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Ethnicity and Gender in the Global Periphery: A Comparison of Basotho and Navajo Women

BETTY J. HARRIS

World-system theory has provided a vehicle for the global analysis of politico-economic change. However, as formulated, the theory has focused on the historical process of European incorporation of non-European societies at the macro-level in a fashion that obscures the emergence of new social categories and processes at the micro-level. This article analyzes the relationship between ethnicity and gender in two peripheral contexts—among Basotho women of Lesotho and Navajo women of the American Southwest.¹

In the British social anthropological tradition, anthropologists have attempted cross-cultural comparisons between and among cultures at similar stages of sociocultural integration in order to formulate general laws of society.² In the 1970s, when American anthropologists began to work in urban contexts, they often referred to research on different ethnic/racial groups in the same context as well as the same ethnic/racial group in different contexts.³ Having abandoned ahistoricism, they began to consider the period during which their research was conducted.

Here I have chosen to compare two groups of women on the basis of their place in the world-system. Both groups occupy peripheral areas, engage in sheep- and goat-herding and in tapestry weaving. In examining the history of incorporation of each society, I have discerned parallels and divergences. Of primary concern is how these societies compare contemporaneously.

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In comparative research, the issue of perspective is important. Native Americanists draw occasional comparisons with African ethnographic data, but the opposite rarely occurs. As an Africanist, I have decided to take the opposite approach.⁴ Such a comparison should illuminate the Navajo Reservation's status as a peripheral area within a core country and, in turn, pose certain questions about the autonomy of peripheral nation-states like Lesotho.

Adopting such a comparative approach represents a transcendence of the core/periphery relationship on which world-system analysis rests in order to explore interperipheral economic relationships.⁵ In other words, instead of looking at those relationships as reflected through the North American core and the South African semiperiphery, we will view them as isolates that represent the end-products of the incorporation process. Insofar as indigenous women in peripheral areas are concerned, this should clarify a number of issues related to their economic status in their respective reserve armies of labor and their reliance on subsistence production and/or the social welfare system. Moreover, we will consider strategies, such as cooperative formation, employed to counter core expansion.

In a comparison between Lesotho and the Navajo Reservation, the question of sovereignty arises, because the former is an internationally recognized, independent country, and the latter is an American Indian reservation in the United States. In the context of the world-system, Lesotho's peripheral status is mediated through the semiperipheral South African economy. South Africa has violated Lesotho's sovereignty by supporting a guerilla group opposed to the Lesotho government; in addition, South Africa has conducted military incursions into Lesotho in pursuit of members of the African National Congress.

In the American context, the Navajo Reservation is unique and incomparable to other politico-economic entities in the United States, because it possesses some degree of sovereignty independent of state and federal governments.⁶ It has its own tribal governmental structure and judicial system in which nonfelonious cases can be tried. The tribe can determine membership criteria for tribal rolls. Furthermore, certain governmental agencies on the reservation are run by the tribe.⁷ In 1924, Native Americans became United States citizens as well as citizens of their state and their tribe. According to the wording of the Indian Reorganization

Act of 1934, tribes have a higher status than states; this allows them to hold direct negotiations with the federal government.⁸

Some of the most comprehensive international legislation on the status of aboriginal groups has been formulated by the International Labor Organization, although the bulk of it has been ratified by neither the United States nor South Africa.⁹ Thus, the Navajo Reservation—the largest and most populous reservation in the United States—has no substantial international recognition.

The world-system, as defined by its major proponent, Immanuel Wallerstein, represents a cohesive economic system initiated in Europe in the sixteenth century; its tentacles now embrace the entire globe.¹⁰ World-system theory emerged at a time when it was becoming clear that Western approaches to economic development in non-Western countries were not resulting in economic parity. In fact, significant underdevelopment was taking place in a number of areas of the non-Western world.

World-system theory rests on the relationship between core and peripheral nations, with some acknowledgment of an intermediate economic system, the semiperiphery. Cores are areas of capital concentration that may receive raw materials from elsewhere to fuel technological development. In core labor markets there is enormous labor specialization and social stratification, and frequent sectoral adjustment. Furthermore, a core usually has a highly developed social welfare system that attempts to accommodate unemployment caused by such adjustments. The agricultural sector is capitalized to the point where family-owned farms find it difficult to operate. The state has a vested interest in maintaining its hegemony through coercion, capital investment, and/or foreign aid in dealing with its neighbors.

Peripheries are areas where capital investment is minimal but there is high potential for resource exploitation. The periphery, having very little capital at its disposal, depends on the core to provide capital investment for resource procurement, refinement, and attendant job generation. The periphery benefits from the research and development that emanate from the core. Since most profits are exported from the country, there is enough surplus to provide for only a very rudimentary social welfare system, usually in the form of a retirement pension or lump sum. Social stratification and labor specialization are fragmented, with vast income differentials between rich and poor, working class and proletariat, and rich farmer and poor peasant. Subsistence

agriculture often occurs in conjunction with cash crop agriculture in peripheral areas. Usually, capital investment is oriented towards the exploitation of one or two major resources, i.e., minerals or crops.

Semiperipheries are areas that are intermediate between cores and peripheries. They exhibit considerable social stratification and specialization. Semiperipheries can occupy a position within the global hierarchy of economies, can mediate between core nations and peripheral nations in a region, and can maintain a sizable periphery within their own territorial boundaries. They tend to exhibit features of both the core and the periphery in relation to the development of the agricultural and industrial sectors.

These distinct entities have emerged, in most instances, as a result of centuries of incorporation. Incorporation is the process by which core economies penetrate into self-sustaining, small-scale economies to capitalize on land, mineral, or other natural resources, or labor. This process precipitates and perpetuates underdevelopment and dependency. The core provides the capital, technologies, and markets for goods produced. Core-periphery incorporation necessarily involves race, because the distinction between colonizer and colonized has been predominantly along culturally established racial lines.

Some researchers may dismiss race as a biological concept, but it is, in fact, a cultural concept expressed in the politico-economic suppression of many nonwhite groups. I view ethnicity as a subcategory of race. Thus, each race is composed of a number of ethnic groups. Particularly in the American and South African contexts, domination is viewed through a white/nonwhite prism, with ethnicity being a by-product of differential discrimination. Ethnicity is, in fact, a manifestation of local and regional political economies within the world-system. Major economic shifts can result in the accentuation or deaccentuation of ethnicity.

Hall argues that, from the perspective of the periphery, the formation of tribal societies usually represents reactive social change due to exposure to a society at a higher level of sociocultural integration.¹¹ In the periphery, he suggests, ethnicity emerges as a vehicle for resistance to incorporation; the core provides a means of consolidating a power base.¹²

Hall views the process of incorporation as neither unilinear nor unidirectional; in fact, he proposes a continuum of incorporation.¹³ At the lower range of the continuum, peripheral areas

have little or no relationship with a core; in the middle, there is some degree of incorporation, with the flow of influence being unidirectional from the core; at the upper end, essential goods are exchanged between the two areas. Hall believes there are levels of explanation of the process of incorporation—the local level and the world-system level.¹⁴ Nevertheless, while he acknowledges ethnicity and class, he ignores race and gender.

Concerning gender, Ward reiterates the views of many feminist development theorists who contend that women in peripheral nations have lost status as a direct result of the international development effort in which patriarchal ideologies are often reinforced and accentuated.¹⁵ In peripheral economies where exploitable raw materials are available for export to core areas, male labor traditionally has been used for the production or extraction of these materials.

Whereas, with the incorporation of peripheral nations into the world-system, men have been drawn into commodity production, the vast majority of women have been confined to household production. This includes subsistence farming and the procurement, production, and sale of handicrafts, cooked food, and second-hand clothes in the informal sector. To compound the problem of women's being confined to the informal sector, few women are in decision-making positions in government in peripheral nations. Moreover, on the average, women tend to be less literate than men. Further complicating the current situation is the fact that women's confinement to the household has resulted in a high birth rate in many African and Asian countries, leading to greater erosion of women's economic status. In core nations, Ward argues, women are actively involved in both commodity and household production as epitomized by the concept of the "double day."¹⁶

In a later volume, Ward discusses the implications of global restructuring for the establishment of a global assembly line. In the ordering of this assembly line, transnational corporations may combine formal and informal sector production. In addition, women may engage in domestic duties or hire a woman who is more oppressed to perform those duties. Instead of the "double day," then, we have the "triple day." This negates the commonly held view that women's involvement in the public sphere—as opposed to the domestic sphere—leads to their improved status.¹⁷ Actually, there is no strict dichotomy. Women working

at home are isolated in terms of being able to voice resistance to their economic circumstances, whereas working women in more formal contexts participate in organized resistance in subtle and innovative ways for improved wages, benefits, and working conditions. Hossfeld's article in the Ward volume examines the intersection of gender, class, and race in the Silicon Valley.¹⁸

In a comparison of these two groups of women, a number of factors must be considered, including race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Insofar as the comparison itself is concerned, I am dealing primarily with ethnicity and gender. However, in analyzing the incorporation process in each peripheral area, I have found that race emerges as a factor shaping the process of incorporation and peripheralization in both politico-economic contexts.

Class takes on a number of dimensions in the context of the world-system. Whereas the dichotomy between core and periphery reflects a global class structure of national political economies, there are class structures within each individual political economy that may not be well-aligned from a global perspective.

At this juncture, it is necessary to examine the internal mechanisms for the incorporation of Basotho and Navajo societies into the world-system and their implications for contemporary manifestations of women's status in each case.

I

Because of Lesotho's geographical encapsulation by South Africa, it is often mistakenly thought to be a South African homeland. Actually, there is a homeland—Qwa Qwa—designated for the Basotho living in South Africa. One of Qwa Qwa's fragments shares a border with Lesotho. This situation has resulted in considerable friction between the two groups, which have the same ethnicity but different nationalities.

Historically, there were only two major ethnolinguistic groups among Bantu-speaking peoples in southern Africa—the Sotho and the Nguni.¹⁹ The three groups of Sotho-speakers—the northern, western, and southern Sotho—exhibited slight linguistic differences. The village was the principal residential unit. Villages of the northern and western Sotho had some urban features, whereas southern Sotho villages were smaller and more dis-

persed. The Nguni-speakers were the Zulus, the Xhosas, and the Swazis, who also exhibited slight linguistic differences. For Nguni groups, the homestead was the principal residential unit. The homestead was an economically self-sufficient unit containing agnatically related kin, usually spanning three generations. Homesteads were widely dispersed and surrounded by agricultural fields and cattle pastures.

There has been a European presence in southern Africa since 1652 at Table Bay (Cape Town) in the western Cape and since 1498 at Lorenço Marques (Maputo) in Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). By the early 1880s, due to ecological constraints and demographic expansion, the Zulu population could not be sustained in the area to which it was confined.²⁰ Under the leadership of Shaka, the Zulus began to consolidate a power base by annexing homesteads, requiring tribute, engaging in cattle and grain redistribution, and establishing a standing army for military expeditions against the neighboring groups.

The process of societal consolidation was not confined to the Zulu area. It spread throughout southeastern Africa, precipitating social upheaval and famine. This period is called the *lifaqane*. In reaction to the disruptions of the *lifaqane*, Moshoeshe united most of the southern Sotho population into a chiefdom, through which he provided military and food security for his followers.

When the British finally took over from the Dutch East India Company in 1803, the Cape Colony became subject to British imperial law. The Dutch settlers, or Boers, incensed over the abolition of slavery in the British empire, began the Great Trek in 1834, migrating to the north and east of the Cape Colony and encountering various indigenous groups along the way. Prior to this period, there had been vigorous trade among these groups. The Voortrekkers, as the Dutch migrants were called, began to interweave among the indigenous villages and homesteads, expropriating their land and isolating them from each other.²¹ Declaring the Voortrekkers their subjects, the British acted as arbiters of disputes between indigene and Boer in demarcating boundaries and regulating the arms trade.

As the indigenous economies were incorporated into the emerging South African economy—first through capitalist agricultural expansion and trade; later through mining—these areas were transformed into labor reserves. Population groups were

further isolated and differentiated. In many instances, in the postindustrial period in South Africa, members of particular racial/ethnic groups were recruited to work in particular industries or in different job categories in the same industry, thereby heightening ethnic tensions.

Three of the labor reserves, including Lesotho, became British protectorates near the close of the nineteenth century and gained internationally recognized independence in the mid-1960s. South Africa granted independence to the homelands—ethnically based reservations within the country—beginning in the mid-1970s. As the apartheid-based political economy developed, a premium was placed on ethnic differentiation and conflict within the Black population.

The pattern of land expropriation and balkanization of indigenous groups reflects colonial policy towards indigenous people under British rule throughout the nineteenth century and under Afrikaner political ascendancy in the mid-twentieth century. There has been a continuous, strong emphasis on racial and ethnic segregation, whether in the former High Commission territories or homelands or in urban townships in South Africa. At the same time, however, there has been a consistent policy of Black employment in the industrial and agricultural sectors of the South African economy.

Basotho men began to go to the mines in the 1860s when diamonds were discovered in Kimberley; later they went to the gold mines around Johannesburg. Between 1870 and 1885, mining employment was discretionary, because the Basotho were such successful agriculturalists that they were selling surplus grain to Boer settlers in the Orange Free State. This began to change, Kimble suggests, when Basotho men started engaging in migrant labor in order to acquire guns to defend their territory against further Boer encroachment.²² Furthermore, at the turn of the century, the British had introduced hut and poll taxes to serve as inducements for men to seek jobs in the mines. By the 1930s, mining employment had become necessary for the survival of the migrant and his family. Agriculture had declined to the subsistence level, as evidenced by famine and out-migration.²³

Prior to independence, little employment was available to women. Educated women were members of the teaching and nursing professions; uneducated women were domestic servants and

waitresses in towns. Uneducated women in rural areas engaged in more informal activities as beer brewers, seamstresses, etc. With the advent of independence, jobs began to open up for educated women in the civil service and in the private sector, in hotels, restaurants, banks, and stores.

Lesotho's ecology has been a major factor in facilitating its incorporation into the South African political economy. Its altitude ranges from 5,000 to 10,000 feet. The country encompasses the highest mountains in southern Africa. There are three ecozones: the lowlands, the foothills, and the mountains. The majority of Lesotho's human and livestock populations are concentrated in the lowlands. Livestock includes cattle, sheep, and goats. Principal crops cultivated are sorghum, wheat, and maize. Second to labor, water is Lesotho's most exploitable resource.

During the colonial period, Maseru emerged as Lesotho's administrative center. District centers, called camps, were established near the South African border. As a consequence, roads were more oriented towards South African border towns than towards the country's mountainous interior. After independence, Maseru became the capital of the country and the site of some industrial development. In the mid-1970s, Lesotho decided to create a new district in the center of the country in order to reorient infrastructural development towards the mountainous areas.

Rural women have been heavily dependent on income from men's migrant labor to provide funds for agricultural inputs, house construction and repair, and school fees for the children.²⁴ However, since the mid-1970s, the gold mining industry has begun to mechanize and to localize labor. As a direct consequence, the industry is recruiting very few novices; its long-term workers are considered to be skilled and are often given reengagement certificates to encourage continuous employment. Thus, younger men have had considerable difficulty in gaining access to lucrative employment. In the future, as the mechanization process continues, many skilled Basotho workers will be dismissed from their jobs and will have to return to Lesotho with few, if any, job prospects. As a result, there is a growing segment of proletarianized families in the rural areas that have no male relatives working in the mines. Leys believes that the economic circumstances of rural households are becoming increasingly dire because mining employment has been greatly restricted since the mid-1970s.²⁵

Vis-à-vis Lesotho's peripheral position in relation to the South African semiperiphery, gender-related issues emerge in the context of race and ethnicity. Women in Lesotho cannot freely migrate to South Africa to seek employment. Whereas male migrant laborers interact with their male counterparts in the South African context, females interact almost solely with other Basotho females in the villages in which they reside. These social relations are conducive to cooperative formation in rural areas.

The way that the domestic political economy is oriented, there is sexual segmentation in the labor force. Women occupy subordinate positions to men in public and private sector employment. Only at the highest echelons of the civil service is there some semblance of gender equality in representation and in input to the decision-making process.²⁶

Unlike South African homelands, Lesotho, as an internationally recognized, independent country, is eligible for foreign aid. However, most foreign aid has been spent on male-oriented projects. Only in the last decade and a half has more aid been set aside for female-oriented projects. As has been the case with female-oriented projects elsewhere in the global periphery, there has been a heavy emphasis on handicraft production. The types of handicraft production in Lesotho include basket weaving, pottery making, knitting, crocheting, and mohair tapestry weaving. While some of these skills have been present in the culture for a long time, others have been acquired as new projects have been introduced.

Traditionally, Basotho women have been prohibited from herding cattle in the domestic division of labor. Since small stock such as sheep and goats are also herded with cattle, males do all of the livestock herding. With increased migration of adult males to the South African gold mines in the last century, herdboys have been hired. As a consequence, women have never been heavily involved in herding and have tended to stay in school longer than their male counterparts.

In Lesotho, mercantile capital investment did not become extremely localized to the point that European traders wielded unlimited politico-economic power in one particular area. For a brief period of time, they engaged in mine labor recruitment in parts of South Africa; they received capitulation fees for recruits, they extended credit, and they engaged in barter with migrants.

However, European settlers were never considered a permanent fixture. Today, both traders and the government engage in buying raw mohair and wool from individual growers in the country. They then transfer the raw fiber to South Africa to be sold at auction. In only one known instance has a trader actually started a mohair weaving industry.

Basotho women have engaged in mohair weaving in cooperative and factory contexts for the past two decades. Weaving cooperatives have been rather ephemeral since their formation in various communities in the lowlands. However, privately owned factories located in Maseru, the capital, and in Teyateyaneng, a major town to the north of Maseru, have been quite successful. Weaving factories have engaged in considerable diversification in terms of the variety of woven items manufactured. Also, handicrafts from other parts of southern Africa are sold in the factories' outlet stores. Due to the low rate of South African tourism, both cooperatives and factories rely heavily on merchandise orders from core nations.

Tapestry weaving was introduced in Lesotho in the late 1960s. Prior to that time, Lesotho produced raw mohair solely to be sold on international markets via South African auctions. When tapestry weaving was introduced, machine-spun mohair was purchased from South Africa, since there were no locally produced yarns of weaving quality.

In the early 1970s, CARE funded a hand-spun mohair project called Lesotho Handspun Mohair (LHM).²⁷ Cooperatives, in which women were taught how to spin mohair, were established in rural areas throughout the country. These were called Primary Production Centers (PPPs). Spinners were supplied with raw mohair that was withheld from the South African market for spinning.

In the early 1980s, LHM developed a number of problems. At the village level, the organization was perceived as a company rather than a cooperative. Female spinners began to complain about the poor quality of raw mohair. As a stop-gap measure, LHM decided to buy tops from South Africa at considerable expense for individual spinners as well as the cooperative. In a feasibility study for LHM, John Gay suggested that each PPP maintain its own angora goat herd to be tended by spinners.²⁸

In 1986, CARE suspended the village cooperatives, because it

had stockpiled too much yarn in its warehouse. A private company is now renting the Maseru facility and is running a diversified mohair weaving factory there. When I visited in June 1989, the new manager indicated that most of the stockpiled yarn had been sold. They were at the point of beginning to work with CARE to revitalize the PPCs to produce handspun yarn. In southern Africa, the successful mohair weaving industries have begun to invest in less successful industries in the region, thereby expanding to a transnational scope. In the case of the Maseru facility, the government was probably unable to assume funding of the project.

Truelove describes a similar case in Colombia in which an uncompetitive shoe factory dismantled its formal operations and engaged in a joint venture with the state-run cooperative unit.²⁹ The cooperative was set up in a coffee-producing area where men were casual laborers on plantations. Their wives obtained steady employment assembling shoes and were paid on a piecework basis. Drawing on this example, one could argue that the PPPs in Lesotho have essentially become privatized, because they have to respond to the production demands of the company in Maseru.

Lesotho's mohair industry clearly lacks vertical integration. Some of the tapestry-weaving projects are cooperatively owned while others are privately owned. Rarely do women weave independently because of difficulty in marketing the finished product. As an informal marketing strategy, tapestry-weaving industries encourage tourists to visit their outlet stores and to go into workrooms to observe women while they weave. The women weave a variety of village scenes composed by Basotho and non-Basotho artists; they also produce abstract geometric designs similar to those carved into house facades. Tapestries range in price from \$10 to \$1,000. However, weavers are paid meager wages by the square meter. In 1986, one tapestry weaver estimated that the average weaver received \$68 to \$90 per month.

It has been only since the 1970s that the industrialization process has really begun to take hold in Lesotho. After a number of core nations implemented economic sanctions against South Africa beginning in 1986, many manufacturing industries in that country sought to relocate in the independent countries of the region. Textile industries are heavily involved in relocation. These industries employ young, relatively well-educated women, single women who have one or two children. As Safa has noted in

characterizing runaway shops, these are not import-substitution industries.³⁰ They usually cater to large, foreign markets. In the case of the southern African periphery, these factories cater almost exclusively to the South African market.

Cottage industries that have served as the initiators of the industrialization process continue to function in spite of the fact that many textile industries are relocating from South Africa. However, these are not the only sources of competition for Basotho tapestry weavers. High-quality, handcrafted mohair tapestry production also takes place in cottage industries and cooperatives in Botswana and Swaziland as well as in the South African homelands.

The consumers of these products include affluent white South Africans, European and American expatriates living in the region, and members of the African elite. Because of gross inequalities in wealth, the vast majority of Blacks living in the region occupy the lower rungs of society and therefore cannot afford such luxury items. With the most pronounced industrial presence in urban areas of South Africa, affluent whites living there experience some alienation from their agrarian origins and tend to consume items they consider more traditional—even if only recently introduced.

In recent years, with the mounting liberation struggle in South Africa, tourism from that country has been reduced to a trickle. Tapestry-weaving industries have had to move aggressively to tap into core markets in Europe and North America.

II

Although the Spanish began to colonize the American Southwest and the Hopi Indians, in particular, in the 1530s, their attempts to dominate the Navajo were uncertain. In 1680 the Spanish were expelled from the area, but they returned in 1693 and attempted to cultivate the Navajo. They had friendly chiefs installed in the tribe and manipulated the Navajo against the more recalcitrant Apaches in the Gila River area. When it became clear that the Navajo acknowledged kinship ties with the Gilas, the Spanish considered having the Navajo removed from the area.³¹ However, the tribe was not to be easily confined.

There is some debate as to the Navajo's precontact mode of

production. Some anthropologists suggest that they were hunter-gatherers with a matrilineal bias.³² Kelley goes further to postulate a society with matri-uxorilocal residence that engaged in horticulture, gathering, and some pastoralism in the early nineteenth century.³³ She speculates that some wealth stratification began to appear by 1750, when pastoralism had gained more emphasis in the Navajo economy. Hall, using Steward's typology, speculates that at the time of initial contact, the Navajo were organized into several more or less autonomous bands.³⁴ The Navajo became marginally incorporated into the Spanish empire as a result of trading and raiding.

Kelley argues that, in relation to pastoralism, a gender-based division of labor emerged in which women tended herds while men went on raiding expeditions. The more successful raiders, called *ricos*, began to assume community leadership positions as "big men." In examining statistics from a household survey undertaken in 1915, Kelley suggests that stratification as indicated by livestock numbers shows that about one-fifth of Navajo households were rich—i.e., living well above the subsistence level—and the remaining four-fifths represent different gradations of poverty.³⁵ She concludes that the nineteenth century was the period during which Navajo society became more patrilineally based and more socially stratified. Of course, a major implication of this is the decline in women's status in Navajo society.

In the mid-nineteenth century the United States acquired the Southwest after the defeat of Mexico. It was then that the American government took upon itself the task of vanquishing all Native American ethnic groups in the region. However, during the Civil War the army faced a severe manpower shortage in Indian Territory. To try to stabilize the region, the government ordered that the Navajo be removed to Bosque Redondo in eastern New Mexico, where Fort Sumner was to be built.

This was the first of a series of policy decisions the end result of which was to increase Navajo dependency on the United States core.³⁶ The ostensible objective of the Bosque Redondo removal was to convert the pastoralist Navajo into agriculturalists. Nevertheless, they were confined in less-than-exemplary conditions, both poorly sheltered and poorly fed. In 1868, five years after their removal, a treaty was signed that permitted the Navajo to return to their homeland. Each man, woman, and child was to be given three sheep or goats to start new herds.³⁷

White argues, however, that this led to inequality in stock holding, because chiefs got more stock, and those Navajo who had evaded federal authority during the removals had maintained their stock elsewhere.³⁸

Boundary lines were delineated for the reservation that encompassed part of the Navajo's original territory. However, the area was and is very arid, although temperatures are relatively mild. With subsequent rapid population increase, the reservation could not adequately accommodate its inhabitants. Efforts to expand the size of the reservation were generally unsuccessful.

Snipp calls Native American reservations in the early stage "captive nations," to indicate their subordinate status to the United States government.³⁹ It was during the reservation era in American incorporation, Hall argues, that the Navajo and other Native American societies became distinct ethnic groups.⁴⁰ In the twentieth century, he postulates, increasing internal colonial incorporation has transformed them into ethnic minorities within a large state.

The Santa Fe Railroad was built through the Navajo Reservation during the 1880s. This had a profound impact on transportation, communication between the reservation and the outside world, and the orientation of infrastructure that developed subsequently. Navajo men assisted in the construction of the railroad, raw materials were transported to market, and Western consumer goods became more accessible. The Navajo had a means of migrating to off-reservation employment, and tourists found the reservation within easy reach.

Traders, setting up trading posts along the railway line, became the core of American mercantile capitalism. The first trading post was established shortly after the Navajo Reservation was established; by 1875 there were seven trading posts on or near the reservation.⁴¹ Volk suggests that the traders filled a void created by the Navajo's lack of self-sufficiency in food production and their wide dispersal due to sheep herding. The trading posts provided areas for centralized Navajo population settlement on the reservation.

The next step contributing to underdevelopment on the Navajo Reservation is the stock reduction policy of the federal government, implemented in the late 1920s.⁴² This policy was precipitated by the fact that considerable silting was occurring at the recently constructed Hoover Dam. Because government officials

viewed the Navajo Reservation as overstocked and overgrazed, they postulated that erosion on the reservation was the major factor contributing to the silting of the dam. Through a series of measures, the government formulated quotas on sheep, goats, cattle, and horses. The policy was carried out despite considerable Navajo resistance and resentment. Although large stock owners were practically unscathed, middle-range stock owners were reduced to living at the sub-subsistence level.

Navajo women traditionally had controlled sheep and goat herds, and men had controlled horses and cattle. By the 1930s, women were more adversely affected than men by the stock reductions. To compound the gender discrepancy, federal jobs generated on the reservation were primarily for men. One could argue that, with each stage of underdevelopment, women lost more status within Navajo society; this was a direct result of United States core incorporation of the Navajo population.

Prior to the introduction of the trading post, Navajo women wove blankets and rugs for personal use and maintained control over the entire production process. After posts were established, traders encouraged women to weave rugs for core markets. The traders negotiated rug style from existing designs and increasingly provided materials for production. Before the emergence of a cash economy on the reservation, women bartered rugs to traders for commodities. During the first two decades of this century, traders were content to have women weavers produce rugs and blankets in their homes. Weiss suggests that this strategy was adopted because it enabled traders to squeeze more free labor from weavers and their family members.⁴³

It is clear that the vicissitudes of capitalist incorporation have had a profound impact on weaving. High wool and mutton prices during World War I brought Navajo weaving to a halt. Because wages and benefits were high for those left behind on the reservation, women were encouraged to do very little weaving. However, with the formation of handicraft cooperatives during that period, females often were employed. Later, the depression forced women to revert to weaving again. It always has been something to fall back on during hard times.

Weiss regards the period from 1930 to 1949 as one in which the ascendancy of wage labor occurred, thereby signaling less emphasis on the role of mercantile capital.⁴⁴ By the late 1930s, small stock owners who had lost their herds had become heavily involved in temporary wage labor. However, women, the most ad-

versely affected group, still had few opportunities for federal employment. As weavers, they made between five cents and ten cents per hour, whereas male laborers were paid about two dollars per day. In the 1950s, wage labor was more than half of per capita income. Weiss postulates that in the 1960s, complete incorporation had occurred, as reflected in the expansion of government employment and the social welfare system. He estimates that in the mid-1970s, weavers received about \$1.30 per hour.⁴⁵

Although some weavers, primarily older women, weave high-quality rugs for which they demand a handsome price, the vast majority of weavers obtain a meager income from their work. Navajo rugs range in size from miniature to grandiose and in price from \$50 to \$5,000, with the trader receiving a substantial commission. Weaving is, for the most part, an individual activity, with some family members assisting in the production process. Today, the repertoire of styles includes both traditional and modern patterns.

Since the 1930s, efforts have been made to introduce cooperatives on the Navajo Reservation; however, it was not until the 1970s that a sustained cooperative thrust took root. The Navajo Wool and Mohair Warehouse markets raw wool and mohair and buys back some of the yarn to be sold to weavers. Navajo Arts and Crafts markets rugs, silver jewelry, and other products. A highly successful rug auction is held in Crownpoint, New Mexico several times a year. More recently, the Save the Children Fund has allocated funding to the Navajo Nation to form cooperatives among weavers on the reservation. This represents one of the few development projects being executed in a core nation by a core foreign aid organization.

Cooperatives, formed to act as an alternative to trading posts, provide such resources as livestock feed, gasoline, food, handicraft supplies, and handicrafts themselves. Handicraft cooperatives are tourist-oriented instead of primarily serving the needs of the Navajo.

Traders have been adamantly opposed to cooperative formation; through credit extended on unsold tapestries, they have tried to keep female weavers economically dependent on them. Weiss argues that independent merchant capital actually has inhibited industrial development on the reservation.⁴⁶

The Navajo Reservation covers three states—New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. The administrative center is located in Window Rock, Arizona. The western area—which is more arid—has a

lower population density than the eastern area of the reservation. Most of the mineral wealth is located in the former and most of the pastureland in the latter.⁴⁷

In the later 1960s, there was a dramatic shift in United States government policy towards Native Americans. Whereas the previous policy had fostered assimilation, the new policy stressed self-determination. For the Navajo Nation, the political ascendancy of Peter MacDonald to the position of chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council came on the heels of this policy shift. A former Hughes Aircraft engineer, MacDonald embarked on a program of economic development that would culminate in Navajo self-determination. He sought to explore and exploit more fully the reservation's oil, uranium, and timber resources. If this policy were to be implemented successfully, the Navajo would benefit from increased employment opportunities, tribal participation in joint ventures with private enterprise, revenue allocation to local chapters in which resource development occurs, and possibilities for cooperative formation.⁴⁸ Snipp considers the federal government's shift to resource development on reservations to have changed the reservations' status from "captive nations" to "internal colonies."⁴⁹

Much Navajo out-migration takes place to towns and cities that border the reservation, such as Gallup, Albuquerque, Phoenix, and Flagstaff.⁵⁰ Some Navajo migrate as far as Los Angeles, which has the largest Native American population of any American city. There has been a particularly high rate of male migration from the reservation to urban areas of the Southwest and the West. To some extent, economic development on the reservation in the 1970s helped to stem that tide because of growing employment and educational opportunities.

Tourism has not diminished in Navajo country. If anything, it has increased. Visitors to the Southwest can tour a number of geological and archeological sites—in addition to the Navajo and Hopi reservations. Unfortunately, tourists buy rugs and other Navajo handicrafts primarily from traders.

The Navajo are the most populous Native American group in the United States. However, the entire Native American population constitutes the smallest racial minority in the country, as a result of centuries of colonization and genocide and liberal European immigration policies. Thus this aboriginal group has been dominated by the politico-economic processes initiated and perpetuated by the colonizing majority.

In the late capitalist phase, indigenous American artifacts are rare and precious and thereby command higher prices. Nevertheless, unlike the products of southern African weaving industries, Navajo rugs are sold almost exclusively on the American market.

* * * *

Comparison of Basotho and Navajo weavers reveals the extent of sexual segmentation of the labor force in peripheral areas. The women of Lesotho are confined to sexually segmented employment in their own country; Navajo women are restricted to limited wage labor opportunities both on and off the reservation. Because of this sexual segmentation, I would argue that the "reserve armies of labor" to which most of these women belong are in a different category from the reserve armies occupied by men in their respective societies. Braverman's characterization of Marxian components of the reserve army of labor are as follows:

1. The floating reserve is found in industrial centers where workers move from job to job, experiencing periods of unemployment in relation to movements of technology and capital.
2. The latent reserve is located in agricultural areas where peasants have no recourse in terms of employment options when new agricultural technology is introduced and, as a consequence, often migrate to cities.
3. The stagnant reserve is one in which there is only irregular, casual, or marginal employment available and which often results in pauperism for members of the category.⁵¹

The reserve armies of labor have a geographical basis. The floating reserve is found in the major industrial centers of a country; the latent reserve appears in productive agricultural areas that are relatively close to industrial centers; and the stagnant reserve, in most instances, is even more marginalized for employment options in agricultural areas and industrial centers. At the level of the nation-state, core-periphery relationships consist of industrial centers, which are the cores; productive agricultural areas, which are the semiperipheries; and stagnant agricultural areas, which are the peripheries. Regarding class formation, the floating reserve represents industrial wage labor; the latent reserve represents casual agricultural labor; and the stagnant reserve

represents the *lumpenproletariat*. Because of women's more limited access to the industrial sector, they are more heavily concentrated in the latent and stagnant reserves.

In Lesotho, where some industrialization is taking place, women are primarily members of the latent and stagnant reserves. Whereas textile factories cater to a limited floating reserve, cooperatives and cottage industries cater to the latent and stagnant reserves. Factories are located in the towns; cottage industries and cooperatives, for the most part, are in rural areas. For Basotho women in the latent and stagnant reserves, there is no national social welfare system to serve as a safety net against pauperism. Their survival is a function of their access to employment or to male migrant remittances.

On the Navajo Reservation, women have been relegated to the latent and stagnant reserves because men have been the principal recipients of wage employment. Women, being more limited in their sheep- and goat-herding activities, turn to weaving increasingly as a supplement to household income. Nevertheless, unlike the Basotho women, the Navajo female reserve armies of labor, in many instances, have the social welfare system as a safety net during hard times. In the last decade, however, it has become increasingly possible to fall through the safety net in the United States and to be penniless. Thus, in a comparison of the two reserve armies of labor—Basotho and Navajo—neither the floating nor the stagnant reserves are closely aligned.

Weaving never has been a highly structured occupation. It has been individualized, privatized, and confined to the home. It is only in relation to the network of individual traders that one finds some semblance of a putting-out system in which individuals do homework. The trader acts as a broker between the core market and the individual weavers.

Although foreign aid strategies have fallen under considerable criticism over the last decade, more cooperatively oriented development projects are being initiated in Lesotho for weavers, despite the lack of integration of these projects. However, this is not to ignore the fact that most core foreign aid organizations are perpetuating underdevelopment.

For the last three centuries, Navajo weavers have encountered the vicissitudes of capitalist development in the American core with little assistance from outside. That has limited them in terms of developing viable alternatives. Although cooperatives have

been introduced from time to time, and a few have remained viable, they have never been able to vertically integrate the entire production process.

In rural areas of Lesotho, extended family ties have remained intact, serving as a basis for negotiating cooperative formation. However, the Navajo Reservation is affected by social trends in greater American society that portend the nucleation of the family without the majority of its members achieving middle-class status. In the context of the family, vis-à-vis the wage economy, a process of individualization is under way. Certainly, this is epitomized by the individualized work efforts made by weavers.

March and Taqqu suggest that cooperatives introduced by development organizations are often based on a Western model.⁵² In Western society, women have formed cooperatives in response to industrialization and the privatization of their lives. These organizations tend to be too large, too formal, and too bureaucratized to motivate non-Western women to participate fully in them. March and Taqqu conclude by advocating that, in order to design viable cooperatives in peripheral contexts, some synthesis be effected between the indigenous cooperative model in a given society and the Western cooperative model. In the case of Lesotho, such a synthesis seems to have been effected to some extent before privatization was initiated.

A final dimension illuminated by the comparison of Basotho and Navajo women is that the former have experienced both a periphery-semiperiphery relationship and a periphery-core relationship, while the latter have only a periphery-core relationship. In the case of the Basotho, the periphery-core relationship has enabled Lesotho to receive foreign aid from a variety of sources with different approaches to development. In the case of the Navajo, however, the periphery-core relationship is almost exclusively one of intense, but uneven, capitalist incorporation.

In the case of the Basotho, the periphery-semiperiphery relationship seems to involve less capitalist incorporation. However, Lesotho also has economic relations directly with the core through foreign aid allocations. The major foreign aid organizations have sought to reinforce Lesotho's dependency on the South African semiperiphery. Smaller agencies like CARE have attempted to adapt cooperatives to that particular context. From this, one can conclude that the implications of foreign aid dependency are rather contradictory.

In conclusion, the world-system operates on a number of levels and from many different vantage points. From the global perspective, it represents a hierarchy of nations; from the regional perspective, it involves a hierarchy of nations and non-national entities; and, in terms of a particular nation-state, it consists of towns, cities, and rural areas.

In the case of the two peripheral areas under consideration, the classes that have been formed as a direct response to the incorporation process are not fully articulated. Basotho and Navajo women have different trajectories of marginality, with different options for attempting to enhance their lower status vis-à-vis men in their respective societies.

NOTES

1. My findings are based on field research conducted among the Basotho and the Navajo. I did field research in Lesotho for fourteen months in 1979-80, for the month of July 1986, and during a brief visit in June 1989. I made my first field visit to the Navajo Reservation in March 1988.

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