

Article XII.—A ROCK PAINTING OF THE THOMPSON
RIVER INDIANS, BRITISH COLUMBIA.

By JAMES TEIT.

Edited, from notes of the collector, by FRANZ BOAS.

In the interior of British Columbia numerous rock paintings are found, most of which are laid on in red ochre. Many of these have the appearance of having been made quite recently. Mr. James Teit has had the good fortune to find one near Spence's Bridge, B. C., which the Indians were able to explain in detail.

According to the custom of the Thompson River Indians, who form a branch of the Salishaw family, girls on reaching maturity must retire to the hills where they undergo a long ceremony of purification and make offerings to secure good luck. At the end of this period they record their offerings and the ceremonies that they have performed on a boulder. The subjects of these records are therefore identical in many cases, and all the women of the tribe are able to interpret their meaning. Mr. Teit found a boulder of this sort near Skaitók,¹ about one mile northeast of Spence's Bridge. It is partly imbedded in the ground and faces northward and southward. The paintings are all on the south side. The size of the boulder is about six feet square, and it rises to a height of four feet above the ground. The paintings occupy a space about 5½ feet by 4 feet in size.

The explanations were given by Waxtko,² an old woman living at Spence's Bridge. In giving her explanations she stated that she had made paintings of the same character when undergoing the ceremonial of purification at the time when she reached maturity, and that she was perfectly familiar with the meanings of all the designs. According to her statement the paintings were made by various girls at the time when they reached maturity. This is borne out by the appearance of the paintings, some of which are quite fresh, while others appear old and indistinct.

¹ *δ=0* in German *voll*.

² *x* aspirate guttural, like *ch* in Scotch *loch*.