RESEARCH ARTICLE

On the Concept of Gender: A Critique of Processual and Postprocessual Mortuary Archaeological Theory

Shannyn R. Snyder*

Department of Global and Community Health, College of Health and Human Services, George Mason University, USA

Introduction

Gender is a social construct. In the feminist and masculinity schools of thought, led by feminist theorists, such as Judith Butler, we "do gender" as a disservice. When we assign sex, based on the sex-determining chromosomal methodology, we do so scientifically but without recognition of gender preference. This concept is at the forefront of the LGBTQ movement and widely misunderstood or arguably unpalatable to comprehend for particularly those driven by religious ideology, many of whom also misunderstand science. While this paper may lead politically-charged in liberalism, there is bearing here, as we also mitigate the processual and postprocessual ideologies of gender with the approach that sex is more than standardization, and we need to be broader in scope. It would also be remiss to negate an opportunity to interject women and gender studies theory as a means to confirm that postprocessual theory is also in line with where gender studies is heading today.

When we negotiate gender, based on chromosomal determinants, assigning boy or girl, whether it is as physicians or parents, prior to birth (as determined by an ultrasound sonogram) or after, determined by sex organs, we disallow personal agency for a child to decide their own gender preference later in life. The concept of fitting into a check box is also problematic, as the chromosomal assignment of sex means that the concept of gender is binary, allowing for lack of autonomy in a society. The concept of nonbinary gender or the "other" checkbox is uncomfortable for many, and the assignment of this third category relegates those whom could have assigned their own intuitive gender to a life of discriminatory othering.

However, hospitals in Washington and California are now considering allowing a neutral option on their birth certificate, so that parents can allow a child the autonomy to settle into the gender that feels natural to them. This is the epitome of human agency. It may also be the start of an important reclassification of gender-related mental disorders, which according to the American Psychiatric Association, does not include gender nonconformity. Unfortunately, those whom refuse to widen their lens still believe that effeminate men, tomboy women, and anyone whom does not adapt to the behaviors, roles, tools, and trades of their gender (again, assigned by sex-determining chromosomes) is mentally unhealthy. These societal pressures can indeed lead to gender dysphoria, or the distress and disorders related to the taboos of hiding one's intuitive gender.

In addition to the studies on transsexuality, gender dysphoria is complex, and archaeologists and anthropologists may continue to discover that the social constructs of gender are as old as time, and that there are mortuary archaeology case studies that recognize the potentiality of gay men, gender-bending women, and transsexuality. Funerary ritual is also an interesting place in which we may not only deliberate over gender-assignment but also when to question the pieces that don't quite fit.

Of course, one issue with mortuary archeology is that we can potentially never know the stories behind the burials or the society in which these rituals take place. What we do know through ethnography is that sometimes these burials follow patterns created by important traditions, which are often interwoven with strong mores and values embedded in class, gender roles, and societal position. There is also often some element of cultural materialism, which may follow a general pattern or one that is also influenced by class, role and position.

In her work, Undoing Gender, Judith Butler remarks on the importance placed on marriage by societies and those "efforts to establish bonds of kinship that were not based on a [heterosexual] marriage tie become nearly illegible and unviable when marriage sets the term for kinship," remarking most importantly that these marriage ties are what most societies determined strengthened their organization and power (Butler 2004:5) [1,2].

It is important to note that even without a religious structure, the concept of kinship, sex, and procreation was recognized to be one man and one woman, and the purpose of growing families was to make the community larger. This goal was not only to strengthen the power of the community, whether in terms of trade or fighting power, but also in terms of what a community could produce for itself or its overall economy. Just as it is true today in our capitalist society, if you are not producing in some way, you are sitting on the periphery of society. Thus, it was typical that most burial patterns reflected those of the living,

normative society. That is, men were represented in typical male roles, as hunter, warrior or worker, and women were represented in typical female roles, as gatherer, mother, wife, and crafter. To this end, early processual mortuary archaeology also approached funerary ritual with this expectation.

If we begin to challenge every burial site as potentially not what it seems, or use a postprocessual approach of looking at the broader context of each burial instead of a binary approach, this in itself seeks to dismantle the foundation of a society. To avoid upsetting the apple cart, we can assume that extinct communities mostly operated under the same processual gender norming assumptions that exist today, regardless of postprocessual efforts to normalize a nonbinary approach. However, this paper hopes to shed light on some of the anomalies to processual thought, even if the examples found thus far in archaeology still represent a minority of the burials which have been re-studied, with the majority of current mortuary archaeological research still continuing to follow processual expected patterns of sex identification. The latter may also be due to the absence of ethnographic research or a lack of emic purview to corroborate findings. Even when we find irregularity in an excavation, the ethnography explaining the findings must seek to understand some level of gender and queer theory. We have to question how gender inconsistencies would have been treated in that society (and here, again, it would be important not to generalize based on findings in another society), and what the repercussions would have been to go against the norm. Butler states the problem of a person bending one's gender outside of the assignment by sex:

"One only determines 'one's own' sense of gender to the extent that social norms exist that support and enable that act of claiming gender for oneself. One is dependent on this 'outside' to lay claim to what is one's own. The self must, in this way, be dispossessed in sociality in order to take possession of itself..... [and in this queer theory] be opposed to the unwanted legislation of identity" (Butler 2004:7) [1,2].

In other words, to go against one's assigned gender is really to go against society and thus be prepared (and potentially not) for the consequences of this decision on one's new identity. Unless we also understand these consequences for acting autonomously in that ancient society, how are we to know if anyone was compelled to that freedom and at what cost? Postprocessual archaeology may have been more prepared to interpret those meanings than the former theoretical schools of thought, but it is still complex, as gender studies are still also in evolutionary phase. Regardless, some type of testing these ideas is paramount, with the challenge of how.

Alternatively, what if nonbinary genders were acceptable in a society? This is another realm of research that is important to archaeology, particularly because it may counter existing research, especially that which assumes that gender-centric grave goods may have been buried with someone of the opposite sex due 1) their trade, 2) or gifting, or 3) the living implying deviance.

In one case, the Kashaya Pomo Native people openly recognized the existence of third-gender males and fourth-gender females, and the Russian administration allowed marriages between their colonizing men and third-gender Pomo males (Agarwal and Wesp 2017: 54) [3]. This third and fourth-gender conceptualization is different than homosexuality or transsexuality, because it may include the declaration of no gender or of having both/two genders, as in intersex. Many Native American tribes did not consider this construct to be out of the ordinary, as it was in line with their connection with the spirit world, which has both male and female qualities. So their grave goods have a wide range of inclusion and significance, as can those found in other cultural societies.

One interesting concept has been that the gender with which one identified during his or her lifetime may not be the one that he or she was recognized for in death. We have seen this presented in vastly different ways, from a person living his or her life in a socially-appropriated role for his or her [birth] sex but buried with the recognition that they preferred another identification. Perhaps burying the dead with this recognition was also in an effort to ensure that they did not perpetually live in a liminal state. In at least one case, it was possible that a man lived his life as a heterosexual male, father and husband, but was buried with grave goods associated with feminism. So, for some perhaps autonomy only came in death, where they could be buried in their true identity. Was this because it was now at no social consequence to them or a procreational threat to the continuation of marriage kinship? Or was it conferred recognition at death so as to not upset the deceased, which could have dangerous consequences for the living? When unrecognized, are some deceased perpetually in a state of unrest because the grave goods and manner in which they were buried were not in line with their true, innate gender?

There is also the question of whether or not men or women would act or "play" at an alternative gender but still identify as the male or female, as assigned, and again whether that "play" was more acceptable in a society, which is why, for example, some burial rituals included both male and female grave goods, in recognition of this play. The concept of play and masquerade is widely discussed in anthropology and cultural studies and it deeply intertwined in homosexual overtones, such as in the Roman Empire.

Finally, there are also numerous cases where people fit comfortably into their traditional sex roles but also adopted those of the opposite sex, due to necessity or norm, which was often widely and socially accepted. This means that as long as one did not alter or threaten the perpetuity of kinship, they could adopt both roles, but representing themselves only as the sex in which they were born. Again, this notes the chromosomally-identified male or female, and not the social construct.
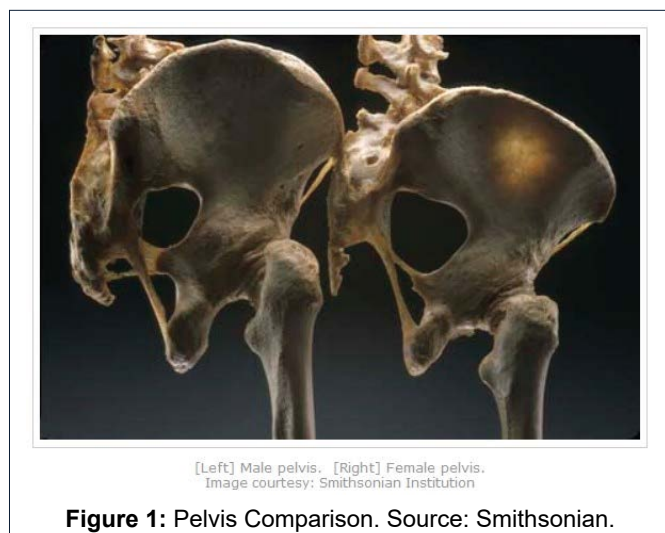
Bones

The first clue to sex-assignment in burial site excavation may simultaneously be both the grave goods and the visual identification of the bones. When the skeleton is not whole or intact or may be missing bones, as in a reduction or secondary burial, grave goods may be the only visible gender identifier.

However, for the purposes of identification based on bone structure, the differences may be both key and problematic. Gender identification research for children is complex, as noted by the Smithsonian Institute, because it may be more difficult to identify a skeleton as male or female unless the body had reached sexual maturation (Smithsonian nd). Due to the numerous varied beliefs and traditions regarding children in societies across the globe, some of which may not even recognize children as human until a certain age, understanding the social construct of gender in cases related to children can also be complicated, as children in some societies may be treated as gender-fluid until they reach a certain age. Thus, even when identification in younger skeletons is possible, there may be no grave goods that can serve as reliable clues as to gender-identity, again noting that this is different than biological sex.

At first look, sex identification at a burial can be done by looking at the pelvic bones, with physiological characteristics being that the male pelvis is typically narrower than a female, as seen in Figure 1 (Smithsonian nd). Of course, it is also suggested that bias exists in science here, where what was first hypothesized in terms of the male versus female pelvis was adopted and thus became the standard for identification. In her work, "Bones, Biases, and Birth: Excavating Contemporary Gender Norms from Reproductive Bodies of the Past," in the edited collection by Agarwal and Wesp, Dana Walrath, explains that there have been evolutions of the pelvis and that "male features can appear in female pelves" (Caldwell and Moloy 1933:480; Agarwal and Wesp 2017:22-23) [3].

Identification using other bones, such as the skull, is more complex. When the jaw line or cheekbone structure is wide and squared, it could be male, versus a narrower facial structure, which could imply a female. In hunter-gatherer societies, wear on the teeth has also been known to suggest female versus male, due to "women's involvement in the mastication of plant fibres for basket-weaving, or hides for the making of clothing or structures (Larsen 1997:257; Gilcrest 1999:43) [4].

Another identification strategy used in mortuary archaeology

[Left] Male pelvis. [Right] Female pelvis.
Image courtesy: Smithsonian Institution

Figure 1: Pelvis Comparison. Source: Smithsonian.

is to either measure an intact skeleton or layout of bones, as well as to note the height and width of long bones, theorizing the women are smaller or shorter than men. However, a quick look at a photograph of a large group of people, or in one's own family, can assert that this method may work only for some groups of people, as body and facial structures may different within a sex group. Perhaps if you are comparing skulls and bodies within a certain cultural subgroup of people, and whereupon with research and ethnography you can assert that men and women in this tribe were always at a x height differential, and anything different would be an abnormality, that could make it easier for identification. However, sometimes the types of burials themselves, particularly secondary, make precise burial reconstruction impossible.

When there is an absence of sex-related bones, other cues may exist that may also be common to that population which can provide gender-related information, especially the type of grave site regularly used for burials of a particular sex or burial rituals that are known to have gender signifiers. For example, among Scandinavians during the Iron Age, female graves were often marked with "large round stones" called grave balls, which were helpful markers for archaeologists, especially since the Scandinavian graves in this area contain "very few bones" (Arnold and Wicker 2001:90) [5]. Body positioning has been another sex signifier at some grave sites, with left-side orientation in the grave typically meaning a male body, and right-side indicating a female (Arnold and Wicker 2001:141). This tradition is also helpful when grave goods may be missing or there is an absence of any sex-identifying bones.

However, there are also aberrations here. Interestingly, for Germans from the village of Singen am Hohentwiel, the placement of a body in the correct position for its sex was considered to be important to ensure the body would be at rest and not be "dangerous." This is certainly echoed in Arnold van Gennep's theory on the rites of passage, where the liminal state is the stage of in between, when the deceased have left the living but has not yet been reincorporated. According to the German case study, the concept of Totenfurcht, or the fear of the dead, meant that communities typically adhered to typical body positioning protocol. There was such fear of the body being in a dangerous state that in burial rituals "stones [would be] placed at the top of the grave [to] ensure that the body could not move[,]…keep the dead individual safely in his grave where he [could not] harm the living" (Arnold and Wicker 2001:141) [5].

However, there are several graves in this area with males in female grave positioning and visa versa. One theory suggests that for the male in Grave 71, for example, that he had "a female role in the community," but the burials of the women are confusing. Also dismissing that these are cases of mixed transgender, gender role or gender identities, anthropologists believe something else is afoot, especially given the number of stone piles found with one of the bodies. In Grave 74, for example, piles were found at the head and feet, suggesting more along the lines of a deviant burial and the concerns that the body may be in a perpetual dangerous state and, if not weighed down, could come back to harm the living (Arnold

3

and Wicker 2001:141-142) [5]. The concept of Totenfurcht is also in line with our own awareness of the potential for evil in the afterlife. Aries' work reflected this awareness of the self, the other, and the afterlife, which may weigh in on how decisions are made by the living regarding methods to use to bury the dead, from placement of the body to what is added to their graves, especially those deceased who lived on the fringe of society.

Bones and bodies notwithstanding, many archaeological excavations of bodies rely heavily on grave goods. Often, given the challenges of secondary burials or those which are otherwise incomplete, as well as the complexity and expense of DNA-testing on hundreds of thousands of bones and fragments, the reliance on grave goods to explain sex and gender is widely used. When accompanied with ethnographical accounts of a particular society, this can methodology can be quite effective, particularly when the combination of grave goods and research tells a unique story.

Grave Goods

The use of grave goods as an identifier may often seem intuitive. If a skeleton is buried with spears, it may be assumed to be male. If a skeleton is buried with weaving tools, it may be assumed to be female. This is a good example of where we can visualize the processual framework. It was used as a way to "analyze social organization and economic relationships,"[1] and once there was a point of reference for one idea, it was generalized to encompass other societies (Klaus 2018) [6]. In this processual time frame, we also read the writings of Kroeber who believed that funerary ritual did not have tradition or structure at all, and that grave goods were included (or excluded) based on trends. Although fashion could certainly be an intrinsic part of mortuary ritual, many societies also operate without these influences. At this point, processual mortuary begins to look at nomology and patterns and culture as a system[2] (Klaus 2018) [6].

In terms of grave goods, patterns have been a helpful means to deduce sex. This school of thought focused on typology and classification, entering into data mines whatever statistics were gathered at sites to beget additional connections to pattern. This was strength of the Binford-Saxe methodology. Binford believed that a person's burial site encompassed a "composite of an individual's social identity," including sex and social rank, and that "sex [was often distinguished] by grave goods"[3] (Klaus 2018) [6]. However, there have been plenty of examples, when grave goods are not necessarily fail-safe identification tools, whereas the role of a weaver, for example, can be either occupied by a man or a woman, and there have been case studies on the question of women in the warrior role. In addition, some grave goods can be found in both male and female graves, even though the good may traditionally have a particular gender assignment, such as bowls and vases.

[1] "Processual Mortuary Analysis: Emergency and Development." (Klaus 2018)

[2] "Processual Mortuary Archaeology Emerges." (Klaus 2018)

[3] "Processual Perceptions of Burial Practices." (Klaus)

Although utilized in a kitchen or for domestic use, these items may have additional meaning, such as a decoration or gift.

In her writing "On the Changing Role of Material Culture in Gender Studies," Marie Louis Sorensen also notes that both the type of grave goods, as well as the quality of certain grave goods, have been often utilized to analyze both the sex and class of the deceased in a burial site. As we have studied under Binford and Saxe, this may be more possible in a complex-structured society than a hunter-gatherer one. Sorensen found the same to be true in her research on the Norwegian graves from the Iron Age.

In understanding this society, it was discovered that the grave good of a woman may have more to do with her rank and status than her gender, or, that is, women of different ranks in this society would be found with a varied set of goods. The higher ranking women would often adopt the "jobs and responsibilities" of men, including blacksmithing (Dommasnes 1987:76; Nelson 2007:77) [7-10], and thus her grave goods could reflect this occupation. Sorensen remarks that there may also be a "social significance" to grave goods, which could include gift-giving during burial ritual. This complicates identification, particularly if those gifts are included in the grave but may not necessarily be personal identifiers of the deceased. Binford hypothesized that all of these components were important in burial, particularly the presence or lack of grave goods, as well as the quantity. However, it may have been more important for the family of the deceased to choose one key item for burial, among many received. Jewelry typically worn by a woman may be buried with a man, as a gift offering, but it does not mean that he ever wore the jewelry or that it was even his living possession. Thus, the study of grave goods in mortuary ritual also needs to include the intention of the gift, such as when gifts are included as a matter of gratuity and status, versus those goods with a personal connection to the deceased.

In a case involving Romano-British burial practices in England, there were certain types of necklaces and bracelets were "only ever worn by females," and in a large sampling of grave goods from Romano-British cemeteries, there were largely no exceptions. However, two males recovered from these sites were found with such [female-typed] jewelry, one with a bracelet and one with beads at the neckline. The questions posed here were whether or not this was a rarity, whether the individuals just happened to be "in possession" of these items and thus the items were included at the time of burial, or if the people responsible for the burial of the deceased included the jewelry because they were associated with homosexual, feminized, or effeminate behaviors, therefore implying the sexual orientation of the deceased (Donald and Hurcombe 2000:13) [11]. The answers are still unknown, since a) during most of the historical period of this area, homosexuality was part of an underworld culture and not "open," and b) nothing is personally known about the two men. Therefore, either the jewelry was a gift OR a part of their identity, but it is not within our knowledge-base to assume either, and we may never know the truth.

This case seems similar to the artifacts discovered with "The Gay Caveman," when it was reported that "people in this period of [time] took burials, symbolism, and grave goods seriously," as mentioned for burial ritual in other societies herein. Thus, for this case, grave goods would not have been serendipitously included in a grave if it did not belong to or identified the deceased in some way. Due to the types of goods recovered, however, the man is believed to be transsexual (Klaus 2018)[4] [6].

Another case study in this regard relates to the societal position of Scandinavian noble women from approximately 1050 to 1100, when they were often found to be buried "alongside precious gifts like swords and good horses," noting that these grave goods were also associated with warriors and knights. So, is this a case of gender-bending, intersex, or something else? In this case, however, the grave goods were gifts and did not mean that any of the women personally used those items (Norr 1998:124; Arnold and Wicker 2001:83) [5].

Artifacts that may be gender-signifiers in one society may not hold true in another. Again, in the case of the German burials in Singen am Hohentwiel, there seem to be patterns for jewelry and tools in some grave groupings, but then others would not follow any patterns. Using the right side/left side body positioning patterns that were often signifiers in this society, archaeologists made note of the grave goods on or near a particular side of a grave, with many bodies still adorned with bracelets and pins. Although the shape or materials sometimes differed, "pins, bracelets, awls and daggers [were] distributed randomly across graves of right-and left-lying individuals" (Arnold and Wicker 2001:144) [5], meaning that both women and men often wore gender-neutral jewelry.

In another case involving both ritual and status, among men and women in the Karasuk sites from the Bronze Age in eastern Eurasia, an assortment of adornments, weapons and tools were found with men, women, and children. Not only were the types of grave goods important, but also the materials they were made from, as well as the placement. Unfortunately, because of the quality and rare materials of the grave goods, these burial sites were often looted, which is another important note. When engaging in mortuary archaeology, the lack of grave goods that is typical in a burial must also be explored. It should not be generalized that a deceased was simply buried without any grave goods. However, there are likely signs of looting, such as a perforation in the grave. Some of the grave goods in this case include hair ornaments made of bone and jewelry made of bronze and cowry shells. Knives adorned with bronze, as well as special fasteners, were also found. Knives and other tools were found with both men and women, as were various types of jewelry, except for one jewelry type (a heavier piece), which was only found among the men's graves.

However, placement of these artifacts was also significant. When an artifact was placed as part of the burial ritual, it was placed in a specific part of the grave and in a particular direction or with other specifications, typically near the head. When the

artifact was placed as a signifier of social rank, it was placed at or on the body, typically at the waist. For example, a knife that is part of the mortuary ritual would be placed by the head, but a knife that was placed at the waist indicated "the prestigious and hierarchical rank of its owner" (Linduff and Rubinson 2008:161-173) [12]. However, none of these knives indicated previous trade usage by the deceased. Thus, the inclusion of the knives were either a part of a stylized, ritual tradition or trend (as suggested by Kroeber) or as part of a social signifier, similar to those suggested by Saxe. See Figure 2.

In a look at gender and mortuary analysis, there are many cases of female warriors during the Iron Age, in which their grave good weapons were the same as men, except for swords. Their skeletal remains also had stress markers and injuries, but these are difficult for archaeologists to differentiate between those obtained in battle versus "noncombatant" activities, such as archery and riding (Nelson 2007:114-115) [7]. Thus, it would be important not to generalize that all women were warriors whom also fought in battle, even though some did, but often only in a defense position.

When exploring the attributes of burials, patterns have been a key focus of processual archaeology. The anomalies explored in postprocessual theory, tradition and norms are also important to consider. Thinking about middle-range theory, Saxe relayed hypotheses about social deviants, which has ignited discussions about the concept of personhood, praxis and agency theories. The complexity of agency is also intertwined in Marxism and Durkheim. Durkheim, for example, discussed falling in line as a part of the unspoken conformity that we engage in to be a part of a society. They are a part of the normalcy of every day life, but we must abide by them because they are necessary to be able to live [cohesively] in a community.[5] "Middle-range theory" wants to understand this cultural process but does not have an effective way to do it. Where Binford is heavy on the comparison of data, there does not seem to be a way to fact-check it, and the desire for connections between the data and

___

[4] "The 'Gay' Caveman" (Klaus 2018).

[5] Excerpted from my own paper, which reads as follows: "In his *Rules of Sociological Method*, Emile Durkheim likens social fact to "rules" and notes that they are external to the individual, meaning they are not ingrained but a societal pressure of sorts to conform to a certain standard of behavior. He calls these "social", however, versus a performance unique to the individual, because everyone in that society does precisely the same actions, in unspoken conformity. He adds the argument that man has never had to wait for a deliberation on the science of social facts to "fall in line" with the acceptable behaviors of his particular society, because these facts are often necessary to "live" and conduct oneself within a community or family. They are actions that we may not need to put much thought into, and, as Durkheim suggests, are just part of the normal "way of life." These are also different than laws, the system of rules we *must* abide by to live within the society. Durkheim also argues that beliefs, such as religious, are difference, in that they can exist in isolation, but social facts only exist where there is social organization. It is our way to belong versus ostracize ourselves from community and "normalcy", much like society would treat someone who hoards their garbage or lacks simple etiquette with some ostracizing or rejection." Emile Durkheim, "What is a Social Fact" from *The Rules of Sociological Method*.
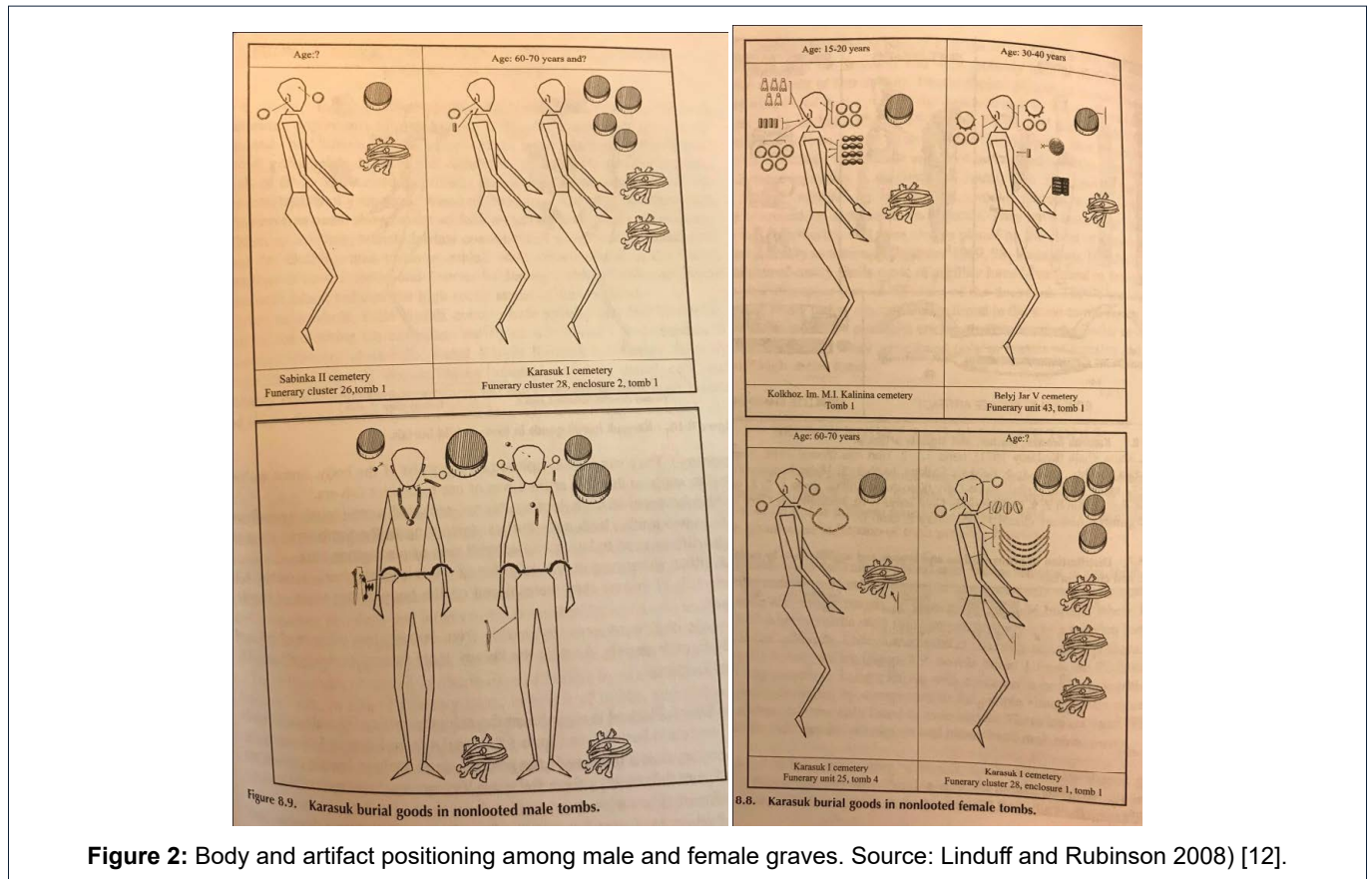
Figure 2: Body and artifact positioning among male and female graves. Source: Linduff and Rubinson 2008) [12].

testing to see if a hypothesis is accurate leads the way to the postprocessual approach.[6]

Complex Kinship

In her case study, "Gender and Mortuary Analysis: What Can Grave Goods Really Tell Us?," Barbara Crass notes that for Inuit tribes "the nature of [kinship] is more important than the sex of the individual" (Giffen 1930:58; Arnold and Wicker 2001:108) [5], as a deceased person in this culture passes along their gender roles to living children. This transfer can be replicated numerous times, and the child may also adopt additional various life roles as they age.

Inuit men and women also adapt to whichever roles are necessary to survive, with men often "cooking and mending" and "women who hunted [and] stalked seals on the ice, and were members of whaling crews" (Arnold and Wicker 2001:109) [5]. These roles and occupations then become gender neutral, as they are based on "need and not gender attribution" (Arnold and Wicker 2001:108-109) [5]. It was also noted that in their belief system, Inuit shaman practiced cross-dressing, transvestitism, and often the appearance of androgyny to ward off evil spirits. Crass also shares that parents could decide that a child born male would live his life as a female, and so it was, and this was a normal part of Inuit culture (Arnold and Wicker 2001:109) [5].

These gender transformation practices are still a part of Inuit culture today, which makes it easier to understand when

mismatched graved goods may be found at a burial site. The existence of a current culture practicing old belief systems is important when linking the evolution of any mortuary archaeology practices using postprocessual theory. When cultural practices are also still included in modern burials, it is easier to test the occurrence of similar traits in older burials. This is sometimes not the case, as we discussed in our cannibalism reading, when society members may still be alive but no longer practicing a ritual, or when the ritual has evolved in meaning through generations, so the original meaning is unknown. However, when a living person can corroborate the evidence of a burial with current praxis, it is often our only means of talking to the dead.

In the archaeological recovery among Inuit societies, grave goods were compared between Inuit burial sites in both Canada and Greenland. Grave goods such as cooking utensils and sewing implements were found mostly among the female burial cairns (these burials either having been previously sexed by examining the human remains or hypothesizing based on the grave goods), but these goods were also found among some of the male cairns. Weapons were also found with both men and women, as well as with male and female children. The case study also looked at earlier ethnography of the population, which made generalizations about grave goods, such as that weapons would typically be found with males. Yet, a later revisit to this site found something different.

In the early ethnography, the same claims were made about kayaks and sleds in that they were mostly identified with male burials. Although the later record found that, for the most part,

---

[6] " The Processual Approach" (Klaus 2018).

kayaks were found with men, sleds were also found with men and women, as well as male and female children (Arnold and Wicker 2001:113-115) [5]. This case also looked at why the earlier ethnography may have missed the paradox contained in some of these burials, and it was noted that "this early record of Inuit mortuary practices was [primarily] economic, political, or religious [in focus]" and meant to quickly collect necessary data rather than interpret the findings. This was concurrent with the methods of the processual period (Arnold and Wicker 2001:113-115) [5].

In her summary of the case, Crass notes that due to the gender neutrality of the roles in particular populations, such as the Inuit, using grave goods as a means to assign gender may not be accurate if the deceased and the burial items are not treated like "puzzle pieces," meaning that there is a much larger picture made up of many smaller fragments (Arnold and Wicker 2001: 114-115) [5]. This then becomes a postprocessual way of thinking, and it is interesting to see how this particularly study went through various transformations, from the earliest study which was in line with the antiquarian phase of archaeology where the focus was on material culture,[7] as well as the processual period, where the focus was on searching for patterns to be represented as data. Crass also noted that the "passage of time" between the studies was important, as the excavation site was able to receive a second look but with a very different lens (Arnold and Wicker 2001: 114) [5]. This became evident when looking at it with a postprocessual approach.

There are also cases in which deviation from societal norms was simply not a practice, or at least not a known one. In societies with strong adherence to gender-specific roles, the binary examples of grave goods actually work. That is, even in a movement from processual to postprocessual archaeology, we can find communities in which there are no aberrations from the norm. For example, in the Hidatsa tribes of the Great Plains, women were restricted to all of the gatherer work, as well as those responsibilities to the home, and men were typically assigned to the hunting and raids. Any crossover of men into domestic work was only due to old age, as with elderly men, but even so these men were often found other suitably male tasks, such as planning, without the physical requirements of younger men (Hays-Gilpin and Whitley 1998: 148-149) [13].

Comparisons

In the case studies shared here, there are clear lines between processual and postprocessual theory. From the way in which the grave goods were observed in the Inuit burial sites during the first excavation from a processual lens, which was purely to gain statistical information and a count of goods, goods that were found were generalized to belong to either men or women. During the later study, after the postprocessual theories of mortuary archaeology were introduced, grave goods were found to deviate from the previously thought trends, when they took a deeper look at gender plus goods, such as in male-

stereotyped weaponry found buried with women. With these discoveries, more research was done to discern the reasons for deviation, including important ethnography to understand both cultural materialism and how gender is treated in the Inuit culture. Again, these changes demonstrate a movement into the postprocessual period, in which we are instructed not to treat evidence as having binary meaning.

The case studies in the Iron Age also demonstrate that male weaponry found with women may have also meant that women adopted male roles, even as warriors, but in the Eurasia case study, weaponry found with women may only have had significance as gifts. These cases were chosen to see how important ethnography and postprocessualism has been to archaeology, particularly in terms of understanding the meaning behind grave goods, how those meanings are not universal across cultures, and how grave goods, such as knives, can have different meanings, such as a weapon or a gift.

Fortunately, postprocessualism is interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary, which allows for, among other aspects, freedom of interpretation from perspectives of "gender, phemonology, ideology, cognition, [and] semiotics (Klaus 2018) [6].[8] Postprocessualism is a "bottom-up approach… [where] each society needs to be analyzed on its own,… [with] no generations" (Klaus 2018) [6]. The main critique of this approach is that it can be biased, as is also a critique of ethnography, and in the case of mortuary ritual, there are few circumstances for fact-checking.

This causes us to give pause to understanding human agency and the role of the living in the burials of the dead, particularly if we are trusting that the meaning of grave goods, body positioning, or other cues that were implied by the living on behalf of the dead. We also have to understand that the evaluation of these artifacts may tell us more about the living society than the dead, particularly since it is, after all, the living that are responsible for mortuary ritual.

It is therefore the archaeologist and anthropologist who must then interpret the motives and intentions of the living society when they impose characteristics upon the deceased. The bottom line is that with postprocessualism, the emphasis is on meaning more than pattern, and that is especially important given that we are now talking about gender and all of those implied social constructs, and not just the assignment of binary sex. This is an emergent focus area in mortuary archaeology, and even in this research, it is clear that few independent cases exist that have been dissected in this new lens. Now, postprocessual archaeologists need to do the work of going back through older cases to ensure that concepts of gender were not missed, similar to the revisit of the Inuit burial grounds.

Conclusion

Theories regarding agency and gender in mortuary ritual are also important when we consider the tasks of second wave feminism, which among others seeks to dismantle structures of dominance. In this theme, we acknowledge that historically

---

[7] "Early Direction in the Study of Burial." (Klaus)

[8] "Postprocessual Achievements" (Klaus 2018).

it is argued that women lack autonomy from men, and their roles in society, kinship, and family are those in which they may be subservient or complicit in their dependence on a man (Sorensen 2000:64). This theory is echoed widely in feminist texts, and it speaks to the counter-intuitiveness and counter-agency of a woman to act against those long-standing norms, and for what purpose? Are women never again to have children and rear them in the home, while her husband or child (ren)'s father provide financial support? Can a woman not retain traditional roles and still be considered to be a feminist? Can a woman not be both a mother and a warrior?

The issues of autonomy and agency are complex. Even if we look at gender through the scope of a particular culture, through its cultural materialism, through its burial practices, there is the question of what do we do now? From what lens does it matter other than for biological-sex identification or gender-preference categorization for archaeological data? If, in the pursuit of postprocessualism we are seeking to evolve these classifications or practices, we must articulate a goal, which may simply be to further understand the societies in which we are extracting mortuary data by counting the number of women, men, and others, as well as charting which grave goods and body positions are found for each. However, we may really only be seeking to look for patterns and collect data, as with processual archeology.

However, if we are looking at gender from a postprocessual lens, we may also learn about other intersections of people not currently represented in archaeological data or ethnography, and we may understand societies in more complex ways, from their agency praxis to preserve the rules of kinship to expand their communities to the means of punishing societal, including sexual, deviants. We may learn that there are more societies, like the Inuits, in which gender was treated with more fluidity, or those which treated women with the same role-capabilities as men, such as the women warriors of the Iron Age. In her chapter on "Gender Identity" in the anthology, The Archeology of Identity, Margarita Diaz-Andreu says that these studies open up a new milieu for archaeology, so much so that there are so many subcategories or micro categories that can be explored, including nuances of age, as well as sexual behaviors that operate "within the norm" for some societies (but may be considered deviant in others) (Diaz-Andreu, et. al. 2005:15) [14]. These are interesting studies which can build upon existing work, such as looking at homosexuality in the Roman Empire as a means of exerting masculinity and not a demonstration of sexual preference. Many men during this period of time were heterosexual but used sex with young men as a power play. Gender fluidity and third-gender studies for both the Bronze Age or in North American tribes are also a

complex study. All of these and more challenge the original work in mortuary archeology to explain a binary model of sex identification, when the social constructs require much more work.

This complex task, however, is in absolutely line with the new trajectory of mortuary archeology, which will use what fits from antiquarian, processual, postprocessual, and ethnographic archeology and try new directions which continue to use interdisciplinary approach and study of previously untapped angles on both new and existing burial sites, include a nonbinary approach to gender.

References

1. Butler, Judith (2004) Undoing Gender. Routledge Classics, New York. [View Article]

2. Butler, Judith (1990) Gender Trouble. Routledge Classics, New York. [View Article]

3. Agarwal S, Julie W (2017) Exploring Sex and Gender in Bioarchaeology. Albuquerque. *University of New Mexico Press* 312. [View Article]

4. Gilcrest Roberta (1999) Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past. Routledge, New York. [View Article]

5. Arnold Bettina, Nancy Wicker (2001) Gender and the Archaeology of Death. AltaMira Press, New York. [View Article]

6. Klaus, Haagen (2018) PowerPoint Lectures, various. George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia. [View Article]

7. Nelson SM, Benjamin A, Diane B, Hetty JB, Bonnie JC (2007) Identity and Substance: Gender Strategies for Archaeology. AltaMira Press, New York. [View Article]

8. Nelson SM (2006) Handbook of Gender in Archaeology. AltaMira Press, New York. [View Article]

9. Nelson SM, Myriam RA (2004) In Pursuit of Gender: Worldwide Archaeological Approaches. AltaMira Press, New York [View Article]

10. Nelson SM (2015) Shamans, Queens, and Figurines: The Development of Gender Archaeology. Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek. [View Article]

11. Donald M, Linda H (2000) Gender and Material Culture in Archaeological Perspective. St. Martin's Press, London. [View Article]

12. Linduff K, Karen R (2008) Are all Warriors Male? Gender Roles on the Ancient Eurasian Steppe. AltaMira Press, New York. [View Article]

13. Hays Gilpen Kelley, David Whitley (1998) Reader in Gender Archaeology. Routledge, New York. *CRC Press* 400. [View Article]

14. Diaz Andreu Margarita, Sam Lucy, Strasa Babic, David N Edwards (2005) The Archaeology of Identity. Routledge Classics, New York. [View Article]