Title
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Abstract: The central question to be addressed by the archaeological investigation of the Hawaiian household is the division of labor as reflected in the formal organization of space within late pre-European contact Hawaiian house complexes. The research privileges archaeological remains, analyzing placement and construction of residential architecture as well as artifacts and ecofacts recovered from residential landscapes in order to find the voices of those left out of the current narratives and investigate the daily lives of the people. The approach does not reject the ethnohistoric and ethnographic records, as early writings provide an important resource for understanding tasks performed by early Hawaiians. Rather, such accounts are utilized to create a database of predicted gendered tasks, which are then tested against the archaeological record. Considered together, these paint a nuanced picture of gendered social relations and use of space in the household.

Key Words: Archaeology, Hawaii, Gender, Household, Embodiment, Feminist Theory, Identities, Architecture, Houses, Pre-Contact, kapu

Archaeological research historically neglected a gendered perspective until Margaret Conkey, Janet Spector and others recognized this fundamental gap in knowledge in which interpretations were working from “contemporary gender ideology” (1984:2). The years succeeding these foundational archaeology of gender works saw remarkable studies that brought the discipline beyond the concern for finding women in the past, to increasingly nuanced perspectives that incorporate multiple levels of identity through time with consideration for gender (Gilchrist 2004). Archaeologists are now cognizant of the fact that identities are contextual, and modern researchers recognize the temporal and spatial fluidity of gender, “considering historical variations and cultural diversities in the cultural construction of gender” (Gilchrist 2004:142). Multiple identities have become an important aspect of any research related to gender in archaeology. This applies to socioeconomic status, age, role in society, and a multitude of other variables that together form and reforms a person’s worldview as well as the way that person is perceived by others. This focus on multifaceted identities requires that we pay attention to the degree of importance a society places on various roles. Contemporary
archaeological studies recognize that societies are unique in how they conceive of identities—including those pertaining to gender and sexuality. For example, Barbara Voss (2008) engages with queer theory in an effort to address the problematic assumption that sexuality is a universal defining factor of gender and identity. In actuality archaeologists should conceive of gender and sexuality as clues to past performance of identity rather than defining characteristics. Related to my particular interests, Julia Hendon outlines a primary concern for those studying gender in the household through her question, “In what ways does gender organize production and give meaning to social action as part of a process that produces not only material goods but also social relations and identities?” (2004:179).

My own work takes an archaeology of gender approach to Hawaiian households during the late pre-European contact period from approximately 1400-1778 AD. My particular research question addresses space use related to the construction of gendered identity and social interaction. Historical reconstructions say that Hawaiians settled the archipelago around 1000 AD. The late pre-European contact period saw a massive intensification of social practices, specifically related to kapu (taboo) and social relationships, which coincided with the intensification of agriculture as a result of an increase in population and land restructuring. The house system also intensified, and today the house complexes (or kauhale) are important material traces of the existing social relationships from this period. Food in particular was used as a method of the performance and embodiment of the social structure, and these remains are vital in my effort to glimpse the structure of Hawaiian gendered interactions.

Linnekin accounts for the presence of multiple identities in Hawaiian society through her assertion that the divisions created by the kapu system were likely more relevant as divisions between the elite and commoners rather than men and women (1990:15)—however current
literature heavily focuses on female pollution rather than understanding the political context within which the kapu system thrived. Linnekin further identified the lack of reconciliation in scholarly literature between the perceived symbolic female identity with their important role in the political and religious arena through production and exchange (1990:13). This is likely due to the low valuation of household tasks in western thought, and with that the tendency to dichotomize the public and the private.

The history of Hawaiian archaeology—particularly with regards to household research—parallels that of the development of gender theories in the broader discipline, if lagging a few years behind. Due to the poor preservation of the material culture, past archaeologists overly relied on the limited number of nineteenth-century oral histories as a means of attributing function to a particular space without thoroughly analyzing the archaeological remains (Kirch 1985). These ethnohistoric accounts offer idealized descriptions from the early post-contact period that may in actuality have pertained only to the small percentage of the population composing the chiefly class. The oral traditions were filtered and recorded through the worldview of the writers, who were primarily elite males. Although valuable accounts, these men were not trained modern ethnographers bent on reflexivity. Translations of recorded oral histories were also problematic. For example, kapu has multiple meanings in the Hawaiian language—Pukui and Elbert’s Hawaiian dictionary list “taboo, prohibition; … exemption from ordinary taboo; … sacred, holy, consecrated” (1986:132) as some of the word’s many meanings. However, Handy translates the female kapu as protection for the males from female pollution—I argue that there are other explanations.

The resultant interpretation of Hawaiian social interaction was wrought with androcentrism. When the gendered spaces are mentioned in discussions of traditional practices,
there exists an underlying message of inferiority in relation to the women of the Hawaiian archipelago—as previously illustrated, this assumption is based primarily on ethnographic accounts that articulate an unsupported translation of cultural kapu. Such androcentric interpretations of mo’olelo, used in the analyses of recovered artifacts and cultural features, serves to promote potentially inaccurate descriptions of gendered interactions as well as an impression of diminished significance of female activities within pre-European contact Hawaiian society. I do not wish to suggest that we reject the ethnohistoric or ethnographic record, the traditions and histories offer important cultural information not always visible or preserved in the archaeological record. However, the existing records should be understood within the context of the time they were written, recognized for their proper applicability, and implemented as a tool in the analysis process rather than the deciding factor upon which interpretations are based.

The difficulties involved in using oral histories are not the only issues faced. Archaeologists routinely use a linear master narrative stemming from a point of origin decided by the dominant group. Julia Kristeva labeled this process “cursive time” (1981:14), which weaves together cultural experiences from society as a whole, creating one master narrative agreed upon by the dominant group. This system pervades in archaeology, with the point of origin being European contact for many societies. This method of dating has a large effect on Hawaiian history, as events are dated pre-historic, proto-historic, or historic with the qualifier being the arrival of the Europeans (and therefore the arrival of a writing system). The dating method is particularly troubling in that the basic inference is that events occurring before the arrival of the Europeans are not considered part of history owing to the lack of documentation. Diminishing the importance of the native Hawaiian oral tradition in essence diminished the importance of the cultural customs, symbolism, and practice embedded in that tradition, which
Kirsten Vacca

opens the door for voluntary or involuntary inferences based on westernized rather than Hawaiian worldviews. Rather than working backward from the point of origin established by western influence, we should be working forward from the point of origin of Polynesian culture. Archaeology can assist with the exploration of Hawaiian social structure, working from the point of origin of the Polynesian culture and kapu system, forward, and allowing for an understanding of the reasoning behind such practices.

Pacific archaeological research utilizing multiple lines of evidence and reflexive practices asserts that the ancestral Lapita culture developed into something distinctly Polynesian in the Tonga-Samoa region (Kirch 2002:210). The particular Hawaiian manifestation of Polynesian culture emerged as the most socio-politically complex, exhibiting settlement patterns similar to other people of the Pacific, but highly stratified along class lines and regulated by the religious *kapu* system (Kirch 1985, Malo 1951, Sahlins 1958). There existed ten ranks among the chiefly elite and four categories of commoners according to status. (Kamakau1991:39-40). The high chief (*ali`i nui*) oversaw the island and assigned lower chiefs to oversee the individual *moku* (district) and *ahupua`a*, segments of land that comprise the *moku* (Sahlins 1992). Equally important to the structure of the landscape were the house complexes—the *kapu* system required that men and women perform activities in segregated spaces within these complexes, particularly with regards to food preparation and consumption, and ritual activity. This is important to the topic of embodiment and social status in that the people built *kauhale*, which seem to be designed primarily to enforce the structure of social relationships. The information given by oral traditions leads to the inference that the establishment of the food restrictions developed around the same time as the establishment of the land tenure system. The intensification of the social
structure and the kapu system occurring at the same point in history succeeded in widening the gap between the classes (Kirch 2012:133) and enforcing the power held by the elites.

Although the development of the Hawaiian land tenure system and resultant chiefly practices are known through westernized linear historical accounts, we are still missing the voices of those left out of the current narrative regarding Hawaiian history—namely women and the commoner classes. Linear historical documentation has created a vertically hierarchical historical record from the dynamic network of cultural identities, in which the impact of gendered relations on cultural change is pushed to the periphery.

The need for linearity as described by Kristeva produces the need for complete historical documentation, but in the process of discourse we create a linearity of time that fails to encompass events contradictory to the agreed upon ‘truth’. Forcing Hawaiian history to conform to this format presents an unrealistic image of the past that is dominated by the elite male perspective. Patricia Tobin (1979) theorizes that the need for historical linearity stems from an embedded cultural mindset that permeates every aspect of our lives—particularly language. The cycle is then perpetuated as language reinforces cultural practices of creating timelines, lineages or other representations of culture that force globular time, encompassing all spaces and all people, into the straight and narrow path of cause and effect. Archaeological work that utilizes the available written resources along with additional lines of evidence, multivocality and reflexivity has the potential to recover the voices of the “other” erased by historical narrative.

Previous Hawaiian archaeological research exhibits significant gaps in knowledge as a result of the focus on the perceived dominant groups and linear historical narrative. For example, Hawaiian archaeologists who are researching the household must analyze floral and faunal remains, as this is the best method for understanding use of space. However, such studies
Kirsten Vacca

currently prize foods such as pig and dog bone as well as choice fish bones (Kirch and O’Day 2003), markers of elite and primarily male status. Relying on elite goods and limited written works as the foundation for analysis does not allow for studies focused on identities that are not as fully explored, rendering them invisible in the archaeological record. Carefully excavated structures reveal numerous types of artifacts—the material most commonly found include basalt, shell, coral, volcanic glass, charcoal, fish remains, and mammal remains. Microarchaeological methods can also reveal a variety of identifiable plant material as well as soil composition. The amount of materials present as well as size and/or shape of the structures can give valuable clues to the past, but the approach used in analysis significantly affects the outcome, which ultimately affects the interpretation and recording of history. We currently understand that the kauhale differ across the landscape; however, much of the literature primarily analyzes elite complexes while largely neglecting the variation in use of spaces present within the household and across status lines.

The current research I am conducting engages with the previously discussed gender and feminist thought as well as social theory in order to identify daily practices, creating a multifaceted approach that allows for multiple lines of evidence resulting in a more robust understanding of past Hawaiian social interactions through time. As previously stated, we currently understand more about elite men than any other group of people from the Hawaiian pre-European contact period. Taking from Bourdieu (1984), we see the enactment and performance of cultural memories that formed the preferred taste. This taste in turn symbolized the lifestyle and identity of the men who were internalizing the structure. But what happened outside of said ritual performances? How did women internalize structure through meals? How did commoners form social networks and were their identities performed differently from their
elite counterparts? These are merely some of the questions that I am currently asking of the archaeological record in order to retrieve the voices left out of current historical narratives. An archaeological investigation incorporating sound research that evaluates micro- and macro-archaeological traces and engages with social, feminist and gender theories will prove vital in answering these questions.

Gender performance and identity does not remain static across a culture or even throughout one’s lifetime. Its transformative nature must be approached with an understanding that we will never capture all of the countless identities present in the past, but the moments visible in the archaeological record are traces of people and actions (Joyce 2014) that must be understood as part of the dynamic cultural context and social structure embodied by the individual. Only then can we truly glimpse the past.
Bibliography


