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

by Ramón A. Gutiérrez*

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

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

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

HISTORICAL SETTING

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

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

Though "savages" were all the Spaniards saw when they arrived in the Rio Grande Valley, the word is hardly adequate to describe the Indians living there. Since the thirteenth century, the river basin had been occupied by the compact agricultural villages of the Pueblo Indians. The 90 pueblos—so named by the Spanish because their multistoried dwellings resembled Aztec cities—were economically independent, politically autonomous, and best described as city-states. In 1598 the Pueblo population totaled approximately 60,000. Though several nomadic Indian tribes, notably the Apache and Navajo, hunted in the
surrounding plains and mountains, their low level of material culture and social organization spared them the yoke of subjugation until the early 1700s (Dozier, 1950: 43-52).

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

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

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

But the problem of extracting labor and wealth from the native population in its various forms remained. The revolt had not altered the practice of using political office as a vehicle for personal enrichment. Someone still had to construct the imposing mission compounds that were to dot the landscape, and the aristocracy’s sense of preeminence was still dependent on the labor of others. For these ends, then, a new enemy was necessary. The “Apaches”—as the Spanish called all the nomadic Indians whose hunting grounds bordered on the agricultural
settlements of the river basin (Jicarilla, Mescalero, Navajo, Ute, and Comanche)—were quickly defined as Satan's minions; this status made them eligible for "just war." Scores of men, women, and particularly children were brought into Spanish villages enslaved as prisoners of war. Some genizaros, as these detribalized Indians became known, were retained in local households for the performance of domestic tasks while others were traded for luxury goods in the mining centers of northern New Spain. The growth of this commerce in captives during the eighteenth century was directly responsible for the constant warfare the kingdom's colonists were to experience (Bailey, 1966: 1-89).

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

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

The nobility consisted of 15-20 families that intermarried to ensure their continued dominance. Their sense of aristocracy was rooted in the legally defined honor granted to the kingdom's colonizers by King Phillip II in their 1595 charter of incorporation (Hammond and Rey, 1953: 50). As the colony developed, nobility gained a broader social meaning and was claimed by individuals who acquired large amounts of land, by military officials, and by bureaucrats—wealth and power acting as the determinants of intragroup mobility. By comparison with the titled peerage of central Mexico, New Mexico's nobility at best enjoyed
the life of a comfortable gentry (Ladd, 1976). Yet, perhaps because of its isolation—and the attendant belief that it was a cultural oasis in a sea of barbarism—New Mexico’s aristocracy considered itself second to none. Bearing Old Christian ancestry, harboring pretensions of purity of blood, and eschewing physical labor, it reveled in its rituals of precedence, in ostentatious display of lavish clothing and consumption of luxury goods, in respectful forms of address and titles. Needless to say, such habits were buttressed by force of arms, wealth, and a legal superstructure premised on the belief that the social order was divinely ordained.

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

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

Genizaros (from the Turkish yeni, “new,” and cheri, “troops”) were truly New Mexico’s shock troops against the infidel. Stigmatized by their former slavery, lacking kinship ties to the European community,
and deemed devious because of their lack of mastery of Spanish, the increasing numbers of free genizaros were segregated in special neighborhoods such as Santa Fe’s Barrio de Analco or congregated in new settlements such as Belén (1740), Abiquiu (1754), Ojo Caliente (1754), and San Miguel del Vado (1794). All of these genizaro communities—communities now of landed peasants of genizaro origin—were strategically established along the Indian raiding routes and were to serve Spanish settlements as buffers against attack (Swadesh, 1974: 31-35).

THE IDEOLOGY OF HONOR

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

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

The maintenance of social inequality was central to the way in which status and virtue were defined to interact, the aim being the perpetuation
of the nobility's preeminence. An aristocrat of however low repute was always legally more honorable than the most virtuous peasant. Because precedence at the upper reaches of the social structure guaranteed more material and symbolic benefits, it was usually among the nobility and elites that the most intense conflicts over honor-virtue occurred. Family feuds and vendettas were frequently the way sullied reputations were avenged and claims to virtue upheld.3

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

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

Inequalities in power and status kept peasant men from honorably challenging aristocrats. Both because of this disparity in status and because of the excesses of the nobility in asserting their virility, ideals of female virtue were as intensely cherished by peasants. Manuel Alvarez, the United States consul in Santa Fe, alluded to this when he wrote in 1834: “the honorable man (if it is possible for a poor man to be honorable) has a jewel in having an honorable wife” (Manuel Alvarez, personal papers, notebook, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives). Among the peasantry, gender prescriptions undoubtedly had to be reconciled with the exigencies of production and reproduction of material life. The required participation of all able household members in planting and the harvest meant that there were periods when constraints on females of this class were less rigorously enforced. Juana
Carillo of Santa Fe admitted as much in 1712 when she confessed enjoying the affections of two men her father had hired for their spring planting (Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe [hereafter AASF] 51: 735-758). Again, in households where men were frequently absent, such as those of soldiers, muleteers, shepherds, and hunters, cultural ideals were less rigid. The fact that females supervised family and home for large parts of the year, staved off Indian attack, and cared for the group's public rights meant that it was difficult for them to lead sheltered and secluded lives. It was not uncommon for these women to lament that they had been assaulted, raped, or seduced while their husbands or fathers were away from home (AASF 60: 270; Spanish Archives of New Mexico [hereafter SANM] 18: 579; AASF 60: 376).

HONOR AND MARRIAGE

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

The 1786 marriage of Francisco Narpa and Juana Lorem in Sandia provides a glimpse of the familial motivations involved in an arranged union. Appearing before the provincial ecclesiastical judge to explain how he had married, Francisco reported: "Having agreed with Juana Lorem that we wished to marry, I asked her grandmother Tomasa Cibaa, and with her permission and that of her relatives, I married." Juana Lorem had a slightly different understanding of the events that led up to her marriage to Francisco. She told the judge, "It is totally false that I agreed to marry the said Francisco. I never wanted to marry the said Francisco. But for fear of my grandmother Tomasa Cibaa I contracted the marriage." Finally, Tomasa Cibaa explained: "I ordered my granddaughter Juana to marry the said Francisco Narpa because he is moderately wealthy, and it is true that I pressured Juana to appear before the priest [for the matrimonial investigation] and say nothing that might provoke questioning." The details of this marriage surface as
part of an ecclesiastical investigation into the allegation that the union was incestuous. Francisco had fathered a child by Maria Quiyypas, Juana’s mother, and therefore his marriage to Juana was invalid. The marriage was annulled, dotal and patrimonial property were confiscated, the three were publicly flogged, and Narpa was exiled from New Mexico (AASF 64: 706-707; 52: 773-774).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But the vexing question clerics were obliged to ask, in the case of marriage, was when paternal guidance and filial obedience simply became coercion. The issue was of some importance because forced marriages, or those contracted under duress, were invalid. Matrimony was the sacramental union of free will based on mutual consent. Ideally
it was the work of God, and "what God has joined together, let no man separate."

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

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

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

The freedom that the Catholic church might grant the sexes in the selection of conjugal mates formed the legal foundation for the subversion of parental authority, but, as the experience of all areas of the Spanish colonial empire testifies, the law and its execution were two very different matters. It was not uncommon for clerics charged with the interpretation and execution of canon law to enforce it selectively or to
bend its dictates to avoid misalliances or subversion of the social order. If a friar believed an arranged marriage was a good match, he might uphold parental prerogatives and rationalize that the natural authority of a father over his children was in full accord with the will of God.

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

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

CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS AND THE DIALECTICS OF SOCIAL ACTION

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

The cultural system in which marriage was enmeshed was diverse and divisive, resting on symbols that were ambiguous and polysemic. The head and the heart were two such equivocal symbols that synthesized beliefs about hierarchy, honor, and desires and translated them into behavior. According to the native cognitive model of New Mexicans,
behavior was the outcome of interplay between several realms. Individual actions were the result of mediation between external forces, such as social rules, values, and chance, and internal physical drives, such as sentiments and emotions.

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

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

The heart as a natural symbol for love had been enmeshed in the popular consciousness of Western Europeans since at least the thirteenth century (Hüning, 1949: 77-84). The songs and poetry of courtly love diffused to the New World cast the heart as the well of sentiment. As roving troubadours performed their medieval romances in New Mexico’s villages, the motifs of their repertoire—the all-consuming love that tormented the courtier, the impossible desires of an inferior man for a married lady, the discovery of an adulterous liaison that ended in death for the two lovesick individuals—certainly resonated in the imagina-
tions of young and old alike (Campa, 1946: 29-90; Espinosa, 1915: 446-560).

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

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

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

The individuals, be they clerics, family heads, or bureaucrats, who articulated the ideals of marriage formation that opposed arranged marriage to marriage choice, hierarchy to egalitarianism, had a vested interest in presenting the cultural system as rigidly circumscribed by these dichotomies. In reality, much behavior fell along a continuum of which these oppositions were the extremes. After all, our information on these prescriptions comes largely from litigation before the civil and ecclesiastical courts, which established the outer limits of proper conduct. In their daily lives, individuals negotiated their behavior pragmatically in dynamic relationships with one another using the ideas of the cultural system as anchors. Thus, for example, on the continuum between arranged marriage and marriage choice, children of the aristocracy may all have their marriages arranged; children of the peasantry may vary between the two forms depending on their sex and birth order;
and genizaros, wage laborers, and landless peasants would be relatively free to choose their own partners (Drummond, 1980: 352-374).

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

A recent bride and woe is me
I weep the livelong day
To think I'm wed so unhappily
Nothing can my fate allay.

Before I wed my mother dear
Did try to turn me from my course,
Her counsels wet with many a tear
I now regret with great remorse.

But willful was I, I paid no heed
And God has fully punished me,
But willful was I, I paid no heed
And God has fully punished me.

For my husband I have found to be
A man who drinks and drinks and drinks,
He has already forgotten me
Of his young bride he never thinks....

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

Oh what times these are Señora Chepita;
Oh what things are happening these days!
Laboriousness is no longer prized,
Misery engulfs us all,
Progress itself is lost.
Oh what times these are Señora Chepita!
In my time commerce bleused
And the crafts with much to do.
Lovers were always constant,
No woman was ever false.
Women in times past
Spent their time only caring
For their children, husbands and servants
And of none did they gossip.

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

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

The bishop of Durango in 1823 attested to the fact that children, though constrained in their marital options, did not sit by passively and always accept parental will. They manipulated the symbols of marriage, of honor and love, to obtain a desired spouse. Given the bishop's concern that maidens were being deflowered as part of youthful schemes "undertaken to facilitate" marriages that might otherwise have been unacceptable to parents (AASF 53: 790), we can speculate on what actions may have been taken by adolescents. A young man and woman might be aroused by a genuine love for one another and desire matrimony. Fearing that parents would object to a union, they might devise a ploy to maneuver an acceptable solution within the limits of their familial honor preoccupations. The woman might allow her virginity to be taken, claim that her honor had been sullied, and demand marriage simply as a way of forcing parents to consider a mate who might
otherwise never have been ideally acceptable. The discourse in such a case would take place entirely in the idiom of honor, but only because this strategy allowed the parties to maneuver within the parental value system. Such plays were popular resolutions to conflicts of honor in Golden Age Spanish theater (Larson, 1977: 17-37).

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

SOCIAL CHANGE

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

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

The reform project began in 1765 when the Spanish Royal Corps of Engineers was sent to the northern frontier of New Spain to map the
area thoroughly, to identify its mineral and hydraulic resources, to assess the feasibility of textile production, to propose methods for increasing agricultural production, and to outline the military changes necessary to fortify the frontier (Fireman, 1977). On the basis of the expedition's recommendations, northern New Spain was reorganized in 1776 into one military and administrative unit called the Internal Provinces. New presidios were constructed to ward off foreign attack, and vigorous campaigns were staged to subdue the "Apaches," who made trade and communication difficult. It was precisely in this period that permanent settlements were finally established in California, the first mission being built in 1769 at San Diego (Bannon, 1974: 143-190).

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

Imperial economic reforms coincided with a period of demographic growth in New Mexico, which resulted in intense land pressure. Between 1760 and 1820, the Spanish and mixed-blood population of New Mexico grew from 7,666 to 28,436. By the 1780s, many of the land grants to the initial colonists were insufficient for subsistence. A few new mercedes were conceded in the late 1780s, but not enough to meet the population's needs. Governor Fernando de la Concha noted this in his 1796 report to the commandant of the Internal Provinces and estimated that there were 1,500 individuals without land to till (AGN-CALIF 17-7: 226). The inevitable upshot of this situation was the expansion of wage labor. A comparison of the occupational structures of the kingdom in 1790 and 1827 reflects this expansion of wage laborers. In 1790, Albuquerque had an adult working population of 601. Farmers constituted 65 percent (391), 25 percent (151) were craftsmen, and 10 percent (58) were day laborers. By 1827, 610 persons were listed as full-time workers: 66 percent (397) were farmers, 14 percent (85) craftsmen, and 19 percent (113) day laborers. The 1790 census of Santa Fe listed 413 individuals
with occupations. Farmers represented 85 percent (350), craftsmen 7 percent (28), and day laborers 8 percent (34). By 1827, of 846 workers, 55 percent (467) were farmers, 12 percent (101) craftsmen, and 31 percent (264) day laborers. An expansion of the day-laborer category in both size and proportion also occurred in Santa Cruz during this period (SANM 12: 319-502; Carroll and Villasana Haggard, 1942: 88). The end result of the Bourbon reforms and the land pressure that accompanied them was the expansion of socially autonomous forms of labor and increased mobility for a significant portion of the population.

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

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

The Bourbon reforms and the growth of a landless population dependent on wage labor for its reproduction had increased social differentiation. This in turn brought into open question the ideological consensus that had formerly existed between the nobility and the landed peasants regarding ascribed honor as a sign of social status premised on
family origin and control over means and instruments of production. For free genizaros, mestizos who could not boast of “Spanish” origin, and landless peasants, honor was of little material consequence. Their social status was obtained primarily through individual achievement, under such circumstances patriarchal control over marriage formation was of no functional significance. After all, parental sanction for arranged marriage was effective because familial honor carried with it property and social privileges. Once children were able with their own wages to accumulate the necessary resources to establish a household, and could not in any way count on significant inheritance of property, generational relations were placed on a new footing.

Examining the period from 1690 to 1848, the major change that occurred in marriage formation was an increased preference for unions based explicitly on romantic love over those arranged by parents pursuing economic considerations. This change was not sudden; it was an ongoing process. Love matches were possible from the earliest days of Spanish settlement but occurred infrequently among the landed classes concerned for the perpetuation of their patrimonies. Children had plenty of parental counsels, ballads, folktales, laws, and sermons to make them realize the disastrous consequences of placing desires over reason.

The history of marriage in a colonial social formation such as New Mexico reveals the centrality of patriarchal control for generational, gender, and class forms of domination. Arranged marriages that enhanced honor provided the nobility and the landed peasantry with a tool by which to protect their status in an unequal society. The various ideologies by which gender and class hierarchies were comprehended and legitimated, however, were not monolithic and static. The partnership between the church and state so instrumental in the conquest of Latin America created distinct views on the meaning of marriage. Though the positions of church and state frequently converged, differences between them enabled children to challenge parental authority without danger to the social order. Similarly, the meanings attached to the system of status and prestige varied by class and changed in response to larger economic forces that themselves transformed relations of production and the power relations between church and state. By the 1800s, the material underpinnings of the honor code had been eroded, creating the conditions that allowed individual urges such as romantic love to exert greater influence on marriage formation.
NOTES

1. The generalizations presented in this article are derived from extensive reading of documents in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, the Spanish Archives of New Mexico, and the Mexican Archives of New Mexico (deposited at the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, sections of the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City that pertained to New Mexico (Historia, Provincias Internas, Inquisición, Californias, Hacienda), and the folklore collections housed at the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe and the University of New Mexico's Zimmerman Library in Albuquerque. The major portion of my source material dates from 1690 to 1846 and is primarily court cases heard by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities on seduction (for the loss of female virtue), affronts to a person’s honor, parental opposition to marriage, impediments to matrimony, dowry negotiations, concubinage, rape, adultery, spouse mistreatment, and divorce. By examining points at which behavior deviated from prescriptions, I have attempted to reconstruct the society’s ideals. Where my evidence is thin, I have been forced to turn to Mexican prescriptive literature that, though not produced by New Mexico’s residents, was undoubtedly available to its literate members and reflected the broader cultural milieu of New Spain. Readers desiring more extensive documentation of my sources should consult Gutiérrez (1980).


3. No one has yet adequately explained the origins of honor-virtue. Its history is ancient in the Mediterranean as a cultural template for the maintenance of hierarchy through endogamy and precepts concerning the sacred. Honor antedates Christianity, yet their moral and ethical ideals coincide on many points. The most intelligent discussion of the origins of honor is found in Schneider (1971).

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