

March 31, 2005

15: ETHNIC IDENTITY, STATE, AND SEXUALITY

Read: Nagel, 2003. Sex and nationalism” sexually imagined communities
Stoler, Ann, 1991. Carnal knowledge and imperial power, gender, race and morality in colonial Asia
Heng and Devan, J 1995 State fatherhood: the politics of nationalism, sexuality, and race in Singapore

I. Introduction

A. How are ethnicity/race/nationalism and gender/sexuality linked?

1. Manliness and womanliness are racialized, ethnicized and nationalized
 - a. And sexuality, of course, figures in such images of manliness and womanliness

B. Common stereotypes used to depict “us” and “them”?¹

1. Positive and negative: hardworking/lazy, clean/dirty; pure/dirty; rational/emotional; smart/stupid; reliable/undependable; moral/immoral; modest and virtuous/vulgar and promiscuous
2. These oppositions often involve gender and sexuality: potent and impotent men; ruled and unruly women; male strength and weakness; female seductive power and vulnerability; masculine sexual desire and feminine sexual desirability

II. Examples of domains in which ethnicity, nationalism and race are linked to gender and sexuality

A. Nationalist images (how citizens/members of ethnic groups represent themselves and are portrayed by others) are often sexed

1. The essay by Carol Smith we read and a book by Diane Nelson analyze how sexuality in Guatemala is raced²
2. Narratives of ladino men/women, Indian men/women differ significantly—a difference she argues is integral to image of Guatemala as a nation

¹ First examples are taken from Joane Nagel, 2003. *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers*. New York: Oxford.

² Diane M. Nelson, 1999. *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*. Durham: Duke University Press.

3. Nagel discusses how nationalism itself is masculinized in a number of ways
- B. Maintenance of ethnic boundaries and stratification
1. Rules governing contact and interaction, and their ideological justification
 - a. Policing sex and marriage
 - 1) Via miscegenation laws, sterilizations, castrations and lynchings
 - 2) Trying to influence birth rates and send unmistakable messages
 - 3) A movie titled “Rosewood” is based on an actual massacre that occurred in a Florida town in the 1940s—highly recommended
- C. Ethnic armed conflict and gender, sexuality:
1. Nazis and white male supremacists in the US
 - a. “Heteronormal” masculinity associated with war, nationalism, patriotism, valor, manly codes of honor
 - b. But the heterosexuality and potency of the male ethnic “other” is often challenged
 - c. Female others may be seen to be slutty, impure, aggressive, unfeminine
 2. Treatment of collaborators differs
 - a. Nagel contrasts French women with their heads shaved, public reviling; men executed
 - b. However, Mata Hari was executed—seductive spy for Germany
 3. Ethnic cleansing
 - a. Serbia: “other” women (Christian, Muslim) raped repeatedly “You will bear a Serbian child”

- b. Sex with a dirty, impure “other” doesn’t make men impure, just the women who do it

III. Conquest and Colonialism

- A. Its main project: economic
 - 1. Acquire land for its resources (mineral, agricultural potential)
 - 2. Acquire people as laborers, consumers, and various other purposes (military conscripts)
 - 3. Other goals as well—military, for example
- B. The territory has to be administered
- C. Labor has to be recruited and managed by men from the imperial country
 - 1. In the case of slavery, labor brought from other colonized lands
 - 2. How this was accomplished during the colonial era changed radically over time, and was always gendered
- D. Stoler’s examples
 - 1. She’s particularly interested in the connections between the colonizing state and sexuality, affective attachments
 - 2. In explaining why sexual arrangements and affective attachments were so critical to the making of colonial categories and to what distinguished ruler from ruled
- E. Captivity narratives in colonial America reveal gendered, sexual themes³
 - 1. Fascination with accounts of (and sometimes by) white women abducted by “savage” Indians, if not killed, then turned into squaws
 - 2. Pocahontas, too, was a captive, but this is always left out of the story, which is about her willing conversion to Christianity and marriage to a white man
- F. In all cases, gender and sexuality are major concerns in the colonial project

³ See Pauline Turner Strong, 1999. *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives*. Boulder: Westview. And Rebecca Blevins Faery, 1999. *Cartographies of Desire: Captivity, Race, & Sex in the Shaping of an American Nation*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

1. On the ground: regulate sexual access, interactions between genders in general, reproduction
 2. Symbolically, ideologically: provide justifications for what's happening
- G. Heng and Devan discuss the state's interest in making sure that the "right" people produce more children, or at least maintain the current rate, and the "wrong" people produce fewer
1. But in some colonial situations the state had an interest in producing more "natives"
 - a. When importation of slaves was abolished in US, plantation owners were concerned to make sure as many healthy children as possible were produced
 2. However, for the most part colonial powers, (and certainly modern post-colonial states), couldn't control their populations the way animal breeders control theirs
 3. One way to give the appearance of order, of firm boundaries, is to establish social classifications
 4. So we see over and over again a great amount of attention paid to:
 - a. Parents
 - b. Parenting practices
 - c. Nursing mothers
 - d. Servants
 - e. Orphanages
 - f. Abandoned children
- H. But there are many other domains in which the state participates in manipulating ethnic and national identity in the realms of intimate relationships
1. Class distinctions and racial demarcations
 2. Nationalism and European identity
- I. None of the markers distinguishing Europeans from natives was adequate in itself

1. There were several kinds of colonists, many tensions
 2. True for colonial US, too
 3. There were concerns about ne'er-do-well whites who economically, socially and morally do not meet the standards
 - a. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* deals with this theme
 4. And, as soon as half-breed, half-caste children appeared, the rigidly opposed white man-native dichotomy broke down
 5. When this happened, states attempted to adjust their "clear-cut," fixed classification schemes
 6. In the Caribbean, in the U.S. vs. Caribbean (Segal and Handler), in Spain's colonies in the New World, elaborate schemes for dealing with the variety of people living in the colonies were created
 - a. Remember "Stolen Lives"?
 7. But as Stoler documents, physical features don't always work, and cultural criteria always accompany physical ones—cultural racism
- J. Gender and sexuality employed as symbols in colonialist contexts
1. Stoler: Women as symbols of national superiority, native inferiority
 - a. Contains the notion that *all* men are potentially inferior—lustful, tendency to mingle with natives, degenerate
 - b. As opposed to image of European women as too weak to withstand rigors of tropical country
 2. The colonizer not only as patriotic and manly, but as sexual man: virile
 - a. Its opposite: images of the heightened sexuality of colonized men; resulting in the white man threatened
 3. European women seen to need protection because men of color had "primitive" sexual urges and uncontrollable lust, aroused by the sight of white women
 - a. Establishment of rape laws
 - b. Rape laws were often race specific

- c. Stoler points out that there was virtually no correlation between accusations and actual incidences of rape of European women by men of color.
- d. First, allusions to political and sexual subversion of the colonial system went hand in hand. “Cheeky” without respect
- e. Second, rape charges often based on perceived transgressions of social space
- f. Third, accusations of sexual assault frequently followed upon heightened tensions—served to unify European communities, restore consensus.
 - 1) Nagel’s point about Durkheim’s analysis of deviance as functional for society
- g. Unify the often factionalized European community around a common threat from the outside
- h. And Stoler suggests that accusations increased frequently following heightened tensions within European communities because of strikes, unrest
- i. Fourth, it was a means of controlling white women
 - 1) And always lurking in the background is the fear that white women cannot be controlled, will willingly have sex with a native
- j. Fifth, a broader explanation: male natives interacting sexually with white women subverts the power status quo
- k. Example from the U.S.: how many black men were lynched because of accusations of rape—or of only whistling at a white woman (often this didn’t actually happen)
 - 1) Famous case of Emmett Till: teenager from Chicago was brutally murdered in order to teach the cheeky Northern blacks (and sympathetic whites) a lesson about the way things were in the South
 - 2) His crime was simply being in that Southern town (he was visiting relatives)

- l. Hysteria about black men's desire for white women?
 - m. Yet how many more black women were raped by white men?
Many tens of thousands more
 - n. Black women weren't seen as capable of being raped
 - o. White men raping black women maintains, enacts the power status quo; but black men engaging in any kind of sexual activity with white women challenges it
 - p. Interest in white man/black woman relations seems to appear only when the man is important in some way: Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemmings, for example
 - 1) Recent revelation that Southern segregationist Strom Thurmond fathered a daughter with a black 16-year-old maid in his family's house
- K. An interesting twist on this theme was Panama's attempts to integrate its indigenous population, including intermarriage⁴
- 1. Supported the notion of a *raza cósmica*, "cosmic race"—hybrid vigor—Panama's form of eugenics required race mixing
 - 2. The Kuna, off the coast of Panama living on the islands of San Blas, would have none of it.
 - 3. They protested and finally rebelled against government policies
 - 4. Their narrative of the rebellion has it being sparked by the rape of a Kuna woman by a Panamanian policeman
 - a. In fact, there was no rape
 - b. The policemen involved were trying to implement a government decree that racially mixed pairs had to dance as couples
 - 5. This story tells of a native population wanting to preserve its biological purity, protect its women, etc., from the taint of the colonial oppressors—the opposite of the cases discussed by Stoler
 - a. But it's important to note that the Panamanian policemen in the story are always pictured as black

⁴ See James Howe, 1998. *A People Who Would Not Kneel: Panama, the United States, and the San Blas Kuna*. Washington, D.C." Smithsonian Institution Press.

- L. I mentioned on Tues. Frantz Fanon's argument that Algerian women must remain veiled, because French men wanted to unveil (symbolic rape) them, and the veil represented resistance, among other meanings
1. Stoler discusses Edward Said's version of this notion: "the sexual submission and possession of Oriental women by European men 'fairly *stands for* the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled.'"
 2. Said argues that a kind of symbolic Orientalism remains with us: male power fantasies of penetrating, possessing "Oriental" things
 3. The article you read about mail-order brides provides some examples supporting Said's argument
- IV. **Discuss:** $\frac{3}{4}$ American interracial marriages involve black men and white women, whereas it's the opposite for white/Asian marriages. Why?