

GENDER AND CALIFORNIA ARCHAEOLOGY: YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, MAYBE

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The examination of gender in the archaeological record of California is increasing, but remains for the most part an underemployed theoretical and methodological approach. In this paper I discuss recent developments in the archaeology of gender and examples of applications in California archaeology. These include examinations of sexuality, the multiple axes of identity that include gender and other variables, and systems of gender that are non-binary. I will also discuss analytical approaches that have grown from gender archaeology, such as the examination of the life course in the archaeological record, identity formation, and osteo-biography.

The history of gender research in California archaeology can be split into two periods: B.G. (before gender) and A.G. (after gender). The demarcation of these periods occurred in 1984, when Conkey and Spector's (1984) groundbreaking article appeared in the seventh volume of *Archaeological Method and Theory*. Also in that year, the two book-length overviews of California archaeology, one by Moratto and the other by Chertkoff and Chertkoff, were published. Despite the fact that nearly a quarter of a century has passed since these works appeared, the examination of gender in the archaeological record of California remains for the most part an under-employed theoretical and methodological approach (but see Ardren 2008).

I am purposely drawing a distinction between the related but distinct concepts of sex and gender (see Geller 2008; Walker and Cook 1997). It is generally acknowledged that “sex” refers to biological markers such as secondary sex characteristics (genitals, breasts, facial hair, etc.), and “gender” refers to the cultural construction of roles, behaviors, and ideologies that may (or may not) have something to do with biological sex. There is a very substantial and growing literature that has employed sex as an analytical category in bio-archaeology and mortuary analysis (e.g., Walker and Erlandson 1986; see Walker 2006 for a summary). Space does not allow a complete discussion of this literature, but prior to 1984, these kinds of analyses rarely considered gender in the contemporary, theoretical sense that I use here.

The relative lack of gender research in California archaeology may be attributed, in part, to the scarcity of archaeologists in California universities who identify themselves as interested in this research. Although my sampling method was informal, this cursory survey of faculty perhaps reflects the idea that gender research, regardless of the geographic area of archaeological investigation, is still not in the mainstream (Table 1).

An additional factor in the marginalization of gender research in California archaeology has to do with the venues of publication and the ability to locate gender research in journals, edited volumes, and dissertations. The sometimes arbitrary categorization of published research may make it difficult to find gender research using standard search formats. For example, until this year, the categorization of abstracts in the online database of the SCA *Proceedings* listed gender as a research topic only in historical archaeology. I provide this example of the difficulty that researchers face in attempting to locate gender research in our profession.

Most gender archaeology research is published in edited volumes whose titles give a reasonably good idea about the volume contents: *Gender and the Archaeology of Death* (Arnold and Wicker 2001), *Handbook of Gender in Archaeology* (Nelson 2006), and *Women in Prehistory: North America and*

Table 1. Self-Identified Gender Archaeologists at California Universities.

INSTITUTION	NUMBER OF GENDER ARCHAEOLOGISTS
UC Berkeley	4
UC Santa Cruz	2
UC Santa Barbara	1
San Francisco State University	2
Sonoma State University	1
Stanford University	1

Mesoamerica (Claassen and Joyce 1997). Some are not so easily identified: *Social Memory, Identity and Death: Anthropological Perspectives on Mortuary Rituals* (Chesson 2001) and *The Archaeology of Shamanism* (Price 2001).

In my chapter from *The Archaeology of Shamanism* (Hollimon 2001), I argue that the distribution of non-binary gender systems in the indigenous cultures of Siberia and North America most likely means that the original migrants from northeast Asia into North America recognized more than two genders (see also Kirkpatrick 2000). Therefore, I suggest that the consideration of gender in the archaeological record of Native California should start with the assumption that these cultures had non-binary gender systems.

There has been a legitimate criticism that the ability to “find” non-binary genders in the archaeological record is limited by the fact that these individuals were numerically rare in their societies. The possibility of locating the individual in the archaeological past is admittedly difficult, but it has not stopped generations of archaeologists from studying other numerically rare members of past societies; we call them “elites.”

In addition to the study of these numerically rare individuals, archaeologists can study the intersection of gender and labor. It may be possible to identify non-binary genders by recognizing the ways in which cultures construct their genders. For example, many indigenous cultures on both sides of the North Pacific display genders that are based on attributes such as preference for or skill at specialized labor. In a sense, these genders are more-or-less-equivalent to the social role, such as "shaman" or "undertaker," and may have material correlates that could be identified in the archaeological record (e.g., Hollimon 2000). I think that it is incumbent on us to continue to think as anthropologists, and remember that many Native California societies recognize many kinds of human existence and human difference, based on such things as supernatural endowment (see Bean 1976). These personal qualities may have had as much to do with gender identity and construction as any other factor that we might recognize in the present-day, dominant culture.

Other examples of analyses of gender and labor in pre-contact California societies include the studies by Jackson (1994), Jones (1996), McGuire and Hildebrandt (1994), and Hildebrandt and McGuire (2002). These researchers have examined the ways in which gender and subsistence were involved in the decision-making processes of resource use and settlement location. Dick-Bissonette (1998) has also studied the interplay of acorn-based economies, basketry, women's labor and authority among the Yokuts, Mono, and Miwok. She concludes that senior women had significant authority in kin and community matters because they controlled wealth in the form of baskets.

Dick-Bissonette's research is an excellent example of the way in which archaeology is uniquely capable of providing data beyond the information present in the ethnographic record. The biases of the record that resulted from the early twentieth century's salvage ethnography have been enumerated, and certainly the subject of gender is one that can be illuminated by archaeological analysis. Another fine case

is Walsh's (2000) study of stone tool manufacture and use in desert areas of California. He aptly reminds us that archaeologists frequently attribute stone tool use to males/men, but that this should not be automatically assumed.

The examination of gender and labor in California's archaeological record has benefited from the emerging field of sexuality studies. As an outgrowth of gender archaeology, this focus has resulted in analyses of the archaeology of the life course (life stages), reproduction (e.g., Hollimon 2005), and the archaeological record of prostitution (e.g., Costello 2000). This approach includes both pre-contact and post-contact periods, and intersects with the study of socio-economic class and labor specialization.

Approaches to the study of rock art have also employed gender as an analytical tool. An example is Parkman's (1994) analysis of Pomo "baby rocks" and their use in rituals associated with fertility and reproduction. In addition, Whitley's interpretations of California rock art traditions make use of gendered symbolism and the role of life cycle events (rites of passage) in the production of rock art (Whitley 1998, 2000).

Perhaps we might consider the study of gender in California to begin with Arlington Springs Woman. The fact that these skeletal remains were initially sexed as male and then were reassigned as female is in some ways a microcosm of archaeological gender research. The fact that humans of all genders, ages, occupations, and ethnic identities lived here, created an archaeological record here, and then died here, is something that we must bear in mind. These aspects of identity are at the forefront of archaeological research that considers the process of identity formation and the ways in which we can study this in the material record.

An excellent example is the work of Voss (2008a, 2008b), who considers these issues in the archaeology of contact and of pluralistic communities. Her work focuses on the process of ethnogenesis, or the construction of ethnic identities. Some research suggests that this process is accelerated or emphasized in culture contact situations, and this has been studied in California Mission archaeological contexts. The strategies employed by persons of different cultural backgrounds, genders, ages, and occupations in contact situations left different material records, and these can be interpreted by archaeologists.

Other examples of this approach are the studies by Martinez (1994, 1996) that describe the ways in which Native Californian women enacted their own strategies in the multi-ethnic community at Colony Ross (now Fort Ross State Historic Park) on the north coast. Their roles as cultural mediators are highlighted in Martinez's interpretations of this pluralistic setting. Farris (1992) examined pine nut bead exchange among Native women of California, Oregon, and Nevada; this "women's economy" functioned alongside other exchange networks, such as the trade in obsidian and other commodities.

The interpretive approach known as osteo-biography is one method that can be used to reconstruct these differing strategies of identity construction. An example comes from the analysis of "Fort Ross Man" (Hollimon and Murley 2001). In 1999, a visitor at Fort Ross State Historic Park noticed skeletal remains eroding from the bank of Fort Ross Creek. After determining that the remains were of archaeological origin, mitochondrial DNA analysis was performed. The results suggest that this man had Native Alaskan ancestry on his maternal side, and that he likely had lived in California by virtue of the presence of the Russian-American Company (1812-1841). "Fort Ross Man," as he came to be known, apparently ate the foods of the local native people, the Kashaya Pomo, as indicated by the wear on his teeth. This suggests that he may have had a local native "wife" who prepared this food, but his burial conformed neither to Kashaya nor to Russian Orthodox practices. These interpretive challenges led me to consider the various ethnic, class, and religious identities that this man may have chosen for himself, or had imposed upon him by others. His life experience may have been one that was fairly common at Colony Ross: inter-ethnic households formed by Native Californian women and men of Native Alaskan descent (see Lightfoot and Martinez 1997).

This brief consideration of gender research in California archaeology highlights the fact that there is considerable promise for the future. We have many opportunities to study the archaeological record of gender in California societies from earliest times to the present. Also, it is possible to examine the many ways that cultures who have contributed to California's archaeological record identified, organized, and employed gender. My hope is that this will become a major focus in our discipline.

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