
Gender in Crisis: Women and the Palestinian Resistance Movement

Julie Peteet

New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. x + 240 pp. \$37.50 (cloth)

Reviewer: Sherna Berger Gluck

California State University, Long Beach

The blurring of the distinctions between disciplines and the value of cross-over scholarship is demonstrated beautifully in Julie Peteet's book on Palestinian women in exile. Relying on participant observation and interviewing, Peteet documents women's experiences during what turned out to be the last one-and-a-half years of the Resistance movement's control in Lebanon, ending her field research just a few weeks before the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the subsequent massacres and dismantling of the PLO power there. Using anthropological techniques and drawing on concepts and theories from women's history, she makes an important contribution to the scholarship on feminist consciousness and on the activism of Palestinian women in exile. She also provides what is probably the best English-language history of the Palestinian women's movement from its early organizational forms in the 1920s, grounding it in the emergence of early-20th-century Arab feminism.

The primary focus of the book is on the development of political consciousness (including national, class and gender identity) and on the implications both of the techniques of mobilizing women and of the forms of their activism. Peteet argues that because of expanded education for girls and women and their entry into the work force and national politics, Palestinian women in Lebanon did not suffer the loss of status that has marked Third World women's separation from agricultural production. Moreover, despite the absence of a clearly articulated ideology on women and gender relations, by responding to the force of social circumstances and attempting to transfer control from the family to organizational needs, the Resistance created the conditions for heightened consciousness.

It is the discussion of different forms of gender consciousness and activism that gives direction to the book and the variety of activists that Peteet studied that makes it so highly nuanced. Drawing on the distinction between female consciousness and feminist consciousness that Temma Kaplan identified in her landmark study of Spanish women in the 1910s (1982), Peteet differentiates the activities of women that merely expanded gendered boundaries from those that challenged them. Despite the fact that she sometimes conflates these concepts, interview materials and descriptions drawn from her observations help to illuminate the distinction and to reveal how gender ideology was both reinforced and redefined.

In fact, the strongest chapters in the book are those that more directly utilize her observations of and interviews with women. Strangely, one of the weaknesses of the book is the very cursory manner in which the author discusses her fieldwork. Although adequate for ordinary purposes, this was no ordinary research site. The community that was already "in crisis" came under major assault just as Peteet completed her fieldwork and Shatila Refugee Camp, where she lived, was the site of a major massacre. There is something disquieting about not knowing from the beginning the fate of the women with whom she lived, ate and laughed; about her failure to discuss these events up front and, instead, choosing to deal with them under the rubric of a "brief update on the research community." Despite these shortcomings, this book has

a resonance that extends its value beyond the study of this particular community. Its detailed exploration of consciousness, ideology and activism makes it a valuable case study that also furthers our thinking about gender and politics in the Third World.

Reference Cited

Kaplan, Temma

1982 Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona 1910-1918. *Signs* 7(3):545-566.

The Native Game: Settler Perceptions of Indian/Settler Relations in Central Labrador

Evelyn Plaice

St. John's, Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University, 1990. 155 pp. \$18.00 (paper)

Reviewer: Jo-Anne Fiske

Saint Mary's University

The "native-game," according to Plaice, comprises the struggle of a local group of Labradorians "to qualify for some kind of native status in the eyes of the outside world" (p. 123). Confronted by the growing politicization of their neighbours, the Montagnais-Innu and the political and economic implications of the Indians' land claims, residents of North West River seek to legitimate their own political claims by reference to native (Inuit) ancestry and to their historical participation in the fur trade. As "trappers," "old timers" and "Settlers," the descendants of early European colonists seek to construct a unique ethnic identity, one that sets them apart from Indians and from other European residents whom they view as "newcomers" and "outsiders."

Assuming that "the important criterion in ethnic history is the *defining* of differences between groups," Plaice argues that analysis of Settler perceptions of Indians exposes the cultural differences exploited by those claiming a Settler identity. Ethnicity, she states, is a resource that is manipulated in order to create and communicate social identities within a group. Hence, her goal is not to analyze Indian/Settler interactions but to shift attention to intra-ethnic communication.

The argument unfolds in two steps. The first is a study of the historical, economic and political developments that shaped the shifting social identity of North West River residents. Chapter two describes settlement and economic changes over 250 years which are divided into three economic eras: pioneer settlement and the development of the fishery; geographical mobility of the fur trade period; and 20th-century sedentarization and the emergence of an administrative period marked by reliance on the International Grenfell Association. Chapter three charts the continuity between early settlement patterns and contemporary residential arrangements.

The second section turns to contemporary social relations and the identification of a plethora of "social characters" said to comprise the Settler ethnic identity. Chapter four maps the construction of the "old timer" social character, chapter five the "trapper" social character, both of which are not only central to Settlers' claims to an unique and long-standing relationship to and understanding of the land, but central to