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**Book Review of *Gendered Labor in Specialized Economies:
Archeological Perspectives on Female and Male Work* edited by
Sophia E. Kelly and Traci Arden**

Jane Peterson

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American Anthropologist, Vol. 121, No. 2 (2019, June): 537-538. [DOI](#). This article is © Wiley and permission has been granted for this version to appear in [e-Publications@Marquette](#). Wiley does not grant permission for this article to be further copied/distributed or hosted elsewhere without the express permission from Wiley.

Gendered Labor in Specialized Economies: Archeological Perspectives on Female and Male Work edited by Sophia E. Kelly and Traci Arden Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016. 384 pp.

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Economic transitions in middle-range and state-level societies implicate changes in both the structure of labor and how social identities and ideologies are constituted. This volume demonstrates the value that engendered perspectives continue to play in providing dimension and nuance to archaeologists' understandings of these processes. Six chapters represent case studies from the Americas, focusing on Incan, Mesoamerican, and Hohokam research. Additional case studies are geographically far-flung, drawn from Thailand, Ghana, Cyprus, and England. An introduction by the editors provides brief summaries of each chapter and a discussion of how they articulate with the current gender-informed themes and theories. The closing chapter by Wright provides a synthesis and comparative remarks.

It comes as no surprise that researchers able to deploy ethnohistoric and Indigenous writings to help establish baselines for certain gendered tasks have some advantages reconstructing gendered labor patterns. For example, Costin's contribution outlines how the Inka state dispersed female weavers from their centralized state workshops in Chan-Chan to manipulate and disrupt the identity and political control of Chimu lords during the Late Horizon period (chapter 2). Escontrias uses spatial syntax analysis (chapter 3) to examine how relationships between government-run weaving workshops—and the women crafters within them—changed over time as Incan state control emerges and are increasingly reified compared to the previous Moche arrangements. Defining “women as weavers” is, in these cases, supported by Spanish accounts and supplemented with robust architectural and mortuary data.

Investigating household-based specialization as a feature of surplus production is central to a number of other contributions in this volume. When explored ethnographically, we have long recognized that complex activities, made up of related but sometimes spatially and temporally distinctive tasks, often require the labor of many individuals working in complementary and integrated ways (*sensu* Brumbach and Jarvenpa **1997**; Spector **1983**). That some of the activities are less archaeologically visible than others led to the use of the terms “invisible” and “hidden producers.” Integrated task-set approaches are outlined in several ethnoarcheological studies of ground stone axe and iron (chapter 8—Swantek), salt (chapter 5—Halliwell, Yakowski, and Chang), and pottery production (chapter 9—Callaghan). Kelly and Heidke (chapter 7) use this perspective to argue convincingly that the production of Hohokam red-on-buff ceramic wares, which compositional analyses suggest were produced within an area centered on the Snaketown canal system and widely distributed throughout the Phoenix basin, would have required men and children taking on less-skilled tasks like collecting and processing clay and tempering materials to satisfy growing demand. Several other authors scour ethnographic literatures to explore their potential as sources for gendered task attribution. Overall, these explorations reinforce the cross-cultural variation in gender patterns that often occurs, even at local and regional scales of analysis (chapter 9—Callaghan, in particular).

The interdependent relationships that exist between craft specialists is another cross-cutting theme of this volume. Kovacevich (chapter 10) provides evidence from the Classic Mayan center Cancuen indicating that jade artifacts had complex genealogies that included one stage where preforms were roughed out in nonelite homes and another stage where elite households' members put the finishing touches on them, fashioning headdress ornaments and ear flares. She suggests that the labor from all household members would have been mobilized in this system. On the other hand, at the Terminal Classic site of Xuenkal, an elite household in this small city center appears to have been involved in the full range of production stages for crafts, including obsidian/chert tools, shell ornaments, and possibly textiles (chapter 4—Ardren, Olvera, and Manahan). The authors contend that women's and children's labor were likely being incorporated into surplus craft production in elite households. Last, the dynamism of relationships between crafting specialists is manifest in Stahl's (chapter 6) study of changing ratios of ceramic sherds that contained slag inclusions as temper in the Banda region of Ghana. Longitudinal patterns suggest male iron smelters and female potters sometimes produced their crafts in complementary household contexts, while during other periods their work appears to have been spatially and socially segregated.

Ethnographic data continue to demonstrate the diversity and complexity of sexual labor solutions that have been developed to satisfy production demands in specialized economies. In this context, it is slightly disheartening to see most researchers bypass serious examination of bioarchaeological data sets that can be informative about habitual labor demands. Costin mentions studies that have tried to identify Incan weavers through skeletal markers (chapter 2). Callaghan (chapter 9) cites the promise of bioarchaeological data but maintains it is poorly understood. Yet studies examining patterns of degenerative joint disease, cross-sectional geometry of long bones, and musculoskeletal stress markers exist for many of the areas included in the volume.

Their value in assessing mobility (chapter 8—Swantek) and increased male participation in intensified agriculture production (chapter 4—Ardren, Olvera, and Manahan; chapter 7—Kelly and Heidke) are overlooked. Unfortunately, it appears that subdisciplinary silos are still, more often than not, firmly in place.

In chapter 1, the editors identify the economic concept of comparative advantage as an integrating framework to help the reader navigate the remaining chapters. However, most authors seem to pay more attention to producers as social actors, the importance of symbolic capital in craft production, and microhistorical perspectives—notions owing more to “bottom-up” feminist approaches (chapter 12—Wright). Nonetheless, this volume provides a series of data-rich studies that demonstrate the value of gender studies to our understandings of ancient societies where crafting and craftspeople adapted to the demands of specialized economies.

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