ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the relationship between the organization of labour and usewear and artifact distributions from the floor areas of three aboriginal plank houses excavated in the Greater Lower Columbia River region. These houses date to the late precontact/early contact period, from ca. 1400 AD to 1830 AD. Lithic usewear analysis on tools excavated from these houses was used to identify the range and nature of extractive and maintenance activities carried out within the houses during occupation. Spatial distribution analysis of usewear traces and various artifact types began with identifying and controlling for cultural and natural site-formation processes by a careful selection of the sample. The analysis continued by examining the frequency of occurrence of usewear traces and various tool types in the northern, central and southern areas of the long, narrow plank houses, areas hypothesized to have been occupied by peer groups of different social ranks, as documented ethnohistorically and projected into the late precontact period. Presence/absence distribution analysis indicated that members of all social ranks were engaged in each of the eight major maintenance and extractive tasks determined by the usewear study, such as butchery, woodworking, and the working of hides, whereas frequency distribution analysis indicated that there were significant variations in the intensity of engagement in such activities.

These determinations suggest that labour was organized by degree of engagement in a given activity rather than by including or excluding such activities from the domain of all social ranks within a plank house. It was also determined that the basic organization of labour differed in each plank house even though the tools used and the activities carried out were the same. Thus while technical solutions to sedentary foraging were the same among the inhabitants of these houses, organizational solutions differed significantly even among contemporaneous households only several kilometers from each other. While a number of implications of these findings are proposed, caution should be used in extrapolating the results of this study deeply into prehistory or widely in space until several additional analyses (e.g. floral and faunal remains) are completed and integrated with the results of this study.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wonderful parents,
Margit and Donald Smith,
and my brothers, Mark and Julian.

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The years of work summarized by this dissertation included the thrill of discovery, the mind-numbing work of classification and data-management, and, in the un-funded last four years, amazing financial acrobatics. Luck was involved in my surviving the traps which prevent many grad students from completing the PhD, but I also have had the best start one could wish for, in my parents, Don and Margit, both university professors. They first sparked my interest in archaeology with a trip to Mexico in 1984, and have helped keep me going since I started my undergraduate education that same year. They showed me by example that there is no substitute for hard work, the best lesson I know. My brothers, Mark and Julian, continue to make life exciting and fulfilling.

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All the mistakes in this dissertation are my responsibility.

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