

**Occurrences of the Motive North of the  
St. Lawrence River.**

*PRIMARY AREA. GROUP I: NASKAPI,  
MONTAGNAIS, MISTASSINI.*

*Naskapi.*

The Naskapi, in several related bands, inhabit nearly the whole interior of the Labrador peninsula north of the height of land dividing the Arctic watershed from that of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. These people paint their designs with pigments made from bird's eggs and fish upon caribou skin articles of clothing, bags, utensils and the like. Although a little beadwork is done, the whole of Naskapi art may be included under painting. Since these Indians and their neighbours remain today about the most uninfluenced of the Algonkian tribes, we are enabled through them to determine some of the earliest common characteristics of the stock.

In the Naskapi examples (Figs. 12, 13; Plate VIII) considerable uniformity prevails. The common type has a smaller curve or two ellipses superimposed upon the centre of the main double-curve, which generally has sweeping shallow sides. The effect is very artistic. Practically no flowers except the three petal or leaf-like pattern, which is found both north and south of the St. Lawrence, appear in the designs of this tribe. No symbolism has as yet been found, though when more is known we can speak more definitely. The favourite scheme in the Naskapi figures is for the double-curve to be side by side between rows of the common Algonkian serrated stripes. This feature, appearing in the figures, is common from the Penobscots northward to the Naskapi, and is probably one of the most fundamental features of the whole eastern field.

An isolated example of the curve from the Labrador Eskimo, probably derived from the Naskapi, is shown in Fig. 13 (b).

*Montagnais.*

The bands of Indians who hunt south of the height of land in the Labrador peninsula southward to the St. Lawrence river

and the gulf are known collectively as Montagnais. Though divided into numerous local groups or tribes through this extensive tract, their culture follows certain lines of similarity, forming two general types, that of the interior and that of the St. Lawrence coast. The art motives of both are fairly homogeneous except that the characteristic etching on birch bark so prevalent among the interior divisions is practically absent on the coast, where birch bark is very scarce. The art techniques of moose hair embroidery and painting, however, were of common distribution, having given place in later times to beadwork, silk embroidery (the chain stitch), and a form of embroidery consisting of animal wool braid sewed upon leather or cloth to form designs. This braided woolen embroidery is quite intricate. Out of wool combed from the pelts of wild animals, threads are woven into cords in the manner shown in the accompanying sketch, as analysed by Mr. W. C. Orchard (Fig. 14). This may be termed a double braid on a double thread foundation.

Among the interior river and lake Montagnais, one of the richest fields of art lies in the already mentioned birch bark etchings. In this the designs are produced upon the surfaces of birch bark receptacles, baskets, etc., by scraping away the dark coating of the winter bark, leaving the light under surface as a background. The patterns consist of thin paper-bark stencils made by folding and biting designs in them with the teeth. These are tacked as patterns over the parts to be ornamented and scratched away round the edges. Examples of this work are shown (Plate IX), and also a set of designs copied from other specimens (Fig. 15).

The former design types fall only in a very general way within the double-curve province. As will be observed, the motive is much obscured by the broad line figures and the spreading elevated interiors. They are, however, very artistic. These figures are known among the people as trees, spruce or balsam, only in the most general indefinite way. They convey no symbolism so far as I have been able to learn. In the beadwork, silk and wool cord embroidery, floral patterns are most commonly employed, the figures in general being known as *wápurwun*<sup>1</sup> "flower". In some examples, however, an animal realism creeps

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<sup>1</sup>γ (Greek gamma) represents a velar sonant stop.

in, the combination being recognized in the name. For instance, the figure in Plate X b shows a design known as *NEmec wapur-wun* "fish flower", a combined plant and fish form being quite apparent. Other examples from the Montagnais woman's cap and beaded articles appear in Fig. 16. (See also Plates XI-XIII.)

The Montagnais show a strong tendency toward the modification of their simple double-curve designs into floral forms, this becoming more intense as they occur westward. From the western borders of the Montagnais we pass to the Têtes de Boule and Mistassini.

*Mistassini, Têtes de Boule, and Huron.*

The Mistassini, who hunt in the country around Lake Mistassini and trade at Rupert's House and Lake St. John, have more artistic tendencies than the Montagnais proper, with whom they are related. The former decorate articles of clothing, bags, and ornaments very profusely with beadwork and silk embroidery. In their designs, flowers and plant forms are most noticeable, though very often moulded into double-curve forms. Some examples of these handsome patterns are shown in Fig. 17. Here also inquiry fails so far to yield anything more definite than mere floral pattern making. The bitten paper-bark copy patterns supply practically all of the motives among these people. (See also Plates XIV and XV.)

Upon the waters of St. Maurice river, Que., dwell the Têtes de Boule, intermediate in type of culture and dialect between the eastern Ojibwa branches and the Montagnais. I have only recently begun investigations among them. Their beadwork shows the ruling motive to be floral, though tinged strongly with the double-curve motive.

The Hurons of Lorette, most probably through contact with the eastern Algonkian tribes since their disintegration, show strongly the influence of the double-curve element in their moose-hair embroidery. It is, however, possible that they have inherited their double-curve forms from their Iroquois parentage. Fig. 18 shows some examples. (See also Plate XVII.)

### Adjacent Areas Westward.

#### *GROUP II: CREE, OJIBWA, BLACKFOOT.*

Ranging from the Montagnais westward almost to the Rocky mountains, we find the double-curve with weakening force pervading the designs of the Cree and Blackfoot. In the beadwork of both, as well as in some Cree quill work, the double-curve appears quite frequently, often in familiar guise, again almost lost in floral complexes. Even the Sarsi share the motive with the Blackfoot. Examples are shown in Figs. 19 and 20.

The Ojibwa, contrary to what might be expected, show even less of the double-curve than their neighbours, their art being so overwhelmingly floral. One example is shown in Fig. 21, though of doubtful identity.

The Missisauga, nevertheless, are so close to the true area of the double-curve that they employ it quite commonly.

#### *GROUP IV: SAUK AND FOX, MENOMINI, POTTAWATOMI.*

In a rather ill defined though probably a wide area in former times, south of the Great Lakes, among the northern members of the central Algonkian group, we find a distinctive series of designs, forms of which appear in Figs. 22 and 23. They occur with great frequency, chiefly among the Sauk and Fox, Menomini, and Pottawatomi, in beadwork and quillwork, and we also find them in Winnebago designs (Fig. 24). Here, if we pay attention to the foundation unit, we will observe the true incurving brackets enclosing interior decorations. This is identically the double-curve motive, modified to the extent of having very much broadened or thickened lines. This interesting series is closely related to the true double-curve series, showing only a divergence in detail. No studies have as yet been undertaken in this field of art, though Mr. A. B. Skinner reports that the Menomini, among whom these designs are very characteristic, attach no symbolism to them, considering them all in a vague way as floral decorative effects.

The motive in this region is so strong that it has been conveyed to Oklahoma by the central Algonkian tribes who have moved there, and it is now to be seen in the art of the Osage (Plate XVIII,) Kansa, and other southern Plains tribes. No information is, however, available from the collectors regarding possible interpretation or symbolism.

#### **Summary.**

The accompanying map (Fig. 25) shows some general conclusions on the distribution of the prevailing types of designs. The tribal designations, however, only give general locations, not by any means the tribal boundaries.

As a start in the study of the distribution of art motives of the northern, eastern, and central tribes, I present the following arrangement, giving the art characteristics in the whole general region where the double-curve is found. This scheme is only a suggestion, as, up to this point, the observations bearing upon all except the strictly northeastern divisions are based upon museum collections. Consequently the interpretations, except that presented under group I, may later have to undergo considerable alteration.