Since the 1960s, archaeologists have worked at developing methodologies to identify and analyze variability within and between ancient societies. Prior to that time, most “traditional” archaeologists—and, more generally, anthropologists—approached the cultures they studied as though they were homogeneous units of mind and behavior, making the implicit assumption that everyone within a society thought the same and acted in the same sorts of ways. The “new” approach to archaeology explicitly acknowledged many forms and causes of cultural heterogeneity: geographic and environmental differences, occupational differences and specialization, class and wealth differences. Although some argue that the potential for incorporating these ideas has yet to be fully achieved, most archaeologists today recognize that individuals of different occupation, class, or place of residency engage in different activities, pursue different strategies for survival and success, and are likely to be affected differently by the actions of others within and outside their societies.

Recently, some archaeologists have begun to include another dimension of social variability in their research. This dimension is gender, the distinction between feminine and masculine. In all human societies women and men do different things and are thought about in different ways. Because of this, it is probable that they will contribute to, as well as experience, cultural change in different ways. To gloss over or ignore this fundamental difference is to miss an important dynamic of social process.

But how can we identify and analyze how gender helped structure ancient societies? After all, the people we study are dead! We cannot directly observe people making tools, stirring food, growing crops, selling wares at the market, or deciding to declare war or sue for peace in order to document and analyze gendered differences in behavior. Even more invisible—so the argument goes—is what people thought about gender: the relative values placed on the products of men’s and women’s labor, their activities, and their very lives. It is important that we do not assume that gender-based behavior, personality, status, and treatment have been universal across space and time or that they conform to twentieth-century Western ideals. Rather, we must develop methods to identify and explain the similarities and differences in the ways men and women acted, participated, and were treated in ancient societies. In the remainder of this chapter I will present the wealth of data we can use to study gender differences in ancient societies, just as we can analyze other key dimensions of variability such as occupation, settlement, and
class. I will do so with examples from my own research on the immediately pre-Inka and Inka societies of the Yanamarca Valley in the Central Highlands of Peru.

Data Appropriate for the Study of Gender in Ancient Societies

There are many categories of data that can be used to study gender differences in past societies. We can broadly divide these into ethnohistorical and archaeological data. Ethnohistory is a term used by both anthropologists and historians to refer to the reconstruction of native cultures from written sources. There are many types of sources available to the ethnohistorian. First are indigenous documents. These come from ancient civilizations that developed their own writing systems. The earliest of these documents include Maya hieroglyphic texts; Mesoamerican pictorial books (called codices); Mesopotamian cuneiform texts; Mycenaean clay tablets; and Egyptian hieroglyphic texts. These sources are particularly informative because they present the insiders’ view. The audience for whom these documents were written was that small segment of society that was literate, namely the elites. Hence, the topics covered were those that would be of most interest to them, such as elite genealogies, military and political histories, taxation and other economic matters, and state religious ritual and belief.

The second category of ethnohistoric sources are transcribed native oral traditions. Like native written documents, they were probably composed and/or maintained by the elite. These texts include myths, legends, poetry, literature, genealogical histories, legal codes, and other bodies of information traditionally retained by memory but eventually written down.

A third category of ethnohistoric sources consists of firsthand accounts and descriptions by outsiders such as traders, explorers, missionaries, and conquerors.

A fourth category of ethnohistorical data consists of colonial administrative documents, including censuses, official questionnaires, tribute lists, court transcripts, and legal codes. Many of these documents exist because colonial administrators often relied
upon indigenous forms of labor organization, tax collection, and administration to achieve their ends, and the native systems incorporated into the colonial structure were recorded in an attempt to regularize and standardize them. Indigenous peoples also sought to take advantage of new legal systems to preserve and advance their own interests, and their testimony to courts and judicial advocates about title to land, rights of access to resources, marriage patterns, inheritance rules, and other practices is preserved in archives around the world.

None of these ethnohistoric sources is without problems and/or biases. For most, the topics and domains covered are narrow, usually focusing primarily on things of interest to the ruling class. The information in both native and colonial documents was often collected from and recorded by men—usually upper-class men—and therefore most ethnohistoric sources represent the viewpoint and practices of only a small segment of society.

One of the main problems with colonial sources is that they rarely represent the native point of view. Few of these works are consciously objective “ethnographic” investigations of native culture. Outsiders sometimes failed to comprehend what they were witnessing and often were contemptuous of the practices they observed. For both native and colonial texts, we have problems of translation. These problems include our own ability to decipher and translate ancient texts as well as errors in translation made by those who compiled oral histories and recorded native languages and practices many centuries ago. The third problem is one of imprecision in chronological and spatial focus. Oral histories—which are often passed down with modification for hundreds of years—may combine attitudes and practices that pertain to different eras. Similarly, colonial chronicles and administrative documents may indiscriminately record the practices of different regions and/or subgroups without noting where or from whom the information was obtained. We need to evaluate the veracity, reliability, and usefulness of each source, taking into account when it was written, where it was written, for whom it was written, why it was written, and the background of the writer.

Despite their shortcomings, the documentary sources are particularly valuable as sources of certain kinds of information, especially for those intangibles of culture that often leave no material record. These include rules, ideas, abstract beliefs, marriage patterns and practices, systems of access to resources, and historical information. Many aspects of gender—including the division of
labor and gender ideology—are among the topics that can be accessed with ethnohistoric data.

I have found that ethnohistorical materials are particularly useful when used in conjunction with archaeological data. The advantage of archaeological data is that, if collected and analyzed appropriately, these data do not suffer from the same types of problems discussed for the documentary materials. First, archaeological materials are more broadly representative of the society as a whole. We should be able to recover the garbage of rich and poor, men and women, children and adults, farmers and priests, villagers and city-dwellers. Also, since most human activities leave some sort of material record, the archaeological data may reflect a wider variety of activities than do the ethnohistoric data: from the mundane, humdrum acts necessary for daily survival to the great pageantry and spectacle of ritual and nobility.

Second, the archaeological data themselves are more objective. The processes of deposit formation—loss, discard, and abandonment—are rarely consciously manipulated to present an image or bias an opinion; neither is there self-reflective commentary in patterns of deposit. That is, people rarely worry about the image they create when they throw out their trash (because they don’t expect anyone to really look at it, let alone scientifically analyze it to recreate their lifestyle).

The archaeological record is not without its drawbacks and limitations, however. Not all things people use preserve equally well over the centuries. Organic materials are much less likely to be preserved than nonorganic materials. This can lead to an incorrect interpretation of a culture. For example, if we recover all the stone tools but none of the wooden ones, we may incorrectly reconstruct the range of activities people pursued. Similarly, some organic materials preserve better than others, so that animal bones (which represent the flesh component of the diet) may be well represented, while botanical remains (which represent the vegetal component of the diet) may not be recovered. Such a pattern of recovery may cause us to overestimate dependence on meat and underestimate the importance of plant foods in the diet. Similarly, there may be some parts of culture that are invisible in the archaeological record because they do not have a direct, material component. Language and beliefs are two often cited examples, but other items include marriage and kinship patterns, property systems, and historical data. Also, there are parts of the archaeological record that are not immediately identifiable and interpretable,
often because they have no modern counterpart to which we can compare them, or because the record is incomplete or ambiguous. “What is this?” is probably among the most frequently asked questions in the field and in the lab. Problems of objectivity and reliability figure in the analysis, and it is incumbent on us to use rigorous and appropriate methodologies for drawing our conclusions about the past.

Despite these problems, archaeological data can be used to study gender. In fact, there are five general categories of archaeological data pertinent to the study of sex/gender. The first is skeletal data. While most sex differences are expressed in soft tissues (which are rarely recovered), it is also possible to use the shape and size of some bones to identify the sex of an adult with reasonable accuracy. Examination of bone can yield information about age at death; number of pregnancies (obviously, females only); trauma; stress; diet and malnutrition; and some infectious and degenerative diseases. These analyses provide straightforward information on the physical well-being, activities, differential care, prestige, and status of men and women.

The second category of archaeological data that may reflect gender differences consists of grave goods—the objects with which individuals were buried. Archaeologists assume that these reflect some of the basic activities the individual participated in in life (or at least those activities ideologically or symbolically associated with his/her social category); and his or her status and prestige.

The third category of data consists of two-dimensional or three-dimensional figurative representations, which may record information about gender differences in activities and status. As with most archaeological materials, some artistic traditions are easier to interpret than others. For example, the division of labor is fairly easy to identify from images painted on the walls of ancient Egyptian tombs, while the nature and meaning of Paleolithic female “Venus” figures remains enigmatic.

The fourth category of data consists of various artifacts themselves. We must first try to determine which particular artifacts and/or activities were regularly associated with which gender. We can then compare this with the variable distribution of these artifacts and activities throughout time and location. This will enable us to identify changes in the location of particular activities, the relative intensities of activities in different periods or different communities, changes in people’s work loads, and changes in activity
scheduling. All of these things may in turn affect economic and social relationships.

The fifth category of archaeological data consists of analysis of activity patterns in their spatial and architectural contexts. The identification of certain activities and artifacts with certain individuals permits discussion of where those activities took place. We can consider the degree to which certain activities are domestic or public, unrestricted or secluded, universal or limited. We can then further discuss the impact any restrictions may have on people’s lives and on other activities they may pursue.

In sum, we students of the past are lucky in that archaeology and ethnohistory generally have complementary strengths, errors, and omissions. They can thus be combined quite effectively for the study of the past. The two types of data often cover different domains and aspects of society. Second, the archaeological and ethnohistorical records were generally formed independently of one another, and so should not contain the same errors, biases, and omissions. Of the roughly nine different categories of data, I used seven in my study of Wanka and Inka gender.

**Research Background**

The archaeological data discussed in this essay were collected by the Upper Mantaro Archaeological Research Project (UMARP). UMARP was established in 1977 to study culture changes in the Yanamarca Valley of highland Peru (see Figure 1). We were particularly interested in the development of small scale chiefdoms among the indigenous Wanka ethnic group between A.D. 1300 and 1470, and the effects of the Inka conquest, which occurred in about A.D. 1470, on the local population. The project members were an international team, each of whom contributed their expertise in an area of data collection and/or materials analysis (pottery, lithics, animal bone, botanical remains, architecture, etc.).

To achieve our goal of reconstructing and explaining change in Wanka society, we collected archaeological data from sites that pertained to the immediately pre-Inka period (which we call Wanka II), and the period during which the Wanka population was under Inka domination (which we dubbed Wanka III). Surface
Figure 1
Map of the Upper Mantaro Archaeological Research Project Research Area
collections were made at over thirty sites, and intensive excavations were conducted at seven of those sites. In our excavations, we focused our efforts on houses and their adjoining “private” patio space. We excavated in thirty-one households. Although this is an extremely small fraction of the tens of thousands of households that populated the region, because we used scientific sampling procedures we believe that the sample is probably representative of the Wanka population as a whole.

We recovered, catalogued, and analyzed hundreds of thousands of artifacts and ecofacts. In all, approximately 300,000 pottery sherds, 50,000 stone artifacts, 80,000 animal bones, many kilos of botanical materials, 106 human burials, and hundreds of pieces of metal and shell comprise the dataset from which we drew our conclusions about Wanka and Inka society in the Yanamarca. In addition, we analyzed the architecture and settlement patterns of the communities from which we collected our data. All the materials were processed and catalogued in Peru. Computer analyses of the data were conducted at UCLA.

When we developed our research design, we were careful to include methods of data collection and analysis that would allow us to discuss differences in the Wanka population in terms of socioeconomic class, occupation, and community type. However, to be honest, we did not include gender as an analytic category in our original research and therefore did not explicitly collect data to address gender-related issues. It was not until a decade later that I realized we should have included gender as an analytic category! It is a credit to the potency of our research design—which generated data to address a wide variety of questions, including some not anticipated when the research began—that I was able to expand our analytic categories and pursue this “gender-informed” research.

Let me digress for a minute, to discuss the non-gendered conclusions we drew from our analyses. As mentioned above, the Wanka were the native inhabitants of the Yanamarca Valley. At about A.D. 1300, they developed a chiefdom level society, probably as the indirect result of intensified warfare among communities. We infer a high level of conflict among the Wanka from the locations and configurations of their settlements. Most people lived in walled/fortified communities located on knolls high above the valley floor, where they could easily defend themselves. This conclusion is supported by ethnohistoric documents that report a high degree of warfare among the Wanka prior to the Inka con-
There was some socio-economic stratification in the Wanka II period. We differentiate between elite and commoner households on the basis of house size, location, and the quantities and types of artifacts recovered in those households. According to the documentary sources, the Wanka lords (called sinchi) initially achieved their positions of power and authority as successful leaders in battle. We can also identify a settlement hierarchy. There were people living in both large towns and smaller villages. The ethnohistoric documents tell us nothing about the division of labor and occupational specialization during the Wanka II period. However, our archaeological work did identify some occupational differences among the pre-Inka population. Based on the distribution of tools used for agriculture, pottery making, stone working, and weaving, we determined that most people were farmers. However, there were some households that specialized part-time in pottery production, stone tool production, and perhaps textile production.

As recorded in the colonial-era chronicles, the Wanka were conquered by the Inka during the reign of the Inka Emperor Pachakuti (in about A.D. 1470) as a part of that leader’s explosive military expansion through the Andes. After the Inka conquest, the area was transformed physically and organizationally. We learn from documentary sources that the region was incorporated as a province within the Empire. The state sent a governor and many bureaucrats from the imperial capital of Cuzco to establish Inka rule. These rulers built a new administrative center (the archaeological site of Hatun Xauxa) and set up a provincial government. Some local Wanka rulers were given low-level positions in the Inka provincial bureaucracy. There was a change in the nature and structure of socioeconomic class differences. The Inka conquerors (bureaucrats and military personnel) formed the uppermost level in Yanamarca society. Although the Wanka elite were able to maintain their wealth and power differentiation from the commoners, the local lords lost much of their independence, in that they obtained their power and wealth as vassals of the Inka state. This dependence on the conquerors is reflected materially in the fact that the Wanka elites became great imitators of all things Inka. They used large quantities of imitation Inka pottery and built Inka-style additions to their homes. Interestingly, the archaeological data indicate that while overall status differences continued, the commoners were in some ways better off under the Inkas. For example, the higher quantities of
maize and animal bones found in Inka period houses compared with that found in pre-Inka houses suggests commoners had better diets after the conquest. Similarly, higher frequencies of certain types of pottery and other artifacts indicate increased access to some types of material goods with Inka domination. Finally, comparative analyses of skeletal remains indicate commoners experienced slightly better health and longer lifespans after the Inka conquest.

In our study of settlement patterns, we identified changes in community location and structure. Most fundamentally, people moved out of the large, walled Wanka II hill towns into smaller villages closer to agricultural lands near the valley bottom. This move likely increased agricultural productivity—since people didn’t have to spend an hour or more commuting each day. The breakup of the fortified towns also enhanced the Inka’s ability to control the local population, since the Wanka could not retreat behind their walls to plot and carry out a rebellion. Finally, the shift from the dense, crowded towns may have contributed to the generally better health experienced by the Wanka after the Inka conquest.

The ethnohistoric sources provide some information about the craft artisans who worked for the Inka government, but provide little information regarding those artisans who produced utilitarian goods for local consumption. However, the archaeological data provide a wealth of information about craft producers. From these data, we recognize changes in the occupational structure of Wanka society after the Inka conquest. Most basically, the economy became more specialized as people in some villages focused intensively on agriculture while in other villages most households focused more intensively on craft production, such as pottery making or stone-tool making.

WANKA GENDER RELATIONS: CLOTH

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that we can reconstruct quite a bit about social and economic differences within a given cultural group, and we can document how cultural change—in this case, change brought about by the Inka conquest—affects different social groups in different ways. Can we also explore how the Inka conquest affected women and men differently? Yes!

In my own research, I have combined ethnohistorical and
archaeological data to study gender relations as reflected in one small slice of ancient life: cloth production. By engendering my discussion of textile production, I have been able to explore the division of labor, the nature of the economic and political process, and social relations.

The first step I took in my work was to identify each sex/gender with certain activities, symbols, and/or places. Unfortunately, the burial data from the UMARP excavations were of minimal use in identifying sex/gender differences in the Wanka and Inka populations. There were few strong associations between artifacts of known function or symbolism and a particular sex. Also, there was little in the way of artistic data that could be used in the study, as neither the Wanka nor the Inka had strong figurative artistic traditions.

However, the ethnohistoric documents are rich in their discussion of sex/gender patterns and differences and therefore offer a starting point from which to conduct the analysis. The pre-colonial Andean peoples were nonliterate; therefore, there are no native/indigenous written sources from which to draw information pertaining to a time prior to the Spanish conquest. However, we do have a variety of early Spanish documents from which we can draw information. The Inka had a rich oral tradition, which was recorded soon after the Spanish conquest of Peru. Second, we have a large body of legal documents, including censuses, official questionnaires (visitas), and court documents. Finally, we have a relatively large corpus of diaries, letters, and other written works of the Spanish conquerors, later European administrators, and literate natives.

The ethnohistoric documents provide information on the general division of labor along both age and gender lines. Ideally, children and adults of both genders had specific tasks they were expected to perform. Young girls were expected to carry water, collect herbs and flowers (for cooking and dyeing), help with the cooking, and watch their younger siblings; young boys were expected to trap birds and other small animals, carry wood, and herd. Adult men and women both worked in the agricultural fields, but at somewhat different tasks: Men plowed and helped with the harvest, while women planted, weeded, and harvested. Men also built houses and other structures and served in the army. Women were responsible for cooking food, brewing beer, and watching small children. Females of all ages performed various tasks associated with cloth production, such as spinning thread and weaving (see Figure 2).
Figure 2
Sixteenth-Century Drawings Illustrating Andean Women (a) Spinning and (b) Weaving
It was the study of cloth production that led me to the study of gender in Wanka and Inka society. As the person on the project responsible for the analysis of all ceramic artifacts, it fell to me to say something interesting about several thousand round, perforated objects recovered consistently in our excavations (see Figure 3). I quickly identified these as spindle whorls, which are weights used in the spinning process to keep the thread tight and even (see Figure 2a). Having identified these objects with a specific activity, I began my investigations of that activity (spinning), its final product (cloth), and the people who made that product.

The ethnohistoric documents make clear the extreme importance and value of cloth and cloth production in Wanka and Inka societies. Cloth—in the highlands woven primarily of llama and alpaca wool—was obviously necessary for survival. Cloth had a role in many important ceremonies and rituals, including puberty rites, marriage, and burial. Cloth was also the primary form of wealth in most Andean societies, which had no money as we know it.
Because the pre-Columbian Andean peoples had no true money or coinage, the activities of the government were financed in kind (goods such as food items, pottery, and especially cloth). Revenues were raised by imposing tribute levies on subordinate populations. For example, when the Inka conquered a new territory they imposed a cloth tax on the local population. Each village was required to produce a certain amount of cloth to be turned over to state tax collectors on a regular basis. The cloth requisitioned by the state was used to clothe men serving in the army and to “pay” or reward bureaucrats and other personnel working for civilian and military institutions. State tax collectors told local leaders how much cloth to produce, and these leaders then divided the work among the villagers under their control. Not surprisingly, the cloth tax burden fell on the “traditional” spinners and weavers, that is, on girls and women. Thus, in addition to spinning and weaving to make clothing and blankets for their own families—as they had done before the Inka conquest—women under the Inka additionally spun thread and wove cloth that was turned over to state tax collectors.12

The ethnohistoric documents tell us that most cloth was manufactured in a domestic setting and that women were the primary producers of thread and cloth.13 Given the strength of the association between weaving and women in Inka (and likely pre-Inka) society, I would argue that the study of cloth production provides an ideal way to study women in particular and gender relations more generally in Inka society. I make the leap from technology and production to social relations for the following reason. Cloth was a good that was produced in part for exchange. People who exchange goods must have some sort of an economic and social relationship. Asking questions about the nature of production ultimately gives us information about the nature of those economic and social relationships. Given this argument, our next questions become: How can we see cloth production archaeologically? What can the study of cloth production tell us about the effects of the Inka conquest on women’s labor and gender relations?

In the Andes, the tools and materials associated with cloth production that were recovered by archaeologists include spindles and whorls used in thread production, pieces of the simple backstrap looms favored by Andean women, and needles used in finishing and embellishing woven cloth. On the coast of Peru where the dry climate leads to unusually good preservation of organic
materials, my colleagues often recover a wide variety of tools associated with weaving, including entire “weaver’s baskets” replete with unspun wool, half-finished thread, wooden spindles, and other accoutrements. Unfortunately, the cool, damp conditions of the highlands where I conducted my investigations do not promote such preservation. Thus, I have virtually no cloth, raw wool, spun yarn, or tools made out of perishable materials available for analysis.

The primary archaeological data I used consisted of several thousand ceramic spindle whorls, several dozen bone and metal needles, and a few ambiguous bone tools that may have served as thread bobbins, shuttles, or battens. I combined an analysis of the distribution of these artifacts (and their association with other activities) with ethnohistoric descriptions of cloth specifically and Inka society more generally to understand how cloth production changed over time, its contexts of production and distribution, and how this all affected women (and their relations with men). I used the relative numbers of tools recovered in different households to determine whether and how the amount of cloth production varied by site, class, and time period.

First, I reconstructed pre-Inka cloth production as a baseline against which to test changes after the Inka conquest. We found spindle whorls in all Wanka II households, which I interpret to mean that all households—and, therefore, I presume all females—spun and made cloth. Whorls were not, however, evenly distributed. Some households had significantly more whorls than others, suggesting some households—and therefore some females—worked more at cloth production than did others. The intensity of production varied in two ways. First, the density of whorls increased with elevation. This indicates that women living closer to the high elevation puna grasslands—where the Andean villagers kept their flocks of wool-bearing llamas and alpacas—spun more thread and possibly made more cloth than did villagers living further from good pastures. I propose a straightforward ecological/environmental explanation for this pattern: People exploited most intensively those resources located closest to where they lived.

Second, elite households yielded twice the density of whorls as did commoner households. This pattern supports a conclusion that elite women made more cloth than did commoner women. This is an interesting observation that requires further discussion, as it is at odds with our twentieth-century Western perception that
wealthy women enjoy great leisure. I turned to the ethnohistoric record for an explanation of this pattern. The colonial-era documents describing pre-Inka and Inka society indicate that elites generally did not work at hard labor in the agricultural fields, but this does not mean that they did nothing all day. Rather than being idle, I argue that elite women spent their time weaving, a conclusion that is indirectly supported by statements in the documents describing the wives, daughters, and other female relatives of leaders as weaving intensively. Considering what we know about the importance of cloth as a measure of wealth in Andean societies, we see that women and girls created wealth for their families by using their time and labor to turn raw fiber into valuable cloth.

The cloth created by women was an important part of the Andean political process as well as an economic asset. We learn from the documentary sources that powerful families gave away large quantities of cloth as a way of creating alliances, enlarging their power bases, and rewarding loyal followers. Cloth distribution took place as a part of large feasts sponsored and hosted by elite families. Archaeological materials help us identify the locations of these feasts. The distribution of bowls used to serve special foods and drinks indicates that these feasts took place within elite houses, rather than in some other nondomestic, public place. Since Wanka houses were built in such a way that no one could be secluded in an inaccessible part of the house, all members of the household sponsoring the feast must have been present at and likely participated in the activities. Thus, elite women—as the creators of textile wealth—directly contributed to and participated in the political strategies of their families.

Using the Wanka II data and conclusions as a baseline in the analysis, I then asked: What happened after the Inka conquest? Several interesting patterns emerged from the data. First, the number of spindle whorls recovered in Wanka III households is twice that recovered in Wanka II households. From this I conclude that the overall amount of spinning doubled after the Inka conquest. I believe this reflects the Inka cloth tax described in the colonial documents. There is no indication—archaeological or ethnohistoric—that women were freed from any other tasks to make more time for spinning and weaving. Thus, it would appear that the production of thread and cloth to meet state demands was accomplished in addition to all the other work for which women were responsible. By combining evidence from documentary sources and archaeo-
logical data, we might conclude that women worked harder and longer under Inka domination.

A second pattern that emerged is that, after the conquest, elite women were no longer making more cloth than commoner women: We recover roughly the same number of whorls in Wanka III commoner and elite households. The significance of this change will become clear in the subsequent discussion.

The changes in cloth production were accompanied by changes in distribution. Cloth retained its important economic and political functions, but the location of distribution and the identities of those who participated in its distribution changed. Cloth distribution no longer took place within a household context (where women would invariably have been involved). Rather, cloth was removed from the local villages and taken to regional Inka storage facilities and to the capital of the Empire itself, from where it was redistributed. In fact, the colonial-era documents make clear that all fine cloth “belonged” to the emperor (no matter who made it). Technically, people could obtain it only as a gift from the state.

As in pre-Inka times, large amounts of cloth were given away during official feasts and festivities, but the sponsorship and nature of these events changed after the Inka conquest. The number of large bowls and other artifacts associated with feasting fell dramatically in Wanka III household contexts, indicating that local Wanka lords no longer hosted large feasts and large cloth giveaways within their homes. Rather, the Inka governors and state bureaucrats assumed this role, which was carried out in large public plazas at Inka administrative centers.

Under Inka domination, cloth distribution became an increasingly masculine activity on both the giving and receiving ends. It is clear from the ethnohistoric sources that all Inka bureaucrats—including the tax collectors and administrators who distributed cloth—were male. My colleague Christine Hastorf has presented important evidence that women did not attend the state-sponsored feasts—the events where cloth was distributed—as frequently as did men. Hastorf’s analysis of bones from Inka-period graves indicates women ate less maize (corn) than did men.17 The chemical composition of women’s bones closely reflects the types and proportions of foods recovered in domestic settings, indicating women mostly ate at home. In contrast, men consumed more maize than was served up at home. Hastorf concludes that men were “eating out” more than women. In the Andes, maize was
often consumed as *chicha* beer, which was a key component of elaborate state-sponsored feasts. In sum, the skeletal and botanical data provide circumstantial evidence that men were partying (feasting) more than women. If women were attending fewer feasts, they may not have been the direct recipients of cloth as frequently as men. Likely, women would have received state-distributed cloth from their male relatives (husbands, brothers, fathers, sons) who did attend the feasts. This established a new set of dependencies, whereby women could not directly obtain necessary and/or valuable goods for themselves, but had to rely on others (men) for them.

Women were not directly distributing or receiving cloth, and they may not have been the ultimate consumers of this fine cloth either. Very few of the textiles that women made have survived: The organic materials from which they were made decomposed long ago. However, virtually all that have survived the last five hundred years are *men’s shirts*. Based on the increase in textile production activities and the lack of evidence that women were weaving for themselves, we might conclude that under Inka domination women increased their labor but presumably did not benefit from it directly. Under Inka domination, Wanka women produced more but consumed less of what they produced.

Let us return now to the specific labor taxes imposed on the conquered population. Ethnohistoric documents indicate that women wove cloth and brewed beer. The archaeological evidence indicates that they did much of this work *within* their own houses. Women, however, were not the only ones who worked harder under Inka domination. The men were also taxed. Most commonly, men worked in state agricultural and construction projects *outside* their homes. Although both women and men were taxed, there was a structural difference in the nature of men’s and women’s taxes: Women worked in a domestic setting, while men worked in a more public context. It was the latter type of work that was rewarded with preferred foods such as meat, maize, and chicha during and after state service. Thus, while everyone “paid taxes” by producing goods and providing services for the state, men received greater rewards for that labor.

As the nature of cloth production and distribution changed, women became further removed from direct participation in the political process. The fine cloth that elite women wove went not toward their own families’ political activities, but to the state, which generally excluded women from the larger political and
bureaucratic functions. Irene Silverblatt and others have argued that the pre-Inka Andean ideology viewed men and women as complementary—each working for the benefit of the other within the domestic unit and within the society. But under Inka domination we see an increasing flow of highly desirable goods (such as cloth and preferred foods) from women to men, without a complementary increase in the flow of valuable “masculine” products to women. Women also lost control over the products of their labor, as these items were increasingly distributed outside the home by men unrelated to the female producers. At the same time, women may have become more dependent on men for the acquisition of necessary and valued items, such as cloth.

To follow through on this line of thought, I ask one last question: How might this change in the distribution of goods have changed household and social structure and gender relations in general? The increasingly lopsided apportionment of privileges and dependencies surely must have disrupted the formerly balanced, complementary gender relations of the Andes. We can speculate that there might have been an increase in tension between men and women as women produced more beer and cloth but participated less in the public activities in which these goods were distributed. Might the Inka conquest have begun to set men and women in opposition to each other instead of seeing themselves as working together? Returning to the original hypothesis that men and women experience culture change differently, men and women would probably have different degrees of acceptance of or resistance to Inka domination in part because they experienced their tax burdens differently. A differential, gender-based reaction to Inka rule may have spawned more gender-conscious policies of governance and administration, which might then change traditional Andean society even further.

**Conclusions**

I hope that the foregoing discussion has demonstrated the strength of combining archaeological and ethnohistorical inquiry in our studies of the past. Frankly, my discussion could not be as vivid, my conclusions not as detailed, if I did not have both types of data
from which to draw. My students often ask me what conclusions I might have reached had I not had the ethnohistorical materials to complement my archaeological data. My archaeological data on the Wanka (and Inka) are probably insufficient to engender activities—including cloth production—in the first place and certainly not to the degree they are made gender specific in the ethnohistorical literature. I could have studied cloth production using only archaeological data, but could not have derived the conclusions about the gendered division of labor, gender relations, and women’s power (or lack thereof).

At the same time, the documentary sources alone are also insufficient to generate these conclusions. The ethnohistorical record provides virtually no information on patterns of variability in cloth production. For example, in discussions of the location of cloth production, there is no distinction made between elite and commoner, high- and low-altitude villages. Similarly, there is little in the documents on how the cloth tax was implemented, the actual burden it created, or the effects of changes in cloth distribution on local populations. There is little in the documents on the seemingly “incidental” information—such as diet and the locations of feasts—which ends up being crucial for piecing together the story of gendered socioeconomic relationships and political process. Archaeological and ethnohistorical data are frequently—indeed usually—used independently of one another. In many cases, it is because we have available to us only one or the other, but not both. As this work shows, however, when both can be employed, the old proverb holds true: The whole is clearly greater than the sum of the parts.

Notes


2. Although the two terms are often used interchangeably, sex and gender are two different phenomena. Sex refers to the genetically determined, physiological differences between males and
females that relate directly to their respective roles in biological reproduction. Gender refers to the socially defined, learned behaviors that are considered appropriate for individuals of a particular sex. Sex is universal in the sense that no matter where you go, all females have the same genitalia and potentially the same roles in biological reproduction (they gestate and lactate), while males have a distinctive set of genitalia and their own role in biological reproduction (they impregnate). In contrast, while all human societies have gender systems, the specific personalities and behaviors that are considered appropriately masculine or feminine vary from one group to the next. For example, in some societies making pottery is considered “women’s work,” while in others it is “men’s work.” Similarly, in some societies it is considered feminine to be passionate and headstrong and masculine to be calm and rational, while in others the near opposite holds true.


10. Prior to the Inka conquest, the Wanka built exclusively round houses. Inka architecture, in contrast, is characterized by rectangular buildings with trapezoidal niches, windows, and doorways. In the Wanka III period, these Inka architectural canons were selectively used by the Wanka, but only in elite houses.


12. According to the documentary sources, the state supplied the fiber while women theoretically supplied only their labor. My research suggests women probably supplied their own tools. The fiber likely came from state-controlled cotton fields and camelid herds.

13. There is some discussion as to how exclusively “feminine” cloth production was. Some argue that all women produced domestically while some men were specialists; others argue that men and women made different things and/or used different types of looms. Two points are relatively clear. First, spinning and weaving were such labor intensive activities, and demand for cloth was so high, that it is likely that all “idle” hands were recruited to help with these never-ending tasks. Second, despite the fact that the reality was that at least some boys and/or adult men spun thread and wove cloth, these activities were viewed as archetypal feminine roles.


16. We learn from ethnographic literature that feasting is a strategic political activity in ranked societies. During these “social” events, status differences are marked and reinforced, political alliances are forged, the allocation of resources is negotiated, and decisions about marriages, warfare, and other events are made.


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**SUGGESTED READINGS**


