a & b – adapted from drawings in Dewdney 1975, fig. 63; c – sketched from a portrait in Hoffman 1896, pl. 5).*



Figure 2. *A* mitigoon *from Nett Lake with a bird effigy (sketched from a photograph in Killy 1946, fig. 1).*

buildings wherein the initiation and healing rites take place (Angel 2002; Densmore 1929; Dewdney 1975; Hoffman 1891; Landes 1968). The doorways — perhaps covered with animal hides, blankets, mats or bark — are positioned at either end of the buildings which are oriented east–west lengthwise. The length varies depending upon the number of members in attendance. The *midewigaanaak* is the lattice-like framework consisting of poles, saplings and brush of a *midewigaan*. The *mitigoon* are the ceremonial posts located inside and outside of a *midewigaan* (Fig. 1a & b). The tops of the *mitigoon* are often adorned with a variety of symbolic wood carvings, including avian effigies, anthropomorphic forms, crescents and spheres, as well as lashed crosses and rectangles. Figure 2 displays a common form of the *mitigoon* with a bird effigy on top.

Figure 3 illustrates the *bimojige*. This is an initiatory 'shooting rite' that is held within the *midewigaan* (Angel 2002; Densmore 1929; Dewdney 1975; Hoffman 1891; Landes 1968). In this ceremony, elder members propel *miigisaan* at the candidate from their *midewayaanag* (plural), or animal-skin medicine bags. A *miigis* (singular) can be 'any species of small white shell' (Hoffman 1891, 167). The *midewayaanag* are often made from the hides of the Mustelidae family, such as the marten, mink, otter and weasel (Blessing 1963; Harrison 1989; Nelson 1984). Figure 4 is a sketch of a *midewayaan* made from mink hide and a *Marginella* shell used as a *migiis*. The candidates complete the ritual by fainting and are then revived through the exhortation of their peers. Upon resuscitation, the initiates typically expel the *miigisaan* from their mouths into their hands.

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Figure 3. *The* bimojige*, an initiatory 'shooting rite' held within the* midewigaan *(Hoffman 1896, pl. 8).*

Figure 5 is a sketch of a *mitigwakik* and two common types of the *baaga'akokwaan*. The *mitigwakik* is a water drum used in the Midewiwin healing and initiation ceremonies. It is made from a hollow log (Densmore 1929; Dewdney 1975; Hoffman 1891). The base of the drum is sealed to hold a small amount of water, which is filled and drained by the removal of a plug on its side. A rawhide is stretched over the head of the drum and is usually held tight with a wooden ring. The *mitigwakik* is played with a single drumstick, the *baaga'akokwaan*. The percussive end of a *baaga'akokwaan* may either take the form of a crook or a cross that has been lashed together from two sticks. The concept of the Midewiwin is thought to denote the 'sound of drumming' (Johnston

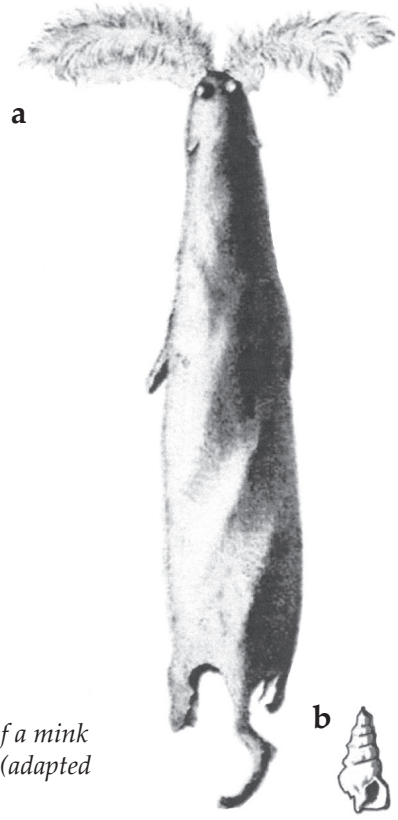


Figure 4. *(a) A* midewayaan *made out of a mink hide; and (b) a* miigis *(*Marginella *shell) (adapted from a portrait by Hoffman 1891, pl. 11).*

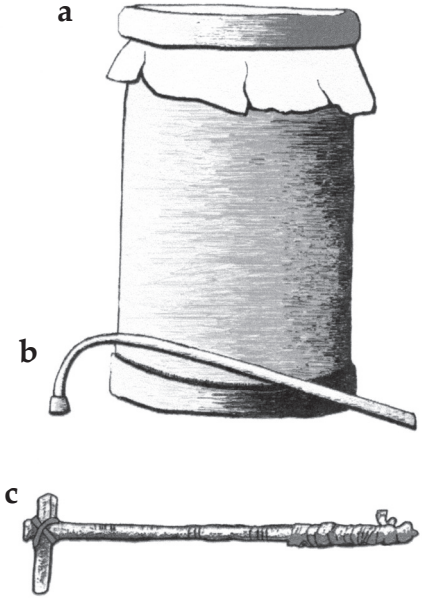


Figure 5. *(a) A* mitigwakik *and (b&c) two kinds of* baaga'akokwaan *(a & b – sketched from a photograph in Densmore 1910, pl. 2; c – from Inger, adapted from a drawing in Blessing 1952, pl. 16).*

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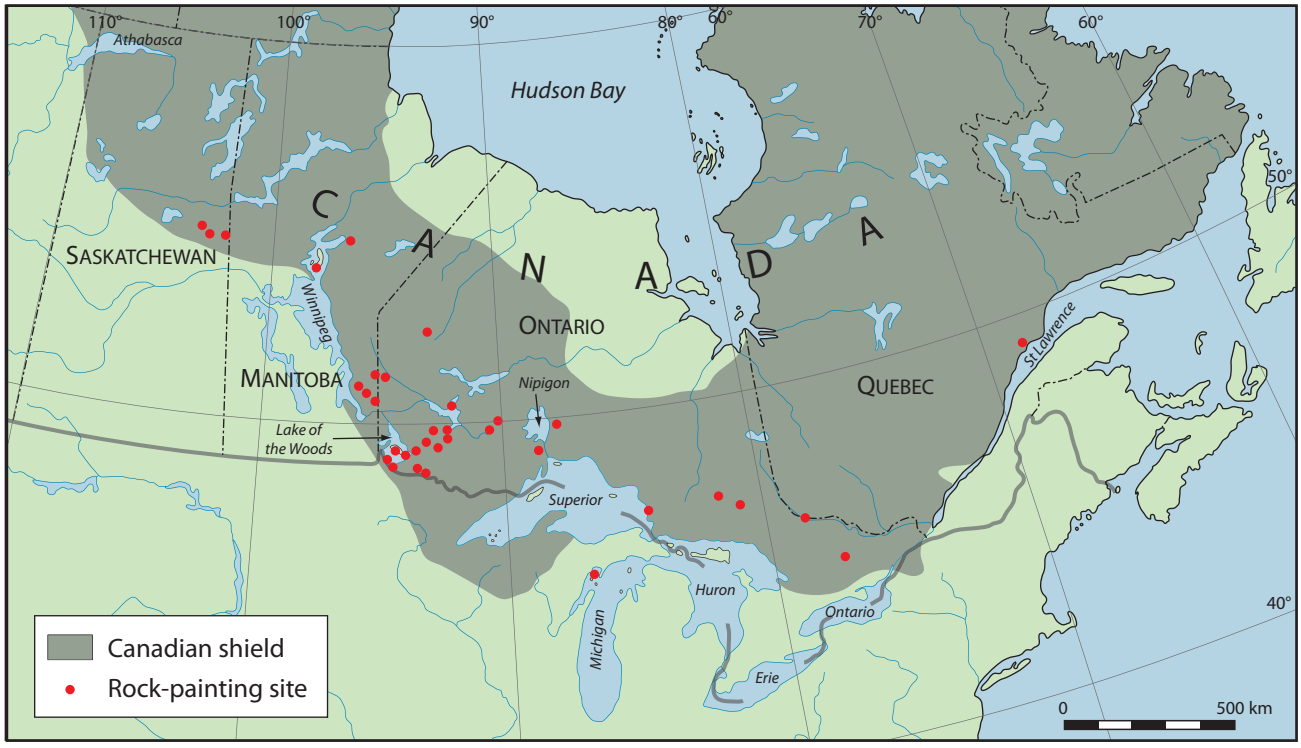


Figure 6. *Map of the geographic distribution of plausible Midewiwin rock-painting sites. (Map drawn by Dora Kemp.)*

1982, 95). Over great distances, the resonance of the *mitigwakik* (waterdrum) and *baaga'akokwaan* (crook drumstick), is likened to the 'heartbeat' of the Anishinaabeg with connotations of perpetual well-being (Johnston 1982, 95).

In addition to representations of the material culture discussed above, two signs convey concepts that are distinctive to the Midewiwin. Both are known from the songs and the mnemonic imagery of the scrolls. The signs are the *makwa bima'adoo* and the paired, opposing *mishibizhiwag*. As a precept, entrants follow the *makwa bima'adoo*, or 'bear's path', into the *midewigaan* (Densmore 1910, 106–7; 1928, 323; Hallowell 1936, 48). Bears are revered for their strength and their ability to dig deep into the earth for healing roots and herbs (Densmore 1928, 323). The *mishibizhiwag* are a pair of 'great lynxes' facing each other which stand guard outside the eastern entrance of a *midewigaan* (see Dewdney 1975). A candidate is symbolically exalted by passing unharmed between these formidable *manidoog*. *Manidoog* is a term usually translated as 'spirits' in English (Nichols & Nyholm 1995, 77). However, the Ojibwa language does not make a clear distinction between natural and supernatural phenomena; therefore, the term 'other-than-human-persons' may closely approach an emic understanding (Hallowell 1960).

Analyses and data

A total of 282 rock-painting sites along the southern border of the Shield were examined for the six signs and two sign-pairs diagnostic of the Midewiwin (Weeks 2009, 569). The sum is representative of the quantity of sites that are available as published illustrations. Table 1 lists the 35 sites that contain the diagnostic signs, which constitutes about 12 per cent. Figure 6 shows their geographic distribution. The frequencies of the various kinds of signs and sign-pairs are summarized in Figure 7. The most common and widespread sign is the *midewigaanaak*, while the rarest and most spatially restricted is the two oppositional *mishibizhiwag*. The median is the *midewigaan*.

The *midewigaanan* are depicted from three vantage points: as a floor plan, or 'planview'; from the outside looking into the eastern entrance; and lengthwise along the profile. Figure 8 exhibits examples of the *midewigaanan* in its planview from a scroll in black and from a rock-painting site in red. This colour convention is used for the remainder of the Figures. Scroll glyphs average a factor of about one-tenth of 50 cm^2, the mean size of a rock-painting (cf. Dewdney 1975; Dewdney & Kidd 1967; Rajnovich 1994). Among examples in the scrolls, *midewigaanan* are most commonly represented in their planviews (see

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Table 1. *An inventory of rock-painting sites by types of Midewiwin signs and sign-pairs.*

Case no.	Site name	Royal Ontario Museum no.	Borden/ Smithsonian no.	*Midewigaanaak*	*Makwa bima'adoo*	*Midewayaan & bimojige*	*Midewigaan*	*Mitigwakik & baaga'akokwaan*	*Mitigoon*	*Migiis*	*Mishibizhiwag*
1	Hayter Peninsula	91	DiKn-1	X							
2	Hickson-Maribelli 1	181		X							
3	Keso Point			X							
4	Mameigwess Lake	52	DjJw-1	X							
5	Nisula		DeEh-1	X							
6	White Otter Lake 1	283	DgJw-4	X							
7	White Otter Lake 10		DgJw-1	X							
8	Wizard Lake		CkHk-1	X							
9	Picture Rock Island	69	DhKm-3	X				X			
10	Bloodvein River 1	60	EiKs-1	X		X					
11	Agawa 1	36	CiIe-3		X						
12	Lower Manitou Narrows	21	DhKg-1		X		X	X			
13	Roche l'Oiseau	291	CaGh-1		X						
14	Sabaskong Bay 1	197	DgKl-1		X						
15	Silent Rapids		GkNl-1		X						
16	Uskik		GiMu-11		X						
17	Red Rock	51			X		X				
18	Fishing Lake	204				X					
19	Frances Lake	208				X					
20	Knee Lake	252				X					
21	Route Lake 3	90				X					
22	South Delano Lake		DkKi-2			X					
23	Mazinaw Lake	37	BfGh-1				X		X		
24	Painted Cave		DgJw-1				X				
25	Sioux Narrows	28	DiKm-3				X		X		
26	Painted Rock Island	108	DhKo-1				X	X			
27	Namakan Narrows	24						X			
28	Sasaginnigak Lake 2	255	EiKv-2			X		X			
29	Ferris Lake	45							X		
30	Paimusk Creek	160	GbLh-1						X		
31	Spider Cave	81	20DE3							X	
32	Route Lake 2	89								X	
33	Pine Needle Lake 1	149	EdKo-2							X	
34	Sasaginnigak Lake 3	256	EjKv-3							X	
35	Barbara Lake	193	DiDw-1								X

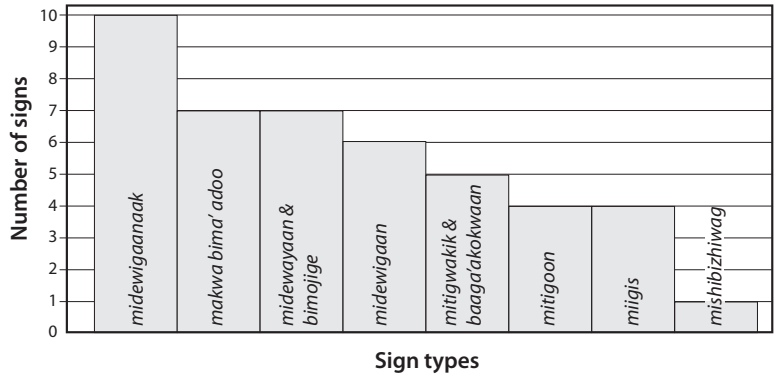


Figure 7. *Frequency of diagnostic Midewiwin signs and sign-pairs.*

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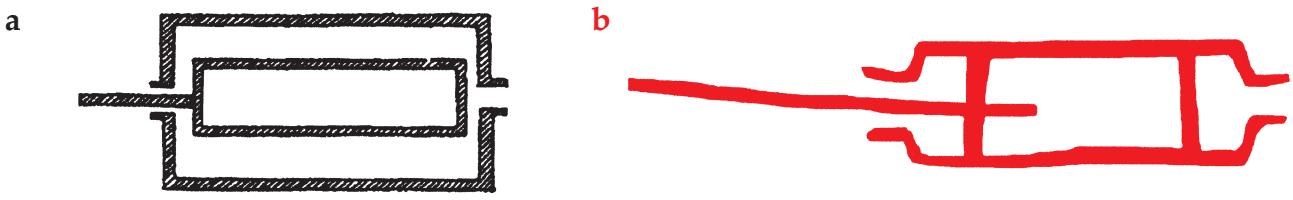


Figure 8. *Planviews of* midewigaanan *(a – birch-bark scroll from White Earth adapted from Densmore 1929, fig. 12; b – rock-painting from Painted Rock Island adapted from Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 47).*

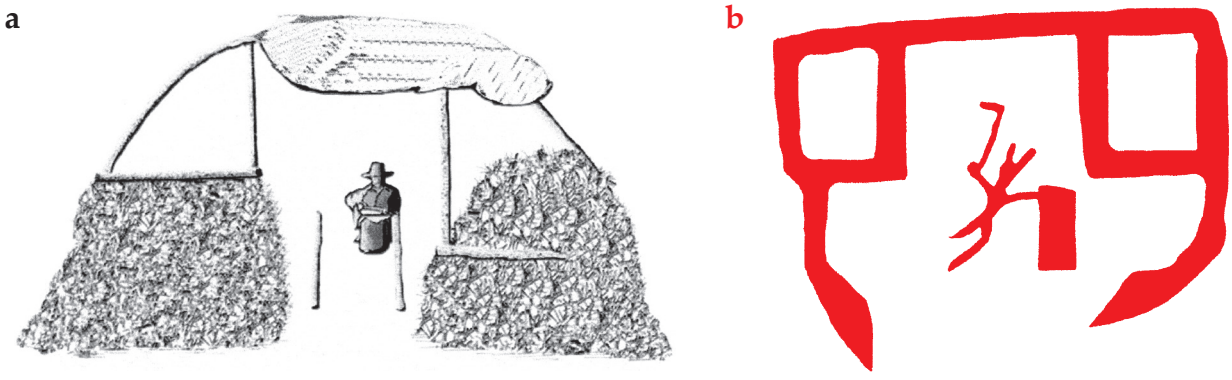


Figure 9. *Depictions of* midewigaanan *looking into the eastern entrance (a – sketched from an ethnographic photograph of White Earth in Densmore 1910, pl. 5; b – rock-painting from Lower Manitou Narrows sketched from a photograph in Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 63).*

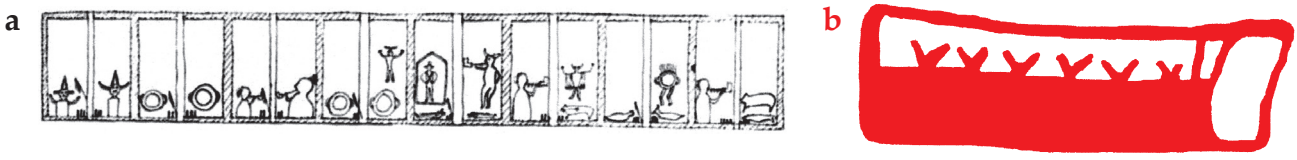


Figure 10. *Depictions of* midewigaanan *lengthwise along their profile (a – birch-bark scroll from Lac Seul adapted from a drawing in Dewdney 1975, fig. 154; b – rock-painting from Red Rock adapted from a drawing Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 77).*

Dewdney 1975). Similar examples occur at Painted Rock Island, Painted Cave and Sioux Narrows in the Lake-of-the-Woods area of northwestern Ontario (Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 47 & 50; Molyneaux 1987, 25). Dewdney and Kidd (1967, 47) were the first to identify the *midewigaan* sign in its planview on Painted Rock Island. The scrolls do not portray the *midewigaanan* from the perspective of viewers facing the doorways. However, when compared with a sketch of an ethnographic photograph (i.e. Densmore 1910, pl. 5), some rock-painting sites in northwestern Ontario — particularly at Lower Manitou Narrows and on Painted Rock Island — appear to contain depictions of the *midewigaanan* from the perspective of an outside observer looking into the eastern entryway (Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 46 & 67). Figure 9 is an example from this standpoint. Finally, judging from the images of both scrolls and ethnographic illustrations, Red Rock and Lake Mazinaw (cf. Fig. 1b inset; Woodhead 1994, 116) in Ontario seem to display the *midewigaanan* rendered lengthwise along their profile (Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 77, 100; cf. Dewdney 1975, fig. 154; Woodhead 1994, 116), as in Figure 10.

The *midewigaanaak* signs frequently occur on the scrolls and at rock-painting sites (Weeks 2009, 632 & 638). Two types exist, the most frequent of which can be described geometrically as a rectangle composed of a series of nearly equal tiles (see Fig. 11). Rajnovich (1994, 32, fig. 21) was the first to record this type on Picture Rock Island in the 1980s. Her interpretation is corroborated by the traditional knowledge shared with her by two local Midewiwin elders, Maria Seymour and Walter Red Sky, as well as some analogous examples from the scrolls (e.g. Coleman 1947, 76; Hoff-

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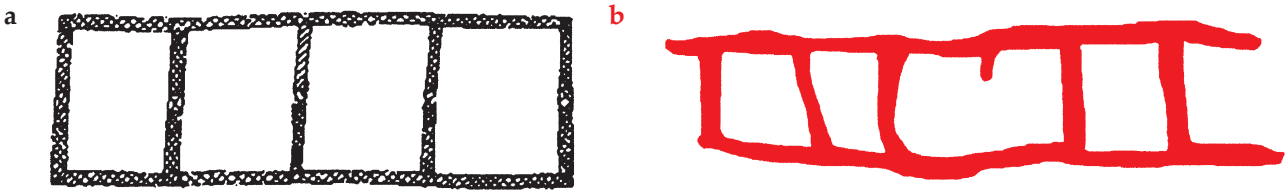


Figure 11. *The most common form of the* midewigaanaak *(a – birch-bark scroll from Naytahwaush adapted from a drawing in Coleman 1947, pl. 15; b – rock-painting from Knee Lake adapted from a drawing in Dewdney 1978, fig. 38).*

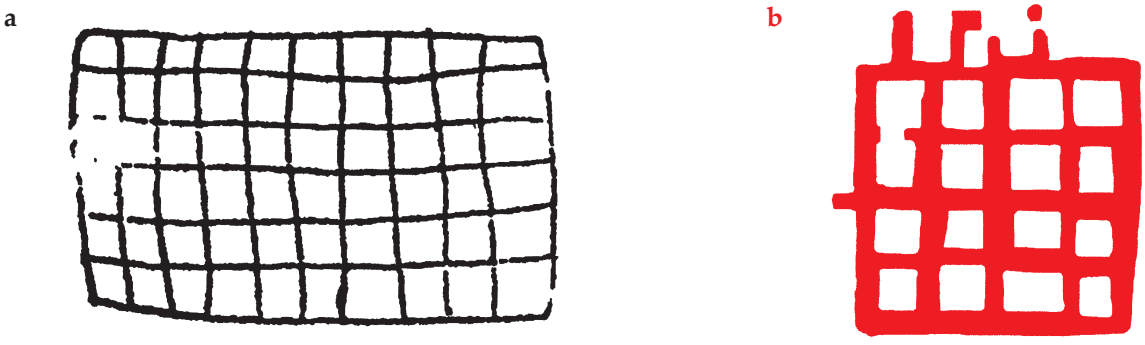


Figure 12. *An alternative form of the* midewigaanaak *(a – birch-bark scroll from Lac Courte Oreilles adapted from a drawing in Blakeslee 1890, 12; b – rock-painting from the Hayter Peninsula adapted from a drawing in Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 52).*

man 1891, 186). Examples also occur at eight of the other sites, including Knee Lake in Manitoba, Bloodvein River 1, Keso Point, Mameigwess Lake, White Otter Lake 1 and 10, and Wizard Lake in Ontario, and Nisula in Quebec (Arsenault *et al*. 1996, 34; Dewdney 1978, fig. 38; Rajnovich 1994, figs. 21, 24, 25, 26 & 27; Rusak 1992, figs. 17, 18, 24 & 30).

The other type of *midewaanaak* sign is a grid. A Presbyterian missionary, Allen Delano Blakeslee (1890, 12), published a sketch of a scroll and a description from a mide from Lac Courte Orielles in his pamphlet, entitled *The Religious Customs of the Ojibway Indians*. The grid is also identifiable in some ethnographic photographs and sketches (e.g. Angel 2002, fig. 5; Conway & Conway 1990, 76; Hoffman 1896, pl. 5; Roufs 1975, 10–11; Steinbring 1981, fig. 10a). Figure 12 compares examples from a scroll and a rock-painting. This second form is found at two of the sites, particularly Hickson-Maribelli 1 in northeastern Saskatchewan and on the Hayter Peninsula in northwestern Ontario (Dewdney 1970, 10–11; Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 51–2).

The *mitigoon* signs, corresponding to imagery from scrolls and ethnographic illustrations, occur at a few of the rock-painting sites, particularly in the forms of birds, crescents, rectangles and spheres (e.g. Densmore 1913, pls. 40 & 41; 1929, fig. 12; 1975, figs. 62, 63 & 170; Hoffman 1891, pls. 8 & 14; Killy 1946, figs. 1 & 2; cf. Dewdney 1965, fig. 2; Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 50 & 101). The most numerous type of *mitig* (singular) at the rock-painting sites is the cruciform pole, but this type is excluded from this study because it is neither unique to Midewiwin symbolism nor to that of any other indigenous society in the Americas before and after the introduction of Christianity (Flannery 1940, 9; Mallery 1893, 724–35; Morgan 1952, fig. 30g). Figure 13 compares representations of the *mitigoon* with bird effigies from a scroll and a rock-painting. Dewdney (1965, 9, fig. 2) was the first researcher to suggest that a depiction of a post with an avian effigy on top was

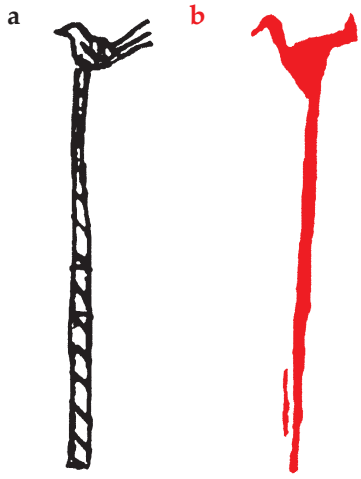


Figure 13. Mitigoon *with bird effigies (a – birch-bark scroll from White Earth adapted from a drawing in Hoffman 1891, pl. 8; b – rock-paintingfrom Paimusk Creek adapted from a drawing in Dewdney 1965, 9).*

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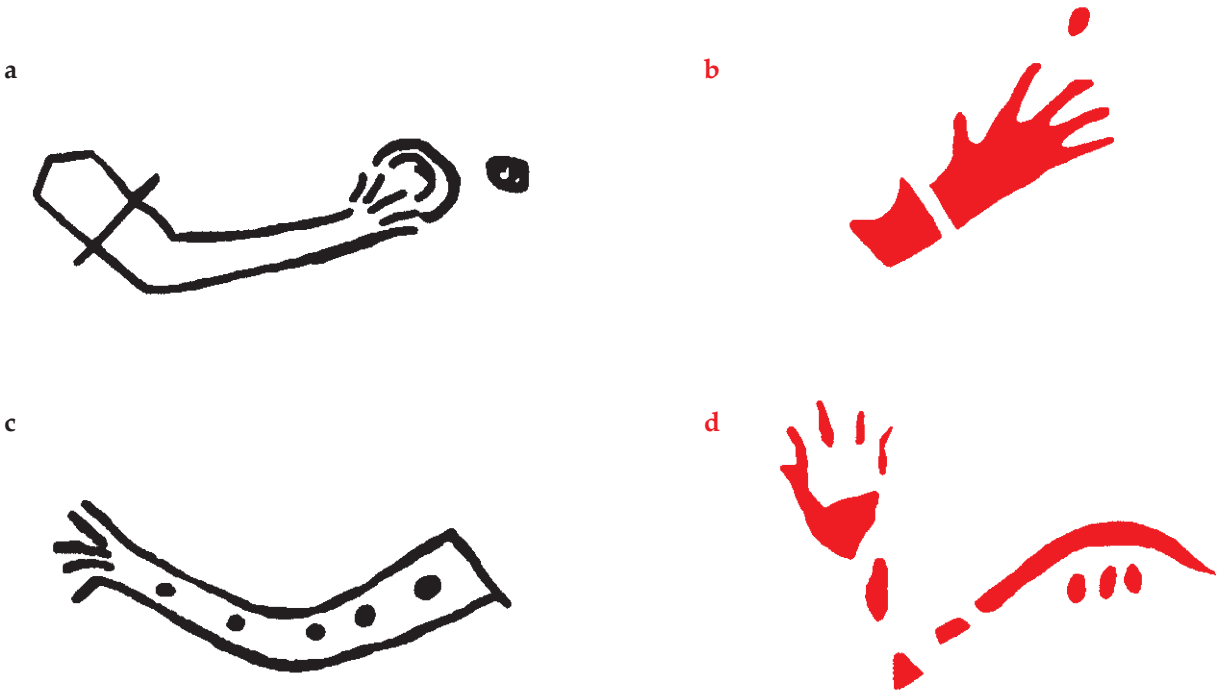


Figure 14. Migiisan *associated with the upper human appendages (a – birch-bark scroll from White Earth adapted from a drawing in Hoffman 1891, 229; b – rock-painting from Pine Needle Lake 1 adapted from a drawing in Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 123; c – birch-bark scroll from White Earth adapted from a drawing Hoffman 1891, 219; d – rock-painting from Route Lake adapted from a drawing in Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 66).*

possibly representative of the Midewiwin. However, he misidentified the locality of the rock-painting as Tramping Lake. The correct location is at the Paimusk Creek site (see Steinbring 1998, 80). Another case occurs at Ferris Lake (Rajnovich 1994, fig. 69). While poles topped by birds may occur as early as 17,000 years ago in the Upper Palaeolithic cave art of the Franco-Cantabrian region, such as at Lascaux (Bahn & Vertut 1997, fig. 11.8), in the Shield, upon an examination of the ethnology, they are distinctive of the Midewiwin (Weeks 2009, 640–42). Rajnovich (1994, figs. 13 & 17) highlights poles with a combination of a rectangle crowned by a sphere from ethnographic photographs (e.g. Densmore 1929), but she does not link them to any of the rock-painting sites. Only one painting of a pole with the rectangle-and-sphere form exists in the planview of a *midewigaan* painting from the Sioux Narrows (Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 50). A crescent crowning a post is found at Lake Mazinaw (Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 101).

Portrayals of the *migiisan* are highly variable among the scrolls (Weeks 2009, fig. 42). This diversity is not surprising since they may be any kind of a white shell. In the scrolls they are simply etched as dots, open or filled circles and ovals (sometimes concentric), and with or without exterior rays. The dots, as well as open or filled circles and ovals, are seldom represented by themselves, but are in tandem with etchings of human appendages, particularly arms and hands. Figure 14 offers a cross-media comparison. Steinbring (1998, 37, fig. 29) is the first to identify this latter configuration at the Sasaginnigak Lake 3 site in eastern Manitoba and at the Pine Needle Lake 1 site in northwestern Ontario (see Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 123). Another example occurs at the Route Lake 2 site (Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 66). Rajnovich (1994, 53, fig. 39) infers a possible variant of the *miigis* at Spider Cave in Upper Michigan which consists of an amorphous splotch with exterior meandering rays. According to Rajnovich the *miigis* is connected to the heart of the anthropomorphic painting by a sinuous line. In the cultural linguistics of Midewiwin origin stories the shell, sun, heart, and the imbuing of vitality are major metaphors supporting her inference (Weeks 2009).

The primary use of the *midewayaan* is the *bimojige* (Weeks 2009, 651). Figure 15 compares a representation of a *midewinini* (Midewiwin man) from a scroll to that in a rock-painting. In both cases the *midewininiwag* are holding their *midewayaanag*. At the Bloodvein River 1 site, Dewdney and Kidd (1967, 60 & 62) are the earli-

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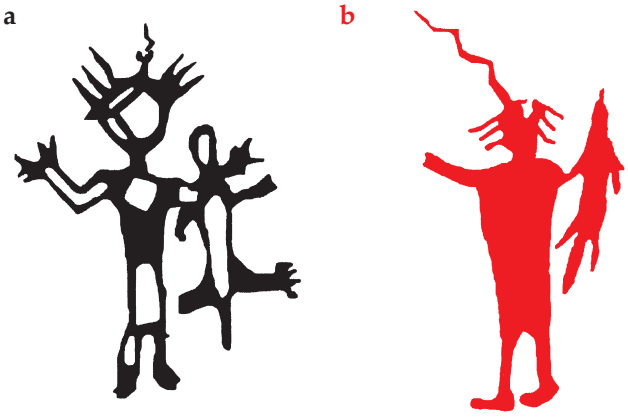


Figure 15. Midewininiwag *with their* midewayaanag *(a – birch-bark scroll from Cass Lake adapted from drawing in Dewdney (1975, fig. 106); b – rock-painting from Bloodvein River 1 adapted from a drawing in Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 62).*

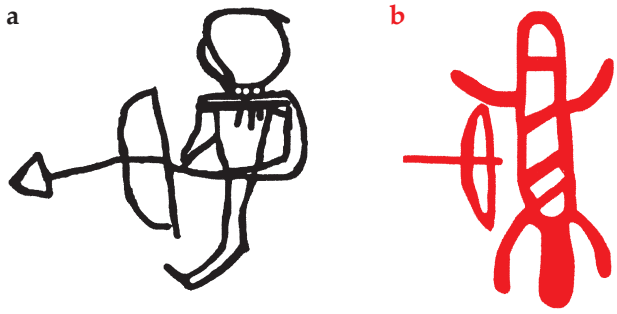


Figure 17. Midewayaanag *with their bows and arrows as a symbol of the* bimojige *(a – birch-bark scroll from White Earth adapted from a drawing in Densmore 1910, 46); b – rock-painting from Frances Lake adapted from drawing Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 116).*

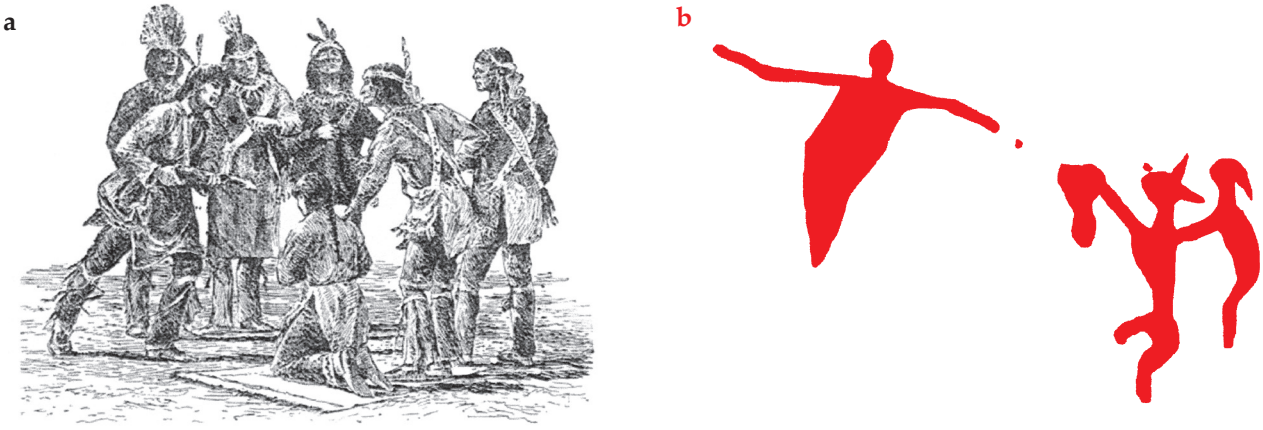


Figure 16. *A comparison of a depiction of the* bimojige *from an ethnographic sketch with a rock-painting from the Route Lake 3 site (a – adapted from a portrait in Hoffman 1891, fig. 15; b – adapted from a drawing in Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 66).*

est observers to suggest that the motif is indicative of the Midewiwin. Additional examples are the Route Lake 3, the South Delano Lake and the Sasaginnigak Lake 3 sites (Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 66–7; Lambert 1985, pl. 46; Steinbring 1998, fig. 25). The Route Lake 3 site is unusual. As shown in Figure 16, it appears to portray a realistic scene of the *bimojige* rather than the otherwise iconic forms (Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 66–7; cf. Hoffman 1891, fig. 15). The shooting of a bow and arrow is also symbolic of the *bimojige* in Midewiwin imagery and cultural linguistics (Densmore 1910, 45–6 & 77; Hoffman 1891, 262). Three rock-painting sites, particularly Bloodvein River 1, Frances Lake and Fishing Lake, show the *midewayaanag* themselves shooting arrows from their bows (Dewdney 1970, fig. 6; Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 116–17; Rajnovich 1994, fig. 114). Figure 17 illustrates examples of these.

Figure 18 displays various representations of the *mitigwakikoog* (plural) and the *baaga'akokwaanan* (plural) from scrolls and rock-paintings. The *midewiniwag* are shown playing their *mitigwakikoog* and in some cases their *baaga'akokwaanan* (e.g. Hoffman 1891, pl. 8; Kinietz 1947, pl. 42); normally, women do not play the drum by the strict observance of ceremonial proscriptions. In other situations, these percussion instruments appear alone (e.g. Hoffman 1891, 186). The scrolls and rock-paintings depict the *mitigwakikoog* from two views: in profile and from above (Hoffman

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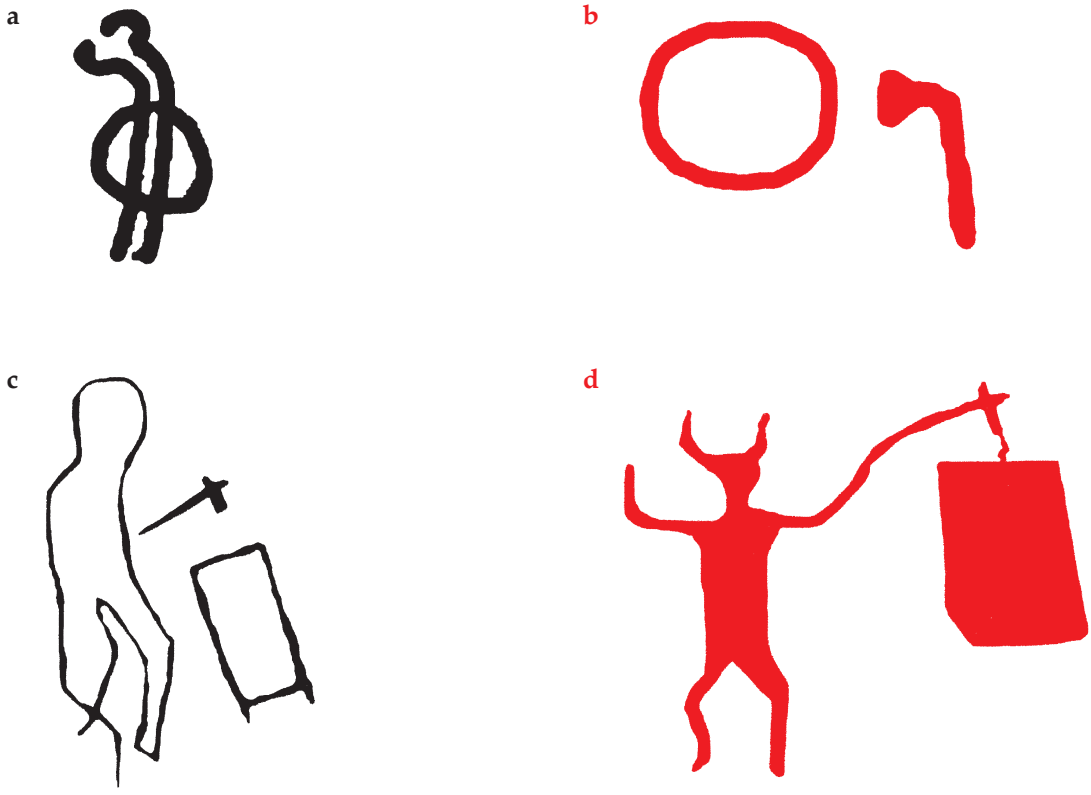


Figure 18. Mitigwakikoog *(water drums) and* baaga'akokwaanan *(drumsticks) (a – birch-bark scroll from Red Lake adapted from a drawing in Hoffman 1891, 186; b – rock-painting from Namakan Narrows adapted from a drawing in Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 40; c – birch-bark scroll from Leech Lake sketched from a photograph in Kinietz 1947, pl. 42; d – rock-painting from Painted Rock Island adapted from a drawing in Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 47).*



Figure 19. *The* makwa bima'adoo *(a – birch-bark scroll adapted from a drawing in Dewdney 1975, 140; b – rock-painting from Red Rock adapted from a drawing in Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 76).*

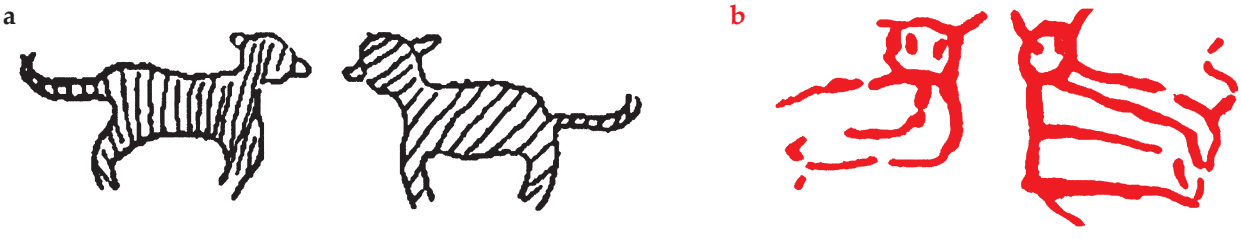


Figure 20. *The paired oppositional* mishibizhiwag *(a – birch-bark scroll from Red Lake adapted from a drawing in Hoffman 1891, pl. 13; b – rock-painting from Barbara Lake adapted from a drawing in Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 142).*

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1891, pl. 8; Kinietz 1947, pl. 42; cf. Hoffman 1891, 186). The former occurs at the Sasaginnigak Lake 2 site (Dewdney 1978, fig. 49; cf. Reagan 1935, pl. 2) and on Picture Rock Island (Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 47). Lipsett (1970, fig. 48) originally recognized the latter perspective at Namakan Narrows. Picture Rock Island is another example from this perspective (Wainwright 1985, fig. 33).

Figure 19 relates examples of the *makwa bima'adoo* from a scroll and a rock-painting site. These are typical of the *makwa bima'adoo* with the bear standing in profile followed by its tracks (e.g. Blessing 1963, fig. 1; Dewdney 1975, fig. 140; Kohl 1860, 292; Mallery 1893, pl. 1; Reagan 1935, pls.1 & 2). Dewdney and Kidd (1967, 111) were the first to ponder the implications of the *makwa bima'adoo* at Sabaskong Bay 1. Five additional cases are found at Silent Rapids and Uskik Lake in Saskatchewan, Lower Manitou Narrows and Agawa in Ontario, and Roche L'Oiseau in Quebec (Conway & Conway 1990, 34; Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 74 & 111; Jones 1981b, figs. 7 & 30; Tassé 1977, fig.10).

Figure 20 compares a couple of opposing *mishibizhiwag* from a scroll with those from the Barbara Lake rock-painting site. The scrolls typically show a set of oppositional *mishibizhiwag* in profile with their heads facing the viewer at the eastern entryway of a *midewigaan* in its planview (see Dewdney 1975). C. Gordon Hill (1983, 14) originally put forward the idea that the *mishibizhiwag* on Barbara Lake was a symbol of the Midewiwin (see Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 143).

The relationship between images is the basis for inferring their possible meanings (Conkey 2001). Table 1 clearly shows that most of the rock-painting sites have only one of the diagnostic Midewiwin signs or sign-pairs. However, consider the significance of the seven sites that have dual co-occurrences. Both Lower Manitou Narrows and Red Rock have *midewigaan* in association with *makwa bima'adoo*. Likewise in another pattern, Sioux Narrows and Mazinaw Lake each show a connection of the *midewigaan* with the *mitigoon*. The remaining occurrences of these two signs are mutually exclusive. The *midewigaanaak* and the *bimojige*-and-*midewayaanag* appear together at the Bloodvein River 1 site, while the *midewigaanaak* and the *mitigwakik*-and-*baaga'akokwaan* co-occur on Picture Rock Island. Similarly, the *midewigaan* accompanies the *mitigwakik*-and-*baaga'akokwaan* on Painted Rock Island. Assuming the contemporaneity of the associated elements at any one locale, together these seven sites represent the strongest cases for the identification of Midewiwin rock-paintings. Yet, they constitute less than one-quarter of those that have the Midewiwin signs and sign-pairs, and only about two per cent of the total observable sites in the Shield from the illustrations currently in publication.

Therefore, the data and analyses of this study support Conway's (1992) hypothesis. Drawing upon oral traditions, Ojibwa elders say the Midewiwin rock-painting sites are rare and identifiable by certain motifs. However, like Agawa, some of the sites may have ambiguous signs relating to the Midewiwin, but we cannot recognize them without the assistance of the descendant communities. Steinbring (1998, 1–8) shows this is possible on the Rice River in Manitoba and on Obabikon Bay in Ontario. Nevertheless, these advances make very little difference to the overall dispersion of the data at present.

Discussion

Any anthropological discussion of the Midewiwin inevitably ensues in the contemplation of its origins. In the regional reference material, the dominant anthropological opinion is that the Midewiwin arose as a 'revitalization movement' after the Central Algonquians had encountered the brunt of European diseases and colonization (e.g. Mason 1981; McMillan & Yellowhorn 2004; Schlesier 1990; Stone & Chaput 1978). The concept of 'revitalization movement' was coined by American anthropologist, Anthony F.C. Wallace (1956). Wallace believed that the term was broad enough to encompass a range of phenomena anthropologists had previously described as 'nativistic', 'reform', 'messianic', 'mass', 'social' and 'charismatic' movements, as well as 'cargo cults', 'religious revivals', 'utopian communities' and 'social revolutions'. It is interesting to note that the architect of the concept did not include the Midewiwin as an example of a revitalization movement in either his original article or his recent reassessment of the concept (Wallace 2003). The Midewiwin does not fit. Unlike the primary examples offered by Wallace, particularly the Handsome Lake religion, the Ghost Dance and the Shawnee Prophet, the more than 45 published Central Algonquian Midewiwin origin narratives lack the most salient feature of revitalization movements — 'the prophet' (Weeks 2009). Thus, the origins of the Midewiwin cannot be traced to any historical founding father, like Wovoka and the introduction of the Ghost Dance.

Nevertheless proponents of Midewiwin origins as a recent revitalization movement commonly point out that the institution's practitioners may have drawn upon ancient symbolism and reinvented their traditions (e.g. Cleland 1985; Hickerson 1970; Swauger 1974; Vastokas & Vastokas 1973). Upon examination

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of over 30 archaeological sites in the Great Lakes-Riverine area which are attributed to the Midewiwin, its antecedents, or by analogy, I conclude that Midewiwin traditions hardly seem reinvented (Weeks 2009). The best examples are Hunter's Point (Fitzgerald & Ramlukan 1995; Fitzgerald *et al.* 1998), Whitefish Island (Weeks 2009; Conway 1977; Brown & Peers 1988), Providence Bay (Conway 1987; Smith & Prevec 2000), Madisonville (cf. Hooten & Willoughby 1920; Drooker 1997), Burntside Lake (cf. Burpee 1927; Kidd 1965; 1981; Mason 2006), Hampsher (cf. Cleland 1985; Cleland *et al.* 1984; Weeks 2009), Anker (Bluhm-Herold *et al.* 1990; Bluhm & Liss 1961), Missaukee (cf. Howey & O'Shea 2006; Mason 2009), Juntunen (McPherron 1967), Johnson (cf. Lovis 2001; Weeks 2009), Younge (cf. Greenman 1937; Murphy & Ferris 1990; Stothers *et al.* 1994), and Pfingstgraef (Fox & Molto 1994). Archaeologists have discovered Midewiwin-like artefacts and features known from ethnography and ethnohistory, such as the remains of birch-bark scrolls, human burials accompanied by mustelid-skin medicine bags with small white shells, effigies and engraved symbolic artefacts, dog sacrifices and the foundations of long, rectangular, brush-arbor structures. Many excavated archaeological sites in the Great Lakes-Riverine area have suites of Midewiwin-like artefacts and features that are presumably associated, contemporaneous, and date to Pre-Contact times (Weeks 2009). This converging body of independent evidence can no longer be ignored.

The archaeological record appears to be characterized by the continuity of Midewiwin-like material culture (i.e. within the approximate array of historical and ethnological diversity up to the early twentieth century) from about AD 900–1880. Four sites date to after European contact. From the latest to the earliest respectively, they are Hunter's Point, Whitefish Island, Providence Bay and Madisonville. Likewise, the eight Pre-Contact sites include Burntside Lake, Hampsher, Anker, Missaukee, Juntunen, Johnson, Younge and Pfingstgraef. The strength of the archaeological support for the Midewiwin's antiquity is predicated on the association of presumably contemporaneous assemblages. If the artefacts and features occur in a few isolated contexts, then the Midewiwin could be interpreted as an amalgamation of diffuse aboriginal elements after contact. However, when so many Midewiwin-like artefacts and features are found together, such as at the Anker site, the plausibility of Pre-Contact origins is difficult to refute.

Anker, located near the southwestern tip of Lake Michigan just south of Chicago, was excavated in 1957 by the University of Illinois and the Chicago Field Museum. The site is dated to the Late Prehistoric period AD 1400–1500, with its chronology based on the cross-dating of artefact styles, the absence of European trade goods, and environmental factors precluding when the area could be occupied due to the water-table fluctuations. Anker is analogous to the artefacts and features associated with the *Jiibay Midewigaan*, or 'Ghost Lodge' (cf. Bluhm-Herold *et al.* 1990; Densmore 1929; Dewdney 1975; Hoffmann 1891; Weeks 2009), including:

- the foundation of a long, rectangular pole structure roughly oriented lengthwise north to south;
- a circular cemetery and mourning area just east of it with graves of both men and women;
- individuals buried with mustelid medicine bags, some of which contained (or are closely associated with) small white shells;
- an antler bird effigy designed to be mounted on a post;
- the remains of a dog sacrifice; and
- much evidence for mass-gatherings and feasting.

The three hearths evenly spaced lengthways along the centre may be indicative of a Ghost Lodge of the Three Fires Alliance of the ancestral Ojibwa, Ottawa and Pottawatomie (Clifton *et al.* 1986). Human remains at Anker correspond archaeologically to the Huber phase of the Oneota culture in Illinois and to the ancestors of Central Algonquians based on the landmark study of prehistoric Native American DNA samples from the Norris Farms Cemetery. The study indicates that haplotype C is the most prominent at Norris Farms and it is highly correlated with the modern Anishinaabeg populations (Merriwether 2006, 829). A very similar configuration of artefacts and features is found at Juntunen in Upper Michigan, which was radiocarbon dated to a couple of centuries earlier than Anker. Thus, archaeological and biological evidence seem to strongly support the notion that Midewiwin origins are 'Pre-Contact'.

The principal evidence is negative for advocates of the 'Post-Contact' and revitalization movement hypotheses of Midewiwin origins. Negative evidence amounts to the inference that the Midewiwin did not exist, because it is not mentioned specifically 'by name' in the earliest colonial documents — the *Jesuit Relations* between 1640 and 1700 (Hickerson 1970, 54). However, the Jesuit journals and correspondence of the officials of New France are replete with fragmentary observations of ceremonies identical to the professional ethnographic descriptions of the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries (e.g. Blair 1911–12; Deleary 1990; Kinietz 1940; Pease & Werner 1934; Thwaites 1896–1901). Further, as early as 1639, Father Jean de Brébeuf wrote about a 'Medicine Dance Society' — synonymous with the Midewiwin — of the

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Central Algonquians, who were probably the Nipissing, a band of Ojibwa (cf. Thwaites 1896–1901, vol. 10 [1897], 207–9; Hall 1997, 75; Steckley 2007, 216–18). This proverbial 'smoking gun' has been overlooked by many ethnohistorians until recently owing to their lack of familiarity with Iroquoian and Algonquian varieties of language and their failure to collaborate with linguists. Archaeologists too are only starting to realize the importance of cultural linguistics. Given the extreme religious intolerance of indigenous traditions by French missionaries and officiates in the initial conquest of the southern border lands of the Shield, we cannot expect them to have mastered the most esoteric aspects of a native language such as that of the Midewiwin, which is itself a secret society typically meeting only twice a year (Ritzenthaler 1978, 755; Rogers 1973).

In addition to ethnohistorians, some eminent art historians, religious-studies scholars, and cultural anthropologists argue that the patent syncretism with Christianity and the use of European trade goods in some of the historical and ethnographic accounts of the Midewiwin ceremonies are evidence of Post-Contact origins (e.g. Bahr 1991; Vastokas 2003; Vecsey 1983). Indeed, as is known from historical documents and ethnographies, the Midewiwin exhibits a wide range of diversity and varying degrees of perceivable sociocultural change. Are syncretism and acculturation indicators of the Midewiwin's origins or merely of its changes in the wake of colonialism? The Post-Contact hypothesis of the Midewiwin's origins is questionable in light of a growing body of evidence that involves the reexamination of the early documents, the analyses of the native origin stories, the compilation of numerous reports from archaeological excavations, and the systematic study of the rock-paintings across the Shield (for a synthesis, see Weeks 2009).

According to Steinbring (1998, 43), 'rock paintings containing Midewiwin symbolism, in fact, form one of the bases for asserting ancient origins for the institution'. While the Shield rock-paintings are notoriously difficult to place within the timeline of the archaeologically invented 'cultures', chronological data are available for five sites that have Midewiwin signs and sign-pairs. They are Silent Rapids, Spider Cave, Lower Manitou Narrows, Sasaginnigak Lake 3, and Nisula. I present here a brief synthesis of these data.

The Silent Rapids site is located within the Churchill River drainage system of northeastern Saskatchewan (Pohorecky & Jones 1968). It bears the mark of the *makwa bima'adoo*. One of the first explorers in the region, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, made earliest reference to the site around AD 1793 (Combe 1801, lxxviii). He noted that his native guides left offerings there. Thus, the site was already present at the point of contact between the British and the Central Algonquians in the area, and it has a minimum *terminus ad quem* date of more than two centuries.

The Spider Cave site is a small waterfront recess situated on the southern tip of the Garden Peninsula on Lake Michigan. A faint *miigis* is painted at the mouth of the cave (Rajnovich 1994, 50). Nearly 100 flint projectile points were excavated from the thin deposits within the little alcove (Cleland & Peske 1968). Most of them exhibit impact fractures. They were likely propelled into the grotto from canoes. Cross-dating of the points' haft styles covers a time span of approximately 300 BC–AD 800. Assuming an association with the points, the painting is therefore more than a millennium old. The Spider Cave site may represent a symbolic relationship between the *miigisan* and *bimojige* in the cultural linguistics of the Midewiwin.

Similarly by the assumption of association, Brian Molyneaux (1983) found a small, triangular stone projectile point at the Lower Manitou Narrows site in northwestern Ontario. The arrowhead lay upon a small ledge beneath a panel with *midewigaan*, *makwa bima'adoo* and *mitigwakik*-and-*baaga'akokwaan* paintings. The point is characteristic of the Late Prehistoric period in the region dating after about AD 900 (Molyneaux pers. comm. 2006; cf. Justice 1987; Wright 1981).

The Sasaginnigak Lake 3 site is found within the Upper Bloodvein River watershed of southeastern Manitoba (Steinbring 1998, 22). One panel has a painted hand reaching for a *miigis* (Steinbring 1998, 37). The paintings are thought to range in date from 1000 BC to AD 1 (Steinbring 1998, 51). The timeframe is based on the 'Winnipeg Principle of Horizontal Banding'. Its premise is that the linear water stains, or 'bands', over the paintings are correlated with estimates of the long-term fluctuations in the lake's levels (Steinbring 1998, 43).

Finally, the Nisula site is positioned on the shore of Lake Cassette and north of the St Lawrence River mouth. It has a *midewigaanaak* painting (Arsenault *et al.* 1996, 34–5). The age estimation of this site is tentatively bracketed between two *terminus a quo* AMS radiocarbon dates and its earliest mention within the French historical documents (Arsenault 2004a). The radiocarbon dates come from two samples of unidentified organic material, probably diatoms, which had become trapped within mineral deposits beneath the paintings (Aubert *et al.* 2004). The sampling was opportunistic. Conservation ethics prohibit intentional damage to the paintings, regardless of how insignifi-

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cant the impact may seem. Hence, the samples consist of miniscule, naturally exfoliated flakes from two of the rock-paintings just above the *midewigaanaak* sign. The radiocarbon dates indicate that the paintings cannot be much older than 3000 years. However, Jesuit Father Pierre-Michel Laure discovered the site in 1732 when the French first visited the lake. Thus, like Silent Rapids, Nisula was likely painted before the so-called 'Contact Period', which varies chronologically by location with the trajectories of expeditions and encounters.

Together these five important rock-painting sites reveal that the Midewiwin may very well have originated in remote antiquity, accepting three assumptions: first, that the signs are correctly identified; second, that the age-estimation techniques are reliable; and third, that the dates correspond to the Midewiwin paintings. Although chronological evidence for the rock-paintings is circumstantial, it does call into question the popular notion that the Midewiwin's origins are relatively recent.

Conclusion

Sometimes indigenous descendant communities have oral traditions that can frame our cognitive archaeological investigations of rock-art research. My case study offers an example from the Canadian Shield. As archaeologists, we should count ourselves fortunate that Ojibwa elders have shared some of their traditional knowledge with us through the narratives of Thor Conway. In particular, their ancestral rock-paintings were made by people of various holistic medical vocations that can be recognized by their frequency and content. Among these 'shamanic' crafts, the best known of them to the anthropologists is the *mide*. The glyphs in the Midewiwin birch-bark scrolls have long been primary sources for interpretation of the rock-paintings. Yet according to the Ojibwa elders, the Midewiwin rock-paintings are rare.

While nearly all of the rock-paintings have corresponding analogues in the scrolls, few graphic elements, or 'signs' and 'sign-pairs', are uniquely Midewiwin. This supports Schoolcraft's (1851) oft-cited observation of the Ojibwa distinction between two types of signs: (1) *kekeewin*, or 'such things generally understood by the tribe'; and (2) *kekeenowin* for the 'teachings of the *medas*' (*contra* Lemaitre 2004). Midewiwin birch-bark scrolls and rock-paintings contain both of them, most of which remain poorly understood. Still, over the last five decades archaeologists have identified six signs and two sign-pairs that are plausibly diagnostic of the Midewiwin. My research synthesizes these studies exploring their implications in light of an Ojibwa oral tradition. Four of the signs include artefacts and features:

- the Midewiwin lodge (*midewigaan*);
- its brush-arbor lattice work (*midewigaanaak*);
- the ceremonial poles (*mitigoon*); and
- the shells used in initiation ceremonies (*miigis*).

The other two signs represent Midewiwin concepts, particularly:

- the bear's path (*makwa bima'adoo*); and
- the set of oppositional great lynxes (*mishibizhiwag*).

The two sign-pairs are:

- the medicine bag and shooting rite (*midewayaan* and *bimojige*); and
- the water drum and drumstick (*mitiwakik* and *baaga'akokwaan*).

My findings support an Ojibwa oral tradition of two elders of the Garden River Reserve, Fred and Dan Pine, who held considerable knowledge of the rock-paintings and the Midewiwin. Only a very small fraction of the total number of known rock-painting sites is likely attributable to the Midewiwin. However, the data are constrained to consideration of the 252 sites for which published illustrations exist. According to one estimate (Rajnovich 1994), at least 150 additional sites are documented, but remain in provincial Ministry of Culture archives. Many of these sites are located in Manitoba and northeastern Ontario (Weeks 2009). Thus, the analytical results indicate that approximately 12 per cent out of about two-thirds of the observed rock-paintings in the Shield have signs and sign-pairs that are unique to the Midewiwin.

Five of the Midewiwin rock-painting sites have chronological information. Age estimation is based on four assumptions:

1. the association with the cross-dating of artefacts;
2. the time-sensitive patterns in the flux of lake levels;
3. the *terminus a quo* AMS radiocarbon dates; and
4. the *terminus ad quem* from the earliest colonial documents.

Two sites indicate that the symbolism of the Midewiwin was already present by the time some of the earliest French and British explorers had reached particular areas of the southern Shield. The other three pre-date the European conquest by centuries. Together these five sites compel us to negate the widely accepted notion of the Post-Contact origins of the Midewiwin, presuming that the dating methods are reliable and that they correspond to the properly identified Midewiwin rock-paintings. Whether or not the converse perspective will now be accepted as a working hypothesis, a considerable degree of uncertainty must be admitted about the characterization of the Midewiwin's beginnings in the midst of revitalization movements (*sensu* Wallace 1956).

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Furthermore, my examination of Midewiwin rock-paintings addresses four topics of wide-ranging interest to archaeologists.

1. Recent discussions have contested the notion that rock-art is archaeological. I contend that my research establishes that it is germane to the field.
2. Rock-art is often considered as a research domain unto itself. However, taken as archaeological features, rock-art studies can address pervasive problems in anthropological discourse, such as the role and limitations of ethnography and ethnohistory in archaeology, and the crisis of representation in the use of emic classification, the revision of deeply entrenched colonialist thinking, and the consideration of cultural linguistics.
3. The archaeological record can provide the crucial evidence that some indigenous North American sodalities most likely originated in remote antiquity (the Midewiwin being a primary example) rather than being recent 'revitalization movements' in reaction to the European conquest. Conclusions drawn entirely from early colonial documents are insufficient. Unfortunately, key reference materials are based on this sole source of information, which results in popular textbooks that misrepresent indigenous institutions to scores of students every year (e.g. Wolf 1982). The anthropological, art history, and religious-studies literature needs to be revised to include the archaeology of rock-art.
4. Contemporary rock-art research tends to favour the shamanic explanation, whereby almost any form of imagery is recognized as 'entoptics' in the 'neuropsychological model'. However, indigenous insights show how this can be a fallacy leading to cases of mistaken identification of culturally significant forms, such as depictions of ceremonial Midewiwin architecture. Also the line is obscured between the most basic distinctions of 'representational' versus 'abstract' designs in rock-art classification systems. Rock-art research broadens the future of cognitive archaeological endeavour.

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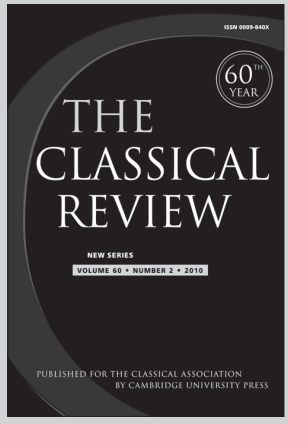
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