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## The Archaeology of Appetites

“Every meal we eat tells an evolutionary tale whose beginnings go back to the origin of life itself” (Gremillion 1). Through use of examining how food is produced, stored, distributed and consumed, one can take a glimpse into the past, present and even future of this planet—to better understand the complexity of human identity and the social practices or roles that define an individual, community or society. So this begins an exploration of the archaeology of food as a gendered commodity throughout our evolutionary past, emphasizing the infinite ways in which foodway practices exceeds the nutritional value of what our ancestors, family, friends and ourselves consume(d) on a daily basis. Foodway practices is an invaluable tool in any archaeologists’ tool belt, for it illuminates a very integral part of human identity; gender. A foodways approach examines gendered identity by incorporating an intersectional view of food in culture, tradition and history—food is a communication tool to understanding the beliefs of past peoples, an area that gender plays an active role in. This paper will argue that food is never a purely biological activity, rather, the foods eaten have histories associated with the pasts of those who eat them; its consumption is always determined by meaning and these meanings are always symbolic. An engendered foodways approach to interpreting the archaeological record—and therefore our species history—will replace the focus on the remains of history with a focus on the people of history, by demonstrating that gendered consumption is a dynamic interplay between communities and cultures. This approach better enables the examination of gender studies in the

archaeological record, supporting active agency and giving a voice to voiceless women, children and other marginalized peoples of the past, present and future.

My paper will begin by connecting foodway practices and gender through use of gender archaeology. This discussion will highlight the importance of gender in research directly relating to social power and prestige of past peoples. In determining the social complexity of various cultures, I will incorporate many methods of feminist analysis, all of which employ foodway evidence found in the archaeological record. These analyses will illuminate the critical need for exploration of feminist discourse in anthropology, taking root in previous Eurocentric archaeological research. In discussing feminist archaeology, I will illustrate the importance of holistic research—research that calls on personal reflection and acknowledges that our own perspectives may hinder the untold narratives of the past. By showcasing the multi-faceted nature of the archaeological record, I will illuminate the critical need for reflexive academia, and the wonderful insights that this bettered anthropological study will bring for future generations of scholars.

### **Studying Gender through Archaeology—Connecting Foodway Practices and History**

"Gender" refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women (Guest 270). This is not to be confused with "Sex"—the biological and physiological characteristics that differentiate men and women (Guest 272). A foodways approach examines gendered identity by incorporating an intersectional view of food in culture, tradition, and history—food and the cultural practices that follow are communication tools to understanding the beliefs of past peoples. One way in which foodway

practices is incorporated into the archaeological record is through examination in gender archaeology.

Gender archaeology addresses the presence of women and men in the past and the multiple ways in which their relations were structured. This research critiques many important theories that hinder the engendering of the past, thus making the archaeological record unsatisfactory in nature. These troubling theories include—the focus on economic, social, and political power as an interpretive theme in the past; the implications of biological determinism; and the effects of employing an evolutionary model on past social processes (Nelson 148). By shining light on these often overlooked concepts, gender archaeology illustrates the ugly truth; history focuses upon men as the foundation of societies, relegating women to subordinate roles, roles that are often simply ignored because they are deemed inferior (Nelson 150).

Many important themes found in the study of gender archaeology include, but are not limited to—"equity issues, critiques of androcentrism, retrieving 'lost' women archaeologists, reclaiming women in past societies, considering gender as relational, studying bodies and sexuality, and ... feminist pedagogy and presentations"—themes that are tackled in topics such as the division of labor, social structure, domestication, iconography, and the origins of society (Nelson 157). The examination of such topics acknowledges the power and prestige of women, increasing their visibility and giving way to the study of gender in archaeology. Engendering the archaeological record will help us to illuminate a body of knowledge that has been lost under the pressure of patriarchy. Gender research in archaeology will guide us to see the importance of what women do, how women are defined in social systems, the roles women presume in the economic, public and private spheres, and the implication of imagery on women—both past and present (Nelson 163).

Prehistoric women's work is often presented as only supportive, not creative work. It is critical to understand that the bulk of the maintenance work—the preparation of food and the clean-up, the construction of clothing, the care of children and elderly, and the cleaning of domestic spheres—is performed by women (Nelson 175). Gender archaeology examines the division of labor amongst past societies with this ideology in mind, stressing the terminology employed by the archaeological record in the examination of such topics. For example, rather than simply accepting the common-used “(male) hunter and farmer/ (female) gatherer” model, gender discourse emphasizes a series of studies from prehistoric sites in Mississippian cultures that utilize more subtle approaches (Nelson 89). These approaches show the error of the traditional dichotomous perspective that normalize the performativity of gender roles in past societies and offer a better interpretation—one in which researchers and archaeologists examine bodies of evidence related to food production and ask questions that enable them to reconstruct subsistence strategies, diet, and food preparation (Nelson 90). In doing so, we will learn that societies (past and present) take different forms and in some, if not the majority of all, “women made tools, procured food, took responsibility for food storage, utilized sophisticated technology, and prepared meals” (Nelson 87).

### **Feminist Archaeology—Engendering the Once Static Past**

The rich history of this planet calls for an understanding that past societies were more flexible and fluctuating in their social relations and values than previously thought by archaeologists. This feminist approach suggests that an intersection of “gender, age, status, and personal identity” must be considered when researching past peoples, in order to explain the complex daily life within prehistoric (and historic) communities (Levy 227). Feminist

archaeologists begin their explorations in material culture by taking the “lives of women seriously in thinking about past human societies” (Levy 226). In doing so, they examine patterns of gender differentiation which reveals the importance of work by women in the past, an area of study that has been previously silenced by the archaeological record.

A feminist approach to archaeology is one that links directly to work; “subsistence patterns, craft production, exchange, development of political systems, warfare, ritual, tool making, and exchange” are all topics of interest for feminist scholars in archaeology (Levy 228). Such topics have been researched by leading archaeologists, to include: Patty Watson, Mary Kennedy, Jane Peterson, Cheryl Claassen, Sarah Nelson, and many others. Their research brings to light the complexity of gender, and directs attention to a wide variety of people in the community, instead of focusing on the singular male dominated model of hierarchy—a very modern and patriarchal approach to past peoples. These people include, and are not limited to: men, women, other genders (third or fourth genders), youth, adults, and elders (Levy 230). By making use of an intersectional lens, feminist archaeology helps to avoid the biased and oversimplified views of past life as binary—male or female and elite or non-elite— and increases diversity in history, by giving a voice to the people who did not fit these very dichotomous roles (Levy 231).

A fundamental quality of feminist archaeology is that its scholars are reflexive, and they question their assumptions when conducting research on past societies. (Levy 231). Feminist archaeology calls on personal reflection, and acknowledges that each archaeologist starts research from different perspectives, perspectives that must be considered when making assumptions about past life (Levy 231). Due to this biased beginning in research methods, and because hierarchy is often gendered male, the life and work of women throughout time may be

ignored. Furthermore, the life and work of non-elite men may also be ignored, due to the frequent—and often wrong—assumption by archaeologists that past societies were static and not complex in nature (Levy 231). It is suggested that a feminist approach to archaeology will lead to more questions being asked, questions that cause academia to reconsider the roles of all members in a society, and take note that prehistoric peoples were far more complex than once thought (Levy 232). This is clearly evident in the many case studies provided by feminist discourse in archaeology, all of which employ an intersectional lens in understanding foodway practices, and the cultural identity that takes shape from such multi-layered modes of research.

### **Methods of Analysis—Gender and Food Systems in Feminist Archaeological Discourse**

*Gendered Labor Practices—The Role of Subsistence, Agriculture, and Food Distribution in Prehistory:*

When applying an engendered lens to the archaeological record, one must challenge the normative view of inflexible, gender-based divisions of labor—where men hunt and fought, and women gathered and nurtured—and replace those biased concepts with more accurate and evidence driven data. One way in which this is accomplished in the archaeological record is through the examination of skeletal and material culture evidence found in prehistoric societies. Using scientific methods of inquiry, such as analyzing “musculoskeletal stress markers” or  $^{13}\text{C}$  and  $^{15}\text{N}$  levels found in bone patterns of skeletal evidence, archaeologists can attempt to highlight the repetitive work activities that differ from male to female samples (Peterson 17).

In Jane Peterson’s dissertation, *Sexual Revolutions: Gender and Labor at the Dawn of Agriculture*, she utilizes a feminist lens to examine sexual labor patterns and how these sex-

specific behaviors changed through time— specifically the transformation from hunter-gatherer lifestyles to horticulture and subsistence lifestyles. Peterson collects her data from skeletal and archaeological evidence found in pre-historic periods of modern Israel, Palestine, and Jordan— these periods include—the Natufian, Neolithic, and Early Bronze Age. These areas show evidence of plant domestication as early as 10,000 BP, with Peterson studying the time period of 12,500 to 5,000 BP. Using “musculoskeletal stress markers” found in the bone patterns of her skeletal evidence, Peterson attempts to highlight the “repetitive work activities” that defer from male to female samples. The documented patterns of bone modification will help to identify the gendered practices between the sexes during pre-historic times, a feat that is revolutionary in nature.

*Gendered Agricultural Tools—An Interpretation of Prehistoric Technology:*

New studies of “women’s work” by gender archaeologists are beginning to illustrate the many facets of women’s technologies in basketry, pottery, clothing, stone tool-making, and food production (Watson and Kennedy 256). This is clearly evident in the discussion on the domestication of food plants in the Eastern U.S. Woodlands, which illuminates the contradictory nature of the archaeological record—where men are attributed as the domesticators of food plants rather than women (Watson and Kennedy 257). Archaeologists believe that this false attribution exists in the archaeological record due to the tendency by researchers to stress dichotomous relationships, such as the “active” lifestyle of male hunters as compared to the “passive” lifestyle of female gathers (Watson and Kennedy 257). It is argued that past women do much or all of the planting, weeding, and harvesting of plants, as well as processing and storing them after the harvest (Watson and Kennedy 259). Thus, many agricultural tools may have belonged to women.

This conclusion is supported by ample ethnohistoric and archaeobotanical data, ranging from charred and uncharred plant remains, to accounts of European entry into the Southeast (Watson and Kennedy 258). Evidence of charred plant remains—recovered by flotation-water separation systems—and uncharred plant remains—recovered from dry caves and rock shelters—all suggest three different episodes of domestication in the Eastern US:

The first began about 7000 BP when a gourd-like cucurbit and bottle gourd begin to appear in archaeological deposits in the Eastern US. The second is from 3500 BP onward when domesticated forms of weedy plants sumpweed, chenopod, and sunflower begin to appear. The third is the development of varieties of maize specific to the requirements of the Eastern US, a process that took place between 2000 and 1000 BP (Watson and Kennedy 257).

These accounts tend to be discussions of the archaeological evidence or plant remains found, rather than the people who manipulated the plants—all reasons why ethnohistoric data is used to supplement archaeobotanical evidence in search of the true Eastern US domesticators; women.

Historical or ethnohistorical data provided by scholars and explorers such as Le Page du Pratz describe and give information about the plant use by living peoples in the Eastern Woodlands, giving a glimpse into the data recovered from plant remains. One integral source of ethnohistorical data, suggesting female domesticators, comes from Le Page du Pratz's (n.d.:156) account of an Eastern Woodlands cultigen being grown in Louisiana by the Natchez at the time of European entry in the Southeast: "I have seen the Natchez, and other Indians, sow a sort of grain, which they called Choupichoul, on these dry sand-banks. This sand received no manner of culture; and the *women and children covered the grain any how with their feet*, without taking any great pains about it" (Watson and Kennedy 258). Accounts such as Le Page du Pratz's



(n.d.:156) can be found throughout the ethnographic literature of the Eastern U.S., all suggesting similar examples of women “planting, reaping, collecting, and processing” plants (Watson and Kennedy 258).

Past researchers allowed their Westernized worldview on gendered performativity and normalized gendered roles to taint a past that did not have such unilineal social processes. Recently, however, archaeologists studying gender through a feminist lens leave behind Eurocentric thought, and present the past of the Eastern Woodlands as one of varying social complexity. They argue that past women do much or all of the planting, weeding, and harvesting of plants, as well as processing and storing them after the harvest (Watson and Kennedy 266). They also contend that by examining the artifacts used in food preparation—especially their disposition and distribution within the site—archaeologists will be able to see that food production and preparation were of the female sphere (Watson and Kennedy 267).

“The division of labor by gender is rarely absolute” (Nelson 111). It is foolish to believe that past women could not or did not make lithic technology or domesticate plant foods. It is just as foolish to believe that no past men participated in the production of pottery, basket-making, and cooking. Archaeologists must be critical in their assessments of past social processes, and look beyond the dichotomous relationships they are so used to; “training, talent, and convenience” are better indicators of divisions of labor as compared to biological capacity (Nelson 115). Asking such gendered questions about work in the prehistoric past will lead to a more complex understanding of our descendants, and an appreciation that not only extends to our male ancestors but our female ancestors as well.

*Engendering Foodways to Illuminate Cultural Identity: Rock Shelters as Women’s Retreats:*

“Material, usually of plant or animal origin, that contains or consists of essential body nutrients, such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, or minerals, and is ingested and assimilated by an organism to produce energy, stimulate growth, and maintain life” (TheFreeDictionary.com). This very basic definition of food illuminates only one aspect of food character—the biological function—however, what it fails to introduce is the various circumstances that food plays in cultural identity. Through the preparation, consumption, and distribution of foodways, one can infer the ways in which a group or society of peoples socially interacted and valued humanity (Claassen 635). Research in archaeological areas that were once overlooked, such as the importance of rock shelters for ancient female identity, are now shining light on the complexity of foodways practice in prehistory. Newt Kash rock shelter in eastern Kentucky is one such often forgotten area of cultural research.

Taking a closer look at the biological remains found at the shelter—recovered fibers, plants, nuts, features, a roof fall, mortar holes, and infant burial—archaeologists can illustrate the importance of food identity to a 1,500 year era, beginning in the Terminal Archaic and continuing through the Early Woodland periods (Claassen 635). Archaeologists, including Cheryl Claassen, propose that Newt Kash was used specifically as an area of “menstrual seclusion and birthing locus for women,” where they would remove themselves from the community for days to weeks at a time (Claassen 637). It is suggested that the domesticated plants found were used as food or medicine for the women in seclusion. These women present in the shelter would produce nut oils, cordage and fabrics for the home and family unit (Claassen 638). The shelter was temporary, with women staying overnight for periods of time, sleeping, eating and collecting “medicinal plants, bark and grasses” (Claassen 633). Researchers provide evidence that further suggests that the shelter was a ritual area, where the women, “at the end of

their stay,” would take a ritual bath to cleanse their “heat”—the term used to describe the power women held during menstruation and birth, as supported by Mexican folklore and origin stories—discard old clothes, and oil their babies with the nut oil produced at the shelter (Claassen 635). Such inferences could lead to more research being done to prove that the shelter was a staging place for rites important to a medicine society and that this society oversaw the retreating and birthing uses of the shelter (Claassen 640).

The remains occurring in the greatest quantity at the site are textiles and cordage (Claassen 640). Researchers believe without a doubt that the production of string and cord occurred at Newt Kash shelter. Evidence from North, Central, and South America supports this notion, remarking the importance of braiding and weaving as women’s work, even noting that the “drop spindle and back loom both impart sexual symbolism,” and for many groups in Eastern America the goddess Tlazolteol was the deity of weaving, childbirth, and sexuality (Claassen 631). This evidence, along with the presence of nut oil, which was used to soften the skin of women and children, makes a case for a gendered landscape at Newt Kash shelter (Claassen 632).

With such ample evidence, archaeologists feel confident that menstrual retreat, birthing, and rituals suggesting medicine can be added to the “ethnographic literature from North America that indicates the uses for rock shelters,” which formerly included food storage, burial, and seeking visions (Claassen 639). Research on the Newt Kash rock shelter in Kentucky addresses one major goal in archaeology—reconstructing ancient life ways. Evidence from the site suggests a new approach to looking at Terminal Archaic to Early Woodland peoples by studying the behavior of women, a group of people that have been silenced in many histories throughout the world. By use of artifacts and features from the Newt Kash site, archaeologists and

anthropologists can gender a landscape that was once static and biased by ethnographic research that left out the voices of half the population.

*The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting: A Feminist Inquiry of Power:*

In John H. Blitz's, "Big Pots for Big Shots: Feasting and Storage in a Mississippian Community," he explores the long sought after archaeological understanding of social ranking in non-state societies. He suggests that preserved material evidence of feasting and food storage in community ceremonial environments, such as Mississippian platform mounds, give way to the gendered food practices and production that convey social unity—or lack thereof—in past life ways (Blitz 81). Blitz highlights that the majority of proposed perspectives for social ranking in non-state societies includes the "control of access to resources" as a central factor in community development (Blitz 80). This key perspective suggests a "Big Man" or "Big Woman" role in society, where certain individuals would become institutionalized as a formal office of chief, in an attempt to gain access to wealth and make it available to the members of a community through use of ceremonial potlatches—feasts or large celebrations held in the center of a community to redistribute wealth held by the "Big Man" or "Big Woman" (Blitz 83).

Similar feasting ideology is employed in *The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires*, which discusses a concern with the political uses of material culture, the social significance of food, and the gendered construction of power. This text examines New World archaeological assemblages in terms of its function and culinary consequence. This is evident in Mesopotamian ideology, with the Inca Empire showcasing the importance of the relationship between rulers and subjects, as facilitated through the staging of food and drink. Highlighted in this text is the vast array of Inca culinary equipment—linking food,

politics, and gender as an important role of women in the “negotiation and consolidation of imperial state power” (Bray 17).

Adding to the multiple lines of evidence found from John Blitz, and Tamara Bray, *Gastronomy: The Anthropology of Food and Food Habits*, edited by Margaret Arnott, is a collection of essays from prominent anthropologists on studies of prehistoric food patterns and modern urban food habits, calling on ceremonial or folklore approaches to explaining identity and power through consumption

“Food has always been and still remains man’s most important concern, and its study should be of crucial importance to anthropologists since it affects all mankind and all man’s relationships and activities...” (Arnott Preface XI). The essays found in this book stress the importance of ethnic and geographical studies in determining food preferences and requirement, in order to learn how people may be fed, what they can and cannot eat, and to know what part fast, festival and status play in diets of people throughout history. Bokonyi’s article on the “Effects of Environmental and Cultural Changes on Prehistoric Fauna Assemblages” is supportive in the anthropological exploration of divergence from the traditional “(male) hunter and farmer/ (female) gatherer” model, instead providing evidence that food provision was much more complex than the dichotomy presented by early anthropologists. Bokonyi examines various prehistoric settlement fauna (animal husbandry and hunting) to argue that cultural changes affect domestic fauna much more than the wild fauna assemblages (Bokonyi 9). He explains that the oversimplification of assuming males were primary hunters and females primary gathers is falsified when one surveys various other factors, to include—“local domestication, inner evolution of cultures, influence of neighboring cultures on fauna assemblages, increase of density of the human population, and climate change” (Bokonyi 11). These approaches show the error of the

traditional dichotomous perspective that normalize the performativity of gender roles in past societies and offer a better interpretation—one in which researchers and archaeologists examine bodies of evidence related to food production and ask questions that enable them to reconstruct subsistence strategies, diet, and food preparation.

### **Symbolic Consumption: Food and its Imagery, Purpose and Power**

#### *Fighting for Your Right to Consume:*

When discussing food as symbolism, one must call on the tastes, appearances, dietary adaptations, and consumption in institutions of power—religious, colonial, and other—in order to shed light on the complex cultural connotations of food. These lines of inquiry are clearly evident in Sidney Mintz’s text, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past*, which focuses upon the notion of a person’s reasoning behind why they choose to consume. This notion is woven beautifully throughout his essays, each one surrounding theories that involves the ways that humans eat, the acts and substances of consumption, the hopes and passions behind each food ethnology and the history of individual consumption throughout time and space. Mintz explains how the exercise of power affects what gets consumed, and under what conditions—a great framework for understanding how we comprehend food and correlate that to our identity through symbols, such as war (Mintz 20).

“War is probably the single most powerful instrument of dietary change in human experience” (Mintz 25). During war, people, food, and various resources are mobilized—these mobilizations are all dependent upon the national economy and those who run it to supply military personnel with what they need or can be afforded (Mintz 25). In this way, service

personnel ate what they were given; “what they were given was decided by powerholders who functioned outside the army and outside their direct experience” (Mintz 26). War directly affects the consumption of those involved, with a hierarchy of power determining the tastes that service men and women are afforded. For personnel during World War II, meat, coffee, and sweets were their main food groups, however, a very powerful symbol of American culture—Coca Cola—was not given to service men and women (Mintz 26). This is due in part to the limited usage of bottling plants for Coca Cola manufacturers during war time efforts, which negatively affected its production numbers throughout the U.S. Although one may believe that the lack of a soft drink beverage may not be detrimental to war time efforts, Mintz brilliantly debunks this assumption, providing that the absence of such a culturally significant food to service personnel made them fight more vigorously for their right to drink a beverage that reminded them of their Homefront—Coke.

*Food is Culture:*

“Much of human activity is tied, either directly or indirectly, to the quest for food” (Gremillion 8). Evidence to support the notion of food as symbolism to cultural constructions of nourishment can be examined in Massimo Montanari’s *Food is Culture*, and David Sutton’s *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*, both providing wonderful insights on the complex meaning(s) of consumption.

Throughout Montanari’s *Food is Culture*, there is a fundamental proposition that all food is cultural, however “artless” it may appear. His opening paragraph of section 1 illustrates this proposition best:

What humans grow involves selectivity, of course, but even in the wildest “natural” or spontaneous growth and “wild” livestock, those elements of biological or horticultural environment and genetics that constitute “natural selection” are “cultural.” And from the moment humans choose food products, however “natural” their provenance, that too becomes a cultural choice. With the “discovery” and human appropriation of fire, plants and animals are metamorphosed into cultural manifestations through the crucible of flames and heat... (Montanari 5).

Montanari employs quotations frequently when using words such as “natural” and “cultural,” because he wants to highlight the social and political ways in which these terms have been created to explain the “nature and culture” dichotomy. He wants to showcase that such a division is arbitrary, for even the things we associate with being “natural” are constructed with “cultural” and symbolic connotations; the foods we consume—whether past, present or future—will always have underlying meanings attached to them...and these meanings can better help to explore the diversity of human consumption.

Sutton argues that food is about “identity creation and maintenance,” whether that identity be “national, ethnic, class or gender-based” (Sutton 8). Food is also seen as commensality—“eating to make friends”—and competition—“eating to make enemies” (Sutton 9). He explores these notions of food as a topic of symbolic ritual in identity creation through the studying of consumption and consumption-related memories of the Kalymnos people in Greece. The reasons for buying, preparing, and consuming certain foods is evident in the memories of food structures during special occasions, such as Easter feasts in Kalymnos. These food structures are often reminiscent of acts of food exchange, which take form from the narratives of



food generosity—name, reputation, and honorable personhood are created in Kalymnos culture through the shared exchange of food during communions (Sutton 11). Therefore, community is created through the exchanging of food with neighbors, family, and even enemies.

Sutton also explores how the daily handling of food is an “opportunity to show one’s intelligence and skill, for women in preparing food, and for both men and women in shopping for food and getting the best deals” (Sutton 21). The marketplace is the arena for showcasing one’s position in Kalymnos society, by use of food-related conversations or practices. For example, Kalymnos men are expected to express their “honor” of generosity by performing their disregard for monetary concerns while at the marketplace. Whereas women take advantage of the marketplace as an opportunity to run into neighbors and “gossip” about food prices and everyday consumption in Kalymnos (Sutton 23). Such narratives give way to the diverse uses and implications of food in the global world.

### **The Cultural Importance of Nourishment throughout Time: How Globalization has Contributed to Worldwide Food Biographies**

A more in-depth discussion of globalization trends throughout time and space helps to trace the history of production, exchange and use of food in the ancient and present world, emphasizing the importance of active agency of all peoples—especially those whose voices have been silenced by gender, history, race, or ability— in the cultural importance of nourishment throughout time. This conversation highlights the migration of innovative foodways technologies and provides evidence that food development has been an ongoing process affecting consumption for centuries, with gendered labor practices taking precedence.

*Globalization in Food Innovation, Production, and Consumption: How Shifting Cultural Connotations of Food Has Affected Gender Norms:*

Karen Bruhns and Karen Stothert's text, *Women in Ancient America*, provides evidence of female active agency in the production, distribution and innovation of foodways technology. Chapter 4 of this text, "Women and Food Production," places Native American women as the farmers at the center of an agricultural stage. This chapter has brought with it the belief that gender roles in the past were not static; many societal cases prove that gender roles or norms did not always correlate with the biological sex of individuals in a fixed way, supporting that food biographies are not always fixed either (Bruhns and Stothert 33). This concept of an obsolete static gendered labor field is continued in *Food, Ecology and Culture: Readings in the Anthropology of Dietary Practices*, which provides many relevant case studies from around the globe to illustrate the multi-faceted nature of globalization in food innovation, production and consumption. One such reading from this text, "Eskimo Story-Knife Tales: Reflections of Change in Food Habits," by Susan Lippe-Stokes, narrates the implications of the changes in dietary patterns for the nutritional status of Kuskokwim River Eskimos by use of traditional, transitional and modern story-knife tales.

Story-knife tales are told by girls of Eskimo villages from the ages of five through adolescence, and are "rich in ethnographic details concerning social structure and subsistence activities" of a particular Eskimo culture (Lippe-Stokes 79). A study of Yuk Eskimo girls' story-knife tales were collected in 1996 in the Kuskokwim River Delta, resulting in eighty-three tales being transmitted. Each of these tales fell into a particular category of traditional—"those which made no mention of modern living styles"—, transitional—"tales containing an admixture of both

modern and traditional ways of life”–, and modern–“those that reflected contemporary life in Kuskokwim”–tales (Lippe-Stokes 79). Of the stories collected, the data suggests that there is a “negative association between the degree of acculturation and modernization of a village, and the presence of traditional stories” (Lippe-Stokes 79). The shift from a traditional story to a modern type of story involves the adoption of Western themes, particularly that which relates to food procurement; “Non-traditional stories tend to describe modern dietary patterns and methods of food procurement, whereas traditional stories reflect aboriginal methods” (Lippe-Stokes 80). Aboriginal methods include collecting berries—a responsibility of women and young girls— and hunting, trapping and fishing of animals—a male task (Lippe-Stokes 80). Whereas modern stories recognized that food came from “food stores and was kept in cupboards” (Lippe-Stokes 81). Concluding that, “in the traditional life, it is the environment that provides the food resources: in the modern story-knife tales it is the commercial food stores” (Lippe-Stokes 81). It is also important to note that references to cannibalism were found in both traditional and non-traditional stories, with non-traditional instances of cannibalism reflecting horror movies shown in city theaters (such as vampire occurrences). These tales provide the reader with views on how the teller perceives their changing world, giving way to the deep layers that form globalized cultures.

“Food, Illness, and Folk Medicine: Insights from Ulu Trengganu, West Malaysia” is another article from this text which provides a closer look into the food practices and beliefs of a certain peoples. In West Malaysia, rice is a superfood that is favored in virtually all circumstances, however, “during certain common illnesses many other specific foods are viewed as detrimental...such beliefs often effect a restricted intake of protein, vitamins, or minerals at times of particular physiologic need” (McKay 61). Many foods in Trengganu have heating and

cooling properties; the fruit papaya and many green and yellow vegetables are considered cooling food items, whereas, most kinds of mammalian meat are considered heating foods (McKay 63). Due in part to these properties, these foods will be avoided or ate during times of illness to emphasize *bisa*–detrimental foods to be ingested or avoided during specific illnesses (McKay 63). This can lead to a decline in nutritional and affordable food for Malaysian peoples who consider cooling foods, like papaya (which is an “inexpensive plentiful source of carotene often recommended by health educators”) a taboo (McKay 64). This research emphasizes that universality of food practices is imaginary, with many cultures partaking in folk medicine practices that shift their meanings of particular food item biographies.

Relating the dietary inadequacies found in particular folk medicine practices, the New York Times article, “Scientist at Work: Ingo Potrykus; Golden Rice in a Grenade-Proof Greenhouse,” is an interesting consequence to Westernized medicine’s reaction to more traditional methods of food procurement. This New York Times article explores a popular debate amongst genetics and biotechnology in the scientific field; do the benefits outweigh the costs of genetically modified foods? And, how does the cultural connotation of scientifically modified foods affect such a topic of interest?

The GMO up for debate is the “Golden Rice” created by Dr. Ingo Potrykus and his colleagues in Zurich. This rice produces beta carotene in its seeds to promote vitamin A intakes, which is “crucial for healthy vision and resistance to disease;” “Vitamin A deficiency causes about half a million children to go blind every year and makes many more vulnerable to diseases that cause diarrhea...One million to two million children die each year for lack of vitamin A.” (Christensen 2). Dr. Potrykus believes that the introduction of such a superfood will lead to a more sustainable crop yield in developing countries, where he plans on offering his “Golden

Rice” free of charge, for he remembers what it is like to go hungry and lack proper nutrients to maintain health (he was raised in an impoverished home) (Christensen 5). The free distribution of the “Golden Rice” seeds will be guided by a humanitarian advisory board, and could improve food supplies and nutrition worldwide (Christensen 3). However, “Golden Rice” has remained “under lock and key since it was created,” for many argue that such a crop is unnatural; it is a “Frankenfood,” displaying the fears of science in the making of foods we consume on a daily basis (Christensen 4). Such proponents of the anti-agro industry believe that crops such as Dr. Potrykus’ will disrupt our natural ecosystem, and promote the playing of God—it will violate the barriers of the natural world. Dr. Potrykus only wants to help developing nations in their search for more healthy and sustainable lifeways, however, many people fear food that is created in a lab due to the negative cultural connotations of science gone wrong—think about all the pop cultural references, religious texts, and folklore that damn science for “corrupting” our planet (Christensen 4). This article shines light on the complex nature of modern innovations on food and health; the agro-industry is a multi-faceted corporation that is directly affected by cultural assumptions of consumption. These assumptions are affected by many differing cultural practices and are not static, evident in the contrasting nature of modern science and folk medicine.

## **Urban Archaeology: How the Prehistoric and Historic Past Have Shaped Modern**

### **Consumption Ideology**

*How Standardization Shifted Our Cultural Meaning of Nourishment:*

This area of inquiry will focus on consumer culture—building on evidence from this essay’s previous topics of interest—and place an emphasis on marketing food. In our present

global world, what advertising, systems of belief, and theories determine our foodways practices? And how do these practices differ or relate to the prehistoric and historic meaning of food? Research from *Marketing Heritage: Archaeology and the Consumption of the Past* and *The Archaeology of Consumer Culture* explore these complex inquiries.

*Marketing Heritage: Archaeology and the Consumption of the Past* and *The Archaeology of Consumer Culture* have a similar ideology; in showcasing the multi-faceted nature of the archaeological record, both authors illuminate the critical need for reflexive academia, where the symbolic, cultural, and social dimensions of material consumption—including that of food—illustrates the complex vision of the manufacturing, marketing, display, and purchase of a materials' significance. Both books look at the many marketing strategies—including heritage, tourism, politics, and economics—that compose a global perspective on consumption. This is of utmost importance, for it sheds light on the challenges and issues surrounding the narration of food biographies throughout time. In the texts' research on urban archaeology and foodways—the critical examination of waste produced by metropolises, using archaeological methodology—a conclusion can be made; an emphasis on political systems, created through modernity and standardization, plays an integral role in the ways in which we view food, the body, and food-related issues. Heightened by this conclusion, the texts of *A Sociology of Food and Nutrition: The Social Appetite*, and *The Anthropology of Food and the Body* give way to the complex nature of modern consumption ideology.

A contemporary field of study in foodways practices comes from the critical examination of world hunger. Hunger is defined as “inadequacy of dietary intake relative to the kind and quality of food required for growth, activity, and maintenance of good health” (Germov and Williams 14). Therefore, world hunger is the universality of food scarcity. Comparing this to

previous studies of ancient foodways practices, a universality of any issue is quite contemporary and influenced by a new global trend; standardization. Ancient world epidemics and food scarcity was not viewed as static or worldwide in nature, for these cultures were not as interconnected as today's global market. There were cases of warfare and neighboring foodways induced events, however, this idea of world hunger is a recent one. As noted, standardization is key in a global and modern world; a key that illustrates the way in which we relate to foodways.

“The creation of comparability is a central feature of globalization” (Eriksen 57). One cannot explain standardization without first imagining a global world, for “standardization implies comparability” (Eriksen 58). This comparability exists due to the breaking down of borders and barriers of once “discrete and largely incommensurable worlds” (Eriksen 58). Globalization—the constant transfer of ideas, products, and lifeways across borders—has eliminated the possibility of a nonstandard world; “The establishment of global standards in measurements, political organization, and language...has accompanied and facilitated the growth in transnational connectedness...” (Eriksen 57).

Modernity—characterized by industrialization's effects on the global market—is also interwoven in the meaning of standardization. Following the ideology of Karl Marx “industrial production synchronizes work and standardizes its products,” for mass produced objects (commonplace in global markets) are interchangeable, and therefore creates a world of “many common denominators and bridgeheads for communication” (Eriksen 60). Such standardized forms of communication can be seen in many arenas of social organization, to include: a monetary economy—“the omnipresence of money integrates an unlimited number of people anonymously into a vast system of exchange” (Eriksen 58); a formal education— universally recognized as “a means for the achievement of rank, wealth, and related benefits” (Eriksen 58);

political parties—political units are of universal importance in the organization of nation-states; and lastly, official ideologies of citizenship—a way in which nationalism creates “metaphoric kinship” (Eriksen 59). The marketplace and trade systems of the ancient world were as close to standardization as one can infer, however, these systems of practice were nowhere near as influenced by comparability as contemporary systems, such as The World Bank. In fact, it was the effects of modernity that erased many traditional ways of life, and continues to do so at an alarming rate.

Standardization plays a huge role in how political systems view and affect world hunger. Research from *A Sociology of Food and Nutrition* provides several opposing political positions on hunger, in which conservatives, liberals, and Western neo-Marxists fall in the argument and analysis of world hunger, via standardization of foodways consumption, production, and marketing. Conservatives view world hunger as “natural and, in a sense, good...like evolution, it weeds out the weak and rewards the strong” (Germov and Williams 30). The liberals position is reformist; “they wish that the developed world would become altruistic and contribute enough money and social technology to bring an end to world hunger while maintaining the essentialist viability of world capitalism” (Germov and Williams 30). Whereas, Western neo-Marxists believe the solution to world hunger lies in socialist development “that guarantees all citizens food before undertaking the accumulation of capital required for development” (Germov and Williams 31). These contrasting positions on world hunger illustrate the influence of globalization on foodways research and showcases the effects of standardization in contemporary food ideology.

*Food and the Body: How Modernity Shapes the Ways We Relate Consumption and Beauty:*



Carole Counihan's text, *The Anthropology of Food and Body*, focuses on the effects of modernity and how this influences the ways we view the body and the relationships of food to this image. In her discussion, Counihan emphasizes the particular relationship of women to food, and how this relationship influences the ways in which female bodies are illustrated in modernity.

Food is a particularly important concern and symbol for females in all cultures. Women have universal responsibility for food preparation and consumption, and in many cultures for production and distribution as well. They are defined as nurturers and carry out this role principally through feeding. In addition, women themselves become food for their children during pregnancy and lactation, intensifying their identification with food and its relevance as symbol. In many cultures, as among ancient and modern Aztecs in Mexico, women are associated with the fertility of the earth and its bounteous food... Western women also use food as a symbol of self... (Counihan 98).

This complex relationship between food and the female body has contributed to the ways in which femininity has been created and justified. For many women, food is a symbol of status—this status has historically been problematic, with food being “invariably linked to women’s difficulty in being women” (Counihan 76). This difficulty can be seen in many forces, to include: the “contradictory expectations of families for girls;” “the objectification of women and the degradation of their sexuality;” and “the cultural slighting of female experience and female values...with an excessive concern with food as a product of these factors in women’s lives” (Counihan 77). This argument is important in the exploration of contrasting themes in contemporary hunger; the hate and fear that many women feel for their bodies has created an

epidemic of eating disorders. These disorders are an attempt to “eliminate or render invisible that part of self represented by the body... a woman’s attempt to escape hunger is a terrible struggle against her sensual nature” (Counihan 81). This repression of appetite is horrifically displayed in anorexia, bulimia, and obesity, where the terror of hunger is accompanied by “an inability to allow, recognize, or satisfy the physiological stirrings of appetite,” that being sexual or food-related (Counihan 82).

This repression of appetite is a direct correlation with the way contemporary food ideologies have been standardized in media and foodways practices. Marketing and advertising has led to the widespread acceptance of an unrealistic ideal of beauty for women worldwide, but especially in America. This beauty is woven into food biographies, where the lack of food creates an image of fragility, a common characteristic of femininity. Food biographies in the present are heavily influenced by the social, political, and historical meanings of beauty, sensuality, and consumption.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Man, with his superior physical strength, can better undertake the more strenuous physical tasks, such as lumbering, mining, quarrying, land clearance, and housebuilding. Not handicapped, as is woman, by the physiological burdens of pregnancy and nursing, he can range farther afield to hunt, to fish, to herd, and to trade. Woman is at no disadvantage, however, in lighter tasks which can be performed in or near the home...All known human societies have developed

specialization and cooperation between the sexes roughly along this biologically determined line of cleavage. (Murdock 1949:7).

The words of famous anthropologist George Murdock hangs heavily in academic discourse, for it promotes patriarchal standards for history. These words carry with it centuries of oppression, silence, and ostracization of marginalized “others”—it supports a dichotomous division of the sexes, where men are strong, dominant protectors who hunt and women are weak, passive beings hindered by their reproductive abilities (Watson and Kennedy 256). This is the very early anthropological ideology that feminist archaeologists wish to dismantle by reinstating marginalized peoples of the past as agents of change. The tailoring of gender and feminist theories to prehistory and beyond has the potential to radically alter the once static notion of human evolution, and to instead offer a record full of rich, active characters to the world’s stage. This can be true for modernity as well, for a critical examination of food ideology through urban archaeology proves that food biographies can be damaging to women, and other minorities. By reclaiming for women that which has historically been denied to them, feminist approaches to the interpretation of the archaeological record—specifically that of foodways practices—offers multi-faceted perspectives to a past once controlled by European men. The study of plant domestication, lithic technology, labor practices, food symbolism, marketing, and agency in prehistory and beyond illustrates a new kind of biography—one in which people, that being women, men, children, and anyone else—were and are fully capable not only of conscious action, but also of innovation in the global world.

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