

The Archaeology of Ethnogenesis: Race and Sexuality in Colonial San Francisco, revised edition

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In this revised edition of *The Archaeology of Ethnogenesis: Race and Sexuality in Colonial San Francisco*, originally published in 2008, Voss includes an extensive preface to recontextualize her original work on the archaeology of Spain's northernmost outpost in the Americas, El Presidio of San Francisco, California. The publication examines the explosion of archaeological investigations on ethnogenesis (defined as the emergence of new kinds of identities rising from historical and cultural changes), that have appeared over the past decade. In doing so, she treats readers to a brilliant review of ethnogenesis theory and its application to interdisciplinary research related to colonization. For example, Voss draws attention to the "renewed emphasis on continuity and authenticity" in ethnogenesis studies, including recent, poignant bioarchaeological cases, among others, that echo and build on her original research's attention to the dominant influence of "imperial administrative categories" on past and present identities.

Aside from some minor revisions, the rest of the book is the same as the original. Voss's overall argument emphasizes the ways in which a new, Californio cultural

identity was forged among racially mixed soldiers, farmers, and their families who were recruited from rural areas in Mexico—where they had been "submerged in the greatest poverty and misery" (p. 45)—to populate the garrison of the Spanish Presidio in San Francisco during the 1776–1821 Spanish colonial occupation of that region. After tacking back and forth between historical and archaeological evidence and social theory, she observes that household objects, food, ceramics, clothing, adornments, architecture, landscape, and even bodily movement played inherent roles in "shifting the terms" of identity and in transforming the ways "colonists at El Presidio de San Francisco perceived their own identities and those of Native Californians" (pp. 6, 24). She concludes that the settlers, who were initially described according to the *sistema de castas* (the colonial system of racial status and inequality that included people of European, African Latino, and Native American ancestry) of 18th-century Spanish military and church records when they arrived in Spanish California, evolved to more homogenous and nonracialized identities as "Californios" in just 25 years.

In this revised edition, Voss uses the preface to connect her original interpretations in the first book with recent findings and ongoing cultural heritage research at El Presidio and colonial San Francisco, bringing readers up to date on her own continued analysis of topics that grew out of the information presented in the 1st edition, including the imperial effects on the experiences of native Californians; the

ways in which archaeologies of identity can contribute to regional scholarship on Spanish colonial Americas; and the intersection and influences of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity on Californio identity and ethnogenesis. Regarding the latter, she challenges readers to give more attention to questions of gender and sexuality to address the all-too-often overlooked ethnosexual component of identity, which is one of the core points and momentous contributions of her original volume.

Drawing on theories of social interaction and concisely explaining the influences of Bourdieu, Foucault, Geertz, and others, Voss reiterates the fact that people's social identities are "continually enacted, reproduced, and transformed in social life" (p. 18). She also explains how historical archaeology's methodological engagement with objects, texts, and images requires theoretical pluralism—and by applying such an approach, it becomes possible to illuminate the ways in which objects and material practices in general contributed to colonial ethnogenesis by providing a theoretical scaffolding to interpret the "entanglements that bind people, things, and places together" (p. 23).

Public outreach and inclusion of native California and Californio descendants in ongoing heritage planning are also addressed. The Presidio's Heritage Program has progressed since the 2008 publication of the 1st edition of this book, and Voss uses the preface of the revised edition to share an anecdote that is pertinent to these steps forward. The Presidio hosted a public forum, "Heritage Dialogues," that accentuated the importance of including indigenous perspectives in investigations of colonization. The panelists and participants in the forum discussed the polycultural heritage of the

Californios as Voss had initially presented it—as a narrative of deprived and disadvantaged people cooperating to create new opportunities and new identities. However, one of the native Californians, a Chochenyo Ohlone Indian who served as a panelist in the forum, took exception to this version of the history by reminding the other participants that the Spanish colonists were actually "illegal intruders and uninvited guests whose attempts to change native cultures and the environment were unwelcome ... [and that] our ancestors were ... enslaved here at the Presidio ... [and] at the missions ... but they kept their culture alive ... even though it would have been easier to just assimilate" (p. xxix). Voss reflects on this viewpoint, noting how, in the 1st edition, she overemphasized the active ways in which the colonists shaped their own identities, and how she now realizes that native Californians, like the Ohlone people, also shaped the course of Californio ethnogenesis by avoiding cooperation and refusing to participate in colonial culture.

Voss also reflects on critiques of her original work, namely that she did not describe her historical research methods in as much detail as she did the archaeological methods and that she did not include copies of primary sources. She addresses the critiques head-on in the revised edition, and seizes opportunity to address the unintentional oversight and highlights the ways in which information from documentary sources was essential for her analyses of archaeological remains of San Francisco's Spanish colonial era.

The 1st edition of *The Archaeology of Ethnogenesis* received the American Anthropological Association's Ruth Benedict Prize—the only archaeology monograph to win that award to date. That edition also got rave

reviews in flagship journals such as *American Antiquity*, *Current Anthropology*, the *Journal of American History*, and *Historical Archaeology*, to name a few, and reviewers predicted the book would reach audiences in fields beyond archaeology and anthropology and would become an “anthropological standard” (Rebecca Allen, *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 28(2), 2008, pp. 194–195). Indeed, the book is a classic and the research is still innovative and commendable, a testament to the exemplary presentation Voss produced nearly a decade ago. Voss effectively demonstrates how to carry out meaningful, systematic, and theoretically sophisticated 21st-century interdisciplinary research by connecting data recovered during public-oriented cultural resources management projects with social theory.

Before I even got to the end of the preface of the revised edition, I decided to recommend and/or assign this book to the students with whom I work and to let others know that they should be doing the same. For those grappling with analyzing and/or teaching such a “contested field” as identity, have faith—Voss’s work makes the concept accessible. The book is standing the test of time, is elegantly written, and lucidly demonstrates how to integrate multiple lines of empirical evidence within a pluralistic theoretical framework to foster nuanced, inclusive understandings of historical events in complex colonial settings.

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