

**Citation:** Rehman, F. u., Khalid, R., & Mukhi, G. M. (2021). A Socio-Spatial Critique of Pre-Historic and Pre-Contact Spatial Marginalization of Native American Woman. *Global Language Review*, VI(I), 156-165. [https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2021\(VI-I\).17](https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2021(VI-I).17)



## A Socio-Spatial Critique of Pre-Historic and Pre-Contact Spatial Marginalization of Native American Woman

Fasih ur Rehman<sup>†</sup>Rubab Khalid<sup>†</sup>Gohar Munir Mukhi<sup>‡</sup>

### Abstract

*This paper offers a socio-spatial analysis of Native American normative geographies and Native American woman's spatial positionality within these normative landscapes. The discussion in this study premises on the notion that these normative geographies are ambivalent since they accord a marginalized spatial position to the Native American woman. The study argues that the nomadic tribes brought the Asiatic socio-cultural patterns that paved the way for Native Americans' compromised spatiality. The discussion offers a critique of the ambivalence of the normative geographic structures in the pre-contact era. Hence, the study maintains that by the pre-contact time, Native American nations have developed and expanded into different civilizations with established socio-cultural structures and socio-spatial boundaries. During this period, Native American woman's spatial predicament continued and her spatial suppression has become institutionalized.*

**Key Words:** Native American Spatiality, Native American Normative Geography, Native American Woman, Spatial Marginalization

### Introduction

Reminiscing the glorious Native American past, [Lee Maracle \(2006\)](#) claims that the Native American cultures promote communal self-reliance, individualized self-disciplining, nurtured love among the community, and shared the bounties bestowed by nature before the arrival of the Euro-Americans. She claims that the pre-contact socio-cultural system was guided by the essence of humanity and spirituality. The Native American women in these societies had extraordinary roles and their dominions extended from the economy of the nations to the pedagogy of the children and to the governance of the relationship between nations (p. 33). Miracle holds the westerners responsible for the disintegration of the socio-cultural authority of the Native American woman and putting her at the lower

strata of social hierarchies. According to Maracle, the Westerners' hierarchy accord the superior position to the White man, followed by the White woman, at the further inferior level is occupied by the Native man, and the Native woman is placed at the subordinated and marginalized position within this social pyramid (p.34).

Laura Frances [Klein and Lillian Alice Ackerman \(1995\)](#) claim that colonial literature presents Native American women either as a savage squaw or in a much romanticized image of an Indian princess (p.5). The squaw is represented as a woman who has no contribution to the social progression, is subordinated to the authority of man, and is powerless to take decisions of life like marriage, and family. On the other hand, the princess image is

<sup>†</sup>Lecturer, Department of English, Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Karak, KP, Pakistan.

Email: [fasihurrehmanku@gmail.com](mailto:fasihurrehmanku@gmail.com)

<sup>†</sup> MPhil. Scholar, Department of English, Riphah International University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

<sup>‡</sup> MPhil. in English, Department of English, The National College of Business Administration and Economics (NCBAE), Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

developed upon the Eurocentric ideal of ladyship, love and romance. The stereotypical image that results from the two differing views about Native American woman is that of either a disgraced drudge who is subservient or is trapped in the degenerating traditions of their cultures or as a picturesque lady who “took on the virtues of upper-middle-class European society and left Native American traditions behind them” (p.6). This representation emerges from the Europeans’ reading of Native American women through the lenses of European ideals of womanhood. However, this portrayal of Native American woman as a princess is also marred with Eurocentric prejudice. For instance, the princess in popular colonial literature is portrayed as a submissive woman to the authority of man, a dependent creature that requires the support of man and above all she is portrayed as “maternal protector and helpmate” to the European expansionists. Klein and Ackerman, however, are pleased to note that there are ethnographers who have bridged the gap between reality and fantasy and have portrayed a relatively “positive” image of the Native American woman, and have documented the true status of women and gender roles in their ethnographic writings (p.6). Klein and Ackerman claim that although Native American men and women had diverse roles throughout history, but these roles were not constituted upon any social hierarchy. They considered it in a “balance(d)” form which then promoted “well-being of society” (p.14).

Maracle’s eulogizing of Native American history and women’s situation in pre-contact era, and Klein and Ackerman’s disdain for the portrayal of Native American woman’s image are few examples of the way Native American scholarship assesses the Native American woman’s issue in the pre- and post-contact eras. Indeed, Native American scholars are justified to point out the atrocities of the white Americans against the socio-cultural reconfiguration in the post-contact scenario. However, in Klein and Ackerman’s collections of essays related to gender roles in different Native American societies, multiple writers have highlighted the broad differences between male and female gender roles and the existence of a gendered labor division. For instance, [Lee Guemprl \(1995\)](#) in her description of the Inuit society claims that although at a socio-cultural level men and

women of Inuit society have “relatively equal status, power and prestige”, however, the social roles are assigned through “the division of labor” (p.27). Similarly, [Henry S. Sharp \(1995\)](#) claims that Chipewyan society is a male dominated society with frequent abuse of females (p.49). Joy Bilharz in her portrayal of Iroquois society points towards a gendered socio-cultural imbalance between men’s and women’s roles. According to [Bilharz \(1995\)](#) the Iroquois men occupied the “forest” which is the domain of warriors, hunters and diplomats, on the other hand, women were restricted to “clearing” which is the sphere of women, farmers, and clan matrons (p.103). [Alice B. Kehoe \(1995\)](#) in her description of the Blackfoot societies of the Plain argues that these societies espoused a socio-cultural setup that supports “personal autonomy” (122). However, the location of this personal autonomy existed in specific domains for men and women, and Blackfoot women were expected to exercise their autonomy through their “innate powers of homemaking and child care” (p.122). Likewise, the gender roles in Pomo society as described by Victorian D. Patterson attest that the Pomo people cherished “complementary” relations between sexes (p.126). The complementary relationship, although promised “necessary and equally valued roles”, nonetheless did not guarantee against the division of spheres for men and women. Pomo societies will all harmonize relationships between sexes and have specified activities for men and women within a specific realm (p.129). This division has barred Pomo women from achieving “personal prestige” as men gathered within the Pomo tribes (p.141). In addition, [Martha C. Knack’s \(1995\)](#) account of the Great Basin culture reveals that women in these tribes were also subject to subordinated tasks. These cultures propagated “gender-segregated work groups” with distinct territories for men and women (p.149). [Mary Shepardson’s \(1995\)](#) study of Navajo socio-cultural patterning reveals that Navajo culture offers certain rights to women, but the society primarily functions on the sexual division of labor (p.165). Therefore, when a man engages in woman’s work, he is labeled as “transvestite, or *nádlée*” which means the man has lost his superior position (p.166). The works, although, elaborately define the roles and positions of Native American woman, but within that paradigm,

they also point towards the existence of exclusive spaces for men and women. The instances presented above attest to the fact that the Native American ethnographers assert a clear division between the masculine and feminine spaces in Native American society. Klein and Ackerman (1995) point out the biased portrayal of Native American woman in the colonial literature, however, an in depth analysis of Native American ethnographers' works reveals that Native American woman were subjected to a lower socio-cultural position by the Native American patriarchy. This marginalized socio-cultural position, subsequently, influenced her spatial position within the Native American normative geographic structures. Similarly, delineating the Cherokees' metaphors for masculinity or femininity, Theda Perdue asserts that throughout history Native American women have been portrayed as sifters whereas men have been compared to a bow. This metaphoric division is not only a literal dimension of the socio-cultural patterning of Native America but it is deeply rooted in the socio-economic paradigms as well. The announcement of either bow or sifter at a child's birth initiates the division of space and place for Native American man and woman within a Native American socio-cultural context. This initial spatial division is further augmented by raising male and female children in different ways and educating them in gender specific skills and labors.

In the following section, I present a critique of the socio-spatial development of Native American normative geographies from prehistoric till the post-contact times in order to explore the institutionalized spatial marginalization of Native American woman. The study claims that Native American socio-cultural structures are constructed upon gender discrimination which made the normative geographies ambivalent, authoritarian and exploitive. Consequently, these oppressive normative landscapes spatially suppress Native American woman according to their marginalized spatial locations. This study also presents accounts of Native American women who got engaged in out of place actions and transgress the normative geographies of the Native American society.

However, there is no denying the fact that there are Native American women who have made efforts to transgress the spatial division of the prehistoric,

pre- and post-contact normative geographies. The present study draws a blueprint of the space and place where this Native American woman lives and engages in these nonconformist actions. I understand that without delineating the socio-cultural geography of her existence, one cannot comprehend the gravity of her out of place actions and the enormity of her transgression. I use the word nonconformist, purposely, to inform the reader that the notions of out-of-placeness and transgression are not only spatial but also subversive in essence. This suggests, hypothetically, that there exists a geographical space that is a space of conformity to set rules and patterns that governs our behavior. This space constitutes what [Cresswell \(1996\)](#) calls, "normative" geographies (p.10). This normative geography is constituted upon what is considered as "natural and commonsense" behavior within a particular space in any culture (p.10). These normative geographies are "always already existing", and thus influence an individual's sense of place within a socio-cultural pattern (p.10). However, it is important to note that forces that hold "power" to do so (p.10) do the demarcation of the normative geographies of a society. In other words, there has to be some agency that fashions these normative geographies in the first place. This suggests that there is an unwritten code developed by some powerful agency that designates actions as appropriate and inappropriate with reference to particular spaces. In addition, these normative geographies cease to provide a sense of place and location in a particular space to an individual. The individual experiences spatial degeneration with the space and a sense of out-of-placeness overcomes previous spatial positionality. Consequently, an individual's emotional attachment to the place becomes ambivalent, and thus fails to establish any sort of connection with this space of conformity. All those actions that defy the boundaries of such normative landscape are considered as out of place actions (p.10). Such an individual develops a nonconformist attitude towards the normative geography, and the out of place actions further culminate in the transgressive act, where the individual crosses the established spatial boundaries.

Every society operates within its predefined normative geography that complements the socio-cultural pattern of a particular social group. The

natural and commonsensical spatial patterns explicate the socio-cultural structure of any society. Throughout history Native American societies have thrived upon normative geographies that complemented the socio-cultural schema of the society. The power to define such normative geographies rested with the Native American patriarchy, therefore, in the prehistoric and pre-contact normative geographies of Native America, the Native American man occupied central and pivotal position, whereas the Native American woman was accorded spatially marginalized status. The Euro-American spatio-cultural invasion further reinforced the already ambivalent prehistoric and pre-contact normative geographies. In efforts to impose the Eurocentric spatio-cultural values upon the Native Americans, the Euro-Americans further escalated the spatial crisis for the Native American woman. By remodeling the pre-contact Native American normative geographies upon the standards of Eurocentric normative geographies, they disturbed the Native American woman's sense of place to a great extent in the post-contact era. The Eurocentric spatiality of the Native American normative geography engendered spatial anxiety in the Native American woman. For the Native American woman, the imposition of yet another spatially discriminatory order, along with the Native American biased spatial allocation, was an utmost rejection of her spatial identity. The Native American woman experienced double spatial marginalization in the sense that in the pre-contact normative geographies, the Native American man marginalized her, but in the post-contact era, this spatial suppression was doubled because of the Eurocentric spatial structuring of the Native American societies. The implementation of Eurocentric divisions of spheres further complicated the already disturbed spatial location of the Native American woman. The Native American woman was restricted to the private sphere of the home, whereas the Native American man exploited the public sphere of game and wars. The Native American woman's limitation to defined spaces and places utterly destabilized her sense of place. Thus, there was an increase in the degree of suppression and exploitation of the Native American woman in the post-contact era. In the following section, I draw the contours of the prehistoric, pre-

and post-contact Native American normative geographies to explore the ways in which the Native American woman was spatially marginalized.

Before I engage in the delineation of the Native American woman's oppression and marginalization in the pre-contact Native American normative geographies, it is pertinent to understand how these pre-contact normative geographies came into being in the first place. This leads us to a very fundamental question regarding the origin of the Native American societies and their initial socio-spatial structuring. In order to understand the spatio-cultural patterns of the pre-contact Native America, it is important to know how the Native American societies emerged and established these normative geographies. One simply cannot accept the idea that these societies might have emerged from the ground just like plants, even plants require some seed to grow from, and that has to be borne by some other plant, which might be located at some place. Therefore, the questions related to the formation of normative geographies can only be answered when we trace the origin of these pre-contact Native American societies.

Social changes do not occur at a specific point of time; rather they span over a great expanse of time to be weaved into social structures. Such processes sometimes begin years ago, continue for centuries, and remain incomplete after millenniums. In such scenarios, it becomes difficult to determine the period of initiation of a particular social process. In my present study, I also came across the difficulty of determining the time of the development of the normative geographies of pre-contact and post-contact eras. The terms 'pre-contact' and 'post-contact' refer to the period that marks the arrival of the Euro-Americans to America. However, what makes these terms complicated is that historians differ in determining the exact date of the contact between the Euro-Americans and the Native Americans. Historians and anthropologists maintain differing views regarding the first contact. [Doherty and Doherty \(2008\)](#) claim that Vikings had "briefly" lived in the Atlantic coast somewhere around 1000 AD (p.82). [Granberry \(2005\)](#) argues that between the years 12,000 BC and 1492 Native America had "few additional visitors from the Asiatic world" (p.38), and that Columbus's discovery of America was "third such European finding" (p.24). These differing views

make it difficult to fix the date of the first contact and thus complicate the identification of the normative geography of the particular era. However, in order to avoid confusion, in my present study I take the pre-contact time as the period that roughly begins at the end of the first millennia and lasts till Columbus's landing in America in 1492. The post-contact era begins from Columbus's arrival in 1492 and continues through the assimilation and acculturation periods of the nineteenth and twentieth century until contemporary times.

Furthermore, in my delineation of the normative geographies of the pre- and post-contact era, I do not take the chronological time scale, rather I engage in the sociological progression of time. In other words, my division of normative geographies takes place at the intersection of time when the United State government implemented the assimilation and acculturation acts that began a new era of Native American history. In the current scenario, the arrival of Columbus in 1492 did not altogether change the socio-cultural patterns of these pre-contact societies, rather the Native American culture received Euro-American cultural values slowly and gradually. Hence, the term pre-contact normative geography encompasses the overall spatio-spatial schema of Native American society that existed until the legislation of assimilation and acculturation acts. The post-contact normative geographies are composed of those spatio-cultural practices that the United States government implemented under the aegis of the assimilation and acculturation programs.

### **Native American Woman's Spatial Marginalization in the Prehistoric Era**

Native American ancestry can be traced back to the pre-historian time when the Asian hunter tribes travelled through the Bering land bridge between Siberia and Alaska during the last ice age that occurred somewhere between 12,000 and 20,000 years (Granberry, 2009, p.29). These hunter groups later settled in different parts of the Americas. The Asian-American groups developed "bewildering number of native societies" with great language and cultural diversity (Granberry, 2009, p.29). Similarly, Craig A. Doherty and Katherine M. Doherty (2008)

maintain that the Paleo-Indians migrated from North Asia through the Bering pass. These nomadic tribes settled throughout the Americas in small bands that "worked together" for the sustenance of the group (p.5). J. E. Luebering (2011) asserts that these family-based bands "shared certain cultural traits" (p.18) with their Asiatic cousins. These and many other historical resources agree that the Native Americans are the descendants of Asian hunting tribes that developed their own socio-cultural systems in America. According to Granberry, between 12000 BC and Columbus's arrival in America, the New World was "part of the Asian realm, both physically and culturally" (p.30). He suggests that although these tribes developed diversified cultural traits, yet they were largely indebted to their ancient Asian ancestors for their socio-cultural and socio-spatial patterning. These societies, along with other cultural practices, maintained the Asiatic gender roles that persisted throughout the Native American society. In these hunting groups, men and women had defined roles, where men brought the kill and women made a fire and raised children. The spatio-cultural norms were established upon these socio-cultural orders, which allowed the prehistoric Native American man to travel long distances for hunting, and restricted Native American woman to home and domestic chores (Granberry, 2005, p.31).

During the developmental stages, these nomadic groups used the animal to hunt for sustenance, however in later centuries, with the improved socio-cultural structures and environmental changes the dependency on the hunt was reduced. Towards 10000 BC agricultural modes of sustenance flourished throughout the Americas, which resulted in the initiation of trade activities in the region (Luebering, 2011, p.19). The change in modes of acquiring provisions for sustenance changed the socio-cultural patterns as well. The cave dwellings now changed into construction of dwellings made of mud, trees and bushes. The new dwelling structures restricted the nomadic movements of tribes; consequently, tribes became spatially stable during the later stages of development. The small family bands of hunting groups grew into bigger tribes. This sociological development complicated the overarching gender roles as well. In the hunting

groups, woman mostly remained at home and man exploited the forest.

In the later agricultural and trade eras, women started work in the field and prepared trade items at home to be traded by men in different trading zones. In addition, with the socio-cultural developments, these tribes developed a refined family system. Native American societies employed both matrilineal and patrilineal family systems. In the matrilineal system, “the extended group was traced through the women in the family”, whereas in the patrilineal system families were “organized along the male’s family line” (Doherty & Doherty, 2008, p.18). However, the chief of the tribe used to be a man who would hold supreme authority (Doherty & Doherty, 2008, p.18). Although in many tribes, women were respected and given positions as “clan matrons” (Volo & Volo, 2007 p.54), however, this status was given to very few elder women and was not practical to be granted to all women. For instance, societies, such as Iroquois, where the matrilineal system was established, did not guarantee woman’s political role as superior to that of men. In fact, these matrilineal social setups were governed by patriarchy, and their matrilineal system was “far removed from a political matriarchy in which the women actually ruled the tribe” (Volo & Volo, 2007 p.54). Furthermore, to establish the spatio-cultural norms, in many tribes, at an early age young boys and girls were taught, “separate tasks they would be expected to do as adults” (Doherty & Doherty, 2008, p.22). The ceremonies organized for the celebration of adulthood for young boys and girls were of great importance to the development of the Native American normative geographies. Boys were considered men only when they would kill a big animal, whereas young girls, reaching puberty, would be separated from the family for the puberty ceremonies (Doherty & Doherty, 2008, p.22).

These were the initial steps that instituted a patriarchal social system with defined but imbalanced spatio-gendered roles in these prehistoric Native American societies. Except for a few, in the majority of tribes, men would assume positions as head or chief of the tribe, council members, traders and warriors, whereas women would take jobs like food gatherer, and domestic workers. This gentrification of the social classes on a gender basis paved the way for the spatial ordering of

the society as well. Although these prehistoric societies did not mature into the Victorianized or later Native American division of spheres, they established clear spatial demarcations and allocations of space within the social setup. With little differences, individual tribes had defined spatial allocation of gender, and “women’s activities tended to take place in family dwellings” mostly (Luebering, 2011, p.45). In short, the prehistoric Native American tribes maintained their gender-biased normative geography throughout the era, until it entered the pre-contact period. The spatial division of these prehistoric societies further reified into the later generations of the pre-contact tribes.

### **Native American Woman’s Spatial Marginalization in the Pre-Contact Era**

The normative geographies of the prehistoric era developed into refined socio-spatial structure in the first millennium. By this time, most of the tribes had grown into fully developed societies with established socio-cultural norms and structures. With the development of social hierarchies, the prevailing imbalanced spatio-cultural systems became more stringent. Over the centuries, the Native Americans developed great cultures like that of Hopewell cultures, Mississippian cultures, and Pueblo cultures. These diverse cultures developed individualized and complex socio-cultural patterns and possessed “carefully defined political and economic structures” (Granberry, 2005, p.33). The prehistoric socio-cultural processes continued to influence Native American society until the end of the first millennia. Towards the beginning of the second millennia, foreigners started arriving in America from Russia, Spain, and France. The Spanish established a local peasant class to serve the Crown, the French exploited the natural resources of the Native Americans, and the Russians used the trade route to supply marine mammal fur to China from the Northwest coasts and Arctic (Luebering, 2011, p.21). However, these occasional visitors left very little or no impact upon the socio-cultural progression of the Native Americans during the pre-contact era, rather these societies “produced new and unique cultural patterns alien even to the original Asian homeland” (Granberry, 2005, p.30). In addition, the arrival of Euro-Americans in the fifteenth century had little

impact on the spatio-cultural ordering of the pre-contact Native American societies. The socio-cultural foundations of these Native American societies grew strong enough to repel the early and mild European cultural invasion in the beginning. Since the early Euro-American did not do much to influence the socio-cultural infrastructure of the Native American societies. Therefore, the socio-spatial ordering of the pre-contact era remained intact for quite a long time even after the arrival of the Euro-Americans to America, and the Native Americans continued with their spatio-cultural hierarchies.

During this era, more and more documented records were established that enlighten us regarding the spatio-cultural structures of the Native American society. Unlike the prehistoric periods where records of spatio-cultural ordering can only be traced through findings of artifacts at archeological sites, with the arrival of the Euro-Americans written records of the spatio-cultural ordering of the Native American societies also became available. The Euro-Americans developed detailed accounts of their encounters with the Native Americans. Although these records might be biased and subjective observations of individual Europeans, and their authenticity may raise serious questions; however, they help us to sneak a look into the socio-cultural and spatio-cultural structures of these societies.

During the pre-contact era, Euro-Americans encountered Native American men as traders and warriors, whereas their encounter chances with Native American women were very limited; there are very few accounts of Native American women in these personal writings. The catalogues of Euro-Americans provide data about the socio-spatial organization of the Native American societies. These accounts fail to enlighten us about, Native Americans in general and Native American woman in particular, the experience of space and place. However, these accounts reveal that Native American “men’s and women’s spheres were separate” (Rountree, 2001, p.16) in the pre-contact eras. The normative geographies of the pre-contact era defined spatial allocation to the male and female members of society. In these Native American societies, gender roles were “rigidly defined” and there existed “strict division between men and women who performed different work and even occupied separate space in dwelling”

(Moore, 2001, p.93). In these normative geographies, “warfare and diplomacy with foreign nations lay firmly within the men’s world, while domestic affairs, including farming, rested with women” (Rountree, 2001, p.16).

Native and Non-Native scholarship agree that Native American societies had an established gendered spatial division in the pre-contact era. The spatial allocation of man and woman was strictly observed in Native American societies in the pre-contact era in order to subjugate the Native American woman. The spatial marginalization of the Native American woman of the prehistoric era continued during the pre-contact era, and with the arrival of the Euro-American, it changed to the worst. There are scores of instances, which attest to the fact that the spatial ambivalence of the pre-contact Native American societies grew more explicit and exploitative after the year 1492. The ambivalent normative geographies that emerged in the prehistoric era continued to mar the spatio-cultural positioning of the Native American woman in pre-contact era as well. Although, we have very little information about the lives of common Native American woman, however, the accounts of those women who somehow transgressed the spatial boundaries of the pre-contact and post-contact era, suggest that normative geographies of these eras were gender biased and suppressive for the Native American woman. In her delineation of the legend of Pocahontas, Rountree claims that Pocahontas, a daughter of Powhatan chief, was subject to spatial discrimination. Pocahontas, like other Native American women, experienced spatial suppression and marginalization. She assumed the roles and places that were specifically prescribed for her gender. At an early age, Pocahontas, received training “in all the womanly arts” since she would be doing all this work “under other’s scrutiny” (Rountree, 2001, p.16). The *other*, in this scenario, was always the Native American man who would marry Pocahontas. Rountree’s (2001) statement exposes the gender biased spatial allocation of the Native American woman in the pre-contact normative geography. Pocahontas’s training in the womanly arts and young Native American women’s training in domestic chores imply a restriction upon their spatial movement imposed by the Native American

patriarchy. Furthermore, the notion of the scrutiny of a Native American woman's work by an implied *other* suggests her spatial subordination to the Native American man and in such cases the husband. Similarly, the legend of Lozen exemplifies the rigid spatial divide between the Apache men and women. Laura Jane Moore (2001), in her narrative of the legends of Lozen, maintains that the Apache's normative geographies were extremely rigid, where Apache men and women would follow "strict division" of space and gender roles (p.93). Apache's had developed a social setup that structures society around a "sexual division" (p.94) of labor and space, which made it difficult for the Apache woman to cross these spatial boundaries. In Apache normative geographies, women's roles were limited to gathering and processing of wild plants for food and were spatially limited to their homes, whereas men would hunt, trade and their movements were not curtailed by the spatial restrictions. Upon marriage, an Apache woman would assume "certain roles within the community" which would be mostly domestic tasks (p.94). Moore claims that for Apache women it was easier "to cross into men's domain", however, the Apache society "observed strict rules that governed relations between the sexes" (p.97). This sort of spatio-cultural norms developed normative geographies where the Native American woman felt marginalized and exploited in the pre-contact era. The marginalization and suppression of the Native American woman was not limited to the Native American woman's spatiality, rather it had also been maintained in the economic structure of the Native American societies, which further contributed to the inequality and marginalization of the Native American women. In such circumstances, it is not surprising to know that Malinche, a Nahuatl Native girl, would be sold to the Tabascans in order to ensure that her stepbrother from her mother's second husband would inherit all the wealth and titles of the family (Bataille & Lisa, 2001, p.193). Such episodes attest to the imbalance of spatio-cultural traditions of this pre-contact Native American societies.

In short, the pre-contact Native American normative geographies were suppressive and established upon the principle of Native American woman's restriction to home or private spaces. The

natural and commonsensical were unnatural and lacked any rationality in every way. These pre-contact geographies delimited the Native American woman to the domestic sphere only and allowed the Native American man to relish the public sphere. The domestic sphere became a place of emotional detachment and the Native American woman failed to establish any sort of affiliation with her positioning in that suppressive space. The geographically subordinate position of the Native American woman in the pre-contact era further divided the already spatially hierarchical society. This dichotomous and biased geographic division resulted in the repression of the Native American woman and established a socio-spatial culture, which would continue in coming centuries, and further reinforced by the imposition of the Euro-American spatio-cultural values.

However, within the confines of these suppressive and marginalized spatio-cultural structures, there were Native American women who actually defied and transgressed these spatial confinements. For these women, the biased spatio-cultural division of the Native American society was unacceptable and whenever they got an opportunity to defy the spatio-cultural distribution, they actively engaged themselves in such subversive practices. Whenever these Native American women have crossed these spatial boundaries, they have impressed their name upon history. There are scores of instances, where Native American women of the pre-contact era have defied the always already existing normative geographies, and created new spaces for themselves, although unacceptable to the Native American patriarchy. These women have transgressed the pre-contact era normative geographies during Native American wars and skirmishes within Native American tribes and in wars with the Euro-Americans. They have also crossed the traditional normative geographies of the Native American society during peace as well. These early transgressions were limited to women's participation in tribal skirmishes and wars against the Euro-Americans. There were also few episodes where the Native American woman participated in trade and other activities that constituted destabilization of the normative geographies of the pre-contact era.

Furthermore, in the pre-contact and post-contact eras, Wars and battles also contributed in the formation of normative geographies. The space of battle and war was considered a domain reserved for the Native American man, and woman's participation was least celebrated. According to [Kessel and Wooster \(2005\)](#), warfare was considered as a "social force", that would determine the social status of a Native American (p.323). An individual Native American behavior during war and battle would define his position in a social hierarchy. Since warfare was a man's domain, therefore, Native American woman rarely participated in inter-tribal wars and often became victim of the brutality of the invaders and conquerors. However, there were women, who actually defied the spatiality of warfare and transgressed the socio-spatial boundaries by participating in wars and leading war parties. Native American women received scores of war trophies for showing their mettle in wars. The-Fight-Where-the-Girl-Saved-Her-Brother is one such war, named after Buffalo Calf Woman, a Cheyenne woman who saved her brother during a war (p.323). Island Woman, the wife of Cheyenne chief, in a fight against Pawnee, won reputation for her prowess in many battles (p.323). Running Eagle, a famous Piegan Indian of Blackfoot Confederacy, left her domestic sphere to avenge her husband's death who was killed by Crow (Absaroka) (p.277). She was the most celebrated woman warrior among the Piegans and had successfully led war parties for her tribe. Similarly, The-Other-Magpie, a Crow woman, transgressed the normative geography of her tribe. She was a medicine woman and participated in battles against Lakota and Cheyenne tribes (p.318). Woman Chief, a Gros Ventre warrior, later adopted by the Crow, from early childhood despised women working in the home, rather trained herself into skills of bow and arrow, riding, guarding family and horses. After the death of her adoptive father, Woman Chief became the chief of her family. She led war parties against the Blackfoot Confederacy and for sheer strength and courage received the third rank among Crow chiefs (p.345). William B. Kessel and Robert Wooster assert that these and many other Native American women participated in wars and battles to avenge the murder of their relatives or defend their home and family (p.345). However, what I claim here is that the Native

American woman found the space of war and battle an avenue to defy the normative geographies of their respective society. The war spaces gave the Native American woman an opportunity to redefine her spatial location. Her courageous engagement in war expeditions and winning of war trophies opened new vistas for other Native American women.

### **Conclusion**

Native American woman of the pre-contact era did not transgress the normative geographies of the era for fighting battles, but she also participated in trade activities, politics and as well. Although Native American women prepared trade stuff, which included beads, wampum, baskets and jewelry, however, they were not actively engaged in trading those things, rather these things were traded by the Native American men. There are very few examples of Native American women traders in the pre-contact era. Netnokwa, an Ottawa woman, was a famous fur trader. She led a group of trappers and was called "captain" for her leading role in the fur trade ([Bataille & Lisa, 2001](#), p.223). In the pre-contact era, few Native American women also rose to the status of the chief of the tribe. Queen Anne of Pamunkey was one such leader who successfully led Indians of Virginia into treaties with the Euro-American and thus saved her people and land. She was a successful politician and during her short tenure, she managed to engage the Euro-Americans into different political situations. As a politician, she guaranteed the survival of her people, reduced land sales, and even gave her son to the College of William and Mary in order to save her people. Wetamoo, a Pocasset woman of Wampanoag Confederacy, became a Sachem of Algonquian tribes of the North Atlantic coast. She was a renowned sachem and had legendary "leadership role and regal stature" ([Bataille & Lisa, 201](#), p.333). These and many such unknown Native American women defied the normative geographies of the pre-contact era and created their own space by transgressing the geographical boundaries. They did not yield to the suppressive and marginalized spatial allocation of the pre-contact Native American society. Rather they created spaces of their own by transgressing the normative geographies of the pre-contact era.

## References

- Bataille, G. M., & Laurie, L. (2001). *Native American women*. New York: *Routledge*.
- Bilharz, J. (1995). "The northeast first among equals? The changing status of Seneca women." *Women and power in native north America*. Ed. Laura F Klein and Alice A Ackerman. Norman: *The University of Oklahoma Press*, 101-112.
- Cresswell, T. (1996). *In place/out of place*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 14 December 1990: 195-215.
- Doherty, C. A., & Katherine M. D. (2008). *Northeast Indians*. New York: *Chelsea House*.
- Granberry, J. (2005). *The America that might have been*. Alabama: *The University of Alabama Press*.
- Guemple, L. (1995). "The arctic gender in Inuit society." *Women and power in native north America*. Ed. Laura F Klein and Alice Ackerman. Norman: *The University of Oklahoma Press*, 17-27.
- Kehoe, A. B. (1995). "The plains blackfoot persons." *Women and power in native north America*. Ed. Laura F Klein and Alice A Ackerman. Norman: *The University of Oklahoma Press*, 113-125.
- Kessel, W. B., & Robert. W. (2005). *Encyclopedia of Native American wars & warfare*. New York: *Fact on File, Inc.*
- Klein, L. F., & Lillian. A. A. (1995). "Introduction." *Women and power in native north America*. Norman: *The University of Oklahoma Press*, 3-16.
- Knack, M. C. (1995). "The basin the dynamics of southern Paiute women's roles." *Women and power in native north America*. Ed. Laura F Klein and Alice A Ackerman. Norman: *The University of Oklahoma Press*, 146-158.
- Luebering, J. E. (2011). *Native American history*. New York: *Britannica Educational Publishing*.
- Maracle, L. (2006). "Decolonizing native women." *Daughter of mother earth: The wisdom of native American women*. Ed. Barbara Alice Mann. Westport: *Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc*, 29-52.
- Moore, L. J. (2001). "Lozen: An Apache woman warrior." *Sifters*. Ed. Theda Perdue. Oxford: *Oxford University Press*, 92-107.
- Rountree, H. C. (2001). "Pochantos: The hostage who became famous." *Sifters*. Ed. Theda Perdue. Oxford: *Oxford University Press*, 14-28.
- Sharp, H. S. (1995). "The subarctic asymmetric equals women and men." *Women and power in native north America*. Ed. Laura F Klein and Alice A Ackerman. Norman: *The University of Oklahoma Press*, 46-74.
- Shepardson, M. (1995). "The southwest: Navajo the gender status of Navajo." *Women and power in native north America*. Ed. Laura F Klein and Alice A Ackerman. Norman: *The Oklahoma University Press*, 159-176.
- Volvo, J. M., & Dorothy D. V. (2007). *Family life in native American*. London: *Greenwood Press*.