

Pacific Northwest Coast: Complexity, Sedentism, and Continuity

**Fort Vancouver,
Washington:
Spring, 1850**

“As the officer responsible in McLoughlin’s absence for the Columbia headquarters, Douglas sought to elevate moral standards. He was disturbed by the presence of slavery. “With the Natives, I have hitherto endeavoured to discourage the practice by the exertion of moral influence alone,” he informed the company in London. “Against our own people I took a more active part, and denounced slavery as a state contrary to law; tendering to all unfortunate persons held as slaves, by British subjects, the fullest protection in the enjoyment of their natural rights.” In 1849 he ransomed a slave with goods worth 14 shillings.”

What Shaped (and Shapes) the Pacific Northwest?

- Sea
- Rivers
- Mountains
- Rainforest

Pacific Northwest Culture Area

Timeline:

Basic Dates

- (As yet, no confirmed PaleoIndian period sites)
- Archaic = 10,000 BP
- Early Pacific = 6,300 – 3,700 BP
- Middle Pacific = 3,700-1,700 BP
- Late Pacific = 1,600 – 400 BP
- Modern = 400 BP to present

Archaic

Around 10,000 BP to around 6,500 BP

- more mobile, smaller scale hunter-gatherer groups with greater cultural diversity than occurred later
- Split between microblade (further north) and pebble-tool Old Cordilleran traditions (especially along river channels)

Pacific Period: Complexity elaborates

- the long rise of complex chiefdoms
- maritime/rainforest resource exploitation intensifies and specializes over time
- parallel trajectories of increasing technological, social, and cosmological complexity.
- Social complexity based on control of labor, territory
- Sedentary, complex hunter-gatherers

What is a chiefdom? How (many different ways) do they develop?

Chiefdom: “A kin-based, ranked society in which access to resources and political power, as well as social status, are determined by hereditary proximity to the chief, who often controls the redistribution of goods and is wealthy as well as powerful.”

Food surpluses, labor, monumentality, display... can this be done w/o agriculture?

Southwest alaska conservation coalition pix

"Chief Delivering Speech at Festival." Painting of a potlatch at Tsax̄is by Wilhelm Kuhnert. Franz Boas, "The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians," 1897

http://www.firstnations.eu/forestry/kwakiutl_protest.htm

Pacific Northwest Coast History

Key Trends over time:

- Increasingly diverse stone and bone tool technologies
- Increasingly diverse woodworking, maritime tools and technologies
- Increasing technological investment in storage
- Increasingly large, dense settlements
- Increasing investment in status display and competition
- Increasing evidence for inter-group conflict and warfare

Modern Period: More intensification, more competition

Key factors:

- Arrival of European economic effects BEFORE the Europeans: fur trade, escalating territorial competition
- Intensification of chiefly competition for status
- Competition with Europeans for control of land, river trade
- Opening of the territory to intensive resource extraction via waterways

Competition and Display...

- Potlatches
- Inter-ethnic conflict
- Commercial competition and conflict
(Hudson Bay Company)
- International competition and 'borders'

Wetsite Archaeology

**wet sites preserve
more than other kinds
of sites...**

**wet sites often
represent specialized
adaptations to
specialized ecosystems**

...

The 'special case' for maritime archaeology...

Vessels...

**And foreshore
features...**