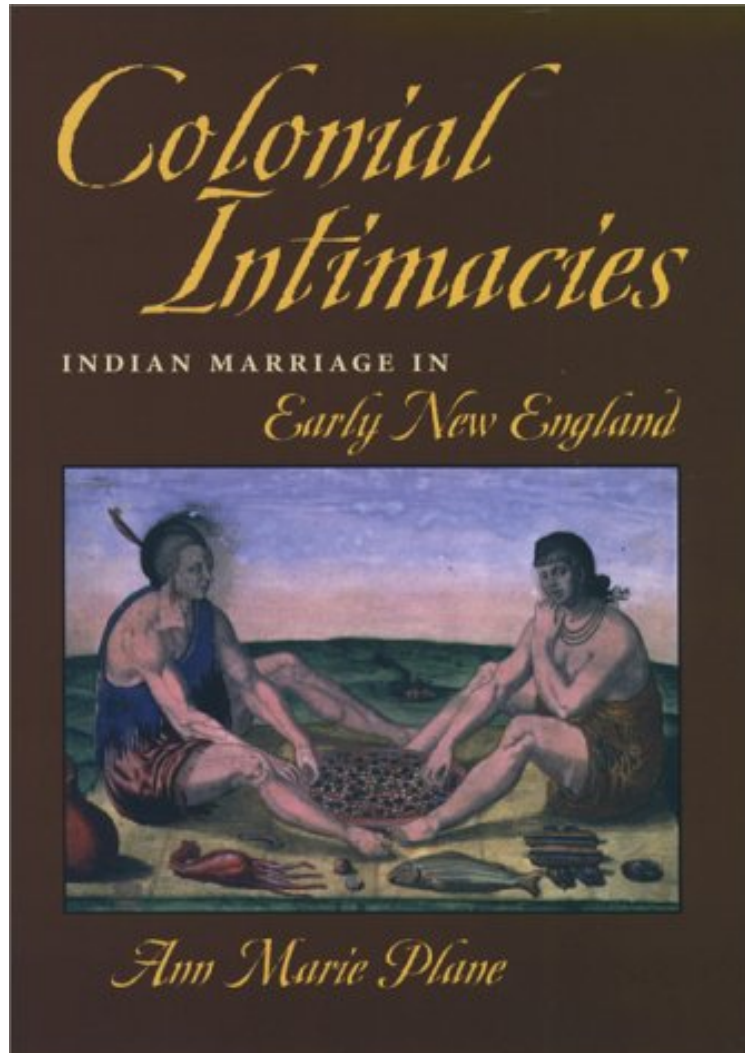


(Get free) Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriage in Early New England

Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriage in Early New England

Ann Marie Plane

audiobook / *ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#4618757 in Books 2000-06-22Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 .91 x 6.47 x 9.601, #File Name: 080143291X288 pages | File size: 49.Mb

Ann Marie Plane : Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriage in Early New England before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriage in Early New England:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Revealing Look at American Indian Marriage in New EnglandBy Michael A. KleenHow did Puritan missionaries affect Native American marriage practices in colonial New England? How did Native Americans react to these changes? These are the questions Ann Marie Plane seeks to answer in Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriage in Early New England. From the diverse marriage practices of pre-1620, to Anglicized marriage of the late 1600s, to the partial reconstruction of traditional Indian marriage in the 1740s, American Indian practices were profoundly altered by Puritan evangelization and colonialism.For American Indians

living in New England, many aspects of their marriage practices changed, including polygamy and the distinction between elite and common marriages, divorce, the role of formal legal bodies, inheritance, notions of household, and even expected gender roles. By the time American Indians began to assert their independence by appealing to past notions of traditional marriage in a now English-dominated colony, it was difficult for them to determine what that looked like. Ann Marie Plane cautiously explains there were no uniform practices among American Indian tribes, and that marriage practices were always in flux. She was able to find some generalities in primary sources, which were mainly generated by early explorers and missionaries. Clan affiliation and kinship were more important to Native Americans than the bonds between a husband and wife. The nuclear family did not form the foundation of American Indian society like it did for the English. There was also a distinction between common and elite marriage. Elites (tribal leaders) practiced polygamy, while most Indians had only one partner. Because many extended family members lived in a residence together, children were raised communally. Also, sexual activity prior to marriage was not taboo as it was in Puritan society. When Puritans first encountered native peoples, they imagined their marriage practices were wild and uncivilized. In their conversion efforts, Puritan missionaries focused on reforming and transforming American Indian marriage so that it would resemble Christian and English marriage, which was much more rigidly defined, religiously oriented, and central to English society. There were three main areas missionaries attempted to change: gender roles and notions of household, sexual mores, and divorce and inheritance. The Puritan missionaries succeeded in fundamentally changing American Indian marriage practices in all three areas, although they did not ultimately succeed in remaking them into an exact copy of Puritan practices. Puritans were able to change at least one aspect of Native American gender relations within marriage. Although Plane is quick to point out that spousal abuse may have been a symptom of the collapse of Native American culture under colonialism, she does present evidence to suggest that there were no proscriptions against husbands behaving violently toward their wives in American Indian society. Wife beating reportedly had been quite common among the Indians before their exposure to Christian teaching, she claims. Puritan missionaries quickly established an Indian legal system among the converted in order to among other things discourage this practice. In that way, English common law and Biblical codes were imposed on the relations between Native American men and women. These courts also attempted to enforce the nuclear family. They abolished polygamy and punished adultery. They made spousal abandonment a crime, and so an American Indian wife could pursue a legal case against her husband if he failed to provide for her. Colonial Intimacies shows that American Indian marriage practices adapted to changing circumstances, but did not change entirely. Plane reminds her readers that only a small number of elites practiced polygamy. The majority practiced serial monogamy, cohabitating with a succession of spouses, but many stayed with the same partner throughout their lives. As a result, changes brought about by Christian missionaries affected some more than others. The Puritan mission to transform the diverse marriage practices of Native Americans into English and Christian practices essentially failed, but as a result of that effort, American Indian marriage irreparably changed.

1 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Colonial Intimacies By investigative reader Not what it appears to be. Less informative than I had hoped. I wanted information on ties and relationships between Early American Indians and English settlers for tracing some family history. Disappointing.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Thorough and insightful By Jeffrey Leach Edmund Morgan's "The Puritan Family" explored the structures of the Puritan social and political elites. John Demos's "A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in the Plymouth Colony" dug deeper to uncover information about the lower social classes in the early American settlements. Ann Marie Plane's "Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriage in Early New England" expands upon the two previous works by exploring the social, political, legal, and economic interactions between the European settlers and the indigenous population. The author's sources encompass a broad spectrum of available materials: court records, travel narratives, religious sermons, essays, and census information all contribute greatly to her probing analysis of native family life. All three books taken together provide a multifaceted view of the earliest English settlements in North America. The only element missing from these three works is an environmental history of the early English colonies, and for all I know someone has already written one. "Colonial Intimacies" claims the English efforts to help the natives adapt to European lifestyles "often strengthened, rather than loosened, the boundaries between people." To understand how good intentions created divisions, the study seeks to answer several questions about the effects of colonialism on not only the indigenous peoples but the English as well. The author wishes to discover how the arrival of the Puritans changed the Indian culture, and how the Indians reacted to this intrusion. Too, Plane examines whether or not the settlers were successful in imposing their belief systems, principally the English institution of marriage, on the native population. She concludes that the Europeans, despite strenuous efforts in the years immediately following their arrival, failed to completely convert the various tribes to their style of living. What emerged instead after roughly 150 years of colonialism was a weird hybrid of English common law marriage-called spousals-and pre-colonial Indian relationship forms. According to Plane's research, traditional Indian marriage and family structure differed significantly from the European structure. The most important aspect of native relationships "were those of clan affiliation and kinship, not conjugal unions." Moreover, polygyny, or the taking of more than one wife, was a part of indigenous marriage for certain elite tribal members. Wives held more power in Indian relationships, in terms of providing food and tending the land, than they did in the European household. The

divorce process was less important for natives than it was for the English. With the arrival of the Puritans, missionaries went to work at once to fundamentally change the concept of Indian marriage and family. Polygyny, the central role of wives, and kinship relationships became sins that only a shift to the nuclear, patriarchal household of English tradition could expunge. King Philip's War of 1675-76 led to a tectonic shift in how the Europeans interacted with the locals. The emphasis on creating thousands of native "little commonwealth" families gave way to an almost disinterested concern about what the Indians did with their lives. Some missionaries still toured the praying towns to preach and convert, still instructed the locals on how to pray and worship, but the increasing presence of African American slaves and the rise of a mulatto class saw the English changing their goals. They now turned from seeking religious conversion toward developing a racial caste system replete with all of the inequalities attendant to that type of social organization. Plane argues quite convincingly that the Indians overtly and covertly fought to retain their social status by having their marriage and family customs legally codified in English courts. The court case resulting in the emergence of Indian marriage customs as an accepted legal tenet spotlights one of the book's greatest strengths, namely native agency in the development of seventeenth and eighteenth century New England. Although the author does not explicitly refer to the concept of agency until the last two or three pages of the book, there is little doubt that the indigenous people still created a viable history under the veneer of colonial occupation. Moreover, native agency influenced the colonists. For instance, the first missionary efforts converted many tribal members to Christianity, but these Puritan teachers were forced to examine their own views when converts asked probing questions about this new religion, or when they pointed out that European families often failed to practice the very things the missionaries preached. The interaction between the two peoples forced Puritans to look deeper into their theology than ever before. One common result of the wars against the native peoples, since documented by dozens of American historians, was the despotic policies the federal government and settlers imposed upon the vanquished Indians. The government viciously suppressed the Dakota Uprising of 1862, ultimately carrying out the largest mass execution in United States history as well as further solidifying the reservation system after this conflict drew to a close. The later wars on the plains also resulted in the internment of the Lakotas on reservations, a process resulting in a fundamental, damaging transformation from a hunter based society to an agricultural lifestyle that eventually paved the way to policies seeking cultural assimilation. Plane's book is a revelation because she concludes that the Puritans essentially left the natives to their own devices, in terms of family and marriage, after King Philip's War. An increase in debt peonage and forced labor counts as one measure of repression, as does selling off Indian children into servitude, both of which the Puritans did after the war. But nowhere do the English march the Indians off to reservations, nor do the settlers attempt a systematic cultural assimilation as seen in later eras of American history. The author might have arrived at a deeper understanding of her topic had she examined this unique phenomenon further.

In 1668 Sarah Ahhaton, a married Native American woman of the Massachusetts Bay town of Punkapoag, confessed in an English court to having committed adultery. For this crime she was tried, found guilty, and publicly whipped and shamed; she contritely promised that if her life were spared, she would return to her husband and "continue faithful to him during her life yea although hee should beat her againe. . . ." These events, recorded in the court documents of colonial Massachusetts, may appear unexceptional; in fact, they reflect a rapidly changing world. Native American marital relations and domestic lives were anathema to English Christians: elite men frequently took more than one wife, while ordinary people could dissolve their marriages and take new partners with relative ease. Native marriage did not necessarily involve cohabitation, the formation of a new household, or mutual dependence for subsistence. Couples who wished to separate did so without social opprobrium, and when adultery occurred, the blame centered not on the "fallen" woman but on the interloping man. Over time, such practices changed, but the emergence of new types of "Indian marriage" enabled the legal, social, and cultural survival of New England's native peoples. The complex interplay between colonial power and native practice are treated with subtlety and wisdom in *Colonial Intimacies*. Ann Marie Plane uses travel narratives, missionary tracts, and legal records to reconstruct a previously neglected history. Plane's careful reading of fragmentary sources yields both conclusive and fittingly speculative findings, and her interpretations form an intimate picture, moving and often tragic, of the familial bonds of Native Americans in the first century and a half of European contact.

"Plane does a wonderful job of reading closely Indian conversion narratives and court cases for telling hints of how the Puritans transformed Indians into an immoral and inferior subclass residing on the periphery of New England society. . . . This is an innovative and important work, and students of the ethnohistory of early New England will need to have a look." Michael Leroy Oberg, SUNY, Geneseo. *American Historical*, December 2001 "In this historiographical context, three genuinely inspired ideas drive Ann Marie Plane's fascinating study of Native American conjugal relations in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries." Daniel K. Richter, University of Pennsylvania. *s in American History*, Vol. 29, No 4, 2001 "Colonial Intimacies is a welcome addition to New England family history, providing a multicultural dimension to a field largely centered on Puritan households. . . Her engaging text draws readers into a complex world of human relationships, with all the messy complications life can offer. Not the least of Plane's accomplishments is her

ability to put a face on the impersonal forces of colonialism."Melanie Perreault, Salisbury University. William and Mary Quarterly, January 2002"Ann Marie Plane takes an original approach to the subject of English-Indian relations in colonial America by focusing on marriage. . . Plane reinterprets colonial New England's history by concluding that the English cultivated the idea of Indians as culturally different to keep Indians on the margins of English civil society. . . This interesting argument allows Plane to formulate valuable, far-reaching insights into what marriage is and how it works. . . The book is most illuminating. . . in explaining how English colonists understood and used cultural differences to create a sense of themselves."Nancy Shoemaker, University of Connecticut. Journal of American History, December 2001"Case studies support the author's conclusions and provide examples of real people trying to adjust to a foreign order. Recommended for undergraduate Indian and Colonial history collections."Choice, March 2001"Anne Marie Plane's Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriage in Early New England offers a treasure of evidence and anecdotes about Native American women's and family history, reflecting years of dedication to researching a notoriously difficult subject."Eric Arnesen, University of Illinois at Chicago, Law and History , Fall 2003"Viewing the inhabitants of early New Englandnatives as well as newcomersthrough the lens of marriage, this extraordinary book opens up new vistas onto a time and place we thought we knew, and knew well. Ann Marie Plane's imaginative use of intractable sources gives colonization a human face; through her tales of love (and lust), of loss (and gain), she gives voice to people long silent, bringing these obscure folk not only to light, but also to life. Colonial Intimacies will change the way we think about New England and early America, about the colonizer and the colonized, and about families from the Puritans' day to our own."James H. Merrell, Lucy Maynard Salmon Professor of History, Vassar College"The research behind this book is excellent. Ann Marie Plane demonstrates a great skill in her elucidation of specific court cases. By doing so, she shows us the real tensions that existed within families, and between families and communities, in the different populations of early New England."Peter C. Mancall, University of Kansas, author of Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America"Colonial Intimacies makes an important contribution to the history of early New England by adding a multicultural emphasis hitherto absent from social and family historical studies in the region. Ann Marie Plane has imaginatively conceptualized her book and the multicultural emphasis yields significant resultssome of her insights, informed by her careful reading of anthropology and feminist scholarship, are remarkable. This is a fascinating book."Mary Beth Norton, M.D. Alger Professor of American History, Cornell University