
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON HISTORICAL REVIEW

GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY HISTORY DEPARTMENT



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**THE
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JOSHUA BLAUSTEIN

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2025–2026

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Foreword & Introduction

Dear Reader,

As an undergraduate in George Washington University's History Department, I was constantly intrigued and inspired by my peers' original work in research in their introductory seminars, theses, and other courses. With this, I was struck by the lack of a place for this stellar scholarship to be published, soon learning that the *George Washington Historical Review* became defunct during the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the course of 2025, I led the charge to revive the journal alongside a stellar team of authors, editorial staff, faculty, and community members.

My sincerest thanks to the authors for your motivation in preparing your articles for publication. It has been a pleasure to work with all of you and learn something fascinating from each of your articles. More importantly, I sincerely hope you are proud of yourselves for the dedicated work in history you have all done this year and your original contribution to the historical discipline. I am also greatly indebted to the amazing editorial team of fellow undergraduate students that helped make the revival of the *Review* a reality. Over the past year, the editorial team and I worked hard to publicize submissions, select pieces for publication, and revise them through an editorial process to be publication ready. I am so grateful to have worked with you all and for your tenacity and dedication. I would especially like to thank my Managing Editors, Anika Kanitkar and Javier J. Castillo, for their instrumental flexibility, cooperation, and creativity throughout this entire process.

I am equally grateful to our generous donors for their support for a print version of this edition of the *Review*, namely Edward C. Howland, Associate Director for Board Operations of the Office of the Board of Trustees at George Washington University. I also want to thank the faculty of the George Washington University History Department that generously donated their time to review selected pieces as a part of our publication process. Finally, this project would have been impossible without Dr. Denver Brunzman, the *Review's* faculty advisor, whose unparalleled guidance, dedication, and genuine care for student scholarship have been essential to this project from its infancy. I am beyond thankful for and inspired by his approach to teaching and community engagement.

The process of assembling a journal of diverse historical scholarship proved to be a constant reminder of the importance of original work in history. From Uyghur Islam to pan-African movements and Roman land reform, there is something in this edition for arguably every historical interest. The process of writing original historical work is imperative to continued understandings and engagements with the world's rich history, and I invite you to explore the diversity of our world's history with this year's edition of the *George Washington Historical Review*.

Sincerely,
Grayson Lewis, Editor-in-Chief

The Eradication of Pennsylvania's Original Inhabitants: The Impact of Settlers, the State, and the Military on Indian Displacement, 1765–1800

COLLIN PIVNICK

In November of 1763, the Paxton Boys (a group of Scottish and Irish northern-Pennsylvania settlers who believed all Indians should be killed and were angry about government protections of certain friendly tribes) attacked and killed 20 Conestoga Indians. In response, the Pennsylvania government forced nearly 100 Christian Indians, mostly Moravian Delawares, to move from their land near Nazareth to municipal barracks on Province Island for their safety. The Bethlehem Congregational Diary from November 8, 1763, romantically noted that:

At noon, Br. and Sr. Grube arrived here from Nazareth with their exiled Gemeinlein [little congregation], which was comprised of 44 souls... accompanied over the Lehigh where they came together with the Indian brothers and sisters from Nain, totaling 77, and so under the protection of the sheriffs who had been named to the task by the authorities, who are concerned for them like fathers, they set forth in their flight.¹

This group was displaced by attacks on other Susquehannock Indians in Lancaster by the Paxton Boys, and the government's response was to offer them forced "protection" in county barracks, instead of dealing with the Paxton Boys themselves. In January of 1765, a number of these Indians "went to speak with Mr. Allen about their departure from [Philadelphia], because they feared

¹ *Bethlehem Diary*, November 8, 1763, Moravian University, http://bdhp.moravian.edu/community_records/bethlehem_diary/8nov1763.html.

that the pox would soon come among them. They also said to him that they would be very happy if only they might be in Nain this winter.”² The Indian refugees did not return home to Nain until April 3, 1765, nearly two full years after they took refuge in Philadelphia. Many of these Indians actually relocated to Wyaloosing after leaving Philadelphia, and in a cruel twist of fate (and evidence of a larger pattern), were forced from that land in the 1770s at the hands of the Pennsylvania government and white settlers.³

Though the colonial period of American history has been deeply studied, the question of what happened to the tens of thousands of indigenous Indians in the region that would become Pennsylvania remains unanswered. Previous scholarship on this question has focused heavily on specific events, such as the 1742 Walking Purchase or the 1763–64 Paxton Boys Riot, but has largely ignored the overall trend of where these victimized tribes went, and more importantly, why. New York University’s Kevin Kenny as well as John Smolenski, a professor of Colonial American history at UC Davis, look at the early policies of William Penn’s government, and how they led in part to the

² *Diary of the little Indian Gemein currently in the barracks in Philadelphia 1765*, January–April 1765, Moravian University, http://bdhp.moravian.edu/community_records/christianindians/diaires/barracks/1765/translation65.html.

³ See Megan Trent McGee, “Schmick’s Frontier: Native American and Moravian Community Building in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1753-1765” (PhD diss., West Virginia University, 2018), 174–222, ProQuest (27527076) for more information on the confinement and treatment of Indians in Philadelphia.

conditions that bred the Paxton Boys and their opinions.⁴ They examine how tension over the direction of Indian policy became a dividing line in politics at the time. Others, such as Native American scholar Alden T. Vaughan from Columbia University and Peter Silver, an expert in early American and Indian history from Rutgers University, examine how the rise of white hatred of Indians became widespread.⁵ Silver additionally places a large focus on the divide between those who wanted to use peaceful methods and those who advocated extermination. Further writers examine specific episodes of Indian displacement, such as Steven Craig Harper's examination of the Walking Purchase and its effects on Indian-colonist interactions in the next few decades.⁶ A school of military history examines military campaigns that ended in Indian removal, but focuses very little on the removal itself. Works by Joseph Russell Fischer, John C. Appel, and Eber L. Russell contributed significantly to the study of these military operations.⁷

⁴ Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (Oxford University Press, 2009); John Smolenski, "Murder on the Margins: The Paxton Massacre and the Remaking of Sovereignty in Colonial Pennsylvania," *Journal of Early Modern History* 19, no. 6 (2015): 513–38.

⁵ Alden T. Vaughan, "Frontier Banditti and the Indians: The Paxton Boys' Legacy, 1763–1775," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 51, no. 1 (1984): 1–29; Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (W. W. Norton, 2008).

⁶ Steven Craig Harper, "Promised Land: The Holy Experiment and the Walking Purchase" (PhD diss., Lehigh University, 2001).

⁷ See Joseph Russell Fischer, "A Well Executed Failure: The Sullivan Campaign Against the Iroquois, July–September 1779" (PhD diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 1994); John C. Appel, "Colonel Daniel Brodhead and the Lure of Detroit," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 38, no. 3 (1971): 265–82; and Eber L. Russell, "The Lost Story of the Brodhead Expedition," *The Quarterly Journal of the New York State Historical Association* 11, no. 3 (1930): 252–63.

Throughout the first contact and colonial periods of its history, Pennsylvania was home to tens of thousands of Indians of various tribes, yet by the turn of the nineteenth century was almost completely devoid of its original inhabitants. What happened to the tribes and people, and the process by which they were forced or chose to leave their homelands in the East, has so far been grossly under-investigated. During the period from the Paxton Boys Riots to the end of the Revolutionary War, white Pennsylvanians cleared their territory of its Indian population with both intentional and unintentional actions. This process, composed of three categories of actions, can be generalized as: 1) settler hatred of Indians and their actions, 2) government-led Indian-hatred and the associated unofficial actions, and 3) official government actions. Settler actions and hatred include violence committed by settlers, and the widespread popular demand among whites for Indian removal to make the frontier “safer” and to open more land for white settlement. Unofficial government actions are composed of leaders’ clear disdain for Indians and less forceful actions taken by those in positions of power that influenced how the nation was run. Finally, official government actions include land purchases and their associated clearings, as well as military campaigns and battles against Indians.

Communication in the form of letters between military officials such as Major General Edward Hand and Brigadier General Daniel Brodhead, and government leaders such as Commander-in-Chief and later President George Washington and Pennsylvania Governors John and Richard Penn, are integral to tracing the removal process of Indians in Pennsylvania. Correspondence

between military officials discusses the planning and outcomes of specific campaigns, conditions preceding battles, and military orders. Newspaper articles and advertisements (nearly always published in Pittsburgh or Philadelphia papers) reveal the opinions and actions of frontier settlers. Most importantly, sources from Indians, and European missionaries proselytizing them, provide the vital perspectives of Indians in the Pennsylvania area.

To explain why Pennsylvania was nearly devoid of Indians by 1800, one must start with an examination of popular Indian-hatred and hostile actions towards Indians. This section will look at newspaper articles from across the state and how they demonstrate a clear desire for the extirpation of Indians. It will also include a discussion of massacres and killings of Indians by whites on the frontier that contributed to the decision of many to move westward. The next section will focus on unofficial government actions and the overarching government opinion of Indians, demonstrating that, at best, many white officials did not care what happened to Indians, and at worst, many agreed with the opinion of expansionist settlers. Military officials wanted to remove and kill Indians because of their belief that it would contribute to winning independence, and civilian officials wanted to clear the land of Indians to make frontier settlement safer and more accessible. The final section focuses on the official government actions that caused Indian removal from Northern and Western Pennsylvania. Major General John Sullivan and Brigadier General John Clinton led an expedition into Iroquois land in New York with the express purpose of destroying Indian towns and ravaging Indian lands in Pennsylvania

on the way. General Brodhead led an associated campaign into Mingo country in Western Pennsylvania, the only purpose of which was to rid the area of Indians and destroy their towns so they could not return in short order.

Pre-Removal Indian Population

Before grasping the importance of the lack of Indians in Pennsylvania after 1800, it is necessary to understand how many Indians inhabited the area previously. While it is extremely difficult to pinpoint the exact number of Indians living in the state (and anywhere in North America, for that matter), it is possible to estimate using a combination of contemporary sources. The time period's most reliable and comprehensive survey of Pennsylvania's Indian populations comes from Thomas Jefferson's 1785 *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which draws on four previous accounts that had experience surveying Pennsylvanian Indian populations. The first comes from George Croghan in 1759, who was the deputy agent for Indian affairs in the Ohio territory. The second comes from Bouquet, whom Jefferson calls a "French trader of considerable note." The third comes from an expedition by Captain Nathaniel Hutchins in 1768 "for the purpose of learning [Indian] numbers," and the fourth is from Indian trader John Dodge in 1779.⁸ Croghan and Bouquet counted 1,500 Haudenosaunee in northern Pennsylvania. Hutchins counted 2,120, and Dodge counted 1,600. The numbers for the Delawares, who by the

⁸ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (R. T. Rawle, 1801), 196.

late 1700s nearly all lived in Pennsylvania, ranged from 600 to 750 in all four counts. The Shawnee ranged from 300 to 500, and the Munsee were listed as having 150 members. A group consisting of smaller tribes, including the Mingoes, Mohicans, Wyandots, and Caughnawagas, numbered between 500 and 1000.⁹ These tribes alone accounted for a total of at least 3,500 Indians in the state in 1770.

A second method for estimating the number of Indians in the region at the time is to examine the accounts of whites, particularly missionaries, embedded within tribes. John Heckewelder, a Moravian missionary and historian of the Delaware people, provides a set of observations in his book *History, Manners, and Customs of The Indian Nations who once Inhabited Pennsylvania*. Throughout this book, Heckewelder notes a few towns and villages and their approximate numbers. He mentions that a town of 200 to 300 Delawares “applied to the great council of the Six Nations at Niagara” in 1781.¹⁰ Later in the book, he notes of Pennsylvania’s Indians, “I saw them myself between the years 1754 and 1760, by hundreds at a time... In the year 1762, while I lived at Tuscorawas on the Muskingum, they were settled on that river and its branches, and also on the Cayahoga river.”¹¹ Heckewelder then goes on to describe that “upwards of one hundred” and “a considerable number” of Mohawks migrated

⁹ Jefferson, *State of Virginia*, 197–99.

¹⁰ John C. Heckewelder, *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations who once Inhabited Pennsylvania* (1819; Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1881), 28.

¹¹ Heckewelder, *History of the Indian Nations*, 60.

into Pennsylvania in the 1760s and 1780s.¹² George Henry Loskiel, another German missionary living in Northern Pennsylvania, also spoke on encountering large numbers of Indians. Loskiel wrote of seeing “upwards of 800 having been fed at Bethlehem in one year.”¹³ Both historians note seeing multiple settlements of hundreds of people firsthand between the years 1760 and 1780, which helps lend credence to the approximate estimation of Indians in the region at the time given by Jefferson above.

Other scholars look much more in-depth at the population at first contact with Europeans rather than in the late 1770s, which also helps to establish a potential range. Thomas J. Sugrue investigates this number in his article titled “The Peopling and Depeopling of Early Pennsylvania: Indians and Colonists, 1680-1720.” He wrote that in the 1600s, “some 11,000 Indians (including the Munsee and Lenape) inhabited the Delaware watershed.”¹⁴ He continues on to explain that “at least three smallpox epidemics had stricken the natives by 1677,” which led to somewhere between one-fourth and one-tenth of the precontact population still inhabiting the region.¹⁵ This (admittedly

¹² Heckewelder, *History of the Indian Nations*, 66.

¹³ Heckewelder, *History of the Indian Nations*, 60; George Henry Loskiel, *History of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Indians in North America* (Brethren’s Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, 1794).

¹⁴ Thomas J. Sugrue, “The Peopling and Depeopling of Early Pennsylvania: Indians and Colonists, 1680–1720,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 116, no. 1 (1992): 10–12.

¹⁵ Sugrue, “Peopling and Depeopling of Early Pennsylvania,” 13.

somewhat crude) estimation would provide a 1700s estimate of between 1,100 and 2,750 Indians in the Pennsylvania region.

Settler-Driven Hostility and Anti-Indian Attitudes

Ascertaining an educated estimate of Pennsylvania's Indian population in the state in the late 1700s allows for the exploration of the process by which they were removed. Frontier settlers were initially responsible for the displacement of Pennsylvania Indians. The opinions of these settlers are crucial because they, along with objectives issued by military leaders, directly shaped the decisions of government figures in charge of Indian policy. The opinions of settlers, and constant writings about their intent to kill as many Indians as possible, are also significant, because they led to numerous massacres and killings, and contributed to Indians leaving of their own volition.

Pennsylvania's frontier settlers espoused rhetoric that characterized Indians as "bloodthirsty savages" through publications in newspapers, contributing to the environment in which Indian removal was taking place. Americans constantly used Indians as a reference point for barbarity. A Pennsylvania Packet article from October of 1778 demonstrates how poorly Indians were thought of at the time by describing the conduct of a group of Tories taking military action with "a barbarity that would have disgraced an Indian."¹⁶ Similarly, a newspaper ad in October of 1786 from the inhabitants of

¹⁶ "To the Freemen of the State of Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Packet*, October 3, 1778.

Wyoming County aimed to show the urban population how frontier folk bore all the costs of defending the state from the “savages.” The ad read in part, “during the late glorious revolution, we became your barrier on the north, and were thereby exposed to the relentless fury, savage barbarity, and devastation of the common enemy... in the scenes of horror we were your frontier. Our blood answered for yours... we stood between you and the tomahawk and scalping-knife.”¹⁷ Indians at the time were seen as a point of comparison for extreme depravity, a group that made living on the frontier horrific, and a population whose mere presence made the land uninhabitable for white settlers.

Given the widespread attitudes shown above, it is unsurprising that many settlers also emphatically believed in genocide to clear more land for peaceful settlement. A letter published in 1792 claims that “we ought to send a sufficient force into that country, even to extirpate that savage race, and their three-penny scarlet friends [the British].”¹⁸ In another published letter, the author wrote that he heard another man “threaten to put every Indian to death he should meet with on the river, and that if he could get a number sufficient for the undertaking, he was determined to mark a small Indian village on Yellow Creek.”¹⁹ In a letter from a “gentleman of character on the frontier,” a

¹⁷ “An Address to the People of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania at Large,” *The Independent Gazetteer*, no. 261, October 11, 1786.

¹⁸ “For the American Daily Advertiser,” *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*, no. 4085, February 29, 1792.

¹⁹ “Extract of a Letter from an American Gentleman, Now in London, Dated April 6th, 1774,” *Pennsylvania Packet*, no. 135, May 23, 1774.

frontiersman was quoted as saying to Indians, “You damn Rascals, if it was in my power, not one of you should live. Nothing should please me more than to see such Devils as you are all killed.”²⁰

The impact of such thinking was not limited to the pages of newspapers and official government policy. Settlers across the frontier and state constantly took matters into their own hands by murdering Indians indiscriminately. The author of a 1789 published letter wrote that “a small [group] are gone to White-River to extirpate 80 or 90 Indians.”²¹ The letter ends with the author inviting two Indian men and women to drink with him before he “killed and scalped them.”²² Another letter published in 1791 describes a group that “offensively far advanced into Indian country, and in a manner which carried with it marks of design to extirpate whole tribes.”²³ Frontier settlers wanted to kill Indians, often doing so in quantities sufficient to remove them from large areas of the state, or to cause those left alive to contemplate leaving on their own.

The widespread racist thoughts of frontier settlers, and the killings and massacres associated with them, contributed to Indians leaving the region

²⁰ “Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman of Character on the Frontiers, Dated June 30, 1779,” *Pennsylvania Packet*, August 26, 1779.

²¹ “Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Danville, (Kentucky) to his friend in this town, Dated the 9th of last month,” *Pennsylvania Packet*, no. 3316, September 16, 1789.

²² “Letter from an American Gentlemen,” *Pennsylvania Packet*.

²³ “Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in the Western Country, to His Friend in this Town,” *Independent Gazetteer*, no. 1332, March 19, 1791.

“voluntarily.” Dorsey Pentecost, Washington County’s representative on the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council at the time, wrote in 1783 that Indians had “at length left the country of their own accord; and I have the pleasure of informing your excellency that I have not heard of any disturbance from them for several weeks past.”²⁴ Heckewelder alluded to a separate example of Indians fleeing land because of potentially forthcoming frontier violence in his book. He described how, in 1768, a group of Nanticokes and other “Christian Indians” found that the Iroquois “sold the whole country, including the land they lived on, to the English.” The Nanticokes quickly began “foreseeing what kind of neighbours they should have” and “determined to move off in a body to the Ohio, where they had received an invitation to settle from the grand council of their nation.”²⁵ He finished the chapter by claiming that through the process of violence led by white frontier settlers, followed by land purchases or theft and settler movement, the “whole country east of the Allegheny mountains was cleared of its original inhabitants.”²⁶

²⁴ Dorsey Pentecost to John Dickinson, May 6, 1783, *Washington-Irvine correspondence. The official letters which passed between Washington and Brig.-Gen. William Irvine and between Irvine and others concerning military affairs in the West from 1781 to 1783* (David Atwood, 1882), 409–11.

²⁵ Heckewelder, *History of the Indian Nations*, 58–60.

²⁶ Heckewelder, *History of the Indian Nations*, 59.

Attitudes and Actions of Government and Military Officials

The sentiment of frontier settlers, and popular opinion more broadly, are also important because of the impact that it had on government officials and policymakers. This view of Indians as subhuman can be seen in the thoughts and writings of those in command of the military and government. Government officials such as General Washington or members of the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council devalued Indian life, seeing Indians simply as savage thorns in the side of settlers to be removed and disposed of. Many military generals and commanders in the Continental Army also expressed similar opinions in their correspondence. These attitudes influenced the actions taken by many of these leaders, and, similarly to the efforts of frontier settlers, led directly to Indians leaving their Pennsylvania homelands.

Government officials constantly expressed their belief that Indians were only to be viewed through the headaches they caused for white settlers, rather than as agents in their own lives. One example comes from Washington, who in 1782 wrote “no persons, I think, should, at this time, submit themselves to fall alive into the hands of the Indians.”²⁷ Washington essentially warned that it was better for a frontier settler to die than be captured by Indians because of the horrific treatment they would face.

²⁷ George Washington to William Irvine, August 6, 1782, *Washington-Irvine correspondence*, 130.

A letter from the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council in 1779 demonstrates a similar focus on Indians solely as a deep threat to frontier settlement. The letter read:

If Virginia and the other states have suffered by the ravages of the Indians in any proportion to this state, the particulars have never reached us... [we] are still smarting under their abuse and desolation, the complaints of which were suppressed and complainants perswaded to bear with patience their losses and sufferings.²⁸

Government officials took note of the sentiment of their populations and internalized many of the same thoughts, impacting their policy decisions towards Indians.

Perhaps the most striking example of government officials being concerned with the impact of Indians on the frontier is their inclusion in the Declaration of Independence. The final enumerated reason for the necessity of independence from Britain was King George III's incitement of Indians to attack white settlers. The text reads, "He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions."²⁹ Indian destruction of the frontier and the British use of Indians as allies were so

²⁸ Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council to George Washington, May 8, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-20-02-0344>.

²⁹ Thomas Jefferson, et al, *Declaration of Independence*, July 4, 1776, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjtbib000159/>.

remarkable to officials at the time that it was explicitly included in the Declaration.

Military officials were even more forceful in their use of disturbing and often racist language to express similar sentiments. Writing to Thomas Wharton, the president of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, General Edward Hand explained that “in short, every days experience teaches me that nothing but penetrating their Country & destroying the settlements of these perfidious miscreants, can prevent the depopulation of the Frontiers.”³⁰ In 1783, Major Isaac Craig hoped for the “opportunity of sending a sufficient force to extirpate or at least properly chastise these marauding rascals.”³¹ He also hoped to “have the pleasure of battering the Wyandot blockhouses in the course of the ensuing summer.”³² General Irvine was of the “opinion that nothing short of a total extirpation of all the western tribes of Indians, or at least driving them over the Mississippi and the lakes, will insure peace.”³³ In a 1779 letter to Washington, Colonel Brodhead wrote about the “Savages’... Malicious purpose” and the “enivitable consequences of their Barbarity.”³⁴

³⁰ Edward Hand to President Wharton, July 24, 1774, *Pennsylvania Archives: Selected and Arranged from Original Documents in the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth*, series 1, vol. 5: Commencing 1776 (Joseph Severns & Co., 1853), 443.

³¹ Major Craig to William Irvine, April 5, 1783, *Washington-Irvine correspondence*, 411.

³² Craig to Irvine, *Washington-Irvine correspondence*, 411.

³³ William Irvine to Benjamin Lincoln, April 16, 1783, *Washington-Irvine correspondence*, 187.

³⁴ Colonel Daniel Brodhead to George Washington, May 3, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-20-02-0269>.

The racist and denigrating view of Indians by American officials led directly to several tribes choosing to leave the area they had inhabited for decades. A clear example of this is the case of the Wyaloosing Indians in the late 1760s and early 1770s. At the time, tribal leaders worried about potential attempts to take their land by colonists, and wrote to Pennsylvania Governor John Penn expressing this concern. Penn responded in a letter on the 21st of June 1769, telling them not to worry. He wrote he “heard that [the Indians] are very uneasy, for fear that your land at Wyaloosing should be taken from you,” and assured the tribe that even without a deed (something often offered to white settlers), because they were “a peaceable and quite [sic.] people, and behaved very well, you should not be disturbed in your Population at Wyaloosing.” Penn then finished his letter by saying he would do all in his power to “protect and secure you.”³⁵ Job Chillaway, a local land surveyor, was then given a mortgage for and an order to survey a 623-acre plantation on the site two years later, on May 20, 1772, to be completed only after Indians had vacated the site.³⁶ The governor of the state had directly promised a tribe of Indians that their land was safe when the tribe raised concerns, only for the same governor to give an order to survey and inhabit the land (after telling

³⁵ Governor John Penn to Wyaloosing Indians, June 21, 1769, “Friendly Association” Papers, TriCollege Libraries Digital Collections - Bryn Mawr College, Haverford College, Swarthmore College, <https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/object/hc10650>.

³⁶ Job Chillaway, *Survey and Petition Papers for Wyaloosing, 1772–1774*, Collection RG-017-USGL-384, Box A1001195, Records of the Land Office, Pennsylvania State Archives, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Records of the Surveyor General.

Indians such formalities were unnecessary) to a different person shortly thereafter.

Seeing the writing on the wall, this group of Indians chose to leave their land and move into the Ohio country, specifically because the government did not protect their holdings. In a letter on May 15th, 1772, Governor Richard Penn detailed a conversation he had with Wyaloosing Indians on the previous day. He wrote that he had taken into consideration “what [the Indians] said to me yesterday, informing me of [the Wyaloosing’s] intention to remove to the Ohio... I am sorry for your departure at this [...] time, because I am apprehensive it may be injurious to the government, and the interest of the proprietors.”³⁷ This group numbered approximately 200 people, and was moving to a 125-strong Moravian missionary town on the Beaver River led by Heckewelder and David Zeisberger.³⁸ As discussed earlier, this group of Indians, now leaving their land at the hands of the government, contained many who were given “protection” from the Paxton Boys in Philadelphia barracks by said government.³⁹

³⁷ Governor Richard Penn to Wyaloosing Indians, May 14, 1772, “Friendly Association” Papers, TriCollege Libraries Digital Collections - Bryn Mawr College, Haverford College, Swarthmore College, <https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/object/hc10662>.

³⁸ Richard, W. Pointer, *Pacifist Prophet: Papunbank and the Quest for Peace in Early America* (University of Nebraska Press, 2020), 240.

³⁹ *Bethlehem Diary*, November 8, 1763, Moravian University; *Diary of the little Indian Gemein currently in the barracks*, Moravian University. See also Pointer, *Pacifist Prophet*, 136; Scott Paul Gordon, “The Paxton Boys and the Moravians: Terror and Faith in the Pennsylvania Backcountry,” *Journal of Moravian History* 14, no. 2 (2014): 121–22, 145–47.

Government and military leaders also contributed to the removal of Indians by offering scalp bounties to any whites who killed Indians and by calling in the militia to remove Indians. One example of this can be seen in the March 20, 1778 deposition of Colonel Sullivan, in which he discusses scalp bounties. After musing on frontier violence led by Indians, Sullivan spoke about how “[British] Governor [of Quebec Henry] Hamilton did all in his Power to induce all Nations of Indians to massacre the Frontier Inhabitants of Pennsylvania and Virginia and paid very high prices in Goods for the Scalps the Indians brought in.”⁴⁰ Colonel Archibald Lochry suggested that he had “consulted with a number on this head who all seem of opinion that a reward for scalps would be of excellent use at this time and would give spirit and alacrity to our young men and make it their interest to be constantly on the scout.”⁴¹ Being “on the scout” in this context meant looking for Indians to murder.

Through the 1770s in Northwest Pennsylvania, the idea of a scalp bounty had only been discussed as an option by policymakers, but that changed in 1780. President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania Joseph Reed suggested to Washington that “the Proposition of offering a Reward for

⁴⁰ Deposition of Colonel Daniel Brodhead by Colonel John Cannon, March 20, 1778, Fort Pitt, Pennsylvania, *Frontier defense on the upper Ohio, 1777–1778: compiled from the Draper manuscripts in the library of the Wisconsin Historical Society and published at the charge of the Wisconsin Society of the Sons of the American Revolution* (Wisconsin Historical Society, 1912), 231–32, <https://lccn.loc.gov/12011742>.

⁴¹ Archibald Lochry to Joseph Reed, May 1, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-20-02-0344>.

Indian Prisoners & a less one for Scalps of Indians only is revived. We shall do nothing on it without your Advice. I fear we shall be forced into it whether we like it or not.”⁴² In his last sentence, Reed was likely referring to settlers revolting, like the Paxton Boys, if a bounty was not enacted. He later stated “it is [the Council’s] earnest Desire that [Colonel Samuel Hunter] would encourage the young Men of the Country to go in small Parties & harass the Enemy.”⁴³ In a proclamation he wrote, “We would therefore recommend to you to encourage the young Men to hire out in small Parties to endeavour to strike the Enemy near Home & give them the Alarm for their own Safety.”⁴⁴ In service of this desire, he gave Colonel Hunter the authority to provide ammunition and offer “1000 [dollars] for every indian scalp.”⁴⁵ In the final line of this proclamation, Reed wrote, “We are fully satisfied that the Frontiers will never have Peace while the Country waits for the Enemy but on the other Hand it will be in their Power with few and small Parties to harass & distress them greatly.”⁴⁶ Reed and the Supreme Executive Council generally believed that as long as there were Indians on the frontier, there could be no peace. A scalp bounty was a

⁴² Joseph Reed to George Washington, May 1, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-20-02-0262>.

⁴³ President Reed to Col. Samuel Hunter, April 7, 1780, *Pennsylvania Archives*, series 1, vol. 8: Commencing 1779, 167–68.

⁴⁴ President Reed to Colonel Jacob Stroud, 1780, *Pennsylvania Archives*, series 1, vol. 8: Commencing 1779, 176.

⁴⁵ Reed to Hunter, April 7, 1780, *Pennsylvania Archives*.

⁴⁶ Reed to Stroud, 1780, *Pennsylvania Archives*.

promising way to encourage settlers to go out of their way to kill Indians within the state.

This scalp bounty, which was enacted on April 11th of 1780 and extended statewide on the 20th, was discontinued on March 21, 1783.⁴⁷ Bounty payments were only stopped because, in the Supreme Executive Council's words, "the reasons upon which the same was founded [are] no longer continuing."⁴⁸ While data as to the number of bounties claimed is extremely limited, at least \$2,500 (roughly \$60,000 in 2024) was paid out by the state to Colonel Samuel Brady, who is to be discussed at greater length below, as "a reward for an Indian scalp, agreeable to & late proclamation of this Board."⁴⁹ Lieutenant Andrew Hood was also paid a bounty for "taking an Indian scalp in the county of Westmoreland, agreeably to Proclamation of this Board."⁵⁰ In the Council's own words, the bounty program was enacted because of the government's desire to kill frontier Indians to make settler life more peaceful. Taken together with the termination of the bounty, this meant one of three

⁴⁷ "March 22, 1783, Minutes," *Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, From its Organization to the Termination of the Revolution*, vol. 13 (State of Pennsylvania, 1853), 564; For more details on the history of Pennsylvania scalp bounties see Henry J. Young, "A Note on Scalp Bounties in Pennsylvania." *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 24, no. 3 (1957): 207–18; and Margaret Haig Roosevelt Sewall Ball, "Grim Commerce: Scalps, Bounties, and the Transformation of Trophy-Taking in the Early American Northeast, 1450–1770" (PhD diss., University of Colorado at Boulder, 2013), ProQuest (3561921).

⁴⁸ "March 22, 1783, Minutes," *Minutes of the Council of Pennsylvania*, vol. 13, 564.

⁴⁹ "February 19, 1781, Minutes," *Minutes of the Council of Pennsylvania*, vol. 12, 632; Morgan S. Friedman, *The Inflation Calculator* (S. Morgan Friedman, 2000), <https://lccn.loc.gov/2004564254>.

⁵⁰ "February 22, 1782, Minutes," *Minutes of the Council of Pennsylvania*, vol. 13, 215.

things was likely true in 1783—either the state no longer wanted to kill Indians, which was unequivocally false, the ending of the Revolutionary War made Indians no longer a threat, which is demonstrably untrue, or there were simply no more Indians to kill in the regions for which the bounty was offered.

A second discussion point and course of action for officials was the use of the militia rather than the Continental Army to harass Indians. Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Mifflin wrote to President Washington in 1794 on the topic, “the exposed situation of the Western frontiers of Pennsylvania has, likewise, claimed the interposition of the Legislature; and, it is probable, that, as an auxiliary to the force of the United States, three companies drafted from the militia will be stationed, during the ensuing summer, in the frontier counties.”⁵¹ Later the same year, in May, Mifflin again wrote Washington, saying, “orders were immediately issued to the Adjutant General, for organizing, arming, and equipping, according to law, 10,768 of the Militia of Pennsylvania, officers included; agreeably to your requisition.”⁵² Calling up the militia and sending the troops to the frontier is an overtly aggressive action towards Indians, which was a direct response to the public’s constant desire to kill Indians.

⁵¹ Thomas Mifflin to George Washington, February 11, 1794, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-15-02-0162>.

⁵² Thomas Mifflin to George Washington, May 20, 1794, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-16-02-0079>; “Executive Minutes of Governor Thomas Mifflin,” May 16, 1794, *Pennsylvania Archives*, series 9, vol. 1, part 2: 1792–1794, 773–777.

The actions and opinions of those in political and military control of the colony and later state played a direct role in clearing the area of its Indian inhabitants. Scalp bounties induced regular scouting by settlers of the frontier for Indians to kill. This danger made it practically impossible for Indians to find a place in the state to settle safely, even if the government had not officially harassed them and stolen their lands. The use of the militia and scalp bounties, and their successes, led to Washington's official military campaigns with the express purpose of killing Indians and making the land uninhabitable for their return.

Military Campaigns and Indian Responses

Washington and the military at large also wanted Indians gone from the frontier out of concern that the British were employing them in their war effort. Consequently, the military launched multiple campaigns to kill and remove Indians from the frontier regions of the country. Washington wrote about or forwarded letters supporting this line of thinking to Congress throughout and after the Revolutionary War period. One example is a letter which read in part "We will enquire why those Savages are our Enemies, because they are Bribed by the British to take up the Hatchet against us."⁵³ In a letter to Colonel Brodhead in 1789, after the end of the Revolutionary War, Washington wrote,

⁵³ Peter Scull to George Washington, February 19, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-19-02-0241>.

“offensive operations are going forward against Detroit & the Indians in Alliance with the British in that quarter. . . .”⁵⁴ Washington also wrote that a “hostile disposition may appear in many of them” when discussing Canada’s Indians because of the British cultivation of Indian friendship.⁵⁵

Washington launched multiple campaigns into Northeastern and Northwestern Pennsylvania to extirpate the Indians found in those regions. The first was a multi-month campaign led by Generals Clinton and Sullivan in 1779, which began in Eastern Pennsylvania and proceeded into Southern New York. The second was an expedition led by Colonel Brodhead starting in Western Pennsylvania and finishing in the Lake Erie region by late 1779. Both campaigns were undertaken with the express purpose of killing as many Indians as possible and discouraging Indians from resettling there in the future. In the two campaigns, Americans killed hundreds of Indians and plundered or burned thousands of pounds of provisions.

Sullivan’s expedition in the summer of 1779 is the better-known of the two campaigns, and while it mostly took place in New York, multiple battles and attacks also took place in Pennsylvania.

⁵⁴ George Washington to Daniel Brodhead, December 29, 1780, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-29-02-0443>.

⁵⁵ Washington’s Summary of British and American Forces, May 1, 1782, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-08311>.

Washington straightforwardly instructed General Sullivan as to his goals for the campaign. In a May 1779 letter to Sullivan, Washington wrote:

The expedition you are appointed to command is to be directed against the hostile tribes of the six nations of Indians, with their associates and adherents. The immediate objects are the total destruction and devastation of their settlements and the capture of as many prisoners of every age and sex as possible. It will be essential to ruin their crops now in the ground and prevent their planting more... parties should be detached to lay waste all the settlements around with instructions to do it in the most effectual manner, that the country may not be merely overrun but destroyed... you will not by any means listen to [any] overture of peace before the total ruin of their settlements is effected... Our future security will be in their inability to injure us the distance to which they are driven and in the terror with which the severity of the chastisement they receive will inspire. Peace without this would be fallacious and temporary.⁵⁶

Sullivan's campaign was one of extirpation, the instructions of which came directly from the most powerful military (and later political) figure of the early United States. Washington believed, for the many reasons discussed throughout this essay, that the destruction of Indians on the Pennsylvania frontier was of such great importance that he allocated nearly 5,000 soldiers to the campaign, or

⁵⁶ George Washington to Major General John Sullivan, May 31, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-20-02-0661>.

roughly one-third the total regular force of the Continental Army.⁵⁷ The purpose of the expedition was not a secret, at least among the brain trust of the Army. Colonel Brodhead, in a letter to Nathanael Greene, wrote, “The Genl will be into the Indian Country in good time to destroy their Corn and I hope he has plenty of Sythes for that Purpose. There is very little Game in the Mingos Country and should their Corn be distroyed they will suffer as they deserve.”⁵⁸

When looking at the number of homes and the amount of corn destroyed, Sullivan’s expedition was a clear success.⁵⁹ The bulk of the destruction took place north of Tioga in New York, but Sullivan and his forces destroyed multiple towns in Pennsylvania. In a letter to Washington describing his actions to that point, Sullivan wrote that he split his force to surround a Seneca town situated in modern-day Athens, Pennsylvania. When the attack was set to begin, the town was found abandoned, so Sullivan sent a detachment north to pursue the fleeing Indians. The troops were unable to catch up to the

⁵⁷ Major General John Sullivan to George Washington, July 10, 1779 *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-21-02-0349>; George Washington to Major General John Sullivan, July 5, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-21-02-0295>; Joseph Russell Fischer, “A Well Executed Failure: The Sullivan Campaign Against the Iroquois, July–September 1779” (PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1994), 5, 41, 161, ProQuest (9414280).

⁵⁸ Daniel Brodhead to Nathanael Greene, May 16, 1779, Nathanael Greene Papers, American Philosophical Society, https://as.amphilsoc.org/repositories/2/archival_objects/362692.

⁵⁹ See Joseph Russell Fischer, “A Well Executed Failure” and Donald R. McAdams, “The Sullivan Expedition: Success or Failure,” *New York Historical Society Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1970): 55–81.

Indians, and “returned and destroyed the Town together with all their fields of corn and whatever else was found to destroy.”⁶⁰ Sullivan described the town his troops had just flattened as the:

most beautifully situated, contained a chappel with between thirty and fourty other houses, many of them very large, and some tolerably well finished. There were fields of corn, the most extensive that ever I saw, with great quantities of pota[toes], pumpkins, squashes, and in short every other thing which any farms could produce—the whole of which was destroyed root and branch.⁶¹

Sullivan also noted that he forgot to mention in his last letter that “the enemy had erected a new Town near Scheshequening [modern day Ulster] containing twenty two houses, which they abandoned on the approach of our army. Col. Proctor who had charge of the fleet sent on shore & burnt it.”⁶² Before beginning the main portion of his campaign, Sullivan had already supervised the destruction of between 55 and 65 houses and all associated crops and fields. Neither town was ever resettled by Indians and, today they are home to modern American towns of 3,500 and 1,500 people, respectively.⁶³

⁶⁰ Major General John Sullivan to George Washington, August 15, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-22-02-0118>.

⁶¹ Sullivan to Washington, August 15, 1779, *Founders Online*.

⁶² Major General Sullivan to Washington, August 15, 1779, *Founders Online*.

⁶³ See the footnotes of Major General Sullivan to Washington, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-22-02-0118>; and Data for the 2020 Pennsylvania Census, U.S. Census Bureau, <https://data.census.gov/profile/Pennsylvania?g=040XX00US42>.

In the fall of 1779, Colonel Brodhead was ordered by Sullivan and Washington to lead a sub-campaign of the Sullivan expedition into the territory northwest of Fort Pitt, home to Mingo, Munsee, and Seneca Indians. As a related campaign to that of General Sullivan, the goals of the expedition were understood to be similar, and Washington gave Brodhead express permission to undertake the expedition on July 13, 1779.⁶⁴ In a letter to Washington, Brodhead noted:

At the upper Seneca Towns... we found seven other Towns consisting in the whole of one hundred & thirty Houses some of which were large enough for the Accommodation of three or four Indian families. The Troops remained on the Ground three whole days destroying the Towns & Corn Fields. I never saw finer Corn altho it was planted much thicker than is common with our Farmers. The quantity of corn & other vegetables destroyed, at the several Towns from the best accounts I can collect from the Officers employd for to destroy it must certainly exceed Five hundred Acres which is the lowest estimate & the plunder taken is estimated at 30 [thousand] Dollars [roughly \$600,000 in 2024]⁶⁵

Brodhead went on to explain, “From the great quantity of Corn in new Ground & the number of new houses Built & Building it appears that the whole Seneca & Muncy nations intended to collect to this settlement,” and “that the Counties

⁶⁴ George Washington to Colonel Daniel Brodhead, July 13, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-21-02-0383>.

⁶⁵ Colonel Daniel Brodhead to George Washington, September 16, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-22-02-0360>; Morgan S. Friedman, The Inflation Calculator.

of Westmoreland Bedford & Northumberland if not the whole Western frontiers will experience the good effects of it.”⁶⁶

Washington was thrilled with the results of Brodhead’s expedition. He wrote a congratulatory message in his General Orders on October 18, 1779: “The Commander in Chief is happy in the opportunity of congratulating the Army on our further successes.”⁶⁷ Washington continued by listing out the details of the destruction, describing how Brodhead:

penetrated about one hundred and eighty miles into the Indian Country lying on the Allegany River, burnt 10 of the Muncy and Seneca towns in that quarter containing 165 houses, destroyed all their fields of corn, computed to comprehend 500 acres besides large quantities of vegetables, obliging the savages to flee before him with the greatest precipitation and to leave behind them many skins and other Articles of value.⁶⁸

He concluded his daily orders by saying, “The Activity, Perseverance and Firmness which marked the conduct of Colonel Brodhead and that of all the officers and men of every description in the expedition do them great honor, and their services fully intitle them to the thanks and to this testimonial of the General's acknowledgments.”⁶⁹ These words were published in a set of General Orders available to the entirety of the Continental Army, and Washington was

⁶⁶ Brodhead to Washington, September 16, 1779, *Founders Online*.

⁶⁷ George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799*, vol. 16 (United States Government, 1937), 480.

⁶⁸ Washington, *Writings*, 480.

⁶⁹ Washington, *Writings*, 480.

expressly congratulating Brodhead on killing Indians and destroying their property.

Indian sources regarding Brodhead's expedition prove valuable in understanding the fear and alacrity to leave the area ahead of Brodhead's troops that Indians felt. These sources are often oral recollections from the first generation born after the forcible removal. Charles O'Bail, Cornplanter's son, was interviewed in 1850 and recounted the Seneca tradition of the Battle of Thompson's Island, a battle in Brodhead's expedition. He explained that:

Capt. Crow was the leader of the party who were defeated by Brodhead's advance... Brodhead's friendly Indian spies heard the shooting, & reported.... Crow & two of the others took to the woods, who escaped: Red-Eye & his two companions pushed off in the canoe, aiming to reach the eastern bank of the river, thinking they would be safest when there. Brodhead's succeeded in getting fair shots at them, & killed two of them.⁷⁰

He then noted that Captain Crow and Red-Eye both died at Cold Spring, a town in Southern New York, after their relocation following the battle.

Seneca Chief Blacksnake also noted the move to Cold Spring in his recollection of the expedition. He explained that a group of Indians made a stop on the Cornplanter Reservation to “prepare themselves [to leave], away from Danger of their anemy that are coming up the River, that Redeye [urged] his

⁷⁰ Thomas S. Abler, *Cornplanter: Chief Warrior of the Allegany Senecas* (Syracuse University Press, 2007), 202; Louise Phelps Kellogg, et. al., “Recollections of Charles O'Bail,” *Publications of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, Volume 26: Frontier Retreat on the Upper Ohio 1779–1781 (The Society, 1917), 62–63.

people to get Ready as soon as possible.”⁷¹ He continued, “the Danger near at hand, of the 500 men are coming to Destroyed them So they got away, and left all those unmoveable Such [as] crops on the ground and come into state new york, and made a stop at now Cold Spring.”⁷² These accounts from those involved demonstrate that because of Brodhead’s campaign and its associated annihilation, multiple groups of Indians left the state of Pennsylvania and moved into New York in hopes of living peacefully.

Sources from Indians also emphasize the value of ancestral lands to their culture and communities, which illustrates how grim conditions must have been to force them to leave said land. Indian leaders were clear about their belief that the land on which they lived was divinely ordained, and the land on which they were destined to live in perpetuity. In 1744, treaty negotiations at Lancaster, speaking to English officials who laid claim to the land in question for at least 100 years, Canassatego (an Onondaga diplomat) said:

what is One Hundred Years in Comparison of the Length of Time since our Claim began since we came out of this Ground? For we must tell you, that long before One Hundred Years our Ancestors came out of this very Ground, and their Children have remained here ever since.... the Lands to belong to us long before you knew any thing of them.⁷³

⁷¹ “Recollections of Blacksnake,” in Kellogg, et. al., *Publications of Wisconsin*, 63–64.

⁷² “Recollections of Blacksnake,” in Kellogg, et. al., *Publications of Wisconsin*, 64–65.

⁷³ Representatives of Great Britain, Cayuga, Tuscarora, Mohawk, Oneida, Six Nations of New York, Onondaga, and Seneca, “Treaty of Lancaster, 1744,” Oklahoma State University Treaties Library.

Tanaghrisson, a Seneca diplomat, relayed a similar sentiment to Washington in 1753 when he said, “Fathers, both [the French] & the English are White. We live in a Country between, therefore the Land does not belong either to one or the other; but the Great Being above allow’d it to be a Place of residence for us.”⁷⁴ In 1763, Pontiac, the Odawa leader who started Pontiac’s War, drew on Neolin, a Delaware prophet, in his justification for war. He paraphrased Neolin, stating, “I am the Master of Life, whom thou desirest to know and to whom thou wouldst speak. Listen well to what I am going to say to thee and all thy red brethren. I am he who made heaven and earth, the trees, lakes, rivers, all men, and all that thou seest, and all that thou hast seen on earth.... This land, where you live, I have made for you and not for others.”⁷⁵ By leaving, or being forced off their land, Indians gave up land they believed was specifically created for them by a higher power to an invading group.

Actions taken by frontier rangers such as Samuel Brady also served to force Indians out of their homes in Pennsylvania. These however were not full campaigns expressly authorized by Washington, as Sullivan’s and Brodhead’s expeditions were. In a letter to Washington in June of 1779, Brodhead described how Brady set out into “Seneca Country,” where he “Killed a Soldier between Forts Crawford & Hand & proceeded towards Sewickly Settlement

⁷⁴ George Washington, “Journey to the French Commandant: Narrative,” in *Founders Online* <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/01-01-02-0003-0002>.

⁷⁵ Henry S. K. Bartholomew, and Pioneer Society Of The State Of Michigan, *Collections of the Pioneer Society of the State of Michigan together with Reports of County Pioneer Societies, Volume VIII, Second Edition* (Lansing, 1907), 270–71.

where they killed a Woman & Four Children & took two Children Prisoners.”⁷⁶

Brodhead continued to note that Brady took “Six horses, the two Prisoners the Scalps & all their plunder which was considerable & took Six Guns and every thing else the Indians had.”⁷⁷ Seneca Chiefs responded to these attacks by pleading with Washington to protect them. In a letter in 1791, the tribe wrote:

Your promise to me was that you would keep all your people quiet, but since I came here, I find that some of my people have been killed... We hope you will not suffer all the good people to be killed, but your people are killing them as fast as they can. Three men and one woman have been killed at Big beaver creek, and they were good people, and some of the white people will testify the truth of this.... Our father and ruler over all mankind, now speak and tell me, did you order these men to be killed?⁷⁸

The letter continued by saying, “We must now acquaint you with the mens names who did this murder at Beaver creek—Samuel Brady formerly a captain in your army, and under your command.”⁷⁹ Actions such as these, and those of other official frontier rangers from across the state, bolstered the idea that the entire American military and political establishments were against Indians and wanted to remove them through violent means.

⁷⁶ Colonel Daniel Brodhead to George Washington, June 25, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-21-02-0202>.

⁷⁷ Brodhead to Washington, June 25, 1779, *Founders Online*.

⁷⁸ Seneca Chiefs to George Washington, March 17, 1779, *Founders Online*, National Archives <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-07-02-0334>.

⁷⁹ Chiefs to Washington, March 17, 1779, *Founders Online*.

While actions taken by frontier settlers on their own accord and the unofficial actions taken by the government and military contributed to Indian removal, official military actions were by far the most disastrous form of removal when seen through the Indian lens. In what was almost a warm-up for the destruction he unleashed in New York, General Sullivan had already displaced two towns, destroyed around sixty homes, and burned acres of Indian corn. Colonel Brodhead's expedition kept him in Pennsylvania the whole time, as the destructive results show. Sullivan destroyed ten towns, 165 houses, and hundreds of acres of corn and other provisions. Both campaigns are known to have forced Indians out of the state and into neighboring New York, and left abandoned towns in their wakes. Other smaller official military actions, such as those taken by Captain Brady, led many Indians to feel they had nowhere in the state to live peacefully. Altogether, official military actions taken in the period resulted in the murder of hundreds of the state's Indians, or them leaving only to never return.

Post-Removal Indian Population

As mentioned, it is extremely difficult to gather an accurate number of Indian inhabitants of the state at the turn of the 19th century. This challenge is even more difficult considering that the entity charged with counting Indians, the government, believed that they should all be killed or removed. The first United States Census that specifically included Indians was taken in 1850, and Pennsylvania is not found in the count at all, nor in the data included from

1825. Tribes which were formerly in Pennsylvania, such as the Munsee and Mohicans (listed in the census as the Stockbridge, most of whom were Mohicans), are listed as living in Wisconsin, a group of 51 Delaware are listed as living in Louisiana, and a few thousand Iroquois are listed as living in Indian Territory West.⁸⁰ The 1860 Census contains a much more detailed accounting of Indians across the country, and it does mention Pennsylvania. That census counts seven Indians living in the whole of Pennsylvania.⁸¹ While the population of the state (overwhelmingly white) is listed as having grown by 570 percent since 1790, the population of Indians is in the single digits from at least 3,500 as demonstrated.⁸²

Numbers from sources taken in the late 1800s are equally bleak. Data from the 1890 Census (expanded upon in the 1910 Census) lists the state as having 1,081 Indian inhabitants, but 1,010 of them were listed as “enumerated in Carlisle Indian School,” a boarding school aimed at “re-educating” Indians from across the United States to acculturate them to the standards and

⁸⁰ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Indian Statistics of the United States—1789, 1825, 1850*, 10 November 1850, American Indian Collection, Bureau of the Census Records, <https://www2.census.gov/about/history/census-records/american-indians/1850aian032022.pdf>.

⁸¹ *Recapitulation of the Tables of Population, Nativity, and Occupation*, 1860, Decennial Collection, Bureau of the Census Publications, 596–98, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/population/1860a-46.pdf>.

⁸² *Recapitulation of the Tables of Population*, 1860, Bureau of the Census Publications.

expectations of white American society.⁸³ This means that, at most, there were 71 Indians who were not currently enrolled in boarding schools living in the state in 1890. The data show Pennsylvania as being home to 7 Delawares, 2 Munsees, 10 Wampanoag, 3 Mohawk, and 2 Narragansetts—all tribes which at one time made up a large portion of the Indian population of the state.⁸⁴ The location of the Carlisle School also serves as further evidence that the land was barren of Indians at the time. Richard Pratt, the founder of the school, had the desire to civilize Indians by removing them from their “surroundings of savagery” and moving them to “surroundings of civilization, [to] grow to possess a civilized language, life, and purpose.”⁸⁵ Pratt chose to found the school in Carlisle, then, because of how removed from Indian culture the area was. Meaning, in his view, that there was essentially no Indian culture, and thus very few to no Indians, in the region when Pratt began his campaign for the school in 1870.

⁸³ Bureau of the Census, *Indian Population in 1890 and 1910 United States Censuses*, Bureau of the Census, IPUMS USA, 11-25, <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/resources/voliii/pubdocs/1910/Population/00420142ch1.pdf>.

⁸⁴ *Indian Population*, IPUMS USA, 24.

⁸⁵ “Kill the Indian, and Save the Man,” Captain Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans, *Official Report of the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction* (1892), printed in *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the “Friends of the Indian” 1880–1900* (Harvard University Press, 1973), 260–71. See also Robert L. Brunhouse, “The Founding of the Carlisle Indian School,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 6, no. 2 (1939), 72–85.

Conclusion

Throughout the first contact and early colonial period of Pennsylvanian history, Indians dominated the landscape. By the Revolutionary War period, Indian numbers across the continent had declined significantly, but they were still a staple in the political and economic life of the region. But by the turn of the nineteenth century, Pennsylvania had scarcely any Indian inhabitants at all. This process of removal and death is vitally important to understanding the early history of both Pennsylvania and the nation. It also contributes greatly to the history of the many tribes, such as the Seneca or Delaware, who left the state and moved westward to the Great Plains, Wisconsin, Louisiana, Texas, and Ohio. Indian-American relations also became a major theme in the later history of these states, and of course, the United States, with the Indian Removal Act and Trail of Tears.

In Pennsylvania, the state's native population declining from roughly 3,500 in the 1770s to perhaps the single digits in the 1800s was a multi-stage process participated in by all of white Pennsylvanian society. Frontier settlers were not shy about expressing their belief that Indians were in the way of their settlements and were simply subhuman savages. These same settlers also took matters into their own hands and murdered several Indians. Military and government establishments shared many of these views and let it bias their policy-making efforts. Actions by Governors John and Richard Penn led directly to Indians leaving the state when their land was not protected. Scalp bounties were offered across the state for a few years until no Indians existed

within Pennsylvania. Finally, and most devastatingly, official military campaigns were undertaken with the explicit purpose of killing as many Indians as possible and rendering the land inhospitable for their return. Major General John Sullivan and Colonel Daniel Brodhead both led expeditions during which they destroyed hundreds of houses and thousands of pounds of Indian corn and potatoes. These three pathways caused the complete clearing and negligible return of Indians from the state by 1800.

The Indigenization of Uyghur Islam: How Uyghur Legends and Tombs Mark the Religion as Their Own

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Amidst the windswept desert sands outside Kashgar in East Turkestan, Muhammad Sharif, a 16th-century Sufi Saint and mystic, guided by the spectral presence of the deceased Sultan Satuq Bughra Khan, rediscovered the long-lost resting place of the First Great Islamizer of the Uyghurs.¹ Muhammad Sharif had previously been but a wandering Islamic mendicant with no master. A highly spiritual dervish to be sure, one that had even performed “several miracles and intercessions, but it was only in conjunction with the Khān [Sultan Satuq Bughra] that he [was] able to lay pious groundwork of a more permanent sort.”² Sharif’s journey to sainthood began in Samarkand (modern-day Uzbekistan), when the Sultan’s spirit gave him this quest, saying, “Come in

¹ Throughout this article, I will be discussing the historical region of the Uyghur people located in modern north-western China around the Tarim and Dzungar Basins. Many names have been given to this region, Xinjiang (Chinese for “New Dominion”), East Turkestan (Turkic for Eastern “Land of the Turks”), Chinese Turkestan, Altishahr (Uyghur for “Six Cities”), etc. among others but throughout this paper, unless in instances of quotation, we will be using the term East Turkestan. While the term East Turkestan does have some political connotations, especially in modern-day China in which it is associated with the two breakaway East Turkestan Republics of the early and middle 20th century, in this essay it is simply being used as a matter of convenience to describe the region. This term was chosen above others due to its emphasis on “Turkic continuity” with the rest of Islamic Central Asia (i.e. Western Turkestan which comprises many of the former Soviet Republics such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, etc.) as well as its geographical moniker indicating the unique aspects of this “land of the Turks” (i.e. it is in the east as compared to other Turkic lands) which are both important aspects to this paper. For further discussion on this nomenclature issue read James Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*, Revised and Updated Edition (Columbia University Press, 2022), xii-xiii.

² Jeff Eden, *The Life of Muhammad Sharif: A Central Asian Sufi Hagiography in Chaghatay* (Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2015), 14.

search of me, go to Kashgar [my royal city].”³ In Kashgar, a local pointed Sharif to where they approximated the Sultan was buried, a rocky outcropping, but any remains of his *mazar* (his tomb) were long gone amidst 600 years of desert winds and storms. In this outcropping, Sharif “spent three days meditating...[And] on the night of the third day, Satuq Bughrā Khān suddenly appeared face-to-face with him,” pointing to the particular spot in the desert sands where he was buried.⁴ It was on this very spot, according to Uyghur legend, that the *mazar* pilgrimage site of Sultan Satuq Bughra Khan was rebuilt and reconsecrated comprising “Altishahr’s greatest tale of shrine discovery,” the legend of Muhammad Sharif, who would enter Uyghur mythical-consciousness by discovering “further graves of holy people with the help of the sultan and through his own interactions with other spirits.”⁵

The tale of Muhammad Sharif is one of the most famous in East Turkestan, regaling the Uyghurs with a great Sufi mystic working in conjunction with their cultural ancestor and hero, Sultan Satuq Bughra Khan, etiologicaly confirming that the Sultan’s *mazar*, and others’, are exactly where they know them to be. The Uyghurs, like other indigenous practitioners of Islam, have tied themselves to the religion, and the religion to their land; their variety of Islam focuses on themselves, the Turkic Uyghur people, and their ancestral homeland

³ Eden, *The Life of Muhammad Sharif*, 33.

⁴ Eden, *The Life of Muhammad Sharif*, 34.

⁵ Rian Thum, *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History* (Harvard University Press, 2014), 126–127.

of East Turkestan. These diverse local varieties of Islam, like the one practiced by the Uyghur people, are known amongst scholars, even those outside of the field of Islamic Studies, with political scientist Mariya Omelicheva describing “Islam in Central Asia [as] immensely diverse...manifest[ing] itself in a variety of local practices and perspectives that developed from the two concurrent historical processes of indigenization of canonical Islam and Islamicisation of local customs and traditions.”⁶ Over its millennia and a half history, Islam has spread far beyond the Arabian deserts from which it originated. To cover such a vast geography, it has adapted to fit the cultures and lands of foreign people. This process works both ways, as both the “converter” and “converted” utilize the religion to justify how non-Arabs fit within the “original” Arabic religious context.⁷ The eminent scholar on Central Asian Islam, Devin DeWeese, in his magnum opus *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*, describes various “‘mechanisms’ emerg[ing] in popular and learned Islamic religious thought to explain and articulate such ‘communal’ conversion among distant or simply alien peoples” like the Turkic peoples of Central Asia.⁸ Turkic royal

⁶ Mariya Y. Omelicheva, “Islam and Power Legitimation: Instrumentalisation of Religion in Central Asian States,” *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 2 (2016): 148.

⁷ For more on the “‘original’ Arabic religious context” of Islam, see Earl E. Grant, “Folk Religion in Islam: Its Historical Emergence and Missiological Significance (Animism, Magic)” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, 1987), 271, ProQuest (8714604). In it, Dr. Grant discusses pre-Islamic Arabic religious beliefs being “folded into” Islam such as the belief in *jinn* which are mentioned in the Quran’s 72nd Surah.

⁸ Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 25.

dynasties traced back to Quranic figures, untold journeys in East Turkestan by the Prophet's companions, mystical initiation of Turks by Arabian ghosts; through “mechanisms” like these, Uyghur Islam has adapted into a unique, but still wholly Islamic, religion different from other varieties and totally Uyghur in value and character.

The story of Muhammad Sharif embodies many of these “mechanisms” that localize or indigenize the Islamic religion into a more recognizable form for the faraway and culturally distinct Turkic peoples of the Tarim Basin. *Mazar* shrines permanently etch Islam into the landscape of East Turkestan; Uyghur historical figures like Muhammad Sharif and Sultan Satuq Bughra Khan embody the religion as Turks; even the references to communing with ghosts and spirits culturally tie this legend to pre-Islamic Uyghur values and practices. Uyghur legends like Muhammad Sharif, and most notably their “founding” narrative describing the 10th-century Islamization under Satuq Bughra Khan, indigenize Islam in East Turkestan by tying it to the physical land, the Uyghur people and their ancestors, and to pre-Islamic Indigenous Uyghur practices.

The Islamization of East Turkestan

Before the arrival of Islam in East Turkestan, the region had “witnessed a vivid traffic of religious ideas” with various animistic and ancestral cult-based religions interacting with those of the Silk Road like Manichaeism,

Nestorianism, and Buddhism.⁹ It would not be until the 10th century, under the Qarakhanid Dynasty, that the religion most associated with the region, Uyghur Islam, was introduced. The historiography indicates Islam was likely brought to East Turkestan by Muslim merchants, shaykhs, and mystics roaming the Central Asian steppe, and/or a Muslim scholar in the court of the Qarakhanids around this time by the name of Kaliati.¹⁰ However, this is not the tale popularly told amongst the Uyghurs. While there are myriad versions of this history, one thing they have in common is that they do not teach of a slow-going, gradual Islamization but rather a quick and epic one led by a single man: Sultan Satuq Bughra Khan, the Great Islamizer of the Turks. DeWeese notes that the idea of “communal conversions,” in which an entire community is quickly converted to Islam by one single action, is “not only acceptable, but in some cases normative” due to the religion’s “emphasis upon the religious basis of communal identity...[a theme also] prevalent in Inner Asian tradition...”¹¹ Under these cultural frameworks (Islamic and Inner Asian both), if one’s entire

⁹ Paula Schrode, “The Dynamics of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Uyghur Religious Practice,” *Die Welt Des Islams* 48, no. 3/4 (2008): 399. Manichaeism being a “Silk Road Religion” revering the 3rd-century Persian Prophet Mani as a successor to Zoroaster, Jesus, and the Buddha (amongst others; the religion famously syncretized concepts from all three of these faiths as well as others through their dualistic/good-vs.-evil worldview) and Nestorianism being a Christian sect following the teachings of the 5th-century Christian theologian Nestorius who emphasized the difference between the human and divine persons within Christ (Nestorius’ teachings were rejected in the Roman Empire by the Council of Chalcedon though continues to be practiced after its spread throughout Persia and Central Asia).

¹⁰ James Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*, rev. edn. (Columbia University Press, 2022), 51.

¹¹ DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*, 23–24.

community is converting, then the individual has a communal duty to join them. Otherwise they risk no longer being part of that same community. This was doubly so for those ancestral Uyghurs converting to Islam due to their own pre-Islamic culture's emphasis on religion being inextricably linked to one's communal identity. Regardless of how rapid this Islamization occurred, or if it was indeed led by a Sultan Satuq Bughra, it did *historically* occur as the region became Muslim to its very character. This essay will examine how this Islamization was framed by the Uyghurs as an artifact of their indigenization of the religion through the form of the Satuq Bughra Khan legend.

Jeff Eden's translation of the Satuq Bughra Khan legend, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road: Legends of the Qarakhanids*, is the most accessible version of the tale (at least in English) and derives from a "late 18th or early 19th century [manuscript], [although] parts of the text have roots that may reach as deep as the eleventh century" being remnants of oral tradition.¹² This narrative begins not with the birth of Satuq Bughra Khan, as one would expect, but rather long before his birth in the Arabian Peninsula of the Prophet Muhammad. During Muhammad's legendary *mi'raj* or ascension into heaven, "God showed the Prophet the Sultān's spirit, which could be seen among the ranks of the prior

¹² Jeff Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road: Legends of the Qarakhanids* (Brill Academic Publishers, 2018), vii. Rian Thum in his *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History* notes how before the year 1700 most Uyghur historical texts were actually imported from other nations such as Persia, India, and Arabia with most of their own local legends being told orally before this time so it is not uncommon for the Satuq Bughra Khan manuscript to have been written so late. For more on this emergence of the locally-written Uyghur historical traditions read Rian Thum, *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History* (Harvard University Press, 2014), 18.

prophets” where the angel Gabriel (the same who transmitted the Quran to Muhammad) explained that “this is no prophet’s spirit...He appeared 330 years after you passed from this world. He conducted the infidels of Turkistan into Islam...”¹³ Prophet Muhammad’s reaction to this prognostication was one of pure joy, for he stated, “Thank God that Turkistan is in accord with my heart...I feared my community in Turkistan would be abandoned on the coming Day of Judgment.”¹⁴ According to this legend, not only was Sultan Satuq the Great Islamizer of the Uyghurs, but he was also prophesied and known to Muhammad, appearing during his miraculous nightward ascension.¹⁵ Sultan Satuq is also listed amongst the Prophets of Islam despite being born after Muhammad, the final “seal of the Prophets,” giving legitimacy to the Uyghur position of Sultan Satuq as the “holiest figure in Altishahri [Uyghur] Islam, after Muhammad and God himself” for converting the Prophet’s most beloved people: the Uyghurs.¹⁶

As prophesied, Satuq Bughra was born into the Qarakhanid royal family in the late 10th century and was raised as an “infidel” unknowing of his

¹³ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 31–32.

¹⁴ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 32.

¹⁵ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 88. This nightward *mi’raj* of the Prophet Muhammad had special significance to the Sufi mystics who wandered and converted East Turkestan. For it was during this ascension that Muhammad learned the initial mystical wisdom taught to all subsequent Sufis. Essentially the *mi’raj* serves as Sufism’s origin which is partially why it is so significant that Sultan Satuq Bughra Khan was connected to it.

¹⁶ Thum, *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History*, 53. Muhammad’s ahistorical love of the Turkic Uyghurs is to be expected; this is a Uyghur tale after all.

destiny. At age 12, he went on a hunt and encountered a hare with “the face of a great man,” implied to be the enigmatic Islamic figure of Khidr, who instructed Satuq in the *shahada* (the Islamic profession of faith, a pillar of Islam) to say “*There is no God but God and He has no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is his servant and his messenger.*”¹⁷

After various adventures in which the young Sultan was converted to Islam properly by the Samanid trader Abū al-Nāsir (perhaps a reference to the historical Samanid traders who may have brought Islam to the region) and tricking his evil pagan uncle, the Sultan, into sparing his life, Satuq overthrew his uncle at 16 fulfilling his destiny. On the day of his victory over his pagan uncle:

several miracles were manifested by Sultān Satuq Bughra Khān. The first miracle was that [his uncle], at the Sultān’s command, was swallowed into the ground. Another miracle was this: the Sultān’s sword... whenever he fought it out against the infidels, it would stretch to twenty-eight meters... Another miracle is this: fire shot out from the mouth of the horse on which the Sultān was mounted and obliterated the infidels...¹⁸

¹⁷ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 35. Khidr is an enigmatic immortal spirit fitting the “Green Man” archetype of ancient European and Near Eastern folklore. Sometimes identified as a Prophet, angel, or *wali* (Islamic saint; literally “friend of God” in Arabic) he has been commonly syncretized with Moses’ anonymous teacher in the Quran. As shall be later discussed, Khidr, at least in East Turkestani literature, is perhaps a “shamanistic holdover” of animal guides from earlier legends explaining his particular popularity in East Turkistan appearing in such well-known legends as those of Satuq Bughra Khan and Muhammad Sharif. For more on Khidr, see Julian Baldick, *Imaginary Muslims: The Uwaysi Sufis of Central Asia*, (New York University Press, 1993), 3.

¹⁸ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 44.

The rest of the *tazkira* (Arabic for “memorandum”) gets very repetitive, an indication of its oral nature, recounting the many battles Satuq led against the infidels, his various miracles, his peaceful death in his 90s (very rare in a Uyghur *tazkira* as most take the form of a martyrology), and the actions of his descendants. The Sultan’s greatest legacy, however, was the spreading of Islam throughout East Turkestan. While it would not be fully converted in his lifetime it was in the decades after his death that the Uyghur people would permanently tie Muhammad’s religion to themselves and their land.

Indigenizing Islam to Uyghur Land

The clearest way Muhammad Sharif and Sultan Satuq Bughra’s legends indigenize Uyghur Islam and make the religion more recognizable and familiar to Uyghur Turks, is through connecting the legends to physical locations throughout East Turkestan. Specifically, both legends focus on explaining the origins of *mazars* which dot the desert landscape of the Uyghur homeland. *Mazars* (in English either “tombs” or “shrines”) are “most frequently used in reference to the burial place of a saint, or to a location where miracles have reputedly taken place,” becoming “sites of pilgrimage in part because they are associated with supernatural powers capable of curing infertility, disease, solving social problems, or preventing natural and man-made disasters alike.”¹⁹ These

¹⁹ Rahile Dawut, “Ordam Mazar: A Meeting Place for Different Practices and Belief Systems in Culturally Diverse Xinjiang,” in *Kashgar Revisited: Uyghur Studies in Memory of Ambassador Gunnar Jarring*, ed. Ildikó Bellér-Hann, Birgit N. Schlyter, and Jun Sugawara (Brill Academic Publishers, 2017), 233–34.

mazars are physical locations, often marked with a structure or fenced-off area, that Uyghurs visit in pilgrimage circuits, breaking up the vast deserts that divide Uyghur settlements.

The *mazars* not only tie the religion of Islam to the physical land in which Uyghurs and their ancestors reside but also tie Uyghurs to each other (i.e. creating a shared Uyghur identity) as their spread-out cities and oases become stopping points on these pilgrimage trails. These *mazar* pilgrimages were so tied to Uyghur cultural identity that a Uyghur belief emerged “that a certain number of visits to an important Altishahri tomb could serve as a substitute for the *hajj* [the Islamic pillar of visiting the *Kaaba*, toward which a Muslim prays, at least once in their life], a tradition which is still maintained.”²⁰ This Uyghur belief is notable, even compared to other localized varieties of Islam, in that it completely localizes Uyghur Islam by supplanting a pillar of the religion that often forces Muslims to leave their home country for Islam’s birthplace in Mecca. The Islamic religion is *so* tied to the land of East Turkestan, that Uyghurs are blessed amongst Muslims as to be the only ones not obligated to leave their own homeland and journey to the far-off Arabian deserts of the Prophet Muhammad.

These *mazars* are not unique to the Uyghur people however, as both Shia and Sufi Muslims all over the Islamic world visit shrines for specific blessings from God. A parallel analysis of West Turkestani *mazars* (called

²⁰ Thum, *Sacred Routes of Uyghur History*, 122–23.

ziyaratgohs) similarly notes that they “are the instrument which provides safety and the evolution of ancient traditions and ideas of Central Asian people. *Ziyaratgohs* integrated harmoniously into Islam and became an important element of regional Islam.”²¹ It was the Sufi mystics who converted Central Asia that brought the idea of *mazars* over, associating Islam with physical locations throughout Turkestan that the Uyghurs knew. Legends like those of the Uyghur Islamizer Satuq Bughra and the Turkic Sufi mystic Muhammad Sharif also reassured the Uyghur people that their cultural ancestors were both buried where they believed them to be and that they had the prominence within Islam to confer blessings upon them. For example, Sultan Satuq Bughra was seen as a near prophet-level saint to his Uyghur “descendants,” being a favored individual shown to the Prophet Muhammad and the converter of many thousands to the true faith of Islam. Thus, the saint Satuq Bughra was worthy of giving many blessings to those pilgrims, his cultural descendants, who visited his *mazar*.

In bringing “shrine culture” to East Turkestan, Sufi converters not only created sacred structures to dot the Uyghur landscape, but also sacralized the physical ground at locations throughout the region. Rian Thum, a historian who specializes in Islam in China, notes the unique healing property of *mazars* compared to other Islamic sacred structures like mosques, finding himself “[un]able to document any similar interactions [i.e.. healings] with the physical

²¹ Komil Kalanov and Antonio Alonso, “Sacred Places and ‘Folk’ Islam in Central Asia,” *UNISCI Discussion Papers* 17, no. 5 (2008): 184.

structure of a mosque, even where a mosque is attached to a *mazar*.”²² While mosques are sacred in their very design and architecture, this is not where Uyghurs perceive the miraculous healings to be coming from. The healing comes not from the bricks that make the mosque nor even the prayers of the community within. Instead, there is something more to the *mazar* that is lacking in the sacred *structure* of the mosque, because *mazars* are sacred *spaces* tied to the Uyghur people through their indigenous connection to the land of East Turkestan. Sacred spaces, as defined by the religious historian Mircea Eliade, “are spaces, or settings, that facilitate the experience or expectation of transcendent encounter with a greater oneness, truth, or the divine.”²³ *Mazars* fit this definition, facilitating Uyghur pilgrims’ transcendent encounters (with a useful healing side effect) not based on the structure itself, but the land upon which it was built. The land where Uyghur saints and martyrs have shed their blood, died, and been buried in the name of Islam. The building itself is not sacred; the land is sacred, and that is why the *mazar* was built there.

Sacred spaces, such as *mazars*, localize and make any given religion more familiar to the peoples associated with that land, cultivating communal bonds and identity centered around the religion and the land. To Uyghurs, Islam is not just the religion of a faraway Arabian prophet, but the religion of Uyghur ancestors who died on Uyghur land, creating sites where Uyghurs on

²² Rian Thum, “The Spatial Cleansing of Xinjiang: Mazar Desecration in Context,” *Made in China Journal* 2 (2020): 50.

²³ James Kuper, “The Relationship Between Religious Motivation and a Sense of Sacred Space” (PhD diss., William James College, 2019), 13, ProQuest (13426792).

pilgrimage can attach their own identity and memories to these Uyghur-Islamic *mazars*. All the elements of the *mazar*:

rituals, spiritual experiences, pilgrimages, artifacts, stories and texts all contribute to an individual's learned connection to a place. Rituals and prayer help the individual internalize the experience, while artifacts are held as tangible reminders of the connection to the place...these ties can serve to connect individuals ancestrally, through a transgenerational connection to place.²⁴

The buildings, pathways, relics, and *tazkiras* read aloud at these sites all add to the sacred connection between the Uyghurs, their ancestors, and Islam. The religion may not have originated in their land, but the way Islam is practiced within East Turkestan is firmly rooted in Uyghur identity. Islam, in its own logic, is a perennial religion starting not with Muhammad but with the beginning of time. It was always present and always true. The Sufi converters of East Turkestan extended that logic by tying the religion to the land of East Turkestan and the Uyghurs who lived there. Whether historically the Uyghurs had always "been Muslim" does not matter, for the religion is a key part of their identity and perpetually tied to the land they and their ancestors walked.

Even before the historical Islamization of the 10th century, Uyghurs had tied themselves religiously to many of the same spots *mazars* now occupy; retroactively tying their Islamic faith to the sacred spaces of their pre-Islamic ancestors. Rian Thum notes how "many, perhaps even most, of the major shrines purported to have been founded in desert space were, in fact,

²⁴ Kuper, "Religious Motivation and a Sense of Sacred Space," 30.

transformations of earlier Buddhist religious sites.”²⁵ A famous example of this “Buddhist-mazar continuity” in East Turkestan is the Toyaq *mazar*, also known as the Thousand Buddha caves, where locals have combined their own legends of the site (dating to pre-Islamic, Buddhist times) with the Quranic legend of *Ashab al-kahf*, or the Seven Sleepers.²⁶ When Islam arrived in East Turkestan, it quickly integrated itself into the wider Uyghur culture, changing the nomenclature around Buddhist holy sites to remain consistent with Islam. For the indigenous Uyghurs, the land these sites occupied had always been sacred, touched by the Divine and associated with healings, and so to make Islam more familiar and palatable, these sacred sites maintained their sacred status with revised legends to explain this status from an Islamic perspective.

There is some evidence linking the ways Uyghurs venerate the buried saints at *mazars* to a longer shamanic tradition practiced even before the arrival of Buddhism or Islam. Uyghur ethnologist Rahile Dawut notes piled stones/earth and poles with colorful flags and other offerings hanging off of them left at *mazars* having “the obvious characteristics of the shamanist *obo*,” sacred cairns which were integral to pre-Islamic Central Asian religion.²⁷ That is not to say that Uyghurs merely kept their shamanist sacrifices and “re-labeled”

²⁵ Thum, *Sacred Routes of Uyghur History*, 125.

²⁶ Dawut, “Shrine Pilgrimage Among the Uighurs,” 59. To add another layer to the syncretic combination of religions at this site, the Quranic tale of the Seven Sleepers is probably itself an adaptation of an earlier Roman-Christian myth of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus who slept hundreds of years through the Decian Persecution.

²⁷ Dawut, “Shrine Pilgrimage Among the Uighurs,” 58.

them as Islamic, as archeology shows that the types of things “sacrificed” at *obo*’s changed over time. Buddhism, which forbids the slaughtering of animals, forced Uyghurs to hang objects on poles instead of hanging animals, in order to keep their ancestors’ worship of sacred trees alive. This *obo*-like practice of hanging objects at sacred sites continues today at Islamic *mazars*, and demonstrates “that the dissemination and acceptance of foreign religions very much depend on the degree in which they accommodate local beliefs which are maintained even in the face of substantial pressure to accept an alien culture.”²⁸

The conservative appeal of maintaining the traditions of our ancestors is a strong one; after all, no one wants to imagine their relatives (however distant) burning in hellfire for not practicing a religion they had never learned in their lifetime. For Buddhism and later Islam to flourish in East Turkestan, they had to adopt certain indigenous elements that did not contradict their own traditions. This, in turn, made their religions culturally familiar to the newly converted Uyghur Turks. This process of acculturation by absorbing indigenous religious sites is familiar to Islam, which famously maintained the religious significance of the *Kaaba* after Muhammad’s cleansing of the formerly idolatrous holy site of pre-Islamic Arabs. Sacred land is sacred due to its interaction with the Divine and the powers associated with that land, so to change the nomenclature around it while acknowledging the Divine’s history there, is only natural to maintain converts.

²⁸ Dawut, “Shrine Pilgrimage Among the Uighurs,” 64.

Uyghur legends seemingly account for this philosophy of sacred land maintaining its sacredness regardless of its historical origin, as the Muhammad Sharif and Satuq Bughra stories indicate East Turkestan has *always* been sacred to the Uyghurs. The story of Muhammad Sharif is *not* a narrative of discovery, with one of its central themes being that these sacred sites predate Sharif. He does not *make* any sacred spaces but merely rediscovers those that have been forgotten, allowing the narrative to avoid any implications around how these sites became sacred (they already were when Sharif found them) or whether Sharif had the authority to make these sites sacred himself. The story also assuages any concerns about Uyghur ancestors not having access to the Divine, for these sites had always been sacred for the Uyghur people, whether they date back to the Buddhist or shamanic periods. Muhammad Sharif's story merely recontextualizes these sites to have an Islamic origin. As for Satuq Bughra Khan, there is the legend of the "mosque in your heart" in which Satuq's idolatrous uncle challenges him to build a site for idol worship and prove he has not converted to Islam. Morally conflicted, Satuq goes to Abū al-Nāsir who tells him:

O child, some say that doing forbidden acts is permissible if you do them in order to defend and protect yourself. If you build the wall with the inward intention of building a mosque, then surely in the eyes of God you will be rewarded, and you will be saved from the infidels' calamitous designs. Do not be overly perplexed by all this.²⁹

²⁹ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 40.

This story introduces the important Islamic concept of *niyat*, or “intention,” into the Uyghur cultural milieu.³⁰ Essentially, for Muslims, including Uyghur Muslims, it is often “the thought that counts” with the efficacy of one’s actions being dependent on whether one intends to do the right thing. For Sultan Satuq, this is the famous “mosque in your heart” justification, in which his sinful act of building an idolatrous site is made righteous by his heart’s intention of building a mosque dedicated to the one, true God. This concept of intention is fundamental in a converted culture like the Uyghurs for, if intention is what matters, then these pre-Islamic sacred sites had always been intended to be sacred sites connecting the Uyghurs’ ancestors with the Divine. With this story of “the mosque in your heart” in mind, these same sites were thus retroactively made into sacred sites with an Islamic origin most commonly through the *tazkiras* explaining the sites Islamic origin/rediscovery. Through the *mazar* phenomenon, an indigenization of Islam occurred in which the land of East Turkestan was filled with sacred sites and a parallel Islamization of pre-existing Uyghur holy sites occurred by putting them in an Islamic context.

Indigenizing Islam to Uyghur People

Another way the Muhammad Sharif and Satuq Bughra Khan legends display the indigenization process of Uyghur Islam, is through their attempts to

³⁰ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 94.

connect Islam to the people of East Turkestan, by showing the Uyghurs to be an intrinsically Muslim people. Connecting Islam to the Uyghur people and their ancestors, in an even more obvious way than connecting Islam to the land, familiarizes the Uyghurs with the religion, and helps make the process of mass conversion possible. After all, in creating a retroactive Muslim history of East Turkestan, as the Satuq Bughra legend does, the stigma around abandoning the faith of one's ancestors is removed.

Before moving on to specific examples of this “indigenization by connecting to the converted people” in both the Uyghur legends and Muslim conversion narratives, take note that this essay is not trying to oversimplify this process and imply that Muslim converters “dumbed down” or taught a sort of “pseudo-Islam” for the sake of conversion. As mentioned earlier, this idea of mass conversion of a people is rather common within Islam and the tactics used by Muslim missionaries to connect Islam to the non-Islamic people they are trying to convert, is perfectly permissible within the religion. What was taught to the Uyghurs was not some “watered down Islam,” but a truly localized, authentically Islamic Islam that was tailored to best suit the Uyghur population, by fitting within both Islamic and pre-Islamic/indigenous social values. DeWeese notes that “The Islamic *ummah* [collective term for Muslims] defines itself, and other communities, on religious grounds, and hence the adherents of other *adyan* constitute distinct social groupings or communities...to change

one's religion is to change one's communal identity, and vice versa."³¹ In other words, the Muslim conception of the world, at least regarding ancestral religion, is rather communal and so incentivizes these communal conversions to Islam, such as occurred in East Turkestan under the Qarakhanid sultans. Specific "mechanisms" used to convert communities include:

Links with Islamized genealogies...as in the case of the discovery of 'Turk b. Yāfīth'; ...more mystically oriented strategies include stories placing particularly prominent converts among the Prophet's interlocutors during his *mi'rāj*, or the theory of 'Uvaysī' Sufis (who could provide not only conversion, but mystical initiation, for noteworthy converts).³²

Through the Satuq Bughra Khan legend, and its placement of the Sultan amongst the Prophet's *mi'rāj* interlocutors, Uyghurs are intrinsically tied to Islam as an essentially Islamic people by their very character. As noted, the Turks are regarded by the Prophet Muhammad, within the legend, as a favored people. Sultan Satuq Bughra himself is exalted to near-Prophet status (the highest of honors in Islam) and his conversion to Islam is implied to be a pre-ordained action predicted over three centuries before his own conception. The translator of the legend, Jeff Eden, focuses on Satuq's "secret conversion" as a child to Islam "serv[ing] to project Islamization deeper into East Turkistan's past. The region's Islamic history, the motif seems to suggest, is deeper than it appears to the naked eye, and there may well be Islam (or at least a latent,

³¹ DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*, 23.

³² DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*, 25.

predestined faith) even where it is not visible.”³³ While he was not raised a Muslim, Satuq Bughra Khan was seemingly destined for it, and in his heart, always was a Muslim. This narrative prologue serves as a powerful reflection of the Uyghur people who may not have been Muslim historically before the 10th century, but were, according to the Satuq Bughra legend, always destined for it and “Muslim at heart.” The same principle of *niyat* or intention applies here. Additionally, it is important to note that there is only one God in Islam (the key idea of the religion), so any genuine religious connection with the Divine is with Allah, whether one knows it by that name or not. In part, due to this strict monotheism and Islamic ideas around *niyat*, legends like the above indigenize the religion by showing that through their sacred intention the Uyghurs had always been Muslim/sacred as a people.

Jeff Eden relates a *hadith* or saying of the Prophet Muhammad “‘*Anwalu man aslama min al-Turk*,’ meaning that the first Muslim was from among the Turks (a *hadith* well-known among Central Asian Turks but, as one can imagine, not widely embraced everywhere)” further emphasizing the predestination of the Uyghur Turks to become Muslim even long before their historical conversion.³⁴ Through the Satuq Bughra legend, Islam has been projected far into the Uyghurs’ ancestral past and intrinsically tied to them “reinforc[ing] the narrative’s distinctly local character: it is a story of Turkistan, with the Turks at its heart...locating the greatest local saint among the greatest

³³ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 93.

³⁴ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 89.

of prophets...the ultimate proof that Turkistan had received Muhammad's special attention during his lifetime."³⁵ Uyghur Muslims, through their own "founding myth" establish a wholly indigenous form of Islam indicating that Islam itself is indigenous to their ancestors and ethnicity. Uyghurs were not converted to Islam; they were predestined for it and intrinsically Muslim even before the Arabs who later converted them.

The Uyghurs were not the only ones tying themselves to an Islamic heritage, however, as Muslim converters from Arabia and Persia sought to fit Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples into their "Islamic conception of the world" through the introduction of a "Quranic genealogy" of the Turks. By the mid-7th century, shortly after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslim armies had encounters with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. Within a few short centuries, many of these same Turkic "heathens" would convert and even rule over vast swaths of Muslim territory due to their military might. These powerful Islamic rulers necessitated powerful Islamic genealogies to justify their power. Chief among these newly Islamic dynasties were the Qarakhanids, descendants of Sultan Satuq Bughra Khan and "the first Turkic-Muslim dynasty in Central Asia..."³⁶ Central Asian historians Scott C. Levi and Ron Sela, in their translated collection *Islamic Central Asia: An Anthology of Historical Sources*, note that this rapid ascent of the Turks within the Islamic world forced Muslim

³⁵ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 89.

³⁶ Scott Cameron Levi and Ron Sela, *Islamic Central Asia: An Anthology of Historical Sources* (Indiana University Press, 2010), 47.

historians to explain the origin of the Turkic peoples (never mentioned in the eternal Quran) and so Turks were “incorporated into the Muslim account of creation, and were accorded their place in history.”³⁷ Whether this Muslim heritage of Turks had any *actual* historical veracity to it or not, the importance of giving Turks a genealogical connection to the Quran was readily apparent to any who tried to convert them. Rooting noble and royal dynasties in a mythological, often religious, origin, is nothing unique to the Turks; the Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt and the present Imperial House of Japan are rather famous examples of this phenomenon. The point is important people demand important origins and so it was not just the Turks who perpetuated their inherent Islam.

This Quranic genealogy of the Turks went back to Yafith, who in the Quran is the third son of the Prophet Nuh.³⁸ An example of this narrative of the Turk’s descent from Yafith is the 11th-century Persian historian Gardizi, who notes in his work *Zayn al-akbbar* that “the prophet Nuh (Noah)...had three sons, Sam (Shem), Ham, and Yafith (Japheth), and he divided the earth among his sons...the lands of the Turks...as far as China fell to Yafith.”³⁹ DeWeese notes that this “Turk son of Yafith” narrative was “a common process evident as early as...[the] tenth-century...and well developed in histories such as those

³⁷ Levi and Sela, *Islamic Central Asia*, 48.

³⁸ Interestingly Yafith’s Biblical equivalent, Japheth son of Noah, would be used by Medieval European Christians as their own Biblical ancestor. This is probably due to Japheth/Yafith’s descendants, unlike Noah/Nuh’s other son’s kids, not being associated with specific territories in the Near East and Africa.

³⁹ Levi and Sela, *Islamic Central Asia*, 60.

of Rashīd ad-Dīn and Abū'l-Ghāzi” showing just how widespread this narrative was and how soon after the conversion of Turks like Satuq Bughra Khan it emerged.⁴⁰ It was not just in the Uyghurs’ interest to tie themselves to Islam and assert that they were intrinsically Muslim, as even the Arabs and Persians they interacted with (and sometimes ruled over) wished to tie them to the Islamic religion and bring their mighty military strength into the Islamic fold. It was in Islam’s best interests in Central Asia to indigenize the religion, project into the Turks’ past a “historical” connection to Islam, convert the Turks, and let them found mighty Islamic dynasties to spread the true faith even further.

Indigenizing Islam to Pre-Islamic Uyghur Culture

A third form of indigenization within Uyghur Islamic legends is the recontextualizing of pre-Islamic, often Indigenous shamanic, cultural beliefs and practices into an Islamic context. Examples include the Muhammad Sharif legend indigenizing pre-Islamic ancestor worship into Uvaysi Sufi ghost communing, Satuq Bughra’s conversion via Khidr evoking pre-Islamic animal motifs, and the Yafith genealogy being used to justify in Islamic context shamanic rain stones.

Before moving onto these specific examples, however, let us first try to define what we mean by Indigenous shamanic religion. DeWeese notes that scholarship has failed to find a “suitable and comfortable terminology” for pre-

⁴⁰ DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*, 445.

Islamic Indigenous religion with “labels ranging from ‘primitive religion’ and ‘animism’ to ‘natural’ or ‘archaic’ or ‘tribal’ religion...each [however] conveys a set of assumptions or implications” often negative and derogatory.⁴¹ Despite this “labeling issue,” there was, in fact, an indigenous Uyghur religion. Unfortunately, the pre-Islamic Uyghur people, probably due to the all-encompassing impact of religion on their lives, never gave their religion a name. The religion of pre-Islamic Uyghurs undoubtedly included both “home-grown” and “imported” elements, the Uyghur people not being “sealed from” the rest of the world but regularly interacting with and adopting elements from such religions as Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Eastern Christianity, Manichaeism, and Judaism due to their central location between China and the Middle East.⁴² These “imported religions” all indigenized, finding their commonalities with whatever indigenous beliefs dominated the Uyghur region at the time and recontextualizing elements that could be carried over into their “religious orthodoxy.” Think of the shamanic sacred spaces recontextualized as Islamic *mazars* where saints spilled their blood as a primary example of this phenomenon. However, for the sake of convenience, this essay will continue looking at pre-Islamic Uyghur religion as shamanic, which are those religions found all over the world and involve magical systems most often interacted with

⁴¹ DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*, 27.

⁴² DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*, 28.

in the character of the local shaman: healer, rain-maker, community leader, and consulter of spirits.⁴³

One of the more notable aspects of Uyghur Islam, especially when compared to other local varieties of the religion, is their association with a Sufi Order or type of Sufi mystic that is termed “Uvaysi” or “Uvaysiya” and is associated with communing with ghosts. Uyghur historical figures ranging from Sultan Satuq Bughra Khan to Muhammad Sharif have been identified as Uvaysiya, with the term coming from Uvays al-Qarani a supposed companion of the Prophet Muhammad who communicated with the Prophet telepathically (having never met him in the flesh).⁴⁴ Jeff Eden notes that the term Uvaysi either refers to “a distinct and tangible Sufi order in East Turkistan...[or, as] it implies elsewhere in the Muslim world: it refers to a Sufi whose lineage is ‘spiritual’ rather than strictly genealogical, i.e. a master...who received the chain

⁴³ For further reading on Dr. Devin DeWeese’s views on the “shamanic” label for pre-Islamic Central Asian religion read Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 35.

⁴⁴ Julian Baldick, *Imaginary Muslims: The Uvaysi Sufis of Central Asia* (New York University Press, 1993), 1. There is actually a minor academic debate amongst scholars of Muhammad Sharif about whether he himself belonged to an Uvaysi Order. His actions seem to indicate that he was an Uvaysi mystic as he communicates with ghosts, though the tale itself never mentions his explicit belonging to an Uvaysi Order. For arguments in favor of Muhammad Sharif being in and even founding an Uvaysi Sufi Order see Julian Baldick, *Imaginary Muslims: The Uvaysi Sufis of Central Asia* (New York University Press, 1993), 32-33. For arguments against this assumption see Devin DeWeese, “The ‘Tadhkira-i Bughrā-khān’ and the ‘Uvaysi’ Sufis of Central Asia: Notes in Review of Imaginary Muslims,” review of *Imaginary Muslims: The Uvaysi Sufis of Central Asia*, by Julian Baldick, *Central Asiatic Journal* 40, no. 1 (1996): 104–5 and David Brophy and Rian Thum, “The Shrine of Muhammad Sharif and its Qing-era Patrons” in *The Life of Muhammad Sharif: A Central Asian Sufi Hagiography in Chaghatay* (Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2015), 62.

of transmission from the ‘spirit realm’ rather than through birth” such as Satuq Bughra Khan.⁴⁵ One of the important aspects of a Sufi is their teacher-student lineage, with any Sufi being able to trace back through their teacher and teacher’s teacher etcetera back to the Prophet Muhammad, who directly received esoteric mystical teachings from God. However, the Uvaysi distinguish themselves not through a direct master-student lineage, but one that often “skips generations” as even Sufis without living masters (dervishes) can learn from ancestral spirits long dead. In instances and localities in which there are no Sufi mystics to learn from, the Uvaysi tradition benefits as an Uvaysi can consult a spirit and learn mystical traditions without any need for a living, local master. An example of this is the case of Satuq Bughra Khan’s learning of Islam through the spirit Khidr initially or Muhammad Sharif through his consultations with the Uvaysi Sultan’s ghost.

While there is scant historical evidence for the aforementioned “distinct and tangible [Uvaysi] Sufi Order in East Turkistan” during this Islamization period, the Uvaysi phenomena’s subsequent popularity in the region is perfectly understandable under the idea that the Uvaysi may have been another indigenized element of Islam.

⁴⁵ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 97.

In Turkic linguist Kagan Arik's interviews with a surviving, neighboring, shamanic culture in East Turkestan (the Xinjiang Kazaks) his interviewee notes that:

We also revere our ancestors (*ata-baba*). I do not think that this is an influence (*ixpal*) from Islam. For example, we say 'ghosts/spirits' (*arvaq*), we venerate (*siyin-*) *arvaq*. If one appears in our dreams, we give a feast for it (*as*) in a Muslim manner (*Islam arqili*). This is an influence (*ixpal*) from Islam, but worshiping our ancestors is an element from shamanism.⁴⁶

Essentially, one of the shaman's tasks, as part of pre-Islamic ancestor worship, was to consult ancestral spirits and communicate with them; a task similar to that of the already existing Uvaysi mystics elsewhere in the Islamic world. Thus, the concept of Uvaysi mystics who speak with spirits, due to their similar roles to pre-Islamic Uyghur shamans, may have been an element Uyghurs and Islamic converters "carried over" into Uyghur Islam to indigenize the religion and make it more familiar to Uyghur shamanist converts.

Another indigenous theme found within Uyghur Islam, showing a continuity with pre-Islamic beliefs, is animal motifs which are shown in the Satuq Bughra Khan legend through the character of Khidr. Julian Baldick, a scholar on shamanistic religion practiced in the pre-Islamic world, notes that "The most dominant motif of the Turkic religious traditions...was the role of the animal as the guide of human beings. The early Turks were entirely dependent upon animals for food and clothing, and saw them as possessing

⁴⁶ Kagan Arik, "Shamanism, Culture and the Xinjiang Kazak: A Native Narrative of Identity" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1999), 40, ProQuest (9954809).

magical powers and wisdom.”⁴⁷ In the Satuq Bughra legend, the enigmatic Khidr appears to the young Sultan as a hare teaching him of Islam, the pre-ordained role he will play in the Islamization of his people, and having him recite the *shabada* with him fulfilling the indigenous role of the animal guide. Khidr fitting the archetype of the pre-Islamic animal guide may explain his popularity within other Uyghur tales for “Khi[d]r’s apparition to Satuq Bughra Khān...align[s] him with other well-known saints in the East Turkistani tradition (such as Muhammad Sharif) to whom Khi[d]r also reportedly appeared to offer guidance and prophecies.”⁴⁸ Much like the earlier mentioned Uvaysi tradition, it would appear that Khidr is another Islamic element that was found to mesh well with Indigenous Turkic beliefs and so served as a “transitory motif” within East Turkestan. Khidr is both fully Turkic in his role as animal guide and fully Islamic in his Quranic attestations, fulfilling the religious needs of both of these cultures and thus serving as an indigenizing element in the creation of the Indigenous Uyghur Islam.

Lastly, there is the pre-Islamic “holdout” of rain stones, which are still an important part of Uyghur magical systems even into the modern day. Within academia, magical systems are those religious systems in which certain rituals are done to produce or prevent some kind of specific result. In other words: do the specific ritual get the specific result. The rain stones are a magical system whose proper use will result in rain somewhere in the desert environment of East

⁴⁷ Baldick, *Imaginary Muslims*, 9.

⁴⁸ Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road*, 91.

Turkestan. These rain stones are believed to be an element from the pre-Islamic, shamanistic period.⁴⁹ For modern Islamic Uyghurs, one important aspect of the magical systems is that “the prayers of the rain-maker [are] undoubtedly Islamic in character” though they fit within this Indigenous, shamanistic magical system.⁵⁰ Despite these shamanistic activities “find[ing] no mention in the Qur’an or in the prophetic traditions (*hadith*)...these [shamanistic rituals, like the use of rain stones]...were considered to be proper components of the faith both by local *imams* and by the Uyghur state officials responsible for their monitoring.”⁵¹ This general acceptance of the pre-Islamic ritual amongst devout Uyghur Muslims is due to the Islamization of this rain-making ritual. Rain-making stones were given an Islamic context much like ancestor worship through the Uvaysi and animal guides through Khidr were given their own Islamic contexts.

⁴⁹ Arik, “Shamanism, Culture and the Xinjiang Kazak,” 40.

⁵⁰ Chris Hann and Ildikó Bellér-Hann, “Magic, Science, and Religion in Eastern Xinjiang,” in *Kashgar Revisited: Uyghur Studies in Memory of Ambassador Gunnar Jarring*, ed. Ildikó Bellér-Hann, Birgit N. Schlyter, and Jun Sugawara, (Brill Academic Publishers, 2017), 257.

⁵¹ Hann and Bellér-Hann, “Magic, Science, and Religion in Eastern Xinjiang,” 263.

In the earlier cited Yafith legend by Gardizi, there is a passage which states:

Nuh...t[ought] Yafith a Name of His [God], which when he called upon Him by it, rain would at once come, and the Lord, Almighty and Glorious, at once hearkened unto that prayer and so taught Yafith. When Yafith learned that Name, he wrote it on a stone which he suspended about his neck out of precaution, lest he should forget it. Thereafter, whenever he craved for rain, it would rain. Moreover, if he were to touch that stone to water and give that water to a sick person, that person would become better. That stone his descendants continued to hold as their inheritance... This is why when the Turks want rain they fashion themselves a special stone.⁵²

Through this Yafith legend Islamic converters essentially recontextualized healing shamans as successors of the Quranic Yafith and therefore fully Islamic. Much like how shamanic ancestor worship and ghost consultation were folded into the pre-existing and Islamic Uvaysi tradition, and shamanic animal guides were upkept with Islamic figures like Khidr, so too were the roles of shamans and their rain stones maintained and recontextualized as fully Islamic in the indigenous Islamic faith. By Islamizing Uyghur indigenous practices like the above, the Uyghur convert was able to take that final step to conversion more readily, as they did not have to turn their back on their ancestors or traditions.

Conclusion: Uyghur Islam Today

This indigenous, Uyghur form of Islam would persist for a millennium after Satuq's conversion and Islamization in the 10th century, continuing into the modern day. However, its future in the modern world is debated by

⁵² Levi and Sela, *Islamic Central Asia*, 60–61.

academics, the Chinese state, and among the Uyghurs themselves. Islamic scholar Paula Schrode notes that:

Local Islam among the Uyghur people in Xinjiang, PRC as well as among other Muslim peoples in Central Asia has often been discussed either as something different from an assumed ‘real,’ ‘pure’ or ‘official’ Islam, or as a distinct religious system in its own right. Such approaches, however, sometimes lose sight of the fact that the question of what ‘Uyghur Islam’ is supposed to be is negotiated among Uyghurs themselves no less vigorously. Traditional practices such as ritual healing and saint veneration are highly contested, yet widely adhered to in Uyghur society.⁵³

In the globalized world of today, Uyghurs are not bound to the six cities of East Turkestan and the indigenous form of Islam that ties itself to that land, people, and culture. They’ve gone abroad, “Uyghur merchants travelling to countries with strong Islamic-fundamentalist movements like Pakistan, wealthy Uyghurs who return from Saudi Arabia as *hajjīs*, young men receiving a religious education in madrasas abroad,” and have interacted with “Islamic fundamentalists, who distinguish between ‘true’ and ‘nominal’ Muslims.”⁵⁴ Questions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy emerged with practices long established in East Turkestan coming into question. Is there a Quranic basis for speaking with ghosts? Is there a legitimate hadith that attests to Muhammad’s love for the Turks? What about the *mazars* and their miraculous healing properties? Is this idolatrous? This essay has argued that there are plenty of

⁵³ Schrode, “Dynamics of Heterodoxy and Orthodoxy in Uyghur Religious Practice,” 394.

⁵⁴ Schrode, “Dynamics of Heterodoxy and Orthodoxy in Uyghur Religious Practice,” 413, 404.

legitimate, Islamic bases for many of these “Uyghur exclusive” practices. But the fact that these aspects are still debated amongst Muslims and Uyghurs all over the world perhaps indicates this form of real, lived Islam is still very much alive and should be kept out of the hands of academics. DeWeese has stated that to limit what defines Islam, what is “true” and what is “original,” “was never the business of the majority of self-defined Muslims over centuries, or even most medieval jurists, and it is certainly not the business of scholars who would analyse and interpret Muslim religious life historically or at present” and so we will leave it at that.⁵⁵

Unfortunately, as all modern discussions on the Uyghur people and their culture inevitably seem to lead, we cannot conclude this essay without a brief discussion of another group that very much intervenes in indigenous Islamic practice in East Turkestan: the Chinese state. The Communist Party of China is performing a campaign of cultural genocide against the Uyghurs in a bid to permanently put down any nationalist movements in the region that would advocate independence. In fact, one of the scholars cited in this paper, Uyghur ethnologist Rahile Dawut, has been imprisoned as part of this campaign to suppress Uyghur culture and identity. As part of this cultural genocide, the CCP has stepped in to define what is “truly Muslim” (according to them, it is *not* the Indigenous Uyghur Islam this essay discussed) and has even destroyed

⁵⁵ Devin DeWeese, “Islam and the Legacy of Sovietology: A Review Essay on Yaacov Ro’i’s *Islam in the Soviet Union*,” review of *Islam in the Soviet Union*, by Yaacov Ro’i, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 13, no. 3 (2002): 309–10.

Indigenous aspects of the religion, such as the aforementioned *mazars*. Schrode discusses “legal spheres of Islam, albeit under severe control, in which accredited religious leaders are allowed to operate. Illegal mosques and religious schools, in contrast, are cracked down on. Activities of other types of religious specialists, like the so-called shamans, are likewise illegal” under the firm rule of the Communist Party; perhaps an extension of their Marxist view on “evolving religion” in which “feudal, superstitious remnants” (i.e., shamanism) are purged.⁵⁶

The CCP’s efforts to define what “true Islam” is, are readily apparent in the Communist Party’s preferential treatment of the more “culturally Chinese” Hui Muslims as compared to the Uyghurs. These Hui Muslims are another indigenized form of Islam (even having their own foundational narrative called “How, Once Upon a Time, the Emperor of China Became a Muslim”), although due to their “Indigenous elements” being Chinese rather than, say, Turkic, the Chinese state treats them in a relatively hands-off manner.⁵⁷ China “tend[s] to conflate ethnic and religious identities with separatism” although “the successful and ongoing political sinicization of Hui Muslims” has

⁵⁶ Schrode, “Dynamics of Heterodoxy and Orthodoxy in Uyghur Religious Practice,” 408.

⁵⁷ Musa Sairami, *The Tarikh-i Hamidi: A Late-Qing Uyghur History*, trans. Eric Schluessel (Columbia University Press, 2023), 75-79. Within the narrative a Tang Emperor of China who was a contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad was converted to Islam by the Prophet through a dream. Unfortunately for the Hui, this Emperor eventually died and was succeeded by further Emperors who forgot the true Islamic faith leaving the Hui as a remnant of a briefly Muslim China.

seemingly worked to keep the Chinese state mostly focused on the Uyghurs and other Islamic ethnic minorities in East Turkestan.⁵⁸ China uses the debates around the Indigenous aspects of Uyghur Islam to “justif[y] cracking down on Islam among Uyghurs...Many accus[ing] Uyghurs of being only marginally Muslim, abstaining from alcohol, cigarettes, or Chinese holidays not on the grounds of religion, but really doing so to propagate a deviant culture.”⁵⁹ In justifying their crackdown on Uyghur indigenous Islam, China need not worry about their diplomatic relationships with other Muslim countries deteriorating. “We are not cracking down on Islam,” China may say, “we are cracking down on Uyghur indigenous elements who advocate independence that just happen to be Muslims.”

Perhaps most relevant to this essay is the CCP’s campaign of *mazar* destruction, which, as we have established, would be both an attack on Uyghur cultural architecture and on the very sacredness of the land of East Turkestan itself. Historian Rian Thum has noted how in the two-year period of 2016 and 2017, “...the Chinese state has destroyed and desecrated Uyghur historical and holy places at a scale unprecedented in the history of Eastern Turkistan,” targeting in particular the *mazars* due to their indigenous and potently sacred nature.⁶⁰ The Chinese state has expended great effort into this destruction. To

⁵⁸ Luke A. Adams, “China’s Good Muslims: The Hui” (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2018), iii, ProQuest (10745355).

⁵⁹ Adams, “China’s Good Muslims,” 11.

⁶⁰ Thum, “The Spatial Cleansing of Xinjiang,” 49.

destroy the famous Ordam Padishah *mazar* (where Sultan Satuq's grandson Ali Arslan Khan is buried), they drove bulldozers 14 kilometers over the soft, sandy desert dunes, which is no easy task.⁶¹ The CCP very much knows what they are doing, attacking cultural landmarks and sacred spaces that connect the Uyghurs to the land of East Turkestan in a larger campaign to “reconfigure Uyghur geography, and eradicate the spatial underpinnings of Uyghur culture...[as] part of a larger effort to disconnect Uyghurs' experiences and identities from the landscape” as mosques, houses, cultural furniture like *supas*, and Kashgar's old city alike are razed under CCP bulldozers.⁶²

For over a millennium Uyghur Islam has indigenized the Arabian religion to better familiarize itself with the Uyghurs' land, people, and pre-existing cultural practices through legends and tombs such as those of Satuq Bughra Khan and Muhammad Sharif. Now, due to the actions of an authoritarian and atheist government, these Indigenous elements are being attacked at an unprecedented level. There is one measure of hope, however in this dark time. As mentioned earlier, there is the idea amongst Uyghurs that spaces themselves are sacred, independent of the structures built upon them. *Tazkiras*, such as the legends of Satuq Bughra Khan and Muhamad Sharif, depict *mazars* “as an enduring point of significance on the landscape, independent of human-made structures. It can even be argued that the

⁶¹ Thum, “The Spatial Cleansing of Xinjiang,” 51–52.

⁶² Thum, “The Spatial Cleansing of Xinjiang,” 55.

sacredness of the place preceded the saint's arrival on the spot."⁶³ What this means is that, perhaps one day, after the cultural genocide is over, a "new Muhammad Sharif" will arise, perhaps guided by the Sultan Satuq or one of their many other Uyghur ancestors, and rediscover these forgotten and destroyed shrines to once again tie the Uyghur people to their indigenous, sacred land of East Turkestan.

⁶³ Thum, "The Spatial Cleansing of Xinjiang," 60–61.

The WUPPIES Strike Back: Understanding the Runaway Successes of Washington's Professional-Class Anti-Freeway Civic Organizations

BECKETT FORDAHL

Introduction

“Help preserve your home and your neighborhood from blight by freeway,” a flyer boldly proclaimed to upper-middle-class homeowners in 1960s Northwest Washington, D.C. With these simple eleven words, a professional-class anti-freeway civic organization called the Northwest Committee on Transportation Planning (NCTP) galvanized Northwest D.C. neighborhoods into resisting the combined might of the federal government, urban planners, and automotive lobbyists. On the flyer’s margins, the NCTP juxtaposed light-hearted cartoons of cars with terrifying predictions of the proposed freeway’s impact on the local community. The flyer’s second page outlined the crisis, arguing that if the proposed freeway were built, “a good neighborhood cannot survive.” On the next page, the NCTP presented its cunning solution to the advancing asphalt: organizing neighborhoods condemned to death by freeways to rally against the roads and champion rail transit for a better future. As readers turned the page, they were met with a caveat: “for these objectives, [the NCTP needs] MORE MEMBERS... MORE FUNDS.” The NCTP continued by instructing readers with disposable income to join the noble crusade against this blighting freeway by financially supporting the group and attending its meetings. The flyer concluded with a form to enroll for recurring donations and to sign

up for additional mailings from the NCTP.¹ A small army of dedicated lawyers, politicians, and civil servants distributed fearmongering, occasionally verbose, strategically focused flyers like this one across D.C. These “WUPPIES,” a portmanteau of Washingtonian and yuppie, stopped encroaching highways and built the Metrorail system.

Like any great project, the halting of the freeways and creation of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) was not inevitable. Several scholars have documented the Herculean exertions undertaken to turn Metrorail into reality. “STOP THE ROAD,” an article by transit historian Raymond Mohl, explores the extensive organizational efforts of communities nationwide to halt plans to demolish their neighborhoods in the 1950s and 1960s. Mohl asserts that community cooperation and successful public relations battles spurred the predominantly minority neighborhoods targeted by freeways to band together forcefully enough to resist the governments, corporations, and planners that sought to replace their homes with roads.²

Historian Zachary Schrag best tells WMATA’s story in *The Great Society Subway*, which recounts Washington’s mass transit history as a decades-long battle between highway builders and rail transportation advocates.³ Schrag

¹ Flyer Distributed by NCTP, 1960, MS2066, box 12, folder NW Committee for Transportation Planning 1960, Peter S. Craig Papers, Special Collections Research Center, George Washington University (hereafter NCTP Flyer, Craig Papers).

² Raymond A. Mohl, “STOP THE ROAD: Freeway Revolts in American Cities,” *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 5 (2004): 674–706.

³ Zachary M. Schrag, *The Great Society Subway: A History of the Washington Metro* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

spends the majority of his monograph discussing the work that went into planning, financing, constructing, and operating Metro, a story that involves thousands of passionate individuals who toiled ceaselessly in the transit network's name. Schrag's work frequently discusses anti-freeway civic organizations that not only halted planned roads but also culminated in the creation of WMATA and the Metrorail system that Washington enjoys today. Although numerous scholars discuss these WUPPIE organizations, no work has sufficiently covered their operational-level activities in detail, a critical gap in scholarship that prevents a complete understanding of their accomplishments.

Peter S. Craig, the leader of the NCTP and several other neighborhood organizations, stands out not only for his boldness and impact but also for epitomizing the WUPPIE. This intelligent and well-spoken lawyer would have spent a life removed from freeway planning were it not for a doorknocker calling him to sign a petition against a proposed Northwest Freeway that would have bulldozed his Cleveland Park home, replacing it with a flow of hundreds of thousands of cars each day.⁴ When Craig learned this, he immediately began amassing information, organizing, and finding politicians to lobby against the freeway, demonstrating his immense force of will and adeptness at navigating Washington's political landscape.

⁴ "The History of the Mass Transportation Survey by Darin Stolzenbach," 1983, MS2034, box 15, folder 1, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority: Metro History Project Collection, Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The George Washington University, Washington, D.C. (hereafter Metro History Project Collection).

Craig was but one of many crucial cogs in the machines that were the NCTP and similar civic organizations that worked with overwhelming force to shift D.C.'s transportation future away from reliance on automobiles and toward rail. These groups achieved this by repeatedly conducting the same multi-step process: First, collecting information; next, utilizing that knowledge to cultivate a highly organized opposition; and ultimately, directing collective action toward harnessing the most potent resources of their class in support of their objectives, notably their political connections, financial base, and legal expertise. By employing these methods with unique effectiveness, the affluent, legally minded, and politically connected WUPPIE organizations efficiently defeated Washington's planned roads even as other cities succumbed to pressures from urban planners driven by freeway-incentivizing legal codes.⁵ The Northwest Freeway, the Three Sisters Bridge, the Glover-Archbold Parkway, and numerous other proposed roads that would have destroyed communities and blighted Washington for decades were never built due to WUPPIE anti-freeway civic groups' political and organizational work.⁶

In researching the causes of the WUPPIES' triumph over the freeways, this piece pays extensive attention to their groups' operational documents. The primary collection used for this research was the extensive Peter S. Craig Papers. The George Washington University compiled the Peter S. Craig Papers

⁵ Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, Pub. L. No. 103-331, 70 Stat. 378.

⁶ Selected index cards of roads and infrastructure projects highlighting the NCTP's transportation planning victories, MS2066, box 4, folders 1 and 2, Craig Papers.

from the American Civic Association/American Planning and Civic Association collections, as well as Craig's posthumous donations. Craig's papers include documents related to the NCTP, other civic organizations in which he participated, and numerous miscellaneous materials that tell the story of the freeway fight. Alongside this collection, the online newspaper archives of *The Washington Post* and *Star* were instrumental in understanding the day-to-day developments in the D.C. freeway fight. The relative impact of these organizations' efforts was assessed by analyzing correspondence from civic organizations, published documents, and newspapers reporting on the developing fight over freeway-rail transportation. Although past scholars, especially Schrag, have employed these sources, the tactical-level political, organizational, and fundraising techniques of these organizations remain underexplored. The specific methods, strategies, and practices used by professional-class civic organizations are analyzed in these documents, rather than the overarching transportation narrative they convey.

This analysis examines the freeway fight through the lens of the various techniques employed by professional-class anti-freeway civic organizations, ultimately seeking to understand why these groups succeeded in opposing the roads. Politicking is the first technique explored, where sources such as correspondence between civic organization leaders and senators, representatives, and other politicians serve as a window into the behind-the-scenes conversations necessary to create an anti-freeway coalition. Additionally, the testimony of members of neighborhood organizations before Congress

demonstrates these groups' ability to present a coherent, politically palatable message that appealed to federal leaders and local Washingtonians alike. Next, organizational techniques are analyzed, with particular attention to how civic organizations grew their membership through anti-freeway fearmongering in advertisements. Alongside their expansion, anti-freeway civic organizations had to organize their members to fight the roads effectively, and in doing so, required meticulously planned organizational structures. Neighborhood civic organizations' plans for combating the freeways demonstrate their political and managerial talents. In organizational documents, the financial costs of the freeway fight were always considered, as vast sums of money were required to support the political and organizational aspects. The freeway fighters sent barrages of fundraising flyers, donation requests, and calls for membership dues across Northwest D.C., underscoring the pivotal role financing played in effectively combating the freeways. WUPPIE anti-freeway neighborhood organizations blocked the roads due to their unique political and organizational talent.

Political Skill

WUPPIES' extensive political skills enabled them to navigate complex and intentionally slow federal and local power structures, deftly garnering the support of stakeholders. Initially, the momentum from President Dwight Eisenhower's Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 and decades of gradual American movement toward automobiles rather than public transportation

seemed insurmountable. However, WUPPIES' connections from their careers in law, lobbying, and politics allowed them to communicate with Washington in its language, effectively bypassing the political barriers that typically hindered other, less well-to-do freeway fighters. These freeway fighters built relationships with federal and local leaders and their staff, allowing them to easily communicate their message and flip votes away from the highways and toward mass transit methods. Before the WUPPIES' reversal of the roads' momentum, the massive federal funding percentages toward freeway construction promised by the Eisenhower Administration set off a building frenzy that seemed impossible to reverse. The Federal-Aid Highway Act's commitment of billions of federal dollars for states to construct freeways spurred the erection of vast road networks nationwide, razing thousands of homes in urban centers.⁷ Suburban commuters, tired of traffic and apathetic to the detriments of urban freeways, clamored for new roads in the nation's capital, putting increased momentum behind proposed freeways.⁸

To stop the roads, civic organizations had to blunt the asphalt-tipped spear thrust through the heart of communities. The threat of bulldozers leveling their homes encouraged swift and impactful action, spurring the collection of

⁷ Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove, *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 360.

⁸ Alfred Alibrando, "The Ten Worst Jams: Traffic Clogged Wisconsin Avenue Even in 1755," *Sunday Star*, July 5, 1959.

droves of information on planned freeways to mount an informed resistance.⁹ Well-connected freeway fighters secured meetings with key stakeholders in Washington's urban planning community, gaining valuable information on what lay in store for their homes. From these initial meetings, WUPPIES formed alliances that would prove essential in influencing policymakers to oppose roads and support a rail rapid transit alternative. For the time being, though, the first retaliatory shots against the freeways came in the form of extensive internal memoranda and reports explaining exactly how these roads would destroy neighborhoods.¹⁰

After compiling detailed information, freeway fighters worked to make further inroads into federal and local political networks to guide stakeholders away from freeways and toward rail transportation solutions. Documents that outlined why proposed freeways were so detrimental to urban life made their way into the hands of potential allies at the local and federal levels.¹¹ These documents explained the disastrous consequences of freeway construction in clear terms, intended to scare road opponents into action. WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations' executives, like Peter Craig, Edward Burling Jr., and David Sanders Clark, mailed numerous reports to political leaders, hoping to

⁹ "Facts and Analyses Required on Northwest Freeway," MS2066, box 12, NW Committee for Transportation Planning 1960 folder, Craig Papers.

¹⁰ Report on Location of Interstate Route 70-S, June 1, 1960, MS2066, box 21, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 2, Craig Papers.

¹¹ "Freeway Foe Compiles 46-Page Protest Data," *Washington Post*, March 3, 1960.

sour their opinion of the roads. In a letter addressed to D.C. Mayor Walter Washington, Sanders Clark explained the dangers of air pollution emanating from highways, appealing to the mayor's known soft spot for environmental issues.¹² Attached to this letter was a report produced by the Committee of 100 on the Federal City (C 100 FC), another anti-freeway civic organization, that detailed the potential for highways to contaminate Washington's air. This report was concise, contained extensive underlining to highlight key points, and flattered Mayor Washington extensively. The C 100 FC tailored this report to the mayor's concerns, allowing him to easily digest it and decide to assist the freeway opponents.¹³ By communicating with potential political allies about where they might agree, freeway fighters gradually accumulated a stockpile of supporters eager to oppose planned roads.

D.C.'s anti-highway civic organizations' leaders communicated respectfully with political stakeholders who had the power to stop the freeways, addressing them in official and well-produced language through carefully crafted documents on smart letterhead. Additionally, many civic organizations' executives were known figures to politicians and the public due to their adjacent careers in law, lobbying, and politics, further comforting the letter's recipients.¹⁴

¹² Kirk Scharfenberg, "Mayor Asks Clean Air Plan," *Washington Post*, April 17, 1973.

¹³ David Sanders Clark to Mayor Walter, Washington December 22, 1967, MS2066, box 19, folder D.C. Transportation Planning Reports 1968 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

¹⁴ "Mr. Redeveloper," *Evening Star*, March 17, 1960; "Freeway Need is Emphasized," *Washington Post*, April 1, 1960.

Freeway opponents forwarded copies of letters bound to politicians to other civic organizers to coordinate lobbying efforts and to compare notes on best practices for convincing politicians. In one of these forwarded copies sent by Burling to Craig in the summer of 1960, the latter explained how he typed these letters on the Citizens' Advisory Council's (CAC's) official letterhead. The CAC, an organization similar to the NCTP and C 100 FC, hoped to use its organizational weight to convince politicians that the body politic of Washington opposed their freeway plans. To Craig, Burling stated that he produced these documents on "official [CAC] stationery to give it a little more weight," and that the report attached to the particular letter was "An excellent job – most impressive and... convincing."¹⁵ Tactics like mailing with official letterhead made the politicians in charge of urban planning more comfortable with the freeway fighter's message. By sending these reports on official letterhead to political leaders who traveled in similar professional circles, WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations efficiently communicated their message to Washington's political elite.

In addition to their effective campaign to connect and ally with federal leaders, WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations reached out to politicians' staff to enlist them in road opposition through policymaking. The NCTP, in particular, documented meetings with staffers via memoranda that sought to

¹⁵ "Memorandum to Pete Craig" and attached letter to Hon. Robert E. McLaughlin from Edward Burling, Jr., MS2066, box 21, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 2, Craig Papers.

structure their efforts, demonstrating their understanding of staffers' influence on the political process and potential to become future stakeholders themselves.¹⁶ In one such memo, Craig reported that an NCTP member, Mrs. Luchs, overcame a Senate staffer's initial opposition to stopping a proposed freeway, gradually winning him over through detailed and fact-based arguments. Senate staffers often served as powerbrokers between lobbyists and politicians, meaning that when a freeway fighter succeeded in whipping a staffer against the roads, their bosses often followed. Additionally, this meeting could only have occurred via WUPPIES' political connections and knowledge of the Capitol Hill ecosystem, demonstrating the political efficacy of these groups at targeting staffers for anti-road arguments. In another memo, Craig regaled the NCTP of his conversation with a Senate staffer named Henry Bain, with whom Craig had a productive working relationship. Craig happily reported that Bain would furnish five copies of a new bill, "even if public distribution were held up," along with a "section-by-section summary of the bill with extended discussion of the reasons for ... amendments." In his discussion on the conversation with Bain, Craig demonstrated the benefits of friendships on Capitol Hill, notably private access to the legislative process that gave the civic organizations with these connections a leg up on their opponents.¹⁷ These meetings rapidly bore

¹⁶ "Quiet Professional Succeeds to Head of Planning Group," *Washington Post*, November 5, 1965. This article documents the meteoric rise of a former staffer at the National Capital Planning Commission. from a low-level technician to the Commission's Director, demonstrating staff not only influence policy but can rise to position where they decide it.

¹⁷ June 15, 1960, memo on Mrs. Luchs meeting with Mr. Juhnke, an assistant to Senator Cass, MS2066 box 21, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 2, Craig Papers; June

fruit via proposed legislation to freeze freeway construction and pivot funding to rail transit.¹⁸ The freeway fight anchored itself securely to political allies by making inroads with politicians and their staff, constructing a formidable coalition against the roads.

Alongside connecting to federal-level politicians and their staff, the anti-freeway civic organizations extensively courted local-level decision-makers to their cause. Outside of D.C., county-level state leaders held the keys to the region's transit future and were a prime target for WUPPIE freeway fighters. The diplomatic skills that anti-freeway civic organizations' leaders possessed allowed them to dissuade Maryland's leaders from planning roads despite their initial interest in the projects.¹⁹ For decades, fights between the suburban, commuter-oriented Marylanders and the urban and local-focused Washingtonians led to significant delays in transportation planning.²⁰ Fundamentally differing views on how land should be utilized created opportunities for WUPPIES to drive a wedge between interest groups and to create an environment more conducive to stopping the roads and building rail rapid transit. An internal planning document outlines the major viewpoints of

15, 1960, memo on Henry Bain's conversation with Peter Craig, MS2066 box 21, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 2, Craig Papers.

¹⁸ Jack Eisen, "Area Rapid Transit Bill Sets Test in NW of Transit Versus Auto: Measure Due for Action Today Calls on Decision on Freeways," *Washington Post*, June 21, 1960.

¹⁹ NCTP Memo on Meeting with Maryland Leaders, April 4, 1960, MS2066, box 12, NW Committee for Transportation Planning 1960 folder, Craig Papers.

²⁰ Chalmers M. Roberts, "Road Planners at Loggerheads Over Rock Creek Park Freeway," *Washington Post*, March 6, 1950.

each political group involved in planning the Northwest Freeway, demonstrating the NCTP's awareness of potential opportunities to gain new allies.²¹ Civic organizations' cognizance of the local political situation aided in making valuable friends, such as a letter to Craig from the Democratic Central Committee of D.C. that thanked him for his "very excellent statement to the Board of Commissioners."²² Political planning and concerted lobbying efforts conducted by anti-freeway civic organizations led to powerful partnerships at the local level and shifted planning momentum away from roads and toward rail.

When communicating with local stakeholders, anti-freeway civic organizations often made small, friendly gestures to signal their willingness to work alongside existing power structures to halt the roads, alleviating future allies' fears of radicalism that bedeviled other freeway opponents. This strategy is best illustrated in a letter Craig sent to D.C.'s Democratic engineer commissioner, where he revealed extensive information on a planned hearing that was immensely useful to the commissioner. In this letter, Craig employed phrases like "you may be interested in knowing" and "if I can be of any assistance to you," a clear demonstration of the civic organization's willingness

²¹ "Positions on Northwest Freeway," September 12, 1961, MS2066, box 12, folder Northwest Committee for Transportation Planning - 1961, Craig Papers.

²² Democratic National Committee of D.C. to Peter Craig December 13, 1961, MS2066, box 21, folder NW Committee 1961 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

to cooperate with civic leaders.²³ By making inroads with these local leaders and harnessing the anger of special interests, such as school boards and planning groups, the civic organizations opened a new front against the freeways. After the civic organizations converted an interest group to their cause, they often remained steadfast opponents of planned highways. Converted freeway opponents' loyalty is best seen in the years-long opposition of anti-road business leaders to renewed calls for freeway construction.²⁴ Unlike disgruntled citizens in community meetings shouting them down or furious homeowners protesting in the streets, these neatly produced and respectful messages sent by fellow men of letters caught the attention and appealed to the sensibilities of Washington's stakeholders.

Alongside gaining political allies at the federal and local level, WUPPIES testified before political bodies to influence transportation policymaking and planning. Stake-holding political organizations held hearings on transportation planning throughout D.C.'s history, and the events were often publicized, gathering large audiences of concerned citizens to be swayed by those who gave testimony.²⁵ Anti-freeway civic organization's leaders were frequent witnesses at hearings, seeing them as excellent venues to spread their gospel. Freeway fighters with legal experience, such as Craig and Sydney Cone,

²³ Peter S. Craig to Brig. General A. C. Welling, June 13, 1960, box 12, NW Committee for Transportation Planning 1960 folder, Craig Papers.

²⁴ "Business Units Fear Second Freeway War," *Washington Post*, June 2, 1964.

²⁵ "70 Slated to Give Views on Freeway," *Washington Post*, February 4, 1965.

delivered sermonical speeches denouncing the evils of the freeways and singing the praises of a rail-based transit future for Washington. At one hearing, Craig warned the Board of District Commissioners that they were “sitting on a powder keg that is about to blow up” and that the citizens of D.C. had “virtually unanimous resentment” toward the freeways.²⁶ At a hearing before the Senate Committee on Banking and Currency, Cone warned senators that the freeways would “hideously and needlessly desecrate the nation’s capital.”²⁷ Unlike the calm language anti-freeway leaders used in communicating with political leaders in letters and private meetings, public hearings provided an opportunity to flex their sharper rhetorical muscles, strengthened by years in the courtroom. The legally trained WUPPIES sent to hearings delivered persuasive testimony that whipped federal and local leaders against the roads.

Anti-freeway civic organizations’ maneuvering in private correspondence, personal meetings, and public hearings set the stage for their members experienced in policymaking to influence federal legislation. Throughout the freeway fight, several key pieces of legislation decided numerous neighborhoods’ fate, with multiple attempts to freeze and unfreeze freeway construction and fund and defund rail rapid transit.²⁸ Throughout this

²⁶ Peter Craig, “Statement to the Board of District Commissioners,” November 22, 1961, MS2066, box 21, folder NW Committee 1961 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

²⁷ Statement before the Senate Committee on Banking and Commerce of Sydney M. Cone III March 20, 1961, MS2066, box 21, folder NW Committee 1961 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

²⁸ Jack Eisen, “Rail Rapid Transit Bill Approved By Committee: Senator’s Endorse Partial Thaw on Northwest Freeway ‘Freeze,’ First Hurdle Cleared, 99-Mile System Asked,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 1961; “Views Asked on Freeway Thaw in

legislative tug-of-war, WUPPIE freeway fighters put considerable pressure on legislators to add text to bills that opposed the roads and, later, favored a rail rapid transit system. One bill, introduced in the Senate during the 86th Congress as S. 3193, which related to congressional funding of freeway construction, was extensively scrutinized and edited by the NCTP. In a document of proposed edits, the NCTP criticized paragraphs as “superfluous” and suggested many “should be deleted” lest they “be misconstrued as an implied endorsement of the ... the ‘Transportation Plan - National Capital Region.’”²⁹ A staffer sent the text of another bill, related to Congressional approval of interstate highway routes, to Sydney Cone, who thanked the staffer for “forwarding the proposed bill” to him, an exchange that showed the benefits that came with the inroads the anti-freeway civic organizations made on the Hill. Cone suggested several alterations in his reply to this staffer, demonstrating the immense influence these politically minded freeway fighters wielded.³⁰ By being in a position to make such confident and thorough edits and even going so far as to suggest what a senator should want in his own bill, anti-freeway civic organizations demonstrated their ability to influence policy at the federal level.

NW,” *Washington Post*, 21 December, 1963; Paul Delaney, “D.C. Plans Plea on Freeways: Will Seek to Ease Freeze by Courts,” *Evening Star*, February 12, 1968.

²⁹ Comments and Proposed Amends to S. 3193 from NCTP, MS2066, box 20, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

³⁰ Sydney M. Cone III to John George Fain, June 3, 1960, box 21, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 2, Craig Papers.

Amid their efforts to build a coalition to overcome pro-road interests at the local and federal levels, WUPPIE freeway fighters often encountered tense political situations, where their backgrounds proved vital in avoiding disastrous conflicts with elites. Pro-road factions presented their plans as proven, common-sense solutions to congestion, language that convinced some politicians to pursue freeway construction.³¹ Often, those who sat on the local committees with the power to prevent the freeways held pro-road convictions and voted in favor of new projects, something the non-professional-class anti-freeway groups relied on demonstrations to prevent.³² Although WUPPIE anti-freeway groups, like the NCTP and C 100 FC, succeeded in large part through partnerships with protest groups from working-class communities and universities, the NCTP's unique political savvy and connections turned pro-road politicians into new allies.

The most salient example of this political savvy comes from Craig, who, in three letters, successfully converted an offended pro-freeway local leader into a cooperative ally. On June 18th, 1964, Craig received a letter from Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., the Chairman of the Democratic Central Committee of the District of Columbia, that scolded the freeway fighter for "insulting letters" he had received from the NCTP. On the same day, Craig replied in a humble letter,

³¹ "Rush-Hour Parkways," *Evening Star*, September 23, 1961. Articles published like this one in the *Star* and other newspapers made compelling arguments for freeways and swayed the public and political leaders toward their construction.

³² Lee Flor, "D.C. Freeway Foes Picket, Jam Hearing," *Evening Star*, September 15, 1966.

reminding Chairman Rauh that he simply wanted to act “for D.C. residents in support of a truly balanced transportation system.” Craig insisted that the freeway fighters meant no offense to the Chairman before reminding him that freeway costs for D.C. had grown “at the rate of \$50-\$100 million annually.” He also informed the Chairman that, although still expensive, a rail rapid transit system would cost the District significantly less to maintain than a freeway once it was built. A week later, Chairman Rauh responded in a brief letter that he and his colleagues were “similarly high-minded and determined to be helpful on this problem.”³³ This short exchange epitomizes how the WUPPIES’ political savvy uniquely situated them to build a coalition against the roads. Through numerous interactions fueled by the special talents of anti-freeway WUPPIES, such as the one between Craig and Chairman Rauh, the alliance against the roads grew rapidly and gained momentum, ultimately leading to the development of Metrorail.

The uniquely potent political skills possessed by WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations allowed these groups to successfully combat the roads, build a political coalition, and move Washington toward rail-based rapid transit. From extensive fact-finding missions, informative and convincing memos were compiled in the language of Washington’s elite who controlled the city’s transit future. The socioeconomic status and career histories of these civic

³³ Joseph L. Rauh, Jr. to Peter Craig June 18, 1964, MS2066, box 20, folder NW Committee 1964 Vol. 1, Craig Papers; Peter Craig to Joseph L. Rauh, Jr. June 18, 1964, MS2066, box 20, folder NW Committee 1964 Vol. 1, Craig Papers; Joseph L. Rauh, Jr. to Peter Craig June 25, 1964, MS2066, box 20, folder NW Committee 1964 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

organizations' members enabled them to effectively communicate the dangers posed by the freeways to these stakeholders. Behind closed doors, civic organizations established durable working relationships with policymakers and their staff, which became the mortar that held the anti-freeway coalition together. Additionally, the political awareness of WUPPIE civic organizations' leaders allowed them to court allies at the federal and local levels to oppose the roads. In public hearings, the political adeptness and legal training of civic organizations' representatives became evident as they articulately and passionately made the case against more roads and for alternative transportation solutions. The result of these fact-finding missions, partnerships, and public displays of opposition to the freeways was the ability to influence the legislation and law that ultimately determined the fate of D.C. transit.³⁴ When presented with tense situations, the political savvy of freeway fighters converted foes into friends. WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations possessed special political talents that allowed them to successfully halt the roads and divert D.C. toward a better transportation future.

Organizational Talent

Alongside political acumen, WUPPIE anti-freeway civic groups' organizational skills allowed them to efficiently muster resistance against the

³⁴ Martin Well, "2,349 Foes of Bridge Call for Referendum," *Washington Post*, October 28, 1969. This article mentions that two Supreme Court justices joined in the Three Sisters Bridge fight, a major campaign of the professional-class anti-freeway civic organizations, a clear indicator of these groups' elite influence.

advancing roads. Although many of the sources analyzed in this section came from the NCTP's records, the leadership overlap between anti-freeway civic organizations means they employed similar tactics. To succeed against the well-financed and politically connected pro-road faction, the freeway fighters had to amass equal economic might.³⁵ Effective fundraising and financial management proved vital to successfully stopping the roads, considering the extensive costs of combating the freeway lobby. Beyond financing, the managerial strategies acquired through years of white-collar experience significantly contributed to white-collar freeway fighters' ability to mobilize their forces against the roads. The internal organization of the NCTP and the substantial cooperation between anti-freeway civic organizations projected these groups' power beyond what other freeway fighters could hope to achieve. The NCTP and other civic organization leaders' strategic talents proved essential in preventing the construction of roads and shifting public and elite opinion toward rail-based rapid transit, as seen in the rapid growth of their coalition through effective outreach. The organizational talents of the NCTP and other WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations distinguish them from other road opponents, explaining these groups' considerable contributions to shaping D.C.'s transportation infrastructure.

³⁵ Drew Pearson, "D.C. Mayor on Spot in Freeway Fight," *Washington Post*, Feb 21, 1968. This article asserts the freeway lobby's power and, although it is somewhat more modern than other sources employed in this article, is useful in understanding that the pro-road faction's immense power was common knowledge in the 1960s.

The NCTP's political success stemmed from its robust and thoroughly planned financing structure that allowed it to muster the resources necessary to defeat the freeways. Due to their higher socioeconomic status, the WUPPIES enjoyed a financial advantage over their non-professional-class peers. Other groups, composed predominantly of working-class Washingtonians and students, lacked the deep pockets that WUPPIES possessed. Observers of the road battle immediately noticed the affluence of these professional-class fighters, with one journalist jokingly suggesting that readers "pity the poor homeowners," mocking their wealth.³⁶ Despite this financial runway at the freeway fight's onset, immense funds were required to operate an organization as politically involved in lobbying as the NCTP, with the fancy letterhead, extensive mailings, and constant lobbying trips burning a hole in their pockets.³⁷ In one letter sent out by the NCTP to its members, the organization claimed that "the Committee's treasury is in need of funds immediately" due to "the tempo of events... [having] increased markedly."³⁸

Maintaining solvency required a constant stream of income from dues, donations, and fundraisers, with dues seen as an especially potent revenue stream as the NCTP expanded. Efforts to raise dues to build a substantial war

³⁶ Martha Strayer, "Pity the Poor Home Owners?: NW Citizens Battle Corridor Plan," *Washington Daily News*, March 23, 1960.

³⁷ "Re: Jane Jacobs 'The Death and Life of Great American Cities,'" MS2066, box 12, folder Northwest Committee for Transportation Planning - 1961, Craig Papers; Federal Regulation Lobbying Act Filing, July 20, 1960, MS2066, box 20, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

³⁸ Letter to the Members and Friends of the NCTP, MS2066, box 21, folder NW Committee 1961 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

chest were constantly on the minds of NCTP leaders and frequently discussed in meetings. One memorandum summarized the NCTP's dues structure as "\$15 for associations, \$5 for active members, and \$2 for inactive members," demonstrating the multiple sources from which the organization collected revenue.³⁹ In one statement Craig made in 1961, he claimed that the NCTP has four thousand individual members and scores of participating organizations, meaning the revenue from dues would be substantial.⁴⁰ From this multifaceted revenue stream, the NCTP facilitated its aggressive lobbying and outreach efforts. This uniquely lucrative fundraising strategy gave the NCTP and other organizations with similar financing methods a significant advantage in combating the freeways.

In addition to a sturdy financial structure, the NCTP continually attracted new dues-paying members by riding the national wave of popularity the anti-freeway protest movement experienced throughout the 1960s. In particularly tense transportation planning battles, the anti-freeway movement could rapidly expand in size month-to-month, demonstrating the palpable anger that citizens held toward planned roads.⁴¹ Seeking to ride the wave of widespread opposition to the freeways, the NCTP and their allies advertised

³⁹ "Re: Executive Committee Meeting September 7, 1961," MS2066, box 12, folder Northwest Committee for Transportation Planning - 1961, Craig Papers.

⁴⁰ Peter Craig, "Statement to the Board of District Commissioners," November 22, 1961, MS2066, box 21, folder NW Committee 1961 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

⁴¹ Robert J. Lewis, "Support of Freeways Pact is Defended by Parks Chief," *Evening Star*, June 3, 1966; "North Central Freeway Protest," *Evening Star*, September 15, 1966.

themselves relentlessly. Alongside the previously highlighted flyer sent to homes across Northwest Washington, the NCTP also distributed mailings intended to recruit new members featuring evocative and urgent phrases like “the time for action is now.” This mailing targeted the specific concerns of the upper-middle-class families the NCTP represented by highlighting that “\$10 million [in] tax revenue that should be available for schools... would be diverted to highways.”⁴² Another professional-class anti-freeway civic organization, Neighbors, Inc., distributed informational mailings to the same Northwest Washington neighborhoods that the NCTP targeted.⁴³ In these mailings, Neighbors, Inc. explained their specific goals and tactics in detail, and informed recipients that they were an “important force in our community.” Much like the NCTP’s mailers, flyers sent by Neighbors, Inc. ended with a removable slip to sign up for membership and to make recurring donations, demonstrating their unrelenting expansion goals.⁴⁴ By constantly advertising themselves and seeking to expand their dues-paying membership base, WUPPIE anti-freeway groups amassed financial and social power.

In addition to their financial strength, the organizational structure of WUPPIE anti-freeway civic groups contributed to the overall effectiveness of their political movement. These organizations meticulously planned all aspects

⁴² NCTP Subscription Form Mailing, February 1962, MS2066, box 21, folder NW Committee 1962 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

⁴³ “NW Residents Blast Plans for Freeways,” *Washington Post*, June 3, 1960.

⁴⁴ NCTP Flyer, “What is Neighbors, Inc.?” MS2066, box 21, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 2, Craig Papers.

of their crusade, from lobbying targets to internal leadership structures. To ensure focus in their battle against the roads, the NCTP formed an internal steering committee comprised of its most active members, including Craig, Clark, and Cone. Modeled after members' experiences in government and other leadership roles, the steering committee was unique to WUPPIE civic organizations and effectively maintained concentration in drawn-out political battles.⁴⁵ In another document, the NCTP outlined the roles of the organization's executive committee members in detail. Jobs focused on outreach and communications, with titles like "Relations with Citizens' Organizations" and "Relations with Montgomery County Organizations," demonstrated the attention the NCTP gave to coordinating the freeway fight across a broad front. Additionally, specialist roles for "Rapid Transit, ...Highways," and "Schools" reveal the commitment the NCTP had to couching their attacks against the freeways in a robust knowledge of transportation policy and its impacts.⁴⁶ Well-ordered political and planning bodies continued to be the norm for the anti-freeway and pro-rapid transit movement, with Metrorail's earliest publications including organizational structure charts.⁴⁷ These charts and lists, inspired by members' experiences in

⁴⁵ "Northwest Committee for Transportation Planning (Steering Committee)," MS2066, box 21, folder NW Committee 1961 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

⁴⁶ "Specific Responsibilities of Members of Executive Committee," MS2066, box 20, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

⁴⁷ "Progress Report: Regional Rapid Rail," MS2066, box 19, folder D.C. Transportation Planning Reports 1968 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

leadership positions, prove the exceptional organizational acumen possessed by the NCTP and explain the long-term successes of white-collar freeway fighters and rail rapid transit proponents in Washington.

Alongside the effective internal financial and organizational cohesion of the NCTP, the group's external-facing strategies facilitated the continuous expansion of the anti-freeway coalition in the Northwest D.C. area they represented. As seen before, the freeway fight was widely publicized across D.C., with journalists adding evocative maps and descriptions of what properties would be leveled to make way for the roads.⁴⁸ Eye-catching headlines, charts, and maps left those in the proposed path of destruction concerned and eager to influence urban planning, which the affluent and well-connected Northwest D.C. residents excelled at.⁴⁹ Into this environment, the NCTP undertook considerable efforts to understand and reach out to organizations and notable citizens concerned about the advancing roads. Similar to the political efforts of other WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations, the NCTP began its membership expansion with intelligence gathering. One document showed the results of a phone poll regarding alterations to a resolution funding the Northwest Freeway and revealed how the NCTP put out feelers to concerned and educated neighbors, allowing them to understand local

⁴⁸ "Planners Propose Wisconsin Avenue Freeway," *Evening Star*, April 1, 1960.

⁴⁹ "Midway Would Extend Rehabilitation Time," *Evening Star*, January 13, 1960. This article highlights the successful efforts of the Midway Civic Association to influence urban planning in Adams Morgan, a nearby D.C. neighborhood, just as the NCTP was picking up steam a few neighborhoods away.

opinions on the roads while, at the same time, advertising their cause.⁵⁰ In tandem with intelligence gathering on concerned citizens' views on the freeways, the NCTP carefully planned outreach to existing civic organizations that might make valuable allies or become new members of the freeway fight.⁵¹ In another document, the NCTP listed nearby citizens' associations that had yet to join their ranks, demonstrating an acute sense of situational awareness regarding the locality they fought for. Additionally, in the margins, notes were scribbled with other organizations and their membership numbers, illustrating the attention the NCTP paid to calculated and efficient expansion.⁵² The NCTP's external outreach strategy to citizens and organizations, particularly during periods of heightened political engagement with the freeways, facilitated the group's rapid expansion in membership and influence.

WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations successfully influenced Washingtonians to reconsider the freeways and expanded rapidly due to their outward-facing strategies. The Palisades Citizens Association, a civic organization representing another wealthy Washington neighborhood, made considerable efforts to inform D.C. residents of the dangers of the freeways through the press. In one letter addressed to the editor of *The Evening Star* in

⁵⁰ "Results of Telephone Polling on Revised Paragraph 4 to Resolution," MS2066, box 20, folder NW Committee 1964 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

⁵¹ "Memorandum to Tom Farmer Re: Groups that May Provide Assistance to Northwest Committee on Transportation Planning," March 28, 1960, MS2066, box 20, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

⁵² List of Organizations for NCTP Outreach, MS2066, box 20, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

1963, the organization's president argued that previous victories against the freeways stemmed from community efforts. She continued by defending her backyard, effectively arguing that if the freeways are to be again proposed, "the people of Palisades, D.C., do not wish to be the victims of this game of 'musical chairs.'" In this letter, this WUPPIE civic organization leader employed extensive rhetorical skill, effectively denigrating the freeways by comparing their careless developer's actions to a cruel game to sway readers against the roads.⁵³ The NCTP made headlines, too, via Craig's vehement denunciations of the freeways and skillful promotion of rail rapid transit.⁵⁴ Outside of the press, the NCTP made extensive inroads into nearby civic organizations, seeking to add them to the NCTP's ranks, demonstrating a clear strategy to grow the coalition opposed to the freeways. One document outlined the numerous civic organizations that joined the NCTP, revealing the coalitional nature of the organization. In the document, the NCTP boasted that "the Northwest Committee are representatives of over 15 citizens groups in Northwest Washington," demonstrating the success of the group's external outreach efforts.⁵⁵ By striking the public and other organizations while the iron was hot, the NCTP and other WUPPIE anti-freeway civic groups converted countless concerned Northwest D.C. citizens into dues-paying freeway fighters.

⁵³ Ruth Aull, "'This is 'Practicable?'" *Evening Star*, November 1, 1963.

⁵⁴ "Further Jams Seen for Loop," *Evening Star*, November 8, 1961.

⁵⁵ "Citizens Associations Represented on NCTP," MS2066, box 20, folder NW Committee 1964 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

WUPPIE anti-freeway civic groups' outreach was effective because it targeted roads in tandem with non-transit-focused community organizations, broadening the campaign to stop the freeways. Environmentalists and conservationists mobilized extensively to oppose the freeways that targeted parklands. Glover-Archbold and Rock Creek Park are the two significant nature arteries in Northwest Washington, and plans to build a highway through the former and expand the preexisting parkway in the latter drew immense scrutiny from environmentalists.⁵⁶ Alongside citizens' environmentalist groups, the National Park Service (NPS) also mobilized to stop roads across D.C. parks, employing rhetorical tactics identical to those used by the Northwest's WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations.⁵⁷ In the years-long slog over the proposed Three Sisters Bridge between Virginia and Northwest D.C., the NCTP and NPS made common cause in bashing the proposed road and formed a united front against urban planners.⁵⁸ Parents' organizations and schools also jumped into the fray, with Sidwell Friends Middle School in Northwest D.C. not only offering itself as the meeting spot for NCTP meetings but also urging parents to oppose the Northwest Freeway. In a joint letter from

⁵⁶ Lawrence Stern, "Officials Drop Plans for Road Through Glover Archbold Pk: Leaves Question of Where to Put Traffic Corridor," *Washington Post*, February 22, 1962; Jack Eisen, "Rock Creek Freeway Proposal is Revived: Up 13 Years Ago," *Washington Post*, April 15, 1966.

⁵⁷ Lawrence Stern, "Planners, Park Men Rap Freeway Change," *Washington Post*, May 26, 1962.

⁵⁸ Lawrence Stern, "Park Service Bombshell Produces Crater in Three Sisters Bridge Plan: Park Service 'Bomb' Snarls Three Sisters Bridge Plan," *Washington Post*, July 29, 1962.

the Sidwell Friends Middle School administration and parents' association to the school district, parents were urged "to use whatever channels of communication seem most appropriate to you to bring this matter to a public, Congressional hearing." The letter concluded by saying that the school knows "we can count on your help" in an effort to spur parents into action.⁵⁹ WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations effectively joined with environmentalists, federal agencies, local institutions, and parents' groups to oppose roads.

The effective financial, managerial, and outreach strategies employed by WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations, particularly the NCTP, explain their exceptional success in opposing the roads. Through meticulous financial planning, including multiple streams of income, constant efforts to expand revenues, and an acute awareness of the costs of lobbying campaigns, freeway fighters maintained a deep war chest to fight the roads. Additionally, documents outlining the detailed internal organization of the NCTP reveal how labor was effectively divided to ensure efficient usage of time and resources. The presence of an executive and steering committee explains anti-freeway civic organizations' ability to maintain focus in years-long political battles. Similar to their internal cohesion, the outreach conducted by the NCTP and other civic organizations to potential members, the press, and other groups meant the freeway fighters constantly expanded their ranks. By cooperating with environmentalists, federal agencies, local institutions, and parents' organizations,

⁵⁹ "Dear Sidwell Friends School Parents" May 20, 1960, MS2066, box 20, folder NW Committee 1960 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

freeway fighters enhanced their message and succeeded in stopping the roads. Along with their political acumen, the organizational skills of WUPPIE anti-freeway civic organizations explain the city's ability to block planned freeways and instead construct a rail rapid transit system.

Conclusion

White-collar anti-freeway civic groups achieved impressive results through their unique political and organizational talents, successfully preventing disastrous freeways from being built and ushering in the creation of WMATA. The WUPPIES had won a great victory, alleviating fears that these asphalt behemoths would have scarred the face of Washington, divided communities, shuttered businesses, and destroyed the city's cultural fabric for generations.⁶⁰ Millions of dollars would have been spent on projects that would only worsen D.C.'s transit woes, as freeways continuously harm the urban landscapes they touch. Instead of this nightmare scenario, the herculean efforts of anti-freeway civic organizations of all socioeconomic classes created the cost-effective and efficient rail rapid transit network that Washingtonians enjoy.⁶¹ Although D.C. residents from all backgrounds participated in stopping the roads, it was the unique political and organizational talent of the WUPPIE freeway fighters who

⁶⁰ Map Showing Proposed Freeways in 1967, MS2066, box 19, folder D.C. Transportation Planning Reports 1968 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

⁶¹ "97.2-Mile Regional Metro Adopted," March 1968, box 19, folder D.C. Transportation Planning Reports 1968 Vol. 1, Craig Papers.

facilitated the policy needed to make WMATA a reality.⁶² Without their considerable affluence, connections to local and federal stakeholders, ability to directly influence legislation, managerial talents, and robust outreach strategies, the freeway fighters would have buckled under the road lobby's immense pressure. Only in Washington did a group of such politically and legally talented, civically minded, and energetic rail transit supporters exist to oppose the roads, explaining why D.C. enjoys WMATA while other cities suffer from blight by freeways.⁶³

⁶² Arthur Cotton Moore, "The Highwaymen," *Washingtonian*, January 1968, Vol. 3, no. 4, box 19, folder D.C. Transportation Planning Reports 1967 Vol. 4, Craig Papers.

⁶³ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 282–83; Mohl, "STOP THE ROAD: Freeway Revolts in American Cities," 700.

Much Respect to the Ladies: Women's Social Influence on American Politics in the Early Republic and the Jacksonian Era

MARIELLE CORNES

On September 18, 1787, the doors to the Pennsylvania State House finally swung open, and out stepped the delegates of the Constitutional Convention. For the past 103 days, they had remained inside the stuffy building, the doors and windows completely locked, with the sole goal of crafting a new government. With the conclusion of the convention, they now carried the secrets of what the future would hold for the country, with many Americans anxiously waiting to learn what had occurred behind those closed doors. When Benjamin Franklin, the delegate's oldest member, stepped into the fresh air, a voice called out to him asking, "Well Doctor what have we got a republic or a monarchy[?]"¹ Franklin's response: "A republic . . . if you can keep it."² Unexpectedly, Dr. Franklin was not speaking to a military general, future Congressman, or some other important American man. He was responding to Elizabeth Willing Powel.³

Women were instrumental in creating mass democracy in America. They expanded the political realm, opening the door for others to influence the government. For elite women during the Early Republic, their weapon of choice was society—the dinners, balls, and receptions of elite America. These women

¹ James McHenry, "James McHenry's Diary," September 18, 1787, James McHenry Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

² McHenry, "James McHenry's Diary," September 18, 1787.

³ McHenry, "James McHenry's Diary," September 18, 1787.

were learning that they could take advantage of their limited social position to carve out their own political roles, a realization that would mark the beginning of the continuous historical progression of expanding female political activity. This timeline continued as America shifted from the Jeffersonian Era to the Jacksonian Era—the nation witnessed an explosion of political participation and the rise of mass democracy, a broader form of civic engagement that included more than just voting, extending to activism and public discourse. Amid this transformation, women launched the first significant national political movement led by their own efforts: petitions to Congress opposing the Indian Removal Act. These petitions set a crucial precedent, directly inspiring a later wave of abolitionist petitions that spurred women to take leading roles in the abolitionist movement.

Yet even within the abolition movement, divisions persisted regarding women's place in the public sphere. In response, figures like Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton concluded that the fight for abolition must be accompanied by a fight for women's suffrage. This trajectory of activism demonstrates not only women's expanding role in reform movements but also a continuous evolution of female political participation that both mirrored and propelled the broader expansion of American democracy. As women's history continues to get told in isolated moments, a longitudinal approach is necessary. It provides a complete picture of how women's political participation in America shifted from elite women who had personal connections to the President and wanted to influence politics (but were likely not intentionally

trying to change women's political standing as a whole), to politically minded women fighting for their suffrage, now intentionally trying to subvert the patriarchal nature of politics in America.

This essay investigates the social landscapes of the Early Republic and analyzes the expansion of republican ideals and mass democracy in America; specifically, it will shed light on how elite women navigated and contributed to the social and political culture of their time, engaging with American politics in ways that were both subtle and significant. This essay will then shift its focus to Jacksonian America, examining the ways in which women weaponized their predetermined social positions to promote and expand their political activism. It will highlight how, ironically, American women had manipulated their undesirable social position into a role that facilitated their expanding political participation. These women, who men had long tried to exclude from politics, were mirroring the growth of mass democracy that characterized this period of American history. Although historians have examined certain periods, locations, figures, or movements in isolation, there remains a lack of comprehensive scholarship tracing the full trajectory of women's social and political participation between 1789 and 1848—a gap this essay seeks to address.

Part 1: The Early Republic

The practice of mixed-gender Republican Courts originated in the Presidential residence in New York City in 1789, with Martha Washington herself demonstrating the role that powerful political wives could play as

hostesses.⁴ Following in the footsteps of the first lady, when their city became the acting capital of the United States, Philadelphian wives demonstrated their talents as high society hostesses, welcoming the newly-formed American political elite through their doors. Among them was Elizabeth Willing Powel, who opened her Philadelphia homes for some of the most influential social gatherings of the Early Republic.

Born in February 1743, Elizabeth Willing Powell was the sixth child of Charles Willing and Ann Shippen, members of Philadelphia's gentry. She married Samuel Powel, who was elected mayor of Philadelphia twice and served as a state senator from 1790 until his death in 1793.⁵ His political success cemented both his and Elizabeth's place in the country's elite. She would often host Founding Fathers such as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams in her drawing room. She turned her home into a Republican Court where the practice of republican ideals—such as the freedom to be informed about and critique the current government—could flourish.

Through these dinners and discussions, the Powels grew closer to the Adams and the Washingtons, arguably the two most important political couples of the Early Republic. Elizabeth Powel herself became close with George Washington, and as their relationship developed, Powel began to discuss

⁴ David S. Shields and Fredrika J. Teute, "The Republican Court and the Historiography of a Women's Domain in the Public Sphere," *Journal of the Early Republic* 35, no. 2 (2015): 172.

⁵ Susan Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 135.

political issues with Washington. Their letters reflected a level of mutual respect that fostered political discussions.

Although Washington and Mrs. Powel often agreed in their political discussions, Elizabeth did not always fall in line with her distinguished correspondent. During one of their encounters, Washington confided in Elizabeth that he was considering not running for a second term—a decision she vehemently opposed. This conversation prompted her to write a letter to Washington addressed “To the President of the United States on the Subject of His Resignation.” It is the only surviving letter written by a woman and a non-cabinet member on the possibility of his resignation.⁶ In this letter, Elizabeth argued that his absence would undermine the security and welfare of the United States.⁷ Showing a keen political understanding, she pointed out that “The Antifederalist would use it as an Argument for dissolving the Union” as she felt that they could spin Washington’s resignation as proof that he did not support the current federal system.⁸ This exchange highlights the intellectual rapport between this pair of friends. Washington himself confirmed this when he later stated that only his “particular, and confidential friends” were told about his

⁶ Samantha Snyder, “You Are Welcome to Eat at Her Table,” *Women in George Washington’s World*, ed. Charlene M. Boyer Lewis and George W. Boudreau (University of Virginia Press, 2022) 169–70.

⁷ Elizabeth Willing Powel to George Washington, November 17, 1792, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-11-02-0225>.

⁸ Powel to Washington, November 17, 1792, *Founders Online*.

internal debate over whether to run for a second term.⁹ Elizabeth Willing Powel's relationship with Washington and the rest of the political elite in Philadelphia was a direct product of her prowess as a hostess, allowing her to demonstrate the intersecting political and social roles that elite women could play within American democracy.

Following its tenure in Philadelphia, at the turn of the nineteenth century the United States capital moved to Washington City. With it came the wives of congressmen and other important political figures, who were tasked with constructing a new society.¹⁰ Washington mixed cosmopolitan and rural life—elite families would often pass their time with late-night conversations, breaking into mixed-sex groups where politics was discussed over tea.¹¹ Their social prowess and hard work helped develop Washington into a true city where republican ideals could flourish through the continued expansion of political debates, discussion, and knowledge.

As the capital moved to Washington City, the country was also undergoing its first transition of political power. Thomas Jefferson winning the 1800 election cemented the fact that America would now be led by a Democratic-Republican. This transition saw an expansion of republican ideals—Jefferson built his political platform on the belief that the republic

⁹ From George Washington to Henry Lee, January 20, 1793, mss 44693, reel 018, George Washington Papers, Series 2, Letterbooks 1754-1799: Letterbook 18, Sept. 9, 1791 – March 30, 1794, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

¹⁰ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 4–9.

¹¹ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 9.

should be controlled by the general public in America, which he defined as all of the white, male citizens—not just the propertied ones.¹² However, if he wanted access to politics to expand, he would have to accept that women would be a part of it. Therefore, as the belief in mass democracy expanded, the involvement of women within the political field also expanded. One person who increased the impact of women in society and politics within Washington for the Democratic-Republicans was Dolley Madison, who continued to advance the concept of female political actors and left a definitive legacy on American democracy.

Dolley Madison was the wife of fourth president James Madison, and her prominent role in society as first lady allowed her to exert political influence at the highest level. In 1808, the Madisons took over the reins of leading Washington City and its society, giving Dolley Madison, the new ‘Queen of Washington,’ the opportunity to shape a social and political style that supported a republican government.¹³ President Madison was so confident in Dolley’s ability to strengthen a republican society that he gave her power over the decorating of the Presidential Residence, something that was often seen as a man’s duty because it involved designing a “power house.”¹⁴ He was entrusting

¹² Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785; Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture, 1996), 148–9.

¹³ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 47–51.

¹⁴ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 60.

her with a public, political duty that would directly affect his reputation as president.

The influence that Dolley Madison had as hostess of the most important American politicians at the Presidential Residence, paired with her tendency to engage with guests, demonstrates how Dolley intentionally worked to influence governmental affairs. She understood the importance of making a good impression on guests as it could aid her husband in gaining political allies; at one dinner, George Ticknor described Dolley during of a political dinner he attended at the President's House, noting, "Mrs. Madison is a large, dignified lady, with excellent manners ... Her conversation was somewhat formal, but on the whole appropriate to her position."¹⁵ Mrs. Madison also participated in other political events alongside her husband, where she was received with much success. During the 1808 Independence Anniversary celebration, a newspaper published a report about a troop of cavalry that marched to the Madisons' residence, where "Mrs. Madison presented them with an elegant standard, accompanied by a patriotic address."¹⁶ Such duties highlighted how women's political domain had expanded beyond just their ability to host Republican Courts in their elite homes and was becoming an accepted part of public, political life.

¹⁵ George Ticknor, "George Ticknor's Account of a Dinner at the President's House," January 21, 1815, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/03-08-02-0458>.

¹⁶ "Washington City Wednesday, July 6," *National Intelligencer*, July 6, 1808.

Part 2: Jacksonian America

Despite Jefferson building the Democratic-Republican party on the belief that the government should be controlled by the general public, or precisely, white men, it was not until the Jacksonian Era (1829-1854) that America entered the “golden age” of political democracy.¹⁷ Jackson inherited a country where political participation was becoming more commonplace and voting was expanding rapidly. In 1828, when Jackson was elected, 1,155,340 American men cast a ballot, an increase of over 800,000 votes compared to the previous election.¹⁸ Alongside increased voter turnout among white men, groups including women and African Americans were becoming more politically active. These disenfranchised groups began to weaponize claims to civic inclusion, conventions, petitions, and more. They created what political history has termed a “civil society,” or a society where political engagement expanded beyond the domain of the family but is still distinct from the official state.¹⁹

Similar to women in the Early Republic, women in Jacksonian America harnessed their given position within society to engage more heavily with national politics. While their actions more closely resembled a modern idea of

¹⁷ Edward Pessen, “Society and Politics in the Jacksonian Era,” *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 82, no. 1 (1984): 2.

¹⁸ Kathleen D. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700–1865* (University of Chicago Press, 2003), 125.

¹⁹ Seth Rockman, “Jacksonian America,” in *American History Now*, ed. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Temple University Press, 2011), 54.

democratic participation than those of the elite hostesses of Philadelphia and Washington City, they also reflected the accepted gender roles of the early nineteenth century. During this period, women were viewed as the protectors of morals and religious righteousness, a position they would use as justification to engage with and weight in on national political issues. Such a sentiment was captured by Alexis De Tocqueville in his famous account *Democracy in America*, published during the Jacksonian presidency in 1835. In addition to recognizing that American women attended public events and political speeches, Tocqueville also noted that “women [were] the protectors of morals.”²⁰ This understanding of women as guardians of morality and religion provided a critical foundation for women’s rhetoric and arguments that justified their engagement with national politics, allowing them to carve out an intersecting role between social and political spheres.

As mass democracy and political awareness spread across the country during the Jackson administration, women leveraged their role as the protectors of morals to assert their opinions regarding national politics. Women no longer needed to live in the capital or have personal political connections to engage with the state; women from across the country were becoming politically conscious through petitions, writings, societies, and more. Examining women’s involvement in three main political issues—indigenous rights, abolition, and women’s rights—illustrates the growth of their political involvement, evolving

²⁰ Alexis De Toqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (Saunders and Otley, 1835).

from the work of elite women in the Early Republic, and culminating with an official call for the right to vote at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848.

Indigenous Rights

Andrew Jackson entered the presidency with a reputation as an Indian fighter. During the War of 1812, Jackson often responded to attacks on white settlers with aggression, following a policy of “life for life,” and already had experience negotiating with tribes for exchanges of large sums of land.²¹ Aligning with such a reputation, following his electoral victory in 1828, Andrew Jackson began his campaign for the removal of American Indians from east of the Mississippi River. In December 1829, Jackson sent a request to Congress for federal funds to be invested in the removal of Southeast Indians.²² This resulted in the 1830 Indian Removal Act, which gave the president full authority to give American Indians land west of the Mississippi River and forcibly remove them from the tribes’ land east of the Mississippi.²³

The Indian Removal Act ushered in the most intense public political backlash that the young United States had ever seen.²⁴ Citizens from across the nation ramped up their engagement in national politics, as political participation

²¹ McCarthy, *American Creed*, 126.

²² Hershberger, “Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle against Indian Removal in the 1830s,” 15.

²³ U.S. Congress, *An Act to provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the states or territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi*, 21st Cong., 1st sess., ch. 148 (1830).

²⁴ Hershberger, “Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition,” 15.

was no longer limited to those residing in the capital or possessing the social privilege to host members of Congress. The result was a multitude of petition campaigns, including the first petition to Congress from American women—sent by Charlotte and Elizabeth Cheever and 59 other women from Hallowell, Maine—and the first national women’s petition campaign led by Catharine Beecher and Lydia Sigourney.²⁵

In total, between 1830 and 1831, over 1,400 women submitted petitions protesting against the forced removal of Native Americans from their southern territory.²⁶ In these petitions, women weaponized their accepted role as the fairer sex, meant to preserve morals and righteousness in America, to speak on a national, overtly political issue. The circulation of these petitions, alongside their documentation in newspapers across America and the records of the House and Senate, reflects a growing recognition of women’s political engagement—an awareness that helped propel the movement toward increased female participation in public affairs and, ultimately, demands for suffrage.

An examination of these petitions reveals that women often employed rhetoric that was emotionally charged or rooted in American ideals, aiming to persuade Congress without overtly challenging their accepted social roles. A petition from women in Hadley, Maine, reminded Congress that the signers were “Mothers, Wives and Daughters of the enlightened and patriotic citizens

²⁵ Alisse Theodore, “‘A Right to Speak on the Subject’: The U.S. Women’s Antiremoval Petition Campaign, 1829–1831,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 5, no. 4 (2002): 601–23; Hershberger, “Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition,” 15.

²⁶ Theodore, “A Right to Speak on the Subject,” 601.

of these United States,” appealing to members’ nationalistic sensibilities.²⁷ Dozens of women from Batavia, Ohio, noted that they were writing on the subject of Indian Removal with “a modesty and reverence becoming of our sex and with all the ardor of female tenderness.”²⁸ Their explicit acknowledgement of their gender outlined their intention to not just establish themselves as credible writers on the topic, but as credible *female* writers.

American women also employed moral and religious arguments to legitimize the stances presented in their petitions. Some emphasized the negative treatment of American Indians, especially considering that they were American allies. They juxtaposed the fact that the United States had “used, harassed, and tormented” Indigenous communities with the treaties the federal government had signed promising not to infringe on their jurisdiction.²⁹ Women from Farmington, Maine, reminded the government of “the moral obligation we are under to ‘do unto others as we would that they should do unto us.’”³⁰ Additionally, American women often concluded their petition with

²⁷ Petition of Inhabitants of Hadley, Maine, February 1831, Committee on Indian Affairs, Petitions and Memorials Referred to Committees (HR21A-G8.2), Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁸ Petition of Inhabitants of Batavia, Ohio, March 3, 1831, Committee on Indian Affairs, Petitions and Memorials Referred to Committees (HR21A-G8.2), Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁹ Petition of Inhabitants of Batavia, Ohio, March 3, 1831

³⁰ Petition of Inhabitants of Farmington, Maine, February 22, 1831, Committee on Indian Affairs, Petitions and Memorials Referred to Committees (HR21A-G8.2), Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

religious calls to action, arguing that, as “moral agents,” they ought to care about the just treatment of their allies like they would the “protection [and] smile of Almighty God.”³¹ The religious and moral rhetoric incorporated throughout these petitions illustrates these women using their roles as the protectors of morals to engage directly with the federal government in the early nineteenth century.

Although most Indian Removal petitions were gender-segregated, some were submitted to Congress bearing signatures from both men and women. Certain petitions, like one sent from Nelson, Ohio, designated different columns for signatures labeled “Gentlemen” and “Ladies.”³² The lists of signatures had a mix of shared and unique last names between men and women, underscoring the fact that some women were signing the same petition as their family members, and some were independently signing a mixed-gender petition. A petition from Union, New York demonstrated the alternative, where signatures are not segregated by gender, but instead jumbled together.³³ The fact that men signed the same petitions as the women in their community illustrates the growing acceptance of women as political actors at a local level;

³¹ Petition of Inhabitants of Nelson, Ohio, March 3, 1831, Committee on Indian Affairs, Petitions and Memorials Referred to Committees (HR21A-G8.2), Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³² Petition of Inhabitants of Nelson, Ohio, March 3, 1831.

³³ Petition of Inhabitants of Union, New York, February 6, 1832, Committee on Indian Affairs, Petitions and Memorials Referred to Committees (HR21A-G8.2), Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

while these men would likely have drawn the line at women voting, running for office, or other formal avenues, it reveals a clear shift in public consciousness.

Alongside gaining recognition as political actors within their local communities, women's petition campaigns also received national attention through newspapers and the press. As the main dispersers of information and politics at the time, women's presence as political actors in the press expanded their influence and likely inspired other women to act, sowing the seeds of the mass political mobilization that would characterize the later abolition and suffrage movements. The two women's petition campaigns that received the most national attention came from Steubenville, Ohio, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Newspapers in Washington, D.C., often covered national affairs, with the *United States' Telegraph* narrating the presentation of the petition from the ladies of Steubenville before Congress. Residents of the capital would have read about Mr. Goodenow, a congressman, wanting to present the women's petition against the removal of Indians, the arguments against this petition being presented, and the speaker confirming the right to call for the reading of the petition. Additionally, the newspaper reported the vote, 86–72, in favor of the petition being printed.³⁴ Citizens were not just learning about women's political activity, but also the ways in which the federal government acknowledged and interacted with it.

³⁴ "House of Representatives," *United States' Telegraph*, February 17, 1830.

Fortunately, the increased dispersal of political information allowed individuals to learn about petitions through newspapers without residing in the capital or the originating community. Newspapers from both Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Edenton, North Carolina, cited the *United States' Telegraph* to report on the Steubenville petition.³⁵ Although their accounts were less detailed than that of the *Telegraph*—noting only Mr. Goodenow's presentation of the petition from “the ladies of Steubenville, Ohio, against the removal of the Indians” and its eventual reading and printing—readers were nonetheless exposed to women's involvement in American politics. Another petition that received attention in the national press was one from ladies of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—the largest women's petition regarding the Indian Removal Act, sent to Congress in February of 1830. The *Christian Advocate and Journal and Zion's Herald* reported that 670 women had signed a petition “praying that the Indians may be protected in their rights.”³⁶ This article is especially notable due to the newspaper's prominence as a highly circulated Methodist publication. These newspapers' mentions of women's petitions further aided in the creation of a public political consciousness that included American women.

Finally, these petitions were noted and discussed in the journals of the House of Representatives and the Senate. One such Senate journal recorded the submission of a petition from women in Burlington, New Jersey, who prayed

³⁵ “Congressional,” *Edenton Gazette*, February 27, 1830; “Congress,” *Harrisburg Chronicle*, February 22, 1830.

³⁶ “NATIONAL AFFAIRS.: PROCEEDINGS OF CONGRESS,” *Christian Advocate and Journal and Zion's Herald (1828–1833)*, March 12, 1830.

that the Indian tribes' possession of their own land be protected and that they would have "the full enjoyment of their rights." The Senate journal observed that the senators had decided "That said memorial be laid upon the table, and printed."³⁷ The largest petition, sent in by 670 women from Pittsburgh, was also acknowledged in the Senate journal and received the same treatment of being laid on the table and printed.³⁸ While these petitions were not heavily debated in Congress, nor did they result in changes to the United States' Indian Removal Act, petitions sent by men had comparable influence.

The anti-removal movement ushered in the first mass women's petition movements in American history. While still acknowledging their differences as the female sex and often utilizing connections with men to establish their authority to speak, women were outwardly political and were engaging with the federal government and national politics from all across the country. As the first petitions inspired hundreds of other women to add their names to Indian Removal petitions sent to Congress, American women gradually began to broaden their political engagement and participate in other national movements. While these petitions did not result in the government halting the implementation of the Indian Removal Act, they did signal a shift in women's activism in the 1830s. It was not confined to a single cause or moment, but rather marked a broader, ongoing expansion of their role as political actors.

³⁷ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Senate of the United States*, 21st Cong., February 23, 1830, 149.

³⁸ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Senate of the United States*, 21st Cong., March 3, 1830, 165.

Abolition

The 1830s launched a new realm of female activism in the growing fight against slavery. Taking inspiration from the prior movement against the Indian Removal Act, the 1830s and 1840s saw groups of women sending petitions to Congress denouncing slavery. One from over sixty women from the state of Pennsylvania requested that Congress “abolish every thing in the constitution or laws of the United States, which in any manner sanctions or sustains slavery.”³⁹ Like their predecessors, these petitions received attention in newspapers across America.

Anti-slavery petitions from women were also noted in the House and Senate journals. On January 30, 1837, for example, John Quincy Adams presented a laundry list of petitions before the House of Representatives with regard to the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia and other Territories.⁴⁰ Included were petitions from 2,193 women from Massachusetts, New York, and Maine, with the largest being from around 900 women from the county of Oneida, New York. Additionally, Quincy Adams presented petitions from 2,110 “citizens, male and female,” from the states of New York, New Jersey, and Ohio.⁴¹ Although these petitions were merely “laid

³⁹ “Anti-Slavery Petition from the Women of Philadelphia,” 1844, Petitions and Related Documents That Were Presented, Read, or Tabled, Petitions, Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures which were Presented, Read, or Tabled during the 28th Congress, Record Group 46, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁰ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States*, 24th Cong., January 30, 1837, 303.

⁴¹ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States*, 24th Cong., January 30, 1837, 304–7.

upon the table, and no further action had thereon,” their sheer volume illustrated the stunning rise in women’s political engagement. This surge both showed women acting in tandem with men through formal political channels and accelerated the expansion of participatory democracy in the United States. More women had their petitions formally recognized in that one day than during the *entire* campaign against the Indian Removal Act.

But they did not stop there. Female reformers fighting to end slavery were creating a new style of female politics focused on mass mobilization.⁴² Mirroring the expansion of American democracy, women began to use the new tools of a civil society to spread their message and influence national politics. Through publishing their writings, forming societies, and hosting conventions to advocate for abolition, American women continued to establish themselves as important political actors. Still grounding their arguments in religion and morality, these women understood how to harness their accepted societal role to be more conspicuously political than their predecessors.

Due to the growing focus on mass mobilization, early publications often focused on mobilizing specific groups. The first example of such a publication by an American woman was written by Maria Stewart, a freeborn African American from New England. Her pamphlet, *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality*, was printed in Boston by William Lloyd Garrison, the publisher of the famed abolition newspaper *The Liberator*. Stewart’s work made a

⁴² Anne M. Boylan, *Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797–1840* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 137.

direct appeal to African American women, urging them to fight against slavery and for their own equality. Opening her pamphlet with a reminder that they were all equal under God and were created in his likeness, she followed with an explicit call to action, writing, “O ye daughters of Africa, awake! Awake! Arise! No longer sleep nor slumber, but distinguish yourselves. Show forth to the world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted faculties.”⁴³ The pamphlet also argued for abolition, insisting that African Americans should not have to “bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pot and kettles[.]”⁴⁴ Stewart’s pamphlet represented the beginning of women acting as authors and activists who could explicitly call for abolition, and her dedication to mobilizing a community emphasized how emerging female political activity was directly connected to mass mobilization, a key component to the growth of mass democracy in the United States.

Stewart’s writings ushered in a new generation of female politicians, many of whom also used writing, publications, and public speeches as their method of choice. Two of the most notable early female abolitionists were the Grimké sisters of South Carolina. Sarah and Angelina were the daughters of wealthy planter and slaveowner John Grimké.⁴⁵ As children, Sarah and her younger sister Angelina questioned the morality of slavery as an evil institution,

⁴³ Maria Stewart, “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality,” in *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart* (October 1879), 24–35.

⁴⁴ Stewart, “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality.”

⁴⁵ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*, 11.

with many concerns arising following their witnessing violence against enslaved children.⁴⁶ Following growing opposition from their community due to their antislavery views, both sisters chose to leave South Carolina for Philadelphia. While Sarah left quietly, Angelina made sure that her departure was an act of public protest against slavery.⁴⁷ In their later book *History of Woman Suffrage*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage noted that the sisters had “emancipated their slaves and came North to lecture on the evils of slavery, leaving their home and native place forever because of their hatred of this wrong.”⁴⁸

The Grimké sisters soon became connected with William Lloyd Garrison, who initiated the first publication of an anti-slavery piece written by one of the sisters. In 1835, Garrison published a letter in *The Liberator*, which was written to him from Angelina Grimké regarding her opinions on the pro-slavery riots in Boston. In her letter, she stressed that she has not turned away from her abolitionist principles and that the riots were like the religious persecution perpetuated by mobs. She warned of “the enactment of laws even in our Free States, against Abolitionists,” yet she argued that she would prefer to see pro-abolitionists die as martyrs rather than see America descend into

⁴⁶ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*, 28.

⁴⁷ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*, 56–60.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage, Volume I* (Susan B. Anthony, 1881).

war.⁴⁹ Finally, she declared that if such persecution resulted in the destruction of slavery, then an “immense good [would] be accomplished.” She concluded with a call to action, like Stewart had before her, urging, “Let us endeavor, then, to put on the whole armor of God, and, having done all, to stand ready for whatever is before us.”⁵⁰

Angelina continued her activism and mobilization through public speeches, weaponizing the developing role of women in the public sphere. Often speaking as “a moral being,” she argued that American women must speak on the issue of slavery because it is moral, religious, and political.⁵¹ In a speech before the Massachusetts Legislature, she spoke of her efforts to overturn the horrific institution of slavery and remarked that she represented the 20,000 women who had signed an anti-slavery petition.⁵² Angelina continued to give speeches advocating for abolition, as did her sister Sarah. While originally attended only by women, slowly, American men began to attend the sisters’ talks.⁵³ Their attendance marked a growing acceptance of women participating and speaking in the public political sphere.

⁴⁹ Angelina E. Grimké to William Lloyd Garrison, August 30, 1835, Portfolio 56, Folder 15, Broad­sides, Leaflets, and Pamphlets from America and Europe, Rare Books and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress.

⁵⁰ Angelina E. Grimké, “Slavery and the Boston riot. The following letter was written, shortly after the pro-slavery riot in Boston by Angeline E. Grimke to William Lloyd Garrison ... 1835,” August 30, 1835, Portfolio 56, Folder 15, Broad­sides, leaflets, and pamphlets from America and Europe, Rare Books and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress.

⁵¹ “Angelina E. Grimke,” *The Liberator*, March 2, 1838.

⁵² “Grimke,” *The Liberator*, March 2, 1838.

⁵³ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage, Volume I*.

Despite pushing the boundaries of women's activism at the time, the Grimké sisters also relied on the accepted role in society for women as protectors of morality and religion. Writing to fellow abolitionist Amos Phelps, Angelina used morality to justify both men and women's participation in the anti-slavery movement. "My motto is, whatever is morally right for a man to do, is morally right for a woman to do," she explained. "Rights and duties depend not on sex but on our relations in life."⁵⁴ Sarah Grimké also drew upon religious rhetoric. In an 1838 epistle, she wrote to southern clergy and sought credibility as an author by stating that she was writing to her "fellow professors of his holy religion." She cited scripture and God's creation of the universe, making man in His image, to argue that "Slavery has disrobed him of royalty, put on him the collar and the chain, and trampled the image of God in the dust."⁵⁵ Such a perspective aided in giving the Grimké sisters and other female abolitionists more authority to speak on the subject in the eyes of society and their male peers.

Similar to how information about the Indian Removal petitions was dispersed, the Grimké sisters and their activism gained attention in the press. Most significantly, William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator* published articles about their speeches, writings, and participation in meetings and societies, such

⁵⁴ Angelina E. Grimké to Amos Phelps, letter, "Dear Brother, 2" September 2, 1837, Women of the Antebellum Reform Movement, Digital Public Library of America, <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/women-of-the-antebellum-reform-movement/sources/1080>.

⁵⁵ Sarah Moore Grimké, *An epistle to the clergy of the southern states* (1836), 2.

as Angelina Grimké's letter to Garrison condemning pro-slavery riots in Boston.⁵⁶ Garrison advertised the works of both sisters. In an 1837 edition, he argued that abolitionists should provide every family in America a copy of "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South," Angelina's anti-slavery pamphlet, and argued that Sarah's epistle to southern churches was "an irresistible appeal to all who are Christ's disciples."⁵⁷

While most of their press features were published in *The Liberator* and other abolitionist newspapers, the Grimké sisters gained enough notoriety to, at times, be mentioned in local newspapers. Also in 1837, the *Springfield Weekly Republican* covered both sisters' speeches in front of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society and highlighted Angelina's emphasis on the fact that Congress had the power to end slavery in the District of Columbia and Sarah's religious appeals.⁵⁸ Their presence in the press demonstrated how the sisters' message and their efforts to mobilize others to fight against slavery were being spread across the country, not just contained to the capital or other major American cities. As Jacksonian America witnessed a surge in political engagement, women's political activity expanded from private and localized roles to active participation in a burgeoning national civil society—underscoring not only the

⁵⁶ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*, 85–6.

⁵⁷ "Descriptive Catalogue of Anti-Slavery Works, for Sale By Isaac Knapp," *The Liberator*, October 27, 1837.

⁵⁸ "The Slavery Question," *Springfield Weekly Republican*, June 1, 1837.

increasing visibility of women in the political realm but also their crucial role in the broader evolution of mass democracy since the Early Republic.

Lydia Marie Child, another noteworthy female abolitionist, produced her own attacks on slavery and ventured into the publishing world through her work as an editor for the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*.⁵⁹ Her most momentous work, *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans*, outlined the political history of slavery in America and critiqued past failings at attempting to move towards abolition.⁶⁰ She concurred with the argument that slavery is an evil institution, but argued that abolitionists needed a concrete plan. She expressed hope, writing, “My life upon it, a safe remedy can be found for this evil, whenever we are sincerely desirous of doing justice for its own sake,” demonstrating her political opinion on slavery and providing her call to action.⁶¹ Her work as an author, editor, and abolitionist exemplifies how women broadened their societal roles to encompass political activism, and her emotionally charged rhetoric serves as yet another example of the ways women would weaponize their roles as protectors of virtue and morals.

As more women followed in the footsteps of Stewart, the Grimkés, and Child, the female abolition movement began to move towards collective action and mass mobilization. American women began attending anti-slavery

⁵⁹ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 20, 1841.

⁶⁰ Lydia Maria Child, *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (John S. Taylor, 1836).

⁶¹ Child, *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans*.

conventions and forming abolition societies. In addition to representing expansions of participatory democracy, their actions reflected the same steps male abolitionists of the time were taking. Despite still not being able to vote abolitionists into office, these women used moral rhetoric and social connections to expand what a female politician could be.

Many major American cities witnessed the introduction of female anti-slavery societies alongside the proliferation of women in the political sphere. One of the earliest societies, created in 1833, was the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society (PFASS).⁶² 1833 also saw the creation of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS), which was established by a group of black and white Baptist and Congregational women.⁶³ Lydia Maria Child was a member of the Boston society. Her influence and public reputation likely played a pivotal role in drawing elite Bostonian women into the ranks of the BFASS, whose expanded resources and social capital enabled the society to undertake forms of political engagement that far surpassed the charitable or moral reform efforts of earlier women's associations.⁶⁴ By sponsoring political events such as the lecture tour of British abolitionist George Thompson, the BFASS not only asserted women's presence in the public political sphere but also marked a critical

⁶² Emily Hatcher, "The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society and the Civil War," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 135, no. 4 (2011): 528.

⁶³ Debra Gold Hansen, "The Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society and the Limits of Gender Politics," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Cornell University Press, 1994), 46–47.

⁶⁴ Hansen, "The Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society," 49.

transformation in women's activism that reflected a broader redefinition of civic participation during the Jacksonian Era.

Additionally, women in America organized anti-slavery conventions and began attending large national abolition conventions. The BFASS was instrumental in producing the first Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, which occurred in New York City in 1837.⁶⁵ Female abolitionists relied on the press to report on these activities and conventions, often having Garrison's *The Liberator* publish articles about their meetings alongside his articles about the non-female societies. One example was when Garrison published advertisements for the American Female Anti-Slavery Convention prior to its occurrence in May of 1837, helping to mobilize other women with anti-slavery beliefs, asking, "Mothers of New England, will you not respond to this call?"⁶⁶ After the American Female Anti-Slavery Convention ended, citizens could read about the "highly intelligent women" it was composed of and the convention's proceedings in *The Liberator*.⁶⁷ Once again, female political activists used the press to participate in the expansions of mass political mobilization that characterized the 1830s and 1840s.

In an effort to further establish themselves within the abolition movement and the growing global political consciousness, American women also traveled to London in 1840 to participate in the World Anti-Slavery

⁶⁵ Hansen, "The Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society," 51.

⁶⁶ "Female Anti-Slavery Convention," *The Liberator*, March 4, 1837.

⁶⁷ "Anniversary Meeting at N. York," *The Liberator*, May 19, 1837.

Convention.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, this came at a time when the American abolition movement was fracturing, with some male abolitionists disagreeing with William Lloyd Garrison and the American Anti-Slavery Society's acceptance of female members and delegates. They had recently elected Abby Kelley, a female abolitionist lecturer, to the AAS's business committee, a step too far in the eyes of many American men.⁶⁹ Therefore, when Garrison attended the World Anti-Slavery Convention that same year, the issue of women activists was hotly debated.⁷⁰ This demonstrated that, despite the progress women had made within the movement and in broader social and political spheres, significant efforts were still needed to fully establish them as political actors in American society. American women began to see that it was time to advocate for women's rights and suffrage.

Women's Rights

Most historians date the emergence of conscious feminist politics in the United States to the late 1830s.⁷¹ As figures like the Grimké sisters and Lucretia

⁶⁸ Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Women Who Speak for an Entire Nation?: American and British Women at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, London, 1840," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America (Cornell University Press, 1994), 301.

⁶⁹ Sherry H. Penney and James D. Livingston, "Seneca Falls," in *A Very Dangerous Woman: Martha Wright and Women's Rights* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 68.

⁷⁰ Penney and Livingston, "Seneca Falls," 69.

⁷¹ Amy Swerdlow, "Abolition's Conservative Sisters: The Ladies' New York City Anti-Slavery Societies, 1834–1840," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, ed. Jean Fagan

Mott established themselves as political actors within the abolition movement, their actions ushered in a new era of activism for women's rights. Historian Aileen Kraditor notes that, "The founders of the women's rights movement were all abolitionists."⁷² Suffragists themselves concurred, with Stanton and Anthony writing in their book *History of Woman Suffrage*, that anti-slavery movements were "the initial steps to organized public action and the Woman Suffrage Movement."⁷³ These women began to build a movement for political equality based on popular republican traditions, arguing that the promise of equal rights for all in America required their own individual freedom.⁷⁴ As American women continued to exist within a civil society and politically engage with the state, demands for more formal avenues of participation developed.

Many female abolitionists began to explicitly advocate for women's rights, including the right to vote. Sarah Grimké was one such abolitionist who quickly began to advocate for her rights as a woman. In her 1838 publication *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman*, Sarah argued that the laws in America that limited the rights of women were not unlike the slave laws of Louisiana.⁷⁵ Her comparison highlighted the direct transition from abolition

Yellin and John C. Van Horne, *Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Cornell University Press, 1994), 31.

⁷² Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890–1920* (Norton, 1981), 1.

⁷³ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage, Volume I*.

⁷⁴ DuBois, "Outgrowing the Compact of the Fathers," 841.

⁷⁵ Sarah Moore Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman: Addressed to Mary S. Parker* (I. Knapp, 1838), 80.

activism to women's rights and suffrage. Ten years before the Seneca Falls Convention, Sarah also discussed complaints regarding the lack of a vote for women. She highlighted that women, especially those who were widowed and were entitled to one third of their husband's estate, were being taxed without representation, which she reminded readers was the cause of the American Revolution. She noted that this was "a grievance so heavy" that they fought a war and spilled their blood over it, yet "the daughters of New England . . . are suffering a similar injustice."⁷⁶

Like Sarah Grimké, other female abolitionists became engaged in the fight for women's rights. In particular, women who still faced sexism and discrimination within the abolition movement found themselves inspired to fight for change. Prior to a widespread, official movement, women began to form local Suffrage Associations.⁷⁷ Despite such organizations and an undeniable increase in participation and acceptance of women as political actors within the abolition movement in America, gender-based political equality was still far from being a reality. This manifested itself at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, where Lucretia Mott and other American women were barred from participating.⁷⁸ Despite the setback, the 1840 convention served as a crucial moment for the history of women's suffrage. In addition to being

⁷⁶ Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman*, 81.

⁷⁷ "All Sorts of Things," *The Pittsburgh Post*, October 8, 1842.

⁷⁸ Jennifer Chapin Harris, "Celebrating Women's Herstory: The Story of Seneca Falls," *Off Our Backs* 28, no. 7 (1998): 9.

Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's first meeting, it was where they conceived the need for a women's rights movement.⁷⁹ Eight years later, the pair again met for tea, where they concocted a plan to host a convention, like many female abolitionists had done before them.⁸⁰ However, this time they planned to advocate for women's rights and suffrage.

The suffrage movement officially launched in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention and the signing of the Declaration of Sentiments. This document was directly inspired by the Declaration of Independence and included a list of grievances against men for their denial of women's inalienable and constitutional rights. The Declaration of Sentiments, written by Stanton and Mott and signed by sixty-eight women and thirty-two men, stressed the "history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman."⁸¹ They argued that refusing women the right to vote, depriving them of representation that they elected, and a lack of property rights for women were some of the many inequalities that needed to be rectified in America.⁸² They concluded this document, the first official instance in which women called for their own suffrage, with their signatures.

⁷⁹ Sklar, "Women Who Speak for an Entire Nation," 301.

⁸⁰ Harris, "Celebrating Women's Herstory," 9.

⁸¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Declaration of Sentiments," 1848, GreatHearts Institute. <https://www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-american-calendar/the-declaration-of-sentiments/>.

⁸² Stanton, "The Declaration of Sentiments."

Word of the Declaration spread throughout the country, again through newspapers. *The Evening Post* in Cleveland, Ohio, noted the similarities to the Declaration of Independence and explicitly stated that the women at Seneca Falls had declared that “the history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over woman!”⁸³ Women from across the country were now able to read about other women actively advocating for their right to vote.

With women’s mobilization through signing and spreading political documents now being commonplace, the Declaration of Sentiments represented a clear evolution from their earlier political activity. Women no longer felt the need to restrict themselves to championing other marginalized groups, including Indian tribes and the enslaved. Now they could advocate for themselves and their own ability to actively engage with the United States government. Though it would be another seventy years before women officially claimed the right to vote, the first sparks of the suffrage movement were lit in 1848 and represented a direct continuation of the expanding political participation of women from the Early Republic through Jacksonian America.

Conclusion

Between the adoption of the Constitution and the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, American women increasingly redefined their social roles

⁸³ “The late woman Convention at Seneca Falls, N.Y.,” *The Evening Post*, August 5, 1848.

through political engagement. While political influence in the Early Republic was often limited to elite women with proximity to power—those living in the capital, participating in the social season, and cultivating ties with presidents and politicians—by the mid-nineteenth century, women from diverse regions were asserting themselves as political actors in their own right. The women’s rights and suffrage movement did not emerge in isolation; rather, it was the product of a broader transformation in the public political sphere. From hosting private salons and participating in political life in Washington City, to petitioning Congress and founding formal political organizations, women’s activism evolved in tandem with the rise of mass democracy. This essay illustrates that the trajectory of women’s political participation is inseparable from the wider democratization of American society.

Starting in the Early Republic, it became apparent that women yielded political influence, even if they were not voting in Congress or giving speeches in statehouses. Turning society into a political stage allowed these women to assist their husbands’ political careers and become political actors in their own right. They built friendships and political alliances, injected their opinions into political debates, and helped to normalize the availability of democracy and politics to a wider audience. Despite living roughly one century before American women earned the right to vote, these women wielded real political influence over elected officials. Yet, while founding fathers like Washington did respect women as political figures in some light (note his respect for Powel as a

political pen pal), their influence had yet to spread beyond already established social elites.

This began to change during the Jacksonian Era, as American women gradually transformed from informal influencers to active participants in the public political sphere. As civil society expanded during the Jacksonian Era, so too did women's methods of engagement. No longer needing to personally know the president, women used their accepted role as a moral authority to engage with national political issues. The national women's petition campaign against the Indian Removal Act in 1830 evolved into sustained petitioning against slavery, and the abolitionist movement, in particular, provided the ideological and organizational groundwork for many women to begin advocating for their own rights. By 1848, with the Seneca Falls Convention, the women's suffrage movement had formally emerged—not as a sudden rupture, but as the culmination of decades of political evolution. Women were learning from those who had come before them, often toeing the line of what was socially acceptable to slowly, but surely, politicize themselves and their role in America; this highlights the limitations that come from only studying women's political activity as isolated moments in history. While the struggle for full enfranchisement was still to come, this progression underscores the reality that women had long been political actors, leveraging their traditional societal roles to assert an enduring presence in the shaping of American democracy.

MUCHA ALIANZA, POCO PROGRESO: How the Alliance for Progress Was Incompatible with Development in 1960s Mexico

NICOLE PRAVOVEROV

Introduction

Mucha alianza, poco progreso: a phrase that began to circulate in Latin America only a year after the United States launched its sweeping economic development program in 1961, the Alliance for Progress (*Alianza para el Progreso*).¹ The Alliance for Progress, one of the U.S.'s most extensive economic development programs to date, intended to "accelerate the economic and social development" of all signatory members of the Organization of American States (OAS) "so that they may achieve maximum levels of well-being, with equal opportunities for all."² The program promised to achieve these goals by instituting sweeping anti-poverty and industrialization measures, and by working directly with local labor groups to expand literacy and implement agrarian reform.³ These measures would be funded extensively by the United States, totaling over \$20 billion over the next ten years, aiming to bolster the economies of Latin American nations and promote democracy throughout the Western Hemisphere in an era of burgeoning Cold War ideological tensions. However, popular and diplomatic memory largely recall the program as a well-

¹ "Editorial: For 'alianza' a Warning," *Life Magazine*, March 16, 1962.

² "The Charter of Punta Del Este Establishing the Alliance for Progress Within the Framework of Operation Pan America," August 17, 1961, President's Office Files, Presidential Papers of John F. Kennedy, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum (hereafter JFK Papers).

³ "The Charter of Punta Del Este," August 17, 1961.

meaning but fruitless U.S. effort to bolster Latin American economic and social development.

Latin American nations at this time had been grappling with a series of domestic revolutions and authoritarian regimes. In 1954, the CIA executed a coup under the name Operation PBSUCCESS that overthrew the democratically elected leftist President Jacobo Árbenz. President Dwight Eisenhower's Administration had grown increasingly concerned with Árbenz's support of several communist revolutionary groups in Latin America, particularly in Honduras and Costa Rica.⁴ A 1953 U.S. intelligence estimate relayed that Communists, led *de facto* by President Arbenz "exercise a political influence far out of proportion to their small numerical strength.. [which] will probably continue to grow as long as President Arbenz remains in power."⁵ The report claimed that several Communists held positions of power in the Arbenz Administration, and influenced the President's land distribution reforms and labor policies, including the 1962 Agrarian Reform Law which resulted in the expatriation of significant vacant holdings of the U.S.-owned United Fruit Company.⁶ In early June 1954, just weeks before the coup, the U.S. Secretary of

⁴ Director of Central Intelligence Walter Smith to Under Secretary of State Bruce, memorandum, December 12, 1952, Document 419, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1952–1954, vol. 4: American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983).

⁵ "Probable Developments in Guatemala," National Intelligence Estimate, May 19, 1953, Document 422, *FRUS*, 1952–1954, vol. 4: American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983).

⁶ "Probable Developments in Guatemala," May 19, 1953, *Foreign Relations of the United States*.

State sent a resolution to diplomatic offices in Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Nicaragua, denouncing the objectives of the “International Communist movement,” and claiming that it has penetrated the political institutions of Guatemala, thus “increas[ing] the danger to the peace of America.”⁷ In the immediate aftermath of Operation PBSUCCESS, U.S. President Eisenhower’s Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs expressed growing concerns that the operation “was having serious anti-American consequences in a number of Latin American states.”⁸

Beyond the Western Hemisphere, a number of European publications and diplomats, particularly in Britain and France fiercely opposed the U.S.’s violent and aggressive mechanisms of diplomacy.⁹ This international outcry “left an enduring legacy of anti-Americanism,” across Latin America, and even helped bolster communist sentiment in the region in direct opposition to American imperialism.¹⁰ Notably, Fidel Castro rode this wave of anti-American

⁷ Ambassador John Dreier and Assistant Secretary Henry E. Holland, “The Secretary of State to Diplomatic Offices in the American Republics,” circular telegram, June 4, 1954, Document 463, *FRUS*, 1952–1954, American Republics, vol. 4: American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983).

⁸ Director of the Executive Secretariat Walter K. Scott, memorandum, June 23, 1954, Document 479, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1952–1954, vol. 4: American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983).

⁹ Nicholas Cullathur “Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala, 1952–1954,” 1994, CIA History Staff document, Excerpt, Document 5, *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book*, No. 4, CIA and Assassinations: The Guatemala 1954 Documents, National Security Archive, George Washington University.

¹⁰ Cullathur, “Operation PBSUCCESS,” 86.

sentiment as he came to power in Cuba, and began directly engaging with the Soviet Union to support his regime. As early as 1959, the Eisenhower State Department was concerned with Castro's influence on neighboring nations with similar economic conditions, necessitating, "a new formula that can win the confidence and support of such [socialistic] governments until they can be guided into more moderate channels."¹¹ Thus, when President John F. Kennedy assumed office in 1961, one of his central objectives was to tackle the looming threat of communism in Latin America burgeoned by Cold War ideological tensions.¹² The Alliance for Progress was therefore born as a defense mechanism against economic instability, aiming to, "Strike at the causes of unrest by assisting...those countries which are genuinely striving toward economic and social progress," while simultaneously "strengthen[ing] the will and capacity of governments... to defeat attempts at a take-over by forces supported by or allied with international communism or Castroism."¹³

The Alliance for Progress intended to "unite [signatory nations] in a common effort to bring [their] people accelerated economic progress and broader social justice within the framework of personal dignity and political

¹¹ U.S. Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State, airgram, August 2, 1959, Document 349, *FRUS*, 1958–1960, vol. 6: Cuba (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991).

¹² Task Force on Immediate Latin American Problems to President-elect Kennedy, report, January 4, 1961, Document 2, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, vol. 12: American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

¹³ Daniel McCoy Braddock, "Summary Guidelines Paper," July 3, 1961, Document 15, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, vol. 12: American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993).

liberty.”¹⁴ This essay aims to examine how previous U.S. incursions in Latin America created conditions that doomed the Alliance for Progress before it began, particularly in Mexico. To local leaders and the broader population, the U.S.’s legacy of intervention in Mexico and its haphazard attempt at robust social reform through the Alliance shaped intranational perceptions of the program as paternalistic.¹⁵ Moreover, after the program failed to meet the expectations for an improved standard of living among the member states, *campesinos*, or peasant farmers, began to grow increasingly enamored with Fidel Castro’s Communist revolution.¹⁶ Officially, the U.S. largely attributed the Alliance for Progress’s shortcomings to bureaucratic organizational issues and resistance by Latin American leaders to invest in robust social reform.¹⁷ However, as early as 1962, the Kennedy administration was acutely aware of the lack of infrastructure to implement the programs effectively.¹⁸ Although the initiative aimed to reduce poverty, the top-down process of rapid industrialization kept the economic benefits from reaching the impoverished populations it aimed to serve. As a result, elevated levels of poverty and wealth inequality also provoked ideological conditions for leftist revolutionary sentiment. Moreover, Fidel Castro’s rise to power after the Cuban Revolution in

¹⁴ “The Charter of Punta Del Este” August 17, 1961.

¹⁵ “Quality of Life in the Americas,” *The Department of State Bulletin*, 1968.

¹⁶ Keller, “A Foreign Policy for Domestic Consumption.”

¹⁷ “Quality of Life in the Americas,” *The Department of State Bulletin*, 1968.

¹⁸ Image 44, 1962, JFK Papers.

1959 exacerbated fears among Mexican political elites and governmental officials of insurrection. Thus, Mexican officials took advantage of the opportunity to enrich themselves while simultaneously blaming the United States for the program's failure.

By the end of the 1960s, the Alliance for Progress catapulted a “new type of nationalism” among Mexican citizens who longed for self-determination and independence from the United States.¹⁹ U.S. development efforts were increasingly viewed as predatory and discouraged Mexican officials from engaging fully with the Alliance for Progress. I will then focus on how this perception doomed the program from its inception, as the U.S.'s legacy of intervention proved to be more detrimental to its public image than previously anticipated. This article will build upon Renata Keller's research on Mexico's involvement in Latin America's Cold War, particularly her argument that the Mexican government's defense of leftist regimes throughout the 1960s can be attributed to a fear of a national leftist revolutionary uprising.²⁰

This article will outline the Kennedy Administration's goals for establishing the Alliance for Progress throughout Latin America. It then contrasts these goals with Mexico's domestic political and economic situation, leading to the discussion of the Alliance's incompatibility with these conditions.

¹⁹ President of Mexico Echeverría to U.S. President Nixon, undated, Document 48, FRUS, 1969–1976, vol. E–11, part 1, Documents on Mexico; Central America; Caribbean, 1973–1976 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2015).

²⁰ Renata Keller, “A Foreign Policy for Domestic Consumption: Mexico's Lukewarm Defense of Castro, 1959–1969,” *Latin American Research Review* 47, no. 2 (2012), 100–19.

Then, it will explore the role of anti-American nationalism in Mexico's participation in the Alliance and examine how this sentiment influenced Mexico's ongoing diplomatic relations with Cuba throughout the 1960s. Anti-American nationalism was often conflated with leftist pro-Castro ideology by the U.S., and, over time, the two doctrines began to converge. The article will then examine the effects of Mexican nonalignment during the Cold War and its failure to commit to the Alliance. In sum, I have found that the U.S.-Mexican relations were ultimately unaffected by Mexico's flirtation with the Castro regime, as the U.S. was acutely aware of the prevalence of anti-American sentiment within Latin America and the resulting anxieties of the Mexican government. Moreover, due to the Alliance for Progress's overwhelming inability to meet its economic development goals throughout Latin America, Mexico was not subjected to heightened scrutiny. However, working-class populations became increasingly critical of the initiative's failure and thus turned towards sympathizing with Castro's revolutionary rhetoric.

Modern Takes on the Alliance for Progress

The Alliance for Progress scarcely achieved its stated objectives across Latin America, with social conditions, such as poverty and wealth inequality remaining high by the end of the 1960s.²¹ One reason for the Alliance for

²¹ Sebastian Edwards, "FORTY YEARS OF LATIN AMERICA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: From the Alliance for Progress to the Washington Consensus," NBER Working Paper Series, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2009.

Progress' failure has been attributed to the actors within Latin American governments preventing the allocated funds from reaching lower-income populations. For example, John Bedan states that the Alliance's failure in Guatemala is attributable to the government's funneling of funds into military counterinsurgency efforts, resulting in the fortification of Enrique Peralta's dictatorial regime.²² Similarly, Renata Keller's analysis of declassified intelligence correspondence found that Mexico's reluctance to participate fully in the Alliance for Progress had less to do with anti-democratic governance but more with appeasing the local leftist revolutionaries.²³ This desire to quell domestic revolutionary sentiment led the López presidential administration of Mexico to avoid publicly denouncing Castro's rule. Alan McPherson claims that this reluctance to collaborate openly with the United States out of fears of leftist backlash cemented the ability of Mexican elites to forgo their responsibility of more equitably redistributing land and paying taxes, thereby only increasing the wealth gap within their nations.²⁴

Vanni Pettin, on the other hand, has argued that Mexican officials heavily considered isolating themselves from a direct relationship with the U.S. despite the U.S.'s efforts to advance democracy across the Americas. Pettin

²² John Bedan, "The Price of Progress Guatemala and the United States during the Alliance for Progress Era" (PhD.diss., University of Oregon, 2018), ProQuest (10933147).

²³ Keller, "A Foreign Policy for Domestic Consumption."

²⁴ Alan McPherson, *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in U.S.–Latin American Relations* (Harvard University Press, 2006).

states that the Mexican government expressed interest in joining the Non-Aligned Movement by flirting with the possibility of attending the 1961 Belgrade Conference in Yugoslavia.²⁵ Mexico's solidarity with the Movement would have established the nation's decision to shift away from the country's economic and political dependency on the United States and instead establish a stronger relationship with the so-called "Third World political bloc."²⁶ Ana Covarrubias also posits that Mexico's decision to pursue a policy of noninterventionism with Cuba forged a path of independence from U.S. foreign policy pressures. Covarrubias further discusses how Mexico and the United States mutually benefitted from the former's neutral position with Cuba, even exchanging surveillance information at various embassies.²⁷ The Mexican government's effort to distance itself from the U.S. thus did not sour relations between the two nations, as the U.S. understood Mexico's domestic pressures and perceptions of the Alliance for Progress from leftist groups early on.²⁸

²⁵ Vanni Pettinà, "Global Horizons: Mexico, the Third World, and the Non-Aligned Movement at the Time of the 1961 Belgrade Conference," *The International History Review* 38, no. 4 (2016): 741–64.

²⁶ Pettinà, "Global Horizons," 742.

²⁷ Ana Covarrubias, "Cuba and Mexico: A Case for Mutual Nonintervention," *Cuban Studies* 26 (1996): 125.

²⁸ "Highlights of the First Meeting of the Working Group on Problems of the Alliance for Progress," January 16, 1962, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, vol. 12, American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

The Goals and Influence of the Alliance for Progress

One of former President John F. Kennedy's highest priorities upon entering office was the well-being of the Latin American economy. This desire for development stemmed from the Cold War tensions and a need to counter Fidel Castro's growing influence as a global communist leader. Kennedy understood that Latin America was on the brink of significant social transformation and thus aimed to prevent Communist revolutionary sentiment from inhibiting the development of democratic solutions to their societal ills.²⁹ These promises of drastic economic and social transformation sowed the seeds of disillusionment among Latin American revolutionaries to the point where they were even appropriated for anti-American propaganda.³⁰ Despite knowing that the Alliance for Progress would require significant dedication and investment from the U.S. and signatory nations, the plan relied on a top-down development approach propelled by rapid industrialization. The plan would allocate \$20 billion in economic aid to Latin America, which the Kennedy administration believed would provide states with the financial stability to pursue robust political and social reforms.³¹ At the same time, the U.S. State Department recognized that the Alliance was more of a political investment than an economic one, as the program depended significantly on stable

²⁹ Task Force on Immediate Latin American Problems to President-elect Kennedy, January 4, 1961, *FRUS*.

³⁰ Task Force on Immediate Latin American Problems to President-elect Kennedy, January 4, 1961, *FRUS*.

³¹ "The Charter of Punta Del Este," August 17, 1961.

governments that were “capable of absorbing reform and change.”³² At the same time, the United States recognized the polarization of many Latin American political environments and the fine line between enforcing proper aid allocation and appearing interventionist.³³ As early as February 1962, the State Department began to notice the lack of “correlation between per capita assistance received by countries and their performance in terms of self-help and reform criteria.”³⁴ Local leaders believed that this push was largely politically motivated and distrusted that adherence to reform criteria would result in actual resources for development.³⁵

Kennedy’s desire to improve Latin American economies was primarily due to fear of Fidel Castro’s influence in the region. Many U.S. officials nicknamed the Alliance for Progress the ‘Latin American Marshall Plan’ to compare its goals to the similarly wide-scale economic plan throughout post-WWII Europe. The Economic Recovery Act of 1948, also known as the Marshall Plan, was the United States’ most extensive economic plan to date. It aimed to stimulate post-war economic growth by investing heavily in European

³² “Highlights of Discussion at the Secretary of State’s Policy Planning Committee Meeting,” February 13, 1962, Document 40, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, vol. 12: American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

³³ “Highlights of Discussion at the Secretary of State’s Policy Planning Committee Meeting,” February 13, 1962, *FRUS*.

³⁴ “Highlights of the First Meeting of the Working Group on Problems of the Alliance for Progress,” January 16, 1962, *FRUS*.

³⁵ “Highlights of the First Meeting of the Working Group on Problems of the Alliance for Progress,” January 16, 1962, *FRUS*.

industries while simultaneously creating markets for American goods.³⁶

Although the Plan was primarily focused on stimulating European recovery to maintain its role in the global economic sphere, it also aimed to promote democracy and prevent the spread of communism from the unstable post-war political climate. The Alliance for Progress can similarly be understood in terms of its underlying motive of preventing Latin American nations from turning towards communism.³⁷

However, a key difference between the two plans is the lack of an ‘information program’ within the Alliance for Progress. To distinguish the Alliance from other economic aid programs, it became necessary to produce an “emotional, ideological appeal” that would effectively convey the program’s benefits and goals while also countering the growing Communist propaganda in the American Hemisphere.³⁸ The Marshall Plan dedicated over \$20 million to its information program alone, emphasizing the joint coordination of European and American citizens in a mutually beneficial development project.³⁹ The Truman Administration utilized corporatist capitalist language that highlighted the program’s promotion of the “common good” and emphasized the collective

³⁶ Act of April 3, 1948, European Recovery Act (Marshall Plan), Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996, General Records of the United States Government, Record Group 11, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³⁷ Alexander Nimick Jr., 1962, photograph, Image 76, JFK Papers.

³⁸ Nimick Jr., 1962, JFK Papers.

³⁹ Alexander Nimick Jr. to T. Graydon Upton, February 9, 1962, JFK Papers.

benefits of productivity and engagement with the program.⁴⁰ Although the 1961 State Department Summary of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America underlined the need for “strong informational support for the Alliance for Progress, with emphasis on the principle of self-help,” the actual investment and implementation of these programs are unclear.⁴¹ The lack of faith in the program and distrust of U.S. bureaucrats was thus reflected in the program’s results in the coming years, as the Alliance’s most significant impediment was found to be its lack of organizational structure, partnered with the dwindling cooperation of elites to social reform.⁴²

The Alliance for Progress relied on the Rostovian model of development offered by modernization theory. The theory’s founder, Walt Whitman Rostow, acted as a close advisor to President Kennedy and became increasingly involved in Latin American economic affairs. The theory relied on the idea that a substantial amount of aid would foster self-led economic growth in Latin America.⁴³ The United States allocated overseas aid toward rapidly expanding industry and agricultural markets in the region, which would enrich

⁴⁰ Amy C. Garrett, “Marketing America: Public Culture and Public Diplomacy in the Marshall Plan Era, 1947–1954,” *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2004), ProQuest, (305148505).

⁴¹ Braddock, “Summary Guidelines Paper,” July 3, 1961, *FRUS*.

⁴² Thomas Clifton Mann, telegram, Embassy in Mexico to the Department of State, October 19, 1961, Document 34, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, vol. 12: American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

⁴³ Michelle C. Mayhew, “Poverty on the Periphery: U.S. Implementation of Modernization Theory in the Alliance for Progress and the War on Poverty,” (master’s thesis, West Virginia University, 2013), ProQuest (1464786070).

America as a whole and, as Rostow claims, ultimately lead to robust liberalizing social transformation through public investment.⁴⁴ However, the theory did not consider the impact on Latin America's cultural and bureaucratic organization. The assumption that economic development would result in a top-down redistribution of wealth was overly optimistic. As described by many U.S. government officials who were “predominantly out of sympathy with the Alianza,” the plan required massive social upheaval that Latin American elites were unwilling to undergo at their own expense.⁴⁵

Within the first year of its institution, the United States became increasingly aware of the lack of social and bureaucratic infrastructure in Mexico to support the Alliance's goals. Much of this had to do with embedded “old-fashioned prestige-building military establishments” that were not willing to deny their power and influence to pursue “economic, fiscal and social reforms” and place “greater emphasis on internal security measures.”⁴⁶ The incongruence of cultural and political organization manifested itself in myriad non-democratic ways, with labor unions relying on political bargaining to achieve change and local elites benefiting from the program's economic gains while stifling

⁴⁴ Max Milikan and Walt Whitman Rostow, *A Proposal: Key to an Effective Foreign Policy* (Harper & Brothers, 1957), 28.

⁴⁵ President's Special Assistant Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to President Kennedy, memorandum, June 27, 1961, Document 13, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, vol. 12: American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

⁴⁶ Mann, telegram, Embassy in Mexico to the Department of State, October 19, 1961, *FRUS*.

democratic social reform.⁴⁷ The idea that enough monetary aid would negate the necessity to invest wholly in social reform plagued the Alliance's institutional mechanisms, which largely contributed to its failure.⁴⁸ As the United States had come to see, "development is a far more difficult undertaking than economic recovery," and very little change could be made without an upheaval of existing administrative and socioeconomic infrastructure.⁴⁹

Bay of Pigs and Aftermath

The Alliance for Progress was further characterized by disingenuousness, considering the notorious failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in April 1961, just months before the Alliance for Progress was implemented.⁵⁰ After the United States publicly failed to overthrow Fidel Castro, Latin American nations became increasingly skeptical of the United States as a benevolent ally. The day after the failed invasion, Mexico submitted a resolution to the United Nations, urging non-intervention to be applied in all

⁴⁷ "Survey of the Alliance for Progress - Labor Policies & Programs - A Study Prepared at the Request of the Subcommittee on American Republics Affairs," July 15, 1968, series 3, box 74, folder 8, United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Special Collections Research Center, The George Washington University.

⁴⁸ Piki Ish-Shalom, "Theory Gets Real and the Case for a Normative Ethic: Rostow, Modernization Theory, and the Alliance for Progress," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (2006).

⁴⁹ Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

⁵⁰ Chairman of the Task Force on Latin America A. A. Berle to President Kennedy, memorandum, April 25, 1961, Document 10, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, vol. 12: American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961).

contexts where a state's ability to conduct its internal affairs is concerned.⁵¹ This resolution signaled latent support for, if not solidarity with, Cuba against U.S. intervention and set forth a trend of cordial diplomacy between Mexico and Cuba. The Ambassador of Mexico to the United Nations, Luis Padilla, argued:

Every people [i.e., Cuba] had the right to resort to arms to repel armed foreign intervention, to depose a tyrant [Batista] or to carry out a social revolution [Castro's]. But no foreign Power [the United States] had the right [through adventures like the Bay of Pigs] to instigate or bring about the fall of a Government which was not to its liking.⁵²

Padilla's decision to support Cuban sovereignty and oppose U.S. intervention was largely due to rising anti-American sentiment within Mexico.⁵³ Another resolution, which was significantly less critical of the concept of intervention, was proposed by Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, Panama, Chile, Uruguay, and Honduras.⁵⁴

Anti-Americanism in Latin America was a familiar concept to the U.S. State Department. In May 1958, Vice President Richard Nixon landed in Caracas, Venezuela, during a diplomatic trip to South America, only to be met by a mob of local protestors spitting, throwing rocks, and shouting, "Go home,

⁵¹ Edward B. Glick, "Cuba and the Fifteenth UN General Assembly: A Case Study in Regional Disassociation," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 6, no. 2 (1964): 235–48.

⁵² Glick, "Cuba and the Fifteenth UN General Assembly," 244.

⁵³ Glick, "Cuba and the Fifteenth UN General Assembly."

⁵⁴ Adlai Stevenson, Mission to the United Nations to the Department of State, telegram, April 19, 1961, Document 148, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, vol. 10: Cuba (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997).

Nixon!”⁵⁵ Hundreds of protestors gathered to express their disgust at the Vice President, and even onlookers were apathetic to Nixon and glared at him with contempt as his motorcade raced away from the tarmac. There was no evidence that the orchestrators of this protest were directly influenced by international communist organizations, with even local communist groups being surprised by their organizational capacity and vitriol. Nixon’s visit forced U.S. officials to confront the tangible consequences of paternalistic, violent intervention in Latin America and investigate the region’s intangible “interests, emotional prejudices, and sensitivities” that worked to breed anti-American resentment.⁵⁶ A series of subsequent polls of Latin American citizen sentiment conducted by the United States Information Agency (USIA) reflects that the recent surge in Latin American anti-Americanism was primarily bred by envy of U.S. institutions and the standard of living, as President Nixon came to represent “the broken promises of U.S. free market modernization.”⁵⁷ Pre-Castro anti-Americanism thus grew from public discontent with material and political conditions, and U.S. ignorance and apathy only fanned its flames.

In Fidel Castro’s Cuba, anti-Americanism became a rallying cry. By characterizing U.S. imperialism as the root of Cuba’s social strife, Castro utilized public opinion as a political strategy by fomenting revolutionary support

⁵⁵ McPherson, *Yankee No!*, 29.

⁵⁶ McPherson, *Yankee No!*, 33.

⁵⁷ McPherson, *Yankee No!*, 37.

amongst other Latin American nations.⁵⁸ After the Bay of Pigs, Castro had ammunition to criticize the U.S. invasion and spread across Latin America.⁵⁹ As a result, U.S. policymakers thus began to identify the Alliance for Progress as the ‘cure’ to their unfavorable position among Latin American nations post-Bay of Pigs.⁶⁰ If the United States could facilitate robust socioeconomic reform, perhaps there could be more popular support for the program among Latin Americans. In the U.S.’s view, this was the primary medium of reconciling its past relationship with the Western Hemisphere.

However, increasing anxiety within the U.S. State Department regarding its loss of the special relationship with the Western Hemisphere led to the assumption that Latin Americans would rather turn to radical solutions to their problems than turn to the U.S. out of fear of revolution.⁶¹ Although Latin American U.N. ambassadors displayed “unanimous and intense interest” in the Alliance, there was a disconnect between the program’s promises and its feasibility in most nations.⁶² As the integration of economies and revitalization of education and agricultural systems between the Americas began, U.S. officials

⁵⁸ McPherson, *Yankee No!*, 68.

⁵⁹ Dick Goodwin. “Memorandum for the President,” JFK Papers.

⁶⁰ Senator Mike Mansfield to President Kennedy, memorandum, May 1, 1961, Document 192, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, vol. 10: Cuba (United States Government Printing Office, 1997).

⁶¹ “Quality of Life in the Americas,” *The Department of State Bulletin*, 1968.

⁶² Representative to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson to President Kennedy, report, June 27, 1961, Document 14, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, vol. 12: American Republics (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

grew discouraged by the lack of cooperation from Latin American nations. The United States had not met its goals of robust economic reform, and thus, Congress had grown hesitant to provide additional funding without substantial results.⁶³ Similarly, Latin American leaders declined to reduce their state military expenditures to then invest in robust social programs.⁶⁴ Moreover, as stated in the 1969 *Department of State Bulletin*: The dilemma posed for the governments is that they know that U.S. cooperation and participation can contribute greatly to accelerating achievement of their development goals, but their sense of political legitimacy may well depend on the degree of independence they can maintain from the states.⁶⁵

In other words, although the Alliance for Progress could have worked to bring collective positive benefits for the residents of Latin America, the legacies of nationalist anti-American rhetoric prevented the population from considering the feasibility and reality of democratic outcomes. Moreover, domestic political elites took advantage of the public's disdain for the Alliance to forgo their responsibility to conduct equitable land, labor, and tax reforms.⁶⁶ In the aftermath of the 1961 United Nations resolution, Mexico was uniquely

⁶³ "Quality of Life in the Americas," *The Department of State Bulletin*, 1968.

⁶⁴ President's Special Assistant Walt Whitman Rostow to President Johnson, memorandum, *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 31: South and Central America; Mexico (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004).

⁶⁵ "Quality of Life in the Americas," *The Department of State Bulletin*, 1969.

⁶⁶ Keller, *Mexico's Cold War*, 162.

positioned as a latent sympathizer with the Castro regime but did not desire to undergo radical regime change.

Mexico, Cuba, and the United States

In January 1962, Mexico was the only state that abstained from voting to expel Cuba from the Organization of American States, which sent shockwaves across the Latin American community.⁶⁷ Mexico did not ideologically stand with Castro's regime; instead, the ambassador viewed this motion as essential to the nation's survival by appealing to domestic leftist revolutionaries.⁶⁸ Once again, in 1964, ahead of the Mexican presidential election, Mexico stood alone in voting against cutting all diplomatic and economic ties to Cuba, arguing that Cuba did not pose a significant threat to Latin American security.⁶⁹ At the same time, Mexican officials became increasingly concerned about the threat of leftist insurgents to the political regime. Declassified Mexican national security documents reflect these anxieties, as they consistently indicated that local leftist groups posed a significant threat to the political order.⁷⁰ Though Mexican officials did not align themselves with Cuba's ideological influences, they consistently supported Cuba's right to self-determination and non-intervention from the United States. On the

⁶⁷ Keller, *Mexico's Cold War*, 162.

⁶⁸ Keller, *Mexico's Cold War*, 157.

⁶⁹ Keller, *Mexico's Cold War*, 157.

⁷⁰ Keller, "A Foreign Policy for Domestic Consumption."

international stage, Mexico was viewed as strong-willed against foreign intervention, which was an increasing subject of concern to its citizenry and Latin America at large. In response, Castro commended Mexico as “the only state in Latin America for which our government feels sincere and profound respect.”⁷¹ The Mexican government garnered support from the international community and its domestic revolutionary base, effectively consolidating an advantageous position of agency and cooperation with two ideologically competing allies.

Many Mexican citizens supported Fidel Castro’s regime in Cuba due to their identification with the revolution as an expression of nationalism. The Mexican revolution played a key role in the construction of a Mexican national identity, and the Cuban revolution reminded them of an era of social upheaval and popular representation.⁷² The historical threat of foreign intervention in the Indigenous struggle for liberation from dictatorial President Porfirio Díaz shaped Mexico’s commitment to the principle of international nonintervention in a state’s domestic affairs.⁷³ Moreover, the Mexican people felt encouraged by Castro’s disavowal of U.S. intervention and envious of his ability to vigorously defend his nation’s sovereignty.⁷⁴ Combined with anti-American sentiment,

⁷¹ Covarrubias, “Cuba and Mexico: A Case for Mutual Nonintervention,” *Cuban Studies* 26 (1996): 121–41.

⁷² Renata Keller, “Fan Mail to Fidel,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 33, no. 1 (2017): 6–31.

⁷³ James F. Engel, “The Revolution and Mexican Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 11, no. 4 (1969): 518–32.

⁷⁴ Keller, “Fan Mail to Fidel.”

widespread domestic political insecurity translated to disbelief in the Mexican state's ability to represent its interests.

The United States understood Mexico's position regarding Cuba and reaffirmed Mexico's right to "exercise an independent foreign policy" while maintaining positive relations with the United States.⁷⁵ At the same time, the United States benefited greatly from Mexico's preferential relationship with and geographic proximity to Castro. As discussed by Ana Covarrubias, Mexico assisted the United States with several covert operations targeting Cuban foreign service officials. These included the stationing of CIA official Humberto Carrillo Colón as a foreign service officer in the Mexican embassy in Havana, as well as phone tapping and surveillance of all individuals entering the Cuban embassy in Mexico.⁷⁶ Despite the eventual discovery of this collusion, Cuban officials continued to blame the United States as the sole perpetrator of these challenges to their sovereignty.⁷⁷ Thus, the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico was much more reciprocal than can be inferred from Mexico's increasing anti-American sentiment among the population. This relationship cemented Mexico as a reliable and fiscally successful ally in Latin America that

⁷⁵ Donald F. Barnes and Hawthorne Q. Mills, "Conversation Between President Johnson and President Lopez Mateos," memorandum, February 21, 1964, Document 346, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, vol. 31: South and Central America; Mexico (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004).

⁷⁶ Covarrubias, "Cuba and Mexico," 133–34.

⁷⁷ Covarrubias, "Cuba and Mexico," 135.

the United States understood could be depended upon to maintain ideological ties to capitalism.

However, Mexico's dedication to the Alliance for Progress diminished once members of Mexico's domestic leftist party began to conflate participation in the program with sympathy for U.S. imperialism.⁷⁸

After his exit from office, former President Lázaro Cárdenas also played a significant role in criticizing U.S. involvement in Mexican affairs, even going so far as to threaten revolution to establish a pro-Castro Communist regime.⁷⁹ He went on to establish the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN), which became a profoundly influential political organization that advocated for “electoral transformation, rejection of North American imperialism, economic emancipation of campesinos [peasant farmers], workers, agricultural reform, and defense of the Cuban Revolution.”⁸⁰ The success of this movement and the proliferation of subsequent leftist labor organizations indicated popular discontent with U.S. involvement in internal affairs. Moreover, this revealed to the Mexican government that the working class identified strongly with the Cuban revolution. Thus, the fear of leftist influence caused President López Mateos to express outright support for Castro, effectively rallying support from the entire left-leaning coalition.⁸¹ With this

⁷⁸ Keller, *Mexico's Cold War*, 184.

⁷⁹ Keller, “A Foreign Policy For Domestic Consumption” 106.

⁸⁰ Keller, “A Foreign Policy For Domestic Consumption,” 108.

⁸¹ Keller, “A Foreign Policy For Domestic Consumption,” 107.

came a decreased commitment to U.S.-backed economic development programs and a de-prioritization of the Alliance for Progress.

Retrospective on the Alliance for Progress

My research found a significant disconnect between the retrospective views on the Alliance's failures and the discussions between U.S. and Mexican ambassadors and officials that reified their support for the program throughout the 1960s. Mexico had been economically prosperous throughout the 1960s and claimed to be fully dedicated to the Alliance for Progress's demands. In a conversation between Presidents López Mateos and Lyndon B. Johnson, Mateos expressed his belief that the program was "sound," contrary to the sentiments of other South American nations, and notably expressed that "his only criticism was that the Alliance often moved too slowly."⁸² Ironically, the Alliance moved slowly due to chronic lagging among the Mexican elite, who did not wish to engage in the newly established progressive tax policy or land redistribution.⁸³ Economically disenfranchised groups throughout Latin America thus began to blame the United States for their own governments' failure to effectively cooperate with the program, which exacerbated the existing anti-Americanism.⁸⁴ However, the United States continued to prioritize the potential for communist subversion as the explanation for the middle class'

⁸² Barnes and Mills, "Conversation Between President Johnson and President Lopez Mateos," February 21, 1964, *FRUS*.

⁸³ McPherson, *Yankee No!*

⁸⁴ Alan McPherson, *Yankee No!*

disillusionment with U.S. involvement in their affairs.⁸⁵ At the same time, the top-down model of progress inherent in the program allowed the Mexican elite to reap the benefits of the aid while suppressing popular discontent and ignoring the stark income inequality. Resentment against the failed program continued to build throughout the 1960s, thus entrenching the Alliance for Progress as a paternalistic economic aid program in historical memory.⁸⁶

By the decade's end Mexico's peasant class was largely exempt from the benefits of the immense industrial development brought about by financial aid. Although the agricultural and industrial sectors were remarkably stable, social reforms were not enacted, and the middle class was again left out of the picture of development.⁸⁷ Many Latin American countries further developed the sentiment that the U.S. did not prioritize sustained social development in the region, as U.S.-backed loans exclusively mandated economic reforms rather than social or political change.⁸⁸ This led to a common belief that the U.S.'s foreign economic development policy was inherently paternalistic, as it relied on organizations crafted on assumptions of inability for Latin American nations to pursue development independently of the U.S. Further, these loans often denied autonomy to Latin American borrowers, resulting in a one-size-fits-all approach

⁸⁵ "National Intelligence Estimate," Central Intelligence Agency, August 19, 1964, Document 24, in *FRUS*, 1964–1968, vol. 31: South and Central America; Mexico (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964).

⁸⁶ Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World*.

⁸⁷ Juan de Onis and Jerome I. Levinson, *The Alliance That Lost Its Way: A Critical Report on the Alliance for Progress* (Quadrangle Books, 1970).

⁸⁸ de Onis and Levinson, *The Alliance That Lost Its Way*, 14.

that was largely ineffective at improving living conditions for middle and working-class populations.

The goal of preventing the rise of Communist regimes throughout Latin America cannot be attributed to the economic benefits of the Alliance or the rise of a democratic left, as the U.S. conducted several military interventions throughout the 1960s and 70s that empowered conservative movements, such as in the Dominican Republic, Brazil, and Guatemala.⁸⁹ This fact both proved the ineffectiveness of the Rostovian modernization theory and the U.S.'s single-faceted, general approach to Latin American development. Thus, the Alliance systemically entrenched benefits for the elite, engaging in a trickle-down economic policy that resulted in contradictory effects for most of the Latin American population. Further, the Mexican government found it beneficial to place blame on the United States for the failed program, despite its role in profiting from the lack of equitable social measures.

Conclusion

In a 1973 letter to President Nixon, Mexican President Luis Echeverría shared a series of critical views of the U.S.'s policy in Latin America. Notably, he described that, “almost all observers and analysts agree that the last serious attempt on the part of the U.S. to define an attitude towards Latin America took

⁸⁹ de Onis and Levinson, *The Alliance That Lost Its Way*, 15.

place during the Kennedy era, through the Alliance for Progress.”⁹⁰ Throughout the rest of the letter, Echeverría claims that the Alliance’s failures were reflective of the United States’ policy throughout Latin America at this time, which was “characterized by its imprecision.”⁹¹ Echeverría further expanded on Rostow’s modernization theory, arguing that the self-help policy was “not acceptable to the peoples of Latin America who have a great need for equitable treatment in order to meet the demands of economic development.”⁹² Finally, he concedes that, “the relative failure of the main projects created during the last decade, such as regional integration and the Alliance for Progress, has led to ‘a new type of nationalism,’” among Latin American states, which required a reconfiguration of hemispheric relations that deemphasized the role of the U.S. in South American affairs.⁹³

This article has explored how the Alliance for Progress ended up radicalizing discontented middle-class populations in Mexico, forcing the hand of government officials to distance themselves from the program. In this bold letter, President Echeverría accurately expressed the program’s greatest miscalculations. By depending on a theoretical model of economic development based largely on neoliberal ideas of trickle-down economic theory, the Alliance’s

⁹⁰ Mexican President Luis Echeverría to President Nixon, Document 48, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, vol. E–11, part 1: Documents on Mexico; Central America, and the Caribbean, 1973–1976 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2015).

⁹¹ Mexican President Luis Echeverría to President Nixon, *FRUS*.

⁹² Mexican President Luis Echeverría to President Nixon, *FRUS*.

⁹³ Mexican President Luis Echeverría to President Nixon, *FRUS*.

institutional mechanism was largely incompatible with the domestic conditions in many Latin American countries. Fidel Castro's influence was largely prevented from reaching the upper echelons of government throughout Latin America, but, because of the rampant social inequality and growing anti-American sentiment, many working-class populations became increasingly leftist. Mexican campesinos became especially emboldened by Cuba's 'glorious revolution,' calling for an end to paternalistic U.S. involvement in their affairs after seeing the poor results of the Alliance for Progress. Thus, Mexican officials further alienated themselves from the United States to appease domestic leftist revolutionaries but continued to enrich themselves and maintain the status quo that relegated campesinos to the lower echelons of society. From the perspective of these populations, it was true, but ultimately avoidable, that there was *mucha alianza, poco progreso*.

**AN EMPIRE OF DEBT: SHIKARPURI MONEYLENDERS AND BRITISH
IMPERIALISM
IN QING CENTRAL ASIA**

CHRIS CARPENTER

On February 25, 1906, George Macartney, Kashgar's famed British consul, received word of a murder in the small town of Zanggyu, along the southern edge of the Tarim Basin.¹ According to the letter from Qian Binghuan, a Qing official in nearby Guma, the body, which had suffered multiple stab wounds, was that of Tilla Bai (Navind Ram), a moneylender from the Indian city of Shikarpur.² The ensuing case unfolded over the course of a year, revealing a predictable motive: the accused, one Tokhta Muhammad, was in debt to Tilla Bai and had taken the opportunity to burn the lender's account books on the night of the murder.³ Nearly ten months later, an increasingly frustrated Macartney wrote to the British Minister in Beijing, complaining of local authorities' "temporizing attitude" and attempting to marshal diplomatic pressure on the

¹ Macartney's precise diplomatic status in these years was disputed. Initially the "Special Assistant for Chinese Affairs to the Resident in Kashmir," he was declared a consul by British authorities in 1904. The Qing and Russian governments, however, did not recognize this consular status until 1908. Despite this unclear legal authority, Macartney still wielded significant local influence, often informally. I use the term "consul" here for convenience. See Emily Whewell, *Law Across Imperial Borders: British Consuls and Colonial Connections on China's Western Frontiers, 1880-1943*, (Manchester University Press, 2019), 107–10; "Zanguggy" is rendered "Zanguia" in the British documents.

² IOR/L/PS/7/187, Reg 822, no. 16M. Today, Shikarpur is located in Pakistan's Sindh region.

³ IOR/L/PS/7/188, Reg 941, no. 19M; IOR/L/PS/7/189, Reg 1101, no. 23M.

provincial government to bring the case to a close.⁴ A speedy sentencing of the accused was vital to the preservation of British “prestige,” Macartney insisted. To underscore the danger of an unresolved case, he reported that “owing to the murderers not having received punishment, the natives are becoming impudent and are refusing to pay their debts to the moneylenders.”⁵

This was neither the first nor the last time that British officials in Kashgar would be occupied with moneylending disputes.⁶ Yet the circumstances of, and responses to, the case reveal much about Shikarpuri moneylending networks, British power, and their impact on local society in early twentieth-century Xinjiang/East Turkestan. It reveals the ubiquity of Shikarpuri moneylenders in *Altishahr*'s socioeconomic landscape.⁷ By 1906, much of the region's Turkic-speaking Muslim population—including in relatively small and remote locations like Zanggy—was enveloped in webs of debt spearheaded in large part by lenders from Shikarpur. With chronic indebtedness came widespread discontent, revealed in the public rejection of debt payments glossed by Macartney as “impudence.” The consul's response to the murder is equally

⁴ After over a year of back-and-forth between Macartney and several provincial officials, the case eventually resulted in Tokha Muhammad condemned to death, and his servant, deemed an accessory to the murderer, sentenced to “a few years' rigorous imprisonment.” IOR/L/PS/7/203, Reg 1109, no. 24M.

⁵ IOR/L/PS/7/198 Reg 389, no. 6M.

⁶ Most, but certainly not all, of these cases ended somewhere short of murder. Still, they are among the most frequently appearing items in the diaries of Kashgar's British officials.

⁷ “*Altishahr*” is a Uyghur term meaning “six cities” and referring to the Tarim Basin region. I use it here interchangeably with “East Turkestan” in an effort to avoid repetitive prose.

revealing. Over the course of more than a year, he used his considerable diplomatic and political influence to press for a sentence that would satisfy his empire's "prestige" through the legal protection of the British-subject Shikarpuris.⁸

Early twentieth-century Altishahr was not a formal British colony; though it abutted Britain's Indian empire, the region itself was under relatively weak and uneven Chinese rule. Along the southern and western rims of the Tarim Basin, however, the Raj was a formidable economic, political, and legal power. This largely informal imperial hegemony appeared in stark relief in the hierarchies that marked the many European archaeological expeditions to the region. But these expeditions, important as they were, were only experienced directly by a minority of people. Still, British imperialism left a deep imprint on East Turkestan's economy and society, even among those who rarely, if ever, encountered Europeans. The economic dimensions of imperialism are crucial here: by the early twentieth century, Xinjiang was deeply and disadvantageously integrated with the economies of neighboring regions.⁹ Shikarpuri moneylenders were among the most important agents of this unequal

⁸ Many of these Shikarpuri moneylenders lived "unprotected in out of the way villages," Macartney wrote, rendering it "incumbent on the Chinese authorities" to punish the accused. IOR/L/PS/7/189, Reg 1101, no. 23M.

⁹ Here, I am specifically discussing the western and southern reaches of the Tarim Basin, where British power was strongest and where Shikarpuri moneylenders were concentrated. Other regions Xinjiang were more closely tied to include Russian Central Asia (Russian and British influence also competed in Kashgar). While Shikarpuri moneylenders were most prominent in this region, other moneylending networks (those originating from Tianjin, in eastern China, for example), predominated elsewhere in the province.

integration, and their impact touched vast swathes of local society. Thus, I contend that Shikarpuri networks of lending and debt—networks facilitated and sustained by British power—were among the most widespread and visible manifestations of British imperialism in late-Qing Altishahr.

The role of Shikarpuri moneylenders in late Qing Xinjiang/East Turkestan reveals the layered nature of imperial power. Indian mercantile and moneylending networks in Central Asia predated British rule and operated with some autonomy from the British state. However, the dramatic expansion of Shikarpuri moneylending in Xinjiang around the turn of the twentieth century was underwritten by British imperial power, a fact clearly recognized by officials and lenders alike. British subjecthood offered the Shikarpuris a powerful ally in the colonial state, which though not directly in control of the region, possessed immense legal and political sway. South Asian economic activity, of which Shikarpuri moneylending networks were a key part, also served as a powerful instrument of British economic imperialism and a link between India and the Tarim Basin, allowing British officials to extend their economic and political sphere of influence, while countering that of their rival, Russia. Shikarpuri moneylenders thus formed an economic network that operated, with some friction, as a subsidiary and agent of British imperial power, while also using such power to further its own interests in a layered system of hegemony extending across the region—to devastating effect for many local communities.

Despite the prominence of Shikarpuri moneylenders in contemporary documents, there is a striking dearth of secondary research on the subject. Scott

Levi's study of the Indian merchant diaspora in Central Asia focuses largely on an earlier era, and although briefly noting the relatively late growth of Shikarpuri commercial activity in East Turkestan, it largely limits this region to a side note.¹⁰ Claude Markovits, in his study of Shikarpuri merchant networks, similarly emphasizes the western reaches of Central Asia, and does not explore Xinjiang in depth.¹¹ Emily Whewell's study of British consuls and colonial law in western China offers valuable insight into the legal status of British subjects, the activities of British representatives, and, to an extent, the makeup of the British Indian community in the province. Yet, Whewell's account is limited in several areas. Her focus is on British officials and their interactions with both Chinese authorities and Indian subjects, while the local population of East Turkestan, and the impact of imperial authority on their lives, is generally overlooked. Whewell discusses British responses to urgent legal cases, demonstrating their navigation of legal precedent, local custom, and practical needs to resolve disputes, but the emphasis is placed on British representatives, portrayed as professional and resourceful. The local effects of imperial hierarchies fade into the background.¹² On the other hand, scholars like Ildikó

¹⁰ Scott C. Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and Its Trade, 1550–1900* (Brill, 2002), 157.

¹¹ Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 94–98.

¹² For example, Whewell concludes her fifth chapter by noting that “[British consuls] tried to balance the concerns of peaceful community relations, the importance of local custom and the rights of British subjects.” Yet this formulation fails to problematize these categories (why, and to what end, were the British seeking to avoid communal strife, for example? Not out of altruism, of course—the goal was to extend an imperial sphere of influence in an orderly manner, with all of the hierarchies that this entailed). It also fails to sufficiently reckon with the effects of British imperial

Bellér-Hann have written in depth on Uyghur economic and social life in this era, providing a valuable portrait of everyday life. Yet while mentioning the prevalence of debt in the region, she only briefly mentions the role of Shikarpuri lenders.¹³ In addition to a general lack of research on the subject, in other words, existing scholarship remains divided between studies of British and British Indian legal and economic networks, and studies of local society, with a limited sense of how these spheres interacted.

To understand the role of Shikarpuri moneylenders and British power in local Turki society, it is thus necessary to turn to primary source documents, the most detailed of which are British India Office files, particularly the diaries of the Special Assistant for Chinese Affairs/Consul in Kashgar.¹⁴ Indeed, these are some of the only available sources on Shikarpuri economic networks in the early twentieth century. Lenders are often mentioned in the accounts of European expeditions to Central Asia, but while important, these sources are less detailed and systematic than their archival counterparts. British archival documents are thus extremely valuable, but they must be used with caution. These documents were written by imperial functionaries whose overriding

maneuvering on local society. Additionally, it is worth noting that most of Whewell's legal case studies date from the post-Qing era, whereas this study focuses on the pre-1912 years. Whewell, *Law Across Imperial Borders*, 143–44.

¹³ Ildikó Bellér-Hann, *Community Matters in Xinjiang: 1880–1949: Towards a Historical Anthropology of the Uyghur* (Brill, 2008), 99, 131.

¹⁴ The Turkic-speaking Muslims living in East Turkestan, today known as the Uyghurs, were generally referred to as “Turki” in the English-language documents of the time. I use that term here to avoid anachronism. Locals in this era generally referred to themselves as Musulman (Muslim), a term that seems to have carried ethnic as well as religious connotations.

interest was in British power and prestige, along with regional stability. Accordingly, they present information understood to have implications for British policy. Their concern was not with the everyday experiences of local people, and thus the hierarchies and impositions that marked local life generally went unmentioned unless seen to carry implications for Britain. These documents, often disdainful of Shikarpuri moneylending practices, demonstrate the significant role of British power in fostering the extension of these networks. When read critically, they offer valuable insight into the relationship of Shikarpuri moneylenders to British power, and the effects of both on local society. This study thus uses archival records to uncover the impact of British and British Indian economic and political power on Central Asian society.

Indian commercial and moneylending networks were well-established elsewhere in Central Asia long before the rise of British imperialism in the region, but the powerful Shikarpuri presence in East Turkestan was a relatively late development. It was also one that owed a great deal to British power. The dramatic expansion of the Shikarpuri presence in the region was a product of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, growing even as the larger Shikarpuri community in Russian Central Asia remained stagnant or declined.¹⁵ This was enabled by the weakness of Qing administration, along with the outsized role of British legal and political power in providing protection to, and furthering the interests of, its subjects. Already in the 1890s, British sources

¹⁵ On the decline of the Indian merchant diaspora in late nineteenth-century Russian Central Asia, see Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and Its Trade*, 250–58.

document concentrations of Shikarpuri lenders across the region.¹⁶ In the first decade of the twentieth century, the number of Shikarpuris in Xinjiang grew rapidly. In 1903, Macartney reported that the community's number would "receive a considerable increase this year," as part of a consistent pattern.¹⁷ The following year, he reported that "60 new arrivals" were expected from Shikarpur.¹⁸ In 1905, he wrote that the "ever increasing" number of Shikarpuris in the province now totaled over 400.¹⁹ Travelers' reports give the same impression. Visiting Central Asia for the second time in 1906, British archaeologist Aurel Stein noticed a Shikarpuri presence significantly larger than what he encountered six years prior.²⁰ Macartney was certain he knew the reason for the increase: the growth of Shikarpuri moneylending networks, he wrote, "[owed] doubtless to the protection afforded by this office."²¹

The presence and growth of British consular power was indispensable to the expansion of Shikarpuri moneylending operations. British representatives in Kashgar saw the furthering of Anglo-Indian economic networks in the region

¹⁶ IOR/L/PS/7/74, Secretary's Notes 1263 and 1265F. Markovits and Levi both note that, while there is evidence for a small number of Shikarpuris in East Turkestan as early as the 1830s, the dramatic growth of the community in the region began in the 1890s—timing corresponding to the growth of Britain's presence in Kashgar. Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, 94-95; Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and Its Trade*, 157.

¹⁷ IOR/L/PS/7/160, Reg 1729, no. 50M.

¹⁸ IOR/L/PS/7/171, Reg 2114a, no. 45M.

¹⁹ IOR/L/PS/7/185, Reg 487, no. 7M.

²⁰ Aurel Stein, *Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China* (Macmillan, 1912), 140-41; 153.

²¹ IOR/L/PS/7/134, Reg 823, no. 218.

as a crucial method for extending their empire's sphere of influence and counteracting that of their Russian rivals.²² Britain's role was therefore not limited to physical protection of Shikarpuri and other Indian subjects, but aimed to actively extend their economic interests, including in debt transactions.²³ As early as the 1890s, Macartney intervened with Qing officials on behalf of Indian merchants and moneylenders. While the legal role of the British consulate became increasingly formalized in the early twentieth century, much of Britain's local influence was, as Whewell notes, not governed by formal treaty relations, especially prior to the designation and recognition of Macartney as consul. Whewell argues that this "non-treaty-based extraterritoriality" limited Britain's influence in the region.²⁴ While there certainly were limits to the empire's power in this vast province around the turn of the twentieth century, however, British documents make it clear that the consul played an important role in facilitating Shikarpuri moneylending, even in a situation of legal pluralism and unclear jurisdiction.

By the early twentieth century, the Qing state was weak, Britain possessed both an empire in India and semicolonial influence in China, and British subjects enjoyed powerful extraterritorial privileges (and often substantial capital). In this context, British consular power became a vital source

²² Whewell, *Law Across Imperial Borders*, 100.

²³ As Whewell notes, British subjects in Kashgaria were almost entirely of South Asian origin. Whewell, *Law Across Imperial Borders*, 132–36.

²⁴ Whewell, *Law Across Imperial Borders*, 105–7.

of protection and legal assistance for Shikarpuri lenders. Macartney and others repeatedly noted that, despite ostensible regulations on the trade, they were often able to rely on the “assistance” and “friendly [disposition]” of local officials in recovering debts, even when interest rates dramatically exceeded the legal limit.²⁵ The power of these moneylenders, often over and above Qing law, owed much to British legal and diplomatic influence. A case from 1894, one of the earliest in which Shikarpuri lenders are mentioned in records from Kashgar, demonstrates how this influence functioned on the ground.²⁶ In April of that year, Macartney reported that “three Hindus,” including one Chandar Bhan, approached him for assistance in debt-related cases. Chandar Bhan sought the recovery of 30,000 Tangas that he claimed were owed by Qing subjects, and sought Macartney’s “good offices with the local officials” to this end. By appealing to Macartney, Chandar Bhan sought to avoid standard legal channels—going to the magistrate directly, he argued, was useless, because the *yamen*’s “Musalman” interpreters would “represent things in a light unfavorable for him.” Macartney informed the lender that, while his activities were of dubious legality, he would intervene with the magistrate “on his behalf.”²⁷ When he did so, the local magistrate assured him that he always provided

²⁵ IOR/L/PS/7/74, Secretary’s Nos 1263 & 1265F. This same document, from 1894, reveals interest rates to be as high as 100 to 130% annually (later documents record much higher rates). The highest legal rate, Macartney reported, was 36% per annum. See IOR/L/PS/7/172, Reg 2179a, no. 2M.

²⁶ IOR/L/PS/7/74, Secretary’s Nos. 1263 & 1265F.

²⁷ Macartney stated that “the lending of money on interest was a trade badly considered by the local authorities, and was one unlawful for Chinese subjects to carry on.” IOR/L/PS/7/74, Secretary’s Nos 1263 & 1265F.

assistance to “the Hindus,” even in debt-related cases.²⁸ Even without a formal treaty or consular status, then, British influence in the region allowed lenders to access legal backing to which they were not officially entitled. The brief but intriguing mention of “Musalman” interpreters also seems to demonstrate local resentment of such practices, and the importance of British power in circumventing this.

British representatives and Shikarpuri moneylenders had access to numerous avenues of influence. As the Chandar Bhan case demonstrates, lenders could and did appeal to British officials for assistance in recovering debts. While they were not always successful, such political influence was necessary given Shikarpuri lenders’ well-documented reputation for loaning money on bad security and with exorbitant interest rates.²⁹ Even outside of specific cases, British representatives made it clear that they expected Qing solicitude towards Indian moneylenders. In 1896, for example, Macartney sent a translator to inform local officials that “the Hindus” sought (and, by implication, should receive) “these officials’ good-will and...assistance in collecting debts.”³⁰ In 1899, faced with a proposal from local officials to ban Indian subjects’ moneylending lending on interest, Macartney argued that the

²⁸ The magistrate added that, while interest rates were “exorbitantly high,” he generally encouraged lenders to settle cases with “the principal a lower rate than that agreed upon.” He connected this to the apparently common practice of “taking receipts from persons for a larger sum than that actually lent,” allowing, on paper, for the illusion of lower interest rates. IOR/L/PS/7/74, Secretary’s Nos 1263 & 1265F.

²⁹ IOR/L/PS/7/74, Secretary’s Nos 1263 & 1265F.

³⁰ IOR/L/PS/7/85, 941 F, no. 183 F.

“evils connected with” moneylending were “not so grave as to call for urgent action,” and opposed a ban on the grounds that “abuses” connected with the trade could be “kept well in hand” without outright prohibition.³¹ Years later, in 1904, Macartney continued to facilitate these operations, informing the Yarkand prefect that the aim of his visit to the city was “partly to see how the Indian trade was getting on, and partly to help our traders recover their outstanding debts from Chinese subjects.”³² In the same document, Macartney reported that, while he was aware of “bullying on the part of Shikarpuris,” he did not intend to “give any encouragement” to the large crowd of locals who took the occasion of his visit to petition the consul for “relief against money-lenders.”

Even without the direct intervention of consular representatives, imperial protection paid off for lenders. In 1907, Macartney wrote that “As a British subject, [the creditor] enjoys a certain prestige, he can make himself heard in the Yamen.”³³ Access to capital further enhanced Shikarpuris’ considerable local influence—secured, Macartney observed, “by judicious bribing.”³⁴ Finally, British-Indian subjects were able to wield influence as *aqsaqals* (trade representatives). *Aqsaqals* were a longstanding, recognized institution in Central Asia, representing foreign trading communities and mediating small-scale commercial disputes. Over time, as Whewell argues, the

³¹ IOR/L/PS/7/113, no. 94.

³² IOR/L/PS/7/171, Reg 2114a, no. 45M.

³³ IOR/L/PS/7/202, Reg 1035, no. 22M.

³⁴ IOR/L/PS/7/171, Reg 2114a, no. 45M.

direct British role in the selection of Indian aqsaqals grew as that of Qing authorities declined.³⁵ These aqsaqals reported to the consul, and as late as the 1930s, were clearly identified with British power: in 1935, Swiss traveler Ella Maillart (travelling with Peter Fleming, a British national) reported hearing from locals of “Engleesh” in the town of Cherchen: “They even had an aksakal there.”³⁶ Maillart clarified that the aqsaqal in question was a British Indian subject, but still described him as “*our* aksakal [emphasis in original].” Thus, despite occasional friction between British consuls and Shikarpuri moneylenders (as well as among Shikarpuris themselves), lending operations in East Turkestan were largely underwritten by British power, secured by a combination of informal influence and formal legal arrangements.³⁷

The significance of this imperial protection was clear to both the British and the Shikarpuris. As early as 1899, one Shikarpuri aqsaqal in Yarkand wrote to Macartney to inform him of the recovery of an large debt, declaring that “All this is due to your [Macartney’s] assistance, otherwise there was no chance for the repayment of such a large sum of money.”³⁸ On his second visit to the

³⁵ Whewell, *Law Across Imperial Borders*, 128–31.

³⁶ Ella Maillart, *Forbidden Journey: From Peking to Kashmir* (William Heinemann LTD, 1937), 171.

³⁷ Macartney and others, as demonstrated in the Tilla Bai case mentioned in the introduction, could also appeal to British representatives in Beijing for added support, leaning on the country’s semicolonial diplomatic influence to press legal cases and secure favorable conditions. IOR/L/PS/7/203, Reg 1109, no. 24M. Whewell records numerous other appeals to Beijing to secure objectives in Kashgar. Whewell, *Law Across Imperial Borders*, 102.

³⁸ IOR/L/PS/7/116, 33 M, no. 3537.

region in 1906, Hungarian-born British archaeologist Aurel Stein encountered “two dozen odd Hindu money-lenders” greeting him upon his arrival in Yangi-Hissar. That they recognized the role of British power is clear in Stein’s explanation of this episode: they expressed a “quite genuine” “wish to offer attention to an officer of the ‘Sirkar’ which *protects them in this land of highly profitable exile* [my emphasis].”³⁹ That lenders recognized the value of appeals to the British consul is made clear by the sheer volume of debt-recovery cases which they submitted to the representative. Moneylending cases were by far the most common variety with which consuls dealt. Though we lack clear numbers for the Qing period, statistics from 1922 and 1923 record 157 civil suits by British subjects against Chinese defendants: 146 of these were debt-related.⁴⁰ So widely known was the role of British power in facilitating Shikarpuri moneylending that, in 1908, a “Kanjuti” in Hunza told acting British consul A.R.B Shuttleworth that “We all know why the Sirkar keeps a Sahib at Kashgar and pays him well; it is to collect the bad debts of the money-lender.” In his report, Shuttleworth added that “I think a great many people in Kashgaria think the same.”⁴¹

³⁹ Stein, *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, 104–5.

⁴⁰ Whewell, *Law Across Imperial Borders*, 137. British legal assistance was in fact recognized as being such a valuable resource that even non-British subjects often sought to claim British nationality. As Qing authorities had little idea of how many British subjects were residing in the province, these claims were a frequent source of official anxiety. See IOR/L/PS/7/171, Reg 2114a, no. 45M; IOR/L/PS/7/172, Reg. 2179, no. 2M; and IOR/L/PS/7/189, Reg. 1101, no. 23M.

⁴¹ IOR/L/PS/7/221, Reg 1775, no. 36M. In this document, Shuttleworth argues that “[Shikarpuris in Xinjiang] only exist through being British subjects.” Having come to see moneylending activities as more of a liability than an asset to British power, he proposed restricting Shikarpuri operations in the region by limiting their access to

There can be no doubt that the Shikarpuris' moneylending business was carried on at the expense of the local population. By 1907, Macartney observed that the trade was "manifestly discreditable and is impoverishing the people."⁴² While British reports were concerned more with diplomatic affairs than with the condition of local society, the latter had a way of intruding on the former and the effects of widespread indebtedness proved impossible to ignore. Nearly everywhere British representatives travelled, they were inundated with moneylending disputes. At Karghalik in 1907, Macartney was "besieged by a crowd of [the Shikarpuris' victims]" in a "destitute condition," many of whom "should have repaid the amount perhaps twenty times over, yet somehow were still in debt."⁴³ Lending practices were notorious for predatory interest rates and widely recognized, in the words of one Qing official, as a "a transaction calculated to bring hardships on the borrower."⁴⁴ Shikarpuri lenders were also notorious for seizing and (unlawfully) confining debtors or the relatives of debtors; Shuttleworth observed that they "seem to think there is no law here."⁴⁵ Despite their empire's facilitation of these debt-related "hardships," many British representatives expressed personal revulsion towards these practices, with some going so far as to consider moneylending more harmful than

British subjecthood. Nothing seems to have come of this, as Shikarpuri moneylending networks continue to appear in the sources well into the 1930s.

⁴² IOR/L/PS/7/202, Reg 1035, no. 22M.

⁴³ IOR/L/PS/7/202, Reg 1035, no. 22M.

⁴⁴ IOR/L/PS/7/113, 94, no. 83.

⁴⁵ IOR/L/PS/7/221, Reg 1775, no. 36M.

beneficial to the extension of imperial economic interests. Still, they seem to have done little to prevent it: even when British representatives supported investigations into the conduct of individual lenders, Macartney clarified that “agitation against the Shikarpuris, as a body, should be stopped.” Nor did the problem seem to improve with time: even in the 1920s, consular documents were filled with reports of Shikarpuri lending practices—characterized, in the words of then-consul P.T. Etherton, by “unrestricted activities, extortion and oppression.”⁴⁶

British documents also record considerable local resistance to these practices, ranging from legal appeals to violence. In 1901, Macartney recorded an instance of villagers at Bora Khitai “anxious to have the Hindu [Paras Ram, a Shikarpuri lender] ordered out of the village.”⁴⁷ Several years later, he wrote that “the attitude of the people [at Abad Bazar] was so threatening” that eight Shikarpuris were forced out.⁴⁸ The economic influence of Shikarpuri moneylenders allowed many to exercise power over debtors and communities at the local level. Macartney reported a particularly dramatic incident from Kashgar in 1907. A Shikarpuri moneylender (Nichal) and his local wife claimed to have “purchased an infant girl...from her parents” several years earlier; the lender presented Macartney with a document purporting to verify this

⁴⁶ IOR/L/PS/10/825.

⁴⁷ IOR/L/PS/7/139, Reg 1385, no. 412. Paras Ram had reported to Macartney that the villagers had attempted to force him out “under threat of assault.” The villagers denied this charge, but admitted to wanting the lender gone.

⁴⁸ IOR/L/PS/7/203, Reg 1109, no. 24M.

transaction.⁴⁹ In early May of that year, however, his house was attacked by a 200 to 300-strong local crowd, who claimed that the man had “stolen” the girl. Once in the house, they destroyed the lender’s account books. Macartney seems to have sided with Nichal, claiming that the recovery of the “stolen” girl was a mere “pretence,” and implied that “the natives” aimed to force the lender out of the city. He argued that Nichal’s departure would “give courage to his enemies” and advised him to stay under Qing protection. Whether the girl was stolen or not, however, this case resulted from accumulated resentments over the economic power and coercion of moneylenders at the local level—coercion, as demonstrated in this case, safeguarded by the British consulate.

The British documents suggest that local particularly cases in which Shikarpuris, aided by economic exploitation, were seen to transgress sexual or ethnic boundaries.⁵⁰ Whewell, for example, notes a 1922 case in which one Anant Ram (who was ultimately acquitted by the consul), had run off with

⁴⁹ IOR/L/PS/7/203, Reg 1109, no. 24M. The legal status of this marriage seems unclear. Shikarpuri Hindu marriages with local Muslim women were common and widely known, although they were often of dubious legality. Macartney, in this report, used vague language, saying that Nichal “calls [the local woman] his wife.” For more on Shikarpuri-local marriages, see Whewell, *Law Across Imperial Borders*, 135.

⁵⁰ The significance of sexual and communal boundaries in a context marked by new forms of hierarchy and exploitation was by no means limited to the southern and western reaches of the province. Eric Schluessel has examined the same phenomenon elsewhere in the region, where the groups involved were Muslims (Turki, later Uyghurs), Han Chinese, and Hui. Crucially, he notes the gendered aspect of these cases, describing them as instances of “patriarchies in competition,” a framework useful in this context as well. Eric Schluessel, *Land of Strangers: The Civilizing Project in Qing Central Asia* (Columbia University Press, 2020), 118.

Zainab Khan, a local Muslim girl.⁵¹ The consul (in the face of Chinese pressure) argued that despite the marriage's apparent illegitimacy under Chinese and Islamic law, Ram could not be punished because he had obtained the "consent" of Zainab Khan's parents. Such consent was clearly not freely given, however: the indebted parents had given their daughter to Ram "in lieu of a debt payment."⁵² Ram's acquittal speaks volumes about the degree of coercion and everyday violence that consular officials were prepared to tolerate, so long as it did not interfere with public order. Throughout the southern and western reaches of the Tarim Basin, the extremely onerous economic and social power of Shikarpuri moneylenders, enabled by East Turkestan's relative poverty and British imperial influence, became a part of everyday life.

Given the legal power of the British representative, much of this resistance consisted of appeals to the consul for relief, appeals which were usually disappointed. Travelling around the vast region, Macartney and others received appeals (dozens, if not hundreds, in individual towns and cities)⁵³ for relief from debtors whom he observed had "given probably everything they possessed to the Shikarpuris, not excluding the honor of their wives and

⁵¹ Anant Ram was also accused, and acquitted, of killing a man with his cart. Whewell, *Law Across Imperial Borders*, 141.

⁵² Whewell does not explore the implications of the debt relationship in detail, instead using the case as an example of British consuls taking "local custom" into consideration when judging cases, another example of failing to reckon with multiple layers of imperial exploitation. Whewell, *Law Across Imperial Borders*, 141.

⁵³ IOR/L/PS/7/224, Reg 2225, no. 50M.

daughters.”⁵⁴ Consuls, despite their evidently low opinion of the moneylenders, were generally unwilling to assist indebted locals. Helping even a small number, Macartney rationalized, would prompt “100 others” to petition for relief, jeopardizing British Indian economic interests more broadly.⁵⁵ On other occasions, British representatives cast doubt on local testimonies against Shikarpuri lenders, arguing that, as they were “thoroughly detested,” “the natives...would not have scrupled to play...any trick however mean to get [them] into trouble.”⁵⁶ Many local Qing officials expressed similar sentiments. At Guma, Macartney found an official who thought poorly of “the natives of the country,” who allegedly “borrowed freely...and never thought of paying back.” Accordingly, the Qing official advised his British interlocutor “not to lend too willing an ear to the people.”⁵⁷ These appeals and their outcomes illustrate two key points. First, that as much disdain as some British officials (and presumably some of their Qing counterparts) may have held for Shikarpuri moneylenders, they were unwilling to place “native” interests above those of

⁵⁴ IOR/L/PS/7/202, Reg 1035, no. 22M.

⁵⁵ IOR/L/PS/7/202, Reg 1035, no. 22M.

⁵⁶ IOR/L/PS/7/171, Reg 2114a, no. 45M. In this case, the moneylender in question was suspected of murder, charges that Macartney did not investigate in depth. Though “corpses had been found on his premises,” Macartney wrote, “there was nothing to show that he was responsible for the death of any one.” He therefore “did not go into [these] charges very closely.” In another instance, Macartney argued that “the petitioners for relief often told the grossest lies, with the object of repudiating their indebtedness.” IOR/L/PS/7/202, Reg 1035, no. 22M.

⁵⁷ IOR/L/PS/7/202, Reg 1035, no. 22M.

their economic empire.⁵⁸ The second is that, even in the absence of a clear-cut anti-imperial movement among locals in East Turkestan at this point, it was widely understood that there was some connection between Shikarpuri moneylenders and British power. This explains why, in the face of such frequent disappointments, so many continued to petition the Kashgar consul for relief.

These accumulating hardships and resentments erupted in Yarkand in 1907. What began as a confrontation over a Hindu merchant's relationship with a local woman quickly spiraled into intercommunal rioting that was only narrowly defused through the actions of magistrate Peng Xuzhan and Macartney. Adding fuel to the Hindu-Muslim fire were a series of inflammatory statements allegedly made by resident Hindus. "With money," one was reported to have said, "the Hindus could debauch the daughters of the Muhammadans...in the mosque."⁵⁹ This and similar statements indexed a clear

⁵⁸ Historian Justin Jacobs argues that European and Qing officials shared a sense of superiority over East Turkestan's "native" population. These were "gentlemen of empire" who took for granted their superiority as rulers over the ruled. This was also an era in which new ideas of colonialism, shaped by European examples, were becoming increasingly known to Chinese officials in Xinjiang. Either way, this case seems to provide another example of British and Qing officials harboring converging ideas about Altishahr's subject population. Justin Jacobs, *The Compensations of Plunder: How China Lost its Treasures* (University of Chicago Press, 2020), 122–25.

⁵⁹ IOR/L/PS/7202, Reg 1062, no. 99, page 4. Another was quoted as saying that Hindus could "do *zan-bazī* inside the mosque by tint of Yambus and Seers." "*Zan-bazī*" is a Persian term for womanizing, while "Yambus and Seers" both refer to currency, once again reflecting a sense that Indian moneylenders could use economic power to transgress sexual and communal boundaries. As Eric Schluessel notes, whether or not these statements were actually uttered is perhaps less relevant than the widespread public sentiment that they capture. Eric Schluessel, "The Muslim Emperor of China: Everyday Politics in Colonial Xinjiang, 1877-1933" (PhD diss., Harvard University), 208-209. Connected to this was a sense, noted by Schluessel, of Hindu economic power threatening local masculinity: in one particularly revealing line,

sense of threat among Yarkand's Muslim population. Indian moneylenders had acquired unchecked economic and social power, which allowed them to run roughshod over local religious practices and sexual norms. As the confrontation escalated, local Hindus appealed to Macartney for protection, with some allegedly refusing to come to a compromise before the consuls arrival in the city. When Macartney arrived in Yarkand, however, he was met by a crowd of "5,000 or 6,000 people," petitioning "against the Hindus in connection with the mosque incident."⁶⁰ By the time he met with magistrate Peng, however, it was clear that the raging dispute was not limited to one incident. It had instead become a broader revolt against Shikarpuri power. The crisis in Yarkand, Macartney wrote, "was becoming the excuse for a general agitation against the Hindus, because they were money-lenders, because they were keeping Muhammadan women, because they had got proud, and had forgotten their former position in this country, &c."⁶¹ In other words, the economic and social coercion exercised by Shikarpuri moneylenders had grown too oppressive to ignore.

The upheaval in Yarkand (which echoed elsewhere in Altishahr) offers a valuable window into the social, economic, and diplomatic implications of British-enabled Shikarpuri moneylending networks in late-Qing Central Asia.

Macartney reported a Yarkandi man as having exclaimed "Is there no Muhammadan *man* here [emphasis in original]" during the riots.

⁶⁰ IOR/L/PS/7202, Reg 1062, no. 99, 3.

⁶¹ IOR/L/PS/7202, Reg 1062, no. 99, 5.

The large-scale nature of the conflict, involving thousands of people in multiple cities, is revealing of the ubiquity of debt and moneylending throughout the region. The effects of Shikarpuri economic networks, in other words, were clearly felt by large swaths of society; accordingly, resistance to them was a mass movement as well. “The common complaint,” Macartney observed, “was that the Hindus were simply devouring up the people, justice being denied to the latter on account of the weakness and corruption of the Chinese rule.”⁶² As in many instances of late-Qing popular revolt, the aggrieved voiced a sense of denied justice necessitating their drastic actions. The confrontation thus paints a picture of widespread indebtedness as a mass social phenomenon, enabled by the province’s political situation. Also crucial is the rapidity with which Macartney was drawn into the conflict as an authority and a site of appeal, demonstrating a clear sense of Britain’s regional power and connection to the Shikarpuri moneylending enterprise. As Britain’s representative in the province, Macartney sought to protect British subjects and interests, and to avert large-scale conflict that could endanger the empire’s position in the region. In an extremely revealing sidenote, the consul added that although his “sympathies were with the Muhammadans,” “we must not make them feel that they were in hand, or else we should have a crop of troubles all over the country.”⁶³ In other words, to Britain’s imperial representatives, the “natives” of East Turkestan could not be permitted to exercise their own power, lest they place the empire’s

⁶² IOR/L/PS/7202, Reg 1062, no. 99, 6.

⁶³ IOR/L/PS/7202, Reg 1062, no. 99, 5.

interests and prestige in jeopardy. At the end of the day, imperial authority would continue to further networks of exploitation and debt.

In the last decades of Qing rule, Xinjiang/East Turkestan was subject to a nested and overlapping set of imperial hierarchies.⁶⁴ Though these were not limited to the British empire, the role of British power and Shikarpuri moneylending networks reveals a type of layered imperial hegemony: one operating outside of formal colonial borders and mediated by debt and economic dependency. As British authorities sought to push their economic, political, and legal sphere of influence into Qing Central Asia, Shikarpuri moneylenders (colonial subjects themselves), acted as economic agents of empire, while harnessing British influence to further their own interests.

Crucially, this layered economic imperialism cannot be understood solely with reference to British authorities, Qing officials, and Indian subjects. Instead, we must examine developments on the ground, with attention to the experiences and voices of the local Turki population. Subject to an often-suffocating degree of British and British-Indian economic power, but not entitled to any imperial protection, these subaltern populations lay close to the bottom of a layered system of imperial hierarchies mediated by debt, money,

⁶⁴ In addition to British imperialism in the southern and western reaches of the Tarim Basin, Russia exerted powerful economic and political influence over much of the province. Additionally, with the Qing reconquest of the region in the 1870s, China's Hunan Army sought to remold the region in line with Neo-Confucian orthodoxy in a system resembling a colonial "civilizing mission." Though this essay has focused on British imperialism, all of these systems interacted in the last decades of the Qing empire. Future research could fruitfully explore the intersections of these imperial and colonial projects.

and law.⁶⁵ By reading British consular documents critically, however, it is possible to recover echoes of these voices, revealing these British-enabled Shikarpuri moneylending networks to be among the most widely and directly experienced manifestations of imperial power in Turki society. And while this may seem like an unusual case, it reveals much about the nested nature of imperial power more broadly. Indeed, in today's age of formal national sovereignty, direct colonialism (à la British India) is widely seen as an anachronism.⁶⁶ But amid extreme global economic inequality and dramatic disparities in political power, imperial hegemony endures in new forms (often mediated by different forms of debt). Perhaps then, Britain's indirect and layered economic empire in Qing Central Asia has more to teach us about the modern world than we have previously realized.

⁶⁵ Turki society, of course, was not monolithic, and one's exact relationship to imperial power likely varied based on social position, location, and other factors. Some sections of local society are more visible in the sources than others. Despite the frequency of accounts involving women, for example, women's voices are extremely difficult to discern from these documents (and would make a fascinating topic for further research). My point here is simply the position of Turki society in general vis-à-vis British and British Indian power.

⁶⁶ Of course, direct colonialism does persist in many regions (many have argued that this includes East Turkestan itself). My point here is not that such cases no longer exist; it is simply that direct colonialism is widely seen as a thing of the past, and that formally independent nation-states (in reality enveloped in imperial hierarchy) are taken to be a global norm.

**"WE ARE AN AFRICAN PEOPLE!" African Liberation Day 1972
and the Rebuilding of a Pan-African Movement**

JOVANNA WALKER

Introduction

Dust rose and settled as thousands of Black people filed into Malcolm X Park. Red, black, and green flags waved in the humid breeze as afros expanded and fists reached for the sky. Children in all-white sweaters and black pants lined up in a single file and grabbed onto the ends of the banner that read "AFRICAN LIBERATION DAY WASHINGTON DC MAY 27, 1972."

Babies were strapped to the backs of fathers who held signs that read "Portugal is the running dog of U.S. Imperialism" and "Gulf: Wanted for murder." Conga drums lined the southwestern portion of the park, and Black college students slammed their palms on the rawhide skin as women in batik print blouses, mud cloth dresses, white abayas, and denim bell bottoms danced alongside each other. Small children chased each other and dug in the dirt as they waited for their parents to call their names.

To the east, black shades graced the faces of the cadre of the Committee for a Unified Newark, dressed in all black, who awaited directions from a man with a stack of papers in one hand and a small red and white megaphone in the other. Imamu Amiri Baraka stood in the center of the park and spoke with 74-year-old Audley "Queen Mother" Moore. Roy Innis and several other comrades joined the discussion and dispersed at 11:00 AM as the cadre began to lead a procession onto 16th Street. Brothers and sisters descended the aggregate concrete steps and were led onto the streets protected

by a line of volunteers with red armbands.¹ White Brush Hill charter buses, which carried people from the midwestern, southern, and northern corners of the United States, lined the streets, narrowing the body of the march as it traveled right onto U Street.

A black pickup truck covered in red, black, and green flags rolled slowly around the corner as a man in all black stood on the truck bed chanting:

LONG LIVE AFRICA
AFRICA IS GONNA WIN
*LONG LIVE PEOPLE'S WAR!*²

This was the momentous scene at the largest all-Black demonstration in support of Africa since the days of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA): African Liberation Day (ALD) in Washington, D.C.³ On May 27, 1972, approximately nine thousand African Americans convened in Meridian Hill Park—a 12-acre national park built on the settled grounds of a post-Civil War African American community—which was reclaimed by Black nationalists in the preceding years and colloquially referred to as Malcolm X Park.⁴ The demonstration began on the streets of the historically Black U Street corridor and proceeded along a five-hour route that

¹ Horace W. Peaslee, “Notes on the Concrete Work of Meridian Hill Park, Washington,” *Landscape Architecture* 21, no. 1 (1930): 31–38.

² Howard Fuller, “African Liberation Day – 1972,” August 17, 2014, YouTube, 35:37, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmcbne_3eFQ&t=840s.

³ Fuller, “African Liberation Day – 1972.”

⁴ Derrick Morrison, “African Liberation Day Actions: 25,000 March in Washington, 3,000 March in San Francisco,” *The Militant*, June 17, 1972, 3.

traversed the affluent Embassy Row of Massachusetts Avenue, ultimately culminating near the U.S. State Department. Supporters of the anti-colonial struggles on the African continent traveled "over concrete, grass, and dirt to show their support for the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and to denounce U.S. complicity in the oppression of African people in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Angola, Mozambique, South Africa (Azania), and Southwest Africa (Namibia)."⁵ The march ended at the Sylvan Theater on the National Mall, which was renamed Lumumba Square to honor Patrice Lumumba, a staunch Pan-Africanist and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's first prime minister who was assassinated in a U.S. and Belgian joint operation spearheaded by the CIA and former president Dwight D. Eisenhower.⁶ By the end of the program, the crowd had swelled to an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 supporters.⁷

Across the country in San Francisco, 1,500 to 2,000 Black demonstrators similarly marched through the Fillmore District, a historically Black neighborhood, to show their solidarity with armed freedom struggles on the African continent and "unity in concern for the welfare of the Motherland."⁸ That march converged in Raymond Kimball Park, renamed

⁵ Richard D. Benson II, *Fighting for Our Place in the Sun: Malcolm X and the Radicalization of the Black Student Movement 1960-1973* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2015), 233.

⁶ Frances Giles, "African Liberation Day Plans Set," *Washington Post*, May 10, 1972.

⁷ Morrison, "African Liberation Day Actions," *The Militant*, June 17, 1972.

⁸ "A Black Beginning: African Liberation Day – A Common Black Struggle," April 1972, ink on paper, 11 x 8 ½ in., Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, https://nmaahc.si.edu/object/nmaahc_2015.97.27.59.

DuBois Savannah Park, with speeches from figures ranging from Guyanese historian Walter Rodney to American Ghanaian playwright Shirley Graham DuBois and Black Panther Party co-founder Bobby Seale. Smaller African Liberation Day demonstrations also took place in Toronto, Antigua, Grenada, and Dominica, but nonetheless attracted large streams of Black protestors across the diaspora.

To members of the African Liberation Day Coordinating Committee (ALDCC)—a broad-based non-sectarian national steering committee established by Owusu Sadauki (Howard Fuller) and composed of over 44 leaders representing Pan-Africanist, Black Nationalist, and Black Marxist revolutionary projects—African Liberation Day demonstrations were regarded as a resounding success.⁹ However, White-owned media outlets underreported the scale and diluted the political significance of the day. The *New York Times* capped the attendance in Washington, D.C. at 10,000 and narrowly framed the demonstration as a protest against “the treatment of blacks in South Africa and United States relations with that country.”¹⁰ In response, grassroots Black and Pan-African journalists and presses provided on-the-ground coverage of African Liberation Day that not only reinforced its anti-imperialist and Pan-Africanist sentiments but also galvanized organizers to formally institutionalize it as an annual commemoration—scheduled on or after May 25th—to honor

⁹ Barbara J. Stith, “African Liberation Day march designed to teach, politicize, mobilize protest, and instill pride,” *Howard Hilltop*, May 24, 1972.

¹⁰ “10,000 Protest on South Africa,” *New York Times*, May 28, 1972.

the founding of the Organization for African Unity (OAU), led by Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah and Ethiopia’s Haile Selassie.

Attempting to understand the totality of African Liberation Day 1972 has been eased by the existing scholarship of Black Studies scholars, historians, ALD organizers, and those who align with all three titles. There is no authoritative text on this historic march. Still, scholars have mentioned ALD alongside other events in the mid-1960s and early 1970s to understand the changing context of the Black freedom struggle within the Western hemisphere.

Wendel Nii Laryea Adjetey argues in *Cross-Border Cosmopolitans: The Making of a Pan-African North America* that for centuries Africans in the diaspora have networked, created organizations, and strategized while traversing the physical boundaries of North America and the Atlantic world, creating a cross-border cosmopolitan corridor.¹¹ Cross-border connections have allowed for an articulation of an alternative nation-building project that is intrinsically connected to *Pan-Africanisms*. Pan-Africanisms, as a movement that inspires to achieve a federation of self-determinative African states, combines the uppercase “Pan-Africanism” and lowercase “pan-Africanism” as denoted by British historian and Pan-African scholar George Shepperson.¹² *Pan-Africanism* implies a recognizable movement “for national self-determination and cooperation in Africa and its diaspora (or diasporas),” while *pan-Africanism*

¹¹ Wendell Nii Laryea Adjetey, *Cross-Border Cosmopolitans: The Making of a Pan-African North America* (University of North Carolina Press 2023), 3.

¹² George Shepperson, “Pan-Africanism and ‘Pan-Africanism’: Some Historical Notes,” *Phylon* (1960–) 23, no. 4 (1962): 346.

entails solidarity based on Black racial and socio-cultural consciousness and mobilization against racial domination. The act of differentiating between these forms of *Pan-Africanisms* does not inherently devalue or place importance on one over another, but rather accentuates the necessity of having both in a project designed to unite the African diaspora. For Adjetey, African Liberation Day 1972 signifies a sustained Pan-African movement.¹³ The mass mobilizations of African people across North America and the Caribbean basin were an act of identification with the fates of African peoples on the continent in their struggles against colonialism.

While Richard D. Benson II takes a different approach by examining the radicalization of the Black Student movement in the late twentieth century, he also further situates African Liberation Day 1972 in the ongoing nation-building project of Pan-Africanism. *Fighting for our Place in the Sun: Malcolm X and the Radicalization of the Black Student Movement, 1960-1973* focuses on how Malcolm X's, later known as El-Hajj Malik el Shabazz, philosophy of Black unity provided intellectual and ideological guidance to Black student leaders, particularly at a time when young people in the United States were becoming disillusioned with the ideological groundings of the mainstream civil rights movement. To Benson, the student movement was not only shaped by Malcolm X's internationalist perspectives and rejection of an integrationist project but also by broader struggles against global imperialism on the African continent.

¹³ Adjetey, *Cross-Border Cosmopolitans: The Making of a Pan-African North America*, 5.

African Liberation Day was an attempt largely by student organizers from the Malcolm X Liberation University in Durham and Greensboro, North Carolina, to integrate themselves into the wider cross-border cosmopolitan corridor that Adjetey discusses.

As Amanda Joyce Hall expresses in *Black Students and the U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movements on Campus*, Black college students were integral to the construction, facilitation, and maintenance of not only African Liberation Day 1972 but of most Pan-African organizing after that point.¹⁴ As previously mentioned, the original idea for African Liberation Day developed out of the Malcolm X Liberation University (MXLU) and the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) after Owusu Sadauki's 30-day trip to Mozambique in 1971, where he spoke directly with freedom fighters in the Mozambique Liberation Front or FRELIMO.¹⁵ Historically Black Colleges and Universities around the country held regular interest meetings for student "marshalls, babysitters, information aids," and coordinated transportation for African Liberation Day.¹⁶ ALD brought together people of all ages and educational backgrounds, demonstrating the necessity of inter-generational coalition building in the

¹⁴ Amanda Joyce Hall, "Black Students and the U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movements on Campus, 1976–1985," *Zanj: The Journal of Critical Global South Studies* 6, no. 1 (2022): 11.

¹⁵ Richard D. Benson II, *Fighting for Our Place in the Sun: Malcolm X and the Radicalization of the Black Student Movement 1960-1973* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2015), 125.

¹⁶ "African Day," *Howard Hilltop*, May 12, 1972.

pursuit of a unified African world and empowered students to claim their role as invaluable actors in this struggle.

In all, scholars have positioned African Liberation Day as an act of mass identification with freedom fighters on the African continent. While this mass demonstration brought together different communities within the African diaspora, it is not the first or only example of Pan-African nation-building. ALD is firmly rooted in a movement that seeks to transcend colonial and imperial borders and guarantee the self-determination of Black people across the world. That transcendence was possible with the assistance of students, as well as established community organizations that all possessed different political orientations but nonetheless believed in the liberation of Africa from Western imperialism.

I do not seek to revise or reject the conclusions of existing literature, but rather to expand on them to further situate African Liberation Day 1972 in the *longue durée* of Black internationalism. I will argue that African Liberation Day not only served as a space for identification for Black people in North America and the Caribbean but also as a space for active world-building. While Africans in the United States and the Caribbean have always had a connection to Africans on the continent, the cross-border relationship has had ebbs and flows due to changing political conditions and connections to the American empire. The mid-1960s and early 1970s marked a turning point in which African Americans were no longer interested in redeeming a morally depraved U.S. society and looked toward fully aligning themselves with the Third World's

struggles. In my articulation, African Liberation Day was not just an example of Pan-Africanism but was *the* moment in which African Americans became materially closer to African liberation struggles on the continent and recommitted themselves to a Pan-African world-building project.

When looking at the relationship between Africans and African Americans, ALD inspired Africans in the United States to see themselves as part of the struggle for the liberation of the Third World, rather than a group that is in mere solidarity with, and therefore spatially and ideologically distanced from, freedom fighters. African Americans understood the difference in their material conditions, so they did not seek to replicate the exact scenes of armed struggle coming from Southern Africa; however, they did see the necessity of engaging in a struggle that was as disciplined as the Third World struggle to “break the chains of oppression through Black unity.”¹⁷

Further, African Liberation Day created a context in which Africans living in the imperial core could identify and articulate their evolving relationship to the U.S. imperial project. Amid growing disillusionment with the constitutionalism of the civil rights movement, African Americans increasingly rejected integrationist frameworks in favor of a politics grounded in Third World internationalism. ALD was a landscape for envisioning how a wide-scale, protracted war within the heart of the empire might unfold and who should be

¹⁷ African Liberation Day Program, May 27, 1972, box 94, folder 5, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, part 2, MS2310, Special Collections Research Center, George Washington University.

entrusted with its leadership. The formation of a national steering committee—rather than reliance on a singular, charismatic leader—offered a potential model for leadership within the Pan-African movement, particularly in the wake of Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah’s death exactly one month earlier. In doing so, organizers also repositioned North America and the Caribbean basin as strongholds for the global Pan-African struggle.

African Liberation Day 1972 brought together the “wretched of the Earth” in the imperial core to show material support for freedom fighters in Southern Africa; therefore, it is only right to use the knowledge that they produced. These primary sources come from the personal archives of African Liberation Day organizers themselves and include video footage from ALD 1972 and interviews between organizers. The information available can accurately portray the goals of African Liberation Day and its subsequent influence on Pan-Africanism in the United States. Aside from the personal archives of organizers, the Walter E. Fauntroy papers stored in the Special Collections Research Center at George Washington University have served as a guiding archive to understand the details of the march itself, but also the intentions behind having it be an all-Black crowd. Additionally, this study will utilize newspaper articles from prominent Black student newspapers such as the *Howard Hilltop*, located in the Howardiana Collections at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center in Washington, D.C., and *The SOBU newsletter*, later renamed *The African World*, stored in the Robert Bontrager papers at Kansas State University. The overall goal is to incorporate the first-hand accounts of ALD

1972 into a historically accurate retelling of the demonstration, which will clarify its place in establishing a Pan-African climate in late twentieth-century America.

This article will follow the route of African Liberation Day 1972, including its various stops and ending points.¹⁸ It will pick up at the first official stop of the demonstration, the Portuguese Embassy, which was the backdrop for speeches from Roy Innis of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in New York City and Ron Daniels of the Midwest Regional Black Coalition based out of Youngstown, Ohio. The remarks given at this stop created a space for consciousness-raising among demonstrators in which they were able to hear first-hand accounts of freedom struggles in Mozambique, Angola, and Tanzania to understand the necessity of building a mass movement that aligns with the goals of the Third World.

Just as the group did, I will move to the second stop, the Rhodesian Information Center, where Ruwa Chiri of the United Africans for One Motherland International (UAOMI) and Inez Reid of Washington, D.C., delivered remarks on the state of the struggle in Zimbabwe. Despite this being one of the quickest stops on the route, it marked a point in the demonstration in which Africans in the United States could actively challenge spaces of domination through the creation of a disruptive spatiality of resistance. Next, I will analyze the speeches given at the third stop, the South African Embassy, by Reverend Douglas Moore of the Black United Front in Washington, D.C., and

¹⁸ African Liberation Day Program, May 27, 1972, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers.

Reverend Lucius Walker of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organizations. To the organizers of African Liberation Day, the struggle in South Africa was seen as the most arduous, painstaking, and crucial for Black Americans to organize around. This sense of urgency provides a context in which organizers were building a broad coalition within the United States to fight for the liberation of Africa. Further, demonstrators were able to understand ways to materially support freedom fighters in South Africa, as well as become more disciplined members of the Third World struggles for liberation.

The last stop, the State Department, served as a final point of contention for participants in ALD 1972 to realize the connection between the struggles in the United States and Southern Africa. This essay will end on the National Mall, renamed Lumumba Square, where John Walker, Walter Fountroy, Charles Diggs, George Wiley, Imamu Amiri Baraka, Don L. Lee, Elaine Brown, Owusu Sadaukai, Smallwood Williams, and Cleaveland Sellers gave their final remarks. This moment marked a crystallization of the notion that Africans in the United States were aligned with liberation movements on the African continent and therefore had a moral and political obligation to oppose colonialism and commit to actively building an alternative Black world that is bound together by ideals of self-determination, revolutionary optimism, and pragmatic coalition building.

A Luta Continua!

Demonstrators filled U Street as they inched towards the active intersection at 17th Street Northwest. A man wearing a cheetah print kufi and a black jacket with a Pan-African embroidered flag on the sleeve had his back to the street as he kept the pace of the crowd. Men with full-piece suits marched alongside sisters in black leather trench coats and sunglasses, holding the hands of small children. Patrons of mom-and-pop shops and hardware stores stared at the crowd and then slowly joined as young college students raised fists in their direction. As the crowd grew, chants erupted from different areas. Children who held signs that said "Long Live the African Revolution" led call-and-response chants that were picked up by elders in traditional kitenge dresses, rows behind them. Volunteers on the side of the street with red armbands nodded their heads to the rhythm of freedom songs as they ushered onlookers into the mold of the crowd. At the corner of 17th Street, the Black Panther Party headquarters was wedged between a Benmoll liquor store and a row of worn-down Victorian-style townhouses. Black people continued to join as the crowd slowly crept down U Street and turned left onto Florida Avenue. The wide streets narrowed, and trees began to take up the sidewalk. Police motorcycles cruised alongside the streams of Black protestors, as White residents looked on from their doorsteps in fear and confusion. The black truck decorated in Pan-African flags came to a halt halfway down Massachusetts Avenue. Police officers in stiff white long-sleeve shirts lined the sidewalks in front of a black iron gate. Inside the boundary was a small brick building

covered by trees with a Portuguese flag perched above the front door. The crowd was brought to a standstill as the screech of a microphone marked the beginning of the program, and Roy Innis read:

In the states of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau, which are now under Portuguese oppression, the liberation war being waged by our brothers and sisters has served as a catalyst in the chemistry of liberation of all Africa.¹⁹

Despite being the poorest nation in Europe, Portugal was exerting extensive military efforts to maintain a stronghold over its colonies in western, central, and southern Africa.²⁰ For 450 years, Portugal laid claims over Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau and sought to assimilate Africans into a world of Portuguese values.²¹ However, the end of World War II marked a period of colonial intensification. After realizing that European nations could not survive without the exploitation of their colonies, Portugal began to extract natural resources, which called for greater involvement of multinational corporations.²² In Angola, hundreds of thousands of native Angolans were forced to work on plantations to harvest oil, gold, and silver.

Simultaneously, Angolan society was being adapted to reflect a contemporary system of institutionalized and racialized hierarchy. Citizens were

¹⁹ Fuller, "African Liberation Day – 1972."

²⁰ Fuller, "African Liberation Day – 1972."

²¹ James Duffy, "Portuguese Africa (Angola and Mozambique): Some Crucial Problems and the Role of Education in their Resolution," *The Journal of Negro Education* 30, no. 3 (1961): 294.

²² James Garrett and Agostinho Neto, "The Lessons of Angola: An Eyewitness Report," *The Black Scholar* 7, no. 9 (1976): 2.

issued identification cards, and upward mobility no longer became determined by merit, but rather by “the absorption of the color and culture of Europeans.”²³ Liberation movements naturally developed out of these conditions – three main groups waged a protracted war against the Portuguese: The National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Similar conditions of oppression led to the erection of liberation factions in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, including the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), led by Samora Machel and Eduardo Mondlane, and the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau (PAIGC), spearheaded by Amílcar Cabral.

As Roy Innis explained in detail the depravity of the Portuguese colonial project, there was a sense of consciousness-building amongst the crowd. For some, this was the first time that they had heard about the conditions in the Portuguese colonies, let alone the liberation struggles that arose out of those conditions. After hearing the similarities between the histories of domination, Guinea-Bissau became linked, in the minds of demonstrators, to the Southern nations of Angola and Mozambique by its steadfast support and efforts for liberation. African Americans were beginning to connect the lines of struggle between different countries on the African continent to the Portuguese embassy in Washington, D.C. They understood

²³ Garrett and Neto, “The Lessons of Angola: An Eyewitness Report,” 3.

liberation movements as figuratively and literally moving across borders and oceans. The same understanding could be applied to Black nationalist and Pan-African movements in the United States that existed separately from each other. The Portuguese Embassy, as the first stop, interrogated the idea of distinct movements for freedom and allowed demonstrators to envision the possibilities of coalition building within the imperial core, given the shared history of domination that Africans in the United States experienced and held onto as embodied knowledge.

A Spoke in the Wheel of Oppression

The crowd began to move again as the truck inched north on Connecticut Avenue. Spirits were still high as chants grew louder and louder. The residential landscape was unrecognizable to most of the demonstrators, but everyone walked with a sense of pride and their heads held high. A row of women, all dressed in different fabrics, linked arms and marched down the street; they passed their signs reading “Free Azania” and “Breaks the Chains of Oppression: Africa for the African!! UHURU” behind them for others to hold. Volunteers with red armbands appeared within the crowd, and men in black berets and Pan-African-colored knitted caps stood on the perimeters and signaled for cars to pass. The trees that used to shelter the sidewalk were now few and far between as the crowd approached the William Howard Taft Bridge. Jackets, trench coats, and blazers came off as the sun beat down on the faces of

demonstrators. To conserve energy, some people began to march in silence, but the air was filled with the banging of cowbells and the rhythmic beating of djembe drums that were strapped over the shoulders of young college students in all black. Small children were lifted out of their strollers and started to walk alongside their parents. At times, they drifted away to peek between the bars of the bridge that separated the road from the trails of Rock Creek Park. Toward the back of the crowd, two Mozambican flags moved through the humid spring air. At the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Calvert Avenue, cars honked at the masses of demonstrators. Some drivers sped off in the opposite direction, while others slowed down, lowered their windows, and raised fists in the air. The streets began to widen, and the crowd expanded to fill the three lanes of traffic.²⁴

As the demonstrators descended upon the Rhodesian Information Center, most police officers were no longer waiting in front of the building but were standing off to the side and behind the crowd. In Zimbabwe, a small White minority had declared independence and sought to define the rights of more than four million Indigenous Africans through a globally unrecognized political party.²⁵ Since Rhodesia was not formally recognized as an independent state, the information center was not protected by a D.C. law that "require[d] demonstrators to maintain a distance of 500 feet from diplomatic

²⁴ Fuller, "African Liberation Day – 1972"

²⁵ Julius Nyerere, "The Role and Responsibility of the United States in South Africa and Rhodesia," *The Black Scholar* 9, no. 2 (1977): 40.

establishments.”²⁶ Two members of the Executive Protection Services, which is charged with protecting embassies, were standing at the top of the stairs leading to the front door.

Atop of the black truck, Ruwa Chiri, editor and organizer from the United Africans for One Motherland International (UFOMI) in Chicago, encouraged demonstrators to get closer to the building as he read an indictment against the Rhodesian government: “If South Africa is the hub in the wheel of oppression in Africa, then Rhodesia, or Zimbabwe as it is known to Africans, is a principal spoke.”²⁷ Inez Reid went on to share the developments in the Zimbabwean liberation movement. The African liberation groups of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), and the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI) were working together to not only defeat Rhodesia but also rebuild the nation for the African people.²⁸

Being at the Rhodesian Information Center, a quasi-embassy, served as a point of agitation for ALD demonstrators. The protection of a non-legitimate settler colony symbolized to the crowd the lengths to which the United States would go to ensure the longevity of colonialism in Southern Africa, at the

²⁶ Bruce Oudes, “The African Liberation Day March,” *Africa Report*, June 1, 1972.

²⁷ Indictment on Rhodesian Embassy, May 1972, box 94, folder 5, Walter E. Fautroy Papers.

²⁸ Indictment on Rhodesian Embassy, May 1972, box 94, folder 5, Walter E. Fautroy Papers.

expense of African life. Despite being an illegitimate state in the eyes of the international community, Rhodesia was still receiving material support from the United States. The connection between forces of imperialism illuminated the necessity for forging links between members of the Third World. It was not only important for consciousness-raising, but also for universal Black survival, according to Chiri. The changing conditions in Zimbabwe meant that there was no longer time to support freedom struggles from afar. The only way forward was through materially investing in the struggles of liberation factions. The Rhodesian Information Center itself symbolized, if not embodied, a space of racial domination, and the act of protestors surrounding it and voicing their anger created a spatiality of resistance that showed Black opposition to the illegitimate settlement in Zimbabwe.

The Liberation Struggle is Ours Too

The agitation around the Rhodesian Information Center not only reinvigorated the crowd but also increased its size. Onlookers continued to join the crowd as it moved south from 28th Street to Rock Creek Drive NW. It was not long before the mass turned left onto Massachusetts Avenue to once again face Embassy Row. Volunteers who had locked arms quickly unraveled themselves and dispersed along the sidewalk. Men with signs that read "Israel and South Africa are partners" diverged from the crowd to meet the black truck at the front of the demonstration. A long white banner held upright by two wooden planks that said "EMBASSY OF SOUTH AFRICA" was brought to

the sidewalk and planted into the ground in front of a tall iron gate. Four men with black sunglasses and another in a denim shirt with a saxophone slung around his neck stood in front of the sign and began to clap to welcome Douglas Moore of the Black United Front of Washington, D.C. to the makeshift stage.²⁹

For Africans in the United States, the struggle for freedom in South Africa (Azania) was seen as “more arduous, more painstaking, more long-range, [and] more crucial” than any other struggle in Southern Africa.³⁰ 1972 marked the 24th year of apartheid, a system of legal and institutionalized racial segregation that subjugated indigenous South Africans. However, as Douglas Moore and organizers of African Liberation Day noted, the White minority in South Africa had been carrying out acts of war against the African population since the seventeenth century. In another statement of indictment, Moore listed 17 acts of genocide committed by South Africa towards the Indigenous Khoi-Khoi and San groups, ranging from the almost total extermination of African peoples in the southernmost part of Africa through “bullets, brandy, and smallpox” to the collusion with nations like West Germany, Israel, and the United States to develop nuclear weapons to use on “Black people in South Africa who wage war against White encroachers.”³¹

²⁹ Howard Fuller, “African Liberation Day – 1972.”

³⁰ Indictment on South African Embassy, May 1972, box 94, folder 5, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers.

³¹ Indictment on South African Embassy, May 1972, box 94, folder 5, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers.

The stop at the South African embassy arguably was the final opportunity for African Americans to develop a point of identification with Africans resisting imperialism on the continent. For decades, Black Americans have made the connections between the Jim-Crow South and South African apartheid abroad and were looking to move beyond the rhetorical comparisons to find ways to materially support the liberation efforts of the Pan-African Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC). As Moore continued with the list of indictments, he started each charge with a unifying "we." By the end of his speech, he demanded to see all fists in the air if Black people condemned the United States. Almost instantaneously, black fists of all sizes took over the D.C. sky.

This moment brought demonstrators closer to understanding the power they held as a coalition dedicated to supporting the liberation of Southern Africa. Participants realized that they not only had the power to see their struggles as connected to those in South Africa but also to physically contend with the imperialist nations at their front gates. By placing indictments on the South African embassy after traveling from the historically Black corridor of U-Street to the upper-class neighborhood of Embassy Row, which housed the political elite and White intelligentsia of Washington D.C., Black Americans were creating and reinforcing a counter geography, one that believes in the liberation of the African continent through armed struggle. This geography of resistance was bolstered by the use of the term "Azania" rather than "South Africa" in reference to their desired future of the African nation-

state. The contestation and subsequent repudiation of the colonial namesake for the home of millions of indigenous Africans invoked a complete rejection of the colonial world at large, and the creation of a new world order, which was contextualized by the principles of Pan-Africanism and global Black liberation.

Leaflets were passed around to demonstrators explaining how they could materially support South Africa:

We can give money to the liberation groups. We can send medical supplies for the people, we can apply pressure on the government and businesses here in America. We can boycott South African goods sold here—yes, carling black label, too—we can educate ourselves...so that Africans in America know that the liberation struggles in South Africa is ours, too.³²

The material examples of support constituted a part of the alternative nation-building project essential to Pan-Africanism. In a unified and liberated African world, Black Americans would not just be in symbolic solidarity with their brothers and sisters on the continent but financially divested from nations that partake in the destruction of their societies. This would require discipline and sustained commitment, which can come through a geography of resistance that has been fortified up to this point.

³² Indictment on South African Embassy, May 1972, box 94, folder 5, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers.

"We Are an African People"

Around 4 hours had passed in the march and demonstrators had begun to slow down. The once tightly bound army of demonstrators dissipated into small clusters of families, friends, and newly introduced comrades. The large banner that was originally held by children was now taken over by college students walking in the center of the crowd. Demonstrators walked south on Massachusetts Avenue along the sidewalk and in the middle of the road. Cars that once drove freely past the march are now parked on the side of the street as demonstrators take over the landscape. Fewer Pan-African flags were raised in the air, but chants and claps were still heard throughout. After marching 2.1 miles south on Massachusetts Avenue, the crowd moved down 23rd Street. The homes that once lined the streets of Massachusetts Avenue were now replaced by tall government buildings and health centers. Police officers returned to the sidewalks as they watched demonstrators pass through the streets and move closer toward the Department of State.

At the site of law enforcement, the clusters of protestors quickly turned back into a unified mass and a large Pan-African flag was spread across a section of the crowd with elders, college students, and community members all grabbing a piece of the fabric. Founder of the National Black United Front, the East, a Pan-African cultural and arts community center based in Brooklyn, and the Uhuru Sasa School, Jitu Weusi (also known as Leslie Campbell) stepped onto an elevated platform across from the State Department and called for the attention of the crowd.

While the stop at the State Department was relatively short, it served as a point of contention for African Americans to reflect on the role their government played in the genocide and exploitation of African people abroad. Similar to the other stops, a statement of indictment against the United States was read on behalf of Black Americans. In the statement, the United States was described as a 200-year-old settler state that supported the racist regimes of South Africa, Rhodesia, and Israel.³³ As Africans living in an internal colony in the United States, demonstrators were being called to support the struggle for liberation because it was vital to the survival of the Black race. Campbell reminded participants of the route they traversed over the last 5 hours and the indictments they placed on each regime. He further encouraged demonstrators to remember the power they held as members of the Third World who were living among these embassies.³⁴ Fists once again struck the sky; as they came down, demonstrators started to clap and chant:

White man's hands off Black man's land
White man's hands off Black man's land
*White man's hands off Black man's land.*³⁵

Black people were not only chanting that phrase but believing it. The energy returned to the crowd as Campbell instructed the sea of protestors to move forward to Lumumba Square. The intentional renaming of the National Mall, a

³³ Howard Fuller, "African Liberation Day – 1972."

³⁴ Indictment on the United States of America, May 1972, box 94, folder 5, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers.

³⁵ Fuller, "African Liberation Day – 1972."

central symbol of American nationalism and power, to a space that memorializes a leader of the Pan-African movement who was assassinated by the United States government, encapsulates a concrete effort to align with the African people and mark the landscape with an internationalist politic. Throughout the march, Black Americans have been reclaiming spaces and pushing the predetermined boundaries of Black nationalism, anti-imperialism, and Pan-Africanism. By traveling across the ghettos of Washington, D.C., to the mansions of diplomacy on Massachusetts Avenue's Embassy Row to the offices of surveillance around the State Department, demonstrators were not only self-identifying spaces of domination, but they were also creating terrains of resistance over them.

30,000 Black people marched, ran, and walked towards Lumumba Square and listened to the final speakers of the day. Ten microphones were perched in front of a small wooden podium settled on the edge of the wooden stage of Sylvan Theater. Children and elders dropped into folding chairs that were spread across the green space. College students threw their jackets onto the ground as they called to their new friends and comrades. A line of conga drums emerged next to the stage, and women danced alongside each other as they waited for the Harambee Singers, an Atlanta-based all-Black, all-female acapella group rooted in the Black Arts and Black Consciousness movements, to take the stage.

"I think this is the most beautiful site I've ever seen in my life," Elaine Brown, the first woman to lead the Black Panther Party as chairwoman,

declared into the microphones, “but the thing to do is go beyond today.” She reminded attendees that the work was only beginning, and African Liberation Day marked the first step in the process of uniting the struggles not only within the borders of the United States but also creating a unified presence across the African diaspora.³⁶ After resounding applause, poet and organizer Imamu Amiri Baraka of the Committee for a Unified Newark took the stage to remind Black people that to achieve liberation, they must build an independent Black political party. “We must be done with just talking a good game. We must begin to organize a political structure that can transform not only our spiritual consciousness, but also transform our reality. We must deal with the transformation of our reality.” Congressman Charles Diggs echoed the same sentiments and urged Black people that if they were interested in moving past the 1960s, they must build a political structure.

Speeches from Black political leaders, one after the other, symbolized the necessity of coalition building after the conclusion of African Liberation Day 1972. From Elaine Brown to Charles Diggs, there was an understanding that this demonstration marked the beginning of a new age in the Black freedom struggle that was defined by coalition building and cooperation among Black people in the United States. The diverse array of speakers and members of the national steering committee, ranging from religious leaders to former political prisoners who were guided by Marxist Leninist principles, showed that

³⁶ Fuller, “African Liberation Day – 1972.”

a counter geography of Pan-Africanism could have only been constructed with a total commitment to reorienting every aspect of society towards Black internationalism and liberation.

Conclusion

African Liberation Day served as the vessel for demonstrators to raise their consciousness, develop a principled critique of the existing systems of domination, and work towards building a unified movement for Africans. The five-hour route through the streets of Washington, D.C., transformed the racially segregated and politically contentious urban infrastructure into a temporary but highly visible arena for Pan-African solidarity. The renaming of parks, national monuments, and larger nation-states sought to inscribe Pan-Africanism into the built environment of the nation's capital and hopefully inspire participants and future generations to see the city, not just the confines of Black neighborhoods, as a landscape for international Pan-African struggle. Further, the inclusive and unifying language from speeches around the city empowered Black people to see themselves as agents in Pan-African world building, not just because their brothers and sisters on the African continent were fighting for their freedom, but because organizing for a Pan-African world meant their freedom as well. As Kwame Ture noted in his address, which was

delivered by Cleveland Sellers, “Our support for our liberation movements is only natural. Those fights are our fights. The blood being shed is our blood.”³⁷

African Liberation Day, as an institutionalized project, continued for decades after 1972. However, due to ideological divisions, the African Liberation Day Coordinating Committee dissolved, and the All African People’s Revolutionary Party (AAPRP) has led the charge in the contemporary political landscape to keep the legacy of African Liberation Day alive. Despite the deep fissures that arose after ALD 1972, this mass mobilization provided a fresh perspective on Pan-African organizing within the borders of the United States and, more importantly, emphasized that Pan-Africanism, as an ideology, has the power to transcend colonial borders and create counter geographies of resistance among the African diaspora.

³⁷ “Message from Stokely Carmichael,” May 1972, box 94, folder 5, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers.

The Panama Canal and American Backdoor Imperialism

HAYDEN STUBBLEFIELD

On January 20, 2025, Donald Trump delivered his inaugural address in the Capitol Rotunda, following one of the most consequential elections in recent history. Among his bold declarations was a striking promise: “The Panama Canal... we’re taking it back.”¹ Built by the U.S. in the early twentieth century, the U.S. had enjoyed monopolizing the key trade point for most of the century. In 1977, amid considerable controversy, President Jimmy Carter initiated an agreement to return control of the canal back over to Panama, which culminated in the complete withdrawal of the United States on December 31, 1999. While the U.S. invested heavily in the canal’s original construction, Panama’s administration has treated the international community fairly since, with over 12,000 ships passing through the isthmus annually today in pursuit of free trade.² Still, in Trump’s “America First” view, the Panamanian government was overcharging the U.S. for access to a resource it once dominated. While Trump sought a return to an earlier era, International Political Economy Professor Ricardo Hausman protested, “It’s not that the U.S. is being unfairly treated, it’s that the U.S. is not being preferentially treated. I would argue that’s what Trump doesn’t like.” Similarly, critics called Trump’s desire to

¹ Donald J Trump. “The Inaugural Address,” The White House, January 20, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/remarks/2025/01/the-inaugural-address/>.

² “A History of the Panama Canal,” Canal de Panamá, Panama Canal Authority, <https://pancanal.com/en/history-of-the-panama-canal/>.

seize the canal “imperialist in nature,” as Harvard Kennedy School writers proclaimed: “It sounds un-American to expropriate the assets of other countries, just because we can.”³

Such a statement overlooks that, despite Carter’s relinquishment of the canal, the United States historically used military and political leverage to advance its imperialist aspirations throughout the early 20th century. In fact, such leverage was precisely how the U.S. originally gained its influence over the Panamanian waterway in 1903. After a failed canal construction deal with Colombia and amid chronic instability in the Isthmus, President Theodore Roosevelt and the United States secretly facilitated Panama’s independence movement from Colombia. In direct breach of international treaties, the United States blocked Colombian reinforcements to guarantee the revolution and promptly recognized the new Panamanian republic. Days later, in return for defending the revolution, the U.S. forcibly coerced Panama into ratifying the Hay–Bunau-Varilla Treaty, granting itself permanent control over the sought-after Canal Zone and stripping the young republic of its territorial sovereignty of the isthmus on the international stage.⁴ While highly controversial, Roosevelt’s vision saw the canal become a crown jewel of American engineering, commerce, and global power. However, acquiring the Canal Zone

³ Susan A. Hughes, “Why the Panama Canal Is on President Trump’s agenda,” March 11, 2025, Harvard Kennedy School, <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policy-topics/international-relations-security/why-panama-canal-president-trumps>.

⁴ Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America’s Empire at the Panama Canal* (Penguin Press, 2009), 22.

was far from the cooperative narrative that the Roosevelt administration had portrayed it to be.⁵ Instead, it was a calculated assertion of informal imperialism as both the Panamanians and Colombians would be betrayed and exploited.

While there was never officially an “American Empire,” in the traditional sense, the United States made significant strides towards an interventionist, exploitive, yet highly rewarding and influential foreign policy during the early twentieth century. Though this behavior is not exclusive to this period, the label carries a connotation strongly associated with the global developments of this era, particularly as European Empires dominated formal imperial practices in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Contrarily, the idea of American imperialism is essentially an academic construct rather than a term ever recognized by policymakers. Historically, American imperialism is usually defined as the United States’ control over Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam, and other Pacific islands that were formally incorporated into their territory at the turn of the twentieth century.⁶ This approach resembles America and its proxies in a manner that closely parallels the European model as Britain, France, and Germany occupied nearly a third of the world’s population under the direct rule of their empires. However, I am extending the definition of American Imperialism beyond the aforementioned territories to highlight the broader American Empire, demonstrated through a

⁵ Greene, *The Canal Builders*, 25.

⁶ Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism*.

case study of global reach through informal economic, political, and military influence.

Throughout this era, the United States repeatedly leveraged its dominance over foreign nations to extract economic wealth and expand geopolitical power, achieving an effect comparable to direct colonial rule. This process of covertly manipulating sovereignty is a process I refer to as “backdoor imperialism.” It is most apparent in the United States’ grip on Panama. In 1903, the United States supported Panama’s independence from Colombia specifically to secure control of the Panama Canal Zone, framing its intervention as support for self-determination. By concealing its interventionist ambitions behind a curtain of democratic rhetoric, the U.S. government attempted to cultivate national support and minimize international backlash while facilitating the transition to a new stage of imperialist foreign policy.

The First Footsteps of Influence

On December 12, 1846, the United States signed the Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty with New Granada, gaining exclusive transit rights across the 46-mile isthmus of Panama.⁷ In return, the United States agreed to defend Colombia’s sovereignty in addition to its own transit rights over the politically unstable

⁷ New Granada was the official name of the modern-day Republic of Colombia in the mid-19th century, including at the time of the 1846 Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty.

region.⁸ President James K. Polk outlined the benefits of the treaty in his address to the Senate with the following statement:

The vast advantages to our commerce which would result from such a communication, not only with the west coast of America, but with Asia and the islands of the Pacific, are too obvious to require any detail. Such a passage would relieve us from a long and dangerous navigation of more than 9,000 miles around Cape Horn and render our communication with our possessions on the northwest coast of America comparatively easy and speedy.⁹

Some advantages did materialize, but the U.S. commitment soon exceeded the original intent of the signatories, with the Navy intervening in local uprisings and civil unrest on fourteen separate occasions before Panama's independence.¹⁰ Meanwhile, gold was discovered in California just two years later. As an alternative to the dangerous wagon trail across the western frontier, Americans turned to the constructing the Panamanian railroad, allowing forty-niners to sail down to the isthmus by steamboat swiftly, ride the train to the Pacific Ocean, and catch a corresponding steamboat back up north to the California territory. The same route would be used on the way back with enormous amounts of gold accompanying the miners. This in turn, fostered an

⁸ Michael L. Conniff, *Panama and the United States: The End of the Alliance*, 3rd ed. (University of Georgia Press, 2012), 19–20

⁹ James K. Polk, *Message to the Senate on the Bidlack Treaty*, December 10, 1846. <https://loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/1846Polksmessagetosenatebidlack.pdf>.

¹⁰ Michael L. Conniff, *Panama and the United States: The Forced Alliance*, 2nd ed. (University of Georgia Press, 2001), 33.

even higher magnitude of U.S. involvement due to the need for further protection against the threat of bandits.¹¹

While this commitment to a foreign territory undeniably projected American influence far south of its borders, the United States of the 1840s was not yet the imperial power described in the introduction. Manifest Destiny only called for the annexation of western lands into the union, not the influence or occupation of foreign peoples or states, at least beyond North America. Although aggressive, the Mexican-American War conquest proved worthwhile by solidifying the United States' regional domain, reinforcing the aims of the Monroe Doctrine in keeping the "Old World out of the Western hemisphere."¹² Such authority was essential to preserve autonomy in an era when many young nations fell under European imperial influence.

This justifiable focus on only "regional dominance," however, is also tested by the ratification of the Mallarino-Bidlack treaty itself. The Monroe Doctrine pledged the United States to maintain neutrality towards new independent governments descending from Spain, "provided no change shall occur which, in the judgment of the competent authorities of this Government, shall make a corresponding change on the part of the United States indispensable to their security."¹³ While the 1846 treaty overstepped international policy in exchange

¹¹ Conniff, *End of the Alliance*, 28

¹² Greene, *The Canal Builders*, 18.

¹³ James Monroe, *Message of President James Monroe at the Commencement of the First Session of the 18th Congress (The Monroe Doctrine)*, December 2, 1823, Presidential Messages

for strategic access in Panama, the United States still largely remained pre-imperial and adherent to the Monroe Doctrine in its behavior and definition.

There are various points reaffirming this claim: (1) The Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty was arguably the only alliance treaty signed by the United States in the entire nineteenth century, so it must be said that this is the most extreme case of an otherwise reserved foreign policy in all other matters.¹⁴ (2) Furthermore, this behavior is not entirely inconsistent with the Monroe Doctrine, as the broader and most recognizable goal of it, which historians most often associate the doctrine with is the declaration that “the American continents... are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.”¹⁵ The Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty only partially stretched the precedent as President James Polk committed the U.S. to what was already promised. However, the treaty included one small expansion: the U.S. would now also ensure Colombian sovereignty in the Isthmus against internal and external threats, beyond just European ones.¹⁶ (3) Ultimately, the United States’ decision to extend boundaries also stemmed from the growing security dilemma that European powers (particularly Great Britain and Spain) might disregard the Monroe Doctrine entirely, as evidenced by their interest in annexing the

of the 18th Congress, ca. 12/02/1823–ca. 03/03/1825, Record Group 46, Records of the United States Senate, 1789–1990, National Archives.

¹⁴ Conniff, *Forced Alliance*, 20.

¹⁵ Monroe, *Message of President James Monroe*.

¹⁶ Conniff, *End of the Alliance*, 19–20.

Yucatán Peninsula.¹⁷ In response, The U.S. did not abandon its policy, but rather reinforced it more assertively, at the cost of the new responsibilities brought on by the treaty. It is important to understand the international context of nineteenth-century American foreign policy and the Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty because it demonstrates a balance of reservation and authority that resembles the later transition to American “backdoor imperialism.”

The Failed Hay–Herrán Treaty

By the turn of the twentieth century, American ambitions were intensifying— a development that scholars have interpreted in strikingly different ways. Later revisionists such as Robert A. Friedlander, writing in 1961, portray Roosevelt’s pursuit of the canal as “morally straightforward and legally justified,” while other historians, most notably Walter LaFeber and Frank Ninkovich situate it within a broader pattern of informal American empire, a dynamic clearly visible in Roosevelt’s handling of the canal negotiations.¹⁸ The United States’ temptation to expand global power, step by step, was drawing it ever deeper into a perpetual cycle towards overseas influence, exceeding initial intentions each time. In addition to the commercial benefit, naval operations during the Spanish-American War convinced President Theodore Roosevelt

¹⁷ Conniff, *Forced Alliance*, 20.

¹⁸ Robert A. Friedlander, “A Reassessment of Roosevelt’s Role in the Panamanian Revolution of 1903,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1961): 535; Walter LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 1989); Frank Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism* (Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

that the United States needed to control a canal somewhere in the Western Hemisphere.¹⁹ Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, the leading strategist and advocate for expanding U.S. interest in the canal, argued that command of the seas (and by extension, control of strategic maritime chokepoints) was essential to naval power. Without the canal, the U.S. Navy faced the risk of being paralyzed in wartime and unable to respond to threats on both American coasts. Roosevelt and his followers saw the prospect of a canal was a strategic necessity to maintain authority across newly imperial acquired holdings in the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, and, informally, in Cuba.²⁰ The canal was the linchpin of an American hemispheric defense and as Julie Greene puts it, a demonstration “to Americans and to the world the beneficent potential of American power.”²¹

After a year of diplomatic negotiations between U.S. Secretary of State John M. Hay and Colombian diplomat Tomás Herrán, the two parties reached the framework for what became the Hay-Herrán Treaty: a one-hundred-year renewable lease of the six-mile-wide canal zone under shared jurisdiction and civil administration, a \$10 million lump sum payment, and a \$250,000 annual annuity. The U.S. ratified the agreement in March 1903.²² The document’s

¹⁹ Sandra W. Meditz and Dennis M. Hanratty, eds., *Panama: A Country Study*, 4th ed. (Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1989), 22.

²⁰ Patrick J. Garrity, “Mahan, Choke Points, and the Panama Canal,” *Classics of Strategy and Diplomacy*, April 2, 2021, <https://classicsofstrategy.com/2021/04/02/mahan-choke-points-and-the-panama-canal/>.

²¹ Greene, *The Canal Builders*, 25.

²² Conniff, *Forced Alliance*, 64–65.

arrival in Bogotá relieved pressure on Colombian President José Marroquín, who had previously worried about missing out on the economic opportunity due to a strong U.S. lobbying effort for an alternative canal route across Nicaragua. Given the dictatorial nature of his administration, it was expected of President Marroquín would confirm the treaty outright through executive power. However, seeking to unify the masses under his leadership, and likely also out of desire to scheme for a more favorable contract, he called the nation's legislature into session to ratify the treaty.²³ This diplomatic impasse would soon expose the limits of negotiation and push Roosevelt toward a more covert assertion of American power.

In hindsight, Marroquín had an inflated sense negotiating power with a United States that was already flirting with expansionism, especially given the fragile political climate following the One Thousand Days War, a brutal civil war between Colombia's deeply divided Conservative and Liberal political factions. Despite the United States' clear disinterest in returning to negotiations after already conceding formidable amendments on several occasions, many Colombians remained adamant about holding out for a \$20 million lump sum, or possibly \$40 million, due to a loophole in the existing contract with the withdrawn French Canal Company, which would transfer the project to the United States.²⁴

²³ Henry J. Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy: The U.S. Navy and the Birth of the American Century* (Naval Institute Press, 2009), 55

²⁴ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 60.

In addition to widespread disunity, many Colombian senators were very open about their corruption as their vote could be purchased for a mere \$10,000, though the Americans never capitalized on this opportunity.²⁵ Several accounts reaffirm that foreign competitors did, however, and their influence contributed to the shockingly unanimous vote to rejection of the treaty on August 12, 1903.²⁶ When news arrived in Washington, President Theodore Roosevelt was furious, exclaiming that “Jackrabbits in Bogotá” must not be allowed to “bar one of the future highways of civilization.”²⁷ It was clear Roosevelt had no intention of submitting to Colombia’s refusal, and even clearer that the United States was finished negotiating with its unreliable partners in Bogotá. The only question that remained was how far Roosevelt was willing to go to secure the canal. While Roosevelt considered the canal his greatest re-election plank, it was also widely understood how controversial the idea of American imperialism was and that it would be overwhelmingly distasteful to just “take it” through blunt force. Because of this dilemma, he had to play his hand carefully. Rather than risking international condemnation through direct intervention, Roosevelt pursued a subtler path by leveraging the Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty, Panama’s instability, and Colombia’s weakness to

²⁵ Hendrix *Theodore Roosevelt’s Naval Diplomacy*, 60.

²⁶ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Naval Diplomacy*, 56; Conniff, *Forced Alliance*, 55; “The Hay-Herran Treaty,” TR Encyclopedia – Foreign Affairs, Theodore Roosevelt Center, <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/encyclopedia/foreign-affairs/hay-herran-treaty/>.

²⁷ Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Naval Diplomacy*, 57.

achieve imperial aims without declaring them. This strategy marked the emergence of the very “backdoor” strategy of influence that would define the canal’s creation.

Roosevelt acted in a way that would satisfy his aspirations but still be defensible later. As he would have argued, the desire for revolution, at its core, had long been simmering within Panama’s borders regardless of any U.S. involvement. According to one historical estimate, the isthmus in the latter half of the nineteenth century experienced “forty administrations of the Panamanian department, fifty riots and rebellions, five attempted secessions, and thirteen interventions by the United States, acting under the provisions of the Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty to maintain Colombian authority.”²⁸ This record of unrest was the opportunism that Roosevelt’s agenda needed as it provided the benevolent rationale of Panamanian self-determination to justify the United States’ eventual backing (and exploitation) of isthmian independence. By simply lifting the veil of U.S. protection over Colombia’s unstable province, he was able to enable yet another revolutionary movement to emerge in Panama.

On October 9, 1903, Roosevelt held a carefully scripted meeting with Phillippe Bunau-Varilla, a major shareholder in the failed French Canal Company who, despite not having lived in Panama for fifteen years, had been appointed the provisional Panamanian ambassador to the United States by José Augustin Arango’s new revolutionary junta. Roosevelt expressed a keen interest

²⁸ Meditz and Hanratty, *Panama: A Country Study*, 21.

in backing the revolutionaries. Nonetheless, he remained officially noncommittal even behind closed doors.²⁹ In stark contrast to the demure policy statements that may have fostered false confidence amongst Colombians (and the reciprocal for Panamanians), naval correspondences establish a plan, referred to as “War Portfolio No. 1,” to be an active “defense” of a new Panamanian republic by military units of the United States.³⁰ Evident to the growing development of imperialist American foreign policy, Washington prepared its military for the revolution, while ultimately disregarding any substantive collaboration with both the Colombian government as well as the provisional Panamanian government. While outwardly it may appear that the good faith of the Roosevelt administration was now favoring the revolutionaries, as was assumed by them, the naval plans contained in War Portfolio No. 1 and Roosevelt’s intentionally vague communication reveals a detachment from genuine commitment, specifically by the weakness in Roosevelt’s communication. This is representative of Washington’s core disinterest in aiding the rebels and its true focus on the hidden imperialist agenda of seizing the canal for itself. In the days that followed, particularly after a discreet meeting at Secretary Hay’s residence, Bunau-Varilla conveyed his growing confidence in American backing to Arango’s revolutionary junta in Panama City.³¹ While such a backing could have been more solidified, out of

²⁹ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Naval Diplomacy*, 58–59.

³⁰ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Naval Diplomacy*, 55.

³¹ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Naval Diplomacy*, 55.

enthusiasm (and perhaps out of the lack of consequence as not a true Panamanian) the Frenchman relayed the agreed-upon date of the uprising to Panama's would-be protectors in Washington.

Revolution and Colombian Betrayal

The final intervention under the Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty in 1903 marked the point where legality became the instrument of U.S. imperial control. While Washington portrayed its actions as the democratic support of Panamanian self-determination to the American public, it simultaneously relied on a deliberately broad reading of the treaty to excuse its violation of Colombian sovereignty. The *USS Nashville*, which was deliberately positioned on the Atlantic side of the Panamanian coast, arrived at Colón the day before the planned rebellion, blocking access to the Panamanian Railroad under the justification of ensuring “peace and order” and upholding the United States’ transit rights across the isthmus in the spirit of “neutrality.”³² This ultimately ensured the quick triumph of the revolutionaries on November 3 in Panama City, their military being the fire department, the local police, and a Colombian army detachment whose commander had been bribed.³³ After a long series of backdoor diplomatic maneuvers that had paved the way, the United States finally faced an inevitable confrontation. By blocking the railroad and denying the Tiradores Battalion transportation upon landing in the port city of Colón,

³² Meditz and Hanratty, *Panama: A Country Study*, 23.

³³ Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism*, 109.

the United States effectively halted the Colombian attempt to suppress the uprising, since the troops were unable to cross to the other side of the Isthmus. While this was nothing more than a calculated effort to secure the canal for strategic and economic gain, American newspapers made sure to endorse the U.S. State Department's narrative "that [the adversarial Colombian response to the rebellion] certainly interferes with the freedom of transit across the isthmus, which [the U.S.] Government is treaty bound to maintain."³⁴ While the Colombian were angered and correct to assume that the alliance treaty was read to militarily inhibit them, the power of the U.S. Navy was unmatched. The *USS Dixie* arrived the next day to support the *USS Nashville*, with further reinforcements following soon after. The Colombians had simply no alternative but to return to Bogotá and contemplate their standing with what was believed to be their ally.³⁵ This episode blurred the line between defense and domination, revealing how easily international law could be bent to serve ambition.

For the Colombians, the American position was unknown as this backdoor method of imperialism took them by the utmost surprise. Given the power dynamics of the time, more deliberate behavior would have been expected and more foreseeable if the United States were to cut ties in support of an adversary. Contemporary observers also recognized the exceptional nature of Washington's action, with Professor Edwin A. Grosvenor of Amherst College remarking in a 1903 *New York Tribune* interview that "the circumstances

³⁴ *The San Francisco Call*, November 5, 1903, 1.

³⁵ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 66.

are... without precise precedent.”³⁶ This underscores how unusual (and therefore how politically risky) Washington’s rapid defense was, and helps explain why the administration carefully manufactured a legal and rhetorical cover for its intervention. In disregard of their prior allegiance to Colombia, the United States recognized the independence junta as a de facto government of Panama under the pretense of an organic expression of self-determination. It took only 76 minutes to recognize the junta, but longer for the news to be relayed around the world.³⁷ On 6 November, under orders of Hay, American minister to Bogotá, Arthur Beaupre dispatched this recognition to the Colombian government:

The people of Panama having by an apparently unanimous movement dissolved their political connection with the Republic of Colombia and resumed their independence, and having adopted a government of their own, republican in form, with which the Government of the United States of America has entered into relations, the President of the United States... most earnestly commends to the governments of Colombia and Panama the peaceful and equitable settlement of all questions at issue between them.³⁸

This disingenuous diplomatic maneuver stunned Colombians as they stumbled to formulate a proper response. Furthermore, it is a clear example of the usage democratic rhetoric to defend imperialism. Washington deliberately had used

³⁶ *New-York Tribune*, November 18, 1903, 2.

³⁷ Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism*, 110.

³⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1903*, Document 272, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1903/d272>.

the language of legality and self-determination to produce the political outcome it desired in the Panama affair.

After a week of turmoil, Colombian Chief of Staff General Rafael Reyes met with Panamanian and U.S. military leaders aboard the *USS Canada* in effort to comprehend what had occurred. There, General Reyes was informed by Admiral Coghlan the extent of Roosevelt's protection of the new republic to which he learned of the direct orders to prohibit any outside force from landing within the State of Panama.³⁹ As the rather concealed declaration of war that the United States had made started to become more apparent, Reyes reserved that his "forces would do nothing hostile" until he was able to ascertain the situation in Washington fully, but regardless he issued a ferocious statement from Bogotá:

It is preferable to see the Colombian race completely extinguished than to submit ourselves to the infamous policy of President Roosevelt. It is well proven that the Chief of the American union does not know how to interpret the boasted Monroe Doctrine; and that he does not comply either in the spirit or the letter, with International Treaties such as the treaty of 1846 in which the United States guaranteed that Panama should ever belong to Colombia... Commanders, Officers and Soldiers of the Army let us swear to God and let us promise the Fatherland that we will defend our rights until the last drop of blood is shed.⁴⁰

Reyes was justifiably frustrated as Colombia had been exploited as part of an imperialist agenda, through American concealed and coercive diplomacy.

Meanwhile, the United States would never admit that it had orchestrated a coup

³⁹ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 69.

⁴⁰ Rafael Reyes, quoted in Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy* 69.

so undermining to its word and principles, as strategic interests drove its plans in Panama. While Reyes may have been the forerunner of retaliation, no military confrontation ultimately occurred due to the difficulty of traversing the Darién Gap amid the national disunity in the wake of the Thousand Days War.⁴¹

Dejected Conservative leader Jorge Holguín described that "it appears that some hellish genius has determined to conjure up against us all the elements most powerful in destruction."⁴²

Throughout 1903 the Roosevelt administration proactively presented itself as a benevolent agent of progress rather than an empire builder. It remained steadfast that it had not violated any treaty. Hay argued the United States kept its pledge from 1846 by ensuring that "the peaceable traffic of the world across the Isthmus of Panama shall no longer be disturbed by a constant succession of unnecessary and wasteful civil wars," essentially claiming that they upheld their duty of maintaining peace over the unstable land.⁴³ This claim, like other inconsistent public justifications presented by this administration, ignores the fact that Colombian sovereignty was dismissed, regardless of whether violence was avoided. In 1904 Roosevelt made his position rather clear in a statement to Congress:

⁴¹ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "Building the Panama Canal, 1903–1914," *Milestones: 1899–1913*, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/panama-canal>.

⁴² Joseph L. Arbena, "Colombian Reactions to the Independence of Panama, 1903–1904," *The Americas* 33, no. 1 (1976): 132.

⁴³ Theodore Roosevelt, *Message Regarding the Panamanian Revolution*, November 16, 1903, in *Presidential Speeches*, Miller Center, University of Virginia.

I think proper to say, therefore, that no one connected with this Government had any part in preparing, inciting, or encouraging the late revolution on the Isthmus of Panama, and that save from the reports of our military and naval officers, given above, no one connected with the Government had any previous knowledge of the revolution except such as was accessible to any person of ordinary intelligence who read the newspapers and kept up a current acquaintance with public affairs.⁴⁴

This is known to certainly be false, according to numerous naval dispatches that are now unclassified.⁴⁵

Furthermore, Roosevelt's deep access to intelligence, had positioned him to wholeheartedly expected a retaliation from Colombia through the south of the Isthmus, according to additional navy department dispatches, and was ready for war if necessary.⁴⁶ In the months after Panama's declaration of independence, the United States established a formidable imperial military defense across the isthmus: multiple U.S. warships, including the *USS Dixie*, *USS Prairie*, *USS Wyoming*, and *USS Boston* that were positioned to blockade a Colombian landing through the Río Tuira or a coastal inlet.⁴⁷ Simultaneously, Brigadier General Elliot organized the 1st Provisional Brigade in Panama which

⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. "The United States and the Panama Canal, 1903–1917," Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations, 1899–1913. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/panama-canal>.

⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1903, doc. 310, 268–70.

⁴⁶ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 70.

⁴⁷ Naval History and Heritage Command, "USS Wyoming II (Monitor # 10, later BM-10)," Naval History and Heritage Command. <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/w/wyoming-ii.html>; Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 75.

landed over 1,100 Marines in Colón, creating what one officer described as “an armed camp” strong enough to resist any Colombian counteroffensive.⁴⁸ Evidently, U.S. military involvement in the Panama Crisis was less a defense of neutrality than a demonstration of how the United States government could fabricate legitimacy domestically and abroad while directly dismantling sovereignty. In fact, they were prepared for warfare if needed.

Imperial Ambitions and Protectorate Status

With the secession unfolding exactly as planned, the United States moved quickly to assert its long-term interests, encroaching on the canal zone almost as soon as it recognized Panamanian independence. Both sides understood their obligation in the deal: Panama would have to grant the United States a favorable contract for the canal in return for ensuring their independence. In addition to both the U.S. and Panama looking to benefit, Bunau-Varilla held a special stake as the middleman in this operation, as he was set out to profit handsomely through the sale of his shares in the previous canal project. This dilemma was harshly consequential for the young republic’s hand in negotiating. Hay was readily aware of this conflict of interest; in fact, he was ready to exploit it. When Panama’s leaders attempted to counter by revoking the Frenchman’s credentials, they were stopped under threat of withdrawal of U.S. protection.⁴⁹ This possibility would immediately entail reabsorption by

⁴⁸ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Naval Diplomacy*, 75.

⁴⁹ Conniff, *Forced Alliance*, 68.

Colombia, leaving the new government no choice but to fall victim to such backdoor imperialism. Thus, the very conditions of Panama's birth left it with little power to shape its own destiny.

In Washington, Hay and Bunau-Varilla rushed to write the treaty before the Panamanians could organize themselves. The new draft expanded the canal zone from six miles to ten miles wide and set the U.S. as the sole protector. Rather than a hundred-year lease, the United States was instead given the Canal Zone in perpetuity. A particularly impactful provision outlined that "Panama grants to the United States all the rights, power and authority... which the United States would possess and exercise if it were the sovereign of the territory... to the entire exclusion of the exercise by the Republic of Panama of any such sovereign rights, power, or authority."⁵⁰ The fateful treaty was signed just hours before a Panamanian delegation arrived in Washington to try to stop it. The Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty would become a defining burden on the majority of Panama's twentieth century history.

The United States' role in the Panamanian Revolution reveals an American foreign policy far more imperialistic than U.S. policy makers sought to portray. In this age, where European powers amassed wealth and direct influence through conquest and exploitation, building astonishing achievements on the subjugation of others. The United States, though born in opposition to

⁵⁰ Conniff, *Forced Alliance*, 68–69.

such empires given its revolutionary history, faced the same temptations seeking global influence. Of course, being a beacon for liberty was fundamentally incompatible with such a desire. What emerged instead was backdoor imperialism as a form of soft imperialism, manufactured by the Roosevelt administration and masked behind a façade of democratic support but also neutrality. In the Panama affair, the United States covertly orchestrated a revolution, dictated the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, and established a de facto protectorate in Panama to achieve dominance without ever declaring its Caribbean empire. In the end, they garnered the same rewards as if they had simply invaded and colonized by force. For Colombia, its sense of victimhood did not endure to the same extent. While its land was effectively seized in violation of international law, the U.S. did pay modest reparations of \$25 million roughly two decades later.⁵¹ Although widely regarded as inadequate, the payment was not followed by a prolonged U.S. military presence, sparing Colombia the sustained encroachment that Panamanian nationals experienced.

Overall, the events of November 1903 are a testament to the painful history of the Panamanian state and to the rapid shift towards America's careful approach toward precedent-setting hegemony. In the following years, Roosevelt doubled down on this aim with the Roosevelt Corollary, extending the Monroe Doctrine to assert the United States' right to intervene in the affairs of any state in the Western Hemisphere, effectively making the U.S. State Department the

⁵¹ Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism*, 110.

policeman of the Americas. As historian Thomas Bailey puts it, "The Monroe Doctrine, which was originally designed to prevent intervention by the European powers, would be used to justify intervention by the United States."⁵² This expansion of policy created a new identity as the once inward-looking and non-interventionist republic would go on to shape the future of the world, heavily influencing the outcomes of the next two World Wars and beyond.

In the modern era, the methods may have changed, but the enduring impulse towards dominance and self-interest persists in a humbler form. In lines with decolonization and a new world order, it has become increasingly controversial to capitalize on developing countries. Out of international pressure, the Johnson and Nixon administrations attempted to return the canal to Panama but failed to successfully navigate negotiations. Retaining favorable economic and political circumstances was a difficult feat; President Jimmy Carter narrowly managed to pass the deal in 1977, but only 30 percent of Americans were in support of it.⁵³ This struggle and controversy underscore the delicate balance between rhetoric, benevolence, and opportunism that has characterized presidential foreign policy. However, in rejection of the transferring of the canal, Trump's 2025 call to "take back" the canal should not be seen as an isolated provocation, but an effort to reopen the door to the

⁵² Thomas Bailey, quoted in Serge Ricard, "The Roosevelt Corollary," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2006): 18.

⁵³ Ted J. Smith and J. Michael Hogan, "Public Opinion and the Panama Canal Treaties of 1977," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1987): 14.

imperial ambitions that initially secured American control over the canal more than a century ago.

With or Without Influence: The Impact of George Wythe's Antislavery Beliefs on his Students

NADIA WACHIRA

George Wythe, a professor of law at the College of William and Mary and Chancellor of the Virginia's High Court of Chancery, was celebrated as "one of the most virtuous of characters, and whose sentiments on the subject of slavery are unequivocal" by his student Thomas Jefferson.¹ In a letter to British abolitionist Richard Price, Jefferson encouraged him to "be not therefore discouraged" from sharing his antislavery pamphlet with students of William and Mary, assuring him that they were "under preparation for public life" under Wythe's guidance and would be receptive to his ideas.² Despite Jefferson's confidence in his mentor, many of Wythe's students approached antislavery with contradictions, speaking against enslavement while continuing to uphold it. Through his own actions and example, Wythe shows how antislavery existed as a spectrum of beliefs, ranging from forming moral objections without action to taking steps to lessen enslavement in America, influencing some to act while others reconciled with it.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, antislavery thought consisted of opposition to enslavement and its continuation and expansion

¹ Thomas Jefferson to Richard Price, 7 August 1785.

² Thomas Jefferson to Richard Price, 7 August 1785.

within Western society. Although similar to abolitionism, which called for emancipation, antislavery was moderate and expressed by enslavers who opposed enslavement while practicing it.³ Scholarship has extensively explored these antislavery ideas, focusing on the connections between intellectual and political ideologies and the arguments against enslavement held by slaveholding American leaders.⁴ However, George Wythe's role as a mentor to emerging revolutionaries and his prominent voice in antislavery thought have been neglected in the historical narrative. Scholarship on Wythe primarily focuses on biographical explorations of his life and death in 1806, as well as analyses of his legal career as an educator and judge of Virginia's High Court of Chancery.⁵ These works, although plentiful in well-researched information, do not fully encapsulate the extent of Wythe's antislavery views and actions.

Through his rulings as Chancellor and his role at William and Mary, Wythe's antislavery was expressed in ways that affected law and the education of future leaders. In Virginia's High Court of Chancery, his decisions on cases involving people held in bondage, such as *Pleasants v. Pleasants* in 1799, reflected

³ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 21–22.

⁴ See Anthony Alfred Iaccarino, "Virginia and the National Contest Over Slavery in the Early Republic, 1780–1833" (PhD diss., University of California, 1999), ProQuest (9939023); Cara Rogers Stevens, *Thomas Jefferson and the Fight Against Slavery* (University Press of Kansas, 2024), 7.

⁵ See Robert Bevier Kirtland, "George Wythe: Lawyer, Revolutionary, Judge" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1983), ProQuest (8324216); John Bailey, *Jefferson's Second Father* (Momentum, 2013); Thomas Hunter, "The Teaching of George Wythe," in *The History of Legal Education in the United States: Commentaries and Primary Sources*, ed. Steve Sheppard (Salem Press, 1999), 138–68.

his commitment to fairness and human liberty. Through his role as a professor of law at William and Mary, he formed mentorships with students like Thomas Jefferson and St. George Tucker that would shape their legal and political endeavors. “And to him,” wrote Jefferson in 1806, reflecting on Wythe’s death, “I am indebted for first impressions which have had the most salutary influence on the course of my life.”⁶ This lifelong influence is more complicated than how it is framed in Jefferson’s letter. While Jefferson and Tucker wrote extensively about their support for antislavery, they failed to act upon such beliefs by not emancipating their enslaved people. Wythe, on the other hand, sought to uphold his antislavery beliefs in both his public life and career as Chancellor and professor and within his private household. However, the varied responses of his students highlight the impact and limit of his influence. In a broader scope, Wythe and his influence raise important questions on the meaning of antislavery in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As a spectrum, antislavery thought in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries could be seen as an expression of ideas paired with a lack of action or the willingness to change through the power one had. By examining Wythe’s personal actions and influences on his students, the spectrum of antislavery is apparent, ranging from principles without practice to invigorated action.

In order to understand the significance of George Wythe’s antislavery beliefs, this essay will begin with an examination of Wythe’s views and actions.

⁶ Thomas Jefferson to William Duval, 14 June 1806, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

This first section will focus on how Wythe's antislavery beliefs shaped his actions throughout his legal career and in his private household, where he kept enslaved and manumitted African Americans. Next, Jefferson and Tucker will be introduced as students of Wythe who each compiled their opinions on slavery and abolition into writing. First, Jefferson will be analyzed through his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1832), where he expresses his views on enslavement and race. Tucker's notable work, including *A Dissertation on Slavery* (1796) and his opinion on Wythe's rulings on the *Hudgins v. Wright* case, will be analyzed to highlight a defining shift in his beliefs. Despite their significant writings on the subject, Jefferson's and Tucker's failure to act on their antislavery views reveals the limits of Wythe's influence and the unfulfilled ideals of antislavery in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

George Wythe and Practicing Antislavery

George Wythe's antislavery beliefs were reflected in his personal life as much as his legal career, demonstrating an active commitment to freedom that challenged the ideology he was surrounded by. Wythe was born and raised by a plantation-owning family in Elizabeth County, Virginia, where he was "intimately enmeshed" with both the ideology and the physical reality of enslavement.⁷ After his father's death in 1729, the young Wythe inherited enslaved people while his older brother, Thomas, received the plantation and

⁷ Bailey, *Jefferson's Second Father*, 5.

the majority of the family's wealth.⁸ This early inheritance marked Wythe's involuntary entry into slaveholding based on familial tradition. Upon marrying his second wife, Elizabeth Taliaferro, in 1754, Wythe was entrusted to execute the Will and Testament of his father-in-law, Richard Taliaferro, in 1779. In Taliaferro's will, Wythe and his wife were to receive the "House and Lotts" in Williamsburg, Virginia.⁹ In addition, Taliaferro gave Elizabeth "my negro Wench Peg, and my negro boy called Joe to her and her Heirs forever."¹⁰ Similar to Wythe's first inheritance in 1729, Taliaferro's will reflects how deeply enslavement was embedded in the social system of eighteenth century Virginia, with Wythe being placed as an heir to continue upholding his family's "property." Rather than accepting his inheritance completely, Wythe began to act against enslavement, most notably in 1787 through manumission.

Two months after Elizabeth died of illness on August 17, 1787, Wythe transferred ownership of several enslaved African American men and women to the children of his brother-in-law, Richard Taliaferro.¹¹ The deed, referred to as "George Wythe's Gift," listed eleven names of enslaved people who were to be "divided among" Taliaferro's daughters and sons—"my negro woman slave Cate, with her children and grandchildren, Rachel, Lydia, Lucy, Bob and Jamey,

⁸ Imogene E. Brown, *American Aristides: A Biography of George Wythe* (Associated University Presses, 1981), 20.

⁹ Richard Taliaferro, "Will of Richard Taliaferro," *The William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine* 12, no. 2 (1903): 124.

¹⁰ Taliaferro, "Will of Richard Taliaferro," 124.

¹¹ George Wythe, "George Wythe's Gift," *The William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine* 12, no. 2 (1903): 125–26.

and also my negro woman slave Fanny, with her children, Paris and Isaac...Rose and Edward.”¹² While Wythe did not free these individuals in the deed, it reflects the legal reality of the eighteenth century. Since Elizabeth had died without heirs, Wythe may not have been able to retain legal ownership of the eleven people. By 1787, Wythe’s household included only sixteen enslaved persons, suggesting an evident gradual decrease in the number of people in bondage in his household¹³

When Wythe inherited enslaved people from his wife’s family, Virginia law prohibited manumission without specialized permission from the legislature. Many Virginians protested against the law, arguing that it violated their right “to do whatever they pleased with their property,” which included the ability to free their enslaved people.¹⁴ In response, the Virginia General Assembly passed “An Act to Authorize the Manumission of Slaves” in May 1782, declaring that “persons who are disposed to emancipate their slaves may be empowered so to do” either during their lifetime or in their last wills and testaments.¹⁵ The act required freed African Americans over the age of forty-five, men under the age of twenty-one, or women under the age of eighteen to

¹² Wythe, “George Wythe’s Gift,” 125–26.

¹³ Bailey, *Jefferson’s Second Father*, 195.

¹⁴ Sherri Burr, “The Free Blacks of Virginia: A Personal Narrative, A Legal Construct,” *The Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice* 19, no. 1 (2016): 24–25.

¹⁵ “An Act to Authorize the Manumission of Slaves,” in *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619*, ed. William Waller Hening, vol. 11 (1823), 39–40.

be supported by “the person so liberating them or by his or her estate.”¹⁶ If a person was deemed not to need financial support from their “former master,” they were required to pay levies and taxes imposed by their county—failure to do so resulted in the county’s sheriff “to hire out him or her” until they raise the amount of money due.¹⁷ Despite its limitations, the Manumission Act made the private manumission of enslaved people easier. It was through the Manumission Act that Wythe had the opportunity to file manumission papers without government interference in 1787, nineteen years before his death in 1806.¹⁸

The actions Wythe took based on antislavery in his personal life were recognized by those around him like George W. Munford. “He emancipated his slaves, but did not cast them on the world friendless and needy,” Munford wrote in his reflection on Wythe’s life, “He gave them sufficient sums to free them from want.”¹⁹ Manumitting enslaved people years before his death enabled Wythe to transform his antislavery beliefs into concrete actions, showcasing his commitment to these principles. The first of four enslaved people Wythe freed before his 1791 move to Richmond was Lydia Broadax. Under the Manumission Act, Broadnax, who was over the age of forty-five, was required to be financially supported by Wythe, which led her to work as his

¹⁶ “An Act to Authorize the Manumission of Slaves,” 39.

¹⁷ “An Act to Authorize the Manumission of Slaves,” 40.

¹⁸ Mary A. Stephenson, “George Wythe House Historical Report, Block 21 Building 4,” in *Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series - 1483* (1955), 33. For George Wythe’s death, see Bruce Chadwick, *I Am Murdered: George Wythe, Thomas Jefferson, and the Killing That Shocked a New Nation* (John Wiley and Sons, 2009).

¹⁹ Munford, *The Two Parsons*, 418.

domestic servant in his Richmond household.²⁰ However, Wythe's letters suggest that she had other means of income, as indicated by a letter sent to Thomas Jefferson in 1801 regarding an officer owing money to "a freed woman living with" Wythe.²¹ According to Andrew Nunn McKnight in his study of Broadnax's life, she owned property in Richmond after Wythe's death and collected yearly rent of fifteen or sixteen dollars. Her property was either acquired with her payments from working under Wythe or inherited rent through his will.²² Broadnax's life after being manumitted shows the lasting impact of Wythe's actions, as Broadnax was able to maintain some financial stability and her own property.

Wythe and Broadnax's complex relationship is highlighted by observers' accounts commenting on Wythe's unexpected death in 1806. George W. Munford, the son of one of Wythe's students, wrote in 1884 about Broadnax's loyalty to her former master. Munford claimed that she was "a servant of the olden time, respected and trusted by her master, and devotedly attached to him and his—one of those whom he had liberated, but who lived with him from affection."²³ Despite her status as a free, property-owning

²⁰ Andrew Nunn McKnight, "Lydia Broadnax, Slave, and Free Woman of Color," *Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South* 5, no. 1/2 (1994): 19.

²¹ George Wythe to Thomas Jefferson, 19 June 1801, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

²² McKnight, "Lydia Broadnax, Slave, and Free Woman of Color," 20; George Wythe, *Last Will and Testament with Codicil*, 6 June 1806, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

²³ George Wythe Munford, *The Two Parsons: Cupid's Sports; Cupid's Sports; the Dream; and the Jewels of Virginia* (J. D. K. Sleight, 1884), 417.

African American woman, Broadnax continued to be perceived as domestic and loyal without much agency of her own, reinforcing the traditional narrative of the antislavery thought Wythe possessed. The focus of antislavery in the South was on a “redefinition of collective norms,” or an attempt to restructure traditional thoughts to grapple with the moral dilemma enslavement proposed.²⁴ However, this idea was only applied to the perspective white enslavers had on slavery rather than their perspective of free African Americans, leading Broadnax to be compared to “a servant of the olden time.” Wythe’s actions toward Broadnax and her manumission reveal both a commitment to antislavery principles and the spectrum within which they existed. Although manumitting Broadnax, Wythe was limited by social constraints that directly affected the freedom of African Americans. This tension between belief and action highlights the complexity of Wythe’s antislavery and its effects on his personal life and household, shaping the lives of those he freed.

In his legal career and position as a mentor, Wythe’s beliefs expanded to an outside audience where antislavery thought outweighed action. Munford regarded Wythe as a judge who was “uncontaminated by prejudice or partiality, or meaner selfishness.” Those of the Virginian Capitol knew that Wythe “held the even scales of justice well balanced in his hands” with only “undoubted equity and law” being able to tilt it to one side or another.²⁵ In cases involving enslavement, Wythe applied his antislavery views through his careful

²⁴ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823*, 11–12.

²⁵ Munford, *The Two Parsons*, 415.

interpretation of equity and the law, demonstrating how his personal beliefs were expressed within the framework of legal fairness.

The influence of Wythe's antislavery views in his legal career is most present in *Pleasants v. Pleasants*, a case brought before the Virginia High Court of Chancery in 1799. The case centered around the 1771 will of John Pleasants, who declared that the enslaved people under him would be offered freedom at the age of thirty years old.²⁶ After his death, his heir and signer of the Anti-Slavery Petition of 1795, Robert Pleasants, immediately took action in 1782 to legally manumit the enslaved people under the Manumission Act. Despite Robert's urges for the family to emancipate under the new act, twelve of his relatives objected to his case, claiming that "the rights of property are as sacred as those of liberty."²⁷ Wythe's opinion was that any enslaved person who was thirty years old or older in 1782 was "entitled to freedom."²⁸ If a person was not thirty by the passing of the Manumission Act, they would be liberated once they turned thirty. Those born after 1782, the year of the passing of the Manumission Act, were to be freed, as Wythe believed freedom was entitled from birth. Since the enslaved people were being held in bondage illegally by the defendants, Wythe decreed that a commissioner would "ascertain their ages, and to take an account of their profits since their respective rights to freedom

²⁶ Daniel Call, *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Court of Appeals of Virginia* (A. Morris, 1854), 2:270, 319.

²⁷ Call, *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Court of Appeals of Virginia*, 324.

²⁸ Call, *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Court of Appeals of Virginia*, 323.

accrued.”²⁹ Through this decision, Wythe was able to draw on his beliefs regarding “human liberty” in the form of manumission and property rights. As the case revolved around people’s natural right to freedom, the defendants could not rely on their rights to property. Despite Wythe’s ruling, the defendants appealed the decision.³⁰

The Court of Appeals concurred with the Chancellor’s ruling regarding enslaved people having the right to be free under the Manumission Act. However, the court overruled the idea of profits, or reparations. Paying those who were illegally held in bondage was a direct challenge to the institution of slavery and to antislavery thought. Wythe’s emphasis on obtaining justice was placed on action—for the ruling to be just, those affected must be compensated. One judge on the case, Judge Spencer Roane, thought otherwise, stating in his opinion that “in this country, I believe no instance can be produced of profits being adjudged to a person held in slavery, on recovering his liberty.”³¹ Since there was no example of reparations for a person’s time in bondage in England to guide the Court’s decision, Roane saw this action as a precedent that should not be set. Wythe’s ruling in *Pleasants v. Pleasants* demonstrates how he attempted to translate his antislavery beliefs into meaningful action, using the authority he held as chancellor to uphold freedom and set an example in the courts.

²⁹ Call, *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Court of Appeals of Virginia*, 323.

³⁰ Call, *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Court of Appeals of Virginia*, 323.

³¹ Call, *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Court of Appeals of Virginia*, 342.

Outside the courtroom, Wythe publicly presented his antislavery beliefs through what is known as the Antislavery Petition, which highlights the shortcomings of early antislavery thought. This petition was drafted by the “sundry inhabitants” of Virginia and directed to the state’s House of Delegates on November 16, 1795. The petition deemed enslavement to be “not only a moral but a political evil,” that was “an outrageous violation and an odious degradation of human nature.”³² Notably, it directly quoted the Declaration of Independence, referring to how several American states were contradicting the “unalienable rights of human nature to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” by allowing “a number of fellow men to remain in a state of abject slavery.”³³ With over three hundred signers, the petition ultimately proposed to the House a law against “inhuman treatment” and freedom for children born after it was passed.³⁴

However, there were flaws in the petition. First, it sought the gradual abolishment of enslavement through proposed laws to end it as an “inhuman treatment,” rather than “a general and immediate Emancipation.”³⁵ The petition also alluded to the House of Delegates’ “sensible” ideas regarding enslaved African Americans, such as prejudices “arising from a habit” of viewing

³² “An Act to Ameliorate the Present Condition of Slaves, and Give Freedom to Those Born After the Passing of the Act,” 16 November 1795, reel 233, box 294, folder 5, Legislative Petitions microfilm, Library of Virginia, 1.

³³ “An Act to Ameliorate the Present Condition of Slaves,” 1.

³⁴ “An Act to Ameliorate the Present Condition of Slaves,” 1.

³⁵ “An Act to Ameliorate the Present Condition of Slaves,” 1.

Africans as an “inferior species of mankind” and as “property.”³⁶ The petition framed enslavement as “evil” in principle, yet it focused more on its corrupting influence on the new nation rather than the effects it had on African Americans. If the over three hundred petitioners had taken action on the petition, it would not have changed how people viewed African Americans—this is shown by how the signers reassured the House that their opinions on race were reasonable despite feeding into what they considered as evil. Wythe, on the other hand, was able to expand his beliefs outside of thought alone. Unlike the society around him that failed to challenge enslavement through thoughts and petitions, Wythe presented his moral opposition through his efforts to act on his principles by utilizing his influence in his public and private life.

Apart from Wythe’s private actions against enslavement in his household and his challenges to the legal system as Chancellor, his importance shone through his influence on students at the College of William and Mary. In December of 1779, Wythe began his career as a professor of law and police, lecturing twice a week on “the substantive and procedural details of the law,” theory, or a perspective on the differences between Virginia law and English law through Blackstone’s Commentaries.³⁷ At William and Mary, Wythe “gained an enviable reputation” for his teaching, allowing him to shape the minds of several young men through his “innovative, rigorous, and enjoyable

³⁶ “An Act to Ameliorate the Present Condition of Slaves,” 1.

³⁷ Thomas Hunter, “The Teaching of George Wythe,” in *The History of Legal Education in the United States: Commentaries and Primary Sources*, ed. Steve Sheppard (Salem Press, 1999), 1:145.

curriculum,” consisting of a strict commonplacing process, where students maintained detailed notebooks on legal readings, and a focus on legal treatises.³⁸

In a letter to James Madison, Thomas Jefferson explained that “Wythe’s school is numerous. They hold weekly courts and assemblies in the capitol. The professors join in it; and the young men dispute with elegance, method and learning. This single school by throwing from time to time new hands well principled and well informed into the legislature will be of infinite value.”³⁹ Based on Jefferson’s meaningful description, Wythe’s teaching was impactful on the university community and the young nation as a whole as Wythe was educating young men who would become influential legal and political thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Education was a fundamental principle within Wythe’s belief system, displayed by his efforts to teach law to students within and outside the university. Education also held a force of moral and civic development that extended beyond the elite, White students of William and Mary to whom he lectured. In June of 1752, Wythe was listed as one of the Virginian benefactors for the creation of a Charity Working School in Talbot County, Maryland, donating “2 Pistoles,” or two gold coins, to the cause.⁴⁰ The Charity Working

³⁸ Hunter, “The Teaching of George Wythe,” 145.

³⁹ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, July 26, 1780, Jefferson Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-03-02-0589>.

⁴⁰ *The Maryland Gazette*, June 11, 1752, Maryland Gazette Collection, Archives of Maryland.

School was the project of Reverend Thomas Bacon, a priest who advocated for children's education regardless of race, sex, or financial status. Wythe's advocacy for the education of enslaved and freed children did not stop at charity, as he offered lessons to young African American men he manumitted. This included teaching Michael Brown, "one of his negro boys Latin and Greek, and the rudiments of science" and Jemmy, a "servant," how to write.⁴¹ Munford wrote to John Coalter that Wythe's actions served as "only one more example of that benignity, granted by heaven to the minds of few."⁴² Wythe's actions not only reflect kindness and dedication to education, but also his effort to emphasize the moral worth of African Americans in line with his antislavery beliefs.

Thomas Jefferson and Separating Freedoms

Thomas Jefferson, a student of George Wythe from 1762 to 1767, greatly admired his mentor, praising Wythe as "distinguished by the most spotless virtue" and "one of the greatest men of the age."⁴³ Under Wythe's instruction, Jefferson recognized the Enlightenment ideals of education, virtue, and even antislavery principles that would surface in Jefferson's early career. In 1769, Jefferson, then a newly elected member of Virginia's House of Burgesses,

⁴¹ ("one of his negro boys...") Munford, *The Two Parsons*, 418; William Munford to John Coalter, July 22, 1791, Tucker Papers (I), Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary (hereafter Tucker Papers).

⁴² Munford to Coalter, July 22, 1791, Tucker Papers.

⁴³ Thomas Jefferson to Ralph Izard, 17 July 1788, Jefferson Papers, National Archives, *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-13-02-0274>.

“made one effort” for “the emancipation of slaves.” His proposal was rejected, with Jefferson later attributing this failure to “nothing liberal” being able to “expect success” before the dawn of the American Revolution.⁴⁴ Antislavery would continue to be a topic of interest for Jefferson as he expressed his ideas of emancipation in his 1785 work *Notes on the State of Virginia*, revealing how deeply Wythe’s antislavery beliefs shaped both Jefferson’s thoughts and actions even as his commitment to the cause remained complex and incomplete.

Throughout *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson grappled with how enslavement had an “unhappy influence” over the enslavers it benefited. “The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions,” Jefferson wrote, “the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other.”⁴⁵ Enslavement posed a moral threat to both sides involved—the white enslavers would become corrupt with power while enslaved African Americans would be forced to endure it. Jefferson also saw it as a threat to natural rights, asking if the liberties of the nation could be seen as “secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God?”⁴⁶ He suggested that a society built upon denying the God-given natural rights of some would diminish liberties for all.

⁴⁴ Jefferson, *Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson*, 7.

⁴⁵ Thomas Jefferson and Joseph Meredith Toner Collection, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Lilly and Wait, 1832), 169–70, <https://www.loc.gov/item/03004902/>.

⁴⁶ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 170.

Jefferson's argument in *Notes on the State of Virginia* echoes his stance in *Howell v. Netherland*, a case he argued before the General Court of Virginia in 1770. In this case, Jefferson represented Samuel Howell, a mixed-race, indentured man who believed he "could not be detained in servitude under any law."⁴⁷ "Under the law of nature," Jefferson claimed, "all men are born free" with "a right to his own person," a concept Jefferson referred to as "personal liberty."⁴⁸ Due to this principle and what was outlined in Virginia law, the natural rights of man were relevant to everyone regardless of their race or status. Yet, Jefferson was hesitant in his writing when discussing the rights of enslaved African Americans when compared to white people. In *Notes*, he expressed how prohibiting natural rights was immoral, but also how freedom alone would not help the antislavery cause. The tension between Jefferson's claims in *Howell v. Netherland* and in *Notes* reveals the complex nature of his antislavery thought, marked by bold ideas of liberty, limitations, and race.

The racial views Jefferson held are apparent in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, highlighting a prejudice that is essential to his antislavery beliefs. His discussion of enslavement emphasizes racial inferiority as he commented on "political," physical, and moral factors. In "Query XIV" of *Notes* regarding Virginia law, Jefferson posed an important question on what would happen if enslaved people were free: "Why not retain and incorporate blacks into the

⁴⁷ Thomas Jefferson, "*Howell v. Netherland*" in *Reports of Cases Determined in the General Court of Virginia, from 1730 to 1740 and from 1768 to 1772* (F. Carr and Co., 1829), 91.

⁴⁸ Jefferson, "*Howell v. Netherland*," 92.

state, and thus save the expense of supplying by importation of white settlers, the vacancies they will leave?”⁴⁹ Jefferson dismissed this idea of free African Americans living in Virginia, citing the differences in physical features like “colour, figure, and hair,” and bodily functions between the two races as causes for “deep rooted prejudices” and unrest.⁵⁰ Furthermore, he believed that black people were inferior in reason, characterizing them as “dull, tasteless, and anomalous.”⁵¹ These reasons, culminating in the “unfortunate difference of colour,” were a barrier to emancipation in Jefferson’s eyes. He saw that many antislavery advocates were “anxious” about the idea of what would happen after enslaved people were free.⁵² It appeared to be the question many were avoiding, focusing more on short-term solutions to an “evil” institution than racial equality—similar to what was seen in the later Antislavery Petition of 1795 where racial inferiority was recognized in a plea for emancipation.

To Jefferson, emancipation was dependent on whether the “community of free men” could come together and recognize how the “moral and political necessity of destroying an institution that they still believed was fully legitimate.”⁵³ If they could not, enslavement would continue to prosper in the new nation. Furthermore, according to Jefferson, emancipation “must be

⁴⁹ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 144.

⁵⁰ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 144–45.

⁵¹ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 146.

⁵² Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 151.

⁵³ Ari Helo and Peter Onuf, “Jefferson, Morality, and the Problem of Slavery,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2003): 585–86.

accompanied by colonization,” or the idea that freed people should be relocated to Africa rather than be integrated into American society.⁵⁴ In short, Jefferson’s vision for antislavery centered around gradual emancipation and relocation without integration or equal rights. Even though Jefferson, like his mentor George Wythe, was a prominent Virginian enslaver who expressed antislavery views, their beliefs ultimately diverged. Wythe’s impact on Jefferson’s early thought is clear as it is based on a rigorous commitment to Enlightenment ideas, liberty, and justice in law. Despite his many praises for Wythe, Jefferson’s actions show how limited this influence was. Jefferson was on one end of the antislavery spectrum, where he wrote for gradual emancipation and colonization that did not consider equality or integration of freed African Americans. While Wythe’s antislavery stance grew stronger over his lifetime, leading to manumitting enslaved people and advocating for their education, his students’ actions did not completely mirror his own beliefs.

Although Jefferson supported a gradual emancipation, his life after 1784 did not reflect it. Instead, his beliefs on the inferiority of African Americans were “completely congruent” with his behavior categorized by other “enlightened slaveholders who deplored needless cruelty, but would use whatever means they felt necessary to protect their peculiar form of property.”⁵⁵ By the time of Jefferson’s death in 1826, he had only emancipated seven people,

⁵⁴ William Cohen, “Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery,” *The Journal of American History* 56, no. 3 (1969): 224; Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 144.

⁵⁵ Cohen, “Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery,” 514–15.

including Burwell, John Hemings, Joe Fosset, Madison Hemings, and Eston Hemings, who were all manumitted in Jefferson's will.⁵⁶ This number is significantly smaller than the over 260 enslaved people who were to be inherited by his family.⁵⁷ The reluctance of Jefferson to manumit the majority of people he enslaved and his persistent ideas of black inferiority emphasize the reality of Wythe's limited impact on his students, reflecting the broader spectrum of antislavery thought that viewed principle over practice.

The Reconciliation of St. George Tucker

Out of all of Wythe's students, St. George Tucker was the one to succeed him in his role as Professor of Law and Police at William and Mary and as a judge in Virginia's Court of Appeals. Tucker took on his role at William and Mary with great stride, tackling a new curriculum and inspiring students the same way his mentor did.⁵⁸ Though Tucker was less vocal about Wythe's influence over him in comparison to Jefferson, Tucker's connection to Wythe is evident in Tucker's own antislavery thought. Wythe's moral opposition to enslavement and his push for emancipation shaped Tucker's moral framework even when he expressed antislavery with more caution later in his life.

⁵⁶ Thomas Jefferson to Will and Codicil, March 16, 1826, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-5963>. For Jefferson's relationship with the Hemings Family and its legacies, see Annette Gordon Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (W.W. Norton, 2008).

⁵⁷ Cohen, "Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery," 519.

⁵⁸ Charles Thomas Cullen, "St. George Tucker and Law in Virginia, 1772–1804" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1971), 165–67, ProQuest (7207232).

Originally from Bermuda and moving to Virginia in 1772, Tucker was caught between his revolutionary ideals and his status as a “substantial” enslaver with over one hundred enslaved people across three plantations he gained through his marriage in 1778.⁵⁹ By 1796, six years after accepting his teaching position at William and Mary, Tucker published his *Dissertation on Slavery: With a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It, in the State of Virginia*.⁶⁰ Similar to Jefferson’s *Notes*, this work encapsulates both Tucker’s antislavery beliefs and his proposed solution to the state’s entrenched problem.

Tucker was aware that even though America was “the land of promise to Europeans, and their descendants,” it was the “vale of death to millions of the wretched sons of Africa,” seeing how the nation’s revolutionary ideas contradicted its involvement in enslavement.⁶¹ In his *Dissertation on Slavery*, Tucker sought to reconcile the liberal concepts of the rights to freedom and to own property. “The abolition of slavery may be effected without the emancipation of a single slave,” Tucker wrote, “without depriving any man of the property which he possesses.”⁶² For this to be possible, he proposed that Virginia adopt a plan of gradual emancipation similar to those found in northern states like Pennsylvania and Connecticut. However, Tucker knew that

⁵⁹ Hamilton, “Revolutionary Principles and Family Loyalties,” 533.

⁶⁰ Vanderford, *The Legacy of St. George Tucker*, 22.

⁶¹ St. George Tucker, *Dissertation on Slavery: With a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It, in the State of Virginia* (1796), 9.
<https://archive.org/embed/dissertationonsla00tuck>.

⁶² Tucker, *Dissertation on Slavery*, 82.

emancipation was not enough to “confer the rights of citizenship” on those who were granted freedom.⁶³ In a state in which they were free but with limited rights, Tucker assessed that free African Americans would become “idle, profligate, and miserable.”⁶⁴ Tucker’s solution to this dilemma echoes Jefferson’s *Notes* as he expressed a desire to “accommodate” prejudice or racist ideas, hoping that it would “avoid as many obstacles as possible to the completion” of emancipation and encourage African Americans to move into Western territories.⁶⁵ These arguments reveal Tucker’s limits on his antislavery position—he opposed enslavement as a whole, but was wary of challenging Virginia’s social order and reliance on property rights, opting instead for gradual emancipation and an African American migration. Unlike his mentor, Wythe, Tucker prevented himself from advocating for full equality, not presenting it in his *Dissertation*.

Tucker attempted to spread his *Dissertation*, sending it to Virginia’s Senate in November of 1796. With confidence, Tucker wrote that since the Representatives of “a free people” had already “declared that all men are by nature equally free and independent,” they could not “disapprove an attempt to carry so incontestible a moral Truth into practical Effect.”⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the

⁶³ Tucker, *Dissertation on Slavery*, 75.

⁶⁴ Tucker, *Dissertation on Slavery*, 79.

⁶⁵ Tucker, *Dissertation on Slavery*, 94–95.

⁶⁶ St. George Tucker to The Speaker of the Senate of Virginia, November 30, 1796, box 19, folder 18, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

Virginia Senate promptly rejected his proposal for gradual emancipation. This action served as a “force of prejudice” and contradiction for Tucker who became disheartened by the negative reception he received for his work.⁶⁷ Although he argued for antislavery in his dissertation, Tucker’s views eventually shifted in relation to his finances and judicial work. He increasingly backed away from the vision of emancipation and freedom he had endorsed, leading to a more cautious interpretation of property rights and the social order of Virginia.

The shift in Tucker’s beliefs was present in his opinion as a judge in *Hudgins v. Wright*, an 1806 case initially brought before the High Court of Chancery before being appealed. Wythe, as Chancellor, ruled in favor of Jackey Wright and her family, who had argued that they were entitled to freedom since they were descendants of a free Native American woman.⁶⁸ Wythe concluded that each of the plaintiffs was “perfectly white” with only “gradual shades of difference” in their skin color between grandmother, mother, and granddaughter.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Wythe claimed that “freedom is the birth right of every human being.”⁷⁰ Wythe’s ruling was evident in the first section of Virginia’s 1776 Bill of Rights, which declared “[t]hat all men are by nature

⁶⁷ George K. Taylor to St. George Tucker, 8 December 1796, box 20, folder 1, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary; Hamilton, “Revolutionary Principles and Family Loyalties,” 537.

⁶⁸ William Waller Hening, “*Hudgins v. Wright*,” in *Reports of cases argued and determined in the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia with select cases relating chiefly to points of practice, decided by the Superior Court of Chancery for the Richmond district by William Waller Hening and William Munford* (1808), 134.

⁶⁹ Hening, “*Hudgins v. Wright*,” 134.

⁷⁰ Hening, “*Hudgins v. Wright*,” 134.

equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights, of which...they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity.”⁷¹ Wythe’s reasoning in *Hudgins v. Wright* greatly reflects his antislavery views and his actions, challenging the status quo of the courts once again in recognizing enslaved and freed people as human beings rather than property. However, Tucker’s views and actions undermined Wythe’s as he reinforced legal and racial barriers.

In his opinion for Virginia’s Supreme Court of Appeals, Tucker stated that he did not “concur with the Chancellor in his reasoning on the operation of the first clause of the Bill of Rights, which was notoriously framed with a cautious eye to this subject, and was meant to embrace the case of free citizens or aliens only; and not a side wind to overturn the rights of property.”⁷² For Tucker, the Bill of Rights was not intended to be applied universally, especially when it would disrupt one’s right to property. However, noting the different opinions between him and Wythe, he did agree that the appellees were “*absolutely free*” on the basis of Wright’s physical appearance being more akin to Native Americans than African Americans.⁷³ Tucker’s opinion also contradicts a point made in his *Dissertation on Slavery* ten years earlier. When discussing the equal rights clause of the Bill of Rights, Tucker wrote that it was “indeed no more than a recognition of the first principles of the law of nature, which

⁷¹ George Mason, “The Virginia Declaration of Rights,” June 12, 1776, National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/virginia-declaration-of-rights>.

⁷² Hening, “*Hudgins v. Wright*,” 141.

⁷³ Hening, “*Hudgins v. Wright*,” 141.

teaches us this equality, and enjoins every man.”⁷⁴ Due to this, it would be “hard to reconcile reducing the Negroes to a state of slavery” as they also possessed equal rights as people.⁷⁵ The only way to get around this, however, was to politically, physically, and morally degrade them to “below the rank of human beings.”⁷⁶ Yet, Tucker’s opinion in *Hudgins v. Wright* reveals a deviation from this radical argument, seeing that property rights—being interpreted as the right to enslave people—could not be overturned by the right to freedom. This deviation from his antislavery and revolutionary beliefs would continue later in Tucker’s personal life when he attempted to reconcile with the idea of enslavement.

In his private life and personal finances, Tucker often acted in ways that conflicted with the antislavery ideals he had expressed in writing. Shortly after the publication of his *Dissertation*, he formed a partnership with William Haxal, a “slave trader,” and sold many enslaved people for four years. For example, in August of 1797, records show that Tucker sold an enslaved woman, Katy, for £36.⁷⁷ Tucker had “no insincerity” in these actions, for it had “nothing to do with his commitment to freedom for African Americans,” or an

⁷⁴ Tucker, *Dissertation on Slavery*, 50.

⁷⁵ Tucker, *Dissertation on Slavery*, 50.

⁷⁶ Tucker, *Dissertation on Slavery*, 50–51.

⁷⁷ William Haxall to St. George Tucker, 31 August 1797, box 20, folder 8, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary. See also Tucker’s correspondence with Haxall regarding the sale of enslaved persons on 20 December 1796, 10 February 1797, 28 June 1797, 15 April 1798, and 17 August 1801.

attempt to decrease the number of enslaved people he owned. Rather, it was to maintain the financial status of his family, which had suffered during and after the Revolution.⁷⁸ Even though he claimed to reconcile the rights to freedom and property for all men, these actions show that Tucker still regarded African Americans as property, something he could use for his family's benefit. In contrast, Wythe was more consistent in his antislavery views, manumitting those he enslaved and using his influence as chancellor and a professor to advocate for equal freedom. Tucker lacked action although being intellectually engaged with the same principles, demonstrating how economic and social pressures were able to outweigh moral ideas.

Conclusion

The complexity of antislavery is highlighted by the enslavers it attracted—Wythe, Jefferson, and Tucker all participated and benefited from a system they were supposedly against. Each of these prominent figures enslaved people but used their voices to publicly express their antislavery beliefs. These actions provide a stark contrast between holding antislavery views and abolitionism in the nineteenth century. While abolitionists rejected nuance in calling for the immediate end to enslavement, antislavery ideology of the eighteenth century existed as a spectrum defined by actions one took to end enslavement rather than simply thought. Wythe fell on one side of this

⁷⁸ Hamilton, "Revolutionary Principles and Family Loyalties," 537.

spectrum with a position that would eventually move toward future abolitionism. His antislavery sentiments were present up until his death, both privately in his household and publicly in his position as Chancellor and law professor. Unlike his students, Wythe did not need to publish his own book, pamphlet, or dissertation to outline his views or reconcile with the ideas of racial inferiority and separation. Rather, his beliefs in man's right to freedom were expressed by manumitting those he enslaved, challenging rulings in the Court, and being an "unequivocal" voice of influence to his students. Jefferson and Tucker, on the other hand, began with antislavery ideas from their mentor but gradually shifted away. Their antislavery weakened over time, crumbling due to the social and financial nature of being an enslaver. Jefferson justified emancipation based on the perceived racial differences between African Americans and white people, declaring separation. On the other hand, Tucker ultimately saw enslaved people as property he could sell to maintain his plantations. Their shift emphasizes how the institution of enslavement reshaped their ideals, reducing antislavery to abstraction.

The influence Wythe had over his students was not as Jefferson exclaimed.⁷⁹ His mentor's sentiments toward enslavement were impactful in several ways—in Virginia's court system where freedom over property rights was emphasized and, in his household, changing the lives of formerly enslaved

⁷⁹ Thomas Jefferson to Richard Price, August 7, 1785, Jefferson Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-08-02-0280>.

people. Yet, this impact did not fully reach the students he was expected to inspire, revealing the contradictions found in antislavery beliefs. Jefferson and Tucker saw the evil in enslavement, but were reluctant to take action against it, writing their thoughts instead of looking at themselves as part of the problem. Their actions were limited, turning away from the influence of Wythe's antislavery efforts that were, above all, "unequivocal."

Faith, Feminism, and Freedom: Josephine Butler's Religious Crusade Against the Contagious Diseases Acts

ALEXIA CREEDEN

Introduction

“An almost ideal woman,” “a powerful mind,” and “a soul purged with fire”—these were the words used to describe Josephine Butler in her London Times obituary on January 7, 1907.¹ Known for her campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts during the latter half of the 19th century, Butler's obituary spoke to her complex identity as a Victorian-era activist, woman, and devout Evangelical Anglican. Her *Crusade*, as Butler described it in her autobiography, was contingent upon calling out the double standard of legislating women's, not men's, morality. Through supporting the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, Butler shed new light on prostitution, considering its complex moral ramifications, but also the necessity of fighting for the rights of prostitutes. Her work not only sought legal changes, but also a broader moral reform that strived toward the betterment of society overall, not just directed towards women. The combination of Butler's religious values of morality with her advocacy for both prostitutes and women in general, made for a unique case of Victorian-era women's activism. Josephine Butler's campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts told a complex story of faith as a justification for gender equality and women's rights.

¹ “Obituary Notice of Mrs. Butler,” *The Times*, January 2, 1907, reprinted in Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (Horace Marshall & Son, 1911), x.

Moral concerns rooted in religion played a significant role in women's activism during the Victorian era. Butler's campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts complicated the role of religious morality in promoting women's rights because it centered on the plight of prostitutes who were widely regarded as morally degraded in Victorian England. One must ask: how has Josephine Butler's religious identity shaped her campaign, and in what ways does this religious influence complicate understandings of feminists' social reform and the success of Butler's campaign?² Also, how did Butler see religion within her social activism, and how did she justify being an Evangelical woman fighting on behalf of prostitutes? Ultimately, Josephine Butler's writings demonstrated that her deeply held Evangelical Christian values, including morality and equality, fundamentally informed and shaped her campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts, showing the complex intersection of faith, gender, and activism in late 19th century Victorian England.³

A wide body of literature has been produced on Butler's activism and religiosity. Lucinda Matthews-Jones suggests that Butler's work, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade*, is a spiritual autobiographical account, demonstrated by the retelling of stories with biblical symbolism. By exploring several pivotal moments in Butler's campaign, such as the Pontefract by-election of 1872,

² For the purposes of this essay, "feminism" is the belief that women are equal to men. Similarly, "feminist lens" is analyzing sources with the values of feminism in mind.

³ "Intersection" or "intersectionality" refers to understanding how multiple social factors or identities overlap and interact to create a unique analysis or experience.

Mathews-Jones highlights how Butler used explicit biblical references in her account of the campaign. However, Butler's biblical references did not always align with the factual account of the event; thus, the book shows Butler's attempts to create a narrative about her *Crusade* rooted in religious symbolism and values.⁴ In contrast to Mathews-Jones' focus on Butler's memoir, other scholars, such as Helen Mathers, emphasize how Butler's self-identification with prostitutes through the campaign and her writings led to Butler's narrative as a religious prophet. Mathers highlights that this identity process reveals the combination of Butler's feminism and her Christian faith. Mathers shows that through self-identification with prostitutes, Butler was also able to connect all women, a feat that was unique to her campaign among the social reformers of the era.⁵ Both scholars employ a feminist lens in their analyses, highlighting the biblical role of women and traditional gender roles within the Bible as motivation for Butler's movement.

Other scholars have pointed to the Evangelical values associated with Butler's actual campaign strategy as opposed to just her personal works on the subject. Paul McHugh argues that Butler's organization, the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (LNA), was

⁴ Lucinda Mathews-Jones, "Granny Thinking What She Is Going to Write in Her Book': Religion, Politics and the Pontefract by-Election of 1872 in Josephine Butler's Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade (1896)," *Women's History Review* 26, no. 6 (2017): 935–52.

⁵ Helen Mathers, "'Tis Dishonour Done to Me': Self-Representation in the Writings of Josephine Butler," in *Sex, Gender, and Religion: Josephine Butler Revisited*, ed. Jenny Dagers and Diana Neal, vol. 242, Theology and Religion, VII (Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2006), 37–54.

successful because of its moral credibility and orthodox adherence to religious standards of morality. McHugh also notes, like many of the associations mentioned in *Personal Reminiscences*, the LNA remained independent from male-led organizations, a demonstration of feminism. McHugh describes the LNA as operating with feminist undertones, combined with a structure and status in society.⁶

Similarly, scholars like Kathleen Barry claim that the success of the campaign for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts was dependent upon the understanding of purity by Butler herself and her audience. Barry concludes that the intersection between religious purity associated with the campaign and Butler's status as a woman within the societal context created a significant obstacle to the campaign overall. This is evident in Barry's discussion of "purity crusaders" who wanted to "protect" women from prostitution by repressing women and viewing prostitutes as a problem of female indecency.⁷ Building on the work of these scholars, it is crucial to highlight how Butler's religious self-identification present across her works during the campaign for the repeal and in her memoir, impacted the content and status of her campaign. Additionally, it is imperative to recognize how Butler used the evidence of faith to argue for gender equality, even in the context of conflicting perspectives of how to reform prostitution during the period.

⁶ Paul McHugh, "The Role of Women in the Repeal Movement," in *Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 163–86.

⁷ Kathleen Barry, "Josephine Butler: The First Wave of Protest," in *The Prostitution of Sexuality* (New York University Press, 1995), 91–121.

Beyond the literature, there is also contextual information regarding the Contagious Diseases Acts (the Acts) themselves. The first English Contagious Diseases Acts were passed in 1864 and 1868 in port towns as a response to venereal diseases contracted by the British Navy. In effect, the Acts allowed police to stop any woman on the street and subject her to a medical examination. If the woman was found to be carrying sexually transmitted diseases, she could be placed in confinement for up to nine months.⁸ From the outset, the Acts hinged upon the complex reality of prostitution as an industry that was considered necessary but socially and morally reprehensible. Since the Middle Ages, the English government had regulated prostitution by regulating prostitutes as opposed to the industry itself. This approach assumed that even though prostitution was immoral, it allowed men an outlet to satisfy their sexual needs. The regulation of prostitutes was contingent upon the immorality of prostitutes as opposed to the condemnation of the entire institution.

The Acts, which built upon the indecency of prostitutes themselves, very quickly spawned a repeal movement in which some of the most prominent leaders were women, including Josephine Butler. Although religious values of morality were prominent in social reform overall, much social activism around prostitution continued to portray prostitutes as “fallen women,” those who had sinned through prostitution.⁹ Any work on prostitution reform at a policy level

⁸ Pamela J. Walker, “Contagious Diseases Acts,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁹ Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 65.

continued to regulate individual prostitutes, as demonstrated in laws like the Acts. In contrast, Butler's activism centered on opposition to the entire institution.¹⁰ To understand how religiosity impacted Butler's activism, it is necessary to understand Butler's unconventional argument against the Acts and her argument for moral reform overall: an argument that defended prostitutes rather than condemning them.

Josephine Butler was an Evangelical Christian who grew up in a religious family known for their frequent attendance at church. Even in her childhood, religious beliefs in Butler's household served as a foundation for social action. In her writings about her father, Butler recounted how she became engaged in the Bible through her father's weekly reading sessions, but also how she became aware of social problems in the 1830s and 1840s through the same manner.¹¹ While Butler, as an Evangelical, saw Christianity and faith in God as a commitment to social activism, she also implemented other spiritual beliefs in her daily life. Since her family was non-sectarian, Butler recognized spirituality from Quakers and Roman Catholics as a part of her beliefs.¹² In addition, Butler's spirituality focused on "spiritual womanhood," valuing femininity and motherhood, but also valuing women's contributions to guiding society in

¹⁰ Helen Mathers, "The Evangelical Spirituality of a Victorian Feminist: Josephine Butler, 1828–1906," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52, no. 2 (April 2001): 283.

¹¹ Barbara Caine, "Josephine Butler," in *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 159.

¹² Rebecca Styler, "Josephine Butler, Esoteric Christianity, and the Biblical Motherhood of God," *Religion & Literature* 49, no. 2 (2017): 94.

moral matters.¹³ Therefore, Butler's personal religious convictions were shaped in commitment to social activism, but unlike many Evangelicals, she also implored the use of feminine spirituality and the willingness to look beyond the scope of Evangelism for religious inspiration.

The Constitution Violated: An Essay

Butler's early works on the Contagious Diseases Acts demonstrated how she actively used the rhetoric of social movements during the period, as well as biblical references, to strengthen her case for the repeal of the Acts. For example, in her 1871 work, *The Constitution Violated: An Essay*, Butler proposed a structured argument reliant upon religious historical evidence and doctrines of liberty to create a standard of opposition to such immoral laws. Overall, in this essay, Butler argued that the Acts violated the religious principles laid out by common law in England. Butler focused on the constitutional illegality of the law but also noted that the time had come for a "deeper revival still, that of the soul and the spirit."¹⁴ The core of her claim for the betterment of society focused on the purification of individuals. This position was a central theme of Butler's argument for the repeal.¹⁵ Butler's call for a "revival" of society's

¹³ Jenny Dagers, "Josephine Butler and Christian Women's Identity," in *Sex, Gender, and Religion: Josephine Butler Revisited* (Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2006), 107.

¹⁴ Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler, *The Constitution Violated: An Essay* (Edmonston and Douglas, 1871), 169, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000263927>.

¹⁵ Barry, "Josephine Butler," 99.

morality through purification of individuals went in hand with the repeal of the Acts. The argument for going about a “revival” took the form of calling out the lack of liberty for women, double standards, and a case for the mobilization of women across class lines in the fight.

One example of such an argument was how Butler’s reasoning for moral decency and liberty in *The Constitution Violated* demonstrated the intersection of womanhood, liberty, and moral principles that created a complex argument for gender equality within the book. Butler argued that the Contagious Diseases Acts were an infringement on women’s liberties in England, liberties which had been conferred upon them by God—a common theme among women’s rights activists of the period.¹⁶ Butler’s argument included a condemnation of the ways in which the laws inhibited all women and deprived them of their God-given rights. Butler went even further to claim that these liberties never would have been taken away if women had the right to vote.¹⁷ As a supporter of suffrage during the 1860s, Butler’s broader assertions about gender equality were clearly part of the fight against the Acts.¹⁸ Through Enlightenment ideals of liberty and natural rights, Butler made the argument that women’s role in the repeal was taking back the natural liberties that had been stripped from them. Butler’s commitment to Enlightenment ideals was demonstrated in her comparison between the Holy Bible and the “political

¹⁶ Butler, *The Constitution Violated*, 33.

¹⁷ Butler, *The Constitution Violated*, 153.

¹⁸ Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain*, 185.

Bible” of the Constitution drawing on the “Magna Carta, the Petition of Rights, and the Bill of Rights.”¹⁹ Thus, Butler incorporated the Enlightenment ideals of natural rights and liberty as documented in the Bill of Rights in her discussion of the Acts’ problems. Through her argument for the enfranchisement of women based on these principles, Butler set an unconventional precedent for using laws against prostitutes for the complex argument of gender equality, particularly in suffrage.

Another controversial aspect of Butler’s religious argument for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in *The Constitution Violated* hinged upon Butler’s explicit recognition of gender equality in the eyes of God. Near the end of the essay, she not only claimed that the laws affected women more than men, but she also stated that “God holds equally of the interest of all mankind” and that the “contagious diseases acts are based on the fundamental assumption that the interest of women as a class can be neglected.”²⁰ This exemplifies not only Butler’s assumption that women were united in the fight against the Acts together, but even more so that the inequality proposed by the Acts was directly opposed to God’s principles of equality. Butler clearly connected the mission of repealing the Contagious Diseases Acts to the mission of God, placing women, as an entire class, at the center of the mistreatment of the Acts. Butler’s understanding of the Acts as an opposition to God’s principles of equality shows her advocacy for the necessity of a female perspective in identifying the

¹⁹ Butler, *The Constitution Violated*, 4.

²⁰ Butler, *The Constitution Violated*, 155.

mission of God, displaying a contemporary perspective of social reform.²¹

Butler's assertion also shows her determination to advocate for gender equality across class boundaries by defining women collectively as a class. The oppression of women by these laws was not only an act of defiance against God, but also evident of a war against all women.

Butler's claim also addressed the unfaithfulness imposed on men by the Acts, expanding her prior reasoning from how the Acts affected women to how they affected men as well. She directly critiqued how the intolerance for men's immorality was the basis for a more faithful society. In her argument in *The Constitution Violated*, she claimed that the Acts "implied that men are so helplessly the slaves of their own lower passions" and that men leaned on the sentiments of the Acts "in place of on the help of God; and a resolute and manly will."²² The case Butler made also drew upon traditional gender roles for men, directly calling out men for their unfaithfulness, as underlined in the sentiment of the Acts. She emphasized that the double standard harmed men as well and that reforms should focus on a general uplifting of the moral standards of society.²³ By calling out men directly in her essay, Butler expanded the issue beyond that of the regulation of prostitution to an argument for the religious principles of society. She proposed principles that should be upheld by every member of society, not just women. Discussing the double standard associated

²¹ Mathers, "Evangelical Spirituality of a Victorian Feminist," 304.

²² Butler, *The Constitution Violated*, 113.

²³ Barry, "Josephine Butler," 96.

with the Acts was the foundation of Butler's argument in her essay about the Contagious Diseases Acts. However, Butler's assertion would become even more complicated when it came to her speeches regarding the subject, where she directly addressed the public and urged them to act against the Contagious Diseases Acts for the sake of their religious principles.

Address Delivered at Croydon

Butler's public presence in her 1871 speech, *Address Delivered at Croydon*, served as a clear call to action, highlighting the principles upon which Butler built her campaign for the liberation of both men and women from the immorality of the Acts. The *Address*, which was delivered on July 3rd in Croydon, but later published in text format, outlined Butler's condemnation of the Acts with an emphasis on strong religious rhetoric. At the beginning of her speech, she discussed the broader importance of the fight for the repeal. Directly referencing the mission as one placed upon the people by God, she stated, "the bitter contest to which we have been called by God's providence in opposing this legislation has but opened the door, so to speak, to future work."²⁴ Not only did this statement demonstrate her willingness to apply the religious principles upon which she based her writings to other methods of social reform, but it also revealed a central theme in Butler's religious arguments. Butler referenced "being called upon by God," seeing herself as a

²⁴ Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler, *Address Delivered at Croydon, July 3rd, 1871* (National Association, 1871), 9, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100645655>.

prophet, spreading the words and sentiment of God, a theme across her various works.²⁵ Butler's remark that the mission had "opened the door" also revealed how her work was part of a larger mission of God acting through herself.

The *Address* reveals the complexities in Butler's religious argument for the repeal, as she highlighted traditional gender roles despite other works by her directly arguing for the enfranchisement of women. In the *Address*, Butler used biblical references to promote a division of gender roles. Her calls to action included specific biblical references that exhibited traditionally masculine qualities. When speaking to the men in government, Butler urged them to "Quit yourselves like men! It doth not infer any reproach if you shew yourselves Christian men, which alon will make you 'quit yourselves.'"²⁶ This statement was a poignant biblical reference to Corinthians 16:13, wherein the verse has been translated to "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."²⁷ Butler asserted that men had a certain role to fill as Christians, and that if they did not fulfill this role through the repeal of the Acts, then they were acting in opposition to their faith. In effect, Butler made use of the gender roles in the Bible to further her own point about the repeal of the Acts by identifying the mission of modern men in the repeal of the unjust Acts as a natural

²⁵ Helen Mathers, "'Tis Dishonour Done to Me': Self-Representation in the Writings of Josephine Butler," in *Sex, Gender, and Religion: Josephine Butler Revisited*, ed. Jenny Daggers and Diana Neal, vol. 242, Theology and Religion, VII (Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2006), 47.

²⁶ Butler, *Address Delivered at Croydon*, 9.

²⁷ *The Holy Bible, King James Version*, 1 Corinthians 16:13.

extension of their masculine qualities as Christian men, such as strength and courage.

Similarly, Butler outlined a specific role for women within the fight against the Contagious Diseases Acts, emphasizing the agency of women to influence men on moral matters. In her speech in the *Address Delivered at Croydon*, Butler stressed women's role in the moral purification of society. Near the end of her speech, she urged women to "to require, sternly of men; that they be pure, to demand it of them as they have hitherto demanded it of us."²⁸ The argument relied upon women's standing as the moral guides of a religious society, and Butler played upon stereotypical ideas of women's purity within religious tradition. However, Butler also condemned men for their hypocrisy in demanding the purity of women but not demanding it of themselves. By empowering women to do better and condemning the behavior of men, Butler campaigned for a form of liberty.²⁹ Ultimately, she campaigned for the liberty of women to support themselves and the betterment of society. While Butler promoted a somewhat traditional view of women's purity, the inclusion of women's empowerment in her campaign strained the boundaries of religious principles about purity.

Butler also directly called upon leaders of Britain to be more faithful to the principles laid out by God. Therefore, she sought to hold them accountable to a higher moral authority in the fight for social reform. Butler criticized the

²⁸ Butler, *Address Delivered at Croydon*, 14.

²⁹ Barry, "Josephine Butler," 109.

government for their limited adherence to the principles set out by God, stating that “it is not impossible that our rulers should learn the fear of God, and should govern the people in righteousness.”³⁰ In another effort to expand the issue beyond just a lower-class women’s issue, a women’s issue, or even a people’s issue, she held the government to the same religious values to which she held the individuals of the state. Understanding that an attempt to challenge men’s control of the government in her speech would likely be met with opposition, she argued instead for the doctrine of religious principles.³¹ Butler’s moral condemnation of the institutions based on religious principles and a lack of “fear in God” demonstrated her attempt to shape the whole of society around religious principles, as opposed to just the individuals directly involved in the prostitution industry. Her claim focused on an adherence to religious principles, but also a complex understanding of how to effectively use those principles to advocate for the repeal of the Acts.

Personal Reminiscence of a Great Crusade

Finally, in her most autobiographical source, Butler made her largest narrative case for the moral and religious values surrounding her life’s work in social reform. The source, *Personal Reminiscence of a Great Crusade*, was originally published in 1893 as a broad chronicle of Butler’s social campaigns, including her role in the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts. Butler includes

³⁰ Butler, *Address Delivered at Croydon*, 5.

³¹ Barry, “Josephine Butler,” 95.

various stories, letters, and conversations in the book. The title shows a clear example of how Butler used biblical references in her works. She intentionally equated her own *Crusade* with that of God's mission in the title of the work, demonstrating the central importance that faith had in every aspect of Butler's reform efforts. Additionally, the book opened with words from a speaker who highlighted the power God had given people to fight against injustice, again equating the human campaign for social reform to God's spiritual cause.³² The book showcased the most important moments in her campaign, such as her victory at the International Congress for the Abolition of Regulation and concluded with her appeal for the nations and men of the world to hold themselves to a higher moral standard in the name of faith. There were specific themes within the memoir that underlined the unique self-identification process present in Butler's work and how this process related to her personal understanding of herself as an activist for female social reform. Portions of the memoir demonstrated the faith-based motivation that Butler had when running her campaign, which allowed for its ultimate success. These themes, though, were all underscored by Butler's intention for writing the book—to reflect upon her *Crusade* for the social equality of women in late 19th century Victorian England.

To start, Butler's reflections in *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* emphasized her campaign strategy. As mentioned, this strategy relied upon

³² Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (Horace Marshall & Son, 1911), 15.

holding both men and women to a higher moral standard ordained by God. More radically, however, Butler directly mentioned throughout the book the importance of taking the answer to moral dilemmas straight from God as opposed to an earthly government. When discussing liberty for men and women in the memoir, Butler questioned, “At what point are we called on to decide, shall we obey God or man?”³³ Reflecting on the injustices of the British laws passed at the time, Butler’s question demonstrated a higher moral purpose that was a central theme in both her memoir and campaign overall. Her statement about being “called on” equates her mission to that of God’s mission, highlighting the importance of spirituality in her arguments on the subject. This quote exemplifies Butler’s understanding of social reform as a campaign for a better society, dependent on Evangelical Christian values.³⁴

The idea of a campaign directly from God, as laid out in *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade*, was further developed by Butler’s understanding of herself and the women who fought against the Acts as saviors of the less fortunate. Though Butler believed that the *act* of prostitution was immoral, she argued that the *cause* of prostitution was systemic and reflected the degraded standards of morality across all of society. Despite this, Butler reflected on prostitutes not only sympathetically, but also in ways that aligned them with herself and her supporters. For example, when discussing legislation passed against prostitutes, Butler stressed how the legislation passed resulted in

³³ Butler, *Personal Reminiscences*, 41.

³⁴ Matthews-Jones, “Religion, Politics and the Pontefract by-Election,” 937.

“awakening a deeper sympathy amongst favored women for their poorer and less fortunate sisters than had probably ever been felt before.”³⁵ Therefore, Butler emphasized the relationship of “sisters” between these two classes of women, showing her commitment to linking the fate of women of good social standing to those who had been subjected to immoral occupations. Butler’s attempt to connect all women in the fight for social reform and the repeal of the Acts was featured in her self-identification with prostitutes.³⁶ These connections across social class, while still highlighting the role she and her supporters played as saviors, were integral to her understanding of the Acts as an outrage to all women and laws that all women should have been fighting to repeal.

The memoir goes further to highlight how women’s traditional roles could be transformed through the spiritual mission. The roles for women within the campaign to repeal the Acts, as laid out in *Personal Reminiscence of a Great Crusade*, pointed to the intersection of feminist ideas of gender equality and Evangelical ideas of womanhood in relation to God. Butler stated that she had “never found that there was a strong, virtuous and free nation in which the women of that nation were not something more than mere appendages to men in domestic life” and that women “were also strong for public duty...and courageous for the national defense,” challenging ideas of separate spheres.³⁷

³⁵ Butler, *Personal Reminiscences*, 42.

³⁶ Mathers, “‘Tis Dishonour Done to Me,” 41.

³⁷ Butler, *Personal Reminiscences*, 39.

Butler placed her own campaign in the context of other “courageous” women who strived for the betterment of their nation. Her advocacy for both men and women working side by side to counter the Acts demonstrated her understanding of women as a strong and necessary force in social reform.

Additionally, in her memoir, Butler spoke about the large ladies’ organizations that made reform possible. These organizations, including her own, the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (LNA), were known for their concrete arguments and effective goals in legislative and social agendas.³⁸ Beyond their agendas, many of these associations were religious-based and served as a mechanism for more women to get involved in large-scale social reform. In *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade*, Butler positively discussed associations that were modeled after the LNA and fought for similar reform. She characterized the organizations as made up of people with “qualities which seem almost peculiar to that body of Christians—great determination and calmness combined: all the fighting qualities in the highest degree, together with a gentleness of manner.”³⁹ By ascribing these qualities specifically to “that body of Christians,” Butler highlighted not only the importance of the organizations themselves, but also the religious principles that grounded each organization in its reform mission. Therefore, Butler again connected her and her supporters’ work to a broader religious calling.

³⁸ McHugh, “Role of Women in the Repeal Movement,” 177.

³⁹ Butler, *Personal Reminiscences*, 43–44.

The LNA, the organization that Butler founded, was particularly important as a mechanism for Butler to use her religiosity to develop structured mechanisms for reform. The LNA demonstrated the ability of women to run an organized association in the same manner as men. In addition to the credibility of the organization, the LNA was also regarded for its principles and morality—a direct reflection of Butler herself.⁴⁰ Additionally, the LNA successfully organized a monthly journal, called *The Shield*, that provided writers the space to voice their arguments on the repeal. The religious foundations of both the organizations that Butler founded and those she chose to be partnered with, as demonstrated by her characterization of the LNA and other repeal-based organizations, was another example of the ways in which Butler used religious principles to structure her efforts. Even so, the LNA and its membership of women showcased the distinct role that women played in such a large-scale effort.

Finally, Butler's memoir allowed her to reflect on her experience through a narrative that she herself created, shaping her experiences into that of an actual spiritual mission. The memoir was not only titled to reflect her spiritual mission but also included stories that directly referenced moral challenges and issues, convincing people of the importance of religious principles. The spiritual mission aspect of her narrative was especially evident in the conclusion of the memoir. In the last few pages of the memoir, Butler called

⁴⁰ Paul McHugh, "The Role of Women in the Repeal Movement," 183.

attention to the fallen, stating that the “boldest champions fell in the heat of battle, but we have had strength given us to rise again, to put on our armour, and to turn our face to the foe.”⁴¹ The idea of being able to “rise again” likely referenced the story of Jesus Christ, emphasizing Butler’s central spirituality in the arc of her memoir. Butler’s identity in the context of her reform was based on the religious symbolism of the narrative, and the “religiously informed identity” that Butler created through such a narrative.⁴² While the sources written during the events of the campaign demonstrated the importance of religious values associated with morality and equality in the fight against the Acts, the overall *Crusade* narrative established in her memoir was indicative of Butler’s understanding of her story as a broader spiritual mission of her lifetime.

Conclusion

Overall, the work of Josephine Butler, in both her attempts at convincing the public to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts and her account of the campaign near the end of her life, demonstrated the use of religious values of morality and equality as an argument for the liberation of prostitutes and gender equality. The components of Butler’s religious rhetoric and evidence for her arguments for the repeal were important parts of the movement overall. Butler’s religious values played a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of her association and its successes, and the underlying argument for equality between

⁴¹ Butler, *Personal Reminiscences*, 243.

⁴² Matthews-Jones, “Religion, Politics and the Pontefract by-Election,” 936.

the sexes. Butler used religion to argue how the Acts affected men and women differently, and that men and women had different roles to play in the creation of a more moral society. However, she also highlighted the similarities between men and women in the fight for a more moral society, even though they had been treated differently in the past.

The religious and Enlightenment-based arguments that emerge from the writings of Josephine Butler during the height of her campaign against the Acts, and her memoirs looking back on the campaign, revealed the multi-dimensionality of Butler's reform efforts aimed not only at prostitutes, but at women overall. Her claims rested not only on spirituality, but also on feminism and liberty. An analysis of Josephine Butler's religious rhetoric within her campaign strategy demonstrates the intersection of religion and feminism, but also highlights how complex and diverse the arguments of the Victorian-era feminist movements were. As such, understanding Butler's argument allows for a broader perspective of early feminism and the motivations for early feminists. Therefore, the example of Butler's religiosity in her successful reform efforts not only adds complexity to the role of religion in social reform but also implies more broadly that there is always room for the exploration of diversity and complexity in feminist reform.

Ultimately, the impact of Josephine Butler's argument was reflected in the words used to describe her in her obituary—"an almost ideal woman,' 'a powerful mind,' and 'a soul purged with fire'"—capturing the influence of such a pious yet pioneering feminist.⁴³

⁴³ "Obituary Notice of Mrs. Butler," x.

Reformers in the Hot Seat: The Continuous and Evolving Detestation of *Leges Agrariae*

MADELINE SMITH

In the midst of political turmoil, Cicero's words cut through the masses: "Thus I maintain, O Romans, that this admirable and popular agrarian law gives you nothing, but makes a present of everything to certain individuals."¹ Cicero's speech reflected the senatorial elite's apprehensions about land reform and their growing concern about the rising populist sentiment among the Roman polity. The urban people were divided—some favored the law's promise to redistribute land to the landless, seeing it as a step toward social reform. Others, however, viewed it as an attack on the urban elite and a destabilizing force within the Roman Republic. Yet, while the people remained divided on these land reforms, the writings of ancient historians attempted to settle whether the law upheld or destroyed the institutions of Rome. Ancient historians wrote about the emerging populist movement, often highlighting the elite's fear of instability and mob control. Through their words, populist leaders such as Gaius Flaminius and Tiberius Gracchus were not portrayed as reformers, but as revolutionaries who tested the institutions of the Roman Republic. With every word they wrote, these historians constructed a narrative that framed the populists as threats, ultimately shaping how Roman history is understood.

In the Roman Republic, land was perceived as a status symbol of power and prestige. Ancient Romans knew the economic and social value reflected in

¹ Cicero, *On the Agrarian Law*, 2.16 (Loeb).

cattle and agricultural production on farm estates.² This financial opportunity took shape within large plantations—*latifundiae*—in growing corn and wheat.³ Beyond the material incentives of land ownership, land was perceived as a symbol of social status ingrained within the Roman tradition. Jack Morato analyzes how Romans competed for status through agriculture, much to the same extent they competed for art collections.⁴ Due to the critical importance of land, it became a centerpiece of conflict within the Republic, resulting in rising populist sentiments. Figures like Gaius Flaminius and Tiberius Gracchus embodied this sentiment, whose advocacy for land redistribution highlighted the political, social, and economic tensions that fueled the populist cause. Modern historiography on Roman land reforms and underlying populist rhetoric is split into two camps: those who focus on land reforms, often without presenting the broader historiographical context around each, and those who focus on the historiography of the Roman Republic through the writings of ancient authors. This is to say that some historians attempt to piece together the material aspects of the ancient world while others focus on the ancient writers themselves. Historians Christopher Dart and L. de Ligt, for example, examine how the *Lex Sempronia*, a land reform proposed by Tiberius Gracchus in 133

² Theodor Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, bk. 3, trans. William P. Dickson (Benediction Classics, 2019).

³ Mommsen, *The History of Rome*.

⁴ Jack Morato, “Praecipitia in Ruinam: The Decline of the Small Roman Farmer and the Fall of the Roman Republic,” *International Social Science Review* 92, no. 1 (2016): 7.

BC, marked a significant change in Roman agrarian law that reflected growing social tensions between patricians and plebeians.⁵ Other scholars point to the slow evolution of agrarian laws before and after Tiberius' land reform.⁶ For example, Andrew Stephenson examines the development of land reforms from the early Roman Republic to the beginning of the Roman Empire.⁷ He also analyzes the socio-economic contexts that shaped these evolving reforms.⁸ What these scholars have in common is their focus on the subject matter of the land reforms rather than ancient historiography created during the Roman Republic. These analyses show an awareness of the perspectives of ancient authors like Polybius, Cicero, and Livy, but they lack a thorough evaluation of these sources.

In contrast, more recent historiography on Roman land reforms shows a trend of scholars broadening their analytical frameworks and employing a more comprehensive approach to the writings of ancient authors. Rachel Vishnia and Lauren Kaplow, well-known Roman Republican scholars, are a

⁵ The *Lex Sempronia* was a land reform proposed by Tiberius Gracchus in 133 BC. This land reform was meant to redistribute land to the urban poor, particularly landless veterans. See Christopher J. Dart, "The Impact of the Gracchan Land Commission and the Dandis Power of the Triumvirs," *Hermes* 139, no. 3 (2011): 337–57; L. de Ligt, "Poverty and Demography: The Case of the Gracchan Land Reforms," *Mnemosyne* 57, no. 6 (2004): 725–57.

⁶ Andrew Stephenson, *Public Lands and Agrarian Laws of the Roman Republic* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1891); J. S. Richardson, "The Ownership of Roman Land: Tiberius Gracchus and the Italians," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 70 (1980): 1–11.

⁷ Stephenson, *Public Lands and Agrarian Laws*.

⁸ Stephenson, *Public Lands and Agrarian Laws*.

significant part of this trend.⁹ Drawing on the writings of ancient historians, Vishnia analyzes the perception of Gaius Flaminius, including his *Lex Flaminia*.¹⁰ Additionally, writers like Kaplow piece together a thematic understanding of populism's evolution throughout Roman historiography.¹¹ Despite these achievements, there is still a void within modern literature in understanding the historical writings of key ancient writers and their evolving perception of the populists' reforms. Broader views are critical to developing a thematic understanding of how populist tactics are perceived and whether there are similarities across time. Understanding how ancient writers portrayed populism and *leges agrariae* (land reforms) is crucial to grasping how modern historiography has been shaped. This observation illustrates an opening into what my contribution to this scholarship intends to address: how ancient historians in different periods understood and wrote about populist land reformers.

For example, when authors such as Polybius, Cicero, and Livy portray populist figures, such as Gaius Flaminius and Tiberius Gracchus, they root their accounts in their respective historical contexts. Yet, a continuous and evolving critique of populism's threat to the Republic remains evident. As an observer of the Republic's impending collapse, Polybius views populist reforms as

⁹ Rachel Feig Vishnia, "A Case of 'Bad Press'? Gaius Flaminius in Ancient Historiography," *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie Und Epigraphik* 181 (2012): 27–45; Lauren Kaplow, "Creating Popularis' History: Sp. Cassius, Sp. Maelius, and M. Manlius in the Political Discourse of the Late Republic," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 55, no. 2 (2012): 101–9.

¹⁰ Vishnia, "A Case of 'Bad Press.'"

¹¹ Kaplow, "Creating Popularis' History."

threatening Rome's democratic institutions. Cicero, amid tensions between the senate and the tribune, frames the reforms as direct challenges to senatorial authority. Livy, writing under Augustus, connects the reforms to the broader moral and political decay that led to the Republic's fall. Despite these differing contexts, all three figures present the reformers as destabilizing forces, emphasizing the recurring tension between populist movements and senatorial power as the central cause of the Republic's collapse. Together, their narratives build upon one another, shaping a lasting image of populism as a catalyst for the Republic's collapse. My contribution to scholarship on this topic weaves together the accounts of ancient sources to examine how historians from different periods present distinct yet sometimes overlapping perspectives on populist rhetoric and land reform. I aim to highlight how these perspectives reflect each author's historical moment and contribute to a broader narrative that frames populism as a destabilizing force in the Roman Republic.

This article will delve into the texts of Polybius, Cicero, and Livy as they focus on the tensions of the populist movements within the tradition of agrarian legislation.¹² However, these sources have their limitations. Polybius, for example, in his *Histories*, details the progression of the Roman Republic from 264 BC to 144 BC.¹³ Cicero wrote multiple works during the destabilization of the Republic, often referencing the deepening division between the warring

¹² Polybius, *Histories*; Livy, *History of Rome*; Cicero, *De Senectute*; Cicero, *Pro Sestio*.

¹³ Polybius, *Histories*.

factions of the *optimates* and *populares*.¹⁴ While he was a politician and a writer, his views are paramount in developing a perception of populism during the late Republic.

On the other hand, Livy's *History of Rome* positions itself as an in-depth historical account of Rome from the monarchy to the Empire under Augustus.¹⁵ In the preface, Livy expresses a desire to “avert [his] gaze from the troubles which [his] age has been witnessing for so many years,” preferring instead to focus on the historical accounts of the past.¹⁶ However, the *History of Rome* offers more than a record of the past; it also reveals Livy's views on prominent political figures, particularly leaders like Flaminius and Tiberius. These historians span three significant periods: the middle Republic (264 BC to 133 BC), the late Republic (133 BC to 27 BC), and the early Empire (starting in 27 BC), allowing for a nuanced analysis of the origins and evolution of populist ideas. Together, they will guide the study of how these historians perceived the threat of populism through key land reformers.

The essay is divided into three sections. The first section discusses how Polybius, Cicero, and Livy treat Gaius Flaminius, specifically in their reactions to his *Lex Flaminia*. The second section similarly treats Tiberius Gracchus and

¹⁴ The *populares* and *optimates* were broadly speaking factions, albeit not usually identifiable groups, that grew out of the political and social tensions in the late Roman Republic. The *populares* sought political power by elevating the interests of the plebeians. The *optimates*, on the other hand, are figures who aimed to uphold senatorial interests. For Cicero's definition, see Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 45.97.

¹⁵ Livy, *History of Rome*.

¹⁶ Livy, *History of Rome*, Preface (Loeb).

how our sources viewed his *Lex Sempronia*. The third section discusses these writers' differing frameworks and the common themes of political destabilization and threat to the Roman constitution. These sections will attempt to argue that these three historians viewed any populist rhetoric as an assault on the Republic and its institutions.

Framing Flaminius: The Anti-Populist Narrative

Gaius Flaminius was an influential figure in the early Roman Republic, serving as consul in 223 and 217 BC.¹⁷ In 232 BC, Flaminius assumed the role of tribune, representing the plebeians of Rome.¹⁸ The Tribune of the Plebs was an evolving political office, given power to enact *plebiscites* (laws) which intended to benefit the plebeians.¹⁹ Cicero recounts that this position helped Flaminius become a powerful orator, demonstrating his ability to sway public opinion in his favor.²⁰ It was in this position that he advocated for the *Lex Flaminia* in 232 BC, establishing himself as a populist figure in the eyes of many ancient historians.²¹ In addition, when Flaminius was elected consul, ancient historians portrayed Flaminius as tainted by omens. For example, Plutarch notes that

¹⁷ Vishnia, "A Case of 'Bad Press.'"

¹⁸ Robert Develin, "The Political Position of C. Flaminius," *Rheinisches Museum Für Philologie* 122, no. 3/4 (1979): 273.

¹⁹ Taylor, *Roman Voting Assemblies*, 60–64.

²⁰ Cicero, *Brutus*, 57.

²¹ Gaius Flaminius proposed the *Lex Flaminia* in 232 BC in an attempt to distribute land to Roman veterans. This land was actively occupied by large Roman farms. For further discussion, see Stephenson, *Public Lands and Agrarian Laws*, 368–69.

when Flaminius was first elected as consul, the augurs interpreted the omens as “inauspicious and baleful.”²² The river that flowed through Picenum even appeared to be running blood-red.²³ These negative characterizations stemmed from his earlier actions as a tribune. Furthermore, ancient historians portray Flaminius’ military failure at Lake Trasimene in 217 BC through the cynical lens of his decade-old land reform. For example, Polybius contends that Hannibal was aware of Flaminius’ populist politics, which led to his military defeat.²⁴ This is notable as it demonstrates that ancient historians blame Flaminius’ failures under the lens of his populist politics. Thus, Gaius Flaminius’ rise in political power is consistently characterized by one of his first political maneuvers: the *Lex Flaminia*.

However, the *Lex Flaminia* was less radical than its subsequent land reforms, such as the *Lex Sempronia*. The *Lex Flaminia* was based on providing recently conquered land, north of Picenum, to veterans.²⁵ At the time, this land was occupied by a limited number of Roman farms, which presented Flaminius with an opportunity to distribute small holdings to veterans.²⁶ The *Lex Flaminia* permitted a land commission to divide the land “among their citizens the territory in Gaul known as Picenum, from which they had ejected

²² Plutarch, *Marcellus*, 4 (Loeb).

²³ Plutarch, *Marcellus*, 4 (Loeb).

²⁴ Polybius, *Histories*, 2.21.

²⁵ Stephenson, *Public Lands and Agrarian Laws*, 368–69.

²⁶ Stephenson, *Public Lands and Agrarian Laws*, 368–69.

the Senones when they conquered them,” emphasizing the state’s role in distributing newly conquered territory.²⁷ Cicero reinforces this narrative by describing the law as a distribution of recently acquired land.²⁸ Despite the moderate nature of this reform compared to later legislation, Polybius, Cicero, and Livy all interpret Flaminius’ actions through the lens of populist politics and portray him as a destabilizing force within the Republic.

In the *Histories*, Polybius is critical of Flaminius and his land reform attempt, portraying him as a demagogue who attempted to gain political power through the mob. Polybius’ *Histories* is limited to the transition between the Struggle of the Orders and the emerging tensions of attempted land reforms.²⁹ Additionally, as James Davidson describes, Polybius’ writing is often in “several different realities,” reflecting many different biases paramount to evaluating his perspectives within the context of the populist movement.³⁰ Polybius’ view on the cyclical nature of governments, known as anacyclosis, aligns with this perspective. Anacyclosis is a theory that explains how governments evolve and devolve in cycles—from monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, and eventually into tyranny, oligarchy, and ochlocracy (mob rule).³¹ Viewed through this perspective, Polybius’ writings serve as a warning about the fragility of mixed

²⁷ Polybius, *Histories*, 2.21(Loeb).

²⁸ Cicero, *Brutus*, 57.

²⁹ Cicero, *Brutus*, 57.

³⁰ James Davidson, “The Gaze in Polybius’ Histories,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991): 10.

³¹ Polybius, *Histories*, 6.4.

constitutions and the inevitable decline of the Republic.³² Polybius' concerns center on the deterioration of democracy because of increasing power being handed to the mob, a theme reflected in his critiques of populist reformers throughout the *Histories*.³³ This theory anchors Polybius' writings within his historical context, outlining warning signs of the decay of Roman institutions. F.W. Walbank contends that Polybius' theory is discredited within Roman historiography, as he faced a "series of problems which he could not fully formulate, still less solve."³⁴ However, throughout the *Histories*, Polybius frames political developments within anacyclosis. When historical events do not align with his theory, Polybius often disregards or embellishes the facts to reinforce his narrative.³⁵ Consequently, Polybius presents Flaminius as emblematic of Rome's political and institutional decline, positioning him within the cyclical degeneration described by anacyclosis.

Polybius views Gaius Flaminius through this narrow lens, characterizing him as an early example of populism's threat to Roman institutional stability. For instance, Polybius' portrayal of Flaminius as a "thorough mob-courtier and demagogue" emphasizes his disdain for figures who challenged the senate's authority.³⁶ Polybius frames Flaminius' *Lex Flaminia*, which attempted to

³² Polybius, *Histories*, 6.4.

³³ Polybius, *Histories*.

³⁴ F. W. Walbank, "Polybius on the Roman Constitution," *The Classical Quarterly* 37, no. 3/4 (1943): 89.

³⁵ Walbank, "Polybius on the Roman Constitution," 89.

³⁶ Polybius, *Histories*, 3.80 (Loeb).

redistribute land without senate approval, as a direct affront to constitutional order. He emphasizes constitutional decay through his theory of anacyclosis.

Furthermore, Polybius ascribes Flaminius with the “demoralization of the populace, as well as the cause of the war with the Gauls.”³⁷ Polybius characterizes anyone, such as Flaminius, who questions the stability of Roman institutions like the senate in a negative light. This supported his theory of anacyclosis and his belief that Rome would “undergo a natural decline and turn to its contrary.”³⁸ Flaminius serves as a case study for Polybius, illustrating the early stages of the decline of the Roman Republic. In this light, Polybius portrays Flaminius as an example of how populist tactics contribute to the shift towards mob rule, highlighting the dangers that populist figures pose.

Cicero, unlike Polybius, did not view populism within a single theoretical framework, but rather through his own experiences. Cicero, a *novus homo*, strove for political power within the senatorial elite.³⁹ His status as an outsider shaped his political writings and created a sense of vulnerability in his position throughout the Republic.⁴⁰

³⁷ Polybius, *Histories*, 2.21 (Loeb).

³⁸ Polybius, *Histories*, 6.9 (Loeb).

³⁹ A *novus homo* (translated as a new man) defined men in the Roman Republic that were the first in their family to be elected to high political office. For further discussion, see Leonhard A. Burckhardt, “The Political Elite of the Roman Republic: Comments on Recent Discussion of the Concepts ‘Nobilitas and Homo Novus,’” *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 39, no. 1 (1990): 77–99.

⁴⁰ Laurel Fulkerson, “Cicero’s Palinode: Inconsistency in the Late Republic,” *Greece & Rome* 60, no. 2 (2013): 247.

This vulnerability, in turn, cultivated a conservative ideology. According to T.N.

Mitchell, Cicero believed:

The chief effect of the moral crisis on the *nobilitas* [the Roman nobility] was to enervate them and weaken their capacity to provide strong and efficient government, while the real danger to freedom and the republican tradition came from an opposition propelled by greed and ambition into vigorous pursuit of personal ends without regard for the common welfare.⁴¹

Cicero's writings reflected his belief that populists were driven by greed and showed little regard for the stability of the Republic.⁴² He characterized this political divide into two warring factions: the *optimates* and the *populares*.⁴³ Cicero frequently described the *optimates* as the stabilizers of the Republic—the *boni*, or “good men,” who sought to preserve senatorial power.⁴⁴ Consequently, a growing concern for the Republic's stability fostered a strong aversion towards individuals who threatened the deteriorating state of the senate, such as the *populares*. Cicero's critique focused on the dangers of bypassing the senate, framing his political discourse around the tensions between the two factions. Just as Polybius viewed figures like Gaius Flaminius as threats to Rome's institutions, Cicero's portrayal of the *populares* illustrated a consistent, evolving critique of populism's destabilizing role in the Republic.

⁴¹ T. N. Mitchell, “Cicero on the Moral Crisis of the Late Republic,” *Hermathena*, no. 136 (1984): 32.

⁴² Cicero, *On the Agrarian Law*.

⁴³ Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 45.97.

⁴⁴ Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 45.98.

Cicero paints Gaius Flaminius in a negative light for defying the senate, using this characterization to reflect his broader disdain for populist sentiments and movements in his own time. He emphasizes that disregarding senatorial authority is inherently detrimental to the Republic. Cicero expresses concern over powerful orators like Gaius Flaminius, who swayed the masses by presenting themselves as champions of the people.⁴⁵ In Cicero's view, oratory skills, particularly in the hands of populist leaders, could be weaponized to influence the deterioration and further instability of the Roman government structure. Cicero further articulates his distrust and disdain of Flaminius' destabilizing rhetoric in his *De Senectute*.⁴⁶

Furthermore, Cicero labels Quintus Fabius, the dictator who took over after Flaminius' death, as a moral figure in the Republic because he opposed the people's tribune of Flaminius.⁴⁷ He voices that Flaminius acted in defiance of the senate's authority, further casting him as aligned with the wrong side of the political zeitgeist.⁴⁸ Cicero's historical analysis is deeply influenced by his political convictions, which are embedded throughout his speeches. When opposing a recently proposed *lex agraria*, Cicero held in contempt: "Such things as these, conscript fathers, I will resist passionately and vigorously; nor will I, while I am consul, allow men to set forth those plans against the State which

⁴⁵ Cicero, *Brutus*, 53.

⁴⁶ Cicero, *De Senectute*, 4.11.

⁴⁷ Cicero, *De Senectute*, 4.11.

⁴⁸ Cicero, *De Senectute*, 4.11.

they have long had in mind.”⁴⁹ Living through the rapid deterioration of the Roman Republic, Cicero voices the land reformers as an existential threat to the senate’s authority. Consequently, despite having lived long after Flaminius, Cicero frames him as a dangerous figure who exploited social unrest to undermine Rome’s traditional structure and highlights the recurring danger of populist movements.

Livy, living during the reign of Augustus (27 BC to 14 AD), reflects on the decline of the Roman Republic through a lens shaped by moral and political decay. While drawing on the negative portrayals of populism found in the writings of Cicero and Polybius, Livy offers a distinctly reflective interpretation—one in which populist figures are portrayed as agents of the Republic’s collapse. At the center of this understanding lies his disdain for land reforms, claiming that they have not “been brought up without occasioning the most serious disturbances.”⁵⁰ This critical stance emerges early in Livy’s *History of Rome*, when the author depicts King Tarquinius. Livy claims that Tarquinius:

proceeded to gain the goodwill of the commons by dividing among all the citizens the land obtained by conquest from the enemy; after which he made bold to call upon the people to vote whether he should be their ruler, and was declared king with such unanimity as none of his predecessors had experienced.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Cicero, *On the Agrarian Law*, 1.23 (Loeb).

⁵⁰ Livy, *History of Rome*, 2.41 (Loeb).

⁵¹ Livy, *History of Rome*, 1.46 (Loeb).

Just as King Tarquinius cultivated the goodwill of the people, Livy cast later reformers in a similar light as figures who disrupt the status quo for political favor. While continuing the negative portrayals established by Cicero and Polybius, Livy interprets the Republic's decline through a framework of moral and political decay.

Unsurprisingly, Livy does not portray Flaminius positively, reflecting the sentiments of historians before him. However, Livy's treatment carries a more reflective tone—rather than condemning Flaminius as a revolutionary, Livy links his reforms to the broader moral and political decay that contributed to the Republic's eventual collapse. In the *History of Rome*, Livy often references divine interpretations, the understanding of how individuals view phenomena from a higher power, to explain the fate or decline of an individual. For instance, Quintus Fabius, who succeeded Flaminius after his death, criticized Flaminius for disregarding the gods, further underscoring his impiety and political recklessness.⁵² By portraying Flaminius as a figure who dismisses the auspices, Livy highlights how such actions represent a deeper moral crisis within Rome, underscoring the growing instability that would eventually lead to the Republic's downfall. Livy further voices his opinion of Flaminius' flaws, noting he “was out of control before he stood for the consulship,” a direct reference to his *Lex Flaminia*.⁵³

⁵² Livy, *History of Rome*, 1.46 (Loeb).

⁵³ Livy, *History of Rome*, 22.39 (Loeb).

Furthermore, Livy emphasizes his distrust of the *Lex Flaminia* when he argues Flaminius caused “a stir with blustering talk of battles and warfare among civilians.”⁵⁴ This depiction not only highlights political recklessness but also signals Livy’s deeper concern with the decay of Rome. It undermines Flaminius’ character while simultaneously challenging the legitimacy of populist rhetoric, which Livy sees as contributing to the erosion of Roman values. While Livy, much like Polybius and Cicero, analyzes Flaminius through the destabilization of the Republic, he reflects on the decay that accompanied these political upheavals. Through his consistent emphasis on bad omens and the weakening of political institutions, Livy crafts a narrative of the Republic’s decline that places blame on Flaminius and his popular rhetoric.⁵⁵ In this way, Flaminius serves as the vehicle for all three historians, writing in different contexts, to depict populist figures as a central weakening force within the Republic.

Framing Tiberius: A Defining Chapter in the Republic’s Narrative

Tiberius Gracchus, like Flaminius, serves as another case study of how different ancient historians portray populists as threats to the Republic. However, Tiberius was considered more radical than Flaminius by his contemporaries, as evidenced in the content of his *Lex Sempronia* and in his political assassination in 133 BC. Furthermore, he is often the focal point of

⁵⁴ Livy, *History of Rome*, 22.39 (Loeb).

⁵⁵ Livy, *History of Rome*, 22.39 (Loeb).

discussion today when analyzing what led to the fall of the Roman Republic.⁵⁶

Tiberius was a man of connections, who, in the words of Joseph Bringman:

had the distinction of being the son of a twice consul of the same name, grandson of the Scipio who defeated Hannibal (202 BC), first cousin once removed and brother-in-law of the Scipio who destroyed Carthage (146 BC), and kinsman to many other consuls and censors in his ancestry.⁵⁷

Like all elite Romans, these connections guided his political career, but the distinction is that Tiberius conducted himself in behaviors akin to Gaius Flaminius. Once relatively powerless, the Tribune of the Plebs had become a powerful assembly for challenging the senatorial elite, often through land reforms.⁵⁸ Plutarch presents multiple possibilities, suggesting that Tiberius may have been driven by genuine concern for Rome's declining military apparatus, or by personal political ambition.⁵⁹ The varied interpretations highlight the complexity of Tiberius' career. Despite this, ancient historians like Polybius, Cicero, and Livy focus less on his intentions and more on the broader consequences of his reforms.

Tiberius Gracchus' *Lex Sempronia* (133 BC) was a land reform that established a commission to redistribute land from the urban rich to the urban

⁵⁶ J.S. Richardson, "The Ownership of Roman Land: Tiberius Gracchus and the Italians," *Journal of Roman Studies* 70 (2012): 1–11; Joseph Edward Bringman Jr., "The Roman Revolutionaries: The Evolution of Revolution in Ancient Rome" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2024), ProQuest (3123801).

⁵⁷ Bringman Jr., "The Roman Revolutionaries," 36.

⁵⁸ Taylor, *Roman Voting Assemblies*, 60–64.

⁵⁹ Plutarch, *Tiberius*, 8.

poor. Tiberius was particularly concerned with the disregard of the *Licinio-Sextian* law, a Roman law codified in 367 BC, stating that no Roman citizen could own more than 500 acres of land.⁶⁰ Despite this law, there was no institutional mechanism within the Republic to enforce it, leading to the establishment of large plantation estates, *latifundia*, by the wealthy.⁶¹ In light of this, Tiberius made his impassioned speech and stated, “the men who fight and die for Italy enjoy the common air and light, indeed, but nothing else; houseless and homeless they wander about with their wives and children.”⁶² He elevated public concern about wealthy landowners taking land from veterans. Tiberius’ law can be viewed as a continuation of the developing land issue, becoming more desperate as the end of the Republic approached. The *Lex Sempronia* emerged as Rome gradually shifted toward more democratic institutions, with increasing power concentrated in the tribunate and the popular assemblies, which aimed to represent the people’s interests. This attempted *lex agraria* under Tiberius marked a new era of opposition to senatorial control, “a time when the tribunate was repeatedly an instrument of revolution, now accompanied by violence.”⁶³ As a result, Tiberius, followed by his brother Gaius, ushered in a

⁶⁰ Plutarch, *Tiberius*, 8.

⁶¹ Laurence Roudart and Marcel Mazoyer, “Large-Scale Land Acquisitions: A Historical Perspective,” in *Large-Scale Land Acquisitions: Focus on South-East Asia*, ed. Christophe Gironde, Christophe Golay, and Peter Messerli (Brill Nijhoff, 2016), 3.

⁶² Plutarch, *Tiberius*, 9 (Loeb).

⁶³ Lily Ross Taylor, “Forerunners of the Gracchi,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 52 (1962): 19.

new era of violence in the Roman Republic through their agrarian laws that drew criticism from the likes of Polybius, Cicero, and Livy.

Similar to his approach to Flaminius's reform, Polybius guides attempted land reforms through the lens of anacyclosis, emphasizing his historical position within the Republic.⁶⁴ Although Polybius does not explicitly discuss Tiberius as he does Flaminius, he consistently views land reforms as destabilizing the Republic. Polybius, throughout his early depiction of Flaminius, drew a clear link between populism and the erosion of Republican norms.⁶⁵

Flaminius, who supported land reform, was used as a cautionary tale of how economic revolution gave rise to mob rule. With this, some contemporary scholars suggest that Polybius retroactively inserted material into his earlier sections after the assassination of Tiberius, to strengthen his critique of populist rhetoric.⁶⁶ While Polybius never explicitly mentioned Tiberius, his hostility towards land reformers strongly suggests that he would not view Tiberius favorably within his political framework. This assessment is supported by numerous references to the senatorial role in maintaining stability in the Republic. In his view, "the people must be submissive to the senate and respect its members both in public and in private," emphasizing the importance of

⁶⁴ Polybius, *Histories*, 6.4.

⁶⁵ Henry Boren, "Tiberius Gracchus: The Opposition View," *The American Journal of Philology* 82, no. 4 (1961): 358–69.

⁶⁶ Boren, "Tiberius Gracchus," 367.

balance in the Roman constitution, fitting into his theory of anacyclosis.⁶⁷ From this standpoint, Polybius would have likely viewed Tiberius, like Flaminius, as a revolutionary. Polybius' theory and historical outlook leave little room for a sympathetic portrayal of Tiberius or his agenda.

Cicero provides the most critical and conservative analysis of Tiberius Gracchus, similar to his portrayal of Flaminius, within a framework that emphasizes conflict between the supporters of the senate and the populists. Cicero lived in the wake of Tiberius's *Lex Sempronia* and the emergence of political violence. As a representative of the *optimates*, he aligned himself with others who were committed to preserving senatorial order.⁶⁸ This is reflected in how he views Tiberius as not only escalating the downfall of the Roman Republic, but also as a figure who employed his oratory skills to manipulate the masses against the senate. Cicero highlights how populists use oratory as a powerful tool to mobilize the poor, bypassing senatorial control.⁶⁹ Tiberius' speeches, in which he explicitly referenced the land amassed by the elite, reinforced Cicero's belief that such rhetoric exploited popular support for personal gain, undermining the authority of the senate.⁷⁰ Moreover, Cicero sharply criticizes Tiberius for employing populist strategies that, in his view, disregard traditional authority.

⁶⁷ Polybius, *Histories*, 6.17 (Loeb).

⁶⁸ Robert Murray, "Cicero and the Gracchi," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 97 (1966): 291–98.

⁶⁹ Cicero, *Brutus*, 53.

⁷⁰ Plutarch, *Tiberius*, 9.

For instance, Cicero praises Tiberius for his great character, until his character proved detrimental to the state:

Tiberius Gracchus overturned the constitution of the state, a man of such great force of character, and eloquence, and dignity, that he fell short in no respect of the surpassing and eminent virtue of his father, and of his grandfather, Africanus, except in the fact of his revolting from the senate.⁷¹

In Cicero's assessment, Tiberius was an enemy of the senate who contributed to the downfall of the Roman Republic. His critique of Tiberius was built upon his earlier condemnation of Flaminius and echoed Polybius' concerns about the populists' destabilizing influence and their challenge to institutional authority.

With the benefit of hindsight, Livy reflects on how Tiberius was a primary contributor to the political decline of the Roman Republic. He provides a continuous narrative in the traditions of Polybius and Cicero. Livy portrays Tiberius' *Lex Sempronia* as a "land law against the desires of the senate," for which Tiberius "went so insane as to remove from office by special enactment his colleague Marcus Octavius."⁷² Further characterizing Tiberius as insane and immoral, Livy contends that:

Gracchus had stirred them up to be greedy enough to hope for a large amount, he declared that he would propose a law that the fortune which had belonged to King Attalus should be divided among those who ought to receive land under the Sempronian Law.⁷³

⁷¹ Cicero, *De Haruspicum Responsis*, 41 (Perseus).

⁷² Livy, *Summaries*, 58 (Loeb).

⁷³ Livy, *Summaries*, 58 (Loeb).

Livy views Tiberius as a cause of the Republic's decay, as he emphasizes the moral decline of the Republic through these figures and their greed for power.⁷⁴ As a result, throughout the *History of Rome*, Livy portrays land reformers such as Flaminius and Tiberius as playing a significant role in the Republic's decline. Livy's negative characterization overlaps with Polybius' and Cicero's view of populism as detrimental to the Republic.

Reform as a Threat: The Continuous and Evolving Narrative

Throughout their writings, Polybius, Cicero, and Livy viewed populists like Flaminius and Tiberius as destabilizing figures, reflecting their own lived experiences and prominent theories. While each offers a different framework on the popular rhetoric of figures like Flaminius and Tiberius, their critiques share a common theme: the growing threat of land reformers and populist rhetoric to Roman political stability. Over time, these critiques evolved as historians reflected on the increasing power of populist figures and the erosion of senatorial control. Each historian records a different stage in the Republic's decline: Polybius' views may be seen as a warning sign to the emergence of populists, Cicero's views as a reflection of the populists in action, and Livy's views as a clear reflection of the past.

All three historians emphasized the senate's authority as a cornerstone of the Republic's stability, presenting it as a check against the growing influence

⁷⁴ Livy, *Summaries*, 58 (Loeb).

of populist land reforms.⁷⁵ As the Republic evolved, the power of the tribunate grew, fueled in part by the expanding base of Roman citizenship, which gave greater political power to the plebeian assemblies and culminated in the death of Tiberius.⁷⁶ The shift gave more political power to the plebeians, fueling populist rhetoric and putting pressure on the senate's authority.⁷⁷ Consequently, the actions of Flaminius and Tiberius are framed as direct challenges to this senatorial authority. Polybius, through his narrow political view, begins the argument of how too much power in the hands of the people against the senate hurts political institutions.⁷⁸ A century later, Cicero echoes this argument, portraying populist figures as adversaries of the senatorial elite. Livy, reflecting on the growth of figures like Tiberius, completes the argument that the *leges agrariae* negatively impacted the institutions of the Roman Republic. Collectively, these historians assert that the senate's dominance was crucial to maintaining political stability and the rise of populist figures as a direct challenge to that stability.

As the power of the tribunate grew, so did the perceived destabilization of the Republic. Instances of populist rhetoric in the Roman Republic were intrinsically linked to efforts many viewed as destabilizing the established

⁷⁵ Polybius, *Histories*, 6.17; Cicero, *De Haruspicum Responsis*, 41; Livy, *Summaries*, 58.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *Roman Voting Assemblies*, 60-64.

⁷⁷ R. T. Ridley, "Notes on the Establishment of the Tribunate of the Plebs," *Latomus* 27, no. 3 (1968): 554.

⁷⁸ Polybius, *Histories*, 6.4.

political order. Polybius, as demonstrated, views individuals who introduced popular agrarian laws as instigators of the “demoralization of the populace.”⁷⁹ Cicero echoes this concern, believing that oratory used to persuade the senate of ill authority led to the weakening of the Republic.⁸⁰ Both emphasize that popular rhetoric was a destabilizing force within the Roman Republic. In agreement with Polybius and Cicero, Livy recognizes that these populist movements contributed to political instability. Livy notes that even after a reformer is executed, the demand for land reforms persists, stating that “The desires of the plebs were this year again excited by the charms of the land-law.”⁸¹ This suggests that, like his predecessors, Livy acknowledges the enduring appeal of populist reforms as a persistent threat to the Republic’s stability. Across all three of these accounts, land reforms represent a political force that unraveled the fabric of Roman institutions and elevated the Roman plebeians over structural stability. This consensus affirms that the populist strategies of Flaminius and Tiberius were perceived as not just controversial reforms, but actions that exposed the fragility of the Republic’s order.

⁷⁹ Polybius, *Histories*, 2.21 (Loeb).

⁸⁰ Cicero, *De Senectute*, 4.11.

⁸¹ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 2.42 (Loeb).

Conclusion

Historian Carl Becker, a prominent American scholar known for his commentary around historiography, argued that, “[t]he truth [is] all historical writing, even the most honest, is unconsciously subjective, since every age is bound, in spite of itself, to make the dead perform whatever tricks it finds necessary for its own peace of mind.”⁸² The historians of the Roman Republic, too, were products of their times—shaped by political loyalties and personal ideological leanings. Polybius, Cicero, and Livy hold their unique biases, as they are tied to their own experiences with prominent land reformers. For these historians, any threat to the establishment and status quo was an attack on the senatorial order and destabilizing to the Roman Republic. In line with Becker’s point, they frame these issues as the “demoralization of the populace” to rationalize and explain the destruction of the Roman people to external political forces.⁸³ Polybius, Cicero, and Livy attribute the Roman Republic’s fall to the reformers’ rising political power, as reflected in a persistent and evolving disdain for Flaminius and Tiberius.

The implications of this elite-driven narrative extend beyond understanding Roman history’s development and how land reforms are interpreted across time. By framing reformers as enemies of the state, ancient historians disregard underlying land problems but equate popular movements

⁸² Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (Yale University Press, 1932), 44.

⁸³ Polybius, *Histories*, 2.21(Loeb).

with instability and eventual collapse. This portrayal has shaped beyond the fall of the Republic and reverberates into modern critiques of populist movements, albeit different in character and scope.⁸⁴ Thus, understanding the representation of land reformers and populist rhetoric is essential for comprehending the dynamics of the Roman Republic. Analyzing how figures like Polybius, Cicero, and Livy crafted these negative narratives helps recognize the power of historical writing to shape political memory in the Roman Republic. Becker's remarks remind readers to read sources for what they say, why they say it, and whose interest the narratives serve.

⁸⁴ For further discussion, see Rafal Riedel, "Populism and Its Democratic, Non-Democratic, and Anti-Democratic Potential," *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 199 (2017): 287–98; Annelien de Dijn, "From Caesarism to Populism: An Intellectual History," in *How Republics Die: Creeping Authoritarianism in Ancient Rome and Beyond*, ed. Frederik Juliaan Vervaeke, David Rafferty, and Christopher J. Dart (De Gruyter, 2025), 441–456.

The Proud Deer Still Runs: A Critical Examination of Georgian National Identity Between the National Awakening and the Early Period of Soviet Occupation (1863–1925)

JOSHUA BLAUSTEIN

Introduction

In *The Sportsman's Story*, the poet Ilia Chavchavadze describes a forest scene where a deer desperately attempts to avoid a hunter. Chavchavadze admires the deer, describing it as wild, proud, and elegant.¹ He is “captivated by its beauty” as it rustles through the fell branches of the forest in a desperate bid to avoid a brutish hunter who is in quick pursuit.² The deer, familiar with its environment, tears through the trees and conceals itself among the bushes. Seeing this, the hunter commands his dogs to attack in full force. Clearing a corner, the deer gains a spark of hope that it might escape. Whatever hope the deer may have, however, is soon crushed, as it watches dogs approach it from every side, leaving no chance for escape from a violent end. Once proud and joyful, the deer recognizes that it is consigned to its fate, and quietly and resignedly stops resisting. As he glances upon the pitiful sight of the fallen creature, Chavchavadze imagines the perspective of the deer in his final seconds: “why must the hunter strike down another of God’s children while there is enough space on this Earth for all?”³ As his thoughts settle,

¹ Ilia Chavchavadze, *Ilia Chavchavadze Works*, trans. Marjory and Oliver Wardrop (Ganatileba Publishers, 1987), 19.

² Chavchavadze, *Works*, 19.

³ Chavchavadze, *Works*, 19.

Chavchavadze moves from empathy to a new emotion - jealousy. He decries to the fallen deer, "...thou diest there where thou wast born. We men sometimes are deprived even of that happiness."⁴

To those familiar with the state of the Caucasus in the late 19th century, Chavchavadze's deer can be seen as a clear allusion to the precarious position of Georgia's culture and people at large. Naturally free and proud, embraced by its picturesque environment and protected by the mighty Caucasus Mountains, Georgian culture has gracefully evaded hunters for centuries. In some form, the Georgian identity outlived occupations by the Mongols, Persians, and Ottomans among others. However, a half-century of Russian occupation resulted in a critical loss of culture; the independent state was annexed and its monarchy abolished in 1801, and the autocephalous church was eliminated just a decade later.⁵ The feudal system upon which Georgia had relied for centuries was fundamentally shaken, and Russification policies turned Georgian into a second or third language in administrative, theological, and commercial spaces.⁶ In *The Sportsman's Story*, the tsarist regime is analogous to the heartless hunter, seeking to kill Georgian identity, leaving its once-proud culture struggling against an inescapable fate. Chavchavadze is calling for Georgia to affirm its cultural autonomy, for the deer to continue evading its

⁴ Chavchavadze, *Works*, 19.

⁵ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd ed. (Indiana University Press, 1994), 59.

⁶ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 128.

hunter. His hopes would largely be realized in the early 1920s, as demonstrated by Georgia's stark resistance to Soviet centralization.

This essay will mainly seek to establish the unique aspects of Georgian identity that prime it for resisting centralization and will also briefly discuss how the autonomy-affirming nature of Georgian identity manifested itself in its initial years of Soviet occupation between 1921 and 1925. In doing so, this essay will first provide a unique historical framework of the centuries-long process of national identity formation, as well as a discussion of how Georgian interactions with the Russian Empire impacted Georgia's historical narrative. It will then discuss the proximate causes of the National Awakening in Georgia, one of the most dynamic periods in modern Georgian history in forming a unitary identity. Third, this article will document the trajectory of the National Awakening itself, describing how the confluence of a distinct brand of Georgian nationalism and a shifting environment influenced the transformation of the Awakening from a full-fledged nationalist movement in the 1860s to one centered on the Marxist-Leninist class struggle by the onset of the First World War. Finally, this essay will provide examples of Georgian resistance against Soviet oppression and power centralization to demonstrate the disproportionate impact of Georgian resistance on the nascent USSR. Throughout this article, I will argue that the confluence of the Georgian historical narrative as well as the dynamism of its National Awakening established a proactive autonomy-affirming national identity which made Georgia a fundamentally difficult nation to occupy.

A Deeply Bivocal Identity: The Two-Sided Georgian Historical Narrative

One of the most integral aspects of the Georgian national identity, as will be explored throughout this article, is its bivocality. According to anthropologist Nino Batiashvili, Georgian historical memory usually appears in two strands that initially seem at odds yet complement one another. The two strands, or “voices,” are an intense veneration of a more dignified past (i.e. self-idealization) and a profound sense of self-blame for historical mistakes (i.e. self-condemnation).⁷ Though she solely applies this theoretical framework to modern-day discourse, I contend that this bivocal form of historical analysis was also critical to the initial developments of the Georgian National Awakening and to the character of Georgia during its initial period of Soviet occupation. In fact, understanding how Georgia’s bivocal memory system operates is essential to understanding the dynamic trajectory of Georgian national identity throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

The first strand of Batiashvili’s bivocality, self-idealization, is a form of national identity that glamorizes the past. Often, this strand originates in the historiographic portrayal of the Georgian Kingdom’s Golden Age, which existed from 1089 until 1220.⁸ The *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, for instance, credits David IV with, for the first time, conceptualizing a *Sakartvelo* (Georgia), fully uniting

⁷ Nino Batiashvili, “We Were Always United, Except When We Were Not: Bivocal Memory and Georgia’s Geopolitical Dilemma” (PhD diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 2014), 64, ProQuest (3625956).

⁸ “Kartvelian” is the term used to refer to the ethnolinguistic group to which Georgians belong.

the disparate Kartvelian kingdoms, and commanding a vast multiethnic empire with an astonishingly small army.⁹ His dynasty, the Bagrationi dynasty, would become an important symbol of the Golden Age and personified the ability of Georgians to govern themselves. Bagrationi descendants maintained the crown of various Georgian kingdoms well into the 19th century.

The glorification of Georgian identity also focuses on the female ruler Tamar, under whom Georgia reached the nexus of its strength and cultural output between 1184 and 1212.¹⁰ This period also saw national identity become further intertwined with Christianity via the Georgian Orthodox Church.¹¹ The *Kartlis Tskhovreba* illustrates this intersection of religion and identity, testifying that “she kept no other thing in her heart besides ‘the origin of wisdom, the fear of God,’ and justice and grace which she distributed equally among all.”¹² Using descriptors like “justice,” “grace,” and “fear of God,” the manuscripts attribute Tamar’s successes largely to her piety and upright morality. By the end of her rule, historians had thus idealized a “high point” in the Georgian historical narrative, pointing to the dedication of the nation to the Orthodox faith and

⁹ *Kartlis Tskhovreba: A History of Georgia*, trans. and ed. Roin Metreveli (Artanuji Publishing, 2014), 181 (Chapter 9, lines 16–18); 189 (Chapter 9, lines 1–4); 267 (Chapter 9, sec. 41, lines 17–21); *Kartlis Tskhovreba* roughly translates to “Georgian Chronicles” and is a collection of medieval writings about Georgia before, during, and after its Golden Age.

¹⁰ James William Robert Parsons, “The Emergence and Development of the National Question in Georgia, 1801–1921” (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 1987), 14 (hereafter “National Question in Georgia”).

¹¹ *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, trans. and ed. Metreveli, 18 (chap. 1, lines 12–20).

¹² *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, trans. and ed. Metreveli, 299 (chap. 9, sec. 1, lines 34–35).

moral uprightness, the projection of regional hegemony, and the prosperity of Georgian-language arts and culture.¹³

The first strand of bivocal memory often focuses on the areas emblematic of the united *Sakartvelo* that existed during this period of prosperity. At its basis, it venerates the Georgian culture, language, and moral code, vital aspects upon which David IV and Tamar ushered in a Golden Age. It also advocates for the continued protection of symbols of this “Georgian greatness”: the autocephalous Georgian Orthodox Church, the Bagrationi dynasty, a united Georgia that can act with autonomy. These factors became core parts of the Georgian identity, with the continued adherence to these traditional aspects being seen as critical to the success of the Georgian nation. Writers like Chavchavadze would later use them almost as proxies of revival, as if bringing back these factors would bring back a period of greatness.

Intricately tied with this perception is the concept of “self-condemnation.” If adhering to tradition will inevitably cause a nation to be strong, and that nation is not strong, it follows that the traditions are not being properly upheld. “Self-condemnation” within the context of Georgian bivocal thought, as a result, accuses those who lived during low points in Georgian history of somehow inviting oppression or tragedy upon themselves by acting out of line with the traditional Georgian idealized identity. They may have divided themselves, collaborated with external forces, or forgotten their culture.

¹³ Parsons, “National Question in Georgia,” 3.

There are many applications of self-condemnation, but the commonality is that victims always hold the agency. In framing *The Sportsman's Story*, after all, although Chavchavadze portrays the hunter's firepower as an overwhelming force, the deer also makes the active decision to stop resisting once he sees no chance of escape. Acting out of line with the Georgian value of bravery, the deer becomes, in part, an agent in his own death.

Many of the real-life applications of self-condemnation appear just years after Tamar's death, during Georgia's long decline, starting with the expansion of the Mongol Empire into the region, which began in 1220.¹⁴ From that point forward, Georgia was largely divided between the empires around it, creating an amalgamation of vassal and semi-independent kingdoms that frequently warred with each other and failed to unite. As a result, the population repeatedly bore the brunt of imperial expansion from the neighboring Ottoman and Persian Empires, most notoriously between 1614 and 1617 when Persian troops burned Tbilisi, killed tens of thousands of Georgians, and deported over two-thirds of Kakhetians back to the Persian homeland.¹⁵ Four hundred years after its Golden Age, Georgia had gone from regional hegemon to a battlefield between larger empires, unable to enforce its sovereignty.

Reflecting on the period between the 12th century and the 18th century, Georgian narratives often blame the disparate Georgian kings for

¹⁴ *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, trans. and ed. Metreveli, 318–39.

¹⁵ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 50; Kakheti is a region in what is today Eastern Georgia.

failing to strongly unite themselves against foreign aggression, acting on personal vendettas and prioritizing a hunger for power over establishing security and prosperity for the Georgian people.¹⁶ Even if they faced overwhelming force, the framing focuses on the idea that the kings' aberration from traditional morality only served to accelerate the tragedy that befell them.¹⁷ The self-condemning frame, thus, refuses to allow these kings to be victims of circumstance, but rather highlights that an aberration from traditional values actively contributed to Georgia's historic tragedies.

Regardless of their different appearances, the two lenses of the Georgian bivocal identity are, in reality, congruent with one another in two main ways. First, they both highlight the agency of the Georgian population. With the self-idealization strand, positive moments are continuously upheld by a morally upright Georgian population. This aspect of agency also translates to the self-condemnation strand. If tragedy is a result of complacency and compromising identity, one has the power and responsibility to avert misfortune by strengthening one's dedication to the Georgian national ideals.

Secondly, the two bivocal lenses are congruent in that they are different interpretations of the same value system. Put otherwise, whether one chooses to idealize a figure or condemn them, they are nevertheless employing a common set of values upon which to base their judgment. As a result, by looking at the unique Georgian bivocal system, one can ascertain the values that are held

¹⁶ Batiashvili, "We Were Always United," 105.

¹⁷ Batiashvili, "We Were Always United," 105.

integral to identity. For example, sometimes the criticism or praise of a leader is based on their attempts (or lack thereof) to work towards the common benefit of the Georgian people without betrayal or foreign collusion.¹⁸ From these praises and criticisms, we can ascertain that an important aspect of Georgian identity is the ability for a united Georgia to act in its own best interests. Additionally, whether one is criticizing or idealizing, the identifiers of Georgian greatness previously alluded to — tradition, morality, and language — are often used to substantiate claims. It follows that these qualities are also critical to the Georgian identity. As this essay looks at further primary sources from the National Awakening, it is thus essential to consider which qualities the author is criticizing or glorifying, where those qualities might be rooted historically, and what they can tell us about the identity markers held close by the society as a whole. Knowledge of these identity markers will help illuminate the throughline between Georgian identity formation in the Great Awakening and its remarkable spirit of resilience in the early years of Soviet occupation.

Russian Contributions to the Historical Narrative

Yet another critical aspect of the unique construction of the Georgian narrative is the history of Russian influence. This section of the essay will briefly discuss the effects of the 1783 Treaty of Georgievsk, the watershed moment in

¹⁸ Batiashvili, “We Were Always United,” 105.

the history of Russo-Georgian relations, and how that helped to shape the dominant historical narrative.

With Russia expanding southward in the 18th century, King Erekle II of Kartli-Kakheti, the largest and most autonomous Georgian kingdom, saw the introduction of an Orthodox empire as an opportunity to secure his kingdom against the Ottomans and Persians. The relationship between Kartli-Kakheti and Russia was finally cemented in 1783, when King Erekle II and Catherine II signed the Treaty of Georgievsk, officially establishing the alliance between the two nations. Among the provisions of the treaty, Catherine the Great of Russia pledged to defend the territory of Kartli-Kakheti, support the monarchy of the Bagrationi dynasty, and respect the existing structures and privileges of the Georgian Orthodox Church.¹⁹ In response, Erekle II swore Kartli-Kakheti's fealty to the Russian Empire, allowing for a ceremonial investiture of its kings and deferring to Catherine II's control of foreign affairs.²⁰

Though Erekle II might have left Georgievsk with new hopes of security, it soon became clear that he could not trust the reliability of his partner. Just four years after the treaty was signed, during the Russo-Turkish War, the Russian contingent abandoned Kartli-Kakheti to fight on another front, leaving it vulnerable to Turkish attack.²¹ Additionally, after Erekle II

¹⁹ Guliko Pheradze, "Breach of the Alliance Agreement, as a Precondition for the National-Liberation Movement (On the Example of Treaty of Georgievsky, 1783)," *Journal of Law*, no. 1 (2022): 22.

²⁰ Pheradze, "Breach of the Alliance Agreement," 22.

²¹ Parsons, "National Question in Georgia," 17.

swore off his allegiance to the Persian Empire as part of his treaty obligation, Shah Agha Khan sought retribution. In 1795, to reassert his authority over the Caucasus, the Shah invaded Kartli-Kakheti. Though Catherine II had vowed to treat Kartli-Kakheti's enemies as her own in Georgievsk, she pulled back her troops during the invasion to use in Russia's other conflicts, allowing the city of Tbilisi to be razed to the ground.²² The continued lack of Russian adherence to security guarantees was devastating for the Georgian population whose livelihoods depended on it. According to Georgian historian Zurab Avalishvili, only half of Kakheti's population survived the Russian protectorate years.²³ Though this number might be an exaggeration, it is clear that the Russian lack of adherence to its security guarantees was devastating to the Georgian population.

Russia's failure to hold to many of its obligations in the treaty was not limited to military matters, but also dynastic and religious ones. When Erekle II died in 1798, in keeping with treaty obligations, Tsar Paul I accepted Erekle's son, George XII Bagrationi, as king of Kartli-Kakheti.²⁴ George XII, ruling a devastated kingdom in the throes of war and threatened by both the Persians and his internal rivals, saw no choice but to ask that his realm be integrated into the Russian Empire as an autonomous kingdom after his death, with the condition that the *mepetbi* (kings) of the Bagrationi dynasty retain nominal

²² Pheradze, "Breach of the Alliance Agreement," 24.

²³ Parsons, "National Question in Georgia," 18.

²⁴ Pheradze, "Breach of the Alliance Agreement," 25.

dynastic control and ceremonial status in its lands.²⁵ However, shortly after George XII's death on January 18, 1801, a manifesto from the tsar formally and unilaterally abolished the monarchy of the Bagrationi dynasty, annexed the kingdom into the Russian Empire, and installed a Russian governor of the new province of Kartli-Kakheti, all without the consent of a Georgian delegation.²⁶ The resistance of the beleaguered Georgian population, devastated by decades of wars imposed upon them, could not prevent their annexation. As Prince Garvesan Chavchavadze, the Kartli-Kakhetian representative to St. Petersburg at the time, decried, "They have abolished our kingdom... no country has ever been so humiliated as Georgia."²⁷

Just ten years later, Tsar Alexander I further encroached upon Georgian cultural autonomy by abolishing the autocephalous Georgian Orthodox Church, putting it in a position of subservience to its Russian counterpart.²⁸ The Church, which had been intertwined with Georgian national identity for 1,400 years, saw its autocephaly suddenly dissolved by imperial decree. In restricting Georgian traditional religion, eliminating Georgia's monarchy, and violating its state sovereignty, the Russian Empire had effectively abrogated three of its major guarantees in the Treaty of Georgievsk. In under 30 years, the kingdom of

²⁵ David M. Lang, *The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy, 1658–1832* (Columbia University Press, 1957), 232.

²⁶ Parsons, "The Emergence and Development of the National Question in Georgia," 18.

²⁷ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 59.

²⁸ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 84.

Kartli-Kakheti went from a sense of optimism due to the treaty's security guarantees to losing its autonomy, both politically and religiously. At the same time, the situation had cemented a critical aspect of self-sufficiency in the national identity, as it was demonstrated that larger powers would often deceive them, hiding their true goal of domination under a cloak of partnership. The Georgian state had entrusted Russia to hold up to its end of the bargain at Georgievsk, and it had cost its autonomy. Never again would the Georgian deer give in so easily to its hunter.

Causes of the National Awakening

The Georgian National Awakening was characterized by both a sweeping cultural revival and an intense dynamism in how national identity manifested itself. The exact start and end of the period is disputed, but it is generally accepted that it reached its peak in the latter half of the 19th century. For the purposes of this article, the examination of the period will begin in the 1860s, with the rise of a segment of the *p'irveli dasi* (first generation) of reformers from the generation of the *tergdalenlebi* (those who drink from the Terek River).²⁹ Though a variety of different factors played into the rise of the *tergdalenlebi*, their ascension can largely be attributed to two key historical trends that took place during the first 60 years of Russian occupation. This brief

²⁹ The Terek River is one of the traditional natural features of the Georgian-Russian border, with the nickname *tergdalenlebi* (singular *tergdalenli*) referring to those who had gone to Russia to study and returned home afterwards; Nino Chikovani, "The Georgian Historical Narrative: From Pre-Soviet to Post-Soviet Nationalism," *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 5, no. 2 (2012): 107.

chapter of the essay will discuss the unique material conditions that helped create the *tergdaleulni* ideology.

The first significant factor of Russian rule that laid the groundwork for the development of a new Georgian national identity was the development of a European-educated Georgian intelligentsia. Believing that education in Russia would give their children the best possible prospects for the future, Georgian noblemen routinely sent their sons to be educated in the universities of Moscow and St. Petersburg.³⁰ As Franklin A. Walker wrote, under Catherine the Great and Paul I, these universities “reflected the ideals of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and their followers, saw public education as a means whereby advanced European thought would contribute to native virtues and lead to national progress.”³¹ Though increasingly restricted by the government after the Napoleonic Wars, these universities often served as hotbeds of the Enlightenment, demonstrating at least in part the prevailing intellectual trends of European thought.³² As a result, for the first time, a generation of Georgian students was introduced to European and Russian thought, and began to network with members of the intelligentsia from across the continent.³³ Students from these universities, as a result of their familiarity with European

³⁰ Parsons, “National Question in Georgia,” 4.

³¹ Franklin A. Walker, “Enlightenment and Religion in Russian Education in the Reign of Tsar Alexander I,” *History of Education Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (1992): 343.

³² Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 122.

³³ Parsons, “National Question in Georgia,” 4.

thought, created Georgia's first class of European-style intelligentsia upon their return home.

From the 1830s to the 1860s, Georgian students in Russia were exposed to dominant schools of European thought, including liberalism, nationalism, and especially Romanticism. The Romantic perspective glorified the natural order above all, supporting a movement from a corrupted society to the natural state of things. Critically, many Romanticists developed a form of nationalism, perceiving the nation-state as an organic and inevitable extension of naturally distinct national identities. As a result, processes such as assimilation and occupation were seen as aberrations from the natural order.³⁴ The infusion of Romantic thought into Georgia would only be further bolstered by the exile of 3,000 veterans from the 1825 Decembrist Revolt to the region alongside many veterans from Poland's 1830 uprising.³⁵

A critical indicator of the influence of Romantic nationalism is a reliance on natural imagery as a proxy of the nation itself. The *tergdaleulebi*, of whom the aforementioned Ilia Chavchavadze is the most famous, frequently engaged in this practice.³⁶ For instance, *The Sportsman's Story* utilizes natural scenery as a proxy for Georgian oppression. Another of Chavchavadze's poems,

³⁴ William A. Wilson, "Herder, Folklore, and Romantic Nationalism," in *The Marrow of Human Experience, The: Essays on Folklore by William A. Wilson*, ed. Jill Terry Rudy and Diane Call (University Press of Colorado, 2006), 109.

³⁵ Jones, "Russian Imperial Administration," 60; Natalie Sabanadze, *Globalization and Georgian Nationalism: The Cases of Georgia and the Basque Country* (Central European University Press, 2023), 71.

³⁶ Chikovani, "The Georgian Historical Narrative," 108.

titled *Spring*, demonstrates this same style of Romantic nationalism, asking: “The mead is in bloom, the mountains blossom. Oh beloved fatherland, why do you not bloom?”³⁷ By comparing an oppressed Georgian culture to mead and mountains, Chavchavadze articulates the core of the Romantic movement: nationhood is natural, and occupation is temporary.

Of the many factors that helped spur the National Awakening, few would be as impactful as the widespread socio-economic changes taking place in the region. The traditional Georgian socio-economic model was feudal, with a small, landed Georgian nobility (5% of the population) holding wide swathes of power over a largely agrarian economy.³⁸ Meanwhile, Georgia’s cities were dominated demographically, economically, and politically by the region’s Armenian population. In 1835, for instance, 75% of Tbilisi’s population was ethnically Armenian.³⁹ Armenians in Georgia held a special liminal space within the traditional order, neither being vassals nor lords. Instead, their positions in cities like Tbilisi and Gori were those of tradesmen and artisans. As a result of their traditional mercantile activity, Armenians over time formed powerful trade guilds and grew to hold immense social and political capital in the cities. Under the stability and larger market of the Russian Empire, the infusion of capital into Georgian cities caused the Armenian mercantile class to further grow in

³⁷ Chavchavadze, *Works*, 43.

³⁸ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 65.

³⁹ Jones, “Russian Imperial Administration,” 57.

influence; between 1821 and 1864, imports of foreign goods into Transcaucasia rose ninefold.⁴⁰

When in 1861 Tsar Alexander II freed the Empire's serfs, the traditional order was fundamentally upended. Having relied on free agrarian labor and regular payments for their living, Georgian nobles lacked the necessary skillsets to succeed in an increasingly capitalist environment.⁴¹ With their serfs liberated from unpaid labor, nobles lost fortunes or even went into debt paying workers or purchasing draft animals. To counteract this debt, they were often forced to sell their ancestral land, which was rapidly speculated by the increasingly wealthy urban Armenian bourgeoisie class.⁴² The *tergdalenlebi*, noblemen themselves, despaired in their situation as the nobility faced a deep economic crisis and a decrease in power relative to the urban bourgeoisie. They believed that only an educated, cultured and dignified nobility could help lead Georgian society into the future.

Alongside material decline, *tergdalenlebi* also believed that the noblemen were falling into moral decline and forgetting the dignified appearance they once had. In his work *Is That a Man*, for instance, Chavchavadze speaks of a nobleman named Luarsab and his ill-mannered, almost primitive temperament.⁴³ When confronted with his undignified appearance, Luarsab

⁴⁰ Parsons, "National Question in Georgia," 18.

⁴¹ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 115.

⁴² Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 115.

⁴³ Chavchavadze, *Works*, 12.

takes no personal responsibility, instead blaming the state, arguing “it is the times of the present day... virtue has gone forth from the Georgian.”⁴⁴ By glorifying the ancient Georgians on account of their dignity while characterizing modern nobles as devoid of honor and responsibility, Chavchavadze’s bivocality marks the moral uprightness and traditional role of the nobility as clear aspects of Georgian identity. As a result, he and the *tergdalenlebi* argue that the noble class must take it upon itself to resurrect its image and status.

Alongside the decay of the social system, Chavchavadze also often mourns the decay of the Georgian language and culture. The Russian Empire had gradually encroached upon the centrality of the language and literature throughout its period of occupation; Russian had replaced Georgian as the default language of instruction in public schools in 1868, and since then the region lacked new Georgian-language cultural institutions or libraries.⁴⁵ As the Russian population served as administrators of the region, Russian became the language of the state, pushing Georgian to secondary or tertiary status. The *tergdalenlebi* lamented the complicity of the passive Georgian population in its own cultural erasure. In his work *Elegy*, for instance, Chavchavadze describes a silent nighttime scene in the sleepy Georgian countryside. The poem starts off with vivid imagery of the dark scenery, describing everything as silent and peaceful.

⁴⁴ Chavchavadze, *Works*, 12.

⁴⁵ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 128.

The author is not calmed by the scene; rather, he is devastated. He begs “Still sleep O God! Sleep, always sleep. When shalt thou deem us worthy to awake?”⁴⁶ In ridiculing God for keeping the Georgian people silent, Chavchavadze condemns the lack of resistance against Russian assimilationist and centralizing policies, in the process appealing to proactivity and assertiveness as aspects of the Georgian identity.

The Three Generations of the National Awakening

Recognizing the major factors behind the rise of the *tergdaleulebi*, we can now piece together the unique dynamics that drove their specific form of nation-building. Resting on the bivocal idea of an idealized past and a deeply flawed present, the *tergdaleulebi*'s movement represented a deep longing for a return of traditional aspects of the Georgian way of life, including its moral uprightness, language, and culture. An example of this longing is Chavchavadze's poem *O Our Aragva*. In the poem, as Chavchavadze solemnly watches the flowing water of the Aragva River, he alludes to the fact that “a long history lies buried” beneath it.⁴⁷ As he describes the condition of the river, Chavchavadze is fixated on a sense of lost dignity, lamenting “on thy banks my

⁴⁶ Chavchavadze, *Works*, 42.

⁴⁷ Chavchavadze, *Works*, 44; The Aragva River is a river in Northeast Georgia, flowing north-to-south and flowing into the Kura at the ancient Georgian capital and cultural center of Mtskheta.

fatherland was one time a glory.”⁴⁸ He asks himself, “What sought I?”⁴⁹ His response: “My country’s past.”⁵⁰ Poems like *O Our Aragva* serve as examples of the intense nostalgia demonstrated by the *tergdaleulebi*. However, at the same time, the *tergdaleulebi* were also future-oriented. As *tergdaleulni* Iakob Gogebashvili once clarified, “Nobody dreams about restoration of the old Georgia... Georgia should look ahead towards Europe and not back towards Asia. It is from the West that we should learn education, scholarship and import the best of social structures.”⁵¹ The *tergdaleulebi* saw the future status of the nobility as Westernized societal leaders – politicians, doctors, and educators – rather than feudal lords.

In *O Our Aragva*, the Aragva River serves as a representation of Georgian tradition. Considering this fact, it is notable that Chavchavadze specifically opted to use the word “our” in the title as opposed to “the.” The title implies that some group possesses the “tradition,” and that it belongs to no member of that group exclusively. This decision to use “our” reflects a key tenet of the *tergdaleulebi* movement, which was the idea that a Georgian identity extends to each ethnic Georgian equally, regardless of class. Guided by Romantic conceptions of the nation, Chavchavadze would have considered any

⁴⁸ Chavchavadze, *Works*, 44.

⁴⁹ Chavchavadze, *Works*, 44.

⁵⁰ Chavchavadze, *Works*, 44.

⁵¹ Sabanadze, *Globalization and Georgian Nationalism*, 75.

class difference to be subsumed by nationality.⁵² After all, many of the *tergdaleulebi*'s main issues of focus – preventing the loss of language, protecting cultural autonomy, and opposing the rapid growth of capitalism and its resulting inequalities – were issues that could appeal to every Georgian.

Over the course of the 1870s, however, the ripple effects of freeing of the serfs and the accumulation of capital in the cities exacerbated class divides within Georgian society. Cities that were traditionally dominated demographically by Armenians gained a massive influx of impoverished ethnic Georgians from the countryside seeking work. Observing the disenfranchisement of the urban Georgian population, a group of the noble members of the intelligentsia, led by Niko Nikoladze, fell out of favor with the more cultural, tradition-based teachings of the *tergdaleulebi*.⁵³ Rather, this group, the *meore dasi* (second generation), took inspiration from the socioeconomic systems of Western European countries, seeking to support urban Georgians through gradual political reform and economic investment within a capitalist framework.

In the 1880s, the *mesame dasi* (third generation) rose to prominence. Socialist at heart, the *mesame dasi* movement blamed the capitalist order for the woes of the Georgian urban working class. In contrast with the work of the *tergdaleulebi*, the ideology of the *mesame dasi* placed a heavier emphasis on class than nationality, arguing that the struggle against oppression was not confined

⁵² Chikovani, "The Georgian Historical Narrative," 108.

⁵³ Sabanadze, *Globalization and Georgian Nationalism*, 71.

to any single ethnic group. Led by Noe Zhordania and Pilipe Makharadze, the *mesame dasi* branded itself simultaneously anti-capitalist and internationalist. However, with the sworn objective to topple the double rule of Russian tsarist administration and Armenian bourgeoisie control over the economy, the socialist movement certainly had ethnic undertones.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the *mesame dasi* represented one of the most influential groups of Marxist intelligentsia of its time; its main newspaper, *kevali* (furrow), became the first legal Marxist daily newspaper in the Russian Empire.⁵⁵

Though the three generations of the National Awakening varied largely from each other ideologically, they nevertheless maintained some key common threads between themselves. Primarily, they each advocated for autonomy, but not necessarily separatism, from the Russian Empire. It was commonly accepted in Georgia that the region was reliant on Russia for security guarantees against the Ottomans and Persians.⁵⁶ As a result, the movements' calls were not for complete independence, but rather for changes within the Russian system, whether it be greater political and cultural autonomy, government reform, or changes in the economy. Additionally, each had aspirations of Europeaness, with Georgian intelligentsia of all generations preferring to align with European ideology rather than that of other neighboring regions.⁵⁷ Finally, all three

⁵⁴ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 145.

⁵⁵ Sabanadze, *Globalization and Georgian Nationalism*, 71.

⁵⁶ Sabanadze, *Globalization and Georgian Nationalism*, 72.

⁵⁷ Sabanadze, *Globalization and Georgian Nationalism*, 75.

generations saw Georgia as a cohesive region that should act united in accordance with its will.

Over time, the disenfranchisement faced by the growing Georgian working-class proved ripe ground for the *mesame dasi* to gradually win over the *tergdaleulebi* and *meore dasi* and take up the mantle of the Georgian cause. However, the *mesame dasi* soon had to confront another problem: the increasing Bolshevik-Menshevik split in the socialist movement. The post-1905 Tsarist repression made the peace between the two sides more and more fragile, with each side favoring a different approach to the Tsarist crackdowns. The Bolsheviks, who generally favored more dramatic action, centralization of power, and the spread of socialism by force, supported a strategy of widespread armed revolt and aggression against the Russian bourgeoisie.⁵⁸ In comparison, Menshevik thinkers, who largely believed that the necessary preconditions did not yet exist for socialism and that it could come via reform, instead acted to support reforms within the system and bring Russia more in line with socialist values.

Eventually, Zhordania and the vast majority of the Georgian socialists aligned with the Menshevik side of the dispute. For one, the process of national revival had renewed the region's association with Europe and "the West." Though Bolshevism was uniquely strong within Russia, socialist circles further West, specifically the Austrian tradition, leaned toward a Menshevik

⁵⁸ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 173.

orientation.⁵⁹ The preoccupation with “belonging to Europe” demonstrated by the National Awakening and with roots in Georgia’s historical narrative of being the “sole Orthodox power” in the region thus played a large part in directing the country towards a Menshevik orientation.⁶⁰ Additionally, Bolshevik ideology required a higher degree of centralization of power, and was largely directed by an intellectual class, establishing a rigid hierarchy. Locked out of power in their own cities for so long and distrustful of foreign, centralized authority from experiences after Georgievsk and with the tsar, Georgian socialists hesitated to divert power away from their local communities.⁶¹

Finally, a reluctance to bring perceived out-of-touch intellectuals into worker’s movements, established largely by the animosity of the *mesame dasi* towards the *tergdaleulebi* and *meore dasi*, might have contributed to the popularity of the Menshevik cause, which was more decentralized and reliant on localized committees of workers.⁶² As a result of these unique factors developed largely during the Great National Awakening, the Georgian socialist culture became resolutely Menshevik-oriented by 1905. In the first Duma, Noe Zhordania and his Mensheviks won the majority of seats from Georgia, making up 5 out of the

⁵⁹ Sabanadze, *Globalization and Georgian Nationalism*, 77.

⁶⁰ Sabanadze, *Globalization and Georgian Nationalism*, 75.

⁶¹ Sabanadze, *Globalization and Georgian Nationalism*, 77.

⁶² Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 173.

18 Menshevik-won seats in the Duma.⁶³ The message from this resounding victory was clear: Georgia was Menshevik territory.

Georgian Independence

The Menshevik-ruled Georgian state was relatively late to declare independence during World War I, on account of security concerns for a small state in the region, its nominal internationalism/anti-nationalist sentiment, and a supposition that union with Russia provided Georgia with a valuable link to European resources, politics, and culture.⁶⁴ However, with the onset of the February Revolution and growing instability in the USSR, Georgian Mensheviks moved towards independence. After a brief period of the Transcaucasian Federative Republic with Armenia and Azerbaijan, Georgia declared independence on May 26, 1918, becoming a protectorate of the German Empire. This sense of security would not last long, as the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 saw all powers withdraw their troops from Transcaucasia, leaving no international presence there to prevent a Soviet or Ottoman invasion.⁶⁵ However, the security dilemma was quickly resolved when a 1920 agreement between the USSR and Georgia saw the USSR recognize the sovereignty of the Republic of Georgia in exchange for Georgia preventing

⁶³ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 173.

⁶⁴ Sabanadze, *Globalization and Georgian Nationalism*, 72.

⁶⁵ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 204.

foreign troops from being stationed on its territory in perpetuity.⁶⁶ The USSR's guarantees in the treaty finally gave Georgia, which had not experienced a unified and independent state for almost 500 years, some degree of security.

In the years following Georgia's 1918 Act of Independence, the Mensheviks ruled the country in a manner inconsistent with the neighboring Soviet Union. Noe Zhordania, the Menshevik revolutionary who became Georgia's first Prime Minister, vowed to turn his nation into a socialist republic with elements of European-style democracy, in stark contrast to his northern neighbor. Years of political maneuvering and the general popularity of Menshevism among the working class had won Zhordania the loyalty of the Georgian working class.⁶⁷ At its height, the Menshevik Party in Georgia would have 75,000 members.⁶⁸ Zhordania's Georgia, in some ways, became the ideal socialist government given its broad support from essentially every social class.

Unfortunately for the young republic, however, international events would soon challenge its very sovereignty. In 1920, the Red Army entered Baku and Yerevan, proclaiming the Soviet Republics of Azerbaijan and of Armenia. Georgia was now surrounded on three sides by the Soviet states and on the other by Turkey, a country with a historically aggressive attitude towards the nation. Zhordania and his Menshevik allies desperately tried to negotiate with

⁶⁶ Jeremy Smith, "The Georgian Affair of 1922 – Policy Failure, Personality Clash or Power Struggle?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 3 (1998): 530.

⁶⁷ Stephen Jones, "The Establishment of Soviet Power in Transcaucasia: The Case of Georgia 1921–1928." *Soviet Studies* 40, no. 4 (1988): 621.

⁶⁸ Jones, "Establishment of Soviet Power," 621.

the USSR, reminding them of the security treaty they had signed less than a year before. However, Zhordania and his small army were ultimately powerless against the Soviet forces.

On February 15, 1921, the Red Army entered Georgia, proclaiming the Soviet Republic of Georgia and installing loyal Bolsheviks in positions of power.⁶⁹ In response, Zhordania and his allies fled, setting up a government-in-exile in France.⁷⁰ The dedication of the Georgian people to holding out against foreign occupation is evidenced by the fact that Zhordania's government-in-exile represented the sole active government in exile of any occupied Caucasian nation. Now ruled by a foreign-appointed leader over whom they had no say, Georgia, in some ways, experienced 1801 all over again.

Soviet Occupation

Following their invasion of Georgia and proclamation of the Soviet Republic, the Bolsheviks faced the immensely difficult challenge of gaining support from a Georgian population loyal to the Menshevik cause. According to Steven Jones, Georgia was the only constituent republic in the USSR in which the Bolsheviks lacked foundational support from the working-class.⁷¹ The records of a 1923 Bolshevik party meeting, for instance, show that the sparse, rural region of Guria alone held more than 8,000 Mensheviks, in comparison to

⁶⁹ Smith, *Red Nations*, 65.

⁷⁰ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 207.

⁷¹ Jones, "Establishment of Soviet Power," 629–30.

the 6,000 registered Bolsheviks in the republic as a whole.⁷² To make matters worse, the Georgian population had a vivid historical memory of “Great Russian Chauvinism” from the days of the Russian Empire, during which the administration had centralized its power in St. Petersburg and denigrated the Georgian language and culture in favor of its own. Having become an occupier once again, the nascent USSR had to work to preserve its optics in this storied region.

In response to the challenge of gaining Georgian support and conscious of the historical legacy of occupation, Bolshevik leaders were divided amongst one another in regard to the best plan of action. Some Bolshevik leaders, such as Pilipe Makharade, Polikarp Mdivani, and Vladimir Lenin supported moderation when dealing with the Georgian population, considering their uniquely developed national identity and connection with Menshevism. On March 2, 1921, a telegram sent by Lenin urged that “it is gigantically important... to search for an acceptable compromise for a bloc with Zhordania and similar Georgian Mensheviks.” He argued that “the internal... situation of Georgia demands... not the application of the Russian pattern, but the skillful and flexible creation of a distinctive tactic.”⁷³ In this telegram, Lenin clearly recognized the immense challenge of integrating Georgia into the Soviet fold, and so he asked Sergo Ordzhonikidze, a Stalin-aligned senior Bolshevik official

⁷² Jones, “Establishment of Soviet Power,” 629–30.

⁷³ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 211.

in the Caucasus, to act with moderation and develop “a special policy of concessions to the Georgian intelligentsia and small merchants.”⁷⁴

Unfortunately for Lenin and his hopes of a more gradual centralization,

however,

Ordzhonikidze and Stalin stood on the other side of the debate, arguing for revolutionary shifts in Georgia and the creation of a completely new political system without regard to the prevailing pro-Menshevik sentiment. According to a speech by Stalin at a meeting of the Moscow Gubernia Committee, the Georgian Menshevik base was too nationalist in nature, and as a result could not be considered truly socialist.⁷⁵ In the views of Stalin and Ordzhonikidze, this meant that it was essential to reconfigure the Soviet Republic of Georgia, both internally and externally, to become a true socialist state.

Disagreements between the two approaches to Georgia came to a head in November 1921, in what is known as the Georgian Affair. The Affair started with a decision by the Politburo in Moscow to unite the Soviet Republics of the Caucasus into what would become the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR). Lenin granted his tacit approval to the principle of the decision, but argued that in practice it could potentially be seen as premature by the Georgians, who, less

⁷⁴ Vladimir Lenin, “Tasks of the Youth Leagues,” *Marxists Internet Archive*, last modified 1921, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/mar/02.htm>.

⁷⁵ Joseph Stalin, *From the Bureau of the Central Committee: Speech Delivered at a Meeting of the Moscow Gubernia Committee, R.C.P.(B.), July 6, 1921*, *Marxists Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1921/07/06.htm>.

than a year into occupation, largely lacked trust in their Bolshevik government.⁷⁶ Lenin was proven correct; though approved by party organizations in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the federation was deemed by leading Georgian Bolsheviks Mdivani and Makharadze as undemocratic and was definitively rejected by the Georgian Central Committee.⁷⁷ In response, Stalin publicly stated that dividing the states in entry to the USSR would only increase ethnic and nationalist tensions, and that the true socialist, anti-nationalist move would be to keep them united.⁷⁸ He also argued it was more economically viable to unite the small Caucasian Republics into one more centralized entity.⁷⁹ The resistance to federation, as a result, would only be from those who placed nation above class; in other words, class traitors.

In January 1922, the First Congress of the Georgian Communist Party, packed with members loyal to Ordzhonikidze, overruled the decision of the Georgian Central Committee to oppose federation.⁸⁰ The Congress found Mdivani and his allies guilty of nationalism, and denounced any further efforts to prevent federation. Two months later, Georgian, Armenian, and

⁷⁶ Smith, "The Georgian Affair of 1922," 530.

⁷⁷ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 214.

⁷⁸ Joseph Stalin, *From the Bureau of the Central Committee*.

⁷⁹ Joseph Stalin, *The Party Before and After Taking Power: Speech Delivered at the Plenum of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' and Red Army Deputies, November 18, 1922*, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1922/11/18.htm>.

⁸⁰ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 214.

Azeri representatives officially signed a document supporting the TSFSR. When the federation was ratified that December, Georgia lost critical aspects of its autonomy, including the right to secession and the right to have an independent Red Army and currency.⁸¹ Mdivani, now joined by Makharadze, would continue to protest the TSFSR's breach of Georgian autonomy and resist efforts by Ordzhonikidze to centralize.⁸² This made it almost impossible for the TSFSR to assert itself in Georgia, leading to a geopolitical stalemate.

The debate between Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, Makharadze, and Mdivani over federation would eventually escalate into a national Soviet debate, demonstrating the disproportionate impact of the Georgian aversion to foreign domination. Mdivani and Makharadze would find a powerful ally in an aging Vladimir Lenin in their struggle against the TSFSR's centralization and encroachment on Georgian autonomy. Retired to his villa in Gorki and of increasingly ill-health, Lenin took an active stance on what he perceived as overly assertive actions in Georgia. Lenin's fears were exacerbated when, in September 1922, Stalin endorsed a plan to annex the Caucasian

Republics directly into the Russian Soviet Republic as autonomous republics. Once again, the Georgian Central Committee, led by Mdivani and Makharadze, opposed the purported overreach by the Politburo. Lenin joined the chorus of criticism, blaming Stalin for acting in line with Great Russian

⁸¹ Jones, "Establishment of Soviet Power," 628–29.

⁸² Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 215.

Chauvinism towards the Georgian local government.⁸³ Writing, “in this given case it is better to oversalt on the side of conciliation... than to undersalt,” Lenin never dropped his conviction that the Georgian state required special concessions.⁸⁴ His influence, even on his deathbed, proved decisive, and Stalin dropped his plans of annexation the next month.

Lenin never stopped pressing for Georgian conciliation. The final recorded letter Lenin ever wrote was a short assurance of solidarity to Makharadze and Mdivani. Lenin wrote, “With all my soul I am following your case. I am indignant at the crudeness of Ordzhonikidze and the connivances of Stalin....”⁸⁵ The fact that the Georgian Affair had become such a preoccupation for Lenin that it occupied his last active days is yet another testament to just how remarkable the Georgian drive to maintain its own autonomy truly was. Additionally, whether it was Stalin or Lenin, it is evident that there was recognition on both sides that Georgia was an exceptionally difficult case. Whereas Armenian and Azeri communists had largely appeased the Politburo, approving federation and maintaining a Bolshevik identity, the Georgian SSR had largely asserted its limited autonomy in any way it could.

As debate on the status of Georgia raged inside the Politburo, Lenin, now too ill to actively engage himself politically, tasked Leon Trotsky with the goals of disempowering Stalin, recalling Ordzhonikidze, and decentralizing what

⁸³ Smith, *Red Nations*, 66.

⁸⁴ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 217.

⁸⁵ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 217.

was now known as the TSFSR. Unfortunately for local Georgians, Stalin won the debate, Mdivani and Makharadze were taken out of local governance, and the Mensheviks were banned in 1923.⁸⁶ Once again, a Russian-dominated government had encroached on Georgia's autonomy, absorbing it into a larger state without its consent. The impact of the Georgian Affair in 1923 is yet another reminder of the legacy of the events of 1801 and 1921.

In a process Robert Grigor Suny calls a "revolution from outside," after initial Georgian resistance, Stalin accelerated the rate of centralization of power in the Soviet Union, with decisions on Georgia's fate increasingly taking place in Moscow as opposed to Tbilisi.⁸⁷ The Stalinist Soviet Union would attack the foundations of Georgian nationalism, imposing Russian as a lingua franca, deporting tens of thousands of Georgians from their homeland, and disappearing and executing thousands of Georgian leaders, most famously Polikarp Mdivani.⁸⁸ However, though it faced immense obstacles, the Georgian deer proved once again to outlive its hunter. In the latter half of the 20th century, Georgian nationalism would once again rise. Under former Foreign Affairs Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, Georgia would declare its independence in 1991. In the short period since then, the country has experienced two wars, an occupation of 20% of its territory, and alleged foreign interference in domestic politics. Despite these obstacles, however, the Georgian people, as

⁸⁶ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 222.

⁸⁷ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 238.

⁸⁸ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 258, 276, 289.

always, remain resilient. In *Lines to the Georgian Mother*, Ilia Chavchavadze urges mothers to “teach them [their sons] to struggle ‘gainst all ill, And give them courage for the fight.”⁸⁹ If history proves anything, it is that the Georgian people certainly do not lack the courage for a fight.

Analysis and Conclusion

It is evident that, during the early period of Soviet occupation, Georgia proved an anomaly in the sheer scale of its resistance towards centralization, especially considering its small size. It can be difficult to pinpoint one specific factor as to why Georgia had such a rigid hostility to centralization during this period. One could certainly point to the attraction of the country to Menshevism as the proximate cause, but that ignores the fact that all the main anti-federation advocates in the Georgian Affair, whether it be Mdivani or Makharadze, were themselves emphatic proponents of Bolshevik doctrine. One can point to a profound distrust of Russian rule engendered by the Tsar’s multiple violations of Georgievsk, but that ignores the fact that the Georgians were hardly alone within the USSR in having a contentious history with Russia. Overall, there is no single proximate factor that can wholly account for Georgia’s idiosyncratic approach to early Soviet occupation; it is more efficient, rather, to view various underlying economic, political, and social factors as the “perfect storm” for the development of an autonomy-affirming national

⁸⁹ Chavchavadze, *Works*, 47.

identity. The origin of this storm, without a doubt, can be attributed to the bivocal perspective on history, the unique Georgian historical narrative, and the dynamism of the National Awakening in establishing an idiosyncratic national identity.

The bivocal historical narrative has proven so critical to the establishment of a proactive autonomy-affirming identity because it gives the Georgian people agency in defining their future. If they act in line with tradition and morality, the narrative suggests that they themselves could potentially invite a new Golden Age. However, at the same time, if they act out of line with tradition or passively give up their morals, they themselves contribute to their own oppression. As a result, bivocality provided a baseline call to action, pushing Georgians to contribute to the protection of their own national identity in the face of overwhelming odds. In the early years of Soviet occupation, this would have served as a cultural value that pushed Georgian leaders like Zhordania and Mdivani to refuse to act passively in the face of injustice.

Additionally, the historical narrative by the time of the Georgian Affair itself provides compelling evidence for a lack of trust in centralized power. By 1922, a Russian-dominated state had twice (in 1801 and 1921) invaded Georgia in violation of existing security agreements, unilaterally annexed it, exiled its incumbent leader, and replaced it with its own. When also considering the deep historical scars caused by the breaches of the Treaty of Georgievsk, it is understandable that the Georgian historical narrative might have served as a

warning against passively allowing a Russian state to disempower its Georgian counterpart.

A final factor contributing to the increased resistance of the Georgian people against Russian rule was the deep interconnection between class and ethnic origin that arose especially during the period of the Great Awakening. With the decline of the landed nobility, the fall of serfdom, and the rise of capitalism, the country transitioned from an agrarian-based feudal society to a more urbanized, bourgeois-dominated economy. As Armenians held generational wealth in the cities and a Russo-Armenian class maintained a chokehold on political power, the Georgians who migrated to the cities often found themselves working menial jobs, connecting with fellow Georgians, not just on the basis of language and culture, but also through a shared class identity. By the era of the *mesame dasi*, the dominant ideology of revival had decidedly shifted from a noble-led nationalist movement, which gave no consideration to the class divide, to a self-proclaimed anti-nationalist Marxist-Leninist movement based on class struggle.

In reality, however, the interconnection between class and ethnicity in Georgia meant that, in relation to other socialist movements, Georgian socialism took on a unique dimension of nationality. This unique strand of socialism was evident in the move towards Menshevism, which was based largely on aspects of Georgian national identity; specifically, a desire to conform with Europe, a preference for less centralized government, and the distancing of intellectuals from nationwide movements, among other factors. It also explains

why Georgia clung so hard to its foundations even when it was the last bastion of Menshevism, in that Menshevik socialism was the natural expression of the intricate nuances of Georgian national identity.⁹⁰ Unlike other countries that had it imposed on them, Georgian socialism developed organically through the National Awakening. Finally, the brief experience of independence between 1918 and 1921 was a clear demonstration that the Georgian brand of socialism wasn't just an ideology, but rather that it was something that worked in practice. If the period of independence could be considered a high point in Georgian history, it follows that the bivocal framework would task ordinary Georgians with taking action to protect it and the values of autonomy and Menshevism that it espoused.

Whether it be Erekle II's search to secure his country in 1783, Ilia Chavchavadze's call to revive the Georgian culture in 1863, or Polikarp Mdivani's impassioned pleas against federation in 1922, there is evidently a strong autonomy-affirming element inculcated within Georgian identity, even against impossible odds. This dedication to protect Georgian agency is evident even today. After the 2024 elections, Georgian protesters swarmed the streets of Tbilisi to oppose what they saw as a corrupt, Russian-influenced election. In the face of tear gas, beatings, and imprisonment, protestors continue to this day. At the end of the day, protests like these prove that the will of the Georgian people to reclaim their political, national, and cultural agency in their historical land will

⁹⁰ Jones, "Establishment of Soviet Power," 634.

always go on. The free Georgian identity, it seems, will never be permanently suppressed. To this day, the proud deer still runs.