

# HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

# HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

Historical Articles on Women's Lives and Activities

*Edited by Nancy F. Cott*

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# HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

Historical Articles on Women's Lives and Activities

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## 14. Intercultural and Interracial Relations

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Edited with an Introduction by

Nancy F. Cott  
Yale University

K · G · Saur

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# Series Preface

In the space of one generation, women's history has become the fastest-growing area of scholarship in U.S. history. Since the resurgence of feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s, insistent questions about the historical meanings of "woman's place" have sowed and reaped a garden of scholarship. Where scholarly works used to be bare of mention of women, academic enterprise has now produced a vigorous growth of books and articles, bringing to light diverse women of every region, race, class and age. This research is marked by a renovating intent that refuses to accept as "human" history a history of men. Interest is lively and debate is stimulating and sought after: attendance at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women rivals the size of the annual convention of the American Historical Association.

While books in women's history are daily increasing in numbers and strength, as in any fast-developing field the scholarly literature in the form of articles is most expansive and up-to-the-minute. All the history journals now publish articles on women's work, domestic settings, family relations, household matters, female politics and organizations and so forth, and new journals have sprung into being to concentrate on such topics. Women's historians publish in numerous regional and thematic history journals as well as in feminist outlets and in journals of other social science disciplines. This series brings together a collection of outstanding articles from the field, almost all written in the past twenty years and more than half published during the 1980s. It brings together, in volumes organized by topic, essays otherwise widely dispersed. These volumes reprint only articles that originally appeared in journals, not chapters of books; review articles are not included. Articles have been chosen for overall quality and for range. Each one was chosen for one or more of the following reasons: because it is the standard authority on its subject matter; represents an important statement on a topic by a recognized scholar; presages an important book to come; provides a first look at new evidence or new methods; or opens an untapped area or new controversy. Older articles have been reprinted if their data or interpretation have not been surpassed or if they marked an important stage in the historiography, even if since superseded.

The historical coverage of the series extends from the Revolutionary era to the 1960s. The articles themselves are dated from the 1940s through 1988. Volumes are organized by topic rather than time period. Within each volume, the

articles are ordered chronologically (with respect to substance), so that the whole can be read as an historical overview. The only exception to this ordering principle is Volume One, on Theory and Method, in which the contents are arranged in order of publication. Within each volume there is an attempt to include articles on as diverse kinds of women as possible. None of the volume topics is regionally or racially defined; rather, all volumes are topically designed so as to afford views of women's work, family lives, and public activities which cut across races and regions. Any volume in the series stands on its own, supplying as full a treatment of a designated subject matter as the scholarly literature will provide. Several groupings of volumes also make sense; that is, volumes two through five all center around domestic and family matters; volumes five through nine consider other varieties of women's work; volumes nine through eleven concern uses and abuses of women's bodies; volumes twelve through fourteen look at major aspects of socialization; and volumes fifteen through twenty include organizational and political efforts of many sorts.

As a whole, the series displays in all its range the vitality of the field of women's history. Aside from imbuing U.S. history with new vision, scholarship in this area has informed, and should continue to inform, current public debate on issues from parental leave to the nuclear freeze. By bringing historical articles together under topical headings, these volumes both represent accurately the shape of historical controversy (or consensus) on given issues and make historians' findings most conveniently available for current reference.

# Introduction

When the field of U.S. women's history began to develop in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it focused principally on white, middle-class, Protestant women of the urban Northeast. Some historians from the first made efforts to examine the lives of workingclass women, who were more numerous if less enshrined in American cultural values than their prosperous sisters; but data and interpretations which illuminated the dominant class and image of American womanhood multiplied most readily. Within ten years, however—and more emphatically as the 1980s proceeded—this narrow focus was recognized as such. Its regional, urban, class and ethnic narrowness was no more pronounced than the usual bias of mainstream U.S. history, but women's historians sought explicitly to uncover the history of women in their ethnic and racial diversity.

One important move, then, was to make plain that periodization based on urbanization and industrialization and concomitant changes in women's work and the household in the early nineteenth century bore a regional bias, toward the urban Northeast. In the South, Midwest and West, most households remained rural for the better part of the nineteenth century, and it was not until 1920 that more than half of the U.S. population lived in "urban" places (defined as population bases of 2500 or more). Another was to recognize that the "image" of appropriate womanhood touted by publicists, moralists, politicians, and other contributors to public discourse was usually (at any given time) far more unitary than the reality of American women, and often unmatched to experience, because it was derived from or proposed to a white, middle-class, urban model. A third move was to focus on the history of women in groups outside the dominant norm: white or black women in the slaveholding South, for instance, or immigrant women in factory jobs; or domestic servants.<sup>1</sup>

Turning the examining lens toward rural women, Hispanic or black women, women of the poor and laboring classes, has resulted in some of the most interesting and innovative work in women's history in the past decade.<sup>2</sup> These investigations have also enabled historians to see that the history of women has been, and must be conceptualized as being, a history of interactions, alliances and conflicts between different kinds of women. Where the first inquiries in women's history tended to look for the features that united women's lives and experiences across divergences of class, race, region, religion and so on, more recent inquiries have evoked the differences of situation, outlook, and possibility among diverse

women. The newer focus not only expands the breadth of women's history but also allows a more accurate and critical look at the purported norm of women's experiences.

In this volume, the articles all explore interactions between and among women of differing cultures or races. Perhaps the paradigmatic model of such interaction has been the dynamic between black slave women and white mistresses in the antebellum South, early a magnet of interest. Practitioners of women's history have raised new questions about the maintenance, structure and meaning of the system of black slavery, simply by insisting that women must be distinguished as part of the groups of both slaveholders and slaves. There has been new attention to elite white women's roles as icons and objects in the patriarchal value system of the white South, and to their double position of subordination to white males and command over black slaves. New distinctions have been drawn between black women's and men's experiences of slavery, especially focusing on black women's efforts to preserve kin ties and intimacy in the face of systematic sexual degradation by white owners. Some of the most interesting work has focused on relations between white mistresses and black slaves, asking to what extent there might have been particular commonality of interest, or particular intensity of conflict, because of their shared gender. The interest in black and white women's interaction during slavery has been further extended to inquiries into the continuing force of racism in later women's history, and also to examination of mistress/servant relationships in the postbellum South and the rest of the United States. For domestic service, more often than not, white women commanding social and economic resources have employed women of class and ethnic or racial identities differing from their own. At successive times in American history, not only the descendants of former slaves but also Irish, Asian, and Mexican immigrant women have found their basic employment in domestic service under white mistresses whose values and expectations differed sometimes dramatically from theirs. Besides this, there are several other categories, so to speak, of intercultural or interracial interaction, which can be discerned as characteristic of United States history. One as yet little-developed area is the study of interaction between women of different racial or ethnic groups at work, in fields or factory, where their similarity of economic resources and employment has sometimes, but rarely, brought women together. Another much better explored is that of cultural contact as white settlers moved across the American continent, bumping up against Native American and Hispanic populations who already inhabited the land. Both the attitudes of hostility or empathy between women of the different groups coming in contact, and the impact of United States government policy on sex roles and family structures of subjugated native groups, have commanded scholarly interest. And as in the study of the Southern system of slavery, all these types of interaction between women require the study of interaction between men and women, since the issues of white males' sexual

conquests, interracial sex, miscegenation, and intermarriage always become prominent.

Much of the recent literature looks at the Western states. This volume reflects that weight of the historiography, which has collected in part because women's historians turned their attention to the West fairly recently, after ethnic and racial diversity was recognized as central to women's history, and partly because intercultural contact has typically shown up in sharper relief in Western history. Although Native Americans were segregated by the U.S. government on reservations, women of Asian, Latin and European background intermingled in the settlement of the West Coast, and Mexican and Anglo women in the Southwest. White women's intents to aid or educate black, Indian, or Latin women through missionary or similar efforts brought a purposeful kind of intercultural and interracial interaction, also represented by articles in this volume. Historians have looked initially from the point of view of the missionaries or the reformers, since these women often left considerable documentation of their endeavors, but increasingly have tried to recapture the interaction from the point of view of the women being aided—or imposed upon. As a whole, the volume not only shows the diversity of women whose history is currently being investigated, but also delineates intercultural and interracial interaction as a subject with a history of its own.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (N.Y., Pantheon, 1982); Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930*, (N.Y., Oxford, 1979); Faye Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, CT, Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven, CT Yale Univ. Pr., 1986); Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (N.Y., Oxford, 1987); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (N.Y., Basic, 1985); Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1790-1860* (N. Y., Knopf, 1986).



# **Intercultural and Interracial Relations**





## The Role of Native Women in the Creation of Fur Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670–1830

SYLVIA VAN KIRK

*Sylvia Van Kirk provides a major example of how the understanding of history changes when women and minorities are treated seriously. In this article she highlights some of the findings from her pioneering study of the Canadian fur trade, *Many Tender Ties*. As she shows, the Canadian fur trade was neither violent nor male-dominated, because the incoming Europeans needed the cooperation of Indians of both sexes for the trade to succeed. Van Kirk's explanation of the activities of Indian women is a model of the feminist scholar's art of "piecing together" information about women from male-focused and ethnocentric sources. Her account does not present a picture of the Canadian fur trade from an Indian perspective, but it does take a giant first step toward a multicultural history.*

*The United States fur trade was much smaller and of shorter duration than the Canadian enterprise. American trappers seem to have depended more on their own resources and less on those of American Indians. However, many trappers married Indian women. Perhaps the American mountain man was not in fact the celebrated loner of legend and story. Because research on these questions is just beginning in the United States, it is still too early to tell.*

In essence the history of the early Canadian West is the history of the fur trade. For nearly two hundred years, from the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670 until the transfer of Rupert's Land to the newly created dominion of Canada in 1870, the fur trade was the dominant force in shaping the history of what are today Canada's four western provinces.

This long and unified experience gave rise in western Canada to a frontier society that seems to have been unique in the realm of interracial contact. Canada's western history has been characterized by relatively little violent conflict between Indian and white. I would like to suggest two major reasons why this was so. First, by its very nature, the Canadian fur trade was predicated on a mutual exchange and dependency between Indian and white. The Indian not only trapped the fur pelts but also provided the market for European goods. Until very recently, the fur trade has been viewed as an all-male affair, but new research has revealed that Indian women played an active role in promoting this trade. Although the men



"At the Portage." The Indian family of a Hudson's Bay Company steersman watches while trade goods are being prepared for the portage at Grand Rapids, ca. 1882. From *Picturesque Canada*, vol. 1, edited by George Monro Grant, published by Belden Bros., Toronto, 1882.

were the hunters of beaver and large game animals, the women were responsible for trapping smaller fur-bearing animals, especially the marten whose pelt was highly prized.<sup>1</sup> The notable emergence of Indian women as diplomats and peacemakers also indicates that they were anxious to maintain the flow of European goods such as kettles, cloth, knives, needles, and axes which helped to alleviate their onerous work.<sup>2</sup>

The second factor in promoting harmonious relations was the remarkably wide extent of intermarriage between incoming traders and Indian women, especially among the Cree, the Ojibwa, and the Chipewyan. Indian wives proved indispensable helpmates to the officers and men of both the British-based Hudson's Bay Company and its Canadian rival, the North West Company. Such interracial unions were, in fact, the basis for a fur trade society and were sanctioned by an indigenous rite known as marriage *à la façon du pays*—according to the custom of the country.

The development of marriage *à la façon du pays* underscores the complex and changing interaction between the traders and the host Indian societies. In the initial phase of contact, many Indian bands actively encouraged the formation of marital alliances between their women and the traders. The Indians viewed marriage in an integrated social and economic context; marital alliances created reciprocal social ties, which served to consolidate their economic relationships with the incoming strangers. Thus, through marriage, many a trader was drawn into the Indian kinship circle. In return for giving the traders sexual and domestic rights to their women, the Indians expected reciprocal privileges such as free access to the posts and provisions.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of this Indian attitude, it was soon impressed upon the traders that marriage alliances were an important means of ensuring good will and cementing trade relations with new bands or tribes. The North West Company, a conglomerate of partnerships which began extensive trading in the West in the 1770s, had learned from its French predecessors of the benefits to be gained from intermarriage and officially sanctioned such unions for all ranks (from bourgeois down to *engagé*).<sup>4</sup> The Hudson's Bay Company, on the other hand, was much slower to appreciate the realities of life in Rupert's Land. Official policy formulated in faraway London forbade any intimacy with the Indians, but officers in the field early began to break the rules. They took the lead in forming unions with the women of prominent Indian leaders, although there was great variation in the extent to which the servants were allowed to form connections with native women.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the public social benefits, the traders' desire to form unions with Indian women was increased by the absence of white women. Although they did not come as settlers, many of the fur traders spent the better part of their lives in Rupert's Land, and it is a singular fact in the social development of the Canadian West that for well over a century there were no white women.<sup>6</sup> The stability of many of the interracial unions formed in the Indian country stemmed partly from the fact that an Indian

woman provided the only opportunity for a trader to replicate a domestic life with wife and children. Furthermore, although Indian mores differed from those of the whites, the traders learned that they trifled with Indian women at their peril. As one old voyageur explained, one could not just dally with any native woman who struck one's fancy. There was a great danger of getting one's head broken if a man attempted to take an Indian girl without her parents' consent.<sup>7</sup>

It is significant that, just as in the trade ceremony, the rituals of marriage *à la façon du pays* conformed more to Indian custom than to European. There were two basic steps to forming such a union. The first step was to secure the consent of the woman's relatives; it also appears that the wishes of the woman herself were respected, as there is ample evidence that Indian women actively sought for trade husbands. Once consent was secured, a bride price had then to be decided; this varied considerably among the tribes but could amount to several hundred dollars worth of trade goods. After these transactions, the couple were usually conducted ceremoniously to the post where they were now recognized as man and wife.<sup>8</sup> In the Canadian West, marriage *à la façon du pays* became the norm for Indian-white unions, being reinforced by mutual interest, tradition, and peer group pressure.<sup>9</sup> Although ultimately "the custom of the country" was to be strongly denounced by the missionaries, it is significant that in 1867, when the legitimacy of the union between Chief Factor William Connolly and his Cree wife was tried before a Canadian court, it was found to have constituted a lawful marriage. The judge declared a valid marriage existed because the wife had been married according to the customs and usages of her own people and because the consent of both parties, the essential element of civilized marriage, had been proved by twenty-eight years of repute, public acknowledgement, and cohabitation as man and wife.<sup>10</sup>

If intermarriage brought the trader commercial and personal benefit, it also provided him with a unique economic partner. The Indian wife possessed a range of skills and wilderness know-how that would have been quite foreign to a white wife. Although the burdensome work role of the nomadic Indian woman was somewhat alleviated by the move to the fur-trade post, the extent to which the traders relied upon native technology kept the women busy.

Perhaps the most important domestic task performed by the women at the fur-trade posts was to provide the men with a steady supply of "Indian shoes" or moccasins. The men of both companies generally did not dress in Indian style (the buckskinned mountain man was not part of the Canadian scene), but they universally adopted the moccasin as the most practical footwear for the wilderness. One wonders, for example, how the famed 1789 expedition of Alexander Mackenzie would have fared without the work of the wives of his two French-Canadian voyageurs. The women scarcely ever left the canoes, being "continually employ'd making shoes of moose skin as a pair does not last us above one Day."<sup>11</sup> Closely related to the manufacture of moccasins was the Indian woman's role in making

snowshoes, without which winter travel was impossible. Although the men usually made the frames, the women prepared the sinews and netted the intricate webbing which provided support.<sup>12</sup>

Indian women also made a vital contribution in the preservation of food, especially in the manufacture of the all-important pemmican, the nutritious staple of the North West Company's canoe brigades. At the posts on the Plains, buffalo hunting and pemmican making formed an essential part of the yearly routine, each post being required to furnish an annual quota. In accordance with Indian custom, once the hunt was over the women's work began. The women skinned the animals and cut the meat into thin strips to be dried in the sun or over a slow fire. When the meat was dry, the women pounded it into a thick flaky mass, which was then mixed with melted buffalo fat. This pemmican would keep very well when packed into ninety-pound buffalo-hide sacks, which had been made by the women during the winter.<sup>13</sup>

But pemmican was too precious a commodity to form the basic food at the posts themselves. At the more northerly posts, the people subsisted mainly on fish, vast quantities of which were split and dried by the women to provide food for the winter. Maintaining adequate food supplies for a post for the winter was a precarious business, and numerous instances can be cited of Indian wives keeping the fur traders alive by their ability to snare small game such as rabbits and partridges. In 1815, for example, the young Nor'Wester George Nelson would probably have starved to death when provisions ran out at his small outpost north of Lake Superior had it not been for the resourcefulness of his Ojibwa wife who, during the month of February, brought in fifty-eight rabbits and thirty-four partridges.<sup>14</sup> Indian women also added to the diet by collecting berries and wild rice and making maple sugar. The spring trip to the sugar bush provided a welcome release from the monotony of the winter routine, and the men, with their families and Indian relatives, all enjoyed this annual event.<sup>15</sup>

As in other pre-industrial societies, the Indian women's role extended well beyond domestic maintenance as they assisted in specific fur-trade operations. With the adoption of the birch-bark canoe, especially by the North West Company, Indian women continued in their traditional role of helping in its manufacture. It was the women's job to collect annual quotas of spruce roots, which were split fine to sew the seams of the canoes, and also to collect the spruce gum, which was used for caulking the seams.<sup>16</sup> The inexperienced and undermanned Hudson's Bay Company also found itself calling upon the labor power of Indian women, who were adept at paddling and steering canoes. Indeed, although the inland explorations of various Hudson's Bay Company men such as Anthony Henday and Samuel Hearne have been glorified as individual exploits, they were, in fact, entirely dependent upon the Indians with whom they traveled, especially the women. "Women," marveled one inlander, "were as useful as men upon Journeys."<sup>17</sup> Henday's journey to the Plains in 1754, for example, owed much of its success to his Cree female companion who provided him with much timely advice about the plans of the Indians, in addition to a warm

winter suit of furs.<sup>18</sup> The Hudson's Bay Company men emphasized to their London superiors the value of the Indian women's skill at working with fur pelts. In short, they argued that the economic services performed by Indian women at the fur-trade posts were of such importance that they should be considered as "Your Honours Servants".<sup>19</sup> Indian women were indeed an integral part of the fur-trade labor force, although, like most women, because their labor was largely unpaid, their contribution has been ignored.

The reliance on native women's skills remained an important aspect of fur-trade life, even though by the early nineteenth century there was a notable shift in the social dynamic of fur-trade society. By this time, partly because of the destructive competition between rival companies which had flooded the Indian country with alcohol, relations between many Indian bands and the traders deteriorated. In some well-established areas, traders sometimes resorted to coercive measures, and in some cases their abuse of Indian women became a source of conflict.<sup>20</sup> In this context, except in new areas such as the Pacific Slope, marriage alliances ceased to play the important function they once had. The decline of Indian-white marriages was also hastened by the fact that fur-trade society itself was producing a new pool of marriageable young women—the mixed-blood "daughters of the country." With her dual heritage, the mixed-blood woman possessed the ideal qualifications for a fur trader's wife; acclimatized to life in the West and familiar with Indian ways, she could also adapt successfully to white culture.

From their Indian mothers, mixed-blood girls learned the native skills so necessary to the functioning of the trade. As Sir George Simpson, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company emphasized in the 1820s: "It is the duty of the Women at the different Posts to do all that is necessary in regard to Needle Work,"<sup>21</sup> and the mixed-blood women's beautiful beadwork was highly prized. In addition to performing traditional Indian tasks, the women's range of domestic work increased in more European ways. They were responsible for the fort's washing and cleaning; "the Dames" at York Factory, for example, were kept "in Suds, Scrubbing and Scouring," according to one account.<sup>22</sup> As subsistence agriculture was developed around many of the posts, the native women took an active role in planting and harvesting. Chief Factor John Rowand of Fort Edmonton succinctly summarized the economic role of native women in the fur trade when he wrote in the mid-nineteenth century: "The women here work very hard, if it was not so, I do not know how we would get on with the Company work."<sup>23</sup> With her ties to the Indians and familiarity with native customs and language, the mixed-blood wife was also in a position to take over the role of intermediary or liaison previously played by the Indian wife. The daughters of the French-Canadian voyageurs were often excellent interpreters: some could speak several Indian languages. The timely intervention of more than one mixed-blood wife saved the life of a husband who had

aroused Indian hostility.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, in his account of fur-trade life during the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly after 1821, Isaac Cowie declared that many of the company's officers owed much of their success in overcoming difficulties and in maintaining the company's influence over the natives to "the wisdom and good counsel of their wives."<sup>25</sup>

In spite of the importance of native connections, many fur-trade fathers wanted to introduce their mixed-blood daughters to the rudiments of European culture. Since the place of work and home coincided, especially in the long winter months, the traders were able to take an active role in their children's upbringing and they were encouraged by company officials to do so.<sup>26</sup> When the beginnings of formal schooling were introduced at the posts on the Bay in the early 1800s, it was partly because it was felt to be essential that girls, who were very seldom sent overseas, should be given a basic education which would inculcate them with Christian virtue.<sup>27</sup> Increasingly, fathers promoted the marriage of their daughters to incoming traders, as the means to securing their place in fur-trade society. In a significant change of policy in 1806, the North West Company acknowledged some responsibility for the fate of its "daughters" when it sanctioned marriage *à la façon du pays* with daughters of white men, but now prohibited it with full-blooded Indian women.<sup>28</sup>

As mixed-blood wives became "the vogue" (to quote a contemporary), it is notable that "the custom of the country" began to evolve more toward European concepts of marriage. Most importantly, such unions were coming to be regarded as unions for life. When Hudson's Bay Company officer J. E. Harriott espoused Elizabeth Pruden, for example, he promised her father, a senior officer, that he would "live with her and treat her as my wife as long as we both lived."<sup>29</sup> It became customary for a couple to exchange brief vows before the officer in charge of the post, and the match was further celebrated by a dram of liquor to all hands and a wedding dance. The bride price was replaced by the opposite payment of a dowry, and many fur-trade officers were able to dower their daughters quite handsomely.<sup>30</sup> Marriage *à la façon du pays* was further regulated by the Hudson's Bay Company after 1821 with the introduction of marriage contracts, which emphasized the husband's financial obligations and the status of the woman as a legitimate wife.

The social role of the mixed-blood wife, unlike that of the Indian wife, served to cement ties within fur-trade society itself. Significantly, in the North West Company, many marriages cut across class lines, as numerous Scottish bourgeois chose their wives from among the daughters of the French-Canadian *engagés* who had married extensively among the native people. Among the Hudson's Bay Company men, it was appreciated that a useful way to enhance one's career prospects was to marry the daughter of a senior officer.<sup>31</sup> Whatever a man's initial motivation, the substantial private fur-trade correspondence which has survived from the nineteenth century reveals that many fur traders became devoted family men. Family could be a source of interest and consolation in a life that was often hard

and monotonous. As Chief Factor James Douglas pointedly summed it up: "There is indeed no living with comfort in this country until a person has forgot the great world and has his tastes and character formed on the current standard of the stage . . . habit makes it familiar to us, softened as it is by the *many tender ties* which find a way to the heart."<sup>32</sup>

However, the founding in 1811 of the Selkirk Colony, the first agrarian settlement in western Canada, was to introduce new elements of white civilization that would hasten the decline of the indigenous fur-trade society. The chief agents of these changes were the missionaries and white women.

The missionaries, especially the Anglicans who arrived under the auspices of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1820, roundly denounced marriage *à la façon du pays* as being immoral and debased.<sup>33</sup> But while they exerted considerable pressure on long cohabiting couples to accept a church marriage, they were in no way champions of miscegenation. In fact, this attack upon fur-trade custom had a detrimental effect upon the position of native women. Incoming traders, now feeling free to ignore the marital obligations implicit in the "the custom of the country," increasingly looked upon native women as objects for temporary sexual gratification. The women, on the other hand, found themselves being judged according to strict British standards of female propriety. It was they, not the white men, who were to be held responsible for the perpetuation of immorality because of their supposedly promiscuous Indian heritage. The double standard, tinged with racism, had arrived with a vengeance!

Racial prejudice and class distinctions were augmented by the arrival of British women in Rupert's Land. The old fabric of fur-trade society was severely rent in 1830 when Simpson and another prominent Hudson's Bay Company officer returned from furlough, having wed genteel British ladies.<sup>34</sup> The appearance of such "flowers of civilization" provoked unflattering comparisons with native women; as one officer observed, "this influx of white faces has cast a still deeper shade over the faces of our Brunettes in the eyes of many."<sup>35</sup> In Red River especially, a white wife became a status symbol; witness the speed with which several retired Hudson's Bay Company factors married the English schoolmistresses after the demise of their native wives. To their credit, many company officers remained loyal to their native families, but they became painfully anxious to turn their daughters into young Victorian ladies, hoping that with accomplishments and connections, the stigma of their mixed blood would not prevent them from remaining among the social elite. Thus in the 1830s, a boarding school was established in Red River for the children of company officers; the girls' education was supervised by the missionary's wife, and more than one graduate was praised for being "quite English in her Manner."<sup>36</sup> In numerous cases, these highly acculturated young women were able to secure advantageous matches with incoming white men, but to some extent this was only because white ladies did not in fact make a successful adaptation to fur-trade life. It had been predicted that "the



lovely, tender exotics" (as white women were dubbed) would languish in the harsh fur-trade environment,<sup>37</sup> and indeed they did, partly because they had no useful social or economic role to play. As a result, mixed marriages continued to be a feature of western Canadian society until well into the mid-nineteenth century, but it was not an enduring legacy. Indian and mixed-blood women, like their male counterparts, were quickly shunted aside with the development of the agrarian frontier after 1870. The vital role native women had played in the opening of the Canadian West was either demeaned or forgotten.

## Notes

1. Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980; Winnipeg, Manitoba: Watson and Dwyer, 1980), pp. 72–73.

2. The most outstanding examples of Indian women who, although not married to whites, were active peacemakers and diplomats, are Thanadelthur, a Chipewyan, and Lady Calpo, a Chinook. See *ibid.*, pp. 66–71, 76–77.

3. The few cases of violent conflict, such as the Henley House Massacre of 1752, were caused by the traders' failure to respect this bargain. See *ibid.*, pp. 41–44.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–29, 41–42.

6. After an ill-fated venture in 1686, British wives were officially prohibited from traveling to Hudson Bay. It was not until 1812 with the Selkirk settlers that women were again officially transported to Hudson Bay. A French-Canadian woman in 1806 was the first and one of the few white women to come west in the North West Company canoes. See Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, pp. 173–80.

7. *Johnstone et. al. v. Connolly*, Appeal Court, 7 Sept. 1869, *La Revue Legale*, 1:280 (hereafter cited as *Connolly Appeal Case*, 1869).

8. Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, pp. 36–37. For a discussion of the motivation of the Indian women, see chap. 4.

9. This does not mean that sexual exploitation of Indian women was unknown in the Canadian West. Prostitution certainly existed, and the marriage relationship could be abused as in white society.

10. *Connolly vs. Woolrich*, Superior Court, Montreal, 9 July 1867, *Lower Canada Jurist* 11:230, 248.

11. W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 220.

12. Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, pp. 54–55.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

14. Toronto Public Library, George Nelson Papers, Journal, 29 Jan.–23 June 1815. See also Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, pp. 58–59.

15. Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, p. 57.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

17. J. B. Tyrrell, ed., *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor, 1774–1792*, Champlain Society, vol. 21 (Toronto, 1934), pp. 252–53.

18. Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, p. 64.

19. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B.239/b/79, fols. 40d–41 (hereafter HBCA).

20. Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, pp. 90–91.

21. R. H. Fleming, ed., *Minutes of Council of the Northern Department of Rupert's Land, 1821–31*, Hudson's Bay Record Society, vol. 3 (London, 1940), p. 378.

22. Public Archives of Canada, James Hargrave Correspondence, vol. 21, Hargrave to Christie, 13 June 1832.

23. HBCA, D.5/18, fols. 535d-536.
24. One of the most famous cases was that of James Douglas, a clerk in northern British Columbia, whose high-handed treatment so outraged the Carrier Indians that he might have been killed but for intervention of his mixed-blood wife Amelia and the wife of the interpreter. See Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, pp. 111-13.
25. Isaac Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1913), p. 204.
26. Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, pp. 97, 99, 106, 131.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.
28. W. S. Wallace, ed., *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, Champlain Society, vol. 22 (Toronto, 1934), p. 211.
29. Connolly Appeal Case, 1869, p. 286.
30. Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, pp. 108, 115.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.
32. G. P. de T. Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, Champlain Society, vol. 24 (Toronto, 1928), p. 381.
33. Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, pp. 153-56.
34. They also violated "the custom of the country" by callously casting aside their former mixed-blood partners after the fact. For a full discussion of this episode see Sylvia Van Kirk, "The Impact of White Women on Fur Trade Society," in *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), pp. 27-48.
35. PAC, Hargrave Correspondence, vol. 21, Hargrave to Charles Ross, 1 Dec. 1830.
36. Glazebrook, ed., *Hargrave Correspondence*, p. 229.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 310-11.

## **Honor Ideology, Marriage Negotiation, and Class-Gender Domination in New Mexico, 1690-1846**

by

**Ramón A. Gutiérrez\***

The ways in which societies organize marriage provide us an important window into how economic and political arrangements are construed. When people marry, they forge affinal alliances, change residence, establish rights to sexual service, and exchange property. Besides being about the reproduction of class and power, however, marriage is about gender. The marital exchange of women gives men rights over women that women never gain over men. This feature of marriage provides a key to the political economy of sex, by which cultures organize "maleness" and "femaleness," sexual desire, fantasy, and concepts of childhood and adulthood (Rubin, 1975: 166).

With these theoretical moorings in mind, I present here an essay on the history of marriage in a colonial setting, New Mexico between 1690 and 1846, an environment in which class domination was culturally articulated and justified through hierarchies of status based on race, ethnicity, religion, and gender. My major concern will be to examine the key role that control over marriage choice played in the maintenance of social inequality, focusing on changes in the mode of marriage formation during the period under study—a decline in the incidence of parentally arranged nuptials and an increase in those freely contracted by adolescents on the basis of love and personal attraction. Rather than discussing the roots of these changes abstractly, I will explore how parents and children negotiated their behavior, the disparities of power

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that constrained their actions, and the ambiguities, tensions, and contradictions within the ideological superstructure that gave historical agency meaning.<sup>1</sup>

### HISTORICAL SETTING

Once the ancient temples of Mexico City had been leveled and cities of gold had failed to materialize, the business of colonizing Mexico's central plateau began. The 1548 discovery of silver at Zacatecas quickly moved the frontier north and set the pace for the establishment of a rapid succession of towns: Guanajuato, Queretaro, San Luis Potosí, Durango. The far north, the areas we know today as New Mexico, California, and Texas, was explored in the first half of the sixteenth century by such men as Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Fray Marcos de Niza, and Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. Nonetheless, it remained a fantasy of future enrichment in the Spanish imagination until the end of the century. Then, in 1598, Don Juan de Oñate, the son of one of Zacatecas's wealthiest silver miners, mustered 129 soldiers and together with their dependents ventured into the land of the Chichimecas—the fierce nomadic Indian tribes that had effectively curtailed Spanish expansion north—to establish the Kingdom of New Mexico.

Arriving in August of 1598 armed with the cross of Christ and the sword to impose it, the soldier-settlers and friars quickly set about the task of "civilizing" the Indians through baptism, the introduction of European seeds and livestock, and the imposition of Spanish mores of comportment and dress. To ensure the presumed physical and spiritual well-being of New Mexico's Pueblo Indians, they were divided into 41 *encomiendas* awarded to notables of the conquest. For this "entrustment" to the protection and spiritual care of the Spanish, the natives paid dearly in tribute, labor, and, often, lives (Bloom, 1939: 367-371; Snow, 1983: 347-357).

Though "savages" were all the Spaniards saw when they arrived in the Rio Grande Valley, the word is hardly adequate to describe the Indians living there. Since the thirteenth century, the river basin had been occupied by the compact agricultural villages of the Pueblo Indians. The 90 pueblos—so named by the Spanish because their multistoried dwellings resembled Aztec cities—were economically independent, politically autonomous, and best described as city-states. In 1598 the Pueblo population totaled approximately 60,000. Though several nomadic Indian tribes, notably the Apache and Navajo, hunted in the

surrounding plains and mountains, their low level of material culture and social organization spared them the yoke of subjugation until the early 1700s (Dozier, 1950: 43-52).

The years 1598-1680 were brutal ones for the Pueblo peoples. Their food reserves were depleted by the colonists; their lives were disrupted by Spanish labor demands; their religious images were desecrated by the friars and their rituals suppressed. Many saw their kin driven to the point of death; women were raped and children enslaved. In 1680 they formed a confederation and routed the Spanish from the area, a feat that reverberated throughout New Spain and spurred other Indians to similar action. When the fury of the Pueblo Revolt was over, 21 out of 33 Franciscan friars were dead and 380 settlers had lost their lives. The 2,300 white survivors fled south to El Paso (Texas), where they regrouped and remained until 1693 (Bailey, 1940).

Don Diego de Vargas was charged with the reconquest of the territory and in 1693 led 100 soldiers, 70 families, and 18 friars to reestablish Spanish presence in Santa Fe. A second Spanish town, Santa Cruz de la Cañada, was founded in 1695 (Archivo General de la Nación, Historia [hereafter AGN-HIST] 39-5), followed by Albuquerque in 1706 (Bloom, 1935: 48). Colonists who did not live in one of these three towns resided in small dispersed ranches or hamlets situated along the banks of the Rio Grande. The white population in 1700 was perhaps no more than 3,000. The Pueblo population by that year had declined to 15,000 (Dozier, 1950: 122).

The period following the reconquest saw a major readjustment in Indian-white relations. Faced with the realization that there was a limit to the exploitation the Pueblo would tolerate and that they would not be cowed into abandoning their native religious beliefs easily, the crown abolished the *encomienda* and replaced it with the *repartimiento*, a less onerous rotational labor levy. New Mexico's governors were ordered to observe Indian rights strictly, and the martyrdom of their brothers impressed on the friars that their evangelical zeal would have to be tempered (Meinig, 1974: 27-32; Bannon, 1974: 28-48).

But the problem of extracting labor and wealth from the native population in its various forms remained. The revolt had not altered the practice of using political office as a vehicle for personal enrichment. Someone still had to construct the imposing mission compounds that were to dot the landscape, and the aristocracy's sense of preeminence was still dependent on the labor of others. For these ends, then, a new enemy was necessary. The "Apaches"—as the Spanish called all the nomadic Indians whose hunting grounds bordered on the agricultural

settlements of the river basin (Jicarilla, Mescalero, Navajo, Ute, and Comanche)—were quickly defined as Satan's minions; this status made them eligible for "just war." Scores of men, women, and particularly children were brought into Spanish villages enslaved as prisoners of war. Some *genizaros*, as these detribalized Indians became known, were retained in local households for the performance of domestic tasks while others were traded for luxury goods in the mining centers of northern New Spain. The growth of this commerce in captives during the eighteenth century was directly responsible for the constant warfare the kingdom's colonists were to experience (Bailey, 1966: 1-89).

In this environment, the Spanish colonists of the post-reconquest period fashioned a society that they perceived as ordered hierarchically by honor, a prestige system based on principles of inherent personal worth. Honor was a complex gradient of status that encompassed several other measures of social standing such as descent, ethnicity, religion, profession, and authority over land (Tönnies, 1953: 12-21). The summation and ordering of these statuses and the pragmatic outcome of evaluations of honor resulted in the organization of society into three broadly defined groups: the nobility, the landed peasantry, and the *genizaros*.

The status hierarchy did not completely encompass class standing as structured by relations of production. The Pueblo Indians on whose labor and tribute the colonists so heavily relied fell outside the groups to whom honor mattered and refused to accept, cherish, and validate the ideals by which Spanish society organized its interactions. From the colonists' point of view, the physical tasks the Pueblo Indians performed were intrinsically dishonorable and conquest by a superior power itself dishonoring. Obviously, the Pueblo did not consciously share this view. In colonial New Mexico, honor and class were nevertheless interdependent. Social power ultimately gained its effectiveness from the combination of the two (Giddens, 1971: 166-167).

The nobility consisted of 15-20 families that intermarried to ensure their continued dominance. Their sense of aristocracy was rooted in the legally defined honor granted to the kingdom's colonizers by King Phillip II in their 1595 charter of incorporation (Hammond and Rey, 1953: 50). As the colony developed, nobility gained a broader social meaning and was claimed by individuals who acquired large amounts of land, by military officials, and by bureaucrats—wealth and power acting as the determinants of intragroup mobility. By comparison with the titled peerage of central Mexico, New Mexico's nobility at best enjoyed

the life of a comfortable gentry (Ladd, 1976). Yet, perhaps because of its isolation—and the attendant belief that it was a cultural oasis in a sea of barbarism—New Mexico's aristocracy considered itself second to none. Bearing Old Christian ancestry, harboring pretensions of purity of blood, and eschewing physical labor, it reveled in its rituals of precedence, in ostentatious display of lavish clothing and consumption of luxury goods, in respectful forms of address and titles. Needless to say, such habits were buttressed by force of arms, wealth, and a legal superstructure premised on the belief that the social order was divinely ordained.

Landed peasants who were primarily of mestizo origin but considered themselves "Spaniards" were next in the hierarchy of honor. They had been recruited for the colonization of New Mexico with promises of land, and in 1700 all enjoyed rights to *merced*, a communal land grant consisting of private irrigated farmlands, house plots, and commons for livestock grazing. By 1800, the progressive subdivision of private plots had resulted in parcels too small for subsistence. Under these circumstances, owners of morseled holdings increasingly turned to wage labor. Their ranks were swelled by persons who had not gained access to land as part of their patrimony. Though the land area of New Mexico may seem boundless, it was constrained by limited water sources, by the previous and competing water and land claims of the Pueblo Indians, and by the resistance to geographic expansion offered by hostile tribes (Leonard, 1970).

Lowest in prestige, dishonored and infamous because of their slave status, were the *genízaros*, a diverse group of Indians who resided in Spanish towns and performed the community's most menial and degrading tasks. Between 1694 and 1849, 3,294 *genízaros* entered Hispanic households (Brugge, 1968: 30). Early in the seventeenth century, New Mexicans had been granted the privilege of warring against infidel Indians and retaining them in bondage for ten years as compensation for the costs of battle (Góngora, 1975: 128). Though many *genízaros* remained slaves much longer, they were customarily freed at marriage. Lack of access to land and the development of emotional dependencies on their masters, by whom in most cases they had been raised, meant that even after manumission *genízaros* had few options for social mobility. Remaining in the household and employment of their former owners was common.

*Genízaros* (from the Turkish *yeni*, "new," and *cheri*, "troops") were truly New Mexico's shock troops against the infidel. Stigmatized by their former slavery, lacking kinship ties to the European community,

and deemed devious because of their lack of mastery of Spanish, the increasing numbers of free *genízaros* were segregated in special neighborhoods such as Santa Fe's Barrio de Analco or congregated in new settlements such as Belén (1740), Abiquiu (1754), Ojo Caliente (1754), and San Miguel del Vado (1794). All of these *genízaro* communities—communities now of landed peasants of *genízaro* origin—were strategically established along the Indian raiding routes and were to serve Spanish settlements as buffers against attack (Swadesh, 1974: 31-35).

### THE IDEOLOGY OF HONOR

Honor was a polysemic word embodying meanings at two different but fundamentally interrelated levels, one of status and one of virtue. Honor was first and foremost society's measure of social standing, ordering on a single vertical continuum those persons with much honor and differentiating them from those with little. Excellence manifested as territorial expansion of the realm was the monarchy's justification for the initial distribution of honor. Yet, "the claim to honor," as Julian Pitt-Rivers (1968: 505) notes, "depends always in the last resort, upon the ability of the claimant to impose himself. Might is the basis of right to precedence, which goes to the man who is bold enough to enforce his claim." The children of the conquistadores gained their parents' honor through ascription and maintained and enhanced it through behavior deemed appropriate to a highly esteemed person.<sup>2</sup>

The second dimension of honor was a constellation of virtue ideals. Dividing the community horizontally along prestige-group boundaries, honor-virtue established the status ordering among equals. Definitions of virtue were gender-specific. Males embodied honor (the sentiment of honor) when they acted *con hombría* (in a manly fashion), exercised authority over family and subordinates, and esteemed honesty and loyalty. Females possessed the moral and ethical equivalent of honor, *vergüenza* (shame), if they were timid, shy, feminine, virginal before marriage and afterwards faithful to their husbands, discreet in the presence of men, and concerned for their reputations. Infractions of the rules of conduct dishonored men and were a sign of shamelessness in women. Shamelessness accumulated around the male head of household and dishonored both the family as a corporate group and all its members.

The maintenance of social inequality was central to the way in which status and virtue were defined to interact, the aim being the perpetuation



of the nobility's preeminence. An aristocrat of however low repute was always legally more honorable than the most virtuous peasant. Because precedence at the upper reaches of the social structure guaranteed more material and symbolic benefits, it was usually among the nobility and elites that the most intense conflicts over honor-virtue occurred. Family feuds and vendettas were frequently the way sullied reputations were avenged and claims to virtue upheld.<sup>3</sup>

Consensus seems to have existed among New Mexicans of Hispanic origin regarding the behavior deemed virtuous and worthy of honor. Among the nobility and the peasantry alike, men concerned for their personal and familial repute, judged by how well they resolved the contradictory imperatives of domination (protection of one's women-folk from assault) and conquest (prowess gained through sullyng the purity of other men's women), hoped to minimize affronts to their virtue, thereby maintaining their status. Female seclusion and a high symbolic value placed on virginity and marital fidelity helped accomplish this aim.

Yet only in aristocratic households, where servants and retainers abounded, could resources be expended to ensure that females were being properly restrained and shameful. The maintenance of their virtue was made easier because *genízaro* women could be forced into sexual service. As slaves they were dishonored by their bondage and could therefore be abused without fear of retaliation, for as one friar lamented in his 1734 report to the viceroy, Spanish New Mexicans justified their rapes saying: "an Indian does not care if you fornicate with his wife because she has no shame [and] . . . only with lascivious treatment are Indian women conquered" (Archivo General de la Nación, Inquisición [hereafter AGN-INQ] 854: 253-256).

Inequalities in power and status kept peasant men from honorably challenging aristocrats. Both because of this disparity in status and because of the excesses of the nobility in asserting their virility, ideals of female virtue were as intensely cherished by peasants. Manuel Alvarez, the United States consul in Santa Fe, alluded to this when he wrote in 1834: "the honorable man (if it is possible for a poor man to be honorable) has a jewel in having an honorable wife" (Manuel Alvarez, personal papers, notebook, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives). Among the peasantry, gender prescriptions undoubtedly had to be reconciled with the exigencies of production and reproduction of material life. The required participation of all able household members in planting and the harvest meant that there were periods when constraints on females of this class were less rigorously enforced. Juana

Carillo of Santa Fe admitted as much in 1712 when she confessed enjoying the affections of two men her father had hired for their spring planting (Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe [hereafter AASF] 51: 735-758). Again, in households where men were frequently absent, such as those of soldiers, muleteers, shepherds, and hunters, cultural ideals were less rigid. The fact that females supervised family and home for large parts of the year, staved off Indian attack, and cared for the group's public rights meant that it was difficult for them to lead sheltered and secluded lives. It was not uncommon for these women to lament that they had been assaulted, raped, or seduced while their husbands or fathers were away from home (AASF 60: 270; Spanish Archives of New Mexico [hereafter SANM] 18: 579; AASF 60: 376).

### HONOR AND MARRIAGE

Marriage was the most important ritual event in the life-course, and in it the honor of the family took precedence over all other considerations. The union of two properties, the joining of two households, the creation of a web of affinal relations, the perpetuation of a family's symbolic patrimony—its name and reputation—were transactions so important to the honor-status of the group that marriage was hardly a decision to be made by minors. The norm in New Mexico was for parents to arrange nuptials for their children with little or no consideration of their wishes. Filial piety required the acceptance of any union one's parents deemed appropriate or advantageous.

The 1786 marriage of Francisco Narpa and Juana Lorem in Sandia provides a glimpse of the familial motivations involved in an arranged union. Appearing before the provincial ecclesiastical judge to explain how he had married, Francisco reported: "Having agreed with Juana Lorem that we wished to marry, I asked her grandmother Tomasa Cibaa, and with her permission and that of her relatives, I married." Juana Lorem had a slightly different understanding of the events that led up to her marriage to Francisco. She told the judge, "It is totally false that I agreed to marry the said Francisco. I never wanted to marry the said Francisco. But for fear of my grandmother Tomasa Cibaa I contracted the marriage." Finally, Tomasa Cibaa explained: "I ordered my granddaughter Juana to marry the said Francisco Narpa because he is moderately wealthy, and it is true that I pressured Juana to appear before the priest [for the matrimonial investigation] and say nothing that might provoke questioning." The details of this marriage surface as

part of an ecclesiastical investigation into the allegation that the union was incestuous. Francisco had fathered a child by María Quieypas, Juana's mother, and therefore his marriage to Juana was invalid. The marriage was annulled, dotal and patrimonial property were confiscated, the three were publicly flogged, and Narpa was exiled from New Mexico (AASF 64: 706-707; 52: 773-774).

Of course, I do not wish to suggest that arranged marriage was an inflexible rule. The extent to which parental preference for arranged marriage could be enforced was mediated both by the person's status and by each family's particular fertility history. The number of children in a family, their birth order, and their sex dictated the options available to parents to secure their son or daughter an acceptable or advantageous spouse. These and other variables also conditioned the range of filial responses possible—whether a son or daughter acted as if bound by duty or sentiment or resisted or attempted to manipulate the situation so as to appease everyone's concerns.

From a father's point of view, a round of poker is an excellent metaphor for the way in which limited resources (the patrimony) were manipulated to maximize the gains associated with marital alliance. Pierre Bourdieu (1976: 122) has applied this metaphor to the marriage of a family's children. Success at enhancing and perpetuating the family's status is based not only on the hand one is dealt (whether the nuptial candidate is an only child, the eldest of several sons, or the youngest of many daughters) but also the skill with which one plays it (bids, bluffs, and displays). The patrimony was the material resource a father had to apportion among its claimants at strategic moments to maximize reproductive success. Although legally every legitimate child in New Mexico was entitled to an equal share of this wealth, practice varied by class. Aristocratic holders of large landed estates preferred male primogeniture as a way of keeping their property intact. The eldest son, as the heir to the household head's political rights over the group and the person responsible for the name and reputation of the family, was the individual to whom a disproportionate amount of parents' premortem resources was committed. As first in importance, even if preceded by older sisters, he could not suffer a misalliance without lowering the entire family's public rating and diminishing the possibilities of securing honorable partners for his unmarried brothers and sisters. Therefore, he was the child of whom parents expected the most and the child disciplined most severely to ensure obedience but allowed the greatest excesses in other matters. He was also perhaps the most predisposed to bow to duty.

If the eldest son had married well and the family's position had thus been attended to, filial participation in the marriage process was tolerated in subsequent cases. Because younger sons were unlikely to fare as well in the acquisition of marital property and could expect only enough money and movable goods to avoid misalliance, fathers might be more open to their suggestions regarding eligible brides.

Daughters of the nobility were a potential liability on the marriage market, dissipating the material and symbolic patrimony by having their dowries absorbed into their husbands' assets. Every attempt would be made to dispose of nubile females as quickly as possible and at minimal expense. If a daughter experienced a prenuptial dishonor, such as the loss of her virginity, additional resources would have to be committed to secure her an appropriate mate. Thus large amounts of time and energy were spent ensuring that a maiden's sexual shame was being maintained. Undoubtedly, the result was that a woman's freedom to object to a marriage, to express her desires in spouse selection, was more limited than that of her brothers (SANM 10: 4-25, 868-872).

Peasants enjoying rights to communal land grants practiced partible inheritance. Sons were given their share of the family's land when they took a bride and were assigned a certain number of *vigas* ("beams"—a way of dividing the space in a house) in the parental home. If space limitations prohibited such a move, assistance was given in the addition of rooms to the house or the construction of a separate edifice in the immediate vicinity. For females, premortem dowries usually consisted of household items and livestock. Daughters seldom received land rights at marriage because parents fully expected the husband's family to meet this need. The authority relations springing from this mode of property division meant that parental supervision over spouse selection and its timing was as rigidly exercised as among the nobility.

For landless freed *genízaros*, the institution of marriage itself was of no consequence. Many preferred concubinage, as they held no property to transmit and the alienation from their Indian kin that accompanied enslavement made the issue of perpetuation of family name irrelevant. Wage earners and landless peasants were in a similar situation with regard to marriage. Once children were old enough to leave the familial hearth in search of a livelihood, parental control over their behavior all but ceased. Their only concern in the timing of marriage, if in fact they chose matrimony for cultural reasons, was the necessity to accumulate a nest egg with which to establish a conjugal residence.

### MARRIAGE AND THE CHURCH

The settlement of the Kingdom of New Mexico was a joint venture of church and state. In all the remote areas of the Spanish empire in which civilization was to be brought to the Indians, it was by the religious orders, through the institution of missions, that the task was accomplished. Acting as defenders of the Indians, as guardians of community piety and morality, and as a counterpoint to the power of the state, the church at one and the same time legitimated and buttressed the colonial system and challenged certain tenets of its rule. Nowhere was this tension among the authorities of God, of the family head, and of the state clearer than on the issue of marriage.

Until 1776, the Catholic church enjoyed exclusive jurisdiction over the ritual, sacramental, and contractual aspects of matrimony. Ecclesiastical law, articulated as a theory of impediments to marriage, was dominated by two concerns: the prohibition of incest and the determination of the exercise of free will. The latter principle drew on the Roman legal tradition that a nuptial contract was valid only if the parties had given free and absolute consent. The use of persuasion and coercion to arrange marriages of children could place patriarchs in direct confrontation with the church and its clerics.

Arranged marriage was a complex issue for the church. Scripture and canon law were fraught with ambiguities and contradictions on the matter. Christian ideology reinforced the honor code regarding the obedience and personal subordination children owed their parents. "Honor your father and mother," ordered the fourth commandment. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," enjoined St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians (5:22). The church maintained that the law of nature bound parents and children in a relationship that entailed reciprocal rights and obligations. The authority of man over his wife, children, and servants emanated from God's power over creation, and therefore his was the right to guide and discipline children as necessary. Filial submission, St. Paul promised, would be reciprocated with paternal love, protection, and guidance (Flandrin, 1979: 118-119).

But the vexing question clerics were obliged to ask, in the case of marriage, was when paternal guidance and filial obedience simply became coercion. The issue was of some importance because forced marriages, or those contracted under duress, were invalid. Matrimony was the sacramental union of free will based on mutual consent. Ideally

it was the work of God, and "what God has joined together, let no man separate."

The autonomy of individual will, responsibility, and conscience in undertaking marriage was central to Catholic thought. In arranged marriages, in which conflicts between obedience to parents and obedience to one's conscience existed, the will of the individual was to take precedence (Flandrin, 1979: 122). The scriptural basis for limits on the authority of the father and the freedom of Christ's message rested in the following: "Call no man your father upon the earth: for One is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9). And again (Matthew 10:34-37):

*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

A mechanism for the determination that a person was marrying freely existed in canon law. If the slightest hint of coercion surfaced, the local priest had the power to remove the candidate from his/her home for isolation from parental pressures. Once the person's wishes became known, the priest was legally bound either to marry the person, even against parental wishes, or to prohibit a forced union. Don Salvador Martínez of Albuquerque, for example, availed himself of ecclesiastical intervention when he sought Vicar Fray Manuel Roxo's help in his 1761 matrimonial bid for Doña Simona Baldes. Though Martínez had twice asked for Doña Simona's hand in marriage, his proposals had been ignored. Moved by the evidence, the vicar sequestered Doña Simona, who admitted she wanted to be Martínez's bride. The marriage occurred despite parental objections, which may have been due to a gross age difference. Don Salvador was a 62-year-old widower; Doña Simona was only 19 (AASF 62: 311-314).

The freedom that the Catholic church might grant the sexes in the selection of conjugal mates formed the legal foundation for the subversion of parental authority, but, as the experience of all areas of the Spanish colonial empire testifies, the law and its execution were two very different matters. It was not uncommon for clerics charged with the interpretation and execution of canon law to enforce it selectively or to

bend its dictates to avoid misalliances or subversion of the social order. If a friar believed an arranged marriage was a good match, he might uphold parental prerogatives and rationalize that the natural authority of a father over his children was in full accord with the will of God.

A variant of such an alliance between priest and parents occurred in Santa Fe in 1710. María Belasquez and Joseph Armijo appeared before Fray Lucas Arebalo that year claiming that her parents would not allow her to marry Joseph. They asked the friar to take María into his custody so that she could express her "true" wishes. María was sequestered but was returned to her father shortly after Joseph left the rectory. Joseph immediately appealed to the provincial ecclesiastical judge, who agreed that Fray Lucas had not upheld the marriage canons of the Council of Trent. The two were sequestered anew and were finally joined in wedlock after affirming their desire to be husband and wife (AASF 60: 680-692).

From the evidence in the ecclesiastical archives, "absolute" legal liberty to choose a spouse meant, in fact, freedom to select a mate from *within* one's class and ethnic group. No examples exist in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe of clerics' sanctioning a cross-class marriage over parental objections. The church might subvert the particular authority of parents, but it would not subvert the social order at large.

### **CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS AND THE DIALECTICS OF SOCIAL ACTION**

Marriage was a ritual event with meanings derived from several interrelated and interpenetrating ideologies. For the state, it was a way of perpetuating status and property inequalities in their hierarchical order. In Christian thought, it prefigured the love between Christ and the church and was of necessity the union of free wills. The sacrament preserved community morality by providing a sanctioned arena for the expression of sexual desires. The emotions of parents and children regarding affinity and connubiality figured in behavior, as did fertility histories and demographic realities.

The cultural system in which marriage was enmeshed was diverse and divisive, resting on symbols that were ambiguous and polysemic. The head and the heart were two such equivocal symbols that synthesized beliefs about hierarchy, honor, and desires and translated them into behavior. According to the native cognitive model of New Mexicans,

behavior was the outcome of interplay between several realms. Individual actions were the result of mediation between external forces, such as social rules, values, and chance, and internal physical drives, such as sentiments and emotions.

External factors were comprehended through the head. Reason, probity, and the conscience were perceived to be located there. The head was the symbol of personal and collective honor. The king's honor was exhibited through a crowned head, the honor of the bishop through his miter. Honor and precedence were paid by bowing one's head, taking off one's hat, or (for women) covering one's head. Decapitation was a dishonorable punishment. Honor challenges were frequently initiated by a slap to the face. Manuel Martín of San Juan in 1766 punished his daughter for bearing an illegitimate child by cutting off all her hair; a bald head was to serve the community as a sign of her shamelessness (SANM 9: 943). Catholic priests cut a tonsure in their hair as a sign of their vow of chastity and pledge to sexual purity (Pitt-Rivers, 1977: 23).

Just as the head was the source of reason, its antithesis, emotion, was rooted in the heart. The heart was the organ through which "natural" urges were experienced and heartfelt. "I wish to marry for no other reason than to serve God and because it comes forth from my heart, without it being the result of any other motivation," said Sebastiana de la Serna of her 1715 marriage bid (AASF 61: 209). For Fray José de la Prada, concupiscence sprang from the heart. Writing the governor of New Mexico concerning the sexual laxity of his congregation, Prada complained that "their customs and heathen friskiness have sunk very deep roots into their hearts" (SANM 15: 617). Another friar in a sermon on lust warned his congregation of the metabolic repercussions of an unregulated heart. "It is from the heart that we must displace this monster of sensuality . . . it is the cause of so many sudden deaths, infectious disease, and numerous maladies of the liver" (Archivo General de la Nación, Hacienda [hereafter AGN-HACIENDA] 29-8: 2).

The heart as a natural symbol for love had been enmeshed in the popular consciousness of Western Europeans since at least the thirteenth century (Huizinga, 1949: 77-84). The songs and poetry of courtly love diffused to the New World cast the heart as the well of sentiment. As roving troubadours performed their medieval romances in New Mexico's villages, the motifs of their repertoire—the all-consuming love that tormented the courtier, the impossible desires of an inferior man for a married lady, the discovery of an adulterous liaison that ended in death for the two lovesick individuals—certainly resonated in the imagina-



tions of young and old alike (Campa, 1946: 29-90; Espinosa, 1915: 446-560).

The tensions between external forces and personal desires symbolized as conflicts between the head and the heart, between reason and sentiment, between collective responsibility and individual will, provided Hispanics in New Mexico with a variety of options and explanations for their behavior. One sees in the 1715 statements of Sebastiana de Jesús of Santa Fe the equivocation over such ideals. Appearing before the local priest to complete the matrimonial investigation necessary so that she could be joined in wedlock with Gerónimo Ortega, she was asked if she truly wanted to marry. She said:

*When the mother who raised me, whose name is Lucía Ortis, asked me about the marriage the first time, I said no, I did not want to marry; but later, so that my mother would not be angry I said yes. But now, the desire to marry him does not spring from my heart . . . and having heard that the father of Gerónimo de Ortega has become a public ward in Santa Fe, I refuse to marry him. And if I marry him it will be only because my mother forces me to. I must do as she wishes, and will do it only to please her. . . . I do not wish to marry, it is not of my heart. . . . Before it was not of my heart and it is even less so now.*

Fray Antonio Miranda was uncertain whether Sebastiana was being forced into matrimony, so he ordered a new declaration taken. When asked again, she said blankly that she wanted to marry Gerónimo "of my absolute liberty" (AASF 61: 209-212).

The individuals, be they clerics, family heads, or bureaucrats, who articulated the ideals of marriage formation that opposed arranged marriage to marriage choice, hierarchy to egalitarianism, had a vested interest in presenting the cultural system as rigidly circumscribed by these dichotomies. In reality, much behavior fell along a continuum of which these oppositions were the extremes. After all, our information on these prescriptions comes largely from litigation before the civil and ecclesiastical courts, which established the outer limits of proper conduct. In their daily lives, individuals negotiated their behavior pragmatically in dynamic relationships with one another using the ideals of the cultural system as anchors. Thus, for example, on the continuum between arranged marriage and marriage choice, children of the aristocracy may all have their marriages arranged; children of the peasantry may vary between the two forms depending on their sex and birth order;

and genízaros, wage laborers, and landless peasants would be relatively free to choose their own partners (Drummond, 1980: 352-374).

The dialogue that undoubtedly occurred between the generations while negotiating a marriage match was seldom voiced and rarely recorded. Folk songs alone give us a hint of the interaction that must have been central to the selection process. "The Recent Bride," an early nineteenth-century song from Taos (Works Progress Administration, New Mexico Folklore Collection, 5-5-19 #26), explores the tensions between parents and children over marriage choice. Parents, having themselves at one time perhaps experienced the same feelings, can articulate the child's view but do so negatively, casting duty and sentiment, reason and passion, paternal love and romantic love as irreconcilable. The parental objective is clearly the subversion of individualistic filial behavior. By describing the consequences of ignoring parental counsels, they hope to have their expectations fulfilled:

*A recent bride and woe is me  
I weep the livelong day  
To think I'm wed so unhappily  
Nothing can my fate allay.  
  
Before I wed my mother dear  
Did try to turn me from my course,  
Her counsels wet with many a tear  
I now regret with great remorse.  
  
But willful was I, I paid no heed  
And God has fully punished me,  
But willful was I, I paid no heed  
And God has fully punished me.  
  
For my husband I have found to be  
A man who drinks and drinks and drinks,  
He has already forgotten me  
Of his young bride he never thinks....*

In "La Señora Chepita" (Campa, 1946: 203), the nature of the generational conflict is more explicit:

*Oh what times these are Señora Chepita;  
Oh what things are happening these days!  
Laboriousness is no longer prized,  
Misery engulfs us all,  
Progress itself is lost.  
Oh what times these are Señora Chepita!*

*In my time commerce bleated  
 And the crafts with much to do.  
 Lovers were always constant,  
 No woman was ever false.  
 Women in times past  
 Spent their time only caring  
 For their children, husbands and servants  
 And of none did they gossip.*

*Today it is common to see  
 That honor is snatched from one another  
 In others defects are found  
 While ignoring one's own, Señora Chepita.  
 If a young man made a conquest  
 He would hide it with just reason  
 So that none would know  
 The secrets of his heart.*

From the parents' point of view presented above, their society is orderly and rule-bound, whereas that of the new generation is chaotic and ruleless. The song is not a statement of fact. If we took them literally, the folk songs in which the older generation laments the shortcomings of the new—a lament so common in every historical period—would lead us to believe that society was constantly in a state of breakdown. These songs are instead comments about what parents would like their children to do. Parents refuse to legitimate the norms that guide filial behavior by denying that such norms exist. The songs express parental displeasure. They attempt to persuade sons and daughters to conform to parental ideals and do things the way they used to in “the good old days” (Yanagisako, 1980: 56).

The bishop of Durango in 1823 attested to the fact that children, though constrained in their marital options, did not sit by passively and always accept parental will. They manipulated the symbols of marriage, of honor and love, to obtain a desired spouse. Given the bishop's concern that maidens were being deflowered as part of youthful schemes “undertaken to facilitate” marriages that might otherwise have been unacceptable to parents (AASF 53: 790), we can speculate on what actions may have been taken by adolescents. A young man and woman might be aroused by a genuine love for one another and desire matrimony. Fearing that parents would object to a union, they might devise a ploy to maneuver an acceptable solution within the limits of their familial honor preoccupations. The woman might allow her virginity to be taken, claim that her honor had been sullied, and demand marriage simply as a way of forcing parents to consider a mate who might

otherwise never have been ideally acceptable. The discourse in such a case would take place entirely in the idiom of honor, but only because this strategy allowed the parties to maneuver within the parental value system. Such ploys were popular resolutions to conflicts of honor in Golden Age Spanish theater (Larson, 1977: 17-37).

Parents and children negotiated with different amounts of power. The dynamics of the process were clearly skewed in favor of the elders in both conscious and unconscious ways. Sons and daughters were familiar with the options available to them in marriage formation and knew exactly what was expected to ensure property transmission, to satisfy the requirements of the family's symbolic patrimony, and to avoid scandal and ostracism. Norms and the authority of custom buttressed parental prerogatives, as did the socialization process. Personal "tastes" were learned in infancy and reinforced through avoidance of contact with certain persons. Thus a child's desire for a certain mate was just as much the result of interaction with persons of similar status, race, education, and subcultural traits as it was of "individualistic" urges (Bourdieu, 1976: 140-141).

### SOCIAL CHANGE

From the years following the reconquest to the early 1770s, the Kingdom of New Mexico was peripheral to the empire. Isolated on the northern margins of New Spain, the colony's only link to "civilization" was a yearly mule train to Mexico City, which traveled over several thousand miles of territory inhabited by hostile Indians. New Mexico contained no significant mineral deposits, its population's material culture was rudimentary, and its cash-crop production (wheat, cotton, corn, pine nuts) was insignificant. In fact, had the Franciscan order not pleaded passionately before the crown for the privilege of converting New Mexico's Indians, colonists might never have been sent there in the first place (Adams, 1954: 3-4).

The isolation of the province slowly began to crumble in the 1760s. Frightened by the increasing levels of Russian, Anglo-American, and French encroachment into Texas, New Mexico, and California, King Charles III ordered a series of economic, military, and administrative reforms, commonly known as the Bourbon reforms, to safeguard the territory.

The reform project began in 1765 when the Spanish Royal Corps of Engineers was sent to the northern frontier of New Spain to map the

area thoroughly, to identify its mineral and hydraulic resources, to assess the feasibility of textile production, to propose methods for increasing agricultural production, and to outline the military changes necessary to fortify the frontier (Fireman, 1977). On the basis of the expedition's recommendations, northern New Spain was reorganized in 1776 into one military and administrative unit called the Internal Provinces. New presidios were constructed to ward off foreign attack, and vigorous campaigns were staged to subdue the "Apaches," who made trade and communication difficult. It was precisely in this period that permanent settlements were finally established in California, the first mission being built in 1769 at San Diego (Bannon, 1974: 143-190).

The crown believed that New Mexico could be retained as part of the empire only through fuller integration into the market economy centered in Chihuahua. To achieve this aim, trade and travel restrictions were abolished, New Mexican products were given sales tax exemptions, and agricultural specialists, veterinarians, and master weavers were sent to the area to upgrade local production and improve the competitive position of the kingdom's products. Within a few years the frequency of mule trains to and from Chihuahua increased, money began to circulate more widely, and new colonists from north-central Mexico migrated into the area (AGN-HIST 25-31: 252-253; 25-36: 297; Archivo General de la Nación, Californias [hereafter AGN-CALIF] 17-7: 228; 17-10: 325-327; SANM 10: 931-933, 1020-1037; Escudero, 1832: 37-38).

Imperial economic reforms coincided with a period of demographic growth in New Mexico, which resulted in intense land pressure. Between 1760 and 1820, the Spanish and mixed-blood population of New Mexico grew from 7,666 to 28,436. By the 1780s, many of the land grants to the initial colonists were insufficient for subsistence. A few new *mercedes* were conceded in the late 1780s, but not enough to meet the population's needs. Governor Fernando de la Concha noted this in his 1796 report to the commandant of the Internal Provinces and estimated that there were 1,500 individuals without land to till (AGN-CALIF 17-7: 226). The inevitable upshot of this situation was the expansion of wage labor. A comparison of the occupational structures of the kingdom in 1790 and 1827 reflects this expansion of wage laborers. In 1790, Albuquerque had an adult working population of 601. Farmers constituted 65 percent (391), 25 percent (151) were craftsman, and 10 percent (58) were day laborers. By 1827, 610 persons were listed as full-time workers: 66 percent (397) were farmers, 14 percent (85) craftsmen, and 19 percent (113) day laborers. The 1790 census of Santa Fe listed 413 individuals

with occupations. Farmers represented 85 percent (350), craftsmen 7 percent (28), and day laborers 8 percent (34). By 1827, of 846 workers, 55 percent (467) were farmers, 12 percent (101) craftsmen, and 31 percent (264) day laborers. An expansion of the day-laborer category in both size and proportion also occurred in Santa Cruz during this period (SANM 12: 319-502; Carroll and Villasana Haggard, 1942: 88). The end result of the Bourbon reforms and the land pressure that accompanied them was the expansion of socially autonomous forms of labor and increased mobility for a significant portion of the population.

To complete the picture of changes that occurred in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, we must also examine church-state relations as they affected New Mexico. During the reign of Charles III many of the formal aspects of the Patronato Real, the partnership between church and state that had been so effective in the colonization of the Americas, were abolished. The religious orders, perceived as independent and powerful because of their relationship to the indigenous population, were first to lose their privileged status. In New Mexico, where the Franciscan friars and the area's governors had battled incessantly since the 1600s over the extent to which each could exploit Indian land and labor, the Bourbon attack on clerical rights put an end to the feud. The missions were gradually secularized; where 30 friars had administered the sacraments in 1760, by 1834 none remained (Weber, 1982: 43-82).

The loosening of the Franciscans' grip on the population of New Mexico, part and parcel of the growth of secularism and the diffusion of rationalism throughout Europe and its colonies, bred an indifference toward moral theology, the scriptures, and the authority of priests. One of the first changes one notes in this increasingly secular society is a linguistic change in the ecclesiastical marriage records. Whereas between 1690 and 1790 most individuals married ostensibly "to save my soul" (AASF 61: 404), "to serve God and no other reason" (AASF 61: 68), or motivated by similar religious convictions, after 1790 nuptial candidates are moved by "the growing desire we mutually have" (AASF 66: 18) and by "the urges of the flesh, human wretchedness and the great love we have for each other" (AASF 79: 122). Increasingly, individuals mention personal desires such as love as the reason for marriage.

The Bourbon reforms and the growth of a landless population dependent on wage labor for its reproduction had increased social differentiation. This in turn brought into open question the ideological consensus that had formerly existed between the nobility and the landed peasants regarding ascribed honor as a sign of social status premised on