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### Article abstract

Women's engagement in warfare has been offered as requisite to the eradication of gender hierarchy. Their presumed non-involvement in combat has been presented as an indication of lower status. Both views are critiqued in this article. In kinship societies, women's engagement in warfare is discussed. The relationship of warfare to social authority is considered in the context of class formative, and often colonial, pressures. Warfare in precapitalist state societies is considered as one form of labor service or conscript labor. Women's engagement or non-involvement in state-sponsored warfare is analyzed in the context of class formation and surplus extraction. Warfare is not considered to be determinant of women's status.

# Women and Warfare: Shifting Status in Precapitalist State Formation

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Women's engagement in warfare has been offered as requisite to the eradication of gender hierarchy. Their presumed non-involvement in combat has been presented as an indication of lower status. Both views are critiqued in this article. In kinship societies, women's engagement in warfare is discussed. The relationship of warfare to social authority is considered in the context of class formative, and often colonial, pressures. Warfare in precapitalist state societies is considered as one form of labor service or conscript labor. Women's engagement or non-involvement in state-sponsored warfare is analyzed in the context of class formation and surplus extraction. Warfare is not considered to be determinant of women's status.

*La participation à la guerre serait nécessaire à la fin de leur subordination par les hommes. Ci-dessous, je discute cette participation dans le cas de sociétés « primitives » et j'analyse les rapports entre guerre et autorité sociale dans des situations où de nouvelles classes sociales apparaissent et où s'exercent des pressions coloniales. Dans les sociétés pré-capitalistes, l'engagement ou l'exclusion des femmes dont il est question doit être considéré en rapport avec les processus de travail et de tribut, ainsi qu'avec celui de la formation des classes sociales. La guerre, seule, ne détermine pas la position sociale des femmes.*

Military expenditures increase in the United States, while attacks on the legal gains of the women's movement intensify. In this climate, a long submerged debate has resurfaced: should women be involved in military combat as soldiers? Some of those who favor combat positions for women would consider themselves to be feminist. They argue that involvement in all aspects of the military is requisite to the removal of discrimination against women in the larger society. The flaw in this argument is historical as well as logical. I will argue that women's involvement—or lack thereof—in state-associated warfare is not determinant in the processes that foster and maintain gender hierarchy. The significance of warfare in precapitalist states can provide a deeper perspective on the role of the military in capitalist states. Women's exclusion from, or engagement in, precapitalist warfare can contribute to our understanding of the issues facing us today.

I will discuss changes in the significance of warfare and concomitant changes in the status of women in two precapitalist societies, with reference to several related cases. Highly stratified, but still kin-organized, the Tongan Islands of Polynesia provide a case of women's changing involvement in warfare as the purposes and consequences of war-

fare changed during class and state formation. Precolonial Dahomey provides one of the few well-documented cases of women's institutionalized involvement in state-associated combat.

### *Problems of Evidence and Interpretation*

Women and warfare, in kinship or class societies, is an area of research in ethnohistory that requires more attention<sup>1</sup>. Women's involvement in precapitalist state warfare typically has been under-reported, in part because early travellers or new colonial administrators may have mistaken warfare for another form of activity where women were involved (see, for example, Van Allen, 1972, on the British interpretation of the Igbo "Women's War" in 1929). Until the resurgence of careful historical research that accompanied the women's movement of the 1970's, evidence had come from rather unreliable sources, such as the writings of Robert Briffault (1929/1969), an early 20th century matriarchist. Many writers have noted women's involvement in state-sponsored warfare, but the cases tend to focus on individual women as commanders or heroines (see, for example, Smith, 1960:1). This is no surprise, considering the rarity of large-scale involvement of women in such warfare. One must be cautious in extrapolating from such cases about "women's status", however, since considerations of class in precapitalist states often override gender in providing legitimation for military command. The rise and fall of Jeanne d'Arc reveals, only by its uniqueness, something of the position of peasant women in prerevolutionary France. But what can we tell, from that case, of peasant women in their everyday relations to the state, compared with those of peasant men, or of the status of peasant women during periods of less crisis in the state? On the other hand, to focus entirely on warfare sponsored by states can lead us to overlook cases of women's involvement in combat. The militias of women in the Nien and T'ai Ping movements in prerevolutionary China are two examples of the widely noted phenomenon of women's engagement in armed opposition to existing state structures, precapitalist and capitalist (Etienne and Leacock, 1980; Silverblatt, 1980: 176-180). One should not conclude from such involvement that the military actions by women constitute a fight for inclusion in a parallel fashion in the constituted hierarchy. Correlatively, it would be careless to assume that in those instances where women were involved in state-sponsored warfare, that they therefore had statuses parallel to those of men in the military. It appears

that women were not frequently involved as regular combatants in precapitalist state warfare, at least not on behalf of the state. But how can we interpret this minimal or sporadic involvement?

Marvin Harris (1977) has argued that where women are not engaged directly in "pre-industrial" warfare, their status is lower than men's. In a related piece, he and William Divale argue that women are not engaged in the warfare of kin-organized societies ("band and village cultures") (Harris and Divale, 1976:524), which would seem to imply a continuity between kinship and precapitalist state societies in this regard. The authors indicate that direct involvement means carrying weapons and combat. They also argue that women are excluded from activities that hone aggression, as boxing, etc.. Here the lens of Western categories can seriously distort our understanding.

The purported exclusion of women from warfare in kin-based societies can be dismissed as empirically incorrect. Warfare in the Tongan Islands will be discussed later. Here it might be noted that, although women did not usually engage in combat, nonchiefly women were oftentimes skilled in fisti-cuffs. This was considered to be a rough sport: the level of violence in the bouts varied, but they sometimes ended with broken bones (see Beaglehole, 1969:3:108). Leo Pospisil, in a work not considered to have a feminist perspective, describes the active engagement of Kapauku women in battles (1963:59). They use what he describes as "walking sticks" to beat up enemy men, while they collect arrows for later use by their own kinsmen. (There is a cultural proscription on shooting women.) The descriptions of war-related incidents need to be re-examined for such involvement: digging sticks often are used to spear animals, for instance, so the distinction between tools and weapons may not be particularly rigid.

A technical division of labor in warfare, where men are responsible for combat, is frequently encountered in kin societies. However, it does not follow that women are non-participants, or are passive in warfare. Combat is not the sole arena of warring. Among the Shuar, women may not be involved in the raiding activity, but they are crucial for the successful conclusion of warfare: as wives, they sing the spirit of the slain enemy home, when his heroic qualities have been tapped (Harner, 1972: 146). To exclude non-combat roles as not direct involvement in warfare, obscures—at least for kinship societies—the manner in which warfare is initiated, conducted, and concluded (or continued).

Judith Brown has discussed the role of Iroquois women in initiating and determining the period of warfare through their undisputed control over provisions (1975: 247-250). Eleanor Leacock describes Montagnais-Naskapi women in their raids against the Iroquois:

The fury with which the 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' (Leacock, 1981:145).

There are cases of kinship societies where war-related skills are highly valued, and where social authority is closely linked with warrior status. But in such cases as the Plains Indians, the Yanomami and other (prior) Amazonian peoples, encroachment from expanding capitalist societies is a direct or indirect factor in the intensification of warfare and, I would offer, in the privileging of war-related activities as a source of social authority. Even in the Plains Indians, however, mere warrior status was not sufficient for positions of prominence. The context of the warfare—particularly pressures of a colonial sort—must be understood to avoid ahistorical distortion or false analogies. Since the purposes of warfare in kinship societies differ markedly from those of precapitalist state societies (Diamond, 1974: 154-159), one should take the differences into account in comparative research. Harris (1977) is not careful in this regard, and Harris and Divale (1976) draw cases from pre-contact and colonially-threatened kin societies without distinction.

The analysis offered here does not rest on an assumption that warfare is functionally similar across disparate levels of socioeconomic integration. Warfare, as all social institutions, can best be considered in a context of a given political economy and an historically specific form of social reproduction (cf. Gailey, 1981: 314-318). If we are to examine the warfare of precapitalist state societies, we must situate the warfare in terms of tensions within the society, not only the relations between societies. The importance of warfare in precapitalist state formation is not disputed, but the role of warfare in the development of state institutions is a moot point (see, for example, Carneiro, 1970; Service, 1975; Diamond, 1951; Terray, 1979; Chapman, 1957; Engels, 1964, *inter alia*). In agreement with Diamond (1951), I would hold that conquest and domestic repression are dual aspects of state formation, and that warfare is essential to the consolidation and reproduction of class relations in

precapitalist states (see Gailey, 1981: 171-182; 194-204).

To focus on warfare out of this context ignores the overarching process, that is, the attempt by strata seeking to be disengaged from direct production, to systematically extract a surplus from a population without incurring rebellion. In the precapitalist cases, the producing population remains predominantly kin-organized. The relations and institutions that may emerge to consolidate control over this portion of people's labor—directly or in the objective form of products—has been called the "Asiatic mode of production" in the Marxist tradition (see Krader, 1975 for an analysis of the concept). Samir Amin has proposed the term "tribute-paying mode of production" to avoid the 19th century ethnocentrism of the earlier term (1976). The subordination of a kinship mode of production (see Gailey, 1981) to the class and state structures of a tribute-paying mode of production, provides the setting for our analysis of women and warfare in precapitalist states.

### *Warfare in Precapitalist States*

Warfare in precapitalist state societies often entails the extension of state control, thus allowing the imposition of taxation or tribute extraction, or direct appropriation of labor (see, for example, Chapman, 1957). Where the object of raiding or warfare was the acquisition of slaves, the appropriation of laborers, not just labor, was involved (Terray, 1979; Smith, 1960). State warfare can thus be considered as a form of forced labor for a portion of the population. Like other forms of forced labor, such warfare serves to reproduce emerging class relations. Through military *corvée*, this reproduction can be assisted in several ways. The seasonal or annual raiding for captives in West African kingdoms involved conscript labor. Furthermore, as Terray points out for the Gyaman and other Abon kingdoms (1979), the majority of the slaves taken were reserved for the royal class and its attendant classes. The captives were used in various types of production. Thus, the tax/rent burden (cf. Krader, 1975; Amin, 1976; Anderson, 1974) remained fairly light for the indigenous producing classes—excluding captives—although the kin communities' labor was exacted for the annual raids.

Where the tax/rent base is extended through conquest and annexation, the burden on the producing classes in the core area may be lighter than that in the newly conquered areas, but only where the central administration is fairly weak: a certain

degree of collusion has been developed in an effort to circumvent what is otherwise an indirect or intermittent control over the determination or extraction of surplus. In stronger states, such as ancient Rome, the existence of a standing army replete with local militias, reminded potentially rebellious local peoples of the repressive capacity of the conqueror. In precapitalist states like Dahomey (Diamond, 1951), punishment for draft evasion was severe, whether the draft was for the military or for so-called public works projects. (I prefer the term civil projects, since the public is rarely served as much by improved roads, irrigation works, etc., as is the ruling class by the facilitation of surplus removal and generation.) The punishments in precapitalist states, in general, involve corporate responsibility—a recognition of customary collective kin responsibility—while at the same time, a denial of the consensual determination of guilt and offense (Maine, 1861/1963; Tylor, 1904). Kin groups thus are used, wherever possible, as agents for enforcing state-defined expectations and duties (as Diamond points out, 1951).

Alongside this type of repression, there often is attached to military *corvée* a promise whether of higher status or wealth accumulation through pillage, booty, etc. (Terray, 1979). This approach is echoed in other forms of institutionalized conscript labor, to be considered later. On the one hand, people are extracted, or lured in some cases, from their kin communities. On the other hand, they are exalted or privileged in their state-associated capacity (Silverblatt, 1978). In the new status, they may aid their kin through channeling favors, but they become quasi-outsiders, people with split loyalties. The latter feature is especially pronounced with regard to women's status in precapitalist states (Silverblatt, 1978; Diamond, 1951).

In most precapitalist states, women were not engaged directly in combat as a rule. But involvement in state warfare can include provisioning, medical care, espionage, etc. and in some cases, women were appropriated for these functions; in other cases, wives accompanied husbands in war. Where women were not combatants, their differential involvement may or may not have entailed differential status by gender, *vis-à-vis* men of their same class: the problem has not been investigated in any depth. But where women were not drafted into a military, they certainly were subject to other forms of conscript labor. For example, one form of forced labor involved military service for the Inca, while the tribute system demanded that women weave the articles that fueled long-distance trade for the

empire (Silverblatt, 1978). The technical division of labor was in part, gender-associated, but both politically imposed tasks supported the expansion and consolidation of control by state-associated classes. A related case comes from the Aztec. Chapman points out:

In most cases where trade preceded tribute, once a province had been conquered and began to pay its tribute, long-distance trading ceased. In a sense, then, trade was followed by tribute: commerce by administration (1957: 122).

In this case, men were the warriors, mostly conscripts. But many of the tribute items—especially cloth—were produced by women. In a way, men in communities could be taxed in labor, while women were taxed in products. Conscript labor for women also occurred in the Aztec empire: featherworkers were women who were forbidden to marry (although they could have children), and were housed in a special quarter of the city (Soule, 1984).

Whether or not women are warriors, the dynamics of the struggle between kin group autonomy and state assertions of control necessarily involve women of the producing class(es) as semi-abstracted females, although the arenas of conflict may vary. In state societies like precolonial Dahomey, where women were warriors, the status of the women warriors was not parallel with that of the male warriors, as I will argue below. Formal homology but differential status can be understood in the context of efforts by state-associated classes to secure their own reproduction as classes in part through the regulation of local social reproduction. The reproduction of kin relations—from physical replication of population through nuanced, ambiguous relations of authority—is subordinated to the reproduction of the class society (Gailey, 1981: 123-126, 246-251). The military functions of women warriors in Dahomey illustrates this regulation and subordination. In other cases, other forms of conscript labor serve the same general purpose.

Women could be extracted from their communities to serve in a range of state-related roles: secondary wives, religious attendants or priestesses, concubines, prostitutes for the state (as in Dahomey), slaves, soldiers, and tribute-producers either attached to state institutions (as the *aclla* in Incaic Peru). These services at times entailed permanent alienation of women from their natal or customary marital kin groups (e.g. Silverblatt, 1978). Several of the roles listed above could be subsumed in one institution, as with the Mesopotamian temple priestess-prostitutes. All the roles restrict, at least *de facto*, women's roles in the reproduction of local kin

communities in the sense of social reproduction, not only child-bearing (Gailey, 1981: 270-277). In the state-associated capacity, the woman could be constrained in various degrees from performing socially needed tasks, from food production to the creation of items needed for life crisis rites. In addition, and as an obvious symbol of the denial of kinship determination of social reproduction, the woman's biologically defined reproductive potential could be allied to the state, rather than remain a facet of her life in a kin-ordered setting. Concubinage is the clearest example.

Women who remain residents of their natal or marital communities avoid this instance of reductive identity. Women who produce items as tribute may remain *in situ*, but, as with all people who remain identified with the kin-based sector, customary sources of prestige are denigrated in the emerging state ideology. Tribute extraction may involve the attachment of women, men, or entire kin groups to the state classes. Sharon Soule discusses the Aztec featherworkers, who were uprooted and resettled, and whose production was predominantly for use by state-associated classes. The status of featherworker brought the women a great personal freeing-up in sexual terms, but they were viewed with charged ambivalence in the codices (1984). The featherworking women could exercise little authority through broader kin channels, since their connections had been severed.

Military conscription, then, is one of many types of forced labor in tribute-paying modes of production. Like others, and like the tribute which is the concrete form of forced labor, conscription for military purposes supports the continuation of class relations. If we now examine a state formative situation where women were not engaged in combat as a rule, and one where women were conscripted, we can perhaps see more clearly the relationship of warfare and women's status in precapitalist state societies.

### *Women and Warfare in Tonga: Changes with Class and State Formation*

For women customarily disengaged from combat roles, a transformation of status accompanied the changing consequences and purposes of warfare in the Tongan Islands (Polynesia), during the post-contact but precolonial period. Prior to the 19th century, Tongan society was stratified into chiefly and nonchiefly estates or orders (Gailey, 1981: 140-143; 1980: 298; Rousseau, 1978). The relations of production and reproduction remained kin-associat-

ed. However, there were a plethora of tensions both within the chiefly estate and between the chiefly and nonchiefly estates. These tensions centred on claims to labor and products (Gailey, 1981: chs. 2, 3). Pressures for and against class formation permeated the social relations of everyday life.

In this situation, women were actively engaged in initiating and waging warfare, while they usually were not combatants. Contention for chiefly titles necessarily involved chiefly women as well as men, as I have discussed elsewhere (1980). Warfare was concerned with succession, rather than conquest *per se*. The claims established in other people's labor through title acquisition remained kin-based claims and, as such, implied continuous, reciprocal responsibilities. Women as chiefly people were involved in exhorting kinsmen to support their title claims, at times *vis-à-vis* their brothers or nephews. As wives, many women of chiefly and nonchiefly status accompanied war parties in both intra- and inter-island disputes (Thomson, 1904:338). During the war expeditions, women would guard the canoes and tend the wounded (Mariner, 1827:1:166). They did not usually venture to fight, but numerous stories praise the valor of women who sought vengeance on the battlefield for their fallen kinsmen (Mariner 1827:1:239). Women were not immune from being killed in warfare.

If a nonchiefly woman was captured, she could be raped, although this was not inevitable, nor was it considered a taint subsequently. Generally speaking, if the woman was married (indicated by hairstyle), she was not raped, regardless of her rank. Male captives, by way of comparison, sometimes were tortured and often were killed upon capture. On occasion, slain warriors were cannibalized by some of the opposing men. Tongan women viewed this practice, which Tongans blamed on proximity to Fiji, with repugnance. On at least one occasion, the men who had so indulged were denied re-entry to their habitations by women (Mariner 1827:1:173). Female captives were held hostage until ransomed by their kin. Valuables, created exclusively by women, would be handed over to the captors. Sometimes captive women were incorporated into the captor group as lower ranking kin. Frequently captives had relatives in the captor group: Tongans were expected to fight for the chief in whose area they resided at the outbreak of hostilities, and inter-district visiting was commonplace. Reports of pre-contact warfare mention numerous instances of defections and intergroup visitation even in the midst of war. Wars were concluded when it became obvious, through rout or stalemate, that one side or

neither had a preponderance of popular support. Negotiations followed which ended variously with the temporary exile of one chiefly group, or the maintenance of all titled people in their positions.

Into this charged situation came the dual effects of Western weaponry and Christian ideology (see Gailey, 1981:171-183, for an extended discussion of these dynamics). At first, in the absence of non-kinship ideology, the new arms merely intensified the warfare, increasing fatalities, but not changing the reasons for warfare. The acquisition of title and the claims to labor and products associated with high ranking kinship remained the goal. Later, Christian ideology provided an alternative reason for warfare: for their own sakes, heathens had to be converted, by force if necessary. Kin-based reciprocal obligations were not acceptable in the new ideology, which stressed immutable hierarchy and submission to a single male ruler-deity. Tribute extraction was justified as well, in part to support the church efforts, and in part to support the nascent class structure and state institutions that were considered requisite to the achievement of Christian civilization. How did this affect the involvement of women in warfare?

Weapons were acquired, at first, through plunder, salvage and barter. The intensified warfare which followed the plunder and barter phase heightened the implicit conflict between those Tongans (chiefly and nonchiefly) who claimed captive women's labor by superior kinship and those who claimed it by right of capture (Mariner 1827:1:188). The spectre of permanent claims, based on conquest, entered into the prior hostage status. Wesleyan Methodist missionaries encouraged commodity trade, and supplied weapons to help in the consolidation of power that they (rightly) identified as helpful to conversion efforts. The articles used for the trade were, at first, primarily items made by women and customarily considered as valuables. Captured women were put to work producing coconut oil and other products for the weapons trade. In the course of the 19th century, missionary concern for proselytizing—whether or not it was down the barrel of a gun—helped to justify labor claims based on conquest. Kin claims were associated with heathenism and, at times explicitly, with resistance to the newly established kingdom. The commodity trade provided weaponry, the means of

acquiring more captives, at the same time as it filled mission coffers and aided the missionaries' top-down conversion strategy.

In Tonga, the shift in purposes of warfare entailed the institution of forced labor for non-chiefly and non-Christian women. They were used to create the means for reproducing an emerging political authority, a centralized, Christian government. Following the conquest of the islands by the armies associated with George I, a paramount Tongan chief, taxation and corvée punishments for newly-defined crimes replaced warfare as the major means of gaining labor and products. That Tongan women were not engaged as warriors is somewhat beside the point with regard to their changing status. The chiefly and nonchiefly women's kin-associated functions as creators and distributors of valuables were used selectively by men and women to buttress an emerging royalty and nobility, by whatever means were expedient. Labor by captives was replaced by convict corvée for women and men, followed in turn (never fully replaced) by taxes in kind and in cash. The development of class relations certainly affected the status of women, as it demeaned the status of nonchiefly and many traditional chiefly men; warfare, as the purposes shifted, helped to consolidate political control by a small class of former chiefs and nonchiefly attendants. But it is difficult to argue that women's involvement or non-involvement in combat was related to their loss of social authority. The sources of gender-associated stratification seem closely related to processes of class formation (Gailey, 1981, 1980), but warfare is not causal in that respect.

### *Dahomey: Military Conscription and Labor Service*

Precolonial Dahomey, by way of contrast, is famous for the regiment of women who constituted the core of the army. I rely here on Stanley Diamond's early (1951) and critical analysis of the dynamics of gender symbolism in the emergence of class relations, as crystallized (among other institutions he examines) in the all-women regiment. Gender-associated labor service is situated in what he calls a taxation/ conscription/census complex, and in the struggles between local, kin-based communities and the emerging civil structure.

First, consider the recruitment of the regiment. Some of the estimated 4,000 “Amazons” were adultresses who had been expelled from their kin compounds. Others were criminals of one sort or another, the definition of crime being, in some cases, at odds with customary expectations. Most, according to Diamond, came from a tribute in unmarried adolescent girls extracted from local communities every three years by the state (1951: 68). All girls around 13 years of age were sent to the court at Abomey. Some were retained for service to the king, while the rest were allowed to return home. The assertion of the right of the king (i.e. the state) to determine the disposition of all unmarried women was thus physically and geographically demonstrated. (A parallel with the Inca state can be seen in this respect, see Silverblatt, 1978.) The girls selected by the state agents were inducted symbolically into the king’s harem. Some of these “wives” were trained as domestic workers, while others were recruited for the army. In theory it was an honor to be selected for the king’s harem, but Bosman reports in the early 18th century that some of the select committed suicide (1705, quoted in Diamond, 1951: 68).

Although the women warriors were wives of the king, they were celibate (p. 67). They lived in the king’s compound but, unlike wives in the kin communities from which they came, they did no maintenance or productive work. Such tasks were done by slaves, who were war captives. Thus, the royal class adopted the symbol of a compound from the kin communities, while it denied the meaning of that institution, in the denial of the need to engage in direct production (p. 69). When the warriors left the compound, they did so in troops, preceded by slaves who struck down anyone who would not yield. The women warriors had very high status, yet their lives were spent under the surveillance of the king and his agents, and in continuous training. They were expected to die, rather than retreat in battle.

Other forms of forced labor in Dahomey also allied women’s narrowly defined reproductive potential symbolically or literally with the state. Some of the king’s wives were selected to serve as prostitutes in local communities. In this capacity they generated revenues for the state—they were heavily taxed on an annual basis—and to boost male conscription into the army, through successfully prosecuted accusations of rape (p. 65). Since communities were levied in young, marriageable women, such accusations were not rare.

Women whose husbands, brothers or fathers did not show up for the annual slave raid conscription were impressed in their place (p. 43). Other women were selected to live in the royal compound at Abomey as the symbolic “mothers” of each male bureaucrat. They were not the men’s actual mothers, but women from the same localities. They served as parallel administrators within the confines of Abomey. Again, these women had high status, and like the “sons” who were bureaucrats, they lived off the tribute extracted from local communities and from slave labor. But they could not refuse the honor, to remain in their marital community. Indeed, they were in a way, hostages to ensure the administrators’ loyalty (p. 89-91). That the women’s presence was perceived as adequate to ensure loyalty reflects the authority and importance of women in their role as mothers in the kin communities. In addition, there were female captives/slaves who were in service to the royal clan, worked on royal lands, and maintained the royal compounds. The female children of the king, the “princesses” could be placed in the harems of bureaucrats as spies (p. 84). If they were married to non-bureaucrats, the husbands lived with them at Abomey, and the children inherited matrilineally, in contrast to the rest of the society. No son of a “princess” could become king. The “princesses” were free to contract sexual relationships where they wished, regardless of marital status (p. 82-83).

Each of these groups of women was alienated from the kin sector and placed in service to the fictive, instrumental kinship of the royal and state classes. Each group—celibate warrior, wife/whore, mother, slave, daughter—had its reductively defined reproductive potential at the call of the royal class<sup>2</sup>. Even the king’s daughters, while they had sumptuous lives, could not expect the growing authority that women in the kin communities enjoyed through life. The trade-off of high status for permanent alienation from depth of kin is clear for the warriors, royal wives, symbolic mothers, and princesses.

### *Labor Service and Reproduction*

The attachment of women’s reproductive capacities to state-associated classes has parallels in most, if not all, precapitalist states. In the broader sense of social reproduction, the priorities of the emerging class society take precedence over the reproduction of kin relations. Metaphorically, the redirection of the reproduction of kin relations can become the imposition of prior claim to the potential



of women to create new people. The concubinage found in virtually all precapitalist states is paralleled by the absorption to the state of other emblems of control over the reproduction of kin communities. As secondary wives, temple prostitutes, concubines or sacred virgins, as slaves in some cases<sup>3</sup>, the focus in early states on the more obvious means of controlling community autonomy—preventing continuity without the state—is evident. Women and men are tapped to serve the requirements of the dominant order, through tribute production, labor service, or permanent alienation from the community. But the metaphor of sexual potential distinguishes women's from men's relations to the state, in most cases. Irene Silverblatt's discussion of the false analogy between the female *aclla* and the male *yanacona* in the Inca state is one example. Both institutions extracted young people from kin-based communities for service to the state classes. As with the Dahomey warriors, the *aclla* were to remain chaste. *Yanacona*, as the conscripted men in Dahomey, were not so restricted. The *aclla* wove cloth that was used by the Inca in long-distance trade and to cement alliances. The *aclla* also brewed the corn beer needed in state religious functions (Silverblatt, 1978). As the symbolic wives of the Inca, they were his to bestow: some became the secondary wives of high ranking state functionaries.

In the cases we have examined, producing women's involvement in the taxation/conscription schema is parallel: in addition to the tribute production and labor service extracted along "customary" lines of gender, rank and age, women also could be alienated on a permanent basis from their kin communities, and in this alienation, their potential to bear children was a focus of attention. State control could be aided through the denial of child-bearing to local communities (an obvious symbol of dependency on the state) as well as through the extraction of goods and other forms of labor service.

In this context, involvement or exclusion from combat assumes an appropriately minimal role in the determination of women's status in an emerging class structure. It is clear from the discussion that warfare should not be reified or unduly privileged as a barometer or anyone's status in transitions from kin to class relations. Conquest and military repression may be intensified as an attempt to quash overt or implicit resistance by kin communities. In that sense, military exploits may come to acquire a prestige unknown—or circumscribed by less volatile sources of social authority—in a precolonial kin context. Warfare on behalf of an emerging state can

become, in some instances—Vikings, Germanic tribes during state formation (Muller, 1977)—an avenue to social power. As the purposes and content of the warfare shift, there can be implications for the status of women, particularly if women come to be excluded from the battlefield for the first time (Muller, 1977). But like all other avenues to high status in state formative situations, the cost of mobility is alliance with the interests of the emerging ruling class and the rejection of broader, kin-associated obligations.

Thus, the involvement of women in warfare should be considered alongside their involvement in other forms of labor service. Since the emerging politically-imposed division of labor (Diamond, 1974: 14) draws upon previous, kin-associated considerations of gender, life status and kin role (see Rapp, 1978), women are engaged in tribute production or corvée labor, whatever form the labor service takes. Gender symbols, like all kin-associated meanings, are manipulated to serve ends of the state-associated classes whose positions are, in fact, insecure: the emerging class structure is parasitic upon the communal mode of production, and the ruling classes are simply unnecessary for the reproduction of kin relations—at least earlier in the process. The issue of the autonomous reproduction of kin communities is the grounds of kin-civil conflict (Diamond, 1951: 4, 14). The manipulation of gender symbols by the emerging state structure tends to reduce or decontextualize facets of gender as constituted in a kin context. Combined with the effort to fragment community solidarity, the appropriation of aspects of gender to further state control tends to abstract biologically defined reproductive capacities from other aspects of the social person. In the absorption of particular aspects of specific roles to aid in the consolidation of control (as with the "mothers" in Dahomey), there is a reification of the function of child-bearing. Biology is not destiny in a kin context: social authority is too diffuse to be reduced to any single aspect of a person. But an obvious means to control the social reproduction of kin communities is to insert state priorities in the cycle of life. The function of child-bearing can be abstracted and personhood defined in terms of the function, for purposes of social control. Biology is not destiny in an ahistorical sense, but in state formation, biology can become destiny, at least as an assertion of the developing class structure. In whatever form women's labor is drafted or appropriated, the multiplicity of their activities in the reproduction of kin-based relations is reduced and put in service to an institutional

denial of autonomy to their own communities, and a circumscription of a communal mode of production. The initial benefits may include high personal status and sumptuous living for particular groups of women, but the cost—sometimes recognized by the women themselves—is profound. Social identity becomes determined solely by the interests of people over whom these women from the kin communities never exercise authority and toward whom they must defer. Their gender identity becomes abstracted from their kin roles, life experiences, rank, status, and often is reduced—so far as the ruling classes are concerned—to sexuality and their child-bearing potential (Gailey, 1981). The ambiguous, multidimensional status of women in Tonga prior to state formation, or in the kin communities of Dahomey, is replaced by a class-determined, even if privileged, status. The new status is neither flexible nor transcendent in the life-long sense of on-going status changes typical of the kin context. The “Amazons” gain in status was their unborn daughters’ loss.

Women’s engagement or removal from combat in warfare is not a direct reflection of their social status. Whether women were soldiers or not, the warfare of precapitalist states was oriented to assuring the systematic extraction of products, labor, and in some cases, people. The process is intrinsically objectifying, since it denies the autonomy of the other as a group and singles out a few aspects of social persons as primary. Where women were not conscripted or recruited for military purposes, they were drafted or appropriated for tribute production or for their reproductive potential in the narrow sense. The subordination of women’s status is inherent in the state formative process, as I have argued elsewhere (Gailey, 1980, 1981). Whether the women were elite or peasant, their status was implicitly demeaned, although non-producing class status afforded those women alternative avenues of social power.

To return to the debate that sparked this foray into precapitalist warfare and women, a response can be made to those who urge that women be included in combat. Parallel involvement of women and men in institutions that serve to further the expansion or consolidation of class structures over which they have no control cannot constitute a remedy for the subordination of women.

#### NOTES

1. Mona Etienne organized a session of Women and Warfare in Precapitalist Societies for the 1982 meetings

of the CESCE (Canadian Ethnological Society/Société canadienne d’ethnologie), held in Vancouver. I delivered an earlier version of this paper in that session. I would like to thank Mona Etienne, Timothy Parrish, Irene Silverblatt, and Constance Sutton for their criticisms and suggestions.

2. M.G. Smith says of slave women in the kingdom of Zazzau that, like slave men, the status was legally determined and was terminable by “manumission, purchase of freedom, or death, *and also for females, by bearing a child for their master as his concubine*” (1960:52: my italics).

3. This can be said of certain groups of men in some precapitalist states. Eunuchs are a case in point, as Smith discusses their role in the kingdom of Zazzau (1960:7, 54 *inter alia*). Obviously, the eunuchs’ reproductive potential, in the reductive sense, was subsumed by the high status and sensitive administrative roles accorded to some. They represent an ideal interstitial person in governments still staffed primarily by kin-related people. There could be no question of plots on behalf of their own successors, and they could mediate between the royal person and his/her potentially contentious kin. The *de facto* celibacy of secondary wives in harems, guarded by eunuchs in their own way forcibly celibate, underscores the objectification and rejection of kin-ordered reproduction in such states. The case of slaves in high positions is parallel, and in cases of castrated slaves, emphasized. Slaves in the Roman Empire, for instance, could have no claims to succession, although they could help determine the successor.

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