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Coast Salish Social Complexity, Community Ties, and Resistance: Using Mortuary Analysis to Identify Changes in Coast Salish Society Before, During, and After the Early Colonial Period

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Abstract *Consistently, Coast Salish mortuary practices demonstrate one element in common, even as burial customs have developed over the course of the Marpole Period to the present day: resistance to authority and societal pressures. Building upon the seminal work of Suttles (1958), Thom (1995, 1998), and Mathews (2006, 2014), this study offers a comprehensive examination of pre- and post-contact Coast Salish burial practices, as well as their corresponding emphasis on social rank, status, or loss of social stratification as identified in the mortuary record. Beginning with an examination of the evolution of ranked social classes in Marpole and Late Period midden, cairn, and mound burials, I conclude with a detailed discussion of enclosed “grave house” burials (originating with Euro-American contact) and the late nineteenth century development of the Indian Shaker Church to demonstrate how recent burial practices are a reaction to and reflection of settler colonial encroachment upon Coast Salish territories. In doing so, I provide evidence that Coast Salish societies grew increasingly unified against non-Native presence at the turn of the century, exchanging previous individual and class-based social rank systems for community-oriented identification that aided in retaining Coast Salish spirituality, access to land, and kinship networks during times of intense cultural turmoil. Compared to Marpole and Late Periods, which witnessed fluctuations in status and resistance to elite authority figures, ethnographic Coast Salish burial phases reveal that certain aspects of pre-colonial Coast Salish social structure were sacrificed to foster tribal solidarity against foreign imposition during the Early Colonial era. Using an interdisciplinary approach advocated by Morris (1992) that combines multiple strands of evidence including grave goods, demography, spatiality, ritual, history, ethnography, and comparative studies, I employ an anthropological lens to analyze the subversive nature of past and present Coast Salish social organization.*

Keywords

Coast Salish, mortuary studies, settler colonialism, cultural change, archaeology of death, burial practices, social status/class/rank, social organization, community/belonging, Indian Shaker Church, Christianity

Coast Salish Burial Practices as Adaptations to and Reflections of Social Change

Coast Salish communities belong to a broad, anthropologically defined culture group of Indigenous nations who share related languages, cultural customs, and geography of the southern Northwest Coast. Unlike other Northwest Coast culture groups, the Coast Salish are rarely treated as one unified group and are instead referred to by their regional divisions. Reflecting the current academic literature, most case studies referenced in this article originate from central (including the Lower Fraser Valley, southern Vancouver Island, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca) and southern (defined here as Puget Sound) Coast Salish territories, with some comparisons made between neighboring non-Coast Salish groups exhibiting similar burial practices, such as the Nuu-chah-nulth to the west and Chinook to the south. While identifying how social rank, social class, and eventual egalitarianism (or the absence of highly stratified systems) constitute distinctive stages that correspond to Coast Salish burial phases, a certain similarity reveals itself, despite the tremendous diversity associated with such mortuary practices. Coast Salish burial practices often resist, or originate in resistance to, constrictive power structures. I provide evidence for this characteristic by charting significant changes spanning from midden burial of the Marpole Period¹ (2500 to 1000 BP), mound and cairn burial of the Late Period (1000 to 500 BP), elevated canoe and box interment prominent during the Early Colonial Period or contact

era (late 1700s), grave house structures of the mid to late nineteenth century, and Indian Shaker Church funerary practices beginning in the 1880s (see Table 1). In addition, I track less frequently discussed phases including cremation, cave burial, and scaffold interment, all of which represent outliers within the Coast Salish mortuary world.

This plethora of burial practices spanning time and space highlight the dynamism that defines Coast Salish communities. Linking mortuary practices of the distant past to those encountered within contemporary Coast Salish settings illustrate Coast Salish continuity and a culture informed, though not necessarily defined by or limited to, the past. Reinterpreting modern mortuary practices, specifically those of the contact era and subsequent Indian Shaker Church Period, demonstrates Coast Salish solidarity and unity—parting ways with the social class and rank distinctions previously integral to burial practices. This is not to say that such differences were completely forgotten or abandoned in recent times, but rather, that newer burial practices emphasize community identity and communal belonging in favor of identities rooted in ascribed or achieved status (Binford 1971; Thom 1995). Spanning 2,500 years, these complicated mortuary transitions represent negotiation, accommodation, and resistance to internal and external power imbalances, standing in stark contrast to how Coast Salish society has been presented in historical literature—as monoliths representing a less-developed cultural “backwater,” in which “the Northern maritime tribes...represented the cultural climax...with their impressive totem poles, chiefly systems,

¹ I use archaeologically defined Coast Salish culture periods (not to be mistaken with general Northwest Coast culture periods) to classify and categorize changes in Coast Salish burial practices. These phases are based on Grier and Angelbeck's 2017 article, “Tradeoffs in Coast Salish Social Action: Balancing Autonomy, Inequality, and Sustainability” in *The Give and Take of Sustainability: Archaeological and Anthropological Perspectives on Tradeoffs*. To some, such as Roy (2010), these phases represent academic jargon inaccessible to the tribal communities that they aim to represent. Acknowledging this, I realize that archaeological categories do not often align with Indigenous ways of interacting with or understanding the past, and can be used as a form of academic violence to delegitimize Native claims. As such, this article provides first person, archival, and ethnographic accounts, as well as oral history excerpts, as an anthropological complement to archaeological classifications. Doing so emphasizes that Coast Salish burial practices remain relevant even in recent times and are not solely consigned to the past.

Table 1. Descriptions of Coast Salish Mortuary Periods

Years BP	Coast Salish Mortuary Period	Characteristics Introduced
3500–2500	Locarno Beach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small class of elites • Fluid social rank • Labrets as status signifier • Semi-permanent villages • Small village populations
2500–2000	Early Marpole (“Old Musqueam”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to Locarno Beach Period • Flexed burials in shallow middens • Burning food for deceased • Cave and rockshelter burials
2000–1600	Middle Marpole (“Beach Grove”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few grave goods • Large winter villages • Large, multifamily longhouses • Little warfare • Resource surplus • Strong economy
1600–1000	Late Marpole (“Bowker Creek”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rock cairn and earthen mound burials • Elevated burials for elite • Large class of elites, with small classes of commoners and slaves • Shift from labrets to cranial deformation for elite individuals
1000–550	Late	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual cairn and mound burials for majority of population • Few slave burials • Grave good differentiation • Expanding population of elites and expanding social networks • “Inverted pear” shaped social stratification solidifies • Increased intertribal warfare and fortified villages • More utilization of marine resources
250–130	Early Colonial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevated canoe burials for political authority figures • Elevated box burials for commoners • Cave burials for diseased, resulting from epidemics • Introduction of scaffold burials and grave houses to discourage looting/trespassing • Diverse mortuary practices • Frequent conflicts • Various sized longhouses dependent upon social class • Loss of land and cultural customs resulting from Euro-American imposition
130–current	Indian Shaker Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mourning parades • Elaborate funeral services • Cemeteries • No grave goods • Mortuary taboos • Less emphasis on class/status • Coast Salish, Catholic, and Protestant amalgamation • Indian Shaker Church unifies Coast Salish communities by mirroring kinship ties and travel of pre-colonial era and emphasizing importance of solidarity against colonialism

theatrical winter ceremonials, and large-scale art” (Miller 2013:204; see also Boas 1910 and Duthuit 1946).

Interpreting Social Worlds Through Mortuary Analysis

Mortuary practices communicate socio-cultural values and attitudes associated with both the dead and the living (Tainter 1978; Morris 1992). When analyzed in a specific societal context, it becomes clear that burial practices are not haphazard or random, but instead represent intentional activities that communicate social differences (Watson 1994; Mathews 2014). Examining various aspects of mortuary practices (quantity and quality of grave goods, demographics of the deceased, grave location and spatiality, position of remains, funerary rituals, etc.) highlight important distinctions associated with the deceased based upon ascribed versus achieved status, social class, age, sex, or gender (Binford 1971; Saxe 1971; Pearson et al. 1989; Morris 1992). Simply put, studying the dead tells us about the living. In addition, changes in burial practices illuminate broader societal changes (Morris 1992). Although social class differentiation is often quite stable, in that major fluctuations are rare, the ways in which social class manifests itself in burial practices changes frequently (Cannon 1989). Reflecting lived realities where those who hold the most power create meaning and control social narratives, those in prestigious or elite positions often dictate how religious or ceremonial symbols are defined and enacted in the mortuary record (Bloch 1986; Morris 1987). Attempting to subvert the social hierarchy, other classes might co-opt elite symbols or grave goods as their own, though, as Morris (1987) states, these attempts can be quashed by elites possessing greater power to re-define these symbols or create new ones to challenge lower classes. All the while, the social order is presented as a natural phenomenon, especially for those occupying the lowest rungs of society (Bloch 1986).

Though Morris’ 1992 methodological study, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity*, references Classical Greek and Roman mortuary studies in the context of broader societal changes, his interdisciplinary approach is equally useful when examining Indigenous examples, most notably those of Coast Salish origin. Though mortuary practices alone do not account for societal change, when contextualized and combined with data provided by other sources—whether they be literary, oral, or material—burial practices gain credence as a viable avenue through which to interpret the past. Sole reliance upon historical literature has proven an inadequate and prejudicial means of comprehending those who came before us, as has the scholarly preoccupation with studying ancient elites, whose positions are rarely characteristic of society at large (Morris 1987). Only by using multiple sources, as well as examining a variety of experiences representative of many ranks of society, will mortuary studies contribute to a well-rounded understanding of how societies change and how individuals respond to such change. Grave goods, burial demographics, and even the deceased themselves share relationships with the broader political sphere that cannot be ignored. By examining Coast Salish reactions to the pressures of authority throughout the Marpole Period to the early twentieth century, I provide a fresh perspective on Coast Salish society that considers multiple social classes and historical events. As demonstrated by the latter half of this article, taking into consideration historical sources and ethnographic accounts is of utmost importance if burial practices are to provide relevance for contemporary Coast Salish archaeology. Anthropologically speaking, to neglect the recent period is to deny the existence and vibrancy of Coast Salish culture today. Though colonialism has undoubtedly altered many aspects of Coast Salish social life, burial practices reveal that resistance—a thread that weaves itself through all periods of recent Coast Salish history—perseveres.

Social Organization of the Locarno Beach Period (3500 to 2500 BP)

The earliest recorded phase of Coast Salish burials that display significant social complexity is associated with middens originating during the Marpole Period, dating from 2500 to 1000 BP (Clark 2013; Grier and Angelbeck 2017). Previously, during the Locarno Beach Period (3500 to 2500 BP), Coast Salish society was characterized by semi-permanent villages, small populations, and fluid social rank with some individuals donning labrets as signs of achieved status (Angelbeck and Grier 2012). A type of body modification, labrets were not permanent, and could be implemented, enlarged, or abandoned at any time, pointing towards social flexibility as an explanation for the adaptability of this bodily alteration (Keddie 1981). Locarno Beach Period remains suggest that power was centralized amongst a select few hereditary leaders, with most of the population comprising a commoner class (Angelbeck and Grier 2012). Prior to Locarno Beach settlements, communities were highly mobile and, with increased equal access to resources, notably egalitarian. Fewer grave goods are associated with pre-Locarno Beach graves, signaling that differences in social status may have been less prominent (Burley and Knusel 1989; Grier and Angelbeck 2017).

Midden Burials of the Marpole Period (2500 to 1000 BP)

The early Marpole Period (2500 to 2000 BP), also known as the “Old Musqueam” phase, maintains similarities to the earlier Locarno Beach Period, with major differences emerging in the middle Marpole (2000 to 1600 BP), or “Beach Grove” phase. Middle Marpole communities displayed “large winter villages with enormous, multifamily planked houses, an economy based on stored salmon supplemented with other seasonal resources, [and] highly developed art” (Matson and Coupland 1995:241). Achieved status and prestigious occupations defined individual

positions of social rank that valued household leaders as authority figures, and strong economies “evolved along with the elite, who in turn gained additional influence via economic control by using increased production as an opportunity to compete for prestige” (Mathews 2006:50; see also Moss 1993; Matson and Coupland 1995; Thom 1995). Villages were autonomous and subject to the rule of household leaders, rather than dependent upon regional governments (Angelbeck and Grier 2012). As household leaders sought similar individuals for marriage, these unions contributed to increased social networks that connected autonomous villages via travel and trade and reinforced the importance of the upper class (Grier 2003).

Marpole burials are characterized by flexed remains placed within shallow shell midden pits located adjacent to Coast Salish village sites (Burley and Knusel 1989; Cybulski 1992; McKay 1999; Brown 2003). Mimicking earlier culture phases, graves contain the occasional exotic grave good (associated with particularly elite individuals), with most burials likely interring poor or lower class people who accounted for a bulk of the population (Burley and Knusel 1989; Ham 1998). Few remains exhibit signs of violence—signaling stability and decreased warfare during the middle Marpole (Cybulski 1994). Marpole-era burials, such as the Tsawwassen middens located near the mouth of the Fraser River along the Strait of Georgia, contain bodies wrapped in reed mats or blankets, placed in wooden boxes, and then situated beneath oyster and clam shell middens (Arcas Consulting 1991). Neighboring Marpole midden burials are found in Musqueam tribal contexts and at Skw’atets, located along the Fraser River in Sto:lo territory on the Peters First Nation Reserve (Roy 2007; McHalsie 2011). Today, the Upper Chehalis of western Washington recall stories of Blue Jay, who visited the Land of the Dead, where he encountered piled bones and debris in this afterlife landscape, symbolic of Marpole midden burials (McKay 1999). Similarly, the Duwamish of Seattle also remember a time when “below

ground” midden graves were used by ancestors to inter the deceased (Switzer 2005).

Elevated Canoe Burials for the Marpole Elite

Beginning during the mid to late Marpole Period, ca. 1500 to 1000 BP, a unique form of burial emerges for some of the elite household rulers: placing bodies in elevated settings, such as canoes wedged in trees or platforms balanced atop posts (Suttles 1990; McKay 1999).² Identified by scattered remains that have fallen to the ground below during their decomposition, elevated burials were often isolated and located in forests, abandoned settlements, or on islands (Ham 1998; Lepofsky et al. 2000). Sites containing these burials, such as Beach Grove and neighboring Crescent Beach, located on Boundary Bay in Georgia Strait, are identified by fractured and dispersed human remains (Abbott 1962; Ham 1982; Mitchell 1996). Though interring bodies in wooden boxes placed in trees or on raised structures eventually became the norm in Coast Salish communities of the contact era, such burials were first correlated with social elites interred in canoes balanced upon cedar or Douglas fir branches during a much earlier time (Elmendorf 1960:455). Suttles (1958, 1987:16–17) explains that Coast Salish elites often legitimized their status by claiming to possess special knowledge, “advice,” or good etiquette (accessed by “moral training”) that supposedly differentiated them from commoners or lower class individuals. Lower class individuals were thought to have “lost their history,” and represented “people who had no claim to the most productive resources of the area and... to recognized inherited privileges” (Suttles 1987:16–17). Elevated canoe burials not only physically allowed the high ranking deceased to preside over lower class corpses and the living, but the burial mode also communicated that the elite possessed a special connection with

non-human entities and realms supposedly inaccessible to other classes.

Canoes, an expensive commodity whose use in burial was not something a low ranking person could afford, held spiritual significance within Coast Salish societies. Skilled healers were known to travel in the maritime vessels between worlds that separated the sea from the land, the spiritual from the secular, and the dead from the living during otherworldly journeys, such as the Sbetetdaq or spirit canoe rite practiced by Puget Sound tribes (Haeberlin 1918; Torrance 1994). Spirit canoe practitioners performed the alternate world ritual in the dark of winter, “since in the other world it would then be a bright summer day” (Torrance 1994:182), and paddled in a canoe toward the land of the dead while battling sinister creatures who held captive the spirit of an ill patient (Haeberlin 1918). A similar Nuxalk story tells of a shaman who “descended into the ocean by a rope lowered from his canoe ‘until he found himself in a land where everything was much the same as on this earth’; he rescued his wife and later revived the son who had rotted away to a skeleton during his father’s absence of nearly a year” (McIlwraith 1948:544–546).

Social Shifts from the Mid to Late Marpole Period (1600 to 1000 BP) to the Late Period (1000 to 550 BP)

The transition from the terminal Marpole (“Bowker Creek” phase) to the Late Period witnessed a significant change in mortuary practices, with rock cairns and earthen mound graves replacing the midden burials that formerly accounted for a majority of the commoner population (Burley and Knusel 1989; Cybulski 1992, 1994; Mathews 2006; Angelbeck 2016). Cranial deformation, an intentional means of head flattening, became a widespread practice seen amongst most skeletal remains, with few interments exhibiting the labrets that were once

² This elite practice continued intermittently into the Early Colonial Period of the nineteenth century, thus overlapping with 550 to 225 BP when political authority figures intensified in local Coast Salish societies as a result of fur trade competition and introduction of European economies (Donald 1985, 1997; Suttles 1990).

affiliated with high status (Angelbeck and Grier 2012; Grier and Angelbeck 2017). Unlike labrets, cranial deformation was permanent and denoted that an individual's status was likely fixed or unchanging. Gone were the days of being able to achieve positions of household leadership by performing impressive feats or simply asserting one's authority over others. It was during the Late Marpole when the elite population dramatically increased in size, leading to the development of an ascribed class-based society containing small lower class populations (Thom 1995; Angelbeck and Grier 2012). This shift laid the foundation for an entirely new period of Coast Salish history, the Late Period (1000 to 500 BP). The Late Period reflected a shift in social organization, with personal status becoming indicative of an ascribed social class, compared to achieved or competitive positions seen during the Marpole Period (Suttles 1958; Thom 1998). Late Period settlements display large longhouses and villages to accommodate expanding populations, with the landscape increasingly utilized and modified for resource harvesting along maritime regions. Though this phase intensified stress on social networks, the natural environment, and local communities, "Coast Salish economies exhibit a strong degree of continuity over this extended period, suggesting...long-term sustainability" (Grier and Angelbeck 2017:204). Visible, above-ground gravesites in the form of cairns and mounds, some reaching nine feet tall, became favored over previous subterranean Marpole midden interments (McKay 2009). This change was accompanied by increased warfare and social stratification in the form of class-based status, rather than individually achieved or inherited rank (Angelbeck and Grier 2012). Angelbeck and Grier (2012) attribute the Late Period formation of a large elite population to resistance and intertribal warfare that occurred during the end of the Marpole stage, in which the commoner class rebelled against the few household heads who dominated Coast Salish society. Intertribal warfare of the terminal Marpole hints that class-based conflicts occurred,

with commoners aggressively negotiating for increased status, which the elite were forced to submit to. This theory also accounts for the increase in cranial deformation to include most individuals, as well as decrease in labret usage, during the Late Period—signifying that positions of high rank were now more inclusive as well as more permanent. Thus, a "nouveau riche" class formed that included a majority of society.

Reasons proposed for social changes during the Late Period include: decreased salmon supply (linked to climate change), increasingly dispersed Coast Salish populations resulting from intermarriage amongst elites, fewer cultural (artistic and religious) specialists, and increased violence (Keddie 1984; Ames 1994; Cybulski 1994; Moss and Erlandson 1995; Thom 1998; Carlson 2011). However, Butler and Campbell (2004), as well as Grier and Angelbeck (2017), find no compelling signs of Salish Sea resource shortage during the past 7,000 years, suggesting stable Coast Salish populations. As a possible explanation for why social classes developed out of relative stability, Thom (1998, 2009) explains that Coast Salish social networks for trade, access to resources and land, and exogamous marriage with allied tribal communities were integral to forming social classes, spreading community wealth, and dispersing populations beyond immediate village sites. He argues that "changes in settlement patterns, tool assemblages, subsistence strategies, increased warfare and the advent of burial cairns and mounds are a consequence of intensified social networking during the Marpole Period," during which elite individuals intermarried with other high status people from differing communities to secure land rights, resources, and alliances (Thom 1998:7). A constantly expanding network of elites eventually generated a formal high ranking class associated with the Late Period, characterized by increased labor and "food production from seasonally occupied limited activity sites to be used as gifts for exchange with other members of the social network" (Mathews 2006:49).

Because the new class of elites controlled who could access such resources and marry into high ranking families, commoner and lower classes also developed, thus securing the oft-cited Coast Salish hierarchy described as “three distinct social classes—a majority identified as ‘high class,’ a somewhat smaller group identified as ‘low class,’ and still smaller groups of slaves” (Suttles 1987:16–17, see also Suttles 1958, Mathews 2006). This framework, known as the “inverted pear” model of social organization, was characterized by a large and expanding upper class, a smaller commoner class, and a minimal slave or servant class (Suttles 1958:500–501). Despite that social stratification became stricter amongst individuals (reflecting “high social complexity”), villages retained their political autonomy (indicative of “low political complexity”) and relied upon other self-governing settlements for mutual aid (Matson and Coupland 1995:29; Angelbeck and Grier 2012). As anarchic societies, Coast Salish communities promoted self-rule and discouraged overarching bodies of governance. Feinman (2000) suggests that social networking itself is not a system of political rule, a claim confirmed by Coast Salish individuals who reaped the benefits of mutual aid while managing to avoid falling under the purview of non-local authorities.

Village organization supports the hypothesis that social classes of nobles, commoners, and slaves or very low ranking people developed and stabilized during the Late Period. Shoreline villages dating from the Late Period contained settlements for high ranking individuals situated in protected or fortified areas abutting bluffs with separate quarters for lower class people located in vulnerable positions on narrow spits (Suttles 1958). As unfortunate occupants of the lowest societal rung (because slaves functioned as property who lived within the households of their masters, as opposed to “true” members of society), low class individuals held negligible socio-economic connections to those who would share resources or supplies during times of need (Suttles 1973, 1987). Perhaps as

a result of the new social organization, warfare increased during 1600–500 BP, as evidenced by skeletal trauma and heavily used defensive sites (Cybulski 1994; Schaepe 2009). For villages subject to frequent raids and increased violence, such as the Lower Skagit settlement of Penn Cove, deceased enemies, “especially those of defeated Northern raiders” (Deur 2009:95), were impaled or displayed at the entrance to fortified settlements, in hopes of deterring future adversaries (Deur 2009:95). Another deterrent to attack, defensive boulder walls dating to the 1400s (the end of the Late Period), are present along the Lower Fraser River Canyon (Supernant 2009, 2011).

Late Period (1000 to 550 BP) Cairn and Mound Burials

Late Period burials are identified by the prevalence of cairn and mound interments, marked by piles of small stones or large boulders rolled upon graves (Pickford 1947). With the exception of slaves, whose diminished status permitted them little ritual treatment, both elites and commoners were buried via individual cairns and mounds in large fields or forested areas that functioned as cemeteries (Thom 1995). Individual burial “plots” display differences in social class based upon grave goods and cairn or mound size. An example of this phenomenon includes the Scowlitz Mounds site (also called the Fraser Valley Pyramids), located in southern British Columbia where the Harrison and Fraser Rivers meet. Here, elite Hul’qumi’num burial mounds contain prized artifacts including copper, abalone, and dentalium (Thom 1995, 1998; Lepofsky et al. 2000). Of the 42 Scowlitz mound burials, slate knives and other utilitarian objects also appear in high numbers (Lepofsky et al. 2000). The Late Period exhibits remarkable variation, however, as demonstrated by southern Vancouver Island’s Rocky Point site. This region contains hundreds of earthen mound graves, few grave goods, and indiscernible status markers associated with burial remains (Thom 1998; Mathews 2006, 2014). Mathews (2006, 2014) suggests that

analyzing the external, as opposed to internal, mound features provides answers to the social mortuary structure of Rocky Point. For instance, the different clustered locations of mounds at Rocky Point may demarcate different regions reserved for the dead as based upon their social status. Evaluating the size and shape of mound and cairn burials also provide information about social signifiers of the deceased. Just as village organization provides clues as to the three-tiered Coast Salish social structure that evolved during the terminal Marpole phase, burial and mound organization operated as metaphorical “villages” for the ancestors. The living imposed social control over the deceased, mirroring the circumstances of daily life and making it impossible to extricate the dead from the social order of the time. Despite differences in grave good quantity/quality and monument size, both Coast Salish cairn and mound burial methods spanned far and wide, as recorded by mounds at the Comiakin Duncan site and cairns encountered at Penn Cove (Pickford 1947; Deur 2009).

Cairn and mound burials necessitated a unified labor force to allow for their elaborate, monument-like construction (Mathews 2006). Produced by the social shifts that occurred at the end of the Marpole Period to the beginning of the Late Period, a large elite population met the demands of the new interment style, which was certainly more costly than simple midden burials. As high ranking families employed social networking to extend their access beyond their own familial territories, such as camas fields, specific fishing holes, or envied hunting grounds, the importance of forming a “symbolic and visible expression of a mutual identity” associated with these spaces also grew (Mathews 2006:237). Performed as a group activity, burial cairn and mound building acted as a means of strengthening ties to familial places, staking or reinforcing territorial claims, and provided a meaningful way to visit with relatives during difficult times of grief (Mathews 2014). Burial mounds, such as those at Rocky Point, were not

visible from afar, but instead hidden behind natural slopes and wetlands that defined the geography. Those wishing to access such monuments needed intimate knowledge of and access to the sometimes physically challenging mortuary landscape (Mathews 2006). Access to these territories was dependent upon social status, where elites and high ranking individuals possessed increased rights of visitation and travel, as well as increased spiritual knowledge (as identified by Suttles (1958, 1987) who linked status to specialized wisdom) that was off-limits to slaves and lower class persons. As cairns multiplied and were built in clustered groups, the cairn cemetery presented itself as naturally occurring or spontaneously regenerative—reminiscent of Bloch’s (1986) and Morris’ (1987) claims that social organization often initially appears to be organic, rather than manmade. However, cairn construction, placement, and access were largely determined by the elite, who defined mortuary symbols and practices.

Movement though the landscape simultaneously asserts and reflects rights to place, as well as mediates interactions between individuals (Ingold 2011). When Late Period burials are contextualized within the political climate that experienced a change from few elites to many, it becomes apparent that building cairn and mound burials was a subversive action undertaken by the new majority elite class. In contrast to midden burials during the Marpole Period, in which dead commoners were invisible *beneath* the terrain and elites were displayed *above* in elevated canoe graves, cairn burials were prominent markers imposed *upon* the landscape—meaning that the large elite class were asserting their rightful presence on the local landscape in a visible, irremovable fashion (Mathews 2006). Re-visiting cairn and mound cemeteries to build additional memorials or to honor the deceased undoubtedly claimed rights to place via monumentalization and commemorative processes (Dark 1995). Claiming burial grounds is a form of territoriality, in which the living hold the power to designate the landscape

as one reserved for the dead, communicating that the landscape is also the responsibility or property of the living.

Yet, monuments symbolize more than mere hierarchical power relations or territoriality. The labor needed for cairn and mound construction (and subsequent maintenance) encouraged community participation and communal belonging by routine interaction with the local geography (Mathews 2014). The well-trodden routes, paths, and trails taken to arrive at cairns and mounds both reflected and controlled how people experienced their physical and spiritual environments (Dillehay 2007). Limiting or allowing access to highly charged spaces influenced how the landscape was viewed and fostered social relationships that revolved around shared experience and meaning-making (Barrett 1990; Dillehay 2007). Some mound burial sites, such as those at Skw'atets, are interred upon previous Marpole midden graves, offering poignant reminders of cultural continuity (McHalsie 2011).³ Though the internment of the deceased can inhibit travel and movement in attempts to abide by cultural taboos or property rights, Late Period mounds and cairns prove that cemeteries also stimulate movement and encourage interaction, rather than silence, with the past (Barrett 1994; Tilley 1994, 1996; Mathews 2014).

The Contemporary Political Context of Cairn and Mound Burials

To the untrained eye, mound and cairn burials are difficult to discern, and, as such, were “some of the first archaeological victims of urbanization” (Thom 1995). In British Columbia, the Heritage Conservation Act dictates that culturally significant or sensitive First Nation sites cannot be disturbed without proper permits. Recorded in a provincial database consisting of more than 54,000 burial and/or spiritually significant sites, such information is not dis-

³ Mathews (2006) mentions that Rocky Point cairns and mounds are located in the vicinity of, though not overlapping with, traditional midden and village sites—implying that the region was perhaps used for mortuary practices of the past.

played on land titles, meaning that property owners often do not recognize the potential for conflict until they initiate development. This is not an unfamiliar problem faced by Native communities and non-Indigenous property owners, as evidenced by the recent Chilliwack River controversy, in which Ts'elxwéyeqw burial mounds were “discovered” by a married couple who wished to build a new home upon lands they purchased (McCue 2019). Even during an era far removed from the Late Period, remnants of mounds and cairns offer resistance to the social order of the settler state. The continued relevance of these burial practices challenge non-Native ideas of land use and land ownership by limiting development and construction upon Coast Salish burial grounds. Gone though not forgotten, mounds and cairns serve as reminders that the land is Indigenous, even as Indigenous presence has been substantially diminished by settler colonialism.

Elevated Burials Become Commonplace During the Early Colonial Period (250 to 130 BP)

Prior to the Late Period adoption of the “inverted pear” societal model that reflected a large elite class, small commoner class, and minimal lower class, elevated canoe interments were reserved for the rare elites of the late Marpole Period (1500 to 1000 BP), whose aerial graves communicated important status distinctions to commoners and slaves. However, while arriving in Coast Salish lands during the late 1700s, non-Native explorers and early ethnographers noted the ubiquitous presence of elevated canoe burials, suggesting that the interment practice was no longer reserved for the fortunate few (Mitchell 1996; Mathews 2014; McKay 2018). Manuel Quimper, the Spanish explorer of 1790, observed Coast Salish burials consisting of placing the dead on raised platforms or canoes suspended in trees near southern Vancouver

Island's Sooke Harbor, with Archibald Menzies encountering similar Lummi burials at Birch Bay in 1792 (Newcombe 1923; Wagner 1971). The practice continued until the late nineteenth century, as evidenced by pre-1894 sketches made by Congregationalist missionary Myron Eells of a Skokomish canoe burial, as well as those by ethnographers George Gibbs (1877) and James Swan (1857), who depicted similar (non-Coast Salish) Chinook mortuary practices (Castile 1985). Numerous modern tribal accounts remember canoe burials as a means of interment, including the Duwamish recollection of Stitici (a burial ground located on Foster Island in Seattle's Washington Arboretum) and the Olympic Peninsula's Jamestown S'Klallam, who recall that individuals (whose "relations may be included at a later time") were situated in a canoe, with a small canoe or reed mats covering the interment as a lid (Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe n.d., see also University of Washington Botanic Gardens 2009; Duwamish Tribe 2018). Illustrating elevated canoe burials' connotations with high status, *Coba?álsid*, the Lower Skagit village of Snatelum Point on Whidbey Island, "was of unusually high status and, according to oral tradition, of unusual antiquity," occupying a landscape where "canoe burial was widespread and...standard practice for tribal elites" (Deur 2009:95). Of practical use, as well, canoe burials prevented bodies from being disturbed by large animals or unwanted visitors.

Harris (1997) speculates that, when two thirds of Coast Salish populations were killed during smallpox epidemics of 1782 to 1783, new religious and burial customs emerged. In 1792, Captain George Vancouver noted that children and adult skeletons wrapped in blankets were preserved in boxes and baskets suspended from trees near Discovery Bay, a S'Klallam site known locally for its history of smallpox (Vancouver 1792; Gibbs 1877; Brooks 1997). It was also here where small boxes containing food, presumably to nourish the dead in the afterlife, dangled from

trees (Gibbs 1877). Bodies wrapped in blankets and affixed to trees were found at the base of the Okanagan River in the 1850s, with Gibbs (1855, 1877) mentioning that children were sometimes placed in hollowed out trees or stumps. Vancouver (1801) recorded a similar scene at Penn Cove, with Eells, Gibbs (1877), and Roberts (1975) supporting the theory that "suspended" burials for small children reflected recent epidemics (Castile 1985). By the mid-1800s, elevated burial in wooden boxes became a mainstream mode of interment, regardless of one's social class affiliation (Elmendorf 1960). However, canoes were still reserved for the elite, with wooden chests or boxes housing remains in trees for commoners and lower classes (Smith 1899).⁴ Many instances of Squamish and Musqueam tree box burials exist, notably at Deadman's Island near Stanley Park in Vancouver, accompanied by Kwantlen recollections of bodies "wrapped in skins and blankets and placed in pole platforms high above the reach of animals, or in tree [with] pipes, bowls, hammers, or such things as he... might require to start life in the next world" (Webber 1899:313, see also Mitchell 1996). Just as mound and cairn burials of the Late Period were often constructed upon older Marpole midden grounds, Sto:lo and Duwamish elevated box burials located, respectively, at Skw'atets and Stitici are superimposed over landscapes where earlier burial modes were also practiced (Switzer 2005; McHalsie 2011; Duwamish Tribe 2018).

The reason for adopting elevated box burials is not clear. Deur (2009) cites Upper and Lower Skagit examples to support the idea that elevated box burials were adopted to challenge or co-opt elite canoe burials, perhaps signaling tension or rivalry between competing classes during the Early Colonial Period (250 to 130 BP). This theory is viable, as the fur trade spurred new forms of economic competition amongst Coast Salish individuals. Elmendorf (1960) suggested that elevated box burial was inspired by older

⁴ At this time, some especially poor families buried their dead in boxes beneath a layer of soil, though this practice was rare and not readily employed by others—likely illustrating the large upper class that continued to occupy most of Coast Salish society (Elmendorf 1960).

Marpole traditions renewed during the contact era, supported by the Chehalis story of “The Man Who Gains Power to Restore the Dead to Life,” which details that the protagonist’s deceased wife is placed in a tree as homage to the “old ways” (Hill-Tout 1978). However, the Coast Salish transition to elevated box burials at the time of European expansion begs the obvious question: were burials gradually raised from the ground in response to prying non-Native eyes and sticky fingers? Ethnographers were rapidly collecting for museum collections and world’s fair exhibitions, with looters and amateur archaeologists hoping to sell or pocket their exotic Northwest Coast “Indian” finds. Franz Boas, the father of American anthropology and founder of salvage ethnography, sifted through Kwakwaka’wakw and Coast Salish graves in search of skulls for measurement and display, admitting in 1888 that “it is most unpleasant work to steal bones from a grave, but what is the use, someone has to do it....I am as well known here in Victoria [British Columbia] as a mongrel dog” (Rohner 1966). Such actions had consequences and did not go unnoticed by Coast Salish individuals or fellow non-Indigenous observers. Missionary Myron Eells believed that elevated box burials (“a change in their mode of burial”) of the late nineteenth century reflected an outraged Native reaction to the “actions of unprincipled white gold seekers who stole both canoes and grave goods from burials they encountered along rivers in the Pacific Northwest” (Castile 1985:334). He emphasized that such theft even incited Coast Salish communities to painstakingly excavate previously interred midden and cairn remains from their ancient cemeteries, and, “because enough trees could not be obtained [for canoe burials]...they made boxes and elevated them” on scaffolding or posts (Castile 1985:334).

Located immediately south of Coast Salish territory, the Chinook of Longview, Washington proposed a similar, but tragically unsuccessful, solution for their burial ground located at Mount Coffin, a remote bluff located below the mouth of the Cowlitz River. Though Lewis and Clark

detected, but did not disturb the more than 3,000 canoe burials at Mount Coffin in 1805, “a fire caused by the carelessness” of Captain Charles Wilkes’ 1838–1842 expedition “destroyed the whole...to the great indignation of the Indians” (Gibbs 1877). Much like attitudes reported by Eells, the “violation of the grave was always regarded as an offense of the first magnitude and provoked severe revenge” from the Chinook (Gibbs 1877). As places for the dead to rest in peace, canoe burials were not meant to be disturbed in such a manner. When questioned by early ethnographers about mortuary practices and taboos, McKay (2018) reports that some Coast Salish interlocutors feigned ignorance, which was interpreted as a lack of concern or knowledge about the past, cold detachment, or paranoid superstition. Judging by the intrusive actions of non-Natives, however, these presumably disengaged attitudes were likely meant to distract from or discourage meddling with graves and remains.

Accounting for Infrequent Cremation and Cave Burials throughout Coast Salish History

Burning human remains and grave goods, as well as interring bodies in caves and rock shelters, are somewhat rare within the Coast Salish mortuary record, though these practices occurred with enough frequency to warrant discussion here. Marpole midden burials, such as those at Tsawwassen, contained scorched food and goods (Arcas Consulting 1991). Carlson (2011) suggests that the shift from Marpole (2500 to 1000 BP) to Late Period burials of 1000 to 550 BP signaled a concurrent shift from ritual feeding of the deceased to burning food or possessions for the deceased, with Carlson and Hobler’s (1993) Pender Canal study charting a similar Marpole phase transition to burning offerings for, as opposed to physically feeding, the dead. Hill-Tout (1930) records charcoal and charred soil intermixed with stone cairn graves, leading to speculation of cremation or ritual

burning. This theory is reinforced by Pickford's (1947) observations of Late Period mound and cairn burials interred primarily with cremated remains, forming a sort of "mortuary mortar," spanning from the northern Coast Salish Comox community to Puget Sound and inland to the Fraser River. When smallpox struck in the late 1700s and early to mid 1800s, burial rituals became abbreviated, with communities burning villages and longhouses "when the families that formerly occupied the house had been largely decimated due to disease and there were no survivors to maintain the home" (Deur 2009:96, see also Roberts 1975). Referencing raised canoe burials in trees, Eells (Castile 1985) notes that he participated in a funeral during 1877 that featured goods burned for the dead on the Skokomish Reservation. Since 1900, burning grave goods to provide sustenance for the deceased grew common in central and southern Coast Salish ceremonies and is a practice retained today by some groups, such as the Sto:lo (Kew 1990; Fehr 2016).

Outliers within Coast Salish mortuary practices, cave interments represent a puzzling occurrence within the archaeological record. Thought to constitute burials for social outcasts and criminals or severely diseased individuals, cave burials date to the Marpole Period, as evidenced by interments located near the *Snunéymuxw* village at False Narrows dating to 2000 BP (Littlefield 2000:10). Bilton (2014) records cave burials along the Gulf of Georgia, with Cassidy (1976) noting caves and rock outcroppings used as burial places in southwestern Georgia Strait, and Beram (1990) writing of a Vancouver Island cave burial at Francis/King Regional Park containing human teeth and bird bones. Similarly, cave burials are documented amongst tribal communities adjacent to Coast Salish settlements, such as Nuu-chah-nulth cave and rock shelter burials at Hesquiat Harbor, circa 2500 BP (Haggarty 1982).

Instances of cave burials are recorded during the ethnographic era as well, with Nuu-chah-nulth burials at Broken Group Islands

commonly located in sea caves and identified by wooden box interments supplemented with European manufactured grave goods (Haggarty and Inglis 1983). Coast Salish skeletal remains found in caves such as those on Gabriola Island, as well as Barkley Sound's Nuu-chah-nulth sites, display signs of tuberculosis and syphilis, spreading after European contact occurred (McMillan and Schulting 1995; Curtin 2002). Tuberculosis and syphilis took root in 1778, when permanent British settlements and trading posts appeared in the Pacific Northwest (McMillan and Schulting 1995; Daugherty and Kirk 2007). The strain of tuberculosis introduced during this period was particularly virulent, leading to early adult death before the disease had a chance to cause dramatic skeletal changes, thus accounting for the minor skeletal decay documented on tuberculosis-infected individuals buried in rock shelters (McMillan and Schulting 1995). These recent strands of evidence support the assertion that cave burials were associated with deaths caused by extremely contagious diseases, representing European epidemics (Haggarty and Inglis 1983:31). Burial caves held connotations of disease, trauma, and possible sexual deviance (associated with syphilis), and situated diseased bodies in asocial or isolated places distant from villages. Removing perceived threats of disease from the community and avoiding interaction with infected corpses illustrated Coast Salish attempts to strengthen or cure villages of epidemics during the Early Colonial Period.

Coast Salish informants describe caves as places of wartime refuge and as spaces often referred to in cosmological narratives, such as the malicious *Hul'qumi'num* figure of "*Sheshuq'um*, or 'Open-Mouthed,'" who "lived in a cave at Octopus Point at the southern entrance to Maple Bay, where it would swamp canoes traveling through Sansum Narrows with its tongue, drowning and devouring travelers in the tidal rapids and whirlpools" (Angelbeck and McLay 2011:364, see also: Littlefield 2000; Angelbeck 2009). Given the scant amount of published information about Coast Salish cave

burials in Northwest Coast academic literature, the (perhaps intentional) ambiguity of these graves remain both literally and metaphorically hidden—successfully preserving cultural meanings, stories, and associations that may not be deemed appropriate for secular settings.

Post-Contact Influenced Scaffold and Grave House Burials

Although box and canoe burials in trees, with occasional cave burials, remained prevalent throughout the late 1800s, non-Native theft and ensuing destruction took their toll on local Indigenous societies. Perhaps in an effort to further secure human remains and the belongings of the dead, Coast Salish burials gradually shifted to interring bodies upon scaffolding and enclosed within small, house-like structures during the 1850s (Castile 1985; Mitchell 1996; McKay 1999). Canoe burial via scaffolds were present in Puget Sound and central Coast Salish regions, with the Cowichan legend “Blue Jay Brings the Dead Girl to Life” telling of how Blue Jay, wishing to take a beautiful woman as his wife, miraculously revived the woman from her final resting place on scaffolding (Gibbs 1877; Barnett 1955). More widespread and common than scaffolding, grave houses covered the remains of the buried dead, acting as a pseudo-mausoleum. Nearby non-Coast Salish tribes such as the Makah, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka’wakw were known to practice grave house interment during pre- and post-contact periods, signaling that the practice was not distinctly Coast Salish (Gibbs 1877; MacLeod 1933). Grave houses enclosed subterranean burials, offered protection against theft, and, built in a simple shed style with tokens often left for the deceased, were recognized by non-Natives as a

form of “proper” burial (Deur 2009:97). Grave house interments satisfied Western assumptions of what constituted acceptable mortuary practices, in contrast to elevated burials, which were interpreted by Europeans as a peculiar practice, and midden or mound burial grounds, which were easily violated in the name of settler development or rogue collectors.

Some attribute the Coast Salish transition to grave houses as a consequence of Christian missionary influence, using cemetery burial as a means of assimilation and conversion. Father Chirouse, a Catholic priest who began his tenure at the Tulalip Reservation in 1857, encouraged the Tulalip Tribes to abandon “their ancient custom of placing the dead in canoes, and then raising them up on trees. He established and blessed a cemetery, and the Indians showed much respect for it, and pride in its appearance” (Sullivan 1932:47). Smith (1899:538) also noted that missionary influence and legal ordinances caused the Coast Salish to “bury as do the whites of the region,” referring to interments that resembled Christian cemeteries with personalized grave houses acting as Indigenous gravestones or shrines. However, the shift to grave houses is more complex than the assimilationist approach suggests and demands critical analysis of the contemporaneous Coast Salish social fabric. Native lands were increasingly lost throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, resulting from the Stevens Treaties in Washington, the Douglas Treaties of Vancouver Island, and a lack of treaties throughout greater British Columbia—despite that King George III’s 1763 Royal Proclamation declared territory belonging to First Nations could only be ceded to the British Crown for non-Native settlement via treaties.⁵ These coercive land

⁵ While Coast Salish treaties were signed in Washington Territory, the process leading up to such negotiations mirrored the absence of treaties in British Columbia. The United States’ Confederation Congress Proclamation of 1783 states that Native title to land can only be extinguished by the federal government—not by individual or state-wide agreements—signifying that ceding land was a government-to-government affair. Similarly, the Indian Non-Intercourse Act of 1834 prohibited the purchase of land in Indian Country by non-Natives prior to treaty negotiations, even though many settlers violated the Act by homesteading Coast Salish territory before treaties were signed in the 1850s. This violation was made possible by the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850, which allowed settlers in Washington and Oregon Territory to claim 320 acres per man or married woman. The Donation Land Claim Act was problematic because it granted lands prior to the ceding of territory by Coast Salish signatories. Governor Stevens of Washington Territory

deals (or, conversely, a suspicious lack of negotiation altogether) encouraged encroaching homesteads, which Coast Salish communities rebelled against by constructing grave houses denoting long-standing sacred places on the local landscape. In addition, resources were lost to the settler colonial monopoly, meaning that many high status families did not maintain their rights to traditional lands and wealth sources that had secured their prestige during the pre-colonial era (Suttles and Lane 1990). By adopting a form that was recognizable to and respected by Europeans, Coast Salish grave houses subverted settler gazes by physically covering remains, visibly reclaiming the land using a method that monumentalized the dead (reminiscent of cairn and mound burial of the Late Period), and provided a meeting place for descendants to honor the deceased.

In the past, Coast Salish villages were politically autonomous or anarchic from any centralized power and employed potlatching with members of extensive social networks to reach political consensus, spread surplus wealth, witness legal agreements, and profess rights to specific land claims (Angelbeck and Grier 2012; Grier and Angelbeck 2017). Compared to European notions, Coast Salish understandings of territorial boundaries and power hierarchies differed greatly (Thom 2009). For the Coast Salish, historical authority figures were “situationally justified” (Angelbeck and Grier 2012:552). Leaders did not inhabit widespread positions where they controlled all aspects of daily life, but instead, roles were often contextual, temporary, and mutually agreed upon by those subject to their authority (Smith 1940; Miller 2001). All-purpose leaders were often rejected or punished for attempting to rule over communities who saw themselves as independent and self-governing. Indian agents and missionaries, who were granted control over a large portion of Coast Salish society during the reservation and treaty eras, did not mesh

well with traditional Coast Salish definitions of leadership. Government agents on reservations surveilled Native movement and bodies, often restricting trade, travel, and communication between historically mobile tribal nations who depended upon mobility to strengthen and maintain social order and class differences. With compromised access to wealth, social networks, and status symbols, it follows that elite burial practices (such as canoe interment) faltered, leaving grave houses to inter all classes of the dead in a more egalitarian manner.

Chehalis grave houses were recorded by Edwin Chalcraft (2004:17), an Indian boarding school superintendent during the 1800s, who described the structures as a “grave shallow enough to permit the cover of the box in which the body had been placed to be level with the surface of the ground, and then build a small house, about three feet high, over the grave.” Drawings and paintings by W. McMurtie at Victoria in 1854, Edward M. Richardson in 1864, and Edward Whymper at Chapman’s Bar, British Columbia, all illustrate grave houses. Richardson’s depiction is especially noteworthy, in that it portrays a large grave house replete with shotguns and other firearms (perhaps left for the dead or serving as a warning to trespassers), numerous European grave goods, and large rocks surrounding the structure—possibly implying that grave houses were built near older cairn burials to maintain a connection to places charged with mortuary importance. Deur (2009) describes similar continuity at Snatelum Point, a site used for canoe burials and subsequent grave house burials. Even after the site was abandoned by Coast Salish individuals, white settlers left the grounds intact because of its “certain status” as a legitimate cemetery (Deur 2009:97). In 1914, the cemetery was later purchased by Skagit descendents of the village (who had since moved to reservations), assisted by Tulalip Indian Agent Charles Buchanan and government agents on

quickly recognized the contradiction between the two pieces of legislation. In 1854, he urged the formation of treaties in the Pacific Northwest so as to avoid any further confusion and legally grant homesteaders “their” lands (Coan 1922). In return, Stevens was instructed to make immediate treaties with tribes, revealing that the Stevens Treaties did not intend to reserve lands or rights for Washington’s Native nations, but rather, aimed to extinguish their rights as quickly as possible to legally settle the frontier.

the Swinomish Reservation (Buchanan 1914). Ethnographic accounts of grave houses are plentiful, with Eells recording the practice in 1878 by Twana mourners and Edward Curtis (1907) photographing a Snohomish grave house in 1912 (Castile 1985). A Kwantlen woman chronicled the grave houses of her community, stating that “within an hour of death,” corpses were “placed in a tiny house” (Webber 1899:313). Eells noted that a similar method of burial emerged amongst the S’Klallam, in which the dead were buried below ground and surrounded by a small fence in substitution of a grave house structure (Castile 1985). Grave house interment represents a final phase that took place in the region, only to be eclipsed by Indian Shaker Church practices that spread like wildfire throughout Coast Salish territory in later years.

Establishing the Indian Shaker Church (1880s)

It was in 1881 that John Slocum, of Washington’s Coast Salish Squaxin Island Tribe, founded the Indian Shaker Church. Slocum was a logger who had lost eleven of his thirteen children to disease or untimely deaths, with one of his remaining sons imprisoned. Depressed, Slocum spent his wages on whiskey and gambling, until he suddenly died one day in 1881. Depending upon which accounts are cited, Slocum remained dead anywhere from eight hours to three days before he miraculously revived (Ruby and Brown 1996). Although Slocum’s “death” might be regarded as a coma, seizure, or trance-like state by medical professionals, Slocum claimed to have seen a bright light and was urged by an angelic figure to return to Earth and form a new religion (Ruby and Brown 1996). Gladly accepting this proposition, he awoke to find his wife, Mary, praying and vigorously shaking over his body—presumably out of fear or grief. He credited her shaking movement for his return to life, thus establishing the Indian Shaker Church (Harmon 1971). The new religion, which promoted resurrection and Christ as Messiah,

instructed that the trembling of one’s body, hands, and rattles—especially when performed in a communal setting led by women—could revive the recently deceased, heal the sick, and even aid in locating drowned bodies of drunken men (Amoss 1982).

The religious movement grew popular amongst other Coast Salish nations. Requiring sobriety of its members and declaring gambling immoral, Indian Shaker churches were organized by male Coast Salish “bishops” who spoke a combination of English and various Coast Salish languages during services (The Morning Olympian 1911; Barnett 1957). At a time when local newspapers lamented that young Coast Salish individuals’ names were “more frequently” associated with the “police headquarters’ docket than upon the roll of honor,” non-Natives initially praised the “curious” Shaker religion for its “elevating influence upon the Indian” (The Olympia Daily Recorder 1907). Washington legally incorporated the religion in 1910, granting Coast Salish tribes control over their own religious practices. Characterized by unadorned, dark wood paneled buildings that were rectangular in shape, Indian Shaker churches were oriented east-west and quickly appeared on dozens of Coast Salish reservations, accompanied by Indian Shaker cemeteries resembling Catholic burial grounds.

Shaker Funerary Practices

Influenced by Catholic and Presbyterian customs, Shaker funerary practices (known to include Catholic priests, potlatches, and private services) are elaborately structured and regarded as the most varied of all Shaker ceremonies (O’Brien 2013). The night before a funeral and subsequent burial, a candlelit service is held in which members speak of the deceased (Ruby and Brown 1996). The corpse is not present at this service, which features the sign of the cross performed three times in a row and Coast Salish elements such as spontaneous praying and singing. A funeral occurs the next day, with balloons,

wreaths, and flowers surrounding the deceased inside the church (Ruby and Brown 1996). During the funeral, men sit on the left side of the church, with women and children to the right. A group of women with candles and men with bells (items important to Shaker ceremonialism because of their associations with shaking and reverberation) surround the deceased to sing memorized songs in an extemporaneous fashion (Ruby and Brown 1996). Crying and outward displays of emotion are both expected and encouraged, with faces washed in a communal basin (akin to a baptismal font) as the funeral concludes (Ruby and Brown 1996).

After the funeral, the body is prepared for burial by being placed in a coffin at the home of the deceased (Gunther 1949). Coffins are carried to a cemetery, sometimes followed by an impressive mourning parade. Once mourners arrive at the cemetery, Protestant hymns are sung in full, which is unique because non-mortuary Shaker services often contain only snippets of hymns (Gunther 1949). Unlike at other Shaker services where shaking is employed to heal or revive an individual, burial settings do not feature shaking and are instead conducted while standing completely still. Following burial, the group returns to the church and passes around the clothing of the deceased in a counter clockwise circle. Although clothing is not retained by group members, this rotating of intimate possessions aids the grief process and preserves the memory of the deceased. Any images of the dead, as well as their belongings, are hidden or removed from sight for a year following death. Concealed possessions are allowed to return to public view after a year, when the items are then entrusted to family members and close friends (Johansen 2015). Grave goods are not buried with the dead, thus denying any material reminders of status or prestige in the afterlife.

Resistance and Amalgamation Within the Indian Shaker Church

Beginning in the 1880s and continuing in some Coast Salish communities until the

present day, the Indian Shaker Church formed as a distinct, amalgamated Coast Salish belief system that unified Native communities against the tragic effects of colonial imposition. Shaker practices were observed by Eells (1886) as a combination of Coast Salish spirituality and Catholicism, with practitioners believing that their religious activities could cure sickness, revive the dead, and control settler impact on the landscape. Eells (1886) wrote that Shakers attributed the closure of local logging camps to Shaker ceremonies, which were deemed as capable of purifying the landscape of foreign influence. Shaker rituals also pledged the ability to manipulate future events. Shaker leaders courted their fellowships with promises to “shake away the Indian court, the judges, the agents, the agency, laws, influences and restrictions... shake away all the whites in the country and bring back the old days to them all, with freedom, license, and everything that then existed” (Eells 1899:9). While the Indian Shaker Church resembles other American Indian revitalization movements of the same time that desired to return to a pre-colonial environment devoid of white presence (such as the Great Plains and Great Basin Ghost Dance), Shakers diverged from such movements by uniquely melding Christian and Coast Salish themes. Just as grave houses aided in preserving Coast Salish lands and livelihoods, the Indian Shaker Church protected Coast Salish ceremonies and shifted the social organization of tribal communities towards increasing unity and solidarity with each other.

Settler colonialism represents a “contact zone,” or, a “social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism [or] slavery” (Pratt 1992:4). However, as demonstrated by the Indian Shaker Church, “encounters between Indigenous peoples and Christianity rarely have been singular confrontations among spiritual and cultural worlds characterized by unintelligibility, misunderstanding, and opposition” (Neylan 2011:189). As a counter-colonial measure, Shakers adapted deeply ingrained Coast

Salish practices to exist both within and against Christianity, marking the belief system's purpose as two-fold and, to those unfamiliar with the religion, seemingly contradictory. This duality is infrequently acknowledged even by Shakers themselves, who view their practices (including Christian prototypes of candles, bells, crucifixes, and vestments) as distinctly independent from, rather than reliant upon, Christianity (Amoss 1982). The uses and meanings attributed to sacred Shaker accoutrements are said to "come directly from God, not through the mediation of Christian missionaries and their teachings," implying that the Indian Shaker Church was more resistant to Christian influence than is generally portrayed (Amoss 1982:99). Disapproving missionaries noticed this defiance. Rather than rejoice in their semi-successful attempts to force foreign beliefs upon the Native public, many Christian missionaries were threatened by Shakers, stating that, "without the leaven of pure Christianity and all the good there is in it," the Indian Shaker Church would merely represent old Coast Salish ways, which "would not make a safe place for anyone" (Eells 1899:9). Taking little care to mollify these concerns, early Shakers stood steadfast in the Indigenous roots of their church and took pride in "how we Shakers don't have to wait or look at the government or white people missionaries to show us how to carry our religion.... We have...everything ourselves that the religion needs" (Abraham 1911). In this way, the new religion retained a sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency for Coast Salish individuals whose agency was severely limited.

The Indian Shaker Church's Promotion of Cultural Unity and Solidarity

The spread of Shaker beliefs and practices mirrored those of pre-colonial trade routes, seasonal travel, and social networks valued by elite Coast Salish families (Raibmon 2005). Previously, to lay claim to valued or familial lands, such as fishing holes, camas prairies,

or tide flats, high class families were obligated to host potlatches where wealth circulated amongst other elite individuals. The Canadian potlatch ban of 1885 and a concurrent, though informal, ban in the United States, as well as legal land theft (originating from British Columbia's disregard for treaty negotiation, as well as unfulfilled and questionable treaties in the United States), negatively impacted Coast Salish social structure and limited relationships with distant relatives. Shaker gatherings circumvented some aspects of potlatch bans by supporting pre-colonial routes of trade and travel. Though reservation surveillance and laws controlling Indigenous mobility made it increasingly difficult to maintain Coast Salish kinship ties to land and relations, the Indian Shaker Church called upon modern kinship networks to spread the religion to other Coast Salish territories. Church services "saw not only visitors from neighboring reservations but also those who had traveled great distances to find employment or to visit kin," whereas religious and national holidays (such as Christmas or the Fourth of July) attracted "annual congregations of Natives" to reservations, where veiled "exchanges of religious ideas were a part of the socializing" (Neylan 2011:205). Gunther (1949) and Amoss (1982, 1990) recognize two phases of Shaker expansion, constituting the initial phase in the 1880s that transmitted the new religion to other Coast Salish groups, and the second stage, which occurred in the 1890s and spread Shaker beliefs to non-Coast Salish communities in California, Oregon, and eastern Washington. Neylan (2011) identifies a third phase of Shaker expansion, taking place during World War I, attributed to crisis, wartime instability, and the Spanish influenza pandemic. These stages would not have been possible without strong, already existing Coast Salish ties secured by social networks that allowed for historical participation in cairn and mound burial construction.

Prior to European contact and colonialism, Coast Salish groups "identified with their local village, household, or kin group more so than

any larger scale of identity, such as the region, language group, or pan-Salish ethnicity” (Grier and Angelbeck 2017:198). These societies were autonomous, managing to maintain contacts from outside the immediate community via potlatching and trade routes, without any specific political or authoritarian figures to act as intermediaries (Thom 2009; Grier and Angelbeck 2017). However, with numerous societal stressors introduced during the late 1800s, Coast Salish communities began to embrace an identity centered around broad similarities and ideas of unity or solidarity. This trait was strengthened by the move to reservations, many of which consisted of multiple tribes living within the same boundary. (The modern Tulalip Tribe is a good example of this, with its roots in Duwamish, Snohomish, Snoqualmie, Skagit, Suiattle, Samish, and Stillaguamish communities who were later legally consolidated and classified by the United States federal government as “Tulalip.”) Rather than return to pre-contact autonomous groups that used potlatching to negotiate consensus amongst distant and varied communities, the late nineteenth century witnessed the unification of Coast Salish society. The pan-tribal Indian Shaker Church provided an avenue for increased solidarity that emphasized Indigeneity, rather than identity based upon individual social status of the Locarno Beach and early Marpole Periods or ascribed social rank and confidential spiritual knowledge of the Late Period. Shakers promoted continued kinship relations and “shared dedication to maintaining Indian traditions” (Harmon 1998:224). Elevating one’s status in historical ways became less important, with Shaker Church membership providing ceremonies that heightened morale and instilled pride amongst Coast Salish participants (Wike 1941; Amoss 1978). Shakers viewed themselves as holding enviable “access to supernatural assistance,” “good health, the power to overcome hardship, and the support of a strong community”—all characteristics previously identified by Suttles (1958, 1987) as traits associated with high ranking individuals of

the Late Period’s inverted pear hierarchy (O’Brien 2013:142–143). Rather than emphasize class-based identity of the past—which could threaten the already fragile Coast Salish communities of the reservation and treaty eras—the Indian Shaker Church served as a Coast Salish source of belonging and social solidarity, “locating the individual within an extended network of kin and community” (O’Brien 2013:142).

Conclusion

By tracking the development and diversity of Coast Salish mortuary traditions spanning from Marpole Period midden burials to Late Period cairns and mounds, as well as more diverse recent practices including elevated interments, grave houses, and Indian Shaker Church funerals, it is revealed that Coast Salish mortuary practices grew less status-centric and increasingly community-focused during and after the Early Colonial Period. Coast Salish burial customs changed dramatically during the initial Colonial Period as a means of communicating resistance to settler imposition, preserving Indigenous identity in creative ways, and adapting to cultural crisis. These adaptations were reflective of familial alliances secured by Coast Salish communities of the distant past, who used their high social status and mobility to secure territories, resources, and relationships. A culmination of Christian missionary presence and Coast Salish agency, the Indian Shaker Church and its contemporary tribal members offer proof of cultural amalgamation as an effective means of Native survivance.

When examined closely through the context of pre-colonial Coast Salish burial phases and social status discrepancies, the Indian Shaker Church shares a connection to the past rooted in resistance to authority, however defined. Defying existing power structures is a defining feature of Coast Salish mortuary practices, as depicted by the transition from a small class of elites during the Marpole Period to an overarching class of elites seen in the Late Period. Mortuary

acts of resistance were also implemented in the Early Colonial Period, when elevated box burials for commoners evolved in competition with elite canoe interments and in response to the steadily increasing power wielded by non-Native ethnographers and explorers. This rebellious characteristic of Coast Salish mortuary practices continued to manifest itself with the formation of grave house structures that grew popular during the treaty era, in opposition to land theft and settler colonial homesteading. As modern burial practices illustrate, Coast Salish society is dynamic and flexible, seeking

today to promote a distinct cultural identity characterized by increased social solidarity in exchange for pre-colonial social stratification. Despite parting ways with historical social organization systems that emphasized class-based differences, Indian Shaker mortuary practices challenged Christian missionary authoritarianism and forced removal to reservations, echoing a similar resistance promoted by Coast Salish ancestors of the deep past.

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