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.

In 1991, while doing my MA at Portland State University, I began a professional and friendly relationship with Professor Ken Ames, now chair of PSU’s Department of Anthropology and President of the Society for American Archaeology. Ken has become my friend and mentor, and I’m very grateful for his constant support and encouragement. I look forward to continuing our (apparently infinite) research projects. At PSU I also have to thank Connie Cash, the Office Manager, who has kept me on top of the red tape, first as an MA student, and then as an Adjunct Lecturer, and for cutting through that red tape when I was entangled.

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All the mistakes in this dissertation are my responsibility.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval ............................................................................................................................ ii
Abstract............................................................................................................................. iii
Dedication ......................................................................................................................... iv
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... v
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... vii
List of Tables ..................................................................................................................... x
List of Figures .................................................................................................................... xii

Chapter One: Introduction and Theoretical Context................................................... 1
  1.1 Stratified Foragers and Anthropological Theory ..............................................1
  1.2 Contributions to the Wapato Valley Archaeology Project and
      Northwest Coast Archaeology and Anthropology ........................................2
  1.3 Contributions to Archaeology and General Anthropological Theory ............3
  1.4 Scope and Methodology ...................................................................................4
  1.5 Dissertation Organization .................................................................................5

Chapter Two: Household Archaeology on the Northwest Coast..................................7
  2.1 Theoretical Context (i): Household Theory and Archaeology ........................ 7
  2.2 Theoretical Context (ii): Household Archaeology and Labour Organization
      on the Northwest Coast ....................................................................................9
  2.2.1 Maurer, c. 4,800 BP ................................................................................11
  2.2.2 Paul Mason, c. 3,000 BP ........................................................................11
  2.2.3 Keatley Creek, c. 2,000 BP .....................................................................11
  2.2.4 Tualdad Altu, c. 1,700 BP .......................................................................12
  2.2.5 Dionisio Point, c. 1,600 BP .....................................................................12
  2.2.6 Ozette, c. 500 BP ....................................................................................12
  2.2.7 Meier, c. 500 BP .....................................................................................13
  2.2.8 Cathlapotle, c. 500 BP .............................................................................14
  2.2.9 Sbabadid, c. 200 BP ...............................................................................14
  2.2.10 Cla-Cle-Lah, 200 BP .............................................................................15
  2.2.11 Summary ...............................................................................................15
  2.3 Cultural Context: Stratified Foragers of the GLCR........................................16
      2.3.1 The Material Plank House ............................................................................26
      2.3.2 The Social Plank House .............................................................................27

Chapter Three: Site Formation Processes .................................................................29
  3.1 The Meier and Cathlapotle Sites .................................................................29
     3.1.1 Chronology .................................................................................................30
     3.1.2 Architecture ...............................................................................................32
  3.2 Cultural and Natural Formation Processes ....................................................36
     3.2.1 Cultural Formation Processes .....................................................................37
3.2.2 Natural Formation Processes .................................................................57
3.2.3 Analytical Formation Processes.................................................................63
3.3 Summary of Site-Formation Process Evaluations ........................................64
3.4 Modes of Deposition..................................................................................65
  3.4.1 Summary of Modes of Deposition.........................................................69
3.5 Summary of Site Formation Processes ......................................................69

Chapter Four: Usewear Analysis .......................................................................73
  4.1 Usewear Analysis Methods.........................................................................73
    4.1.1 Principles and Literature Review.........................................................73
    4.1.2 Phase 1: Replicative Experiments.......................................................75
    4.1.3 Phase 2: Blind Testing .........................................................................79
    4.1.4 Phase 3: Examination of Artifacts .......................................................81
    4.1.5 Summary of Usewear Study Methodology............................................82
  4.2 Usewear Analysis Results...........................................................................82
    4.2.1 The Lithic Sample..................................................................................83
    4.2.2 Utilized Element Functional Types .......................................................84
    4.2.3 Dimensions of Artifacts Bearing Utilized Elements.............................91
    4.2.4 Usewear Codes...................................................................................96
  4.3 Summary Comments on Work Actions, Worked Material and
       Activities Identified in the Usewear Analysis...........................................111
    4.3.1 Work Actions......................................................................................111
    4.3.2 Worked Materials................................................................................112
  4.4 Discussion and Conclusions on the Usewear Study.................................112

Chapter Five: Spatial Distribution Analysis .....................................................114
  5.1 Spatial Distribution Analysis Methods .......................................................114
    5.1.1 Hypotheses and Test Expectations......................................................114
    5.1.2 Analytical Units and Material Correlates of Behaviour .......................116
    5.1.3 Nine Data Groups and their Membership...........................................117
    5.1.4 Measures: Counts, Densities, Percentages..........................................128
    5.1.5 Tests of Statistical Significance..........................................................131
    5.1.6 Synthesis.............................................................................................133
  5.2 Spatial Distribution Analysis Results .........................................................133
    5.2.1 Chi-Squared Test Results......................................................................133
      5.2.1.1 Group 1: Gross Sample Characteristics..........................................134
      5.2.1.2 Group 2: UE Function Categories..................................................137
      5.2.1.3 Group 3: UE Work Action Categories............................................141
      5.2.1.4 Group 4: Lithic, Bone/Antler, Wood & Hide Chaine Operatoires.143
      5.2.1.5 Group 5: Lithic Production Details................................................152
      5.2.1.6 Group 6: Debitage Details .........................................................155
      5.2.1.7 Group 7: Major Raw Material Production Stages..........................156
      5.2.1.8 Group 8: Gross Worked Material Categories.................................159
      5.2.1.9 Group 9: Gross Hunting Categories.............................................161
  5.3 Activity Class Analysis .............................................................................163
  5.4 Summary Comments on Distributions .....................................................169
Chapter Six: Conclusions .............................................................................................173

6.1 Conclusions ........................................................................................................173
   6.1.1 Inducted Conclusions: Lithic Usewear Analysis and the Range
       and Nature of Activities Among the Plank Houses ...............................173
   6.1.2 Labour Organization Among the Plank House Sites .........................175
   6.1.3 Deduced Conclusions: Activity Group Analysis and the Range
       and Nature of Activities Within the Plank Houses ...............................176
   6.1.4 What Was the Same and What Was Different .................................180
   6.1.5 Household Labour Organization .......................................................181

6.2 Theoretical Implications .................................................................182

6.3 Suggestions for Future Research ..................................................185

Bibliography ...................................................................................................................188

Tables ..............................................................................................................................207

Figures.............................................................................................................................258

Appendix A, Figure A1 Sample of Artifacts from Meier Site..........................309
Appendix A, Figure A2 Sample of Artifacts from Meier Site..........................310
Appendix A, Figure A3 Sample of Artifacts from Meier Site..........................311
Appendix A, Figure A4 Sample of Artifacts from Meier Site..........................312
Appendix A, Figure A5 Sample of Artifacts from Cathlapotle Site..................313
Appendix A, Figure A6 Sample of Artifacts from Cathlapotle Site..................314
Appendix A, Figure A7 Sample of Artifacts from Cathlapotle Site..................315

Appendix B, Figure B1 Microphotograph of Unutilized Chert Flake Edge .......316
Appendix B, Figure B2 Microphotograph of Chert Edge used to Harvest
       Plant Matter ..............................................................................................317
Appendix B, Figure B3 Microphotograph of Chert Edge used to Cut Flesh ......318
Appendix B, Figure B4 Microphotograph of Chert Edge used to Shave Wood ....319
Appendix B, Figure B5 Microphotograph of Chert Edge used to Scrape Antler ....320
Appendix B, Figure B6 Microphotograph of Chert Edge used to Scrape Bone ....321
Appendix B, Figure B7 Microphotograph of Chert Edge used to Saw Leather ....322
Appendix B, Figure B8 Scanning Electron Micrograph of Microflaking ..........323
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1    Schematic Representation of the Household ............................................208
Table 2    Properties of Selected Plank Houses Excavated on the Northwest Coast 209
Table 3    Scales of Identity and Interaction on the Northwest Coast.......................210
Table 4    Cultural and Economic Characteristics of Early-Historic Northwest Coast Societies ...................................................................................................211
Table 5    Functional Inferences from 16 Basic Artifact Types................................212
Table 6    Chipped & Ground Stone Production Within Plank Houses....................214
Table 7    Bone/Antler, Wood and Hide Production Within Plank Houses..............216
Table 8    Summary of Site Formation Processes and Attendant Analytical Strategies .........................................................................................................................218
Table 9    Usewear Replication Studies 1991-1999.................................................220
Table 10   Blind Test Results ...................................................................................221
Table 11   Counts of Variables 1-20 in the Meier and Cathlapotle Samples...........222
Table 12   Counts of Variables 21-40 in the Meier and Cathlapotle Samples.......223
Table 13   Counts of Variables 41-60 in the Meier and Cathlapotle Samples.......224
Table 14   Counts of Variables 61-80 in the Meier and Cathlapotle Samples.......225
Table 15   Counts of Variables 81-100 in the Meier and Cathlapotle Samples.......226
Table 16   Usewear Variable States for 623 Utilized Elements...............................228
Table 17   Usewear Code Modes .............................................................................244
Table 18   Variable Membership of Nine Data Groups for Spatial Analysis ............245
Table 19   Variable Membership of Chaine-Operatoire Stages...............................247
Table 20   Chi-Squared Battery: Meier and Cathlapotle Sites ................................248
Table 21   Chi-Squared Battery: Meier Site North, Central and South Zones ......250
Table 22   Chi-Squared Battery: Cathlapotle House I North, Central and South Zones .........................................................................................................................252
Table 23   Chi-Squared Battery: Cathlapotle House IV North, Central and South Zones .........................................................................................................................254
Table 24   Counts, Percentages and Densities for Eight Activity Classes Per Plankhouse .........................................................................................................................256
Table 25  Summary of Household Function Participation by Social Rank in the
Sampled Plank Houses..........................................................................................257
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1  Study Area ............................................................................................... 259
Figure 2  Schematic Illustration of Excavated NWC Plank Houses ....................... 260
Figure 3  Regional Chronology ............................................................................... 261
Figure 4  Meier and Cathlapotle Site Locations ..................................................... 262
Figure 5  Meier Excavations, Wall and Hearth Features and Sampled Units ............ 263
Figure 6  Cathlapotle Excavations, Wall and Hearth Features and Sampled Units .... 264
Figure 7  Meier and Cathlapotle 14C Dates ............................................................ 265
Figure 8  Historic Illustrations of GLCR Plank House Interiors ............................. 266
Figure 9  Meier Bench Stratigraphy ........................................................................ 267
Figure 10 Cathlapotle Bench and Cellar Stratigraphy .............................................. 268
Figure 11 Meier Cellar Stratigraphy ........................................................................ 269
Figure 12 Meier Hearth Stratigraphy ...................................................................... 270
Figure 13 Cathlapotle Hearth Stratigraphy .............................................................. 271
Figure 14 Meier Plank House Reconstruction ......................................................... 272
Figure 15 Cathlapotle Plank House Reconstruction ............................................... 273
Figure 16 Whisker Plots of Facility Distribution of Used and Unused Artifacts ....... 274
Figure 17 Whisker Plots of Facility Distribution of Debris Items ............................. 275
Figure 18 Whisker Plots of Facility Distribution of Chipped Lithics ....................... 276
Figure 19 Whisker Plots of Facility Distribution of Lithics Projectile Points .......... 277
Figure 20 Whisker Plots of Facility Distribution of Hide Scrapers ......................... 278
Figure 21 Cathlapotle Midden Stratigraphy ............................................................ 279
Figure 22 Selected Contemporaneous Pits in the Meier House ............................... 280
Figure 23 Selected Contemporaneous Pits in Cathlapotle Houses ........................... 281
Figure 24 Meier Site Within Plank House Artifact Flow Diagram ........................... 282
Figure 25 Cathlapotle Within Plank House Artifact Flow Diagram ........................ 283
Figure 26 Meier and Cathlapotle Artifact Assemblages by Excavation Level ........... 284
Figure 27 Meier and Cathlapotle Feature Elevations .............................................. 285
Figure 28 Meier Site Raw Material by Excavation Level ........................................ 286
Figure 29 Cathlapotle Raw Material by Excavation Level ..................................... 287