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**MY BROTHER, MY SLAVE:  
THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ROLE OF SLAVERY AMONG THE NAVAJO**

By

**Neil T. Dodge**

B.A., History, University of New Mexico, 2009

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts  
History**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**July, 2016**

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my uncle, Donald Dodge.

**MY BROTHER, MY SLAVE:  
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**ABSTRACT**

My kin, my people, all of you... My children,  
wherever you go, for as long as you exist, never  
forget our language, our prayers, our clans or our  
ways. –Manuelito, Navajo headman

This thesis concerns the lives of captives taken by the Navajo people during the 1846-1863-time period in New Mexico. The goals of this work are two-fold: First, to expand upon the available literature regarding the captivity experience of people taken in raids or conflict and to explain those captives' roles within a Navajo context. The second goal addresses the need for more study of American Indian practices regarding slavery, particularly through the use of American Indian oral tradition and stories. This has been accomplished through the use of a comparative slavery analysis with another global indigenous culture. Further, through the use of Navajo oral tradition, language and cultural philosophical concepts; this work will lay the foundation for understanding the cultural background necessary to understand the lives of captives. And finally, this thesis will study the lives of several captives and explain their significance to the larger narrative of American History. Through these points, it will become clear previous

studies about the lives of captives or slaves have been narrow in their focus. Through the use of Navajo oral traditions, language and culture; this research highlights the necessity for incorporating culturally relevant understandings into narratives of American Indian history.

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## Introduction

This thesis is an examination of one of the many ways a person can become Navajo. In a way, it represents my own personal push-back against the imposition of outside ideas of what it means to be Indian. In a real sense, I am the kind of individual most suited to write this story. By my clans, I am a person of mixed ancestry. I have often been told that I do not 'look Navajo.' Despite this, I am and have been a full member of an American Indian tribe since I was born. I have left the reservation to seek an education and to become more than an educator one day but to contribute to building the Navajo Nation. And I am a historian who work's to study the history of my people. For these reasons, I know and understand a great deal of what it means to be Navajo, outside a blood quanta fraction on a piece of paper.

In a very different sense, I am an unlikely person to write this history. For one, this thesis very much presumes to educate both Indians and non-Indians about the intricacies of 'Navajo-ness.' Perhaps this work should have been written by someone more involved than I am in his community, someone who was active for much of his life in Navajo ceremonies and life-ways, someone who spoke his tribal tongue as a first language, not as language acquired through schools and books. Perhaps someone more readily identified as being Navajo should have written this paper, someone with a racial authenticity so indisputable that it would grant this person a greater level of authority when speaking about a subject as complex as Navajo identity. Further, my position as a historian places me in a peculiar place; Navajos look with great suspicion at any work of history that talks about the past. Other historians will question my objectivity for I will seem to be too close to my subject matter.

Whatever claims there may be, I have chosen to write this work for three very important considerations. One of these centers on a question that continually poses problems to modern Indian nations: First is “who are our people?” When we consider the number of societal debates that have emerged about this question, we see that it must be explored, especially in the case of American Indians. The second consideration is to challenge accepted ideas of race and cultural homogeneity. In these modern times, American Indians struggle to overcome the effects of colonialism, most notably, tribal affiliations that are determined by blood quantum. And finally, no one in my tribe has written a history quite like this one. So I have chosen to write it. It has the benefits of my experience as child of two worlds, Euro-American and Navajo Indian. It represents the accumulated wisdom and love of my elders and family. It represents the wisdom and ceremony that my people have shared with me to help write this thesis in an open and honest way. It is marked by the life of a person who has lived his life in the Navajo community and his desire to continue being a contributor to the long-standing welfare of that community.

Nonetheless, what I have written here shall not at all be the final word on Navajo identity or how those battles should be resolved. I cannot predict how these issues will change nor how scholarly perspectives will evolve over time. It is my hope that this work will not be seen as a guide for understanding Navajo identity, but as an open invitation to future Navajo and American scholars. This invitation serves as a means to complicate and contextualize our understanding of identity, especially with respect to American Indians. If my scholarship does nothing more than open a forum for future

generations of scholars and speakers as a means to validate indigenous ways of understanding identity, I will consider my work complete.

### Family Icons

We have many stories of my great-grandfather. Henry Chee Dodge is an icon of sorts among the Navajo people.<sup>1</sup> Particularly among my family, he is an example of how someone relatively obscure and unnoticed became an important leader for the Navajo in the early twentieth century. He had endured and survived the Long Walk. He was a peacemaker and he was wise. He was a leader among men. These traits make him seem like more than a man, rather something more akin to a demi-god. Most likely that is my view of my great-grandfather. The stories that were told about him made him larger than life-stories that recalled his hardships, stories that spoke of his care so deep for his people that often his family was neglected, stories that spoke of his death and how Navajos from all across the reservation came to see him to the next world.

There were also stories that I was not told, at least not until I was older. He placed high expectations on his children to learn English and mathematics. An elderly man, he tired of public service and sought the solace of family. In these stories, I learned to see Chee Dodge more as a human being than as a native icon. But there was one story that troubled me. When I was younger, I asked what had happened to Chee Dodge's parents. I was told that his mother died on the Long Walk, but no mention was made of his father. When I grew older, I asked the same question. I was told that my family was uncertain about who his father, was but they did offer one name consistently. The most

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Iverson, *Dine: A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2003), 4-5.

consistent character who came up in this story was Juan Cocinas Anaya, a Mexican silversmith and interpreter.<sup>2</sup>

This story was difficult to take in. I could understand that my great-grandfather was human and had many faults. But this one piece of information was world shattering in many respects. When I heard things about Chee Dodge, the image that I constructed and that was constructed for me immediately came to mind. I had always thought of him as being all Navajo. After all, who could have lived his life, embraced a culture so readily, and performed so much on behalf of a people who were not his own? For much of the oral history that I was told and in many of the accounts I had read in school, Navajos and Mexicans seemed bitter enemies.<sup>3</sup> In this context, what did that make my great-grandfather? Was he Mexican or was he Navajo? Could someone be both at the same time? At the time, I chose to reject that story. It did not seem at all possible that the person I came to idolize was different from me even though we are family.

Although I chose to overlook this point of my family's story, it remained with me. I began asking myself questions about my own heritage and what it meant to be a Navajo Indian. I continued to reflect on these ideas well into my college career. In the university system, I learned firsthand that things were not as simple and clear-cut as I had first believed. I learned that there is more to the history of my people beyond conflict and bloodshed only. I learned that the way we think about ourselves as American Indians is shaped not solely by outside forces, but also by our own

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<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Niethammer, *I'll Go and Do More: Annie Dodge Wauneka, Navajo Leader and Activist* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 6-8.

<sup>3</sup> W. W. Hill, *Navaho Warfare* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1936). Frank McNitt, *Navajo Wars, Military Campaigns, Slave Raids and Reprisals* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972).

perceptions. I learned the power of race and the tremendous influence it wields in our daily lives. The world was not the same when I entered the university system. Once again, my world was shattered.

This work represents my ongoing journey to understand the world I live in. But on a deeper level, it introduces a way to understand the complicated world that existed more than 150 years ago. When I was younger, I saw the past through the present. I applied my own ideas of what it meant to be Navajo and Navajoness to a past era. At that time, I did not realize the mistake I was making. When I have thought back to my earlier naiveté, I have come to appreciate it. Not only did it keep Juan Cocinas Anaya on my mind, but it motivated me to search for answers. Who was this man and why was he among the Navajo? But more importantly, he inspired me to look for others like him who chose to live and work among the Navajo.

#### The Indian Race

In 1998, a new Miss Navajo Nation was chosen to serve as the tribe's cultural ambassador. However, this particular Miss Navajo, Radmilla Cody, happened to be of biracial descent.<sup>4</sup> She possessed all the skills necessary for participation in the Miss Navajo competition. Cody spoke the language, possessed a traditional talent, and even demonstrated adeptness at sheep butchering. Yet her elevation to the office of Miss Navajo Nation was a site of intense controversy within the Navajo Nation. Cody described at several points the racism she experienced growing up and even when she was selected for Miss Navajo Nation. Some people did not see a Navajo woman competing for and holding this distinguished office; rather, they saw a black woman in a

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<sup>4</sup> Cody was born of a Navajo mother and African American father.

place where she did not belong. Based solely on her appearance, Cody was deemed unfit by members of the community to serve as Navajo cultural ambassador.<sup>5</sup>

What we are seeing at work here is the use of racial narratives to describe how Navajos did not include other people into our tribe. These racial narratives were not constructed overnight; but represent thought dating back to the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. During the Enlightenment, Europeans obsessed over ideas of race. Much of that obsession was played out in the debate between monogenism and polygenism.<sup>6</sup> The core of what the natural philosophers sought to explain was not only differences in apparent skin color, but also the lack of “civilization” and “progress” among the indigenous peoples of the Americas.<sup>7</sup> Monogenism held sway until the late eighteenth century, when polygenism was adopted as a satisfactory explanation for the distinction between the races of man.

The nineteenth century saw further change in the articulation of separate races. Since the Enlightenment, the idea remained purely a concept. There were yet no known ways to determine the actual separation of the races outside skin color and Euro-centric notions of progress. Until craniology (also known as phrenology) became the fashionable science of the day in the United States. Scientists such as Samuel George

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<sup>5</sup> Leslie Linthicum, "Queen of Two Cultures," *Albuquerque Journal*, (Albuquerque, New Mexico), March 1, 1998, A1 sec.

<sup>6</sup> An excellent narrative of the development of race can be found in Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> James Slotkin, ed. *Readings in Early Anthropology*. 2nd ed, (London: Routledge Library Editions, 2004), 42-43, 81-82, 96-97.

Morton went into the field to gather physical data about Indians from their skulls.<sup>8</sup>

Though phrenology would later be disregarded as a pseudoscience following the publication of Darwin's *Origins of the Species*, it still remained a powerful tool of racial categorization. The separation between races was no longer an abstract concept; proof could now be found in biology. Indians were a different race.

The early twentieth century saw further articulation of the Indian race through the perspectives of both science and law. Darwin had opened the door to consideration of heredity as one of the key factors in passing on traits across generations. Although Darwin had framed the discussion through a different approach, he did not take up the cause of the separation of races. Other scientists and prominent eugenicists prosecuted the case of heredity as it applied to people of different races.<sup>9</sup> Although much of their work was aimed at isolating people who were considered a drain on the nation's resources, these scientists developed the idea that racial characteristics were carried in the blood.<sup>10</sup> Several decades following this scientific "breakthrough" the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act, with its subsequent legal definition of who is Indian and who is not.<sup>11</sup> This would have a profound impact on American Indians for many years to come.

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<sup>8</sup> Samuel G. Morton, *Crania Americana; or, A Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America. To Which Is Prefixed an Essay on the Varieties of the Human Species* (Philadelphia: London, Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1839).

<sup>9</sup> Pat Shipman, *The Evolution of Racism: Human Differences and the Use and Abuse of Science*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. See also: Thomas F. Gosset. *Race: the history of an idea in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Shipman, *The Evolution of Racism*, 5-8.

<sup>11</sup> *An Act to conserve and develop Indian lands and resources; to extend to Indians the right to form business and, other organizations; to establish a credit system for Indians; to grant certain rights of home rule to Indians; to provide for vocational education for Indians; and for other purposes*, Public Law 73-383, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 48 (1934): 984-988. Known also as the Wheeler-Howard Act.

Since the 1960s and 1970s, tribal nations have done their best to shake the blood quantum system from defining their membership. However, despite the intense activism of the Civil Rights and Red Power movement's, the blood quantum system remains as the standard for many tribes. Blood quantum has become so influential in the lives of Indians and tribes that many have adopted its notions of racialized blood without much apparent thought. Take, for example, the Cherokee Freedmen of Oklahoma and their subsequent expulsion from Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.<sup>12</sup> Or more recently, the case of six-year old Lexi Page who was taken out of foster care because she possessed 1.5% Choctaw blood.<sup>13</sup> Although these are only two cases, they remain important, nonetheless.

They represent a unique aspect of the history of American Indians. First, they demonstrate the lasting power of scientific conceptions of race. This scientific narrative is easily dismissed as a colonial imposition with no thought given to its origins or implications. Second, these examples further demonstrate the extent to which American Indians have adopted those understandings and incorporated them into definitions of indigeneity. Consider again the case of Radmilla Cody. Many people were absolutely certain that there was no way a person from another race could become Navajo. And finally, we must consider what the future implications of that adoption could mean for the future. One grim forecast is that the system of blood quantum remains a form of quiet and gentle genocide. The Indians will eventually be bred out of existence.

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<sup>12</sup> Evelyn Nieves, "Putting to a Vote the Questions 'Who is Cherokee?'" *New York Times*, March 3, 2007, sec. A9.

<sup>13</sup> Adita Dynar and Timothy Sandefur, "For This 6-Year-Old, the Law Sees Only Race," *Wall Street Journal*, March 24, 2016. Accessed March 30, 2016. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/for-this-6-year-old-the-law-sees-only-race-1458857982>.



## Authentic Navajos

The term *race* has become a buzzword of the modern era. We hear it in the news, and we see it played out in popular media. Yet *race* is a problematic term for our purposes. It emerges from ideas shaped in the history of race relations in the United States. It brings out the suspicions and the tensions between groups. For this study of how a person of a different ethnicity became Navajo, the concept of race is not useful. Rather, human subjects in this study are people who lived the experience of captivity among indigenous people. *In the end, these captives demonstrate the process of how one person can become Navajo through the powerful influences of language and culture.*

Captivity among indigenous peoples of the Americas has often been equated with slavery. Yet, the term *slavery* is also problematic. First, for Americans, it brings the images of black slaves laboring in cotton, rice, and tobacco fields of the American South. This impression has been burned into American memory as one forever tainted with the subjugation of an entire group of people, but this image held by Americans is justly earned, especially when we consider the grisly history of American slavery. Yet this story should include yet another dimension of the history of slavery in North America. Historians have not adequately explored the story of slavery practiced among North American Indians. The purpose of this thesis is to probe the nuances found within captivity and slavery, giving special attention to the Navajo people between the years of 1846-1868.

Slavery in the southwestern United States is regarded as practice of the Spanish and later Mexican eras. The relative obscurity of southwestern Native slavery is a direct result of the overwhelming prevalence of African slavery in the American South.

A single historian and a single anthropologist have framed much of the scholarship on the subject: James Brooks and David M. Brugge. In his work, *Captives and Cousin: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*, Brooks covers the vast geographical area of the Southwest, considering each tribe in turn and offering explanations of their respective conceptions of slavery and kinship. However, he offers only cursory analysis for the Navajo, and he frames much of his argument around economics, with some mention of culture and language. Brugge, on the other hand, has written voluminously about the southwestern tribes with a special focus on the Navajo. An anthropologist, he views the Navajo through their relation to another group, the Anasazi. These works are valuable because they enrich a general western understanding of Navajo culture. What is missing is a narrative of the people under study.

As a Navajo, I believe this topic and area of study have too often been overlooked. Existing scholarship on slavery among the Navajo places more emphasis on the Navajo as a slave in New Mexican households. The opposite side of that story, the Navajo as slaveholder, is missing from the narrative. Who are these slaves or *naalte'*? What does it mean to be a *naalte'*? Does this experience have an impact in the modern day? These are some of the questions I will seek to answer. I will incorporate already existing scholarship, but I will also add something new. Much of the published work examining Navajo slavery focuses on those people who have been "rescued" from their captors. I will examine a new body of sources to place the *naalte'* within Navajo society.

## Chapter Outline

To frame this thesis, this work will be broken into three chapters. Chapter 1 will examine slavery and captivity in a global context. However, its focus will not be on the European empires that built slave enterprises in the age of exploration but on the people indigenous to Africa, more specifically, West Africa. How did the indigenous people in this part of the world understand captivity and slavery? What were their means of incorporating outsiders into their society? This chapter will offer an opportunity to explore that narrative and to locate within Navajo society captives who were part of this larger story of captivity/slavery.

Chapter 2 will move from the larger narratives of slavery and captivity to a more focused treatment of Navajo people and their culture. How did the Navajo people understand captivity and slavery? Were outsiders readily incorporated into the society? The examination of several sources will provide some answers. First, I will ground the captive experience in Navajo oral tradition. Second and equally important, I will explore the subtleties in the Navajo language of what it means to be *naalte'*.

Chapter 3 will examine the lives of the captive and slave in Navajo history. Much of the historiography concerning Navajo slavery centers on the Navajo as slave of Spanish and later Mexican American masters. Available documents offer references to those individuals who were taken captive as children or adults. I will interrogate the records of their lives with what is learned from chapter 2. My hope is to find the process by which an outsider becomes a Navajo.

## Chapter 1

Slavery is a significant practice in many societies across the world. It has existed in one form or another from ancient times to relatively recent times.<sup>14</sup> Because of slavery's universality in the human experience, it represents a shared bond between otherwise disparate cultures. To be sure, how the institution of slavery was applied across time varied from culture to culture. The American experience with slavery has been largely influenced by visions of black men and women working the plantations of white slave owners. While this is emblematic of the American slavery experience; other experiences are to be found in other societies across the world.

In this chapter, I will cover several themes. The first theme is a definitional discussion of *freedom* and *unfreedom*. This analysis is crucial for parsing out the nuances in the scholarly literature about free societies and slave societies. The second theme examines the historiography of slavery in both American and global contexts. This section engages scholars in a conversation about the evolving nature of the slavery institution. The final theme of this chapter considers the practice of slavery by indigenous African societies. Important cultural distinctions are made about slavery as it was practiced by centralized and noncentralized African peoples.

On the North American continent prior to contact with Eurasians and Africans, many American Indian groups practiced slavery. Unlike the African slaves, those of Pre-

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<sup>14</sup> The United Nations Human Rights Council and other human rights organizations monitor the modern slave trade. New definitions of slavery have emerged since slavery was abolished over 100 years ago. Much of the emphasis is on human trafficking or child exploitation. See International Labor Organization, "Convention Concerning Forced or Compulsory Labor," June 28, 1930. International Labor Organization, "Abolition of Forced Labor Convention," June 25, 1957. International Labor Organization, "Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention, 1930" June 11, 2014.

Columbian America were war captives or hostages. Further, these slaves were not integral to precolonial American Indian economies. Rather they were used in small-scale labor systems. Often, these slaves were taken to replace tribal and family members lost through warfare or sickness. Recent historiography complicates the story behind slavery in many indigenous communities across the world. It is difficult to ascertain how these indigenous people perceived their slaves but it is not entirely likely that their “owners” considered them racially inferior. On the contrary, historical research into the northwest coastal and the southeastern regions of North America suggests that slaves were regarded as people outside established kinship networks.<sup>15</sup> Further consideration of the elusive nature of this precolonial slave system suggests that it may be inaccurate to refer to these people as slaves.

With the arrival of European and Africans into the North American continent, the nature of indigenous slavery changed considerably. Indians in the Northeast and Southeast found that British settlers eagerly sought to obtain Indians for use as agricultural laborer,<sup>16</sup> whereas Indians in Florida, the Southwest, and much of California found themselves forced to work in mines, on agricultural estates, and in the missions introduced by the Spaniards.<sup>17</sup> The Unangan peoples of the Aleutian Islands

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<sup>15</sup> For an analysis of slavery in the Northwest prior to European contact, see Leland Donald, *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997). For the Southeast see Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012). Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> See Alan Galloway, *Indian Slavery in Colonial America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> See James Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, NC. University of North Carolina Press, 2002) and Steven W. Hackel, *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769-1850* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

and mainland Alaska were enslaved by Russian explorers and forced to hunt for sea otter pelts and process various animal products.<sup>18</sup> In some Indigenous societies, war captives were no longer kept in the tribe and integrated into their respective societies. Instead, they were sold to fill the insatiable labor demands of European cash agriculture. Accurately accounting for how many Indians ended up in the slave trade is very difficult, but this process of constant warfare and enslavement clearly took its toll on many indigenous groups and dramatically altered the demography of large regions of the North American continent, especially in the Southeast, Southwest, and North Pacific.

A similar pattern seems to have also taken place in Africa following the introduction of European demands for slave labor. War captives were no longer considered for inclusion their captors' society but became a commodity for sale to a larger Atlantic labor market. The trans-Atlantic slave trade has been well documented and remains an area of considerable interest for historians of slavery. However, for the purposes of this thesis, what were indigenous practices of slavery prior to contact with Europeans in Africa? How did African indigenes understand the social role of slaves in their respective societies? Were there opportunities for the slaves to integrate into their new communities, or were they always considered social outcasts? These and other

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<sup>18</sup> See Claudio Saunt, *West of the Revolution: An Uncommon History of 1776* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014) and Aldona Jonaitis, *From the land of the totem poles : the Northwest Coast Indian art collection at the American Museum of Natural History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988). For the Aleutians and Alaska, see Terry Lee Johnson and Kurt Byers, *The Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands: Region of Wonders* (Fairbanks, AK: Alaska Sea Grant College Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2003).

questions will be central to this chapter as it seeks to lay a framework for comparing indigenous slave systems from two very distinct societies.

Traditional definitions of slavery have stressed the slave's status as mere property. He or she is subject to the master's whim in regard to being sold or traded. Slaves have no will but that of their master, and their labor is a commodity that benefits the master, not the slave. This definition essentially strips away the human and leaves behind a beast of burden. However, most indigenous societies did not deploy slavery with such a harsh, punitive framework. This is not to say that people held as slaves by indigenous societies did not suffer poor treatment or experience trauma from their abduction and captivity. Yet slavery represented something entirely different to the indigenous people who practiced it. This chapter will seek to clarify that difference and establish an interpretive frame for later chapters.

#### 'Free' or 'Unfree'

Ancient European societies, such as the Greeks and Romans, were among the earliest examples of "slave societies". A "slave society" is defined, loosely, as one in which the institution of slavery is sanctioned and serves an essential component of the society and economics of that society. Although some people in the Mediterranean world questioned the justification for slavery, no sweeping social or political effort was made to end the practice. Even comparatively recent religions such as Christianity, which was the primary agitator for the abolition movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, tended to reinforce the existing social order in the ancient

world.<sup>19</sup> Historical studies of slavery in the ancient Mediterranean have therefore featured prominently in debates about the nature of slavery as an institution.<sup>20</sup>

The history within these slave societies is often portrayed in terms of a dichotomy between *free* and *unfree* peoples. In reality, the difference is not so clear-cut as there were many forms and degrees of *unfreedom*. For example, while racial differences based on appearance or origin eventually became one of the markers of “slave” vs. “free” in the larger Atlantic world, with Africans becoming identified almost exclusively with the status of a slave, such was not the case in the ancient world. To the ancient people, slavery was commitment to perpetual bondage. Manumission was the freeing of an individual slave by his owner. Further, the custom of a slave purchasing his own freedom was a relatively common practice in the ancient Mediterranean world.<sup>21</sup> The movement between slavery and freedom was much more fluid in the ancient world; some people moved easily from freedom to slavery and back to freedom. As an example, an individual might briefly lose his freedom due to accruing a debt that he might not have the means to repay. This situation led to the emergence of a form of slavery known as “debt-bondage.”<sup>22</sup> Debt-bondage, and especially the practice of selling

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<sup>19</sup> Jennifer Glancy, “Slavery and the rise of Christianity,” in Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge, eds. *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: vol. 1, The Ancient Mediterranean World*, vol. 1. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 456.

<sup>20</sup> Bradley and Cartledge, *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, Introduction.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas E. J. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), Chapter 3.

<sup>22</sup> Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, Chapter 2.



children to pay for family debt, is still a common form of slavery, for example, in Indonesia.<sup>23</sup>

The categories discussed here are necessarily broad (free vs. unfree vs. slavery), but they serve as a valuable tool for formulating theories about how change occurs over time. However, these categories and concepts do not overshadow the divergence and deep intricacies of the historical background. Robert J. Steinfeld and Stanley Engerman observed that while *free* and *unfree* may be central social categories to any given society, the division between who is free and who is not is scarcely a natural divide. Instead, different societies have drawn the demarcation differently over time.<sup>24</sup> For example, in the Ottoman Empire, those who were considered slaves were also powerful members of the Ottoman state. Under the jannisary system, the sultan owned key ministers, generals, and soldiers as a means of ensuring their fealty and also keeping the day-to-day operations of the state within his household. A few of these slave ministers and generals went on to distinguish themselves as effective administrators or powerful men.<sup>25</sup> Based on this historical example and the different approach other cultures have taken to slavery, it is imperative to discard assumptions about any one slave or slave system.

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<sup>23</sup> Junius P. Rodriguez, ed. *Slavery in the Modern World a History of Political, Social, and Economic Oppression*. vol. 1. (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 225-227.

<sup>24</sup> Robert J. Steinfeld and Stanley Engerman, 'Labor--Free or Coerced? A Historical Reassessment of Differences and Similarities,' in Tom Brass and Marcel van der Linden, eds, Free and Unfree Labour: The Debate Continues (Bern, 1997), 107-126.

<sup>25</sup> Ehud R. Toledano, "Enslavement in the Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern Period." *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 3, AD 1420-AD 1804*, David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 28-44.

The boundary line between freedom and slavery has been neither clear-cut nor easily understood. This same ambiguity also speaks to Western capitalist ideas regarding wage labor and its uncomfortable proximity to slavery. As C.A. Bayly notes, “The violence and cruelty of the slave trade and the exploitation of the slaves cannot obscure the fact that this was a flexible, financially sophisticated, consumer-oriented, technologically innovative form of human beastliness.”<sup>26</sup> Societies in the West like to think their modern capitalist economy emerged just in time to replace the evil of slavery. Yet this notion is a fairy tale. Both free market economics and slavery work together harmoniously. Such a radical idea is difficult to accept, but the work of a free laborer and slave laborer is tied to issues beyond economics. Both systems have carefully crafted “rules” of conduct that bear the force of established cultural and social norms. Violence, whether real or implied, and physical restraints have been some of the tools used to force or coerce slaves to work. The same conditions hold true for free laborers. As Karl Marx theorizes, laborers have little choice but to sell their labor, sometimes even under duress. Marx suggested that “free” wage labor systems operate with a “double sense” of freedom. Workers have an apparently free choice of employment, but they are also “free” of alternatives in the labor market: they can “sell” their labor to employers for wages or face the prospect of starvation.<sup>27</sup> Physical intimidation has also been a factor in free wage labor markets. By way of example,

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<sup>26</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), 40-41.

<sup>27</sup> Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Ernest Untermann, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1907), 785.

locking up free women working in garment factories in modern Cambodia is a strong example of the force companies are able to exert of their workers.<sup>28</sup>

Slavery has been a means of bonding labor to economic production, but it is not the only one. Thus, historians have viewed slavery as a defect of the human condition and freedom as a person's natural state but how the did a concept of freedom emerge from a long history of enslaved and coerced labor?<sup>29</sup> An exploration of this problem follows.

### Persistent Theories of Slavery

#### Domar Serfdom Model

Where did slavery come from? One general explanation, known as the Domar serfdom model, suggests that slave systems emerge when labor is in short supply, and therefore highly valuable, and land is plentiful. The economist Evsey Domar calls this relationship the land-labor ratio. By way of explanation, the model states that landowners who have an excess of land but are not themselves laborers on that land must also become owners of labor. Thus, the workers are prevented from exercising their right to leave their work at a time of their choice because the landowner compels them to labor, a condition leading to the emergence of serf or slave systems. This model places significance on the ownership of labor, not property, as the marker for status and wealth. However, how does this model respond to regions where the land is marginal or

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<sup>28</sup> Modern slavery conditions in garment factories are headlines found commonly after tragedies occur. Some publications consistently bring attention to the ongoing practice of modern slavery. Nathan A. Thompson, "In Cambodia, Workers' Rights for Women Slow to Come." *Al Jazeera*, March 12, 2016. Accessed March 15, 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/cambodia-workers-rights-women-slow-160310110241090.html>.

<sup>29</sup> David Northrup, "Free and Unfree Labor Migration, 1600-1900: An Introduction." *Journal of World History* 14, no. 2 (2003): 125-30.

unworkable? For instance in deserts, tundra or other similar environments, subsistence agriculture is not possible or difficult to sustain. In such a hostile environment, the availability of labor and the absence of alternative subsistence lowers the value of any individual's labor; thus employers find it much easier to hire and control wage laborers.

The Domar model has proven very resilient. With some caveats and modifications, many scholars of slavery still reference it as a starting point, but a number of critics have challenged the "simple" model it proposes. Evsey Domar himself provided the first essential criticism, noting that the land-labor ratio is not the only, or even the primary, factor determining the degree of labor "freedom".<sup>30</sup> Landlords and workers exist in states whose politics determine the extent to which landowners can exploit slave labor. Slave systems require that the polity defend and support the right of landowners to trade and transport slaves and to control enslaved labor. The state may also regulate, tax, and use its manpower resources such as its army or police to protect the slave trade. The nature of this support could include aiding slave owners in suppressing slave rebellions. The power of the state could further extend to the articulation of a legal framework defining slavery, enforcing a code of discipline to control slaves and punishing runaways.

Furthermore, the model suggests that slavery is tied exclusively to economic incentives related to land availability. However, slavery has never been tied solely to one ideology or system. The example of Ottoman slavery suggests that some slave systems were not centered on the control of agrarian labor. Slaves may very well be

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<sup>30</sup> Evsey Domar, "The Causes of Slavery or Serfdom: A Hypothesis" in *Capitalism, Socialism, and Serfdom: Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 225-38.

providing military, administrative, domestic, or sexual services. From these and other examples throughout history, the Domar model fails to apply to societies like the Ottoman Empire, where slaves were primarily employed in such roles. Also, other forms of *unfreedom*, as David Northrup points out, were not directly related to resource labor pressures, but rather to social or ideological ones, such as restrictions on rights or activities based on gender, race, ethnic origin, or religion.<sup>31</sup>

Critics have argued that in its most basic form, the model does not adequately explain the varying costs and benefits of different forms of labor and their relationship to resources. The sociologist Orlando Patterson offers his own pointed critique. He notes that workers could organize a strike to create an artificial labor shortage that has nothing to do with numbers of workers or their relationship to the land. Additionally, capitalists might respond either by adopting new technologies to reduce their reliance on labor, or, if this is not an option, by intimidating workers instead of giving in to strike demands. Further, free wage laborers in factories were often coerced in various ways, or were purposefully drawn from populations considered more docile and less able to resist harsh labor conditions such as young women and children. The application of coercion in a 'free' wage labor economy does not fit with the Domar model.<sup>32</sup>

### 'Social Death'

Rather than propose a single model, historians have placed slavery in its appropriate context within history so that its trajectory across time can be charted

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<sup>31</sup> Northrup, 'Free and Unfree Labour Migration', 125-127.

<sup>32</sup> Orlando Patterson, "The Structural Origins of Slavery: A Critique of the Nieboer-Domar Hypothesis from a Comparative Perspective." No. 292, *Comparative Perspectives on Slavery in New World Plantation Societies* (1977): 12-34.

accordingly. This flexibility allows historians to define slavery by comparing fundamental aspects of different slave systems. For instance, many scholars trace the origin of chattel slavery to the practice of treating enemy war captives as the spoils of war or property of their conqueror. Captives cease to be members of an independent society. Also, in some instances, they cease to be considered human and become, instead, the property of their captors<sup>33</sup>. Throughout much of world history and across different societies, victors have seen prisoners of war as having lost their right to personhood and membership in the conqueror's community. At the opening of the Atlantic slave trade in the early sixteenth century, the slaves sold by African leaders to Portuguese traders were prisoners of war. Slavery was seen as a more 'humane' option for a prisoner of war in the early-modern period because a slave could be redeemed through conversion to his owners' chosen faith.

Domar ties slavery practices to land usage, but Orlando Patterson, in *Slavery and Social Death*, characterizes slavery in terms of socio-political relationships and power dynamics in human societies. He opens *Slavery and Social Death* with a powerful statement: "All human relationships are structured and defined by the relative power of the interacting persons."<sup>34</sup> He presents a comparative perspective of several slave-holding societies through history and concludes that slavery is "one of the most extreme forms of the relation of domination, approaching the limits of total power from the

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<sup>33</sup> This relationship is often referred to as chattel slavery in which objects that are moveable are considered property. This definition does not include immovable items such as permanent structures or land.

<sup>34</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1-3.

viewpoint of the master, and of total powerlessness from the viewpoint of the slave.”<sup>35</sup> Patterson relies on a combination of Marxist theory, statistical and quantitative analysis, and extensive primary and secondary research to compare the institution of slavery from the ancient Mediterranean world through the medieval, colonial, and postcolonial eras. Regardless of the specific historical context, Patterson observes that slavery was, at a fundamental level, a relation of domination. One of the first critics of the Domar model,<sup>36</sup> Patterson went on to argue that slavery was not primarily an economic system. Instead it was defined by three kinds of relationships of oppression that, together, constituted a “social death”, which then allowed the slave’s labor or services to be employed in a new system of control. The first condition is that the subjugation of slaves is underpinned by violence, and the ability of their owners to physically coerce them. Secondly, slavery involves “natal alienation”, a complete removal of family and societal connections, leaving the slave without any form of legal or social protection or the ability to inherit or pass on rights or property. Finally, slaves are considered socially corrupted and thus must live with dishonor, whereas their owners or masters hold the slave’s honor and add it to their own. Thus the master’s status is enhanced in the eyes of his society.<sup>37</sup>

Patterson further identifies two ways in which premodern slaveholding societies represented and culturally understood the concept of social death. In those societies, where the recruitment of slaves was external, the mode representing social death was intrusive. The second form of social death is considered extrusive. In the intrusive

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<sup>35</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Patterson, "The Structural Origins of Slavery", 12-34.

<sup>37</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 35-37.

model, the captive was regarded as a complete outsider to the society. His existence was regarded as anathema to the cultural sensibilities of the captors. However, these outsiders served the purpose as a reminder of a defeated enemy who enhanced the honor of his captors.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, the extrusive slave is radically different. The extrusive slave was recognized as a member of his parent society, however because their actions alienated the individual from that society, he became a slave.<sup>39</sup> The individual had fallen out of favor for a variety of reasons.

Patterson's definition of slavery is useful because it distinguishes between slavery and other forms of *unfree* labor. Indentured laborers, pawns, debt servants, or other "servile" groups, did not experience "natal alienation". In medieval Europe, pawns were offered by their families as surety for loans, but were able to rely on their family connections to ensure their safety during the loan period and would be returned to their former lives after the loan was paid off. Indentured servants in early modern Europe and its colonies were protected, at least in theory, by contracts that fixed the terms of their employment, and therefore, they had access to legal protection.

#### "Agency" and Resistance

While Patterson's work was initially well received, and 'social death' was widely used to explain the nature of slavery as an institution, later historians were concerned that 'social death' as a concept was too broadly applied and did not do justice to records of lived experiences of slavery. In terms of a slave's legal status, 'social death' seems appropriate: slaves no longer could claim protection under the law. But some historians

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<sup>38</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 38-39.

<sup>39</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 40-42.



argued that many historical accounts of slavery suggest that it was impossible to completely strip people of older cultural and social identities.

Patterson's idea is valuable because it explains the social logic behind slavery as an institution, but it also provides a cautionary tale about the use of 'all-encompassing' theories to explain historical processes. Over twenty years later, Frederick Cooper, a historian of colonial and postcolonial Africa, published *Colonialism in Question* (2005), suggesting that the problem with 'social death' is that it describes the slaveholder's ideal of how slavery worked rather than the historical experience of slavery. Cooper argues that 'social death' ignores the potential for agency by the slaves themselves, both to resist the new systems of control imposed on them and to preserve earlier social identities and relationships.<sup>40</sup> Other historians have seen 'social death' as a way to understand the process of 'commodification,' of transforming people into property, in a way that does not suggest that slaves were somehow responsible for their own enslaved condition.

In earlier histories of slavery, scholars tend to view slaves themselves as entirely passive agents, unable to resist or influence the slave system effectively. David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman note, "Slavery is generally regarded as the most extreme form of dependency and exploitation."<sup>41</sup> Yet many historians of slavery have noted that resistance and rebellion among enslaved populations developed simultaneously with the trade itself. In other words, the agency expressed by individual slaves and organized

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<sup>40</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 17.

<sup>41</sup> David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, "Dependence, Servility, and Coerced Labor in Time and Space," *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*. Eds. David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-2.

groups of slave rebels shaped the nature of slavery from the very beginning of the trade and slave systems. Beginning in the late twentieth century, debates about the extent to which enslaved people were able to influence the course of events or alter their own circumstances have created a historiographic debate about the nature of slavery itself. Some historians have argued that denying slaves agency undermines a historical record of resistance, individual achievement, and the 'survival' or 'retention' of West African cultures in the Americas. Others argue that it is equally important to emphasize the dehumanizing, brutal aspects of slavery, which often suppressed and destroyed such resistance or cultural continuities.

Slave labor, alongside other forms of coerced or *unfree* labor, has underpinned economic production from the ancient world to the modern era, just as various forms of unfreedom have structured human societies and polities during the same period. Often, the societies that relied on slave systems perceived them as crucial and ubiquitous to socio-economic life. Thus, in the twenty-first century, slavery is a strange occurrence, but for much of human history, as David Eltis points out, wage labor was the 'odd institution.'<sup>42</sup> Orlando Patterson has gone so far as to argue that our contemporary understanding of 'freedom' is entirely dependent on the institution of slavery.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> David Eltis, "Slavery and Freedom in the Early Modern World" in *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 21-24.

<sup>43</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Freedom: Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 7-9.

### Societal Differences in Slavery: Centralized vs Non-centralized

The following section discusses indigenous African practices and perceptions of slavery in colonial Sub-Saharan Africa. E.S. D. Fomin's model of centralized and non-centralized societies offers a manageable comparative framework later in this thesis.

Indigenous slavery, or more appropriately for this section, African indigenous slavery, was the practice of acquiring and utilizing nonmembers of a family or differing society for involuntary servitude or slavery in the new host societies, institutions or families.<sup>44</sup> Even though strong societal differences may exist, the majority of slaves taken were often considered outsiders to their host society.<sup>45</sup> These new slaves functioned outside the normal lines of kinship within their host society and thus existed in a gray area on the fringes of society. With the introduction of the European slave trade, all notions of slavery changed. The impetus was no longer to look within but without. Slaves were no longer social outcasts deprived of a place in society; rather, they were outsiders captured in war or raids.

Given the unique nature of indigenous slavery, it is very difficult to craft a specific, all-encompassing definition of slavery. Clearly, some African societies, particularly centrally organized societies, possessed a clear distinction between a state of servitude and a state of slavery. Freeborn persons could accept or reject their role of servitude; the slave was given no such choice.<sup>46</sup> However, in non-centralized societies, the status of slaves was fairly fluid. For example, in the Banyang region of what is now

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<sup>44</sup> E. S. D Fomin, *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences on Indigenous Slavery in Two Types of Societies in Africa* (Lewiston, New York: E. Mellen Press, 2002), 13.

<sup>45</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 21.

<sup>46</sup> Fomin, *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences...* 14-15.

modern Cameroon, tasks such as picking certain fruits or harvesting specific nuts was reserved solely for slaves. Otherwise, slaves were allowed a greater degree of mobility and freedom than in their centralized society cousins.<sup>47</sup>

### Slavery in Centralized Societies

Centralized states or polities were the traditional states in Africa in which supreme leadership was vested in an individual known by a variety of local names; for our purposes, we shall refer to this individual as a king. This king would rule over a well-defined state with a heterogeneous population. Power was centralized in the figure of the king, though he did possess vassals, who were obligated to serve the king through sacred belief or custom. The administrative and social apparatus of state were at the disposal of the king or chief. Some hereditary nobility and chieftaincies did exist, but the acquisition of high office was not reserved exclusively for the elite. Slaves could attain high rank and position within the courts of their respective monarchs.<sup>48</sup>

Slaves were acquired through a variety of methods in centralized states. Within centralized societies, the manner in which a slave was acquired proved to be an important factor in his status.<sup>49</sup> Certain individuals were considered by their parent society as unwanted and were thus placed on sale as slaves.<sup>50</sup> Some of these people

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<sup>47</sup> E.S.D. Fomin, "Oral Accounts of Slave-Master Relations from Cameroon Non-centralized and Centralized Polities, 1750-1950." in *African Voices on Slavery and the Slave Trade* vol. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 55-62.

<sup>48</sup> Paul N. Nkwi, "Slavery and Slave Trade in the Kom Kingdom of the 19th Century" PAIDEUMA. No. 41 (1995): 238-249. Jean Pierre Warnier, "Slave Trade Without Slave Raiding in Cameroon" PAIDEUMA. No. 41 (1995): 251-272. Nijasse Njaya Aboubakar, "Slavery in the Banum Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries" PAIDEUMA. No. 41 (1995): 227-237. E.S.D. Fomin, "Slavery and Slave Trade among the Banyang in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries" PAIDEUMA. No. 41 (1995): 191-206.

<sup>49</sup> Ralph A. Austen, "Slavery and Slave Trade on the Atlantic Coast: The Dual a of the Littoral" PAIDEUMA. No. 41 (1995): 127-152.

<sup>50</sup> Fomin. *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences...* 42-44.

were considered outcasts because they had violated specific rules of conduct or overstepped boundaries. This type of sale was not solely confined to mischief-makers; surplus family and tribal members were also placed on the market. Unlike the slave markets of the Americas or Europe, this sale was not conducted openly. Slave dealers contacted buyers discreetly and if the buyer agreed to purchase the slave, rituals were conducted to cleanse the sale and to prevent the slave from fleeing.<sup>51</sup> As a symbolic act, this process signified the cutting of ties with the past and reminded the slave that his new life was now in service to the new owner.

Another means of acquiring slaves was through warfare, although centralized societies largely frowned on this practice. In West African societies, war captives were put to work in royal plantations or mines.<sup>52</sup> In other societies, war captives were considered unsuitable for service in local families or households. For particularly powerful states in Central Africa, trade in war captives was primarily external.<sup>53</sup> These war captives were funneled into foreign markets for sale to Muslim states and later to European markets. If a specific group of war captives was kept for local consumption, it would have been children.<sup>54</sup> Adult slaves might be problematic in that they could resist or run away. Children could be easily absorbed into their new society with the possibility of shedding their slave status when they matured.

Slaves were also acquired as gifts. In centralized societies, slaves were already an integral part of elite households. As part of their obligations to their monarch, vassal

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<sup>51</sup> Fomin. *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences...* 44-45.

<sup>52</sup> Fomin. *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences...* 46-47.

<sup>53</sup> Philip Burnham, "Raiders and Traders in Adamawa: Slavery as a Regional system" *PAIDEUMA*. No. 41 (1995): 154-168.

<sup>54</sup> Fomin. *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences...* pp. 49-50.

chiefs often sent the king a cadre of slaves.<sup>55</sup> Seen as an act of loyalty to the reigning king, this practice also served as a means of cementing goodwill. Female slaves were also part of this practice of gifting, although they served in various capacities as concubines and wives to the king.<sup>56</sup> Marriage alliances could also become a conduit for acquiring slaves. Highborn women would bring a dowry with them; most often this included one or two slaves.<sup>57</sup> These slaves represented marks of friendship and respect among the elite. Those slaves offered as gifts stood almost no chance of being sold, so as not to offend the giver.

The final method by which centralized societies acquired slaves was through more natural means or procreation. It appeared that there was a great reluctance on the part of these societies to maintain slaves beyond those who were initially enslaved. There was a tendency to free the children of slaves. In certain circumstances, a king maintained small communities of slaves to serve his household.<sup>58</sup> Slaves were dependent on their owner and were considered to be absolutely loyal. Thus they were valued for their stability in the royal household. In other centralized societies, slave or free status was largely dependent on which parent was free and which was slave.<sup>59</sup>

Slaves in centralized societies were integral in day-to-day functioning of society. Most societies had no real slave class. Slaves were simply another part of the general population. Some slaves maintained the households of their owners. Those slaves who

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<sup>55</sup> Fomin, *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences...* 49-50.

<sup>56</sup> E.S.D. Fomin, "Female Slavery in Nweh Country, 1850-1970." *WAJA* 26, no. 2 (1996): 140-55.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Fomin, *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences...* 51-52.

<sup>59</sup> E.S.D. Fomin, "Slavery in Cameroon. Case Studies in Slavery in selected centralized and non-centralized polities" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Yaounde, 1985), 76.

had distinguished themselves were permitted to marry and manage households of their own.<sup>60</sup> Simply put, it was difficult to distinguish between who was freeborn and who was slave in centralized societies.

In terms of their importance to the administration of a centralized state, the role of slaves cannot be understated. Although slaves did not manage the affairs of territories within the king's domain, they did manage the king's household<sup>61</sup> and looked after those items essential to the king's claim to power.<sup>62</sup> More than loyalty to their owner motivated these slaves; they also understood the importance of their position in the maintenance of order within the state. Further, royal slaves served as messengers and royal envoys.<sup>63</sup> Slaves appointed to this duty were trusted to see that the king's words were conveyed accurately, and their status as servants of the king granted them a level of protection from interference, even in times of war. And perhaps most importantly, the exchange of slaves between royal personages represented a solemn promise.<sup>64</sup> Slaves who were highly valued were given as gifts to mark the closing of warfare between two states or to seal agreements. Slaves were invaluable to administration of the state.

Outside the royal court and the states administration, slaves had purpose in the larger society in which they found themselves. Certain slaves would serve as pages to the king and other nobility. These pages would take up tasks that freeborn persons

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<sup>60</sup> Fomin, *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences...* 53-54.

<sup>61</sup> Fomin, 'Slavery in Cameroon', 84.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Fomin, *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences...* 69-70.

considered undesirable.<sup>65</sup> Despite their seemingly mean position, these pages were essential in maintaining the honor of their owner and household. Some slaves even attained the status of witchdoctors or renowned healers.<sup>66</sup> Few positions were barred to slaves and the role of spiritual harbinger and healer were among those open to slaves. The practice was not widespread, some centralized societies buried slaves with their deceased king.<sup>67</sup> Though Fomin places this practice as being fairly limited in scope, it demonstrates the regard that some societies had for the slaves who looked after them.

Economics is the lifeblood of any society, and the centralized societies of Africa were no exception. The sale of slaves was one aspect of the economic chain. It is here we gain some insight into how slaves actively contributed to the local economy rather than existing as mere commodities of that economy. It appears that in some parts of Cameroon, the elite expected their slaves to fill the day-to-day needs of their owner's households. This would include going to market to purchase food, going on hunts, bartering for goods, among other duties. Slaves were permitted two days to see to their own needs; the rest of their time was devoted to fulfilling their owners' needs.<sup>68</sup> Female slaves held a unique role among some larger centralized societies. Slaves' families offered their daughters to the local elite so they could be taken in as wards.<sup>69</sup> A bride price was paid to the family, and the daughter joined the elite's household as his or her ward. That girl then had the chance to repay her wardship by marriage later in life,

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<sup>65</sup> Fomin, 'Slavery in Cameroon', 94-96.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Nkwi, 'Slavery and Slave Trade', 240-243. Njoya, 'Slavery in the Banum Kingdom', 234-236.

<sup>68</sup> Njoya, 'Slavery in the Banum Kingdom', 230.

<sup>69</sup> Fomin, 'Female Slavery in Nweh Country', 144-147.



when her husband paid her bride price to the holder of her wardship. Slaves, despite their lowly station, were invaluable actors in the economic life of centralized African states.

### Slavery in Noncentralized Societies

Noncentralized societies were, in effect, opposites of their centralized society's cousins. Leadership was not inherited through family. In some tribes, a group of elders possessed the role of community leaders, where others chose their leaders based on their ability to manage the affairs of society effectively. Should the chosen leader fail in this capacity, he was often replaced with another leader who demonstrated similar potential.<sup>70</sup> For the most part, noncentralized societies were closed societies. An individual's membership in the society was greatly dependent on his kinship ties to the community.<sup>71</sup> Another pertinent feature of noncentralized societies was the lack of a social hierarchy.<sup>72</sup> There were no distinctions between common people and the elites; those who can claim kinship ties to the community have a measure of say in how the affairs of their society are conducted.

Like centralized societies, noncentralized societies also acquired slaves through a variety of channels. How a slave was acquired was considered a very important factor in where the slave would find himself in the social atmosphere. Slaves who were purchased or acquired through barter were considered to be at the lowest level of social standing and were thus put to work in households; children originally acquired

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<sup>70</sup> Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: The Development of African Society since 1800* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 50-62.

<sup>71</sup> Ruel Makon, *Leopards and Leaders: Constitutional Politics among Cross-River peoples* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 12-15

<sup>72</sup> Basil Davidson, *History of West Africa, 1000-1800* (London: Harpers Collins Publishers, 1978), 11-13.

as slaves who had matured were considered partially free; war captives were usually sold off to larger centralized societies or sent away to European slave markets; the final distinction designated those who shed their slave status and were incorporated into their owner's kinship network.<sup>73</sup> The following section should make these brief distinctions more clear.

Slaves acquired through purchase appear to be uncommon in noncentralized societies. Particularly among those peoples living in smaller countries along the western coast of Africa,<sup>74</sup> the trade and sale of slaves was controlled by larger societies.<sup>75</sup> Usually the kings and elites of Cameroonian societies would raid smaller groups to be sold into Muslim (earlier) and European markets (later). In other countries such as Ghana, the large centralized society put out a call for slave raids. The small satellite societies raided their neighbors in the interior and brought back the captives to sell to the larger society.<sup>76</sup> Yet some groups were not content to serve as the middlemen and engaged in slave dealing directly. The Banyan people of Cameroon took to raiding their neighbors for slaves. Also, as they were situated on a major trading route, they could barter with other groups to acquire slaves if raiding did not achieve the desired result.<sup>77</sup>

Slaves could also be acquired through procreation. The Banyan, for instance, considered it unacceptable for a free person to marry a slave. Thus marriage unions

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<sup>73</sup> Ralph A. Austen and Jonathan Derrick, *Middlemen of Cameroons Rivers: The Duala and Their Hinterlands, ca. 1600-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 25-29.

<sup>74</sup> Fomin refers to the geographic area surrounding the Bight of Benin.

<sup>75</sup> Fomin, *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences...* 117-118.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Fomin, 'Slavery in Cameroon', 167.

that included slaves were confined solely to those people designated as slaves.<sup>78</sup> Any children of these unions were still considered slaves subject to sale by their owner. Slave status remained with the person and was passed on to the children with no clear hope for a change in status. However, among the Duala and Isubu peoples, the proscription against marriage between free persons and slaves was not always observed.<sup>79</sup> The children of a slave man and a free woman could be considered half-free. In these societies, half-free peoples' families could eventually become free and full kin members of the society. This was accomplished by carefully planned marriages between free persons and half-free persons.

Perhaps the most popular means of acquiring slaves in noncentralized societies was through pawnship. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, two people could contract to exchange property or land. One person could potentially pawn children, spouses or siblings to establish a promise to repay the debt created.<sup>80</sup> Following the arrival of Europeans and the shifting of the slave trade, pawnship took on a new dimension. Family and relations who were pawned had a very likely chance of finding themselves in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade should the debtor fail to make payments on time.<sup>81</sup> Though the practice of pawnship would seem prone to abuse, caution had to be taken against offending the relatives of the pawned person. To do otherwise might prompt angry relatives of those who were pawned to call for a violent reprisal against the people who had sold them.

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<sup>78</sup> Fomin, 'Slavery in Cameroon', 167.

<sup>79</sup> Edward Ardener, *The Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons* (London: International African Institute, 1956), 77-80.

<sup>80</sup> Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 5, 13-15.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

Making distinctions in noncentralized societies is a difficult prospect because there do not appear to be any universal norms regarding the treatment of slaves. Take, for instance, the Banyan people, where a sharp distinction was drawn between slave and kin. Slaves were housed in a completely separate village.<sup>82</sup> Among the Duala people, the differences in villages could be more fluid. The Duala recognized half-free people and they could live in the main Duala village. Those who were slaves or not half-free would live in another village, primarily farming while the Duala engaged in fishing for subsistence.<sup>83</sup> In this system, the importance of kinship could not be understated. For some, attaining kinship connections proved impossible, while for others, kinship ties were possible, just not immediately attainable.

Slaves could find a variety of uses for their services in terms of the economic functioning of noncentralized societies. The Banyan people essentially held a monopoly in the trade of certain goods such as nuts and palm oil. Since the process of harvesting these items was often dangerous and arduous work, slaves were tasked with harvesting them.<sup>84</sup> However, coastal societies like the Duala established a symbiotic relationship with their slaves. In earlier eras, the Duala traded fish for neighboring tribes' farm goods. As the Duala acquired slaves, the slaves worked on the farms, enabling the Duala to continue their traditional lifestyle of fishing. Other peoples found more ingenious ways to exploit slaves. The Igbo and Ibibio peoples of central Africa used slaves in their religious and cult rituals.<sup>85</sup> Lovejoy points to earlier beliefs that these slaves were

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<sup>82</sup> Fomin, 'Slavery in Cameroon', 192-194.

<sup>83</sup> Fomin, *A Comparative Study of Societal Influences...* 138-141.

<sup>84</sup> Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 143.

<sup>85</sup> Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 83-85.

sacrificed as part of a ritual, but he asserts that these slaves were sold to foreign markets. Slaves, it seems, had a larger role in the noncentralized societies. Labor was one of those roles.

### Conclusion

This chapter examines several crucial themes. The first regards the scholarly discussion about *freedom* and *unfreedom*. The definitions established in this section lay the groundwork for consideration of other slave peoples later in this thesis. The second theme examines in part the scholarly engagement with slavery as it was practiced in the Americas and in other parts of the globe. The debate framed in this section argues over the nature of slavery as to whether it was an experience that completely dehumanized the victim or that slaves formed an identity of his/her own despite the harshness of the institution. The final theme studies the slavery complex as it was practiced by several West African cultures. An examination of the social and cultural roles of these slaves reveals that they were far from menial laborers but held an essential function in their respective societies.

Yet the wider history of slavery has shown us this description of slaves in Sub-Saharan colonial Africa was not universal. To be a slave is to be degraded. To be an owner (or master) is to have an appalling lack of regard for another human being. Yet shall this be the final condemnation of slavery among indigenous peoples? Was their approach to slavery exactly the same as Europeans practiced it in the Americas? That is also not the case, as slaves or systems of slavery are pertinent to their situation. Rather than place a modern value judgment on a practice that is now considered archaic,

remember the people in their unique circumstance. They were organizing the world in manner they understood and that matched their understanding of history.

## Chapter 2

Of a long, long time ago these things are said.  
 It is said that before she departed for her home in the West,  
*Asdzáá nádleehé* took leave of her younger sister *Yoolgai Asdzáá*.<sup>86</sup>  
 "I must leave you now *shideezhí*, she told her.  
 "But before I go, consider what you want to do now."  
 And this is what *Yoolgai Asdzáá* said in response to *Asdzáá nádleehé*.  
 "I shall miss you *shádi*," she replied.  
 "I have thought about what I now want to do."  
 "More than anything else, I wish to go back *Dibé Nitsaa*. I want to  
 dwell in place where our people came from."  
 "But you will be lonely there," said *Asdzáá nádleehé*.  
 "Sooner or later you will crave someone to keep you company."  
 Nevertheless, *Yoolgai Asdzáá* insisted that she wanted nothing  
 more than to return to the place she considered her home. And  
 when *Asdzáá nádleehé* left for the west her young sisters turned  
 east toward *Dibé Nitsaa*.  
*Nayéé' neighání* and *Tó bajiish chíní*<sup>87</sup> accompanied her as far as *Tó  
 ahidiilí*<sup>88</sup> the Place Where Two Waters Join where they chose to dwell.  
 And from there she journeyed alone into the mountains.<sup>89</sup>

This is but a small excerpt of a much longer oral tradition. True to the words of Changing Woman, White Shell Woman becomes lonely from her time in the San Juan Mountains. She sought out the deities Talking god and Growling god; she begged them for a solution to end her loneliness. Talking god called the other deities to a council, and they deliberated what should be done. Days passed, and they decided on a course of action that would alleviate White Shell Woman's solitude. The deities performed a ceremony that lasted seven days. The result was the creation of the first mortal boy and

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<sup>86</sup> Also known as Changing Woman and White Shell Woman respectively.

<sup>87</sup> Individually they are known as Monster-Slayer and Water-Born respectively. More colloquially, they are both known as the 'hero twins' of Navajo oral tradition.

<sup>88</sup> There is some dispute as to the location of "Where Two Waters Join". Some traditions place it in what is now Utah near Monument Valley while others place it around Durango, Colorado.

<sup>89</sup> Paul G. Zolbrod, *Diné Bahane': The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1984), 281.

girl. Thus emerged the first Diné<sup>90</sup> and the first clan, *Tsenijíkiní*.<sup>91</sup> From this beginning, other clans were made to the total of four.<sup>92</sup>

This chapter will examine several themes. The first is a cross examination of the tension within the scholarly literature regarding the use of oral tradition in Western scholarship. That tension teases out the epistemological debate that surrounds the use of nonwritten materials in composing histories about American Indian peoples. The second theme concerns the affirmation of the importance of oral tradition in understanding Navajo culture. Without this cultural grounding, any study of Navajo society is incomplete. The final theme is a survey of the pertinent parts of Navajo oral tradition and cultural life. Aspects of such as the incorporation of new peoples into early Navajo society, the nuances contained within Navajo language, the foundational concepts of Navajo clan and family life will be considered.

#### Concerns about Oral Tradition

The significance of the events contained within the Navajo oral tradition cannot be understated nor can they be written off as mere 'myth.' Early twentieth scholarship into American Indian oral history has at best been dismissive of its value. Most notably, the anthropologist Robert Lowie's article published in the *Journal of American Folklore* in the summer of 1917 argued against the validity of American Indian oral history.<sup>93</sup> His first argument is that Indian oral tradition has historical value insofar as it emblematic

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<sup>90</sup> Navajo

<sup>91</sup> Also known as the Honeycombed Rock People. Zolbrod, *Diné Bahane'*, 289.

<sup>92</sup> There is some internal debate about which clans were considered progenitors and the number of clans created in the beginning. However, I chose use the oral tradition narrative I know and the one that is contained within my sources. . Zolbrod, 283-293.

<sup>93</sup> Robert Lowie, "Oral Tradition and History." *Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 30, no. 116 (April-July 1917): 161-67.



of the people's primitive state. Lowie's second argument, that accepting Indian oral tradition as completely true without subjecting these traditions to established historical methodology, is at best naïve. His final argument is that primitive Indians are confined to one specific viewpoint with no supporting documentary evidence or any sense of greater historical significance of the events they witnessed. Lowie's strongest criticism can be found in the statement, "Indian tradition is historically worthless, because the occurrences, possibly real, which it retains, are of no historical significance; and because it fails to record, or to record accurately, the most momentous happenings."<sup>94</sup> Robert Lowie clearly regards Indian oral tradition as being comparable to fanciful stories or myth.

More recent scholarship regarding Lowie's critique of oral tradition represents the new position taken by anthropologists in the early twentieth century. Scholars have taken up the challenge of incorporating oral tradition but also of promoting its inherent value for understanding history. In their article, "Folk Tradition as Historical Fact: A Paiute Example," anthropologists David Pendergast and Clement Meighan lay out the methods by which they employ Paiute oral traditions to craft a more complete history of the people and the area they inhabit.<sup>95</sup> With Paiute accounts, Pendergast and Meighan combined archeological data about migration patterns and found that Paiute oral traditions corresponded with those data. Further, economic patterns of hunting and agriculture were verified as part of the archeological record as well as physical descriptions of the Paiute's Pueblid neighbors derived from recovered skeletal

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<sup>94</sup> Lowie, "Oral Tradition and History", 165.

<sup>95</sup> David M. Pendergast and Clement W. Meighan, "Folk Traditions as Historical Fact: A Paiute Example." *Journal of American Folklore* vol. 72, no. 284 (April-June 1959): 128-133.

remains. And finally, Paiute oral tradition and archeological exploration confirmed the location of certain Puebloid home sites and the differences of material culture between the two peoples. Both Pendergast and Meighan conclude that Indian oral tradition preserves historical information with a relatively high degree of accuracy and that oral tradition may, in fact, substantiate or even broaden archeological inferences made about Indian cultures.

Where Pendergast and Meighan saw strong potential in the employment of Indian oral traditions within archeology, more recent scholarship has scaled back some of that optimism in favor of a more scientific approach to archeology, anthropology, and history. The anthropologist Ronald Mason's "Archeology and Native North American Oral Traditions" critically examines the advantages and disadvantages of using oral traditions in academic discourse.<sup>96</sup> Mason engages in a lengthy discussion about the relative pros and cons of the use of oral traditions. To completely enumerate his points here would be a lengthy process. Some supporting points about the compatibility between oral tradition and Western historiography, and the overlap of knowledge that is rich with possibility for creating new understandings of the past. Some of Mason's criticism expounds the seeming invulnerability of the oral tradition to external challenge and the exclusive nature of oral tradition that makes it inaccessible to people outside the culture. Mason concludes that the exercise in bridging the gap between two opposite epistemologies is fraught with difficulty and, if not handled with great care, might prove to be a roadblock to understanding the past.

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<sup>96</sup> Ronald J. Mason, "Archeology and Native North American Oral Tradition." *American Antiquity* vol. 65, no. 2 (April 2000): 239-66.

From Mason's cautionary points suggests a vicious circle of who has privilege to tell the history. Western academia, with particular regard to history, places great emphasis on documents and first hand accounts to render an 'objective' view of the past. American Indian oral tradition, or in this case Navajo tradition, sets great stock in indigenous people's view of the world, their place in that world, and the names of places around them. Is there necessarily an unbridgeable gap between these two worldviews? History is concerned with knowing, understanding, and reflecting on the past. Through Navajo oral tradition, I have developed a deep connection to an ancestral past and the land we now inhabit. I also learned family and clan history along with the complex genealogical web that shapes the Dodge family. I, too, learned about the Navajo as a people; our interactions with other clans and with other peoples. These oral traditions allowed me to see the Navajo chain of existence since time immemorial. I, and others of my people, can see where we began as a people.

In my childhood, the oral tradition I heard through my family was equal parts entertainment and admonishment toward proper behavior. Then, I could only be fascinated with the people of the past, the places they visited, the deeds they accomplished, and how these traditions fit into the world as a whole. As I became wiser, I began to understand these traditions as stories that recreated a time far in the past and not as exotic or fantastic fables. I was tied to this past through my clan but also through the place names around me, and this reality made the stories palpable. These oral traditions became my historical record, one that chronicles the significant events and explains what happened in the valleys and mountains of my home. The Navajo gave these places names, and in turn those names carried forward across time. That these

place names continually pop up in the stories demonstrates that Navajo people were active in these locations over the *durée*. We were part of the landscape and actively participated in shaping the history.

Yet the Western academy has been divorced from this rich knowledge of the past. Navajo life and history have been exhaustively examined, written about, and studied. Most of these studies, however, are written in a detached, almost clinical style; disconnected from the oral tradition. Western academia's reliance on scientific inquiry and documents has allowed for great inroads into understanding the past, but this reliance on one aspect of information is representative of larger problems in the historical discipline. The histories about unwritten lives of American Indians prior to European contact are largely unknown and remain unexamined in the historical literature. To say these accounts are inaccurate would be wrong; after all, few can dispute that well-documented events did occur. Rather the history proffered by the academy remains incomplete.

Although that history is incomplete, it should not be deemed as worthless. Western history that focuses on written documentation is essential because many of those documents contain valuable information. But these documents must also be kept in critical perspective. The accusation commonly made against oral tradition is that it is unreliable due to its dependence on verbal transmission and memory. This argument asserts that oral tradition is at its best, a shaky source and at its worst, completely unreliable. But when this same critical view is turned on the written record, scholars argue that the writers of these accounts did not necessarily maintain an objective view of the world around them. How these writers witnessed, recorded, and ultimately

interpreted history is more reflective of their views of peoples who remain outside their social and cultural world. Yet it is through these influences that Navajo history has been interpreted, written down, and retold. The written history has been shaped to fit into the established conceptions of the western mind and the non-Indian historian. Consider the example of migrations: anthropology and archeology have Athapaskan peoples migrating through the Bering Strait. Yet recent developments in archeology have debunked the Bering Strait migration theory.<sup>97</sup>

In order to generate a much more complete picture of the past, it is vital to study the written record and the oral tradition in tandem. Together, they allow historians to get at the heart of the social and cultural depth of a past too often regarded as fairytale. Through the use of these oral traditions, modern histories can achieve a broader understanding of the social and cultural events that have shaped many modern Indian nations. If a historian seeks to study Indian peoples, he or she must, at some level, engage with the cultural and oral traditions of those people whom they seek to know. To do otherwise would be to engage in superficial observations about Indian peoples.

### Slavery in Navajo Culture

Indigenous slavery in the southwestern United States sounds unfamiliar because the narrative of African slaves has largely overshadowed any other narratives. But slavery was also a common practice or institution in the Southwest borderlands. James Brooks and David M. Brugge frame much of the scholarship on this subject. In *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*, Brooks

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<sup>97</sup> Tom Dillehay. *The Settlement of the Americas: A New Prehistory* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 15-33, 227-235, 249-258.

covers the vast geographical area of the Southwest, addressing tribes individually and explaining their respective conceptions of slavery and kinship. However, his narrative searches for broad trends shared among New Mexicans and Indians without giving too much emphasis on Navajo culture or language.<sup>98</sup> Brugge, on the other hand, has written numerous works on the southwestern tribes with a special focus on the Navajo. One caveat is that much of his focus is anthropological and he views the Navajo through their relationship with another group, the Anasazi and their descendants, the Pueblo people.<sup>99</sup> These works are valuable for elucidating an otherwise obscure topic, although they are representative of academia's clinical dispassion for their subject of study, Navajo culture and people.

As a Navajo, I believe that this topic and area of study has too often been overlooked. Most existing scholarship on slavery and the Navajo emphasizes the role of the Navajo as a colonial slave, first in Spanish households in the Spanish era, then in Mexican households during the Mexican era. The opposite side of that story, the Navajo as slaveholder, has been almost entirely ignored by historians. Who were these slaves or *naalte'*?<sup>100</sup> What did it mean to be a *naalte'*? Does this still have an impact in the modern day? These are some of the questions I will seek to answer. In this study, I will

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<sup>98</sup> James Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 236-250.

<sup>99</sup> The works that were particularly useful in informing this article are:

David M Brugge, *A History of the Chaco Navajos* (Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Interior, National Park Svc, 1980).

David Brugge, *Tsegai: An Archeological History of the Chaco region* (Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Interior, National Park Svc, 1986).

David Brugge, *Navajos in the Catholic Church Records* (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1985).

<sup>100</sup> *Naalte'* has many different meanings that will be explored later in this work. The concept of slavery and servitude will also be considered from a linguistic perspective.

incorporate already existing scholarship, but I will also add something new. Much of the published work on this subject examines Navajo slavery by focusing on those people who have been 'rescued' from their captors. I will examine a new body of sources and reinterpret other sources to place the *naalte'* in Navajo society.

#### Navajo Culture and Oral Tradition Regarding Slavery

It is very difficult to convey meanings from a culture that I have lived for many years. The task becomes much more difficult and complex when language barriers and cultural understandings complicate the story and pose unique problems. I will attempt to bridge the cultural gap between American and Navajo thought through an explanation of key concepts in Navajo culture and oral tradition during this examination of the roles of Navajo captives.<sup>101</sup> A brief summary of Navajo oral tradition serves as an introduction to the people.

The Navajo as people did not exist. Rather it was other beings who lived in the worlds prior to this one. These other beings lived alongside the *Diyin Diné* (Holy People) in the first world. The Holy People left each of these worlds because of discord and strife between these others. With each successive world, the *Diyin Diné* began to see the danger that would arise if the strife continued. The end of all things nearly did come to pass when the monsters nearly destroyed the fourth world.<sup>102</sup> The destruction wrought by the monsters forced the early people to move to *Tó ahidiilí* (the Place Where Two

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<sup>101</sup> Navajo oral tradition is a story that takes several days to fully recount. It is thus necessary to include only the 'highlights' of that tradition.

<sup>102</sup> The oral tradition is extensive and would take much too long to recount in detail here. However, a fuller account exists: Zolbrod. *Diné Bahane'*. There are subtle variations, but otherwise, Zolbrod's telling of the creation narrative remains true.

Waters Meet).<sup>103</sup> Time passed, and the people began to miss their homeland and the *Diyin Diné* began entreating the people to return. However, Changing Woman would not return. Instead, she would send her own creations back to *Dinétaah*. Taking pieces of her skin and flesh, she created two men and two women. Changing Woman gave these new people clan names, taught them the language, and sent them back to *Dinétaah*. As the new people journeyed eastward, they encountered other people such as the Pueblo, Ute, and Apache.<sup>104</sup>

This particular story is important because it identifies the Navajo people as new arrivals in an unknown area. The tradition also speaks of other people whom the Navajo encountered along their travels from their emergence point. One such story is perhaps the Navajos' first encounter with the concept of slavery. The Navajo began to notice that their neighbors, the Pueblo, were beginning to act strangely, so they went to investigate. While visiting the Pueblos of *K'intyeh*, the people encountered *Nohoilpi* (He Who Wins Men).<sup>105</sup> He had beaten the Pueblos in various games of chance, and now he owned most of the Pueblo men, women, and children.<sup>106</sup> The people watched with curiosity and were going to leave until the *Diyin Diné* told them to remain, and remain they did. After twelve days and nights of waiting, the people were approached by the Pueblos and asked whether they could help in freeing them from the Gambler. The people agreed and three days of prayer and ceremony were performed to prepare

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<sup>103</sup> A physical location is attached with the emergence point into this world. It is located in the San Juan Mountains in Southwestern Colorado. However, it is forbidden for any Navajo to casually visit such sacred site.

<sup>104</sup> Zolbrod, 300-315.

<sup>105</sup> *Nohoilpi* is also known as the Gambler in Navajo oral tradition.

<sup>106</sup> As far as the written tradition is concerned, this is the first mention of slavery. This account can be found in: Raymond F. Locke, *The Book of the Navajo* (Los Angeles: Mankind Publishers, 1992), 80-85.



them. On the fourth day, the people approached the Gambler and challenged him to a wager. The Gambler lost wager after wager, eventually betting himself and his descendants on the chance he might win, but he lost this wager too. In a fit of rage, the Gambler accused the Navajo of cheating and swore revenge. Before the Navajo or the Holy People could collect on their winnings, the Gambler fled south, far from the people. In the south, he found other wives, and his people grew in great numbers.

It is interesting to note that the Navajo found the idea of subservient labor somewhat puzzling. There is an answer for this conundrum. The early Navajo were a very mobile group who relied on the bounty of the land to survive.<sup>107</sup> Also, a highly mobile group like the early Navajo had to keep moving. Agriculture and ranching were then unknown to the early Navajo and thus the need for any type of subservient labor was not necessary to their survival.

The Gambler himself holds an interesting place in the narrative. The Navajo conception of the Gambler is that of the 'other.'<sup>108</sup> The *Diyin Diné* could be considered on the order of gods or deities, but the Gambler falls somewhat short of that stature. Rather than working with the people, he exploits them. His cruelty and distinct lack of compassion make him an object of curiosity and serve as a warning. His anger and threats of reprisal locate him farther from the Holy People. Though the question remains, why is he equated with the Mexicans (and to some extent the Spaniards)? The answer may depend on who responds. However, it is likely the long history of

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<sup>107</sup> The oral traditions confirm this as the people were many a small clans with few people and they understood that too many people would exhaust already scarce resources. See Zolbrod, 281-297.

<sup>108</sup> No clean explanation is entirely possible. But the closest idea that is related to the Gambler's 'status' is that of a demi-god. He is not quite human, but not quite a deity either.

antagonism between Navajo and Spaniards (later Mexicans) that made the Gambler's threat of retribution intimately tied with the people. Thus the Spanish and Mexicans became the descendants of *Nohoilpi*. Another part of the definition of the "other" to Navajos is that they are not at all like the people. Their habits, languages, and customs make them different. Implicit in traditional Navajo culture is that emphasis be placed on bringing new people into the fold. With this action, clans become stronger and are better able to maintain their independence from others and protect themselves from outside threats.

This point marks a watershed. Following the encounter with the Gambler, the Navajo are changed. The transformation comes from outside. The people are once again wandering until they encounter others of the *Nihookáá' diné'é* (five fingered earth people).<sup>109</sup> These were the *Tséníjikiní* (Honeycombed Rock people),<sup>110</sup> and they were the first of many groups to come to the Navajo. They brought with them knowledge of farming, pottery, new methods of hunting, and new ceremonies. All of these people and skills served to enlarge the tribe and make it stronger.

This new era of growth began to have unprecedented consequences for the Navajo. As their numbers grew, the people began to become more wary of their neighbors. The Navajo assembled in a council and talked about raiding one of the local Pueblos. A course of action was agreed on, and the raiding party left for the Pueblo.<sup>111</sup> The warriors returned a few days later with many captives. Among them were young

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<sup>109</sup> This is the name given to all human beings, as this is what we are; the five fingered people.

<sup>110</sup> The account contained here is from Zolbrod, 285-291. The oral tradition varies as to which group was encountered first. However, the overall thrust of the story is that the Navajo were a growing group.

<sup>111</sup> Oral tradition recalls this pueblo as *Kinlichíí* or the Red House People; believed to be from Taos Pueblo.

women who were taken as brides. Initially these captives were treated very much like chattel slaves, but after time and participation in Navajo life, these new people were considered to be completely Navajo. Another similar story can be found in the oral tradition. Except this time, the Navajo had taken in a new group of people, the *Nóóda'i din'é'é* or the Ute people. The Utes had told the Navajo about a strange people who lived near Socorro.<sup>112</sup> The Navajo went with the Utes to raid this settlement. Among the captives was a Mexican (perhaps Spanish?) woman who was initially made a slave. After some time, she was then married to one of the young men of the group and started a family. She lived to an old age and was regarded as a respected Navajo woman.

As the Navajo grew in prominence, some people began to seek them out. One particular oral tradition recalls the Navajo encounter with the people from Zuni.<sup>113</sup> The *Tábąąhá*<sup>114</sup> clan was visiting *Aghaałá*.<sup>115</sup> While there, they sent two young girls to retrieve water from a local source. The girls returned with two more water jars than they started out with. The adults went to investigate, and they encountered two girls on the outskirts of the *Tábąąhá* camp. These girls introduced themselves and told the Navajo that their people were hiding in the mountains. They were sick from some unknown illness, and they were hungry from lack of food. Before any help was rendered to these people, the Navajo gave them a name. They became known as the

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<sup>112</sup> The oral tradition rendered by Zolbrod, 308-309 recalls the location of Mexicans living in and around Socorro. The tradition as I remember it tells that the Spanish/Mexicans were living south of the Rio Grande.

<sup>113</sup> Zolbrod, 335-337

<sup>114</sup> Water's Edge people

<sup>115</sup> No exact translation is available for this place. Its location and meaning have been lost to cultural memory.

Tó'baazhní'azhí.<sup>116</sup> Young men were promptly sent to invite this new clan to come stay with the *Tábąąhá* and these strangers became Navajos.<sup>117</sup>

At some point, the oral tradition takes a turn, raiding and fighting becomes a distinct marker of these later cultural patterns. Two stories are representative of those changing norms.<sup>118</sup> The first concerns a raiding party organized by Navajos to attack the Pueblo of *Séí bee hooghan*.<sup>119</sup> The raiding party captured several women and made them into slaves. Eventually these women had descendants and they became known as the *Áshjįhí*.<sup>120</sup> The second story concerns another raiding party that went to Jemez Pueblo. Several women were captured and they, too, had descendants. These descendants became known as the *Mą'ii deeshgiizhnii*.<sup>121</sup>

These accounts are not just mere stories. These oral traditions recount the growth of the early Navajo people. From the oral tradition, it is clear that there did exist an unambiguous distinction between Navajo people and others. The few selected stories attest to that fact. What is significant here is the act of naming groups of people. Naming something, essentially claims it for a culture. That the early Navajo gave names to visitors and captives establishes a fundamental identity with the Navajo people. These people, once considered outsiders, now possessed an identity and a place within

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<sup>116</sup> Known as the Two Came to Water people

<sup>117</sup> The oral tradition goes on to have other people join the Water's Edge people. These people were fleeing from food shortages and violence from unknown aggressors. These new people were given the name: *Naasht'ezhí dine'é* or the Horizontal Stripe People

<sup>118</sup> Zolbrod, 337-339.

<sup>119</sup> House of Sand people. The location and identity of this pueblo has been lost to cultural memory.

<sup>120</sup> Salt people clan

<sup>121</sup> Coyote Pass people

Navajo society. They were not reduced to objects; they formed a new kinship bond that would continue to the modern period.

These five stories illustrate where slavery appears in the Navajo oral tradition.<sup>122</sup> However, Navajo slavery is radically different from Western academia's understanding of the concept of slavery; certainly as practiced by European and Euro-American societies. We have seen that slaves in the American South were viewed as little more than property, albeit expensive property but in the Navajo oral tradition, the slave (or *naalte'*) begins his/her life initially as property and then transitions to becoming family. The key element in each of these stories is that the captives become Navajo. They transition from the unknown other to becoming the familiar member of the clan, although the process that each undergoes is not yet readily apparent.

The oral tradition contains the foundation for understanding the role of the *naalte'*. However, examining the custom of taking captives exclusively through oral tradition provides a compelling but incomplete picture of the broader topic. It is necessary to look into aspects of language, marriage customs, and kinship to offer more evidence and explain the role of the *naalte'*. From this much more complete picture, we will shift to stories of individuals drawn directly from the history of some of these slaves who transitioned from the role of the 'other' to becoming Navajo.

### The Navajo Language

The Navajo language is complex and difficult to understand at times. This reflects the fact that the language is regional, place oriented, and very context sensitive.

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<sup>122</sup> These are two stories that have been found in Zolbrod, 308-317. Many other narratives are associated with various clans, but these have been chosen because they are easily corroborated.

An added difficulty is that modern Navajo<sup>123</sup> and the dialects spoken by the generations before 1900 appear to be mutually unintelligible.<sup>124</sup> However, some words retain their meaning across the space of time. The particular words examined in this thesis are *na'nish* and *naalte'*. These words are of great value because the Navajo often used them in reference to labor. One word implies free labor and the other subservient labor. We will also look into the argument that scholars have debated the meaning of the word and explored the concept of force in the aforementioned words in the Navajo language.

For all languages words tend to change their meaning in reference to their context. Such is the case with the Navajo language. *Na'nish* refers to someone who performs labor, usually for compensation that is traditionally not monetary. *Naalte'* is most simply understood as slave. This term is normally applied to someone who is not part of a clan and by extension not part of the Navajo culture. Yet a paradox exists with these words. A Navajo could not be considered *naalte'* even though he is not of your clan; he would be considered *na'nish*. However, when it comes to family members who labor, their labor does not classify them under the concept of *na'nish*. Words cannot be carelessly applied to any situation; rather, the speaker must carefully consider many factors before forming his sentence.

Several linguists and anthropologists discussed this topic, the first is a debate between Albert "Chic" Sandoval and Frank Mitchell over the difference between the idea of 'servant' and 'slave' in the Navajo language. Sandoval contends that *naalte'*

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<sup>123</sup> Often regarded as slang Navajo

<sup>124</sup> There are words found in modern Navajo that are not found in turn of twentieth century dialects. For a brief discussion on this conundrum, see Alyse Neundorf, *A Navajo/English Bilingual Dictionary : áłchíní bi naaltsoostsoh* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), xi-xvii.

refers to one slave, whereas *na'nil* refers to an individual who works as a laborer. Mitchell's viewpoint is more in line with what I understand about the terms.<sup>125</sup> A more nuanced discussion is found in the linguist Robert Young's work, *The Navajo Language*. In this discussion, Young differentiates the English understanding of force with that of the Navajo by way of allegory. He writes that a horse may be forced against its will to run or gallop, but it has the choice of not doing so. Young recognizes the difference between those objects that are animate and those that are inanimate, and acknowledges the actor's ability to bend that object to his will.<sup>126</sup> An inanimate object has no agency and thus it has no say in the manner in which it is used, whereas a human being has agency and can refuse to perform certain actions.

In a sense, both Sandoval and Mitchell are correct. Sandoval is correct when acknowledging that numbers are an important factor to consider when offering a translation of a Navajo word or phrase. However, Mitchell is also correct when referring to the individual in his translation.<sup>127</sup> In this case, Mitchell is more correct, as slavery among the Navajo is not what we have come to understand. It is not gangs of slaves bound with chains working fields of cotton; it is the individual and his relationship with his 'master'. A major part of Navajo culture is to recognize the individual and not dehumanize him in a manner that was more prevalent in American slave systems.

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<sup>125</sup> This discussion can be found in Charlotte Johnson-Frisbie and David P. MacAllester, *Navajo Blessingway Singer: The Autobiography of Frank Mitchell, 1881-1967* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1978), 158-161.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Young and William Morgan, *The Navajo Language: A Grammar and Colloquial Dictionary* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1980), 507-510.

<sup>127</sup> It may be arbitrary to point out, but Frank Mitchell is fairly well regarded among the Navajo. His name is known to many Navajo but also his status as *hataali* (medicine man) accords him a greater measure of respect. As for Albert Sandoval, I am unsure if he is a traditional speaker or perhaps a member of the community.

## Navajo Family

Language is another facet of the narrative, but it is still incomplete as of yet. A brief explanation of customs involving the individual, family, and marriage further contextualize the discussion of Navajo captives. It is worth noting that some customs vary from clan to clan, and region to region; but some customs are universally understood and shared by most Navajo.

Perhaps the most foundational customs within Navajo life and thought are found in the words: *K'e* and *hózhó*. They are understood as kinship relations and beauty, respectively. As with the translation of words from one language to another, the translations often obscure much of the meaning behind these cultural and philosophical concepts.

Perhaps the most easily explained custom is that of *K'e*. All human societies have a shared understanding of kinship ties with near and extended family. Those same understandings carry over into Navajo as well. Clans are the most important marker for determining your heritage and place in Navajo society. For instance, when I introduce myself as *Táchii'nii* and *Dibé Lizhiní*, inform the other person of my Navajo and clan heritage. From this information, a Navajo who is aware of their clans and his/her kin relationships can determine who are brothers, sisters, parents, and grandparents. This exchange is also important in determining what matches are acceptable in marriage. After all, it would be highly irregular to have a marriage between siblings.

From an easily understood *K'e* we move into the enigmatic *hózhó*. The English translation understands it as 'beauty'; I understand it more as 'harmony.' There is no easy way to articulate this idea. It is a state of being for one. For another, it is a constant



journey to attain a sense of *hózhó*. Further still, it is maintaining a continuity with times long past. *Hózhó* is also found with Navajo ceremonies. Throughout our lives, we do things that break us away from harmony or *hózhó*. Some ceremonies are designed to return the patient to *hózhó* in order to cure illness or send away misfortune. These ideas are an integral part of Navajo family life, but the role of the individual cannot be understated.

The individual holds a strong position in Navajo society. There is strong emphasis on individual initiative and agency. This is not to say that family completely falls to the way side, yet the family identity does not subsume the individual. An errant family member may bring grief to his relatives, yet those same relatives cannot exercise force or physical violence to make the wayward family member compliant. Often it is ridicule or persuasion that help the troublemaker find his way back into favor with his family.<sup>128</sup>

Individualism is honored, but it has brought the Navajo grief throughout their history. The Navajo tendency toward disliking coercion as a means of submission is best seen in this report from an U.S. agent in the Navajo agency:

I have endeavored to have the chiefs adopt some system of punishment but they think if they immediately taken stolen property away from the thieves, and continually show them good men will not allow them to keep stolen property, it will very soon discourage the thieves and break up all stealing. The chiefs, and all other whom I have tried to punish the thieves or have them delivered up to the military, say the family of the man who is punished, although they do not sanction stealing, become their enemies, on account of their relatives sufferings, and continually harass and bother them, and as they have married and inter-married promiscuously throughout the whole nation for many years, they nearly

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<sup>128</sup> For this particular aspect of Navajo culture is found in James F. Downs, *The Navajo* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 68-70.

all claim some relationship with each other and therefore dislike to make so many enemies.<sup>129</sup>

The agent's exasperation is clearly seen in this particular part of the report. His sentiments originate outside the Navajo culture. That is, by proper application of force or coercion a particularly unsavory behavior can be corrected, when in reality it punishes the person for acting on his or her own. The irony is that American culture has long prided itself on individuality-yet not too much individuality-which might stray from established social norms.

Family life also played an important role in the consideration of this particular discussion because many captives were incorporated into family structures. Navajo domestic life was (and to some extent still is) markedly different from American domestic life in the twenty-first century. For a married Navajo man and woman, the man would hold very little property apart from his weapons, a horse, a saddle, and a few blankets; the women held most of the property, which included the house (*hooghan*), the sheep, cattle, horses and the children. To divorce her husband, a woman need only place the man's belongings outside the home, and that was his sign to leave. Should the husband refused to leave and violence ensue, members of the wife's family or even her entire clan could apply pressure to make the wayward husband rethink his course of action.

It is also easy to place white American gender norms in the workplace on Navajos of the twentieth century. But it does not fit in this case. Up to the modern era,

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<sup>129</sup> J. Lee Correll, *Through White Men's Eyes: A Contribution to Navajo History: A Chronological Record of the Navajo People from Earliest times to the Treaty of June 1, 1868* (Window Rock, AZ: Navajo Heritage Center, 1976), 151.

Navajo women often performed highly skilled tasks like cloth weaving or sheep herding. Men were expected to work in the fields and to hunt game. Though this was the norm, these norms were not entirely set into stone. Men could become skilled weavers and women could also work in the fields alongside their husbands. With some of these examples in mind, it is difficult to refer to this cultural pattern as anything resembling twenty-first-century domesticity. This is owing to the fact that whenever we hear of domesticity, we immediately arrive at the image of a woman working in the home. Such distinctions are very useful to keep in mind when working with cultures outside the American experience.<sup>130</sup>

### Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to establish a working knowledge of critical aspects of Navajo culture and language. This will promise those unfamiliar with Navajo lifeways and concepts a working vocabulary when thinking about the social and cultural role of slavery within Navajo society. Equally important, this chapter also addressed particular aspects of Navajo oral tradition. Those facets of oral tradition contain memories of slaves and slavery within Navajo history prior to that history being written down. This is significant in that slavery is a universal institution. It has different roots in the Navajo world but it does exist as a means of incorporating people regarded as outsiders into Navajo society.

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<sup>130</sup> For more information, see Howard M. Bahr, *The Navajo as seen by the Franciscans, 1898-1921 : a sourcebook* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004). The particular accounts from Leopold Ostermann OFM and Berard Haile OFM describe family dynamics with some detail. Ruth Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society* (Rough Rock, AZ: Navajo Resource Center, Rough Rock Demonstration School, 1981); Looks at gender, but women more specifically and the places they have held throughout Navajo history and how those places continue to evolve. Gary Witherspoon, *Navajo Kinship and Marriage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). This study contains a discussion of Navajo marriage rituals and a more elaborate explanation of bride wealth and traditional economy.

### Chapter 3

This chapter represents many things to the author and to the larger scholarship within American Indian and Navajo history. It represents my own journey into accepting aspects of my heritage that I once sought to hide as a mark of shame. It further represents a small snapshot in time of how definitions of inclusion and kinship have far greater meaning than blood ties and blood quanta on official documents might indicate. And finally, it represents a small effort at restoration of an indigenous Navajo worldview.

The major themes this chapter will tackle revolve around the family stories of two particular men, Henry Dodge and Juan Anaya. Their stories form the backdrop by which other non-Navajos are discussed later. The second theme assesses the terminology and ideology of slavery and captivity, and places this thesis into the larger historiography of American Indian slavery. The explicit recognition of these issues provides a window into the subtleties of this chapter. I position this thesis within these other works, and I also identify the gaps in the scholarship. The third theme supplies a general historical account of the American period (1846-1868) and provides a reference point to ground the reader in Navajo history; it also examines the lives of five captives and interprets their place in Navajo society.

For much of my life, I never really considered myself anything other than Navajo. I grew up among other Navajos, I spoke Navajo, and I lived a lifestyle that was distinctly Navajo. This outlook received a nasty shock in two very memorable episodes of my life. The first came in the seemingly innocuous discussion about my great-grandfather Henry Chee Dodge. Very much apart from the legend surrounding him, the question

about the identity of his father hung in the air like a mildly unpleasant odor. Was his father the Mexican Juan Cocinas Anaya or Henry Lafayette Dodge? To this day, it remains a mystery. Further, I found my own heritage being called into question. My mother has a white father and Navajo mother. She, like me, lives in a Navajo world but her authenticity was often called into question. The ambiguity that surrounded her also spread over to our nuclear family. Somewhere an objective standard of 'Navajo-ness' exists, and we did not fit into that mold.

These impressions haunted my steps as I tried to decipher where I fit in the world. Perhaps through the discipline of history I could learn the truth of my past and somehow calm the uneasiness in the sense of myself. It turns out that I was to be given another nasty shock. In 1933, my great-uncle Tom Dodge had written a letter to *Scribner's Magazine*, deploring the portrayal of his people in a work of fiction entitled "Death of a Medicine Man."<sup>131</sup> He went on at some length to describe the character of the magazine and of the author who wrote the fictional piece. But what is most telling about his letter is found in a particular phrase. He states, "At no time have the Navajos ever adopted a member of another race into their tribe, therefore, they do not have, and never have had any ceremony or practice of adoption."<sup>132</sup> I was shocked when I read that statement. How could the son of Chee Dodge write something like that for wider public consumption? I do not believe I will ever be able to answer that question. However, this episode presented me with a unique opportunity to inquire with the people who would know best, my family.

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<sup>131</sup> Thomas H. Dodge Collection, MSS-33. Arizona State University Libraries: Arizona Collection.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid

Families have many stories, and the stories about my great-grandfather are ones that are told often. I sat down with my father and others of my Dodge relatives to ask about the origins of Chee Dodge. The narratives all begin the same: he never knew his father, and he only had his mother to care for him. He was a child of between three and five<sup>133</sup> when he was sent, along with many other Navajos, to Fort Sumner. I knew of his time at *Hweeldi*,<sup>134</sup> and I knew of his life after those events, but I sought the identity of his father. Two stories emerged from my inquiry.<sup>135</sup>

The most prevalent story was that Chee's father was Captain Henry Dodge, an officer in the United States Army, who eventually became a fair-handed Indian agent to the Navajo. The stories conflict. Some claim that Dodge stayed at Fort Defiance; others that he lived among the Navajo near *Tso' Tsila'* in the Chuska Mountains. What the family does agree on is that Dodge did take a Navajo wife. Some say a daughter of Zarcillos Largos and others, say she was a woman of no distinction. He died shortly before *Kiit chí'*<sup>136</sup> was born.

Another story was also told. This story was about a Mexican man named Juan Anaya or Juan Cocinas. Some of the stories make him a New Mexican trader who travelled with the U.S. Army to set up shop at Fort Defiance. Other stories place him as Captain Dodge's hired man. Yet other stories identify him as a young man who was taken captive by the Navajo and raised by them. What is consistent about his story is

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<sup>133</sup> Navajos of the mid-nineteenth century did not maintain anything remotely resembling the Julian calendar; placing a fixed date with Dodge's birth is quite difficult. Stories regarding his time on the Long Walk places him as a young person who could walk but often required assistance by way of being carried by an adult.

<sup>134</sup> Navajo term for Fort Sumner, New Mexico.

<sup>135</sup> I have chosen to focus on family oral stories for this part alone. Historical documentation exists for both Henry Dodge and Juan Anaya. They will be covered later in this chapter.

<sup>136</sup> Chee Dodge's childhood name.

that he was married to a Navajo woman. He died in the fighting at the second battle of Fort Defiance, several months before his son was born.

Over the generations, the stories we tell about Chee Dodge have shifted, depending on the teller. Very much apart from his legend, he was a complex man who had a genuine concern for his people. The stories of his origin remain a mystery, even to his many descendants. Yet in all my inquiries, I was consistently told, "It does not matter who his father was, Chee Dodge was Navajo." Yet that quest to find an answer is part of my responsibility as an historian. Although I may not be able to put to rest my own ethnic and tribal insecurity; both Dodge and Anaya serve as an example of what it meant to be Navajo. In the end, these retellings demonstrate the process of how one person can become Navajo through the influences of language, culture and proximity to the people he called his own.

#### Captivity or Slavery? A Question of Terminology

In the United States, a nation that is vehemently passionate about freedom and access to that freedom, the history of slavery is largely regarded as an abnormality of a bygone era. This is particularly evident in the overall narrative of American history. Slavery begins in the early colonial period, when Europeans brought African slaves to the Americas, and end with the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865. Its primary perpetrators were white Americans and its primary victims, African Americans. Yet to serious students of history, this rather flat explanation overlooks many of the nuances in the larger histories of slavery, but more pointedly, it ignores the fact that American Indians were also participants, both as slaveholder and enslaved, in that history.

The clouded perception regarding slavery is best viewed from an epistemological standpoint. The first is the general public perception that slavery is a largely American<sup>137</sup> phenomenon. Chapter one went a long way to correcting this idea by arguing that indigenous slavery practices could indeed be found elsewhere in the world. Also taking into account the much larger historiography of global slavery, one gains the distinct impression that slavery is one of humanity's more enduring practices, despite modern promotion of complete freedom of the individual. This is not to say that systems of slavery are to be thought of as good or having positive substance but that they carry a deeper nuance that is not well known outside of the global academy.

The second difficulty emerges from the use of words or, perhaps more appropriately, my own words. Already I have fallen into a trap that is peculiar to scholars of American Indian history and, to a larger degree, any of us who seek to explain cultural ideas and practices by relying exclusively on the English language. Like any language, English carries with it its own meanings and assumptions that often do not translate well into the realm of indigenous history, in this case, Navajo history. In chapter two, I attempted to reveal the cultural and linguistic understandings of slavery. To this end, I may or may not have succeeded as there is tremendous difficulty in bridging the ideological divide between languages. Additionally my choice of the word "slave" over the word "captive" presents its own problems, introducing set ideas about what each of those words means and the ideological baggage all of them carry.

The third difficulty has a direct corollary to the second. My identification of the Navajo customs of taking captives as a practice that was more closely tied to slavery

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<sup>137</sup> Also to a larger extent European



than captivity could be viewed as problematic. I take this position because the narrative of captivity tends to bring with it its own ideas and implications. Further, a growing body of historical scholarship identifies American Indians as slaveholders. Placing this work in that larger historical discussion is useful for developing a nuanced and complicated view that has been largely absent from the study of Navajo history. Finally, it is important to keep in mind the important distinction that Navajos of the mid-nineteenth century did not see those people labeled as slaves through lenses of racial ideology; rather, they were viewed as people outside the established kinship relations.

The fourth difficulty is very modern in its applications. We tend to divide our world into binaries: right and wrong; native and non-native; insider and outsider; and other. This rather oversimplified outlook carries over into the understanding of slavery and freedom. If an individual is not free, we are likely to assume that individual must be a slave. Yet, as I have demonstrated in chapter one, the concept of slavery and *unfreedom* has retained an extremely flexible character across time and space. Bringing that nuance to the Americas further demonstrates that American Indians thought of slavery and freedom in a context quite apart from the American binary that, in the popular mind, often drowns out any subtlety.

Many of these difficulties arise from the failure of the historical discipline to be precise in the words used to describes events, people, and places. However, this poses a challenge because captivity and slavery encompassed a wide and varied continuum of experiences. For our context, both could be defined quite broadly as an outsider with no kinship or clan affiliations. Captivity and slavery were already very much a part of the everyday life of most American Indians in pre-Columbian America. Some of these

people were taken in raids or conflicts, but others were simply fleeing from disaster or other disruptions. Unlike slavery in the American South, American Indian slavery was not tied to ideas of race.

As with any society, a place in the social hierarchy determines one's place in that society. In American society from the early 1800s forward, the ultimate expression of freedom has been a person's undisputed claim to individuality; he is a sovereign person. But this nineteenth-century notion of the 'free individual' did not transfer well into Navajo ideas of social organization. For the Navajo, the opposite of slavery or captivity was not freedom, but acknowledgement of kinship ties to a specific clan or group. Since time immemorial, the clans have formed the most intricate patterns of kinship relations, weaving together disparate bands into one people. All who claimed to be Navajo belonged to a clan. All who had a clan possessed an identity. That clan ties all Navajo's to an unbroken and ancient past. That clan is how Navajos provided safety, food, shelter and other aid to members of their extensive family network. To be a 'free' person was to have a clan, it meant the individual was recognized as having standing and ties to his kinship network. To be absolutely free in the American context was to be absolutely defenseless in the Navajo context.

#### Notable Histories on Indigenous Slavery

American Indians have always been part of the American historical narrative. That narrative has changed as new generations of scholars have taken up writing and new information has been placed into wider circulation. New directions in American Indian history have begun to take shape over the past decade. For instance, consider the ongoing process of decolonizing historical narratives, inclusion of cultural and social

histories, and the growing use of oral histories as a means of remembering the past. Of these several directions, perhaps the most interesting is the slave trade in Indian captives.

The first scholar to take note of the trade in Indian slaves was the historian Alan Galloway in *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717*. Galloway focuses on the English colony of South Carolina, while giving some attention to other parts of the Southeast. He defines the extensive slave and captive practices of precontact natives as being a part of a social institution for incorporating other peoples from rival tribes. With the arrival of the English, French, and Spaniards into the Southeast, the slave trade became the dominant exchange among the groups.<sup>138</sup> His core argument claims that the traffic in Indian slaves changed from a social function to a purely economic organization of slavery with new racial attitudes that made Africans the preferred labor force in of the new southern economy.

Another work that has brought the Indian slave trade to the forefront of academic discourse is the historian Christina Snyder's *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America*. Much like Galloway, Snyder focuses on the Southeast. She also notes the extensive slave and captive networks that were in place prior to the arrival of Europeans. The shift occurs when the Indians must adjust to growing economic demands for animal skins and human beings. Snyder makes the distinction between those people held as slaves for exploitation and those people who were taken as captives. In effect, much of her work places Indian slavery and captive

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<sup>138</sup> It should be noted that other historians have placed the trade in beaver furs and deer hides as the dominant exchange medium. See Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2000), Ch. 6.

practices in line with other indigenous groups from around the world. The flexible definitions of slavery and captivity hardened as the Indians have more contact with the Europeans. Slavery became more closely identified with the supposed racial inferiority of Africans.

Moving beyond these works focused on Indian slavery and slave practices in the American South, other scholars have produced excellent monographs about Southwest borderlands slavery. The first is the anthropologist David Brugge in *Navajos in the Catholic Church Records of New Mexico, 1694-1875*. The title implies that the Navajo are the primary focus of the book, but they appear as part of a larger story of Spanish and New Mexican efforts to civilize and Christianize 'wild Indians' on the periphery of their sphere of influence. Further, Brugge takes note of the geographic distribution of the Indian slaves and their movement into southern New Mexico or even northern Mexico. Finally, Brugge concludes that the struggle between Navajos and New Mexicans produced a cultural shift that was more conducive to war and conflict.

And perhaps most significantly, I turn to the final monograph that has inspired my work on this particular topic, James Brooks' *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*. This book is very much on a par with Alan Galloway's *Indian Slave Trade* with both works initiating the inquiry into Indian slavery. Brooks argues that in the Southwest borderlands, "a unifying web of intellectual, material, and emotional exchange" developed "with which Native and Euramerican men fought and traded to exploit and bind to themselves women and children of other

peoples.”<sup>139</sup> For Brooks, captives “became agents of conflict, conciliation, and cultural redefinition.”<sup>140</sup> *Captives and Cousins* steps beyond the flat definition of slavery as purely an economic tool. Rather, captivity becomes a social relationship, an idea that moves easily across different cultures. Further, Brooks opens a new doorway into understanding the violence and structural misunderstandings that occur when two cultures meet.

Drawing on these scholars, I have developed my interest in the topic of slavery as practiced by Navajo people. This particular site of historical inquiry remains a largely unexplored area of history, especially the particular emphasis on the indigenous perspectives of slavery. This also brings me to my critiques of both Brugge and Brooks. Brugge’s *Navajos in the Catholic Church Records of New Mexico* claims that slavery was a cultural pattern that Navajos adopted from the Spaniards.<sup>141</sup> However, slavery and captivity were not institutions introduced by Europeans in the Southwest and more broadly in the Americas. The works of Gallay and Snyder demonstrate that slavery existed prior to Europeans arrival. Further, Navajo oral and cultural traditions relayed in chapter two demonstrate slavery was already present in the minds of Navajo people. Slavery may have changed with the arrival of the Spaniards, but it was already in place prior to their arrival in the Southwest.

Most significantly, I wish to address some of the effort Brooks put into his *Captives and Cousins*. He paints a clean picture of the shared meanings of captivity between New Mexicans and other indigenous peoples, and places some emphasis on

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<sup>139</sup> Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*, 31.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid

<sup>141</sup> Brugge, *Navajos in the Catholic Church Records*, 144.

Navajos. However, he gives too much agency to the New Mexican cultural and economic imperative for captives. His analysis of Navajo cultural patterns in captivity is insightful, but it lacks the grounding in indigenous cultural practices and linguistic habits. In my work, I hope to offer a deeper understanding of Navajo culture, language, and ceremony in the history of captivity. In a way, the present study may be viewed as another part of the story Brooks has told, but it provides a more distinct approach to the Navajo worldview.

#### Snapshot in Time: 1846-1868

In the early twentieth century, when the anthropologists came to the Southwest to study American Indian cultures, they approached the Pueblos first. The scientists repeated efforts to gain information were met with little to no cooperation. In order to get rid of the men and women who were making a nuisance of themselves, the Pueblos directed them to speak with the Navajos, assuring them the Navajos would tell them everything about their culture. The above story was offered as an explanation as to why there was vastly more information on Navajos than on Pueblos. It may very well be apocryphal but given the sheer amount of anthropological, social, linguistic, and historical research that was done on Navajos, I tend to believe this story to be closer to the truth.

After the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States acquired a vast territory in the Mexican Cession. The arrival of Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearny in Santa Fe in 1846 signaled a beginning of American rule in the Southwest. To demonstrate the intent of the Americans, Kearny made a promise to the New Mexicans:

"The Navahos (sic) come down from the mountains and carry off your sheep and your women whenever they please. My government will correct all this."<sup>142</sup>

In the long history of United States Indian policy, military conquest was the promise most often kept. Since the Spanish colonial times, the Navajo people had free reign over most of northern New Mexico. This same freedom carried into the Mexican Period. Kearny's promise to bring the Navajo to heel marked a departure from the casual violence that occurred between New Mexicans and Navajos. Whether through treaty or conflict, the Americans sought to bring their own brand of order to their new territory.

Peace relations between the United States and Navajos were formalized in the Treaty of Ojo del Oso in 1846. The peace proved to be quite tenuous and short-lived. The death of the respected Navajo headman Narbona and the intrusion of United States Army forts into Navajo territory only served to aggravate tensions. The Americans made two mistakes: the first was to believe that all Navajos followed one headman, and the second was their interference in the long struggle between Navajos and New Mexicans. The mutual mistrust and misunderstandings between the Navajo and Americans would generate over a decade of constant warfare.<sup>143</sup>

To end the unrelenting conflict with the Navajo, Brigadier General James H. Carleton proposed a 'final solution' to the Navajo problem in New Mexico. As military commander of the Department of New Mexico, Carleton's plan called for a destructive war on the Navajo and for their relocation to a new reservation in eastern New Mexico.

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<sup>142</sup> Locke, *Book of the Navajo*, 196, 202-204

<sup>143</sup> Iverson, *Dine: A History of the Navajos*, 39-42

With the support of the governor of New Mexico Territory and his superiors in the War Department, Carleton issued an ultimatum to the Navajo. They would have until July 20, 1863, to surrender or face the consequences of non-compliance. Christopher “Kit” Carson commanded American soldiers and Ute scouts on an expedition to round up the Navajo. What followed was the devastation of the Navajo way of life through the destruction of crops and livestock. With no way to feed themselves and no safe haven available, many Navajos chose to surrender and relocate to their new reservation.<sup>144</sup>

History remembers this time as the Long Walk. The Navajo remember this time as *Hweeldi*. No words in English or Navajo can truly convey the experiences the Navajo had while on the Long Walk or at Fort Sumner. The journey to Fort Sumner was arduous, and the reservation at the fort was ill suited to the accommodation of so many people. It was such a significant event that it has taken on a life of its own. After four years of exile, a final treaty was concluded, and the Navajo were allowed to return home. The old days of Navajo independence were over; the new era of American management of Indian affairs had taken root.<sup>145</sup>

#### Navajo Slaves or Intimate Enemy?

This thesis moves on to the lives of four captives. All four are unique in their lives and how they came to be among the Navajo. However, it is worth noting that the documentary or oral history of these captives can be quite sparse. The historian must draw conclusions from what the documents reveal and why the individuals have arrived at a specific outcome in their lives.

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<sup>144</sup> Iverson, *Dine: A History of the Navajos*, 48-51.

<sup>145</sup> Iverson, *Dine: A History of the Navajos*, 51-60.



By way of introduction, a person who is largely a mystery. Following the end of hostilities in the Mexican-American War, the United States Army began to explore the newly won territories. Soon, they heard from the local New Mexican populace that a particularly vicious band of raiders could be found in the northwestern part of the territory. To put an end to 'Indian depredations' Colonel John Macrae Washington was placed in command of a punitive expedition into Navajo country. Although the initial meeting was not peaceful,<sup>146</sup> it led to negotiations for the Treaty of 1848 and ultimately the establishment of Fort Defiance or *Tséhootsooi*.<sup>147</sup>

As part of that treaty settlement, the United States required that the Navajo hand over all captives that were among them. The parties involved in the signing of the treaty were the first to turn over their captives, although a great many of those captives were reluctant to leave. The Indian agent for New Mexico, James Calhoun, and Lieutenant James Harvey Simpson noted a particular case. What follows is their account about this particular captive:

Josea Ignacio Añane, became a prisoner seventeen years ago, taken, when quite a boy, by a roving band of Navajos, at Tucklatoe. His parents then lived at Santa Fe, where he supposes they now reside. He is the fortunate possessor of two wives, and three children, living now in Mecina Gorda (Big Oak) north of Cheille two and a half days travel. He was originally sold to an Indian named Waro, to whom he yet belongs, I do not think he is under many restraints, for prefers most decidedly to remain with the Navajos, notwithstanding his peonage.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> The soldiers came across a hunting camp of a particularly prominent Navajo by the name of Narbona. It is unclear what precisely unfolded, but what is clear that a fight did break out; Narbona and all of his followers were dead. This death cast a shadow over the treaty negotiations and demonstrated to the Navajo the character of the new arrivals. For a secondary account, see Iverson, *Diné: A History of the Navajos*, 40-41. Also see: AnCita Benally, *Hané' 'béé'ééhaníh: With stories it is remembered* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993).

<sup>147</sup> Roughly translated, meadow between the rocks or hills.

<sup>148</sup> Annie H. Abel, ed. *The official correspondence of James S. Calhoun while Indian agent at Santa Fé and superintendent of Indian Affairs in New Mexico* (Washington, DC: Dept of Interior, 1915), 29-30.

Lt. Simpson offers his account of the same man:

Early this morning, a Mexican captive, of about 30 years of age, came into camp to see the colonel commanding. He represented that he was stolen by the Navajos seventeen years ago, and that he did not wish to be restored to his people again. Indeed, he did not as much as ask about his friends, who, I am informed, are now living at Santa Fe, from the vicinity in which he was stolen, whilst tending sheep. He is a very active, intelligent-looking fellow, and speaks like a native born Navajo, having all their characteristics, in dress, conversation, and manners.<sup>149</sup>

Apart from these two accounts, almost no other record of this man exists. We know his New Mexican name, but the name he was given by his new family is not known. Even these sparse sources enable us to know some things about Jose Ignacio Añane.

Añane was around thirty years old when he came to the soldiers, which means he was very likely a teenager when he was captured. His family's location is hinted at in Calhoun's correspondence as being in "*Mecina Gorda*, just north of Cheille" which is located near the modern town of Ganado, Arizona. The mention of Añane being a shepherd is no accident. It is very possible that the raiding party took the sheep as well as Añane. He had adopted Navajo dress, language, and customs so thoroughly that he was regarded as being a Navajo himself-so much to the point to where he was permitted the opportunity to take a wife.<sup>150</sup> Also, it is clear that he was sufficiently adept in the culture and language to have prospered and found the means to take a

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<sup>149</sup> James H. Simpson, *Journal of a military reconnaissance from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to the Navajo country, made with the troops under command of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel John M. Washington, chief of Ninth military department, and governor of New Mexico* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia, Lippincott, Grambo and Company, 1852), 102.

<sup>150</sup> It is not entirely clear from the sources who his first or second wife may have been. It is likely that his first wife could have been the daughter of his owner and the second wife could have been herself a captive or a woman from within his clan or from a neighboring clan.

second wife.<sup>151</sup> His position within the clan appears to be that of an emissary or cultural broker. Though not implicit in the source, it would stand to reason he was fluent in Spanish as he was able to communicate with the soldiers.

We can also get some sense of the place he held in Navajo society from these examples. Though we cannot be entirely certain of who his first wife was, we can ascertain some things about how his marriage raised him from a slave to a respected member of his clan. She must have been a fairly important woman within the clan; it is considered unseemly for a woman of some prestige to be a second wife. With their marriage, she also would have brought a certain amount of wealth into the union, wealth that Añane would be able to use to expand his own standing. Also, the fact that he had a second wife is further evidence of his pre-eminence. To take a second wife, a man must not only have the resources to be able to care for the new wife but also be willing to support her. These subtleties are not readily apparent, but they are present if you have the background necessary to decode what the sources represent.

A pair of captives who appear in the historical record are also a curiosity, much like Añane. Observers at the time noted that both were Mexican men and that their names were Juan Annagri and Terribio. The following account from Lieutenant Colonel Dixon S. Miles renders some clues as to their place in Navajo society:

On the 21<sup>st</sup> inst. the day before I returned from Manuellito's [sic] village, Juan Annagri, for years past the interpreter of this post, but who left and joined the Navajos a short time before the commencement of hostilities, came in. Lt. Major Brooks immediately confined him to await my orders

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<sup>151</sup> Polygamy was an accepted practice as long as the potential husband had both the means to support a second wife and the desire to take on another wife in the home. See Gary Witherspoon, *Navajo Kinship and Marriage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

This Juan is a shrewd, intelligent man, has exercised more influence over the principal chiefs (I am told) than any other person in the country. He is the peon (nominally) of Jerrera [sic] one of the richest among the Navajos, and except only Sarcillos Largos [sic], Armijo, Manuelito, the most important man among them. The chief is under the complete control of Juan's brother, Terribio.<sup>152</sup>

From this account, we see that Juan Annagri was once an interpreter for the United States Army at Fort Defiance. For reasons not entirely clear, he left Army service and went off to live with the Navajo. He returned to the Army post for reasons not entirely clear. His brother Terribio, according to the record, possessed a great degree of influence with a Navajo headman.

Some significant details can be drawn from this rather sparse record. Both Juan and Terribio had a strong command of the Navajo language. Juan had an official role as an interpreter. He abandoned that role when hostilities between the Navajo and the United States commenced. He identified Navajo interests, or more particularly his clan's interests, as being his key concern. His return to Fort Defiance and into the custody of American soldiers gives us another clue. Juan had an established relationship with the soldiers and his former role as an interpreter made him the ideal choice to end the conflict. There is no mention of Juan having an escort or being in attendance upon the headman. That he came alone to the fort is demonstrative of the trust that was placed in him.

Juan's brother Terribio is another matter. If Terribio did have as much influence as Miles suggests, then it would not be too great an assumption to suggest that Terribio was very close to the headman. Perhaps even close enough to be considered family.

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<sup>152</sup> Miles to Wilkins, October 25, 1858, National Archives, Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Record Group 98, Department of New Mexico. Microform, Roll 74- 1858.

What is at work in this case are the kinship bonds that have formed between Juan Annagri, Terribio, and the headman. Clan relationships are very important in determining an individual's place in Navajo society. That these two men held this degree of influence with a Navajo headman speaks to the fact that they had entered deeply enough into that kinship network to be considered family.

Some individuals like Jose Ignacio Añane, Juan Annagri, and Terribio enter briefly onto the historical stage and are never seen again. Our next person is someone who entered this history in a fairly humble manner. But, despite his humble origins, he proved to be a valuable asset to the Navajo people. His name was Jesus Arviso.

Arviso enters our narrative very much like many other captives. He was taken captive as a young boy, sometime in the 1840s, by a group of Apaches.<sup>153</sup> The oral accounts recall that a Navajo man by the name of Red Hair met with these Apaches, and in the course of their meeting, Red Hair saw they had a young Mexican boy with them. At first, Red Hair had little interest in the boy, but the Apaches told him that he was clever and that he had a facility with their language. Before Red Hair was set to depart, the Apaches kept asking to trade for his prized horse. He refused them, saying they had nothing of real value to trade. But the Apaches persisted, and after some time, Red Hair agreed to a trade; he traded his prized horse for the Mexican boy. The Apache readily agreed to the trade and Jesus Arviso went with Red Hair.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> One oral account has him taken by a nameless group of Apaches. Another account has him taken by a group led by Cochise and Geronimo. In any event, the story remains that he was a captive of the Apache at this time.

<sup>154</sup> Both versions of the story can be found here: Rex Becenti Jr., Interviewed by Tom Ration, December 1969, Tape # 365, side 1. American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.

From the moment of his 'purchase,' Jesus Arviso lived with Red Hair and his family. When he came of age, he was allowed to marry into the clan. He was regarded as an invaluable clan member because he spoke both Spanish and Navajo fluently, and he had the bearing of a Navajo man. He came into his reputation during the Kit Carson campaign and later during the internment at Fort Sumner. He initially served with the United States Army in the Navajo round up as an interpreter and peace-broker. After the round up was complete, he was sent with other Navajos to Fort Sumner. While at Fort Sumner, he and other headmen were instrumental in negotiating the Treaty of 1868. After the Navajo returned to their traditional home, he was appointed the headman of his clan, where he lived out his days trying to keep his people from being exiled from their homes again.<sup>155</sup>

From Jesus Arviso's life, we can see several things at work here. As a boy, he was taken as a captive by the Apache. In his time as their captive, he gained a facility with the Apache language and most likely Navajo, although what caught the attention of Red Hair is still a mystery. The oral account tells us that he (Jesus Arviso) was very clever. Though what being clever means is not entirely certain. In this case, it most likely means that not only was Arviso skilled at language acquisition, he was also a young boy. He was essentially a blank slate with none of the prejudices that came with the relations between Navajos and Mexicans at the time period. He would be an ideal broker for Red

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Also see: Bob Manuelito, Interviewed by Tom Ration, February 1960, Tape # 292, Tape 5. American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.

<sup>155</sup> See Rex Becenti Jr. interview.

Hair's clan because he understood New Mexican culture, and he would serve the interests of his newly adopted people.

Later in his life, he was apparently much valued by his surrogate family as he was taken into their clan. He was also permitted to marry. These are practices that are not otherwise ordinarily expected in the life of a slave. He was also important and skilled enough that the army recruited him to serve as a peace ambassador to his own people, where Arviso convinced them to surrender peacefully and relocate to Fort Sumner. This implies that he was well regarded among many groups of Navajo spread across a wide geographic area. His facility with Navajo was also a factor in his success in convincing people to go peaceably. It was later that he served an even greater role when he was one of the interpreters for the headmen during the treaty negotiations. He was trusted so much by other revered headmen, such as Ganado Mucho, Zarcillos Largos, and Manuelito, that his translations helped facilitate the Navajo's steady refusal to relocate to Indian Territory and insistence on returning to their traditional home. He must have felt a strong bond with the Navajo, as he served as a true advocate for them in this crucial time.

For much of this initial study, we have seen that outside men were included in Navajo culture after some time of relative acculturation and adoption of their new way of life. Women were also taken as captives and held as slaves by the Navajo. Yet we shall see that their story is in some respects very similar and in other ways different. This same experience will also play out in the life of Juanita.

For much of her life, Juanita was overshadowed by the life and legend of her husband, Manuelito. Indeed it is difficult to find any mention of her in the historical

record that is almost exclusively dominated by Manuelito. She makes a prominent appearance just after the Navajo return from Fort Sumner. Juanita, and what is left of her family, returned to their home around modern Tohatchi, New Mexico. It is here that she is referred to as Manuelito's 'Mexican wife.'<sup>156</sup> From this rather limited description, we get the sense that she is an outsider, perhaps newly brought in or perhaps living with the Navajo unwillingly. But this explanation would not make sense as the Navajo had to surrender all captives as part of the Treaty of 1868, and if she (Juanita) did not view the Navajo as her people, it begs the question as to why she returned with them.

Much of the mystery is cleared up in the oral accounts of her children and those who were close to her family. She was allegedly born in the 1840s to a Mexican family and later taken as a captive when she was still a young girl. Much of her young life is unknown until she was married to Manuelito.<sup>157</sup> At this juncture in her life, she was given a new name: *Asdzaa Tl'ogi*.<sup>158</sup> She bore several children for Manuelito and she was well regarded. It was said that she was regarded as completely Navajo. She spoke the Navajo language; no one mentioned whether she had any facility with Spanish. Many people of her clan treated her with deference, and even those who were not of her clan regarded her as a full Navajo. There are descriptions of her attire and of her possessing

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<sup>156</sup> Locke, *Book of the Navajo*, pg. 392.

<sup>157</sup> There is some dispute in the sources about where she fit in the order of wives. Her descendants place her as the first wife, where other sources outside the family place her as the second or third wife.

-Bob Manuelio, interviewed by Tom Ration. February and March 1960, Tape #345, side 1. American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.

-James Oakee, interviewed by Tom Ration, September 1969, Tape #388, side 1. American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.

-Fred Brown, interviewed by Tom Ration, Tape #416, side 1. American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.

<sup>158</sup> Literally translated as "Woman of the Weavers".



many of the mannerisms associated with being a Navajo. But most importantly, she was also respected for her skill as a weaver of fine Navajo rugs.<sup>159</sup> There is so much more that her family remembers of Juanita that it would take an entire chapter to fully account for.

One secondary source recalls that Juanita was a “Mexican woman,” while her children and close relations remember her as all Navajo. In her childhood, she was a Mexican girl. But after her capture and time spent among the Navajo, she became a new person. We can see this in how she adopted the language so fully that she could not speak her birth parent’s language. Her name among the clan also remains very important. It identifies her as part of the group. It also serves to the purpose that in Navajo tradition, when something is given a name, it is known to be something good. If she had not been given a name, she would have been considered suspect and untrustworthy. Also, the stories surrounding her mention that Juanita’s skill as a weaver offer further evidence that she was fully Navajo.<sup>160</sup> A skilled weaver requires knowledge of the process of weaving (wool preparation, gathering materials for the dye, proper use of the loom), but weaving also requires sacred knowledge. No rugs that weavers produce are entirely of their design; rather they are the product of ‘divine inspiration.’ A weaver must be familiar with the ceremony and rituals involved with weaving before any such task can be undertaken.

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<sup>159</sup> In his book, *Captives and Cousins*, Brooks mentions that slave women were often barred from weaving because it would take away from other Navajo women’s status in the household. While in truth, it is much more complicated than a simple economic and gender power explanation. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*: 239-241

<sup>160</sup> Jennifer N. Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of a Navajo Chief and Juanita* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007): 91-93.

The above-mentioned people are but a few of the captives who were found in the archive. Others appeared in the documentary record, but for one reason or another, they chose not to remain with the Navajo. The individuals described here were not mere captives in a society that was not originally their birth culture. To consider these men and women as merely captives would obscure the Navajo cultural underpinnings that made them unique. Such an act would deny their heritage and identity as Navajo men and women. Their birth was not important, they were completely Navajo.

### Conclusion

Identity is more than blood and is deeper than skin color. At the heart of this chapter rests the question of identity. Slavery has been regarded as a means of stripping away an individual's personhood. Captivity has been regarded as an experience of an outsider living among strangers. The stories of the people described above fit those paradigms and at the same time, they do not fit those models. They were not denigrated to the role of beasts of burden or relegated to the periphery of Navajo society. They possessed a core identity, grounded in mid-nineteenth century Navajo life. They began their lives among Navajo as slaves but eventually became, brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers. They were not separate, not apart from their kin; but among them as family.

## Conclusion

If I had to live in a racial house, it was important, at the least, to rebuild it so that it was not a windowless prison into which I was forced, a thick walled, impenetrable container from which no cry could be heard, but rather an open house, grounded, yet generous in its supply of windows and doors.

-Toni Morrison, "Home", from the *House that Race Built*, 1997.

The Navajo Treaty of 1868 brought peace to a war-weary New Mexico territory and returned an exiled people to their homeland. Both nations agreed to end the ongoing destructive hostilities that benefitted neither side. The United States agreed to the creation of a reservation for the sole use and occupancy of the Navajo people. In one manner, the treaty could be seen as a bitter victory; peace was purchased at the cost of complete independence. The Navajo people were no longer free to self-determine their own path. Rather, they were now subject to American authority and power. Many other policies and acts of Congress passed since the treaty can further testify to this fact. Perhaps the most devastating blow to any tribe's sense of itself was the imposition of a blood quantum system.

The Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 was the centerpiece of what is now considered the Indian New Deal. The act had the benevolent intent of ending the long period of destruction of Indian identity and assimilation into the American nation. One part of the act would give the Indian nations a measure of control over their own land and mineral resources in order for these nations to gain some economic self-sufficiency. Another major provision within the IRA established a framework for Indian nations to reassert sovereignty by creating their own tribal governments. Perhaps unintended, the IRA also laid the groundwork for the establishment of blood quantum standards when a person seeks to claim Indian heritage. The provisions of the IRA were binding on all the

tribes that accepted it as part of their reconstruction efforts. It would appear that with the signing of the Treaty of 1868, the Navajo had signed away much more than their independence. They also signed away their right to define who was Navajo and who was not.

Since the 1930s, the issue of blood quantum has remained an open wound in many parts of Indian country. Much closer to home is its effect on the Navajo Nation. Think back to Radmilla Cody. A biracial Navajo woman who was selected to serve as Miss Navajo Nation in 1998. The controversy surrounding her appointment to the office of Miss Navajo Nation has passed into history as an anomaly. The entire episode is remembered as an embarrassing chapter in modern Navajo history, where racism reared its head and made itself known. But it is not the sole case of racial insecurity.

I come back once again to my own family. There remain unresolved questions about Chee Dodge's parentage. There is little doubt that his mother was ethnically Navajo. But what of his father? The stories of Juan Anaya and Henry L. Dodge are intimately linked with my family's progenitor. One was Mexican and the other was American. Even closer to home, my own generation feels an unease about ethnic purity. My mother is half Navajo and my father is full. I have heard stories of how my mother is perceived as white. My brother and I have received similar comments about our racial ambiguity. We do not appear phenotypically Navajo or are prompted to provide proof of our heritage in the form of a Certificate of Indian Blood. The fact that my mother, brother, and I grew up on the Navajo Reservation, lived the culture, and spoke the language to one degree or another does not matter. We share the same conundrum as Radmilla Cody; we are ambiguous. Because we are ambiguous, we are labeled as not

belonging to our parent culture. The significance of these examples cannot be understated. That is, Navajo heritage is now defined by racialized Indian blood.

That being said, this is not an indictment of federal Indian policy or the prevailing racial attitudes of the modern period. To be sure, the process of nation building is not easy. The process of Indian self-determination remains an ongoing evolution. The ability of American Indian nations to define their membership is an assertion of sovereignty. Yet the mechanism that many of these nations have chosen is one that has become mired in politics and ongoing debates of racial heritability. The blood quantum system does not recognize cultural affiliation, does not recognize language, and does not recognize kinship ties to the community. Instead, the individual is boiled down to a number or even a fraction of one identity with a fraction of another identity mixed in. This process is not sustainable.

Is this the fate of Indian nations and peoples? To be broken into fractions until the people pass into the pages of history? No longer in existence. While it is impossible to predict the outcome of future events, the past holds answers to some of these questions. Race is a social concept, not a biological concept. Conceptions of identity did exist prior to the imposition of racial ideas onto American Indian peoples. These concepts were rooted in the people's language. A deeper understanding of the indigenous worldview can be gleaned by examining the words people have used to name and explain things. Identity could also be found in the nexus of cultural and kinship ties the people shared. Family is very important to human societies. These ties formed the basis for the inclusion of peoples that may not have shared the same ethnic

or racial ties. The convergence of all three of these ideas; culture, language, and kinship served as the fulcrum by which a non-Navajo could become Navajo.

This story should not be considered entirely new nor viewed as a radical departure from the established scholarly literature about American Indian peoples incorporating non-Indians. Rather this story should be seen as part of the confluence of histories that have been written about the subject. As already demonstrated, there is an existing body of scholarly discourse that speaks to the presence of indigenous slave practices prior to the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. Those practices were originally followed to replace family members lost to conflict or disease. Entire understandings and practices were put into place to make sense of the incorporation of outside peoples into their new home societies. With the arrival of Europeans, the slavery paradigm shifted to accommodate the market impulse of capitalism; which made slave labor available for purchase.

Slavery, colonialism, and paternalism are contentious issues across the United States and much of the world. Of these subjects, slavery is a particularly painful aspect for many communities in the Americas. The most visibly affected were the African slaves imported to labor in the agricultural Southeast. It is this black-white, slave-master narrative that has garnered a great deal of attention. Another part of that narrative is the Indians who were often enslaved to work the farms and ranches of Spanish masters. From South America to the California Coast, Indian labor was the commodity by which the Spanish empire prospered. But these are not the last words regarding slavery in the Americas. Historians like Galloway, Snyder, and Brooks have brought into focus the existing state of slavery among American Indian peoples. Given

the evolving nature of the scholarship, more inclusive studies will be written that place slavery as an institution found everywhere in the world. By bringing forth these hidden histories of Indians as active participants in slavery, new approaches to American Indian history can be crafted.

Before such new changes can be undertaken, it behooves historians to critically re-evaluate their positions on American Indian history, particularly with regards to slavery. In Navajo, a person outside the culture and established kinship networks was regarded as a slave. This individual was not enslaved because of the color of his/her skin, but because him/she were considered an "other." Slavery was not the mean position that it has often been equated with, but was the vehicle by which an outsider could acquire language and the culture, and eventually be accepted into the kinship network as a member of the family. When writing about topics as complicated as identity and 'otherness,' it is necessary for historians to incorporate American Indian oral tradition and language into those topics. Otherwise such studies remain incomplete. To complete the circle, we as scholars, have to be open to the incorporation of new sources of insight and new interpretations of established knowledge.

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