

DISSERTATIONS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

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GIRLS' PUBERTY OBSERVANCES AMONG NORTHERN ATHABASCANS

Dorothy Libby

The most commonly recorded customs that Northern Athabascan girls observed at the occurrence of their first menses were the following: Seclusion; restrictions on the eating of particular foods or drinking of much liquid; instruction in proper attitudes, behavior, and work techniques; bathing and changing clothes at the end of seclusion; avoidance of men, especially hunters; and avoidance of game animals. Similar activity restrictions were also expected of menstruating or parturient women. The observances, many of which reflect the harshness of the environment, were thought to protect the basic sources of food (game animals and hunters) against harm or destruction from the supernatural powers of the girl. Puberty customs also helped to integrate a girl into the life of the group as a responsible adult; to protect the girl, others in the community, and the natural environment from being harmed by her supernatural power; to influence her future health and moral welfare; and, sometimes, to raise her prestige in the group.

None of the recorded puberty customs definitely differentiates Northern Athabascans from other American Indian groups, parallels in other cultures having been recorded for almost all of their practices. Because distributional evidence is incomplete for any particular trait listed for these peoples, problems of the origin or development of the observances cannot be solved at present. However, all of the Northern Athabascan groups for whom sufficient data has been recorded followed the customs listed above, and it seems probable that other puberty customs may have had a similar distribution.

In recent years girls' puberty customs have changed along with other aspects of native practices, so that at the present time many of the recorded puberty customs have ceased to exist.

229 lvs. Berkeley, 1952.

ANCIENT POTTERY FIGURINES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

IN THE STUDY OF PREHISTORY

Clement Woodward Meighan

Pottery images of humans and animals have been found associated with the remains of early agricultural societies in many parts of the world. They are abundantly recorded from archaeological sites in North and South America, Europe, the Near East, and Japan. Such figures have been commonly interpreted as religious in significance although an examination of the archaeological evidence shows this belief to be questionable in most cases.

Of some 600 sites which contain pottery figurines in an early agricultural context, less than 3 per cent of the occurrences have been found under circumstances which permit inferences as to their use or cultural meaning: there are two occurrences suggesting witchcraft, five suggesting dolls or playthings, and eight which imply a religious significance of some sort. Nearly all of the thousands of reported specimens have been found in refuse middens without evidence of their former significance.

Some writers have noticed a predominance of female representation in archaeological figurines. This predominance is confirmed in the present study, more than 90 per cent of the described figurines being indicated as feminine. The plurality of female images is maintained throughout the world despite the great separation in time and space which exists between the various finds. The differential representation of the sexes has been sometimes referred to a universal concept of fertility, expressed in the manufacture of female images. However, it is here shown that children's dolls are also predominantly female, and the interpretation of female figurines as fertility symbols is thus laid open to serious question.

The distribution of pottery figurines strongly suggests a multiple origin for these objects. They appear to have been "invented" in at least three areas: the New World, the Near East, and the Far East. Further, knowledge of pottery is not an essential prerequisite to the manufacture of pottery figurines, for the latter are found in the Aurignacian of Europe and in California. Both contexts completely lack pottery vessels of any sort.

Finally, the chronological evidence does not support the idea that there is a direct connection between figurines and developmental agriculture. It has been proposed that clay figurines arose more or less with the development of agriculture. However, since many of the earliest agricultural sites appear to have few or no figurines, the belief in an agricultural complex which includes figurines is no longer plausible.

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INDIAN FUR TRADE OF NEW FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Mary Woody Herman

In New France in the seventeenth century there developed a lucrative trade in furs between the aboriginal inhabitants and the French. Furs were collected by native middlemen from Algonkian hunters in return for maize, tobacco, and French merchandise. Among the factors affecting this trading arrangement were the cultural values and customs of the Indian tribes concerned and the rapidly changing political situation in the area.

Before 1650 the Huron sent flotillas of a hundred or more canoes to the French settlements each year to exchange furs for European goods. This occasion was marked by assemblies between the two peoples in which a distinctive type of oratory, characteristic of the Huron, took place, and gifts were exchanged. Rights to tribal ownership of territory were recognized by the Indians of New France by paying a toll for the right to pass through alien territory, and the Huron allowed the family which discovered a new trading market monopoly rights to its exploitation.

The Huron had well-developed concepts of valuation, although their patterns of utilization of property differed from those of the French. This was particularly noticeable in their sense of community responsibility, and attitudes toward hospitality, theft, and gambling. Wampum, which was highly valued by the Huron, was the foremost present in formal exchanges of gifts. It was also used as ornament and as a stake in gambling, buried with the dead, and exchanged for other goods.

The behavior of the Huron traders was also conditioned by their beliefs about the supernatural. Of great importance were the guardian spirit dreams and charms which assured success in trading.

In 1650, the Iroquois dispersed the Huron and overran many other tribes in the area. Remnants of the Huron later settled with the Petun and Ottawa at Lake Superior and after a few years renewed the trade from there. French traders also began going directly to the Indians to trade, and other tribes entered the market.

Some of the changes which occurred in Huron culture in the seventeenth century in the realm of trade and related activities were: development of trade into a full-time occupation, development of wampum into a widely circulated medium of exchange, substitution of iron for stone tools and the gun for bow and arrow, and the breakdown of the persuasive powers of the chiefs. Only a few Huron fully accepted the Christian religion, and Huron concepts regarding the use of property showed strong powers of persistence throughout the century. The trading assemblies between the Huron and French were maintained in the Indian manner throughout the century and therefore represent an adoption of Indian customs by a European people.

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THE ARMENIAN FAMILY:

CHANGING PATTERNS OF FAMILY LIFE IN A CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY

Harold Nelson

Armenians left Turkey in large numbers during the ending years of the nineteenth century and emigrated to other parts of the world, many of them settling in the United States. Of those who came to this country, a sizable group settle in the San Joaquin Valley of California, especially in Fresno and its surrounding area, where they followed their Old World pursuits of farming as well as urban occupations and professions.

In the years which followed their arrival in Fresno, the Armenian community has been subjected to the acculturative influences of the American culture. The greatest effect of American culture has been manifested not merely in the second generation, but in the younger siblings of that group. Old World culture in the family was too strongly entrenched for the older siblings to have accepted American culture to the degree possible for their younger brothers and sisters. Older siblings, though certainly acculturated, were unable to accept much of the adolescent behavior traits of their non-Armenian contemporaries because of parental opposition; on the other hand, they interceded with their parents on behalf of their younger siblings who were thus freer to accept American, and reject Armenian, family values.

Changes in the Armenian family pattern occur more rapidly in those areas of behavior which clash least with traditional values or where social pressure from American society is especially intense. Emphasis on parental control and paternal dominance have been maintained, modified by the acculturative influence of American individualism. Changes in family values have occurred most noticeably at two time periods, first in the early nineteen-thirties when the first large group of second-generation younger siblings were reaching maturity, and second, the period following World War II as the third generation began to approach maturity.

Contact between Armenians and the general American culture has not resulted in the complete acceptance by Armenians of American family ways. A strong Old World tradition of family values remains, and it may be said that present-day Fresno-Armenian culture is neither American nor old-world Armenian, but a synthesis of both, resulting in a different emergent culture pattern.

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