

River” and “Moundville Revised”. This volume will especially be welcomed in the libraries of those interested in the origins and development of Southeastern archaeology in the United States. University and college libraries will also find that the volume will be an indispensable acquisition to their collections relating to the history of Americanist archaeology.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/bha.07208>

Gender in Archaeology: Analyzing Power and Prestige, by Sarah Milledge Nelson, AltiMira Press, Walnut Creek CA, paper, 240 pages, \$19.95.

by

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Nelson uses a historical framework to review a number of archaeological studies purporting to identify men’s and women’s roles and statuses. Her subtitle refers both to assumptions of links between power and prestige, artifacts, and gender, and to our own archaeological profession’s statuses so often linked to gender. The text is quite accessible to the ordinary undergraduate but its critiques are worth perusal by experienced researchers; instructors will value its analyses of the many standard textbook examples that depend upon poorly supported premises.

“Gender” is, after all, a linguistics term defined as an obligatory grammatical category. Nelson amplifies the usual focus on men versus women to encompass the unspoken assumption that hierarchies of power and prestige are natural to human societies, an assumption she considers to stem from archaeologists’ socialization in Western culture. The argument of the book is that archaeologists’ constructions of ancient societies often are pale reflections of our own, following from an uncritical acceptance of conventional cultural evolutionism—“the origin myth of Western capitalism,” Joan Vincent termed it (Vincent 1990:36). This standpoint aligns with Tom Patterson’s (1995) history of American archaeology, and complements it nicely by presenting details of archaeological work alluded to by Patterson. Alison Wylie’s analyses are frequently cited by Nelson, contributing intellectual depth to the historical framework. Modest and unthreatening as Nelson’s book appears, it is a meaty addition to a shelf of history/philosophy of science volumes concerned with archaeology.

References

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1991 *Gender*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Patterson, Thomas C.
1995 *Toward a Social History of Archaeology in the United States*, Harcourt
Brace, Fort Worth.
- Vincent, Joan
1990 *Anthropology and Politics*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson.