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Women's Status in Egalitarian Society: Implications for Social Evolution¹

by Eleanor Leacock

THE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S STATUS in egalitarian society is inseparable from the analysis of egalitarian social-economic structure as a whole, and concepts based on the hierarchical structure of our society distort both. I shall argue that the tendency to attribute to band societies the relations of power and property characteristic of our own obscures the qualitatively different relations that obtained when ties of economic dependency linked the individual directly with the group as a whole, when public and private spheres were not dichotomized, and when decisions were made by and large by those who would be carrying them out. I shall attempt to show that a historical approach and an avoidance of ethnocentric phraseology in the study of such societies reveals that their egalitarianism applied as fully to women as to men. Further, I shall point out that this is a fact of great importance to the understanding of social evolution.

Demonstrating that women's status in egalitarian society was qualitatively different from that in our own presents problems at several levels. First, the societies studied by anthropologists are virtually all in some measure incorporated into world economic and political systems that oppress women, and most have been involved in these larger systems for centuries. Anthropologists know this historical reality well, but commonly

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ignore it when making generalizations about pre-class social-economic systems.

A second problem follows from the selectivity of research. Too many questions about women have not been asked, or not of the right people, and gaps in ethnographic reports are too readily filled with clichés. To handle women's participation in a given society with brief remarks about food preparation and child care has until very recently met the requirements for adequate ethnography. Hence a once-over-lightly of cross-cultural data can readily affirm the virtual universality of the Western ideal for women's status. Ethnocentric interpretation contributes to this affirmation. Women are commonly stated or implied to hold low status in one or another society without benefit of empirical documentation. Casual statements about menstrual blood as polluting and as contributing to women's inferior status may be made without linguistic or other supporting data to demonstrate that this familiarly Western attitude of repugnance actually obtains in the culture under discussion.

A further problem for the analysis of women's status in egalitarian society is theoretical. That women were autonomous in egalitarian society—that is, that they held decision-making power over their own lives and activities to the same extent that men did over theirs—cannot be understood unless the nature of individual autonomy in general in such society is clear. (I prefer the term "autonomy" to "equality," for equality connotes rights and opportunity specific to class society and confuses similarity with equity. Strictly speaking, who can be, or wants to be, "equal" to anyone else?) Non-class-based societies are usually not seen as qualitatively different from those that are class-organized when it comes to processes of leadership and decision making. Differences are seen as purely quantitative, and the possibility that altogether different sets of relationships from those involving economic power might be operating in non-class society is not followed through. Instead, as a result of intellectual habits that stem from Platonic metaphysical traditions, universalistic categories are set up on the basis of individual behavior and are named, counted, described, or otherwise reified by the failure to move on to a discovery of the social-economic processes that lie behind them.

It is difficult to apply the principle that all reality involves interacting processes, and not interacting "essences" or things. Respects may be paid to the concepts of process and conflict, which may then be reified as well. Since these reified concepts are derived from our own culture, it is no accident that hierarchical patterns similar to our own are found to be "incipient" wherever they are not well established. From band to tribe, tribe to chiefdom, chiefdom to state, the development of decision-making processes is seen quantitatively as progressive change

toward Western forms of power and control. Fundamental qualitative distinctions between egalitarian and class societies are lost. A hierarchical view of sex roles fits easily into the scheme. That sex roles exist is, after all, a human universal, and to assume that any difference between the sexes necessarily involves hierarchy is seen, not as ethnocentrism, but as common sense.

The reification of the concept "tribe," pointed out by Fried (1968, 1975), affords a good example of what I mean. Fried argues that insofar as tribes exist as culturally and territorially bounded and politically integrated groupings of bands or villages, they are the creatures of colonial relations. However, for want of a clear conception as to what might replace it, the term "tribe" continues in use and fosters the misconception that egalitarian peoples were organized in closed territorially defined units, uniformly obeying the mandates of custom and controlled by the authority, weak though it might be, of a chief and/or council. The structure is not merely "cold"; it is positively frozen. In reality, people were far more cosmopolitan than the term "tribesmen" suggests. They moved about, traded and negotiated, and constantly chose among the various alternatives for action.

In relation to the study of sex-roles, the core of tribal structure is commonly seen in terms of unilineal agnatic systems that represent formal, jural authority, as counterposed to the "familial" sphere of influence accorded to women. The polarization of public male authority and private female influence is taken as a given of the human condition. Thereby areas in which women exercised socially recognized authority are obscured or downgraded. The reality of the distinction between unilineal and segmenting kinship systems has recently been questioned on the basis of comparison of Melanesian and African data (Barnes 1971, Keesing 1971). It is my contention that the public-private dichotomy is similarly inadequate for understanding societies that are (or were) not structured along class lines. Instead, insofar as social processes of the precolonial world can be reconstructed, the delineation and opposition of public and private spheres can be seen as emergent in many culture areas, where individual families were becoming more or less competitive units in conflict with the communality of family-bands or kin groups. Furthermore, the complex of processes involved, concerning specialization, exchange, and the expenditure of labor on land, together constituted initial steps toward class differentiation. Although the accidents of history caused these processes to become thoroughly entangled with colonial relations throughout the world, some of their essential outlines can still be defined through ethnohistorical research and comparative analysis.

In the case of foraging societies, the control women exercised over their own lives and activities is widely, if not fully, accepted as ethnographic fact. However, assumptions of a somehow lower status and deferential stance toward "dominant" men are made by most writers on the subject. The very existence of different roles for females and males is seen as sufficient explanation, given women's responsibility for childbearing and suckling. The possibility that women and men could be "separate but equal" is seldom considered, albeit not surprisingly, since it seems to tally with the adjuration to women in our society to appreciate the advantages of the liabilities maternity here incurs. That an equal status for women could be interwoven with childbearing is a notion that has only begun to be empirically examined (Draper 1975).

My point is that concepts of band organization must be re-examined if the nature of women's autonomy in foraging societies is to be understood. To describe the band as "familistic" (Service 1966:8) or "only a simple association of families" (Sahlins 1961:324) may serve in a rough-and-ready way to convey something of the nonhierarchical and informal character of social-economic life among foragers, but it implies a uni-

versal "family" to be at the core of all society. Such a view of the band, whether implicit or explicit, leaves no alternative than for sex roles in band society to present a glimmer of what was to develop in class society. It implies historical evolution to be a continuum in which social forms become quantitatively more and more like those we experience, rather than to be constituted by a series of qualitative transformations, in the course of which relations between the sexes could have become altogether different.

To argue the point of sexual egalitarianism, then, involves a combination of theoretical and empirical reexamination. In the following pages, I shall give several examples of what I think is called for. The materials are everywhere at hand; they form the corpus of the ethnographic record.

THE BAND

As a student of the Montagnais-Naskapi people of the Labrador Peninsula, some 25 years ago, I looked at changing relations to the land and its resources among hunters turned fur-trappers and traders. At that time I confronted the fact that the band as then conceived (Speck 1926:277-78)—a rather neat entity, with a leader, a name, and a more or less bounded territory—had simply not existed in the past. Missionaries, traders, and government representatives alike bemoaned its absence and did what they could to bring it into existence, while the fur trade itself exerted its inevitable influence. "It would be wrong to infer . . . that increasing dependence on trade has acted to destroy formerly stable social groups," I wrote at that time. Instead, "changes brought about by the fur trade have led to more stable bands with greater formal organization" (Leacock 1954:20). The *Jesuit Relations*, when analyzed in detail, reveal the 17th-century Montagnais-Naskapi band to have been, not a loose collection of families, but a seasonal coalition of smaller groups that hunted cooperatively through most of the winter. These groups, in turn, were made up of several lodge groups that stayed together when they could, but separated when it was necessary to cover wider ranges for hunting. The lodge groups of several families, not individual families, were the basic social-economic units (Leacock 1969; Rogers 1972:133).

Among foraging peoples, seasonal patterns of aggregation and dispersal vary according to the ecological features of different areas and the specific technologies employed to exploit them (Cox 1973, Damas 1969). However, that aggregates of several families operate as basic social-economic units which coalesce with and separate from other such units remains constant. These aggregates are highly flexible. Congeniality as well as viable age and sex ratios are fundamental to their makeup; kin ties are important but do not rule out friendships; and when formal kinship is important, as in Australia, the focus is on categorical relationships that define expectations for reciprocity, rather than on genealogical linkages that define status prerogatives.

Distinctions between bands of this sort and bands as they have come to exist may seem slight, but in fact they are profound. The modern band consists of loosely grouped nuclear families that are economically dependent to one extent or another on trade or work outside of the group or on some governmental allowance or missionary provisioning. Therefore the modern band has a chief or leader of some sort to represent its corporate interests in negotiations with governmental, business, or missionary personnel, or individual men, who are accepted by outsiders as heads of nuclear families, take on this role. As an inevitable concomitant of dependence on political and economic relations outside the group, a public domain becomes defined, if but hazily, as counterposed to a private "familial" sphere. Furthermore, the public domain, associated with men, is either the economically and politically more significant one or is rapidly becoming so.

What is hard to grasp about the structure of the egalitarian band is that leadership as we conceive it is not merely "weak" or "incipient," as is commonly stated, but irrelevant. The very phrases "informal" and "unstable" that are typically applied to band society imply a groping for the "formality" and "stability" of the band as we comfortably construe it and hinder the interpretation of the qualitatively different organizational form, of enormous resiliency, effectiveness, and stability, that preceded the modern band. The fact that consensus, freely arrived at, within and among multifamily units was both essential to everyday living and possible has implications that we do not usually confront. Individual autonomy was a necessity, and autonomy as a valued principle persists to a striking degree among the descendants of hunter/gatherers. It was linked with a way of life that called for great individual initiative and decisiveness along with the ability to be extremely sensitive to the feelings of lodge-mates. I suggest that personal autonomy was concomitant with the direct dependence of each individual on the group as a whole. Decision making in this context calls for concepts other than ours of leader and led, dominant and deferent, no matter how loosely these are seen to apply.

In egalitarian band society, food and other necessities were procured or manufactured by all able-bodied adults and were directly distributed by their producers (or occasionally, perhaps, by a parallel band member, ritualizing the sharing principle). It is common knowledge that there was no differential access to resources through private land ownership and no specialization of labor beyond that by sex, hence no market system to intervene in the direct relationship between production and distribution. It is not generally recognized, however, that *the direct relation between production and consumption was intimately connected with the dispersal of authority*. Unless some form of control over resources enables persons with authority to withhold them from others, authority is not authority as we know it. Individual prestige and influence must continually validate themselves in daily life, through the wisdom and ability to contribute to group well-being. The tragically bizarre forms personal violence can take among foraging peoples whose economy has been thoroughly and abruptly disrupted, as described recently for the Ik by Turnbull (1972) and for the central and western Australians of an earlier period by Bates (1938), do not vitiate this principle; the bitter quality of collective suicide they portray only underlines it.

The basic principle of egalitarian band society was that people made decisions about the activities for which they were responsible. Consensus was reached within whatever group would be carrying out a collective activity. Infringements upon the rights of others were negotiated by the parties concerned. Men and women, when defined as interest groups according to the sexual division of labor, arbitrated or acted upon differences in "public" ways, such as when women would hold council among the 17th-century Montagnais-Naskapi to consider the problem of a lazy man, or would bring a male ceremony to an early conclusion among the Pitjandjara of west-central Australia because they were having to walk too far for food and were ready to move (Tindale 1972:244-45). The negotiation of marriages for young people would seem to be an exception to the principle of autonomy in those societies in which it occurred. However, not only did young people generally have a say in the matter (Lee 1972:358), but divorce was easy and at the desire of either partner.

The dispersal of authority in band societies means that the public-private or jural-familial dichotomy, so important in hierarchically organized society, is not relevant. In keeping with common analytic practice of setting up quantitatively conceived categories for comparative purposes, it could be argued that decisions made by one or several individuals are more pri-

vate, while decisions that affect larger numbers are more public, and decision-making processes could be tallied and weighted accordingly. My point here is that analysis along any such lines continues to mystify actual decision-making processes in egalitarian societies by conceptualizing them in terms of authority and dependence patterns characteristic of our own society.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN

With regard to the autonomy of women, nothing in the structure of egalitarian band societies necessitated special deference to men. There were no economic and social liabilities that bound women to be more sensitive to men's needs and feelings than vice versa. This was even true in hunting societies, where women did not furnish a major share of the food. The record of 17th-century Montagnais-Naskapi life in the *Jesuit Relations* makes this clear. Disputes and quarrels among spouses were virtually nonexistent, Le Jeune reported, since each sex carried out its own activities without "meddling" in those of the other. Le Jeune deplored the fact that the Montagnais "imagine that they ought by right of birth, to enjoy the liberty of wild ass colts, rendering no homage to any one whomsoever." Noting that women had "great power," he expressed his disapproval of the fact that men had no apparent inclination to make their wives "obey" them or to enjoin sexual fidelity upon them. He lectured the Indians on this failing, reporting in one instance, "I told him then that he was the master, and that in France women do not rule their husbands." Le Jeune was also distressed by the sharp and ribald joking and teasing into which women entered along with the men. "Their language has the foul odor of the sewers," he wrote. The *Relations* reflect the program of the Jesuits to "civilize" the Indians, and during the course of the 17th century they attempted to introduce principles of formal authority, lectured the people about obeying newly elected chiefs, and introduced disciplinary measures in the effort to enforce male authority upon women. No data are more illustrative of the distance between hierarchical and egalitarian forms of organization than the Jesuit account of these efforts (Leacock 1975, 1977; Leacock and Goodman 1977).

Nonetheless, runs the argument for universal female subservience to men, the hunt and war, male domains, are associated with power and prestige to the disadvantage of women. What about this assumption?

Answers are at several levels. First, it is necessary to modify the exaggerations of male as hunter and warrior. Women did some individual hunting, as will be discussed below for the Ojibwa, and they participated in hunting drives that were often of great importance. Men did a lot of non-hunting. Warfare was minimal or nonexistent. The association of hunting, war, and masculine assertiveness is not found among hunter/gatherers except, in a limited way, in Australia. Instead, it characterizes horticultural societies in certain areas, notably Melanesia and the Amazon lowlands.

It is also necessary to reexamine the idea that these male activities were in the past more prestigious than the creation of new human beings. I am sympathetic to the scepticism with which women may view the argument that their gift of fertility was as highly valued as or more highly valued than anything men did. Women are too commonly told today to be content with the wondrous ability to give birth and with the presumed propensity for "motherhood" as defined in saccharine terms. They correctly read such exhortations as saying, "Do not fight for a change in status." However, the fact that childbearing is associated with women's present oppression does not mean this was the case in earlier social forms. To the extent that hunting

and warring (or, more accurately, sporadic raiding, where it existed) were areas of male ritualization, they were just that: areas of male ritualization. To a greater or lesser extent women participated in the rituals, while to a greater or lesser extent they were also involved in ritual elaborations of generative power, either along with men or separately. To presume the greater importance of male than female participants, or to casually accept the statements to this effect of latter-day male informants, is to miss the basic function of dichotomized symbolism in egalitarian society. Dichotomization made it possible to ritualize the reciprocal roles of females and males that sustained the group. As ranking began to develop, it became a means of asserting male dominance, and with the full-scale development of classes sex ideologies reinforced inequalities that were basic to exploitative structures.

Much is made of Australian Aboriginal society in arguments for universal deference of women toward men. The data need ethnohistorical review, since the vast changes that have taken place in Australia over the last two centuries cannot be ignored in the consideration of ritual life and of male brutality toward women. Disease, outright genocidal practices, and expulsion from their lands reduced the population of native Australians to its lowest point in the 1930s, after which the cessation of direct genocide, the mission distribution of foods, and the control of infant mortality began to permit a population increase. The concomitant intensification of ceremonial life is described as follows by Godelier (1973:13, translation mine):²

This . . . phenomenon, of a politico-religious order, of course expresses the desire of these groups to reaffirm their cultural identity and to resist the destructive pressures of the process of domination and acculturation they are undergoing, which has robbed them of their land and subjected their ancient religious and political practices to erosion and systematic extirpation.

Thus ceremonial elaboration was oriented toward renewed ethnic identification, in the context of oppression. Furthermore, on the reserves, the economic autonomy of women vis-à-vis men was undercut by handouts to men defined as heads of families and by the sporadic opportunities for wage labor open to men. To assume that recent ritual data reflect aboriginal Australian symbolic structures as if unchanged is to be guilty of freezing these people in some timeless "traditional culture" that does not change or develop, but only becomes lost; it is to rob them of their history. Even in their day, Spencer and Gillen (1968:443) noted the probable decline in women's ceremonial participation among the Arunta.

Allusions to male brutality toward women are common for Australia. Not all violence can be blamed on European colonialism, to be sure, yet it is crass ethnocentrism, if not outright racism, to assume that the grim brutality of Europeans toward the Australians they were literally seeking to exterminate was without profound effect. A common response to defeat is to turn hostility inward. The process is reversed when people acquire the political understanding and organizational strength to confront the source of their problems, as has recently been happening among Australian Aborigines.

References to women of recent times fighting back publicly in a spirited style, occasionally going after their husbands with both tongue and fighting club, and publicly haranguing both men and women bespeak a persisting tradition of autonomy (Kaberry 1939:25-26, 181). In relation to "those reciprocal rights and duties that are recognized to be inherent in marriage," Kaberry writes (pp. 142-43):

²"Ce . . . phénomène, d'ordre politico-religieux, traduit bien entendu la volonté de ces groupes de réaffirmer leur identité culturelle et de résister aux pressions destructrices du procès de domination et d'acculturation qu'elles subissent, que les a privés de leur terre et soumet leurs anciennes pratiques religieuses et politiques à un travail d'érosion et d'extirpation systématique."

I, personally, have seen too many women attack their husbands with a tomahawk or even their own boomerangs, to feel that they are invariably the victims of ill treatment. A man may perhaps try to beat his wife if she has not brought in sufficient food, but I never saw a wife stand by in submission to receive punishment for her culpable conduct. In the quarrel she might even strike the first blow, and if she were clearly in danger of being seriously hurt, then one of the bystanders might intervene, in fact always did within my experience.

Nor did the man's greater strength tell in such a struggle, for the wife "will pack up her goods and chattels and move to the camp of a relative . . . till the loss of an economic partner . . . brings the man to his senses and he attempts a reconciliation" (p. 143). Kaberry concludes that the point to stress about this indispensability of a woman's economic contribution is "not only her great importance in economics, but also her power to utilize this to her own advantage in other spheres of marital life."

A further point also needs stressing: such quarrels are not, as they may first appear, structurally at the same level as similar quarrels in our own society. In our case, reciprocity in marital rights and duties is defined in the terms of a social order in which subsistence is gained through paid wage labor, while women supply socially essential but unpaid services within a household. A dichotomy between "public" labor and "private" household service masks the household "slavery" of women. In all societies, women use the resources available to them to manipulate their situation to their advantage as best they can, but they are in a qualitatively different position, structurally, in our society from that in societies where what has been called the "household economy" is the *entire* economy. References to the autonomy of women when it comes to making decisions about their own lives are common for such societies. Concomitant autonomy of attitude is pointed out by Kaberry, again, for the Kimberly peoples: "The women, as far as I could judge from their attitudes," she writes, "remained regrettably profane in their attitude towards the men." To be sure, they much admired the younger men as they paraded in their ceremonial finery, but "the praise uttered was in terms that suggested that the spectators regarded the men as potential lovers, and not as individuals near unto gods" (p. 230). In summary, Kaberry argues that "there can be no question of identifying the sacred inheritance of the tribe only with the men's ceremonies. Those of the women belong to it also" (p. 277). As for concepts of "pollution," she says, "the women with regard to the men's rituals are profane and uninitiated; the men with regard to the women's ritual are profane and uninitiated" (p. 277).

The record on women's autonomy and lack of special deference among the 17th-century Montagnais-Naskapi is unambiguous. Yet this was a society in which the hunt was overwhelmingly important. Women manufactured clothing and other necessities, but furnished much less food than was the usual case with hunter/gatherers. In the 17th century, women as well as men were shamans, although this is apparently no longer remembered. As powerful shamans, they might exhort men to battle. Men held certain special feasts to do with hunting from which women were excluded. Similarly, men were excluded from women's feasts about which we know nothing but that they were held. When a man needed more than public teasing to ensure his good conduct, or in times of crisis, women held their own councils. In relation to warfare, anything but dominance-deference behavior is indicated. In historic times, raids were carried on against the Iroquois, who were expanding their territories in search of furs. The fury with which women would enjoin men to do battle and the hideous and protracted intricacies of the torture of captives in which they took the initiative boggle the mind. Getting back at the Iroquois for killing their menfolk was central, however, not "hailing the conquering hero."

Despite this evidence, relative male dominance and female deference is a constant theme in the ethnographic record. The extent to which data can be skewed by a nonhistorical approach that overlooks centuries-old directions of change and by ethnocentric interpretation based on assumptions about public-prestigious males versus private-deferent females becomes apparent when we consider the following two descriptions of hunting society:

In one, women are extremely self-sufficient and independent and "much more versatile than men." They take much pride and interest in their work, especially in the skills of leatherwork and porcupine or quill embroidery. "Girls are urged to do work of such quality that it will excite envy and admiration." The prestige of a good worker spreads far, and others seek her out to learn from or obtain some of her work. Men listen in on women's discussions in order to hear about "gifted women" they might wish to seek in marriage. Women also gain "public recognition" as midwives and as herbal doctors (also a male occupation). Some women become so interested that "they trade with individuals in distant groups . . . to secure herbs that are not indigenous." They achieve renown as runners or participants in other sports, where they at times compete with, and may win over, men, and occasionally in warfare, where "a girl who qualifies as a warrior is considered as a warrior, and not as a queer girl" by her male colleagues. Women compose songs and dances that may become popular and pass down through the generations, and they make fine masks used in important bear ceremonials.

Young girls often accompany their fathers on hunting trips, so they commonly learn men's as well as women's skills. There are more variations in women's lives than in men's, and many women at some time in their lives support themselves by hunting, in mother-daughter, sister-sister, or grandmother-granddaughter pairs. Some support disabled husbands for a while in this way. If need be, women who are resourceful can make their own canoes. On the whole, "women who adopt men's work are characteristically resourceful and untroubled." Women actively pursue, choose, or desert husbands or lovers, or choose to remain unmarried for long periods of time. Too open, casual, or disruptive promiscuity is frowned upon, and there is some feeling against an unmarried girl's having a baby. However, should she or the child's father not wish to marry, a woman with a child has little trouble finding a husband if she wants one.

Women have visions that bring them supernatural powers more easily than do men; visions have to be induced in boys through isolation and repeated fasting. Elder women spend long hours in winter evenings telling stories about women, some factual, some semihistorical, and some legendary.

By contrast, the second description deals with a hunting society in which women are "inferior" and lack "distinct training," in which the generalization is made "that any man is intrinsically and vastly superior to any woman," and in which women are taught to be "recipients of male favors, economic and sexual, and are supposed to be ignored by men." Men's activities are widely spoken of and publicized, while women's tasks are "unpublished"; the "mythology occupies itself with the pursuits and rewards of men." "Artistic women—in marked contrast to gifted men—are given no title nor are they regarded with the awe that indicates general respect." Instead, women "fall into the role of onlookers who watch and admire [men] with bated breath." "No individual woman is distinctive" in the world of men, and although women "discuss the merits of their work just as men do the merits of theirs, . . . these discussions and boasts are not formal, as the men's are; they belong to the level of gossip." A double standard with regard to sex is enjoined on women. Attention is paid to the adolescent activities

of boys, while girls, at their first menses, are isolated as full of "maleficent power."

The latter society sounds quite familiar, but one may wonder about the first. The trick is that the two accounts not only describe the same people, but are taken, selectively, from the same monograph, *The Ojibwa Woman*, by Ruth Landes (1938:viii, 5, 11, 18-19, 23-25, 42, 128-32, 136, 140, 180). I regret being critical of a study that offers full and rich documentation of women's activities and interests, but Landes has undermined her own contribution to the understanding of sex roles in a hunting society through the downgrading of women that is built into unexamined and ethnocentric phraseology.

Unacknowledged contradictions abound in her account. Landes is clear and unequivocal about the resourcefulness of women and the fact that they are allowed greater latitude in their activities than men, but then ascribes this to "the general atmosphere of cultural indifference which surrounds them" and "the sketchy and negatively phrased ideals with which tradition makes a pretense of providing them" (p. 181). In another context, however, she speaks of women who "become self-conscious in terms of their work" and "develop a self-respect which finds satisfaction in the recognition accorded it." She calls this bringing "men's motivations into women's work" and pursuing "feminine occupations as a masculine careerist would" (pp. 154-55). Women are "not trained to these attitudes" of competitive striving and shame in defeat while learning female skills, Landes writes, but learn them in games where the emphases "are the same for boys and girls, for men and women," and both "feel that their self-respect hangs upon the outcome of the game" (pp. 23, 27, 155). Yet in another context, she states, "girls are urged to do work of such quality that it will excite admiration and envy" (p. 19). Furthermore, in the context of case examples of renowned women, Landes makes a non-sex-linked statement about abilities, writing that "individual differences in ability are clearly recognized by the people, and include such careful distinctions as that of small ability hitched to great ambition, or that of potentially great ability confined by small ambition" (p. 27).

Girls, Landes writes, are given "protective" names like "Shining of the Thunderbird," while boys are given names with more "vocational promise" like "Crashing Thunder" (p. 13). Then she writes, without comment, of the shaman "Thunder Woman" (pp. 29, 37), of the woman warrior "Chief Earth Woman" (p. 141), and of "Iron Woman," a shaman who was taught by her "medicine" father and her grandfather and who defeated "even the best men players" at games of chance and skill (pp. 26-27, 62-63, 137).

The basic division of labor, Landes writes, "is in the assignment to the men of hunting and of securing raw materials, and the assignment to the women of manufacturing the raw materials" (pp. 130-31). Men's work is less varied than women's, "but it is appraised culturally as infinitely more interesting and honorable," Landes writes. It has "an indescribably glittering atmosphere" (p. 131). "Women's work is conventionally ignored" by men (p. 18). How, then, does Landes handle the interest shown in women's work by both women and men? She writes that the "excellence of handiwork excites the *informal* attention of women as widely as the boy's talent in hunting excites the attention of men" (pp. 18-19, italics added); that a man may brag of his wife's handiwork, which "had led him to walk many miles" to claim her, "in an *unguarded moment*" (p. 11, italics added); and that men learn about gifted workers that they might want to seek in marriage "from *eavesdropping* upon the *chatter* of their own women folk" (p. 19, italics added). The "private" and less prestigious world of women thus having been established, Landes later implies another common stereotype—that of women as "passive" vis-à-vis men in relation to

sex: "Men seem to be more articulate than women about love. It is men who are said to be proud of their wives, not women of their husbands . . ." (p. 120).

I am not suggesting that Landes did not record statements from both men and women about the greater importance of men's work, as well as statements to the contrary. In fact, when she was in the field, men's work *was* more important. The reciprocity of the sexual division of labor had long since given way to considerable dependence upon trade goods. "Since the advent of the traders," Landes writes, "Ojibwa men have learned how to barter. They trade furs and meat which they have secured in hunting, and since the men, rather than the women, possessed the materials desired by the Whites, they became the traders" (p. 134). She describes the men returning from the post and showing "the results of their trade; ammunition, weapons, traps and tobacco for themselves; yard print, ribbons and beads for the women and children; candy, fruit, whiskey for all" (p. 17). The fact that women remained as autonomous as they did among the Ojibwa was apparently related to the fact that hunting continued to be the main source of food and women could and did often support themselves and their families by hunting. Furthermore, "Today [1932-33], when rice and berries and maple sugar are commanding some White attention, the women also are learning to function as dealers" (p. 134).

Landes's downgrading of women's status among the Ojibwa, in the face of her own evidence to the contrary, flows in part from contradictions due to the changes taking place in women's social-economic position³ and in part from her lack of a critical and historical orientation toward her material. Nonetheless, Landes deserves credit for making available such full material on women that explicit criticism of her work is possible.

Iroquois materials offer similar contradictions. Horticultural but still egalitarian, Iroquois society of the 17th and 18th centuries is well known for the high status of its women. Lands were handed down in matrilineages, and the matrons managed the economic affairs of the communal "long houses," arranged marriages, nominated and deposed the sachems of the intertribal council, and participated in equal numbers with men as influential "Keepers of the Faith." Postmarital residence was uxorilocal, and a woman could divorce a man who did not please her with little ceremony, sending him back to his own family. Women's value was expressed in the fact that a murdered woman called for twice the compensation of a murdered man.

Yet one can have one's choice among contradictory statements about the status of Iroquois women. In the early 18th century, Lafitau wrote of Iroquois women (or perhaps of the similar Huron), "all real authority is vested in them. . . . They are the soul of the Councils, the arbiters of peace and of war" (Brown 1970:153). On the other hand, there is the more commonly quoted sentence of none other than Morgan himself: "The Indian regarded woman as the inferior, the dependent, and the servant of man, and from nurture and habit, she actually considered herself to be so" (1954:315; cited, for example, in Goldberg 1973:40, 58, 241; Divale 1976:202).

The contrast between the two generalizations is partly a matter of the period. Morgan was working with Iroquois informants in the 19th century, when the long house was but a memory and the Iroquois lived in nuclear families largely supported by wage-earning men. Morgan, however, later quoted Rev. A. Wright on the high position of women among the Seneca: "The women were the great power among the clans, as everywhere else. They did not hesitate, when occasion required, to 'knock off the horns,' as it was technically called, from the head of a chief and send him back to the ranks of the warriors" (1974:464).

During the period between the *League of the Iroquois* and

Ancient Society, Morgan was developing his thinking on human social evolution and on the decline in women's relative status with the advent of "civilization." "The mother-right and gynocracy among the Iroquois . . . is not overdrawn," he wrote later. "We may see in this an ancient phase of human life which has had a wide presence in the tribes of mankind. . . . Not until after civilization had begun among the Greeks, and gentile society was superseded by political society, was the influence of the old order of society overthrown" (1965:66). With monogamy, the woman "was now isolated from her gentile kindred, living in the separate and exclusive house of her husband. Her new condition tended to subvert and destroy the power and influence which descent in the female line and the joint-tenement houses had created" (p. 128).

Yet this is not the end of the matter, for Morgan continued (p. 128):

But this influence of the woman did not reach outward to the affairs of the gens, phratry, or tribe, but seems to have commenced and ended with the household. This view is quite consistent with the life of patient drudgery and of general subordination to the husband which the Iroquois wife cheerfully accepted as the portion of her sex.

The question is how such a characterization squares with the description of Wright, who lived many years with the Seneca (Morgan 1965:65-66):

Usually, the female portion ruled the house, and were doubtless clannish enough about it. The stores were in common; but woe to the luckless husband or lover who was too shiftless to do his share of the providing. No matter how many children, or whatever goods he might have in the house, he might at any time be ordered to pick up his blanket and budge; and after such orders it would not be healthful for him to disobey; the house would be too hot for him; and unless saved by the intercession of some aunt or grandmother, he must retreat to his own clan.

An explanation comes readily to mind in terms of the familiar discrepancy between ideal and real wifely roles in our society. Ideally, the wife is the patient and cheerful "helpmeet" in an entrepreneurial nuclear family. A common reality, behind an acceptable public façade, may be a frustrated wife bolstering up, manipulating, and dominating an emotionally dependent husband. Hence an assumption of male dominance as a cultural ideal and the "henpecked husband" as an alternate reality in societies where women's private "power" is constrained by exclusion from public authority is projected into much ethnography. Furthermore, variations on the theme can be observed in erstwhile egalitarian societies in which trade, various forms of sharecropping, wage work, or outright slavery have been important in recent times. These economic relations transform household collectives that were largely controlled by women and that took communal responsibility for raising children; women and children become dependent upon individual men. However, when the previous structures of such societies are reconstructed and the range of decisions made by women is considered, women's autonomous and public role emerges. Their status was not as literal "equals" of men (a point that has caused much confusion), but as what they were—female persons, with their own rights, duties, and responsibilities, which were complementary to and in no way secondary to those of men.

Women's status in Iroquois society was not based on their economic contribution per se. Women make an essential economic contribution in all societies, but their status depends on how this contribution is structured. The issue is whether they control the conditions of their work and the dispensation of the goods they produce. In egalitarian societies, women are limited by the same technological and ecological considerations as men are, but there is no socially defined group that directs their activities. Brown (1970) documents this point for the Iroquois, and its ramifications have been explored by other researchers (Caulfield 1977, Sanday 1974, Sacks 1975, Schlegel 1977).

³ For studies of comparable changes in women's status, cf. Hamamsy (1957) and Leacock (1955).

Iroquois matrons preserved, stored, and dispensed the corn, meat, fish, berries, squashes, and fats that were buried in special pits or kept in the long house. Brown notes (p. 162) that women's control over the dispensation of the foods they produced, and meat as well, gave them the de facto power to veto declarations of war and to intervene in order to bring about peace: "By supplying the essential provisions for male activities—the hunt, the warpath, and the Council—they were able to control these to some degree." Women also guarded the "tribal public treasure" kept in the long house, the wampum, quill and feather work, and furs—the latter, I would add, new forms of wealth that would be their undoing. The point to be stressed is that this was "household management" of an altogether different order from management of the nuclear or extended family in patriarchal societies. In the latter, women may cajole, manipulate, or browbeat men, but always behind the public façade; in the former case, "household management" was itself the management of the "public" economy.

The point that household management had a public character in egalitarian society was made by Engels (1972:137); it was not understood by Morgan. Like most anthropologists today, Morgan saw the status of women in Iroquois society as quantitatively higher, but not as qualitatively different from what it later became.

Indeed, to pursue Morgan's views on Iroquois women is interesting. Despite his contribution to the understanding of historical factors underlying women's changing status, his *League of the Iroquois* is hardly free of derogatory innuendos with regard to them. From reading the *League* alone, one would not know that the matrons nominated the sachems, and their role as providers is dispensed with in the statement that "the warrior despised the toil of husbandry and held all labor beneath him" (1954:320), although Morgan elsewhere refers to how hard the men worked at hunting. Ignoring women's agriculture, he writes as if the Iroquois were primarily hunters. Without the influence of cities, he states, Iroquois institutions "would have lasted until the people had abandoned the hunter state; until they had given up the chase for agriculture, the arts of war for those of industry" (p. 132). When he describes women's formal participation in tribal affairs, he writes, "Such was the spirit of the Iroquois system of government, that the influence of the inferior chiefs, the warriors, and even of the women would make itself felt" (p. 66, italics added); and "If a band of warriors became interested in the passing question, they held a council apart, and having given it full consideration, appointed an orator to communicate their views to the sachems. . . . In like manner would the chiefs, and even the women proceed" (p. 101, italics added).

Richards (1957) argues that "the aboriginal matriarchy pictured by Lafitau, Morgan, and Hewitt was . . . a mistake" and that the status of Iroquois women had increased by 1784, the beginning of reservation life. Her documentation reveals, however, not an increase in status, but a change from the informality of a fully egalitarian society to the formalization of powers necessary for handling a new and complicated set of political and economic conditions.

Richards takes up two of women's formal powers, the right to dispose of war captives and the right to decide about marriage. On the basis of incidents in the *Jesuit Relations* and other early sources, she concludes (p. 40) that there was "a gradual increase in the decision making power of the women and a corresponding loss by the men" as a "product of a long continued contact situation." Richards presents eleven incidents pertaining to the disposition of war captives, eight between 1637 and 1655, one in 1724, and two in 1781. She states (p. 38) that "women in the early period had little if any decision making power," that later they shared power with the men in their families, subject to acceptance by the captors of the prisoner and by the council, and that later still "they were able to intervene and even actually instigate the capture of an individual

though it was still necessary to complete the formality of obtaining council approval." However, among the eight cases in the first period, several indicate the active and successful intervention by a woman on behalf of a captive, concluded with the formal presentation of wampum to the council, and there is an instance in which a woman insists on the death of a captive given her to replace her dead brother, in spite of the council's wish to the contrary.

True, in no case do women exercise power equivalent to that held by bodies of men in patriarchal class-based societies. Instead, the cases illustrate the flexibility of decision-making processes characteristic of egalitarian societies. The captors, the council, and interested individuals all had a say in the disposition of captives, and individual women or men apparently won or lost according to the depth of their conviction and the persuasiveness with which they presented their case. What is of significance to the present line of argument is that in all instances, scattered as they are over time and among different Iroquois peoples, women operated formally and publicly in their own interest, with ceremonial gift giving, use of the arts of rhetoric, and other public display. Richards (p. 41) quotes Radisson's report of his return from a war foray; his adoptive mother, he says, "comes to meet me, leaping and singing. . . . Shee takes the woman slave that I had and would not that any should medle with her. But my brother's prisoner was burned ye same day." Radisson's mother had first claimed him in the following fashion: "The old woman followed me, speaking aloud, whom they answered with a loud ho, then shee tooke her girdle and about me she tyed it, so brought me to her cottage."

In relation to marriage decisions in the earlier period, Richards cites several examples in which matrons did not have the clear-cut power to decide on spouses for their sons and daughters. However, the early records instead indicate that young women lived in dormitories, took lovers, experimented with trial marriages, and made the decisions about whom they were going to marry, albeit with the advice and formal recognition of their parents. Cartier wrote of this "very bad" custom for the girls, who "after they are of an age to marry . . . are all put into a common house, abandoned to everybody who desires them until they have found their match" (Richards 1957:42). Other early accounts report both parents as involved in selecting spouses for their children, but girls as having the right to reject a suitor after trying him out (pp. 40, 43). Marriage arrangements were apparently flexible and included both polygyny and polyandry.

The fact that matrons' powers over disposition of war captives and over marriage became more clear-cut with the formalization of the Iroquois constitution betokens not an increase in power, but a formal recognition of prestige and influence that had long operated. With relation to marriage, in a society where consensus was essential, the young were *influenced* rather than *ordered* by their elders with regard to the conduct of their personal lives. However, the formal codification of women's social position took place in a situation in which their autonomy was already undermined. The subsequent history of the Iroquois polity involved a temporary strengthening of the "public sphere" represented by the confederacy at the point at which it was being supplanted by colonial rule. The long-house communities were replaced by settlements of nuclear family units; what remained were some of the interpersonal styles and traditions of cooperation and personal autonomy.

TRANSITION

Like the Iroquois, societies around the world have been transformed by the economic system that emerged in Europe in what Wallerstein terms "the 'long' sixteenth century" of 1450–1640

(1974:406-7). Unfortunately, this fact has been obscured in anthropology by the practice of separating the "internal" functioning of societies from their total economic and political contexts, in order to reconstruct supposedly "traditional" cultures through deletion of "modern" involvements. Wallerstein's article is not specifically directed at anthropologists, but his criticism of ahistorical methods (p. 389) is apt: "The crucial issue when comparing 'stages' is to determine the units of which the 'stages' are synchronic portraits (or 'ideal types'). . . . And the fundamental error of ahistorical social science (including ahistorical versions of Marxism) is to reify parts of the totality into such units and then to compare these reified structures." To be effective in the interpretation of history, stages must be of total social systems.

Wallerstein distinguishes social systems as "mini-systems" or "world-systems." A mini-system is "an entity that has within it a complete division of labor, and a single cultural framework," such as "are found only in very simple agricultural or hunting and gathering societies" (p. 390). He continues: "Such mini-systems no longer exist in the world. Furthermore, there were fewer in the past than is often asserted, since any such system that became tied to an empire by the payment of tribute as 'protection costs' ceased by that fact to be a 'system,' no longer having a self-contained division of labor." Other factors that have been undermining the self-contained division of labor of mini-systems for centuries are trade, involvement in raiding or being raided for slaves (in the New World as well as in Africa), taxation of various kinds (often as an incentive to wage work), and wage labor, often entailing men's absence from home villages for long periods. In all cases, missionizing played an important role in urging people toward an individualized work ethic and a nuclear family form. Since mini-systems no longer exist, says Wallerstein, social analysis must take into account that "the only kind of social system is a world-system, . . . a unit with a single division of labor and multiple cultural systems." This world-system is "the capitalist world economy."

Recognition of this fact has serious implications for the cross-cultural study of women, since involvements with a developing capitalist world economy have had profound effects on their relation to the production and distribution of basic group needs, hence to sources of decision-making power. The practice of stacking contemporary peoples in "historical" layers—as hunter/gatherers, simple agriculturalists, and advanced agriculturalists with domestication—does, it is true, yield some insight into the nature of women's decline in status, since a people's involvement in the world-system starts within each "layer" from a different basis. Furthermore, cultural traditions can be remarkably strong, and people can wage stiff battles for those they value. Hence the method of comparing near-contemporary cultures can be used with care to suggest historical trends (see, e.g., Sacks 1976). However, socioeconomic systems separated from the economic and political constraints that in part define them cannot be treated as direct representations of sex-role definitions in contrasting societies.

Two recent books, *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974) and *Women and Men* (Friedl 1975), share an ahistorical orientation and assume from recent and contemporary evidence the universality of male dominance and the cultural devaluation of women. The assumption is neither documented nor argued on the basis of ethnohistorical materials. Instead, 19th-century concepts of matriarchal power—incorrectly ascribed to Marx and Engels (Friedl 1975:4) or Morgan (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974:2)—are cited briefly as inadequate, and the alternative of women's equal prestige and autonomy in egalitarian societies is given but passing reference and subsequently ignored (Friedl 1975:4-7; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974:3). Yet the authors eschew simplistic psychobiological explanations for an assumed universal male dominance and see the structure of women's position as critical to relative subordination or autonomy in different facets of cultural life,

making for an open-ended future according to structural changes.

Friedl offers thoughtful discussions of women's participation in the production and control of food and goods in a variety of cultures, but with no reference to the fact that both ethnohistorical and recent materials indicate a general decline in women's control with the advent of trade (certain notable exceptions do not pertain to the peoples she describes). Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974:9) write of the papers in their book that they "establish that women's role in social processes is far greater than has previously been recognized" and that they show that "women, like men, are social actors who work in structured ways to achieve desired ends" and who "have a good deal more power than conventional theorists have assumed." However, they reveal their entrapment in the anthropological ethos that sees contemporary Third World peoples as virtually unchanged representatives of the past in stating (p. 14) that "the papers . . . do not, on the whole, address questions concerning female roles today." With the exception of a paper on the 19th-century Mende of Sierra Leone, the empirical papers do treat "female roles today"—among the Igbo and Ijaw of Nigeria, the Mbum Kpau of Tchad, the Javanese and other Indonesian groups, Lake Atitlán villagers in Guatemala, and people of rural Montenegro, pre- and postrevolutionary China, and urban black communities in the United States. By what fiat are such peoples removed from the world of today?

The upshot of an ahistorical perspective is to see giving birth and suckling as in and of themselves furnishing the basis for a presumed past subordination, though subject to change in the future. Since the division of labor by sex was central in the evolution of cultural life, it is easy to fall into the trap: women bear children; the early division of labor is related to this fact, as is women's present subordination; hence there has been a quantitative but not a qualitative shift in women's status relative to men, which took place as egalitarian social forms were transmuted into hierarchical ones. The structural implications of the fact that, when labor is not specialized beyond the division by sex, goods are completely shared within a band or village collective are ignored, as is the concomitant control by every member of the group over the distribution of the resources and products that each acquires or manufactures. Thereby the source of transformation in women's status is bypassed: the development of trade and specialization to the point that relations of dependence emerge outside of the band, village, or kin collective, undermine individual control and personal autonomy, and lay the basis for hierarchy.

Brown (1970) contrasts the public control exercised by Iroquois women, based on their responsibility for the collective household and its stores, with women's loss of such control, and concomitant loss of status, among the centralized and hierarchical Bemba. In comparative studies, Sacks (1975) and Sanday (1974) affirm the relationship between control of production and distribution by women and their "public" participation and status. Goldhamer (1973) shows the variability in women's control over the products of their labor in the New Guinea highlands and the significance of these variations to their status.

For example, among the Mae Enga women are responsible for the daily allocation of their produce, but "men retain the 'right and duty' involved in the 'important' distribution of pigs, pork, and produce—for prestation, trade and debt-payments" (Goldhamer 1973:6). By contrast, among the Tor of West Irian, "men say that it is women's total control over the food supply that affords them the 'exceptionally high position' that prevails throughout the district" (p. 10). Food presentation may be a "public" or political act or a private service, according to the structural setting. Among the Tor, as among the Iroquois of the past, women's dispensation of food to strangers is a public act; it sets the stage for the reception of newcomers. "The women's expressed attitude toward strangers coming into the villages determines how they will be received by the men" (p.

10). By contrast, Bemba women dispense food as a family service that redounds to the husband's stature and enjoins obligations to him on the part of the recipients in the same way as does chiefly extending of hospitality. Among the Mae Enga, women's labor furnishes produce that is consumed by the pigs which are distributed in political negotiations by men.

The relatively higher status of women among the Iroquois and Tor, where they control their work and its distribution, than among the Mae Enga and especially the Bemba, where they do not, suggests that preliminary phases in the process of class development did in fact accompany women's decline in status, as Engels originally proposed. The link between women's reduced status, on the one hand, and the growth of private property and economic classes, on the other, was in Engels's view the emergence of the individual family as an independent economic unit. Taking shape within and subverting the former collective economy, the family as an economic unit transformed women's work from public production to private household service. The critical development that triggered the change was the specialization of labor that increasingly replaced the production of goods for use by the production of commodities for exchange and set up economic relationships that lay beyond the control of the producers.

Commodity production, Engels (1972:233) wrote, "undermines the collectivity of production and appropriation" and "elevates appropriation by individuals into the general rule," thereby setting in motion "incorporeal alien powers" that rise up against the producers. The seeds of private property and class exploitation are planted, and the single family as an economic property-owning and inheriting unit develops within and destroys the collective. "The division of labor within the family . . . remained the same; and yet it now turned the previous domestic relation upside down simply because the division of labor outside the family had changed" (p. 221). Instead of carrying out public responsibilities in the band or village collective within which goods were distributed, women became dependent on men as the producers of commercially relevant goods. In the context of the individual family, "the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude, . . . a mere instrument for the production of children" (p. 121).

Engels described the process as unfolding through the domestication of animals in the ancient East and the exchange of cattle, which were cared for, and hence came to be owned, by men. Since unequal control over resources and subjugation by class and by sex developed in very different ecological settings in many parts of the world prior to, as well as within, the period of European colonialism, it is important to separate Engels's statement on women's subjugation from the specific context of his discussion. The processes associated with the transformation of goods produced for use to "commodities," produced for future exchange, then become apparent in all world areas. These are: specialization of labor in connection with trade, and warfare to ensure or control trade; intensive work on agricultural land and unequal access to or privatization of prime lands; differences in economic status expressed in categories of "slaves," "rubbish men," perpetual youth, and the like; competition among lineage groups, within which the individual family as an economic unit begins to take shape; the institutionalization of "political" functions connected with warfare and property as separate from "social" functions and the dichotomization of "public" and "private" spheres; and the institutionalization and ideological rationalization of male superiority.

SUMMARY

I have argued that the structure of egalitarian society has been misunderstood as a result of the failure to recognize women's participation in such society as public and autonomous. To conceptualize hunting/gathering bands as loose collections of

nuclear families, in which women are bound by dyadic relations of dependency to individual men, projects onto hunter/gatherers the dimensions of our own social structure. Such a concept implies a teleological and unilineal view of social evolution, whereby our society is seen as the full expression of relations that have been present in all society. Ethnohistorical and conceptual reinterpretation of women's roles in hunting/gathering societies reveals that qualitatively different relationships obtained. The band as a whole was the basic economic unit; individuals distributed their own produce; property did not exist as a foundation for individual authority; and decisions were on the whole made by those who would be carrying them out.

Failure to appreciate the structure of egalitarian relations renders more difficult the problem of unravelling the complex processes that initiated class and state formation. Ethnohistorical research indicates that in precolonial horticultural societies where egalitarianism still prevailed, women continued to function publicly in making economic and social decisions, often through councils that mediated their reciprocal relations with men. The comparison of such societies with those characterized by differences in rank and wealth indicates that the main concomitant of women's oppression originally outlined by Engels is indeed found cross-culturally. The transmutation of production for consumption to production of commodities for exchange (usually along with intensive work on land as a commodity for future use) begins to take direct control of their produce out of the hands of the producers and to create new economic ties that undermine the collectivity of the joint households. Women begin to lose control of their production, and the sexual division of labor related to their childbearing ability becomes the basis for their oppression as private dispensers of services in individual households. The process is by no means simple, automatic, or rapid, and where women retain some economic autonomy as traders they retain as well a relatively high status. In West Africa, women were organized to maintain and protect their rights well into the development of economic classes and political states.

The documentation and analysis of women's social roles, then, show that family relations in pre-class societies were not merely incipient forms of our own. Social evolution has not been unilineal and quantitative. It has entailed profound qualitative changes in the relations between women and men.

Comments

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In her earlier analysis of the Montagnais-Naskapi, Leacock showed a fine ability to analyze historical records as a means of reevaluating entrenched assumptions, in that case challenging the "territoriality" of "patrilocal" bands. In this paper on egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies she does it again, and succeeds both in convincingly arguing for diligent use of the historical method and in revealing the distortions of data that have occurred because of anthropologists' culture-bound premises about male-female relationships.

Leacock's fundamental assumption is that power relations depend upon access to or control of wealth. This is followed by a discussion of mechanisms that transformed egalitarian structures into family-based entrepreneurial units. Her reconstruction is both enlightening and parsimonious, needing only to be pushed farther in terms of the *type* of wealth that was accumulated, held, and exchanged by families. The definitive feature, I believe, is that as wealth first appeared in horti-

cultural or very favorably located hunter-gatherer societies, it was primarily in the form of *commodities*, in contrast to money or some other symbolic exchange medium. Qualities distinguishing commodities from money are that the former are more difficult to store and relatively less divisible, with a correlated tendency for the total family accumulation to fall under the control of a single individual.

Other aspects of human behavior, such as women's child-rearing roles and male preeminence in warfare, may then have militated to make men more often than women those individuals responsible for external family relations and for the control of wealth. The tradition of male relations to wealth persisted into the era of a money economy, with women disbarred not only from equal participation in financial and legal institutions, but also to a large extent from the more effective means of generating wealth. Speculation is in order, however, that the storability and divisibility of money have helped to undermine the corporate character of families, so that individuals (including eventually women) have become able to accumulate on their own behalf.

As women earn income on increasingly equal terms with men and then retain control of wealth, the sexual dichotomy may become less important a dimension for the expression of the hierarchical relations of the society. This does not entail a return to the egalitarianism described by Leacock, in which there is little accumulation above subsistence, but only modification of a hierarchical system so that ascription of status because of sex no longer automatically relegates women to an inferior position within the structure.

by AMITA BARDHAN

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Leacock provides a refreshing look at the limitations of the available ethnographic data on egalitarian societies as they existed and evolved in the long historical perspective. By taking advantage of her own study and analysing the findings of several noted ethnographers, the author has demonstrated that the biases and limitations of tools and concepts of class societies in understanding the status of women in egalitarian groups have resulted in an unfair picture of the role and status of women in foraging societies. The application of concepts and tools used for studying class-based societies to the study of human units like the "band" overlooks the differences between the socioeconomic organization and structure of the band and those of class-organized societies. According to the author, the failure to recognize these differences is responsible for the unilineal view of social evolution insofar as the status of women is concerned. She has shown that this popularly accepted view is questionable and that women in egalitarian societies enjoyed independent status in relation to men and individual autonomy comparable to that enjoyed by men in the area of decision making and the authority to produce and enjoy the fruits of productive activity.

by CATHERINE H. BERNDT

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This paper rests uneasily on a polarized model that contrasts two "qualitatively different" kinds of society, "egalitarian" and "hierarchical," and then proceeds as if they were empirically real. Virtually by definition, "egalitarian society" here is synonymous with "band societies," in which "egalitarianism applied as fully to women as to men." Statements about "the societies studied by anthropologists" that offer a contrary view are said to reflect ethnocentric bias deriving from involvement in "the hierarchical nature of our society."

The paper bristles with unsupported assumptions and assertions that haven't been carefully thought through. It is sad to read, in 1977, such garbled statements on the Australian Aboriginal situation. The Godelier quotation is not used pertinently in the context of the discussion, and in any case there are more directly relevant references (e.g., Gale 1974). The author quotes from Tindale when it suits her (p. 245) but not when it doesn't (p. 248: "In the male-oriented society of the Pitjandjara, it is the men who decide the direction of travel and the watering places they will touch. . ."). Daisy Bates is an undependable source. The Kimberly women in Kaberry's study were themselves very much involved in the pastoral station economy—which actually enhanced the socioeconomic status of women at the expense of their menfolk. Leacock's undocumented allegations of "male brutality toward women" as being "common for Australia" give a distorted picture. To paraphrase her own remarks, she evidently didn't ask the right questions, she too readily falls back on clichés, and the result is a "once-over-roughly" which is visibly subjective, emotive, and clumsily polemic.

Somewhere in all this, there is a paper which could be a useful contribution to the topic of "Women's Studies." Such a contribution, on a cross-cultural basis, would be welcomed by anyone concerned in this field, but the present paper needs some pretty drastic reconstruction, on general and particular points, to be more than patchily helpful.

by JUDITH K. BROWN

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"In the beginning. . ." Peoples everywhere have origin tales, and anthropologists have already devised several. For Leacock, the Garden was a classless society in which women and men enjoyed autonomy. The Fatal Apple was production of commodities for exchange rather than for use, which in turn ushered in the specialization of labor for trade, warfare to protect that trade, and a host of other changes, including a loss of women's autonomy.

Leacock's hypothesis that the position of women was at one time qualitatively different is an inviting one. Yet to accept it must remain largely an act of faith because of the present status of our knowledge. Although amazing inferences can be suggested by the remains studied by archaeologists (see, for example, Whiting and Ayres 1968), Leacock identifies no such index for classless societies or for the status of women. On the other hand, the ethnographic record is not to be trusted, because it describes societies already under the sway of Western contact and because the typical observer has been too blinded by the analogy with the position of women in our own society. Leacock's paper is excellent as it analyzes these defects. The apparent contradictions contained within Morgan's description of the Iroquois and within Landes's work on the role of women among the Ojibwa are reconciled by Leacock with care and with skill. If female autonomy within classless societies was once universal, there is so far only scant evidence for it in the *Jesuit Relations* and in the vestiges of female autonomy noted by Phyllis Kaberry among the Australian Aborigines.

It is not clear what constitutes contradictory evidence. Leacock notes that Iroquois women enjoyed unusual powers, in spite of the fact that the League based its subsistence largely upon cultivation and in spite of the presence of a League treasury that contained stored food, quill work, etc. This should constitute an anomaly, yet the data are presented in support of the hypothesis.

Leacock appears to view the autonomy of women in classless society not as purely axiomatic, but as amenable to proof or disproof. The paper stands as a challenge to anthropologists to discover the additional necessary evidence by a reexamination of early sources.

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Leacock's contention that social evolution was accompanied by "profound qualitative changes in relations between men and women" is not only plausible, but increasingly supported by the recent ethnographic research which seeks to examine and reexamine gender roles (e.g., Draper 1975, Martin and Voorhies 1975, Sanday 1974). Europeans' misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the nature of relations between the sexes in non-Western cultures are scarcely arguable any longer but bear repeating as evidence which points in that direction mounts (see Mintz 1971 and Van Allen 1972 for African examples).

Although one could comment on several issues which Leacock raises, I shall confine my remarks to two points: (1) that qualitative changes are still occurring in relations between men and women in various cultures and (2) that swift and concerted efforts should be directed to research in those few systems where the distinction between public and private domains is still not pronounced and women still retain public autonomy.

Boserup (1970) and a number of others have recently documented changes in the division of labor and restrictions of women's economic opportunities as traditional social systems "modernize." Wherever women lose autonomy in the public domain for whatever reason, it appears almost certain that relations between the sexes in the private domain will change qualitatively. This has been happening since the very beginning of industrialization in European countries, and it is proceeding apace in the Third World today. Where factories replace cottage industries, where corporate enterprises move into the traditional snack market, where casual wage work becomes formally structured and covered by national wage laws or unionized, women lose traditional sources of income and become less autonomous and less valued in both private and public domains. Qualitative shifts in relations between men and women result. The dynamics of such changes can be illustrated by considering Indian women construction workers (Chiñas n.d., Sinha and Ranade 1975).

Traditionally Indian women, mostly tribal, have been employed as hod carriers on all types of construction projects. Nearly all of these women (at least 8% of the total Indian female labor force) are young, married, with small children. Entire families move from their home villages, often hundreds of miles away, to the construction site, usually located in an urban area. Families live on or very near the project site in makeshift housing. Husbands and wives are employed on the same project, and women also are often working with sisters-in-law and other women from their home village. Women earn less than men, but they are free to take time out to nurse babies and attend to toddlers during work hours. Indian law requires mobile creches on every site employing 20 or more women, though the law is apparently seldom enforced. Indian social workers are pushing for the enforcement of the creche law and for equal wages for women in construction. Should either of these superficially admirable goals be accomplished, the result may very well be that contractors will decide they cannot afford to hire women any more or will expect more work per woman per day to cover the extra costs. Either way, the woman construction worker will lose. An increase in the quantity of work expected will reduce the amount of time and energy she has to attend to her family, while child care in creches will limit opportunities now existing for interaction between parents and small children. A decision by the contractor to stop employing women will result in a qualitative change in her relations with her husband as she loses her ability to contribute to family income. By becoming

economically dependent, she will lose her autonomy not only in the public domain but in the private one as well.

Thus, while it is important to reexamine historical sources to document qualitative changes in relations between the sexes in the past, it seems imperative that we all recognize ways in which ongoing qualitative changes in these relations occur through modernization. Anthropologists, especially those who are researching Third World women, have an obligation to fill an advocacy role for the women with whom they work. If anthropologists do not step forward and make a persistent and determined effort to preserve whatever economic autonomy traditional Third World women still have and to work for ways to increase their autonomy within the context of modernization, who will?

My second comment concerns those few groups in which public autonomy for women is apparently still a fact. The Hadza, the Mbuti, and the Paliyans are three such groups, as Friedl (1975) has pointed out. How is it that these peoples, all foragers, have managed to maintain egalitarian systems while surrounded by a nonegalitarian world? The Paliyans, for example, have been part of a highly institutionalized, stratified state (India) for centuries. Gardner (1972) gives us a lucid account of relations between the sexes (and between parents and children) in this contemporary egalitarian system. Even in 1968, Gardner reports, the Paliyans were experiencing increasing pressure on their environment from the dominant Indian population. Paliyans still foraging and those recently sedentized should be prime targets for urgent research into qualitative changes occurring between men and women. Draper's recent research on the sedentizing iKung is a start toward an understanding of these changes. I agree with Leacock that ethnohistoric research is important, but if we do not act with alacrity to study the few remaining contemporary egalitarian societies we shall very soon have *only* ethnohistorical sources.

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Leacock is to be congratulated for attempting to clarify the ethnographic record—and by doing so to raise significant theoretical issues. I differ with her on a number of these but agree thoroughly that sweeping and stereotyped generalizations such as "the universality of male dominance" or "exploitation in class society" must always be questioned. Otherwise we become the puppets of our own paradigms.

Do women and men in band societies have equal status? The literature on the topic is said to be ambiguous, supporting contradictory interpretations of equality and autonomy, on the one hand, and women's inferiority and subordination, on the other. Leacock tries to clear up the problem by suggesting that Engels was right: band, i.e., pre-class, society is egalitarian. Reports to the contrary, she claims, stem from two sources: (a) the male-dominant biases of the observers, who project sex-role images from "class society" onto egalitarian bands, and (b) the contamination of the band's egalitarianism through its contacts with social systems in which males are dominant.

The argument is persuasive, but not convincing, since it is virtually unfalsifiable. There are hardly any data indicating male dominance in band society that would not be dismissed by such postulates. Like all such statements, they *seem* valid if you believe in them beforehand; if not, then it becomes necessary to go back and examine the data.

Among the earliest observations familiar to me are those made by Hearne (1958) between 1769 and 1772 during his

travels in the arctic forests of Canada. By the time of Hearne's travels, the fur trade was well established and the local subsistence economy had changed drastically for many bands in the region. However, he was able to meet individuals quite isolated from contact, whose groups were still using tools made of stone, bone, and antler (p. 172). Hearne reports so often on male authority over wife and/or wives that it is difficult simply to assume that all of the myriad observed practices and evaluations could have sprung up as innovative (or "revolutionary") consequences of European contacts. He summarizes these observations as follows (p. 200):

The men are in general very jealous of their wives, and I make no doubt but the same spirit reigns among the women; but they are kept so much in awe of their husbands, that the liberty of thinking is the greatest privilege they enjoy. The presence of a Northern Indian man strikes a peculiar awe into his wives, as he always assumes the same authority over them that the master of a family in Europe usually does over his domestic servants.

This does not mean that women did not have a great deal of autonomy and even power. The harshness of the northern environment was such that both men and women were able if necessary to subsist on their own, and women are reported as eloping with paramours, insulting their husbands, and having the capacity to manipulate situations for their own benefit. Indeed the menstrual taboos are, as Leacock notes, an indication of the damaging power that women can exert if their menstrual state is allowed to contaminate men's capabilities.

Power is one thing—and all persons of both sexes and all ages have some and are capable through political skills of gaining more. Authority, in which there are stipulated, recognized rights to allocate scarce resources, is another matter. Here it seems to me the literature is clear. In matters affecting both sexes, in their interrelations in terms of scarce resources, men had greater authority than women in band society—even though cooperation as partners (albeit junior and senior partners) was enjoined by the culture (Cohen and VanStone 1963).

In discussing love, gallantry, and relations between the sexes, Hearne (1958:56–57) notes that "Northern Indian" women are valued less for their appearances than for the work they can do in converting skins into clothing and in hauling heavy loads while the camp group is on the move:

As to their temper, it is of little consequence; for the men have a wonderful facility in making the most stubborn comply with as much alacrity as could be expected from those of the mildest and most obliging turn of mind; so that the only real difference is, the one obeys through fear, and the other complies cheerfully from a willing mind; both knowing that what is commanded must be done. . . . When anything is to be prepared for eating, it is the women who cook it; and when it is done, the wives and daughters of the greatest Captains in the country are never served till all the males, even those who are in the capacity of servants, have eaten what they think proper. . . . It is, however, natural to think they take the liberty of helping themselves in secret; but this must be done with great prudence . . . and frequently leads to a very severe beating.

The explicitness of male authority here is quite striking. Is it, as Leacock says, a result of Western observer bias and/or absorption into male-dominant Western society? Clearly, Hearne was shocked at the treatment accorded "the fair sex." Still, his reports of male dominance action and statements by the band Indians of northern Canada stand on their own, apart from his reactions to them, and 200 years later the reader can quite easily sort these out. Western bias notwithstanding, male authority was a well-integrated part of band life in the middle to late 18th century.

The more difficult problem is that of sociopolitical, economic, and cultural change. Is male dominance a result of the contact situation? Here it seems to me there is room for discussion,

theorizing, but *not* dogmatic assertion. The fur trade raised the economic importance of hunting and demanded greater efforts by the entire hunting-gathering group in exploiting faunal resources. It is arguable that under such conditions the value of women's labor increased and men competed to obtain as much control over women as possible. Indeed, Hearne describes such competitions. He also describes polygny, elopement, and wife-stealing; there are many statements by his Indian aides in which women are referred to in effect as a form of capital.

As posed by Leacock, the question is whether inequality can be shown to be the result of "revolutionary" changes in "egalitarian" society brought on by the fur trade or of the enhancement of "glimmerings" of inequality already present in the precontact (unobserved) era. Put in such either/or terms, using both observed and (as yet) unobtainable data as the deciding test, the question is unanswerable. The reference above to "servants" indicates either a fur-trade-induced stratification or some pre-trade status inequality among men. On the basis of other statements in the book, the former seems more likely, and certainly enhancement of status distinctions resulting from incorporation into the fur trade is well documented. I am willing to concede that this same set of changes may well have affected relations between the sexes and the division of labor. But why must inequality suddenly arrive with the fur trade? It seems just as plausible that even though the fur trade transformed Indian life, it enhanced, selected, and emphasized qualities already present, albeit to a lesser degree. Of course, the test for these propositions lies in the unknown past. And if it were ever to be known, and inequality was recorded, it could still be dismissed as observer bias.

Indirect evidence is, on the other hand, again quite clear. In all known band societies, whenever authoritative leadership was necessary for the accomplishment of specific tasks, the leadership positions fell to men. These involved such things as organizing communal hunts (Shoshone, Mbuti), preparing, cutting up, and distributing whale meat (Yahgan), and allocating stone-axe use (Yir Yoront). If overall authority over group tasks was not already present in band society, why is it that whenever the band required indigenous larger-scaled organization men were the leaders? If this is because of contact with other, male-dominant societies, the logic and the data have escaped me. On the other hand, it is logically consistent with the proposition that *leadership of organized activity involving both sexes was in the male domain of the division of labor for band society*. It is this quality of band life that Leacock rejects, and this is the crux of our ethnographic and theoretical disagreement.

Social evolution is a complex multiple-feedback system of interactions in which "dialectics" may or may not play a part, large or small depending upon circumstances (cf. Cohen 1978a, b). To characterize one very broad type of society as "pre-class," whatever that is, and "egalitarian" is in my view to carry into contemporary theory the simplistic unilineal evolutionism of our less well-informed scholarly ancestors. There is every excuse for Engels to have overgeneralized—not so for Leacock.

Band societies are humankind's longest and oldest form of adaptation. Given the *sapiens* capacity to symbolize, moralize, and create traditions or rules (variable in the degree to which they are adhered to) which stabilize patterns of group and individual behavior, bands vary in the degree to which authority is developed. Antiauthoritarian political culture is widespread among them, although the empirical situation varies. Therefore, some have very little overt authority and often seem to outside observers to live in an "ordered anarchy" in which everyone does his or her job without much, if any, authority being exerted. In some there are intermittent author-

ity structures, quite rule-ridden (e.g., communal hunts), in which authority (invariably by males) is very clearly delineated. In others—very few, and mostly confined to Australia—authority resides among older men, who control and compete for scarce resources. Ethnohistorical and environmental factors select which authority pattern evolves at any given time and place. Given a concentration of renewable storable foods, usually connected to water resources, such societies can become quite complex. They are not, however, easily characterized as “egalitarian” or “simple” or anything else. Rather, they form groups that in turn formulate traditions characterizing their adaptation at a particular time and place. To label them as “promiscuous” or “egalitarian” or anything else is to overlook their internal variability and the capacity of such variation to interact with the environment and create new forms of society and authority patterns.

This is the “glimmerings” viewpoint that Leacock seeks to replace with a “dialectic” one. To do so, it seems to me, requires that we look at our anthropological data through the eyes of 19th-century evolutionists, which I find crippling, and that we abandon scientific rigor for service of ideological rhetoric, which I find misguided.

by JULES DE LEEUWE

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Leacocks uiteenzettingen zijn volgens mij een waardevolle bijdrage tot een wetenschappelijke benadering van de betrokken vraagstukken. Tegenwoordig zijn de door haar gekritiseerde inzichten enkel “heersend” binnen de kapitalistische invloedssfeer. Bovendien zijn de betwiste opvattingen na F. Engels eveneens stelselmatig door marxisten verworpen, ook in het niet-socialistische deel van de wereld.

Ik ben het oneens met Leacock wanneer zij de manier van besluitvorming in de “egalitarian band society” als een “basic principle” bestempelt. De methode van besluitvorming is een *gevolg* van de economische grondwetmatigheid ook in zogeheten egalitaire samenlevingen. Om aldaar te kunnen voortbestaan is in de regel bij praktisch alle werkzaamheden een volledige binnenmaatschappelijke coöperatie een gebiedende eis. Dat komt door de lage stand van de produktiekrachten. Voorts blijken menselijke wezens bereid en in staat hun werktuigen en technieken te verbeteren. Invloeden van buiten—waarvan Leacock er enige noemt—zijn daarbij medebepalend. Maar als basis-tegenstrijdigheid ontstaat allereerst *binnen* elke “egalitaire mattschappij” het konflikt tussen enerzijds het belang van de maatschappij-als-geheel en anderzijds het belang van individuele leden resp. groepen leden binnen de samenleving. Dit vloeit voort uit stijging van het peil van de produktiekrachten. Daardoor wordt de volledige intrasociale samenwerking minder noodzakelijk en begint zelfs een rem op de produktie te vormen. (Pas veel later, bij een zeer hoog niveau van de produktiekrachten en door het maatschappelijke karakter van de produktie is opnieuw een wezenlijk volledige coöperatie nodig op binnenlands en internationaal plan. Op een kapitalistische basis gaat dat niet. Maar daar ga ik nu niet op in.)

Dit alles leidt tot het op zichzelf vaststaande feit, dat het egalitaire karakter van de door Leacock bedoelde mattschappijen *betrekkelijk* is. Deze samenlevingen behoren vermoedelijk tot het meest archaische type en men mag ze daarom aanduiden also oorspronkelijke of primitieve mensenmaatschappijen of oergemeenschappen.

(Intra)sociale arbeidsverdeling blijkt aanvankelijk gegrondvest te zijn op verschillen in leeftijd en sekse. Wat dit laatste betreft, hangt de arbeidsverdeling steeds op een of andere manier samen met zwangerschappen van en zogen door de vrouw en met de naar verhouding grotere gemiddelde lic-

haamskracht van mannen. Deze factoren veroorzaken—telkens overeenkomstig het karakter van de produktiekrachten—verschillende mogelijke werksferen-voor-vrouwen en werksferen-voor-mannen.

Aangezien in sommige van die mattschappijen de tuinbouw (alsdan beoefend door vrouwen) van wezenlijker belang is geworden voor het voortbestaan van de samenleving dan dat de door mannen alsdan beoefende jacht en/of oorlog dit zijn, hebben *zulke* mattschappijen de neiging om overheersend *gynekokratisch* te worden. Dit behoeft *niet* in te houden, dat in die mattschappijen mannen en/of kinderen en/of halfvolwassenen worden onderdrukt of uitgebuit.

Onder bepaalde omstandigheden ligt het net omgekeerd: sommige primitieve mattschappijen neigen voornamelijk tot *mannenheerschappij*, aangezien hier een door de mannen bedreven jacht en/of oorlog belangrijker zijn geworden dan een door vrouwen beoefende hortikultuur of door haar gerealiseerd verzamelen (sprokkelen, graven etc.). Zulke soort gevallen worden door Engels niet onder de loep genomen. Daarom heeft Leacock gelijk, als zij stelt, dat men de algemene strekking van het door Engels opgezette betoog over onderwerping van de vrouw moet scheiden van de bijzondere context waarin hij de discussie plaatst. Engels' gegevens reiken evenmin toe om de mogelijkheid onder het oog te zien van vrouwenheerschappij op basis van verzamelen. Hij behandelt uitsluitend wat ik “tweede gynekokratische” resp. “tweede androkratische revolutie” heb genoemd, maar hij vertelt ons niets omtrent eventuele *eerste* gynekokratische of *eerste* androkratische omwentelingen (verg. De Leeuwe 1962, 1964, 1965, 1966; Schebesta 1965, 1966).

Androkratische revoluties lopen inderdaad uit op een toenemende onderdrukking en zelfs uitbuiting van vrouwen door mannen, met name in de tenondergaande primitieve maatschappij en vervolgens leiden ze tot *dubbele* onderwerping van de vrouw in klassenmaatschappijen. Aangezien de traditionele bovenbouw taai pleegt te zijn, verdwijnt zelfs in moderne socialistische landen de “enkele” geringschatting tegenover vrouwen (die mee is overgekomen uit androkratische fazen van de oergemeenschap) pas allengs.

[Leacock's elucidations are, I think, a valuable contribution to a scientific approach to the problems concerned. The views she criticizes are “current” only within the capitalist sphere of influence nowadays. Moreover, Marxists after Engels in the nonsocialist world as well have systematically rejected these views.

I cannot agree with Leacock when she writes that the “basic principle” of “egalitarian band society” is its way of making decisions. The mode of decision making is a *consequence* of the basic economic regularity in “egalitarian societies” as well. In order to survive there, complete intrasocietal cooperation is, as a rule, imperative with regard to practically all work; the reason for this is a low level of the productive forces. Further, human beings turn out to be ready and able to improve their tools and techniques. External influences—some of them mentioned by Leacock—codetermine this development, but as a basic contradiction first and foremost there arises *within* each “egalitarian society” a conflict between the interest of the society as a whole and the interest of individual members or of groups within the society, as the case may be. This is a result of the rise in the level of the productive forces, and through it complete intrasocietal cooperation becomes less imperative and even begins to act as a brake on production. (Only much later, in modern times, does a very high level of productive forces and the social character of production come to require once again complete intra- and

intersocietal cooperation, which turns out to be impossible on a capitalist basis; but no more of this here.)

All this leads to the established fact that the egalitarian character of the societies mentioned by Leacock is *relative*. These societies are presumably of the most archaic type and may therefore be designated original, or pristine, or primitive human societies.

(Intra)societal division of labour appears to be originally based on age and sex, the latter aspect being connected in some way or other with the female's periods of gestation and nursing and with the male's relatively greater average physical strength. These factors cause—depending in each instance on the character of the productive forces—different scopes of possible activity for females, on the one hand, and males, on the other.

Since in some such societies horticulture (pursued by women in the cases concerned) became more essential for the society's continued existence than, for example, hunting and/or warfare (practiced by men), *these* societies tended to become mainly *gynecocratic*. This need *not* imply that males and/or children and/or half-grown persons are oppressed or exploited in these societies. Under certain circumstances, it is the other way round: some primitive societies tend to be mainly *androcratic* because hunting and/or warfare as carried on by the men became more important than women's horticulture or the foraging practiced by women in those societies in a particular phase. Such cases are not dealt with by Engels, and Leacock is right in saying that we should separate Engels's general argument regarding women's subjugation from the specific context of his discussion. Engels's data are equally insufficient for considering the possibility of gynocratic phenomena based on gathering. He only treats of what I have called the "second gynocratic revolution" and the "second androcratic revolution" respectively, remaining silent on possible *first* such revolutions (cf. De Leeuwe 1962, 1964, 1965, 1966; Schebesta 1965, 1966).

The results of androcratic revolutions do imply, among other things, increasing oppression and even exploitation of females by males, particularly in declining primitive societies, and double subjugation of women in class societies. Since traditional superstructure is resistant to change, the "single" slighting of women that arose in androcratic phases in primitive societies is only gradually disappearing even in modern socialist countries.]

by REGULA EGLI-FREY

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Leacock's Reinterpretation der Stellung der Frau in egalitären Gesellschaften überzeugt durch die schonungslose Aufdeckung ethnozentrischer Projektionen und durch die Kritik wegen Vernachlässigung der historischen Entwicklung.

Indem sie sich für die Erklärung der unterschiedlichen Stellung der Frau in verschiedenen Gesellschaften der Argumentation von Engels anschliesst, sieht auch sie die entscheidende Wende in der Entstehung der Klassengesellschaften: hier werden die Aktivitäten der Frau reduziert auf das Erbringen privater Dienstleistungen, wodurch sich ihr Status verschlechtert. Während die Abwertung der Stellung der Frau in Klassengesellschaften ein universales Faktum zu sein scheint, stellt sich jedoch die Frage, ob dabei tatsächlich die hier einsetzende Trennung von öffentlichem und privatem Bereich das entscheidende Moment sei: die Realität konfrontiert uns mit Klassengesellschaften, in denen Frauen zwar der öffentliche Bereich zugänglich ist, ohne dass sich ihr Status dadurch erhöhen würde. Sacks (1975:229) hat unsere eigene Gesellschaft, den Industriekapitalismus als Beispiel und als Ausnahme aufgeführt. Als weiteres Beispiel können Frauen im alten Königreich Dahomey genannt werden: sie leisteten

wichtige gesellschaftliche Arbeit als Beamtinnen und Soldatinnen; Autonomie oder Entscheidungsbefugnisse hatten sie jedoch nicht. Es ist deshalb zu fragen, ob nicht die These, dass der Ausschluss der Frau von gesellschaftlicher Arbeit in Klassengesellschaften wesentliche Determinante ihrer niedrigen Stellung sei, einer Überprüfung bedarf. Der Forderung Leacocks, die Stellung der Frau nicht getrennt vom gesamtgesellschaftlichen Kontext zu analysieren, kann nur beipflichtet werden. Mit derselben Sorgfalt der Analyse, die Leacock auf egalitäre Gesellschaften angewandt hat, sollten auch Klassengesellschaften engagiert werden. Vielleicht ist die Opposition von privatem und öffentlichem Bereich nicht nur für das Verständnis von egalitären Gesellschaften, sondern auch von Klassengesellschaften hinderlich. Wenn der private Bereich je nach Organisation der Gesellschaft unterschiedliche Bedeutung haben kann für die Stellung der Frau, wird zu untersuchen sein, ob dies nicht auch für den öffentlichen Bereich zutrifft.

[Leacock's reinterpretation of the position of women in egalitarian societies is convincing in its ruthless unmasking of ethnocentric projections and its criticism of the neglect of historical development.

While agreeing with the arguments of Engels for an explanation of the position of women in different societies, she also sees the decisive turn in the development of nonegalitarian societies: here the activity of women is reduced to the performance of private services, as a result of which their status is reduced. While it seems to be a universal fact that a low value is placed on women in nonegalitarian societies, we must ask ourselves whether the distinction of public and private spheres introduced here is in fact the point: the reality confronts us with nonegalitarian societies in which women in fact have access to the public sphere without any elevation in their status. Sacks (1975:229) has included our own society—industrial capitalism—as both an example and an exception. As an additional example we can mention women of the ancient kingdom of Dahomey. They carried out important social duties as officials and soldiers; they did not, however, have autonomy or the right to make their own decisions. The thesis that it is the exclusion of women from activity within the public sphere in nonegalitarian societies which determines their low status thus seems to require examination. One can only endorse Leacock's suggestion that the position of women not be analysed separately from the entire social context. The same careful analysis which Leacock has made of egalitarian societies should also be applied to nonegalitarian ones. Perhaps the opposition of private and public spheres hinders the understanding of egalitarian as well as of nonegalitarian societies. If the private sphere can, according to the organization of the society, have varying significance for the position of women, we should investigate whether this doesn't also hold true for the public sphere.]

by CLAIRE FARRER

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4 XI 77

While it is now accepted that most older ethnographies, even when written by women, largely ignored questions pertaining to women, the methodological and theoretical ramifications of such a perspective have needed to be explored. This Leacock has done through her discussion of the thesis that egalitarian societies accorded equal status to women and men. However, the example of band societies calls for some contemporary amplification.

Leacock states that "the modern band has a chief or leader of some sort to represent its corporate interests in negotiations with governmental, business, or missionary personnel." This is contrasted with the situation of the Montagnais-Naskapi

of ethnohistorical and historical records, who dispersed and coalesced depending upon ecological and technological considerations. Similar conclusions, also based upon ethnohistorical data, were reached by Basehart (1970) for the Mescalero Apaches. However, I don't see the differences Leacock does between the historical and contemporary situations.

My views of women's status and place in an egalitarian society are colored by having done fieldwork among the Mescalero, a predominately matrilineal, matrilineal, matri-focal, but *not* matriarchal, group. It is true that contemporary Mescalero have self-identified as a tribe rather than as bands and that they have a tribal council with officers whose task it is to manage tribal business *and* deal with outsiders. It is not to be assumed, however, that the previous band structure and alliances have been replaced by the political structure dictated by the dominant culture through the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act. On the contrary, band affiliations are preserved linguistically through lexical and phonemic distinctions; they are preserved through political factionalism that is predicated on old band membership; and they are preserved through constant reference to previous territory such as "the lower plains down around the [Carlsbad] caverns where my people used to be." The person speaking identifies himself as a Mescalero but one from the Lower Plains Band (Yaaguukande).

Perhaps a more productive analogy would be one of hardwood and veneer, with the hardwood being traditional band structure and interpersonal relationships and the veneer being the Western European model of an elected assembly with attendant officers as well as less outward reliance on kin. The hardwood of tradition is the viable system; it supports, virtually allows, the veneer, as is evident in Mescalero tribal meetings today—meetings in which, it must be stated, the women have equal voice with the men. It would be more accurate to say that each adult has equal voice with every other adult, provided allowance is made for the superior wisdom of the elderly.

Of course, these statements do not negate Leacock's. They merely shift the focus somewhat, but I believe it is the shift of focus that allows us to examine the very areas of concern to Leacock. There is no doubt that the ethnographic record is skewed in regard to women—especially in egalitarian societies. Weiner's (1976) recent reexamination of Trobriand society is an elegant illustration of the value of bringing the women's perspective to bear on what had been believed to be definitive.

I wonder how our ethnographies would read if early ethnographers had had the opportunity to live with a group such as the Mescalero *and* had heeded consultants such as my primary one (a man, it should be noted), who stated, "Men cry because they are *extremely* emotional. . . . Men are always children. . . . A woman is not like that. A woman is practical."

by VALERIE FENNELL

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Leacock effectively argues that anthropology's structural-functional tradition maintains an ahistorical myopia, viewing contemporary gatherer-hunters as untouched by the classism and sexism of surrounding colonial societies. I agree that stages of evolution are reified and that in them we impose our conceptions of imperative social habits upon the peoples we classify. However, I still question the argument that in "untouched" egalitarian societies females had "their own rights, duties, and responsibilities which were complementary to and in no way secondary to those of men," that there was no sex hierarchy, that "qualitatively different" relations existed between females and males. I'm not sure what

Leacock means by "qualitative difference." I also have difficulty with the words "equal" and "autonomous." Leacock chooses the word autonomous to describe women in early egalitarian societies. Autonomy, however, seems to be an individual's quality, while sex hierarchy addresses categorical relations.

The evidence for sex hierarchy in egalitarian societies, Leacock says, is proof of the influence, even before Western colonialism, of more powerful class-stratified societies in the "capitalist world system." These class-stratified societies diffused sexism along with trade and economic specialization. The evidence that may indicate autonomy for women in egalitarian societies represents the vestiges of a greater autonomy which existed before contact with these societies. Rather than vestiges, could these be examples of individual women's taking autonomy as it is available to them in the real situations of their lives, the allowances arising from vague cultural plans? Women do this in all societies. In the United States, for example, women are often allowed to take traditional men's roles, while men cannot as freely take women's roles; thus women's lives have more potential variety than men's. Women can be economically independent of familial males. And, as in all societies, there are women who acquire special status at the urging of male relatives and by association with them. Such women's autonomy does not suggest that we have no sex hierarchy. Nor is women's autonomy among the Ojibwa proof of the absence of a sex hierarchy there.

Part of the problem may be inadequately separating our discussions of woman as a categorical status and of unique individual women. Not all women will follow the cultural prescription for the life of a woman. Maybe none will, but this does not prevent the cultural prescription from persistently and intermittently influencing the enculturation and life experiences of individuals. When we are looking at the individual, there will always be evidence for women's autonomy. However, sex hierarchy is most apparent when categorical privileges are considered and ideologies and attitudes are brought out. I do not feel convinced that individual autonomy for women automatically excludes expectations of female subservience and ideologies of male superiority in a particular cultural system. They may be logically contradictory, but such contradictions are frequently found in ideologies.

Leacock's assertion that female-male relations in "egalitarian" societies were qualitatively different because women had more autonomy and rightfully asserted themselves in *public* roles needs to be fully discussed. She avoids saying that a sex hierarchy existed but notes that women's status "was not as literal 'equals' of men." This "separate but equal" argument is intriguing enough to insure a reexamination of our ethnocentric assumptions. There is another ethnocentric assumption which is often made: that economic and property rights determine, if not justify, hierarchical privileges. Accepting this makes Leacock's argument especially compelling. However, even with the additional data contributed by ethnohistorical analysis, the origins of masculist ideologies cannot be pinpointed, and qualitative differences in female-male family relations before private property and after remain a definitional and interpretive problem.

by MAUREEN GIOVANNINI

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Leacock's article constitutes an important contribution to the growing body of literature on the status of women cross-

culturally. She challenges the assumption that the subordination of women is universal and argues in favor of ethnohistorical research capable of uncovering the qualitative transformations in sex roles which are linked to evolutionary changes in more general economic and political relations. Clearly, a diachronic approach such as that offered by Leacock is essential if we are to go beyond existing static models and arrive at an understanding of the social processes involved in structuring, maintaining, and altering the status of women across time and space.

While in general agreement with Leacock's argument, I believe that two issues of relevance to the position of women have not been sufficiently dealt with in her treatise. The first of these pertains to the need for an operational definition of status inclusive of its various dimensions. When we discuss the status of women, are we assessing this in terms of their productive activities and control over production, their formal authority and decision-making power in sacred and secular domains, or their relative cultural valuation/devaluation? To date, most ethnographic works have explained women's status with reference to either one or several of these dimensions, thus limiting the comparative potential of their findings. Also, contradictions regarding the position of women in certain societies, some of which Leacock cites, may be partly due to the fact that researchers are defining status according to diverse criteria. Operationalizing the concept of status would eliminate much confusion found in the existing literature and form a general analytical frame for future ethnohistorical and cross-cultural research.

A second area requiring more systematic attention is the influence which cultural symbols and beliefs have exerted on the status of women during the course of social evolution. While in many social contexts material factors assume primary importance, the role of cultural meaning in defining, perpetuating, and changing women's status must not be overlooked. For example, recent studies suggest that, even among groups where formal authority is a male prerogative, the ideas surrounding women can constitute a source of female power and control (Strathern 1972, Wadley 1977). In another direction, my own research in a Sicilian village indicates that cultural codes have been altered as a result of the assumption by women of new economic roles in a nearby textile factory. By conceptually identifying the factory with the domestic sphere, these revised cultural interpretations have, however, served to reaffirm and support the persistent subordination of women in that community (Giovannini 1977).

What I would urge, therefore, is that ethnohistorical and comparative studies examine evolutionary transformations in cultural constructs as well as in socioeconomic institutions. In that way the dialectical relations between material and ideal structures and the relative impact of each on the status of women at one point in time or over time can be analyzed. This methodological strategy would overcome the reductionist tendencies widespread in contemporary anthropology, where social phenomena including women's status appear to be explained dichotomously either in materialist or in idealist terms.

by BRIGITTA HAUSER-SCHÄUBLIN

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In der Tat! «Too many questions about women have not been asked, or not of the right people . . .». Beifügen müsste man dieser Feststellung Leacock's: Die meisten Fragen der Anthropologen über Frauen wurden männlichen Informanten gestellt und nicht den betroffenen Frauen selbst. Die Tätigkeiten, sozialen Beziehungen, das Denken und die Ansichten

der Frauen über Männer wurde verhältnismässig selten so intensiv untersucht, wie das für Männer einer Gesellschaft die Regel ist. Bei einigen dieser Beispiele, die es dennoch gibt, hat sich gezeigt, dass Frauen ein selbständiges Weltbild mit eigenem Wertesystem besitzen, das in vielen Punkten mit demjenigen der Männer nicht übereinstimmt, es aber ergänzt, im Sinne eines Gleichgewichtsverhältnisses (Murphy 1974, Hauser-Schäublin 1977). Objektiv gesehen, d. h. mit wissenschaftlichen Kriterien gemessen, besitzt es in der Regel aber nach aussen nicht die gleiche Wirksamkeit oder das gleiche Durchsetzungsvermögen wie das der Männer.

Wir stehen heute immer noch vor der Situation, dass eine Vielzahl von Informationen über Frauen in nicht-westlichen Gesellschaften mit Vorbehalt zur Kenntnis genommen werden müssen. Auch zweifelsohne verstärkt das männliche Vorurteil der Anthropologen dasjenige der männlichen Informanten, die über Frauen Auskunft geben. Wenn Aussagen über Frauen in sogenannten primitiven Gesellschaften gemacht werden sollen, ist Quellenkritik unbedingte Voraussetzung. Aber das gilt nicht nur für jene Autoren, die das Thema Frau auf Kindergebären und -erziehen reduzierten, sondern die (wie le Jeune) den Frauen global «great power» zuschrieben und behaupteten «disputes and quarrels among spouses were virtually non-existent». Zweifellos aber hat die androzentristische Ausrichtung der westlichen Gesellschaften oft eine Veränderung der primitiven Gesellschaften zugunsten der Männer bewirkt. Dennoch bezweifle ich das Hauptargument von Leacock, dass sich in egalitarian societies die Gleichheit auch auf Männer und Frauen, Junge und Alte erstreckt. Arbeitsteilung nach Geschlecht und Alter (die «matrons» der Irokesen waren alte Frauen) ist auch in klassenlosen Gesellschaften mit der Verteilung von Bewertungen verbunden. Warum gibt es eine Vielzahl von männlichen Tätigkeiten, vor allem im Zusammenhang mit Jagd und Kopfjagd (z. B. Mundurucú und Iatmul), die für das Überleben der Gruppe nicht wichtiger sind als die der Frauen, dennoch aber höher bewertet werden und mehr Prestige geniessen? Und gerade diese Tätigkeiten, die mit einem grossen emotionalen Erlebniswert verknüpft sind, sind es, von denen Frauen in zentralen Punkten ausgeschlossen werden. Warum denn gibt es z. B. Massenvergewaltigungen von Frauen durch Männer, wenn sich diese nicht an die Verbote der Männer halten? Umgekehrt sind Männer in weitaus geringerem Mass von weiblichen Tätigkeiten ausgeschlossen. Vielmehr schliessen sich Männer selbst davon aus. So existieren Verbote, ein neugeborenes Kind oder eine Wöchnerin zu berühren, Jagdwaffen oder Festschmuck in Kontakt mit einer menstruierenden Frau zu bringen, nicht deshalb, um Frauen zu schützen, sondern Männer und deren hoch geschätzte Gegenstände. Sogar bei den Irokesen wurden menstruierende Frauen von gewissen Zeremonien ausgeschlossen (Schumacher 1972:127), was immerhin als Zeichen dafür angesehen werden kann, dass zumindest soziale Vorschriften dieser Art von Männern geschaffen wurden.

In Neuguinea werden Verstösse der Frauen gegen solche und ähnliche Vorschriften z. T. im Männerhaus unter Ausschluss der Frauen verhandelt und schliesslich Sanktionen beschlossen, die jedes Mitglied der Gesellschaft treffen können. Warum also sollte man Männerhäuser also nicht als «öffentlich» bezeichnen und das individuelle Frauenhaus als «privat»? Das braucht jedoch nicht zu bedeuten, dass «familial influence» nicht öffentlich wirksam werden kann. Sie tut es, trotz allen Bedenken von Leacock, auf informellere Art und Weise. Im Hochland von Neuguinea sind vorwiegend die Frauen die «producers», aber die Männer sind die «trans-actors», die Verfügungsgewalt über die von den Frauen erwirtschafteten Produkte beanspruchen. Es kann keine Rede davon sein, dass «goods are completely shared within a band or village collective, . . . as is the concomitant control by every member of the group over the distribution of the re-

sources and products that each acquires or manufactures»—es sei denn, Leacock spreche damit nur von Männern. Im Gegenteil, die Rolle der weiblichen «producers» und die der männlichen «transactors» verschärfen das Verhältnis zwischen Männern und Frauen. Übrigens braucht es nicht nur koloniale Übermacht, die intrasoziale Feindschaft, hier Antagonismus zwischen Mann und Frau, schafft. Gerade in relativ dicht besiedelten Gebieten Neuguineas ermöglicht vielleicht sex antagonism, also intrasoziale Aggression, eine intersoziale Koexistenz, auch in vorkolonialer Zeit. Ich werde den Eindruck nicht los, Leacock begeben sich auf die Suche nach dem verlorenen Paradies, das irgendwo in ethnohistorischer Vergangenheit, aber verdächtig nahe beim Mythos liegt.

[Quite right! "Too many questions about women have not been asked, or not of the right people. . . ." And to Leacock's statement we would have to add that most of anthropologists' questions concerning women have been asked of male informants and not of the women themselves. The activities, social relationships, thoughts, and views of women have seldom been as intensively investigated as those of the men of a society. Some of the studies which *do* exist reveal that women possess their own view of the world, with their own value system, which often does not agree with that of the men but rather complements it, in the sense of balancing it (Murphy and Murphy 1974, Hauser-Schäublin 1977). When seen objectively, i.e., when measured by scientific criteria, it does not outwardly possess the same effectiveness or pervasiveness as that of the men.

The situation today remains that a large amount of the information on women in non-Western societies must be accepted with reservations. It is undoubtedly true that the male bias of anthropologists reinforces that of the male informants who provide them with information about women. If statements are to be made about women in so-called primitive societies, a careful critique of the source is indispensable. This doesn't merely hold true for those authors who reduce the role of women to childbearing and child rearing; it also applies to writers such as Le Jeune, who ascribe a global "great power" to women and maintain that "disputes and quarrels among spouses were virtually nonexistent." Doubtless the male-oriented attitudes of Western societies have often brought about change in the primitive societies in favour of men. Nevertheless, I am dubious about Leacock's main argument, namely, that in egalitarian societies the egalitarianism covers men and women, young and old. The division of labour according to sex and age (the "matrons" of the Iroquois were old women) is associated even in egalitarian societies with the apportioning of values. Why are there a large number of male activities primarily in connection with hunting and head-hunting (e.g., among Mundurucú and Iatmul) which are no more important for the survival of the group than women's activities but are nevertheless more highly valued and enjoy more prestige? Further, it is precisely from these activities, which have great emotional significance, that women are excluded. Why does mass rape of women by men, for example, exist for those women who do not observe the men's tabus? Conversely, the men are excluded only on a much smaller scale from female activities. Rather, they tend to exclude themselves by choice. Thus tabus exist against touching a newborn child or a woman in childbed or against bringing hunting weapons or ceremonial decorations into contact with a menstruating woman—not to protect the women, but to protect the men and their highly valued objects. Even amongst the Iroquois, menstruating women were excluded from certain ceremonies (Schumacher 1972:127), which can be taken as a sign that this type of social proscription at least was made by men.

In New Guinea, when a woman violates these or similar

restrictions, the matter is dealt with partly in the men's house, from which women are excluded, and finally sanctions are agreed upon which can affect each member of the society. Why then, shouldn't the men's houses be designated as "public" and the individual woman's house as "private"? This doesn't have to mean that "familial influence" cannot be publicly effective. It *is*, despite all Leacock's doubts, effective in an informal way. In the highlands of New Guinea the women are predominantly the "producers" and the men are the "transactors" who control the goods produced by the women. There can be no truth in the statement that "goods are completely shared within a band or village collective, . . . as is the concomitant control by every member of the group over the distribution of the resources and products that each acquires or manufactures"—unless Leacock has only spoken with men about it. On the contrary, the role of the female producers and the male transactors defines more clearly the relationship between men and women. Incidentally, it doesn't have to be a colonial power which creates intrasocial hostility, i.e., antagonism between men and women. Precisely in the relatively densely populated areas of New Guinea sex antagonism, i.e., intrasocial aggression, perhaps made intersocial coexistence possible, even in precolonial times.

I cannot free myself of the suspicion that Leacock is in search of a lost paradise that lies somewhere in the ethnohistoric past but comes suspiciously close to myth.]

by ANNA-BRITTA HELLBOM

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I would like to underline Leacock's valuable remarks about the inaccuracy of current views and the necessity of revising established opinions in order to avoid further prejudicial misinterpretations. In only one respect do I not entirely agree with her statements. Public and private spheres may not be dichotomized in band—i.e., egalitarian—societies as they are in the Western world. However, we may rest assured that there has always been in human societies a sociocultural sphere connected with "life within the hogan" (to use the Navaho term for "home"), which we could call "domestic," and one associated with the "world outside," whether this be designated "public," "external," or whatever. There may exist a continuum between the two spheres, but there are always some social rules which, in accordance with the specific sociocultural pattern, direct the individual's participation in either or both and which are directly related to his or her sex.

Leacock's statement that "male dominance and female deference is a constant theme in the ethnographic record" is undoubtedly true. Her explanation that such oversimplifying generalizations derive from a nonhistorical approach which "overlooks centuries-old directions of change" is acceptable. Her conclusion that "ethnocentric interpretation based on assumptions about public-prestigious males versus private-deferent females" may have skewed scientific judgment is plausible. Rather to the contrary, she points out—and this is very important—that in egalitarian (i.e., autonomous) society, the basic principle of which was that "people made decisions about the activities for which they were responsible," women were "autonomous," i.e., "they held decision-making power over their own lives and activities." The misleading misinterpretations of so many Western investigators are due to their neglect of such changing factors of sociocultural structure as the undercutting of the economic autonomy of women vis-à-vis men by "handouts to men defined as heads of families and . . . wage labor open to men" and the attempts of the Jesuits "to introduce principles of formal authority . . . and . . . disciplinary measures in the effort to enforce male

authority upon women." One is reminded of such recent incidents as the well-intentioned project of introducing cooperative methods in an African society where trading had always been a female activity by organizing courses in the new techniques only for the men!

by KNUD-ERIK JENSEN and KIRSTEN JØRGENSEN
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Leacock shows in an excellent way that there is a relation between status and ability to control the conditions of work and the dispensation of goods produced. In egalitarian societies this ability is vested in the individual man or woman, and everyone has unlimited access to the resources. Consequently, a separation between the private and the public sphere, and thereby a rigid division of labour by sex, is impossible. In such societies women have the same status as men. An essential conclusion that could be drawn from this is that the low status of women in almost all societies today is not naturally given, but a product of a specific historical evolution. Women's low position was determined in the early stages of the development of our economic systems and would, in a nonhistorical, evolutionary context, seem to be universal for this reason. One could imagine another evolution of society which also would imply a low status for women, but this would not affect the finding that the suppression of women is not a historical universal necessity.

It is a pity that this otherwise excellent paper should be marred by an apparent reluctance to accept any nonhistorical analysis or material, as if historicism as such could be a measure of validity. It is also regrettable that Leacock is reluctant to criticize a study just because it happens to deal with women's activities and interests and that she seems to think that a critical and historical orientation should be able to make up for deficiencies in the empirical material.

by ANN McELROY
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The criticism that ethnographic reports on women's status are often ahistorical and ethnocentric will come as no surprise to students of sex roles, but the point is worth repeating for the general anthropological audience. The more important point made by Leacock, that our understanding of egalitarianism is also erroneous because of ethnocentric premises and poor historical documentation, deserves serious consideration and debate.

To facilitate that debate, the case needs to be made even more strongly than Leacock has done. Anthropologists who have tried and found it difficult to extract reliable data on women from standard ethnographies may readily support her critique of the literature without fully understanding her criticisms of basic theoretical assumptions about egalitarian role relations. While these criticisms may arouse defensive postures in some readers, others may not understand how the critique relates to their research, especially if they are focusing on egalitarian social organization in general rather than on female status specifically.

The contradictions and unsubstantiated generalizations in the reports on the Iroquois, Australian Aborigines, Ojibwa, and Montagnais-Naskapi women exemplify Leacock's argument well, but more examples are needed to illustrate not only ethnographer bias, but also the dynamics of egalitarian relations and how they change under colonialism. Even though Leacock states that examples of sexual egalitarianism "are everywhere at hand," unfortunately she limits analysis pri-

marily to four societies. To strengthen her argument, she might consider additional societies whose egalitarian role relations have been under considerable pressure in culture contact and acculturation (e.g., Briggs 1974, Klein 1977, McElroy 1977, Spindler and Spindler 1958).

The Inuit case is an example of the social transformations incurred by contact. Extensive dealings with European explorers, traders, and missionaries throughout the 19th century in arctic Canada reduced the autonomy of native women and men as they came to depend on trade goods, subsidies, and employment. Sexual politics, that is, negotiations about gender-linked rights and privileges, affected their access to resources in the contact situation (McElroy 1976). The autonomy enjoyed by native men clashed with the authoritarian expectations of European men, and Inuit male roles were consistently disparaged. Women did not experience as much subordination, and opportunities for liaisons with Europeans as interpreters, traders, pilots, mistresses, and wives raised the status of these women in their own group.

Leacock implies that women's status usually declines during contact with class societies. The rise in Inuit female status may be an exception, but I doubt that it is rare. Through its "divide-and-conquer" strategy, colonialism creates oppositions between men and women which may not have been traditionally present. Whether it is men or women who lose power and status, sexual polarization inhibits the native society's ability to resist change and subjugation. Studies which depict a people as frozen in an unchanging tradition, as Leacock says, deny the immense social and ecological impact of colonialism and other types of externally induced change.

The central thrust of the article is excellent, but I disagree with two points. The first is the idea that procreation is as prestigious as hunting or raiding in egalitarian societies. This might be true if reproduction were as risky and unpredictable as hunting (cf. Lee 1968), but in fact it is not. Moreover, nomadic bands could not afford to allow unlimited procreation no matter how prestigious. Most bands space and reduce births through a variety of cultural and nutritional regulators and keep the population well below the environmental carrying capacity (Dumond 1977). Indeed, Leacock's description of "gifted women" and of valued aspects of Ojibwa female roles omits mention of childbearing as prestigious, and we note that control over food resources rather than reproduction formed the base of Iroquois women's power.

This latter point brings me to a second objection. I wonder whether the Iroquois are the best example of egalitarianism. Female solidarity puts men at a disadvantage in this society, judging from quotes such as "he might at any time be ordered to pick up his blanket and budge; . . . unless saved by the intercession of some aunt or grandmother, he must retreat to his own clan." Female unity and egalitarian relations are not mutually exclusive, but the male dependence described here is a far cry from male-female interactions typical of the ambilocal, bilateral, and clearly egalitarian Inuit. In other words, is "egalitarian society" too broad a category? It may be if the reader is tempted to lump the social relations of settled horticultural confederacies with those of nomadic hunting bands. This glossing over of differences is not intended or directly implied by Leacock, but it could easily be done by others looking for ethnographic support of feminist or Marxist theories.

by VERENA MARTINEZ-ALIER
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Leacock has provided an important and provocative reinterpretation of sex roles in egalitarian foraging societies. She maintains that though divisions based on sex are a human

universal, they need not entail sexual hierarchy. In essence, she argues that differences in function need not imply social inequalities and that where inequalities exist they are the consequence of the differential control of resources and distribution of basic necessities.

Leacock's critical reexamination is useful not only in correcting some of the misconceptions on egalitarian band societies. Beyond contributing to a better understanding of the condition of women and furnishing elements for a correct definition of strategies of change, it has far-reaching implications for comprehending the basic principles of class society.

The ethnocentric bias of earlier ethnography on sex roles is not a novelty, nor is it specific to this problematic. I fully agree with Leacock's attempt to set the record straight. I would add, however, that the difficulty in comprehending, as Leacock points out well, the *qualitative* difference of woman's status in egalitarian societies is not merely the consequence of the tendency to interpret the sexual division of labour in nonhierarchical societies in terms of what it means in Western society. Rather, it has deeper ideological roots that are directly related to the contradictory nature of bourgeois society itself.

I will first elaborate briefly on the nature of this ideology and its consequences for the structure of the bourgeois family and woman's status in it and then suggest how Leacock's analysis should be extended.

Underlying the conventional argument that extrapolates woman's inferiority, as apparently substantiated by her differential participation in the sexual division of labour, from her responsibility for childbearing is a widespread form of biological determinism. But the theories of biological class superiority which have been part of the bourgeois world view from the 19th century onward are the direct product of a society which, while upholding as a dogma the equal rights and opportunities of all citizens, was characterized by the most profound social inequalities. From this perspective, the contradiction between the structure of the bourgeois family, based on the subordination of women and children, and the bourgeois ethos of freedom, equality, and the pursuit of individual achievement is only an apparent one if we consider the ideological importance of these biological theories for the legitimization of actual social inequalities. The family head's almost unlimited control over women and children not only would appear to serve to protect private property and to guarantee its socially appropriate transmission through effective control of marriage, but would seem to be equally relevant to safeguarding the privileged genetic stock of the group.

The importance attached to blood ties in our society, typical of social systems based on ascriptive status but obviously contradictory in those in which social status is in principle the product of personal achievement, points in the same direction. The ambiguous definition given by the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* for *to inherit*, as meaning not only "to receive property, rank, title by legal descent or succession," but also "to derive (quality, character) from one's progenitor," is equally symptomatic. A further datum which points in the same direction is the widespread reservations (and this would require further research) in our society regarding adopted children. While in many nonclass societies adopted children or adults become full members of the adopting group, in class society, though enjoying equal rights with those of the children born to the family, they are nevertheless often regarded with some unease.

Legal rules of inheritance may be manipulated and changed; the rules of heredity are apparently immutable and thus furnish the most persuasive explanation for social inequalities. The apparently anachronistic value attached to *heredity*, which, again according to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, is "the tendency of like to beget like," safeguarded through

effective social control over the choice of partners in marriage, is the ideal way of justifying the fact that some are more equal than others.

As Engels showed long ago, monogamy has as its prime aim to prevent any doubts about the true paternity of offspring in order to guarantee the rightful transmission of property. Since it is the woman who gives birth to the children, this implies the man's monopoly over her procreative powers. Engels concluded that, as distinct from earlier forms of the family based, he said, on natural conditions, the monogamous family was the first form of the family based on economic considerations, i.e., the triumph of private property. I would add to this that while it is the economic structure of bourgeois society that in the last instance explains monogamy, it is its biological-ideological trappings which, by making inheritance dependent on heredity, demand the subordination of women and children in the bourgeois family. It is in this sense that, again according to Engels, monogamy constitutes a microcosm of bourgeois society, replicating the contradictions and antagonisms that are fully developed in the society at large. It is social bastardy cum biological bastardy that is seen as the true menace to class society.

If social inequalities are in the last instance presented as "natural" differences, and consequently heredity is a precondition of inheritance, then woman's subordination as a result of her dedication to childbearing must be seen as equally "natural." And finally, since the different biological makeup of the sexes is indeed universal, their social inequality must be universal as well.

The above, however, not only provides an explanation for the widespread biological determinism in the analysis of woman's status in societies structured differently from our own, but adds a dimension to the interpretation of woman's condition in any society. As Leacock sees it, the relative status of women in a society, as expressed by the degree of autonomy and decision-making power they enjoy, is determined by "whether they control the conditions of their work and the dispensation of the goods they produce." Even if female participation in production is different from that of males, this need not imply social inferiority as long as production of basic needs is carried out in the interest of the collectivity as a whole rather than in that of particular individuals or groups. I would add to this that an equally decisive aspect for woman's autonomy is the degree of control she enjoys over her procreative powers within the organization of social reproduction.

Leacock seems to establish a direct causal link between the mode of structuring access to resources and the distribution of production and the definition of sex roles. As I have attempted to outline above, in class society the specific attributes of the sexes derive from their roles in the process of social reproduction, which in its turn is determined by the mode of production. It is no doubt correct that "in our case, reciprocity in marital rights and duties is defined in the terms of a social order in which subsistence is gained through paid wage labor, while women supply socially essential but unpaid services within a household. A dichotomy between 'public' labor and 'private' household services masks the household 'slavery' of women." But why are women in our society ideally—historically this is not true, above all for working-class women, but I am arguing from the point of view of bourgeois ideology—relegated to the domestic sphere, and why are domestic unpaid services regarded as socially inferior to paid labour? I would suggest that it is woman's fundamental role in the social reproduction of class society that leads to her domestic seclusion and control by men. Thus, she is ideally restricted to carrying out services which, being

regarded as socially unproductive, i.e., not contributing immediately to accumulation, do not deserve payment and thus are not only inferior but marginal. As Leacock herself points out perceptively, in societies where the "household economy" is the entire economy no such distinction between productive and nonproductive labour obtains. Therefore, I would argue that in class society the evaluation of unpaid domestic services in comparison with paid labour as being socially unproductive and thus inferior constitutes a device that serves to mask the essential contribution of woman to both production and social reproduction and legitimizes her subordinate condition.

Thus, the socially defined participation of the sexes in social reproduction is as relevant to an understanding of woman's status as is their function in production. Leacock, however, hardly mentions the organization of social reproduction that obtains in the societies she analyzes. I would agree that anthropologists have tended to overemphasize the role of kinship as the basic structuring principle in nonclass societies, very much to the detriment of a proper understanding of production. But Leacock, though rightly stressing the need for a historical perspective, through an overly economicist approach seems precisely to eschew one of the dimensions of a society's history, its mode of social reproduction. Certainly, to apply the bourgeois paradigm of the family to nonclass societies would lead to serious misconceptions, but ethnography has revealed that the early notion of so-called primitive promiscuity was equally misplaced. All societies organize their social reproduction in some way or other, and its implications for the definition of sex roles are fundamental. Leacock states, for instance, in passing that "the negotiation of marriages for young people would seem to be an exception to the principle of autonomy in those societies in which it occurred. However, not only did young people generally have a say in the matter, but divorce was easy and at the desire of either partner," but one is left guessing about the meaning of this. In the same way as the sexual division of labour may be complementary rather than hierarchical, the organization of social reproduction might be qualitatively different from that of our own society; but it is almost as if Leacock believed that no such organization exists in egalitarian band societies. If this is so, it must be made explicit. If procreation and the socialization of the young are structured in some way and "marriage" of some kind or other exists, then this must be analyzed within the general framework she proposes. This is essential not only for an understanding of sex roles, but for an exploration of alternatives to our own family misery.

There is a last problem, that regarding the study of transition. At times Leacock seems to hold that on the whole "societies around the world have been transformed by the economic system that emerged in Europe." At others, however, she suggests that "unequal control over resources and subjugation by class and sex developed in very different ecological settings in many parts of the world *prior to*, as well as within, the period of European colonialism" (my italics). Nobody would deny the dramatic impact of colonialism on nonclass societies, but it would be theoretically important to distinguish clearly, as far as ethnography permits, exogenously from endogenously induced transformations if we are to comprehend the processes of social change.

by NALINI NATARAJAN

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Leacock, in writing about women's status in egalitarian societies and its implications for social evolution, focusses on precolonial societies with bands. Cross-cultural data from a number of American, African, Australian, Canadian, and Melanesian tribes provide the canvas. The emphasis is on the

extended family as the unit in pre-class societies, in some of which there was seasonal coalition and lodge groups provided warmth and intimacy to kin groups. Formal and informal friendship was not ruled out. Certain features of these early collectives that were linked to sex roles—their resilience, their reciprocity between individuals and collectives, their self-contained nature, and their indistinct leadership—are presented in detail and analyzed on the basis of psychology.

Such human universals as the existence of sex roles have persisted in society, manifesting themselves through various phases and acting as catalysts for multilinear and qualitative evolution. This point is well stressed, as the general stand is that evolution is quantitative and unilinear. Some human universals, technology for instance, hasten change, and my suggestion is that they be termed "accelerants." Another point made is that women's status in egalitarian society and socioeconomic structure are correlates.

Fried's conception of tribes as creatures of colonial relations is reified by Leacock. He exposes the myth of the tribe as a closed and static social collective existing as a culturally and territorially bounded entity integrated politically. To illustrate, he mentions the movement, negotiations, and trade of these tribes and the availability of choice among various alternatives for action. Further, since rigid and hierarchical class societies are the result of industrialisation, the norms of these societies are inapplicable in toto to pre-class societies. One constraint is that ethnocentrism mars judgment. The linkage between economic dependency and the group remains despite the increasing complexity which results in individual-centeredness of the individual and an increasing dichotomy between private and public domains. The end is the more conclusive because of data from societies amongst whom coalition was seasonal. Another premise is the application of equal status to men and women. These premises are well developed.

In this in-depth article, the accent is on the basic unit of the family, which in class societies becomes increasingly smaller. Congeniality, a viable age-sex ratio, leadership, the importance of formal and informal friendships as well as kin ties, and the incorporation of societies studied by anthropologists in some measure into world economic and political systems that oppress women and their involvement in larger systems for centuries are mentioned. Various roles of women are described and women's skills presented in detail. While the equal and effective participation of women in every sphere is mentioned, the theme that emerges is of a deferential stance towards men. For instance, details of nomenclature such as protective names given to women as against names of men that depict bravery, women's representation of grievances through the media of men's councils, and the prohibition of women in ceremonies among the Arunta of Australia are indicators of the dominance of men. Female delight in the torture of male prisoners and bizarre forms of violence resulting from the sudden disruption of the economy present pertinent facts.

In such research, selectivity of data is a constraint. Few women are selected, and not the right ones. Also, the linkage of women's status is to procreation, food preparation, and child care alone. Further, the linkage between the status of women and socioeconomic structure remains constant despite other changes in post-class societies, of which Leacock presents conclusive evidence. The results of dominance by a group in political power are illustrated by the fate of the Australian Aborigines. Women's internalization of their secondary role could have been mentioned and developed, however. Also, decision-making processes are mentioned, but illustrations could have been given.

In modern society, there is change in the concepts of purity and pollution and women's gift of fertility. Horror of menstruation has disappeared, much mystery surrounding sex has

been dispelled, and mother-right and gynaeocracy have been recognized as overstated. In the increasing stresses of modernization, these changes assume a new magnitude.

In sum, this detailed article provides sufficient cross-cultural data to demonstrate its premise.

by MARILYN STRATHERN

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A significant issue raised in this paper is the relationship of studies of women's status to the analytic concepts we use. The epistemological dilemma is treated, however, largely in terms of the effect of certain assumptions upon the accuracy of the ethnographic record. We should not talk about women's autonomy, it is argued, without also understanding the nature of individual autonomy in the society under review. Yet this admirable proposition Leacock restricts to a single category of society, for she sees the possibility of autonomy as characteristic of certain social formations—those which allow autonomous "behavior" (here defined as taking one's own decisions). This bypasses the question of having to consider *ideas* about personal freedom, fate, the relationship between volition and action, and such, in short, concepts of the person. A second point, that the notion of a public/private dichotomy on the observer's part may lead to a false evaluation of the importance of women's actions, is also clouded by an insistence on demonstrating this in terms of the same evidence (examples of women making decisions or being praised). Leacock does not touch on the conceptual issue: whether or not there are perceived domains of action in terms of which an individual's status is differentiated. Both points are treated as matters of observable behavior, for they are simply material evidence for what I think Leacock would say was her central message.

Her specific message is that there is a dichotomy between classless and class-based societies and that in respect of women's position ideas relevant to the evaluation of status in class-based societies may be mistakenly applied to classless ones. The latter are apparently found among hunter-gatherers, since the whole argument is set within an evolutionary context. The epithets "band," "egalitarian," and "non-class-based" seem to be synonymous. Modern examples for which the evidence on sexual egalitarianism is ambiguous are seen as contaminated by European colonialism. One would gladly go along with her proposition that in the Australian case, for instance, it is necessary to be reminded of the historical context, but I am unclear as to the basis upon which she decides that some items of behavior (e.g., "male brutality toward women") are partly products of the colonial experience and that others ("women . . . fighting back publicly in a spirited style") "bespeak a persisting tradition."

The ease with which the data slide around is disconcerting. Leacock follows the pertinent argument that women's status is an aspect of the amount of control they exercise over production and distribution. She cites the fact that Mae Enga women produce commodities—the produce fed to the pigs which men then distribute. The fact that they also produce the bulk of the food for immediate use and have a great deal of control over its disposal is dismissed with the qualification that nevertheless men retain power over the distribution of important items. But this is having it both ways: an argument about who in a society controls the products of labour turns into one which rests on the *society's* evaluation of different kinds of production. It is the Mae Enga men who rate their contribution as "important" and women's as not. If one is dealing with a society's own ideology, I do not see the ground on which the *values* attached to economic behavior can be

assumed to be prior to the associated values of men's versus women's work, public versus private relevance, etc.

Leacock is possibly a little casual in taking for granted the ethnocentricity which she claims mars most studies of women's status. The quotations from Landes are amusing, but is it really true that there is no empirical documentation of women's low status or that we have been blinded by unilineal kinship systems? Or, for that matter, that the idea of menstrual blood as polluting is a familiarly Western one? However, the balance is made up by her own firm assumptions about the nature of "band" societies. Women are "autonomous in egalitarian society"; these societies are characterized by a "communality of family-bands or kin groups"; the culprit is the individual family, for the lodge group of the Montagnais-Naskapi is mentioned with approval as being composed of several families. There is consensus within and among the multifamily units, with "personal autonomy . . . concomitant with the direct dependence of each individual [?] on the group [?]." Finally, "goods are completely shared within a band or village *collective*" (my italics)—and here she lets her own ethnocentrism go without remark. An important point about the relationship between household management and the public economy is lost in the mythology of the "collective economy" and the "household collectives that were largely controlled by women and that took communal responsibility for raising children."

I would not criticise her holding an ideology, for it leads to interesting questions; I would criticise the fact that it involves equations which render the analysis unanswerable. And if any example of male dominance or of a domestic domain can show, if not the finished product, at least the beginnings of class development, then obviously only the past can provide pure evidence for what a classless society would have been like.

by SUSAN S. WADLEY

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Leacock's article is a timely and enlightening study of women's roles. Anthropologists dealing with a wide variety of topics are becoming increasingly aware of their ethnocentric biases. As a result, our basic assumptions on such diverse things as Indian caste and Navaho kinship are being altered. We have known for some time that ethnocentrism also prevails in the study of women, and it is in this regard that I find Leacock's detailed appraisal of women in egalitarian societies most provoking.

I am reminded of a passage by Marshall that was recently brought to my attention by a student: "If I were to make a symbolic painting about a !Kung as a man and a father and head of a family I would show him carrying the whole family on his shoulders and in his arms as well as the tools for their living" (1967:30). Yet, as is well-known, !Kung women routinely provide the overwhelming majority of food supplies. Moreover, the !Kung share resources (meat, for example) and do not withhold them from others. Hence, as Leacock points out, "authority is not authority as we know it." Nevertheless, the accepted interpretation is that the father is the authority figure, and, of course, family structure is defined in Western terms (nuclear, extended), although this is forced (see Marshall 1967:39). With this type of impression of men—and hence women—pervading anthropology texts, it is not surprising that we are blind to our own assumptions.

Recently the dichotomy public-sphere/private-sphere has become a popular tool for explaining the status of women. Although these terms reflect a marked advance in our under-

standing of women's roles, even they carry Western connotations and most probably lead us to the wrong answers when dealing with non-Western and/or nonclass societies. Leacock points out the misinterpretations that arise from use of these terms in band societies: I suggest that similar warping may occur when we seek to understand women in a great many other societies. Though I would wish ultimately for much greater detail than we are provided in this article, I applaud it for raising questions and forcing us to reinterpret our own assumptions and data.

Reply

by ELEANOR LEACOCK

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The comments on my paper reflect the broad range of theoretical, methodological, and empirical issues that are being raised as the analysis of women's social roles proceeds. At the risk of doing an injustice to the specificity of each discussant's contribution, I shall organize my response in terms of four areas in which more work is needed: (1) collection and collation of data on women in egalitarian societies; (2) formulation of a reasonably satisfactory terminology for dealing with such societies; (3) heuristic separation of women's status into its major dimensions and analysis of how these dimensions vary in relation to social-economic structure; and (4) utilization of ethnohistorical methods in interpreting changes brought about by colonialism.

Data on egalitarian societies. Chiñas, Farrer, McElroy, and Wadley point out the need for more examples, in more detail, of women's roles in egalitarian societies, including contemporary instances of cultures in which egalitarian relations between the sexes persist. I heartily agree that more such data are needed, and perhaps I should have lengthened my article to include more. Farrer's statement is important, that equality of the sexes among the Mescalero Apache is better phrased as the equal voice of every adult, with allowance for the wisdom of the elderly. Too often, ethnocentric downgrading of old women prejudices their status. For example, Hart and Pilling (1962:14, 19, 84) refer to elderly women among the Tiwi as "hags" and "crones." Women participants in intergroup feuding are "screaming old women . . . yelling obscenities at everybody." Through verbal artifice, the influence of such women is derided. One influential elderly woman is described as remarrying at the "hag or crone stage," in which "her chief value was as a food producer and housekeeper and female politician." A semantic twist both reduces an older woman's assets to liabilities and bypasses the fact that older women, as well as older men, can pass on to young people the benefit of their sexual experience.

Reichard has documented egalitarian relations between the sexes among the Navajo, a people closely related to the Apache, and her account illustrates another possibility for the misrepresentation of women's status. According to Reichard (1928:54-55), Navajo women are "economically, socially, religiously, and politically . . . on a par with men." A woman "enjoys great economic and social prestige as the head of the house and clan and as the manager of economic affairs, and she is not excluded from religious ritual or from attaining political honors." However, in "modern political affairs," women's voice is indirect, due to "the infiltration of white ideas." Without benefit of full data on women and an awareness of changing relations in Navajo culture (later described by Hamamsy 1957), this "indirect" influence could have been seen as similar to the influence women can have on men close to them in any culture, no matter how patriarchal. I would qualify Reichard's discussion in one respect, however. Public

male authority vis-à-vis outsiders is not simply "diffused" as a "white idea." Basically, it is introduced through the restructuring of intergroup relations.

Terminology. There is need for consensus on terms for describing nonhierarchically organized society so there can be agreement on what disagreements are about. The problem, however, is not so much to agree on terms as to endow them with content that escapes from the paradigms of our culture. The implication that differences must be hierarchically ordered is embedded in our thought, whereas whether they are or are not in a given culture should be a matter of empirical determination.

Along with Fennell, I am dissatisfied with the term "autonomous" but prefer it to "equal." I am open to suggestions. As for "egalitarian," to which Cohen and Strathern apparently object, it has become well enough established following Fried's (1967) work to afford a good rubric for discussion. McElroy points out that I have used the term too broadly, by applying it to both hunting-gathering band societies and matrilineal-matrilocal horticulturalists. I have indeed. Although the latter may still be egalitarian, some differentiation is needed. The problem is to define pre-class modes of production (Leacock n.d.), and I was trying not to take on too many issues at the same time.

Despite Strathern's criticism, I still opt for "communal" and "collective" as connoting shared rights and responsibilities beyond those implied by a term like "cooperative." I toyed with constructions like "balanced reciprocal sodalities" but gave up and used English. Perhaps the terms seem reasonable because they apply to the culture area in which I have worked. Rogers (1972:119) refers to the fact that, during the early winter, among the Mistassini Cree, "all the families of one hunting group live in a large communal lodge." The communal lodge has been replaced by individual family tents wherever it existed among subarctic hunters, but terms like "task group," "local band," "microcosmic group," and "hunting group" refer to still closely knit groups of families (Helm and Leacock 1971:364). It is not the individual family as such that is the culprit, as Strathern puts it, but the breaking down of these groups into individual families as *economic units*. Others have independently noted this development. For example, Rogers (1971:133) writes that, with the emergence of the trading-post band among the Mistassini Cree, "the hunting group was losing its central position in the socio-political system and the nuclear family was emerging as a relatively independent social and economic unit." Does one show disapproval when discussing such matters in order to demonstrate scientific objectivity?

Strathern (directly) and Cohen (indirectly) refer to my "ideology" as if social scientists were normally free from what is also known as a point of view. Cohen argues that to call band societies egalitarian is ideological rhetoric that cripples scientific rigor. As I understand his reasoning, band societies are adaptive systems with variable patterns of authority, but when leadership is needed it is invariably male. One person's scientific rigor is another's ideological rhetoric. In my view, Cohen's assumption that ultimate male authority underlies all decision-making structures is an ideological commitment to the familiar terms of our society that cripples understanding of band societies.

One example of male authoritative leadership he cites is the Mbuti communal hunt. In Turnbull's (1962) familiar account, the women get their beaters ready while the men start working with their nets. Some couples wander into the forest early to gather mushrooms while things are getting under way. The men decide where to set up their nets, and the women then arrange themselves in a semicircle. At a signal Turnbull does not catch, the beating starts. Women act on their own initiative in situations that arise as the hunt draws to a close. Turnbull reports no orders being given, no

authoritative leadership exerted. In another observer's account (Turnbull 1965b:203), after the nets are set up, the women leave the young children with the men and go off into the forest with their babies on their backs to form a semicircle. The men stand motionless and the women beat towards them, catching any slow game heading their way and throwing it into their baskets.

Where in these descriptions is male authority? Turnbull (1965a:297) states explicitly, "all decisions concerning the hunt are made by joint discussion, in which women take part." In a hunt witnessed by Schebesta (Turnbull 1965b:172), "leaders" who start things off with a brief ritual are mentioned. Both are elders, one a man and *one a woman*. As Cohen writes, statements *seem* valid if you believe in them beforehand. His Chipewyan material is more complicated, and I shall discuss it below.

De Leeuwe uses the terms "androcratic" and "gynecocratic" to denote the greater importance of male or female roles in different hunting-gathering and horticultural societies. He suggests that "revolutionary" transitions from one to another preceded the revolution to androcratic society which accompanied the emergence of classes. I am glad to be reminded by him that my paper should have been addressed to a broader spectrum of work than it was, and I look forward to becoming acquainted with his own. I fully agree with him that economic relations are basic to patterns of decision making and had not meant to imply otherwise. In fact, my difference of opinion with him is on these very grounds. I am wary of applying to decision making in non-class-based societies terms that connote the type of power which emerged with the class relations of urban civilizations in different parts of the world. De Leeuwe is explicit that men were not oppressed in gynocratic horticultural societies. Why, then, use a term that gets into the same problems as "matriarchy"?

My article is in clear disagreement with the converse de Leeuwe states, that women were to some extent oppressed in hunting cultures. That they were in "declining primitive societies" is clear, however; the term "primitive" has been used to include many societies that are class-structured and politically organized. In my view, the problem of socialist transformation of women's status is not how to shed a remote primitive heritage, but how to eradicate vestiges of the family as an economic unit in which women's work is privatized. Deep-seated sexist attitudes that must be combated in this process are the direct heritage of capitalist relations.

Dimensions of women's status and their relations to different modes of production. Giovannini points out that it is important to analyze the relations among three primary aspects of women's status: control over production, decision making in different domains, and ideological valuation. I agree, although I see the latter two as *ultimately* based on the first. In responding to the comments, I shall deal with those that pertain to production and decision making together and then turn to those that concern ideology.

Brown succinctly summarizes my argument on the significance of exchange but suggests that accumulation of goods among the egalitarian Iroquois should constitute an anomaly. In relation to this point as well as to Abernethy's discussion, accumulation alone does not alienate producers from control over or a claim to their products or create the differential access to resources that is necessary for economic status differences to take shape. Ample data on Hopi and Zuni society make this clear. However, the Pueblo peoples, like the Iroquois, and doubtless every culture from at least Upper Palaeolithic times on, were engaged in some intergroup trade. The question for empirical research is under what conditions such trade leads to the specialization that undercuts egalitarian relations. In the case of the Iroquois, events across the Atlantic introduced dramatically new relations among them, and the fur trade became a major economic

and political concern. My suggestion is that the societies of New Guinea offer valuable insight into the significance of exchange.

In New Guinea, specialization and exchange, relatively intensive investment of labor in garden plots, privatization of rights to desirable lands, and the oppression of "garbage" or "rubbish men," as well as of women, all occur, and warfare is important. The fact that there is great variation in all of these features, within as well as between highlands and coastal areas, makes possible the comparative study of how economic developments relate to each other and to variations in women's roles and in attitudes surrounding them. I know I am brash to say this as a non-Melanesian specialist, but the contrast between the horticultural societies of Melanesia and those of what are now large parts of the United States, with respect to socioeconomic ranking, the specialization of labor, and the position of women, is too clear to be ignored.

How does it come about that, as Hauser-Schäublin puts it, men "transact" what the women produce? What is the range of variation and the significance of the fact that women in coastal areas may engage in trade? Are the kinds of variations first pointed out by Margaret Mead many years ago sheer happenstance? We can here debate, but comparative analysis is needed for reasonably definitive answers (which analysis, it should go without saying, cannot ignore the changes brought about by colonialism).

Strathern points out that women among the Mae Enga maintain a great deal of control over the disposal of their produce for immediate use and questions whether it is not the valuation by the men that makes important their distribution of goods in prestation, trade, and debt payments. My view is that trade *is* important, in that it *objectively* undercuts cooperative relations, and that what is at bottom an economic matter is being fought out in New Guinea in ideological terms of male rights to dominate women, aided by all manner of ritual sanctions as well as threats of physical punishment. That women maintain a good deal of control over their produce is responsible for the "battle-of-the-sexes" character of male-female relations that Strathern among many others has documented. On the one hand, women's status in most of New Guinea contrasts with that among egalitarian horticulturalists, but on the other hand it also contrasts with that in class-based and state-organized societies, where women are economically "dependent" and legally inferior and where sex antagonism is privately expressed and, commonly, on women's part, must be indirect.

Hellbom and Egli-Frey comment on the public-private dichotomy. Hellbom writes that one can always differentiate between cultural rules for behavior in the home and the "world outside." This is clearly so if one is cataloguing traits to do with space utilization and manners inside and outside dwellings, or with norms for behavior with kin and friends by comparison with strangers. The point is not to equate this level of cultural patterning with the separation from dwelling and camp-site life of critical economic activities and important group decisions. Egli-Frey questions whether it is "the exclusion of women from activity within the public sphere" that "determines their low status" and cites Dahomey and industrial capitalism as examples to the contrary. I did not mean to place the matter so narrowly. While I see the creation of a public-private dichotomy and the privatization of women's household labor as intrinsic to the emergence of class relations, I see these processes not as excluding women from participation in the public sphere, but as determining women's inferior position in it. Slave women, and varying but sizeable proportions of lower-class women, have always worked in the public domain. Martinez-Alier has contributed an extensive discussion of women's position in the reproduction of capitalist

social relations. Building on her contribution, I would stress the class differences in the significance of women's privatized status: among propertied classes, to produce legitimate heirs; and among laboring classes, through unpaid labor to reproduce new generations of workers and service the present one. It is not only profitable, therefore, but necessary to the maintenance of capitalist relations as presently constituted for women to be underpaid as workers and marginally involved in economic and political decision-making processes.

Abernethy suggests that women's status will equalize as women "earn income on increasingly equal terms with men." However, given the structure of their roles in capitalist society, how is this equalization of income to be brought about? It is a pressing issue for women in industrializing nations who are entering factory work at extremely low wages. Meanwhile, in the United States, despite publicity and tokenism, the income gap between men and women has widened (Women's Bureau 1976).

Egli-Frey's citation of Dahomey as a case where women carried out important public duties but had no right to make decisions can be questioned, given the types of studies to which Chifias refers. Throughout the Dahomean hierarchy, from the Queen Mother to local headmen, "each official had a deputy and a female counterpart called his 'mother,' who took precedence over him at court" (Murdock 1959:257). Such structures were common in West Africa, where women were marketers and traders and where women's organizations governed the markets, protected female interests, and negotiated with men in relation to the latter's responsibilities. (For example, for the Ibo, the most fully documented instance, see Basden 1938:164, 209; 1966:95; Meek 1937:125, 169, 200-203).

Sudarkasa (1976) argues that in West Africa the public-private dichotomy was not structured or conceptualized in Western terms, but both men and women were expected to and did build their public lives on their familial roles. The proposition is an important one for West African society in particular and historical processes in general and deserves further study. Class distinctions and political organization were old in West Africa, and conquests by Moslems adhering to the patriarchal institutions of the Mediterranean world, along with the greater role of men in long-distance trade, privatized and undermined women's status in some regions. The practice of cliterodectomy is testimony, and its history and distribution should be traced. On the other hand, class systems were not as rigid as those of the Mediterranean and the Middle East—children of slaves were born free; full private ownership of land was rare; and, for whatever historical or ecological reasons, women were not moved out of public production. There were great variations in this large and complex area. As the culture histories of different peoples become more fully known, and particularly as African women scholars bring their perspectives into the discussion, it will become possible to make comparative statements about women's status and participation in decision making in different regions and periods.

Returning to Dahomey, among the nearby Ashanti, Rattray (1923:84) found that the Queen Mother had formerly outranked the King and asked how it was that he had not been told this. The answer was always the same, he wrote: "The white man never asked us this; you have dealings with and recognize only the men; we supposed the European considered women of no account, and we know you do not recognize them as we have always done." Among the Ekoi farther east, another observer (Talbot 1912:97, 99) commented, "Though a woman comes under the influence of her husband on marriage, yet she is his proprietor, and has a right to ask any service." At the time he arrived, he continued, "the chief wife, not the husband, was regarded as the head of the house,"

but the custom was "beginning to be influenced by those of white men; especially in places near European centres."

Chifias points out that industrialization can further undermine the autonomy of women. However, McElroy notes that there are occasional circumstances in which women are able to take advantage of options made available in a colonial situation more readily than are men. Certainly the historical specificity of each instance must be respected. The broad generalizations about social processes that I have been advancing are not intended in their present form as final answers to history, but as opening up for examination areas where research has been blocked by "dogmatic assertions," to use Cohen's phrase, of public male authority as a historical universal.

Giovannini stresses the importance of the dialectical interplay between ideological and other dimensions of women's status and refers to the conceptual identification of a textile factory with women's domestic sphere in a Sicilian village. On the one hand, ideological themes are adapted to reflect and support the economic realities of working women's double duty; on the other hand, they structure the perceptions of alternative behaviors that may be opened up by factory work in such a way as to discourage departures from traditional roles. To carry the analysis forward, one could ask how the structure of work conditions influences the way younger women workers select from available ideological themes to shape personal life goals that diverge slightly from those of older women.

The altogether different analytic approach developed by Lévi-Strauss focusses on universal themes and interprets male-female symbolism in suspiciously 18th-century European terms (Leacock and Nash 1977). Men and culture as superior are linked and opposed to women and nature as inferior. Lévi-Strauss's formulation has underwritten a pervasive assumption that women's imputed universal inferiority is largely based on male fear of menstruation as polluting. Yet even New Guinea data do not quite fit. Faithorn (1975), writing on the Káfe, has rephrased assumptions about female pollution in New Guinea in terms of the power inherent in *both* male and female sexual substances, which can be dangerous if not properly handled. Natarajan refers to the fact that attitudes towards menstruation are becoming more sensible in "modern society," but cross-cultural variations have not been systematically analysed.

Hauser-Schäublin's statement that Iroquois men must have excluded women from certain ceremonies reflects a common implication that men initially banished women to a menstrual lodge. This is to confuse cultural rationales in societies like New Guinea with cultural origins universally. Given the absence of wearable absorbent devices, to sit on moss or the like in a private lodge is a practical and not unpleasant recourse. Why assume that at various times and places women did not make this choice, which then became variously ritualized according to other dimensions of male-female relations?

Cohen refers to Chipewyan menstrual taboos. For a menstruating woman to step over a trap or fishing site might harm a hunter's success (not "capabilities"). Since it hardly makes good sense to risk dripping blood on a trap, this was possibly a practical measure that was later irrationally extended, in the Chipewyan case, to eating parts of an animal's head or crossing a trail where these have been carried. Good manners that organize space and allow privacy in close living are commonly ritualized as taboos. For instance, to step over a sleeping person may bring illness or bad luck, but surely the practice preceded the sanction. Why not with menstrual taboos as well? I am not arguing the original rationality of all ritual practices, but rather that common-sense explanations should not automatically be ruled out.

In any case, Hearne's (1911:303-5) report on Chipewyan practices indicates female choice, not male attitudes of banishment with respect to the menstrual lodge. When retiring to the lodge, women slip under the tent side rather than leaving through the door. Hearne comments that women may leave in this manner at more than monthly intervals, either when annoyed with their husbands or, as Fidler (Tyrrell 1934:531) also notes, when they are meeting lovers. It is apparently unseemly for husbands to question their departure, though they may try to find out if lovers are involved.

I intend to familiarize myself with Hauser-Schäublin's work because I do not see how the effectiveness of a value system can be meaningfully measured apart from its actual functional persuasiveness. I have touched on some of Hauser-Schäublin's other points in relation to Melanesia, but as to the Iroquois matrons, yes, they are older women. However, sachems are older men, and the Keepers of the Faith, men and women, are also elders.

Female fertility is not particularly ritualized among the Ojibwa and Iroquois, as McElroy points out. However, neither is the male principle as such strongly ritualized in these cultures. Female puberty is selected for special group ceremony among some hunter-gatherers, such as the Mbuti, whose positive attitudes contrast with those of their Bantu neighbors (Turnbull 1962), and some peoples of western North America (Driver 1962:445-46; Heizer and Whipple 1971:49-52). The Andamanese give almost identical ceremonial recognition to girls and boys at puberty (Radcliffe-Brown 1964:92-104). I cannot help but question whether the 19th-century interest in the honoring of the female principle has faded because Victorian naiveté has been replaced by scientific sophistication, as I learned in college, or at least in part because the ceremonies themselves had faded by the time 20th-century observers got there.

For Australia, where the male and female principles are celebrated separately, as well as collectively, it will be interesting to see where the exploration of complementarity in place of an emphasis on male exclusion of women will eventually lead (Berndt 1974, White 1974). I apologize to Berndt for not making reference to the Gale (1974) collection on Aboriginal women, for it did influence my thinking. Nonetheless, I still maintain that the fact that recent ceremonial elaboration of male rituals has taken place in the context of reformulating group identities, as referred to by Godelier, must be taken into consideration in the analysis of sex-role ritualization.

Ethnohistorical method. I assure Jensen and Jørgensen that I am here emphasizing the importance of ethnohistorical materials because they have been so commonly ignored. It is certainly not my intention either to denigrate field research or to imply that historical analyses are not often incorrect. Cohen's criticisms raise problems in ethnohistorical method.

Cohen and Strathern argue that it is impossible to speak definitively about social relations in the precolonial world. However, this is a matter of degree. If the dictum were to be applied generally, and not only popular views were being questioned, it would challenge considerably more of the accepted findings of both social anthropology and archaeology than I would wish to. The canons of proof are always a problem in the nonexperimental sciences, but evidence that consistently points in a particular direction eventually wins the day. What, then, about Hearne's 1769-72 account of those Chipewyan known as the Northern Indians, with whom he travelled from Churchill on Hudson's Bay to the Coppermine River?

Cohen cites clear evidence of "male dominance action and statements" and could have added such incidents as a man beating his wife so angrily for jeering at him that she later died (p. 266); men wrestling for or buying as well as cap-

turing or stealing wives (pp. 128, 142-43, 156-57, 199-200, 207-8, 272); and men gang-raping the women in a camp of strangers that Hearne's party encounters (p. 281). Cohen is aware that the fur trade had influenced relations among the Northern Indians and suggests that the status of "servant" referred to by Hearne was probably fur-trade-induced stratification among the men. However, he asks, why must sex stratification "suddenly arrive" with the fur trade? He answers his own question. Women, he writes, "are referred to in effect as a form of capital." The fur trade had transformed reciprocal economic relations; women became, as porters and fur processors, a form of capital, a development paralleling that described for the Plains Blackfoot (Lewis 1942:38-40).

The relationships Hearne observed had not come about so suddenly, and the reason they took such extreme form was perhaps that they were not a "part of band life" in the usual sense of the term band. Hearne did not describe the composition of the "gang," as he called it, whose leader, Matonabee, had agreed to take him to the Coppermine. It contracted and expanded according to the exigencies of that commitment and of the quest for furs, and it contrasted with that of other groups encountered in that the core figures were not part-time trappers. They were full-time middlemen in the fur trade, a role some men had been playing in the area for the half-century following the establishment of the Prince of Wales's Fort in 1717.

Those Chipewyan who chose to become middlemen in the fur trade gave up the life of the "more indolent and unambitious" who, according to Hearne, continued to live on caribou in an area lacking in furs and who traded dressed skins and food for hatchets, ice-chisels, files, and knives (pp. 122-23). The "carriers," as Hearne called them, ran the risk of starvation in order to travel from the fort to the interior, where they obtained furs from the Dogrib and the Yellowknives or Copper Indians (pp. 123, 199-201, 222-24, 271, 288, 316). (The individual that Cohen mentions whose people did not have metal tools was a Dogrib woman from farther west, not any of the Indians Hearne knew and described as groups.) The Northern Indians maintained their middleman status by violence at times, plundering and even leaving to starve any Dogrib or Copper Indians who, instead of trading through them or travelling as their servants, made direct contact with the fort (pp. 201-3). Hearne compared their lives with those of the other Chipewyan as follows (p. 123):

It is true, the carriers pride themselves much on the respect which is shewn to them at the Factory; to obtain which they frequently run great risques of being starved to death in their way thither and back; and all that they can possibly get there for the furs they procure after a year's toil, seldom amounts to more than is sufficient to yield a bare subsistence, and a few furs for the ensuing year's market; while those whom they call indolent and mean-spirited live generally in a state of plenty, without trouble or risque; and consequently must be the most happy, and, in truth, the most independent also.

At the trading factories, Indian women were used as concubines and prostitutes. Governor Norton, son of an English man and an Indian woman, was said by Hearne to have kept a sizeable harem and not only to have poisoned men who refused to surrender wives and daughters he desired, but also to have poisoned two of his women that he considered unfaithful (pp. 107-8). Tyrrell, editor of Hearne's journal, questions such degeneracy, but journals pertaining to factories subsequently set up in the interior reported Chipewyan complaints that Canadians were taking their women by force. Canadians kept polygynous households, sometimes beating the men who tried to prevent their women's seizure, and people

in authority added to their income by pimping (Tyrrell 1934: 446 n, 449). For his part, Hearne inferred that his own experience as a traveller suffered from being "served with the worst commodities," but at "the best price" (p. 159).

Matonabee, Hearne's "principal guide," had been adopted by Norton's father and had lived at the Prince of Wales's Fort as a small boy. After spending some years with his own people, he was returned to the fort at age 16 or 17 to spend the rest of his life working for the Hudson's Bay Company. A man of 34 or 35 at the time of Hearne's trip, Matonabee was well travelled in Canada and had been responsible for making important trading contacts. He was rewarded for the Coppermine trip by being designated "head of all the Northern Indian nation," and he "continued to render great service to the Company . . . by bringing a greater quantity of furs to their Factory at Churchill River, than any other Indian ever did, or ever will do" (p. 334). Upon hearing of the fort's destruction by the French in 1782, Matonabee committed the extraordinary act of hanging himself.

Matonabee's choice of wives epitomized the transformation of relationships between the sexes from what had been a reciprocal division of labor to what became a female service role for individual male entrepreneurs. Women, always essential partners for their leather-processing skills and their other work, became valued as porters (pp. 70, 98–99, 102, 146, 157, 247), who would carry "eight or ten stone [122–40 lb.] in Summer, or haul a much greater weight in Winter" (p. 129). Although most women were "of low stature," and many of them "of a most delicate make," Matonabee "prided himself much in the height and strength of his wives, and would frequently say, few women would carry or haul heavier loads." Hearne wrote (p. 128), "They had, in general, a very masculine appearance," and "most [of the seven] . . . would for size have made good grenadiers."

As Cohen mentions, Hearne recorded enough incidents in his journal to indicate that women commonly asserted their interests. Hearne noted with a certain disapproval that a few were "as lofty and insolent as any women in the world" (p. 320). In assessing such material as Hearne's, it is important to remember that a certain bluster was always put on for the benefit of Europeans. As Matonabee's "gang" approached the fort, he invited some strangers to join up, since the Indians had found "that a large gang gains much respect" (p. 284). Most Europeans, Hearne continued, were under the false impression that all who accompanied the "leaders" on such occasions were "devoted to their service and command all the year," whereas the leaders had no authority beyond their own families, and "the trifling respect . . . shown them . . . during their residence at the Factory" was to enhance their bargaining power. The leaders were expected to use all means available, alternately begging, sulking, and demanding, in order to get a reasonable return even for "the most worthless of their gang" (p. 284). Certainly the women, whose senses were by no means "dull and frigid" as Hearne proclaimed (p. 320), would play along when Europeans were around. This is not to deny the reality of their adverse status, but to modify the possible assumption from my above discussion that they were abject and defenseless.

Cohen argues that the fur trade probably introduced the inequality of male "servants," but that in the case of women it probably "enhanced, selected, and emphasized qualities already present." He cites indirect evidence for male authority in general, such as the Mbuti hunt, but chooses to ignore 17th-century data on egalitarian relations among a people in the same culture area as the Chipewyan, the Montagnais-Naskapi. To be sure, one can find references to Montagnais women as drudges and slaves (Thwaites 1906, vol. 2:77–79; vol. 4:205). In European culture, women who did more than supervise household servants were in fact either peasant and

working-class drudges or slaves. However, those who came to know the Montagnais reported on women's decision-making roles and personal autonomy (Thwaites 1906, vol. 5:133, 179–81; vol. 6:233, 255; vol. 68:93). One also finds reference to violence around trading posts and mission stations, usually associated with drinking, although sometimes with a religious zeal of new converts so excessive as to unnerve the Jesuit fathers (Bailey 1969). These behaviors, however, contrast sharply with the ambience of daily life recorded by the Jesuit, Paul Le Jeune, during the winter months he spent with a lodge group of 18 men, women, and children, with its mix of generosity and cooperativeness (which he admired) and a lusty enjoyment of relaxation, eating, joking, and lewd teasing (of which he heartily disapproved).

Le Jeune's account of the egalitarian quality of day-to-day Montagnais life is reinforced by his reports on progress in converting and "civilizing" the Indians. He continually referred to the lack of authority as his main problem—not only lack of chiefly authority over subjects, but also lack of male authority over women and adult refusal to punish children (Thwaites 1906, vol. 5:197; vol. 6:153–55, 243; vol. 18:107; vol. 22:81, 85, 115–21, 125; Leacock and Goodman 1977). An incident that occurred in 1642 will illustrate the kinds of information available and the importance of analyzing ethno-historical materials in context. Some Montagnais men near Le Jeune's mission tied up a woman who had deserted her husband and threatened to take her to a dungeon in Quebec, surely a clear case of male imposition. However, the entire episode, embellished with a closing statement aimed at gaining support for the order's endeavors, indicates the Jesuit role in structuring such situations and shows the difference between Indians who had attached themselves to the mission and those who had not.

Le Jeune had previously instructed his converts to elect chiefs (Thwaites 1906, vol. 18:99–123) and had been training them in giving and receiving orders and lecturing them on the evils of allowing their wives freedom. Therefore, when a baptized woman left her husband, Le Jeune called a "captain" and some men together to tell them they must make her return. Since the captain had already reasoned with the woman to no avail, the men agreed that the threat of a French dungeon was the only recourse. The men went to get the woman; she broke from them and ran; they gave chase and tied her up. Upon this, as Le Jeune wrote,

some Pagan young men, observing this violence,—of which the Savages have a horror, and which is more remote from their customs than Heaven is from Earth,—made use of threats, declaring they would kill any one who laid a hand on the woman. But the Captain and his people, who were Christians, boldly replied that there was nothing that they would not do or endure, in order to secure obedience to God.

Seeing that the men were in earnest, the woman agreed to return to her husband, "promising thence forward she would be more obedient." Le Jeune concluded:

Such acts of justice cause no surprise in France, because it is usual there to proceed in that manner. But, among these people—where everyone considers himself from birth as free as the wild animals that roam in their great forests—it is a marvel, or rather a miracle, to see a peremptory command obeyed, or any act of severity or justice performed.

Materials such as these show that ethnohistorical research involves more than a search for references to some aspect of a culture. Ethnohistorical analysis should define economic and political relationships in particular instances and interpret the ways they structure alternatives for behavior, as well as the ways Judeo-Christian or Moslem ideologies are utilized when a people's cultural autonomy and economic independence have been severely threatened or destroyed.

In the case of Australia, historically specific accounts of

settlement, genocide, slaving, and prostitution (e.g., Hartwig 1972, Horner 1972) are needed as the basis for exploring changes that have taken place in Aboriginal society in different regions. Berndt objects to Daisy Bates's record of the demoralized refugees that sought out her camp. It is true that Bates's intent to publicize the Aborigines' plight, however well meant, was so permeated with patronization and so negative that her account can be read as insulting to them. Yet exacerbation of intragroup violence is a worldwide result of colonial conquest. I am glad to hear from Berndt that male brutality towards women has been exaggerated. Assuming so, I was careful to write that *allusions* to it were common. I had in mind statements like that of Tindale (1972:261) that, among the Pitjandjara, "Jealousies and quarrels with other women and beatings from her husband when she disagrees with him may in time leave scars on a woman's body." The problem with reporting such data about a repressed people is that they are so often read in terms of an implied contrast with the ideal image, not the realities, of the oppressing society. This may change somewhat now that the beating and sexual abuse of women and children in Western industrial nations are becoming open public issues.

My citation on *public* female decision making among the Pitjandjara, which could bring even important male ceremonies to a halt, was intended to bring out the contrast in functioning between a fully patriarchal society and a gathering/hunting society, despite the formal male authority that has been so consistently reported for Australia. The completion of the statement of Tindale (1972:248) that Berndt quotes further suggests the significance for decision making of women's actual economic importance. The men decide, "although their wives will recall and emphasize the merits of certain areas where vegetable foods are likely to be found."

Considering the degree of complementarity that persists in Aboriginal society (Berndt 1974), the question remains whether formal male authority is not recent. Hart and Pilling (1962:100) suggest that the Portuguese archives should be explored for information on how many young Tiwi men were taken off in 18th-century slave raiding (no longer remembered by present Tiwi), to see whether "the dominance of the old Tiwi men" and the "politics involved in wife trading" might be an indirect result. They go on to discuss the more recent effects on Tiwi life of both prostitution and a missionary program of buying girls for convent schooling. Hart and Pilling's suggestion has broad relevance; what *were* the effects, concretely, of slavery or enforced labor and prostitution on the social lives of different Aboriginal groups?

In an informative study of women in Victoria, Barwick (1974) documents a rise in their position when camps were set up in the latter 19th century, prostitution was ended, and rations were issued to them. Barwick writes that the men "suddenly and voluntarily abandoned certain rights and powers, allowed and encouraged new economic and religious roles for women, and invited their political participation" (pp. 51-52). That it was in the men's self-interest to do so does not seem sufficient explanation for such total reversal of "traditional" attitudes, if they were in fact deeply internalized, rather than something of a situational response. In any case, it is noteworthy that, as Barwick points out, the political activity of the women was soon discouraged, not by their own men, but by outside officialdom. In relation to Kaberry's study of Kimberley women, ethnohistorical studies of different regions will eventually show whether women's decision-making roles had broadened beyond original patterns or simply reverted to practices approaching them.

To step back from specific issues, by way of closing, and consider the comments as a whole, I think it fair to say that despite marked differences of opinion, the last decade of work has brought the discussion of female-male relations cross-

culturally to the level where four propositions are rather widely accepted by scholars working in this area: (1) to speak in unidimensional terms of greater or lesser "male dominance" is too simplistic to be meaningful; (2) analysis is still hindered by the tendency to impose concepts derived from Western sex-role patterns onto other societies; (3) the historical alternative to patriarchal institutions is not prior matriarchal institutions, in the sense of patriarchy's mirror image, but egalitarian institutions; and (4) the further study of egalitarian institutions and how they function economically, socially, and ideologically is important.

A fifth proposition that I believe is becoming recognized is this: to understand the effects of colonialism requires more direct input than fieldwork typically allows from the women and men who are reviewing their own cultural heritage, both pre- and postcolonial, as they weigh alternatives for personal and political action. Third World women are now being drawn into the labor force of multinational corporations as grossly underpaid workers, and anthropologists who limit their work to the problems "modernization" poses for "the traditional ideal of male domination," as LeVine (1966:192) does for Africa, contribute to the sex polarization that McElroy alludes to above as an important divide-and-conquer strategy. In relation to Australia, Berndt (1974:82-83) regrets the "persistent focus" on a sacred-profane contrast and ritual exclusion of women as the core of Aboriginal values. In a period when Aboriginal women are searching for guidelines for behavior, such a formulation distorts their own wider experience of female-male interdependence in economic and domestic life. Anthropologists have acquired considerable *de facto* power to define situations for other peoples; hence research directly combines profoundly important scientific, ethical, and practical issues. If these are to be taken seriously, women who are being written about must themselves be directly heard.

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