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Civilization 1

Annotated Bibliography

Topic: Sources presenting the culture and lifestyle in Western Civilization from prehistoric times through 1500 written by or about women.

It is the year 2015 and the United States is closely approaching almost total gender equality; therefore, as a female citizen who has never known an extensively male dominated society it is difficult to imagine what a male dominated culture resembles. However, this characteristic of society is still present in other countries and was prevalent earlier time periods. Human history reflects advances and evolutions of the culture of the world; one example of these changes is presented in the treatment of women from first breath into death. Although, adaptations have occurred all throughout the world, in the aforementioned category the most progress has been achieved in western culture by way of the preceding societies, which paved the way. Under this reasoning, I will be focusing on the western culture from pre history to the sixteenth century. During the years from prehistoric times to the Renaissance the role of women was highly under represented because of the patriarchal societies, however, in the following sources you should be able to gather a sense of identity from the women of this time period. Through an analysis of art, literature, record keeping, and other social facets of the civilizations leading up to the sixteenth century culture of the West that are provided in the following pages, a better understanding and usage of female heritage may be found helping to connect all the way in to modern society.

ACU sources:

Kahtany, Abdallah H. 2009. *Women's rights : a historical perspective*. n.p.: Saudi Arabia : The Islamic Educational Center, 2009., 2009. *Abilene Library Consortium Catalog*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 13, 2015).

This source is a non-fiction bibliography about women and the women's rights movement over history. It provides information about the atrocities towards the oppression of women in western Civilization and religion along with the rights in regards to religion, government, family, and employment. After examining the oppression of women in the time it compares the priorities of women's rights organizations today.

This source is important to consider because it is relevant to current events. I would use it to suggest to the class the possible advantages and disadvantage of the priorities in the women's rights movement. Possibly by pointing out that it is a popular idea in the West specifically to gain total equality; but then asking the question of is narrow minded to focus on things such as wage equality when around the world there are much more serious issues.

Harrison, Kathryn. 2014. *Joan of Arc : a life transfigured*. n.p.: New York : Doubleday, [2014], 2014. *Abilene Library Consortium Catalog*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 15, 2015).

This is a biography about Joan of Arc. It tells her life story by looking at historical facts, folklore, and word of mouth to evaluate the reality. It also looks in to criticism to better understand her positive and negative attributes. It points to centuries of historians and figures viewing Joan of Arc in a critical manner in

order to get to the reality of who this person was. From early years to her end of days the text points to the trials and success that makes up her character.

This source is a good one to use because even though it only informs of one person of history the character happens to be important to history. Just like the goddesses of Greek and Roman culture, Joan of Arc has become an almost iconic figure through fact and fiction. To use a source that elaborates on her life it can ease some of the exaggeration but also demonstrate a powerful woman of the time. I think that often times people like to only view women as victims so this figure offers a some what different view.

Galeta, Patrik, Jaroslav Bruzek, and Martina Lázničková-Galetová. 2014. "Is sex estimation from handprints in prehistoric cave art reliable? A view from biological and forensic anthropology." *Journal Of Archaeological Science* 45, 141-149. *Science & Technology Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 15, 2015).

This source is journal article from the *Journal of Archeological Science* and therefore, offers a more scientific glance in this otherwise artistic field of reference. The article explains that the current understanding of the handprint size of cave paintings dated prehistorically explains the gender roles in certain prehistoric civilizations; the statement now suggests that women were involved in symbolic rituals of the time. However, the journal article also suggests that this understanding may be flawed because the control group for the sizing was a group from today. Therefore, the size of prehistoric civilizations differs from people today.

Although this article does in a sense contradict itself. It does present the current understanding of gender roles in prehistoric civilization and the evidence for this understanding. Also it demonstrates that our understanding of history is changing as technology and abilities do. I think that it can be used as an excellent tool to demonstrate the fluidity of knowledge. It may also be used to stir conversation as to whether or not one agrees with the journal. Do you think this understanding of gender roles is still relevant even taking in to account the potential margin of error?

Bahrani, Zainab. 2001. *Women of Babylon : gender and representation in Mesopotamia*. n.p.: London ; New York : Routledge, 2001., 2001. *Abilene Library Consortium Catalog*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 15, 2015).

This source is also a non-fiction bibliography written by Professor Bahrani. It investigates the gender role of women in cultures of early civilizations out side of the Greek and Roman culture. The source explains what feminine expectations and women's sexuality in the Mesopotamian branched civilizations looked like. It uses historic and visually historic references to make assertions.

I think this source is beneficial because rather than the other bibliography this offers only facts about women of this culture. It does not provide such a margin of bias as the bibliography that discusses women's rights priorities. It also opens the opportunity to discuss the differences between Babyloanian/ Mesopotamia spurred cultures separate from Greece and Rome. There is an obvious difference between Islamic or Assyrian culture in reference to women

than Roman and Greek treatment of women and this bibliography offers that comparison.

Adovasio, J. M., Olga Soffer, and Jake Page. *The invisible sex : uncovering the true roles of women in prehistory*. n.p.: New York : Smithsonian Books : Collins, 2007., 2007. *Abilene Library Consortium Catalog*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 29, 2015).

The nonfiction bibliography reads as the contradictory article from the academic journal previously mentioned. It submits the theory that women were prominent in the production of tangible and marketable goods such as the creation of cloth for clothing and rope for rafts used in travel. It also asserts that instead of the early human, ape like figures that most consider when think of such generation that they were actually relatively advanced, and women may have even come up with early language and writing.

This source as mentioned can be used as the contradictory argument to the journal article about women in early culture. However, it also provides a new view and understanding not only about women in the culture but about how women affected culture. This is important because people rarely acknowledge advancements at this time let alone from women. It should be kept in mind that other historians and writers may disagree with this assertion, but nevertheless, it is important to offer this mindset to challenge previous notions of women in culture. And finally, if they were important in such early culture when did this notion change? And why? It is monumental to understand how women's rights in civilization digressed if this is factual.

Primary Sources:

Archbishop of Canterbury, *Magna Carta*. Runnymede: 1215. From The British Library, *Magna Carta, Law, Liberty, Legacy*. The Avalon Project: Documents in Law History and Diplomacy, Yale Law School.

<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/medieval/magframe.asp> (accessed April, 2015)

“No one shall be arrested or imprisoned upon the appeal of a woman, for the death of any other than her husband”

“And if anyone die indebted to the Jews, his wife shall have her dower and pay nothing of that debt”

“And there be nothing due for him to us, all the chattels shall go to the deceased, saving his wife and children their reasonable shares.”

The Magna Carta, signed by King John under coercion in 1215, changed the power and regulations of the king after the enagement of bishops around the nation. This document had a great impact on the government of the time and future as well. However, it also concerned individuals under this new organization of the regime. One specific party concerned is that of women. Listed above are the only mentions of women, and how the new rule related to them. Perhaps the most shocking aspect of the Magna Carta is rather the lack of indications towards the rights or regulations of women in the society. This document describes how small a role that women would have played outside of the relationship to her home. Although, she was given rights to her own dowry and husband there is very little mentioning other wise. This can be used to show the role of women not only through what is said but through what isn't.

Bernardo Davanzati. *A Discourse upon Coins*. Text Creation Partnership. Anno: 1588. From Oxford. The Avalon Project: Documents in Law History and Diplomacy, Yale Law School.

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/16th_century/coins.asp (accessed April 2015)

“who fast when they are digging for gold, and for bid themselves the compnay of Women, with all other Pleasures, out of an old Superstition.”

“and the husbands of our time can tell whether the embroideries and other little Trangums of the Women, cost ‘em more than the clothes they are to set off.”

“The old Country-woman that us'd to sell her dozen of Eggs for an Assis of twelve Ounces, seeing it look now so deform'd, and reduc'd to one Ounce, would have said, Gentlemen, either give an Assis of twelve Ounces, or twelve of those paultry ones that weigh but one Ounce; or I'll give you an Egg apiece for your Asses; chuse which you will.”

This document was given aloud by Bernardo Davanzati at the Academy in the year 1588; it was printed later in 1696 by J.D. for John Churchill. This shows the life of women in 1588 through the mentioned of women in the quotes from the text above. In the first section women are referred to as pleasures; in the second phrase women are address as judging their worth; and in the third phrase it speaks of women going to market. This document though not specifically about women gives insight to the lives of women of the time. We can see that though women's position in society has become potentially more valuable than the society in this area before. It is obvious that women are not treated equally. They appear to still remain as property of the husband or other men; they are used for the profit and pleasure of men. Although this concept does not show

advancement in the lives of women, it is an upgrade in the purpose of women. Much like the abbey gave women a function by positioning themselves in the nunnery and formulating independence, the advancement through creating a separation from the home is a step forward in women's rights. This small step increases women's self value as well as the appreciation for their role in society by men and political entities.

"Bust of the Virgin [Bohemian] (2005.393)". In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2005.393> (October 2008)



The bust displayed in this photo is very ornate, as opposed to the previous sculpture of Mary; this bust displays intense colors and extravagant decorations that portrays Mary the virgin as a Queen rather than purely a mother. This is the kind of art that can be expected to appear in a chapel or cathedral rather than used as a personal devotional symbol. This is the only medieval Bohemian example of sculptural work in terracotta. Clearly shown in the picture is the facial expression of the Virgin Mary

in this sculpture. She is given an obviously distraught appearance, and one that is looking down upon those who stand beneath her, which if it were to be in a cathedral would have been the members of the church.

Much like the previous sculpture of "Enthroned Virgin and Child", this demonstrates that the women of the time should be fairer in skin with light to medium colored hair. Her features are also delicate, indicating a preference once again for pureness in women along with soft features. Although Mary is covered, she is heavily

adorned and draws attention to her features. This tells us that although modesty is obviously important that individualism was beginning to emerge in culture as embellishment of the self was not only accepted but also honored as they give their saints this treatment. There will be differences, of course, because Mary is worshiped however, it does indicate styles of woman's clothing and trends of the time.

"Enthroned Virgin and Child [English]" (1979.402) In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–
<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1979.402>. (October 2008)



In this piece, casted in ivory, we see a much more religious aspect which is consistent with the time period and culture. Thirteenth-Century England before the Protestant reformation was heavily involved in the Roman Catholic faith. This piece is thought to be used as a personal devotional piece, and it emerged at the height of the cult of the Virgin which is the worship and devotion to Mary as the mother of God for her compassion that complements that of Christ. Though the Christ child is now missing in the sculpture it represents the relationship between the biblical personalities as well

as the bond between mother and child.

This is a religious piece and therefore exemplifies the culture of the time.

However, it can also be used to explain the time period once again through the portrayal of facial and bodily features of women. The Virgin Mary is exalted as one of the saints in the Catholic Church and subsequently she would have been portrayed in the most ideal form of the time. Contradictory to the previous pieces there is clearly no sexualization of

the figure, but rather the piece is made to exhibit purity. There is a clear innocence in the illustration of Mary through her almost child-like features. This demonstrates the appreciation for innocence and purity; which would have most likely been expected of the women in the culture of the time as religion ruled many aspects of the day to day society.

"Figure of a reclining woman [Mesopotamia]" (86.16.3) In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*.

New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/86.16.3>. (October 2006)



This figure, made from alabaster, is featured in Mesopotamian Greece around the 2nd century BC. As shown in the photo of the specimen one arm and the head is missing. This sculpture is contradictory to Hellenistic pieces of the time and area; although,

most sculptures were modeled after women in Mesopotamia in the time period, the voluptuous features of the sculpture are thought to be more definite of the local tradition rather than Greco-Roman inspired.

Much like the previous sculpture of “Seated Female” from Mesopotamia, the piece shows the body type of women of the time. Because it is more closely related to Hellenistic culture, it is safe to assume that the body of this sculpture represents the ideal body form. However, what is most remarkable about the piece is how different the ideal type of women appears between the cultures. Whereas Grecian sculptures of women showed more toned and shaped bodies, this sculpture exhibits folds near the neck and

torso as well as wider hips anchored by broad thighs creating an ultimately more curvaceous figure.

"Seated female [Mesopotamia or Syria]" (1985.84) In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1985.84>. (October 2006)



This is clay sculpture found in the Mesopotamian or Syrian area that belongs to the Halaf culture. As is obvious in the photograph, she has enlarged thighs and breasts with neither hand nor feet in the sculpture. Though the head is missing in this piece other sculptures that have their heads are “elongated in a nose like projection”. There are remnants of paint on the sculpture which may have been illustrations of jewelry. It is 2.01 by 1.77 inches in size and is dated in the 7th or 6th

millennium BC.

Although the creator of this piece cannot be identified as male or female, we can use it to designate how women were viewed in the time. Sculptures of the time, though probably unrealistic in the facial expressions and appendages, either represent what an average woman would resemble or what the ideal body type should favor. Even today, women are viewed on a primarily visual level whether that be through body type or over appearance, and therefore, even though we may not have as many writings about women's roles of the time assumptions can be made. For instance, I would venture that this body type with large breasts and thigh that women were to be strong and possibly able to tolerate physically intensive labor; but that they were also meant for child bearing

and raising. Therefore, the whether this image represents the ideal or the average we can hypothesize women's societal role. However, I the remnant of jewelry also indicates other cultural occurrences; jewelry could be used purely for adornment, possibly ceremonial purposes, or to indicate class standing.

Roman Council of Magistrates. *Twelve Tables*. 450 BC. Engraved on tablets. The Avalon

Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy, Yale Law School

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/ancient/twelve_tables.asp (accessed April 2015)

“Women, even though they are of full age, because of their levity of mind shall be under guardianship ... except vestal virgins, who Â... shall be free from guardianship”

“The conveyable possessions of a woman who is under guardianship of male agnates shall not be acquired by prescriptive right unless they are transferred by herself with the authorization of her guardian”

“If any woman is unwilling to be subjected in this manner to her husband's marital control she shall absent herself for three successive nights in every year and by this means shall interrupt his prescriptive right of each year.”

“Women shall not tear their cheeks or shall not make a sorrowful outcry on account of a funeral”

“To repudiate his wife her husband shall order her... to have her own property for herself, shall take the keys, shall expel her”

The Twelve Tables are a government forum that was created to ease discontent in 450 BC in Rome. The passages above are the mentions of women in the entire text. It is obvious that women in Rome at the time are the property of their husbands, and they are

not respected by society for being clear of mind. This is valuable in seeing the representation of value of women as a whole, but it is only interesting to see the separation of classes of women. In the classes there are women who are young and unmarried, those who have been given to a husband, and vestal virgins who have given themselves to chastity. All women are to live under guardianship except for those who have vowed celibacy, meaning that they are not to be trusted under their own leadership and abilities. This indicates a distinct lack of respect for an entire gender as far as society goes. Although, there is still potential that women were respected privately and at home, as far as the governing body would be concerned women were prizes of men. However, as shown in the last passage, even though women were not specifically respected, they were to be shown care. The husband had to make sure that the wife was to be safe were there be a decision to leave her. This indicates that even though women were low ranking members of society that it was no a tone of discontent or detest, which is important to point out. Women were not thought of as slaves, they just were not honored in the same manner of men.

Notes:

I did not put all of the documents on this website for sake of space, however, here are a few websites that I employed where you might also useful information.

<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/default.asp>

<http://www.loc.gov>

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/>

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/indexes/subjectpopup.php>