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Peter N. Stearns, Ph.D.

THE GENDER IN WORLD HISTORY

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INTRODUCTION

Timing of gender history Gender is a relatively new category in historical research and analysis, taking shape from the 1960s onward. It was initially associated both with the rise of social history, seeking to expand understanding of the lives and roles of ordinary people in the past, and with “second wave” feminism, eager to include women in historical accounts (beyond the genre of historical biography, where there was already some place). The link to feminist perspectives, and often feminist political goals, has persisted, but the field has broadened beyond this; still, the notion that historians have an obligation to cut into masculine dominance of the historical record continues to inspire.

Goals Beyond working for greater balance and equity in the historical record, gender historians argue that, just as past societies cannot be understood without attention to changes and continuities in social structure, so the principles by which gender is defined and organized shape societies in fundamental ways. While gender history is still disproportionately associated with the history of women, attention to men and masculinity figures prominently as well. At the same time, in a still-developing field, it must be admitted that gender history is not always well integrated with other standard topics –often standing as a separate category in textbook treatments, for example, without much connection to political or diplomatic narratives. Arguably, however, gender history can offer vital contributions to topics outside the standard gender realm – such as the nature and frequency of war, or the ways that religious change is introduced and assimilated. Here, as in other respects, there are opportunities for further synthesis, along with many specific research projects.

Social or cultural construction Gender history assumes, and demonstrates, that many aspects of gender are socially constructed – even if people in the societies involved often believe that their definitions of gender are “natural”. Indeed, one of the purposes of gender history is to clarify how particular gender qualities – like the notion, in some societies, that men are not supposed to cry – were created in specific regions at specific points in time, and what purpose they have served. Gender history in this sense stands in sharp opposition certain kinds of social biology, that assume that deep distinctions between the genders are built in and immutable (like the notion that women are “naturally” more conservative in behavior because --unlike men who regularly create new sperm-- they have a finite supply of eggs – and hence a need to conserve rather than seek new conquests). Not surprisingly, in recent decades gender history has also expanded to include homosexual and transgender groups, where again the boundary lines between biological basics and cultural definitions vary with time and place.

Probing the boundaries between biological characteristics of gender (male as well as female or trans) and the features that have been shaped by particular cultures is an inherent part of the field – but there is no question that the emphasis rests with cultural construction.

Challenges Gender historians face important issues in developing sources of data, though it can be argued that they have overcome many of them. Not surprisingly, women usually leave fewer records than men, at least until recent times. Often, a good bit of information about gender characteristics, in most periods and places, is filtered through the eyes of male observers, and requires careful interpretation. Social class is another serious challenge: it is much easier to find material on upper-class gender features than on society's majorities. Source constraints explain why a good bit of early gender history remained biographical – histories of noteworthy women and female leaders – or focused on explicit feminist movements. Over time, however, historians have uncovered a wider variety of women's voices, and also have exploited more general data, for example on demographic patterns, allowing exploration of facets such as gender in the family.

Gender in world history Gender history initially took shape disproportionately in North American and West European contexts, associated with the centers of second-wave feminism. It remains true that the literature on gender history for certain regions, such as the Middle East or Africa, is sketchier than that for the "West". However, serious gender history is now available for most world regions. Indeed, exploration of particular regional features in gender history is now a well-established category. By the same token, global and comparative gender history is a vital feature of any effort to understand regional differences and clashes over gender today.

Periodization: the big changes Gender characteristics have been profoundly reshaped by the two big shifts in the structures of human societies: the replacement of hunting and gathering by agriculture, beginning about 11,000 years ago and gradually spreading to much of the world, and then the replacement of agriculture in turn by urban and industrial societies – a process that began about 250 years ago and is still ongoing. A world-historical approach to gender history centers on analyzing the nature of these two big transitions, but also exploring how different regional societies put somewhat different spins on the basic patterns – how the Chinese version of gender in an agricultural society, for example, compared to the framework that took shape on the Indian subcontinent. One of the open issues in the world today involves assessing the extent to which different regions will move toward a standard gender pattern – associated for example with the general movement to extend full educational opportunities to women – and how much differentiation will remain: and obviously modern (and even earlier) gender history is fundamental to that assessment.

Periodization: the standard periods Gender history can also respond to the more common periodization in world history, though with some complications. Thus the ancient and classical periods are marked by efforts to refine the patriarchal system of gender relations that was common among all agricultural societies, for example by inserting it in the law codes generated by most early governments. In the process, though again within the overall agricultural framework, different regional approaches took shape. The post-classical period features the impact of the expanding missionary religions on gender, adding new elements to regional gender cultures and raising important questions about the limits of religious change. The early modern period is less clearly useful as a global category, though vital changes in gender characteristics occurred in the Americas and Africa, and to a more limited extent in Western Europe and Russia. Gender in the "long" nineteenth century was shaped both by early industrialization and by the global impact of the new imperialism. Finally, the twentieth-twenty first centuries have seen more widespread industrialization, ultimately including the global decline in birth rates, but also a host of gender variants introduced by movements such as fascism and communism or religious fundamentalism.

Study questions

1. How can the common association of gender history with feminism be both a strength and a problem in the field?
2. What are the basic purposes of gender history?
3. What are some key comparative issues in gender history?
4. What standard world history periods apply fairly readily to gender history? Which periods are more problematic in the field, and why?

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CHAPTER 1: From Hunting and Gathering to Agriculture and the Rise of Patriarchy

The First Big Change The great transition from hunting and gathering societies to societies based on an agricultural economy, whenever and wherever it occurred, brought massive changes in relations between the genders. Patterns of considerable equality between the genders shifted to the massive differentials embedded in patriarchal systems. Yet the process of transition is not easily documented. It occurred well before the advent of writing, leaving many details about timing and process unclear. Questions also apply to causation of the change: historians and anthropologists think they know why the transition occurred, but there is undeniably some guesswork involved. Nevertheless, the change is fundamental to gender in history, particularly of course during the long period in which agriculture predominated, but to some extent around the world still today.

Hunting and gathering Hunting and gathering societies predominated during most of the human experience, leaving a variety of archeological records that can be supplemented by studies of the scattered hunting and gathering groups remaining today. The societies normally featured sharp distinctions in the economic roles of men and women, with men as hunters and women responsible for gathering seeds, nuts and berries (though there were situations where women hunted as well). The socialization of older children was also shaped by preparation for these different functions. However, the system was also compatible with considerable equality between the genders in terms of prestige and power. Both contributed vitally to the groups' well-being, and in some cases women generated more food, in terms of caloric values, than men did. The informal councils that guided many groups often included both genders. Hunting and gathering societies were also characterized by relatively low birth rates, achieved among other things by prolonged lactation periods for young children (up to or beyond four years of age), which reduced the possibility of conception; low birth rates, in turn, facilitated the economic activities of mothers. Many hunting and gathering groups also featured relatively limited regulations on sexual activity, before and even during the formation of families. Finally, some hunting and gathering groups recognized individuals who identified as neither fully male or fully female, often assigning particular economic and spiritual roles; this again might suggest that gender was not a rigid category.

Agriculture and patriarchy Agricultural societies offered marked contrast to earlier hunting and gathering patterns, though it is not clear how quickly the differences emerged. Men now gained clearly superior roles. They monopolized leadership positions, though individual women, mainly through inheritance or marriage ties, could break into the circle. Where any kind of formal education was involved, men clearly predominated: until very recently, male literacy rates always soared above those of women – both a sign and a cause of inequality in patriarchal societies. Property relationships strongly favored males, which helps explain the marked preference for boy children – the family's heirs. Agricultural societies also generated cultures that, though with varying specifics, insisted on the superior aptitudes of men: not only stronger and braver, but also more intelligent and, obviously, more capable of leadership. While young children might play together without too much regard for gender in agricultural societies, they were also taught power differentials – and not just distinct economic roles – fairly early in life. A Chinese custom in which boy babies slept to the side of the parental bed, but girls at its feet, was a characteristic kind of differentiator.

Causation Two factors were primarily responsible for this dramatically new gender system, and they were closely intertwined. In the first place, birth rates increased with agriculture: this reflected better food supply (though it was often of lower nutritional value) and also the greater labor needs of agricultural families. Average birth rates in agricultural societies ranged around eight children per family, and while about 20% of all families were infertile (because of one or both of the partners) some families obviously had more children than the average. The (male-dominated) value system characteristically placed great

emphasis on substantial numbers of children as a sign of success. In contrast to hunting and gathering, most women spent much of their adult lives pregnant or caring for young children. This meant that in most cases – and this was the second factor -- men became responsible for the most important economic production functions, particularly in maintaining the crops that generated the greatest food value. (There was irony in this, since women almost certainly, as seed gatherers, invented agriculture in the first place.) There were cases in which women took over major agricultural functions, as when men were away at war, but this was usually an exception. It is important not to overdo the distinctions. Women had vital work roles, beyond child care – but primarily in and around the house. For example, they often were responsible for bringing water from the village well. And the work distinctions between the genders were much sharper among the upper classes (which also featured higher birth rates) than among peasants and artisans. However, basic economic inequality was common and in every agricultural society, at all social levels above the propertyless poor, it was expressed and transmitted through male ownership and inheritance of most assets and property.

Sexuality and sexual control Patriarchal societies almost always generated a sexual double standard, in which female behavior was more closely regulated and monitored than that of males. Women were more frequently punished for premarital sexual activity and also for adultery. These differentials suggested yet another factor in the rise of patriarchal systems in agricultural societies: the growing effort by men to assure that the children their wife or wives bore were in fact their own. As agricultural societies established property systems and resultant inheritance patterns, men who were responsible for major improvements – like clearing land – sought to be sure that their heirs were “theirs”. (It is important to note though that most agricultural societies also generated prostitution, at least in the cities, where women serviced men.)

Other family characteristics In most agricultural societies marriages were usually arranged, by parents or other relatives, to assure that a new family had a solid economic base. This affected men as well as women, but in most cases women were married at an earlier age, giving their husbands a power advantage in age as well as gender. In most agricultural families, brides went to the grooms’ family, rather than the other way around, again reflecting and furthering gender differentials. In most agricultural regions – though there were important exceptions – brides were expected to bring a dowry to the new marriage, which in most instances the husband or his family would control.

Acceptance and adjustments Once patriarchal systems were established, they proved durable, and there is relatively little evidence of efforts to protest the basic patterns (though women could and did criticize the way patriarchal advantage was being administered) Women simply lacked the power base to organize major protest, and were in addition discouraged from much public activity; and many, surely, internalized the notion that they were inferior. Some women expressed discontent, however, by being unpleasant: many agricultural societies had terms like “shrew” for women who were clearly aggrieved (including the wife of the famous Greek philosopher Socrates). Other individual women managed to assert considerable informal authority, within and sometimes beyond the family. Often they cultivated close ties with sons, which would provide both protection and opportunity for mature wives (and in some cases widows). Wealthy women might also exercise power over servants and daughters-in-law. Patriarchal inequality was real, but it could also be complex in terms of actual life patterns. The specifics of patriarchal systems also varied from one region to the next, creating another complexity.

Study questions:

1. Why did the rise of agriculture always generate major changes in the gender systems of hunting and gathering societies?
2. Why did inheritance systems in agricultural societies always favor males?
3. Why did gender inequality cause relatively little formal protest during the “agricultural age” of world history?

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Chapter 2: ANCIENT AND CLASSICAL PERIODS

Basic features As river valley civilizations took shape, first in Mesopotamia and Egypt, followed by the great classical civilizations in Persia, China, India and the Mediterranean, they formalized many basic features of the patriarchal gender system – though the fundamental features had almost certainly developed earlier. This included appropriate provisions in the law codes commonly issued by the governments involved. Also, thanks to the introduction of writing in these societies, other records concerning the gender systems began to emerge. At the same time, each region began to shape its own approach to patriarchal gender relations, creating comparative issues and challenges in gender history.

Mesopotamia The Law Codes of king Hammurabi, issued around 1700 BCE, clearly spelled out unequal relationships between men and women, and more specifically husbands and wives. The Code decreed that a woman "who has not been a careful housewife, has gadded about, has neglected her house and has belittled her husband" should be "thrown into the water" as punishment. Characteristically also, punishment for adultery bore more heavily on women than on men, and men had more reasons they could legitimately cast wives out the family – including, obviously, careless housework. The Code also clarified male control over most property, along with inequalities in wealth between the genders. Though in most respects wives were treated as if owned by their husbands, male control was not unlimited. At least in principle, a wife could legitimately leave a husband if he systematically failed to provide. Mesopotamia also relied heavily on infanticide as a means of property control, in which unwanted babies would be killed, usually by being abandoned in some isolated spot. Gender factored in here as well, female infants were far more commonly victims than male, both because this served more directly to limit family size but also because boys were more valued. On yet another front: Mesopotamian records clearly listed prostitution as a profession – reflecting the economic difficulties unattached women encountered as well as male appetites, at least in the cities.

Comparative issues Many features of gender relations in other early civilizations replicated those in Mesopotamia, including infanticide (in China, for example) and urban prostitution. However, significant differences emerged as well, though the causes are not always clear. Thus early Egyptian civilization attributed more value to women than its Mesopotamian neighbor. Infanticide was not practiced (possibly reflecting the greater prosperity of Nile River agriculture) – to the amazement of many visitors from other regions. A number of individual women exercised considerable power as rulers – like Queen Nefertiti, wife of the pharaoh Akhenaton, who played an active role in settling religious disputes during his reign. Women were also prominently displayed in Egyptian art, served as powerful priestesses in the Egyptian religion, and were sometimes treated to the same elaborate burial practices, including mummification, available for upper-class men in preparation for an afterlife. On the other hand, basic gender inequality was clear in Egypt as well. As one writer, Ptah Hotep, put it (in what was arguably a mild definition of patriarchy): "If you are a man of note, found for yourself a household, and love your wife at home... Fill her belly, clothe her back... But hold her back from getting the mastery."

Classical models The civilizations that emerged in Asia, north Africa, and southern Europe after 800 BCE continued to elaborate patriarchal systems, though again with different regional emphases. In China, Confucianism emphasized the importance of the authority of husband and father in the family, as a microcosm of an orderly state (itself ruled by a male emperor with only one real exception). Upper-class men often took on concubines as well as a wife, both for sexual enjoyment and to help assure the birth of male heirs; this system was recognized and regulated, among other things to preserve some priority for the initial wife. An influential advice manual for women, written by Ban Zhao, an extraordinary and highly educated upper-class woman, stressed the importance of wifely humility: "Humility means yielding and acting respectful, putting others first... enduring insults and bearing with mistreatment." In classical India, Hindu philosophers debated a crucial issue, given the religion's emphasis on reincarnation and potential spiritual advancement after death: did a woman, to advance, need first to become male in the next life, or could she progress while remaining female? – and the issue was not clearly resolved. Wives were also expected to perform religious sacrifices, but only in their husbands' name, not their own. Both in China

and India marriages were carefully arranged, with the brides' families obligated to provide a suitable dowry. In both societies (though the evidence is somewhat clearer in classical China) physical violence against wives to keep them in line was not uncommon. In both societies, however, female beauty and talent were also prized (here, most explicitly in India). Also in India, the famous manual on sexual and emotional pleasure, the *Kama Sutra* (written sometime between 400 BCE and 300 CE) emphasized the importance of attending to women's needs as well as men's. Here again, patriarchy in practice could be complicated.

Classical Greece and Rome Both Greek and Roman law emphasized gender inequality. In Athenian law, adultery of a married woman was regarded as a more serious crime than rape of an unmarried woman, since it violated the property rights of the husband. Roman law also imposed harsh punishments for sexual offenses: "The husband is the judge of his wife. If she commits a fault, he punishes her; if she has drunk wine, he condemns her; if she has been guilty of adultery, he kills her." Greek philosophers did not discuss gender elaborately, but Aristotle, in particular, highlighted the intellectual inferiority of women: "the man is superior by nature, and ruler." Aristotle granted that family life could not be happy unless women were content, but true happiness, which involved service to society, was beyond a woman's grasp. All public roles must be male, though the philosopher granted that women could have some subordinate authority in keeping a good household. While Roman law in principle insisted on monogamy, in practice emperors and other upper-class men fairly openly took on concubines. Julius Caesar actually divorced a wife despite no clear evidence of wrongdoing, insisting that wives must be "above reproach." However, inequality was not the only theme—as in the other classical civilizations. Some important women writers flourished in Greece, and women were allowed to attend plays and religious festivals. Roman patterns were even more complex. Punishments for adultery eased over time, for example—at one point involving only the loss of some of a woman's property. At one point even the Roman Senate paid attention to women's needs, in a debate over importing luxury goods like silks; while conservatives argued that women's frivolity should be restrained, others pointed out their selfless service to the family, and therefore to society, which deserved some reward through decorative consumer items.

Other issues Several other themes complicate the assessment of gender relations in classical societies. Definitions of masculinity varied. Chinese culture, particularly under Confucianism, placed less emphasis on military virtues than did Greece and particularly imperial Rome: scholarship and bureaucratic service were more important. While India had a warrior caste, the highest Brahmin caste was priestly, and boys indeed were systematically trained in religious rituals and spirituality rather than martial arts. Both in fiction and in fact, the classical societies also could single out unusual women. Hindu epics included women who performed heroic service in rescuing fathers and husbands. Greek plays often highlighted the complexity of women's roles, while the poet Homer's account of the Trojan wars made it clear that rivalry for a beautiful woman was at the root of the conflict. In China, Ban Zhao might praise female humility, but she also emphasized that women had vital roles to play in the family; and she herself gained fame not only as author but as advisor to emperors. Finally, the classical period also made it clear that women could wield considerable power and influence, however informally, particularly through their carefully-prepared roles as mothers of sons. This was a theme in China, where a number of accounts featured influential men who were careful to take their mothers' wishes into account, sometimes in preference to their own interests.

Religion Polytheistic religions predominated during the ancient period, and they continued to play a major role in the classical period particularly in the Mediterranean and among many of the lower classes in China. While there was great variety in specifics, most polytheistic religions attributed important roles to goddesses as well as gods. Goddesses were often sources of fertility, of beauty, but they could also exercise great power in many domains. Stories and plays illustrated how goddesses as well as gods could strongly influence human affairs. Women could also serve major roles as priestesses: this was true both in Egypt and Greece, where a few women gained special training and exercised important ritual functions. In Rome, a few women – the Vestal Virgins – could serve a goddess; after thirty years they could retire with a generous pensions and ongoing prestige, and were allowed to marry though few did so. Hinduism, though a more complex religion, offered similar features: powerful goddesses and a strong emphasis on the female as source of creative energy, and at least some spiritual roles for women as gurus, or spiritual teachers. And Hindu wives and mothers carried out important ritual functions in the household. In traditional Judaism, however, the female role was cut back. A single, powerful God was

often seen in masculine terms; serious religious scholarship was reserved for men, and women worshipped separately. With this exception, however, religion might have provided some balance to patriarchal conditions in many of the ancient and classical civilizations.

Study questions

1. How did laws in the early and classical civilizations seek to enforce male power over women? Were there any significant limitations to this power?
2. What were some important ways in which classical societies cannot be described simply in terms of male control over women?
3. What were some key differences in gender patterns in the major ancient and classical civilizations? Were they very significant?
4. How did religion factor into gender patterns in the early and classical civilizations? Did they offer a major modification of gender inequality?

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CHAPTER 3: THE POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

Major developments For societies in Asia, Africa and Europe, despite great variety, two major changes differentiate the period from its classical predecessor, in addition to the decline of many great classical empires. First, missionary religions spread more widely. Buddhism and Christianity had been established before, but they reached out into new regions during this period; and Islam arose and proved to be particularly capable of reaching across political and cultural boundaries. Second, interregional trade increased, spurring the exchange of goods particularly through Indian Ocean trade. Both developments had significant implications for gender relations. In addition, a number of specific regions introduced new practices, such as footbinding in China that further emphasized women's inferiority.

Economic change This rise of somewhat more commercial economies created some new opportunities for women. In China, for example, increased production of silk, often for export, created a larger category of female manufacturing workers, operating in loosely organized shops though usually at low rates of pay. Cities grew in many places. Again in China, urban populations rose to over 12% of the total, and a more vibrant urban economy generated new chances for female entertainers. A courtesan class developed, heavily dependent on male patrons but accorded some prestige for beauty and artistic achievement; some women in this group became authors and artists. Upper-class women also gained some new influence in the Byzantine empire, in a few cases assuming political power directly. On the whole, however, women's opportunities were still curtailed by larger inequalities, and some societies used new wealth to impose new limitations on women – as in the spread of Chinese footbinding which curtailed activities for many urban and upper-class women. In the Middle East and India, many women were largely secluded in their households and limited by strict rules over appropriate dress.

The missionary religions Buddhism, Christianity and Islam differed in many respects, but they all introduced new emphasis on the basic spiritual equality of men and women. In Christianity and Islam, women had souls, and were capable of salvation; in Buddhism, women shared in the divine essence. The religions also gave women new opportunities in religious vocations, as in the convents established by Christians and Buddhists. At the same time, however, the religions remained highly patriarchal in most respects. They carefully insisted on male leadership – in some ways, more systematically than some of the older polytheistic religions had done. They emphasized the subordination of wife to husband. The

results of religious change had complex implications for gender relations, introducing some new variety in vocations but confirming patriarchy in a number of ways.

Buddhism The Buddha established convents for women with some hesitation, though they followed from the new recognition of women's spiritual potential; and he carefully placed them under the control of male monks. And the religious prestige of monks tended to eclipse the female role. Still, the existence of convents allowed some women to avoid marriage and defy the wishes of their fathers. As one woman noted, insisting on joining a convent, "What must I submit thrice (to father, husband and son) when I am considered a woman of propriety?" Some male Buddhists in Japan were particularly eager to welcome the religious insights of women, arguing they deserved equal credit with male views. At the same time, however, Buddhism could also confirm the authority of husbands in the family. Some Chinese men welcomed their wives' enthusiasm for Buddhism because it made them "tranquil and satisfied with their fate." And Chinese Buddhist leaders, adapting to Confucian tradition, carefully insisted on the superiority of husbands in the family. And some Buddhists worried that women could distract men from the paths of virtue: "women can ruin the precepts of purity." Contradictory impulses were clearly involved.

Christianity Christianity exalted the spiritual potential of women, and Mary, mother of Jesus, became an enduring religious symbol. Many women found new opportunities in convents and some, like Hildegard of Bingen, contributed important treatises on piety that gained wide influence. Christian insistence on the importance of consent to marriage, for both genders, on the whole reduced the incidence of child brides in the Christian regions. There were also significant efforts to reduce female infanticide. On the other hand, Christianity did little to affect other laws concerning gender, particularly when it came to male control over property. Widows in many Christian areas were entirely at the mercy of sons or brothers when it came to economic support. Many Christians used Eve's role in the original sin to maintain concern about women's potential to tempt men into evil habits, leading to disproportionate efforts to regulate female sexual behavior. Christian suspicion of sexuality in general – including praise for the spiritual superiority of celibacy – affected both genders, but impinged more on women. And priestly authority, in all the major versions of Christianity, remained resolutely male.

Islam Muhammed was eager to modify Arab tradition to improve conditions for women. Most notably, the Qur'an and Islamic law carefully protected women's right to property. Women retained control over dowries, and daughters had inheritance rights along with sons – though at only half the rate. Women could also initiate divorce, though the process was much less complicated for men. The Prophet directly attacked infanticide. While Islam carefully avoided any formal monastic movement, individual women did gain credit for spirituality, and some served as highly regarded teachers; women also participated in the spiritual enthusiasms of the Sufi movement. The importance of religious pilgrimage to Mecca, provided opportunities for women to travel. At another level, in contrast to Christianity, Islamic advice urged the legitimacy of female sexual pleasure, though sexual activity outside of marriage, or during special periods such as Ramadan, was prohibited (and sometimes severely punished). On the other hand, official leadership in Islam, including involvement with legal scholarship, remained resolutely male. "The first condition for a judge is that he must be a man....As for women, they are unsuited to positions of authority." In contrast to Christianity and Buddhism, the two genders worshipped separately, with far better spaces provided for men. While Islam insisted on marriage consent in principle, child brides remained common in many Islamic regions. Particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, but ultimately also in India, Islam also gave religious sanction to older traditions that insisted on concealing dress for women, including veiling, though it was not an official obligation. As with Christianity, attitudes to women were affected by the belief that, particularly in sexual matters, women were more likely to sin or induce sin: a passage in the Hadith claimed that "I had a look into Hell and saw that most of its inhabitants for women." This approach justified many efforts to regulate female behavior a subject them to male authority in the home.

Results The postclassical period introduced important changes for some women but, probably, not for most. The tensions in all the missionary religions limited the impact of ideas about spiritual equality. Efforts to debate which religion was "best" for women at this point are inevitably inconclusive. To the extent that the missionary religions prompted new interest in education – particularly important in Islam – males were the primary beneficiaries, often widening the literacy gap between the genders. At the same time other developments – like footbinding in China, the new practice of *sati* for some Hindu women (in

which wives were expected to kill themselves after the death of a husband, on grounds that without a male women had nothing to live for), plus growing regulation of dress and public activities for many upper-class women in many Islamic regions –all introduced new efforts to enforce female inequality. Even the growth of cities in some prosperous regions (regardless of religion), though it had various results, inevitably involved an expansion of prostitution, reflecting the precarious economic conditions affecting some women.

Study questions

1. What were some of the developments that heightened gender inequality during the postclassical period? How can they be explained?
2. To what extent did the missionary religions, as they expanded, create new opportunities for women? Why and how, at the same time, were these opportunities characteristically limited?
3. Compare the results of Christianity and of Islam on gender conditions. Was either religion more advantageous to women than the other?

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CHAPTER 4: THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD, 1450-1750

Basic factors It is harder to generalize about global changes in gender conditions during the early modern period than about most of the other conventional world history periods. Nothing as sweeping as the spread of missionary religions provides an overall focus. The period's big developments – massive increases in world trade, the inclusion of the Americas in international contacts, and the rise of a variety of new empires – do not lend themselves to systematic generalizations about gender. A number of specific developments occurred within key regions, however, that had major implications for the areas involved. None, however, constituted a shift in the basic characteristics of patriarchal agricultural societies.

The world economy The spread of trade linking many areas of the world encouraged various kinds of commercial and manufacturing expansion, though as yet without major technological change. In the process tens of thousands of women, in many regions, took on new or ancillary jobs in domestic manufacturing, producing textile products, shoes, basic tools for sale on the market while working in the home with hand-powered equipment. Men participated too, but on the whole gravitated toward the more skilled occupations. Thus, in textiles, women predominated in spinning, but men had a bigger role as weavers. Domestic manufacturing spread in Western Europe, but also Latin America, India and elsewhere. On the whole women were valued for their low cost, and the results rarely improved their economic position. In Western Europe at least men drove women out of the more skilled urban trades, again confirming their reliance on the lower-wage sectors. In many cases, of course, domestic manufacturing was a parttime occupation, and the women participated in other aspects of the family economy as well.

The slave trade The introduction of the Atlantic slave trade from the 16th century onward had huge implications for gender relations in Africa and the Americas alike. In Africa, disproportionate numbers of young men were seized by the slavers, creating a major gender imbalance in key parts of West Africa. In compensation, polygamy expanded, building on the African tradition of family responsibility for women and the capacity of some men to take on more than one wife. Women who were enslaved in the Americas, through the trade or through birth into slavery, were subjected to the hard work, harsh conditions and often brutal punishments that applied to both genders. In some cases, special ditches were built so that presumably disobedient pregnant women could be laid down to be whipped without damage to the fetus. Enslaved women were also subject to frequent rape or intercourse by their masters or members of his family. And – like enslaved men – they also faced the possibility of family disruption

through sale of spouse or children. Loss of authority by enslaved men, who had little or no room for independent initiatives even in their families, would also affect the gender culture of this population.

American colonization and indigenous peoples The arrival of European settlers in the Americas disrupted indigenous traditions in fundamental ways, while also, through disease and conquest, massively reducing the indigenous populations. Europeans generally found many indigenous habits to be immoral – such as the tradition in some parts of central America of allowing a courting couple a trial period of cohabitation before full marriage. They sought to regulate sexual behavior more closely, and also to subject women more completely to the authority of fathers and husbands. In French Canada, Jesuits reported approvingly of a man who beat a wife “who had insolently provoked him.” Europeans were also shocked by the tolerance, in some indigenous groups, of “spirit people” who were essentially transgender, assuming that they were homosexuals and attempting to repress the custom. Conversion to Christianity included that idea that women, as well as men, had souls, and in Catholic areas often included considerable devotion on Mary. On the other hand, compared to many indigenous religious traditions, women lost roles in officiating in religious ceremonies. The challenge to customary gender patterns was widespread.

Gender patterns in colonial Latin America As a new Latin American population and culture took shape – combining some indigenous groups, but also a growing majority of *mestizos* along with some Europeans and Africans – a number of important gender patterns emerged. Particularly in the early colonial period, sexual violence was considerable, a pattern initiated by Columbus and his colleagues. Far more men than women moved from Europe to Latin America, and the gender imbalance combined with male assertion led to high rates of rape or compulsion, along with a male culture that vaunted sexual prowess. Some indigenous groups, like the Mayans, were shocked by European sexual immorality – to which they might have added hypocrisy. High rates of illegitimate births continued to characterize Latin American society well into the 19th century, combined however with serious efforts by groups of women to share the responsibilities of child care. On the other hand, Spanish Catholic authorities vigorously preached the importance of the family and family solidarity – more than had been the case in European tradition – another element that continued in the Latin American gender tradition. Along with the veneration of Mary, this could give women an important position as mothers, though it had less effect outside the family.

The Islamic empires This was not a period of major change in gender conditions in predominantly Islamic regions, but there were some interesting developments. In India under the Mughal empire, habits of isolating upper-class women in the household, in the system called *purdah*, spread widely among Hindu as well as Muslim populations. On the other hand, Hindu traditions, in which men controlled their wives’ dowries, had some impact on Indian Muslims even though this contravened Islamic law. In both the Mughal and Ottoman empires, rulers developed increasingly elaborate harems, often creating substantial sections of the royal palace – like Topkapi, in Istanbul – for this purpose. Harems included a variety of female relatives, including wives, but also concubines and slave girls, and could be a source of considerable political authority and intrigue. At the same time, exaggerated stories about the harems contributed to European criticism of the empires – and particularly, the Ottoman empire – as decadent and immoral.

Western Europe In addition to the rise of women’s participation in domestic manufacturing, three changes significantly affected gender relations in Western Europe, though they pointed in different directions. In the first place, the rise of Protestantism placed new importance on the family. Martin Luther, for example, pointedly married a former nun. Celibacy no longer, in Protestantism, offered spiritual advantage. By the 17th century, Protestant writers were beginning to pay more attention to the importance of good relationships in the family, including appropriate attention to the well-being of wives. Protestant families still assumed male authority: indeed, fathers had particular responsibility for the moral guidance of children. But there was some change. Protestantism also encouraged more attention to education, and while here too male advantage persisted by the 18th century at least 20% of women were literate in most Protestant regions, a significant shift. (Ironically some Protestant leaders urged literacy for women, but not the ability to write – presumably because as women they would have nothing interesting to say.) Second, what has been called the European-style family structure, though it had started earlier, continued to gain ground. This emphasized relatively late age of marriage for both men and women, at least outside the upper classes. With this, the role of the extended family declined – grandparents often died off before

their children began to have children of their own; in turn, reliance on the nuclear family placed a greater premium on the importance of women's work and constructive working relations between husband and wife. Finally, as Europeans gained access to new consumer goods in world trade, such as chinaware for serving tea or coffee, family rituals sometimes became more elaborate; women in the process gained new roles as arrangers of activities like a more formal family evening meal. None of this altered fundamental gender dynamics, though there were a few debates about gender conditions in Protestant areas, but the changes were interesting.

Russia Peter the Great's process of Westernization, around 1700, had some implications for upper class women, as against more traditional subordination. The Tsar for example abolished the traditional practice by which, in the marriage ceremony, a small whip was given from the bride's father to the new husband, as a symbol of male authority. Aristocratic women began to emphasize Western styles of dress and had new opportunities for public activities, for example in attending concerts. Coincidentally, in the 18th century, two major rulers were female, most notably Catherine the Great. Again, basic gender systems persisted, particularly among the vast peasant majority, but there were some limited shifts at the top of society.

Study questions

1. How did European colonization and the slave trade affect gender conditions in Africa and the Americas?
2. How did the growth of world commerce affect women as workers and consumers?
3. What were the major changes in gender relations in Western Europe? To what extent did Russia participate in these changes as well?

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CHAPTER 5: THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

Principal themes A variety of major changes occurred in gender relations during the 150 years after about 1770. In Western Europe and the United States gender differentiation was strongly emphasized, but it was redefined, particularly in emphasizing women's special virtues in the home. These ideas combined with early industrialization to alter work roles, education, and legal provisions. This was also the context in which formal feminism began to take shape. Many other parts of the world were affected to some degree by Western example or pressure, leading to some reforms of traditional practices and some new attention to education. However the West's industrialization challenged women's work roles in many places, while Western imperialism could affect gender patterns in various ways. Change was widespread, but beyond this it is not easy to identify dominant global themes.

New ideas in the West By the middle of the 18th century ideas about women were beginning to shift, at least in the middle classes. Emphasis on the importance of women's beauty increased: women's colorful clothing began to contrast with the drab outfits men wore. More important, women's moral qualities gained new emphasis, reducing the sense that they were likely sinners (though treatment of sexual misbehavior remained severe). Praise for the special qualities of motherhood increased. As a late 18th century poem put it, "Who wat and watched my infant head...and tears of sweet affection shed? My

mother". The imagery was double-edged: on the one hand, it emphasized domestic roles. On the other, it did quietly undermine some patriarchal assumptions about women's inferiority.

The early industrial revolution Industrialization began to take shape in Britain by the 1770s and spread rapidly to other parts of the West. It challenged jobs women held in domestic manufacturing, where the new machines fairly quickly mounted inescapable competition. Gradually, women's role in the formal work force declined: many working-class girls quit factory jobs after marriage, and most middle-class women never had paying jobs at all. Service as maids became the most common occupation for women in the cities. In the process, marriage became more economically important for women. At the same time, however, the prestige of women's roles in the home, as loving wives and mothers and efficient household managers, increased. Three other developments added to this complex mixture. First, the birth rate began to decline, first in the middle class, then more widely, as children's economic utility declined. Absent effective birth control techniques this required more sexual abstinence, and women were responsible for restraining male appetites – another moral role. But the result did leave more time for attention to individual children and, potentially, for other activities. Second, education for women became more widespread, at the primary and increasingly the secondary levels. It was assumed that women needed some formal education to be effective mothers and housekeepers, and some women even argued that they had educational rights just as men did. The literacy gap between the genders steadily declined, a huge change. By the later 19th century handfuls of women were even entering universities and professions such as law and medicine. And larger numbers of women began to participate in the growing clerical labor force, as secretaries, primary school teachers, bank tellers, at least before marriage. Finally, women became the primary consumer agents of the family, and began to participate in wider consumer opportunities by the later 19th century. They became the favorite patrons of the new department stores, and advertisers began to devote explicit attention to the female market.

Global patterns: work While no region yet copied the West by entering into full industrialization, Western industry, with its massive, cheap factory exports, had huge impacts globally. Tens of thousands of women, as domestic manufacturers, were driven out of work in places like India and Latin America. Economic conditions for many women deteriorated, and alternatives like domestic service or prostitution became more common. Some countries took special advantage of cheap female labor. Japan, for example, as it began to industrialize, depended on cheap female silk workers, held almost as slaves, to produce stockings and other products sold on the world market to help pay for essential imports of capital equipment for industry. Women workers were also prominent in early Russian industrialization.

Global patterns: education Almost everywhere, women's schooling received at least some attention. Reformers paid attention to what was happening in the West, and local needs, including a need for some women school teachers, also entered into the picture. Japan's ambitious education decree of 1872, mandating primary schooling for girls as well as boys, was particularly revolutionary. But Mexico City required schooling for girls as early as the 1840s. The Tanzimat reform movement in the Ottoman Empire included establishment of some schools for girls, particularly for teacher training, though the results were limited. Christian missionary schools in Africa, India and China, often emphasized girls' education, and a few upper-class girls were even sent to the West: Wellesley College in the United States, received a number of Chinese young women for example. In most places the gender education gap was not yet closed. And it was widely assumed that education for girls should have a domestic focus, preparing them, as the Japanese government put it, to be "wise mothers". Still, this was a potentially revolutionary development that would lead a few women into new occupational fields, like medicine, and raise questions for a larger number about traditional practices like high birth rates.

Imperialism as double-edged New Western imperialism, including growing pressure even on independent states like China and the Ottoman empire, affected gender in several ways. In the first place, Westerners identified some traditional practices as unacceptable. In early 19th-century India for example British officials worked to abolish *sati*, with some effect, and they were joined by Indian reformers who, though opposed to British rule, agreed this was a violation. In China Western missionaries attacked footbinding, and here too Chinese reformers joined them, gradually reducing the practice into the first half of the 20th century. And Western reformers, including missionaries, did push for some education, though their efforts were usually limited. At the same time, imperial officials explicitly refrained from trying to do too much, lest they rouse local opposition: reform was not their main goal. Thus in northeastern Africa

British and French officials largely ignored the practice of female circumcision. They were aware of it; they did not like it; but they viewed it as too deeply rooted to attack. Finally, particularly in Africa, imperial legislation subjected women to new controls by husbands, much as had been the case for indigenous people in the Americas earlier. New rules for example sought to regulate dress and sexual behavior. Some of the earlier roles of the extended family, providing protection for women for example when a husband died, were reduced given the new emphasis on the nuclear family unit.

Feminism The emergence of formal feminist movements was a crucial feature of the long nineteenth century. Individual voices were raised as early as the 1790s. Mary Wollstonecraft, in England, and Olympe de Gouges, in France, argued that the “rights of man” arguments of the Enlightenment surely applied to women as human equals. Larger movements began to form by the 1840s, in places like England and the United States, sometimes linked to attacks on slavery. The movements focused on improved legal rights, for example to own and control property or to seek divorce, and they made real headway in Western legislation during the later 19th century. They also began to turn their attention to the vote, insisting that this should be a general and not a male right and even arguing that women, because of their superior morality, might help make governments better. Here, real change began to occur. Several American states gave women the vote from 1869 onward, and New Zealand became the first country to make the shift, in 1893; a number of Scandinavian countries joined in. Feminist agitation caused bitter, even violent strife in the United States and Britain, but it registered steady progress, setting the stage for wider changes in the 20th century. Finally, feminist organizations began to reach out globally from the 1880s onward, recruiting women leaders from China, Iran, Mexico and elsewhere. Widespread movements did not yet form, but individual feminists began to raise demands in many places, including Japan. Finally, feminists also sought to tackle global issues, such as sexual trafficking in women – called “white slavery” in the 1890s, pressing countries like Argentina to introduce new legislation to control prostitution. Here was a new global force, if at this point a modest one.

Study questions

1. What were the strengths and weaknesses of imperialism as a force for change in gender relations?
2. What are the complexities in trying to balance the gains and losses of women in Western society amid new ideas about gender and the effects of industrialization?
3. Were changes in education the most important global development favoring women in the long 19th century? Why did educational change occur in societies that were still firmly patriarchal?
4. What were the conditions that prompted the emergence of formal feminism?

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CHAPTER 6: THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD: 1914-21st CENTURY

General features This was a period of rapid global change in gender relations. Huge gender inequalities persisted but in almost all societies the full apparatus of a patriarchal system had been dismantled by the 21st century, particularly in politics and education. Rapid birth rate decline contributed to widespread change as well. And women's rights were routinely enshrined in any global statement of

human rights. At the same time, regional variety persisted, based in part on prior traditions, and quite widely women's economic conditions lagged behind other gains.

Variations Assessment is complicated by significant regional variations based both on cultural framework and different levels of economic development. Particular regimes also stand out for a distinctive approach. Nazi Germany, for example, urged women to abandon consumerism in favor of traditional dress, while concentrating on bearing and raising children. The Iranian revolution of 1979 introduced reemphasis on concealing clothing for women, though in other domains significant changes continued. More recently the Taliban in Afghanistan has taken an even more radical stance, reducing or eliminating any educational opportunities for girls while enforcing traditional dress. Communist regimes, in Russia after 1917, in China after 1949, concentrated more on social class reform, and economic development, than on gender issues. But they expanded educational and job opportunities for women (though often at lower rates of pay) and tried to reduce other traditional restrictions on women; in China, for example, the regime opposed arranged marriages, insisting on the consent of both parties. On the other hand the regime after 1978, fighting overpopulation, set severe limits on the number of children a couple could have, in some cases requiring abortions or even sterilization; and in practice the result also led to a higher ratio of male babies (reflecting traditional preferences), as some couples left female infants to orphanages or possibly even killed them.

Feminism and women's rights Feminist movements of various sorts spread widely. In Japan agitation by women's groups in the 1930s helped set the stage for achievement of voting rights after the war. In the West "second-stage" feminism began focusing on economic rights and reducing male-female differentials more systematically, beyond earlier goals like the vote. Pressure from women's groups encouraged the League of Nations to note the issues involved, and then after World War II the United Nations promoted women's rights quite vigorously. Gender equality was written into the Universal Charter of Human Rights in 1948, and the UN held periodic conferences to promote greater gender equality. The theme was taken up by various regional organizations, such as the African Union. It also won support from Amnesty International and other international non-government organizations, which by 2000 were actively supporting greater freedom from sexual harassment and seeking punishments for rape as a war crime. In some areas second-wave feminism also encouraged reconsideration of male roles, toward more family involvement and more open expression of emotion, though results here were mixed.

Basic trends: education Advances in education were striking, through most of the century. Some regions lacked resources for universal education, and this sometimes encouraged remnants of a gender gap. Mothers often played an active role in seeking more education for their daughters, eager to provide opportunities they themselves lacked. This was a major motive in birth rate reduction, in places like Latin America. In most countries women's literacy caught up with men's. Communist governments actively promoted education for women, and this was a major theme in the top-down reform effort by Kemal Ataturk in Turkey. By the later 20th century in some places women's educational levels surpassed those of men: this was true among college graduates in the United States from the 1980s onward, and also in Iran by the 21st century (where 55% of university students were female). Gender differences did continue to affect science and engineering, but even here disparities declined.

Voting rights and political participation Women's suffrage spread widely in Europe after World War I, including communist Russia. Another wave occurred after World War II, with Catholic countries in Europe and also Latin America (Mexico, 1953). Most "new nations" included female suffrage, including India and most African countries. By the 21st century the pattern was almost universal, as even Saudi Arabia, long a conservative holdout, began allowing women to vote in local elections. Some countries went further. India, for example, took active steps to make sure women could vote independent of fathers and husbands. Some countries (France, India, parts of Latin America) began requiring that a certain percentage of candidates be female. In many countries women gained growing participation in elected offices; the increase in Latin America was particularly striking. Women leaders became common in Scandinavia and more occasionally elsewhere (including Pakistan, India, Turkey, Japan) – though a few places, like the United States, held back. And women's role in other seats of power, such as corporate boards, continued to lag.

Birth rates and family forms Birth rates declined in most parts of the world, particularly from the second half of the 20th century onward. Latin America, for example, went through its demographic transition in the 1970s, with women often taking the lead in using contraception and explicitly trying to cut back in favor of greater opportunities for the children born. Iranian birth rates declined notably a decade or so later. Rates remained unusually high in sub-Saharan Africa, though here too there was a downward trend. In many industrialized societies by the 21st century – Western Europe, the United States, East Asia including China- birth rates dropped well below population replacement levels. Not only were women delaying child birth, in favor of establishing themselves in the job market, in some cases they no longer wanted children, or more than one child, because of the costs involved and the interference with other life goals. Government efforts to induce more births were not very successful. Marriage also changed. Rates of child marriage declined, though this was still an issue in South Asia and the Middle East. Arranged marriages also dropped off, though they remained common in India. In the West, by the 21st century, many men and women avoided marriage altogether, in favor of informal (sometimes unstable) relationships or living singly.

Work and economic inequality Economic patterns varied widely and were less consistently favorable to women than the trends in education, politics and demography. Educational improvements provided new opportunities, as did the rise of white collar jobs in many economies; and in many places women entered professions like medicine in large numbers. In some regions, however, traditional caution about women's public roles restricted opportunities: thus in the Middle East in the early 21st century only about 25% of the labor force was female. Everywhere, women's pay lagged behind men's for equivalent jobs. On the other hand, many women took advantage of training in fields like teaching and nursing; thousands of women from the Philippines won jobs in other countries in these fields, and also in the recreation industry. In Western Europe and the United States, large numbers of married women entered the formal work force in the 1960s and 1970s, rising to around 45% of the total labor force, a major change that reversed earlier industrial patterns. Women in Japan lagged slightly, but then began to participate more widely by the 21st century, though prejudice and limited facilities for child care continued to play a role.

Other changes Women's participation in sports soared after World War II, with growing international attention to women's performance in tennis, soccer football, and the Olympics. Most regions participated actively, though India and the Middle East lagged somewhat. On another front, women gained active participation in the military in a number of countries, an intriguing modification of traditional patterns that reflected not only new women's demands but also the increasing reliance on sophisticated technology over older tactics. In yet another domain, the rise of movies, television and popular music, in some cases from the early 20th century onward, gave top female performers huge audiences, significant earnings and considerable stylistic influence, from Hollywood to Bollywood and beyond, though of course male entertainers made some similar gains and in certain fields continued to out-earn women.

Sex and sexual exploitation Consumer culture in many regions suggested loosening restrictions on female sexuality. Dress became more informal in many areas, and female sexuality figured prominently in advertisements and popular entertainment. After World War II beauty contests became common in most parts of the world, to the dismay of conservative critics. In the West advice manuals began to urge more attention to female sexual pleasure. A "sexual revolution" around 1960, based in part on wider access to contraception, involved growing rates of sexual activity before marriage, in many industrial societies including Japan as well as the West. At the same time, new or at least more visible problems arose. In Western society, by the 1980s, feminist leaders began to call attention to sexual pressures on women at work, introducing a new concept of sexual harassment. Poverty and displacement – for example, in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism -- opened many women to sexual exploitation, including seizure in the global sex trade. "Sexual tourism" developed in a number of places, such as Thailand, based on access to prostitutes. In another intriguing development, sexual activity seems to have declined in a number of places since the 1990s, both before and during marriage; explanations are as yet unclear, though they could include the impact of growing access to Internet pornography.

Balance sheet The contemporary period has unquestionably seen unusually extensive changes in gender relations, more extensive than in any previous single century and particularly involving new activities and opportunities for women. Male reactions are harder to chart, ranging from adjustment to complaints and even acts of violence, such as recurrent attacks on schoolgirls in South Asia. While

general trends are important, regional variations loom large as well. Some observers have argued that adjustments have been particularly difficult, and often limited, in regions with traditions of female seclusion, such as the Middle East and South Asia, compared to areas like China where patriarchal control had taken somewhat different forms. The religious variable is clearly important, in determining levels of change and resistance, within regions (like the United States) as well as globally. Different trajectories, for example between political and educational rights versus access to political and economic power, also complicate overall evaluations. In many regions gender patterns remain in considerable flux.

Study questions

1. Has the contemporary period seen the end of traditional patriarchal structures for gender relations? What are the main complexities in addressing this questions.
2. What has been the relationship between changes in women's education and reduction of the birth rate, in many parts of the world?
3. Why and how have economic opportunities for women lagged behind changes in education and political rights?
4. Have gender patterns become increasingly "globalized", particularly since World War II?

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CHAPTER 7: GENDER IN CHINESE HISTORY

Key themes Chinese gender history can be used as a classic case of patriarchal relationships, which tended to deepen with time. Certain practices, most notably footbinding, went to extreme lengths in subordinating women, though it is always important to remember that the most striking inequalities applied in the upper classes, not among ordinary people for whom women's capacity to work remained essential. Yet premodern Chinese history also illustrates the respect that could be paid to women who successfully carried out their roles in family. And traditional subordination of women did not prevent significant and rapid reforms in gender relationships, beginning in the later 19th century and certainly carried forward under communism. Yet it remains interesting that, as in other communist societies, women have yet to rise to the top power positions in the Chinese political and economic structure.

The Confucian approach Women's subordination was a crucial feature of the political and social structure that developed during the ancient and classical periods. Confucian thinking, emerging from the 6th century BCE, held that the husband and father in the family played a role similar to that of the emperor in society as a whole, ruling over wives and children alike. Family manners were developed both to display appropriate deference to the household head, and to distinguish sons from daughters; sisters should recognize the superior positions of their brothers. Women were urged to be subservient, and concentrate on domestic skills. Ban Zhao, an unusually well educated woman writing during the Han dynasty, insisted on the gender hierarchy: women must recognize that "continuing the sacrifices means

serving one's husband-master with appropriate demeanor. Ban Zhao's service as advisor to emperors shows that talented women could find spaces within the system, and Ban Zhao herself, building on Confucian precepts of reciprocity, urged that women deserved careful if separate training to be able to carry out their duties successfully. But her manual for women, reprinted into the late 19th century, on the whole emphasized the importance of female deference and humility. In practice, gender inequality showed in the common assumption that wealthy men would take concubines in addition to a principal wife, in part to assure the production of sons. Infanticide, common as a means of population control, disproportionately targeted girls. Arranged marriages, in the upper classes, often saw women sent to husbands they had never met, in order to maximize family economic and political position, and surviving records show the unhappiness that sometimes resulted. Women were systematically excluded from positions in the all-important bureaucracy, or the schools that prepared for bureaucratic service. It should also be noted that, under Daoism, another key belief system, women were accorded greater respect; the Chinese cultural patterns harbored some complexities, though Confucianism gained ascendancy.

Further deterioration Women's position worsened during the Tang and particularly the Song dynasties. Introduction of foot binding was a telling example, as it spread gradually among the upper classes (on into the 19th century), particularly in the cities. In this system, girls had their feet severely bound and bent, breaking some of the small bones, limiting the size of the foot and resulting in a characteristic halting walk, both taken as signs of breeding and beauty. Needless to say the process was quite painful and sometimes caused serious damage. The families involved sacrificed women's economic capacity to this particular demonstration of subservience. The imperial government also introduced more elaborate regulations over concubines, specifying menial duties while also confirming the legitimacy of taking women in addition to the first wife. Though technically illegal, some wives were themselves treated as property, even sold into brothels. The spread of Buddhism to China in some cases served as a spiritual outlet for wives, but Chinese Buddhism also modified the religion to emphasize the primacy of husbands in the family. The Chinese pattern did include important variants. As manufacturing expanded, particularly under the Song dynasty, women gained new, though low-paying, opportunities in the silk industry. Growing cities supported new groups of female courtesans and entertainers, some of whom gained considerable informal power and also created works of art and literature. Within the family, many women cultivated tight emotional bonds with their sons, which could provide protection and even opportunities for informal influence in later life. Officially, in best Confucian fashion, sons made the decisions for their widowed mothers, but in practice the relationship was often more complex. In the 14th century the powerful main wives of some Mongol rulers gained considerable power and looked down on the conditions of their Chinese sisters, but did nothing to change the system.

Early modern period The Ming and Qing dynasties did not introduce major changes to the gender system, but there were new official efforts to reward women who carried out their duties as wives and mothers. The government issued commemorative plaques and other tributes, in an interesting effort to shore up the gender system. Artistic work increasingly featured female subjects, portraying beauty and other attributes. Basic features, however, did not change. Most women still were confined to family roles, and it remained very difficult, a clear sign of failure, for women to attempt to leave even the most ill-functioning household. Confucian ideals in this area were maintained, as with a woman poet who wrote "Women are the inferior part of humanity; the basest functions are, and should be, our portion."

The modern period Significant change began to occur from the late 19th century onward, partly spurred by Western observers, including Christian missionaries, who criticized footbinding and other servile conditions. Chinese reformers themselves extended these themes. A Reform Society was established in 1874, with this as a major theme, and the imperial government itself abolished footbinding – though the practice lingered until the communist government ended it completely after 1949. As one reformer noted, "I look at the Europeans and Americans, so strong and vigorous because their mothers do not bind feet and therefore have strong offspring." Educational opportunities expanded, with some individual (upper-class) women even attending universities abroad. A feminist movement developed by the early 20th century. As one leader put it in 1907: "Men and women are born equal/Why should we let the men hold sway?" Reform goals broadened, beyond specific issues like footbinding, for example urging freedom of choice of marriage partners. While Western example was still cited, by the 1920s developments in the Soviet Union also won attention. Under Mao Zedong, Chinese communist leaders began to call out the

“special oppression” of women, urging women’s participation “in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the entire society.”

Communist policies Communist victory in 1949 led quickly to a variety of major changes. Women were actively recruited into local leadership committees, in a few cases achieving 48% of total membership. A 1950 ruling banned arranged marriages, and allowed divorce by both parties. Educational opportunities expanded rapidly, including access to the growing universities. From 24% in 1978, women’s share in university enrollment rose to 52% by 2020. Public health groups sought to ease the burdens of motherhood. Women’s labor force participation, outside the home, was vital in the nation’s rapid industrial expansion, particularly after 1978. Yet limitations also persisted. Many conservatives objected to undue change in family relationships, even justifying the beating of wives. Communist party leadership at the top included only token women. Measures taken after 1978 to control population resulted in dramatic birth rate reductions that undoubtedly created new opportunities for women beyond motherhood, but also included forced abortions and sterilization for some. And restrictions on the number of children per family produced renewed signs of preferences for sons, as many infant girls were abandoned to orphanages so that the family could produce a male heir. Feminist activity was suspect, and efforts to address problems like sexual harassment made only limited headway. China was no longer a patriarchal society, but it carved a distinctive path in gender relations.

Study questions

1. What were some distinctive features of the Chinese system of patriarchy? How did it fit into the Confucian value system?
2. What were some of the main ways women might adjust to the patriarchal system?
3. What were the main changes in gender relations introduced under communism after 1949?

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CHAPTER 8: GENDER IN JAPANESE HISTORY

Background Lack of written records inhibits evaluations of gender relations in early Japanese history. It has been speculated that inequality between the genders may have been limited – for example, that women shared property rights with men – and that family descent may have been traced from mothers rather than fathers. Whatever the specifics, traditional patterns began to change considerably once Japan developed more active contacts with China, from about 400 CE onward. Japanese leaders became keenly aware that their society lagged behind the Chinese in many ways, which prompted a variety of efforts at imitation – with gender relations included

Japanese patriarchy Imitation and political change definitely included a shift to male control over property, as the legal system was revised by the 7th century. Male control in the household was more firmly established. Men gained rights to divorce that women did not have, and emphasis on obedience to father, husband and son replicated the Chinese pattern. This shift was enhanced, in the upper classes, by elaboration of a warrior code and emphasis on manly honor. To be sure, the Chinese model was not uniformly adopted. Most notably, footbinding was not imported, though Japanese standards of beauty definitely began to emphasize the charm of small feet for women.

Complications Two factors complicated the shift to a more patriarchal system. In the first place, Buddhism, also imported from China, could emphasize women's spiritual equality, and indeed some Japanese leaders were particularly vocal in defense of women's ability to contribute to religious discourse – more than their counterparts in China. One Japanese Buddhist sect stressed that women should have “every opportunity for salvation.” A few women actually rose to positions of leadership; one aristocratic woman for example oversaw fifteen temples and convents. Buddhist pilgrimages also offered women a chance to get out of the home. Tensions did exist in Japanese Buddhism: some temples were closed to women, for example, because they might bring defilement. A second complication in the period of peak Chinese imitation was more short-lived, but fascinating. Increasing admiration of things Chinese meant that many educated men began to devote themselves to studies of Chinese literature and mastery of Chinese poetic styles, excluding women from this pursuit. This ironically created some space for some upper-class women to write prose in Japanese (using modified Chinese script). Thus the world's first novel, the *Tale of Genji*, was written by a woman, around 1000 CE. Women also wrote Buddhist materials. Beyond their literary efforts, some educated women gained informal positions as advisors to leading political figures. None of this fundamentally undercut the shift toward patriarchy, but there were some interesting twists.

Later developments Patriarchal emphases deepened in the early modern period, particularly during the Tokugawa shogunate. Opportunities for Buddhist leadership and literary authorship distinctly declined as Confucian values were more vigorously emphasized. New limits were placed on women's dress, to keep them humble. A 1683 law prohibited embroidery and certain kinds of dye. Women also lost ground in court cases: in one instance, a woman who (accurately) reported that her father had killed her husband was condemned to slave status because she had violated a daughter's obligations to the father. Women were also held back from much participation in the expanding Buddhist and Confucian schools, though some upper-class women did break through. By the early 19th century about 40% of Japanese men were literate, only about 10% of all women, and most of them were limited to the basics. It was also in the Tokugawa periods, amid expanding commercial prosperity, that some women gained roles as courtesans and entertainers for upper-class men, mastering elaborate tea ceremonies, emphasizing costume and beauty, and developing talents in dance and music, while in some cases offering sexual services as well. Beneath this level, urban prostitution also developed widely, and for a period in the 16th century a number of Japanese prostitutes were sold abroad. The Tokugawa regime introduced new regulations in this area, among other things confining prostitution to a few clearly-designated areas.

The period of Meiji reforms, 1868 As the Japanese began to venture study trips to the West after the country began to be forced open after 1853, they were taken aback at what they saw as the powerful role of women. One observer noted, after a visit to the United States, that women were treated as elders were in Japan – and he did not approve. On the other hand, the same study trips produced evidence that some change was essential. In this vein, the massive educational reform, introduced in 1872, dramatically insisted that primary education should be universal for girls as well as boys. This was a huge development, but it also embraced contradictions. While some opportunities developed for higher education, they were distinctly limited compared to those available for men – and some upper-class women may have actually seen their horizons curtailed. Japanese authorities, even more than their counterparts in the West, insisted that the goal of women's education was the creation of “good wives, wise mothers”, not independent actors. Early industrialization also placed great strain on many lower-class women. Many rural families essentially sold at least one daughter either to prostitution or to work as semi-slaves for the silk industry, dependent on low-wage labor at long hours. By 1900 about 62% of the factory labor force was female – well above Western figures. At the upper-class level, many Japanese men continued to emphasize their control over wives and daughters – refusing for example to participate in Western-style dinner parties where women might have some wider contacts. Yet other changes did creep in, particularly in the early decades of the 20th century. The emphasis on strong families could give women some new roles, as husbands were encouraged, for example, to participate in family meals. By the 1920s a number of young women were indulging in a rising consumer culture, buying new cosmetics and other items; and an interest in romantic love gained ground. Even as the military took over the Japanese governments, women's groups began organizing for new political rights, particularly at the local level, setting a basis for further change.

Since World War II Building on earlier changes; rapid intensification of industrialization; and additional foreign example, Japanese gender patterns continue to shift 1945, while on the whole retaining somewhat greater distinctions than was true in some other regions. Male authority, though now more informal, continued to count, and emphasis on female modesty and restraint persisted as well (though foreign observers sometimes exaggerated this point.) Women did get the vote (in 1945), and began to gain a minority role in political leadership (including, at one point, services at prime minister) (though the percentage of women in national elected positions, at about 18%, remained low). The old culture around special female entertainment for upper-class men was scaled back. Rapid reductions in the birth rate created huge changes in the lives of many women. Opportunities for travel and wider participation in consumer culture expanded steadily. On the other hand, women's participation in the economy continued to lag. Limited facilities for child care prevented many mothers from full work roles, in a culture that particularly emphasized long hours on the job and devotion to a company's priorities. This situation did begin to change in the 21st century, and the government also began to introduce new measures to reduce job discrimination. Still, the male-female pay gap remained unusually high, and reports of sexual harassment were common. The situation was fluid, however. Growing numbers of young women also began to reconsider interest in marriage or motherhood – a crucial element in the further rapid reduction of birth rates.

Study questions

1. What were the principal impacts of Chinese example on Japanese gender relations? What were the main complexities in this pattern during the postclassical period?
2. In what ways did women's situation deteriorate in the Tokugawa period?
3. Is it accurate to discuss changes in Japanese gender relations since 1868 in terms of Westernization? What are the most obvious drawbacks to this model?

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CHAPTER 9: GENDER IN SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY

General features Classical India developed a cultural framework for patriarchal gender relations that was different from that of classical China, though many features of family structure were similar. Later changes in premodern India primarily reflected new religious factors, particularly the establishment of Islam as the most important minority religion. British imperialism brought new influences in the 19th and early 20th centuries, though the British ultimately shied away from too much intervention. Indian and Pakistani independence in 1947, and subsequent economic development, introduced major changes, most obviously in political rights, but South Asia continues to maintain distinctive features in modern gender relations most clearly in family structure and religious cultures.

Classical period As the Hindu religion developed, it included mixed signals on women's characteristics and capacity. On the one hand, women were spiritually inferior to men. Intellectuals debated whether women could ascend directly after reincarnation, if they had led a worthy life, or if they must first be reincarnated as a man. Early in the period, women may have had greater access to religious education and function than became true later on. By the end of the classical period, women could not be priests, and could perform religious services only in their husbands' name. On the other hand, female deities had a range of powers, and stories also told of heroic actions by women – though mainly on behalf of fathers or husbands. Interestingly, the divinity most clearly associated with shame was female (for harm

she inadvertently did to her husband). Arranged marriage prevailed, to assure larger family goals through exchanges of property, and girls were sometimes married quite young. However, early legal codes specified the women could retain property ownership and could act make independent decisions when their husbands were away. As in China several manuals spelled out women's obligations to serve fathers and then husbands faithfully. However, motherhood was widely celebrated. The manual *Kama Sutra*, written during the classical period, urged attention to women's emotional and sexual pleasure, along with that of men. Lives of men and women alike were obviously affected by the emerging caste system, which established rules for the types of work and interactions (including marriage) appropriate at each social level. Finally, throughout the classical period including under the Gupta empire, individual women wielded considerable political and military powers, again suggesting a more complicated pattern than in classical China.

Postclassical and early modern periods On the whole, the position of women in South Asia deteriorated in the centuries after the classical period. Individual women continued to wield political and military power, in a region that was often highly decentralized. And there were contributions in literature and the arts, showing that some women also had access to education. However, emphasis on female seclusion unquestionably increased. This reflected influence from the new Islamic minority and areas of Islamic rule, but also efforts to shield upper-class women from unwanted attention. In some Hindu regions the practice of *sati* developed in the postclassical period, in which new widows were expected to hurl themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres, dying because a woman without a husband had no reason to live. Muslims did not adopt this practice, but in other respects Hindu-Muslim interaction often worked to women's disadvantage. In some Islamic families, husbands' control over property, including dowries, increased, though this was technically contrary to Islamic law. The most important result of religious encounter, however, was the spread of the system of *purdah*, or the substantial seclusion of women in the home – initially imported from Persia. Some Muslim rulers urged seclusion and concealing dress on their followers; as one put it, “We are now in the land of idolatry and amongst a strange people, the women of their families should be strictly concealed from the view of strangers.” But upper-class Hindu families gradually adopted the practice as well. It became more widely enforced in the Mughal period, particularly under the emperor Akbar. (It was also under the Mughals that rulers characteristically assembled substantial harems, with multiple wives and concubines.) The custom of *purdah* would be a powerful factor in gender relations well after the early modern period, often inhibiting women's participation in public life. However, it had far less effect in the lower classes, where women's work remained essential and where foreign observers often noted the shared efforts of husbands and wives. And even among Mughal rulers, powerful wives could exert real influence.

British rule Under British rule, gradually established from the later 18th century onward, gender patterns changed in a number of contradictory directions. In the first place, British pressure to reduce Indian manufacturing, through laws limiting import of Indian goods and then the competition of British factory exports, threw many Indian women out of work, or forced increasingly low wages and long hours. British administrators were often strongly inclined to leave gender relations alone, as irrelevant to holding onto power. Many, living in isolated compounds with British wives who were often deeply suspicious of Indian customs, knew little about Indian conditions in the first place. Hindu artistic depictions of women, often highly sensual, roused suspicions among British moralists. But there were some reform impulses, particularly during the first half of the 19th century and then again after 1918. British observers issued many shocked reports about the treatment of women by fathers and husbands. As one noted, “the condition of Indian women” can be described as “miserable, uneducated, mere animals kept for burden or for slaughter.” Practices like *sati* and female infanticide drew particular attention. The British claimed some success in limiting infanticide. *Sati* was officially banned in 1829, and many Indian reformers, like Rammohun Roy, though hostile to British rule, also agreed that the practice was inhumane. Roy argued that *sati* demeaned women, denying them “the excellent merits that they are entitled to by nature”. British law also sought to introduce greater protection for widows' property or opportunities to remarry; a 1859 law legitimized remarriage. Overall, however, reform measures were limited and roused considerable resistance; and the British pulled back after a major rebellion in 1857 prompted reconsideration of efforts to interfere with Indian traditions of any sort. Later in the 19th century, spurred by some missionary and feminist leaders and now joined by some female reformers like Pandita Ramabai (who published a scathing critique of women's lives in India), some attention was given to expanding educational

opportunities, at least for the upper classes. By the early 20th century some new women's magazines appeared, either in English or Hindi, that often criticized customs like arranged marriage, in which girls or young women had no voice.

Nationalism and reform The development of Indian nationalism, from the later 19th century onward, had ambiguous implications for gender. On the one hand, most leaders were male and many, like Gandhi, harbored many traditional ideas about women's roles. Nationalists also praised many Indian traditions, particularly those associated with Hinduism, as a vital part of Indian heritage. Many criticized Western practices. As one put it, "With all the sorrow and pain that an educated Hindu feels for the present position of Indian womanhood, he would not have his daughters and sisters go out into the world in search of employment as the girls in Europe do, not to speak of other excesses to which they are all liable by virtue of their conditions of life." On the other hand, most nationalists did argue for better education – though possibly with some distinctive features that would prepare women to be better wives and mothers. Gandhi himself urged that "India's salvation depends on the sacrifices and enlightenment of her women." Many Indian leaders urged modifications of *pardah* in order to permit fuller participation in public life. In this context, women were quickly granted rights to suffrage after independence, in Pakistan in 1947 and in India in 1949.

Change and continuity A variety of measures accelerated the reform momentum from independence onward. Education spread steadily, if gradually. By the 21st century about 70% of all women were effectively literate in India – a major change, though notably below male rates of about 84%. In India the right to vote was gradually supplemented by measures designed to free women from the influence of fathers and husbands, and efforts were also directed at increasing the percentage of female officeholders. Both in India and Pakistan, a woman held the position of prime minister at a crucial point. New economic opportunities, particularly in India, provided urban women with jobs in a variety of industries. Birth rate decline did not proceed as rapidly as some reformers hoped – a major campaign in India in the 1970s fell short – but it did occur, another huge change in women's lives and roles. Groups of women took increasingly active stances in pressing for further reforms, particularly in India –for example, in the 21st century, pressing for more effective legal action against rape and domestic abuse. On the other hand, change was also limited for several reasons. The majority of the population continued to live in the countryside, where the hold of tradition was particularly strong. Religious traditions, both Hindu and Muslim, also retarded change. There was considerable opposition to women's education, including violent attacks and threats against schoolgirls. In India, a considerable majority continued to support arranged marriage (some women's groups argued that this freed women from the need to compete for men), and there were occasional religiously-inspired attacks on dating couples. While rates of child marriage declined, the practice continued on the subcontinent. So did the preference for sons, leading to disproportionate rates of abortion for female embryos and a marked resultant gender imbalance among adults similar to that in China.

Study questions

1. Were gender patterns more complicated in classical India than in classical China? What were some of the main tensions?
2. How and why did conditions for women deteriorate in the postclassical and early modern periods?
3. Did British rule make much difference in gender patterns on the subcontinent? What were the principal limitations to change?
4. What have been the principal constraints on change on the subcontinent since independence?

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CHAPTER 10: GENDER IN MIDDLE EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN HISTORY

General features Home to the oldest civilizations in world history, the Middle East also developed early systems of patriarchal inequality, both in law and in custom. A few distinctive features took shape at that point. Gender relations were considerably redefined by the Abrahamic religions, particularly Islam, at various points but especially after 600 CE. The early modern period did not see decisive change, but new reform impulses developed in the 19th century, partly under Western pressure. The contemporary period, since the early 20th century onward, has seen a fascinating mixture of basic shifts – like advances in women’s education; explicit reform efforts; and conservative reaction. The result has been a more varied and fluid experience than some foreign commentary suggests.

Mesopotamia Three developments in early Mesopotamian civilizations were particularly noteworthy, in confirming or extending patriarchal gender relations. First, female infanticide was widely practiced as a means of limiting family and population size; while control over the numbers of surviving children was the main point, the practice also highlighted the preference for boys as heirs and ultimate leaders of the family economy. Second, early law codes, including the code of Hammurabi (c. 1700 BCE) emphasized male superiority in many ways. Women were not allowed to testify directly in court cases. They were penalized by law if they failed to perform their domestic duties; the Code urged that deficient wives could be “thrown into the river”, which in most cases probably resulted in drowning. Punishments for sexual offenses were far more severe for women. Husbands did need to provide for their wives, otherwise a wife could in principle leave the family (though in practice this could be quite difficult). Third, between 1400 and 1100 BCE the practice of veiling was introduced as a mark of status for upper-class women. Initially this probably reflected social more than gender inequality; prostitutes and slave women were forbidden to veil, with whippings imposed for violations. Obviously, however, it was not a measure that applied to men, and it would turn out to have a significant role in the region’s gender history.

Islam New religions brought important changes in gender relations. The rise of Judaism reinforced patriarchy among the Jews: worship occurred separately for men and women, the authority of fathers in the family was emphasized, and men were responsible for religious scholarship. Early Christianity proved more flexible, with women playing prominent roles in many local churches. However it was the rise of Islam that proved most crucial for the region – ultimately extending to North Africa and beyond. Muhammed was eager to improve women’s status as against Arab tradition. The Qur’an inveighed against female infanticide, which undoubtedly declined. Women were given clear property rights in Islamic law, controlling their dowries; they were to share in family inheritance, though with portions only half those allotted to men. They could initiate divorce, though with procedures that were more much cumbersome than those available to men (who could principle merely state their intention to divorce). Women as well as men had opportunities to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. While sexual offenses like adultery might be severely punished, in principle this applied to men as well as women, and families were in any event urged to forgive if possible. Men were advised to attend to their wives’ sexual pleasure in marriage. There were however important limitations in gender relations as well, in addition to superior male property and divorce rights. Polygamy was permitted, for men who could support more than one wife. Women worshipped separately, in more crowded spaces; this reflected an ongoing sense that women bore special responsibility for sin. Men monopolized political and religious leadership, including legal scholarship, and though individual women gained some roles as writers and teachers the primacy of domestic roles for women was strongly emphasized. Almost all Islamic schools, in an expanding system, were reserved for males. Further, though it was not strictly a religious requirement, emphasis on veiling and seclusion for women increased, in the upper classes and the cities. Muhammed recommended veiling for his wives, to protect them from being bothered in public, and this was often taken as a wider signal; and the Qur’an explicitly insisted on modest dress, including concealment of jewelry. The Qur’an made the general point quite clear: though women had souls, “men have authority over women because of what God has conferred on one in preference to the other.” According to some interpretations (now disputed) this included authorization to punish wives physically.

The early modern period Gender conditions in the two great Islamic empires of the period were unusual compared to the standards of most other societies at the time. The key was property ownership,

even though under Islamic law women received less portions of inheritance. In both the Ottoman and Safavid empires, many women played active business roles, sometimes even serving as tax collectors. At one point in the 16th century, women's property was involved in at least 20% of all transactions in the Safavid empire. Many women could also travel fairly readily, particularly under the early Safavids. Education was a bit less clear. Some women in the Ottoman empire were schooled at home, and girls in the harem of the Sultan or high officials could be trained there, but formal schools were for males. Opportunities may have been a bit greater under the early Safavids, and in both empires educated women contributed to the arts and took on political roles, even dealing with foreign diplomats. There were important limitations. Lower-class women, the vast majority, were largely confined to household and adjacent tasks. Many women were also held as slaves. The extensive harems, particularly for Ottoman sultans, involved separate living quarters and often intense rivalries, though they could also lead to political influence. Mothers of sultans, particularly, had considerable informal power. Conditions for even upper-class women deteriorated under the Safavids by the 17th century, when regulations increasingly confined women to their homes and insisted on veils and concealing clothing; at this point Shi's Islam, predominant under the Safavids, began to take a more consistently conservative approach to gender. Women in the Ottoman Empire encountered periods of restriction as well, under certain Sultans, though there were fluctuations, as well as considerable variety among different religious communities in the multi-cultural empire. It was also true, as had been the case previously in the region, that veiling and considerable seclusion were taken as signs of social privilege. But with the Ottomans, too, conservative influence gained greater prominence by the 18th century.

Western influence and the 19th century Realization of growing Ottoman weakness in the 19th century led to an important series of reform movements and discussions, and while gender was not at their core some significant new themes were introduced. During the Tanzimat reform era of the middle decades of the century, some schools were created for women – like a school for midwives, in 1850, along with secondary schools for teacher training and later a college. Concubinage was abolished at this point, along with the sale of women as slaves. Important debate arose at the end of the century over the practice of veiling, with some men arguing that this was a visible mark of the inferiority of regional traditions, but conservatives insisting on the status quo or even advocating more rigorous requirements. (One book in Egypt, in 1899, called the *Liberation of Women*, saw the abolition of veiling as a precondition to establishing an “advanced civilization.”) The issue became something of a symbol in ongoing disagreements over how to react to Western standards.

The contemporary era Vigorous debate over gender issues has marked the past century – even in the new state of Israel where orthodox Jews insist on gender segregation, opposed by their liberal, secular counterparts. Reform was a crucial feature of Kemal Ataturk's regime in Turkey, in the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1923 speech the leader urged that “the road of progress must be trodden by both sexes together marching arm in arm.” Law codes were revised to provide legal equality (though stipulating that “man is the head of the union of marriage”). Women gained the vote in 1931 (local elections) and then 1934 at the national level– well ahead of many countries in Western Europe; 18 women served in the parliament by 1935. Mandatory education for both sexes was established in 1923, though implementation was slow particularly for women and girls' classes emphasized domestic training. Important feminist groups developed to push for further change. Ataturk urged abandonment of traditional veiling, but the issue was controversial, and a significant divide emerged among women, partly along urban/rural lines. Divisions persisted into the 21st century, when a more conservative regime reversed earlier measures against traditional styles of dress. Similar tension emerged in Iran, though they took a different direction. The government abolished veiling in 1937 and opened schools at all levels to women. Women gained the vote in 1963, and quickly gained new positions in the government; while legal reforms created greater equality in areas such as divorce. However, the 1979 revolution strongly reverted to what the (male) leaders saw as Islamic tradition. Economic opportunities for women were reduced, and obligatory veiling reestablished, along the men's rights to take more than one wife. However, unexpected levels of change continued in many ways – most notably, the huge surge of women into universities, where by the 21st century they constituted 55% of the total student body; at the same time the birth rate declined rapidly. Tensions over dress codes and other restrictions, along with the formation of some new women's groups, created active issues, including a widespread wave of resistance in 2022-3 which the government sought to repress. Tensions showed in other countries as well. Saudi Arabia, long a holdout against change,

began to ease restrictions under new leadership, allowing women to drive and attend public events; however, feminist leaders were jailed. In contrast the short-lived Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, saw widespread subordination and mistreatment of women, including rape of non-Muslims. Still, basic changes, like advancing education, birth rate reduction and, on the whole, increasing flexibility in Judoutside the home, however, along with persistence of some other traditions like early marriage, nevertheless set the region apart.

Study questions

1. What are the most distinctive features of gender history in the Middle East/ North Africa? Why has the region resisted easy characterization?
2. What were the main features of the Islamic approach to gender?
3. Why, in the Ottoman empire, might some Christian women be inclined to convert to Islam in order to gain better conditions?
4. What have been the main targets for reform and resistance in the region, during the past century?

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CHAPTER 11: GENDER IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA HISTORY

Overview Traditional African patterns involved a number of rather distinctive features in terms of gender and family relations, some of which arguably involved distinctive opportunities and protections for women. Western intrusions, from the slave trade to the imperialism of the later 19th and 20th century, disrupted many of these features, which is why some African feminists have particularly decried the Western influence. Major religious changes, including widespread conversions to Islam and to Christianity, have also complicated the picture. At the same time some developments during the past century, including new educational opportunities and the impact of global human rights efforts, have introduced some changes along what might be regarded as standard modern lines.

Traditional features Evidence of African patterns before at least the early modern period is hampered by lack of written evidence, though travelers accounts and oral histories fill in some of the gaps. Furthermore, regional variations, in the vast subcontinent, complicate generalization, though several common features stand out. First, Africans emphasized matrilineal relationships in defining the all-important kinship groups, placing women at the center of many family interactions. Motherhood was deeply honored. Other customs offered protection for women; for example, if a husband died and a brother was available, he was expected to marry the widow to help provide support. At the same time, polygyny was widespread, and since women in Africa did much of the field work, having numerous wives would allow larger landholdings (while supporting the wives in turn). Also in Africa, emphasis on a bride price required men to provide property (often cattle) as part of a marriage arrangement, in contrast to practices elsewhere that emphasized female dowries. The bride price provided the economic base for the new family, while attesting to the man's commitment to the woman. Women were often involved in market trading and sometimes wielded political power, as queens or queen mothers. In one Ashanti state there were 18 reigning queens between 1295 and 1740. Many customs survived the initial introduction of Islam in the postclassical period, in parts of West Africa and also the Swahili coast, resulting in greater

independence for women and less restrictive dress than was true in the Middle East (a situation which shocked North African travelers to the region). However, particularly in East Africa, women's independence declined over time. Many East African women also formed part of the slave trade to the Middle East, where their skilled in marketing were often appreciated.

Western influence and imperialism The rise of the Atlantic slave trade from the 16th century onward had major impact on African family, quite apart from the seizure of some young women as slaves and the attendant loss of independence. Far more men were taken, resulting in major gender imbalance in much of West Africa which in turn led to the expansion of polygyny. Then the expansion of imperialism in the 19th century led to more extensive interactions with European officials and eager Christian missionaries. Europeans did not understand African family traditions, which often seemed contrary to what they saw as the proper authority of husbands. Colonial legislation often sought to limit women's market activities, in favor on concentration on motherhood. Missionaries, also, often urged women to be docile homemakers – as one put it, “purer wives and better mothers”. Colonial officials also broke up many informal local councils, in which women had maintained a role. At the same time, European-led ventures, such as mining, recruiting mainly male labor, leaving women to more traditional agricultural roles. At the same time, some young men, taking advantage of money wages, returned to villages to seek wives or companions, sometimes disrupting more traditional marriage arrangements. On the policy side, new colonial rules sought to limit polygyny (which had been a source of protection for some women) and also child marriage. Other laws aimed at restricting women's sexuality (sometimes support by African men eager to assert rights as fathers and husbands). On the other hand, missionaries and, by the 20th century, colonial governments expanded educational opportunities for some women, leading some toward jobs in nursing or teaching; a small number even entered the professions – like the first female lawyer in Nigeria in 1935. Some women's groups also sprang up at this point, seeking to advance women's interests in several directions.

Nationalism and independence Women participated actively in many nationalist movements toward the middle of the 20th century. Many male nationalists, however, did not see women's issues as a priority and sometimes even defended older traditions as part of the distinctive African heritage. Thus some leaders in East Africa even defended female circumcision because of its root in older regional culture – one described it as “mere bodily mutilation.” Some leaders also touted an aggressive masculinity, as an antidote to the decades of subservience that had unfolded under imperialism. On the whole, the early results of national independence, as it spread after the late 1950s, disappointed the women involved, as their issues were pushed aside. As an example: the constitution of the newly-independent Ivory Coast, in 1960, assured equal rights regardless of gender, but then a new family code in 1964 emphasized men as undisputed heads of household and limited widows' rights to inheritance. Husbands even gained control over their wives' earnings.

Later 20th-early 21st centuries By the 1970, human rights efforts by the United Nations highlighted women's issues – this included a major conference in Nairobi – while local women's groups became more active. Countries like the Ivory Coast began to set up government ministries to deal with women's concerns, while revising laws in order to protect women's rights, and earnings, in the family. African courts began to cite international law in rulings favoring women's property ownership. Thus a court in Botswana asserted that “now more than ever before, the whole world has realized that discrimination on the grounds of sex...can no longer be permitted or even tolerated.” The Organization of African Unity, in 1981, urged that “the state shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women”. At the same time, in most countries, young women gained greater access to education (though not yet at rates equal to men's). While men continued to have greater access to urban jobs, still leaving some women back in the villages, disparities eased somewhat. In Liberia a woman even became President, a first in modern African history. Opposition to older practices like female circumcision grew as well, though traditions retained a strong hold. Important issues remained. African birth rates, though falling, continued to be quite high, a major factor in women's lives. The AIDs epidemic, rampant in southern Africa, was exacerbated by male insistence on having unprotected sex. On another front, African courts sometimes backpedaled, with rulings in favor of male property control on grounds of African tradition. Women were often disproportionately affected by violence, including sexual violence, in strife-torn regions like Rwanda, in the 1990s, or Ethiopia and Sudan in the 21st century. African feminist organizations continued to develop in many countries however. Some sought a combination of new rights but also a “doctrine of cultural revival”

that would protect women against the excessive individualism of Western feminism and restore the older virtue of African community.

Study questions

- 1, What were the most distinctive features of African family traditions, in terms of gender relations?
2. In what ways did Western intrusions, from the 16th century onward, worsen women's conditions?
3. How did new human rights standards influence gender relations in Africa, but what limitations have continued?

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CHAPTER 12: GENDER IN RUSSIAN HISTORY

Early Russian patterns Though there is a long history of Slavic settlements in various parts of Eastern Europe, Russian history proper begins in the postclassical period, with the formation of a monarchy and, after 988, the conversion to Orthodox Christianity. Gender arrangements at this point were highly patriarchal, though the greatest male-female differentiation occurred in the upper classes. Marriages were arranged, under the father's guidance; often bride and groom met only after the deal had been concluded. At least in the upper classes, the marriage ceremony usually included a clear power ritual in which a small whip was given from father to groom, symbolizing the transfer of male control over the bride. "Should you not behave as you ought to toward you husband, he in my stead will admonish you with this whip." A mid-16th century treatise explicitly urged husbands to beat disobedient wives, though preferably not in anger. Women were typically committed to marriage at a young age, often 12 or even under. A revealing and vivid Russian custom saw women gather before a wedding to lament the loss of girlhood and the burdens a marriage might bring – a distinctive custom that survived until after the 1917 Revolution. Upper-class women were often secluded in parts of the home called the *terem*; when in public, they were often veiled. Great emphasis was placed on virginity before marriage, then sexual fidelity. Women's revolved around motherhood and domestic service, and Russian men took deep offense at any insult that implied they were feminine. It is not clear that Russian imitation of Byzantine patterns had much to do with gender – the Byzantine empire itself was highly patriarchal, but some individual women gained education and wielded political power in ways that seem absent from Russia at this point. Christianity did bring the establishment of convents for religious women – new conventual orders were established from this point through the later 19th century. However, Russian convents did not produce the kind of female spiritual leadership that occurred occasionally in Western Europe. Further, they were often used to punish women, with wives, daughters or sisters obliged to take the veil because of power disputes within the family. Russian Christianity allowed a man, twice in his life, to send an unsatisfactory wife to a convent, where she would become dead to the world – and the man could remarry.

Early modern reforms Significant change began to take shape from the late 17th century onward, initially with the reforms of Peter the Great. Upper-class women benefited disproportionately, but there were some wider shifts; for example, the average age of marriage for women began to rise gradually. Tsar Peter realized that forcing the aristocracy to change habits was a good way to exercise greater control, while also giving mothers new opportunities to shape the education of their sons in constructive ways. And he sought to make Russian culture more Western, at the upper-class levels, to reduce impressions of backwardness. In this vein he encouraged upper-class women to attend public concerts and dances, as

they did in the West. They also gained access to more fashionable, Western-style, clothing. More substantively, he ended the wedding practice of exchanging whips (replacing this with a kiss between bride and groom), and officially abolished arranged marriage. A decree of 1702 insisted that marriage decisions should be voluntary and that a couple should meet at least six weeks before a ceremony. Upper-class daughters began to gain some opportunities for education, under tutors, including reading Western languages. Two major empresses in the 18th century continued the process of change – particularly, Catherine the Great (ruled 1762-96). New, though vigorously disputed, laws began to allow women to own property and control inheritance – particularly important for aristocratic and merchant wives. Catherine also established a few schools, at one point urging an end to different training for boys and girls but then falling back to the idea that female education should “consist most of all in making good homemakers. Faithful wives and caring mothers.” Still, a basis had been set for further developments.

The nineteenth century While this was not a decisive period in Russian gender history, there were some interesting shifts. Throughout the century individual women, aware of developments in Western Europe, wrote treatises urging greater equality and attacking the subordination of wives. During the reform period after 1855, a number of women gained advanced degrees in law and medicine. During the 1870s the governments opened medical courses to women and finally authorized a woman’s university. Men and women alike wrote widely about the need for further reforms, around what was now termed the “woman question”. Various feminist organizations took shape, and women also participated in anarchist movements (where their ability to conceal bombs was valued). Other changes included growing participation in urban consumer culture, including patronizing the new department stores that began to open after the 1850s. Rapid urbanization and changes in the countryside shook up established sexual practices, with a rise in premarital sexual activity. And here too, laws changed: a 1903 edict reduced the number of sexual activities regarded as illegal.

The communist revolution The Russian Revolution of 1917 introduced major changes into gender relations in Russia, along with growing urbanization and industrialization. Communist leaders boasted of the advances for women, compared to predominant housewives in the West, but while there was indeed some differentiation reality proved more complicated. The vote was immediately extended to women. Education was a key area of change. School requirements and opportunities for both genders rapidly expanded, including access to secondary and tertiary education. The early 1920s saw eager discussion about alternative family arrangements and other measures that might benefit women, but then under Stalin more traditional family structures were emphasized. Women did take on new work roles, however, usually combining them with demanding household tasks; shopping, particularly, could take time under Soviet conditions. Participation in fields like medicine expanded, though usually at rates of pay well below those of male counterparts. By the later 20th century over 40% of engineers were women. Birth rates began to fall rapidly, despite some government efforts to maintain them. Particularly after World War II women’s athletics gained new attention, with world-class efforts in the Olympics and other sports. Women also participated in the space program early on. The 1977 constitution emphasized both women’s equality and their special responsibility to contribute to society while raising the next generation of Soviet citizens. Consumer opportunities for most women were somewhat limited in the Soviet system, though Western critics tended to exaggerate. It was also true that women did not rise to the top levels of political leadership. Overall, the Soviet system was a mix of some standard modern features – like education and a low birth rate; an unusual range of professional opportunities; and some lingering limitations.

Since 1989 The fall of communism did not bring massive change, though there was a shift in tone. Educational and work levels largely persisted – along with exclusion from top leadership ranks. By the 21st century over 50% of all university students were female – 57% at the peak, but then with slight decline in the technical fields. Some religious life resumed, including reopening some convents. The drop in the birth rate accelerated. Consumer opportunities increased for some, including new opportunities for travel outside the country. After 2000, under President Vladimir Putin, problems like sexual harassment at work – though almost certainly not new – became more visible. The legal code was revised to make prosecution for domestic abuse considerably more difficult. The regime also tried to crack down on gay culture, both male and female, with a series of arrests. A number of feminist and gay leaders, including members of the music group Pussy Riot, were subjected to jail sentences. After the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, emphasis on military virtues in the schools, with women in a supporting role as wives and mothers, added yet another element.

Study questions

1. What were the most striking features of the Russian version of the patriarchal family?
2. What reforms occurred from Peter the Great onward, and what were their limitations?
3. What was the impact of the Russian Revolution on gender? Did a distinctive version of modern gender relations emerge in the Soviet Union?

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CHAPTER 13: WOMEN IN WEST EUROPEAN HISTORY

Classical background Gender relations in Greece and Rome were firmly patriarchal, though Rome granted a bit more leeway to women at some points. In both societies sexual offenses, particularly adultery, were harshly punished. Greece was also noteworthy for the frequency of homosexual relations between upper-class men and boys (often alongside a marriage), and this continued to some extent in Rome. Greek philosophers emphasized the inferiority of women, and women had no formal political rights even when male citizens voted. However, Greek and Roman religion also highlighted the role of goddesses, and women often participated and even led religious rituals. On the whole, however, Greek and Roman precedent did not play a great role in subsequent gender relations in Western Europe, where the impact of Christianity, along with the standard conditions of agricultural society in a region that was long somewhat backward economically, loomed far larger.

Postclassical period (medieval Europe) Christianity introduced several features that affected gender. In the first place, church rules insisted in principle on consent to marriage, and while arranged marriages prevailed without much voice for the parties involved, there may have been some constraint; and child brides were relatively uncommon aside from some negotiations by royal families. Christianity also led to the establishment of convents, providing a religious outlet and an alternative to marriage for some women (however, a substantial entry fee limited this opportunity for most). In a few cases nuns gained considerable education, contributing books about piety and religious music – as in the exceptional instance of Hildegard of Bingen. Western Christianity also displayed unusual uneasiness about sexual pleasure. Celibacy became required in principle for the clergy, including monks and nuns, and the religion developed active hostility to homosexuality. A few manuals about sexual methods circulated privately, but there was little guidance for most married couples. Amid considerable regional variation, there was no systematic protection for any property rights for women; widows, particularly, were often at the mercy of sons or other male relatives. Indeed, women were often seen as the property of the nearest male relative, and there were cases in which wives were sold. Divorce was difficult if not impossible in most cases. Women's economic contributions were of course vital in agriculture, and also in most urban crafts; some wives served as shopkeepers for their artisan husbands, and a few female crafts developed – such as lace making. Through marriage and personality, some women played important political roles in royal and aristocratic families. Also in the aristocracy a literature of “courtly love” developed that praised the affection that could develop between a man and a woman (usually chaste, sometimes outside of marriage). On the other hand, male aristocrats strongly emphasized martial virtues that might set them apart from wives and daughters.

Early modern period The centuries after about 1400 were unexpectedly significant for gender relations in Western Europe, though there was no systematic change and developments pointed in several different directions. An increasing handful of upper-class women gained access to secular

education, largely within the family, and some contributed works of art and literature during the Renaissance. Protestantism had an even greater impact. Protestants rejected the belief that celibacy conferred special spiritual status, which heightened the valuation of family life: Martin Luther himself married a former nun. Fathers were still expected to guide moral education in the family, but Protestant tracts began to pay greater attention to the importance of wives' contentment. Protestantism also promoted more attention to education, and while expanding school systems still privileged men a growing minority of women gained literacy; in Iceland, in fact, women's literacy rates almost equaled those of men. On another front: from the 15th century onward what has been called the European style family gained ground. For most peasants and townsmen, this involved relatively late marriage age (later 20s) for both women and men (outside the aristocracy, where patterns changed less), which in turn heightened the importance of the nuclear family (since grandparents had fewer years to overlap with their adult children's families). This, in turn, heightened the importance of coordination between husbands and wives. The economic status of women, however, may have weakened slightly, as men increasingly excluded women from the skilled crafts. Large numbers of women did participate in the expanding domestic manufacturing sector, but at lower levels of skill and pay: more often spinners, for example, than weavers. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the massive witchcraft scare in many parts of Europe saw a disproportionate number of women, particularly older women, accused and executed – a sign of new social tensions – though the furor eased by the 18th century. Finally, new consumer opportunities affected gender relations aside from the very poor: interest in more fashionable clothing increased, particularly for women; men's clothing, in contrast, often became more drab. New furnishings and tableware, including porcelain products, heightened the importance of family dining, particularly an evening meal prepared and guided by the wife and mother.

The long nineteenth century: overview This period saw massive changes in gender patterns, though with decidedly complex implications. On the one hand, women's moral authority and family stature greatly improved, particularly but not exclusively in the middle classes; and the male-female literacy gap began to be eliminated. Rapidly falling birth rates, responding to the decline of child labor, resulted in new emphasis on more intensive involvement for mothers with individual children, but potentially new opportunities for other activities as well. During most of the century, however, political disparities increased – as men gained the vote; the rise of formal feminism was a key response. Finally, however, women's economic situation deteriorated, making the majority more dependent on marriage. With declining work opportunities, domestic service became the largest job category for urban women, while prostitution also increased.

The long nineteenth century: key changes As industrialization and urbanization increasingly moved work outside the home, growing numbers of European families began to pull women out of the formal labor force and into more purely household functions. Many middle-class women were never formally employed at all, and many working-class women stopped work upon marriage or childbirth. In the process gender differences were redefined and accentuated: good women were now held to be moral and emotional guardians of the family, able to moderate both sexuality and anger, while male characteristics were suitable for the outside world, serving as "breadwinners" for the family. (Women's roles as consumers also gained new attention, with new levels of advertising aiming at this market by the later 19th century.) Redefinitions of the family as an emotional unit, plus urbanization, also led to a decline in arranged marriages, in favor of direct courtship by young people themselves. By mid-century some legislation limited working hours for women, partly to favor their family roles, which sometimes further reduced their employability compared to men. At the same time, however, education for women expanded rapidly, initially because of a belief that education was vital for modern motherhood and also as a new source of teachers. By mid-century, new women's movements began to spring up in a number of countries. Individual feminists, like Mary Wollstonecraft in England, had argued even in the late 18th century that the new ideas about the "rights of man" should be applied to women also (despite the fact that Enlightenment thinkers had largely excluded women from their claims). By the mid- to late 19th century growing numbers of women, and liberal male allies, argued a variety of legal changes were essential, and reforms gradually provided greater protection for property rights; new opportunities to initiate divorce; and access to higher education and professional training. Claims for a right to vote added to the mix, leading to substantial agitation in places like Britain by the early 20th century. Countries like Britain and Sweden began to allowing women the vote in local elections by the 1860s; Finland was the

first European nation to extend general voting rights, in 1906, with some women elected to parliament the following year. Finally, by the later 19th century new “white blouse” job opportunities opened up for some women, serving as sales clerks, secretaries, telephone operators as well as teachers and nurses.

The contemporary period Major developments both built on and modified some of the key 19th-century trends in gender patterns. Full voting rights were extended in most European countries of Protestant background soon after World War I (including Germany and Britain), in countries like France right after World War II. Women’s share of elected official grew gradually, and women as national leaders became commonplace in Scandinavia by the end of the century, and significant in several other countries. Parity in higher education also became standard by that point. Changes in popular culture modified 19th-century standards concerning sexuality, with growing interest in women’s sexual pleasure, more revealing dress (including beachwear), and often highly sexualized films, television shows and advertisements. (There was important pushback against many of these changes, particularly in Nazi Germany.) Birth rate reduction continued, with a very modest interruption after World War II; by the 21st century birth rates in countries like Italy had fallen well below population maintenance levels. Abortion remained illegal in most countries until the 1970s, when it began to be decriminalized amid often heated discussions. France initially granted rights through the 10th week of pregnancy (in 1975), but then gradually extended this particularly in the 21st century, with expenses often covered by the health care system. Parallel to birth rate decline, women gained a variety of new work roles. This occurred briefly during both world wars, and then more durably from the 1960s onward when over 40% of the labor force became female. A new surge of feminism, from the 1950s onward, inspired by work such as Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*, argued for fuller parity between the genders and a reduced emphasis on women’s family roles. Male-female wage gaps persisted, but did diminish. By 2000 gay rights, including the right to marriage, gained wide approval in most West European countries; Denmark, in 1989, became the first country to begin to recognize legal rights for same-sex couples.

Study questions

1. What were the main ways that Christianity affected gender patterns in Western Europe, from the medieval period onward?
2. What was unusual about the European-style family, and how might it have affected gender relations?
3. Why have feminists, and historians, argued about the implications of major developments in the 19th century: was this a period of progress or deterioration in gender patterns?
4. What were the most important changes in conditions for women during the 20th century?
5. Based on contemporary trends, would you expect to see gender patterns in Western Europe stabilize during the 21st century, or undergo another set of major changes?

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CHAPTER 14: GENDER IN LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY

The colonial period The centuries after Spanish and Portuguese conquest were formative in many ways. Colonial administrators and the clergy sought major changes in indigenous gender relations, yet significant differences remained among different ethnic groups (with African slaves added to the mix in several cases); high rates of illegitimate births left a durable legacy; at the same time, Church authorities, particularly by the 18th century, urged a particularly vigorous argument in favor of the joys as well as moral worth of appropriate family life—another lasting contribution in a society where family values continue to resonate strongly. Indigenous peoples had well-developed gender systems, many of which – as with the

Mayans – emphasized female inferiority, but with specific features that differed significantly from Christian standards. In some cases, for example, men and women had a trial period, including sexual relations, before committing to a permanent marriage. To Spanish observers, this was one of many signs of widespread sexual immorality. Some indigenous groups managed to retain some existing practices, if only by concealment – for example, marriage among close relatives. But Spanish influence did introduce new restrictions on the behavior of many women. At the same time, sexual exploitation of native women by Spanish colonists was widespread – beginning with Columbus’ first intrusion into the Caribbean and bolstered by a preponderance of men among initial European arrivals. Rates of illegitimate births were high as in consequence, a pattern that has survived into the present day, where Latin America has the world’s highest rate of children born to unmarried parents. This did not, and does not, always involve basic family instability however: in some cases, by the later colonial period and beyond, groups of women combined to help take care of children, and in other instances, particularly in the lower classes, stable unions formed – simply without benefit of formal marriage. Here was the source of another durable theme: significant differences between the family patterns of higher-status groups, mostly of European origin, and those of working class and peasant segments. Upper-class criticism of lower-class family habits, and occasional efforts to regulate, persisted in Latin American history into the early 20th century. Adding to diversity: the Spanish church strongly emphasized family values – beginning with the example of the holy family itself. Sermons from the early 18th century highlighted the family as “bound together” like the “fingers of a prodigious hand”; in this process, while veneration of Mary was vital, the figure of Joseph was transformed into a dominant father figure, “the one that stands above the rest” – emphasizing, in other words, a patriarchal structure as well as the centrality of the family to human morality and happiness. Spanish Catholicism did introduce the monastic movement to Latin America, including small but vital groups of nuns. Convents provided some women an alternative to marriage and even a refuge from male violence, along with opportunities for education. A few nuns even achieved eminence as authors and scholars. Yet convents also participated in the process of sexual regulation, punishing women regarded as immoral. Finally, overlaying the whole colonial system, was the heavy reliance on the labor of women as part of the expanding agricultural economy – including of course women imported from Africa as slaves.

The nineteenth century This period, so crucial in many aspects of Latin American history, saw little change in gender relations. Many individual women participated in the independence struggles early in the century, sometimes in military action, sometimes through spying or offering financial support – and a few had been executed. But the new republics did not do much to alter gender patterns. Agricultural work prevailed for both men and women, if anything intensifying in response to demands of the export economy. Most women were still banned from the professions, and in some places they could not even testify in courts of law. Control by fathers and then husbands was substantial: married women in the upper and middle classes could not enter into contracts or take an outside job without permission of their husbands. In some cases, liberal regimes, eager to live up to European standards, tightened controls. In Mexico for example, during the early part of the century some women who became pregnant as a result of rape were not punished for infanticide; later on, however, more rigid rules against murder prevailed. Only in education was there much change in the other direction, as many leaders believed schooling girls would make better mothers, more capable of educating their own children. Thus Mexico City required school attendance from boys and girls alike, after 1842. In most places female literacy still lagged but there was some movement. Growing numbers of women became primary school teachers, for example, and they would begin to provide momentum for new women’s organizations by the end of the century. By this point women’s groups began to form in various places, often in contact with feminists in the United States and Europe, and seeking more equal rights in various aspects of life.

Major trends since the late nineteenth century The past century – literally, from the 1920s and 1930s onward – has seen huge changes in Latin American gender patterns, building in part on the increasing efforts of women’s groups from the late 19th century onward. Three or four factors have combined. Major political shifts, like the 1910 Mexican Revolution or the 1959 Cuban Revolution, while they did not necessarily prioritize gender reform, shook up established structures and gave some women new professional opportunities. Feminist agitation, bolstered but complicated by foreign example and international women’s rights standards, steadily pressed for change. By the early 20th century some United States feminists extended their efforts to Latin America, often with patronizing assumptions of local

inferiority. As Latin American groups sprang up, they placed greater emphasis on social and economic change, and not just political rights, than had been true in the United States, and they gained stronger representation from the working class. Momentum developed slowly: in 1922 a Brazilian women's magazine noted that "ours in a feminism that preserves religion and family...demanding that equality that is indispensable but always seeking the collective happiness and progress of the nation". But efforts to seek change gained momentum. Along with this, levels of education for women, already improving in the 19th century, advanced fairly steadily. By the later 20th century over half of all secondary education enrollment was female, and substantial gains occurred also at the university level. Greater education set the basis for new economic and political opportunities; it provided many women with new motivations and knowledge to limit birth rates as well, hoping to be able to support even higher educational levels for their children. Finally, while economic challenges continued to shape Latin American society, urbanization and considerable industrialization did advance in many places, given women new if sometimes demanding jobs in factories and offices. Several major changes resulted from a confluence of these factors. Beginning in the 1930s in countries like Brazil, but accelerating right after World War II, women gained the vote. Other legal changes included firmer protections of property rights for women. The 1970s saw a decisive turn to lower birth rates. Many women told of their insistence here, often against the wishes of both husbands and priests. By this point also, women were gaining unusual widespread political roles – far above international averages. Several countries had the world's highest rates of female participation at the level of cabinet minister. Parliamentary participation was even stronger by the early 21st century with 25% of all representatives female (in contrast to 18% at that point in the United States). None of these developments of course was without contestation. Conservatives opposed many changes. A culture of *machismo* persisted, along with frequent celebrations of women for sexual beauty – as on the beaches of Brazil during carnival; rates of sexual violence may have been unusually high. Bitter disputes arose over issues like abortion, a subject that began to attract feminist interest by the 1970s. Only a few countries, like Argentina, offered extensive abortion rights by the 2020s; far more allowed it only in cases of rape or incest or where a woman's health was at risk; and a few, particularly in Central America, continued to punish it harshly. Correspondingly, rates of illegal, often risky, abortion ran high throughout much of the region.

Study questions

1. What were the main complexities in Latin American gender patterns during the colonial period?
2. Why and how does educational change stand out, among other possible emphases, during the 19th century? To what extent did it run ahead of developments in other areas?
3. What have been the most striking changes in gender patterns since the 1920s? By comparative standards, what areas have seemed to lag?

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CHAPTER 15: GENDER IN NORTH AMERICAN HISTORY (UNITED STATES AND CANADA)

Overview Patterns of gender history in North America closely parallel those in Western Europe, based on shared culture; comparable dates of industrialization; and overlapping feminist movements from the 19th century onward. Colonial interactions with indigenous peoples, plus the extensive frontier experience, contributed some distinctive elements. In the United States, slavery and then racial discrimination after emancipation left an important mark on a vital minority. In general, Canadian and United States developments overlapped, though feminism arose a bit more slowly in Canada and the dominance of Catholicism in Quebec province generated some differences until the later 20th century. Unusually high religious commitment has also played a role in United States developments (compared to Western Europe), enhancing a number of variations among subgroups and regions and contributing to some ongoing controversies.

The colonial period Several features stand out from this period, along with some questions. European arrival in what became the United States and Canada placed severe pressures on indigenous groups, most obviously through disease and loss of land, but also pressure from missionaries – though this was most pronounced under French Catholicism. Missionaries characteristically believed that indigenous women had too much authority (sometimes describing them as “shrews” or “hellish”), and sought to reinforce the position of husbands along with stricter sexual morality; at the same time, they criticized undue emphasis on women’s agricultural work, urging men to take a greater role so that women could concentrate on domestic tasks. Efforts to alter gender patterns, for example through mission schools and boarding schools, would continue into the early 20th century, involving frequent compulsion and disorientation. Imported slave labor, particularly in the southern colonies, established another gender context. Enslaved women were pressed into hard work; were frequently punished; and were widely exploited sexually. These issues, combined with the sale of individual family members, could severely inhibit stable family patterns. For White women, gender patterns were fairly standard for agricultural societies: emphasis on domestic tasks, few legal rights, subordination to husband and father. Sparse population encouraged higher birth rates than were common in Western Europe at the time. In Canada, where males at first predominated in the White population, the French explicitly imported some women almost all of whom quickly married and developed higher birth rates than their counterparts in France, and French Quebec would long be known for high levels of fertility. Frontier conditions may have prompted some individual women to take on more assertive roles than usual. This was the case in responses to some attacks by indigenous groups, where individual women responded with violence and were hailed by the settler community. From the 17th century onward, however, some assertive women were legally punished for violating patriarchal gender norms. Women’s education lagged behind that of men, but a number became literate. Partly on this basis, many women would participate actively in the American revolution, in a few cases opposing husbands who continued to serve the British.

Developments in the nineteenth century Gender imbalance on the frontiers, both in the United States and Canada, encouraged a highly masculine culture, where respectable women often assumed a particulate mission to instill manners and civility. Among African Americans, individual women played a major role in resistance efforts like the Underground Railway. The abolition of slavery in the United States, after 1863, did not end sexual attacks on Black women; economic disadvantages also prompted high labor rates among married Black women (often as domestic servants) in contrast to predominant patterns among Whites. Immigration brought complex contacts with American gender standards, along with considerable reliance on religious communities. Reactions varied. Italian immigrants sought to keep working in or around the home, for example in small retail shops; Slavic immigrants were more willing to let daughters work as domestic servants to others. Immigrant families also maintained higher birth rates than the native-born population, but would gradually adjust. Birth rate reduction began early, in contrast, among middle-class Whites. The rapid spread of educational opportunities was a major development. Educational reformers, like Horace Mann in the United States, saw women’s education as vital to improvements in motherhood, and also as a source of teachers, though there was brief debate about whether school might harm women’s physical health. Middle-class culture strongly emphasized gender distinctions – what some historians have called the “cult of true womanhood”, with good women seen as possessing natural qualities of love and maternal protection as well as sexual restraint; the rise of women’s magazines, as a new genre, carried these ideas forward, along with instructions on good housekeeping. This same culture, however, could be put to other uses. Both in the United States and

Canada women played a major role in unusually active temperance movements, sometimes in support of outright prohibition, as against men's irresponsible and family-damaging impulses. Feminist movements began early, particularly in the United States and sometimes spinning off from women's support of efforts to abolish slavery. Seneca Falls, New York, hosted the nation's first women's rights convention, in 1848. While full suffrage was not granted to women until after World War I, amid sometimes violent agitation and government resistance, Western states and territories moved faster, beginning with Wyoming in 1869, and Montana would elect the first women to the United States congress shortly after 1900. Feminism in Canada developed only late in the 19th century, often based on arguments that women would bring special moral virtues to government. Western provinces granted the vote first, followed by the national government in 1919 (after a partial move two years before); but Quebec granted the vote only in 1940. In the United States women gained the vote on a national basis in 1920, but in several Southern states access for Blacks was limited; African American women played a major role in the agitation that would lead to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which some argue gave tens of thousands of African American women the vote for the first time.

Developments since the 1920s After achieving the vote, feminism trailed off a bit in North America. Considerable energy went into lifestyle changes: new and less formal clothing for women, new dance styles, new participation in public entertainments like night clubs. The 1950s also saw renewed emphasis on domesticity and a considerable rise in birth rates (baby boom), particularly in the middle classes. Deeper changes took shape from the 1960s. Thanks in part to more accessible birth control, the birth rate began to drop fairly steadily, ultimately falling below population maintenance levels. Marriage age increased for women, but the marriage rate fell; stable two-parent families became a minority by the 21st century, and new choices by women were in part responsible. As in Europe, second-wave feminism emphasized more systematic equality and less emphasis on domestic values and roles; a key statement was Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1963). (African American women participated in this new feminism, but put greater energy into movements for racial equality and collaboration with male leadership in this domain.) Women's labor force participation began to soar (it had increased briefly during both world wars, but then dropped back). By the 21st century about 57% of all adult women were employed both in the United States and in Canada. Gender pay gaps persisted but lessened, and women gained major roles in professions like the law and medicine. Educational levels changed as well: only about 35% of the college population in the 1950s, women gained a majority position by the 1980s, with educational and professional ambitions now surpassing those of men. Women also gained new roles in sports and the military. Important tensions remained, often reflecting religious divisions. The United States saw unusually bitter and persistent battles over abortion rights, with compromise more elusive than in Western Europe. And while women's participation in elected office expanded, it lagged somewhat compared to Western Europe and Latin America – and no woman yet achieved the top political position in either North American country. By 2023 women constituted just over 30% of membership in the Canadian parliament, just over 38% in the U.S. Congress. Change in this category was accelerating (along with women serving in top state offices), but many observers argued that there were still important if ill-defined barriers to full equality. On another front: it was also in North America that new movements against sexual offenses took shape. The term sexual harassment was introduced in the 1970s as a legal category; in 2017 the Me/Too movement gained ground, urging women to come forward against various kinds of sexual exploitation on the job and in entertainment. Launched in the United States the movement quickly spread to Canada, where it sparked a rapid increase in complaints and in appeals to women's support groups. Finally, both the United States and Canada saw major waves of immigration from the 1960s onward, mainly from non-European sources, often involving some distinctive gender and family patterns that interacted with "native-born" norms.

Study questions

1. What were the most important ways that women's experiences in North America, during the 17th and 18th centuries, differed from patterns in early modern Western Europe?
2. Why did Western states, provinces and territories move earlier to grant women's suffrage than other parts of the United States and Canada?
3. What are the most distinctive features of African American gender history, since the colonial period, compared to trends in the broader society?

4. What were the major changes in women's goals and roles from the 1960s onward? Was North American gender history taking a decisive new turn?

Further reading

Wendy Mitchison, ed., *Canadian Women, a reader* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1996).

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Daina Berry and Kali Gross, *A Black Women's History of the United States* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2021).

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