

Engendering Tomb 7 at Monte Albán

Respinning an Old Yarn¹

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A contextual analysis of material culture recovered from Tomb 7 at Monte Albán suggests a radical reinterpretation of the gender identification of the tomb's principal individual. Spinning and weaving implements found with the burial, previously interpreted as a male, indicate the strong possibility that the individual was gender-female. A reinterpretation of the skeletal remains as presented in the published accounts further indicates that the osteological evidence is ambiguous at best and the skeleton may have been of a biological female. Finally, the total assemblage is considered in reference to the religious and gender ideologies of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica to suggest that Tomb 7 may have been an important shrine to Lady 9 Grass, a principal member of the Mixtec Mother Goddess complex. This paper points up the necessity of periodic reevaluations of accepted wisdom that may have been developed under theoretical paradigms that minimized cultural diversity.

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soamerica and the Andes: An Anthology, edited by M. B. Schevill, J. C. Berlo, and E. Dwyer (New York: Garland, 1991), and "The Conquered Women of Cacaxtla: Gender Identity or Gender Ideology?" (*Ancient Mesoamerica* 5, in press). The present paper was submitted in final form 1 IX 93.

Tomb 7 at Monte Albán is one of the richest and most famous archaeological discoveries ever made in the New World (Caso 1932a, b, 1965, 1969). An extraordinary assortment of over 500 exotic grave goods includes objects of gold, silver, copper, jade, turquoise, rock crystal, obsidian, and pearls. The quality of the artistry is exceptional, featuring such techniques as metallurgy, stone carving, mosaic, and fine incising of bone and stone. Yet the significance of the tomb in relation to the site's history is an enigma, in part because the ceremonial center had long been abandoned when the Late Postclassic "treasure" (cf. Caso 1969) was deposited.

Monte Albán, located in the center of the Valley of Oaxaca in the highlands of southern Mexico, has been the focus of intensive archaeological investigations since the late 1920s (Caso 1932a, 1969; Paddock 1966; Caso, Bernal, and Acosta 1967; Blanton 1978; Blanton and Kowalewski 1981; Flannery and Marcus 1983; Winter 1989a). Perched atop a series of high ridges, it was first settled in the Formative period (ca. 500 B.C.), when it became the dominant center in the valley (Blanton 1978). During the Terminal Formative and Classic periods (200 B.C.—A.D. 700) Monte Albán was the capital of a Zapotec empire that may have extended beyond the valley's borders (Spencer 1982, Feinman and Nichols 1993). Its main plaza was largely abandoned in the Epiclassic period (ca. A.D. 700), when the main population was located on the north slope of the hill (Blanton 1978, 1983; Kowalewski et al. 1989; but see Winter 1989b). The Postclassic period (A.D. 900–1521) is poorly understood, but the Valley of Oaxaca probably included several competing polities ruled by Zapotec and Mixtec elites (Bernal 1966, Paddock 1983, Flannery and Marcus 1983, Kowalewski et al. 1989, McCafferty 1989, Whitecotton 1990).

Tomb 7 was originally built during the Classic period, but it was reused in the Late Postclassic, when nine individuals were interred (Caso 1969). The tomb consisted of two chambers connected by a passageway (fig. 1). It was originally entered through a door from the east, but the Postclassic reoccupation involved the removal of most of the original burials and offerings, partial filling of the tomb with dirt, and finally the placement of the new burials and offerings on the dirt fill through the roof, which was then replaced (Caso 1969:50, 55).

The east chamber contained skeletal remains of at least four individuals, together with a rich assortment of objects. Although the skeletons were disturbed, there was sufficient anatomical order to suggest that they were primary interments.² One notable feature, located

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2. Caso initially interpreted the burials as primary but changed his mind because of the degree of disturbance, the possibility that intrusive bones were mixed with the originals, and the incompleteness of many of the skeletons (p. 59). We believe that the

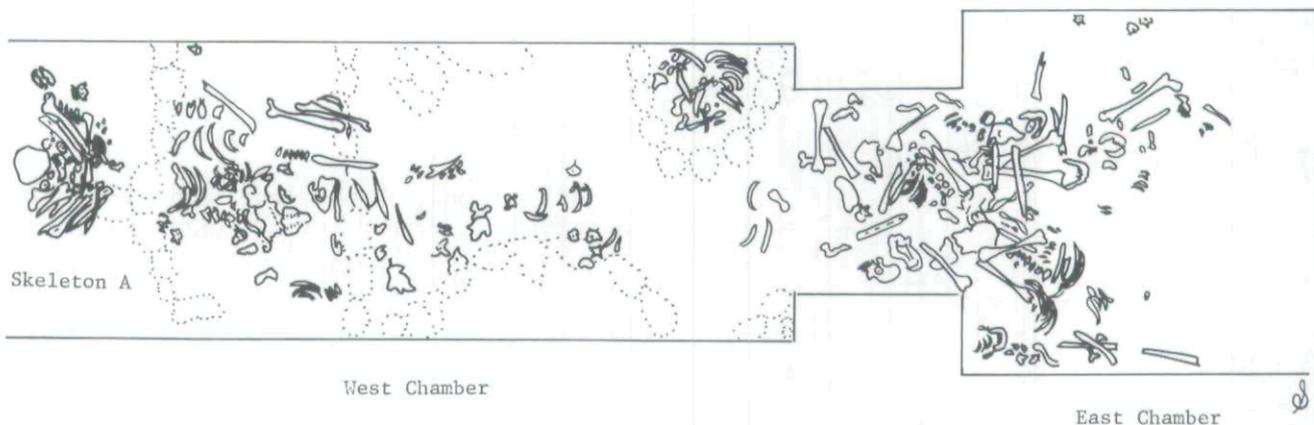


FIG. 1. Plan of Tomb 7 (after Caso 1969: plan 3).

in the southwest corner of this chamber, was a human skull covered with turquoise and shell mosaic plaques and with a flat shell representing a knife projecting from the nasal cavity (Caso 1969:62–69; fig. 2). The top of the skull had been cut away to create a vessel, probably for burning incense. The skull rested on an altar of amaranth seeds bonded together with copal resin. Additionally, there were five “extra” mandibles, painted red, with perforations to allow them to be worn as buccal masks (Caso 1969:61).

The west chamber was subdivided into five sections by low rows of stone. The bodies of three individuals were located in the central section, and another was in the northeast corner. These skeletons were also disturbed but judging from the anatomical arrangement of skeletal elements such as ribs and long bones were probably primary burials. At the western end of this chamber was Skeleton A, the most elaborate and complete of the burial group. It was placed in the flexed seated position typical of a mummy bundle, facing east into the tomb. Rubín de la Borbolla (1969:279) identified it as an adult male of about 55 years of age. A pathological condition found on its skull was a major lesion in the left parietal, resulting in the abnormal thickening of the bone known as Paget’s disease³ (Rubín de la Borbolla 1969:342). This condition may have caused intense headaches but was probably not the cause of death. Caso (1969:239) sug-

gested that the resultant “dementia” combined with the facial deformity itself would have associated the individual with the cult of Xolotl, god of monsters and the twin of Quetzalcoatl.

Although Tomb 7 is described in every introductory course on Mesoamerican archaeology, there have been remarkably few attempts at reevaluating the burials and associated objects (but see Marcus 1983). In this paper we employ a contextual approach (Hodder 1982, 1986, 1987) to the tomb’s material culture to reinterpret the gender identity of the principal individual in the tomb and therefore the meaning content of the tomb itself. Specifically, we suggest that the presence of artifact classes relating to spinning and weaving are evidence for a female gender identity for Skeleton A. Finally, we critically evaluate other artifactual and skeletal evidence to argue that the sexual identity of the principal individual is by no means certain and that this may well have been an important female.

presence of bones in their proper anatomical positions (e.g., vertebral alignments, articulated long bones, and clusters of ribs) indicates that these were primary deposits and that the anomalies were the result of later disturbance, possibly the result of repeated visits to the tomb.

3. Rubín de la Borbolla (1969:342) summarized his analysis of the pathological condition: “La lesión fué causada por la siembra hematogéna de origen meníngeo, de larga duración, de tipo tuberculoso, con un proceso osteítico deformante del tipo Paget” (the lesion was caused by a long-term blood-borne seeding of meningeal origin with a Paget-type deforming osteitis). Although this condition was originally termed a tubercular condition, modern medicine does not consider Paget’s disease, or osteitis deformans, related to tuberculosis (Norman Dean, personal communication, 1993).



FIG. 2. Mosaic skull from east chamber of tomb (after Caso 1969:pl. 4).

From a broader theoretical perspective, we point to the importance of critical evaluation of "accepted" interpretations that may have been developed under earlier paradigms with less emphasis on cultural diversity. In this case, we argue that androcentrism prevented Caso, Rubín de la Borbolla, and subsequent scholars from adequately considering the possibility that Skeleton A may have been female (see Conkey and Spector 1984 and contributions to Gero and Conkey 1991, particularly Wylie 1991). Our reinterpretation does not rely on any technical innovations, and all of the evidence was available to the original investigators, who were in their own right highly qualified scholars. The only significant difference is the theoretical climate of anthropological discourse, in which the role of women is now a central issue. We suggest that for Caso and others of his era gender was not an important research question. For this reason, we assert that previous interpretations should be subjected to critical scrutiny to prevent old biases from continuing to shape current ideas.

Spinning and Weaving Tools in Tomb 7

We first became interested in the Tomb 7 objects while researching a paper on the symbolic significance of spinning and weaving implements in pre-Columbian gender ideology (McCafferty and McCafferty 1989a). In that paper we argued that female tools such as spindle whorls and weaving battens often appeared as metaphors for male weapons, including shields and swords. At one level of discourse this complementarity followed the structural duality of the Mesoamerican religious ideology (Kellogg 1988) and the cyclical linkage between war/death and reproduction/life (Klein 1975). But we also argued that spinning and weaving implements were used as emblems of female identity, invoking resources of female power in resistance to the gender ideology of male dominance (also McCafferty and McCafferty 1988, 1991; Brumfiel 1990).

One important tool used in weaving is the batten, a long, slender piece of wood that tapers to a point at each end and is worn smooth along the edges (fig. 3). The batten is an essential part of the backstrap loom kit, used to separate the warp strings to allow the thread to be shuttled through, thus forming the weft. As part of the same action the batten is pulled tight against the woven design to hold it in place. Battens come in various sizes, ranging in length from less than 40 cm to over 1 m (Sperlich and Sperlich 1980:32–33) depending on the dimensions of the loom and the form of the particular woven product desired. The colonial chronicler Bernardino de Sahagún described Aztec battens as including "the wide batten, which swished [as it was used]; the thin batten, one made of bone; the small batten [*tzotzopaztepiton*] with which they worked designs" (Sahagún 1950–82, book 8:49).

Battens were carried by members of the Mother Goddess complex in Aztec as well as Mixtec pictorials (Sullivan 1982, McCafferty and McCafferty 1991). They are

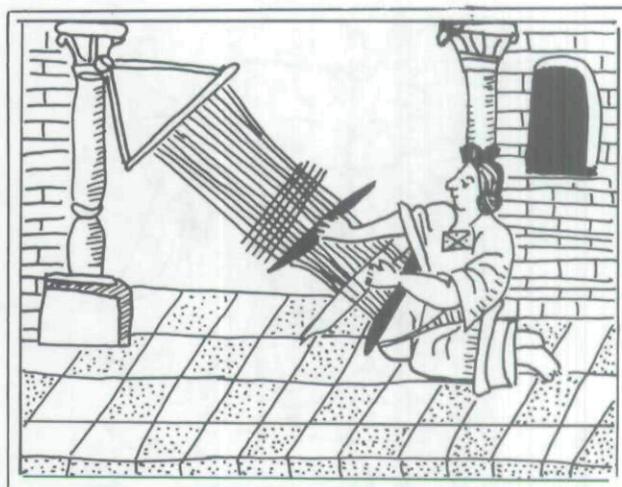


FIG. 3. Aztec woman using weaving batten with backstrap loom (after Sahagún 1950–82, book 10:fig. 58).

a diagnostic trait of the Aztec deities Cihuacoatl and Ilamatecuhtli, who were associated with warfare and sacrifice, especially from the cyclical perspective of death and fertility (Klein 1988; fig. 4). Cihuacoatl was described as carrying a "turquoise [mosaic] weaving-stick" (Sahagún 1950–82, book 1:11). In the Mixtec Codex Nuttall, a decorated batten and spindle are carried by Lady 13 Flower (fig. 5), a deified ancestor with cos-



FIG. 4. Goddess Cihuacoatl with weaving batten (after Codex Magliabechiano 45).



FIG. 5. Lady 13 Flower with batten and spindle (after Codex Nuttall 19).

tume elements suggesting a correspondence with Xochiquetzal, the Aztec goddess of weaving and fertility (McCafferty and McCafferty 1989b). Battens were among the objects presented to baby girls during Aztec bathing rituals as a symbol of female gender identity (Sahagún 1950–82, book 6:201; McCafferty and McCafferty 1991). Battens were also used in ritual contexts as knives to cut open *tzoalli* dough idols made of amaranth seed and honey (Durán 1971:245). Human and/or mountain figures were cut open with battens during the Atemoztli festival, dedicated to the mountain deities. Sahagún (1950–82, book 2:29) recorded the ceremony: "they opened their breasts with a *tzotzopaztli*, which is an instrument with which women weave, almost like a *machete*; and they took out their hearts and struck off their heads."

A group of 34 carved eagle and jaguar bones was a prominent artifact class in Tomb 7 (Caso 1969:177–218). The most common form was described by Caso as "sheets that end in two angled points" (p. 179, our translation), a form that he was unable to identify. The bones measure about 20 cm in length and about 1 cm in width. We suggest on the basis of their form that many of these objects are miniature weaving battens (*tzotzopaztepiton*), although they may have been symbolic rather than functional in nature (fig. 6). Independently, Carol Norton, a weaver who specializes in Guatemalan textile production, has come to the same conclusion (Norton 1989:77). The greatest concentration of bone battens was located immediately behind Skeleton A. In addition to battens, other bone weaving



FIG. 7. Bone comb associated with Skeleton A (after Caso 1969:192, fig. 184).

tools found with the skeleton included a small comb (fig. 7) and a pick. Notably, the pick retains evidence of mosaic decoration using turquoise plaques, as does a second carved bone fragment (Caso 1969:180, 197, pls. 36c, 37).

Because of his encyclopedic knowledge of Mixtec codices and Mesoamerican religion, Caso was greatly interested in the intricate carvings in a style similar to that found in the Mixtec painted manuscripts. Consequently, he devoted most of his attention to the interpretation of the carved motifs on the bones, with relatively little concern for the context of the designs. Some of the themes that he identified included the passage of a Venus cycle as symbolized by the "precious twins" Xolotl and Quetzalcoatl, conquest scenes, and a series of calendrical counts illustrated with zoomorphic figures from the *tonalpohualli* day count. Though he described the carved bone objects in detail, he was unable to identify them as weaving tools. Curiously, he did identify a scene on one of the bones in which a possible batten was carried by Lady 9 Reed (fig. 8), whom he associated with the Aztec goddess Tlazolteotl, patroness of weavers (Caso 1969:192; see Sullivan 1982 for a description of the Aztec deity complex associated with spinning and weaving).

Marcus (1983) discussed the carved bones of Tomb 7 and identified three general themes in the iconographic motifs: (1) historical/genealogical scenes, (2) calendrical lists, and (3) repetitive motifs that often depict zoomorphic images. She suggested (p. 285) that the first type probably related to events surrounding the occupants of the tomb, while the other two types may have been used in divination. Marcus did not attempt to identify the form of the bones.

Furst (1978a:138) pointed out a common tree-birth



FIG. 6. Carved batten no. 203f (after Caso 1969:190, fig. 180).



FIG. 8. Carved batten no. 2031, showing Lady 9 Reed holding possible batten as staff (after Caso 1969:192).

theme found on four of the carved bones. In Mixtec mythology, the gods and royal lineages were born from a tree, and Furst suggested that the image of the birth-tree was associated with the important Mixtec fertility deity Lady 9 Reed, an aspect of the Mother Goddess complex.

Unfortunately, wood and bone implements are rare in the archaeological record because of poor preservation, so comparable items are rare. One example from a dry cave in the Tehuacán Valley was described as "a small, perfectly preserved weaving sword, with incised pattern along its upper edge and round seeds within a slot" (Johnson de Weitlaner 1971:307). From its elaborate decoration it is apparent that the object had a ceremonial function (Johnson de Weitlaner 1960:75–84), and the seeds would have added to the "swishing" sound described by Sahagún (1950–82, book 8:49). The presence of the ritual batten in a cave provides a context that can be related to female sorcery and the Mother Goddess cult, since caves were considered openings into the underworld, the domain of women (Heyden 1981, Milbrath 1988). A second example of an effigy batten was discovered at the Aztec Templo Mayor, where it was made of chipped stone (Nagao 1985: fig. 33b).

The other bone tools found with Skeleton A were also associated with textile production. Small combs and picks like the ones found in Tomb 7 are used for fine decoration during weaving. Picks are occasionally shown in the headdresses of weaving deities, and one of the bone picks was found with a golden diadem and feather in the first chamber of the tomb (Caso 1969:228).

A second artifact class present with Skeleton A in-



FIG. 9. Woman spinning (after Codex Vindobonensis 9 obv.).

cluded four small spindle whorls (Caso 1969:157–58). One of these was decorated with zoomorphic motifs, with the heads of two felines joined at a common mouth formed by the spindle hole. Two other whorls were found in the east chamber, including a second zoomorphic whorl with monkey heads decorated with bitumen paint, or *chapopote*, a naturally occurring tar from the Gulf Coast.

Spindle whorls were an artifact class closely associated with female production and, symbolically, with female gender identity (McCafferty and McCafferty 1991). Whorls act as flywheels on long wooden spindles during the processing of raw fiber into twisted thread (fig. 9). In addition, however, spindles and whorls were often displayed in the headdresses of female deities (fig. 10), especially those such as Xochiquetzal and Tlazolteotl



FIG. 10. Lady 2 Buzzard as Tlazolteotl with spindle and whorl in hair (after Codex Nuttall 34-II).

who were associated with textile production (Sullivan 1982, McCafferty and McCafferty 1991). Spindles in the headdresses of important women appear in Mixtec as well as Borgia Group, Aztec, and even Maya pictorial manuscripts. In modern coastal Oaxaca, weavers known as *malacateras* (Nahuatl *malacatl* 'spindle whorl') are still represented with spindles and whorls in their hair.

Bitumen paint is occasionally found on spindle whorls from central Mexico (Parsons 1972). Although it has been used to infer contact with the Gulf Coast, we have demonstrated that in at least one house compound from Postclassic Cholula bitumen was applied within the household context (McCafferty and McCafferty 1991, McCafferty 1992a). On the basis of the diagnostic use of bitumen as face paint on the goddess (Sullivan 1982:8) and the use of bitumen *chicle* as a marker of sexual status (Sahagún 1950–82, book 10:89–90; McCafferty and McCafferty 1991), we argue that the use of bitumen was associated with the goddess Tlazolteotl and female gender identity.

Caso (1969:157) recognized the gender association of spindle whorls but rejected the possibility that they indicated the presence of a female. He argued that the small whorls would not have been useful in actual spinning (although in fact they are comparable to small whorls recovered archaeologically throughout central Mexico [e.g., Parsons 1972, Smith and Hirth 1988]) and concluded that they were part of a headdress associated with the god Xolotl, as depicted in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis (fig. 11). To our knowledge this is the only instance in which Xolotl is portrayed with spindle whorls and the only example of a nonfemale wearing spindles. We question Caso's argument on this basis and maintain that spindle whorls were an important emblem of female gender identity.



FIG. 11. God Xolotl with spindle in headdress (after Codex Telleriano-Remensis 19v).

Another artifact class found in association with Skeleton A that can be related to spinning is a group of small bowls used to control the base of the spindle during supported spinning. Two are made of *tecalli*, or onyx, while another is of rock crystal. Two additional *tecalli* spinning bowls were found nearby in the center of the west chamber. The *tecalli* vessels range in height from 7.2 to 8.4 cm and in diameter from 7.4 to 9.9 cm. An incised pattern around the base of one of the bowls depicts zoomorphic images from the *tonalpohualli* day signs in a style identical to that used on the carved bones. The crystal bowl is 9.4 cm high and 8 cm in diameter.

Ceramic spinning bowls have been identified archaeologically from the Valley of Mexico, western Morelos, and Cholula (Smith and Hirth 1988, McCafferty 1992a). They have small rim diameters (usually between 6.5 and 8 cm) and usually have annular bases (Smith and Hirth 1988:352). Spinning bowls of identical form are depicted in both the Florentine Codex and the Codex Mendoza (fig. 12). Sahagún (1950–82, book 9:18) recorded the demand by Aztec princesses for "golden bowls for spinning," perhaps in reference to the golden color of the *tecalli* bowls.

A final group of artifacts from Tomb 7 that *may* have functioned in textile production includes two distinctive rings, one of gold (no. 222) and the other of silver (no. 223). Caso (1969:113, 130) suggested that these may have been "false fingernails," in part because of their small diameter⁴ (fig. 13). Alternatively, we speculate that these may have served as thimbles, providing protection during embroidery, or possibly as weaving picks (Jill Furst, personal communication, 1993).

The presence of weaving battens, combs, picks, spindle whorls, spinning bowls, and possibly thimbles provides a coherent spinning and weaving tool-kit. The functional identification of spinning and weaving as stereotypical female activities is well established in the ethnohistoric record. Girls were presented with spinning and weaving implements, including battens, spindles with whorls, and spinning bowls, as part of the bathing ritual shortly following their birth (Sahagún 1950–82, book 6:201). Sahagún (1950–82, book 6:96, in Sullivan 1982:13) recorded this admonition to a young noblewoman: "Pay heed to, apply yourself to, the work of women, to the spindle, the batten." The symbolic significance of spinning and weaving tools was equally gender-specific, invoking identification with the Mother Goddess complex that was associated with domestic production and sexual reproduction (McCafferty and McCafferty 1989a, 1991). Battens carried in the hand, spindles and whorls worn in the hair, and unspun cotton headdresses were all emblems of identity associated with female deities.

4. Caso (1969:223) argued that many of the rings found in the tomb were too small for a "corpulent" man and suggested that they may have been heirlooms preserved from childhood. The measurements of the rings indicate that they would easily have fit a woman's hand. One of the jade rings was even found on a finger bone (Caso 1969:145, pl. 31c).



FIG. 12. Aztec woman spinning in bowl (after *Codex Mendoza*, vol. 3: folio 68r).

The grave goods associated with Skeleton A clearly represent both the functional and the symbolic aspects of textile production. In other Postclassic burial contexts, spinning and weaving implements are associated with females. In the Altar of the Carved Skulls at Cholula (Noguera 1937:9), for example, an elite woman was buried with a spindle whorl, two bone needles, a copper filigree brooch, and carved bones. Among the many burials found at the Cholula ceremonial center, spindle whorls were usually associated with adult females (López A., Lagunas R., and Serrano S. 1976), and individual no. 428 was buried with a spindle whorl, two needles, and an awl. In a mass burial from San Andrés Cholula, spindle whorls and spinning bowls were found with both females and males who were probably sacrificed and buried as retainers for the principal male individual (Suárez C. 1990, McCafferty 1992b). Despite the presence of spinning tools with males in this case, whorls with bitumen were found only with females. Although the number of comparative examples is small, we believe that spinning and weaving tools as grave goods do provide a fairly reliable means for inferring female gender identity in Postclassic central Mexico. Unfortunately, comparable evidence from the Valley of Oaxaca

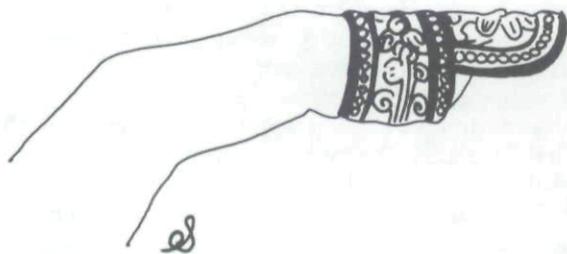


FIG. 13. Small ring from Tomb 7 worn as "false fingernail" (after Caso 1969:114, fig. 97c).

or the Mixteca is unknown (but see Robles García 1990).⁵

In addition to the spinning and weaving tools, Skeleton A was buried with a variety of other grave goods (Caso 1969). Almost all were articles of personal adornment, including rings, ear plugs, pectorals, and bead necklaces. Seventeen rings, of gold, silver, shell, and jade, were found. There were 11 ear plugs, made of obsidian, crystal, amber, and jade. Pectorals were made of gold, representing Tlaloc, Quetzalcoatl, Xochipilli, a butterfly, a jaguar, an opossum (*tlacuache*), and several solar disks. Numerous clusters of beads were found, some with string remaining to indicate that these were indeed necklaces; well over 1,000 beads of gold, silver, jade, turquoise, shell, and pearls were associated with Skeleton A.

While clothing was clearly gender-specific in pre-Columbian representations, jewelry was not. Thus the Mixtec codices can provide us with only limited clues to gender identity based on these objects. Females were virtually always depicted with circular ear plugs, while males wore either ear plugs or bars. According to Sahagún (1950–82, book 9:18), Aztec princesses wanted rock crystal ear plugs, but males also used the material. Both males and females wore solar disks, circular pectorals, and beads. The depictions of the beads in the Mixtec codices appear standard for male and female. One exception may be the wearing of pearls in headbands. Caso (1979:278) identified a female in the *Codex Nuttall* (6-I), Lady 5 Grass, with the nickname "Headband of Pearls" (*Venda de Perlas*). One other female wears an identical headband—8 Lizard "Claw Adorno" (10-II). If Caso's identification of the pearl headband is correct, then pearls may be gender-specific.

In summary, the material culture associated with Skeleton A can be divided into two categories: spinning and weaving tools and personal adornments. In Postclassic iconography, spinning and weaving tools were clearly associated with female gender identity, while jewelry was ambiguous. None of the objects found support a male gender identity for Skeleton A. On the basis of the analysis of material culture, we therefore suggest that the principal individual at Tomb 7 was gender-female, recognizing of course that gender identity as a cultural category does not necessarily imply biological sex.

Skeletal Remains

The well-documented report on the skeletal remains from the tomb (Rubín de la Borbolla 1969) includes an inventory of the bones from Skeleton A (fig. 14). The pelvis was missing, and other important bones necessary

5. Near Mitla, Oaxaca, Robles García (1990) has recently excavated a Classic-period tomb reused in the Postclassic for a group burial in a pattern similar to that of Tomb 7. Although the tomb had been looted, a spindle whorl was among the grave goods recovered. Unfortunately, detailed osteological evidence is not reported from the burial context.

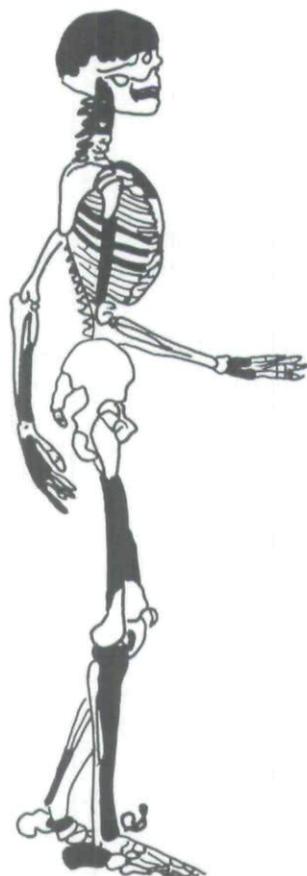


FIG. 14. Skeletal remains of Skeleton A; darkened bones present in tomb (after Rubín de la Borbolla 1969:316, fig. 24).

for sexing a skeleton were fragmentary and distorted by pathological conditions (Brothwell 1972:51–57), making sex determination on the basis of the skeletal remains highly problematic. Although it is speculation on our part, we suggest that the sexual identification was based in part on the general robusticity of the skull, especially the fragmentary supraorbital ridge. But this is precisely the area that was affected by Paget's disease, and the abnormal thickness was therefore probably the result of the pathological condition. Furthermore, from the elaborate grave goods present it seems likely that this individual was a member of the elite and thus had access to higher-quality nutritional resources than commoners. These dietary advantages would be reflected in the skeletal remains, potentially blurring the distinction between a robust elite female and a common male.

Curiously, although the mandible is listed as absent (Rubín de la Borbolla 1969:281), a mandible (no. 9) identified as *female* is present in the inventory of bones found with Skeleton A (1969:276–77; fig. 15). The mandible is that of an adult, and the heavy wear on the teeth suggests that it may have been comparable in age to Skeleton A. The mandible was found near the skull in a position that would be anatomically correct if it were part of the skeleton. Neither Caso nor Rubín de la Bor-

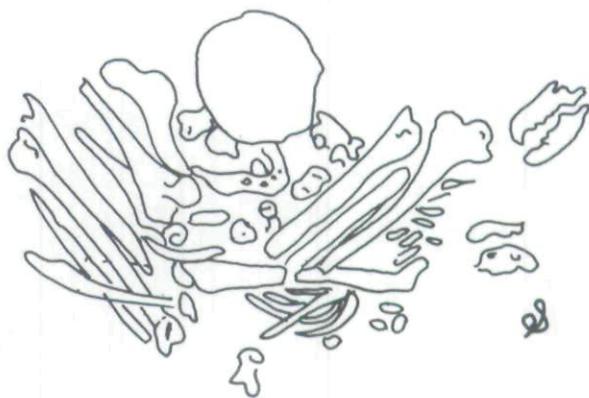


FIG. 15. Detail of Skeleton A in situ (after Caso 1969:plan 3, detail).

bolla discussed the specific location of the mandible, which Caso may have included among the "intrusive" bones in his hypothesized secondary interment (1969:59; Rubín de la Borbolla 1969:279).

Finally, a patella was found associated with Skeleton A. Although originally identified as male (Rubín de la Borbolla 1969:300, table 25), it is significantly smaller than the other two patellas found in the tomb.⁶ The vertical diameter was 37.0 mm, as compared with 42.0 and 43.0 mm for the others; the transversal diameter was 37.0 mm, as compared with 43.0 and 45.0 mm; and the maximum thickness was 17.0 mm, as compared with 20.0 mm. It compares favorably with a patella identified as female from Teotihuacan (Michael Spence, personal communication, 1993). Although the population size is obviously small, on the basis of sexual dimorphism this evidence also supports the possibility that Skeleton A was female.

In summary, the fragmentary skeletal remains are ambiguous at best for establishing Skeleton A as biologically male. If the mandible did in fact belong to the individual and the dimensions of the patella can be taken as evidence for sexual dimorphism, then identification as female is more plausible.

Conclusion

A reinterpretation of the material culture from Tomb 7 indicates a coherent tool-kit of spinning and weaving tools, including weaving battens, spindle whorls, and spinning bowls. Using an ethnohistoric model for pre-Columbian gender identity, we suggest that the principal individual was gender-female and probably affiliated with resources of female power embodied in the Mother Goddess complex. This interpretation contrasts with the original identification of the individual as biologically male (Rubín de la Borbolla 1969). A critical evaluation of the skeletal evidence, however, indicates that the os-

6. We thank Bruce Byland and Michael Spence for their observations regarding the relative size of the patella of Skeleton A.

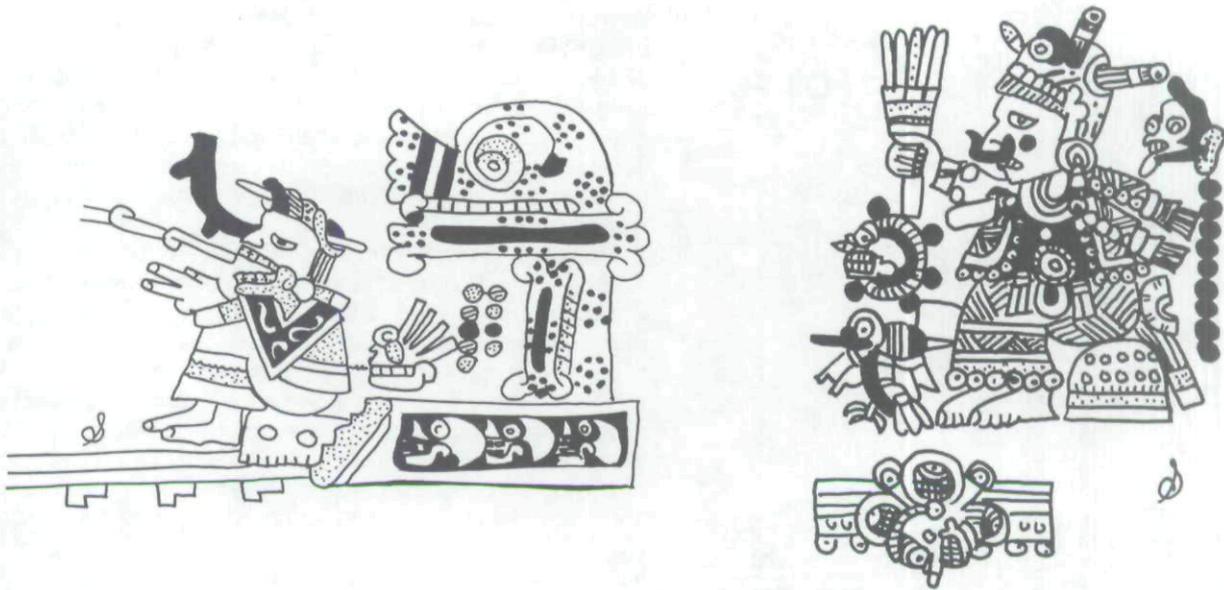


FIG. 16. *Lady 9 Grass with skeletal face* (left) (after *Codex Selden 6-IV*) and (right) *Lady 9 Monkey with skull helmet and "Jewelled Skull" nickname, with flint-knife glyph inserted in nasal cavity and hummingbird-spindle motif* (after *Codex Nuttall 10-II*).

teological basis for the original interpretation is problematic and in fact the female mandible and patella found with Skeleton A may well indicate that the individual was biologically female.

If the principal individual of Tomb 7 was female, then we believe that Caso's interpretation of its religious significance—i.e., as a priest related to Xolotl—is incorrect. As an alternative, we suggest that this context should be associated with the Mixtec Mother Goddess complex, perhaps the goddesses 9 Grass, 9 Reed, or 9 Monkey.

The mosaic skull incense burner found on the altar of amaranth dough in the first chamber relates well to images of skeletonized goddesses that appear in Mixtec codices (Furst 1982; fig. 16). Similar skull masks with stone knives projecting from their nasal cavities were found at the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan (Bonifaz Núño and Robles 1981). Skulls with stone knives are part of the diagnostic costume of the Mixtec goddess 9 Monkey and are included in her nickname (*Codex Nuttall 6-III, 10-II*). A "human skull incense burner" was found in the sacred cenote at Chichen Itza (Moholy-Nagy and Ladd 1992:132–40) with a circular hole in the skullcap and remnants of burnt resin inside. Wooden disks were inlaid into the eye sockets, and a piece of wood was inserted into the nasal cavity. The mandible was painted red, with holes drilled through each side to attach it to the skull.

If the five perforated mandibles from Tomb 7 were designed to be worn as buccal masks, as Caso suggested (1969:61), then these would fit with the skeletal characteristic of Lady 9 Grass. Five additional pairs of shell eyes, similar to the eyes inlaid in the mosaic skull, were found in the tomb, along with an assortment of carved

shell "teeth" (Caso 1969:164–66, pl. 48). These could have been combined with the mandibles as impermanent masks or idols, perhaps made of wood or amaranth dough. A crescent nose ornament, or *yacametzli*, found with the mosaic skull was diagnostic of the goddess *Tlazolteotl* in central Mexican iconography (Sullivan 1982:11, 26–28), and is often depicted with female deities or impersonators in the Mixtec codices, including Lady 9 Monkey.

The famous golden pectoral of Tomb 7 (no. 26), with Mixtec-style calendrical notation, also fits this skeletal theme (fig. 17). Caso (1969:83–84) identified this as a representation of Lord 5 Alligator, the father of the Mixtec hero 8 Wind, because 5 Alligator is depicted in the *Codex Nuttall* (25-II and 25-III) with a skeletal jaw and is involved in calendrical reforms. The figure has also been identified as a representation of the Aztec god of death, *Mictlantecuhtli*. Alternatively, because of the frequent depiction of female deities with skeletal facial features, this may represent a Mixtec fertility goddess such as Lady 9 Grass. The headdress on the pectoral, with a serpent and two plumes, is similar to that worn by Lady 3 Flint "Xochiquetzal" (*Codex Nuttall 14*).

Battens were diagnostic implements of *Cihuacoatl*, the skeletal Earth Mother of central Mexico (Klein 1988), and they may have played a similar role in the symbolism of Lady 9 Reed and/or Lady 13 Flower. The presence of turquoise mosaic decoration on two of the Tomb 7 bones parallels the description in Sahagún (1950–82, book 1:11) of a mosaic batten carried by the Aztec *Cihuacoatl*, although in the case of Tomb 7 the mosaic bones were probably weaving picks instead of battens. Caso identified the staff carried by Lady 9 Reed as a batten, and Lady 13 Flower in the *Codex Nuttall*

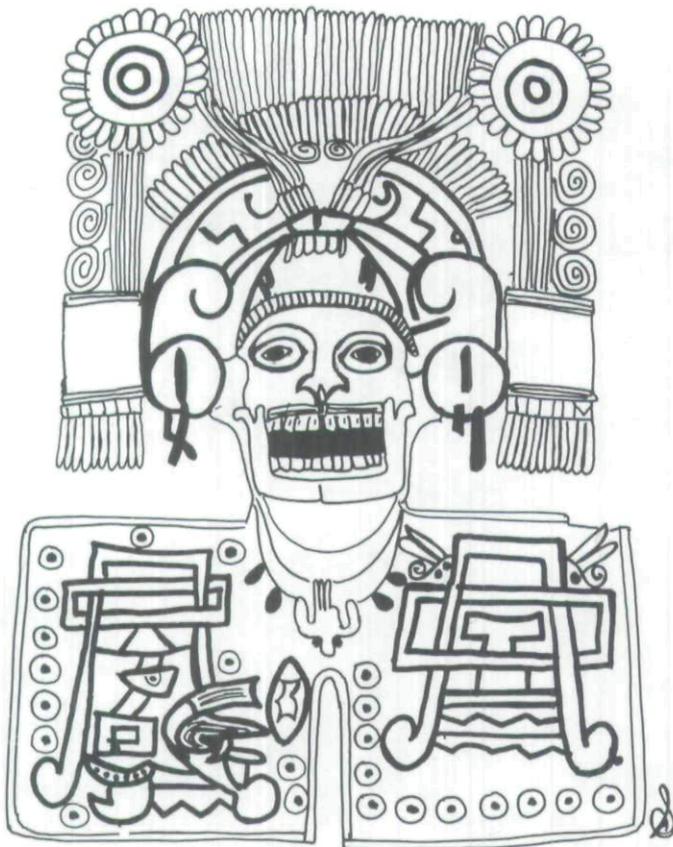


FIG. 17. Gold pectoral of individual with skeletal mandible, fliqree headdress, and Mixtec-style calendrical glyphs (after Caso 1969:pl. 6).

also carries a decorated batten. Neither of these deities is depicted with skeletal features, however. Battens were used in sacrificial rites involving amaranth dough idols (Sahagún 1950–82, book 2:29; Durán 1971:245), and Tomb 7 did include remains of *tzoalli* dough associated with the mosaic skull and its altar and perhaps the “extra” mandibles and shell eyes. An additional possibility involving the battens is use as divinatory tools (Marcus 1983). The Mother Goddess complex of central Mexico, particularly Tlazolteotl, was closely involved with divination and the assignment of calendrical names (Sahagún 1950–82, book 6:203–4). The carved bones with repeating calendrical signs may have been used for such prognostication.

In conclusion, Tomb 7 represents the Late Postclassic burial of a principal individual, Skeleton A, and a number of additional individuals. Skeleton A, the most complete of the individuals, was buried in a seated mummy-bundle position facing east. Although some anatomical order still existed for the other individuals, they were much more disturbed than Skeleton A, suggesting the possibility that the tomb may have been opened on more than one occasion, perhaps for the placement of additional burials or for other ritual events. Spinning and weaving tools found in the tomb indicate a strong asso-

ciation with the Mother Goddess complex, and skeletal imagery from the mosaic skull and the perforated mandibles suggests an association with the Mixtec deities Lady 9 Grass and Lady 9 Monkey. We suggest that Tomb 7 may have been a shrine dedicated to the Mother Goddess complex, perhaps even the Temple of the Skull mentioned throughout the Mixtec codices in association with 9 Grass.

This reanalysis of Tomb 7 could not have been accomplished if the discovery had not been so thoroughly recorded and published. Although we are suggesting profound changes to Caso’s original interpretation, we readily acknowledge the high quality of his research techniques and his scholarly concern for the preservation of the data for future investigation. This is a fine example of how archaeological research should be carried out. In a recent review of Oaxacan archaeology, Marcus and Flannery (1990:191) have called Caso “the closest thing to a Renaissance man that Oaxaca has ever had.” This is undeniable. But the Renaissance was still a dark age for feminist studies, and there is little to indicate that Caso was particularly sensitive to the role of women in the archaeological record. We suggest that the misidentification of Skeleton A is a case of “gender blindness”⁷ on the part of Caso and his colleagues. The presence of an elaborate cache of valuable items readily satisfied the androcentric gender stereotype of a royal (male) tomb. In the absence of obvious evidence to the contrary, Skeleton A became male by default. Suggestive evidence for a female identity, such as the mandible and the spindle whorls, was explained away. The female mandible became intrusive even though it was in the correct anatomical position and of the same biological age as the rest of the skeleton. A unique example of Xolotl wearing spindle whorls in his headdress outweighed the overwhelming evidence for the association of this motif with the Mother Goddess complex.⁸

Tomb 7 is an important part of the popular culture of Mesoamerican archaeology. Within a theoretical framework in which material culture is viewed as discourse from the past to the present, Tomb 7 speaks with a loud and powerful voice. As the interpreters of that discourse, we are obligated to minimize ingrained cultural biases in order to allow the past to suggest alternatives rather than reify what we already know. Archaeological evidence should be a prism for exploring possibilities rather than a mirror for reflecting our own social norms. Skeleton A was a powerful woman in terms of the religious ideology of her time, and her existence makes the history of pre-Columbian Oaxaca all the richer.

7. See McCafferty and McCafferty (1994) for another example of “gender blindness” in relation to interpretations of the Battle Murals of Cacaxtla.

8. Similarly, a figure with a stepped nose ornament and bird headdress on carved bone no. 203d is interpreted as Xochipilli despite the acknowledged association of stepped nose ornaments as items of feminine adornment (pp. 186–87).

Comments

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In this very provocative paper, the McCaffertys make four claims that merit close attention: (1) that substantial evidence suggests that the most elaborate and most complete skeleton in Tomb 7 at Monte Albán is a female; (2) that this skeleton was mistakenly identified as male because of the androcentric bias of Caso and his colleagues; (3) that Tomb 7 may have been a shrine dedicated to the Mixtec deity Lady 9 Grass; and (4) that the contextual approach to the data that has yielded these conclusions constitutes a qualitative departure from previous interpretive approaches in archaeology. I am very much in agreement with the first two claims but not yet convinced of the others.

While I have no firsthand familiarity with the Tomb 7 data, I find McCafferty and McCafferty's interpretation very persuasive. Many of the artifacts associated with Skeleton A look like weaving tools: battens, picks, spindle whorls, and spinning bowls. And there is reason to believe that weaving tools would be found in the context of a female burial. Among the Aztecs, there was a close association between a woman and her weaving tools. A newborn baby girl was presented with weaving equipment, "the spinning whorl, the batten, the reed basket [for unspun fiber], the spinning bowl, the skeins, the shuttle, her little skirt, her little blouse" (Sahagún 1950-82, book 6, chap. 37). A woman who was sacrificed in the festival of Quecholli burned her weaving equipment the night before her death: "her basket, her spindle whorl, her chalk, her spinning bowl, her warping frame, her cane stalks, her batten, her heddle, her divided cord which held [up the textile], her waist band, and her weaving stick and her thorns, and her skeins, her shuttle, and her measuring stick" (book 2, chap. 33). Sahagún explains that this equipment was burned because the sacrificial victim would need it where she was going after her death. McCafferty and McCafferty have performed a real service in bringing the archaeological remains of a pre-Hispanic weaving kit to our attention. As we become more aware of the material manifestations of weaving in Mesoamerica, we will be better able to track the history of this very important industry (see, e.g., Hendon 1992). We will also become more alert to opportunities for exploring gender systems and women's status in specific episodes of Mesoamerican prehistory.

The McCaffertys argue that Caso and his colleagues assumed that any individual whose death commanded so much attention from the living must be male. Caso's handling of the evidence favoring the female identity for Skeleton A appears to support this claim. However, it must be admitted that the evidence was (and is) somewhat ambiguous, and this ambiguity allowed more room for assumptions to influence Caso's interpretation than

might otherwise have been the case. It would be interesting to review more of Caso's work to see how often and under what conditions androcentric bias came into play. At the same time, we must acknowledge, as McCafferty and McCafferty do, Caso's thoroughness in recording and describing the Tomb 7 data, a thoroughness that permits this reassessment of his conclusions.

The suggestion that Tomb 7 was a shrine dedicated to the Mixtec deity Lady 9 Grass will require much additional work to verify. First, verification will require a review of the complete Tomb 7 inventory. It is not enough to select individual items that suggest a particular interpretation, because other items might even more strongly suggest some other interpretation. We have to know if the whole assemblage "works" as a Mixtec shrine. Second, verification will require a more complete structural analysis of Mixtec religious symbolism. Since several persons in the Mixtec pantheon have skeletal jaws and several are associated with weaving equipment, a structural analysis of Mixtec symbolism is required to convince us that the symbolic statement made by the Tomb 7 material could only refer to Lady 9 Grass.

I am unsure that the "contextual approach" employed here represents a qualitative departure from previous interpretive approaches in archaeology. Curiosity aroused, I reread Binford's (1967) "Smudge Pits and Hide Smoking: The Use of Analogy in Archaeological Reasoning" to see if I had missed some obvious differences in inference or verification that would distinguish the McCaffertys' approach from this classic statement of interpretive principles by a founder of processual archaeology. I concluded that the basic logic of Binford's argument is very similar to the logic they follow; the most striking difference is Binford's self-conscious effort to devise tests of his interpretations. I would therefore conclude with a question: Of the procedures of inference and verification used in this article, which are distinctive of a contextual approach?

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In this genuinely significant paper that McCaffertys have shown how a different point of view may reilluminate an old problem and open new vistas of interpretation. Their point that gender blindness prejudiced the original interpretation is perhaps not as well demonstrated as their new conclusions but still convincing.

Independent confirmation of the ancient Mesoamerican existence of an assemblage of women's weaving-related offerings, its identity masked by unassociated elements in an undifferentiated mass of 800 years of offerings, has been dredged from the Cenote of Sacrifice at Chichen Itza. This assemblage or complex of offerings most obviously consists of thousands of textiles (Lothrop 1992) in addition to wooden battens, wooden

and metal picks, spindle whorls (Coggin 1984:nos. 178–86; Coggin and Ladd 1992:318–19), copper thimble(?) rings (Coggin 1984:nos. 130, 131), and gilt copper spinning bowls (no. 149) like the ones described by Sahagún in the passage the McCaffertys quote. One final and startling similarity to the Tomb 7 assemblage is a comparably worked skull originally containing pearls, precious objects that may, as they note, have been associated with women (Coggin 1984:no. 199; Moholy-Nagy and Ladd 1992:132, 133, 138–40).

The roles of women have been overlooked archaeologically both because they were little represented in ancient cultures and because they were hidden behind male metaphors. The McCaffertys (1989a) have addressed this symbolism, showing women's weaving tools to be analogous to male weapons. Such martial symbolism is also found in Classic Maya inscriptions, where some ruling women bore the title "Woman Warrior" (Coggin n.d.).

Caso based his male identification of Skeleton A on the meticulous report of his medical expert, Daniel Rubín de la Borbolla, who had consulted with three more doctors about the pathological conditions of the skull. His conclusions cannot be described as ill-considered. He concluded that Skeleton A was "muscular" on the basis of the oversized sternum (p. 60), which is also described as male and as of "exaggerated form and dimensions" by Rubín de la Borbolla (p. 287, table 9). But the diagnosis of Paget's disease should have explained this, since it is precisely such thickening and uncontrolled growth that characterizes the disease. The greatest mystery is why Caso chose to ignore the female mandible, describing it as "intrusive." It should be noted that there were also five clearly unrelated mandibles in the tomb, but they had all been worked for use in masking and were not near Skeleton A (p. 286, table 5).

Least appropriate in their reevaluation of this excavation is the McCaffertys' rejection of Caso and Rubín de la Borbolla's description of these burials as secondary. Caso considered the question thoroughly and specifically rejected the possibility of a seated burial for Skeleton A. Concluding, despite this, that the burials were primary on the basis of looking at the reconstruction drawing seems to represent an unfortunate kind of second-guessing, especially since Rubín de la Borbolla's report specifically lists the presence of two left clavicles and two left femur diaphyses with Skeleton A (p. 279), surely an indication of the postmortem mixing of burials. Whether the burials were primary or not, Skeleton A was, as the McCaffertys argue, clearly somewhat segregated from the others and associated with a distinctive assemblage of burial goods with more female than male associations.

Perhaps most interesting is their association of the female Skeleton A with Lady 9 Grass. Whether as a death deity whose temple was at the Place of the Skull or as one of two historical women with this name celebrated in the Mixtec codices (Caso 1979:283–85), Lady 9 Grass was a well-known woman warrior (fig. 1) whose identifying characteristics included a skull like the one



FIG. 1. Portraits of Lady 9 Grass from the *Codex Nuttall*. left, Nuttall 20; right, Nuttall 18.

in the tomb and who wore skeletal mandibles like those in the tomb. There were nine mandibles in the tomb, and the sign for the day name "Grass" is composed of "grass" projecting from a mandible. The nine mandibles may thus be understood as the equivalent of the name of Lady 9 Grass. It seems to me very convincing to reinterpret the amous skeletal "Mictlantecuhтли" pectoral as a representation of Lady 9 Grass and possibly, further, to consider the many eagle images in the tomb as emblems of women warriors, not men. If the cast-gold death's-head pectoral, which records two yearbearers that seem to register a correlation between two variant month counts on the day 2 Flint (Caso 1969:90–92), was the property of this woman, along with all the carved jaguar and eagle bone battens, then she may indeed have been a diviner and more. She may have been a calendar priest—a role usually assumed to have been male. I suggest that Skeleton A was the powerful woman warrior Lady 9 Grass who, in her conquests, defeated and incorporated the territory of a town with a slightly variant year count. Her victory was symbolized by the pectoral which equated the two systems, although it is not clear which dominated.¹

While it is possible that the largely abandoned Monte Albán was the Mixtec's "Place of the Skull (or of the Dead)," since it was filled with tombs, I suggest that the Place of the Skull was Mitla (Mictlan, "place of the dead"), famous for its Mixtec temples and tombs. Mitla may have been the home and original burial place of Lady 9 Grass, a priestess and warrior known for her wealth, until Mitla was threatened by war or other calamity and her remains were hastily moved to what might have been the tomb of some of her own ancestors at the safer Monte Albán, not far to the northwest.²

1. Probably the yearbearer became 10 Wind, since it is the year associated with the day name. While the 260-day ritual calendar never varied in any part of Mesoamerica, the 365-day solar or agricultural calendar had variants which corresponded to local seasonal, astronomical, and cultural constraints.

2. One of the carved battens has night-sky imagery resembling the sky conventions of the wall paintings of Mitla (Caso 1969: figs. 193, 194).

The McCaffertys' reanalysis has provided the basis and inspiration for this revisionist interpretation, although they are entirely absolved of responsibility. I hope that their example will prove instructive to all Mesoamerican archaeologists.

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McCafferty and McCafferty have marshaled an impressive amount of evidence for a female gender identity for Skeleton A—presumably the central figure—in Monte Albán Tomb 7. Work such as theirs is a thorough and convincing illustration of the way in which women (or at least individuals of feminine gender) can be identified in the archaeological record, a necessary first step in elucidating their roles and positions in prehistoric societies. Identification of women in such central contexts reminds us that not all individuals interred with material goods indicative of wealth and high status need be male.

Engendering archaeology requires much more, however, than simply restoring women to the data base. McCafferty and McCafferty may be breaking new ground in the study of Mesoamerican prehistory by examining androcentric biases and reevaluating assumptions about the sex/gender of individuals in high-status burials, but this line of analysis should not be viewed as an end in itself. I am disappointed that the McCaffertys' extended work remains ultimately descriptive rather than analytic. It does not satisfactorily address the meanings or implications of high-status female burials—and by extension high-status females—in Late Postclassic Mixtec society or the meaning and purpose of gender distinctions in complex societies.

In contextual analyses of burial materials in other regions the data have been used to discuss more thoroughly (elite) women's roles in society, including access to political and ritual power. For example, Arnold (1991) has reanalyzed the burial of the "princess" of Vix—often identified as a transvestite priest in order to explain the burial's supposedly anomalous gender-specific grave goods—in the context of other West Central European Iron Age elite graves to elucidate the position of women within elite society. Elaborate female burials pertaining to the Moche culture of Peru have been analyzed in the context of their grave goods and iconographic associations to establish modes of access to ritual and political power (Donnan and Castillo 1992, Castillo and Costin 1994). Studies such as these identify the contexts in which gender identity was an important criterion in establishing an individual's roles within society and those in which gender may have been secondary to other ascribed or achieved statuses. Such analyses are critical for our understanding of access to wealth and power in complex societies, where differences in class, gender, lineage, and place of birth may reinforce or crosscut one another as individuals negotiate their relative standing

in society. There are many types of power in complex societies—among them economic, political, military, and ritual. Burials such as Tomb 7, with their rich store of material and iconographic data, should allow for a more explicit discussion of the kind(s) of power available to females. Similarly, we argue (Castillo and Costin 1994) that there are various paths by which (elite) women can attain power, high status, and prestige in complex societies. These include birthright, marital ties, demonstration of exceptional ability, and accession to positions in the hierarchy allocated specifically to females. Gender per se is of varying relative importance in these different modes of access to power. Analysis of burials such as that of Skeleton A in the context of other contemporary burials and iconographic data should increase our understanding of the relationship between gender and power.

McCafferty and McCafferty note that one difficulty in establishing the gender of Skeleton A is the fact that jewelry was not gender-specific in Mixtec society. We must assume that some status markers are primary and others relatively minor. Jewelry in particular can be assumed to be significant as a status marker because it is highly visible, labor-intensive, and often made of rare and intrinsically valuable materials. The observation that men and women to a large degree shared this mode of marking status calls for a discussion of the contexts in which class rather than gender determined access to certain elements of status among Mixtec elites. The Mixtec situation as discussed here differed from the Iron Age and Moche examples mentioned above, in which gender identification was maintained across many categories of material culture, including ornament. This variability in gender-specific material culture suggests different routes of access to status or power in these societies.

Despite these criticisms, I am always heartened by the meticulous work of scholars such as the McCaffertys. I look forward to future analytic work which builds upon this impressive beginning.

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McCafferty and McCafferty present a persuasive reanalysis and reinterpretation of the contents of Monte Albán's Tomb 7, concluding that its principal interment was an individual both culturally and biologically female. I applaud their effort wholeheartedly. Although the skeletal remains are too fragmentary for anything except the most tentative identification of sex, many artifacts included as offerings in the tomb collectively point to spinning and weaving, activities traditionally (although not exclusively) associated with women. And while the specific association between these "female" artifacts and Skeleton A in Tomb 7 is not absolutely certain, the absence of any items whatsoever that are known to be associated only with men seems to render

this uncertainty moot. McCafferty and McCafferty make a convincing case. Basic errors of interpretation in the published archaeological record should be corrected, whether or not they pertain to a widely publicised and near-universally "taught" find such as Tomb 7. Contextual analysis of the circumstances under which such errors resulting from "gender blindness" were made may be illuminating, particularly if it serves to remind us that not only does the past speak to the present but the communication is a dialogue and at times the voice of the present is overwhelming. While virtually all anthropological archaeologists recognise the obligation to minimise ingrained cultural biases in our interpretations, in reality the more ingrained the biases are, the less likely we are to recognise them or their impact. It is always an error to impose current standards on the past, whether that past is the archaeological record we endeavor to understand or earlier interpretations of that record by archaeologists whose professional, cultural, and social realities were very different from those of North America in the 1990s. I do not intend to assume the role of apologist for Caso, but I do not find it surprising that he identified Skeleton A as male. One might even go so far as to suggest that it was predictable.

If Skeleton A in Tomb 7 is indeed female, McCafferty and McCafferty may have laid some of the groundwork necessary for explorations into the longer-term impact of gender roles and gender relations among elites in the political landscape of late pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica. The idea of affiliation with resources of female power embodied in the mother-goddess complex is interesting, as is the suggestion that the principal individual and the tomb itself may have been a shrine. Women are repositories of symbolic power in many societies (Sanday 1981). But what of the implications of the newly reinterpreted Tomb 7 for our understanding of political power in late pre-Hispanic Oaxaca? The richness of the find clearly implies royal status, whatever the sex and/or gender of the principal individual. What was the relationship between real and symbolic power? How did the symbolic sources of male and female power in ancient Mesoamerica in general, and in Oaxaca in particular, translate into real political power? In early colonial times, Mixtec royal women inherited, held in their own right, and passed on royal titles in a number of *cacicazgos* in the Mixteca Alta (Spores 1967:145). There is little if any reason to believe that this was a radical departure from the late preconquest era. A major feature of the Mixtec political system was a highly developed institution of political alliance (Spores 1984:79) to which the Mixtecs' political success was in good measure attributable. That royal women not only were repositories of symbolic power but also wielded political power in their own right may have been a key to the Mixtecs' success in a dynamic political landscape.

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McCafferty and McCafferty's reexamination of the gender of the principal individual buried in Tomb 7 at Monte Albán appears to overturn the well-established male identity of Skeleton A not through any technological breakthrough but through the application of a new gender-sensitivity to entrenched expectations and understandings. Indeed, their multiple lines of evidence for an interred female principal, if not unambiguous, are at least as compelling as the earlier interpretation of a male principal and, in the end, as unambiguous as most archaeological arguments can be expected to be. This study therefore offers two extremely valuable lessons: the necessity for caution in accepting conclusions arising out of the pervasive androcentrism that has characterized much archaeological research and the importance of opening our archaeological imaginations to the existence of social systems in which women were accorded the highest honors and most lavish burials.

I take another significant implication from this study as well, one that is ignored by the authors in their attempts to work narrowly and empirically from the burial evidence towards an identity of gender. Several of the Late Postclassic artifact classes considered are apparently ambiguous in terms of gender attribution, and this very ambiguity of the contents of Tomb 7 (and apparently of other Postclassic burials and visual representations of ritualized authority in the codices and elsewhere) seems to represent a deliberate blurring of gender attributes in representations of power. If both females and (to a lesser extent) males wore spindles and spindle whorls in headdresses and had spindles included among burial furniture, and if both females and males wore circular earpools, solar disks, circular pectorals, and beads, with only relatively minor variations of these artifacts clearly identified with one gender or the other, then we should be questioning the significance of marking—or not marking—gender in representations of power. Even the female-identified weaving battens are to be interpreted as metaphorical parallels to male instruments of power, emphasizing a sharing (or duality?) of power domains among males and females. What seems evident is that the labor-intensive and symbolically loaded artifacts of Tomb 7 do not clearly distinguish males from females with maximally contrastive material markers but rather show an overlapping of male and female accoutrements, such that males and females are identified with the same or closely parallel symbols of power in an overwhelming display of hierarchical control.

McCafferty and McCafferty's analysis, valuable as it is for revising old accounts, focuses so narrowly on the gender attribution of Skeleton A that it ignores the larger sex/gender system reflected in Tomb 7 and elsewhere in Late Postclassic Oaxaca. Tantalizing clues about gender relations and gender ideology interacted with class structures in this context are left unexamined. Since the McCaffertys do not discuss the grave

goods and grave arrangements of contemporaneous burials or interpret many of the specific associations of artifact classes (beyond the weaving implements) with females or males, we gain few insights into the meanings, contradictions, ambiguities, and significance of gender in this specific sociohistorical context.

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29 X 93

The McCaffertys are to be commended for raising the possibility that the main occupant of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán was at least gendered, if not biologically, female. Until the skeletal material from Tomb 7 is located, of course, we can never know for certain whether the skeleton in question was biologically male or female. That the materials interred with it were gender-female rather than male as Caso argued seems to me, however, to have been ably demonstrated in this article. Whether or not the tomb's excavators were blinded by their own expectations regarding the gender of pre-Hispanic officeholders, the fact remains that Caso, in accepting Rubín de la Borbolla's identification of the principal skeleton as male and in arguing that the deceased represented a male deity, either ignored or misconstrued the gender implications of many of the grave goods that accompanied it.

There is no doubt that weaving was widely regarded as a quintessentially female activity in Mesoamerica, regardless of whether it was ever performed by males. Weaving was so closely associated with femininity in Central Mexico, for example, that Aztec parents tried to keep their sons from touching a loom or a batten (Klein n.d.). Similarly, the five mandibles found in the east chamber of Tomb 7 strongly suggest that the "at least four" (perhaps five?) skeletons found there were also identified with the feminine and were perhaps female. As the McCaffertys point out, these mandibles are perforated so as to be worn as buccal masks in reference to certain important Aztec goddesses. In pre-Hispanic Aztec art, where the parallels with the Tomb 7 material are too close to be ignored, these goddesses appear in stone reliefs with faces that are partially if not entirely skeletal.

These facts imply that the Tomb 7 occupant was not just gendered female but very powerful and important as well. Among the Aztecs, the goddess Cihuacoatl, also known as Ilamatecuhtli and Citlalinicue, who carried a weaving batten and was depicted with a skeletal face, was the mother not just of the stars, planets, and other Aztec deities but of the present race of mankind (Klein 1980, Taube 1993). The occupant of Tomb 7 likewise may have been associated with the beginnings, the foundations, the fertilization of the universe and men.

Such a cosmic role does indeed seem to be alluded to on the gold pectoral found in Tomb 7. As the McCaffertys note, the skeletal face on this pectoral could well

be that of a woman. Although they relate the figure's headdress to that of Lady 3 Flint in Codex Nuttall 14, its squarish form, with a rosette at each of the upper corners, compares better with the so-called *meyotli* or temple headdress worn by Aztec fertility goddesses. As Doris Heyden has pointed out, these headdresses normally incorporate the Aztec year sign, a stylized reference to the Binding of the Years and New Fire ceremonies that took place just prior to the beginning of a new 52-year cycle or "century" (Heyden 1977). In Mixtec manuscripts a variant of this sign, referred to today as the A-O sign, serves simply to mark the beginning of something (Furst 1978*b*). It is noteworthy, therefore, that the A-O sign appears twice on the "chest" of the Tomb 7 pectoral figure, incorporated into two prominent year dates. The squared headdress and the A-O signs on this pectoral not only reinforce the McCaffertys' identification of the subject as female but suggest that the being represented was associated with beginnings—with the act of creation.

I stress this because I think the McCaffertys might have further explored the sociopolitical implications of their hypothesis. What role might a gender female of such high status have played in Oaxaca during the Late Postclassic period? They suggest that Tomb 7 was a shrine dedicated to the personage known from Mixtec pictorial histories as 9 Grass. This being appears in painted manuscripts wearing a woman's clothing and with a skeletal face or lower jaw, seated at a temple in the form of a giant skull. The McCaffertys identify 9 Grass only as a Mixtec "fertility goddess." John Pohl has argued for some time, however, that 9 Grass represented a Mixtec political office and oracle held by different individuals in succession (Pohl 1978; n.d.a, b, c). In the Mixteca this oracle was located at Chalcatongo, where the mummified remains of the descendants of the legendary Mixtec ruler 8 Deer were enshrined in a sacred cave. Here 9 Grass presided over the royal ancestor cult. Pohl's examination of 9 Grass's activities in the pictorials reveals that the person representing her was consulted by local leaders regarding strategic matters such as marriage and warfare. Since subsequent events often entailed attaining control of new political centers and the foundation of new dynasties, it appears that 9 Grass was credited by the Mixtec with creating or initiating important political events and institutions, an apt parallel to Cihuacoatl's role as creatrix. Perhaps the person interred in Tomb 7 had powers similar to those of 9 Grass of Chalcatongo.

But was the person who represented 9 Grass really female? The McCaffertys seem to waffle a bit on this point, for although they leave open the possibility that the Tomb 7 occupant was only "gender-female" rather than biologically female, much of their argument is devoted to convincing the reader that Rubín de la Borbolla may well have erred when he sexed the skeleton as male and that Caso suffered from "gender blindness" in accepting his reading. This is somewhat misleading, if not unfair, given that the McCaffertys do not mention that the living impersonator of the Aztec goddess Cihuacoatl,

whose official dress included a skeletal face mask and a weaving batten, was in fact a man (Klein 1988). What Pohl has recognized as the Aztec counterpart of 9 Grass was a close kinsman of the ruler who, having received the title and costume of Cihuacoatl, assisted the ruler in running the affairs of state (Pohl n.d.a). These important powers were passed down to the *cihuacoatl*'s son and grandson via primogeniture. When a new Aztec ruler was to be vested, moreover, it was the *cihuacoatl* who presented him with his new title, suggesting that the right to rule ultimately derived from the mother goddess whom he represented. The situation parallels that among the Chichimecs, who claimed that their first ruler was selected by an oracle representing a primordial goddess named Itz'papalotl (Velázquez 1975:6).

If the main occupant of Tomb 7 were a true counterpart of the Aztec *cihuacoatl*, then his skeleton, were it to be found, would turn out to be not female but male. I do not mean to push this analogy between the Mixtecs and Aztecs too far, because there is considerable evidence that Mixtec women were more likely than Aztec women to hold positions of political and religious importance. The full range of political opportunities for Aztec women, moreover, is just beginning to be acknowledged (Cline 1986). There is a tremendous difference, however, in terms of the implications for our understanding of pre-Hispanic Mixtec women between a tomb that housed the remains of a politically powerful woman and one that contained the remains of a man who dressed up like a legendary woman of power in order to authorize and sanctify the actions of certain persons. In the one case we can say that at least one woman actually held a position of power and that women could perhaps represent themselves. In the other case we can only say that women played an important role in an ideology, largely controlled by men, that appropriated their gender for political purposes and self-interests. Until we locate the missing bones—and unless we definitively determine that their owner was female—it therefore remains entirely possible that the chief occupant of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán was, after all, just another man.

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I am interested to see the McCaffertys go back over old material and draw some new conclusions about the significance of the grave goods in Tomb 7 and what these goods may tell us about the identity and nature of the tomb's inhabitants. Their article is an example of a heartening trend in research: the use of more than one discipline, if not to resolve a problem, then to look at questions and issues differently. To this end, they employ both archeological reports and ethnohistorical documents. Ideally, the research results and methodology of other fields should be the raw materials for one's own efforts, and breaking down the barriers between the disciplines allows a more imaginative and integrative ap-

proach to any problem. Nevertheless, the use of multiple approaches poses difficulties. One basic question is why weaving implements were added to this tomb if the McCaffertys' identification of its major occupant is correct.

Weaving tools were essential to women's work, and they were certainly a gender marker throughout Mesoamerica. Their presence in Tomb 7 strongly suggests that its occupant was a woman rather than a man (or a man who dressed as, and played the role of, a woman). She was afflicted with Paget's disease, which caused a facial distortion approximating the grotesque appearance of the skeletonized (Female) 9 Grass, an important supernatural (for lack of a better term) frequently represented in the Mixtec screenfold manuscripts. In the codices, this deity makes war, kills enemies, and receives their bodies at "Skull," which may be the underworld or a specific site in the Mixteca or both. (Female) 9 Grass was a bellicose figure not overtly connected to any feminine nurturing activities, including weaving. Why should she, or her unfortunate and inadvertent human impersonator, be associated with that activity in Tomb 7?

Weavers are not often shown in the Mixtec manuscripts, but throughout Mesoamerica weaving was and remains one metaphor for making the body of a child. Among the pre-Hispanic Maya, for example, Jaina figurines of the moon goddess and patroness of childbirth Ix Chel show her seated and weaving, her backstrap loom tied to a post. Often a small bird perches on the loom or the post. A similar representation occurs in Sahagún's illustrations for the *primeros memoriales* accompanying the festival of Atamalqualiztli. Visually, the two- and three-dimensional images are analogous, and, indeed, their meanings may be similar.

To paraphrase Freud, sometimes a bird was just a bird, but in other instances, for many pre-Hispanic Mesoamericans, it was a dead soul, usually of a child awaiting rebirth in the creator gods' celestial realm—often nursing from a tree with many breasts much as winged creatures sipped nectar from flowers and buds (e.g., Sahagún 1950-82, book 6:115; Codex Ríos 1964:15-16). The woman accompanied by a bird or birds wove the body of a child, which acted as a net, entrapping the bird-soul and entangling it in the flesh.

The connection of weaving to the embodiment of the soul remains strong among many modern peoples. Tzujil Maya, for example, identify parts of the loom and weaving as an upside-down child's body before birth (Prechtel and Carlsen 1988). Huichol women suspend weaving while they are pregnant (Schaeffer 1990), as if one activity substituted for another. In Oaxaca, until recently, weaving picks were sometimes carved with small birds at the top (Cordry and Cordry 1978), implying that the weaver could capture the unborn soul in her threads.

The fierce skeletonized 9 Grass was also the personified fertile earth, according to Codex Vindobonensis Mexicanus 1 14b. In this guise, she was the patroness and metaphorical mother of certain lineages that the

Mixtecs said were established by ancestors who emerged from the ground in the ancient mythical First Times (Reyes 1976). In the Mixtec genealogical codices, (Female) 9 Grass was a strong supporter of their descendants in conflicts over land and villages [e.g., [Female] 6 Monkey of Magdalena Jaltepec in the Mixtec genealogical Codex Selden]. Further, in the special 260-day divinatory calendar, the one day especially attributed to her and her activities (year 1 Reed, day 1 Crocodile) conveyed the idea of "beginnings" and was the time for establishing lineages and making marriages that ensured dynastic succession (Caso 1950, 1954; Furst 1978b). (Female) 9 Grass thus presided over the origin of new life. While (Female) 9 Grass is not specifically identified as a weaver in the Mixtec genealogical manuscripts, these implements may refer to her role in generating the physical bodies of some ancestors. If she were well disposed, a lineage continued to entangle in human flesh the spirits of the heirs it needed to remain viable and powerful.

The McCaffertys suggest that Tomb 7 was (Female) 9 Grass's special shrine or the site of "Skull," where the Mixtec codices say she lived. I believe instead that the person buried there fulfilled the role of the deity because she resembled the supernatural. The dead woman may have been intended to take the tools as gifts to the goddess in the next life, where they would ensure the continued fertility of the people who so richly endowed her with goods for her postmortem journey and existence. Her elaborate grave goods may indicate not high hereditary status but the special treatment accorded to someone who, because of her disease and deformity, embodied the supernatural life force on earth.

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29 IX 93

Perhaps Alfonso Caso was fortunate in 1932 to find Tomb 7 of Monte Albán, but he then suffered ugly and false attacks and for decades kept much in secret. Thus an updating of his "1969" report is welcome.

Early on the morning of September 17, 1964, when President Adolfo López Mateos inaugurated the National Museum of Anthropology, Caso had brought to the Oaxaca room a large plan showing Tomb 7. Ignacio Bernal, the director of the museum and long Caso's chief assistant, had never seen the plan, and the replica he had had placed under the floor was mistaken. (He had a correct replica built later.) Caso's description of the carved bones found with the chief burial in Tomb 7 was poor. He referred to the unrolled drawings of the carvings, not to the bones, saying that "they" were flat, with pointed ends. The bones of course have curved surfaces.

Caso was never fully freed of Spanish ideas about the Aztecs as somehow "principal" among Mesoamericans. The Museum of Anthropology shows this too: the central Aztec hall has more space for 100 years of Aztec culture than is given to Veracruz or Oaxaca, each with 3,000 years of many cultures. But, as Caso himself said

(1936, cited by Chavez 1946:476), "when the Conquest took them by surprise, the Aztecs were a rude people who still had not reached the cultural refinement of the Mayas, the Toltecs, the Totonacs, or the Mixtecs."¹ Caso's attribution of Tomb 7 and of much else to Mixtecs has been strongly reinforced. The 1563 Genealogy of Macuilxóchitl (in the Tlacolula arm of the Valley of Oaxaca), written in Zapotec (Rabin 1982), and the 1580 Mapa de Macuilxóchitl, written in Náhuatl (Paddock 1982), list lords of the valley who are Mixtecs.

Welcome as is the updating of Caso's deceptively old Tomb 7 material, the modernization itself may soon need the same. The McCaffertys use the antiquated term "Classic" and its derivatives. No definition is given for any of the major stages, "Classic" or other, in Oaxaca. Division of two millennia of Mesoamerican urban development into only two stages is radically insufficient. The discovery that sites all over Mesoamerica, including El Tajín, Cacaxtla-Cholula, Xochicalco, Uxmal, and the Nuiñe region, bloomed after the "Classic" but before the "Postclassic" has sharpened the need for new terminology. The "Classic" terms may still be usable in the Maya region, but objective dating has destroyed the assumed unity of the "Classic" throughout Mesoamerica.

It would be an error to blame the McCaffertys for the frequent use of Aztec terms instead of Mixtec ones. The Spanish never provided us with a detailed description of any Mesoamerican people other than the Aztecs. However, it would have been helpful to distinguish between pre-Hispanic codices and colonial ones when they are used as evidence.

It is probably a mistake to assume that Caso was androcentric. He repeatedly found and published on extremely powerful women in the Mixtec pre-Hispanic codices (but the custom was to give males preference in roles of power). The revelation that Tomb 7 was almost certainly a primarily feminine burial place is highly positive. There is nothing offensive in showing misjudgments by Caso and by Rubín de la Borbolla when their research was done half a century ago.

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In 1984 Conkey and Spector stated that there is virtually "no systematic work on the archaeological study of gender. . . . We know of no archaeological work in which an author explicitly claims that we can know about gender in the past as observed through the archaeological record who then proceeds to demonstrate that knowledge, or to describe how we can" (1984:2). This was a dismal assessment of the field just ten years ago. Sha-

1. "cuando los sorprendió la Conquista los aztecas eran un pueblo rudo que no había alcanzado todavía el refinamiento cultural de los mayas, los toltecas, los totonacas, o los mixtecas."

risse and Geoffrey McCafferty have taken a bold step in bringing gender analysis to the forefront of Mesoamerican archaeology and showing how a systematic gender analysis can be carried out.

They build on a set of ideas advanced by Spector and Whelan (1989), who have proposed that archaeologists first separate gender roles, gender attributions, and gender ideology in looking for ways in which material evidence reflects gender. McCafferty and McCafferty refine their analysis even further by being careful to differentiate between biological sex and gender. This is a key point because it allows them to look at a wide range of evidence including the physical construction of skeletal remains and the symbolic meaning of artifacts found in Tomb 7 and the way that they are positioned. Their analysis suggests the very real possibility that in some cases what individuals wore and carried with them as a gender identity did not necessarily correspond with biological sex. This innovation is important in seeking to understand indigenous cultures that organized biological sex, gender, and sexuality in different constellations from the ones Western researchers are familiar with. In fact, we cannot assume that gender, sexuality, and biological sex were all distinct, socially meaningful categories as we know them. Their constituent pieces could be combined in a variety of ways that cut across the boundaries of our categories.

While few anthropologists would argue for cultural continuity from the present to the past, the type of gendered analysis McCafferty and McCafferty have carried out mirrors developments in ethnography that suggest that contemporary indigenous women play a key role in ritual and production. The work of Nash (1970), Mathews (1985), Sault (1985), Stephen (1991), and others suggests that women are major players in religious ceremonies carried out in indigenous communities. Among the Zapotec of southern Mexico, women are the primary links between the household and the local pantheon of saints and virgins. Women share family troubles with local deities and ask for help with specific problems such as finding a lost child, helping someone to get well, and stopping the goats from dying.

McCafferty and McCafferty's emphasis on the role of weaving, its significance for female gender identity, and its value in various indigenous cultures in Mesoamerica is also echoed in contemporary ethnography (see Ehlers 1990, Stephen 1991, Schevill, Berlo, and Dwyer 1991). Women have been weavers in a wide range of Mesoamerican indigenous cultures, and too often this work has not been counted by anthropologists as productive labor. The central importance of weaving in many indigenous cultures has been masked by an ethnographic focus on male subsistence farming. It is not surprising that these same kinds of blinders have existed until recently in Mesoamerican archaeology.

An education that allows anthropologists and archaeologists to see gender as well as other differences such as class, ethnicity, and age results in finely tuned researchers who look for a variety of explanations. While it has always seemed difficult to deal with symbolism in

archaeology because of the inability to ask people what things mean to them, symbolism and ideology were, of course, key aspects of life. The kind of creative thinking illustrated by McCafferty and McCafferty in their re-analysis of Tomb 7 is critical for future archaeologists, who should also be encouraged to question the canon.

Reply

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The incorporation of gender analysis into Mesoamerican archaeology is a timely process that we are pleased to see is gaining momentum. As Stephen points out, it has been ten years since the publication of Conkey and Spector's (1984) article planted the seeds for an archaeology of gender, yet it has only been in the past few years that articles have proliferated discussing gender in Mesoamerica (McCafferty and McCafferty 1988, 1989*b*, 1991, 1994; Kellogg 1988; Bruhns 1988; Milbrath 1988; Stone 1988; Rodriguez-Shadow 1989, 1990; Brumfiel 1991; Joyce 1992, 1993; but see Hellbom 1967, Nash 1978). Scholars working with gender issues have also been active in the cross-fertilization of ideas through an open exchange of unpublished papers (Kann 1989; McCafferty and McCafferty 1989, 1990*a, b*; Brumfiel 1990; Masson 1991; Klein n.d.; Coggins n.d.), with the result that studies of pre-Columbian gender are now flourishing. These commentaries reflect the diversity of Mesoamerican gender studies in a variety of new and exciting directions.

The engendering of Tomb 7 makes possible a radical reinterpretation of one of the foremost archaeological discoveries from pre-Columbian Mesoamerica (Caso 1969). On the basis of a variety of spinning and weaving tool forms, albeit of exotic materials and with elaborate decoration, the principal individual (Skeleton A) has been identified as gender-female. The fragmentary skeletal remains have been reevaluated to conclude that the biological sex of the individual is ambiguous at best, while some evidence suggests that Skeleton A was female. Up to this point the commentators are generally in agreement; it is with the interpretation of the socio-religious significance of the burial context that differences appear. Three themes recur in the comments: fundamental theoretical issues are raised by Paddock, Costin, Gero, Finsten, Stephen, and Brumfiel, methodological questions are introduced by Klein, Gero, and Coggins, and substantive differences in interpretation are suggested by Brumfiel, Klein, McKeever-Furst, and Coggins.

Paddock provides valuable insights into Alfonso Caso's handling of the Tomb 7 material following its excavation, suggesting that political intrigues resulted in variations in data presentation up until the time of

their final exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. Paddock also points out an underlying tendency of Caso's to interpret pre-Columbian Mesoamerica through Aztec lenses, giving the Late Postclassic Mexica an inordinate importance in relation to the overall breadth of Mesoamerican culture. This is an easy habit to fall into because of the qualitative advantages of the rich ethnohistoric accounts of Aztec society. But while one approach would be to purge the Aztecs from other cultural reconstructions, a more satisfying methodology involves the use of analogy to structure comparisons in order to build critically on the Aztec model (Wylie 1985, Trigger 1991, Stahl 1993).

For example, the analogy between the Aztec goddess Cihuacoatl and the Mixtec Lady 9 Grass is used by us and by several of the commentators. Both deities employ buccal masks and are related to warfare, death, and fertility. Cihuacoatl is often depicted with a weaving batten as her staff; this association does not appear with 9 Grass, although she does appear with a possible weaving pick in the Codex Nuttall 20-II. In Tomb 7, perforated mandibles suggest their use as buccal masks, in agreement with both Aztec and Mixtec representations. The prominence of battens in the assemblage fits well with a Cihuacoatl identification, but only through analogy can these be related to 9 Grass. This analogy cannot be considered as conclusive, however, since other possibilities exist involving the Mixtec deities 9 Reed and 13 Flower. The calendrical glyphs on the carved battens from Tomb 7 may relate to divination, an important activity associated with both 9 Grass and Cihuacoatl. More archaeological contexts involving Mother Goddess worship would be helpful for further evaluating the Tomb 7 assemblage. Through the use of analogy other dimensions can be added to the parallel Earth Mother/war goddess complex of the Aztec and Mixtec. At the same time, it is important to separate the representation of religious iconography from cultural practice by looking at both similarities and differences, since there can be a variety of potential alternatives in the way in which particular assemblages are constructed (McCafferty and McCafferty 1990a).

An additional problem raised by Paddock relates to the terminology used to define temporal periods. The standard nomenclature used throughout Mesoamerica employs three broad terms, Formative (or Preclassic), Classic, and Postclassic, with subdivisions for finer distinctions (e.g., Early and Late Postclassic). As originally conceived in the early 20th century, the Classic period related to the "high" civilizations of Teotihuacan, Monte Albán, and the Maya. Several attempts have been made to introduce less value-laden terminology into the discussion of Mesoamerican culture history (Price 1976; Paddock 1977, 1978; Sanders, Parsons, and Santley 1979). In practice, however, these alternatives have not been widely accepted in the literature, and the basic terms continue to be used without necessarily implying evolutionary stages.

A better strategy for addressing specific archaeological problems is to use site chronologies. Unfortunately, the

Postclassic in the Valley of Oaxaca, or Monte Albán V, is a poorly defined period that last for over 500 years and thus is less precise than the more general "Late Postclassic." For the Late Classic period, when Tomb 7 was originally built, confusion between Monte Albán IIIb and Monte Albán IV is still a controversial subject (Winter 1989b, Marcus and Flannery 1990, Lind 1991-92). Lind (1991-92) has recently suggested a new set of Zapotec terms for the Oaxaca archaeological sequence, the Late Postclassic corresponding to the Chila phase and the Late Classic to the Xoo. Despite the epistemological pitfalls of using the old and potentially value-laden terminology, we prefer the more accepted and recognized terms because they facilitate cross-cultural comparisons and are more reader-friendly.

Costin and Gero raise the issue that our article is more descriptive than analytic, and Costin correctly points out that there is more to an engendered archaeology than simply redressing androcentrism. We agree with this overarching program (McCafferty and McCafferty 1988, 1989b, 1990a, 1991) but are hesitant to push the analysis of women in Mesoamerica too far on the basis of one exceptional burial context. Finsten relates the elite status of Skeleton A to the political system of the Mixtec on the basis of a rich ethnohistoric record (Spores 1984). Klein, McKeever-Furst, and Coggins relate the Tomb 7 material to slightly different interpretations of Lady 9 Grass to comment on the political and religious organization of Mixtec society. We are pleased to see the new directions in which these scholars are going with the basic reinterpretation; indeed, it demonstrates the potential of CA☆ treatment for advancing academic discourse. At the same time, however, we reiterate that much additional work is needed to discover the social roles of all women, commoners and elites, in Mixtec society.

Finsten and Stephen discuss some of the theoretical issues of an engendered archaeology. One is the enormous problem of androcentric bias, both in the past and in the present, where archaeological data have the potential to challenge normative concepts of culture. Tied into this notion of identifying cultural diversity is the potential for recognizing alternative gender identities, as is suggested by Costin in reference to the "princess" of Vix (Arnold 1991). The material culture from Tomb 7 suggests a female gender identity based on stereotypical representations from the ethnohistoric record (McCafferty and McCafferty 1991). Although the skeletal remains are generally ambiguous as to sex, they may well relate to a biological female. What if, as Klein suggests, future analysis should prove that Skeleton A was in fact a male? A variety of possible interpretations would then emerge, including the possibility of a berdache-like male's acting as a woman in ritual (McCafferty and McCafferty 1990b). By contrasting material culture and osteological remains as separate data sets, the range of cultural practices is expanded and is less likely to be determined by our own Western preconceptions.

A final theoretical question is raised by Brumfiel in challenging our claim of a contextual framework for the

analysis (cf. Hodder 1982, 1986, 1987). As she points out, the methodology of the analysis is not significantly different from that recommended by Binford (1967). In fact, as Kosso (1991) has recently suggested, there are close similarities in methodology between the "middle-range theory" of Binford and the contextual archaeology of Hodder in terms of the way in which they relate data to theory in what Kosso calls the "hermeneutic circle." Despite these outward similarities, however, the true distinction between the approaches lies in the questions asked and the overarching perception of archaeology as a natural as opposed to a social science. What we feel is distinctive about the Tomb 7 analysis is the consideration of gender as a research question and the attempt to "read" the meaning content of an artifact assemblage in relation to ideologies of gender and religion. The methodology may not be significantly different from that of processual archaeology, but the research problems most certainly are.

Klein, Gero, and Coggins raise methodological questions regarding the Tomb 7 reanalysis. Klein suggests that we waffle on the issue of whether the Skeleton A remains are biologically male or female. If admitting the inability to determine the biological sex of the skeleton from the published account of these fragmentary remains is waffling, then so be it. Our purpose was to examine the basis upon which Rubín de la Borbolla (1969) made the original identification and then to argue that his interpretation is suspect. The possibility that the mandible and patella are from a biological female is suggestive but far from conclusive. Until the original bones are reexamined by experts, ideally including DNA analysis, we will avoid jumping to conclusions.

Gero argues that some of the artifact classes analyzed from Tomb 7 were "ambiguous in terms of gender attribution," resulting in a "blurring" of gender distinctions. We view this as a misunderstanding of our analysis, specifically confusing the difference between the representation and the practice of gender identity (McCafferty and McCafferty 1990a). Depictions of spinning and weaving artifacts were clearly represented as diagnostic of female identity in pre-Columbian codices. In practice, however, we have identified cases in which males were buried with spindle whorls, suggesting that in some contexts, perhaps for slaves or commoners, the gender stereotype was not followed. Gero is correct, then, in emphasizing the utility of gender analysis as a means of studying power relations. The Tomb 7 remains are clear in their reference to a female identity, while the precious materials of the objects and the intricacy of their manufacture imply the wealth of the offering. What is not clear is whether the individuals present were themselves members of the social elite or simply victims taking part in a religious act as McKeever-Furst implies. Unfortunately, very few comparable burial contexts have been discovered, and none have been as carefully documented as Tomb 7.

Coggins accuses us of "second-guessing" Caso in terms of the burial context of Skeleton A. Since our entire investigation was one of informed second-guessing,

this is not out of character. Caso rejected the possibility that the Tomb 7 burials, including Skeleton A, were primary interments, yet the depiction of the burials clearly indicated articulated bones and correct anatomical positions. For Skeleton A, in particular, the bones are recorded in exactly the same way as primary mummy-bundle burials excavated at Cholula (López, Lagunas, and Serrano 1976, Suárez 1990). The conditions of the Tomb 7 excavation were far from ideal, the work having been done very quickly and at night to prevent the local workmen from looting the site (Caso 1969:44-45). Every artifact and bone was recorded with provenience data, but relatively few field photos exist, and none depict the skeletons in situ. We may never know if the drawing of Skeleton A in the tomb was completely accurate, but from the representation of the bones it was clearly a primary interment. The duplication of some bones that Caso interpreted as evidence of mixing is an unanswered question and pending independent confirmation that these bones were correctly identified, may relate to ritual practice, postdepositional mixing, archaeological error, or some other factor.

As Costin points out, the Tomb 7 reinterpretation lays a foundation for further analysis of the role of women in ritual practice in Oaxaca and Mesoamerica. Nearly all of the commentators begin this task, each proceeding in a slightly different direction. Finsten relates Skeleton A to the powerful women of the Mixtec political elite, while Stephen comments on the important role of contemporary Zapotec women as intermediaries between the natural and supernatural realms. Costin and Gero observe that unisex jewelry in the codices indicated that gender was only one of the cultural identities being negotiated through material culture, with class as an additional facet to the analysis.

Brumfiel, McKeever-Furst, Klein, and Coggins all discuss the Tomb 7 burial in relation to the Mixtec deity 9 Grass. Brumfiel argues for a more detailed structural analysis of the burial goods and how they relate to a "shrine." McKeever-Furst discusses the material metaphor that linked weaving and reproduction and the possibility that 9 Grass was associated with the creation of new life; for her Skeleton A may have "embodied the supernatural life force" because of her pathological similarity to 9 Grass and therefore have been perceived as a direct link to the goddess. Coggins interprets Skeleton A as the personification of a historical 9 Grass who conquered a number of towns and was reburied in the abandoned Tomb 7 for safety. Klein draws the analogy between 9 Grass and the Aztec *cihuacoatl* as a political authority who wore the costume of the goddess Cihuacoatl and even speculates that should the bones of Skeleton A be reanalyzed they would turn out to be male. The lack of consensus among these interpretations suggests that not enough work has been done with goddess imagery in Mesoamerica. For example, was 9 Grass a historical figure, either as a specific warrior or as a political office held by successive individuals, or a deity? Was the Temple of the Skull at Chalcatongo, Mitla, or in the underworld? An increased emphasis on women's roles

in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica should include the examination of female deities and their role in cosmology and religious practice.

Following Paddock's caution against Aztec-centrism in interpreting Mixtec culture, we are unconvinced by Klein's suggestion that Tomb 7 will turn out to be "just another man." While evidence for ritual cross-dressing does exist from Mesoamerica (see discussion in McCafferty and McCafferty 1994), it is not common and has not been demonstrated for the Mixtec or Zapotec. Even for the Aztec Cihuacoatl the evidence is far from conclusive. Klein (1988) has argued that the holder of the Aztec political office of *cihuacoatl* wore the costume of the goddess as insignia because he had conquered a town in the southern Valley of Mexico where Cihuacoatl was the patron deity, but no specific ethnohistorical references exist for this practice. A scene in the Codex Borbonicus (23) depicts a priest/priestess in the costume of the goddess Cihuacoatl with a skeletal face and weaving batten and with the accompanying gloss of "papa mayor" (great priest), but there is nothing visually to identify this individual as male. And although Sahagún's (1950–82, book 1:69) description of Cihuacoatl states that "when he appeared before men, it was as a woman that he appeared," other parts of the same passage refer to Cihuacoatl using feminine pronouns, suggesting either Sahagún's own confusion or perhaps difficulties in translation. Some deities, such as Tlazolteotl (Sullivan 1982), had both male and female costume elements. Linguistically, Nahuatl does not feature gendered pronouns, and therefore translations from Nahuatl are susceptible to gender bias unless neutral terms are used; thus "papa" may have referred to either a male or a female priest (see also Brown 1983). In summary, our own analysis of the Aztec Cihuacoatl complex suggests three distinct aspects: political actor, member of the Mother Goddess complex, and deity impersonator. Given the skeletal mask and weaving battens, Skeleton A most closely resembles the religious aspects of Cihuacoatl and most likely acted as a deity impersonator.

McKeever-Furst addresses the problem of why spinning and weaving implements were present in the tomb and discusses the relationship between weaving and reproduction (Sullivan 1982, McCafferty and McCafferty 1991). She introduces the example of a small bird that represented a soul awaiting rebirth and describes the association of these small birds with looms. Interestingly, one of the naming elements associated with Lady 9 Monkey in the Codex Nuttall is a hummingbird/spindle motif (fig. 16) in which the spindle projects through the bird's head to become its beak and the back of the head becomes the spindle. This seems to support the bird/spinning/reproduction metaphor.

A facet of Cihuacoatl that has not been discussed either by us or by the commentators is Cihuacoatl's literal meaning of "woman-serpent," with possible representations of such a figure in Mixtec iconography. One example from Tomb 7 is the gold pectoral of the human figure with skeletal jaw (fig. 18). The serpent headdress worn by the individual may further identify her as "woman-

serpent." As we noted, a similar headdress is worn by Lady 3 Flint in the Codex Nuttall 14. On this and the two subsequent pages 3 Flint is shown with serpent elements; in a ritual scene she is represented as a serpent with a human head. After a series of ritual offerings at the Temple of the Plumed Serpent, including one in which she uses a weaving pick similar to those found in Tomb 7, Lady 3 Flint gives birth and enters a shrine within a mountain. After this she is again represented as a "woman-serpent" only on page 20, where she is shown seated with her husband 12 Wind and again has her serpent headdress on. This scene includes 13 images of plant-people and is interpreted as a symbol of supernatural fertility.

The concept of Lady 3 Flint's becoming a "woman-serpent" as she gives birth is analogous to the admonition of the Aztec midwife to a woman during childbirth: "My beloved daughter, exert thyself! . . . Seize well the little shield [possibly a spindle whorl (McCafferty and McCafferty 1989a)]. My daughter, my youngest one, be thou a brave woman; face it—that is bear down; imitate the brave woman Cihuacoatl, Quilaztli" (Sahagún 1959–82, book 6:160). Lady 3 Flint as "woman-serpent" is clearly distinct from 9 Grass, who is represented twice in this sequence. The first time 9 Grass appears she is included in a procession of supernaturals that attend the wedding of 3 Flint and 5 Flower. Her second appearance follows the depiction of the 13 plant-people, when she participates in a battle between supernaturals.

This reinterpretation of the 3 Flint sequence in the Codex Nuttall has developed out of the comments on our paper. It adds another level of meaning to one of the better-known passages in Mixtec literature. The inspiration for a more engendered interpretation came from working through the arguments of the commentators, especially those of McKeever-Furst and Klein. We wish to thank all the commentators for participating in this process and look forward to further developments in the exciting field of Mesoamerican gender research.

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