



Women and Power: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Societies from the Neolithic Age into The Modern Era

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Women and Power: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Societies from the Neolithic Age into
The Modern Era

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A Thesis in the Field of Anthropology and Archaeology
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Abstract

Four societies ranging approximately 10,000 years and occupying disparate geographic regions are analyzed for similarities stemming from the fact that each of these societies either is either overtly or suspected of being more honoring of women and mothers in positions of domestic, political, and social leadership. Utilizing various methods of determination from archaeological records to ethnographic data, these cultures are found to have various similarities which are different from patriarchal customs more familiar to many modern people. These similarities are then compared with and projected into common modern modalities of culture and suggestions for how changes could be made to potentially normalize greater social equality across gender lines.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind (Jowett and Davis 1908, 34).

—Aristotle, 4th century BCE

Modern societies are largely descendant from cultures which did not distribute power or authority equitably across gender lines (Miller 2017). There are models of civilization which exhibit more egalitarian traits with respect to gender and understanding the attributes of such cultures may be highly informative to those interested in developing cultural systems which are more inclusive, not only with relation to gender, but across numerous avenues of iniquity. This research connects the concepts of how power dynamics between genders, in both private and public spheres, affect those living within a culture by illustrating aspects of several societies which participate in models of gender dynamics different from the typical ancestor cultures of western civilization.

Matriarchy and Patriarchy

The concept of gender has received increased academic and social scrutiny in recent years and has become a subject of spirited political and philosophical debate (Lindqvist, Sendén, and Renström 2021). As later chapters will illustrate in detail, modern industrialized nations exclusively participate in patriarchal cultural norms which

facilitate the power of an authoritarian “father-ruler” – the literal translation of the term “patriarch”. The dominance of cultural patriarchy has led to homogenization of customs in the modern world which cross cultural and linguistic boundaries creating highly gendered societies which often exclude women and anyone not expressing accepted social masculinity from positions of authority (Miller 2017).

“Matriarch” is defined literally as “mother-ruler”, but modern writers on this subject have opted to redefine the suffix “-arch” not as “ruled by” but replace it with another Greek word “arche”, which is seen in words such as “archetype”, where it means “first” or “primary” whereby “matriarch” may then be defined as something akin to “mother first” (Goetter-Abendroth 2023, 1-4). This definition is close to what is seen in the more egalitarian societies investigated in this research, however, for the sake of accuracy and to avoid confusion, the word “matriarch” will be used in limited circumstances in this document.

Patriarchy itself is commonly understood to define a culture which is exclusive toward empowering men, and often, privileged men born into families which wield inordinate influence. Women can also often participate and enforce patriarchal norms, and without over-emphasizing biological sex when discussing gender norms, it should be noted that female leaders can participate and support patriarchal customs. What is discussed in this research are models of society which do not excessively restrict behaviors depending on a person’s biological sex, and if they do, these restrictions are instituted with an awareness of egalitarianism. There are, in many instances, separations of responsibilities divided along gender lines whereby gender dominance may be curtailed.

In order to understand the cultural precedence which has led humankind to its current position with regard to gender dynamics, it is necessary to consider the Paleolithic Era and explore the models of society in which early humans may have participated.

The Paleolithic

Approximately 70,000 years ago, the world was highly diverse with respect to hominid populations. Neanderthals occupied Western Eurasia, Denisovans inhabited Eastern Eurasia, and several other hominids lived throughout Eurasia and Africa (Neubauer 2014). All the hominids of this time, including *Homo sapiens sapiens*, participated in foraging economies and are often referred to as hunter-gatherers. These populations were not sedentary, but mobile, migrating from summer and winter campsites following food sources and they depended on physical strength, agility, and endurance to procure the necessities of their livelihoods. However, even in these primitive societies, there is evidence for systems of social care which extend beyond the practical need to survive.

Neanderthal Social Care

Looking broadly into the cultures of hominids, Shanidar 1 is the name given by scientists to the skeletal remains of a Neanderthal man who lived in the region of the Zagros Mountains in modern day Iraq around 40,000 years ago. Shanidar 1 was badly injured as a boy with significant damage to one of his arms as well as a badly smashed skull rendering him blind in one eye and largely deaf (Trinkaus and Vilotte 2017; Crubézy and Trinkaus 1992). This is an individual that would be considered highly disabled in the modern world. Yet, despite living within a foraging society, Shanidar 1

lived into his forties, supporting the idea that this was a person who received social care from his community. Shanidar 1 was interred respectfully in a cave alongside several others of his kind. Additionally, high levels of pollen residue suggests that there may have been flowers deposited along with these remains (Kent 2016). This discovery, originating in Neanderthal populations, suggests that the primitive world may not have been as pragmatic and brutal as some promote and, instead, may have inherently valued the lives of others, regardless of how much they may have practically contributed.

Another discovery gives further credence to the idea that Neanderthal culture valued their relatives for more reasons than their economic contributions. A six year old Neanderthal child was recently discovered who shows signs of having suffered from Down's Syndrome which would have made him or her relatively unproductive and requiring excessive care. These hominids must have noticed that this child was not developing normally, but continued to care for them until their death (Conde-Valverde et al. 2024).

Neanderthals were evolutionarily optimized for strength and durability, requiring at least 4,000 calories a day per person, but humans matured slower and were more gracile, requiring 2,000 calories a day (Snodgrass and Leonard 2009). Much in the way that invasive plant species can replace native species by outcompeting them and being more efficient at utilizing available resources, it is not impossible that the human supplantation of Neanderthal populations was not as much territorial violence as it was gradual outcompeting for optimal territories which led the Neanderthals, who required twice the calories per day for each set of hands, to run out of favorable habitat and ultimately become extinct. Using their ingenuity to devise methods of hunting and

foraging which were less dangerous and required less resource expenditure, human beings gradually continued the process of revising tool usage and adopting cultural modalities more conducive to sustaining greater wealth and population.

Gender in the Paleolithic

A counterargument to the idea that women were predominant in some cultures is that women may have been dependent on men to provide food and protection, and this concept defends the ideology that men are the principal creators. However, it should be noted that it has not been the advantage of physical strength of human beings, but the use of technology and the participation of people in complex and robust social groups. Recent studies have also shown that prehistoric women participated in acts such as hunting more commonly than had been previously assumed further deteriorating the theory that the economics of the prehistoric world mirrored those of the modern world whereby women have been largely relegated to dependency upon male counterparts to provide for their physical needs (Owen 2005).

Instead of a nuclear model that seems so ordinary in the modern world, children were likely raised more communally, with a child's dependence upon their birth mother diminished by a sisterhood of lactating women capable of breast-feeding the child and men potentially participating in child-rearing more frequently than had been previously assumed. Diets in these Paleolithic societies depended primarily on small game which can be trapped and requires nimble fingers, careful construction, and repetitive checking of traps more than it requires great physical strength and endurance (Lacy and Obobock 2024). Women likely participated in the hunting of game and procurement of food more

commonly and were not reflective of a domestic lifestyle akin to that which was socially emblematic of 1950's America where a woman would stay home with children while a man would leave the home to provide material and financial support.

Early Human Migrations Out of Africa

Out Of Africa, as the theory is referred, is the phenomenon whereby *Homo sapiens sapiens* left Africa and dispersed across the rest of the habitable world (Templeton 2016). There are two possible ways to leave Africa. Populations may either travel by land or seafaring vessels. Seafaring populations may have skirted the coast north of Africa or across the Red Sea and, while these routes may be unlikely, Aboriginal peoples did cross the Wallace Line, a difficult ocean crossing, by 65,000 BCE in order to populate Australia (Rowland 2018). However, if early populations traveled by the land route, they must walk from the Eastern side of the Nile River Delta across the Sinai Peninsula into the Levant and Eurasia which is a highly constrained passageway. Whichever route early mankind traversed, research suggests that it was one pulse of *Homo sapiens sapiens* which went on to populate the world beyond Africa (Vallini et al. 2024). Given this, it is not unreasonable to suspect that there may have been some cultural norms which were common to all peoples of the world beyond Africa at this time, approximately 75,000 years ago.

Whether or not human populations outside of Africa share a common cultural ancestry is not essential to this study, but it may inform why there are certain commonalities across broad geographical regions. At this time in human history, there may have been consistency in human cultures' respect of mothers and for the sacrifices

that they make during childbirth and early childhood development. Childbirth, which occurs exclusively through the female body, and comes at great physical cost, was likely just as emotional to ancient humans as it is to modern people.

Human Anatomy

Human anatomy has been stretched to its limits in order to deliver a baby with the largest brain possible through the pelvis of females, which is tilted and narrowed in order to facilitate bipedalism. Compounding this, human babies have extremely weak bodies and lack the digestive capacity to break down fats efficiently, so human milk is high in sugar which is easy to digest, but causes the secondary effect on the mother that human babies require near constant breastfeeding because sugar is metabolized quickly and must be frequently replenished, unlike the fatty milks of other mammals which allow offspring to go longer periods of time without feeding. Most other mammals are born with comparatively strong bodies and digestive tracts because it is primarily their physical resiliency, and not the care and attention of their mothers, which leads to their survival (Huber 2007).

Additionally, in contrast to other mammals which produce litters, human babies are born one at a time and infant and child mortality were quite high historically (McDowell 2022). This would place the great burden on replenishing human populations on women's shoulders, as after a traumatic pregnancy and labor and after carrying and feeding a child, this child would ultimately be unlikely to survive to adulthood. It is possible that against such a backdrop of tragedy, and with the clear and obvious pains that human mothers endured at bringing children into the world, both physical and

emotional, human men respected motherhood and honored those that were directly responsible for caring for and nurturing the future of humanity into existence, both as the current mothers, but also the children who one day would be fulfilling that role.

Famed Lithuanian archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, who wrote extensively in the latter half of the 20th century of her theories regarding what she referred to as “matristic” cultures in Eurasia (Spretnak 2011). Gimbutas has many theories of the nature of these cultures of Eurasia and of great interest to her were archaeological finds which appear to illustrate a cultural emphasis on motherhood and femininity in the paleolithic world. Of particular interest to Gimbutas were the many discoveries of so-called Venus figurines (Gimbutas 1974).

Paleolithic “Venus” Figurines

The “Venus” figurines, dating from approximately 40,000 BCE and numbering in many dozens, appear to show female forms and are found across Eurasia (Conrad 2009). It has not been determined what the function or meaning of these figurines were, but some of them are expertly crafted and show considerable investments of time and energy. There are many beautiful examples of these figurines, pictured below is the infamous Venus von Willendorf (fig. 1) which illustrates just how much care and reverence paleolithic artisans put into these figurines. Considering the expanse of time between the paleolithic and now, it can only be assumed that many of these exquisite figurines were composed of organic materials which did not withstand the ravages of time (Weber et al. 2022).



Figure 1. Venus von Willendorf

This figurine was discovered in Austria and dates to at least 20,000 years old (Mathias 2007, Creative Commons).

While there appears to be a certain reverence of female form in these figurines, it has been suggested by some that these figurines were not ritually significant, but instead were children's dolls or even meant to be used pornographically (Eller 2002). However, this explanation would not explain why they disappeared from the cultural horizon at the time of the invasion of the Proto Indo-European Language speaking peoples, from which a plurality of modern humans are linguistically descendent (Fortston 2011; Gimbutas 2001). These sorts of figurines are often also included as burial goods and this may lend itself to the possibility that there was a feminine association with the afterlife, as some have suggested, that, in combination with the sprinkling of red ochre, which is another near universal inhumation process across the prehistoric world, the afterlife was seen as a passageway into a new realm through which people must travel through the feminine form, as they had done upon their birth into this plane of existence, paved with the blood of the mother, as signified by the red ochre (Bueno-Ramírez, Barroso-Bermejo and de Balbín-Behrmann 2019). None of this is settled academically, but what does appear to be the case is that there are many examples of ancient societies which hold a female deity at the apex position of divinity.

Continued Human Migrations

Over the course of tens of thousands of years, human populations operating in tribal societies expanded to inhabit Australia, Eurasia, and the Americas, and more, in addition to continuously populating ancestral territory in Africa. At the origin of the geologic epoch known as the Holocene, at 9,700 BCE, the landscape of the world was undergoing significant transformations as vast ice sheets which had existed for millions of years melted, exposing new lands and providing further habitat for the burgeoning

human populations of the world (Wanner et al. 2008). Additionally, climatic alterations caused by fluctuations in the Earth's tilt would now bring monsoon rains to North Africa and the Levant, creating fertile grasslands, forests, rivers, and lakes across this commonly arid region.

Societies Evaluated in this Study

The cultures which will be evaluated for the purpose of this study are The Neolithic Peoples of the Çatalhöyük of Anatolia who built sedentary townships in the region of the Konya Plain between approximately 7,500 BCE and 5,700 BCE, The Caphtor People of Bronze Age Crete, more frequently referred to as the Minoans, from approximately 3,000 BCE to 1,450 BCE, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy of Iroquoian speaking Indigenous Peoples of Northeastern America from approximately 1,000 CE into the Colonial Period, and the Minangkabau People of Western Sumatra from the Colonial Period into the modern day.

Though occupying vastly different time periods and geographic regions, these four societies share common cultural ideals with relation to gender and egalitarianism which are uncommon in the world today. It is my assertion that cultures which emphasize female leadership exhibit certain traits which are more consistent with an intuitive definition of behaving in a "civilized" manner than cultures which restrict female leadership and, instead, promote patriarchal values.

Chapter II.

Overview of Societies of Interest

Studying societies which permit or emphasize female leadership can be challenging in the face of limited archaeological and anthropological data. It has been argued that such cultures are difficult to study because they never existed or have existed only marginally, however, there is evidence which suggests that not only have such of society existed, but have flourished for many thousands of years across broad geographic regions. I will limit the scope of this research to the primary cultures this document will focus on ranging some 10,000 years and covering broad geographic territory.

Çatalhöyük in the Konya Plain of Anatolia

Ranging from approximately 7,500 BCE to 5,700 BCE and located in a region to the northwest of the Neolithic “Fertile Crescent”, an early sedentary population emerged in a proto city or “mega site” of Çatalhöyük (Hodder 2022). Çatalhöyük is an unusual site with respect to its high degree of preservation, which is due, in part, to the model of sedentary building which this site employed and the fact that the Konya Plain became relatively inhospitable in the millennia following the abandonment of Çatalhöyük. Buildings in this settlement were constructed of mud brick harvested from the river basin below the site and after a period of some decades, buildings were toppled inward and a new building was constructed on top of the old. For this reason, there is a high fidelity in the data respective of time of occupation and of materials utilized in each successive iteration of a building (Noel 2022).

Excavations

Çatalhöyük was first excavated in the 1950s and 1960s by British archaeologist James Melaart who made unique observations of the well-ordered site. Of Melaart's contributions, a baked clay figurine often time referred to as the “Mother Goddess” of Çatalhöyük (fig. 2) is perhaps his most famous discovery (Melaart 1962).



Figure 2. Mother Goddess of Çatalhöyük

This figurine is dated to around 6,000 BCE and depicts a female with animals under each arm and is often considered to be that of a creator Goddess. (Nevit 2012, Creative Commons).

Ian Hodder resumed excavations in the early 1990s and only recently ended those excavations. Hodder was able to procure higher fidelity information over greater areas of Çatalhöyük utilizing modern technologies. Ian Hodder is currently the preeminent scholar with respect to Çatalhöyük given his status in leading excavations for nearly three decades. It is Ian Hodder's opinion that Çatalhöyük is an egalitarian society which has rejected centralization and has dispersed authority into individual homes and neighborhoods (Hodder 2022).

Population of Çatalhöyük

This site was large for its time, though likely not the largest site in the Neolithic Levant in which there were other sites of comparable size in modern-day Israel several hundred kilometers to the south (Valla et al. 2017). Even so, the site is estimated to have supported a population of thousands of persons, and is therefore unlikely to have been governed tribally, and would appear to have required some sort of centralized authority. Some studies have challenged these populations and instead placed concurrent populations of Çatalhöyük at under 1,000 persons and this is currently an unsettled debate (Kuijt and Marciniak 2024). Regardless of the exact number of inhabitants, this site supported a large sedentary population.

The Caphtor People of Crete

On the island of Crete in the Aegean Sea, a great trading society emerged in the 3rd Millennium BCE and continued to flourish until it was assimilated by the Mycenaean Greeks around 1,450 BCE (Wiener 2105). These people spoke an unknown language of an unknown language family. While writings from this culture have survived, and this

writing structure known as Linear A was ultimately adopted and adapted to a different language by Mycenaean Greeks, attempts to decipher Linear A have so far proved fruitless (Salgarella 2022).

Caphtor vs Minoan

The reason this culture is not here referred to as “Minoan” as was coined by Sir Arthur Evans when he began excavations in Knossos in the early 20th century is that “Minoan” comes from the fabled King Minos and his Minotaur which very well may be a tale established many years after the fall of the “Minoans” during the time when the island was inhabited by Mycenaean Greeks. Greek historian Thucydides places the reign of King Minos three generations before the Trojan War which would have been squarely in the 13th Century BCE, approximately 200 years after the Mycenaean Greeks took control of the island of Crete (Dolin 1983; Rutter 2015). The term “Caphtor” approximates what these people called themselves as it is attested in similar pronunciations from several contemporary written sources in different languages for the name of those inhabiting the island of Crete and is therefore likely what they called themselves (Castleden 2002, 21). While it is unsettled whether Caphtor is the true title of the inhabitants of Crete during this time, it is, especially considering the dubious historicity of King Minos, a more accurate title than Minoan.

Excavations

Aside from the likely mistaken nomenclature of naming the Caphtors after the fable of King Minos, Sir Arthur Evans also greatly obscured the discoveries he made by taking it upon himself to reconstruct frescoes, complete broken statuettes, and also,

whether Evans was directly involved or not, there was burgeoning economy of fake artifacts produced on the island of Crete during the time of his excavations (Nikolakopoulou 2020). Evans also participated in very destructive forms of archaeology whereby he aggressively dug through layers of historical debris searching for valuables and disrupting the contextual evidence along the way.

While it is not entirely settled that the inhabitants of Crete and Santorini were the same people, their material cultures are so similar that, if there was a difference in culture, it was likely quite minor. The mysteries of Santorini are great because half the island was eradicated upon the eruption of the volcano at its center and therefore it is entirely unknowable what sorts of towns and outposts existed on this island as around half of it has been completely destroyed (Manning 2010). Thankfully, the discovery of Akrotiri allows us to see a bit more clearly the extent of the cultural boundaries of “Europe’s first civilization”.

Thalassocracy

Recent discoveries on the island of Santorini have allowed modern archaeologists to investigate sites of extreme importance to the Caphtors to the wider Aegean region. The site of a small township known today as Akrotiri has been excavated in recent times. Under 800 feet of ash, the town of Akrotiri was discovered with incredible preservation (Nikolakopoulou 2103). Archaeologists believe the town had been evacuated before its total destruction, likely due to gradual increases in volcanic activity so there are not the sorts of archaeological discoveries found in Akrotiri as there are in places like Pompeii,

but nonetheless, the site provides an invaluable glimpse into the culture of the Caphtors (Martin 2018).

Artistry

Caphtor people are renowned for their incredible artistic style both in the modern day and in ancient times (Koehl 2013). These fine artworks are astounding considering that royal artwork from Egypt and the Levant during this time period was, to a modern eye, rudimentary. Perhaps the best way to grasp some illusion of an understanding of the Caphtor world is to observe the artistry from that time period. Notably, of the many murals and depictions, none yet discovered feature a male in an elevated position, but in some instances, a female can be observed in a posture of authority and abnormally large in comparison to the men or other women in the image, a feature which commonly was used in different cultures of this era to denote leadership, authority, or divinity (Cichon 2022).

Bull-leaping (fig. 3), which is depicted in many works of Caphtor art depict an act which some scholars have suggested is impossible, whereby a leaper engages a charging bull and upon the moment of contact, the leaper utilizes the horns and the momentum of each to fling themselves upward and backward beyond the bull to land safely in the bull's tracks (Shapland 2013). It is not known if these artworks are replicating a folk tale or if they were actual performances like the modern Spanish matador.



Figure 3. Bull Leaping Fresco of Knossos

This depicts an acrobatic act as one leaps over a bull. It is dated to around 1,450 BCE. Missing pieces have been refinished in order to give the viewer a more complete image of the original (Jebulon 2015, Creative Commons).

The Captors also illustrate many scenes of nature and wildlife to exquisite detail and with an excellent sense of aesthetics. In the monochromatic Lily Fresco (fig. 4), a beautiful silhouette of lilies can be seen against an ochre background portraying their beautiful shape with a strong sense of realism. In the Spring Fresco (fig. 5), the limited and intentional use of color prevails as more blooming lilies frame the meeting of two songbirds in flight (Shaw 1993). Both of these show the strong Captor sense of the appreciation for natural forms and can nearly transport the observer, over three millennia, to the sunlit days the artist was attempting to capture. The following image of a gold pendant with two bees or wasps (fig. 6) further exemplifies the Captor appreciation for

the sublimity of nature in addition to showcasing the incredible metallurgy and craftsmanship that was present amongst these people (Kitchell 1981).



Figure 4. Lily Fresco

This fresco is dated from the 16th Century BCE (Zde 2022, Creative Commons).



Figure 5. Spring Fresco

This fresco is from the 17th century BCE. (Zde 2022, Creative Commons).



Figure 6. Two Bees

This gold pendant is dated around the 17th century BCE (Sauber 2009, Creative Commons).

The following frescoes illustrate some of the ways in which women were displayed, often wearing ornate and beautiful clothing and often with their breasts fully exposed. In the Girl with Basket Fresco (fig. 7), the classic Caphtor skirt is shown with descending patterns of chevrons which Marija Gimbutas says is a theme depicting the pubic V of femininity and is seen throughout the cultures which she considered matristic

(Gimbutas 2001). The woman is shown tending to a task, but not in absolute labor, with prominent hoop earrings and well-tended hair. This picture illustrates an image of labor and culture that must have been truly a sight to behold in its day. Again, in the mural of a Ritual with Crocus (fig. 8), a woman is seen wearing ornate, yet practical clothing in a state of rest (Vardinoyannis 2010). The elegant lines of her facial features and the realistic yet stylized and complimentary color scheme point to a culture of artistry which far exceeds mundane mimicry. Her decorative earrings and the sprig of a plant emanating from her head again points to a reverence for nature.

These images are all meant to transport the reader in a way that it is not possible with words alone to the quality of Caphtor artistic representation, and perhaps, toward a Caphtor ethos. It is not impossible that these images were propagandistic, but it is also possible that these artworks were mere reflections of the Caphtor cultural identity, apparently replete with a healthy appreciation for natural forms of nature and an honoring of female positions of society as both industrious and revered members of their culture.

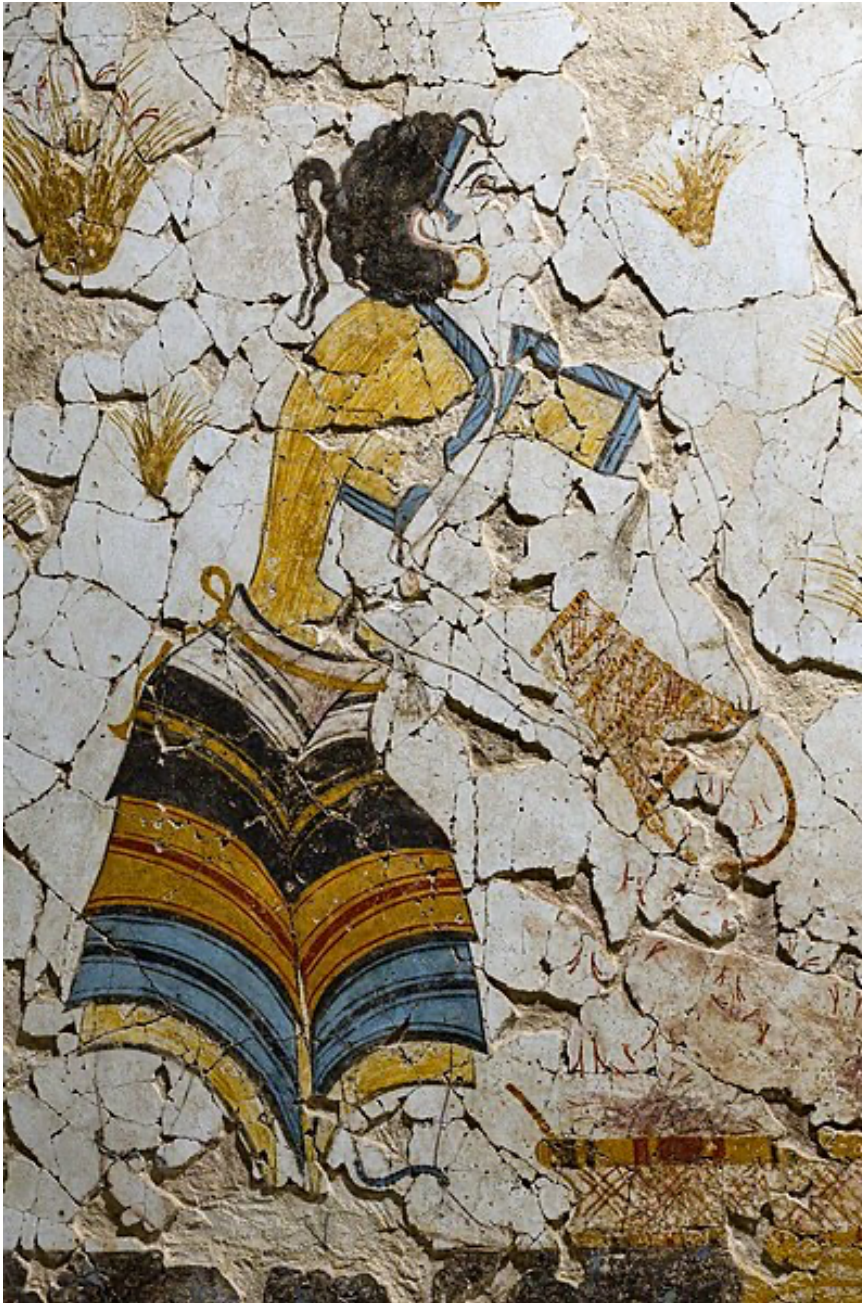


Figure 7. Girl with Basket Fresco

This fresco is from the 17th century BCE (Zde 2022, Creative Commons).



Figure 8. A Ritual with Crocus

This fresco is from the 17th century BCE (Zde 2022, Creative Commons).

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy

Three Millennia following the fall of the Caphtors, and halfway around the world in the Americas, Iroquoian speaking peoples from the Great Lakes Regions developed an incredible governing system known as the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Similar to the incorrect nomenclature of “Minoan” the Haundenosaunee Confederacy is often referred to as the Iroquois Confederacy. The name “Iroquois” means “rattlesnake” in Algonquin, whereas “Haudenosaunee” means “people of the longhouse” in their own language (Venables 2011). However, the name Iroquois is still used to refer to the language family

these people speak which extends far beyond the nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Founding of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy

While it is unsettled when exactly the confederacy was founded, it is generally accepted that it occurred sometime before the arrival of Europeans on American soil (Kincaid and Leckrone 2024). The means by which the confederacy was founded, its principal players, and its principal tenets have been preserved in oral traditions.

The original intent was to create a peaceful confederacy of all nations, but this proved to be too challenging to realistically accomplish with the many linguistic, cultural, and geographic hurdles to manifesting such an organization (Hale 1883). What was achieved was the development of a coalition of five nations which served to protect each of the member nations' territory and sovereignty. These nations were originally those of the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk (Johansen and Mann 2000). Each of these nations maintained their own local governments but, under the leadership of a clan mother, elected officials to meet once a year to settle the five nations' international policy with respect to any issues which may have needed to be settled. Domestic issues were left to the individual tribal nations to settle internally.

This government can be traced back to times before the arrival of Europeans on American soil. Unfortunately, little anthropological data was gathered relating to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy until the mid 1800s, over 200 years after initial contact with European settlers and this fact greatly obscures our understanding of how this organization may have functioned prior to the onset of the many challenges introduced by

European newcomers. As is seen with other cultures described in this document, the influence of powerful invaders can significantly alter cultures and, because these cultures were not of particular interest to the invaders at the time, there is rarely any effort put into protecting or documenting the manners in which cultures conduct themselves at the time of contact.

Nonetheless, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy maintained much of its traditional system through great leadership and adapting to new challenges with swiftness and intelligence. During the American Revolutionary War, some members of the confederacy allied with the Americans and some with the British and this fracturing caused the official dissolution of the confederacy in 1779, however, the confederacy did not truly disperse and even as it may have been weakened, it has persisted and has survived to this day (Ray 2020).

Aside from challenges opposed by European Americans in shifting territorial boundaries, disrupting indigenous economies, and introducing new technologies, the challenge of dealing with new diseases, especially smallpox, is hard to imagine for modern people (Clark 1981). Smallpox was both highly contagious and highly lethal and had already undergone several waves in Europe which had gradually intensified its virulence (Thèves, Crubèzy, and Biagini 2016). Successive waves of smallpox had been disruptive and even devastating to populations in Europe over the course of several hundred years, but by the time it had reached American shores, it imposed devastation beyond comprehension to indigenous populations completely without ancestral immunity from the disease.

Early Ethnographies

In 1851, pioneering anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan published his ethnographic work on the Haudenosaunee in his monograph *The League of the Iroquois*. This book provides modern readers with some of the earliest reliable accounting of Haudenosaunee structure. In 1877, Lewis Henry Morgan followed up with his second work *Ancient Society* identifying more details of the matriarchal nature of the Haudenosaunee. In 1883, building upon the work of Morgan, Horatio Hale compiles and publishes *The Iroquois Book of Rites* preserving more of the Haudenosaunee culture.

These and other early writers largely were not glorifying matriarchal societies as they were describing them in a state of primitive development on the path toward civilization, nonetheless, the modern understanding of the unique situation of patriarchal thought is couched in the works of these early thinkers. These philosophers and anthropologists greatly challenged the established thought on social evolution through their musings on primitive society and the ideas of cultures which are not explicitly oriented toward male supremacy.

The Minangkabau People of Sumatra

The Minangkabau of Sumatra were considered to be potentially matriarchal following the previously mentioned authors' works in their exploration of societies which provided mothers with influence and stature beyond what was typical in western societies. This society is very unusual in many ways, but in part, it is exceedingly rare owing to the fact that they refer to themselves as a matriarchy, or "matriarchaat", and yet they practice Islam, which is rarely considered anything but a patriarchal religion (Sanday 2001).

Historical Folk Tales

Much of what is understood about the history of the Minangkabau is preserved in folk tales and not in written histories either by the Minangkabau or others. Their first interactions with outside cultures which interacted with the Minang people in substantive ways come from early Hindu and Buddhist cultures (Bagindo et al. 2023). Throughout the centuries, the Minang people continually coopt and adopt new traditions, while retaining their core social structure. As Minang anthropologist Peggy Sanday notes,

The Minangkabau matriarchaat has managed to resist and accommodate the patrilineal influences of immigrant kings, traders, and religious proselytizers (Sanday, 2002, x).

Traditional Minang cultural law is known as “adat” and while Minang people have been affected by numerous exterior influences, adat customs have persisted (Blackwood 2001). This resilience in the face of obstacles has been explained most concisely by Frederick Errington who said of the customs of the Minang people,

... the peripheral elements can usually be allowed to change as long as the core elements remain fundamentally the same (Errington, 1984, 37).

At many intersections of Minang culture there is a notable preservation of core codes of conduct while adapting the more superficial aspects of culture to modalities which are more congruent with invading forces or imposing international economies. Anthropologist Patrick Edward de Josselin de Jong noted similarly,

Historically speaking, we have the remarkable resilience of Indonesian cultures towards foreign cultural elements, which they neither rejected nor simply adopted, but Indonesianized, and thereby integrated into the indigenous cultures (de Jong 1984, 2).

These cultures, the residents of Çatalhöyük in Neolithic Anatolia, the seafaring Caphtors of Bronze Age Crete, The five nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy of

Pre-Columbian America, and the Minangkabau of Western Sumatra, while entirely different in their contexts, all appear to have had a reverence for maternal authority. While none have survived in their entirety into the modern day, they each offer some hint of what life could be like in models of society which differ significantly from that which most modern people are accustomed.

Chapter III.

Kinship and Governance

These cultures, ranging from those for which there is only archaeological data to those for which there are written historical accounts and modern ethnographic data, share some commonalities with respect to means of solving social problems. In each of these cultures, there is cause to make the argument that women played considerable roles in leadership and, while men do not appear to be excluded from positions of leadership, there does appear to be an emphasis on female leadership and prominence. This has significant effects on models of kinship and governance.

Kinship

Haudenosaunee Family Customs

Beginning with the example of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and indeed with many Native American tribes, kinship is traced matrilineally. For the Haudenosaunee, a child is born of their mother and will become the same clan as her and will be cared for and assimilated wholly into their mother's clan. In order to understand this in more detail, the following passage regarding the importance of the female leaders in the community should be considered from ethnographer and archaeologist of native peoples of northeastern United States, William Beauchamp from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

There is nothing more real than this superiority of the women. It is they who constitute the tribe, keep up the genealogical tree and the order of

inheritance, and perpetuate the family. They possess all real authority; own the land and the fields, and their harvests; they are the soul of all councils, the arbiters of peace and war; they have care of the public treasury; slaves are given to them; they arrange marriages; the children belong to them, and to them and their blood is confined the line of descent and the order of inheritance (Beauchamp 1900, 85).

Further, ethnographer Judith Drumm clearly describes the nature and dynamic of matrilineal succession known throughout Haudenosaunee cultures.

The basic unit of Iroquois society was the matrilineal family. A matrilineal family was composed of all the male and female descendants of a woman through the female line, including adopted members. It numbered from fifty to two hundred persons and was presided over by a matron, usually the oldest or most respected woman. (Drumm 1961, 8).

Within this model of family and cultural life, the biological father children is necessarily from another clan as intermarrying, or any romantic entangling, within one's own clan is strictly forbidden (Barbeau 1917). In this case, the father will never be the same clan as his children and will be a member of the clan of his own mother, which is the familial structure to which he owes primary allegiance. His responsibilities and duties will not be to his direct offspring, but to the children of his sisters, aunts, and cousins within his maternal clan. Any contact that he has with his children is solely at the discretion of the mother of the children.

Marriage

Moreover, a father will not necessarily have a role in providing for his children as their needs will be accounted for through their mother's clan. The relationship between mother and father is thereby unencumbered by economic concerns and may remain one based on mutual attraction and affection. In the case that the mother of the children continues to enjoy the company of the father and desires to be wed, there is a process for

this union, however, the father will move into the clan of his wife, yet will still be the in the clan of his mother, and not the clan of his wife, his children, or the surrounding village.

This arrangement provides for considerable safety for the mother of children as she will always be in her own home, surrounded by her relatives, and always in a position of power with respect to her partner. The father will retain membership to his own clan of his mother's family to retreat to if difficulties arise. This clan system, which weaves through the five nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, will afford him familial connection in many places besides in the locality of his mother. Judith Drumm describes some of the tradition associated with marriage proposals, which are again mediated through mothers.

To be considered eligible for marriage, young people had to belong to different clans. Marriage was a secular rather than a religious affair, and was arranged by the prospective mothers-in-law. The bride made corn bread for the marriage feast and the groom supplied the meat. The couple then moved into her mother's longhouse (Drumm 1961, 5).

This description of the providing of food sources to prospective mothers-in-law is one in which a young man can prove his capacity as a hunter, while a young woman can show that she is a good agriculturalist and cook. Drumm goes on to explain the simplicity by which a woman could obtain a divorce if she so desired one.

The wife would notify her husband of a divorce by placing his belongings outside the door. Divorce among the Iroquois was not as disruptive as it is in our society since the children were always raised by their mother's family (Drumm 1961, 5).

Beauchamp goes on to explain how little power a man truly had in the lives of his biological children.

Female influence is the controlling power. A widower with children has no title to them among those who observe the old ways, if his wife's mother is living. They belong to her (Beauchamp 1900, 91).

Adoption

The Haudenosaunee practiced adoption on a scale that is unusual not only for westerners, but for Native Americans as well. Adoption was something that could be done of captives if a female within a clan chose, and in some cases, these adopted members of Haudenosaunee culture were able to rise to positions of importance within the culture. This liberal use of adoption is considered to be one of the primary reasons that the Haudenosaunee survived as well as they have, because they were able to refresh their numbers when disease and warfare had diminished them (White 2018). As Native American tribes surrounding the Haudenosaunee struggled in the aftermath of the European invasion, whole tribes were adopted into Haudenosaunee culture in order to greater support their confederacy and provide themselves with a sizable community capable of negotiating and interacting with the European newcomers. By the time of the American Revolution, there were six member nations in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Clan System

The clan system of the Haudenosaunee is not uncommon in the Native American world and is something practiced in one form or another by numerous tribes. Within this clan system, members of a clan are considered family and are excluded from sexual relationships. These clans can extend across broad geographic regions and are traced through the maternal lineage. As Lewis Henry Morgan wrote in simply describing the nature of the clan system,

The division of the people of each nation into eight tribes, whether pre-existing, or perfected at the establishment of the Confederacy, did not terminate in its objects with the nation itself. It became the means of effecting the most perfect union of separate nations "ever devised by the wit of man." In effect, the Wolf tribe was divided into five parts, and one fifth of it placed in each of the five nations. The remaining tribes were subjected to the same division and distribution. Between those of the same name or in other words, between the separated parts of each tribe there existed a tie of brotherhood, which linked the nations together with indissoluble bonds. The Mohawk of the Wolf tribe recognized the Seneca of the Wolf tribe as his brother, and they were bound to each other by the ties of consanguinity (Morgan 1851, 77).

This explanation of the clan system is a bit reductive and does not entirely encapsulate the nature or complexity of the clan system. Not all tribes have all the same clans, but these clans do run through differing tribes and do create a super-family which have an alternate identity to that of the nation. As a coarse approximation, it would be as if, by birth or adoption, a resident of New York City were to be able to travel to Ottawa and connect with a familial group that lived there who they had never met.

Minangkabau Family Customs

Similarly to the Haudenosaunee structure, a Minang man's duty is toward his mother and sisters and while he customarily is granted more leeway in traveling than his female counterparts, and while he is encouraged to do so in order to gain knowledge and experience and create his fortune, he is expected to stay in a position of service toward his mother's family, more primarily than his romantic partner who, traditionally, would be cared for and served by those in her mother's family. This peculiar arrangement has been described here in greater detail by anthropologist Tsuyoshi Kato.

All in all, the position of the male in traditional Minangkabau society is a strange one in our eyes. He did not own any property, although he might manage it for his sisters and their children. He did not really have a house

or a place he could call his own. While still little (probably beginning some time after the age of six or seven), boys slept in the surau (prayer house) where at night they learned how to recite the Koran. ... In old age, should a man's wife have already died, or should he be divorced, he had once again to live in a surau. After marriage, he was only a visiting guest at his wife's house. There are many indications that even in his house of origin, internal, day-to-day affairs were in the hands of the women rather than in those of the mamak (Kato 1978, 8).

In the case of the preceding statement, the “mamak” refers to one’s maternal uncle, though it can also be the name of other male authority figures depending on the specifics of one’s home (Kato 1978, 4). The manner in which a man’s wealth is distributed is summarized more generally in the following account,

... with matriliney, the wealth a man accumulates in his lifetime will be dispersed among his matrilineal relatives and will not devolve to an agnatic heir as in the case of patrilineal inheritance (Parkin 2021, 229).

This exclusion of sexual relationship with regard to bonds of service may be quite reliable in comparison to models in the modern world whereby these sorts of bonds are connected with romantic relationships and therefore, the stability of financial, domestic, and safety concerns are at the whim of personal levels of attraction and connection which may wane over time. The continued reliance on the familial bond, which excludes sexual connection, may potentially provide a degree of stability.

However, keeping with the trend of the societies in this document, the traditional Minang way of life is currently being challenged as is seen in this following passage.

A connected point aspect of the matrilineal puzzle is that societies with matrilineal descent are frequently caught between matrilineal rules of inheritance favouring sister’s sons and fathers’ ‘natural’ desires to benefit their own sons, which has an adverse impact on matriliney by diverting property away from male ego’s sister’s sons to his own sons. This process has often been supported by modern legal changes in colonial and post-colonial states (Parkin 2021, 226-227).

The Minang structure of male inheritance not passing to their agnatic heirs is completely foreign to most in our modern world and has some unique qualities. A potential benefit may be that it breaks down the insular nature of a father insisting their biological son grow into a man in their father's image, being excessively connected to this particular man. Unlike in many modern cultures, for the traditional Minangkabau, inheritance from males is left to sororal nieces and nephews as is accounted in the traditional historiography of the Minang people as a repayment to their loyalty to their maternal relatives (Kato 1978, 1). The father has no exceptional role in the lives of his biological children as is noted in this passage:

Upon the divorce or death of the wife/mother, the children remained at their mother's house and regular personal relationships between father and children ceased to be maintained; however, the father, or rather the father's sublineage (bako), still continued a ceremonial gift-giving relationship with the children (Kato 1978, 6-7).

While the biological father may not have much responsibility toward his biological children, the children's maternal uncle, known as a "mamak" has considerable responsibility to his nieces and nephews or "kemanakan".

The mamak is the guardian of his kemanakan and is responsible for their well-being; it is they who will continue the lineage. The mamak is endowed with authority as *tungganai* or *penghulu*, and is expected to protect and to increase the matriliney's communal wealth. The essence of Minangkabau matriliney is above all concentrated in the two-generation relationship of mamak and kemanakan (Kato 1978, 7).

In this model, a man may not be a father to his children, but he still may carry the responsibilities of a father to his sororal nieces and nephews. This breaking down of the direct biological inheritance may increase meritocracy where a mamak would be inclined to aid the kemanakan which are most worthy of his time and attention instead of those

who were his biological children. Additionally, by deemphasizing the biological father, the primary male support role can be more easily replaced should something happen to the mamak. If sickness or some other tragedy were to befall this man, there would not be the irreplaceable wound left in the children's lives of no longer having access to their biological father, as is the case in societies which overly emphasize biological fatherhood. Instead, another man could rise to the challenge, and although the bond may not be as close as with the previous mamak, this man would be known by the children and would be another safe relative of their mother's family who could now step up to make a deeper commitment to the children's lives.

Marriage

The Minangkabau have a traditional structure with regard to romantic affairs which is sometimes referred to as having a "visiting husband" (Sanday 2002). As previously mentioned, within matrilineal societies, fathers have little to no role in the upbringing of their biological children and, instead, male figures which interact with, educate, and leave inheritance to children come from the extensive network of men who are relatives through their mother's clan. This allows for a relative sexual freedom in that women have no need to verify that their children are their own as is required in patrilineal societies where a father must restrict the sexual activities of a mate in order to ensure that the descendants that she provides are his own biological children. This structure of a visiting husband is consistent with this relative sexual liberation in that, while relationships will typically be monogamous, the male partner will travel to the home of his female counterpart and stay the night there before returning home. If she should not wish to see him, he will not be allowed to visit her and because she lives in a home with

her relatives, she is safe from any emotional or physical outbursts he may demonstrate upon her rejection. She will then be free to entertain other men if she sees fit and, if a child results from any of these encounters, there is no concern given to who the father may be as it is unimportant to the child's life and healthful upbringing. In the following passages, Kato describes details of this model of a visiting husband.

After marriage, a husband moves to or near the house of his wife and stays there at night. But he continues to belong to his mother's house and frequently goes back there during the daytime (Kato 1978, 4).

He was sometimes likened to a bull buffalo borrowed for impregnation, and, in many ways, he was not much more than that to his wife's relatives. Usually he visited his wife at night and left her house in the morning (Kato 1978, 6).

This disentanglement of romantic connection with practical, economic needs could be liberating to those who find attraction and passion with a person who is simply not someone that they would like to depend on. In the modern world of dependence on romantic partners in all aspects of life, it is not as easy or lighthearted to choose a mate, when financial stability, fidelity, reliability, social status, safety concerns, and compatibility in cohabitation are necessary considerations before entering into relationships which can then be very difficult to escape if it becomes apparent that a chosen partner is lacking in any of these arenas. The ability to choose a partner outside of these considerations, where the only connection to a mate's life is intimate and emotional without the aforementioned challenge, may be liberating to modern people who can be, at times, overwhelmed by the complexity and necessity of choosing their "forever partner" who will be inextricably connected to nearly all aspects of their personal and public lives. With the dramatic and traumatic effects that romantic separation has upon family in the

modern world, perhaps a model which deemphasizes these myriad entanglements would be more healthful as our culture evolves out of its traditional patriarchal roots.

Caphtor Family Customs

This system by which a maternal uncle is responsible for his sister's children is the same sort of structure is seen in documents surviving from the city of Knossos which had been conquered by Mycenaean peoples, but still appears to have retained some of its earlier traditions in contrast to the mainland Mycenaean territory which seem to have been more wholly adopted into patriarchal customs. The Law Code of Gortyn, transcribed in the 5th century BCE, was presumably records of earlier customs on the island of Crete, likely from the time of the Caphtors, and mention that women held property, the maternal uncle was responsible for the rearing of his sister's children, and that marriage could be nullified at will (Cichon 2022, 166-170).

Çatalhöyük Family Customs

Çatalhöyük exhibits unique aspects of kinship and social structure which are not yet entirely understood. For example, it appears that some sort of adoption is very common as homes do not seem to have individuals highly genetically related in their domestic burials (Carter et al. 2017). While the individuals buried within a home have some degree of relation, it is not yet understood if the model of a nuclear family was ritualistically disturbed in order to grant greater heterogeneity to the individual family.

Molar vs. Molecular

Ian Hodder has suggested that as part of the reaction in this time period to the oppressive centralized governments of cultures like those found in Göbekli Tepe, inhabitants of Çatalhöyük devised numerous ways to avoid the insular nature of segregated communities within their city which may vie for power or authority. Among these, Hodder suggests that genetic bonds may have been broken such that children were commonly traded so that the children that were raised within a home may not be the genetic offspring of those that raise them (Hodder 2022). Such a concept, similar to that of having fatherless children, may shock and disturb modern audiences as our conditioning has taught us that our genetic relatives and our genetic parents are of critical importance, but it is worth considering that some of these ideas may simply be cultural ideals which may not serve us as well as we are indoctrinated to believe.

Women are seen in much of the iconography of Çatalhöyük and it is not observed that there is different wear on skeletons of female persons suggesting a differentiation in labor, nor has it been established that females have different diets than males (Pearson and Meskell 2015). In both cases, it appears that elders are tended to with special diets and reverence, as is to be expected in a culture which predates writing and depends on the memories of elders to recall historical and cultural events and stories, but, at least in terms of figurine art relics, elder females appear to be most revered.

Governance

Models of governance in traditional societies are extremely variable from those which are highly regimented to some which are dependent on individual consensual participation.

Haudenosaunee Governance

Perhaps one of the most fascinating governments of those mentioned in this documented is that of the Haudenosaunee. While much of the detail and structure has been lost to time, there are some accounts of the manner in which this complex international coalition operated. Henry Lewis Morgan had great praise to heap upon his observations the Haudenosaunee. Noting the individuality and personal liberty granted within the society, he observed:

The government sat lightly on the people, who, in effect, were governed but little. It secured to each that individual independence, which the Hode'-no-sau-nee knew how to prize as well as the Saxon race (Morgan 1851, 73).

Marveling at the structure of this government, Morgan opined,

It would be difficult to describe any political society, in which there was less oppression and discontent, more of individual independence and boundless freedom (Morgan 1851, 131).

Judith Drumm commented further on the democratic nature of the domestic affairs within the individual tribes of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

The affairs of a village were discussed in the democratic, partisan village council where all could speak. The village council dealt with matters of common concern as farming, hunting, fishing, defense, religion and ceremonial affairs. The tribe was composed of all the villages within an area (Drumm 1961, 9).

Beyond being the determinants of kinship for the peoples of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, mothers are also powerful leaders within their communities. As the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is an international coalition, clan mothers serve as the leaders of domestic affairs and are responsible for considering the needs of the people of their clan, who are seen as their children, and are also responsible for electing representatives to the international council which makes decisions which relate not only to individual nations, but to the larger confederacy.

The power of the women on all affairs is further seen in this historical account where an Oneida chief is pleading with European Americans to hear the voices of their female leaders. Beauchamp reported that in 1788 at a council in Albany, an Oneida chief by the name of Good Peter spoke the following words,

You have heard our voice; we now entreat you to open your ears and hear a speech from our sisters, the governesses. Brother, our ancestors considered it a great offence to reject the counsels of their women, particularly of the female governesses. They were esteemed the mistresses of the soil. Who, said our fore-fathers, bring us into being? Who cultivate our lands, kindle our fires and boil our pots, but the women? ... They entreat that the veneration of their ancestors, in favor of women, be not disregarded, and that they may not be despised; the Great Spirit is their Maker. The female governesses beg leave to speak with the freedom allowed to women, and agreeably to the spirit of our ancestors. They entreat the great chief to put forth his strength and preserve them in peace, for they are the life of the nation (Beauchamp 1900 86, 87).

Council of Sachems

For this role, clan mothers elect a man to represent their people and this man takes on the title of “sachem”. He is then responsible for meeting once a year to a council of 50 sachems which all discuss matters of international importance and make decisions based on consensus. The means by which such a large group of people could possibly govern

by consensus may seem impossible to modern observers of highly partisan politics, but within this structure there are sensible means by which this consensus was achieved.

Which men were anointed with power is said to be that of the women's choosing (Collins 1972, 175) and is further accounted by Judith Drumm:

The Iroquois League was a loose confederation of member tribes. Fifty sachems representing the five tribes composed the League council. Their titles, the names of the original founders, belonged to various matrilineal families within the several clans. Each sachem was chosen by the women of his family and he held office for life, or until he was removed from it. If the women were displeased with him, they would depose him by removing his "horns of office," and name another chief. Each sachem had an assistant who was often named to succeed him. Gifted men and women were honored by being named "Pine Tree Sachems" who had no vote but acted as counselors to the other chiefs. All the Iroquoian dialects were used in discussion, but Mohawk predominated. Following an established order, the sachems of one tribe would discuss a problem before they would pass it on to the next tribe. No action could be taken unless opinion was unanimous. The sachems had no absolute authority and were very sensitive to public opinion (Drumm 1961, 9).

This illustrates the manner in which sachems represented their people, much in the way that the United States' federal government does, through elected officials. The culture of consensus is the primary differentiating system.

Consensus

In order to achieve consensus, there were several checks in place in order to accomplish this challenging task of governance. Firstly, there is a protocol for sachems to be rejected by the council if they turn out to be difficult to work with, in which clan mothers will then have an opportunity to elect a new sachem, and furthermore, there is a process by which proposals may be counter-offered by opposing factions until an amenable decision can be made (Bedford and Workman 1997). As there are five original nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, there may be issues for which, as example,

the Oneidas see value in advancing a policy, that the Mohawks, Seneca, and Onandaga are ambivalent about, and the Cayuga slightly oppose. Because the clan system weaves throughout the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, there is another level of connection that sachems may have with one another aside from being from different nations as they may be clan relatives. In this way, proposals may create larger groups of commonality and eventually, as proposals are passed back and forth, a consensus ruling may result. If consensus cannot be reached for individual issues, for example, when debating if the Confederacy should establish a peace treaty with an outside tribe, then the issue becomes the domain of individual nations and each nation is then free to make decisions as each sees fit. It is clear that in the case of whether or not the confederacy should support the British or the Americans during the Revolutionary War, this issue was not settled unanimously and so the individual nations were free to make alliances individually and ended up on differing sides of this conflict.

Minangkabau Governing Customs

This model of consensus or unanimous consent appears in the Minangkabau culture as well. The Minangkabau live in considerably different conditions than those of the Haudenosaunee, but arrived at similar customs with respect to governance. While western governments tend to portray democracy as having been an ancient Greek invention perfected in the last few hundred years, it is hard to argue that the governments of the Haudenosaunee and Minangkabau, which are not only democratic, but govern with some form of unanimous consent, do not exhibit a highly refined form of democracy. The following is a Minang proverb recounted and by Peggy Sanday from earlier texts.

The kemenekan (nieces and nephews) are subject to the mamak, The
mamak (mother's brother) is subject to the penghulu,
The penghulu is subject to the mupakat (consensus),
Mupakat is subject to the power of reasoning,
The power of reasoning is subject to what is appropriate and possible,
What is appropriate is possible is subject to truth,
Truth is our king (Sanday 2002, 173).

While the mamak, the maternal uncle is responsible for the well-being of his sister's family, he is subject to another more powerful man known as the penghulu who is the primary authority figure within the matriliney (Graves 2009, 10). However, he is then held to account by another council which must rule in consensus, similar to the sachems of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The number of penghulu or mamak were entirely flexible and they fell within localized townships that were known as Nagari. These Nagari townships were also capable of forming confederacies if it was seen as beneficial in order to ward off outside aggression (Graves 2009, 15).

The details of how this government functions are illustrated here in broad strokes as having a principle matrilineal descent, but then empowering certain males to be leaders, although superseded by a council which supersedes their authority.

Çatalhöyük Governing Customs

Over the course of the nearly two millennia of inhabitation, there is currently no evidence of a centralized authority in Çatalhöyük and, instead, what is seen are complex, interwoven social networks. So-called "history houses" have been identified where there is a noted increase in ritual activity and symbology as well as an increase in burials underneath the home, however, what is not seen is that the individuals who inhabited these homes, who would have presumably benefitted from some degree of prestige, had

an increase in wealth (Hodder and Pels 2010). Storage bins built into the homes for goods and food are no larger in history houses than they are in ordinary homes and skeletal remains do not show that those buried beneath history houses had better nutrition than skeletal remains in other homes.

Networks

There appear to be many ways in which the residents of Çatalhöyük were woven together into a fabric of society. Instead of location defining insular communities, there are ways in which the distant residents of Çatalhöyük are associated with one another. Perhaps a model similar to what is seen in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy was employed where there were multiple layers to an individual's identity, similar to the nation and clan system, but perhaps with even more dimensionality (Mazzucato 2019). The apparent presence of adoption, thereby breaking the insular biological relation between parents and their children, may have further aided in creating a group identity which negated the nuclear family model which may cause some to excessively protect and care for their own biological relatives and make decisions which favor their individual families over those of the larger society (Yaka et al. 2021). Knowing that one's biologic children were elsewhere in the collective city being cared for by others may aid in creating a group identity which sought to buoy all citizens and lead away from models which created powerful families beyond common physical plights while others languished in poverty and need.

Caphtor Governing Customs

With respect to the Caphtors of Bronze Age Crete, while having palaces and, indeed, even being defined into archaeological eras based on the existence of these palaces, there is an active argument of whether these grand structures were palaces or, as Marija Gimbutas has argued, temples (Gimbutas 2001, 200-202).

The central courtyard of the palace of Knossos points to a model whereby the meeting grounds may have been of importance, in comparison to a central antechamber where a king or other authoritarian figure may have ruled. Whatever the case, it is not yet settled archaeologically how the government was structured for the Caphtors, but within motifs of murals and on painted pots, there are only women seen in elevated positions and no instances of a man appearing large before his subjects as was common at the same time around the Mediterranean and within the Levant (Cichon 2022).

Chapter IV.

Trade and Economics

In this chapter, an analysis of commonalities between these cultures with respect to economics and trade. These cultures emphasize trade agreements which create economies that are not dependent on dominance and subservience of conquered lands, but on the mutually beneficial exchange of goods. These goodwill trade agreements also emphasize the importance of festivals and opportunities to exchange ideas and goods at predetermined times and places which may explain how certain grand constructions are created.

Trade

While the importance of trade is perhaps lessened in historical times where economies were largely confined to localities and transportation of goods or services across large distances was practically infeasible, trade appears to have been at least a small part of all of the cultures described in this document.

Çatalhöyük Trade

Çatalhöyük participated in a large trade network that extended throughout the Levant and traded primarily in obsidian which was harvested from a mountain source nearby to the proto city. This obsidian can be found as far away as Mesopotamia and was crucial to the Neolithic toolkit which was smaller and more refined than tools of the Mesolithic, though it required higher quality stone (Carter 2011; Nazaroff et al. 2015). It

does appear that members of Çatalhöyük culture traveled broadly and there were some who had traces of diets indicating that they had spent significant portions of their lives in different regions. However, on the whole, it has been observed that burials in Çatalhöyük consist primarily of those who were born and raised in the local region (Sadvari et al. 2017).

Caphtor Trade

The Caphtors participated in a vast trade network which not only extended throughout the Aegean Sea, but more broadly across the Mediterranean. This network transported fine goods such as pottery, raw materials such as copper, persons of importance traveling from one region to another, and other fine goods (Callendar 1998). This great seafaring people undoubtedly accrued great wealth as those capable of safely transmitting goods, technologies, and information across vast regions that would have been largely inaccessible to the land-based economies of the other great civilizations surrounding the Mediterranean.

Haudenosaunee Trade

Haudenosaunee trade was relatively minor and not a major contributor to their way of life, even as obsidian, sea shells, and other goods were found in Precolombian Haudenosaunee archaeological sites which attests to a vast, if still relatively inconsequential trade network (Birch 2015).

Minangkabau Trade

Similarly, the Minangkabau do not appear to have traded significantly in their traditional way of life and this fact may in part contribute to their isolation and their ability to retain unusual customs into the modern age. While there were trade networks developed locally, the Minang people appear to have developed a relatively self-sufficient way of life that did not require outside resources (Sismudjito and Munaf 2015).

Economics

Methods that cultures support themselves economically vary significantly, but within these cultures, there are some obvious similarities. Each of them, at least in part, depended on agriculture for their basics of sustenance and each of them utilized trade either for accentuating their wealth and for prestige goods, or for tools of utility.

Çatalhöyük Economics

Primarily, Çatalhöyük does not appear to depend on trade for economic needs and was a mixed hunter-gatherer and agricultural society, seemingly benefitting from the reliability of domesticated food crops and the nutritious fortitude of harvested wildlife (Hodder 2022). Çatalhöyük does not appear to have significant differences in class and instead appears to be an egalitarian society. There are homes which have more religious iconography and appear to have more burials associated with them implying that the inhabitants of these homes had prestige, but this prestige does not appear to translate into greater material wealth or improved diet compared to what is seen in other homes. Whatever social status was granted to the individuals who lived in these homes, it did not

allow them to exert undue pressure on others to make offerings to them or to supply them with greater wealth.

Dental records of inhabitants of Çatalhöyük exhibit high degree of nutrition in the diet of the city's inhabitants (Knüsel et al. 2021). The populace of Çatalhöyük did participate in agriculture, but they also hunted and gathered wild foods. They stored domesticated grains which staved off starvation and they harvested wild foods which helped them to avoid malnutrition associated with early societies which adopted agriculture as their dominant means of providing sustenance.

Caphtor Economics

Evidence of the societies of the Caphtorites appear to be relatively wealthy. They participated in agriculture locally, and engaged in fishing and procurement of maritime resources in addition to their activities in their vast trade network which brought in luxury goods and supported their communities of artisans who produced goods in workshops which could be traded for other valuable resources. There was a class of elites that had higher degrees of wealth than the commoners, who were comparatively impoverished (Schoep 2010).

The means by which great works were accomplished is not yet known, but it does not appear to have been the work of slaves and is likely connected with a more ancient model of group labor that is far more economic, that of corvée labor. Corvée labor is a model which has been equated to slavery in many cases, but at its fundamental core, it could be connected to differing methods of group labor that may have not been physically coercive in nature. After the conquest of the Caphtors by the Myceneans it appears that

changes to traditional methods of governance occurred at uneven rates. For example, Mycenaean Pylos has evidence for a slave class, and a system whereby women do not appear to own property, while Mycenaean Crete has evidence for corvée labor and women in ownership of property (Olsen 2024).

Physically coercive labor is more economically costly than consensual labor, because within forced labor models, at a minimum, you must feed the people who are laboring, but you also must feed and equip guards whose job it is to ensure that these laborers do not abandon their work or, worse, revolt and challenge their oppressors. Corvée labor is often a seasonal work model which has been suggested to have been something of a festival by some authors in ancient times. At a time of plenty, when food sources are abundant, commoners from far and wide would assemble at a predetermined place and bring their local wares and crafts and trade goods and exchange not only material goods, but stories and knowledge and would collectively endeavor to construct great works, not unlike the World's Fairs whereby international innovators would gather to complete monumental works such as the Space Needle of Seattle, the Eiffel Tower of Paris, and the first ever Ferris Wheel built for the city of Chicago (Mattie 1998).

This, however, is unsettled. It is yet unknown how the Caphtors operated their civilization. There is a possibility that they were as brutal as the God kings of Egypt and Assyria were to their subjects, however, this is couched within a civilization that does not show the same sorts of brutal iconography as those exemplified by these and other contemporary societies.

Haudenosaunee Economics

The Haudenosaunee were agriculturalists who depended on corn, squash, and beans as primary means of sustenance in addition to what provisions they were able to forage and hunt (Mt. Pleasant 2016). The people had no notable wealth discrepancies from the higher-class members of society to the lower and individuality appears to be of paramount importance instead of hierarchical social status.

Essentially, the nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy lived within their means and utilized their territory in simple and reasonable ways to afford themselves a reliable and comfortable lifestyle so long as their territory was maintained. As times changed and colonists invaded, trade became increasingly important as new materials and weapons displaced traditional tools.

Minangkabau Economics

The Minangkabau traditionally supported themselves through agriculture and within their village structure through the communal efforts of those within their maternal lineages. Once economic conditions changed in the 19th and 20th centuries, the Minang people adapted to an economy which is based on the male workforce and the procurement of currency for the family instead of communal agriculture which today serves a very minor part of the Minang economy.

The Minang people have also invested heavily in education which has caused their population to be one of the most literate in Indonesia and they therefore have greater economic options than just those of manual labor. The Minang people today publish many books and newspapers to the wider Indonesian communities and have taken an

outsized position in their nation's government due to their high degree of literacy and education (Rahmah, Shuhidan and Yahaya 2021).

Chapter V.

Religion, Conflict, and Language

Tracing the effects of language and religion on culture can be challenging as language may inform but does not necessarily define a cultural ethos. However, in the context of the modern world, it is worth noting that linguistic and religious diversity has considerably declined in the preceding millennia and that, with respect to this fact, there may be a correlation between acts of violence and suppression which have driven this homogeneity.

Religion

Religions are valuable means of observing cultural mores and values and the way in which cultures interact with religion may inform about their potential ideals.

Haudenosaunee Religion

I will describe common elements of the creation story shared by member nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. This creation story varies greatly from tribe to tribe and family to family, but the elements described here should be seen by most Iroquois people as being consistent with oral tradition. The story begins in a world which has no land and Sky Woman falls from the heavens into a water world. The conditions of this fall from heaven and the previous world she existed in vary, but in this case, we will start with Sky Woman and her descent. As she falls, she is aided by the animal world thus establishing the supportive union between the conscious animal life and the supernatural.

She is helped by birds who slow her fall and eventually they deliver her to the back of a turtle thus creating the first land. (Parker 1912, 610).

Sky Mother gives birth to a daughter who then gives birth to two sons who then war with one another and one becomes the victor after the other kills their mother. This war of brothers is like that of Cain and Abel, except that the victor in the case of the Haudenosaunee is the “good” brother, instead of the “bad” brother in the Biblical story (Parker 1912, 478; Collins 1972, 171-172).

This creation story emphasizes the creative force of women even while giving great power to the sons, emphasizing motherhood while still empowering masculinity. This story additionally establishes the role of animals as intelligent helpers and not just as sources of sustenance. This creation story places the animals and people of the world on a relatively even field of existence and creates a dichotomy whereby the son who attacks his mother is seen in a poor light, whereas the son who lives in respect of his mother and his grandmother is blessed with stature.

Çatalhöyük Religion

Çatalhöyük religious iconography suggests a sort of animistic religion which sees animals as important spirits due to the manner in which their skulls and remains are incorporated into shrines. The image seen at the beginning of this document of the “Goddess Mother” of Çatalhöyük with her hands resting on the heads of wild animals, suggests that there is a female creator which gives order to this spiritual realm (Kuijt 2018).

There is an obvious reverence for the afterlife seen in the burial customs of the inhabitants of Çatalhöyük which include burying the desiccated bones of relatives in the floor underneath the home in which people still lived. This behavior has gained much attention and not all the dead were buried in residences as some were buried elsewhere, however, there does not seem to be an obvious indicator of which humans were buried in the homes and which were not. It appears that there is some sort of continuity with the afterlife and with the ancestors which could be deduced from these burial customs (Düring 2003).

Caphtor Religion

It is not known what exactly were the religious of ideals of the Caphtors, but it is likely that they practiced a form of polytheism not unlike what was practiced in Mycenaean Greece, although with different identities. There are numerous shrines to various deities and sub-deities, but none appear to be more principal than that of Potnia Theron, or a “Lady of the Animals”.

A Goddess by the name of Britomartis, attested in Mycenaean Greek, was an incarnation of Potnia Theron and, curiously, she is often seen associated with the Caphtor version of Zeus, referred to in Mycenaean as Zeus Velchanos or a boy version of Zeus. It is speculated that this Lady of the Animals in the form of Britomartis was the principal Goddess in Caphtor religion and was seen as the mother of their sky God which the Myceneans later coopted into Zeus and dissociated him with his maternal figure (Rose, Dietrich and Peatfield 2015).

Minangkabau Religion

The Minangkabau have undergone significant religious development in the past thousand years. It is assumed that they practiced an indigenous animism as is common from cultures around the world before they were influenced first by Hinduism and Buddhist traditions, and then by Islam and Christianity. Today they practice Islam and so their religion, in its primary aspects, is not different from Islam practiced around the world while their traditional ways which govern the day to day aspects of their lives are significantly different from other practitioners of Islam.

One aspect of Minang culture which points to a potential origin in a mother-centric religion is in the folk hero Bundo Kanduang. Bundo Kanduang, as Peggy Sanday describes her is a folk hero who is both divine and a representative of human attributes,

...Bundo Kanduang is depicted as the source of wisdom, the center of the universe. She is the exemplary queen mother, equal in fame to the greatest kings of the world, and resembles the divine king in Southeast Asian texts ... As such she is an Asian model for the matriarch—not as an autocratic ruler who wields power for the sake of power but as a ruler who symbolizes the center of the Minangkabau universe... (Sanday 2002, 40-41).

Transitions to Patriarchal Religion

While mother-oriented religions may have been common in various cultures from around the world, they are no longer common. We can look at Egyptian religious documents, which are very ancient to see how this transition may have occurred.

Egyptian History

The transition to Mother Goddesses taking a primary role to a subordinate role can be seen in iconographic form through Egyptian history. For example, in the infamous Narmer Palette from around 3,000 BCE (fig. 9), the cow Goddess Hathor, or possibly Bat

(Rashed 2009), can be seen as being extremely important in presiding over and blessing the brutal events of Narmer in his conquest of the lands of Egypt. The brutality of his conquest is on full display in this document including decapitated and castrated foes lined up in rows at the upper right-hand portion of the image on the right.



Figure 9. The Narmer Palette

This stone document is dated to the early 4th millennium BCE (Anonymous 2012, Creative Commons).

Again, it can be seen in this statue of Menkaure from the 4th Dynasty in the 25th century BCE (fig. 10), a few hundred years later that the two Goddesses Hathor and Bat are still important enough to be seen as anointing leadership, but now they have taken the

appearance of young maidens and are walking behind the God King thus emphasizing his leadership (Friedman 2015).



Figure 10. Menkaure Flanked by Hathor and Bat

This statue was constructed in the 25th century BCE (Anonymous 2015, Creative Commons).

Within several dynasties, the female creator, whatever her original position had been, had been supplanted by Amun, the male God whose cult became central to Egyptian history from the 2nd millennium onward (Haring 2013). Images of female Goddesses, wearing the horns which are so common in Goddess oriented societies, appear to take a secondary role and exist as wives and consorts of male ruler Gods in continuation of the waning traditions of creator Goddess worship (Hollis 2019).

While not directly Egyptian in nature, this quote from Marija Gimbutas describing the processes which occurred across the Mediterranean Sea from Egypt may be similar to what was happening in Egypt through these times.

By Classical times, the Old European goddesses were eroticized, militarized to various degrees (especially Athena), and made subservient to the gods. Aphrodite (Roman Venus) loses all functions but love and sexuality. This new feminine image diminished the physical power present in Old European goddesses, replacing it with frail beauty and physical weakness. This notion of female deficiency present in both religion and society would be inherited by modern western cultures. It continues to plague secular and religious art up to our times (Gimbutas 2001, 228).

Conflict

Conflict, or lack thereof, can help to determine how a culture governs within both the domestic and governing spheres.

Conflict in Çatalhöyük

Çatalhöyük famously has no known evidence of violence in skeletal remains of inhabitants. The only appearance of significant injuries appear in skull damage which

could be the result of repeated blunt trauma which may have been from some sort of coercive punishment, but it could also have been the result of some kind of sport or ritualized fighting which caused concussions, not unlike the impacts on athletes who participate in modern sports. As far as violence from obsidian arrowheads or decapitations, there is currently no evidence to support that the inhabitants of Çatalhöyük participated in these sorts of violent acts. There is also no emphasis on weapons of warfare in burial goods or violent iconography (Knüsel and Glencross 2017).

Conflict among Caphtors

The seafaring Caphtors, island dwellers amid the Aegean, seem to have been isolated from the brutish times which surrounded them in the Mediterranean for much of their history. Instead of engaging in warfare and battles of attrition of the mainland, they appeared to attain some level of peace. They did have weapons, but it does not appear, from archaeological records including artworks and burial goods, to have been of particular importance to the society (Abell 2023).

Conflict among the Haudenosaunee

The Haudenosaunee were indeed a warrior culture and took warfare seriously, especially once confronted with the realities of the new world imposed by European colonists. The traditions of adoption which allowed the tribe to survive the population decimation that smallpox caused is accounted for in this passage

Prisoners were often required to run a gauntlet of women armed with sticks and clubs. If one ran through without falling, he could be adopted. Prisoners were adopted into families who paid for the accompanying feast. . . . Less fortunate captives were tortured and killed by the women and warriors (Drumm 1961, 10).

Member nations of the Haudenosaunee also participated in the Revolutionary War. Four of the nations fought for the British while The Cayuga and Onadonga fought on the side of the United States. Following the war, the United States exiled the four nations which had fought on behalf of the British to Canada and confiscated their lands. The Cayuga and Onadonga suffered similar fates as their territory was routinely shrunk by the United States government and they were forced onto reservations. Their historical warfaring did not continue in any significant way beyond this time (Tiro 2000).

Horatio Hale had choice words to describe the comparisons between Haudenosaunee brutality and that of European nations.

The Iroquois never burnt women at the stake. To put either men or women to death for a difference of creed had not occurred to them. It may justly be affirmed that in the horrors of Smithfield and the Campo Santo, the innate barbarism of the Aryan, breaking through his thin varnish of civilization, was found far transcending the utmost barbarism of the Indian (Hale 1883, 98-99).

The conflict within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy could be seen as quite extreme, particularly the capture, torture, and potential adoption of other natives. This bit firmly places the traditional Haudenosaunee outside of the seemingly idyllic qualities relating to conflict observed by the other cultures in this document. It is perhaps a reality of the region in which they lived being without any sort of natural borders and may have been exacerbated by the extreme survival situation imposed by smallpox and colonists, but nonetheless, regardless of sentiments of those such as Horatio Hale, there does appear to be intense and brutal conflict between the Haudenosaunee and those which surrounded them.

Conflict in Minangkabau Culture

There are limited accounts of conflict from the Minangkabau, with their remote territory and flexible adat customs appearing to mitigate the need for warfare, however, conflicts did arise in the Padri Wars whereby Islamic fundamentalists in the nation started to execute certain members of society who they did not deem sufficiently Islamic as they sought to impose Sharia Law in the nation. The Dutch colonists were already established in the region in order to procure cacao and aided locals in fighting the Padri Wars which lasted over three decades and eventually hostilities ceased by 1837 (Rahim, Sumarlan and Rachman 2022). This war marks one of the few times that open hostilities were known to have occurred within the Minang culture and, once alleviated, the Minang people returned to their peaceful roots with very few exceptions in the following decades.

Indo-European Conflict

Modern methods such as aDNA allow for the sequencing of DNA from ancient bodies harvested from earbones or molars or other heavy bones which supply genetic material which is fragmented, but can be recombined through the use of advanced computations (Downes 2021). This technology has largely ended the debate of who the original Indo-European speaking peoples were and we now refer to them, the primary branch which spread the language around 5 millennia ago, as the Yamnaya, of the Pontic-Caspian Steppe of central Eurasia.

The Yamnaya captured horses, bred horses, ate horses, built their homes and tools out of horses, and drank horse milk. They kept horses in a state of lactation for their people's sustenance and controlled their horses' reproduction, likely breeding the females

with a tame lineage of mustangs that would ultimately allow the Yamnaya to mount horses and ride them. Presumably, the initial horseback riders used horses for hunting other horses, allowing them to cover vast distances and ensnare horses to bring home to be utilized as food, and other utilities (Trautmann et al. 2023). At some point, these people began using their horses to raid other villages and it seems at this point, the warfare economy of the Yamnaya people took on new stature within their culture.

Surprisingly, much is known about the culture of the Yamnaya who spoke a language known as Proto Indo-European (PIE) due to the fact that their language was spread far and wide, and therefore, there are many isolates and by comparing words which are clearly part of the PIE lexicon, an image of the technology and values of these progenitors of modern society begins to come into focus.

Besides being exploitive of horses and using these creatures to their great benefit, very few inventions can be attributed to them, except, for possibly the cart. The wheel itself had been previously invented for use in pottery, but the cart appears as though it may have found its origin, or at least its widespread adoption, in the Siberian flatlands as the Yamnaya went about their migrations (Anthony 2023). Pottery, metallurgy, permanent structures, and other technological advances of the ancient world would largely be coopted into the PIE speaking people's cultures as migrations and probable conquests occurred.

There is still a certain lack of clarity on how exactly the Yamnaya spread across Europe and into India, with many scholars, particularly in the last century, proclaiming that it was a matter of PIE speaking peoples outcompeting for resources and being more attractive to females which allowed them to ultimately replace populations and eradicate

language families. It is likely, due to the geographic conditions of Europe, that prior to this expansion, there were dozens of language families spread across the continent, whereas today, there is only Basque, which is considered an indigenous European language leftover from the times before the Indo-Europeanization of Europe.

The argument that some, such as Sir Colin Renfrew had posited, was that the Indo-Europeanization of Europe was something that happened because PIE speaking peoples were successful in supplanting native populations because they were superior at utilizing resources due to their use of agriculture (Renfrew 1990). However, it has been since conclusively shown that the agricultural revolution of Europe predates the Indo-Europeanization of Europe and was a separate event emanating out of Turkey, across the Aegean and northwards. This is consistent with the culture of Çatalhöyük and the Caphtors as have been discussed previously.

What remains is an increasing likelihood that the PIE speaking peoples' primary technological advantage over their adversaries was a culture of conquest and colonization and an economy based on warfare which harvests the technologies and productive capacity of others to create personal wealth. Further studies using aDNA will continue to clarify the displacement that these PIE speaking peoples achieved, but what is clear, is that they bred with women, curtailed male contributions to genetics, eradicated indigenous languages, and significantly and abruptly altered cultures (Anthony 2008).

As this document supports the claim that the cultures which were eradicated were not especially warfaring and largely held women and mothers in high regard, we can look to linguists who have studied PIE to inform us on what sorts of beliefs and cultures were they replacing within newly colonized indigenous cultures.

In contrast to cultures that we have previously studied, which hold mothers in high regard and have creation stories based on the creative capacity of women, PIE speaking peoples worshiped a pantheon of sky Gods in which there does not appear to be women in positions of authority. Similar to Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions whereby a male creator God creates the world omnipotently without any female counterpart, or how the supposedly sexless angels all have male names and characters, this male-dominated pantheon of PIE speaking peoples grants little respect to the divinity or inherent power of women (Anthonny 2008).

This philosophical backdrop of controlling the reproductive rights of horses, depending on warfare economy, believing in a pantheon of male Gods, and a culture which emphasizes the heroic male, create a recipe for a culture that, when unchecked, expands and consumes to the ends of the Earth with each successive generation making their mark, conquering, and creating great wealth. This differs from another ancestor to western civilization, that of Sumeria.

Sumeria is often considered the world's first civilization and is considered to be the root of western civilization. Sumeria was among the first to establish writing, to have a society of many tens of thousands of people (Glassner 2003). They spoke a language isolate known as Sumerian and, originally, they appeared to belong to a culture which honored a female creator Goddess known as Nammu as the mother of Heaven and Earth and the mother of Enki, the primary male deity. As religions are not monolithic and change over time, perceiving the oldest versions of a spiritual tradition can be difficult, but it is noteworthy that the oldest city of Sumeria, Eridu, worshiped Nammu (Halo 1966).

Within some centuries after the founding of Eridu, it becomes clear that this city and civilization fall prey to the reign of God Kings and heroic epics now supplant any previously held beliefs about egalitarianism, in any sense, which may have informed the earliest cities. Akkadians and other Afro-Asiatic speaking peoples would subsequently conquer the lands of Mesopotamia and brutal wars would shift territorial lines for many thousands of years. The unfortunate and increasing brutality of these times can be summed up in a transcript of King Sennacherib in the 7th century BCE of his vanquished foes:

They rose against me in battle like a swarm of locusts in spring. The dust from their march covered the face of the horizon, and they drew up for battle before me like a mighty sandstorm in freezing winter . . . I roared mightily, thundering like the Storm God, and by the command of Assur, the great lord, my lord, on flank and front, I pressed upon the enemy like a raging hurricane . . . I cut them down rapidly and I defeated them. I cut their throats like lambs. I severed their windpipes like a string. I spilled their blood onto the wide earth like the waters of a spring shower. The charging stallions of my chariot plunged into the mere of blood as into a lake. The wheels of my chariot – which crushes the wicked and the murdering – were immersed in their blood and filth. I filled the plain with the corpses of their warriors like grass. I cut off their lips, ruining their dignity. I chopped off their hands like ripe cucumbers. I collected the torques of gold and shining silver from their wrists (Barjamovic 2012, 46).

This sort of boastful propaganda glorifying brutality in warfare was not at all uncommon in this era and gleeful supplantation of one's enemy often led to retribution in even more horrific terms. This became the norm across the ancient Levant.

As a theme of the millennia of brutality, Marija Gimbutas describes the effects of warfare on religious iconography within the Aegean polytheistic religions.

The independent, parthogenetic (creating life without male participation) goddesses gradually became the brides, wives, and daughters of the Indo-European gods, albeit not always successfully or consensually. In Greek mythology, Zeus rapes hundreds of goddesses and nymphs, Poseidon

rapes Demeter, and Hades rapes Persephone. These rapes Brutal treatment of Old European mortal women during the transition from prepatrarchy to patriarchy (Gimbutas 2001, 228).

This morose commentary describes what many academics have struggled with in the face of new evidence relating to the roots of western civilization. While it has been the inclination of many to describe the dominance of the Indo-European and Afro-Asiatic language families as something relating to some innate superiority, it has become more and more likely that it was instead due to an increase in brutality. It is hard to argue that if one culture is more brutal and warring than another, it is likely that, at some point, there will be a dominance and destruction of the culture which is not as predisposed toward violence. This is the likely reason for the swift adoption of Indo-European and Afro-Asiatic languages and cultures around the world. The cultural roots of the people who speak these languages are more patriarchal and more prone toward violence than many others around the world.

Language

Languages may inform cultures in many ways, and while it is hard to draw direct conclusions from the manner in which people speak to their culture, language can be a determinant of potential cultural values.

Language of Çatalhöyük

Unfortunately, we cannot say anything with confidence about the language spoken in Çatalhöyük because it is entirely unknown and no written records were left from this time. In terms of what language these people spoke or how they expressed themselves is likely to always remain a mystery.

Language of Caphtors

The Caphtors did leave written records, however, because we do not know the language or language family that they spoke, these written records have yet to be translated. If they are translated, we will have much more information about the nature of this civilization.

However, in lieu of translated written records, what remains are archaeological finds and written testimony of these people from surrounding nations, and cultural and linguistic customs which were inherited by the Mycenaean Greeks.

For example, the name seen inscribed in Mycenaean in Linear B of A-ta-na-po-ti-ni-ja, appears to point to an early version of Athena which was in conjunction with the name potnia (Castleden 2002, 124). Thus, even the great Athena, supreme Goddess of Athens appears to have her roots in Caphtor culture. The degree to which Mycenaean Greece absorbed and adapted Caphtor customs and cultures is not well understood, but given the power of the Caphtor Thalassocracy in the Aegean, it is clear that before their ultimate conquest of Crete, the Mycenaean Greeks adapted elements of their culture to fit into their own.

Language of Haudenosaunee

All of the members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy spoke languages in the Iroquois Language Family. There are other tribes which speak Iroquoian languages as well, mostly dwelling the Great Lakes region, with the exception of the Cherokee who live further to the south. They all participate in agriculture and have other cultural similarities including the prominence of mothers and women in social and governing

spheres. While their language certainly contains numerous particularities which a native speaker could easily explain, it is not obvious that there are structures within the language which may lead to certain cultural ideologies.

Language of Minangkabau

The Minangkabau people speak their own language in the Austonesian family, similar to Malay and Indonesian. While the majority of those in this region practice Islam, they do not speak Arabic which suggests that this area was not excessive violence in eradicating their indigenous languages in the past which may also be, in part, why the Minang people have retained their unique culture. Austronesian languages do not differentiate between gender in pronouns and refer to males and females using the same gender-neutral pronouns although several Austronesian languages have adopted gendered pronouns due to interactions with western societies (Yanti 2021).

Afro-Asiatic and Indo-European Languages

Unlike Indo-European language family which began to spread in the 4th millennia BCE, Afro-Asiatic languages are far older. Afro-Asiatic is the language family of Egyptian, Akkadian, Hebrew, Arabic, and others. And while Afro-Asiatic is not spoken natively by nearly as many people as Indo-European, it is the language of ancestry of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity thus providing the theological underpinnings of modern patriarchal spiritual belief. The inclusion of Christianity may seem strange to some, and Christianity certainly has more relation to Indo-European than the others, but it is largely agreed that Jesus spoke Aramaic which is an Afro-Asiatic language (Casey 1990).

However, the lingua franca of the time was Greek which is Indo-European, and Jesus was killed by Romans, who speak Indo-European.

Similar to Indo-European language family, Afro-Asiatic languages utilize gendered pronouns which are relatively uncommon in languages across the globe. Gendered pronouns are currently a subject of social controversy. It can be seen as an unnecessary division and leads to odd social interactions, for example, when one mistakenly refers to a child or baby as “him” or “her” or when a pet is incorrectly gendered because there are not obvious outward signs of gender while the correct use of gendered pronouns depends on knowledge of one’s gender whereas neutral pronouns, like those used in the Basque language avoid this issue entirely by simply using one word for a personal pronoun that has no separation along gender lines (Lehmann 1995).

Chapter VI.

Discussion

Throughout this document, I have established a throughline between the ancestral female centric societies, and societies of more familiarity which prioritize masculine power and leadership. The differences between these cultural models are extreme and influence domestic, political, and international policy. Cultural modalities of male dominance have been ingrained into western societies for many thousands of years and have become so normalized that other forms of society can seem entirely foreign and even impossible to modern readers.

These four cultures, ranging from each end of the globe and each end of our historical timetable, appear to have solved the problem of how to coexist with each other and with the expansive world in ways unfamiliar to most living in the modern world. With attention and respect paid toward the sacrifice and status of women and mothers, their societies appear to have attained some degree of egalitarianism within their cultures and with the world around them. Self-sufficiently, they have lived with comparative wealth in their respective cultures without needing to embark on conquests to buoy their fortunes.

This much can be said of three of the four cultures, but with respect to the Haudenosaunee, their culture does appear to depend on some level, at least in the colonial era, on adoption of others to replenish the numbers in their tribe. This could be seen as a form of conquest and certainly is not the most idyllic of customs. However, in the face of

annihilation by disease and brutal invaders, it did serve its purpose to maintain their confederacy and allow their culture to survive to the present day.

Considering modern realizations of the capacity of women due to the works of great female scientists, artists, athletes, politicians, and philosophers of modern history, rationale for the cultural iniquity based on gender lines has deteriorated. Now, the world is attempting to adapt to models which support human beings in their capacity regardless of gender, albeit with significant opposition from certain segments of society.

Women have certain biological disadvantages regarding the monthly inconvenience of menstruation, and the bodily challenges and time-consuming nature of pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. However, many of these difficulties can be assuaged by a society which honors the female sacrifice and allows women the space to conserve their strength during menstrual periods and provides health care and child support as a right thus alleviating female dependence on male counterparts.

Additionally, questioning the societal norm of the nuclear family may also lead to supportive family units which can share in the difficulties from these biological challenges. It can be seen that some societies have overcome the temptation for the more physically dominant gender to wield inordinate influence in all affairs, and, seemingly, to no detriment, and likely, to some benefits.

De-emphasizing fatherhood and increasing male participation and responsibility in familial children outside of their biological children is a relatively unfamiliar concept as western society has a longstanding tradition of emphasizing the role of a biological father regardless of an individual's capacity in that role. Societies where the role of the

biological father is unimportant to the healthy upbringing of a child is so unfamiliar as to seem outright wrong by many modern people, however, there is little reason to believe this is due to anything other than cultural conditioning.

The importance of the father can be considered necessary in a society where women oftentimes feel unsafe and one in which their financial stability has been traditionally directly connected to the status of her partner, but modern evolutions in culture and potential adaptations toward a society which enacts certain elements of welfare and security for women and mothers may help lessen the needs of choosing partners for the sake of financial stability or safety. It could be argued, and this would be the subject of research with far greater philosophical and psychological ramifications than that of this current work, that the institution of fatherhood as it is typically conducted in modern western societies, is fraught with traumatic experiences.

A society which moves away from patriarchy and de-emphasizes fatherhood may look very different from what we are ordinarily accustomed and a primary reaction, particularly from women and mothers, may be that such a society would be unfair since the responsibilities of motherhood are non-negotiable, however, this is spoken from the perspective of a culture which does not guarantee female safety or support. Another concern of the emphasis of fatherhood is that many women find themselves in a position of no longer wanting the father of their children in their lives, but are obligated to share parenting and to negotiate and invest time and energy in this man, even if it interferes with their autonomy.

In contrast, with respect to the cultures described in this document, particularly those of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and of the traditional Minangkabau, it is clear

that they do not traditionally guarantee rights to a biological father and such a man may only interact with his children or female counterpart at her discretion. Clearly, safeguards are important to guarantee the safety of a child, but a society in which children normally inherit their mother's last name and in which the custom of women changing their names to that of their husbands is no longer ordinary might be more respectful of motherhood and alleviate some of the complex psychological issues associated with children coming from "broken" families.

For such a process of biological fathers relinquishing status and gaining prestige only through their support of the children in their non-romantically connected family and communities would, perhaps, democratize fatherhood and social status. In a world where it is not uncommon for privileged children to grow up in nuclear families physically close to struggling families, it may help distribute wealth in an organic way if men are seen as honored and respected for supporting children that are not their biological offspring and who are also not connected through romantic entanglements.

This decentralization of power and emphasis on community well-being would, in my opinion, greatly benefit all members of society. There could be great benefits to diminishing unearned privilege from fortunate children and developing a society which more truly represents a meritocracy, instead of a society of rigid class with little mobility, great divisions between biologically unconnected families, and unbalanced opportunities for children who are innocent of any class system which into which they are born.

While female representation in governing bodies such as the American Senate or House of Representatives is certainly a step toward something approaching egalitarianism regarding gender, it does not alleviate the concerns of class or the manner in which those

in privileged classes may be inclined to protect their shared interests instead of the interests of all.

A migration towards consensus decision making may help mitigate some of the divisive politics which are seen as a necessity in our modern world, and such an adaptation may be possible given the proper checks and balances and feedback mechanisms to ensure good-faith practices in the political sphere to achieve a government with greater representation of the populace. Such a government would likely require, as is the case with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, a streamlined method of ejecting representatives from the governing body, and recalling representatives by the electorate, when they are unreasonably difficult to work with or no longer represent the will of the people.

These changes are certainly possible, though they would require alterations to our governing models. It is my opinion that the divisive nature of politics in its current state renders government ineffective in achieving significant acts of public service, with many people investing wholly into the political team they or their local culture most identify with regardless of whether their respective policies are of benefit or not.

Perhaps what should be considered is what might be the properties of a modern value system which mirrors some of the cultures studied in this document. In the modern world, minimizing dependence of romantic partners and increasing female autonomy may look like investing more heavily in social support in the forms of maternity leave, health care, food security, and increased access to reproductive services.

More broadly, deemphasizing authoritarianism by decreasing the vast differences in basic needs by the wealthy and the poor could assist greatly in mobilizing society toward greater egalitarianism not just between genders, but between all human beings. Such a change in the fabric of society may have profound results that are currently unimaginable to those which have lived their lives within a culture which emphasizes strength and domination in lieu of compassion and resilience through community.

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