

Chinese Masculinities and Material Culture

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ABSTRACT

Most Overseas Chinese living in the United States during the 19th century were men. Correspondingly, the archaeology of Overseas Chinese communities in the United States is primarily the archaeology of Chinese men: their behaviors, dispositions, activities, and identities. Despite this acknowledged focus, masculinity is rarely an explicit object of study in Overseas Chinese archaeology. Drawing from methods and theories in archaeology, cultural anthropology, history, and Asian American studies, a framework for the archaeological investigation of masculinities at Overseas Chinese communities is developed. This framework is used to describe how material culture from the Market Street Chinatown in San Jose, California, was interpolated in multiple hegemonic discourses of masculinity.

Introduction

Archaeologists usually characterize Overseas Chinese sites as primarily male communities (Greenwood 1993; Fosha 2004). As a result, men's values and activities are at the center of interpretation (for exceptions, Wegars 1993; Gardner et al. 2004). As Bernard Knapp (1998a:117) suggests, however, to study men "is not to comprehend masculinity." Questions of masculinity, what anthropologist Matthew Gutmann (1998:403) has called "men-as-men," are rarely explicitly studied. During the past few decades, scholars in disciplines such as sociology, history, sociocultural anthropology, and gender studies have developed a large and sophisticated body of literature on masculinity that investigates the deep and omnipresent interpolation of masculinities with other axes of identity such as race, class, power, age, and sex (Bhabha 1994; Bederman 1995; McClintock 1995; Sinha 1995; Eng 2000; Enloe 2000; Whitehead and Barrett 2001; Kimmel 2005). This research demonstrates that ignoring masculinity as an aspect of identity flattens a critical component of society. Maintaining this absence

in an archaeological context, especially one so saturated with men, thins understanding of the archaeological record and the historical past (Knapp 1998a, 1998b; Meskell 1999; Joyce 2005). Advocating for the archaeological study of masculinities is not advocating for a return to an archaeology of "men," where a male perspective or focus is seen as the unmarked universal subject. It is, rather, a practice that seeks to question the cultural foundations of maleness and to understand how masculinities were arrayed and performed in the past (Voss 2006).

To better understand concepts of masculinities in the past, this article creates a framework for making coherent articulations between material culture and gendered discourse. In particular, the concept of hegemonic masculinities provides a methodological pathway for archaeologically investigating the relationship between historic discourses about masculinity and the material artifacts used by Overseas Chinese men. The utility of this approach in archaeological analysis is explored using evidence from the Market Street Chinatown in San Jose, California, demonstrating that multiple contemporaneous masculinities were present in Overseas Chinese communities. The significance of material culture in the construction of masculinities differed cross-culturally and within cultural groups. The Chinese residents of the Market Street Chinatown likely understood their own masculinity in very different terms from their European American neighbors.

Why Study Masculinities?

Calls for an engendered archaeology have been supported, critiqued, thought, and reworked for decades (Seifert 1991; Scott 1994; Wall 1994; Conkey and Gero 1997; Hays-Gilpin and Whitley 1998; Gilchrist 1999; Sørensen 2000; Franklin 2001). This rich and diverse body of research provides a solid theoretical and methodological foundation for investigating how gender operated in the past (Conkey and Gero 1997). Although some archaeologists have studied masculinity (Brashler 1991; Kryder-Reid

1994; Meskell 1996; Knapp 1998a, 1998b; Joyce 2000, 2004, 2005; Matthews 2000; Wilkie 2001), most engendered archaeology focuses on women in the past (Meskell 1999). Even archaeology that moves beyond a “locate-the-women” (Conkey and Gero 1997:415) approach tends to leave men as unmarked subjects whose maleness is taken for granted (Meskell 1996, 1999). Several feminist scholars in archaeology have explained how ignoring masculinities in archaeological analysis opens the door to political and interpretive dangers (Meskell 1996, 1999; Knapp 1998a). Drawing from arguments made by feminist scholars in other disciplines, Lynn Meskell (1999:84) succinctly explains some of these dangers when she warns: “If we problematize women and leave men as an untheorized group, the male position is indirectly privileged and gender studies are regarded as the domain of women.” Knapp (1998a:92, 1998b) argues that ignoring masculinity “has the potential to obliterate the significance of gender.” Polemical rhetoric aside, it is clear that leaving men unmarked results in an untenable theoretical position and interjects methodological biases into archaeological research. How should these masculinities be theorized? What are the first steps taken in an archaeology of Overseas Chinese masculinities?

The most compelling research on masculinities in disciplines such as sociocultural anthropology and sociology does not focus on masculinity as an isolated and essentialized trait of identity. Rather than looking for “men” in a particular group or culture, these studies emphasize the difference *among* masculinities and the intersections among masculinities and other discourses such as race, class, and age. As anthropologist Gutmann (1997:401) notes, studies of masculinities “must be developed and nurtured as integral to understanding the ambiguous relationship between multigendered differences and similarities, equalities and inequalities.” Although not *necessarily* a feminist or feminist-inspired project (May and Strikwerda 1992; Seidler 1994, 2006; Gutmann 1998), the most compelling examples of research on masculinities are provided by scholars allied to feminism who apply insights gained from this political movement and body of theory (Seidler 1994, 2006; Knapp 1998a, 1998b; Meskell 1999; Joyce 2000; Whitehead and Barrett 2001; Kimmel 2005).

One of the dominant themes running through much of this research is the focus on hegemonic masculinities (Connell 2005). These scholars generally use this concept to mediate between the contextual idiosyncrasies of individuals and globally powerful discourses of masculinity. In brief, hegemony is the process through which ideas, people, and concepts become dominant in a given economic/cultural system. This process operates by articulating ideas, people, or actions into coherent ideologies. The resulting “hegemonic structures” are dominant ideologies and discourses that maintain their primacy through “not only pure coercion but also struggles over the prevailing conceptions of the world—for example, definitions of what is masculine and what is feminine” (Chen 1999:586). Following this definition, hegemonic masculinities are the techniques, processes, and materializations through which one form of masculinity is imagined as “dominant within a society” or “more natural” than another. The mythos that has grown around the late actor James Dean presents a compelling example of hegemonic masculinity. This mythos weaves together behavioral models (his “outlaw” behavior in the movie entitled *Rebel Without a Cause*, his brooding personality, and the “live fast, die young” ideal) with material culture (fast cars, leather jackets, cigarettes) and individuals (Dean himself and the characters, such as Jim Stark, that he played in movies). Existing simultaneously with this James Dean hegemonic masculinity are other hegemonic masculinities. The expensive suits, proscribed behavior, and economic activities of present-day corporate lawyers represent just one of these alternatives. As this example demonstrates, hegemonic processes do not operate as a totality (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Meskell 1999). This partiality makes hegemonic masculinities a useful starting point for historical analysis because it allows researchers to “account for vast intracultural and intercultural diversity among men while at the same time not losing sight of basic issues of inequality and domination” (Gutmann 1998:113). Examining these dominant cultural narratives of masculinity and discussing their intersections with the daily lives of individuals allows archaeologists to understand how masculinities are interpolated with other facets of identity—their “social embeddedness” (Meskell 1999:87).

How are these hegemonic masculinities visible archaeologically? How do they relate to material culture—the objects archaeologists study? One possible answer lies in conceptualizing gender as a process of articulation. Other archaeologists have taken this step, turning to the work of Judith Butler who, according to Rosemary Joyce (2000:7), “argues strongly for the decoupling of gender from the ‘natural’ body, and indeed, from any fixity that might allow characterization of gender as an aspect of ‘identity,’ something one is. Butler offers instead a vision of gender as activity, something one does, a kind of performance.” This lack of fixity, however, does not allow for an interpretative “free for all” or an extreme constructivism (Meskell 1996). Butler (1999:33) herself writes that gender is “compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence.” What forces structure this coherence? Kath Weston (2002:134) explains that “for one thing, there is the global economy. For another, there is power ... norm, script, construct, role: These are all standardized measures as well as analytic tools. The same might be said of the concept of fixed and enumerated genders They are calibrated to police borders and to mark off border crossings.” These theorists all turn away from conceptualizing gender as either a “natural” overlay or an entirely mental “social construct” and move towards understanding gender as embodied practice (Meskell and Joyce 2003; Joyce 2005). In other words, hegemonic masculinities are constantly enacted and re-enacted through the movements, expressions, thoughts, and adornments of daily life. Consequently, all archaeological phenomena—from the smallest ceramic shard to household assemblages and entire landscapes—can be examined as materials that were produced through and used within gendered practices.

This article focuses on two dominant discourses of hegemonic Chinese masculinity present in the late-19th century: a Chinese masculinity that has its roots in Western colonialism and orientalism and a Chinese masculinity that has its roots in Chinese literature and history. It is critical to note that the juxtaposition of these discourses is not a comparison of “pure, emic, and authentic” masculinities that came whole from China, with “false, etic, and inauthentic” masculinity rooted in Western racism. Archaeological studies of Overseas Chinese communities long presented two similar static

and essential identities (an Eastern/emic/traditional and a Western/etic/modern) to be the only two coherent identities of Overseas Chinese populations and individuals (Voss 2005). Framing these discourses as a rigid dyad is a problematic representation of history and identity. In a different culture-contact situation Stephen Silliman (2005) shows how discussing Native American identities as if they were coherent and immutable wholes inaccurately reproduces and reaffirms unproductive and simplistic models of acculturation. When applied to the Chinese situation, these models are just as damaging and artificially reductive (Voss 2005). With this in mind, it should be repeated that these two “identities” are *discourses* about masculinity that do not represent essential characteristics. While certain operations of both claim to represent the authentic Chinese masculinity, they were contestable in the past and are contestable in the present (Chen 1999; Williams and Camp 2005). These were not the only hegemonic masculinities in play during the time under study and both Chinese and non-Chinese individuals often viewed themselves and one another through different lenses than those described here. For example, dominant representations of Chinese gender in urban settings were often quite different from those in rural or industrial settings where non-Chinese regularly witnessed Chinese men engaging in activities (such as mining and railroad work) that were considered by neighboring European Americans to be normatively masculine. Although some European Americans still managed to ascribe non-normative masculine characteristics to Chinese men as they labored in the mines and laid miles of railroad track, others did not view their Chinese neighbors strictly through the lens of orientalism and, instead, depicted them with a different and more sympathetic eye (Johnson 2000).

Market Street Chinatown

Between 1872 and 1887, the Market Street Chinatown of San Jose was the primary Chinese settlement in Santa Clara County (Yu 1991). By 1876, the Market Street community housed more than 1,000 residents. During weekends and holidays, many of the Chinese residents living and working in outlying areas would visit the Market Street area for recreation and

socialization (Allen and Hylkema 2002). The Market Street Chinatown contained residences, markets, outdoor cooking facilities, restaurants, boarding houses, a theater, and a temple. The community continued to thrive until 4 May 1887 when Chinatown's wooden buildings were burned to the ground in a fire that was almost certainly sparked by an arsonist (Yu 1991). Despite celebrations from some quarters over what was imagined to be the permanent expulsion of the Chinese, the Chinese community quickly regrouped. There would be at least two later Chinatowns in San Jose, and former Market Street residents remained active in the business, politics, education, and community of San Jose (Allen and Hylkema 2002).

After the arson, the site of the Market Street Chinatown was rebuilt by non-Chinese residents of San Jose and was used for businesses and residences. In 1985 and 1986, the site of the Market Street Chinatown was excavated to make way for a hotel as part of a downtown redevelopment project. Due to various constraints during excavation and recovery, conducting archaeological research with material from the Market Street community presents a number of challenges. For the purposes of this study, the most salient is the lack of contextual information from the excavation. Artifacts cannot be traced to specific households, and only general correlations with buildings can be reconstructed (Camp 2004). This is a common methodological and interpretive challenge in Overseas Chinese archaeology (Allen et al. 2002) and makes the study of masculinities in these communities a difficult endeavor. Although discrete households from the Market Street Chinatown are not necessarily identifiable in the archaeological record, the objects under study were produced, used, and discarded in ways that structured and were structured by multiple discourses that are archaeologically and historically recoverable. Barbara Voss (this volume) explains in detail why the household, or the individual, is not always a necessary or even desirable scale of archaeological reconstruction.

Discourse One: An Orientalist Chinese Masculinity

The first hegemonic Chinese masculinity discussed is a “feminized” or “emasculated”

masculinity that was promulgated in Western discourse (Kim 1982; Wong and Santa Ana 1999; Eng 2000). From at least the 17th century, China and the Chinese were commonly imagined through an orientalist framework (Mandeville 1684; Zhang 1988). Orientalism, a concept adapted from Edward Said (1979), is used here to describe the process whereby people and products from “the East” are not represented in Western culture on their own terms but are, instead, represented as a contrast to “the West.” Under this framework, objects and individuals from the Orient (broadly defined) have been metaphorically associated with the feminine (Said 1979; Sinha 1995; Yegenoglu 1998; Yoshihara 2003). Following this association, Asian men are represented as “emasculated” and women as “hyperfeminized” (Wong and Santa Ana 1999:173). This orientalist masculinity was and is produced and reproduced through a diverse range of structures and popular representations, including film, cartoon, theater, text, and law (Lowe 1996; Lydon 1999; Eng 2000; Yeh 2004; Williams and Camp 2005). Popular press depictions of this feminized masculinity extended to Chinese and Chinese Americans and were especially prevalent in film and theater (Lee 1999). This hegemonic masculinity was constructed in part through the “yellowface” minstrel shows of the 19th century that featured feminized Chinese men (often dominated and cuckolded by masculine Irish women) (Ngai 2000; Metzger 2004; Moon 2005). It was also present in early cinema, perhaps best exemplified in American filmmaker D. W. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* (1919), a film about an Asian man and his illicit relationship with a white child. In this film, the lead Asian male character is thoroughly feminized in dress and action, embodying “the ‘feminine’ qualities linked in the Western imagination with a passive, carnal, occult, and duplicitous Asia” (Marchetti 1993:35). This trope still resonates through popular culture today (Hwang 1989; Fung 2000).

Orientalism and Material Culture

Beginning in the 17th century, this feminization was established and propagated in material form in part by *chinoiserie*—Chinese-styled decorative items, bric-a-brac, paintings, and ceramics created for European or European American consumption (Kowaleski-Wallace

1996). Historians have traced the trajectories of *chinoiserie* through time, explaining how they came to be discursively associated with both China and the feminine, and how this multivalent relationship formed part of a larger series of orientalist discourses about gender (Porter 1996, 2002; Yoshihara 2003). Scenes in literature represented Asian ceramics as “miniaturized fetishes of exotic places,” where women “eat velvet skinned fruit from painted porcelain” (Armstrong 1992:240) and where emasculated and feminized men are “entranced by a dainty cup and saucer pair” (Porter 1996:226). Longxi Zhang (1988: 117) has pointed out that Chinese porcelain became a “symbol of the feminine component of the Rococo.” David Porter (2002:406) notes that these connections between the Chinese style and the feminine were so strong that “they most likely had some degree of experiential resonance.” That is, from the late-17th century onwards, the discursive association between *chinoiserie*, China, and the feminine was so widespread and prevalent that it became an unquestioned fact. This association remains evocative and was clearly salient in California. At the Hoover Institution, a political think tank in Stanford, California, a small museum outlines the lives of former president Herbert Hoover and his wife, Lou Henry Hoover, prominent residents of the area. The museum focuses on Herbert’s political and “humanitarian” career and Lou Henry’s fascination with “blue-on-white Chinese porcelain” (Hoover Institution 2006).

The Manila galleon trade between what is now Mexico, China, and the Philippines started during the 16th century and, as a result, large quantities of Chinese porcelains were imported to Mexico and distributed throughout New Spain (Sokobin 1954–1987:165). These Chinese ceramics were present in what is now California since at least the 18th century (Voss 2002). By the time that large numbers of Chinese immigrants began moving to California in the 1850s, these trade connections were well established. For example, in 1827 “six crates each of blue and white china plates and cups and saucers” were shipped from China across the Pacific with half the total “to be sold in California” (Mudge 1986:183). In following years, the imports of Chinese export wares grew, as ships with names like *Eveline* and the *Frolic* plied

the waters of the Pacific, delivering people and goods between China and California (Layton 2002). Trade connections between China and California ran deep as European, American, and Chinese merchants cooperated and competed to transport products across the Pacific (Layton 2002). At first, ceramics from China were sold to both European and Overseas Chinese consumers. After the American-period Gold Rush and extensive Chinese immigration, the ceramics that to non-Chinese “had formerly been perceived as elegant status symbols, suddenly became ‘ethnic’ and low-class” (Layton 2002:200).

Ceramic artifacts represent a significant percentage of all artifacts recovered from the Market Street Chinatown and were recovered from features across the site. This assemblage includes many vessel forms that are commonly found in Overseas Chinese sites dating to the late-19th century (Greenwood 1996), including Four Flowers, celadon, Double Happiness, and Bamboo designs. Both Chinese and non-Chinese Californians, then, moved through a world that was materially saturated with objects from the pan-Pacific trade—objects that were discursively associated with the feminine in Anglo-American culture (Figure 1).

Constructing an Orientalist Masculinity in the Western United States

This orientalist gendering framed many interactions between Chinese and non-Chinese in



FIGURE 1. Asian porcelain manufactured for the Overseas Chinese market (*left*) and Asian porcelain presumably manufactured for non-Chinese markets (*right*). (Photo by author.)

the western U.S. during the 19th century. The associated hegemonic masculinity was projected onto and woven through the bodies, accoutrements, and occupations of Chinese men. For example, Chinese men in the U.S. often dressed in traditional Chinese clothes (Fosha 2004:64). Though commonplace in China, these clothing styles confounded Western ideals of gender and appropriate dress. These styles were used to great effect in print, theater, and cinema in order to construct and perpetuate a feminized image of Chinese men (Marchetti 1993; Lee 1999).

A second aesthetic feature used by non-Chinese to construct this orientalist masculinity was the long braid (or queue) worn by most Chinese men in the United States before the fall of the Qing Dynasty. Travel writer Hinton Helper (1855:87) provides a striking example of this connection when he writes that Chinese men allow their queues to “trail about [their] back and legs, as young girls sometimes do ribbons.” This link was not just the idiosyncratic observation of one individual. It was so persistent that 30 years later in 1883, author William Henry Bishop wrote that the queue was often “coiled up like the hair of women” (Kirsch and Murphy 1967:455). No matter if the queue was worn up or down, some non-Chinese used this hairstyle to further cement the discursive link between Chinese masculinity and the feminine.

The occupations of Chinese men were another site of articulation for this hegemonic masculinity. Chinese communities in the U.S. were primarily male. During this time, men performed many jobs and chores that in southern China were the domain of women (Hsu 2000). Additionally, a combination of demographic, economic, and social factors caused non-Chinese to often employ Chinese men in occupations that were traditionally considered “women’s work” (Johnson 2000). Laundries were an industry where this connection was particularly strong (Wang 2004). Although the gendered dimensions of labor practices were not the only factors contributing to the participation of Chinese men in the laundry industry, laundry work was considered women’s work, and the extensive presence of Chinese men in this industry was used by some non-Chinese to justify and reinforce an orientalist masculinity (Wang 2004). Another feminized industry that was deemed an appropriate venue of work for Chinese men and non-

Chinese women was domestic service (Rollins 1985). The potential fungibility of Chinese men and non-Chinese women in this corner of the labor market is indicated by a newspaper story that proposed responding to the scarcity of “servant girls” by increasing employment of Chinese men (Wang 2004:61). The connection between the labor of Chinese men and white women was even brought up in discussions of the place of women in the labor force and women’s rights in general. For example, in 1870 labor protestors in San Francisco assembled under signs reading “Woman’s [sic] Rights and No More Chinese Chambermaids” (Gardner 1999:85). An 1876 newspaper editorial from Virginia City argued that because of Chinese men, “women can not establish and make a success of laundries here” (James et al. 1994:172).

Although white men participated in many of these same “feminine” and “domestic” activities, their participation was neither as common nor as institutionalized as that of Chinese men (Johnson 2000). When white men were depicted doing “feminine” work, authors often highlighted the normative masculine qualities that could be drawn from the activity. Witness this passage from Joaquin Miller’s (1876:33) *First Fam’lies of the Sierras*: “Brawny-muscled men, nude above the waist, ‘naked and not ashamed,’ hairy-breasted and bearded, noble, kingly men – miners washing their shirts in a mountain-stream of the Sierras. Thoughtful, earnest, splendid men!” Unlike the Chinese men working in the same facility (and non-Chinese women working elsewhere in Virginia City), European American male employees of the Pioneer Laundry in Virginia City did not list their occupation as “laundry” or “wash man.” In fact, Ronald James and colleagues (1994:179) found that “[N]one of them claimed to be laundry workers: the census shows them as laborers.” In her insightful text on domestic life in Gold Rush era California, Susan Johnson (1999:121) has explained that

however often white men scrubbed their own shirts or handed them over to people of color to wash, they were haunted by memories of white women who did this work back home. A bit of Gold Rush doggerel, entitled “We Miss Thee, Ladies,” called white men in California “a banished race,” and lamented to “ladies” left behind:

We miss thee at the washing tub,
When our sore and blistered digits,

Hath been compelled to weekly rub,
Giving us blues hysterics, figits.

These feminizing discourses were even levied against Chinese men who were working in occupations traditionally associated more “normative” hegemonic masculinities such as mining and railroad work. Turning to a specific example, during an 1852–1853 tour of the Sierra mining region, Scottish artist J. D. Borthwick “claimed that the ‘individual labor’ of Chinese men ‘was nothing compared with that of other miners.’ He maintained that the Chinese lacked the ‘force’ and ‘vigor’ of the Americans and Europeans, that they handled their mining tools ‘like so many women, as if they were afraid of hurting themselves’” (Johnson 2000:245). Comments such as this ignored the lived experience of Chinese men who regularly worked long and hard hours in physically laborious conditions while facing an incredible amount of racism and legal exclusion.

This is not to say that all non-Chinese considered Chinese men to be weak, inferior, or effeminate. As mentioned previously, hegemonic discourses do not represent the full extent of identities, beliefs, and practices. Rather, they are partial ways of framing the world in order to legitimate specific historically contingent relationships of power and inequity. Amongst non-Chinese, there was a substantial diversity of opinion regarding the character of Chinese men. In 1873 journalist Charles Nordhoff noted some of these contradictions when he related to readers on the East Coast all he had heard about the Chinese in California:

He is patient, docile, persevering, quick to learn, no eyeservant, the best cook or waiter you ever saw.
Last week he stole \$600 out of my drawer, and is now in State Prison
He is sober.
Last night you saw him smoking opium in the most horrible of dens.
He saves his money.
And takes it out of the State to spend in China.
He is indispensable.
But he is a curse to the community.
He will make a useful citizen.
His whole race is vicious and degraded (Daniels 1988:47).

Despite this diversity of opinion regarding the Chinese, the presence of a hegemonic masculinity that framed Chinese men in orientalist

terms permeates the historical record. It may have been only one hegemonic masculinity out of many in operation during the late-19th century, but it was a powerful and relevant one that operated through media, politics, and the concrete social relations of everyday life.

How did the deep and omnipresent discourse of orientalist masculinity influence the way that objects from the Market Street Chinatown of San Jose were viewed and interpreted by neighboring non-Chinese? An exploration of ceramics from the community affords the opportunity to suggest an answer.

Orientalist Masculinity at the Market Street Chinatown

Most ceramics found at the Market Street Chinatown are porcelain and porcelaneous stoneware that “looked Chinese.” That is, the form and decoration of many of these ceramics closely resembles the form and decoration so commonly associated with *chinoiserie*. In the most comprehensively cataloged feature from the Market Street site, a wood-lined pit from the center of the site (feature 20 in Clevenger 2004), 361 ceramic shards representing a minimum of 56 vessels were recovered. When narrowed to tableware, 177 ceramic shards representing a minimum of 46 vessels were recovered. Of these, 154 shards representing a minimum of 37 vessels were recorded as of Asian origin. By either shard count (87%) or MNV count (80%), Asian ceramics represent the overwhelming majority of ceramic vessels found at the site. Although some of the smaller features on the site’s periphery contain a somewhat higher percentage of European American ceramics, the large features from areas that were clearly inside the Market Street community tend to follow the pattern of the wood-lined pit (Voss et al. 2003; Camp et al. 2004).

To a trained eye, the ceramics primarily used at Overseas Chinese communities are stylistically different from *chinoiserie* produced in Europe or in China for the European market. *Chinoiserie* uses designs and motifs tailored to a European audience, and much of it was actually made in Europe or America (Mudge 1986; Kowaleski-Wallace 1996). Paul Mullins (2004) has even described an “Asian-styled” object that was likely produced in California. This difference

was not necessarily a salient or obvious factor to the individuals consuming these ceramics who likely “had no articulate interest in whether any given object was actually produced in a foreign place” (Mullins 2004:102). Arjun Appadurai (1986:54) writes, “technical knowledge tends to be quickly subordinated to more idiosyncratic subcultural theories about the origins and destinations of things.” That is, for discursive associations to be made, an object does not have to reproduce the “original,” it simply has to become associated with the original. Even contemporary experts on the subject of Asian tableware have long misidentified Japanese pottery by calling it “Chinese” (Stenger 1993). That even experts can misidentify the origin of pottery demonstrates the ease with which “Asian-looking” objects are lumped together.

For non-Chinese residents who encountered the Market Street Chinatown—a community rich with objects “in the Chinese style”—a discursive connection between the men who occupied the site and the “feminine” objects they used may have been established and propagated. For example if a non-Chinese resident of San Jose saw men at the Market Street Chinatown drinking from the tiny cups found at the site, it would be easy to associate these people with the emasculated Chinese men “entranced by a dainty cup and saucer” (Porter 1996:226) found in popular culture and literature (Figure 2). This association was constituted by and reproduced an orientalist Chinese masculinity. The effect of this discourse

of masculinity was profound and it continues to influence Western conceptualizations of Chinese masculinities into the present (Wong and Santa Ana 1999; Eng 2000; Kim 2005). Specifically, Lisa Lowe (1996:12) posits that the “‘feminization’ of the Chinese that took place before 1940 has resulted in a Chinese ‘masculinity’ whose *racialization* is the material trace of the history of this ‘gendering’ [emphasis in original].” This orientalist discourse is not the only hegemonic masculinity that can be seen at the Market Street community. It is likely that the Overseas Chinese residents imagined these objects as part of very different discourses of masculinity.

Discourse Two: Wen and Wu

The hegemonic masculinity that attempted to feminize Chinese men “has less to do with the actual nature of Chinese men than with the domestic concerns of the time (as is typical of Orientalism)” (Teng 2000:108). For many of the residents of the Market Street Chinatown, it is possible that these same ceramics were read through a different matrix of hegemonic masculinities that articulated more strongly with Chinese history and literature and that connected to issues of class identity and political consciousness. Unfortunately, there have been few English language studies of Chinese masculinity in the late imperial era (1368–1911) (Louie 2002). In one of the few texts on the subject, Kam Louie (2002:14) presents an ideal Chinese masculinity characterized by the dual qualities of *wen*, “generally understood to refer to those genteel, refined qualities that were associated with literary and artistic pursuits of the classical scholars,” and *wu*, “a concept that embodies the power of military strength but also the wisdom to know when and when not to deploy it.” In Chinese history, “Confucius embodies *wen* in the popular imagination Guan Yu [known in Cantonese as Kwan Gung], a warrior from the Romance of the Three Kingdoms, embodies *wu*” (Louie 2002:14). These two qualities are not exclusive, and the “best men” were said to have both. There are important class distinctions in these masculinities: *wu* qualities are typically associated with lower class individuals and *wen* qualities are typically connected to the elite, although this correlation is never neat and is often subverted (Louie 2002) (Figure 3).



FIGURE 2. Tiny cup (left) and larger bowl (right). (Photo by author.)



FIGURE 3. Confucius (*left*) and Guan Yu (*right*). (Images courtesy of Wikipedia <www.wikipedia.org>.)

If these discourses of masculinity were so salient, they should be present at the Market Street site and identifiable archaeologically. Sanborn fire insurance maps and historical accounts indicate the presence of a temple at the Market Street community (Allen et al. 2002). No archaeological remains from that temple have been found, but its contents can be inferred by examining the temples that were built at the Heinlenville and Woolen Mills communities by many of the same people shortly after the destruction of the Market Street temple (Yu 1991; Allen et al. 2002). At the altar of the Heinlenville temple, Guan Yu was featured in a central location, while Confucius, who is often placed beside Guan Yu at temples in China (Louie 2002), is conspicuously absent. Connie Yu (1991:52) has also interviewed a former resident of the Heinlenville community who

emphasized the importance of Guan Yu and the “tales repeated from the Romance of the Three Kingdoms by the workers in his father’s store.” This implies that at least some of the residents of the Market Street Chinatown had a strong connection to *wu* masculinity. *Wu* masculinities may also have played a strong role in the political identity of Market Street residents. It is well known that the Overseas Chinese in California were active in Chinese politics, and a number of prominent political figures visited the San Jose Chinatowns (Yu 1991:89; Chen 2002). One of the heroes in Chinese history who embodies *wu* masculinity is Wu Song—a character from *Watermargin*, also known as *The Outlaws of the Marsh* (Louie 2002). Wu Song and the other heroes of *Watermargin* are exiled to the edge of the Chinese empire where they fight for justice and brotherhood against a corrupt imperial gov-

ernment, a story that could easily resonate with the political hopes and aspirations of residents of the Market Street Chinatown (Figure 4).

One interpretation of this masculinity can be understood through the tiny cups previously mentioned as items that seem to fit particularly neatly into an orientalist interpretation of Chinese masculinity. In Chinese literature, the *wu* “hero’s tolerance for alcohol is highlighted. All heroes consume large quantities of alcohol” (Louie 2002:81). This alcohol consumption is not just a question of unbridled drunkenness and revelry. It is tempered by self-discipline as exemplified by Wu Song who is still able to defeat a tiger in battle after drinking enough alcohol to kill a lesser man (Louie 2002). Archaeological evidence indicates that liquor consumption was an important part of life at the Market Street community (as it was, and still is, in most other communities). Six glass alcohol bottles were recovered from feature 20, along with three of the specialized “tiny cups” (Clevenger 2004:28) that Priscilla Wegars (2001:71) explains were used to drink “a highly alcoholic Chinese ‘tonic’ consumed mostly on festive or

ceremonial occasions.” Similar artifacts have been found in other areas of the site (Simmons 2004). These tiny cups would have been ideal material mechanisms with which members of the Market Street community would create and perform *wu* masculinity.

To some Western eyes, watching residents of the Market Street Chinatown drink alcohol from these cups may have fit neatly into a discourse that feminized the Chinese, but for the individuals drinking from the cups, a historically situated Chinese discourse of masculinity tied to other Chinese discourses of class may have been created and re-created. Objects like these tiny cups are material manifestations of gendered discourses. These discourses both create and are created by the meanings of material objects through which they articulate. The contours of hegemonic masculinities clearly vary cross-culturally, and the methods through which masculinity is enunciated are nuanced and complex.

Conclusions: Multivalence, Gender, and the Next Step

One of the points repeatedly stressed in this analysis is that objects can be simultaneously implicated in multiple masculine, feminine, and other gendered discourses. The two dominant discourses of masculinity presented here have served as examples of the complex and nuanced ways that masculinity is performed with and through material culture. It is important to emphasize that dominant discourses do not entirely obscure or eliminate alternatives and differences (Bhabha 1994). For instance, the totalizing picture Louie (2002) paints of Chinese masculinity has been criticized. Anthropologist Yao Souchou (2002) explains, “Chinese malehood has taken forms more strange and varied than the book would have it.” In another context, studying hegemonic masculinities at a local scale in Mexico led Gutmann (1996:12) to conclude that there are always multiple exceptions to normative masculinity. It is also important to remember that both men and women are implicated in discourses of masculinity (Sedgwick 1995). For example, Chiou-Ling Yeh (2004) explains how the feminization of Chinese masculinity explained in this essay was experienced by women. Mari Yoshihara (2003) writes about



FIGURE 4. The temple at Heinlerville. (Photo courtesy History San José.)

women's roles in creating orientalist discourse, and Louie (2002) writes about the possibilities and impossibilities for women to take on *wu* and *wen* qualities.

Integrating the study of hegemonic masculinities in archaeological practice is demonstrably possible. Alcohol consumption, attention to Guan Yu, and *wu* masculinity are all intimately connected and materially present at the Market Street site. There was also a definite articulation between an orientalist discourse, the construction of Chinese masculinity, and "Asian-looking" tableware that permeated homes in the community. The extent to which these discourses were interpolated into the daily lives of San Jose residents remains debatable.

The possibility for this debate brings attention back to the central goal of this paper: to map out fertile ground for an archaeology of masculinity in Overseas Chinese communities. One possible direction for future research is in the study of local practice and negotiation. How are these global discourses of masculinity contested and subverted? Michel de Certeau (1984) writes that the totalizing views of society (such as *wu* masculinity and the orientalist discourse) never accurately represent what people actually do when they move about their daily lives. This article has focused on the dominant discourses, the "official" ones that are easily identifiable in the historical record. The next step in an archaeology of Chinese masculinities will be to find places where these normative formulations do not work—places where counter discourses are entertained, and objects are conspicuously absent from their proscribed places. Illustrating the tensions between competing and complimentary discourses in practice will allow for complex and nuanced accounts of the transformations in society, culture, and identity that happened at places like the Market Street Chinatown.

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