Illinois Culture, Christianity and Intermarriage: Gender in Illinois Country, 1650-1763

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Illinois Culture, Christianity and Intermarriage: 
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Introduction

The culture of the Illinois Country that began to develop in the second half of the seventeenth century changed the social function of gender for Illinois males, females, and berdaches, a third gender that existed in Illinois culture.¹ In contrast to their previously lower status in patriarchal Illinois culture, Illinois women gained new opportunities for influence as Christian teachers after French Jesuits introduced Christianity to the region. They gained other opportunities at the beginning of the eighteenth century as wives of French fur traders and godmothers in extensive kin systems that controlled the fur trade in the region. Males were divided in their reactions to Christianity, but Illinois masculinity adjusted to include a category for Christianity. Illinois men whose female relatives married fur traders benefitted from direct access to the fur trade. There is no mention of Illinois berdaches in the historical record after 1698. At this point the berdaches most likely either moved to other tribes or ceased to be a significant part of Illinois Country culture. Both French and Illinois participated in the creation of a new Illinois Country culture in which gender functioned in different ways.

The main contact period for the Great Lakes region called the “Pays d’en Haut” began in 1673 when Louis Jolliet and Jesuit Father Jacques Marquette made an expedition down the Mississippi River from present-day Wisconsin to Arkansas.² The Illinois had certainly felt the influence of European presence further east in the form of trade goods and warfare before 1673, but it was not until after this point that French

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¹ Berdaches were anatomical males who assumed female dress and gender roles. Their upbringing and social position in Illinois culture are discussed at length later in this chapter.
² The region was named the “Pays d’en Haut,” meaning “Upper Country” in French, because it is located up the St. Lawrence River from Québec and Montréal, the early administrative centers of New France.
traders increased their penetration into the region.\textsuperscript{3} The Iroquois Wars, a series of raids and conflicts in the Pays d’en Haut carried out by the Iroquois, occurred throughout the seventeenth century with the exception of a few periods of peace. These wars had consequences for the geopolitical structure of the Pays d’en Haut, which intertwined both Native Americans and French. In addition to French fur traders, Jesuits also played a large role in the exploration and French entrance into the region. Some of the first Frenchmen to contact Illinois Indians were Jesuits. In the period from 1650 to 1680, the beginnings of Pays d’en Haut communities formed as French traders, Jesuits, and Illinois came into more regular contact. The connections formed between Illinois society, Jesuits and traders came to affect the function of gender in the Pays d’en Haut, especially in the realms of religion and kinship.

The French had many motives for entering the Pays d’en Haut in increasing numbers after 1673. Fur traders moved further west to obtain easier access to pelts for the fur trade and Jesuits moved into the area to convert the Native Americans to Christianity. Though the French moved into the Pays d’en Haut in increasing numbers, immigration was overwhelmingly male and the French population never surpassed the Native American population. Fur traders could help the administrators of New France by passing on information about the area and by acting as “wilderness diplomats.”\textsuperscript{4} For the most part, however, fur traders did not concern themselves with carrying out the official wishes of the authorities. The primary goal of the Jesuits was to convert the Native

\textsuperscript{3} Jacques Marquette, “Of the first Voyage made by Father Marquette toward New Mexico, and How the idea thereof was conceived,” The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: 1610-1791, Vol. 59: 1667-1669, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1901), 117, <http://www.puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/relations/>. Marquette comments that the Illinois were “clad in cloth” upon his first meeting them. This evidence along with Marquette’s observation that the Illinois sometimes used guns for hunting proves that the Illinois were well acquainted with European trade goods.

\textsuperscript{4} Susan Sleeper-Smith, Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 41.
Americans rather than to support the economic gain of France. As a result, their relationship with officials was often tense.

The Iroquois Wars encompassed a number of different Iroquois raiding campaigns directed at various Algonquian groups of the Pays d’en Haut, and had a significant impact on some tribes of the region. These attacks occurred over many decades, beginning in the 1650s and extending through the end of the seventeenth century. The brunt of Iroquois raiding began to take its toll on the Pays d’en Haut in the 1650s and resulted in the destruction of entire villages and the capture of hundreds and possibly thousands of captives to replace the dead through the practice of mourning warfare.5

Though the Iroquois Wars were certainly a source of destabilization for the Pays d’en Haut, some groups, such as the Ottawa, were able to retain control of their territory and continue their seasonal movements and subsistence.6 Richard White argues that the Iroquois Wars devastated the region by destroying villages, killing or capturing inhabitants, and by spreading disease, reducing the Pays d’en Haut to a “desperate world where accidental congruences and temporary interests” formed the basis of interaction.7 As the Iroquois continued to raid and break up existing social and political structures, White argues, refugee villages containing members of various tribal affiliations became the main cohesive social units in the Pays d’en Haut. However, cultural mixing between and within villages was not a new phenomenon to the region. Native Americans of the

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5 Gilles Havard, Empire et métissages: Indiens et Français dans le Pays d’en Haut, 1660-1715 (Sillery : Septentrion, 2003), 128.
Pays d’en Haut interacted closely with people of other regional groups through intermarriage, the taking of captives, and material exchange. Though the Pays d’en Haut experienced the effects of the Iroquois Wars, their consequences were not the same for all tribes of the region.

The French were heavily involved in the Iroquois Wars in both the Pays d’en Haut and the Pays d’en Bas. Before the Iroquois focused their attention on the Great Lakes region, the French settlements in the St. Lawrence River Valley and their Native American allies located nearby, such as the Huron who lived between Lake Ontario and Lake Huron, bore the brunt of the attacks. The Hurons as a politically cohesive unit were destroyed by a combination of disease and Iroquois warfare. Most Hurons who were not killed moved west and joined other villages in the Pays d’en Haut. The Iroquois, allies of the English and therefore opponents of the French, continued to push west and put pressure on the Pays d’en Haut and on French commercial interests. After launching an

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8 Havard, Empire et métissages 141.
9 The “Pays d’en Bas” means “Lower Country” in French and identifies the St. Lawrence River corridor that included Québec and Montréal.
effective counter-attack against Iroquois attacks on Montréal, the French forced the Iroquois to sign a peace treaty in 1665. Hostilities began again, however, in the 1680s with more raiding and counter-raiding. The Iroquois Wars intensified the development of the French-Algonquian alliance in the Pays d’en Haut. Certainly not all Algonquian groups participated in the same manner, but many Algonquian groups of the Pays d’en Haut did ally with the French. Of these groups, the Illinois seemed to be the most formidable and capable enemy of the Iroquois. The French-Illinois alliance had advantages and disadvantages for both groups as their relationship developed, but the agreement revolved mainly around material exchange and military protection.

French Jesuits began conversion efforts in the New World soon after its initial exploration. The Jesuit approach to conversion was different from the approach favored by other religious orders that advocated “civilizing” the Native Americans before converting them. Instead, the Jesuits established missions within Indian villages or trading sites and traveled with the Native Americans seasonally. The Jesuits began their experiments of meeting the Native Americans on their own terms with the Hurons beginning in the 1630s. Jesuits were instructed to eat the same food and do the same work as the Native Americans in order to win their trust and prove their own worth. One vital element of the Jesuit approach in the New World was intensive language study. Jesuit priests were highly educated and often trained in linguistics to equip them to communicate with the Native Americans in their own language. The Jesuit Relations as well as dictionaries and catechism translations produced by the Jesuits in the New World reveal the efforts of the Jesuits and serve as immensely rich primary sources.

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The Jesuits, while still pursuing the approach of meeting the Native Americans on their own terms, eventually came to favor the establishment of permanent missions at key locations that would receive Native American visitors. The Pays d’en Haut region witnessed the establishment of four important missions between 1660 and 1670: Saint Esprit at Chagouamigon on the southwestern banks of Lake Superior (1665), Sault Sainte Marie at the meeting of Lakes Huron, Michigan, and Superior (1668), Saint François-Xavier at the southern extremity of Green Bay (1669) and Saint-Ignace at Michillimakinac around 30 miles south of Sault Ste. Marie (1670).\(^{11}\) Pimitoui, now present-day Peoria, Illinois, became an important mission location for the Illinois in the 1690s.\(^{12}\) The Illinois most likely encountered Jesuits regularly for the first time at the Saint-Esprit mission after its establishment.

These four missions were established to convert various Algonquian groups, and Jesuit accounts record the appearance of Illinois at the missions at Saint-Ignace and Saint François-Xavier. Father Claude Dablon, who was assigned to several missions in the Pays d’en Haut, describes successful teaching sessions with the Illinois in which they were so eager to listen that they stayed until well into the night.\(^{13}\) In this account from the Relation of 1670-1671, Dablon reveals the strategy behind the location of some of the missions. The post called Michillimackinac, located at the confluence of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, was a strategic location for a mission due to its position on the route east toward Montréal and Québec. Dablon records that Michillimakinac is the “key and

\(^{11}\) Havard, \textit{Empire et métissages}, 67.
\(^{12}\) White, \textit{The Middle Ground}, 67.
the door for all the peoples of the South” including the Illinois. After his 1673 expedition with Jolliet, Marquette returned to establish a mission in Illinois country and founded the Immaculate Conception mission at Kaskaskia in 1675. Other Jesuits, such as Claude Allouez who served at several Great Lakes missions, were sent to the serve in Illinois country.

Figure 2 Jesuit Missions and French Forts (Adapted from Gilles Havard, Empire et métissages: Indiens et Français dans le Pays d’en Haut, 1660-1715. Sillery : Septentrion, 2003.)

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As the Jesuits began to preach to the Illinois in their own language, difficulties arose in the translation of certain Christian concepts that had no simple parallel in the Illinois language. The Jesuits used their language skills and cultural knowledge to help them find approximations that would resonate with the Illinois. These parallels, however, were injected with Illinois cultural meaning most likely beyond what the Jesuits understood at the time. What developed in the Pays d’en Haut Christianity was interaction between the Jesuits and the Algonquians as the Jesuits relied on the interpretation of the Illinois. A distinctive form of Christianity developed that allowed Algonquians to practice Catholicism while maintaining their native identities. This syncretic type of Christianity combined with the new economic opportunities and consequences of the French fur trade acted to encourage the development of a region marked by interaction and exchange between French and Native Americans.


The primary sources examined include excerpts from the Jesuit Relations, the memoir of Pierre Deliette, and Jesuit Father Jacques Gravier’s Illinois-French dictionary. The Relations, which fill a total of seventy-one volumes covering nearly

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every region of New France, are an especially important source in this thesis for their
descriptions of Illinois culture and of Jesuit conversion efforts among them. A memoir
attributed to Pierre Deliette, a French trader who lived amongst the Illinois for a number
of years in the 1680s, is an extremely rich source about Illinois culture. Deliette provides
details about many aspects important to the study of Illinois gender including topics like
gendered work division, marriage relationships, and the berdaches.16 Father Jacques
Gravier, who ministered to the Kaskaskia Illinois beginning in 1688, prepared a bilingual
Illinois-French dictionary that contains thousands of entries. This detailed collection of
Illinois words and phrases is a unique source of information about Illinois culture,
including gender. It was a guide for Jesuits to better interact with the Illinois, and it
allows modern historians to do the same. Other historians, such as Tracy Leavelle have
employed a linguistic approach in studying the Illinois, but my thesis is the first project
that employs Gravier’s dictionary to investigate gender in Illinois Country.

This inquiry firmly situates the questions that this project explores into the field of
the New Indian History. The field formed in the 1970s following the birth of the
American Indian Movement in the late 1960s, and grew out of a new focus on colonial
community history and previously ignored actors: women, slaves, middling and lower
classes, and Native Americans.17 The New Indian History places Native Americans at
the center of the historical narrative while favoring a multi-disciplinary approach drawing
from ethnohistory, archaeology, environmental science, linguistics, social history, and

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16 Deliette describes the berdaches’ upbringing, special ritual roles, and their treatment in Illinois society.
17 Merrell, James, “Indian History During the English Colonial Era” in A Companion to Colonial America,
cultural history. Written documents are important sources of information for this field, but the lack of documents from the perspective of Native Americans themselves necessitates a certain creative use of sources “from treaty minutes, missionary letters, oral traditions, travelers’ accounts to postholes, potsherds, baskets and portraits.”\(^{18}\) The inherent difficulties in reconstructing a history which requires a great deal of interpretation based on scattered evidence encourages a constant discussion in the field.

The field initially pursued a victimization of the Native Americans exemplified by Francis Jennings’s narrative that recounts a violent, calculated “invasion” of the New World by Europeans.\(^ {19}\) Richard White’s narrative of the melding of cultures through collaboration and mutual dependency initially seems to oppose Jennings, but Merrell suggests that these two arguments are not in fact mutually exclusive. Invasion was neither immediate nor total and necessitated interdependency; conversely, the middle ground of cultural exchange was not without violence.\(^ {20}\) These two elements are central to the main question of New Indian History: Where does Native American-European interaction fall on the spectrum of invasion versus cooperation? There is, of course, no single answer to this question, and the lack of such a single answer drives the field forward. In addition to this general question, there are many questions specific to the region and topics of this thesis. What was the nature of the communities in the Pays d’en Haut? Through which processes did Native Americans and French live together in communities? What roles did French imperial authorities, Jesuits, and Native Americans

\(^{18}\) Merrell, “Indian History,” 118.
\(^{19}\) Merrell, “Indian History,” 124.
\(^{20}\) Merrell, “Indian History,” 124; White, *The Middle Ground*, x.
have on the development of these communities? The questions that drive this thesis are derived from these, and they fit comfortably into the field of New Indian History.

Richard White’s *The Middle Ground* is one of the most widely-cited works in the New Indian History field. White situates the Pays d’en Haut region in the French Empire as a peripheral, rebellious area that formed against the wishes of French authorities. Contrary to the French imperial “frenchification” policy toward the Native Americans, French fur traders, Jesuits, and Native Americans created a “common, mutually comprehensible world” through the process of “creative misunderstanding.” New relationships and meanings specific to the Pays d’en Haut created the “middle ground” in both a territorial and conceptual sense. While White does not go so far as to say that violence and deliberate deception were absent, he emphasizes the new cultural meanings of the communities in the region. Robert Michael Morrissey describes different processes of cultural exchange in the Pays d’en Haut but takes a similar scope to that of White. Morrissey agrees with White that the area, inhabited by “illegal fur traders” and “defiant missionaries,” acted against the policies and wishes of the French imperial authorities in their interactions with the Illinois Native Americans. Illinois country consisted of “borderlands” at first, but through the processes of negotiation and cultural innovation, became a “bordered land” as an increased understanding of other groups exposed real cultural differences. In the beginning, the French and Native Americans could approach each other on a relatively equal footing through their new shared cultural

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21 White, *The Middle Ground*, x-ix.
meanings (White’s “middle ground”), but as each learned more about the other, real differences in worldview ironically cemented cultural differences.

Gilles Havard’s *Empire et métissages* takes the Pays d’en Haut region as a scope and contextualizes it into the French empire. Havard resembles White and Morrissey in scope, however, he argues that the cross-cultural communities were not counter to French imperial policy, but a solution that the center of French power, both in Québec and Versailles, accepted. The position of the Pays d’en Haut on the periphery of New France made it a challenge for the administrators of New France, and Havard argues that the network of trading posts and mixed French-Native American communities created a web of communication that effectively linked the periphery to the center.\(^{24}\) Havard’s discussion of the cultural processes in the Pays d’en Haut differs from both White and Morrissey as well. Rather than emphasizing the subordination of specifically French and Native American cultural elements or advocating for the development of strict boundaries based on non-negotiable cultural differences, Havard argues that both groups adapted certain elements of their culture to the other while still maintaining other elements and agendas. White, Morrissey, and Havard disagree on the relationship of the French imperial authorities and the Pays d’en Haut, and also on the process of cultural negotiation. The context and arguments of each provide a wide exposure to the historiography that is extremely useful for this thesis.

Works with a more focused scope on gender in the Pays d’en Haut occupy an important position in New Indian History. Susan Sleeper-Smith investigates the intersection of gender, Christianity, and the fur trade in *Indian Women and French Men*. Male French fur traders seeking access to pelts and Jesuits seeking to win Native

\(^{24}\) Havard, *Empire et métissages*, 16-17.
American souls to Catholicism entered the Native American-dominated region beginning in the 1670s. Various characteristics of Illinois culture encouraged more Native American women to convert to Christianity than men, and many of these women married French men. Through their acceptance of Christianity and later marriages to French traders, Native American women were able to use the fur trade as a method of “sociocultural change.” These women controlled their husbands’ access to pelts and used the practice of godparenting to create extra-familial kin networks which also had a great impact on the fur trade. Sleeper-Smith continues this discussion in her article “Women, Kin, and Catholicism,” in which she examines four specific women of the Pays d’en Haut and their roles as “cultural mediators.” In her argument that Catholicism allowed women new social avenues, Sleeper-Smith contradicts the earlier argument in New Indian History put forth by Carol Devens and Karen Anderson that the introduction of Catholicism instituted a rigid patriarchy that limited women to little more than slaves to men. Through her interrogation of non-traditional sources such as marital registers and baptismal records, Sleeper-Smith demonstrates that Native American women were not simply passive beings subjected to the tyranny of a rigid Catholic patriarchy. 

Raymond Hauser’s work on the cultural position of the berdache gender and on Illinois masculinity brings important balance to the treatment of gender as a whole in New Indian History. A gender history of the Illinois culture would be incomplete without a discussion of the berdaches, but the difficulties posed by the historical record

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27 Sleeper-Smith here refers specifically to Carol Devens’s *Countering Colonization* and Karen Anderson’s *Chain Her By One Foot* on page 425 of “Women, Kin, and Catholicism.”
are a deterrent for many scholars.\textsuperscript{28} The berdaches were anatomical males who assumed female gender roles and dress, and pursued sexual relationships with both males and females. They were believed to possess special access to spiritual power, which granted them unique ritual roles. Hauser argues that the Illinois neither particularly esteemed nor scorned berdaches, taking a middle road between the two extreme views put forth by other scholars.\textsuperscript{29} Hauser also provides a useful discussion of Illinois masculinity in the context of warfare, an essential element in its construction.\textsuperscript{30} Hauser specifically describes the post-contact change in Illinois warfare to favor large-scale village offensives over the traditional small raiding parties. Participation in and leadership of raiding parties was a fundamental part of Illinois masculinity, and this change undeniably had an effect upon the attainment of status as a male. In his description of the large-scale “general march” warfare, Hauser discusses the participation of women and berdaches in warfare. Though non-males participated, they were not permitted to wield the symbolically masculine bow and arrow and instead used clubs or knives.\textsuperscript{31} Hauser’s discussions of berdaches and masculinity provide an important element of the conception of gender in the Pays d’en Haut vital to the field in general and to my specific thesis project.

\textsuperscript{28} It is often difficult to determine from French sources whether or not the author is observing an actual berdache. Oftentimes French observers mistook homosexuality or forced transvestitism as a punishment for male cowardliness for berdaches. Beyond the difficulties posed by the historical record itself, discussing sexuality itself is fraught with difficulty due to the complexity of its definitions. Trying to reconstruct sexuality in a culture whose voices have disappeared is very problematic.


\textsuperscript{31} Hauser, “Warfare,” 371.
Another contribution to the gender history of the Great Lakes region includes works of microhistory such as Alan Greer’s *Mohawk Saint*.32 The book focuses on the life of Catherine Tekakwitha, a Native American woman who converted to Catholicism and became well-known for her asceticism and extreme piety. Greer presents an account of an unusually well-documented Native American personality and simultaneously illustrates the ways in which Tekakwitha’s life were evocative of the region. Even Tekakwitha, elevated by the Jesuits for her piety, exhibits examples of syncretism and never rejected her Native American identity. Greer emphasizes the agency of Native Americans in their reactions to Catholicism.

Scholars of the New Indian History have examined Illinois Christianity, some employing linguistic analysis, to help fill gaps in the knowledge of the Illinois Country. Christopher Bilodeau reconstructs elements of Illinois spirituality through the use of Jesuit language studies recorded in the *Jesuit Relations*.33 He illustrates how Illinois Christians incorporated certain similar elements of Christianity into their own system of spirituality, such as sacrifice, material exchanges and hospitality. These incorporations led to a religious syncretism in which the Native Americans played an active role; complete rejection and complete acceptance were not the only two options. Tracy Neal Leavelle presents a more specific linguistic analysis in which he examines different Jesuit-produced translations of elements of the Catholic catechism into the Illinois language.34 Leavelle discusses the difficulty of translating certain Christian concepts into

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Illinois when it lacked a direct conceptual parallel. In trying to solve these problems, Jesuits unconsciously and consciously mixed connotations bound in Illinois spirituality into Christianity, thus encouraging syncretism.

New Indian History is a very active field of interpretation due to the unique challenges that exist in attempts to reconstruct a culture whose voices have largely disappeared. Scholars of this field are compelled to pursue multi-disciplinary approaches in order to gain the most complete image possible. This thesis specifically examines the effect of Christianity as presented by the Jesuits on gender in the Pays d’en Haut. Works that employ a broad scope, those that take the narrower scope of a gender focus, and those that employ the methodology of linguistic analysis make up the foundation of the secondary sources discussed. This thesis expands upon the work of New Indian Historians by examining gender holistically and investigating its interaction with Christianity through a methodology of linguistic analysis. The topics and methodology in and of themselves are not new to the field, but the combination of topics and scope will allows this paper to ask new questions of the data and provide original discussion.

In Illinois Country, French and Illinois interacted to create a new culture that combined elements of both cultural traditions as well as new elements that emerged on the ground. Illinois spirituality prescribed social roles mostly according to gender, with males responsible for the ritually significant roles of hunting and warfare and females responsible for tasks centered on the village such as agriculture, childrearing, and the management of material resources. Berdaches made up a third gender of anatomical males who assumed female roles. Masculine and feminine duties were strictly divided, with males possessing power over their wives and female relatives as the leaders of
society. The presence of berdaches as a liminal category sharpened the divisions between masculine and feminine roles in Illinois society.

Illinois women gained a new kind of social influence through the development of a unique form of Illinois Christianity. Women became teachers and leaders of the Illinois Christian community. The Jesuits’ decision to convey Christianity in the Illinois language gave interpretive control of Illinois Christianity to the Illinois. Women, by virtue of their positions as teachers of both men and women and translation assistants to Jesuits, interpreted Christian concepts into Illinois. The reaction of Illinois males to Christianity was mixed. Some resisted, but others converted and became dedicated converts. Illinois masculinity, rather than necessitating a rejection of the Jesuits as a challenge to its authority adapted to include Christian identity. After 1698 there is no more mention of berdaches amongst the Illinois, most likely due to the increased French social pressure in Illinois Country and the lack of social position for the berdache in the new joint French-Illinois culture. Illinois Christianity was symbolic of the French-Illinois culture that developed in Illinois Country and also brought changes to the function of gender in Illinois society.

Some Christian Illinois women gained influence in the Pays d’en Haut by marrying French traders beginning at the turn of the eighteenth century. Intermarriage incorporated traders into Illinois kin groups, allowing every party to gain from the alliance in some way. Illinois women who intermarried also gained a new social avenue allowing them the potential to exercise autonomy economically and in the practice of godparenting. Godparenting allowed women to expand their kinship alliances and make important connections in the fur trade. Illinois men gained from these alliances as well in
the form of a constant market for furs through their French kin. Illinois gender adapted on the ground in response to complex social and economic conditions in Illinois Country.
Chapter 1
Illinois Pre-Contact Culture

Introduction

The story of the Pays d’en Haut begins with the Native American groups who had inhabited the area symbolically and physically for centuries before the arrival of the French. The Illinois, along with other mainly Algonquian-speaking groups, were not the snapshot-like, “primitive” peoples of the stereotype, but possessed a complex culture as capable of invention and adaptation as that of the French. An investigation of gender in the unique French-Illinois culture that developed in the Illinois Country would be incomplete without first obtaining an understanding of Illinois culture previous to the arrival of the French to Illinois Country. Both the French and the Illinois brought elements from their own backgrounds into the new culture of Illinois Country, and it is impossible to analyze how the Illinois contributed to this new culture without understanding their cultural background. Though there is a lack of documentation from the Illinois perspective, an analysis of early French sources combined with linguistic analysis helps to bridge the gap.

Four main areas of Illinois culture which expose the function of gender are spirituality, kinship, work division and warfare. Each of these aspects functioned to make Illinois gender roles separate. Illinois spirituality ordered every element of the universe, providing the context for kinship, work, division and warfare and emphasizing the importance of doing one’s duty within the rigid gender roles. Each person’s role within the systems of kinship, subsistence work, and warfare was determined by gender, making gender an essential category in the function of Illinois culture.
Pre-contact Illinois Culture: Spirituality

Illinois spirituality pervaded every aspect of life. Examining spirituality is important in gaining a general understanding of Illinois culture, but it is also important for the purposes of this specific investigation of changes in the function of Illinois gender. Gender was the main category that defined a person’s role with Illinois religion acting as the framework. Elements of Illinois religion later became infused into Christianity, producing a new kind of Christianity in Illinois Country. An understanding of pre-contact Illinois spirituality is essential in order to recognize similarities and differences over time and to analyze the contributions of Illinois religion to Illinois Christianity.

Spirits called “manitous” inhabited every inanimate and animate element of the universe, which gave a spiritual dimension to every action. In this spiritually saturated environment, the Illinois made few distinctions between the physical realm and the spiritual realm. Manitous united every person and thing in the universe, interconnecting the causation of events. Manitous possessed the same ontological makeup as humans, which defined their interaction with humans on a personal level. Each Illinois became acquainted with their personal manitou through the ritual of a vision quest, which marked the beginning of an adolescent Illinois’s spiritual life. The Illinois derived an essential element of their personal identity and purpose from their relationship with their personal manitou, but these spirits acted on a higher plane, simultaneously placing every element in the universe into its proper place. These more powerful spirits, such as the “Great

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35 Bilodeau, “They honor our Lord,” 356.
36 Bilodeau, “They honor our Lord,” 358.
Spirit” of the sun, the war manitou, and the weather manitou, affected the Illinois and defined their group identity on a collective level. Every event, from a natural disaster to a personal disagreement, existed in the context of this interconnected, spiritually-saturated universe.

For the Illinois, proper relationships between individuals, between different groups, and between humans and the environment were essential to a functioning universe. Individuals interacted with their manitous by performing their socially appropriate roles and obligations which were often organized according to gender. Males hunted and went to war while women managed resources, raised children, and were responsible for agriculture. When proper roles were not accomplished, the result was an imbalance in spiritual power, which could manifest itself as an illness, a failed hunt or war raid, or another negative consequence. These negative consequences were indications of an imbalance in power and needed to be remedied. Shamans or healers acted as special ritual conduits between humans and manitous and were believed to have the ability to access spiritual power beyond that of a normal human. The remedies for imbalances could include many different types of ritual: sacrifice, dancing, prayers, lacrosse games, material exchanges or a calumet ceremony among others. Lacrosse, more than a diversion in Illinois culture, was infused with ritual significance in its symbolism of warfare and of the struggle between different spiritual powers. Many of these ritual actions connected to everyday actions that the Illinois performed, indicating

37 Bilodeau, “They honor our Lord,” 357. The title of “Great Spirit” for the sun manitou is derived from the Illinois term “Manitou assouv,” indicating a higher status for the sun above most other spirits.
39 Richter, Facing East from Indian Country, 84.
40 Bilodeau, “They honor our Lord,” 363-365.
the degree to which the physical and the spiritual realms were indivisible. If a person became ill, he or she would receive visions or other indications of the cause of the spiritual imbalance that caused the illness and the afflicted or a healer would receive insight as to the proper remedy.⁴¹ Due to the communal nature of Illinois spirituality, remedies often involved the participation of a number of people since all were affected by the imbalance and would gain from its solution. The importance of maintaining correct relationships between individuals and between groups, and thus avoiding negative consequences, is also revealed in the practices of symbolic diplomacy.

Symbolic diplomacy describes a set of protocols governing interaction that extended across cultures and languages. These protocols were ritualistic and highly integrated into Native American spirituality. The observation of symbolic diplomacy both ensured that the balances of spiritual power were maintained and facilitated communication by establishing common understanding. The calumet pipe ritual and gift-giving were two important examples of these interactions. The calumet ceremony most likely originated with the Pawnee tribe located in the Missouri River Valley and then spread to the rest of the Great Lakes region and to the northeast and southeast.⁴² By the 1670s, the ritual had begun to spread to other parts of North America.⁴³ Gift-giving was a central element of communication in almost all Native American groups and occurred.

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⁴¹ Jean de Brébeuf, “Relation of what occurred in the Country of the Hurons in the year 1636,” *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: 1610-1791*, Vol. 10: 1636, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1901), 183-191, <http://www.puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/relations/>. In this excerpt, Jesuit Jean de Brébeuf describes various Huron healing ceremonies including lacrosse games that were prescribed for healing as well as the process by which an ill person would receive visions about the cure. The Huron were Algonquian speakers whose territory was located between present-day New York state and Michigan in what is now Canada. Though the Huron were separate from the Illinois, they were both members of the same broad cultural tradition. The Illinois most likely approached illness and healing in a similar way.


⁴³ Havard, *Empire et métissages*, 173.
constantly in a number of different circumstances: the renewal of alliances, the negotiation of a marriage, the mundane exchange of food, and others. The significance of both rituals existed on two main levels: the relationship between tribes, villages, or kin groups, and the relationship of the groups involved with various manitous. Symbolic diplomacy was essential because it facilitated communication between groups and reinforced the ordering of the universe.

The calumet ritual signified communication in multiple ways. A calumet pipe was constructed from a stone bowl attached to a reed that was used to smoke tobacco. The act of smoking tobacco in a calumet was seen as a sacrifice to the manitous inhabiting the sky as well as mediation between the terrestrial and celestial realms. For the Illinois, tobacco possessed special sacrificial significance, especially in its role during the calumet ceremony as a communicative device between worlds. The tribe and village responsible for making each calumet could be distinguished by the design and markings of the pipe. The ability to distinguish which tribe generated a calumet was essential to its diplomatic function. Allies received calumets from each other while enemies did not. A tribe bearing the calumet of an ally would be welcomed, but one bearing that of an enemy would be sent away. Alliances between groups who observed the calumet had to be maintained regularly with the celebration of this ritual. It represented the cooperation of the groups sharing the pipe and the place of their alliance in its greater spiritual context.

Gift-giving, whether in a specific ritual context or in everyday resource distribution, operated on the same two levels as the calumet ritual. In Illinois culture, and most other Native American cultures, material goods were allocated based on need.

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44 Bilodeau, “They honor our Lord,” 363.  
45 Rushforth, ‘Nit’aouakara,’ 18-19.  
46 Rushforth, ‘Nit’aouakara,’ 18-19.
People built up influence by increasing the number of goods that they gave away, rather than the number of goods that they had in their possession, as in Europe. In fact, redistribution of goods was one of the most important functions of chiefs. The onus of responsibility rested upon the more prosperous and influential to provide for the needs of others, rather than upon the person in need to acquire goods. Entire villages benefited from successful hunts though the work was usually done by only a few men. Women, who were responsible for agriculture, shared successful harvests with their village in the same way.

Resource distribution provided for physical needs, and the logic and symbolism behind gift-giving maintained the proper balance of spiritual power. A successful hunt or harvest was the result of the interaction of many different manitous, thus it would have been inappropriate for a single person to claim sole ownership for something in which they participated as one of many. Gift-giving was a very meaningful gesture that defined relationships in many different contexts: between villages or tribes, between kin groups, and between individuals. The messages conveyed by gift-giving, however, did not always suggest equality. The exchange of slaves and captives carried an underlying message of power and influence. If villages or tribes were powerful enough to take and keep captives, then they were valuable allies and could be powerful foes if angered. The obligations and symbolism of gift-giving could indicate a range of different power relationships. All groups were not equal. Powerful groups, for example, exchanged gifts with their lesser tribute groups. Many different aspects of gift-giving including the type and amount of materials, the frequency of exchange, and the circumstances of exchange composed and communicated messages.

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Kinship and Relationships

Kinship was one literal expression of the Illinois worldview. Every interaction occurred in the context of the connections between individuals. Any wrong action threatened the balance of spiritual power and hence the well-being of the collective group. The two major aspects of the kinship system most pertinent to gender politics were sexual relationships and marriage. These relationships did not function in a vacuum, but existed in the context of relationships with blood relatives and with the relatives of spouses. Indeed, the Illinois language shows more evidence of the importance of the relatives of one’s spouse than other related Algonquian languages. There are more Illinois terms for the different “in-law” relatives than in other languages spoken in the Pays d’en Haut. Illinoi conceptions of marriage, sexuality, and kinship were grounded in ideology and social expectations.

Illinois sexuality was culturally regulated and socially defined. In Illinois culture young men and women engaged in sexual relationships before they were married. Young men carried out a ritual described by French accounts as the “Ritual of the Match” in which a man went from cabin to cabin until he found a specific girl in whom he wished to express interest. Since the ritual occurred at night, the young man would light a match above the girl he intended; she would blow out the match to signify her acceptance. It is unclear how much freedom the female possessed in this situation to

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50 Havard, *Empire et métissages*, 632.
refuse, but the fact that males initiated the ritual suggests that males had more power in these situations. This ritual was a negotiation outside of marriage since marriage involved an elaborate process of gift-giving not present in these kinds of interactions.

Though marriage was the most common path, French observers recorded that some women did not marry and instead were “femmes de la chasse” or “hunting women.” These women often accompanied men on hunts, as implied in their label, and often acted as interpreters and negotiators. They served as partners for Illinois men, and later French men as well, outside of marriage. In addition to performing the usual female tasks (cooking, caring for the dwelling structure, gathering wood among others), hunting women often acted as sexual partners. Though hunting women were not subject to the control of a husband, it is unlikely that these women possessed much control over their sexuality. Several characteristics of the position of hunting women made them vulnerable to potential abuse and/or rape: their position as the only women on hunting expeditions, their inability to appeal to a kinship structure for protection, and their existence outside of the usual construction of marriage. It is possible that female captives became hunting women if they were not taken as a wife by an Illinois man. Captives, even when incorporated into the society of their captors, were often given positions of submission. The use of female captives as hunting women would help account for the seemingly low numbers of hunting women in Illinois society and their status outside of the normal marriage route.

The punishments for male and female infidelity in Illinois culture were vastly different, illustrating the power of males over their wives. One of the first remarks that

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52 Havard, *Empire et métissages*, 641.
53 Rushforth, ‘*Nit’aouakara*’, 7-8.
Marquette records about the Illinois indicates the power of men to punish their wives:

“[The Illinois] have several wives, of whom they are Extremely jealous; they watch them very closely, and Cut off their noses or ears when they misbehave.”54 At this first contact with the Illinois, Marquette saw “several women who bore the marks of their misconduct.” A wife’s adultery reflected dishonorably on her husband. The Illinois phrase “mattakihe8a anapemari” meant “she dishonored her husband with adultery.”55 The sense of dishonor helps explain why Illinois men enacted such harsh punishments on their wives.

Deliette described with a degree of horror the punishment that a husband could inflict upon his wife for adultery. A husband sought vengeance for the dishonor of his wife’s adultery by subjecting her to gang rape.56 The husband arranged for a group of men – Deliette describes a group of thirty – to take his wife by surprise and rape her repeatedly. He records the rather chilling comment that one husband made on such an occasion: “As I know that you are fond of men, I offer you a feast of them – take your fill.”57 Deliette comments that he had had the “vexation of seeing this thing happen one day in [the] fort.”58 An Illinois man reported to Deliette that his wife had committed an infidelity with Deliette’s own servant. He and the Illinois man went to the servant’s cabin and found him with the woman in question, who then suffered the described punishment. In Gravier’s dictionary, the term “r8ntepata8ic8 ni8i8a” is translated to mean “Go bring my wife outside. Bring her to me from the house so that I can punish

54 Marquette, “Of the First Voyage Made by Father Marquette,” 127.
55 Gravier and Largillier, Dictionnaire Illinois-français, 255. French transcriptions of the Illinois language often use the number “8” to represent the “ou” or “w” sound.
56 Deliette, “Memoir of De Gannes,” 335.
57 Deliette, “Memoir of De Gannes,” 335.
her.’”  Though the circumstances of this term’s usage are not recorded, it exhibits the power of males to punish their wives at least in certain cases.

Men who committed adultery were not subject to such punishment. If indeed action was required, a man who had committed adultery with another man’s wife may have been required to give the husband gifts to repay him for the offense. This obvious example of male power used to correct female sexual behavior was an important element in the function of marriage and of gender in general. While men’s and women’s tasks existed largely in separate categories, it is clear that men exerted power over women for which women had no equivalent.

Before a young man could marry, he had to prove his success in warfare after “several attacks.” Before contact, most Illinois men began to participate in warfare around age twenty-five and usually married around age thirty. Women usually married around the age of twenty-five. Deliette, however, records changes in the average marriage age as a result of contact. The average age for both men and women dropped about five years, with men marrying at twenty-five and women at twenty. The influx of male French fur traders into the area at contact helps to explain this change. More possible marriage partners most likely encouraged Illinois men to marry earlier before potential brides were claimed by others.

The process of proposing and accepting a marriage was highly ritualized in Illinois culture and emphasized the importance of the kin groups surrounding the potential couple. The process of gift exchange as a marriage proposal, according to Deliette, often began when the potential groom was away from the village hunting or at

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Gifts were exchanged multiple times between the groom’s family and the bride’s family before the two were considered married and joined households. The potential bride’s brother had the most power in the acceptance or rejection of the marriage offer. This power of a male over his sister’s marriage choice is another instance in which males exerted authority over women.

Illinois men often practiced polygyny, the practice of taking more than one wife. Gravier recorded numerous Illinois words indicating polygyny: “ninchi8i 8i8ei8ni” identified a man’s marriage to more than one woman, “ninchi8i 8ec8ssita” meant “her husband already has two wives,” and “nita8ic8aaima” meant “she is my husband’s second wife.” Sororal polygyny, in which one man married multiple sisters if a family had more than one daughter, was a common arrangement. This system helped correct the gender imbalance in Illinois society and had consequences for the gender politics of marriage. The imbalance resulted from the loss of men on hunts and in warfare combined with the incorporation of female captives into Illinois society. Men often took captive women as subordinate wives, making captivity and adoption important parts of Illinois marriage practices. Though polygyny seems at first glance to reduce the influence of women in marriage, linguistic data and French accounts record that first wives did exercise influence over subsequent wives. Jesuit Father Jacques Gravier translates the Illinois word “kitachi8eta” to mean “the first wife; the most loved who is mistress of all.” There is also an indication of rivalry between wives in the sentence “ensam8ir8tamaata a8ic8ssari,” which means “She prevents him from going to her rival,

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to his second wife."\textsuperscript{66} It is unclear how exactly the first wife could have prevented the action of her husband, but this translation suggests that first wives exerted power over subsequent wives and some measure of influence over their husbands. Illinois marriage structure functioned within a gender imbalance and granted power to both husbands and first wives, but in separate spheres. The power of husbands, however, extended over all of their wives.

**Work Division**

The Illinois divided labor by gender. Male responsibilities were mostly located away from the village while female work centered on village life. Deliette devotes a significant amount of his account to gendered work divisions and proves to be a very reliable source regarding the socially defined roles of men and women. The function of berdaches, those belonging to a third gender, reveals important aspects of Illinois gender through their intermediate position. Gender-based work division is an essential element in the understanding of the function of gender in Illinois culture.

The majority of male roles in Illinois culture fell under the broad categories of hunting, fishing, and warfare, which routinely took men away from the village. Deliette mentions hunting parties frequently in his memoir, beginning with the fact that when he first arrived to an Illinois village, all of the men (except for those too old to hunt) were out of the village hunting.\textsuperscript{67} In at least one instance, Deliette accompanied the men on a buffalo hunt and describes the Illinois hunting style of ambushing the prey and firing as many arrows as possible. In addition to buffalo, Illinois men hunted beavers for pelts as

\textsuperscript{66} Gravier and Largillier, *Dictionnaire Illinois-français*, 31.

\textsuperscript{67} Deliette, “Memoir of De Gannes,” 308.
well as other game for food. The numerous waterways in Illinois country made fishing an important way for the Illinois to supplement their diet. Warfare, important in both a ritual and protective sense, was another activity that took men away from the village. Experience and success in warfare were especially important in the definition and expression of masculinity. The specific ways in which warfare affected gender are discussed at length later.

Female roles included childrearing, agriculture, and the maintenance of dwellings and resources. In his bilingual dictionary, Gravier recorded the Illinois word “ni8ikieg8a” to identify a man’s wife along with the fact that she took care of the dwelling and cooked. Women, by virtue of their location mostly in the village and in its surroundings, watched children. Agriculture, the staple of Illinois subsistence, was also entirely within the female domain. Deliette comments on Illinois women performing agricultural duties and gathering additional food items such as roots. His many descriptions show that he was very interested in the fact that women farmed, which was the opposite in Europe where men were mostly responsible for farming. While men hunted, the women were responsible for processing the kills and preparing the meat. Women produced and carried the materials for constructing temporary dwellings at winter hunting villages. After observing women performing duties that in France belonged to men, Deliette commented that they were “very industrious.” In addition to those duties already listed, women gathered wood, made vessels for storage, dyed pelts,}

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70 Deliette, “Memoir of De Gannes,” 312.
and made moccasins. Women performed a number of diverse activities that required constant work. Deliette’s perspective becomes more understandable considering that the bulk of men’s work occurred outside the village in short, intense bursts while women worked in or near the village almost constantly.

Rigid boundaries between masculine and feminine roles in Illinois culture reinforced the “other” status of the berdache. In Illinois culture, this status elicited reactions of contempt for pursuing a route outside of masculinity and femininity and fear of the effects of special ritual status. The social position of the berdaches reinforced the separation between masculine and feminine by providing a foil to the system. The berdaches did not conform to the usual division between the male and female genders, which threw the rigidity of the gender roles into sharper relief.

Deliette describes the upbringing and function of berdaches, an intermediate gender status between male and female. Berdaches were anatomically male individuals who performed female work roles and who dressed and spoke as females. Father Jacques Marquette corroborates this observation in his description of Illinois culture included in the account of his first voyage down the Mississippi River. He records that the berdaches dress like women and “glory in demeaning themselves to do everything that the women do,” but do not marry. Potential berdaches were most likely identified during childhood perhaps after they showed more interest in female roles over male roles. Berdaches engaged in sexual relationships with both men and women, but homosexuality was a category that operated independently of the berdaches. Though

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74 Marquette, “Of the First Voyage Made by Father Marquette,” 129.
they fulfilled feminine roles, berdaches were not necessarily homosexual, and not all homosexuals were berdaches.76

The Illinois accorded special ritual significance to berdache in connection to their status as a third gender in the midst of separate male and female roles. Marquette implied a special ritual status for berdaches in identifying them as manitous themselves, indicating that the Illinois recognized a special access to spiritual power.77 Specifically, Marquette comments that the berdaches were present at all of the “juggleries,” a collective term used by the French to refer to a number of different Native American rituals. Marquette also records the presence of berdaches at “the solemn dances in honor of the Calumet,” at which they sang but could not dance.78 This specificity suggests that the berdaches were prevented from dancing by their gender status, which gave them certain ritual functions. The Illinois also most likely recognized some berdaches as healing specialists or shamans.79 Marquette recorded that berdaches were required to be present at council meetings because “nothing [could] be decided without their advice.”80

Though this suggests that berdaches held some amount of influence, it is clear from French accounts and Illinois linguistic evidence that they were not held in esteem. The Illinois word “mantchinag8si8a” connected the terms “monster” and “unnatural” to berdaches.81 The association of such terms reveals the Illinois conception of the berdaches as an “other” category in a derogatory sense. Cowardly men were exposed to

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76 Hauser, “Berdache,” 50.
77 Hauser, “Berdache,” 47.
79 Hauser, “Berdache,” 52. Berdaches among the Sauk and Fox tribes fulfilled shaman roles, and the special spiritual status of Illinois berdaches makes it likely that Illinois berdaches also fulfilled the role.
80 Marquette, “Of the First Voyage Made by Father Marquette,” 129.
81 Gravier and Largillier, Dictionnaire Illinois-français, 245.
social ridicule by being forced to wear women’s clothing. The social stigma of being forced to dress as a woman suggests that berdaches experienced a variation of this stigma in their removal from the male sphere.

The ritual and social status of berdache is somewhat complicated by the fact that there was no similar gender classification in Western European culture and French observers may have misunderstood certain aspects. The dearth of information about the specific functions of berdaches also clouds the discussion of their place in Illinois culture. It is clear, however, that berdaches did possess special spiritual significance and had unique roles in certain rituals, but also that these unique positions did not grant them social esteem. This unique ritual status reinforced the position of the berdaches as an “in-between” category in Illinois culture.

**Warfare**

Warfare was a male-centered practice in Illinois culture that was vitally important in fulfilling cultural standards for masculinity. The Illinois definition of masculinity emphasized warfare and hunting above all else. Small group raids carried out by as few as six or as many as fifty men, the main type of Illinois warfare, had special social significance for men in accumulating influence. Successes in raids granted the ability to act as a leader of future raids, which enhanced an Illinois male’s status even more. In addition to his personal manitou, each warrior received a special war manitou to lead him to success in war. Young Illinois men began to build their military prestige in their

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82 Hauser, “Berdache,” 49.
early- to mid-twenties. Before they had established themselves as skilled warriors, young men performed the roles that females performed at the village while the raiding party was away. Deliette records that these young men set up camp, constructed shelter, gathered firewood, and cooked. These female roles were essential to the survival of the group, and the fact that young men new to warfare were required to perform them helps explain the process of acquiring status through performing appropriate social duties.

After proving his skill as a participant in raiding parties, any warrior could lead a war party, and his term as a leader was determined by his success. Besides leading the raiding party in the field, the leader performed important rituals before leaving the village. Each village contained a number of war chiefs, those who had earned the right to lead raiding parties and perform the requisite rituals. Before each party left, a war chief held a ritual war feast in order to summon spiritual power for success. War chiefs also possessed the party’s “war bundle,” which comprised a “collection of the members’ religious relics and medicine.” Warfare was an essential element of Illinois spirituality for the way in which it symbolized the balances and imbalances of power. As different tribes went to war, so did certain manitous combat each other.

The Illinois, along with many other Native American cultures, engaged in warfare for the purposes of protection and vengeance, which were two main responsibilities of Illinois males. The practice of “mourning wars” had a great impact on Native American cultures both before and after European contact. A loss of life had to be ritually replaced with another person, who was almost always a captive taken from another tribe during a raid. Taking captives was a principal motivator for going to war. Male captives were

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usually killed immediately or taken back to the village to be tortured and then killed. Illinois kin groups adopted the women and children who could survive the trip back to the village. As previously mentioned, Illinois men often took female captives of marriage age as secondary wives, who were subordinate to first wives.

Though warfare was a masculine activity, women and berdaches did participate sometimes. Their participation, however, was regulated in order to maintain warfare as a masculine practice. For example, women and berdaches were prevented from using bows and arrows, which were reserved for males only. Instead, women and berdaches used clubs and knives. The participation of women and berdaches did not reduce warfare from its status as a socially important male activity, but instead represented communal participation in a ritually significant activity.

Illinois warfare practices were important to the function of gender in a number of ways. Success in war was an essential part of the construction of masculinity in Illinois society. Men who built up success in war acquired more influence in society than those who did not. As discussed previously, success in war was a prerequisite for marriage. Warfare was also significant to gender in its contribution to the gender imbalance in Illinois society. Warfare generated female captives who became secondary wives and most likely hunting women, and was responsible for the reduction in the male population that further skewed the sex ratio. The effects of warfare had a significant impact on the gender balance of Illinois culture, which in turn affected gender roles and dynamics.

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Gender Status

In Illinois culture, gender was an essential aspect in defining a person’s social status. As discussed above, males fulfilled their social duties through activities mostly outside of the village arena, while the lives of women and berdaches were centered in the village. Therefore, women and perhaps berdache did possess some influence by virtue of their control over village life and resources. Males did, however, possess more power and autonomy than women and berdaches in Illinois culture.

Males gained influence through the display of skill in hunting and warfare and served as the “ceremonial, economic, military, and political leaders” of Illinois culture.\textsuperscript{90} Hunting and raiding were more ritually significant than female tasks. While it is clear than males were the leaders in most realms of Illinois society, the status of women and berdaches are more difficult to evaluate. Many accounts are unclear on this subject due to misunderstanding on the part of the French observers. Some Frenchmen referred to Illinois women as “slaves” to men after observing them almost constantly at work while men seemed to lounge about the village.\textsuperscript{91} While it is true that secondary and tertiary wives were often captives, certainly not all women deserved the label.

Women successfully fulfilled their roles by “industriously nurturing children, constructing and tending cabins, gathering wood, procuring and preparing food, dressing skins, and tilling fields.”\textsuperscript{92} In these realms outside the participation of males, women possessed influence. Women were responsible for agriculture, which formed the backbone of Illinois subsistence. Hunting, open only to males, was more ritually significant, but the Illinois relied upon crops raised by women when the hunt was

\textsuperscript{90} Hauser, “Berdache,” 53.
\textsuperscript{91} Hauser, “Berdache,” 53.
\textsuperscript{92} Hauser, “Berdache,” 53.
unsuccessful. The practice of sororal polygyny in one way reduced the power of women by giving more power to their brothers in the arrangement of their marriage and to husbands within marriage. As mentioned earlier, first wives did exercise power over subsequent wives within the female sphere.\textsuperscript{93} Another indication of female status was the gift exchange ritual that occurred leading up to a marriage between the families of the couple. As described by Deliette, the potential groom’s female relatives began the negotiations with the first gift exchange, often followed by many others.\textsuperscript{94} The volume of gifts given at the time of marriage to the bride’s family and the importance of the groom’s female relatives in the exchange certainly indicate a significant female status. According to Deliette, the bride’s acceptance was under the control of her brothers and father to some extent, who exercised control over whom their sisters and daughters married. Overall, Illinois women were subject to male authority throughout their lives, though the context of that power changed.

Overall, males had the ability to exercise more power in Illinois society than women, but women were free of male power in certain spheres in which males did not participate. Menstruation and childbirth were two female activities in which men could play no part. This division was based on fear and the belief that women who were menstruating or giving birth, who were required to move to a special dwelling during such times, could harm the spiritual well-being of males. While women may not have exercised power over men in such instances, male fears of being spiritually polluted by females prevented their involvement and influence in these spheres. While women did

\textsuperscript{93} Hauser, “Berdache,” 54.
\textsuperscript{94} Deliette, “Memoir of De Gannes,” 331-335.
exert power in some female domains, men held power over women in shared social space.

Gender divisions in Illinois culture were rigid, but the communal nature of Illinois society meant that certain tasks identified with one gender occasionally included the participation of other genders. Though males were responsible for hunting, hunting women accompanied the party to help transport the kills or begin the processing of the animal. The Illinois played the game of lacrosse to simulate war and to symbolize the struggle between different manitous and sources of spiritual power. Men, women, and berdaches all participated in lacrosse games.\(^95\) Women and berdaches occasionally participated in war raids, but with certain limits that maintained warfare as an essentially male practice. The participation of women and berdaches in certain male activities is more indicative of the cooperation of the community than of non-rigid gender barriers.

The status of berdaches was even more complex than that of women. Berdaches occupied a social category distinct from that of males and females. The status of the berdache as an incarnated manitou with greater access to spiritual power than non-berdaches set them apart from males and females, emphasizing their intermediate position. Their ability to access this power and perform special ritual functions, however, led more to a response of fear than to honor or respect.\(^96\) Not only did the berdaches operate out of normal practice in their work, they were also potentially dangerous in their

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\(^95\) Deliette, “Memoir of De Gannes,” 341. Deliette comments that before a hunt, “the men play at Lacrosse, a few women mingling with them.” He also identifies the participation of berdaches in his description of a berdache “standing aside like the women to send back the ball to party.” In his dictionary, Gravier defines the term “\text{8e8epatta8anegaba8ita}” to mean “woman who turns around her crosse to throw the ball into the air,” providing further evidence of the participation of women in lacrosse games.

\(^96\) Hauser, “Berdache,” 56.
spiritual status as incarnated manitous, which gave them the ability to directly influence
the delicate balance of spiritual power in potentially harmful ways.

Males, females, and berdaches occupied different social categories in Illinois
culture, with the berdaches occupying a category between the male and female spheres.
Men obtained influence and status through hunting and warfare, and exerted power over
both women and berdaches as the leaders of society. Women’s roles focused on the
village, where they performed a variety of duties that required constant work. Some
women did exercise some power within the female sphere, but only in female spheres.
Berdaches performed female roles, while still occupying a separate, albeit socially
tenuous place in Illinois society based on their special spiritual status. Their function,
defined necessarily as neither completely masculine nor feminine, reinforced the gender
divisions between males and females. While men exercised the most power and
influence overall in Illinois culture, society would suffer both spiritually and physically if
anyone should fail to perform their appointed role.

Conclusion

The first phase in the development of the Pays d’en Haut from 1650 to 1680
occurred in the context of Illinois culture. The elements that do survive, however,
provide vital context for the Illinois who witnessed the transformation of their homeland
into the area known as the Pays d’en Haut. Both the French and the Illinois were active
in this transformation, participating in the invention of new cultural elements as well as
the exchange of some already existing.
Illinois spirituality ordered the spiritual balance of the universe and made it vital that each person fulfill his or her social duties, which were largely determined by gender. Each gender – male, female and berdache – had various functions that had to be performed in order for the society to sustain itself physically, socially, and militarily. The importance of each gender’s roles to the community, however, did not mean gender equality. Men were the military and civil leaders of society and possessed the ability to exert power over their wives and most likely other women such as hunting women. Hunting and warfare, both very ritually significant activities, formed the basis of Illinois masculinity. Women controlled household resources and thus were essential to society in this practical sense and for their reproductive ability, but the only area in which women had power occurred when first wives built up influence over subsequent wives. Berdaches were feared for their potential to control spiritual forces, but were generally regarded negatively for their acceptance of female roles over those of males. Their existence on the periphery of masculinity and femininity sharpened gender divisions in Illinois culture.

As French Jesuits and traders entered the Pays d’en Haut in the second half of the seventeenth century, a new kind of society developed that incorporated elements of both traditions and new cultural elements founded on the ground. As Jesuits taught Christianity with the help of materials translated into the Illinois language, a new kind of Christianity emerged infused with elements of native spirituality. The development of Illinois Christianity had a significant impact on Illinois gender. Definitions of Illinois masculinity, femininity and the berdache gender adapted to the new cultural conditions of Illinois Country.
Chapter 2
Illinois Christianity

Introduction

Father Claude Allouez first encountered Ilimouek Indians, who would later become known as “Illinois” in French records, at the Mission of Saint-Esprit in 1666.\(^7\) After witnessing a calumet ceremony and observing other elements of Illinois spirituality, Allouez reported that “they honor our Lord among themselves in their own way.”\(^8\) Many other Jesuits shared Allouez’s opinion that native spirituality and Christianity were not completely mutually exclusive and that certain elements of native religion could be easily transformed into acts of Christian piety.

Jacques Marquette established the Mission of the Immaculate Conception in 1675 at Kaskaskia to work directly with the Illinois. Other Jesuit fathers worked in the mission after Marquette’s death later that same year, and their efforts began to show good returns in the 1690s, when many Illinois heard the Jesuits’ teachings and were baptized. Rather than teaching in French, the Jesuits immersed themselves in language study in order to communicate and teach in Native American languages. The Jesuit mission amongst the Illinois employed this approach and necessitated the translation of the catechism and important prayers into the Illinois language. This process of translation and communication presented difficulties for the Jesuits when many Christian concepts did

\(^7\) The Mission of Saint-Esprit was located on the southwestern shore of Lake Superior on what is now the northern edge of Wisconsin. It was strategically located on this extremity of Lake Superior to increase contact with Indians using the Great Lakes waterways as transportation.

not possess direct Illinois translations. Fathers were forced to improvise and create meaning in creative ways usually with the help of willing Illinois. The choice of words for these translations and teachings encouraged the development of a unique form of Illinois Christianity that blended Illinois spirituality with Catholicism.  

The development of Illinois Christianity had important consequences for the function of gender and identity in Illinois country. Female spheres of Catholicism formed in the development of devotion groups as more Illinois women converted than men. The function of these women as Christian teachers relied upon their dual identity as Illinois and Christians, which encouraged the blending of religious traditions in Illinois Country. The role of Illinois men in the development of Illinois Christianity has been largely overlooked by scholars but was an important social element nonetheless. Despite the status of the Jesuits as a potential threat to Illinois masculine authority, many Illinois men embraced Christianity. Illinois Christians, both men and women, retained their Illinois identity while accepting and practicing Christianity. This chapter discusses the importance of language and meaning in the development of Illinois Christianity and how this syncretic form of Christianity affected the function of gender in Illinois Country. The Illinois played active roles in this development and adopted it into their identities in ways that impacted Pays d’en Haut communities in significant ways.

The Jesuit Approach to Conversion

The Jesuits approached converting the Illinois, and all other Native American groups, in their own language. The Illinois spoke a language now identified as Miami-

99 Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts,’” 365.
Illinois, a member of the Eastern Great Lakes branch of Algonquian. In addition, Fathers sought parallels between Christianity and Illinois religion in order to make the process of teaching proceed more easily. The Jesuits assigned to the Illinois invested great amounts of effort to learn the Illinois language and to translate the catechism and important prayers. Additionally, Jesuits produced dual language dictionaries to help ease future communication and translation. These translation efforts led to many complications and difficulties, both linguistic and cultural. As the Jesuits translated Christian texts into Illinois and taught in the Illinois language, the Illinois gained control of the concepts. All of the Illinois terms that the Jesuits used to teach were already invested with cultural meaning which became incorporated into Illinois interpretations of Christianity.

As Jesuits struggled to find the best Illinois expression for Christian concepts, meaning became fluid. Illinois words could never be separated from their cultural context even when introduced in the new context of Christianity. The result was an integration of Illinois cultural meaning into Christianity. The Illinois linked the Christian God to their Great Spirit, which was a powerful manitous represented by the sun and occupied a place on a higher plane than the other manitous. The Jesuits recognized this parallel and others like it and encouraged them in teaching the Illinois. Misunderstandings between what the Jesuits meant to communicate and what the Illinois understood arose often as a result. With the association of the Christian God with the Great Spirit, the Illinois continued to sacrifice to other manitous as they had before. The Jesuits tried to eliminate Illinois ritual involving manitous, but they could not eliminate

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100 Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts,’” 367.
101 Bilodeau, “They honor our Lord,” 358.
the mental association of the Christian God with the Great Spirit, nor could they practically eradicate Illinois allegiance to manitous.\textsuperscript{102} Once the Jesuits made connections between Illinois religion and Christianity, the Illinois gained control as they viewed Christian practice and concepts through their existing cultural lens. Illinois women in particular occupied positions of influence in Illinois Christianity as some interpreted Jesuit teachings to the Illinois. Their translation concepts and teaching choices influenced the development of Illinois Christianity.

The Jesuits encouraged these connections intentionally and non-intentionally. Jesuit writings reveal the parallels that they employed to facilitate teaching, such as the association of God with the Great Spirit, and Christian texts translated by the Jesuits reveal other examples. These parallels, however, often led to Illinois understandings that differed from the Christian concepts. The Illinois translation of “sins” became “bad things” and “the soul touched by the grace of God, illuminated by the power of the Holy Spirit” became a “good heart.”\textsuperscript{103} As Jesuit and Illinois interaction increased, the result was a “dynamic language environment” that “encouraged linguistic exchange and creativity.”\textsuperscript{104} An investigation of the Illinois translations of Catholic texts reveals many examples of both the difficulties in translation and the language of Illinois Christianity.

Two texts central to Catholicism are the \textit{Our Father} and the \textit{Apostles’ Creed}. In many cases, multiple translations of these texts into the Illinois language are available thanks to the work of different Jesuits. Three Jesuits in particular made important contributions to the effort to translate texts for the Illinois. Allouez translated a prayer book and a basic catechism. Father Jean le Boullenger also contributed translations of

\textsuperscript{102} Bilodeau, “They honor our Lord,” 358-359.
\textsuperscript{103} Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts,’” 364.
\textsuperscript{104} Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts,’” 365.
religious texts as well as a French-Illinois dictionary. Father Jacques Gravier is credited with the first detailed linguistic analysis of the Illinois language in addition to producing a bilingual dictionary of his own.\footnote{Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts,’” 369.} All of these texts contribute to an understanding of the characteristics of Illinois Christianity. Richard White comments that “Indians were not so much being converted to Christianity as Christ was being converted into a Manitou.”\footnote{White, The Middle Ground, 26.} The creation of Illinois Christianity, however, was not as simple as one tradition overtaking the other. Jesuit-Illinois interaction produced a unique form of Christianity that combined elements of both Christianity and Illinois religion.

**Illinois Christianity**

Illinois translations of Catholic religious texts and the practices of Illinois Christianity reveal its truly syncretic nature. The Jesuits’ choice to teach the Illinois in their own language encouraged syncretism, intentionally or not. The combination of Christian concepts and Illinois culture proceeded largely through the action of Illinois women as teachers and translation assistants. Illinois Christianity was not a wholesale rejection of native religion, but a combination of the two. Illinois Christianity was an important fixture of the Illinois Country culture that developed through the participation of both Illinois and French. It was not only symbolic of the culture; it was also an agent that provided new contexts in which Illinois gender could operate. Understanding the beliefs and practices of Illinois Christianity gives a clearer image of the society in which Illinois gender began to adapt.
The Jesuits’ goal was to communicate Christianity to the Illinois in a comprehensible way while keeping true to its dogmas, but the use of the Illinois language complicated the effort. One indication of this struggle to find a balance between these two goals is the translation of the word for “God.” In his translation of the Apostles’ Creed, Allouez employs the French “Dieu,” in an attempt to set the Christian God apart from any Illinois cultural meaning. Le Boulenger, however, used the Illinois term for “great spirit”: “kichemanet8a.”¹⁰⁷ The word for “spirit,” “manet8a,” comes from the same French rendering of the word “manitou.”¹⁰⁸ The Illinois who heard and recited this version of the Apostles’ Creed would have immediately associated the Christian God with their concept of manitous. The choice to use the prefix “kiche-” meaning “great” represents Le Boulenger’s effort to raise the Christian God above the rest of the manitous. In deciding to use the prefix, he was undoubtedly drawing a parallel between Christianity and the Illinois creation myth that involved the elevation of one manitou above the others.

The translation of “Jesus” posed similar issues for the Jesuits. Both Allouez and Le Boulenger used the Illinois term “akima8a” meaning “our chief.”¹⁰⁹ Identifying Jesus as an Illinois chief encouraged misunderstandings due to the difference in the western concept of a “king” and the Illinois concept of “chief.” The lord-subject relationship was very different from the chief-tribe relationship. Whereas a subject must submit to the commands of his or her lord or king, chiefs led with the consent and input of their tribe members. With the presentation of Jesus as a chief, Illinois Christians associated him with a reciprocal relationship in which they could negotiate terms and introduce

¹⁰⁷ The symbol “8” represents the phoneme “ou” when used in Illinois expressions.
¹⁰⁸ Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts,’” 375.
¹⁰⁹ Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts,’” 378.
demands. This relationship is far different from the Catholic one that describes Jesus as an all-powerful king leading to misunderstandings between Jesuits and Illinois later.

One theme of Illinois Christianity was an emphasis on action rather than on inner belief. Both Allouez and Le Boulenger translated the clause “I believe,” appearing multiple times in the Apostles’ Creed, as the Illinois “nitaramita8a.” This word can also be translated to mean “I obey,” “I give thanks to” and even “I pray to.” The emphasis on action reflected the focus of Illinois religion on relationships, ritual, and personal responsibility for proper behavior. The use of this term encouraged Illinois Christians to connect the ritual and practices of Christianity with their religion’s emphasis on actions.

The importance of oral expression in Illinois Christianity was one manifestation of the emphasis on action. Illinois women taught Christianity orally, reinforcing the importance of spoken word. Gravier describes the skill of Marie Rouensa, a young Illinois woman who converted to Christianity who became a Christian teacher: “[Marie] has so well remembered what I have said about each picture of the Old and New Testament that she explains each one singly, without trouble and without confusion, as well as I could do – and even more intelligibly, in their manner.” Other women like Marie helped spread Illinois Christianity.

In Illinois culture, as well as many other Native American societies, language possessed “generative power.” Spoken language was an important form of communication, but words also had the power to impact events on earth and beyond.

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110 Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts,’” 371.
112 Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts,’” 392.
Words had the creative power to heal, renew relationships, and perform ritual, but they could also reverse these actions. This power of language manifested itself in Illinois Christianity in the form of hymns and prayers. Singing and repeating certain oral texts was already an important part of Illinois culture. Christian hymns and prayers occupied a similar position in Illinois Christianity as the spoken word did in Illinois religion. Prayer was an especially significant practice in Illinois Christianity. Indeed, Illinois Christianity was defined by the practice of prayer. The Illinois word for Christianity was “araminatchiki,” which meant “those who pray.”  

The importance of the outward expressions of Illinois Christianity like praying, singing hymns, and repeating important texts and stories reflect the infusion of oral expression and action into Christianity.

The Illinois practices of gift-giving and hospitality were also included in the context of Illinois Christianity. The Our Father instructed Illinois Christians to forgive those who have sinned against them, which paralleled existing Illinois practices. The Illinois interpreted their relationships with other humans and with manitous in the context of reciprocity. As long as the appropriate actions and exchanges were performed, all parties received what they needed. There were certain methods of paying restitution and restoring order when offenses were committed including the ritual of covering the dead.  

Deliette provides a description of the covering of the dead ceremony is his account of the Illinois. He recorded that when an Illinois was killed, his or her relatives sought revenge against the perpetrator or his family. The family could also accept gifts from the guilty party as restitution. This exchange of gifts restored order and was interpreted as the forgiveness that Christians are commanded to practice in the Our

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113 Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts,’” 364.
114 Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts,’” 386.
Father. Rituals such as this one represent the influence of Illinois culture in Illinois Christianity and contribute to its emphasis on actions.

The interpretation of dreams in Illinois Christianity displays the combination of Christianity and Illinois culture in particular clarity. Dreams functioned as important mediums of communication between humans and manitous in Illinois culture. The interpretation of dreams could reveal the cause of an illness or prescribe an action to be taken in the future. Various images and themes had specific meanings for the Illinois. It is worth noting that Christianity had a history of dream interpretation with examples throughout its history and in the Bible. Illinois Christians eventually began to report having had dreams including Christian images. Father Gabriel Marest records the dream that an Illinois Christian identified as Henri received when suffering from smallpox. In the dream, “he seemed to see Missionaries who restored to him his life, who opened to him the door of heaven, and who urged him to enter therein; and from that moment he began to feel better.”116 It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the “validity” of dreams, but the Illinois Christian adoption of Christian themes into their system of dream interpretation provides another example of syncretism.

Social Elements of Illinois Christianity

Why the Illinois converted to Christianity in the first place is a complex question that is connected to gender. Sources reflect variations in the reactions of different Illinois genders to Christianity, suggesting that gender played a role in Illinois Christianity. One


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motivating factor that could have been present for both males and females was belief in the truth of Christianity. Other arguments for conversion based on gender politics and economics are compelling, but true belief as a reason for conversion cannot be ignored. The ability to gain influence in the new context of Christianity was most likely a motivator for some women. Illinois Christian women, who responded favorably to Christianity in greater numbers than men, became Christian teachers to both men and women. This new role of influence would have proven to be attractive given the patriarchal Illinois society. The motivation for men to convert, besides belief, included the desire to become involved in the new Illinois Christian community that was gradually becoming important in Illinois Country. In addition, closer contact with the French gave Illinois men a greater opportunity to trade for French goods. The Jesuits were not traders, but missions did have the potential to function as trading posts. In some cases, Illinois masculinity adapted to include Christianity as an acceptable element of identity even though some Illinois males remained resistant and even hostile.

The Jesuits’ conversion efforts among the Illinois had significant social consequences for the societies of Illinois Country. Jesuit fathers who ministered to the Illinois had few successes in conversion until the 1690s, a turning point in the missions to the Illinois. It was in this period that Illinois Christianity developed as Catholicism became a “more nuanced, socially combative arena once it included a larger, more diverse population.” More Illinois women converted than men, but conversion

119 Sleeper-Smith, Indian Women, 28.
affected the social structure of Illinois society including those who did not choose to convert. Illinois Christian women eventually began to marry French fur traders in monogamous Catholic marriages that affected the fur trade and gave both parties advantages not easily attainable otherwise. While much has been said about the role of females in Illinois Christianity by scholars such as Susan Sleeper-Smith, the place of males and berdaches has not received much attention. A closer look at primary sources reveals that the position of Illinois males especially deserves more consideration in a discussion of gender in Illinois Christianity.

Most leadership positions in Illinois societies, if not all, were held by males. In addition, males wielded power in marriage politics over their wives. Male leadership faced a challenge from Jesuits as another source of authority for Illinois Christians. The reactions of Illinois men to these changes in authority were complicated. Some undoubtedly resisted the Jesuit influence while others converted to Christianity. Deliette comments that the Jesuits’ conversion of women encourages them to “mock at the superstitions of their nation,” which “often greatly incenses the old men.”\textsuperscript{120} This anger, according to Deliette, occasionally motivates the men to kill Jesuits. Father Julien Binneteau, who ministered to the Illinois in the 1690s, commented that among the young men were “monsters of impurity,” and for this reason he could “find hardly a single young man” committed to “the exercises of religion.”\textsuperscript{121} There was clearly tension between the male Illinois leaders and the Jesuits, yet other sources suggest that many men converted and cooperated with the Jesuits.

\textsuperscript{120} Deliette, “Memoir of De Gannes,” 361.
\textsuperscript{121} Binneteau, “Letter of Father Julien Binneteau,” 67.
The conversion of males may have been an attempt to insert themselves into the Illinois Christian world that was mostly inhabited by women and try to gain authority in this new context. Illinois men benefitted from greater involvement in the fur trade through the French husbands of their female relatives. To gain these benefits, men encouraged the conversion of their female family members. The goals of Jesuits and fur traders diverged often, however, and the amount of tension between the two groups suggests that Illinois men could have benefitted from the union of their female relatives with fur traders without cooperating with Jesuits.

Evidence from the Jesuit Relations suggests that male conversion often seemed genuine and did not mean the loss of authority in Illinois society. Jesuit Father Jacques Gravier, who ministered to the Illinois (especially to the Kaskaskia) for thirteen years beginning in 1688, describes the “assiduous perseverance of the Young men Of 25, 30, 35, and even those of over 40 years of age” in learning the catechism.122 Included in this group of men is the chief of the Kaskaskia and his brother. The young men also “sing, night and day, chants that instruct them and keep them occupied” when they are “in the lodges of their chiefs.” Evidence such as this does not suggest that the policy of Illinois leadership as a whole was to discourage conversion and indicates that Illinois men were divided. Illinois masculinity adapted to accept Christian identity in Illinois males who held societal influence.

Illinois Christianity emerges as more than a female sphere in the wake of the evidence from the Relations and the observation that the mere survival, let alone the success, of the Jesuits suggest that the majority of Illinois males did not overwhelmingly object to their mission. Illinois warriors, who greatly outnumbered the Jesuits, could

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have easily destroyed the missions had their grievances been strong enough. That they were allowed to remain and even enjoyed a period of success in the 1690s suggests that Illinois men found some economic, religious, or political advantage to their existence despite the fact that Jesuits posed a challenge to their cultural authority.

The persistence of Jesuit missions suggests the cooperation of Illinois males, but it is also responsible at least in part for the decline of the berdaches. After 1698, there is no mention of the berdaches amongst the Illinois. Berdaches cease to be mentioned within a few decades of contact in other cases of European contact as well. The Illinois may have discouraged berdaches or may have not called attention to them as French cultural influences in the region increased. The overwhelming opinions of the berdaches in French sources and in Illinois linguistic evidence are of judgment and contempt; it is reasonable to suggest that the social position declined as a consequence of increased French presence in the region. There is evidence, however, of the existence of berdaches in nearby tribes after it ceases to be mentioned amongst the Illinois. The Illinois berdaches who were not discouraged may have moved to other tribes who still recognized them. There are many possible explanations for the disappearance of the berdache from written records, but it is reasonable to assume that the institution did not figure into the shared Illinois-French communities in Illinois Country after the end of the seventeenth century. The lack of comment on Illinois berdaches suggesting their disappearance from the Illinois Country is a clear indicator of the evolution of a joint Illinois-French culture in the region.

While berdaches disappeared from the historical record in the 1690s, Illinois Christian women had new religious and social avenues opened to them outside of the relatively “narrow range of acceptable female behaviors” in Illinois culture. Rather than entering a polygynous marriage, they could have elected to remain celibate and pursue a life of devotion to God as a nun would in Europe. Monogamous, Catholic marriages with fur traders became an option at the turn of the eighteenth century when Jesuits in Illinois country began to perform intermarriages. Illinois Catholic women retained their Illinois identity and added the constantly developing Illinois Christianity to it. In this way, they came to personify Illinois country communities as a combination of French elements, Illinois elements, and new inventions that arose from interaction between the groups.

As more Illinois women accepted Christianity than men, Illinois Christianity functioned as a “shared female experience” for Illinois Christian women. Gravier encouraged Illinois women to convert and become active in their devotion. He encouraged them to use female saints, especially the Virgin Mary, as role models. Female devotion groups, which were often focused on one or a few saints, developed with the encouragement of Gravier. One such group gave particular devotion to the Virgin Mary and emphasized chastity and virginity. In contrast to insular convents in Europe, these female devotion groups maintained their Illinois identities and community ties and actively proselytized. Gravier encouraged Illinois Christian women to teach

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126 Intermarriage between Illinois Catholic women and French fur traders is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.
128 White, *The Middle Ground*, 67-68.
through storytelling, which became a specific context in which Christianity was infused into Illinois culture rather than replacing it. Women used the Illinois tradition and style of storytelling to teach about Christianity in Illinois terms. In addition to proselytizing, Illinois women most likely helped Gravier improve his language skills and undoubtedly contributed to the extensive Illinois-French dictionary that Gravier compiled. Through their proselytizing and language assistance, Illinois Christian women were active participants in the development of Illinois Christianity. Though some males certainly did accept Christianity, the greater number of female converts led to the formation of a female sphere of Illinois Christianity that encouraged active participation.

Women occupied a unique place in Illinois Christianity which encouraged them to remain participants in Illinois communities and retain their Illinois identities. Women, and Illinois Christians in general, did not accept Christianity and French culture as wholesale replacements to their own culture, but instead merged the two. The participation of women in the proselytizing process relied upon their knowledge of Illinois language and culture. While the voices and experiences of most of these women are absent in the historical record, Jacques Gravier recorded Marie Rouensa’s story. Through her conversion and activity in Illinois Christianity it is possible to view some elements in the unique role of Illinois Christian women.

Gravier records the conversion of Marie Rouensa in 1693, during the height of Jesuit success in Illinois country in the 1690s. After accepting Christianity, Marie

129 For further reading about the role of Native American women in Christianity, see Allen Greer’s Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) Mohawk Saint describes the conversion and devotion of Catherine (or Kateri) Tekakwitha, a Mohawk Christian who herself came to be an object of devotion for later generations of Iroquois Christians.
“had resolved never to marry, in order that she might belong wholly to Jesus Christ.”

Gravier encouraged her in her decision and commented often on her devotion and skill in storytelling. Marie’s devotion even went so far as self flagellation by wearing a “girdle of thorns” almost to the point of crippling herself. Gravier records many of the ways that Marie taught and encouraged other Illinois Christians: by teaching women and children in her home and by using Biblical images provided by Gravier “explained the pictures on the whole of the Old Testament to the old and the young men whom her father assembled in his dwelling.” Marie presents an interesting example of an Illinois woman teaching Illinois men of influence. This account suggests that Marie Rouensa had some measure of influence over these men as a Christian teacher, as the daughter of a chief, or as a combination of the two. It is clear that her father approved of Marie teaching as did the men in attendance. This provides even more evidence that Illinois males did not view Jesuits as a real threat to their authority.

**Conclusion**

The Jesuits introduced Christianity to the Illinois on Illinois terms. After years of language study, Jesuits translated important texts and prayers into the Illinois language. While Jesuits were themselves the motivation behind the conversion efforts in the beginning, they lost control of the development of Illinois Christianity early on if indeed they ever did in fact possess control at one time. Illinois Christianity became a syncretic blend of Christian concepts and Illinois religion. Jesuits often had difficulty translating exact Christian concepts into the Illinois language and when they did come close to

finding a useful translation, the Illinois terms could not be emptied of their cultural context. The Illinois, not the French, controlled the conversion process and the motivation for the creation of the middle ground was the benefits available to both groups rather than the political stability supposedly supplied by French presence.

Illinois Christianity had a great effect upon gender in Illinois Country past the role of women. Scholars have discussed the new role that developed for women as Christian teachers operating under the authority of Jesuits, but Christianity affected Illinois berdaches and males as well. Additional pressure from Jesuits and other French in the area probably led to the decline and disappearance of Illinois berdaches, or they may have joined other Native American culture groups. While it is generally believed that more women than men converted to Christianity, Jesuit accounts prove the existence of devout Illinois Christian men. The Jesuits presented a threat to the power of Illinois males, yet missions were allowed to function and men themselves embraced Christianity without losing social position or influence. These facts suggest that the nature of Illinois male authority was changing along with the development of Illinois Christianity, but most likely remained a male arena.

The effect of Christianity on gender inspired the institution of intermarriage between French men and Illinois Christian women in the first few decades of the eighteenth century. The idea of intermarriage originally corresponded to the plans of officials in France as a way to “frenchify” the Native Americans based on French cultural ideas of blood purity. It is ironic that this plan would not have been possible had not Illinois women accepted Christianity in a very syncretic form. Even though the plan to impress French culture upon Native Americans failed, Jesuits continued to perform
intermarriages for a variety of reasons. French-Illinois intermarriage affected Illinois Country’s social and economic functions profoundly and had Illinois Christianity as an important starting point.
Chapter 3
Intermarriage

**Introduction**

Some of the earliest plans for the colonization of New France included intermarriage between Native American Catholic women and French men. Jean-Baptiste Colbert, French King Louis XIV’s Minister of Finance, included intermarriage in his policy of the “Frenchification” of New France developed in the 1660s. Colbert and other officials developed the strategy to help populate New France with the children of French men and “frenchified” Native American women. French culture, the obviously superior choice to French officials, would become superimposed over the different Native American cultures. This plan, however, did not proceed as French officials had expected in Illinois County.

The French-Illinois culture that developed in Illinois Country diverged sharply from the French imperial plans to transplant French culture to the New World. Illinois Christianity, a result of the Jesuits approach to conversion on Illinois terms, reinforced certain elements of Illinois culture rather than replacing them with French culture. In this cultural framework, intermarriage did not serve its intended purpose of removing Illinois women from Illinois culture in order to integrate them into French culture. Instead, Illinois Christian women who married French men helped to construct a unique world that organized the fur trade according to Illinois cultural elements.

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Once French officials observed results opposite to those they had intended, they forbade Jesuits to perform any more intermarriages. Jesuits, for various reasons, ignored the bans and continued the now subversive practice especially in Illinois Country. An investigation of these opposing attitudes toward intermarriage provides an essential framework for understanding how intermarriage functioned in Illinois Country. Through this framework, it becomes possible to investigate the function of gender in intermarriage, which became an important institution in the culture of Illinois Country.

**French and Illinois Attitudes Toward Intermarriage**

Correspondence between French officials in the metropole and those in New France reveal the existence of social order discourse in racial terms in New France by the mid-seventeenth century. Unsurprisingly, early modern French ideas about “blood purity” and race were carried to the New World. Officials had originally hoped that Indians, especially Indian women who could serve as marriage partners for French men, would be assimilated into French culture, but the opposite seemed to occur. Officials eventually applied the same language used in France to discourage “mésaillance,” or mixing, of different social ranks to sexual relationships between French men and Indian women. Interestingly, French ideas about social order held that “natural qualities” flowed through males, which meant that a man could marry below rank with no undesirable effects for the next generation. It would seem to follow from this view that marriages between French men and Illinois women would be permissible, and

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134 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 442.
135 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 442.
136 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 443.
intermarriages were part of French policy in the early years of New France. This policy was officially overturned when Indian women were not being assimilated into French culture as planned. Practices on the ground, however, did not always conform to the wishes of officials as in the case of intermarriage in Illinois Country.

Throughout the seventeenth century, official French policies cited intermarriage as a vehicle for Indian assimilation into French culture. In a 1627 charter to the Company of New France, Cardinal Richelieu stated that the Native Americans, after converting to Christianity, would be “considered natural Frenchmen” which included the right to reside in France and to accumulate property “with rights of inheritance and bequest.” Directly encouraging intermarriage, officials collected a fund from Versailles to provide Indian women with dowries.

At the same time that money was sent to New France to encourage French men to marry Native American women, Colbert formed his policy of “Frenchification.” He encouraged various strategies of Indian assimilation into French culture. Ideally, French missionaries would convert and “civilize” Native American women who would marry French men and produce new citizens of New France loyal to French culture. He sent instructions to leaders in New France reminding them that their duty was “to stir [the Native Americans] away from their savage customs and to compel them to follow [theirs].”

It is clear, however, that despite Colbert’s commitment to his Frenchification policy, he harbored doubts that Native American blood would not “pollute” the construction of a French society in the New World. At the same time that Colbert sent

137 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 451.
138 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 451.
139 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 452.
140 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 452.
money to be used as dowries for Native American women, he also sent a fairly limited number of French women with dowries of their own. These “filles du roi” (“daughters of the king”) represent some doubt on the part of Colbert, and probably other French officials as well, that their plans of assimilation in New France would not be successful.\textsuperscript{141} These doubts were proven well-founded when intermarriage failed to automatically transmit French culture to the Illinois.

The idea of intermarriage between cultures was well-established in Illinois Country and in the Pays d’en Haut in general. The region was highly diverse and included a range of groups: Illinois, Miami, Potawatomi, Huron, Mahican, Fox, Sauk and Wabunaki among others.\textsuperscript{142} Intermarriage between groups for diplomatic reasons was a common practice in Illinois Country.\textsuperscript{143} Women played an important role in diplomacy through marriage, but they most likely possessed little autonomy in making marriage decisions. Men controlled the marriage decisions of their sisters and daughters as part of their status as societal and familial leaders in Illinois culture. Though Illinois men, especially Christians, may have exerted influence over the marriages of their Christian sisters and daughters to Frenchmen, some Illinois women used Christianity and intermarriage to construct new identities and cultural meanings.

After her conversion, Marie Rouensa became one of the first Illinois women to be married to a French man. The events leading up to her marriage reveal many interesting facets of the function of gender in French-Illinois intermarriage. Her example, though it

\textsuperscript{141} Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 454. Aubert indicates in a footnote that estimates for the number of “filles du roi” sent to New France vary from 774 to 1,200. See the following for further reading on the subject: Silvio Dumas, \textit{Les filles du roi en Nouvelle-France} (Quebec, 1972); Gustave Lanctôt, \textit{Filles du joie ou filles du roi: Etude sur l’émigration féminine en Nouvelle-France} (Montreal, 1952).

\textsuperscript{142} Sleeper-Smith, \textit{Indian Women}, 38.

\textsuperscript{143} DuVal, “Indian Intermarriage,” 282-283.
is a somewhat peculiar case owing to Rouensa’s father’s status as an Illinois chief, indicates that intermarriage affected Illinois men and women who did not directly participate in intermarriage.

Gravier wholeheartedly supported Marie Rouensa’s decision to devote her life to Christ, but her father, a Kaskaskia chief, and her mother did not. Her parents had arranged for her to marry Michel Accault, a fur trader infamous for his rough character, would not tolerate her wishes. In addition, Marie’s father forbade any Illinois to go to the Jesuit chapel (though some still assembled) and encouraged other chiefs in the area to do the same. Marie eventually suggested a compromise: she would marry Accault if her parents would accept Christianity and be baptized. Her parents agreed and Accault claimed a newfound devotion to Christianity after seeing Marie’s example. Father Gravier performed the marriage in 1699. Marie’s devotion remained a significant element of her identity after her marriage. Gravier records that she took “for her special patronesses the Christian Ladies who have sanctified themselves in the state of matrimony.” She continued to teach and encourage other Illinois Christians and brought babies and adults to be baptized.

The reactions of Rouensa’s father and husband to the compromise have interesting implications for the role of gender in Illinois Country society. Gravier records that after Marie agreed to the marriage, her father “informed all the chiefs of the villages, by considerable presents, that he was about to be allied to a Frenchman.” Rouensa’s father already possessed considerable social influence as a chief, but he sought to gain access to the fur trade through his daughter’s marriage, which required him to convert to

Christianity. Accault admitted to Gravier after his marriage that “he no longer recognize[d] himself,” and could “attribute his conversion solely to his wife’s prayers and exhortations, and to the example that she gives him.”

Given the often antagonistic relationship between Jesuits and fur traders, it is unlikely that Gravier would invent this change in Accault. Gravier comments upon Accault’s unsavory character before his marriage to Rouensa multiple times, and implies that Rouensa’s influence must have been great indeed in order to inspire such a radical change. Both of these men, Rouensa’s father and Accault, responded to Christianity and intermarriage in ways that reveal the complexity of intermarriage in Illinois Country.

The Context of Intermarriage – The Fur Trade and Jesuits

Beginning in the 1680s, it became clear to French officials that Colbert’s Frenchification policy was not achieving the desired results. Fur traders were constantly joining Native American communities and forming sexual relationships with Native American women. Illinois Country especially gained a reputation as the “hotbed of métissage.” Certain developments in the fur trade, in addition to the Jesuit conversion approach, help explain why immersion into French culture failed.

In 1696 when the supply of furs in the market threatened a glut, Louis XIV revoked the trading licenses that authorized trading in the Pays d’en Haut. The official end of the fur trade had significant consequences for the regional culture. Trading continued illegally, with traders labeled “coureurs de bois,” literally “runners in the woods.” The relationships formed between traders and Native Americans in Illinois

147 Gravier, “Letter by Father Jacques Gravier,” 211.
Country and in other areas of the Pays d’en Haut were based on the exchange of furs for French trade goods, and the ban threatened this balance.\textsuperscript{149} Ironically, the ban that should have reduced French contact with Native Americans had the opposite effect. Relationships between traders and Native Americans became more personal without the French government supplying trade goods.

Kinship, already a vital element to identity in Illinois Country, became a defining category in French-Illinois culture. Previous to French arrival, kinship created a sense of collective identity in which one’s associations were as important, perhaps even more important, to a person’s identity than individual characteristics.\textsuperscript{150} The fur trade operated within this kinship context before the trade ban, but connections between traders and Native Americans became even more vital after the ban.

Intermarriage served as a unifying element between traders and Native Americans that provided a context of kinship. A trader gained more direct access to furs through his wife and her kin group since women controlled household resources. As kin, a trader could acquire furs hunted by his wife’s male relatives and provide them with French trade goods in return. A Catholic, monogamous marriage to a trader gave Illinois women a new avenue in society apart from polygynous marriage in Illinois society.

The relationship between Jesuits and laymen – fur traders and some soldiers - was full of tension in general, but relationships between traders and Native American women frustrated Jesuits the most. With increased proximity between traders and Native Americans and the lack of French women in New France, sexual relationships between traders and Indian women could not have been a surprise. Jesuits objected to these

\textsuperscript{149} Sleeper-Smith, \textit{Indian Women}, 42.
\textsuperscript{150} Sleeper-Smith, \textit{Indian Women}, 43.
relationships on the grounds that they were examples of sexual immorality. They often used the term “marriage in the manner of the country” to describe the marriage-like partnering of traders and Native American women without the official consent of the church.  

The Jesuits believed these sexual relationships and the influence of fur traders in general to be corrupting influences to their potential converts and looked for ways to reduce sexual immorality. One Jesuit, “ashamed” to name what occurred in and around French forts, commented that “the women have found out that their bodies might serve in lieu of merchandise and would be still better received than Beaver-skins.” He expresses his frustration that missionaries have not been able to stop this “most Continual Commerce” and that it even seems to increase. He blames the corruption of their mission directly on the traders as most Jesuits did: “These [trade post garrisons] are...so pernicious that we can truly say that they are the greatest scourge of our missions.” Marrying traders and Illinois women in the Catholic Church was a convenient way for Jesuits to begin to eliminate the “scourge” represented by sexual immorality.

**Subversive Intermarriage**

The first decade of the eighteenth century witnessed an official reversal of previous intermarriage policies. New France was in near economic collapse, which added to the stress created by the failure of intermarriage to reproduce French culture in

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151 Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women*, 17.
the New World. Assimilation attempts were not producing the desired results, and
officials in New France reported problems with maintaining order in the colony and an
inability to control the actions of traders. Jacques-René de Brisay de Denonville,
Governor of New France from 1685 to 1689, wrote that instead of assimilating French
culture, Native Americans had “communicate[d] very much all that they have that is the
worst, and take likewise all that is bad and vicious in us [the French].” Complaining
about the coureurs de bois specifically, Denonville complained that they “adopt a savage
way of life which consists of doing nothing, in being restrained in nothing, in pursuing all
one’s urges, and placing oneself beyond the possibility of correction.” Reports like
these convinced French officials and the King that intermarriage was having the opposite
effect than what they had hoped.

Officials in France and in the New World identified the traders’ unruly behavior
and the tenuous state of New France with sexual relationships between French men and
Native American women. In 1700, Antoine Laumet de La Mothe, sieur de Cadillac,
proposed a mission to civilize Native American girls in the new fort called Detroit. Officials rejected Cadillac’s plan on the grounds that similar efforts had failed and with a
racial argument against encouraging unions between French men and Indian women.
The original theories about blood purity being maintained as long as “natural qualities”
were passed through the male line no longer applied. Indian women were a bad influence
on already unruly traders, and were capable of transmitting “bad blood” to any
offspring.

154 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 455.
155 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 455.
156 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 457.
157 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 458.
Jesuits and other missionaries found themselves in a difficult position in the debate about French-Indian unions, and many supported intermarriage as a way to legitimize inevitable sexual relationships. In 1708, Henry Roulleaux de la Vente, vicar-general of the Bishop of Quebec in Louisiana, made a statement allowing missionaries to perform mixed marriages.\(^{158}\) Officials who disagreed with La Vente used blood purity to argue that the children of such unions would inherit bad qualities from Indian women. In the face of continued opposition, La Vente suggested that intermarriage could be restricted to the Illinois Country, where Indian “women [were] whiter, more laborious, cleverer, neater in the household work, and more docile than those of the South.”\(^{159}\) The vast majority of officials, however, did not accept La Vente’s agreement and intermarriages were eventually officially banned.

In 1728, the Superior Council of Louisiana reinforced the ban on “all French and other white subjects of the King to contract marriages with Savage women.”\(^{160}\) The Superior Council released this specific statement in response to complaints from French habitants that Illinois widows were returning to their Illinois kin taking “everything they could” and claiming half of their husband’s estate.\(^{161}\) The Council ruled that Illinois wives did not possess the usual rights of inheritance. To avoid the loss of French property to Indians, the Council stated that widows and children of mixed marriages must remain in the French settlement in order to receive a pension based on the husband’s estate. Despite these official bans and new rulings designed to decrease French-Illinois unions, Jesuits continued to perform mixed marriages.

\(^{158}\) Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 468.
\(^{159}\) Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 469.
\(^{160}\) Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 471. From 1717 until 1763, Illinois Country was administered through the colony of Louisiana rather than Canada.
\(^{161}\) Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 471.
Reports of Jesuits continuing to perform mixed marriages in Illinois Country despite the bans eventually pushed the Superior Council to involve the King directly. Louis XV instructed the Superiors of the Missions to remind their missionaries of the laws against mixed marriages. Father René Tartatin, Superior of the Kaskaskia Mission responded that missionaries resorted to intermarriage in order to curb the “atrocious disorder” that was sexual immorality. Without intermarriage, Tartarin claimed, “the country would be filled with bastards more dangerous than the legitimate métis.” It is not clear whether Tartarin himself subscribed to the argument that he presented to the Council, but it nonetheless represents an effort to gain approval for intermarriage. Implied in Tartarin’s defense is the idea that intermarriage was the solution to the problem of sexual immorality in Illinois Country. Though the Jesuits’ arguments changed emphases throughout the first decades of the eighteenth century, they were all designed to achieve the same effect. Tartarin’s defense, like those offered before him, failed to convince the Council and the King to support intermarriage. The Council continued to emphasize the ban and in 1750, it was explicit in the duties of the Commandant of the Illinois Country to prevent mixed marriages.

The double identity possessed by Illinois Christian women married to French men proved to be a highly complicated arena. Whereas their position as intermediates in the culture of Illinois Country allowed them to be effective as Christian teachers and important links in the function of the fur trade, it became the foundation of official objections to intermarriage. The debate that formed around intermarriage hinged upon Illinois women: their capacity to pass on “bad blood” that would pollute the children of

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162 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 472.
163 Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 472.
French men, to incorporate their husbands into Indian communities rather than joining French communities, and to inherit French property. Though the objections of officials removed nearly all rights from the Illinois wives of Frenchmen, Jesuits continued to perform intermarriages in Illinois Country. The Council and other administrative units could continue to make rulings, but marriage and baptismal registers prove that mixed marriages continued to be a significant cultural feature in Illinois Country.

**Godparenting and the Development of Fictive Kin Networks**

The years of the fur trade ban in the Pays d’en Haut beginning in 1696 witnessed changes in the communities of the region. Rather than ending the fur trade in the west, the ban encouraged the development of personal relationships and communities that included French traders and Native Americans. Illinois Christianity and intermarriage were two major agents in the development of these communities. The practice of godparenting, a tradition in Catholicism, combined with intermarriage to create new kinship bonds in Illinois Country. New kinship bonds formed through godparenting directed the fur trade in the region and had important consequences for the function of gender.

The choice of godparents in Illinois Country that created a “fictive kin network” became largely a choice of trade relations. The massive kin groups constructed with the help of godparenting united French and Illinois in a way that would not have been possible without Illinois Christianity and intermarriage. The vital position of kinship in material exchange was an Illinois element that was applied to the French fur trade. The

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164 Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women*, 43.
combination of an Illinois concept with the French trade produced a new cultural element in the context of the Illinois Country. Fictive kin networks continued to control the fur trade into the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{165} Women were usually the main agents in the creation and extension of godparenting networks and in this way indirectly influenced the fur trade in Illinois Country. Marie Madeleine Réaume L’archêveque Chevalier’s life as an Illinois Christian woman during and after the fur trade bans provides a case study in the operation of fictive kin networks.

Marie Madeleine Réaume was born in the early eighteenth century to Simphorose Ouaouagoukoue, an Illinois woman, and Jean Baptiste Réaume, a French trader.\textsuperscript{166} Her father, uncle and brother all served as interpreters for the King and were heavily involved in the fur trade. Her father’s and uncle’s high social positions, however, resulted more from the women they married than from their own standing. They gained their influential positions in Illinois Country through the connections to the fur trade and to protection provided by their wives.\textsuperscript{167}

Réaume’s first husband was Augustin L’archêveque, a trader licensed in Illinois Country. The couple lived in St. Joseph on the west coast of present-day Michigan on Lake Michigan. There is little documentation of Réaume’s life during her sixteen year marriage to L’archêveque that produced six children, but she begins to appear in fort records as the Widow L’archêveque after her husband’s death. The fort records show that Réaume’s household was prosperous enough to have produced an agricultural surplus along with other items for trade such as canoes and snowshoes.\textsuperscript{168} In 1748,

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\textsuperscript{165} Sleeper-Smith, \textit{Indian Women}, 6.
\textsuperscript{166} Susan Sleeper-Smith, “Women, Kin, and Catholicism,” 432.
\textsuperscript{167} Sleeper-Smith, \textit{Indian Women}, 45.
\textsuperscript{168} Sleeper-Smith, “Women, Kin and Catholicism,” 433.
\end{flushright}
Réaume moved her children north to Michillimackinac to take advantage of the more developed network of trading families. After successfully integrating her family into prominent family networks through the godparenting of her son and the marriages of her daughters, she returned to St. Joseph.

Réaume’s strategy to increase her family’s connections to the fur trade did not end with her return. She soon married Louis Therèse Chevalier, a St. Joseph trader, with whom she bore more children. Through her marriage to Chevalier, Réaume was a crucial connection for the introduction of the Chevalier trading family, already well established in Michillimakinac, to the St. Joseph trading community. Her strategic marriage to Chevalier accomplished her goal of connecting her family based in St. Joseph to the more prosperous trading community at Michillimakinac. Réaume continued to expand her influence as she served as godmother multiple times and gained additional connections through her children’s marriages. Her ambition to expand her family’s influence proceeded through her own actions rather than that of a husband or male relative. After her first husband died, she possessed the autonomy to travel to Michillimakinac and make new kinship connections. Her marriage to her second husband was an additional step in her plan to increase her influence in the trading communities of the Pays d’en Haut well beyond Illinois Country. Réaume is most likely the exception rather than the rule, but she exemplifies the kind of autonomy that was available to Illinois women through marriage to French fur traders and fictive kin networks.
Gender Consequences of Intermarriage

The institution of intermarriage in Illinois Country had important effects for the function of gender for Illinois men, Illinois women and French men. Christian Illinois women gained another social avenue through intermarriage through which they could potentially exercise economic autonomy through participation in the fur trade (alongside their husbands and occasionally without) and social autonomy through the practice of godparenting. Illinois men gained economically and militarily from alliances with French traders through their female kin. The position of Illinois men was complicated, but they became participants in the culture of the Illinois Country that included intermarriage. Non-Christian Illinois women and Christian Illinois women who did not marry fur traders most likely benefitted from kinship alliances with the French in the very least at an economic level since Illinois women controlled household resources. Overall, kinship-based alliances with French traders united French and Illinois in a way that benefitted each gender in different ways.

Intermarriage and godparenting gave Christian Illinois women power in contrast to Illinois culture in which women possessed little power.\(^{169}\) In Illinois culture, marriages were often polygynous with the husband possessing power over his wives with no known examples of the reverse. Based on evidence from Gravier’s dictionary, first wives exercised power over subsequent wives, but there is no other indication that women could exercise power in Illinois culture. With intermarriage, however, Illinois women provided important connections for their French husbands that would not have been available to them otherwise.

\(^{169}\) Sleeper-Smith, Indian Women, 5.
Kinship governed interactions in Illinois culture, and it performed the same function in the new culture of the Illinois Country. Women, however, were not only links but participants in the new operation of kinship networks. Rouensa and Réaume represent the types of opportunities that existed for Christian Illinois women who married Frenchmen. Both became influential matriarchs in Illinois Country. By the time of her death, Rouensa had amassed an estate worth 45,000 livres that included several tracts of agricultural land, two large houses in Kaskaskia, a number of storage barns, and livestock of different kinds. Both of these women left legacies in the form of kinship connections accomplished through godparenting and the marriage of children and material wealth. The ability for a woman to act with the autonomy exhibited by Rouensa and Réaume did not exist in Illinois culture.

Illinois men benefitted economically and militarily from the alliances that their female relatives made with French traders. The Illinois had acquired European trade goods long before the establishment of French presence in Illinois Country. They were not surprised at the increased presence of French traders and Jesuits in the following decades. Further, the simple fact that the Illinois participated in the fur trade, allowed the Jesuit Missions to operate and converted to Christianity suggests that Illinois men gained from the French presence. The low numbers of French in the area would not have been a real challenge to Illinois warriors had they wanted to remove them. Even in the context of conversion, Illinois men most likely continued to exert influence over the marriages of their daughters and sisters as in the case of Rouensa. Rouensa’s father’s boasting about his impending alliance with a trader through his daughter illustrates what was most likely

170 Sleeper-Smith, Indian Women, 31.
a common attitude amongst Illinois men. A kinship alliance with a trader was desirable even for a man who was already in a position of influence in Illinois society.

Non-Christian Illinois women and Illinois women who did not marry Frenchmen gained from intermarriage. Illinois women controlled resources, which would have included the trade goods acquired by their husbands as they traded with the Frenchman integrated into their kin group. Though men held nearly all the power in Illinois culture, Illinois women were just as essential to normal societal functions. Benefits that came through kinship alliances with traders benefitted the kin group as a whole, including women. Additionally, social pressure from the Jesuits and Christianity may have reduced the kinds of harsh punishments that Illinois men inflicted upon their wives for adultery and perhaps other undesirable actions. Even if social pressure did not modify the behavior of Illinois men toward their wives, Illinois women benefitted from intermarriage through material wealth.

**Conclusion**

Intermarriage between cultures was common in the Pays d’en Haut before the arrival of the French. Marriages secured economic, military and diplomatic relationships between groups like they did later between the Illinois and the French.\(^{172}\) In the early years of the French presence in the region, French officials supported intermarriage legally and monetarily as a way to increase colonization when importing more French settlers was not an option. The intention of the French official policies of “Frenchification” was to assimilate the Indians into French culture that had been

imported across the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{173} Officials did, however, support plans to import French women to New France indicating doubt in the assimilationist plans.

When reports of unruly traders engaging in sexual relationships with Indian women and seemingly becoming more Indian than the Illinois women were becoming French reached officials, they issued racialized arguments portraying intermarriage as a threat to the “blood purity” of France.\textsuperscript{174} The reversal in assimilationist policy leading to the prohibition of intermarriage is significant for understanding gender in Illinois Country. First, it indicates that sexual relationships between French men and Illinois women were occurring at a high enough rate to make French officials nervous about controlling the population of New France. While certain political motivations may have led certain colonial officials or missionaries to overstate the problem, they certainly could not have invented the issue entirely. Second, it exposes the division between Jesuits who performed intermarriages and the officials who banned the practice. French officials could not possibly have enforced laws upon the whole of New France considering the sheer size of the territory, which allowed Jesuits to continue to perform intermarriages. This is the context in which the culture of Illinois Country developed. Intermarriage allowed Jesuits to legitimize marriages in the Church, forged important alliances between traders and Illinois that strengthened communities, and allowed gender to function in new ways.

Christian Illinois women, Illinois men and Illinois women who did not intermarry all experienced shifting cultural definitions of gender behavior. Christian Illinois women

\textsuperscript{173} Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 452.
\textsuperscript{174} Aubert, “‘The Blood of France,’” 458.
were instrumental as “cultural mediators” of Illinois Country.\textsuperscript{175} Marriage to a French fur trader connected an Illinois woman’s kin group to a constant market for furs that provided them with French trade goods and military protection. Intermarriage allowed Illinois women the possibility to gain influence in the Illinois Country communities and beyond as Christian teachers in the case of Marie Rouensa and as women of property and business connections like both Rouensa and Marie Madeleine Réaume. Not all women rose to the prominence of Rouensa and Réaume, but the identification of these Illinois women with both cultures granted them the possibility of relative economic and social autonomy. Illinois men gained direct access to the fur trade through the intermarriage of female relatives, and the fur trade became a more significant marker of masculine success. Alliance with a Frenchman promised access to important trade goods, which increased an Illinois man’s status. Illinois women who did not marry traders most likely benefitted from intermarriage indirectly, since Illinois women controlled material resources. Their tasks specific to their gender may have changed as well due to the increasing volume of furs needing processing. Illinois gender developed new and different functions through intermarriage in Illinois Country.

\textsuperscript{175} Sleeper-Smith, “Women, Kin and Catholicism,” 424.
Conclusion

In Illinois Country, a new culture developed beginning in the mid-seventeenth century that included elements from both the Illinois and French cultural traditions and new inventions that arose on the ground. Both French and Illinois participated in the creation of this new culture, which challenges the outdated Euro-centric model of Euro-Native American interaction. The French did not encounter people devoid of culture or agency; the Illinois were just as equipped to interact in a new cultural situation as the French.

Gender functioned in the new culture of Illinois Country differently than it did in Illinois Country, with important consequences for the region’s communities. In Illinois culture, men held power over women including their wives and, in some cases, their sisters, in the case of their marriage choice. Jacques Gravier’s dictionary provides many useful examples of male power that reinforce Deliette’s descriptions of punishments that Illinois men inflicted upon women. Social and ritual pressures in Illinois society kept gender roles rigid and separate by emphasizing performing one’s duties to the community. In this way, Illinois religion reinforced gender roles as ritual intersected with relationships.

Christianity introduced a new kind of authority to Illinois Country in the form of the Jesuits. Both the Jesuits’ authority and the development of a new syncretic form of Illinois Christianity encouraged new functions of gender. The Jesuits’ use of the Illinois language for their teaching gave control of the concepts to the Illinois, especially Illinois women who served as teachers. Illinois words and concepts already possessed meaning,

which combined with Christian concepts to produce a new creation. Illinois Christian women became translators for the Jesuits and Christian teachers, giving them the power to control the translation of Christianity into Illinois terms and understanding. This thesis combines Illinois gender history with an approach similar to Susan Sleeper-Smith, Carol Devens and Karen Anderson, and a linguistic analysis of Illinois Christianity like that provided by Tracy Neal Leavelle. The position of Illinois Christian women as Christian teachers gave them influence in the emerging Illinois Christian community and control over the interpretation and translation of Christian concepts.

Christianity’s effect on Illinois masculinity is complex. Since Illinois men held the power in Illinois society and more women than men accepted Christianity, it would seem that Illinois men would have rejected the authority of the Jesuits. Excerpts from the Jesuit Relations, however, describe Illinois men accepting Christianity and also record influential Illinois men like Marie Rouensa’s father boasting about his advantageous alliance to a Frenchman.177 Furthermore, the mere fact that Illinois men allowed the Jesuits to live and to continue their work suggests tacit compliance at the very least. Illinois masculinity adapted to include Christian identity as acceptable and even advantageous. Marie Rouensa’s father maintained his position of influence and even offers his house for his daughter to teach Christianity. Christian Illinois men could still fulfill their gender roles that included mainly hunting and warfare with the added context of Christian identity. The increasing involvement of Illinois men in Illinois Christianity suggests that the introduction of Christianity changed Illinois masculinity as well as Illinois femininity.

An investigation of the status of the berdaches in Illinois Country is even more complicated than Illinois masculinity. After the turn of the eighteenth century, there is no more mention of berdaches amongst the Illinois in the historical record. Hauser suggests that increased social pressure from the French against Illinois berdaches may have encouraged them to join other Algonquian tribes in the Pays d’en Haut.\textsuperscript{178} The confirmation of Illinois berdaches most likely ended eventually. French records prove that Jesuits and traders did not approve of the berdaches in their middle gender state, but there is also evidence in Gravier’s dictionaries that the Illinois held the berdaches in contempt as well.\textsuperscript{179} Illinois gender roles were rigid, and the berdaches did not conform to masculinity or femininity. The Illinois feared them for the special access to religious power that they possessed, which made berdaches necessary, but there remained an overall feeling of contempt. The social pressure that brought about the end of the berdaches most likely came from both French and Illinois in the new Illinois Country culture, not just the French. Illinois Christianity did not have a place for berdaches, and their status was no longer central to the community.

Christian Illinois women played a vital part in Illinois Country culture through intermarriage to French traders. Intermarriage allowed these women to incorporate their trader husbands into their Illinois kin group and allowed them to gain influence and sometimes the opportunity to exercise economic autonomy. Illinois women married to Frenchmen accumulated property in their own right that they passed on to their children and some even became independent traders alongside their husbands or as widows.\textsuperscript{180} In addition to economic influence, Illinois women used the practice of godparenting to

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\textsuperscript{178} Hauser, “Berdache,” 57-58.
\textsuperscript{179} Gravier and Largillier, \textit{Dictionnaire Illinois-français}, 245.
\textsuperscript{180} Sleeper-Smith, \textit{Indian Women}, 31.
\end{flushright}
increase their influence in Illinois Country communities, strengthen Christian bonds, and increase access to the fur trade for their kin.

Intermarriage changed the function of gender in Illinois Country for more than the Christian Illinois women who married traders. Sleeper-Smith describes how Illinois women were the direct beneficiaries of these marriage alliances, but Illinois men profited from intermarriage as well. Through the marriage of their female relatives to French traders, they gained a constant market for furs that provided them with valuable trade goods. Illinois men could have exercised their power over their sisters and daughters to prevent marriage to Frenchmen, but they did not. Illinois men saw the benefits in intermarriage and encouraged it to continue. Illinois women who did not marry Frenchmen most likely benefitted from intermarriage as well. Women controlled resources in Illinois culture, so it is reasonable to assume that an influx of trade goods would give them and their kin group more influence in Illinois Country.

The wealth of primary sources that exist for Illinois Country and the Pays d’en Haut as a whole provide many opportunities for further research. An in-depth study of Jacques Gravier’s dictionary, perhaps alongside other Jesuit dictionaries as well, would be a unique way to answer questions about Illinois culture and the Jesuits’ understanding of Illinois culture. A number of historians have researched the position of Illinois women, but the effect of the French entrance into the region upon Illinois masculinity has received much less attention. Is there more specific evidence in French accounts or even in the Jesuit Relations that can yield more information about the thoughts and actions of Illinois men as Illinois Country changed? There still remains much to be discovered about the role and status of the berdaches in Illinois Country. Their history in New
France is clouded due to their meager representation in the historic record and the inherent difficulties that arise from examining a cultural element that most French observers misunderstood. Further study could produce a new reading of the sources that inspires new interpretations of the berdaches.

Discussing opportunities for further study seems to beg the question about why the Illinois Country is important enough to be the subject of study in the first place. This thesis fits into the field of the New Indian History, which tells the history of America from the perspective of Native Americans that was either ignored or warped for centuries. Failing to consider countless perspectives gives a woefully incomplete view of the past and damages the understanding of the events that came afterward. The Illinois and all other Native American groups exercised agency in their interactions with Europeans, and the New Indian History studies this agency.

The year 1763 serves as the terminus for the scope of this thesis due to its significance as a watershed year for the Illinois Country and North America in general. The Illinois Country culture continued to be defined by Illinois Christianity, the practice of intermarriage, and the emergence of a métis population that reinforced the multicultural character of the region. In 1763, however, the conditions that had existed for the previous century changed abruptly.

Throughout the eighteenth century, competition between England and France in Europe and in the New World intensified. Native Americans found themselves involved in the imperial contest often as the crucial element that would give one empire leverage over the other in the form of military power. The Ohio Valley became the main arena for the contest since it was the buffer between the English colonies in the east and New
France in the north and west. The conflict radiated outward to Illinois Country, just to the west of the Ohio territory, and elsewhere.

After the French and Indian War, England gained most of New France, including Illinois Country, and pursued a different kind of relationship and governing style than the French. The English were not as interested in making allies with the Indian groups in the Pays d’en Haut since they had been allies of the French and hence enemies of England, and because there was no longer a major imperial threat in North America for which allies would be necessary.  

Pontiac’s Rebellion of 1763 was the response of various Native American groups to poor treatment at the hands of the British. The Rebellion represents a vital turning point after which there was no returning to the previous culture of Illinois Country. The rhetoric of the rebellion was ground in syncretic Christianity like that of the Illinois Country. Native American prophets began to preach the demise of Native American culture unless there was a complete rejection of European culture. The use of syncretic Christianity to urge Native Americans to defend themselves exposes the influence and force of cultures that formed on the ground like in Illinois Country.

Pontiac, an Ottawa Indian, employed this revitalization rhetoric to urge a group of Native Americans from various Algonquian groups to lay siege to Detroit in May 1763. The devastating and symbolic siege lasted until November. Elsewhere, other groups not directly affiliated with Pontiac attacked other English posts: a group of Ojibwe (Chippewa) Indians seized Michillimackinac and a group of Senecas, Shawnees, and Delawares took Fort Pitt and destroyed every other English post in the Ohio Valley.

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183 Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 199.
except Niagara. In addition to military posts, Native Americans also attacked English squatters on the land that England had promised not to settle. Pontiac’s Rebellion was a powerful statement against the changes that occurred in 1763 as England took control of what was formerly New France. 1763 are beyond the scope of this paper, but 1763 marked a turning point that would change the culture of Illinois Country that encouraged new functions of gender in the context of Illinois Christianity and intermarriage.

The Illinois Country from 1650 to 1763 presents a fascinating image of sustained Native American-French contact. Both the Illinois and the French found things to be gained from cooperation, and a new culture resulted that changed the function of Illinois gender in profound ways. This new culture comprising French and Illinois encouraged inhabitants to construct identity from both cultural traditions and from new inventions that developed on the ground. Illinois women gained influence in ways that were not possible in Illinois culture, and expression of masculinity adapted as well. The Illinois Country up until the European imperial conflicts culminating in 1763 presents an image of a region in which Native American cultural and demographic demise does not seem so inevitable.
# Appendix A

Selected Entries from Gravier and Largillier’s *Dictionnaire Illinois-français*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Illinois Word/Phrase</th>
<th>Gravier’s French/Latin Gloss</th>
<th>Notes/Translation</th>
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<td>jaloux, jalouse</td>
<td>jealous</td>
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<td>elle luy defend d aller a</td>
<td>She prevents him</td>
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<td>woman</td>
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<td>I am a woman</td>
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<td>She is a woman</td>
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<td>kimitem8sserimere</td>
<td>je te regarde come une</td>
<td>I see you as a</td>
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<td>femme, tu es un lache.</td>
<td>woman. You are a</td>
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<td>coward.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>natchipata8ic8</td>
<td>alles [=alez] moy querir</td>
<td>Go get for me</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m8i8a</td>
<td>[=go get for me] ma femme</td>
<td>my wife despite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>et amenes [=amenez] la moy</td>
<td>her protests, who</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bongré malgré elle, qui</td>
<td>has chased another</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>en a suivi un autre qu elle</td>
<td>whom she likes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>aime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n8ki8i8agana</td>
<td>l’autre femme, come, la</td>
<td>the other wife,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>seconde [femme], terme</td>
<td>like the second</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>de mepris.</td>
<td>wife. term of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>contempt</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n8ki8i8arata</td>
<td>il la prise [ou]r [une</td>
<td>he takes her as</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>seconde femme]</td>
<td>a second wife</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ni8ikie8g8a</td>
<td>c est ma femme. elle fait</td>
<td>This/That is my</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ma cabanne. elle me loge, a</td>
<td>wife. She</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>soin de moy, me don[n]e a</td>
<td>makes/takes care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>manger.</td>
<td>of my cabin/dwelling. She</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>houses me, cares</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for me, and cooks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for me.</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ni8ikintama8a</td>
<td>j’épouse sa femme. je la</td>
<td>I marry his wife.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a8i8ari</td>
<td>luy pille [=plunder, steal</td>
<td>I plundered/stole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>away]</td>
<td>her from him.</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ni8i8a</td>
<td>ma femme</td>
<td>my wife</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a8i8ari</td>
<td>sa [femme]</td>
<td>his wife</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a8i8auma8a</td>
<td>une femme</td>
<td>a woman</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8i88a</td>
<td>il est marié. il a femme.</td>
<td>He is married.</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He has a wife.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nita8i8miha</td>
<td>je le marie</td>
<td>I marry him</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8e8ita</td>
<td>marié</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ninch8i 8i8e8ni</td>
<td>mariage a deux femmes</td>
<td>marriage to two</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ninch8i 8ec8ssita</td>
<td>son mari [=mari] a encore</td>
<td>her husband</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>deux femmes</td>
<td>already has 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ninch8i8i8arintchiki</td>
<td>les deux femmes d'une même mary</td>
<td>the 2 wives of the same husband</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nita8ic8ssima</td>
<td>elle est seconde femme de mon mary</td>
<td>She is my husband’s second wife</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nipeian8e8itentichiro</td>
<td>tué [=tue] l’a [=la=ma femme] après ma mort</td>
<td>Kill my wife after my death</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r8ntepata8ic8 ni8i8a</td>
<td>alles mettres [sic for Allez, mettez] dehors ma femme. amenes [=Amenez] la moy de chez celuy a qui elle s’est donnee afin que je la punisse</td>
<td>Go bring my wife outside. Bring her to me from the house so that I can punish her.</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitch8i8agana</td>
<td>premiere femme</td>
<td>first wife/first woman</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nita8ic8ssi</td>
<td>je suis seconde femme</td>
<td>I am the second wife.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mikisc8a</td>
<td>vieille femme</td>
<td>old woman</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mitem8ssa tag8si</td>
<td>cette fem[m]e a de l esprit, et cet hom[m]e qui devroit en avoir n’en n’a pas</td>
<td>That woman is intelligent, and that man who would have her can’t</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nacan8ahani</td>
<td>moy femme chante avec les hommes</td>
<td>My wife sings with the men</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitchireni8ita,</td>
<td>homme, femme d’environ 30 ans ou au delà</td>
<td>man, woman of 30 years or so</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitchimitem8ssa</td>
<td>femme, homme d’environ trente ans</td>
<td>woman, man of around 30 years</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kichi mitem8ssa,</td>
<td>nubile depuis longtemps</td>
<td>nubile for a long time</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ninac8ahan</td>
<td>sa femme chante avec les hommes</td>
<td>My wife sings with the men</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitchireni8ita,</td>
<td>femme de mon frère</td>
<td>my brother’s wife</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitchimitem8ssa</td>
<td>femme, homme d’environ trente ans</td>
<td>woman, man of around 30 years</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kichi mitem8ssa,</td>
<td>nubile depuis longtemps</td>
<td>nubile for a long time</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kig1 [kichimitem8ssa]</td>
<td>fille (deleted) femme de 15 17 ans</td>
<td>girl/woman between 15 and 17</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nitchang8a</td>
<td>la femme de mon frère</td>
<td>my brother’s wife</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atchang8ari</td>
<td>la femme de son frère</td>
<td>his/her brother’s wife</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nic8ssa</td>
<td>la femme de mon mary [=mari] dit la première ou la seconde de celuy qui en a deux</td>
<td>the wife of my husband called the first or second if he has two of them</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kigi k8i8ntessi8a</td>
<td>elle [woman] devient tous les jours plus grand</td>
<td>she becomes more pregnant every day</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mitem8ssi8a</td>
<td>si elle estoit [était] bien batuée [=battue], elle ne querellerait pas tant. fem[m]e emportée [=fiery woman]</td>
<td>If she were well beaten, she would not fight as much. (Emportée = captive woman, not fiery woman)</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ninch8ireni8akisi8a</td>
<td>femme enceinte. ou, la femme est enceinte. q[uel] que fois on adjoute</td>
<td>pregnant woman, or the woman is pregnant. Often one adds “It’s because of</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ninch8ireniakisi8aki</td>
<td>I homme et la femme cellecy estant enceinte</td>
<td>The man and woman (couple) there are pregnant.</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kimitchi8a</td>
<td>[’secret belly she has’] femme grosse d’adultere, ou fille grosse de fornicati[on]</td>
<td>grave female adulterer who is pregnant by adultery</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e8ata a8i8ari</td>
<td>il a querellé sa femme, frappé, hontoyé</td>
<td>He fought with his wife, hit her</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitachi8eta</td>
<td>premiere femme. la plus aimée, qui est maitresse de tout</td>
<td>first wife, the most loved, who is mistress of all</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pimit8a</td>
<td>femme qui a eu et quitté plus[iers] mary [s]</td>
<td>woman who had and left many husbands</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8chi8a</td>
<td>elle est marie</td>
<td>she is married</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p8ni kimatamag8aki8i8a, ki8ipentamag8a</td>
<td>ta femme n’est plus infidelle</td>
<td>your wife is no longer unfaithful</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p8ni mattama8a8a</td>
<td>elle cesse d estre adultere, et par la son mary [=mari] cesse d estre prevenu</td>
<td>she stops being an adulteress and by that her husband stops being shamed</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mami8ineh8nta</td>
<td>femme qu’on chasse qui reste malgré cela</td>
<td>woman whom we chase who stays in spite of our chasing</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negat8pir8eta</td>
<td>femme qui a ses cheveux liés, tresses [=braided] par derriere</td>
<td>woman with her hair braided from the back</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mattamec8a</td>
<td>debauchée qui cherche les [hommes]</td>
<td>corrupted one who seeks men</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mattamec8a</td>
<td>qui court les femmes, va toujours les chercher, [’also’] femme qui cherche les hom[m]es</td>
<td>one who courts women, who goes to find them ; also a woman who searches out men</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mattakihe8a anapemari</td>
<td>elle a deshoneré son mary par un adultere</td>
<td>she dishonored her husband with adultery</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mattakihe8a a8i8ari</td>
<td>infidele a sa femme</td>
<td>unfaithful to his wife</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mattakie8a achimari</td>
<td>il a deshoneré son frère en abusant de sa femme</td>
<td>he dishonored his brother in abusing his wife</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mattakihi8e8a</td>
<td>homme ou femme qui commet un adultere</td>
<td>man or woman who commits adultery</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mechahanga</td>
<td>femme ou fille qui frappe le but</td>
<td>woman or girl who hits the goal (lacrosse)</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atesc8i8ni att8a</td>
<td>metaph[orice] d’une femme qui ne se met pas en peine de son mary; elle scait ou en prendre</td>
<td>a woman who doesn’t trouble herself with her husband ; she sleeps with or takes another, or</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un autre, ou se retirer ailleurs</td>
<td>leaves/retires with another</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>femme qui tourne en ronde sa croce [=crosse] pour jeter [jeter] la boule en l air</td>
<td>woman who turns around her crosse to throw the ball into the air</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>femme separee d’avec son mary qui ne veut plus voir quoyq[ue] dans le mesme village</td>
<td>woman separated from her husband who doesn’t want to see her in the same village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il mene avec luy sa femme tous les jours a la chasse avec luy</td>
<td>He brings his wife with him everyday hunting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>femme, fille debauchee</td>
<td>corrupt woman/girl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qui change de femme; qui se remarie apres la mort de sa femme</td>
<td>one who changes wives; one who remarries after the death of a wife</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il n’a pas fait sentinelle pour conserver les femmes, enfens, soy mesme</td>
<td>he was not a guard to protect the women, children, himself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marié a deux soeurs</td>
<td>married to two sisters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mariage a deux femmes</td>
<td>marriage to two women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il court les femmes</td>
<td>hecourts women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il m’a battu a cause des femmes</td>
<td>He beat me over women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la plus aimée de ses femmes qui est maitresse de tout</td>
<td>the most loved of his wives who is mistress of all [of the other wives]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Term: “homme” (“man”)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jeune homme beau, bien fait.</td>
<td>young handsome man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>je suis beau, bien fait. <em>de viro</em> [<em>of a man only</em>]</td>
<td>I am handsome. (Man only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C est un homme certainement fort robuste, de cœur</td>
<td>Here is a strong, robust man, of heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homme commode [*‘accomodating’], complaisant</td>
<td>accommodating, complaisant man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loup, chien affamé qui devore. <em>metaphorique</em> homme cruel, emporté</td>
<td>wolf, starved dog that devours; metaphor for a cruel, carried-away man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homme cruel, qui tue, brule, mange l’ennemy. <em>bourreau</em> [<em>‘executioner,’</em>]</td>
<td>cruel man who kills, burns and eats the enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrase</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nacanac8a</td>
<td>homme d’environ 35 ans, desja un peu aagé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nacanac8nsa</td>
<td>[homme] d environ 30 ans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arimi ressesi8a</td>
<td>homme d’un grand tranquille, ame douce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kichirini88a</td>
<td>homme de 20 ou 25 ans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kikirimai8nakisita</td>
<td>homme de confianse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nina mechichi kit8esita</td>
<td>…dit on se moquant d’un homme qui se vante . C’est justement un homme de distinction, un grand chef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mantchinagani8ra</td>
<td>[=homme] de neant [‘man of nothingness/ worthlessness’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pec8atakina8si8a</td>
<td>homme de neant, gueux, [‘worthless head (person)’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pic8caracaki8ng8ntchi sakita</td>
<td>homme de rien [‘one who rises from filth’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irini8a</td>
<td>un homme fait [‘a man who has reached his full development; an adult, mature man’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pitec8si8a</td>
<td>petit homme gros courtaut [=’courtaud’ thickset]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a8etikinsa</td>
<td>geux, mechant [homme]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nimentit8kerima</td>
<td>je l’estime extraord[inaire], je le regarde comme un homme miraculeux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mattakirahaki8a</td>
<td>homme noir, negre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m8tchisin8et8ca miraki</td>
<td>cest un bel homme pour que je luy donne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiam8a ma8e8a</td>
<td>loup enrage qui attaque tout. metaph[orice] homme qui cherche querelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mattakihi8e8a</td>
<td>homme ou femme qui commet un adultere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ninanat8ma, ninanat8ra met8seni8a at8ni</td>
<td>je ne crains point les discourse des hommes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m8nchaki8aki irini8iki</td>
<td>il ny a, demeure que des hommes dans cette cabane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term: “homosexual male or permanent transvestite”/“berdache”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ic8e8aïa</td>
<td>bardache ['a homosexual']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c8e8aïa (just before previous entry)</td>
<td>chat femelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ic8e8aïa</td>
<td>bardache, femelle d’un chat sauvage ['berdache, bardash (a homosexual male or permanent male transvestite), also a female racoon']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ic8e8ïita* (in same entry as above)</td>
<td>bardache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ic8e8i8ni*</td>
<td>sodomie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ic8e8ipinariti8ni*</td>
<td>id[em]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ic8e8ittinga penara8a, ic8e8ipenara8a, ic8e8ingaipinara8a*</td>
<td>qui a servy de bardache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentchinikita</td>
<td>bardache, monstre qui n’a pas encore pris son cru, croist encore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mantchinag8si8a</td>
<td>monstre, contre nature. bardache, contrefait [counterfeit], difforme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Term : “mari” (“husband”)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anapemari</td>
<td>‘her husband, her man’ ; also ‘her lover’ ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anapemima8a</td>
<td>‘the husband’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nikitassata anapemari</td>
<td>[=’her husband’ supralinearly] c’est celle de ses femmes qu’il ayme le plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiki8na8iba n8nghi 8ir8nig8tchi anapemari tchiraki8e8a</td>
<td>[untranslated perhaps : ‘She was a servant (but) now she (one who is) better accomodated ; her husband is rich]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ninapema</td>
<td>mon mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8chiti8a kic8. 8chixe8a atinta8aganari, niarinta a8ira</td>
<td>elle porte quelque chose, mene une esclave a son mary. d’une jeune mariée a qui on a donné une esclave qu on mene chez le mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nitta8a</td>
<td>le mari de ma soeur, dit le frere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a8itta8ari</td>
<td>son beau frère, le mary de son soeur, a scavoir de la soeur du frere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irecati8aki</td>
<td>ils sont egaux, they are equal, alike in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
semblables en richesses, noblesse, mary et femme | wealth, nobility, husband and wife
---|---
ninen8nsabama | je l’observe de pres, le suy [=suis ‘follow’] de veue. mary jaloux de sa femme | I observe it/him/her closely, I follow. husband jealous of his wife 335
nirapac8a | mary qui prend une seconde femme aprés la mort de la première, il donne une successee a la defunte et une espece de parente aux parents de la morte surtout si le dit mari a soin des parents de la morte | husband who takes a second wife after the death of the first. He gives a successor to the dead and a gift to the parents of the dead above all to heal the parents of the dead 493

**Term: “marriage”/”marié” (“marriage”/”married”)**

| a8i8minti8ni | mariage | marriage | 38 |
| 8chi8ni | mariage [‘It is said of a woman’] | marriage | 377 |
| a8ic8ssi8ni | mariage double, concubinage | double marriage, cohabitation | 37 |
| nigatt8ara | jay envie de l’epouser, fais presents | I would like to marry her, give presents | 161 |
| kirim8nan | dit l’Illinois a un français marié a une Illinoise | Frenchman married to Illinois woman | 509 |
| ni8i8ir8tan Pe8aringhigi | je suis marié chez les Peorias | I am married to a Peoria | 395 |

**Term: “mère” (“mother”)**

| aghimima8a | mere | mother | 13 |
| nitaghimima | elle est ma mere | She is my mother | 13 |
| nighia | ma mere, ma tante maternelle, la fille du frère de ma mere | my mother, my maternal aunt, the daughter of my mother’s brother (cousin) | 163 |

**Term: “père” (“father”)**

| n8ssag8a | mon père | my father | 162 |
| nit8ssima | c’est mon père | That is my father. | 230 |
| n8ssa | mon pere, mon oncle paternel | my father, my paternal uncle | 407 |
| c8ssa | ton pere | your father | 407 |
| 8ssari | son pere | my father | 407 |
Bibliography


