



# Power and Gender in Oneota Culture: A Study of a Late Prehistoric People

*Thomas Edward Berres*

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Examining the traces left by inhabitants of prehistoric Illinois, archaeologist Thomas Berres finds a society without hierarchy, whose patterns of daily life were shaped by deeply held religious beliefs and traditions. Recognizing that symbols on artifacts left by the Oneota people reveal much about their understanding of the world, Berres analyzes these symbols and challenges commonly held assumptions about early Native American culture. He finds, for example, that the Oneota conceived of power as a means of accomplishment rather than as a way to control others and that the roles of men and women were well defined but parallel. His findings carry important new implications for understanding the role of women in Native American culture.

Berres recreates the values and cosmologies of the Oneota communities by closely examining all aspects of Oneota life and death, from food preparation to burial. His discussion of the thunderbird and Oneota mortuary practices, in particular, helps to capture the beliefs in the supernatural that were a vital part of life for these people. Archaeologists and readers interested in Native American history and culture will find fresh insights in *Power and Gender in Oneota Culture*.

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