LOCALIZED RITUALS AND INDIVIDUAL SPIRIT POWERS: DISCERNING REGIONAL AUTONOMY THROUGH RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN THE COAST SALISH PAST

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ABSTRACT

In anthropological accounts, scholars often present the religion of a culture—their ceremonies, rituals, and beliefs—as one bounded system, suggesting coherency and conformity. Such treatments do not apply for the Coast Salish cultures of the Northwest Coast, however, since these groups exhibit a conspicuous degree of local preferences and styles in their ritual practices. Here, in this essay, the intention is to consider the localized patterns of ritual practices from disparate Coast Salish areas, drawing on ethnographies and histories, and to discern their expression in the archaeological history. While there are practices that are prevalent among the Coast Salish—such as the first salmon ceremony or spirit dances (and even those have their qualifications)—there is a spectrum of practices that manifest at various scales. At the smallest scope, these practices anchor in the individual and the household, and households share rituals with affines or allied households in networks of shared interactions. In this way, related groups express particular identities through the rituals they practice, and they convey how particular spirits— those grounded in their territories—empower them. In so doing, they convey how power wrests from their own sources, rather than from sources available to all.

Introduction

In several respects, Coast Salish peoples of the Pacific Northwest exhibit an ardent degree of identity and autonomy. This is expressed in their oral traditions and in how anthropologists have treated them in their research. Commonly, Coast Salish individuals self-identify at local scale of their band, whether Penelakut, Soowahlie, Klahoose, or Upper Skagit. Then, they will usually next identify at a larger scale such as a tribe or nation, such as Ts'elxweyeqw, Stó:lō, or Hul'qumi'num. Further, many will first self-identify with their given ancestral name and their family or village even before identifying with the band. This is a bottom-up form of identity reckoning, and the emphasis here is that such local forms of identity should manifest ethnographically and archaeologically. For this essay, the focus will be on how religious practices indicate the local expressions of Coast Salish identity. Many ritual items or features exhibit localized patterns, ethnographically and archaeologically. One key point from this is that no ritual practice exhibits a distribution throughout the entirety of the Coast Salish area. Furthermore, it is also apparent that even with the more common practices—those with the greatest areal ranges—there are always significant local variations from the general style. And, where there are broader patterns, these can be usefully viewed from a bottom-up perspective as to how such larger-scale forms of interaction come about.

In the following, first is a discussion of the general approach, which concerns autonomy, providing examples of how Coast Salish groups exhibit a strong degree of local identity and independence. This is expressed in their oral traditions and in how anthropologists have treated them in their research. Next, the discussion draws upon ethnographies concerning ritual practices along with their geographic extents. This will set a basis for an examination of archaeological manifestations of items that are often interpreted as linked to spiritual or religious practices, such as rock art, mortuary features, and certain artifact types, including stone bowls and etched stones. In closing, an ethnohistoric case illustrates the dynamics that emphasize local autonomy in the case of Slabebtikud, an Upper Skagit prophet and spiritual leader in the early 1800s. Throughout, the attempt is to show that there's a continuing emphasis for local practices, rather than those that are common to all Coast Salish.

In a sense, the scale of this is necessarily overarching, requiring some degree of generalization, as the intention is to use numerous avenues to convey an overall common pattern, one that illustrates how Coast Salish spirituality is locally anchored, even while those spirit powers and symbols, spiritual practices and paraphernalia, are shared with affines and allies throughout the Salish Sea.

Autonomy of Coast Salish Groups within the Culture Area

Coast Salish traditional territory occupies and surrounds what is now called the Salish Sea (Fig. 1). The Coast Salish exhibit remarkable cultural and linguistic diversity within the region. Perhaps because of this cultural diversity, ethnographers typically have been more comfortable providing ethnographies of localized Coast Salish groups—such as the Puyallup-Nisqually (Smith 1940), Twana (Elmendorf 1992 [1960]), Lummi (Stern 1934), Saanich (Jenness 1934), Upper Skagit (Collins 1974), or Straits Salish (Suttles 1951)—rather than providing discussions of the Coast Salish culture overall, as is more commonly found with other Northwest Coast groups. For instance, for other Northwest Coast groups, such as the Haida, Tlingit, Nuu-chah-nulth, or Kwakwaka'wakw, ethnographies predominantly concern whole cultural groups (e.g., Swanton's (1911) *Haida*, Boas and Tate's (1909) *Tsimshian Mythology*, Drucker's (1951) *The Northern and Central Nootkan Tribes* or Walens' (1981) ethnography of the Kwakwaka'wakw). Indeed, in the primary anthropological handbook about Northwest Coast cultures (Suttles 1990), only the Coast Salish are treated in four sub-groups rather than as a whole cultural area. And, even when overall treatments have been provided—such as Wayne Suttles' (1987) *Coast Salish Essays*, Charles Hill-Tout's posthumously collected *The Salish People* (Maud 1978), or Homer Barnett's (1955) *The Coast Salish of British Columbia*—those ethnographers routinely discussed various cultural aspects partitioned by local cultural groups, forefronting the regional variability. This shows that, when studying Coast Salish communities, ethnographers have been cautious in how far they cast their generalizations. Anthropologists have noticed that the practices that they record are limited in extent and they have restrained the scope of their ethnographies to those local communities. As emphasized by Suttles (1983:68–69), in cautioning that "one might easily get the impression that … the whole Coast Salish area was culturally homogenous," however, "within this continuum there were some pretty clear cultural differences, seen especially in the distribution of ceremonial activities."

So, the way Coast Salish have been treated anthropologically provides an example of this key point for this study, in that Coast Salish peoples exhibit high degrees of local diversity.
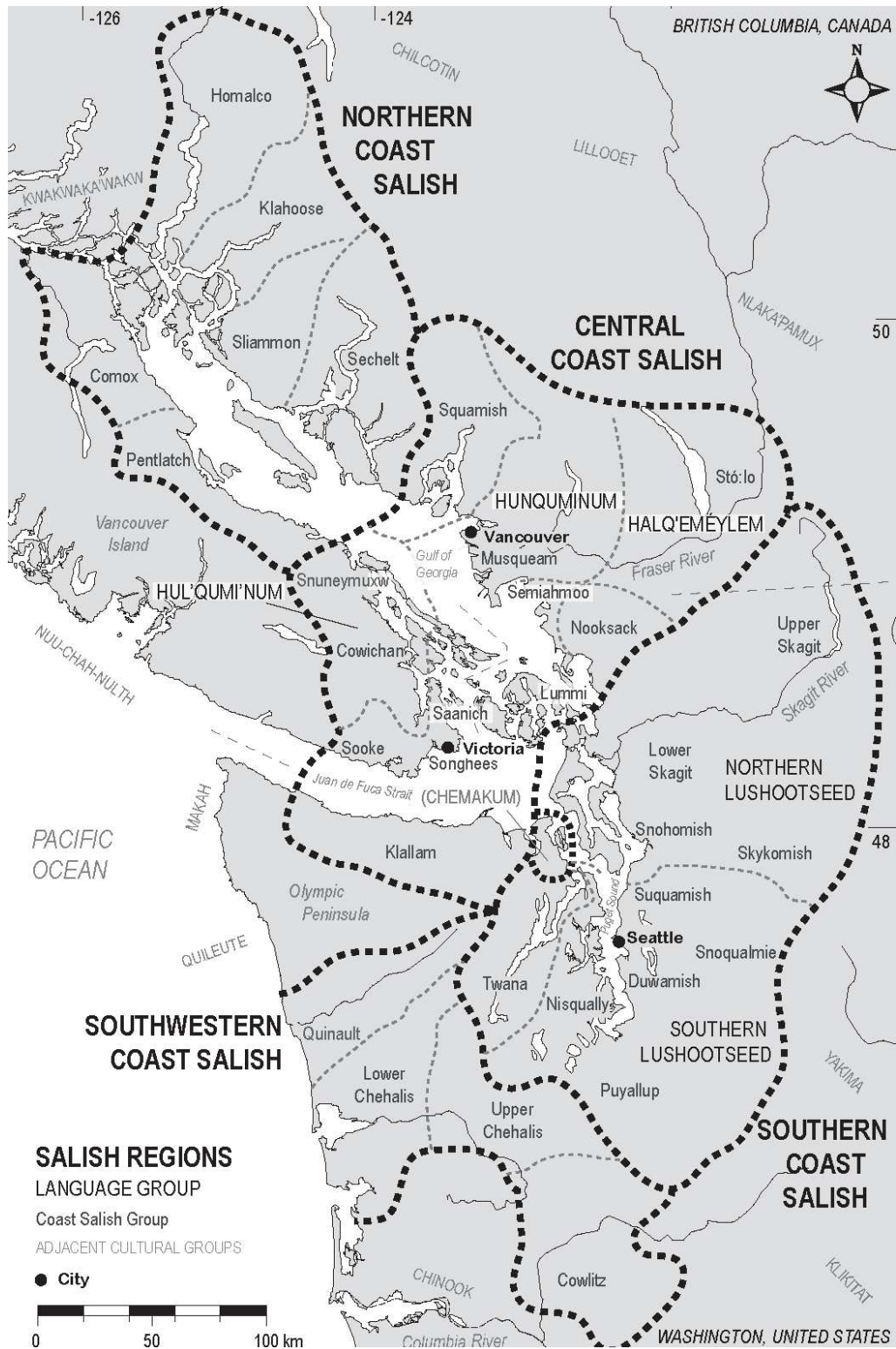
Fig. 1. Map of the Coast Salish area.

Multiplicity in Oral Traditions

One expression of localization comes through in their origin stories. Coast Salish cosmologies emphasize multiplicity in their origins since the "Time of Transformation." Multiplicity indicates that there is not one common origin, but manifold origins. A main example of this is that commonly there was not one Transformer entity, but four original Transformer siblings, or the *Xexá:ls*, consisting of three brothers and one sister (e.g., McHalsie, Schaepe, and Carlson 2001:6). While some recordings, such as Old Pierre's "The Katzie Book of Genesis" (Jenness 1955), have identified a single deity, researchers have shown this to reflect Christian missionizing influences, as noted in the use of the term *Xá:ls* (McHalsie, Schaepe, and Carlson 2001:6). Even founding ancestors for some groups involve multiple individuals. For the Ts'elxweyeqw (Chilliwack), there is not one founding ancestor, but four (Carlson 2010:117–118). Such cosmological views of their origins of the landscape and their lineages certainly are reflection of multiple powers in the world. In this way, the original transformers that created the world consist of a heterarchy, or an array of authorities rather than a pyramidal hierarchy towards one supreme deity or leader. This makes sense as it also is consistent with how there was generally a heterarchy of leaders in their communities, not one leader. These were variously called *siems* or *siyams*, which has often been translated as "chief" but the Western term carries more hierarchical notions than the Salish one implies.[1] Typically, there were multiple leaders within a village, not one. And, the authority of such a leader generally was restricted to their household, only with possible influence beyond, not command, based upon their respect. Thus, Coast Salish sociopolitical organization mirrors the structures in their oral traditions.

Indeed, Crisca Bierwert (1999) made such an argument, that Coast Salish oral histories revealed multiple vantage points, reflective of numerous local positions. In discussing Coast Salish epistemology, Crisca Bierwert has noted that a "heterological" approach, after de Certeau (1986), is appropriate, as these are "antithetical to the premises of master narratives":

> They are fluid more than fixed; develop a dynamic more than static structure; emphasize multiplicities more than unity; are composed of episodic relations more than cohering parts. Heterologies are even more diverse than disjointed narratives, in that their parts are characterized by different modes of thinking, not just a mixture of similar narratives from different positions. (Bierwert 1999:267)

In this way, with her emphasis on fluidity, multiplicity, and the temporariness of relations, Bierwert considers such epistemologies "antihegemonic"; that is, by their very decentered structure they resist concentrations of power, or hegemonies. She pointed out that the "decentered organization of Coast Salish epistemologies has derived from resistance to the grip of the state or transnational empires' hegemony," yet she acknowledges that these appear to have a long history among themselves as "richly contested antecedents of intellectual histories" (Bierwert 1999:269). By portraying their history and epistemology in this heterological manner, Bierwert aimed to accurately portray the multifaceted aspects of Coast Salish culture on its own terms. Here, we should extend such a heterological approach in considering their ethnographic practices as well.

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[1]As Suttles (1987:254) noted, the term [*siem*] implies "respect of others, leadership in nearly any kind of activity, and, probably, ownership of important property." The point is that it indicates respect for another person due to skill, ability, knowledge, wisdom, wealth or status, all of which generally were intertwined and undergirded by their connection to spirit powers.

Ethnographic Examples

Anthropologists have documented a wide variety of ritual practices among the Coast Salish. While some of these treatments might suggest that they apply to the Coast Salish overall, the patterns tend toward localized practices. Moreover, there are certain aspects underlying Coast Salish epistemologies that favor local and individual expressions to be effective, whether through various dances, masks, or ceremonies; this is seen in the spirit powers that inhabit their territories and conduct or manifest themselves through individuals or particular ritual items. An important feature that is common throughout these expressions is the emphasis on spirit powers, the spiritual capital that underlies all signs of success for Coast Salish communities, whether in leadership, warriordom, oration, negotiation, healing, weaving, carpentry, or artistry (Angelbeck 2009:129–136). Yet, a common aspect is that spirit powers are locally acquired and individually expressed.

Spirit Powers and Spirit Dancing. Spirit dancing is common ceremonial practice conducted at winter gatherings. During these events, Coast Salish peoples assemble often for long series of nights throughout the season to display the spirit powers they have acquired, through particular songs or dances that their spirit has given them. These powers have been sought individually, often involving great trials of training in isolation—although spirits also could seek and possess those even not seeking spirits at the time (Kew 1970; Amoss 1977; Jilek 1982). Ethnographies are replete with categories of powers, most of which relate to animal spirits—raven, woodpecker, bear, seal—but also insects, aspects of nature, or simply named but imprecisely known spirits. Only some powers were available year-round, such as shaman's spirit powers or those of a warrior (Collins 1974:118); for most others, they displayed their powers during the winter at spirit dances.

While spirit dancing is common to most groups, Barnett (1955) detailed these by four main types of winter dancing, by subareas; and he was mainly covering just Northern and Central Coast Salish groups, those in British Columbia. In this way, there was a range from "unorganized" spirit dancing, where anyone who had the spirit powers could express them, to those that involved particular dances that were inherited and followed family lines, or involved initiation into the spirit dance ceremony. In spirit dancing, with its emphases in revealing and concealing powers, the people unite together on the longhouse floor and those in attendance, yet each person displays not a collective power, but the singularity of one's individual power. Spirit powers are the individual's alone; the community of the ceremony involves each displaying and sharing songs with each other.

The aspects of spirit dancing, has principles that embue their other approaches to ritual, wherein local autonomy is expressed in a manner that creates links with other groups.

> In their settings and actions the Musqueam ceremonies stress community of interest.... It is as if the domestic family unit were enlarged to incorporate a broadly constituted range of participants. In speeches which compliment the sponsors of spirit dances, metaphors often stress this aspect: 'The *syə'wan* brings the Indians together as a family,' 'Our old people (the Musqueam and Squamish) used to be like one family in the same house,' and the like. (Kew 1970:326)

Pamela Amoss (1977:131), in studies of winter dancing and spirit powers, noted "the double-edged task of creating ties that bind individuals together and at the same time providing devices of separating them from one another." The concept of spirit power as private yet symbolized amorphously to others creates a space for individual autonomy: "This traditional

secrecy surrounding individual power creates for each person an imponderable center to his personality that cannot be penetrated by all community knowledge of his comings and goings, his family history, and the full range of his associations" (Amoss 1977:135). These powers were so individualistic, that these allowed someone a defense against "manipulative relatives," since one could simply say "what [power] I have doesn't like that," and no further explanation was needed to not participate in some activity. It was a way of maintaining independence that was respected by others, a way to create an "inviolable private sphere around a person" (Amoss 1977:134).

Further, people were afraid to offend those perceived to have strong spirit powers as not only might that person be offended, but their spirit powers might also take umbrage, which would be even worse. This explains why shamans and warriors, who had very ambiguous powers, were given social distance. But, it applied to any individual with spirit powers. As Amoss emphasized:

> The concept of power protects the individual's right to separateness, privacy, and autonomy by keeping other people away from the secret center of his being. (Amoss 1977:137)

Suttles (1983) also highlighted how secrecy was central to their notions of connections to spiritual powers and places. He noted that this was inherent to Coast Salish art forms, which created an ambiguity in how spirit powers were portrayed. He referred to this as "productivity and its constraints." Similar to what Amoss (1977) described for spirit powers in dancing, Suttles detailed that Coast Salish art was also based in a connection to spirit powers through questing and visions:

> In theory, although not always in practice, the exact nature of the vision experience is something one ought to keep secret, perhaps until old age. The vision experience inspired a unique individual performance in the winter dance, but its nature was only hinted at by the words of the song and the movements of the dance… Any other representation of the vision experience we might expect also to be vague, ambiguous or covert. (Suttles 1983:69)

Among the Stó:lō, secrecy was an important component of power areas as well as places in which to renew one's relationship to spirit powers, as in "swimming" or "bathing" areas. Many Stó:lō individuals continue to seek solitude in the forests and mountains in clear pools along streams at spots known individually or passed down through families. For instance, one noted that there are "areas around Chilliwack, areas up behind Cheam, areas up in Chehalis…there's different areas that people go for swimming." Others confirmed some of these same general areas as questing sites, although more often the sites were kept secret, especially the specifics. As one noted, "They don't reveal the areas." People do not like to reveal their personal spots, due to keeping their power secret as well as to simply to keep the place private to better ensure solitude (Angelbeck 2003:22). In this way, the spirit powers there, inherent to the location, involve connections that are passed down over the generations, and the knowledge was kept within the family or local community.

Sweating Rituals. Sweating was another ceremonial practice for cleansing, but was typically done closer to the village, creating a cultural space near residences or camps for a spiritual practice, rather than seeking it out in the solitude of forests. Unlike the large sweat lodge of the Plains that could accompany a dozen or more people, Coast Salish groups typically built small domed structures, with enough room for one or two, indicating that it was a more private activity (Duff 1952:50). As Barnett (1955:39) remarked, "sweating was indulged in according to

private needs," and therefore was not predetermined by time as a regular ritual for several people. Barnett (1955:39) was careful to note the variety of practices implemented throughout the Coast Salish area. Instead of domed, as among the Stó:lō, he described structures as small A-frames, with two sets of crossed posts and a cross-post (see also Kennedy and Bouchard 1983:47). These were "small permanent structures" (Barnett 1955:39) set near streams, so those undergoing a sweat could readily plunge into the cold waters afterwards. On Vancouver Island, he detailed that no structures were used. Rather, women heated rocks covered with a bed of sand and mats and laid on them (Barnett 1955:39). While often a regular cleansing practice, individuals in training for spirit powers practiced sweating more intensively in combination with bathing (Duff 1952:50), and brushing with cedar boughs. Duff (1952:50) further emphasized that sweating was much more practiced among the Stó:lō than adjacent groups, indicating a localization and emphasis for the practice. This would also appear to be case for their neighbors to the south in the Cascades, meaning the Upper Skagit (Collins 1974:64, 180), where sweating is often conducted as a part of spirit questing. Both groups also happen to have relations with Interior Salish groups, where such sweating rituals are common as well.

First Salmon Ceremony. The First Salmon Ceremony is one ritual that has broad distribution throughout the Salish Sea. It involves an acknowledgment of the offerings of salmon as food, and is conducted with the first salmon catch of the year or season. Yet, even with this prominent ceremony, local variations were present. For instance, Gunther (1926:608–609) noted that among the Cowichan and Chehalis, the ceremony is quite elaborate. Conversely, in Puget Sound, as with Snohomish, the ceremony is rather simple, in that the person who makes the first catch holds a feast and allows others to eat it, in that they give it all away.

And, there were exceptions, with groups claiming not to practice the ceremony, such as the Klallam, near Dungeness Spit, since they did not have "first salmon" of the year, as their territory had fish essentially all year long (Gunther 1926:610); one could see that this is a boast of local power, to claim such natural capital in salmon was always available to them.

Sxwayxwey. The Sxwayxwey dancers involves a purification ceremony performed in conjunction with other events, such as marriages, naming ceremonies, or funerals. Masked dancers displayed elaborate headresses and attire and they carried scallop-shell rattles. As McHalsie (2001) summarizes, stories of its origins date to the late 1700s, involving purification of disease, likely in association with smallpox epidemics.

Suttles' (1983) believed that the weight of traditions indicated prominence of this tradition in the Lower Fraser Valley; he referred to it as the "Halkomelem sxwayxwey" (Suttles 1982). Bierwert (1999:184) made note of this tradition as a "privilege of some Salish families in the Halkomelem area," and she further added that it was "not [a practice] in the Lushootseed area to the South." The point here is that this a common ceremony, yet it is more restricted to Eastern Vancouver Island and predominantly associated with the Lower Fraser. These are not common in the southern Coast Salish area, for instance.

Secret Societies. Secret Societies were also present among some Coast Salish. The Comox in the northern Salish Sea have traditionally practiced the *hamatsa* of the Kwakwaka'wakw. Klallam communities also had secret societies, called the *xūnxanī'te* (Gunther 1927:281-288). The Quinault were regarded as the "southern limit" of the secret societies of the Northwest Coast. These were called the *tsa'djak* and the *klo'kwalle*, the latter meaning "Black Tomanawus" or black spirits. Among the Twana, initiation into the society insured future acquisition by the initiate of an individual guardian spirit, especially a powerful tutelary, one of the wealth powers (*s'iya'lt*) or one of the strongest shaman powers (*swddac*)" (Elmendorf 1948:631). Notably, these secret societies are found in areas bordering Wakashan groups to the West and North, where such societies are more commonly practiced (Olsen 1936:120).

Skedelich. Skedelich boards are another ritual ceremony exclusive to some Coast Salish groups. These were unique in that spirits conducted themselves through cedar or vine maple boards, and the boards were animated and could shake wildly when held—although only certain people had the power to handle the boards. Upper Skagit peoples considered it the most powerful of the lay (or non-shamanic) spirits. One informant described these as "all head and no body," that the skedelich "knows what people are thinking about." It was used to enhance or ensure fishing success, and people called upon the skedelich power to find lost things. This power knew where things were, where the fish were, where lost things were, and people used it to determine the truth in a contested matter. This is primarily documented as an Upper Skagit ritual item, although neighboring groups also used them, such as the Snoqualmie and Snohomish (Haeberlin and Gunther 1930:70), and some Lower Skagit (Collins 1974:160). An example is also found among the Katzie, although Jenness (1955:63) notably remarked that: "Indians on the Fraser River and on Vancouver Island were not eligible for this guardian spirit except through intermarriage with Indians of the State of Washington, where the skʷədi'ləc dance originated."

Thus, this important ceremony and spirit power is even more restricted in scope than other practices discussed above, and while others outside of the core area could gain the power, it was necessary to have local connections to the original area in which that ritual is practiced, and from which that power originates. These local connections generally worked through familial connections (e.g., Kennedy 2007).

Each of these spiritual practices illustrate that none are distributed throughout the entire Coast Salish area. Many of these practices are restricted in practice to particular areas. Indeed, the underlying commonality in the seeking of spirit powers concerns the individual expression of those powers. This especially is indicated in spirit dancing, where many communities of dancers come together, but they each express their individual powers that they have gained. Even with a widespread phenomena and cultural practice of spirit questing and spirit dancing, the expression of it is local and individual. Given this regionalization is apparent ethnographically, such patterns should also be present archaeologically.

Archaeological Examples

Archaeologists typically associate some archaeological features and artifacts with spiritual practices, and those within the Coast Salish area tend to exhibit localized patterns, meaning that such practices or artifacts do not extend to the whole of the Salish Sea. In the following, the discussion concerns such items that archaeologists do associate with spiritual practices (even while some may argue for other associations for such).[2]

Archaeologists typically point to what are otherwise non-utilitarian items as marking ritual in the archaeological record. This is with the understanding that many items in a Coast Salish assemblage is likely to have some ritual significance, from even certain projectile points or materials used to make them that are used for hunting. With that acknowledgement, I will focus on items or practices explicitly oriented towards ceremonies in the Coast Salish area, and these include mortuary ritual in burial cairns and mounds, rock art, and forms of portable art.

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[2]Here the discussion is limited to spiritually related items, although the localization that is explored here is also expressed in the distributions of non-spiritual items as well, meaning that the argument applies whether particular archaeologists consider such artifacts or practices as related to spirituality or not.

Burial Mounds and Cairns. Mortuary behavior is one the main manifestations of spiritual or religious behavior as ancestors are properly prepared for the afterlife. Burial cairns and mounds, as above-ground earthen or stone mortuary structures, are predominantly associated with 1500 to 1000 BP in the Coast Salish area (Thom 1995; Mathews 2014), according with Late Marpole, which is a time of contestation followed by the Gulf of Georgia or Late Period, ca. 1600 BP.[3] Prior to that period, burials were largely subsurface within shell middens adjacent to villages, generally only encountered through excavation. After Marpole, the predominant form shifted to above-ground mortuary structures involving carved boxes and poles, forms that generally are less likely to last archaeologically. For the Late Marpole Period, these above-ground cairns and mounds are the most readily identifiable mortuary features.

Sometimes these are less clear in their differentiation, as noted by Mathews (2014), wherein burial cairns can exhibit a wide variety of construction forms. In general classification, mounds refer to those of largely earthen construction, even while there may be stone arrangements within (e.g., Smith and Fowke 1901; Lepofsky et al. 2000). Conversely, layers of earth can be incorporated into the design of cairns (Mathews 2014). Even with these caveats, the basic distinction of stone-based cairns and earthen mounds holds more generally for the area, and are applied by archaeologists in the region. Since these are the basis for how such features are classified archaeologically in site form documentation and reports, here I will use the classifications available in the literature and site records. When plotted separately as cairns and mounds, there is a distinction in the geographic array of such features. Clark (2013:187–188) offers a similar observation, providing a map to show that southern Vancouver Island, the southern Gulf Islands, and the San Juan Islands consist predominantly of cairns. On the other hand, the Fraser River exhibits the practice that is predominantly of earthen mound construction. His map, as well as the first map provided here (Fig. 2), both show differing practices in the islands versus the mainland.

When both practices are plotted, there is considerable overlap between the two. However, when plotted as sites with greater than 25 cairns or mounds, the patterns are clear (Fig. 3). Five main cairn sites are concentrated in the islands, while five mound sites are located on the mainland, along the Fraser River, with the main concentration in the Stó:lō or Halkomelem region. This indicates that differing mortuary practices were in use locally in the central Coast Salish area within the same period.

Rock Art. A similar pattern is apparent with rock art practices. Rock art also has a wide distribution throughout the Salish Sea. These are often generally interpreted as having spiritual associations (e.g., Hill and Hill 1974:283–290; Adams 2003). Today, many Coast Salish peoples often regard these as sacred sites or sites with spiritual associations, often depicting supernatural or non-human entities, and relationships with non-human entities.

The distributions of rock art exhibit a similar islands-versus-mainland distribution, with the island groups inscribing petroglyphs into rock and the mainlanders painting pictographs on bluff walls with red ochre (Fig. 4, Table 1). These are much more clearly differentiated than the mound and cairn distributions. A total of 122 pictograph sites are present in eastern or northern Coast Salish groups, those mostly mainland in orientation. In turn, a total of 189 petroglyph sites have

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[3]In some accounts (e.g., Angelbeck and Cameron 2014), the Late Period or Late Pacific (Ames and Maschner 1999) is demarcated as beginning circa 1600 BP in the Coast Salish region, marked by the introduction of new weaponry in the bow and arrow, and the development of warfare, which may signal a need for a differentiation beyond Late Marpole, as the period exhibits numerous distinctions to possibly warrant such. It should be noted that a recent overview of the Marpole Period, Terence Clark (2013) provides a range of 2000 to 1100 BP, which excludes earlier sites extending back to 2400 BP as included in other classifications (Matson and Coupland 1995; Mitchell 1971; Burley 1980).
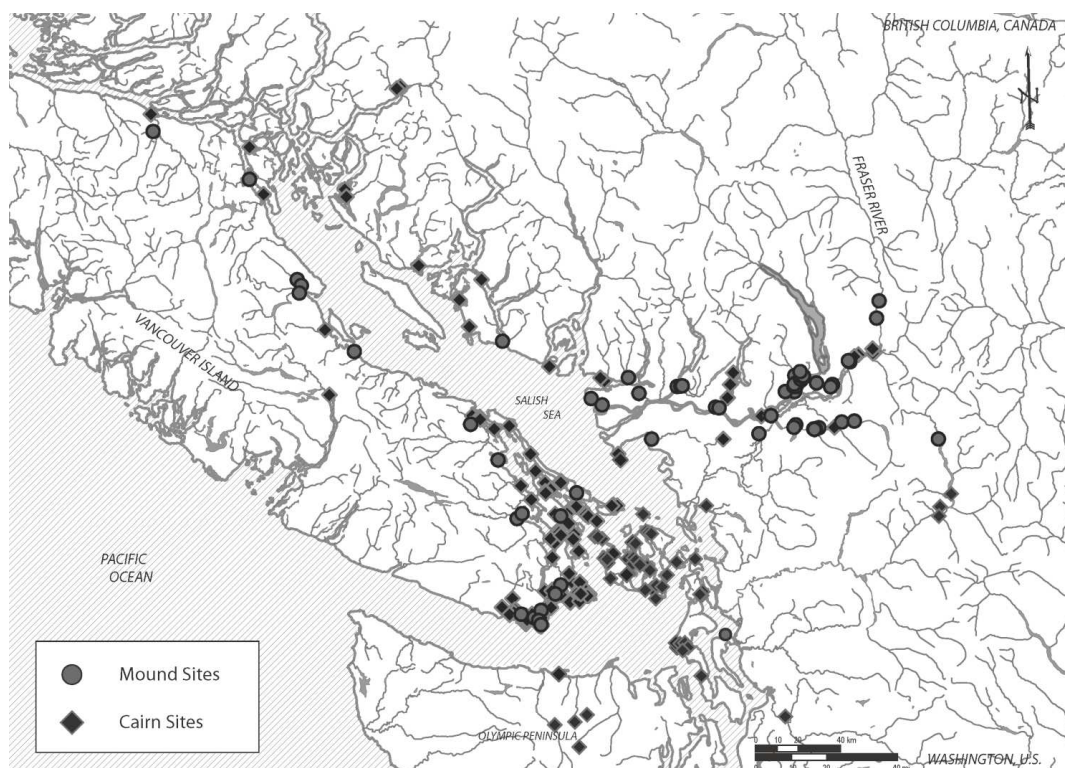
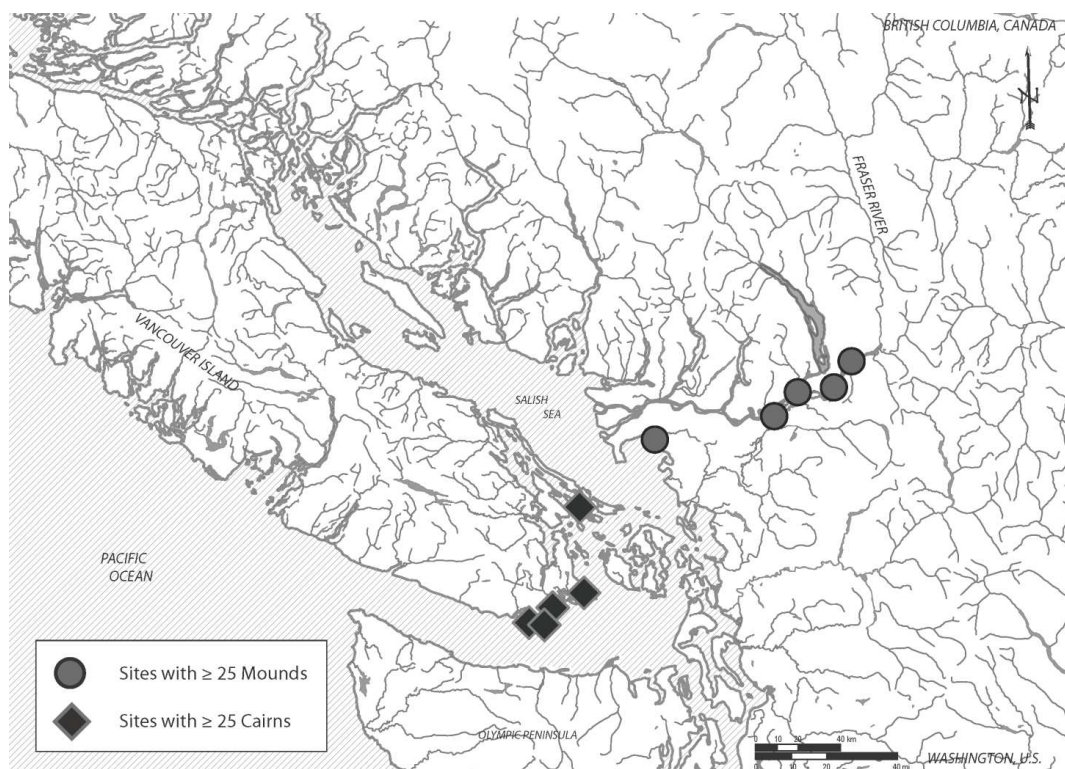Fig. 2. Map of burial mounds and cairn sites in the central Coast Salish area.

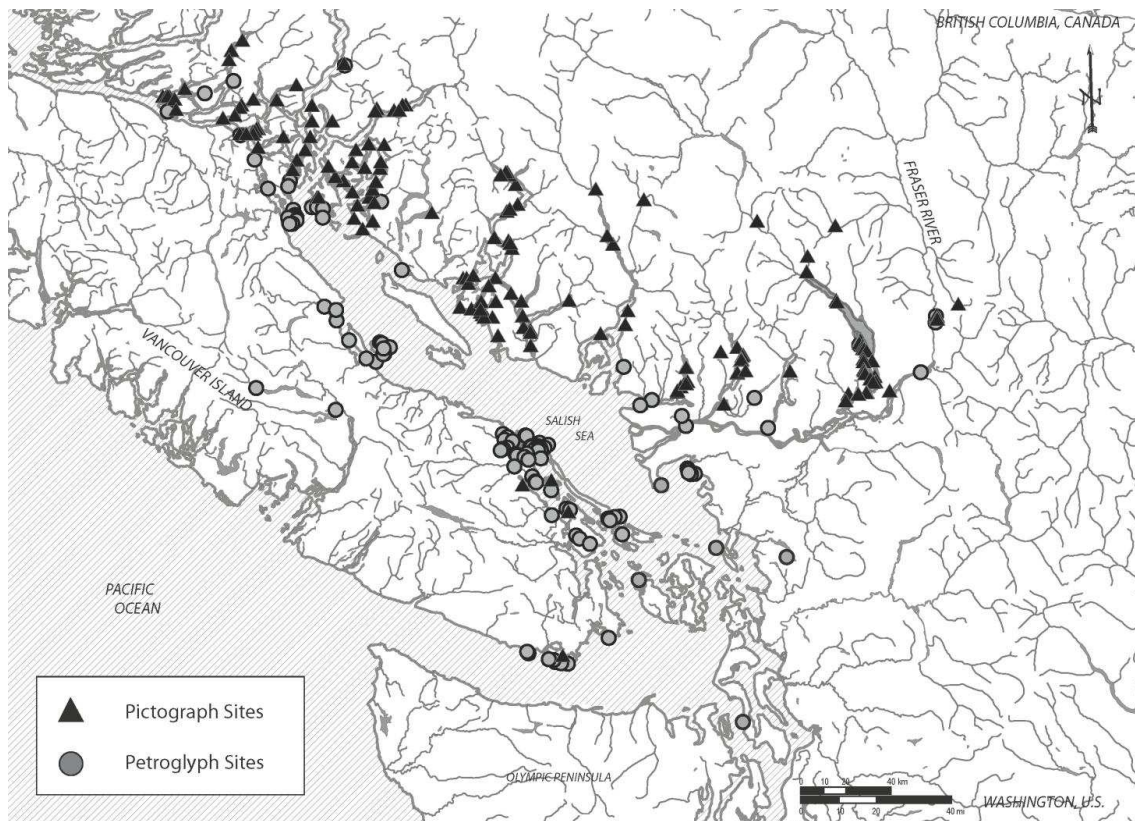Fig. 3. Map of sites containing at least 25 mounds or cairns in the central Coast Salish area.

Fig. 4. Map of rock art sites in the central Coast Salish area.

TABLE 1. ROCK ART SITES CATEGORIZED BY PROMINENT CONCENTRATIONS, INCLUDING BOTH PICTOGRAPHS AND PETROGLYPHS.

Coast Salish Group	Pictograph Sites	Percentage		Coast Salish Group	Petroglyph Sites	Percentage
Klahoose / Sliammon	38	20%		Cowichan	51	60%
Chehalis	38	20%		Snuneymuxw	34	40%
Sechelt	45	24%				
Subtotal	121	64%		Subtotal	85	70%
Coast Salish Area	189	100%		Coast Salish Area	122	100%

been identified in the islands, predominantly in the Hul'qumi'num region. Thus, there existed differing practices within the Coast Salish area. Further, these practices are distinct to these regions even while the materials for both are generally present in both areas. That is, pictographs could have been applied with hematite-based ochre throughout the Coast Salish area; as well, sandstone or some other rocks could have been inscribed with greater frequency on the mainland. Instead, these groups exhibited particular practices, choosing to practices particular forms of rock art. Still, there may be environmental factors in general that contribute to the contexts that influence the choices that peoples make, with common rock surfaces that are easier to inscribe are more present in the islands than the mainland, or certain areas with bluff exposures with the coast mountains. Yet, all cultures work within the environmental options and constraints.

Further, these distributions also reveal even more local patterns than the general patterns of islands versus mainland. The results indicate that certain Coast Salish groups are more associated with rock art practices than their neighbors (Table 1). Nearly two-thirds of the pictographs (64%) in the areas of three groups, Klahoose and Sliammon, Chehalis, and Sechelt. These concentrations indicate that each of these groups contain between 20% and 24% of the total number of pictograph sites. Likewise, petroglyphs are practiced in the areas of predominantly Cowichan and Snuneymuxw groups of the Hul'qumi'num region (n=85), amounting to 70% of all petroglyphs in the Salish Sea. Concentrations are present in the Nanaimo region (n=14) and adjacent Gabriola Island (n=20) (see also Adams 2003). That is, the petroglyph and pictograph sites are not evenly distributed in either the islands or mainland, respectively, as they exhibit concentrations in the territories of certain groups.

Etched Stones. Etched stones indicate a particular artifact type that have been interpreted as likely having spiritual associations (Mapes 2009). In the excavations at čix^wícən (Tse-whit-zen), archaeologists uncovered nearly a thousand (n=906) etched stones. These stones reveal thinly inscribed lines etched into the stone. Many in the community identified these as related to spiritual practices. When the stones were initially discovered, knowledge of this practice had been lost and many tribal members did not know what the stones were. These and many other artifacts are helping the Klallam people gain a better understanding of the ancestors and their life at čix^wícən (Tse-whit-zen) (Mapes 2009; Phillips and Charles 2015). With such a high number of stones, it is the core area for such practices. Yet, other sites exhibit etched stones, if in smaller numbers. Morley Eldridge (1987) has investigated two sites in the Denman Island area in which one site contained over 100 such stones, indicating a second core area for such artifacts (Fig. 5). The site consisted of a rockshelter, interpreted as a space for specialized activities, very likely spiritual in orientation. Other sites contain much fewer instances of such etched stones, indicating areas of influence from those core areas. Yet, these two concentrations of such stones are localized to the Klallam area of Olympic Peninsula or Pentlatch territory of southeastern Vancouver Island.

One possibility is that these two main areas served as the centers for the distribution of these unique items. Astrida Blukis Onat (2008) proposed a similar possibility for the distribution of mobiliary figures carved from antler that appear concentrated in the Swinomish area, ca. 900 to 1,200 years ago. While concentrated at the mouth of the Skagit River, other examples were present at sites further distant, such as Sucia Island in the San Juans. She could have included other such figurines that are present at sites even further to the north in British Columbia, such as those from the Blue Heron Lagoon Site (DeRu-1), Montague Harbour (DfRu-7), or Valdes Island (Keddie 2009). Blukis Onat (2008:176–177) considers these items, due to shared design elements, as valuable markers are "remembrances of a specific event," essentially gifts to witnesses of a potlatch, feast, or ceremony. While she acknowledged that further investigations are needed, she suggests that the "context of the gifting traditions of the Salish area" can be a useful a framework for such analyses.
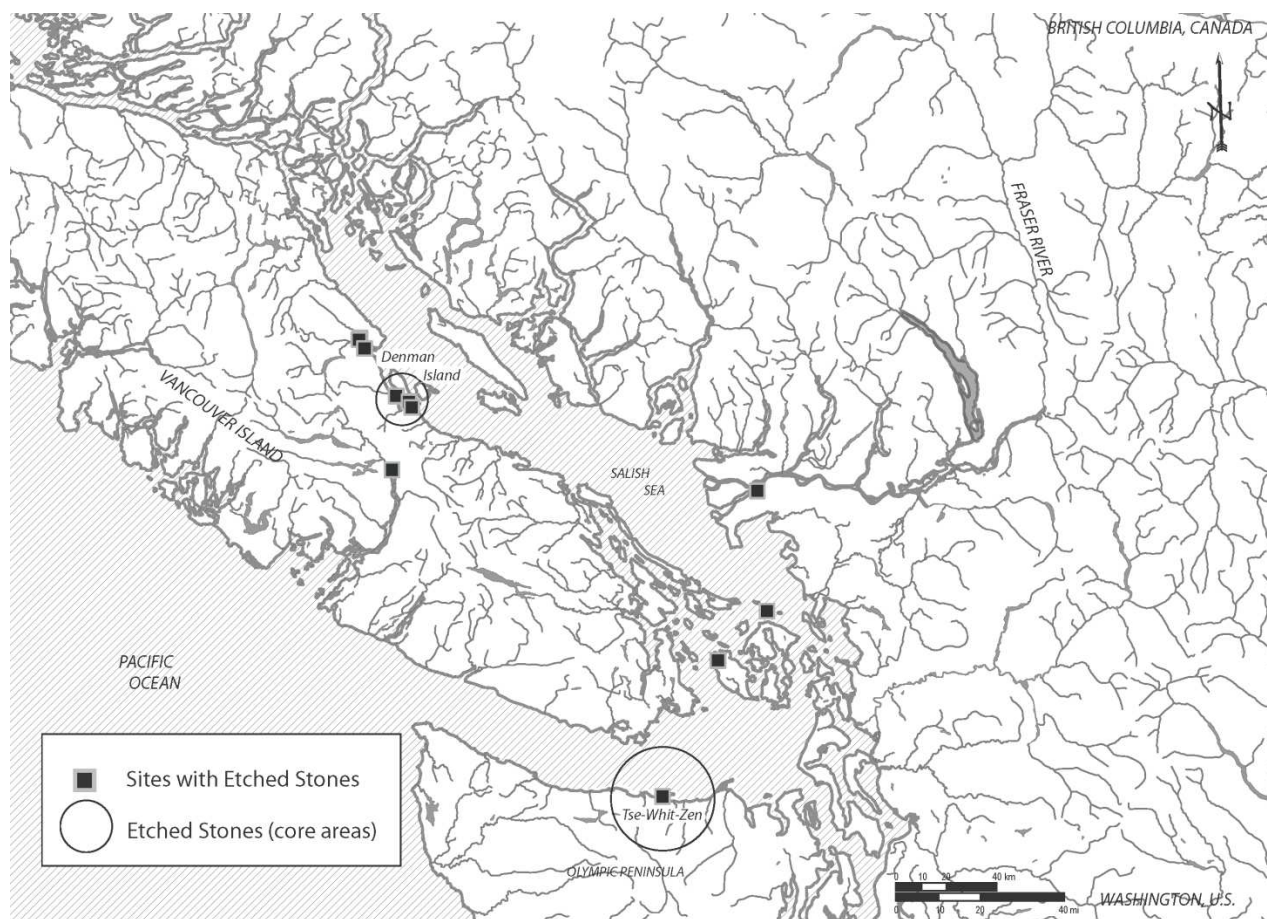
Fig. 5. Map of etched stone sites in the central Coast Salish area.

Anthropomorphic and Zoomorphic Stone Bowls. Carved or ground stone bowls exhibit a much broader distribution than etched stones. These include large but shallow stone bowls carved with zoomorphic imagery or taller anthropomorphic statuettes featuring bowls, or what are known as human seated figure bowls (Duff 1956, 1975; Keddie 2003). Due to their imagery, as well as the value accorded in labour in creation, archaeologists have readily associated these with ceremonial practices, as "medicine bowls" (e.g., Hannah 1996).

These are strongly associated with Lower Fraser area, yet distributions extend upriver to the Mid-Fraser region of the Interior Plateau (Fig. 6). Some of the imagery upon many of these bowls even derives from the Interior, such as rattlesnake imagery. For instance, there is rattlesnake imagery on a bowl in Victoria (No. 30). In turn, there is seal imagery up in Yale (No. 28 in Duff 1975), many kilometres upriver from the coast at the entrance to the Mid-Fraser Canyon. These indicate the alliance or familial bonds that peoples were drawing upon, which signaled ties to regions well beyond their local territory.

In addition to symbolization of distant regions, there are also material associations as well, in that the materials to make the bowls were from distant sources. For instance, soapstone bowls, a material found commonly in the Mid-Fraser region, have been found in Victoria area (Duff 1975). Conversely, other sites, such as Dionisio Point, contain stone bowls that exhibit similar imagery and style, yet are made from locally available Gulf Islands sandstone (Grier 2003:182). Similarly, at the Point Grey site, three such bowls were found, two of which were in the process of
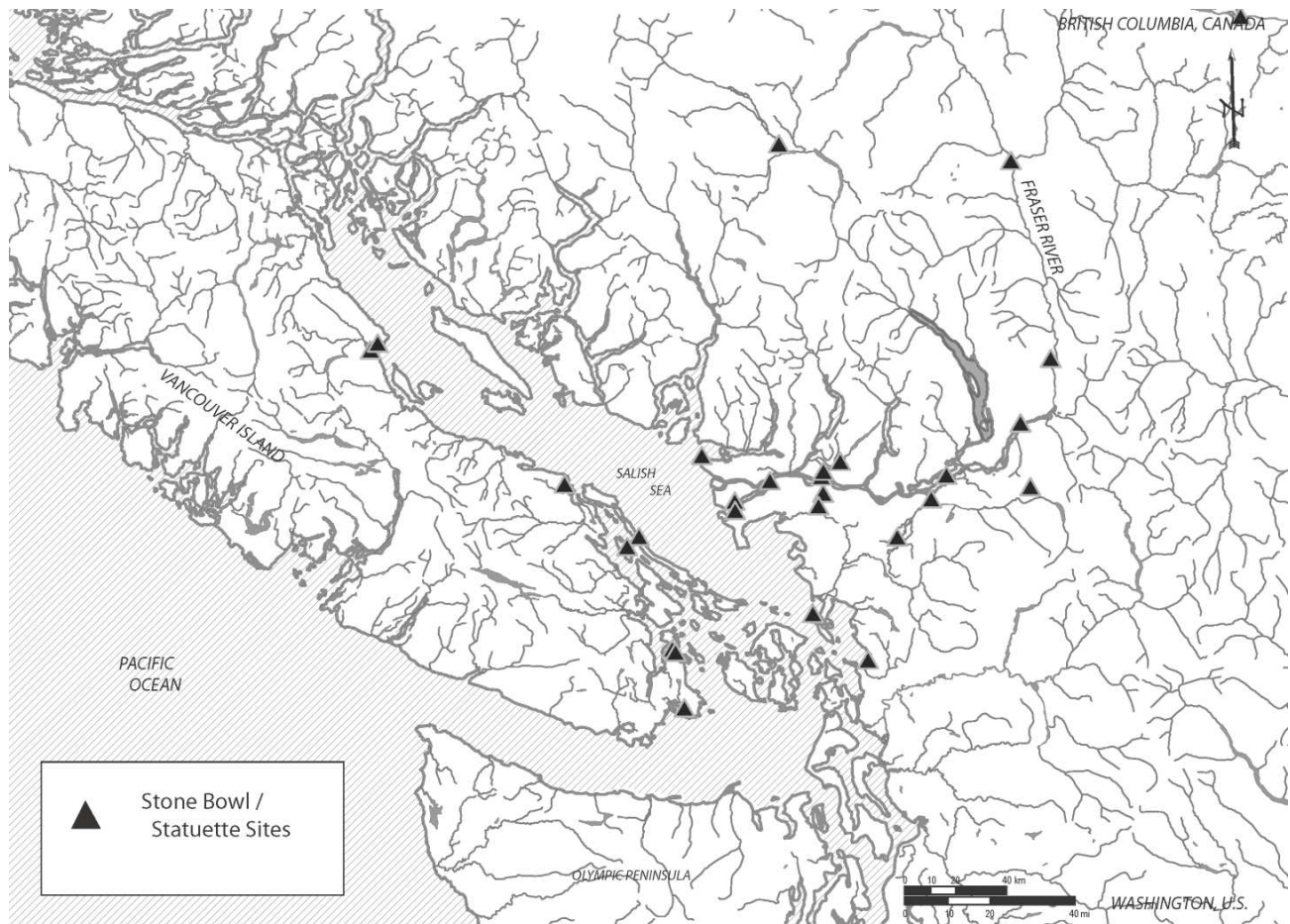
Fig. 6. Map of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic stone bowls in the central Coast Salish area.

manufacture, indicating their local origin and material (Coupland 1991). In either scenario, local or distant, these carved bowls likely represent through their material source as well as the imagery inscribed connections with their sources of origin, both naturally and culturally. In this sense, these are "pieces of places" that serve as mobile items but with lasting material connections to place, as detailed by Richard Bradley (2000). Archaeologists in the Northwest have applied his concept of pieces of places, such as Rudy Reimer/Yumks (2011) for the distribution of Garibaldi obsidian as important for the Squamish Coast Salish or Jesse Morin (2012:172-173) for the sources of nephrite from the Mid-Fraser region. As put by Morin (2012:173), the nephrite items served as the "materialization of social relations". In this manner, this resembles the proposed archaeological manifestations for the carved antler figurines as raised by Blukis Onat (2008), discussed above.

While bowls are a broader archaeological phenomena, it is still predominantly a Central Coast Salish phenomenon, as Duff (1956) emphasized, with the greatest concentration along the Lower Fraser River. This is the area that is tightly associated with the Marpole period and territory. This concentration in the Marpole area indicates another example of localized phenomenom regarding ceremonial practices.

Clark (2013:183–184) has noted that another concentration of such carved and ground bowls occurs in the Southern Gulf. These exhibit their own style, using the locally available sandstones, as

noted above for Dionisio Point. Clark (2013:184) notably remarked that "Artisans of the Southern Gulf area … [may] have used art to express social cohesion with the area and difference from their neighbours in other areas." His point regards the Straits Salish region and it relates to the overall discussion presented here, in that those communities emphasized local expressions, and this was the case within the broader phenomenon of ground and carved stone bowls. Even in being a broader phenomenon, again, stone bowls predominantly relate to the Central Coast Salish area and the Interior Salish of the Mid-Fraser Canyon, indicating that even large-scale cultural practices exhibit localized expressions and should not be regarded as extending to all Coast Salish groups.

To sum, the archaeological patterns for artifacts and features related to spiritual practices do not exhibit distribution throughout the entire Coast Salish area. Core areas exist for patterns that are widespread, such as with rock art or mortuary features, and even for limited distribution items, such as the etched stones. In this way, the material patterns for spiritual activities exhibits the localization (even individualization) and multiplicity of the religious worldview as indicated ethnographically. As Roy Carlson (1983, 2009) has suggested, the motifs commonly portrayed in rock art, mobiliary art, or monumental art have a long tradition, about four millennia. This indicates the continuity not only of symbols, ideas, and aesthetics, but also practices, concerning how such items are often gifted to others in the materialization of social connections.

Ethnohistoric Case: Exerting Local Autonomy Against the Prophet Slabebtikud

In the postcontact period, there was an upheaval in religious practices. Yet, Coast Salish groups also reveal a diversity of actions and practices in how they responded to colonialism, missionization, and the repression of traditional religious practices. One key case to consider illustrates that, while circumstances differed throughout the Salish Sea, certain principles that favored local autonomy ultimately result. This case concerns the Upper Skagit prophet, Slabebtikud.

Slabebtikud was a prophet among Upper Skagit peoples, partially influenced by Interior Plateau prophets (Collins 1950). There were Christian influences upon his views and practices, such as a weekly focus on religious activities and kneeling in prayer, but these coming indirectly from the Plateau prophets, who emphasized apocalyptic themes resulting from the influence of settlers. Upper Skagit communities viewed Slabebtikud as unusual among the communities for turning his plankhouse into a church during the summer months, a place of near-continual focus on religious activities, well beyond the usual winter emphasis for planhouses. And, during winter, spirit dances were held in his house. These gatherings at his plankhouse certainly involved other traditional activities as well, *slahal* gambling, wrestling, and feasting. But, involvement in this new religious fervor further entailed a form of obedience.

Slabebtikud was the chief authority, and he doled out punishments for those who did not follow the new order. His authority was heretofore unusual, as he exerted his spiritual authority beyond his own household. Traditionally, a *siem*'s authority was limited in scope to their household. In the first years of Slabebtikud's rise, Upper Skagit people favored his power. As a leader, he was instilling morality and leadership, especially during the changing times after contact. When the settlers needed to meet with the chief for treaty settlements, Slabebtikud embraced that for Upper Skagit. Later, when missionaries arrived in their territory, Slabebtikud's power strengthened (Collins 1974:35). He also extended his power not just to those beyond his house in the village, but he also extended it to other Upper Skagit communities with a series of sub-chiefs.

The first salmon ceremony, as discussed above, was an annual rite performed to honor the return of the salmon each year (Gunther 1926). Typically, Coast Salish groups performed the rite at their fishing camps, so as Collins (1950:340) described, "Each household held these ceremonies independently; the man in charge was the oldest of the sibling group comprising the core of the household." After Slabebtikud gained prominence as a prophet, he aimed to control the first salmon ceremony for Upper Skagit peoples.

He demanded that he perform one first salmon rite for all the Skagit. As one informant told Collins, "he was kind of a dictator." As Collins noted:

> Since authority in these realms had earlier been limited to the control of elders over younger persons within the family, this concentration of authority was a marked departure from former procedures. In the hands of Slabebtikud it aroused resentment, as did the irresponsible acts of certain war leaders. For Slabebtikud, this disapproval became strong enough eventually to cause his death, when members of one family ambushed and murdered him. (Collins 1950:340)

Thus, even in this case where an individual rises in prominence and spiritual power, the prophet is eventually undermined, and even murdered by his own tribal members, for concentrating and claiming too much power. He intended to control a common Coast Salish ceremony, to centralize how it was conducted. This was rejected, and Upper Skagit peoples returned to pursuing the practice of the rite in their own local fashion.

Discussion

The archaeological and ethnographic patterns discussed above might be considered as simply cultural differences, the presences of traits here and there, or their absences. This is the kind of work done that simply catalogued trait lists (e.g., Barnett 1939). Rather, the point of this discussion is to highlight the underlying Coast Salish cultural preferences that can inform us about how those archaeological and ethnographic patterns have come about. Part of the rationale for these patterns is found in their notions of relations with the spirit world, as the spirit powers available are seemingly infinite in origin and in the nature and the effect of their power. Another way to view this is simply that Coast Salish religion is reflecting their cultural protocols and preferences, that their religious worldview and the spirit powers that inhabit it mirror their own cultural tendencies toward the local places, emphases upon multiplicity and a heterarchy of powers and authorities. Indeed, it is more likely a recursive combination of both belief and practices.

Another aspect of this local autonomy of communities and individuals is that it allows not only for assertions of independence but also for the creation of wider spaces for the critique of another's power as well. In fact, the constant presence of critique contributes to the preference for powers to be localized, and not to be overly concentrated in one space, as with centralization, as with the case of Slabebtikud, or to extend beyond one's local domain. Such ever present community critique leads to other aspects of these spirit powers, involving a high degree of secrecy of spirit power among the Coast Salish as well as a well-treaded tradition of critique of spirit powers as well.

According to Pamela Amoss (1977:138), these spirit powers gave individuals creative expression and particular styles of being. They could be very particular powers, but often people speculated about the nature of one's power. Here, she revealed that an artful balance must be kept in that the dancer must reveal that one authentically gained spirit powers, but they also must

conceal many aspects of their spirit power, lest the source of their power unleash and they lose it. The unleashing can cause problems not for themselves but for others. These rituals help to channel the powers, express them, but control them. Therefore, it was necessary to conceal one's spirit powers in order to control them.

Indeed, Coast Salish people did not want to overtly express their spirit power, knowing they might be subject to criticism. Social critique of people's power was very common in oral traditions. Sally Snyder (1964:313) classed such stories as representative of the "bungling host" theme (see also Bierwert 1996:132). These are tales about people acting as elites, yet they do not really have power that they claim to have. In these stories, a person hosts a potlatch, but they repeatedly mess up—they give things away inappropriately, or they simply do not have enough gifts to hand out, or food to feed everyone, or other embarrassing things happen. These are satirical and humorous stories, but the point is that these hosts are expressing power, but they have overexpressed what power they actually have—and, in so doing, they've come up empty, appearing instead as fools, very publicly. These are the kinds of notions that lead to people to express only certain aspects of their power. Secrecy extends to practices overall. This was an inherent caution in both attempting to display one's power but also to balance that against showing too much.

Another aspect is that "a good power is controlled power, and people who receive power and fail to cultivate their control of it are a threat to themselves and the society at large" (Amoss 1977:138). Some spirit powers that people gained were, according to Puyallup-Nisqually, *ayáxaus*—dangerous, even malevolent spirits that could imbue great power. However, the powers it granted could cause one to pursue power and dominate others, even kill another without warning, and these could lead to the individual's own death (Smith 1940:73). Unlike other spirit powers, these were associated with "abnormal animal appearances," or shape-shifters, animals that when seen or hunted change from deer to snake, for instance, or animals grotesquely larger than normal, or bearing two heads. It is a form of trickster power, which the power one has gained may not appear to be as it is, that the one who holds such power has been deceived, or is masking the true nature of the spirit power. One might gain wealth and power, but others may charge that it derives from *ayaxaus*, and that the person was false in intention, a form of doppelganger—someone that should be opposed. This in a sense may have contributed to the growing critique of Slabebtikud, that he had gained a strong power, certainly, but that perhaps it was not an appropriate power. They had come to recognize it as a power that needed resisting.

Conclusion

All of these examples, ethnographic and archaeological, indicate that the Coast Salish peoples expressed the religious practices in ways tied to their local communities and territories. While ritual practices are multifarious, there are underlying principles common to all expressions, which lie in how they broadly conceive of spirit powers as affecting, even effecting, an individual's social and economic success. To ensure success, however, there is necessary balancing act between revealing that you have spirit power and concealing its precise source: to reveal too much is to lose it; to conceal too much is to not express your power. As argued here, this dynamic, which results from their conception of spirit power, leads to manifold expressions of ritual and supports each group in their effort to maintain autonomy, and this is marked both ethnographically and archaeologically.

In this way, they can express particular identities through the rituals they practice as well as make known the discrete spirits that empower them. They establish their own forms of spiritual power. As Darleen Ann Fitzpatrick (2004:221) noted about Cowlitz identity (and power), that it was "forged on an anvil of their own creation with one another as against tradition."

Often, anthropologists can tend to focus on dynamics that are overly colored by state/chiefdom dynamics, the dynamics of centralized societies, the machinations of which the discipline is a part. Within centralized political formations, people are familiar with how individuals connive and beat down others in the fight for increasingly fewer positions in the higher ranks of society. But, with societies that are not centrally hierarchical, such as the Coast Salish, researchers need to think in different dynamics, those that are heterarchical (Crumley 1995). Among Coast Salish communities, peoples want leaders, and those leaders want to relate to other powerful chiefs. If their ally rises in power, they benefit from their connections. And, in the case of Slabebtikud, he came to be seen as violating those protocols for Upper Skagit peoples. One reason for his downfall was that he tried to implement a centralization of authority in controlling what had been a locally controlled practice in the first salmon ceremony. He apparently had crossed the boundaries of the permissible, and he met his end for it. This shows that power does not just flow from the top down, but that there is power in solidarity in how people ally together to resist the concentrations of authority, particular those that they view as unwarranted. Coast Salish religious expressions here provides a way to interpret such histories. The nature of power is subject to skepticism, to critique; one could view the case of Slabebtikud as having revealed himself to be a false prophet, a sort of *ayáxaus* power.

Each of these examples reveal that there are numerous centers for ritual practices. Even the most common practices reveal a diverse array of local distinctiveness. Most of these practices, and the powers associated with them, are tied to particular places and regions. While there are practices that are prevalent among the Coast Salish, such as the first salmon ceremony or spirit dances (and even those have their qualifications), these examples reveal that there is a spectrum of practices that manifests at various scales. Beliefs and practices are anchored in local places and regions, and this keeps power decentered and in control of local communities. Moreover, as the case of Slabebtikud shows, such regional diversity is actively maintained. As Alexandra Harmon (1998:23) has stated regarding Coast Salish power: "Power or strength was not so much a means to dominate others as insurance against domination."

In this way, Coast Salish peoples can express particular identities through the rituals they practice as well as make known the discrete spirits that empower them. Not only do Coast Salish groups emphasize their local independence and autonomy, their religion provides a way in which to interpret and evaluate their sociopolitical dynamics. Power comes from local practices and is conducted by particular individuals, and they retain their social power through their ties to spirits in their local territories. In so doing, they convey how their power wrests from their own sources, rather than from those available to all. This cultural dynamic contributes to the distributional patterns that manifest ethnographically and archaeologically throughout the Salish Sea.

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