

Broken points and social cohesion in Iroquoian villages: A point refit study

Roderick B. Salisbury^{a,*}, William Engelbrecht^b

^a Department of Prehistoric and Historical Archaeology, University of Vienna, Franz-Klein Gasse 1/3, Vienna A-1190, Austria

^b Professor Emeritus, SUNY Buffalo State, 1300 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222, United States



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Food sharing
Lithic refitting
Spatial patterning
Enchainment
Community interactions
Late Woodland
Iroquoia

ABSTRACT

Understanding patterns of artifact mends within a site has the potential to provide insights into human behavior. In this study, we map the distribution of projectile point mends at a mid-sixteenth century Iroquoian village in western New York. It is assumed that these point fragments were once embedded in meat and were discarded when the meat was consumed. As a result, the distribution of most point mends can be explained through waste stream analysis. However, those mends that occur over long distances or between different longhouses require another explanation. We propose that in these cases meat sharing between domestic groups occurred, as one mechanism used to cement interpersonal relationships. Long distance mends between potsherds and smoking pipes require additional explanations.

1. Introduction

This paper considers the distribution of 114 mends between projectile point fragments on the Eaton site, the location of an Iroquoian village dating to the mid-sixteenth century. As Hofman (1992) has noted, the process of refitting is both simple and tedious, yet can yield significant information on the natural and cultural processes forming the archaeological record, including the use of space (Keeler, 2007). While 44 (39%) of the point refits came from the same or adjacent excavation units, the majority of conjoined pieces were recovered from locations farther apart. Consideration of the archaeological context of the fragments that were conjoined suggests that some refit distributions are best explained by discard practices. For example, a fragment found in a living area fitting with a fragment from an adjacent refuse area suggests that the latter fragment was discarded from the adjacent living area. However, mends over greater distances, especially those between longhouses calls for some other explanation. We propose that meat sharing between inhabitants of different residences is the most likely explanation for this distribution.

This study is an elaboration of Salisbury's (2001) study of artifact disposal patterns at Eaton in which he noted the respective locations of sherds and projectile points that fit together. Among the mends were those between sherds and a point fragments from different longhouses, implying movement between the longhouses. It also suggests the contemporaneity of the structures. Engelbrecht later conducted a more extensive projectile point refit exercise utilizing a larger sample of projectile point fragments. The refits of ceramic sherds and projectile point fragments suggest that movement between longhouses was not

unusual. In fact, projectile point refits between longhouses appears to reflect a recurring behavior pattern.

2. Theory

2.1. Social cohesion and longhouse interactions

Jennifer Birch (2010, 2015) has extensively discussed the phenomenon of Iroquoian coalescence. Occurring at different times throughout Iroquoia, it involved the movement of small, scattered populations into larger villages. The impetus for this appears to have been increasing conflict. Many of the larger settlements that resulted from coalescence were located on defensible terrain and were surrounded by a palisade. It seems likely that all members of the community who were able worked together to construct a palisade for their common defense. In Iroquoian culture, women typically made bark cordage, which was used for a variety of tasks including binding structural elements of the village together. While men traditionally provided the posts for the palisade, women likely supplied the necessary cordage for lashing bark and any horizontal member (Poplawski et al., 2012). We envision construction of a palisade as quite literally a community building exercise.

While fear of a common enemy may have initially kept people together, mechanisms that promoted social cohesion likely developed as well. Researchers have suggested that representative village councils evolved during the process of village coalescence. Ritual societies whose membership included individuals from many kin groups are found among the historic Iroquois and may have become important at

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: roderick.salisbury@univie.ac.at (R.B. Salisbury).

this time (Tuck, 1971:213). There is evidence for sweat bathing in some western New York Iroquoian sites (Perrelli, 2009) and sweat bathing can serve an integrative function. Engelbrecht has recently identified stone disks in Iroquoian sites that may have been used in *chunkey*, a game usually associated with earlier Mississippian ceremonial centers. Games such as *chunkey* and lacrosse required teamwork and would have promoted village solidarity when teams from two villages played one another.

Larger villages required more deer for both food and clothing (Gramly, 1977). It is assumed that Iroquoian longhouses were inhabited by members of a matrilineage. Men from different matrilineages would have moved in with their wives, so brothers or related male kinsmen frequently lived in different longhouses within a village. Cooperation between men from different longhouse on hunting trips likely led to meat sharing. Feasting is another behavior documented for Iroquoians that also operated to enhance village cohesion (Hayden, 2001). It is in the context of meat sharing and feasting that we examine the pattern of some point refits from the Eaton site.

2.2. Waste streams

A waste stream is an aggregated movement of waste material from generation to final disposal. The term is used in archaeology to refer to the processes whereby materials flow from their points of origin to their points of deposition through maintenance of activity areas (Schiffer, 1987:66). Waste often flows from an activity area to a provisional discard location, which is generally within the household space, and from there to secondary refuse areas. The configuration of these flows, which can intermix (e.g., ceramics and lithics, Salisbury, 2001), are partly determined by the hindrance potential of the debris in question, as well as minimization of transport costs (Hayden and Cannon, 1983:126; Schiffer, 1987:66–70; Arnold, 1990). That is, potentially dangerous material was quickly moved to secondary middens, while objects with potential for reuse or recycling were left near task areas. At Iroquoian villages, ceramic and cooking waste generally moves from activity areas inside longhouses to refuse areas outside longhouse doors. In some cases, for example the Eaton and Calvert sites (Salisbury, 2001; Timmins, 1997), areas outside longhouse doors served as provisional refuse areas, with material eventually transferred to larger communal middens. The remains of hillside middens have been identified at Eaton; these were likely more extensive but have been lost to erosion and collector activity.

2.3. Enchainment

The linked concepts of fragmentation and enchainment (Chapman, 1996, 2000) provide a powerful interpretive device for considering the relationships between material remains and human social interaction, and for the ways that enchainment can promote social cohesion. In his introduction to these concepts, Chapman argued that pieces of larger objects, especially of pots and figurines, were used to connect people and places through a process of enchainment. In the process of fragmentation, either objects were intentionally broken, or broken pieces deliberately selected. These pieces were exchanged or deposited by design. Giving a fragment of an object, for example an arrowhead, to another person establishes a link between the producer/user of the arrowhead and the recipient. This is more than a one-to-one relationship between two individuals, because it also links the life histories of the people and objects involved and conveys the personhood of the giver (Chapman, 2000; Jones, 2005). Refits of fragments distributed among different sites, or among disparate places within a single settlement, imply these types of interactions in the Neolithic and Copper Age of Southeast Europe (Chapman, 1996, 2000). Of course, this cannot be true for every material fragment at every location; as Chapman (1996) recognized, objects are often broken through various post-depositional processes. However, it does provide a framework for

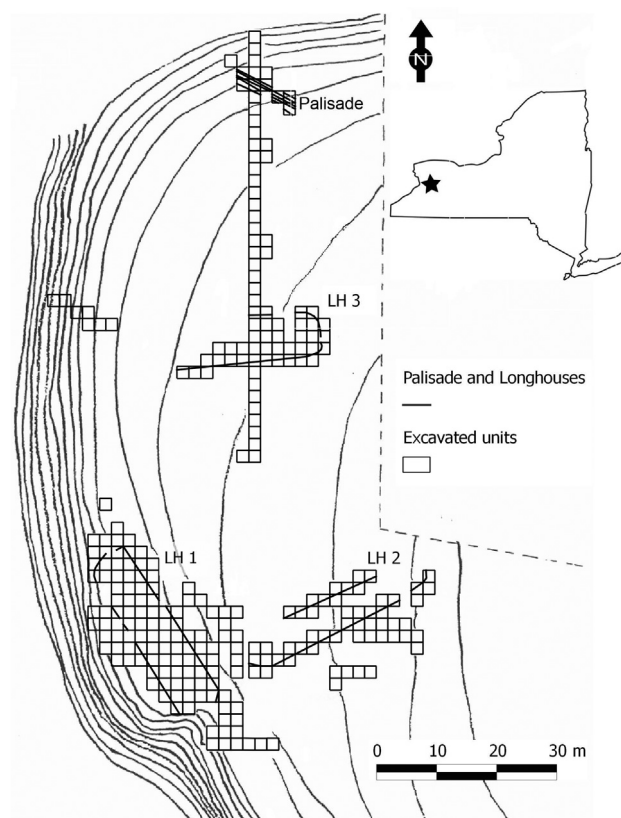


Fig. 1. Location of the Eaton Site in western New York State, and excavated units at the Eaton Site with outlines of longhouses and palisades, and topographic contours.

interpreting parts found far from one another, and at Eaton, for parts found outside of the apparent waste streams. It is also possible, we suggest, that preserved materials such as projectile point fragments can stand as proxies for perishable materials such as meat.

3. The Eaton site

The Eaton site is a multi-component site located on a knoll adjacent to Cazenovia Creek in western New York State (Fig. 1). Eaton was occupied intermittently since the Late Paleolithic period (Smith et al., 2010). The major component is an Iroquoian village of possible Erie affiliation (Engelbrecht, 1991) dating to approximately CE 1550, prior to direct European contact. The site was plowed and surface collected from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century, and portions of the northern and eastern site area were destroyed in the 1960s and 1970s, prior to systematic investigation. The western boundary of the site is a steep slope down to a creek, where there was some evidence for extensive but badly eroded bank middens that were not excavated. The original site area was estimated to be .89 ha based on the size of the knoll (Engelbrecht, 1994, 2014), but the total extent of the occupied area is unknown. The Archaeological Conservancy now owns the major surviving portion of the site.

The Iroquoian component is the subject of articles by Engelbrecht (1994, 2009, 2014, 2015), Jenkins (2004), O'Donnell (2003), Poplawski et al. (2012), and Salisbury (2001). Between 1975 and 2000, Engelbrecht directed 17 summer archaeological field schools on the site. A total of 257 2 m × 2 m units were excavated, with all soil sieved through ¼-in. mesh screens except for samples of feature soil that were water-screened. In contrast to this approach, a number of Iroquoian villages in Ontario were bulldozed prior to the site areas being developed. Those efforts afforded an excellent snapshot of the structure of the villages, and pit contents were typically recovered. However, this

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7440345>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7440345>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)