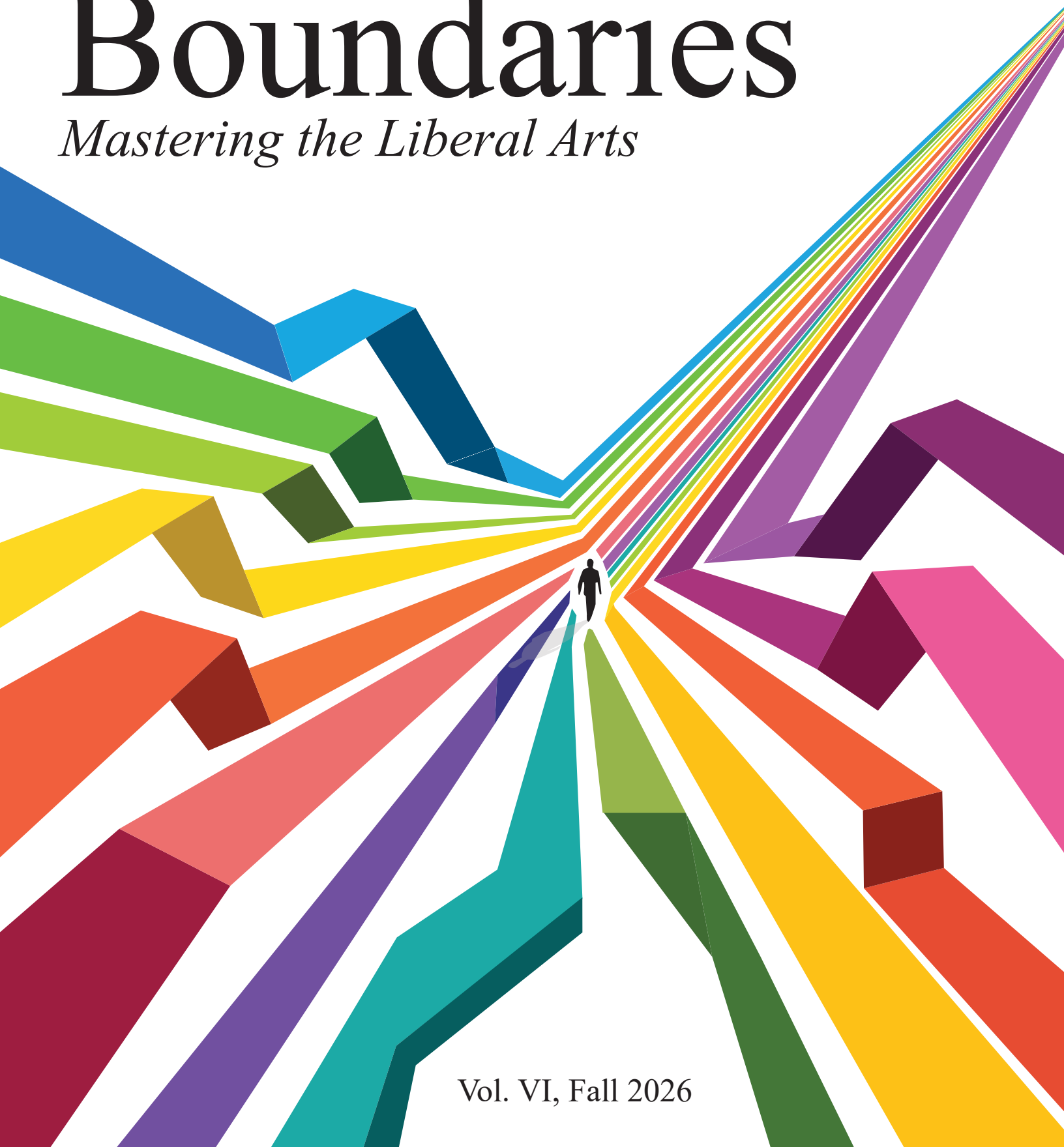
# Beyond Boundaries

*Mastering the Liberal Arts*



Vol. VI, Fall 2026

# Beyond Boundaries: Mastering the Liberal Arts

Issue 6, Fall 2026

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Beyond Boundaries would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of our Faculty Sponsor, Professor Catherine Clinton. We are greatly appreciative of all her support and tireless efforts.

# Letter From the Editors

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to bring you this 6th Edition of *Beyond Boundaries: Mastering the Liberal Arts.* Once again, this peer-reviewed academic journal highlights the quality and variety of the scholarship of the University of Texas at San Antonio's College of Liberal Arts graduate students.

This edition in particular features new categories of contributions, including those from the Department of Anthropology, intercontinental historical research, and poetry. We are extremely proud of the bridge built between departments represented in this edition and extend grateful thanks to Dean Glenn Martinez, Ph.D. and the Graduate Advisors from all departments for their support and encouragement of these research submissions.

Our excellent Peer Reviewers, Collin Ward, Kristen Clay, Liam Bage, and Levi Smith generously offered their time and expertise to help improve these submissions and this edition: to you four, we are deeply beholden.

Lastly, we extend special thanks for the tireless sponsorship and help of Dr. Catherine Clinton, to whom we as Editors and this journal are extremely grateful.

We offer congratulations and thanks to all our authors for their outstanding submissions, and read on to encounter the knowledge of UT San Antonio's COLFA!

With sincere appreciation,

Gavin Morris
Leo Randolph
Editors of Beyond Boundaries, 2026

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# “Diggin’ It! Archaeological Education for Today’s Youth”

By: Anna Surovic

Department of Anthropology

**Abstract:**

*Early archaeological education can help young people develop critical thinking skills, understand conservation needs, and appreciate cultural diversity in a way that the current educational system rarely allows. Through an examination of research previously done on archaeological public outreach and a discussion of the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) Legacy Summer Camp, this paper will illustrate how instructing young people on archaeological findings, issues and practices is an overall benefit to their education. This will lead to more people willing to financially and intellectually invest in archaeological research.*

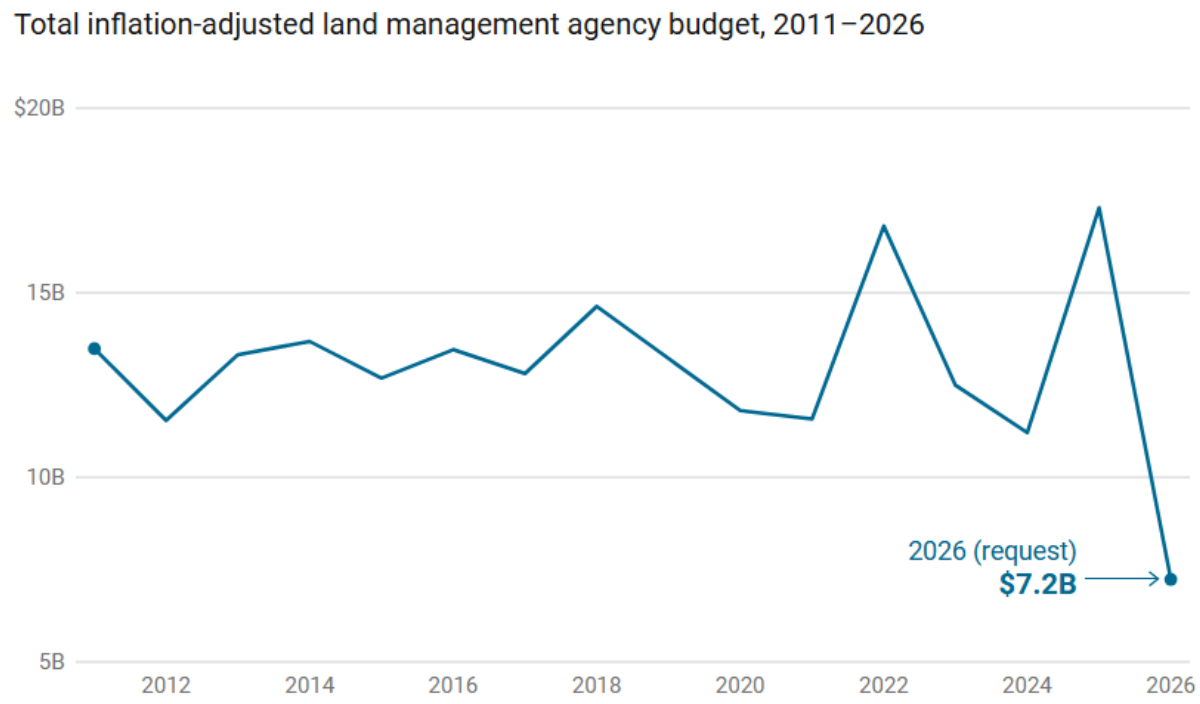
## Introduction

One of the foremost concerns of the modern age is preparing the next generation to contend with the issues they may face in the future. Parents and teachers alike work tirelessly to prepare their children for the challenges of life and must hope that these efforts do enough to make the chaos of life more manageable and understandable. Although these efforts do a lot to form children into functional, knowledgeable adults, there are some undeniable gaps in many a young person's education: in the development of their critical and creative thinking skills, their understanding for and care of historical sites and cultural heritage, and in their knowledge of and curiosity for their cultural history and that of those around them.

Critical and creative thinking skills are some of the most important abilities one can learn, and yet, it seems more and more that these skills are not being taught. Our truly unprecedented times have yielded an untenable growth in the use of digital technology, most pertinent to our topic being the rapidly increasing use of Artificial Intelligence in the classroom. The rise of AI and other technologies built to make learning or studying easier has made people more reliant on these devices, and less capable of finding their own answers and making their own conclusions. Research has shown that people, particularly students, who learn to rely on AI for easy solutions are, after a time, trained not to push their minds to think harder, to train these cognitive "muscles" and make them stronger, but rather to rely on these easy shortcuts to "good enough" solutions (Shaji George et al. 2024; Zhai et al. 2024). Instead of taking the time and energy to gain the important mental abilities that allow people to reason, infer, or even create, the devices end up doing the labor, and the students gain nothing from the experience except a further reliance on technology (Shaji George et al. 2024). This has become a measurable impediment to children's education over the past thirty years (Zhai et al. 2024). The ingrained

reliance on technology will continue to impair the development of these skills if nothing is done to give children the opportunity to develop these skills.

Another important concept that children, and by extension, adults, ought to grasp is that we all ought to be caretakers of the past. In recent years, archaeologists have raised concerns about how landowners legally have the right to do, within certain legal limits, whatever they want to their land, including damaging any cultural materials or sites that might be found on such land (Rawashdeh 2017). The most punishment any of these landowners might get for such destruction is often a small fine, which, as one might imagine, does little to curtail such behavior (Rawashdeh 2017). Such disrespect for a site, or at least, such apathy towards potentially monumental finds in the face of profit, is not simply a problem for landowners or anyone who might just so happen to pull up a pot sherd from the ground. No, this problem has extended itself all the way to the highest seats of governance in America. The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has cut an incredible number of government programs and grants that allowed historical sites, museums, and educational centers of all stripes to host education programs, conduct research, and preserve the cultural history of America (Chhaya 2025). Without this money, these institutions are forced to terminate many of their efforts to educate the public and protect the past. When children are educated on how to care for the past, they grow up to become adults who appreciate and support the work done by researchers, conservators, and so many others to maintain these sites and tell others about them.




(Zeno and Rowland-Shea 2025)

A third element that is important for children is the ability to understand culture, both one's own and that of someone else. Today, it seems that people are more distant than ever. Between the devastation the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked on the social development of the youth and the increased reliance many people of all ages have on social media and the loss of spaces that were specifically for kids, it is no wonder that there exists a pervading sense of loneliness. In 2023, the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) put out a guide entitled, *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community*. It draws attention to the negative health impacts such loneliness is having on people, including higher rates of heart disease, depression, and even suicide (Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) 2023). The book talks about the importance of community and building relationships, while particularly pointing out the need to "create diverse

ties among community members" (Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) 2023; pg. 48). A crucial part in creating such ties lies in our ability to understand others' perspectives, no matter how different from our own they might be. Teaching children about cultures different from their own allows them to connect to others more easily, making the forging of strong relationships, quite literally, child's play.

These ideas and skills are imperative to building a complete skill set for an adult, and archaeological education programs are a fantastic way of helping children learn them. From giving kids scenarios where they must infer the use or time of an artifact, to instilling a sense of stewardship for all archaeological sites, to acquainting children with cultures from around the world, archaeological educational programs can do much to help the children augment these skills. Numerous studies have shown such programs to be beneficial in engaging children in these skills (Erickson-Harvey 2016; Moe 2016). Instructing children in anthropology and archaeology, even briefly, aids in furthering their education by building critical thinking skills, growing their care and curiosity for archaeological sites, and helping them relate to people of other cultures and their own (Urpi 2021).

**Case Studies:**

With these concerns regarding the gaps in children's education in mind, now one must look at how archaeological outreach and education can support the efforts to address these gaps. As previously mentioned, a number of archaeological outreach programs have been lost as the DOGE-mandated budget cuts have forced many institutions to limit their public outreach. Looking at this, and with the proposed benefits in mind, one must ask: what has been lost? Is there a measurable impact that such programs have on children's education, or is it all just a waste? In response, one would only need to familiarize themselves with the research done

regarding archaeological outreach programs to know that these curriculum supplement programs, formal lectures, even summer camps all work to improve young people's minds. The act of illustrating that archaeological heritage education programs have value is one that, by its nature, relies on the study of existing and proposed programs.

An instance of other countries attempting to incorporate these types of educational initiatives to improve their programs can be seen in Spanish heritage education programs. A sample of archaeological sites and museums was selected for a descriptive study of the quality of their heritage education programs to see which practices were most effective (Urpi 2021). Of the museum-based programs studied, they all included various hands-on activities that allowed guests to forge a deeper connection with their heritage and understand how archaeological excavations work (Urpi 2021). A number of them even included curriculum for special needs classes, enabling greater access to this information (Urpi 2021). These institutions answer a need that basic school curriculum may not be able to meet, as the author writes,

> "In keeping with the idea of the museum as a vehicle for the development of personal identity… some institutions address needs that schools cannot fully satisfy. The National Archaeological Museum of Tarragona, for instance, chooses not to address curricular content and focus instead on skill development…Hands-on workshops allow the visitor to take a closer look at professional archaeology by applying the hypothetical-deductive method, which fosters the development of critical thinking… multidisciplinary activities employ methods of deduction, induction, interpretation, and manipulation. All of this promotes the understanding of the past, as well as individual active learning, interpersonal skills, and teamwork (Urpi, 2021; pg. 60-61)".

The variety of programs and resources has a beneficial impact on the attendees, allowing them to develop important skills, among which are critical thinking skills, beyond what a classroom alone would afford them.

In 2016, a study was done on the archaeological curriculum supplement program, Project Archaeology. The study aimed to show the efficacy of the program in teaching core archaeological concepts, such as site and artifact stewardship, critical thinking, pre-colonial

history, and cultural awareness (Moe 2016). Through a series of surveys of 15 classrooms before and after the program, the researchers saw a significant increase in children's understanding of how archaeologists ask and answer questions about the past (which uses critical thinking and an understanding of the scientific method), and an increase in feelings of personal responsibility regarding safeguarding archaeological sites and artifacts (Moe 2016). By adding an archaeological education to the curriculum, the children were able to augment their abilities in the previously mentioned areas of concern. These programs enforce the idea that the past is important and worth investigating and protecting, which is instrumental to the continued support of research, which in turn invites more educational programs.

This self-sustaining cycle requires a balance of researchers working in the field to create knowledge, and people outside the site knowing and caring enough about the site to continue providing resources to carry on with the work. An interesting example of this shows up in the article "Stories we tell: myths at the heart of 'community archaeology.'" In this article, the author records a series of anecdotes from various sources that show the importance of this loop. In the third anecdote, "It's Your History", a local councilman tried and failed to convince people to support his plans to set aside a section of land that had been found to be part of a historical battlefield (Carman 2011). While people had some knowledge of the historic battle, they did not have any local pride or protectiveness towards it, and so personal interests won out (Carman 2011). While we may never know how much would have been gained, financially or otherwise, from preserving this site, the loss of history can still be felt. What the public values as "heritage" is based on the process of turning a plot of land into a place of meaning, something sacred and important. This elevation needs the knowledge brought about by researchers, true, but without

people internalizing that knowledge, the cause for protecting heritage is lost, and with that loss, is a loss of this history to the generations that come after us.

Another great example of archaeological outreach programs improving children's education is apparent in the University of Texas at San Antonio's very own Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) Legacy Summer Camps. Some may wonder how effective summer camps really are at teaching children or influencing their behavior, but research has shown that these moments of learning and connection over the summer months can have a myriad of positive, lasting effects, including healthier habits, more emotional intelligence, and better learning outcomes (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine et al., 2019; Scott, 2019). So, knowing that summer camps can have a significant effect on the young people who attend them, one must question what benefits the Legacy Camps grant their young attendees. According to the camp website, the camps began in 1994, and they place emphasis on "teaching archaeological awareness to children and adults, and… preserving the rich cultural heritage of South Texas through public programs and events" (Center for Archaeological Research 2025). As a former intern who worked at these camps, I can wholeheartedly confirm that more than 30 years later, this mission continues to be carried out.

In my experiences with the Legacy Camp, I saw a marked improvement in critical thinking, site and artifact care, and cultural curiosity among the children. The camps themselves combined lectures with activities, which allowed the children to practice what they were learning in a hands-on manner. This combination allowed the kids to show off their skills in a variety of ways. In terms of increasing their critical thinking skills, I can remember the children as being rather hesitant to make predictions or inferences at the beginning of the class. They would not make suggestions about the artifacts or sites they learned about, relying on guidance from the

instructors for easy answers, but as the week went on, the kids learned to trust their instincts and build their own understanding of the objects and contexts they were examining. My favorite instance of this occurred every Thursday and Friday, in the dig boxes. The dig boxes activity involves a set of 3 or 4 sandboxes of various sizes, each with a unique concrete (and wood) feature at the base, and artifacts strewn throughout the sand. The artifacts are selected to work alongside the feature itself, for example, one of the features depicted is a cooking hearth, so animal bones and other cooking-related artifacts and ecofacts would be present. One of the features was a set of burned wooden posts in a row. The girls assigned to this box examined the charred wooden posts, carefully set aside and washed the artifacts: a buckle, a spoon, some animal bones, and some musket balls. The kids worked together to come to the conclusion that a fight had broken out, leading to the structure (a house) being burned down to the ground. Seeing the group gain that crucial faith in their own thought processes was truly marvelous.

As for site conservation and artifact protection, there were many great moments where this lesson was taught. From the very first lecture, where we talked about what archaeologists do, an emphasis was placed on the difference between archaeologists and looters. This difference lies in research, records, and writing about your finds, of course! And in legality, we cannot forget the importance of getting permission and following contractual and legal mandates. The kids solidified this idea by watching movie clips and deciding whether they counted as archaeology or looting. Surprisingly, pretty much all of them, from *Indiana Jones* to *The Mummy* (1999), were examples of looting, and not really archaeology at all. Over time, we taught them about the importance of mapping out finds, the work that goes into understanding soil color and stratigraphy, and how it helps people understand what really happened in these places all those years ago. The children especially enjoyed the game Archaeologists vs. Looters, a sort of Sharks

and Minnows-type game where the kids could run outside and play. In their final quiz, a marker of how much the kids learned, the children consistently showed that they understood this difference, the need to leave sites undisturbed if they cannot be adequately documented and preserved through papers and photos, and research.

Finally, cultural awareness came up many times throughout the camp. One of the most informative parts of the camp was the Dig Discoveries and the Sites Around the World lectures. The kids got to choose various sites to learn about from a list, and after a brief video presentation, they could ask questions about the sites. Most of the questions revolved around the people who lived there, and why they built what they built. The children were fascinated by these ancient buildings and exotic sites. Every child had a favorite site, and some even attempted to draw them. Another one of the activities involved the children making their own cultures, designing everything from foods to religion to clothes unique to their made-up culture. This encouraged the kids to discuss their own cultural backgrounds amongst themselves, showing their comprehension both of their own culture and of others. The camp developed their curiosity and understanding of other cultures.

All in all, the Legacy Camps did an excellent job of enhancing the campers' critical thinking skills, while also boosting their care for archaeological sites and artifacts, and convincing them to learn more about cultures different from their own. The internship also included an opportunity to help the Center for Archaeological Research show off their work and discuss conservation efforts at a showing of *Indiana Jones: Raiders of the Lost Ark* at the Mission Marquee Plaza. These works all add up to increasing the impact of archaeological research, and the reach future works can have. Hopefully, these efforts will yield a future of

better and more programs that will continue the work archaeologists across the nation do every day to better know our past.

**Conclusion**

To summarize, teaching children about archaeology, even for a short time, is a great benefit to their education, and teaches them much about how to think critically, how to care for material culture and sites, and how to connect to and respect people of other cultures. These experiences raise children to be well-rounded adults who care about protecting their heritage and the heritage of other people. People are more than just their current state of being, and this understanding of the past as something to be explored, understood, and protected as a living, breathing part of ourselves turns history into something more than words on a page. It shows how our culture, our history, and our ancestors remain a part of each and every one of us, and the ways we navigate the world. Perhaps in the future, these programs will be expanded as new technologies emerge, and people grow to care more about their collective past. For now, we must strive to find ways to preserve archaeological sites and programs as best as we can, with or without government assistance, and try to encourage those in power to share in our concerns for the future, not simply of these places and practices, but of our children's education. These efforts only succeed when archaeologists work, hand in hand, with the public, with the children, and with the educators who embrace and share this information. Perhaps Amanda Erickson-Harvey put it best in her article, *Outreach and Education in Archaeology*:

> "Since the curriculum is not currently changing to involve the topic of archaeology and since it is not required for professionals in archaeology to outreach to the community, the only solution is members from each group coming together to create a solution. Members from each side have recognized the benefits that the other can provide for the education of children and, ultimately, the general public. This solution is most often found in the collaboration between archaeologists, especially in archaeological units and other researchers, and educators. The benefits that curriculum-based resources from

archaeological units provide are a perfect example of this solution (Erickson-Harvey 2016; pg. 51)."

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# Hierarchy and Craft Production of Obsidian at Teotihuacan

By: Diana Chavez

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**Abstract:**

*This research examines how obsidian production, consumption, and exchange shape the organization of political hierarchy and economic power at Teotihuacan during the Classic period. Drawing on archaeological evidence from apartment compounds, particularly Tlajinga and La Ventilla, and research on the Otumba and Pachuca obsidian sources, it explores how craft production connected household economies to broader urban and regional exchange networks. Situating obsidian within debates over centralized state control, market exchange, and neighborhood autonomy, this paper argues that economic practices did not simply reflect existing political hierarchies but actively produced social differentiation and interdependence. Differences in raw material sources, workshop organization, and distribution spotlight relationships between labor specialization, resource access, and political authority. This research also considers whether changes in economic organization shed light on Teotihuacan's political fragmentation and decline. Despite limited excavation coverage and challenges in interpreting artifact distributions, obsidian provides a valuable material record for examining how economic practices shaped social and political relationships in ancient Mesoamerica.*

Teotihuacan was one of the largest and most influential primate centers in Mesoamerica, known for its multiethnic population, dense urban nucleation, and a highly integrated economic system. Teotihuacan's success was partially attributed to obsidian, a volcanic glass valued for its predictable flaking properties, sharpness, and cosmological significance. Obsidian was abundant, circulating through the hands of elites, households, marketplaces, craft workshops, and long-distance trade networks. Its prevalent presence makes obsidian an especially useful tool for understanding how the economic practices of Teotihuacan shaped everyday life and relationships in the city and throughout its hinterlands. Teotihuacan's role as a primate city in the Basin of Mexico distinguished it from centers such as Cholula or Tikal, which were politically significant but lacked the dense urban integration observed at Teotihuacan (Cowgill 2015). This density allowed for more complex economic interdependencies, making obsidian not only a utilitarian resource but also a vehicle for social negotiation and political signaling. At Teotihuacan, obsidian production, consumption, and exchange formed an integrated economic system rooted in apartment compounds and neighbourhood organizations. These practices did not merely reflect the existing political hierarchy, but actively produced economic interdependence and social differentiation across the city by linking household-level craft production to regional exchange networks across the Teotihuacan Valley and beyond. Additionally, interactions between household and state-level production exhibit how economic activity itself became a means of social negotiation, with households negotiating access to materials and workforce through both local and citywide influence (Manzanilla 2009; Carballo 2016).

Scholars have long debated whether Teotihuacan's influence was attributed to centralized state control, corporate organization, or a market-based exchange. Early models argued elite dominance over production and trade, particularly obsidian (Spence 1981). Later

approaches have advocated for neighborhood autonomy, household specialization, and collective organization (Manzanilla 2009; Hirth 2009). By examining obsidian across production, consumption, and exchange, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions about how political hierarchy was materially produced rather than forcefully imposed.

Obsidian provides a uniquely effective lens for examining these debates as it moves through every level of Teotihuacan society while remaining materially traceable in the archaeological record. Unlike prestige goods restricted to elite contexts, or subsistence materials limited to household use, obsidian circulated across domestic, neighborhood, ceremonial, and interregional spheres. Its presence in apartment compounds, state-run workshops, marketplaces, ritual deposits, and foreign exchange networks allows its trajectory from extraction to consumption to be traced. This makes obsidian particularly useful for assessing how economic practices were structured, how access was regulated, and how labor and materials linked households to broader systems of authority. Rather than treating hierarchy as a fixed political structure, obsidian allows for an examination of how hierarchy was produced through everyday practices of work, exchange, and consumption embedded in the city's urban fabric. Furthermore, the cosmological and symbolic significance of obsidian reinforced social hierarchical structures, with certain materials controlled and reserved by elites for ritual and political displays (Saunders 2001; Parry 2014).

**Research Questions**

How did the production, consumption, and exchange of Obsidian reflect and actively produce political hierarchy at Teotihuacan? What, if anything, can economic organizations suggest regarding Teotihuacan's fragmentation or decline?

## Methodology

This work employs archaeological data from Teotihuacan, including excavation data from the apartment compounds such as Tlajinga and La Ventilla. Both apartment compounds have shown evidence of large obsidian production and craft specialization. It also draws upon archaeological studies of obsidian quarries and extraction at the Otumba and Pachuca sources. Analyzing the production, exchange, and consumption of obsidian reveals how economic practices operating at multiple levels, from household to regional trade networks, both reflected and reproduced political hierarchy and economic interdependence at Teotihuacan.

Obsidian at Teotihuacan has a uniquely robust dataset due to its traceability and frequency in archaeological contexts. However, it is crucial to recognize its limitations, which include uneven excavation coverage, differential preservation, and the challenge of connecting artifact density directly back to social status and production intensity. These limitations require interpretation of obsidian not only as a proxy for power, but as a part of the grander material and spatial patterns.

## Teotihuacan's Urbanization

Teotihuacan's rapid growth during the Early Classic period created an unprecedented level of urban nucleation, with approximately 100,000 to 200,000 people at a time in its heyday. (Pierce 2025) Teotihuacan became a multiethnic city due in part to environmental pressures, such as Popocatépetl (smoking mountain) erupting during the first and fourth centuries A.D., displacing folks in the southern Basin of Mexico. This contributed to the city’s transformation into a primate urban center (Manzanilla 2015, 9210). Another wave of migration followed the second eruption of Xitle around AD 320, which, alongside “urban renewal initiatives,” created conditions for a reorganization of Teotihuacan society into a corporate multiethnic system (Manzanilla 2015, 9210). Groups from diverse regions settled

initially along the outer limits of Teotihuacan, including the Tlaloltcan and Oaxaca barrios. This brought in skills of garment making, lapidary work, construction, music, and military service to the city. (Manzanilla 2015, 9210).

This rapid urban nucleation led to the development of tightly packed, multifamily apartment compounds, serving as fundamental social units of Teotihuacan. Excavations in the Tlajinga neighbourhood revealed communal living environments that molded daily interactions, craft production, and relationships (Special Section Introduction 2019, 91). The layout of these apartment compounds reflects social hierarchies, as centrally located areas in Teotihuacan held status and political power, and outer neighbourhoods held a labor and status diversity, integrating household production into both local and city-wide economic networks. Urban planning shows the intentional changes in landscape to accommodate population growth, a crowded landscape, and craft specialization. This is reflected in the extension of the Street of the Dead into Tlajinga (Special Section Introduction 2019, 93).

**Sources and Material Properties of Obsidian**

Obsidian's material properties made it uniquely suited for large-scale production and widespread use at Teotihuacan, allowing for the fusion of craft specialization into domestic and larger neighbourhood contexts. Its predictable flaking pattern, skill transferability, and abundant local sources ensured its sustainability for mass production. There are two kinds of obsidian found at Teotihuacan: Otumba, whose quarry was located 16km east of the city, produced a grey-black obsidian. Its proximity to Teotihuacan allowed for nearby households and workshops to get the obsidian without a middleman, facilitating neighbourhood-level production networks. The second kind of obsidian was from the Pachuca quarry, which is located approximately 50km northeast of the city. Pachuca obsidian was known for its green-tinted quality and was not directly under the control of the Teotihuacan elites. This

suggests there is an interdependent trade network, reflecting a likely oversight and selective resource management (Spence 1981; Carballo 2007). These quarrying sites show how obsidian economic structures were integrated at a communal and hierarchical level. Pachuca obsidian was prized not only for its hue but also for its low sulfur content, which made blades exceptionally sharp and durable, ideal for both ceremonial and utilitarian purposes (Barnes 2024; Vance 2014). Transportation from Pachuca to Teotihuacan required organized labor and intermediate stops along the Tula–Valley corridor, indicating a semi-centralized oversight mechanism that balanced household autonomy with elite control.

**Organization of Obsidian Production**

Before obsidian can be consumed or transformed into a finished product, it must be extracted and processed. Production involves several stages: mining, shaping raw blocks into cores, creating blades, and only then can they be processed into weapons or ceremonial objects (Spence 1981). Labor organization and specialization of production varied depending on the source of the obsidian and the location of the workshop. For obsidian from the Otumba quarry, the miners may have also doubled as knappers. In contrast, Pachuca obsidian was located 50 km from Teotihuacan, requiring a separation of labor. One group would be dedicated to mining the obsidian while another group would transform the raw blocks into obsidian cores Spence 1981; Carballo 2007).

Within the city, production sites were organized into a tiered workshop system, showing the scale of output and social hierarchy. Production sites within Teotihuacan are divided into local, regional, and precinct workshops. Local workshops were placed in apartment compounds, promoting household-level crafts made for neighbourhood consumption. Regional workshops operated on a larger scale, supplying bigger sections of the city and fusing multiple households into coordinated production networks. Precinct workshops were state-run, working under elite

oversight to create goods for tribute, ceremonial purposes, or for city-wide redistribution (Spence 1981). This hierarchical system ensured streamlined production and distribution, while reinforcing the political hierarchy of Teotihuacan. Elites would control access to more distant obsidian sources, distribute labor, and create a regulated standard of quality. In turn, local households contributed to the economic interdependence of neighborhoods (Manzanilla et al. 1996).

The differences in quarry methods draw out the relationship between labor and political organization. Pachuca obsidian, due to its distance and desirability, was likely extracted under political watch, whereas Otumba obsidian could be gathered through cooperative, neighborhood-based labor. These labor practices reflect the broader Mesoamerican beliefs that work was a civic duty and a form of tribute, incorporating household production in the larger economic and political systems of the city (Manzanilla et al. 1996; Murakami 2019). The structuring of production maximized output while it enforced social hierarchy and economic interdependence at Teotihuacan.

The organization of production also reflects the differences in skill set and hierarchical access to obsidian. Artisans trained to work with Pachuca obsidian needed the most expertise due to its valued green tint and the high expectations for the blades. Errors tended to be lower in workshops producing for the elite, suggesting they were the most skilled knappers trusted to work the obsidian. Otumba obsidian was crafted into utilitarian blades by those with less specialized training. The result was a division of labor and skill that not only maintained quality control but also reinforced social hierarchy. Access to the most valuable materials and the most skilled laborers was monopolized by elite households and precinct workshops, and neighborhood-level production supported everyday economic functions. By controlling who was trained, what materials they could access, and what products they were allowed to produce,

Teotihuacan's obsidian economy both mirrored and actively reproduced the city's political and social hierarchy (Spence 1981; Carballo 2007).

Excavations at Operation 17 show an organized obsidian craft workshop placed within an apartment compound, revealing how labor was structured and distributed at Teotihuacan (Hirth et al. 2019). The recovery of roughly 406.8 kg of obsidian and nearly 800,000 artifacts points to sustainable large-scale production rather than casual household toolmaking. 41.2 percent of the analyzed samples provide a reliable base for interpreting workshop activities and their role within apartment-based production systems. Production was carried out by trained individuals assigned to specific stages of the process, indicating coordination.

Nearly 99 percent of the analyzed artifacts relate to the Mesoamerican core/blade industry, indicating a high degree of craft specialization within the compound (Hirth et al. 2019). This specialization suggests standardized tasks were allocated according to skill and possibly status, linking workshop organization to broader social hierarchies. Most of the obsidian comes from the Pachuca source (95.4%), with smaller amounts of gray obsidian from nearby Otumba. Using only a few sources suggests that access to obsidian was regulated through established networks that supplied apartment-based workshops. This controlled access allowed for consistent production and tied these workshops into the city’s broader economic system.

Operation 17 revealed that apartment compounds functioned as an important point of specialized craft production. Obsidian blade manufacture was organized, repetitive, and corporatized, reflecting deliberate labor coordination within residential spaces. These apartments held focused workshops where labor was distributed among trained individuals, contributing to Teotihuacan's urban economy and supporting interpretations of neighborhood-level specialization and managed craft production (Hirth et al. 2019).

**Apartment compounds as sites of Craft Specialization and Consumption ( La Ventilla and Tlajinga)**

Beyond production, the apartment compounds were social, economic, and craft hubs within Teotihuacan. These multi-function complexes addressed the challenge of rapid urban nucleation, including food distribution, population density, and potential conflict, while providing spaces for craft production, consumption, and exchange (Arnauld, Manzanilla, & Smith, 2012). Apartment compounds mitigated these challenges by concentrating labor, reducing the need for movement across the city, and making production and daily life more predictable. By embedding specialized craft production, households could simultaneously manage domestic needs and contribute to the broader urban economy in an organized and controlled manner (Arnauld, Manzanilla, & Smith, 2012).

The obsidian sourced from the Otumba and Pachuca flowed into the apartment compounds, where they were transformed into utilitarian tools, ceremonial objects, and weapons. The presence of obsidian workshops within residential complexes showcases how domestic and economic activities were deeply integrated, blurring the lines between household life, specialized craft production, and broader market participation (Arnauld, Manzanilla, & Smith 2012; Carballo 2016).

La Ventilla, located southwest of the city center, housed a diverse population reflecting multiple social statuses. Its layout incorporated tightly arranged apartment compounds, open plazas, and platform structures, allowing craft production and domestic life to coexist. Skilled artisans and elite households were concentrated in the more complex architectural areas, while ordinary residents occupied spaces adjacent to workshops (Carballo & Fortenberry 2015:91).

The proximity of elite households to workshops was a Strategic decision, which enabled oversight, controlling access to valuable obsidian, and the efficient coordination of labor.

Architectural features like platforms, plazas, and streets helped to regulate movement and facilitated state surveillance, which reinforced the hierarchy. The production of obsidian here was not just a practical activity. It carried a symbolic weight, as it reflected the status and authority of the individual in the compound. Through this spatial arrangement, La Ventilla exhibits how Teotihuacan structured residential spaces to manage both production efficiency and social order.

The Tlajinga district, located on the eastern outerlands of Teotihuacan, serves as an example of neighbourhood-level craft specialization. Tlajinga was farther from the urban core when compared to La Ventilla; however, this did not diminish its economic and ritual significance. Its location allowed for the concentration of workshops in a less policed area, where households could engage in craft production at a smaller scale while still being a part of the city's economic and political system. The district consisted of three or four continuous neighborhoods composed of tightly packed apartment compounds, platform structures along the western side of the Street of the Dead, and open-air plazas that likely served multiple purposes, like marketplaces or for public announcements (Carballo 2015:91). The proximity of households to workshops allowed for a consistent, large-scale production of obsidian blades, while integrating domestic life with craft and ceremonial practices. Microartifact studies and bioarchaeological analyses indicate that these residential areas were more than just living spaces. They also acted as centers for craft knowledge, skill training, and oversight of production (Widmer 1991; Sheehy 1992).

The layout of Tlajinga aims to address the challenges of urban nucleation. Through contracting labor, materials, and housing in a set area, the city can manage population density, ensure a steady rate of production, and maintain social order. At the same time, this layout reinforces hierarchical structures. Access to higher-quality obsidian, skilled workers, and

specialized tools was controlled, often found in households involved with elite or regional trade networks. Craft production was fused into both the social and economic fabric of the district, linking local household-level activity to broader urban and regional trade systems (Arnauld, Manzanilla, & Smith, 2012; Carballo, 2016).

The spatial organization of Tlajinga's compounds also reveals how social hierarchy was actively produced. Households that engaged in production for the elite or larger redistribution networks often lived in more architecturally complex spaces, while families with less access to materials or specialized skills lived in areas adjacent to workshops. Open plazas within the district likely served as a bridge between household production and citywide exchange, facilitating the movement of goods and hosting ceremonial events that reinforced social ties and identity.

Lastly, the peripheral location of Tlajinga shows how urban planning, production, and social hierarchy were closely intertwined. Despite being farther from the city's central authority, the district maintained strong economic and ritual significance, contributing to Teotihuacan's overall economic stability and regional influence. The integration of craft production into domestic spaces, combined with the strategic placement of workshops and plazas, allowed Tlajinga to function as both a social and economic axis, ensuring local activity supported the broader citywide and interregional networks.

**Consumption**

Obsidian at Teotihuacan was not important for tool production, but it was deeply ingrained in the daily and ritual life of households. Inside residential apartment compounds, it was regularly used to produce knives, scrapers, construction tools, and crafting (Aoyama 2014; Spence 1981). These domestic workshops often combined living spaces with craft production, further blurring the boundary between household and economic production. Smaller workshops

like those in Tlajinga 33 demonstrate that households could serve as both production centers and sites of craft knowledge transmission, ensuring that consumption and skill development were closely intertwined (Widmer & Storey 2012; Hirth 2009). By rooting obsidian production into domestic spaces, residents structured their everyday activities around both labor and consumption, making the material central to household economies.

Beyond practical usage, obsidian served symbolic and ritual functions. Green Pachuca obsidian was a marker of social hierarchy and political authority, though it may not have been strictly rare (Aoyama 2014; Carballo 2016). Obsidian frequently appears in ritual deposits, ancestor bundles, and grave contexts, showing the importance of cosmological thought (Saunders 2001; Parry 2014; Carballo 2007). Objects such as eccentrics, bipointed knives, and ceremonial blades were produced for ritual use rather than domestic tasks. The consumption of obsidian operated on a practical, social, and symbolic level. (Parry 2014; Saunders 2001).

Looking into how obsidian was used across the landscape reveals a lot about differences in social status. Some compounds clearly had access to a higher quality of obsidian or more specialized tools, as a way to present their own social status, take part in rituals, or signal the identity of a household or community (Aoyama 2014; Manzanilla 2009). Obsidian is a tool that pierced itself into everyday life, ritual, and public life, helping people express relationships, uphold traditions, and stay connected to the city's larger economic and political networks. Observing how Teotihuacanos consumed obsidian gives us a window into the complex mix of work, family life, ritual, and social hierarchy that shaped the city.

**Regional Exchange and Interregional Networks**

Beyond Teotihuacan itself, obsidian linked the city to an extensive web of regional and interregional interactions. The metropolis's access to Pachuca and Otumba obsidian sources

allowed it to shape trade patterns across Central Mexico, reaching outlying communities, neighboring valleys, and even the Maya region (García-Des Lauriers & Murakami 2021; Aoyama 2014). This movement of material was not merely about supplying tools; it carried symbolic, political, and social weight. High-quality green obsidian served as a marker of elite status, often appearing as gifts to reinforce alliances, demonstrating how material exchange functioned as a means of influence beyond the city itself (Levine 2014; Saunders 2001).

The structuring of these networks reflects strategic planning and adaptive flexibility. At the same time, certain types of obsidian were likely controlled by elite actors. Others circulated widely, which supported everyday craft production, Local consumption, and neighborhood-level specialization (Manzanilla 2017; Spence 1981). The simultaneous circulation, which was both restricted and open, aided in the maintenance of social hierarchies while simultaneously sustaining the city's broader economy. The regularity and scale in which obsidian moved also indicate that Teagan and households and workshops were plugged into Coordinated Networks of procurement, production, and distribution that connected urban life to distant regions (Hirth 2009; Widmer & Storey 2012). By controlling which households, neighborhoods, or allied communities received specific materials, elites could subtly regulate power, signal allegiance, and embed social norms within both local and regional networks. In this way, the city’s economic infrastructure reinforced its social and political structures simultaneously.

**Discussion: The Implications of Obsidian Production**

Michael Mann’s IEMP model is a useful framework that helps analyze how power operates on multiple, overlapping domains rather than through a single centralised force. IEMP refers to Ideological, Economic, Military, and Political sources of power. Each of these powers works independently while also reinforcing the others ( Mann 1986). This approach allows

material evidence to be connected to broader social development without having to assume that power was solely contained within the elite ruling class. In Teotihuacan, obsidian offers the ideal lens in which to view these dynamics of power, as they were connected via everyday labor, household organization, ritual practice, and regional exchange.

The ideological power of Teotihuacan is evident in the obsidian's symbolic and ritual importance. Green Pachuca obsidian, used in knives, eccentrics, and ceremonial blades, held cosmological importance (Aoyama 2014; Carballo 2016). These artifacts appear in ancestor bundles, graves, and ritual deposits (Saunders 2001; Parry 2014; Carballo 2007), demonstrating how obsidian reinforced community values and religious beliefs.

Economic power was rooted in the organization of labor and the integration of households into the broader systems of production and exchange. Obsidian was acquired in large quantities, but its production was not confined to everyday labor, household organization, ritual practice, and regional exchange. Rather, archaeological evidence shows that production and tool manufacturing were frequently planted within apartment compounds, where domestic life and craftsmanship converge (Spence 1981; Hirth 2009). This spatial arrangement suggests that influence operated through coordination and specialization rather than strict elite monopolization.

By situating obsidian production in a residential context, Teotihuacanos created an economy where households worked as productive units. Smaller workshops, such as those carried out at Tlajinga 33, demonstrate how obsidian production could be carried out at the local level while still participating in citywide and regional trade networks. These households were not isolated, but were economically interdependent as they relied on access to raw materials, knowledge of craftsmanship, and trade relationships to survive. In this sense, power came about from participation within the market, then from ownership of resources alone.

Importantly, this organization allowed for economic differentiation without complete exclusion. While access to higher-quality obsidian or specialized tools varied across compounds, most households appear to have participated in some aspect of production or consumption. Economic hierarchy existed along a spectrum, structured through levels of access, skill, and connectivity rather than through highly stratified class divisions. This aligns with models that emphasize neighborhood autonomy and collective economic organization over centralized redistribution (Manzanilla 2009; Nichols 2016).

The circulation of obsidian beyond the household context further reveals how economic power and influence were distributed across the landscape and multiple societal levels. Obsidian flowed not only within local neighborhoods and apartment compounds, but also through coordinated trade networks linking the city to distant regions well beyond the Basin of Mexico. Local markets facilitated the movement of utilitarian tools, while neighborhood-level exchanges allowed households to maintain connections with neighboring compounds, reinforcing social cohesion and economic interdependence. At the regional level, long-distance trade brought in high-quality Pachuca obsidian, integrating Teotihuacan into broader Mesoamerican exchange networks (Hirth 2009; Nichols 2016). This layered system shows that economic organization was neither entirely centralized nor completely decentralized, but functioned through a dynamic combination of market exchange, household specialization, and selective institutional oversight.

Mixing production with residential space, while connecting households to wider trade networks, created economic interdependence across the city. Households that specialized in production depended on skilled labor, raw materials, and channels of distribution. Consumers and traders relied on these producers for a constant supply of tools, ceremonial objects, and other goodies. The obsidian reinforced social ties between neighborhoods. Elites likely exercised some

influence over points of exchange. For example, there is clear access to Pachuca obsidian or participation in long-distance trade, but the evidence does not support absolute elite control over all circulation. Instead, power was exercised through regulation, access, and coordination, allowing the state to benefit from obsidian exchange without fully monopolizing it.

This economic structure contributed to Teotihuacan's remarkable size and resilience. The integration of domestic life, production, and exchange supported a densely populated city while creating a mechanism of coordination across communities and regions. Yet this interdependence also introduced new vulnerabilities: disruptions to trade routes, neighborhood production, or the flow of high-quality materials could ripple across the urban system, affecting both economic stability and social cohesion. If a key source of obsidian was temporarily inaccessible, workshops relying on that material would slow production, impacting both local and regional exchanges. The potential fragmentation of this network highlights the delicate balance between control and interdependence, as the city's economic networks are both a strength and a point of weakness.

The circulation of obsidian shows the relationship between economic and political powers. Through the regulation of access to resources and overseeing their movements, the elite enforced their power while allowing households to participate in production and trade. Economic power was exercised through coordination, rather than violent dominance, demonstrating a complex, collaborative approach to urban organization that supported Teotihuacan's political and social systems.

The interplay between economic and political power at Teotihuacan also highlights how obsidian functioned as a medium through which houses were fused into broader networks of authority. By controlling the centers of high-quality raw materials like Pachuca obsidian, elites could indirectly shape production patterns, incentivize compliance with citywide labor

expectations, and maintain oversight of traditional routes without needing to micromanage every single household. In this sense, power was exercised through coordination, regulation, and selective influence, rather than through coercive domination by itself. Obsidian thus acted as both a practical and symbolic marker of participation within the urban economy, linking production with political oversight in ways that reinforce social hierarchy, while still allowing for flexibility and autonomy for each household.

At the neighborhood level, apartment compounds function as a semi-autonomous point of production, training, and transmission. Households not only manufactured the obsidian tools but also passed down the techniques and specialized in the knowledge needed, creating a web of skill and labor that extended across the city. The systemic distribution of expertise strengthened Teotihuacan's economic resilience, as a disruption in one compound could be mitigated by the production in another. It also reinforced ideological and social cohesion, as participating in this craft production both carries practical and Ritual Importance. This repeated engagement with obsidian, through production, consumption, and trade, helped integrate households into the collective, resulting in a hierarchy that was materially enacted, socially recognized, and ideologically backed.

Long-distance trade networks took these dynamics away from the city and connected Teotihuacan to regional exchange networks, such as the Maya lowlands, mainly involving the movement of Pachuca green obsidian (Spence 1996). At first, these exchanges were only interpreted in economic terms, as the flow of materials had a deep impact on regional economies; further examinations of these artifacts suggest the use of obsidian was more symbolic than economic. While these items were indeed produced as commodities in Teotihuacan's workshops, they transformed into gifts during their journey to the Maya area, serving as a testament to the alliance between two Mesoamerican powerhouses. Teotihuacan’s

influence also extended into Oaxaca and the Gulf Coast, where Pachuca obsidian appears in elite burials, suggesting it functioned as both currency and diplomatic gift (Koszkul, Helmke, & Źrałka 2006; García-Des Lauriers & Murakami 2021). This dual role of obsidian, as an economic resource and ideological symbol, showcases how power was performed on multiple levels, through the households that produced and managed their resources locally, elites coordinating access and long-distance distribution, and the receiving party that interprets these interactions in their own ritual and political frameworks.

Viewing these processes through Mann's IEMP model, we can observe that Teotihuacan's power was not solely acquired through dominance or cohesion, but through the designed interconnectedness of labor, trade, and ritual practice. Economic power was enacted through planned coordination, craft specialization, and regulation over complete control, while ideological power was in the very resources that moved along the landscape. Political power operated through the oversight of key sources and networks, and military power, though less directly visible in obsidian outside of the creation of weaponry, provided a constant need for that network. Together, these domains of power created a complex, adaptive system that was capable of supporting a diverse population while pushing its influence across distant regions.

At the same time, this interdependence had risks. Disruptions to trade, workshops, or access to obsidian can spiral quickly, exposing possible cracks in Teotihuacan's apparent stability. Said vulnerabilities may have contributed to the city's eventual fragmentation, as economic networks fractured, ritualized regional exchanges slowed, and political oversight deteriorated. The study of obsidian not only reveals the mechanisms of hierarchy and control but also provides insight into the structural pressures that shaped the city's decline.

**Conclusion**

Obsidian production and circulation at Teotihuacan exhibit how material culture can

reflect and produce social hierarchy. Household-level craft production, neighborhood organization, and citywide trade networks demonstrate that power was distributed, coordinated, and interdependent, rather than being held by one sole authoritative entity. The symbolic and ritual significance of Obsidian reinforces ideological power, linking labor to cosmology, while elites use their political influence through regulating access and maintaining oversight of trade networks. Long-distance exchange further pushes these dynamics, blending economic and ideological purposes to reinforce alliance and perpetuate social cohesion. Through fusing economic, political, and ideological power in daily life, Teotihuacan created a resilient, flexible urban system. The very same mechanisms that supported its expansion, interconnected households, semi-autonomous neighborhoods, and laid-out trade networks also introduced potential weak points, offering a different perspective on the city's eventual decline. Using Mann's IEMP model, obsidian comes about not just as a raw material but as a proxy through which power was enacted, negotiated, and held. The study of obsidian provides insight into the ways complex societies organize labor, space, distribute resources, and integrate religious thought, economy, and politics into enduring social structures.

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# Excavations at Scabe I, Xunantunich, Belize

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**Abstract:**

*How did the ancient Maya create, maintain, and re-create sacred places across centuries of occupation, abandonment, and revival? In summer 2024, excavations were conducted at the terminus of Sacbe I at Group D, Xunantunich, Belize, as part of the Mopan Valley Preclassic Project. Group D was a hilltop ritual locale during the Preclassic and Late Classic periods, connected to the Classic period site core by a sacbe(causeway). Because why structures are built reflects social conditions and perceived needs for socially constructed spaces, the terminus of Sacbe I is an ideal place to examine how movement, architecture, and social memory shaped Xunantunich's ritual landscape. This paper therefore asks when Sacbe I was built at Group D and how the causeway connected the group to a broader ritual landscape. This work aims to inform wider discussions of ritual processions, resource procurement, and labor energetics at ancient Maya sites.*

## Introduction

Xunantunich, Belize (Figure 1), has a dynamic social history, including a long history of ritual practices from the Preclassic to the Postclassic periods in the Maya lowlands. The broader site of Xunantunich has two ceremonial centers, one dating to the Classic Period (AD 250 – 800) and one dating to the Preclassic Period (1000 BC – AD 250), referred to as Early Xunantunich (Brown et al., 2016). In the summer of 2024, I focused my research on a hilltop group, Group D, that was an important ritual locale during both the Preclassic and Late Classic periods. This group was accessed by a *sacbe,* an ancient Maya road or causeway (Figure 1).

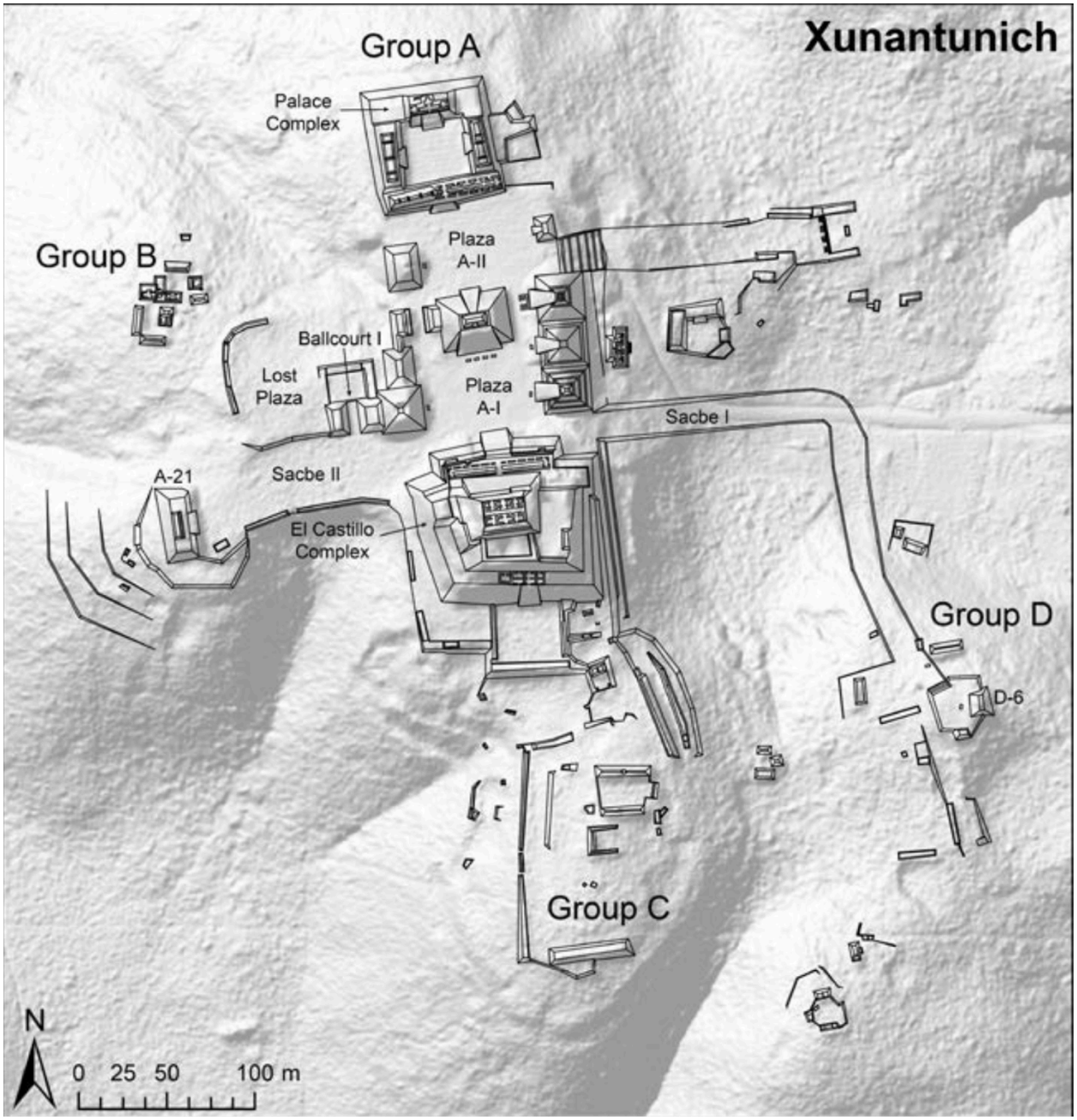



**Figure 1. "Site core of Classic period Xunantunich (created by the Mopan Valley Preclassic Project)" in Cap et al. (2023, p. 54).**

**Research Questions**

Question 1: What is the construction history of Sacbe I?

I address this question through excavations on Sacbe I and comparing my data with previous excavation data combined with previous excavations on Sacbe I.

Question 2: What evidence demonstrates a connection between Group D and Sacbe I that indicates that this group was part of a broader ritual landscape?

I addressed this question by examining my excavation data in addition to previous excavation data from Group D and Sacbe I, primarily from research conducted by Whitney Lytle (2020), Angela Keller (2006), and Jennifer Braswell (1998). I also compare my data with other interpretations of ritual landscapes of Xunantunich and of other sites in the Maya lowlands.

*Sacbe I terminus at Group D*

Group D (Figure 2) served as an eastern shrine group in the Late Classic (Braswell 1998; Lytle 2020) and is attached to the Plaza A (Late Classic site core) by Sacbe I. Group D is also axially aligned with Early Xunantunich, a Preclassic ceremonial center located 800 m to the east. Evidence suggests that Group D served as a western hilltop shrine during the Preclassic (Brown and Yaeger 2020; Lytle 2020). Located southeast of the Late Classic site core, Group D became part of the broader ritual landscape of Classic Xunantunich. As the group was utilized as a ritual destination in the Preclassic and the Classic occupations of Xunantunich, understanding the pathways to Group D is an important contribution to the understanding of the Xunantunich and ancient Maya ritual at large. As Sacbe I connects Classic Xunantunich's ritual center (Plaza A-1) to Group D, it is likely it served a ritual procession purpose, as previously theorized by Angela Keller (2006).

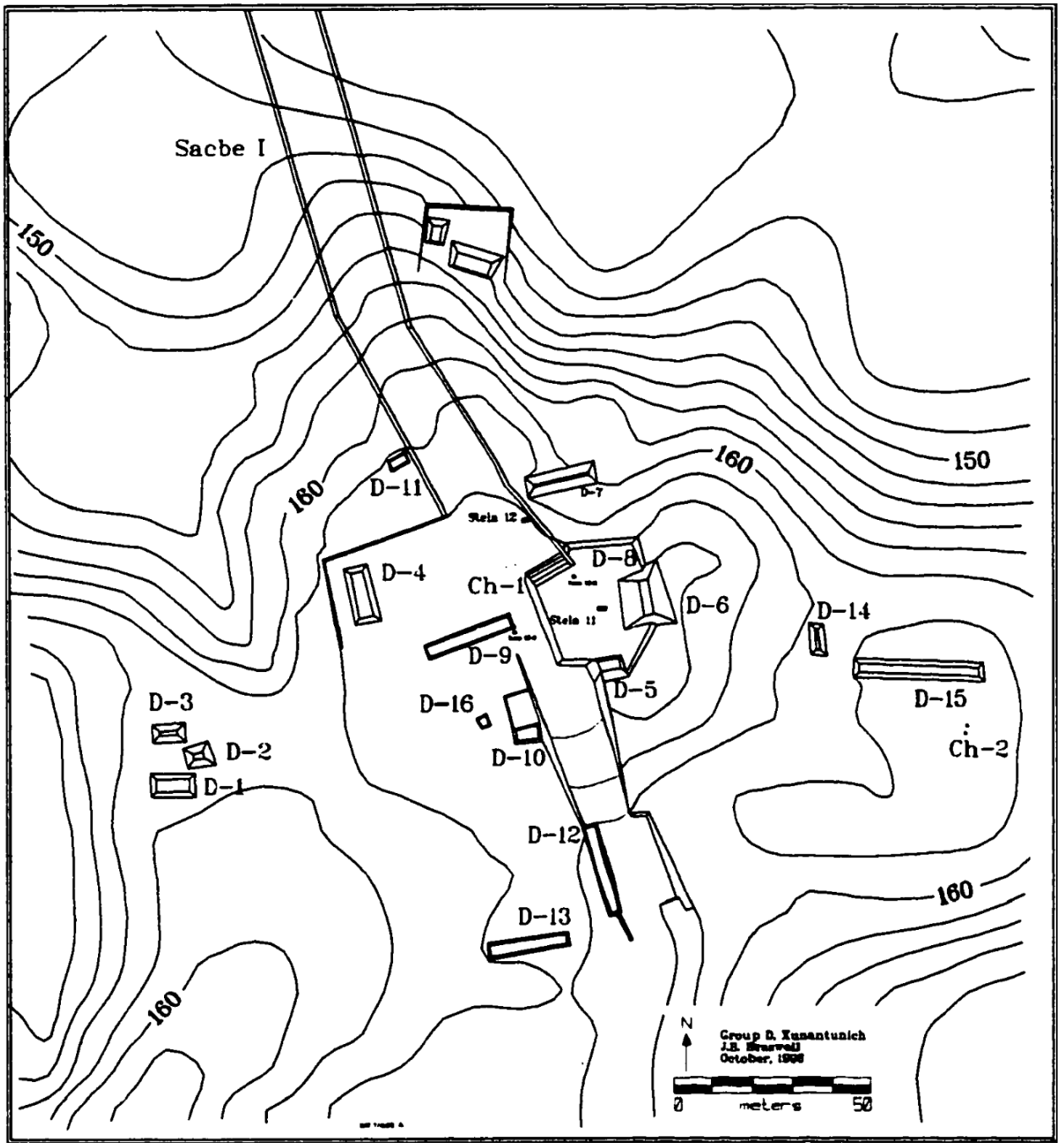



**Figure 2. "Map of Group D, Xunantunich, Belize" in Braswell (1998, p. 398)**

**Background**

Archaeological evidence reveals that Group D was likely a communal western hilltop shrine during the Late Preclassic and associated with Early Xunantunich because of the area's west/east axial alignment to the early ceremonial center and E Group complex (Brown and Yaeger 2020; Lytle, 2020, p. 82). Excavations at Group D revealed that the group's Preclassic platform may have served as part of a ritual procession circuit that centered on Early Xunantunich and included different social groups, while its Late Classic iteration may have been explicitly used by the site's elite (Lytle 2020).

Evidence demonstrates that both Preclassic Group D and Early Xunantunich were abandoned towards the end of the Late Preclassic, and while the ceremonial architecture of Early Xunantunich was not reoccupied during the Late Classic period, Group D was revived as a ritual space and expanded into a larger architectural group (Keller 2006; Lytle 2020).

Jennifer Braswell's doctoral research as part of the Xunantunich Archaeological Project (XAP) posited that Group D was an elite residential plaza whose residents specialized in luxury good making, as evidenced by the presence of chert drill-like tools within some of the group's households (1998; 2010). Braswell also suggested that Group D was an elite household group based on the presence of elaborate masonry buildings, ceramic evidence (defined as domestic ceramics: water jars, bowls, plates, dishes, and vases), the group's connection to Plaza A-I via Sacbe I, the group's eastern pyramidal shrine (D-6), and the presence of uncarved stelae in front of D-6 (Stela 11) and at the terminus of Sacbe I (Stela 12) (1998, p. 193).

Braswell argued the group's residents were craft producers based on "substantial" slate production debris and chert carving tools, coupled with the absence of ceramics in the non-residential structures (2010, pp. 166-167). She determined the assemblages were indicative of small-scale workshops that produced stone tools, especially drills-on-blades (2010, p. 171).

She argued these tools were used to manufacture slate objects, as reflected by the presence of small slate fragments. She bolstered this interpretation by comparing the Group D assemblage with chert tools at other Mesoamerican sites and modern metal tools used by modern slate carvers in Succotz, the contemporary town where Xunantunich is located (Braswell 2010, pp. 174-176). More recent work by the Mopan Valley Preclassic Project (MVPP) suggests the drill-like tools were likely not utilized in crafting but rather were used for food processing activities (Chapman 2013; Devio 2016). This updated interpretation is based on two MA theses that included experimental archaeology, use-wear analysis, and starch grain analysis from a subset of tools from Group D and at Early Xunantunich. It is important to note that while Braswell argued that Group D was a residential group, she distinguished Structure D-8 (central, elevated platform of the Late Classic group) as a public ritual space (Braswell, 1998, p. 280).

Xunantunich's causeways connect the site center's plazas (A-I and A-II) to the surrounding architectural groups. Angela Keller's (2006) investigations demonstrate that Classic Xunantunich's causeways (Sacbe I, Sacbe II, Northeast Causeway) were constructed based on cosmological, political, and practical circumstances like topography and existing structures (2006, pp. 187, 190). All three causeways were built during the Late Classic Haats' Chaak phase (AD 670-780) in a single construction phase and were built using the same construction materials (Keller 2010). Her investigations also provide evidence of Sacbe I's ritual significance. Keller excavated areas of Sacbe I at its Plaza A terminus and at the elbow of the path where it changes from an east-west heading to a north-south one that directs the walkway toward Group D (2006, pp. 297-298). Her investigations recovered remnants of musical instruments and possible ritual regalia, demonstrating the ritual procession purpose of Sacbe I (Keller, 2006, pp. 542, 564). Processions were intrasite demonstrations that were "extremely communal and highly

structured, orchestrated events" that required a group to conduct (Keller 2006, p. 160). Intrasite causeways such as those at Xunantunich are the primary spaces where processions were enacted (Keller 2006).

Later research by Whitney Lytle (2020) as part of MVPP indicated that the dominant features of Group D were not residential and that the group was likely not an elite residential group like Braswell had previously argued (1998; 2010). Rather, Lytle suggested that the architectural group served as a ritual locale and a sacred place for specialized ancestor veneration. Lytle targeted her excavations on Structures D-8 and D-6 to better understand the occupation history of the dominant architectural features of the group. Buried within D-8, Lytle found a small Preclassic platform with thousands of large angular Late Preclassic ceramic sherds (2020:115-116). Lytle suggested the platform was a space where offerings were periodically brought or was a location of ritual feasting (2020, p. 179). Her investigations also show that Preclassic Group D was part of Early Xunantunich's larger ritual landscape that centered around an E Group architectural assemblage, a hilltop ritual site east of the Classic site core (Lytle 2020, pp. 76-77).

Late Classic burials and ritual caches are also present at D-6. The multitude of eccentric chert artifacts recovered from these Late Classic deposits is intriguing because these artifacts are often associated with cosmological themes, deities, and ancestors (Lytle 2020, p. 219). Because of the unusual finds in the excavated burials, Lytle proposed that Late Classic Group D was a place of "community ancestor" veneration and specialized ritual ceremonies, likely restricted to elite ritual practitioners (Lytle 2020, pp. 248-249). She argued the individuals laid to rest at Group D were not associated with claims of ancestral rights to resources or to lay claim to land

tenure and were interred “in a space that connects the community to the past through the social memory of a historically significant location” (Lyte 2020, p. 249).

During the Late Classic revival, Group D’s Preclassic platform was covered by a raised platform (Structure D-8) during the Hats’ Chaak phase and served as a courtyard space for Structures D-5 and D-6 (Lytle 2020). Structure D-6 was later constructed on the raised platform (Lytle 2020). D-8 is directly connected to Sacbe I by a four-step staircase on its northern face (Lytle 2020, p. 182). Based on the collected data, Lytle concluded that Group D was not an elite household group like Braswell (1998) proposed but rather served as a sacred place for ancestor veneration. The caches and burials she found in D-6 included goods that were not typical for Late Classic and Terminal Classic elites from a residential context (Lytle 2020).

Group D has a long history of ritual significance at Xunantunich that transcended a period of possible abandonment during the Early Classic (Keller 2010). Based on the Late Classic revitalization and expansion of the space, the ritual significance of Group D in the Preclassic was still recognized some hundred years after the hilltop shrine was abandoned. It is important to note that the Late Classic platform was constructed on top of the Preclassic platform, indicating the Late Classic ritual users understood the pre-established ritual significance of the locale. Late Classic Group D’s connection to Plaza A through Sacbe I suggests that this was an important ritual destination likely due to its long history (Cap et al., 2020).

## Investigations

### *Sacbe I*

To understand the relationship between social landscape and movement, I investigated Sacbe I’s terminus at Group D during the 2024 Mopan Valley Preclassic Project field season. Investigations along the terminus of Sacbe I at Group D and the surrounding area were

designated as a continuation of Operation 29. A total of nine suboperations, Operation 29c - 29k, were excavated. The goal of the 2024 continuation of Operation 29 was to establish when Sacbe I was constructed at Group D and to identify any potential ritual materials related to *sacbe* procession. Unit sizes varied based on the needs of the research, including a 1x2 meter unit (Suboperation 29f), 2x2 meter units (Suboperations c, d, e, g, h, i, and 3x1 meter units (Suboperations j, k). My initial goal was to locate ceremonial refuse, such as broken instruments (e.g., flutes and drums), that would have been destroyed at the end of a ceremonial procession. However, no instruments were found during this season's excavations. We uncovered the causeway's eastern parapet and its exterior (eastern) and interior (western) facing walls (Figure 3). The remains of the interior wall indicate it was constructed with cut and shaped limestone blocks. Along the sides of the interior wall, we uncovered two fragments of poorly preserved plaster floor surface that date to the Late Classic. The *sacbe* surface excavations show that the plaster surface was heavily eroded, with only spotty evidence of the ballast layer beneath it. The exterior wall was much better preserved and consisted of crudely shaped stones of varying sizes (Figure 4). The parapet is approximately 1.5 meters wide, the interior wall approximately 5 meters tall, and the exterior wall was approximately 1 meter high from the bedrock surface it was directly placed on at the Group D terminus. This construction data is consistent with Angela Keller's excavations of Sacbe I (2006). The exposed parapet construction fill consisted of dry-laid rubble, and our excavations uncovered numerous eroded ceramic sherds and two medial fragments of obsidian blades. Few lithics were recovered from within the fill of the parapet or on the surface of the *sacbe*.



*Figure 3*. Sacbe I eastern parapet, inner/western wall (left), outer/eastern wall (right).



*Figure 4*. Sacbe I eastern parapet, outer/eastern parapet wall.

Most of the ceramics recovered from the *sacbe* investigations were eroded body sherds, although a few diagnostic sherds indicated the presence of Mount Maloney Black bowl fragments and several identifiable sherds of Belize Red types. Both ceramic types were used in the Late Classic Period and were both prominent in Xunantunich's archaeological record (LeCount et al. 2002). Preliminary analysis of the ceramics also identified the presence of several Savana Orange Ware sherds (dating to the Middle Preclassic) within the parapet fill.

*Limestone Quarry*

Located to the east of the exterior wall of Sacbe I, our investigations revealed a limestone quarry that extends east between Structures D-7 and D-8. Our preliminary investigations suggest that this quarry was abandoned before its resources were exhausted because of the presence of soft limestone patches across the quarry that would have made these areas unusable in construction. There are also multiple unfinished cuts in the bedrock that indicate the quarry was abandoned mid-use. Finished cuts in the quarry suggest that residents were locally sourcing materials likely for Group D's construction, and possibly the construction of Sacbe I. Several quarry cuts are the same size as the masonry stones on the Sacbe I interior wall and the same size blocks as seen in the exposed architecture of Structure D-7. The quarry extends beneath the exterior parapet wall, thus predating the building of the *sacbe* at least in this area. Due to time constraints, we had to terminate excavations on the quarry. Future work at this location is planned for the 2026 field season. Based on Jennifer Braswell's excavations in Group D (1998), I expect the boundaries of the quarry (in part) are under her backfill at Structure D-7 and under backfill from the MVPP 2022 field season. Though Braswell excavated a trench from Structure D-7 to the platform on a north-south heading, she did not remark on the presence of modified

bedrock in this area. She stated there is a quarry along the southwest boundary of D-8, but her discussions on both areas are limited (Braswell 1998).

Most of the ceramics recovered in the quarry area were too eroded to identify. Since the quarry is located on a slope, it is likely that ceramic material had washed into the area from Structures D-7 and/or D-8 over time. Preliminary analysis of the ceramics identified a small number of diagnostic sherds dating to the Late Classic period. Lithic flakes were also recovered in the quarry area, but no formal tools were recovered.

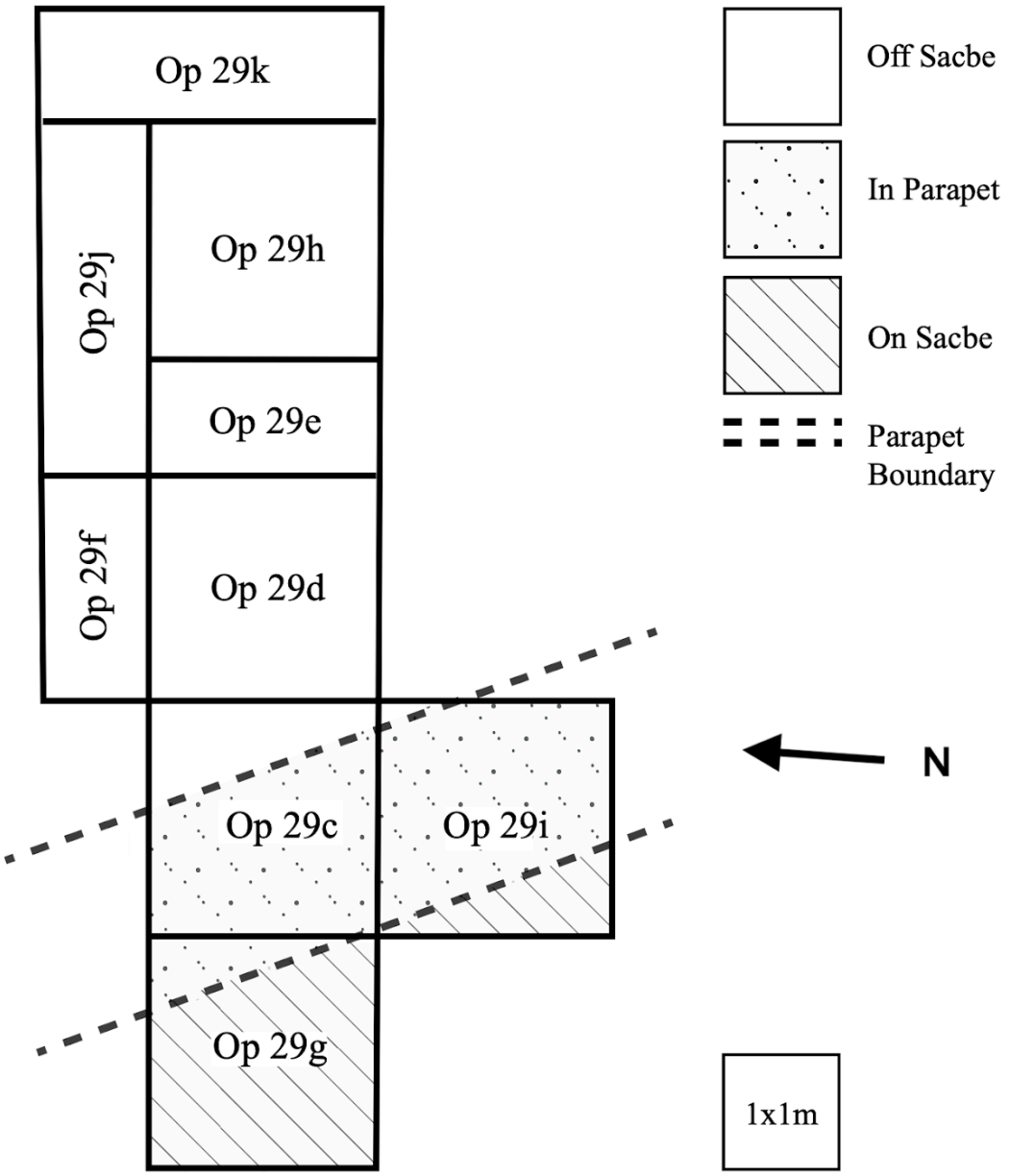



*Figure 5*. MVPP 2024 field season, Operation 29 excavation map

| Suboperations | Dimensions and Sub-Datums | Lot Depths (bottom) | Lot Contexts | Types of Artifacts Recovered |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Op 29c** | All Lots<br>2m x 2m<br><br>Sub-datum 2024-3 (21.5 cm)<br>Sub-datum 2024-8 (44 cm) | *Op 29c-1 (2024 #3)*<br>NW: 66 cm<br>NE: 47 cm<br>SE: 38.5 cm<br>SW: 33 cm<br>Center: 57 cm<br>*Op 29c-2 – Op 29c-3 (2024 #3)*<br>Ending elevations were not recorded on W. Lytle's forms<br>*Op 29c-4 (2024 #8)*<br>NW: 42 cm<br>NE: 41 cm<br>SE: 32 cm<br>SW: 42 cm<br>Center: 48 cm | *Op 29c-1*<br>Humus layer above Sacbe I south of Operation 29b (MVPP 2022), mostly roots, some rubble, and heavily eroded ceramic inclusions<br>*Op29c-2 – Op 20c-3*<br>Construction fill of Sacbe I parapet, mostly cobbles, some heavily eroded ceramics, outer/eastern facing wall of parapet revealed<br>*Op29c-4*<br>Construction fill of Sacbe I parapet, construction fill with high cobble density with ceramics and limited lithic inclusions, outer/eastern facing wall brought down to bedrock, revealing roughly cut stone, modified bedrock located off *sacbe* (eastern edge), modification extended east of unit | *Op 29c-1*<br>Ceramics<br>*Op 29c-2 – Op 20c-3*<br>Ceramics<br>*Op 29c-4*<br>Ceramics, lithics, cobble fill |
| **Op 29d** | All Lots<br>2m x 2m<br><br>Sub-datum 2024-3 (21.5 cm) | *Op 29d-1*<br>NW: 55 cm<br>NE: 52 cm<br>SE: 31 cm<br>SW: 34 cm<br>Center: 47 cm<br>*Op 29d-2*<br>NW: 72 cm | *Op 29d-1*<br>Humus layer east of Sacbe I/Operation 29c, mostly roots in this layer, some heavily eroded ceramics<br>*Op 29d-2* | *Op 29d-1 – Op 20d-3*<br>Ceramics<br>*Op 29d-2*<br>Ceramics, lithics, obsidian blade fragment |

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| | | NE: 66 cm<br>SE: 65 cm<br>SW: 66 cm<br>Center: 66 cm<br>*Op 29d-2*<br>NW: 103 cm<br>NE: 87 cm<br>SE: 75 cm<br>SW: 68 cm<br>Center: 88 cm | Modified bedrock in western portion of unit, not brought down fully to bedrock because of change in matrix color, heavily eroded ceramics, some lithics, and a medial obsidian blade fragment mixed into the sediment<br>*Op 29d-3*<br>Modified bedrock with possible marl features (later determined to be naturally occurring soft limestone inclusions), modified features extend east and north of the unit | *Op 29d-3*<br>Ceramics, lithics |
| **Op 29e** | All Lots<br>1m x 2m<br><br>Sub-datum 2024-6 (19 cm) | *Op 29e-1*<br>NW: 75 cm<br>NE: 71 cm<br>SE: 44 cm<br>SW: 45 cm<br>Center: 65 cm<br>*Op 29e-2*<br>NW: 88 cm<br>NE: 81 cm<br>SE: 77 cm<br>SW: 58 cm<br>Center: 75 cm | *Op 29e-1*<br>Humus layer east of Operation 29d, mostly roots, some heavily eroded ceramics and lithics<br>*Op 29e-2*<br>Modified bedrock fully exposed, lithics and heavily eroded ceramics at level with the bedrock, modified features extend east and north of the unit | *Op 29e-1*<br>Ceramics, lithics<br>*Op 20e-2*<br>Ceramics, lithics |
| **Op 29f** | All Lots<br>3m x 1m<br><br>Sub-datum 2024-6 (19 cm) | *Op 29f-1*<br>NW: 81 cm<br>NE: 85 cm<br>SE: 76 cm<br>SW: 94 cm<br>Center: 83 cm<br>*Op 29f-2*<br>NW: 120 cm<br>NE: 134 cm<br>SE: 120 cm | *Op 29f-1*<br>Humus layer north of Operation 29d, some roots, possible marl fragments and an unmodified slate fragment (possibly washed into the area from either Structure D-7 or the raised | *Op 29f-1*<br>Unmodified slate, possible marl fragments<br>*Op 29f-2*<br>Ceramics, lithics |

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| | | SW: 116 cm<br>Center: 105 cm | platform, Structure D-8)<br>*Op 20f-2*<br>Modified bedrock fully exposed, heavily eroded ceramics and lithics all the way to bedrock, modifications extend east and north of unit. | |
| **Op 29g** | All Lots<br>2m x 2m<br><br>Sub-datum 2024-8 (44 cm) | *Op 29g-1*<br>NW: 83 cm<br>NE: 71 cm<br>SE: 55 cm<br>SW: 73 cm<br>Center: 68 cm<br>*Op 29g-2*<br>NW: 104 cm<br>NE: 79 cm<br>SE: 99 cm<br>SW: 79 cm<br>Center: 102 cm | *Op 29g-1*<br>Humus layer of Sacbe I and parapet west of Operation 29c, mostly roots and some rubble or cobble inclusions, possible ghost wall of inner/western facing parapet wall<br>*Op 20g-2*<br>On Sacbe I: cobble inclusions, poorly preserved paved surface of *sacbe* walkway with intact ballast beneath the paved surface, possible ballast in areas where walkway had completely eroded<br>In parapet: ghost wall of inner/western facing parapet wall confirmed | *Op 29g-1*<br>Ceramics, lithics, possible ballast<br>*Op 29g-2*<br>Ceramics, lithics, possible ballast |
| **Op 29h** | All Lots<br>2m x 2m<br><br>Sub-Datum 2024-6 (19 cm) | *Op 29h-1*<br>NW: 72 cm<br>NE: 69 cm<br>SE: 50 cm<br>SW: 47 cm<br>Center: 56 cm<br>*Op 29h-2*<br>NW: 80 cm<br>NE: 86 cm<br>SE: 76 cm | *Op 29h-1*<br>Humus layer east of Operation 29e, some roots, heavily eroded ceramics and a possible lithic flake<br>*Op 20h-2*<br>Modified bedrock fully exposed, heavily eroded ceramics down | *Op 29h-1*<br>Ceramics, possible lithic flake<br>*Op 29h-2*<br>Ceramics |

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| | | SW: 84 cm<br>Center: 80 cm | to bedrock, modifications extend north, east, and south of unit | |
| **Op 29i** | *Op 29i-1*<br>2m x 2m<br><br>*Op 29i-2*<br>.5m x 2m<br><br>*Op 29i-3*, *5*<br>.5m x 1.5m<br><br>*Op 29i-4*, *6*<br>2m x 1m<br><br>Sub-datum 2024-10 (21 cm) | *Op 29i-1*<br>NW: 50 cm<br>NE: 53 cm<br>SE: 39 cm<br>SW: 47 cm<br>Center: 39 cm<br>*Op 29i-2 (off sacbe)*<br>NW: 84 cm<br>NE: 84 cm<br>SE: 43 cm<br>SW: 47 cm<br>Center: 47 cm<br>*Op 29i-3 (in parapet)*<br>NW: 61 cm<br>NE: 55 cm<br>SE: 39 cm<br>SW: 38 cm<br>Center 48 cm<br>*Op 29i-4 (on sacbe)*<br>NW: 67 cm<br>NE: none<br>SE: 58 cm<br>SW: 54 cm<br>Center: 65 cm<br>*Op 29i-5 (in parapet)*<br>NW: 72 cm<br>NE: 56 cm<br>SE: 42 cm<br>SW: 41 cm<br>Center: 54 cm<br>*Op 29i-6 (on sacbe)*<br>NW: 73 cm<br>NE: none<br>SE: 64 cm<br>SW: 83 cm<br>Center: 85 cm | *Op 29i-1*<br>Humus layer of Sacbe I and parapet south of Operation 29c, lots of roots and rubble inclusions, some lithics heavily eroded ceramics, a medial obsidian blade fragment mixed into the sediment, parapet boundaries uncovered<br>*Op 29i-2*<br>Lot brought down only to the top of the parapet fill for photogrammetry purposes, and down to bedrock outside the outer/eastern wall of the parapet. Heavily eroded ceramics and a medial obsidian blade fragment mixed with cobbles found in parapet, heavily eroded ceramics found off the parapet. Modified bedrock exposed off parapet extending east and south of the unit's boundaries<br>*Op 29i-3*<br>Lot brought down only to top of parapet fill for photogrammetry purposes, inner/western facing wall of parapet exposed, heavily eroded ceramics mixed in sediment with cobbles | *Op 29i-1*<br>Ceramics, obsidian blade fragments, lithics<br>*Op 29i-2*<br>Ceramics and obsidian blade fragment<br>*Op 29i-3*<br>Ceramics<br>*Op 29i-4*<br>Ceramics, lithics<br>*Op 29i-5*<br>Ceramics, lithics, cobble fill<br>*Op 29i-6*<br>Ceramics, lithics, unmodified slate fragments |

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| | | | *Op 29i-4*<br>Heavily eroded ceramics and lithics mixed with roots, rubble, and possible ballast inclusions, unit not brought down to bedrock/walkway surface yet<br>*Op 29i-5*<br>Leveled parapet fill excavation with exposed fill in Op29c for photogrammetry purposes, lithics and heavily eroded ceramics mixed with cobble fill<br>*Op 29i-6*<br>Ghost wall revealed, poorly preserved paved surface of Sacbe I revealed, plaster is adjacent to the inner/western facing wall of the parapet and does not extend under the wall, modified bedrock beneath the *sacbe* surface uncovered and extends northwest of unit, modification extends under the preserved plaster, cobble and possible ballast inclusions, heavily eroded ceramics, lithics, and three unmodified slate fragments | |
| **Op 29j** | All Lots<br>3m x 1m | *Op 29j-1*<br>NW: 88 cm<br>NE: 91 cm | *Op 29j-1*<br>Humus layer north of Operation 29h and | *Op 29j-1* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sub-datum 2024-6 (19 cm) | SE: 79 cm<br>SW: 83 cm<br>Center: 85 cm<br>*Op 29j-2*<br>NW: 120 cm<br>NE: 92 cm<br>SE: 79 cm<br>SW: 91 cm<br>Center: 100 cm | Operation 29e, some roots and high number of lithics, some heavily eroded ceramics and jute shells<br>*Op 29j-2*<br>Limited lithics and two obsidian blade fragments, heavily eroded ceramics mixed in sediment and limestone rubble, modified bedrock that extends north and east of unit. | Ceramics, lithics, jute shells<br>*Op29 j-2*<br>Ceramics, obsidian blade fragments, lithics |
| **Op 29k** | All Lots<br>1m x 3m<br><br>Sub-datum 2024-6 (19 cm) | *Op 29k-1*<br>NW: 93 cm<br>NE: 97 cm<br>SE:53 cm<br>SW: 57 cm<br>Center: 63 cm<br>*Op 29k-2*<br>NW: 97 cm<br>NE: 97 cm<br>SE: 71 cm<br>SW: 79 cm<br>Center: 78 cm | *Op 29k-1*<br>Humus layer east of Operation 29h and Operation 29j, some roots with heavily eroded ceramics, lithics, and two jute shells mixed with the sediment<br>*Op 29k-2*<br>Heavily eroded ceramics, medial fragment of obsidian blade, no lithics closer to bedrock or at bedrock level, modified bedrock with several extremely deep/incomplete cuts, modifications extend north and east of the unit | *Op 29k-1*<br>Ceramics, lithics, jute shells<br>*Op 29k-2*<br>Ceramics, obsidian blade fragment |

*Table 1*. MVPP Operation 29 2024 lot details

*Operation 29c*

The goal of Operation 29c was to locate the eastern wall of Sacbe I, to orient the rest of the excavations as being on *sacbe*, in parapet, and off *sacbe*. This suboperation was a 2 meter x 2

meter unit, oriented slightly off a north-south heading to follow the path of Sacbe I. This suboperation totaled four lots. Measurements for Lots 1-3 were taken using Sub-datum 2024-3. Due to unstable field conditions, Sub-datum 2024-3 was replaced by Sub-datum 2024-8 for Lot 4 measurements. Sub-datum 2024-8 was established at a different elevation. Due to sudden illness, excavation of Lots 3 and 4 was supervised by Dr. Lytle. Artifacts found in Operation 29c included ceramics and lithics.

The majority of the suboperation was in Sacbe I's parapet fill, and part of the eastern-facing wall of the parapet was exposed. The portion outside the parapet was brought down to bedrock while the parapet was left intact for photogrammetry purposes. We quickly encountered the remains of Sacbe I's parapet after excavating through the humus layer, exposing the construction fill of mostly cobbles between the parapet walls. Part of the eastern, outer-facing parapet wall was exposed at the same level as the parapet fill.

*Operation 29d*

The goal of Operation 29d was to expose the area east of the exposed parapet in Operation 29c. Operation 29d was excavated by Dr. Lytle. This suboperation was a 2 meter x 2 meter unit. All measurements for this suboperation were taken using Sub-datum 2024-3. The maximum depth reached was 103 centimeters below Sub-datum 2024-3 and approximately 81.5 centimeters below the surface. The humus of Operation 29d (Lot 29d-1) was light brown (Munsell 7.5 YR 5/2). The second stratigraphic layer was not described in the fill notes, but was a construction fill layer. The final stratigraphic layer was a dark greyish brown (Munsell 10 YR 4/2) in color and terminated at bedrock.

Operation 29d exposed modified bedrock adjacent to the eastern, outward-facing parapet wall and soft eroded limestone on top of the bedrock. Initially, this eroded bedrock was thought to be a white marl layer, a material often used in construction, but excavation revealed that it was

modified bedrock. This modification continued beyond the unit's eastern boundary. Artifacts found in Operation 29d included ceramics, lithics, and a medial fragment of an obsidian blade. Full analysis of artifacts is planned for the future.

*Operation 29e*

The goal of Operation 29e was to extend Operation 29d eastward and to continue exposing the modified bedrock. This suboperation was a 2 meter x 1 meter unit. The excavation and data recording of Operation 29e were assisted by Dr. Whitney Lytle. All measurements were taken using Sub-datum 2024-6. The maximum depth reached was 88 centimeters below Sub-datum 2024-6 and approximately 69 centimeters below the surface. The humus of Operation 29e was very dark gray-brown (Munsell 10 YR 3/2). The matrix was a consistent very dark gray-brown (Munsell 10 YR 3/2) down to the bedrock and was not the same texture as fill found within the sacbe or parapet features. At level with the bedrock, the matrix color changed to a lighter brown (Munsell 7.5 YR 5/2) due to eroded limestone. Additional bedrock modifications were exposed and appeared to continue north and east of the unit. Artifacts found in Operation 29e included ceramics and lithics. The number of artifacts recovered was less compared to Operation 29c (on *sacbe*) and Operation 20d (directly off *sacbe*).

*Operation 29f*

The goal of Operation 29f was to extend Operation 29d northward and to continue exposing the modified bedrock. This suboperation was a 1 meter x 2 meter unit. Operation 29f was excavated by Dr. Lytle. All measurements were taken using Sub-datum 2024-6. The maximum depth reached was 134 centimeters below Sub-datum 2024-6 and approximately 115 centimeters below the surface. The humus of Operation 29f was very dark gray-brown (Munsell 10 YR 3/2) and similar in texture to the lots discussed above in Operation 29e. The matrix was a consistent very dark gray-brown (Munsell 10 YR 3/2) down to the bedrock. At level with the

bedrock, the matrix color changed to a lighter brown (Munsell 7.5 YR 5/2) due to the eroded bedrock that had intermixed with the sediment. Additional bedrock modifications were revealed, and combined with the uncovered bedrock of other units, we were able to hypothesize the modified bedrock was a limestone quarry. Additional soft limestone deposits on top of the bedrock were exposed. Artifacts found in Operation 29f include ceramics, lithics, an unmodified slate fragment in the surface layer, and possible marl fragments.

*Operation 29g*

The goal of Operation 29g was to gather more data related to the chronology of Sacbe I. This suboperation was a 2 meter x 2 meter unit. All measurements were taken using Sub-datum 2024-8. The maximum depth reached was 104 centimeters below Sub-datum 2024-8 and approximately 60 centimeters below the surface. The humus layer was a very dark grayish brown (Munsell 10 YR 3/2). The second stratigraphic layer was brown (Munsell 7.5 YR 4/2) and consisted of (describe the fill here). The final stratigraphic layer was pinkish gray (Munsell 7.5 YR 6/2) in color and terminated at bedrock. Rubble and smaller stones (possible ballast) appeared in all layers.

Operation 29g exposed part of a cut stone of the western, inner wall of the parapet, and poorly preserved plaster floor of the *sacbe* surface. A ballast layer was partially intact beneath the plaster. The construction style of the *sacbe* surface was consistent with other segments of Sacbe I excavated by Angela Keller (2006). Artifacts found in Operation 29g included ceramics and lithics.

*Operation 29h*

The goal of Operation 29h was to continue exposing modified bedrock/quarry east of Sacbe I and to potentially locate tools for shaping limestone blocks and ceramics that might help us better understand the chronology of the quarry. This suboperation was a 2 meter x 2 meter

unit. All measurements were taken using Sub-datum 2024-6. The maximum depth reached was 86 centimeters below Sub-datum 2024-6 and approximately 67 centimeters below the surface. The humus layer was black/very dark brown (Munsell 7.5 YR 2.5/1) and contained much organic material. The matrix color was consistent down to the bedrock, where the matrix changed to a lighter brown color (Munsell 7.5 YR 5/2).

Operation 29h revealed incomplete cuts in the limestone bedrock and, in conjunction with the soft limestone layer (eroded bedrock), indicates that the quarry was potentially abandoned before it was depleted because the bedrock in this area was likely too soft to serve as building stone. The cuts in the bedrock where blocks had been removed were consistent with the shape of cut stones on the inner wall of Sacbe I's parapet and cut stones in other buildings in Group D. Artifacts found in Operation 29h included ceramics and lithics, including a chert flake.

*Operation 29i*

The goal of Operation 29i was to expose the western, inner-face wall of the parapet and determine if the inner wall was a later addition to Sacbe I, therefore making the double-walled parapet style a later addition to an already constructed and used Sacbe I. Operation 29i lots were separated based on being in the parapet, on the *sacbe*, or off *sacbe*. The in-parapet portion of the unit was only excavated to the top of the cobbled layer of the construction fill for photogrammetry purposes. On and off *sacbe* lots were excavated to bedrock or plaster (when present).

The suboperation was a 2 meter x 2 meter unit. All measurements were taken using Sub-datum 2024-10. The maximum depth reached in the parapet was 72 centimeters below Sub-datum 2024-10 and approximately 51 centimeters below the surface. The maximum depth reached on *sacbe* was 104 centimeters below Sub-datum 2024-10 and approximately 83 centimeters below the surface. The maximum depth reached off *sacbe* was 84 centimeters below

Sub-datum 2024-10 and approximately 63 centimeters below the surface. The humus layer was a dark brown/black (Munsell 7.5 YR 2.5/1). The second matrix layer was dark brown (Munsell 7.5 YR 3/2). The matrix color was consistent down to bedrock when it changed to a lighter brown (Munsell 7.5 YR 5/2) on the on *sacbe* side, and a dark grayish brown (Munsell 10 YR 4/2) on the off *sacbe* side. The off-*sacbe* matrix color is consistent with matrix color variation in other off-*sacbe* suboperations.

The on-*sacbe* portion of Operation 29i reached 104 centimeters below Sub-datum 2024-10 because there appears to be modified bedrock beneath the *sacbe* surface. The modification extended northwest into an unexcavated space. This modified bedrock also extended beneath a portion of poorly preserved plaster uncovered in the unit. Additional cut stones of the inner wall of the parapet were exposed, and their sizes are consistent with the cut stone uncovered in Operation 29g. Cobble and possible ballast inclusions were present throughout the on-*sacbe* excavations. Artifacts recovered in the parapet included ceramics and lithics. Artifacts recovered on *sacbe* included ceramics, lithics, and three unmodified slate fragments. Artifacts recovered off the *sacbe* included ceramics and one medial obsidian blade fragment.

Based on the construction and dating of other parts of Sacbe I (Keller 2006), the construction type of Sacbe I at Group D indicates this segment was contemporaneous with other segments of Sacbe I in the Late Classic period. Construction does not indicate the inner facing wall was added later because the remaining plaster and ballast layers do not extend into the parapet.

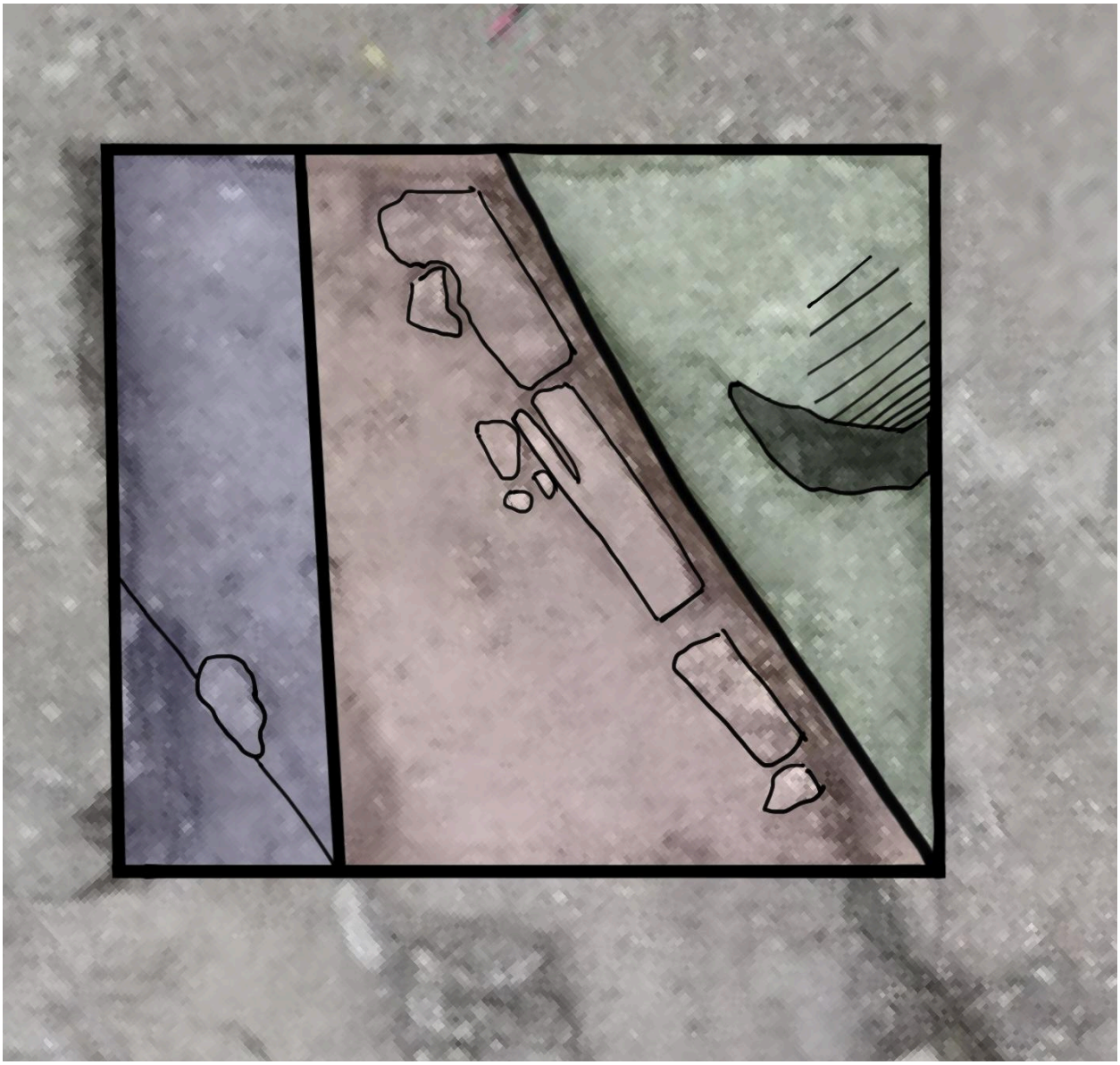


*Figure 6*. Operation 29i lot breakdown. Blue area: Op 29i-2. Red area: Op 29i-3, Op 29i-5. Green area: Op 29i-4, Op 29i-6.

*Operation 29j*

The goal of Operation 29j was to look for tools to help date the feature. Our theory was that if tools remained on the quarry, they may be towards the northern end of the feature because

of rainfall washing artifacts downhill to the north. The sub-operation was a 3 meter x 1 meter unit.

All measurements were taken using Sub-datum 2024-6. The maximum depth reached 120 centimeters below Sub-datum 2024-6 and approximately 101 centimeters below the surface. The humus layer was a very dark gray (Munsell 7.5 YR 3/1). The matrix color was a consistent dark brown (Munsell 7.5 YR 3/2) down to the bedrock. At bedrock level, the matrix lightened to a lighter brown color (Munsell 7.5 YR 5/2).

Artifacts recovered include lithics, ceramics, obsidian blade fragments, and four jute shell fragments. Operation 29j revealed many tertiary lithic chert flakes in the humus layer. Lithics continued into the matrix and down to bedrock at a lower frequency. No tools were recovered. The suboperation also revealed additional complete and incomplete cuts in the bedrock, further supporting the theory that the quarry was abandoned before it was fully depleted.

*Operation 29k*

The goal of Operation 29k was to look for tools to help date the quarry feature. Like with Operation 29j, our theory was that if tools remained in the quarry, they may be towards the northern end of the feature because of rainfall washing artifacts downhill to the north. This sub-operation was a 3 meter x 1 meter unit. We were unable to extend the season's excavations further north because most of Operation 29's backfill was blocking the area.

All measurements were taken using Sub-datum 2024-6. The maximum depth reached 97 centimeters below Sub-datum 2024-6 and approximately 78 centimeters below the surface. The humus layer was a dark brown (Munsell 7.5 YR 3/2). The matrix color was a consistent pinkish gray (Munsell 7.5 YR 6/2) down to the bedrock. At bedrock level, the matrix changed to a brown color (Munsell 7.5 YR 5/2). Artifacts recovered include ceramics, lithics, jute shells, and one medial obsidian blade fragment.

Operation 29k recovered fewer lithics than Operation 29j, even though the two suboperations are adjacent in the east-west heading and their northern boundaries are aligned. No tools were recovered. The suboperation also revealed additional incomplete cuts in the bedrock, further supporting the theory that the quarry was abandoned before it was fully depleted.

*Operation 29b Partial Reopening*

The eastern boundary of Operation 29b, initially excavated in 2022 by UT San Antonio graduate Marcos Reynoso, was exposed at the beginning of the excavation season to help align the 2024 Operation 29 suboperations. No artifact recovery was done because the excavated material was backfill. The exposed boundary revealed part of the eastern parapet wall and potentially modified bedrock that continues under the parapet. This feature indicates that the quarry is potentially older than Sacbe I. Operation 29b was not reopened to investigate the exposed modified bedrock.

*Summary of Excavations*

Excavations of Sacbe I reveal that the Group D terminus is contemporaneous with other segments of the causeway: Late Classic period, Samal and Hats' Chaak phases. The double wall parapet is consistent with excavations on Sacbe I conducted by Angela Keller (2006) along the east-west segment and on the elbow of the causeway's path. Keller also recovered a number of ceramics from excavations in the east, west, and southern areas of Xunantunich, including Sacbe I. Her ceramic finds also support the dating of Sacbe I to the Late Classic period. Identified ceramics that Keller recovered in Late Classic contexts are consistent with the identifiable ceramic types of Mount Maloney Black and Belize Red from my excavations (Keller, 2006, pp. 424, 442-443). While the ceramic data from my excavations is limited due to the overall poor preservation of the assemblage, the consistency between the 2024 excavations and Keller's excavations supports the dating of Sacbe I's terminus at Group D. Ceramic analysis conducted

by Lisa LeCount, Jason Yaeger, Richard Leventhal, and Wendy Ashmore (2002) also supports this dating. They also recovered the previously mentioned ceramic types from LeCount's ceramic analysis of the finds from the 1991-1997 Xunantunich Archaeological Project (XAP) excavations (LeCount et al., 2002, p. 47). The authors' analysis showed that the previously mentioned ceramic types were present throughout Xunantunich's Late Classic occupation.

Based on the modified bedrock shown in Operations 29d – 29f, 29h, 29j – 29k, we have identified this area as a limestone quarry based on the shapes of the modified bedrock and the bedrock type. There are multiple features in the bedrock that demonstrate finished and unfinished cuts. In addition to the incomplete cuts, soft limestone deposits on the bedrock indicate the quarry was abandoned. Complete cuts match limestone blocks used in the construction of Sacbe I (Figure 7) and Structure D-7 (Figure 8).

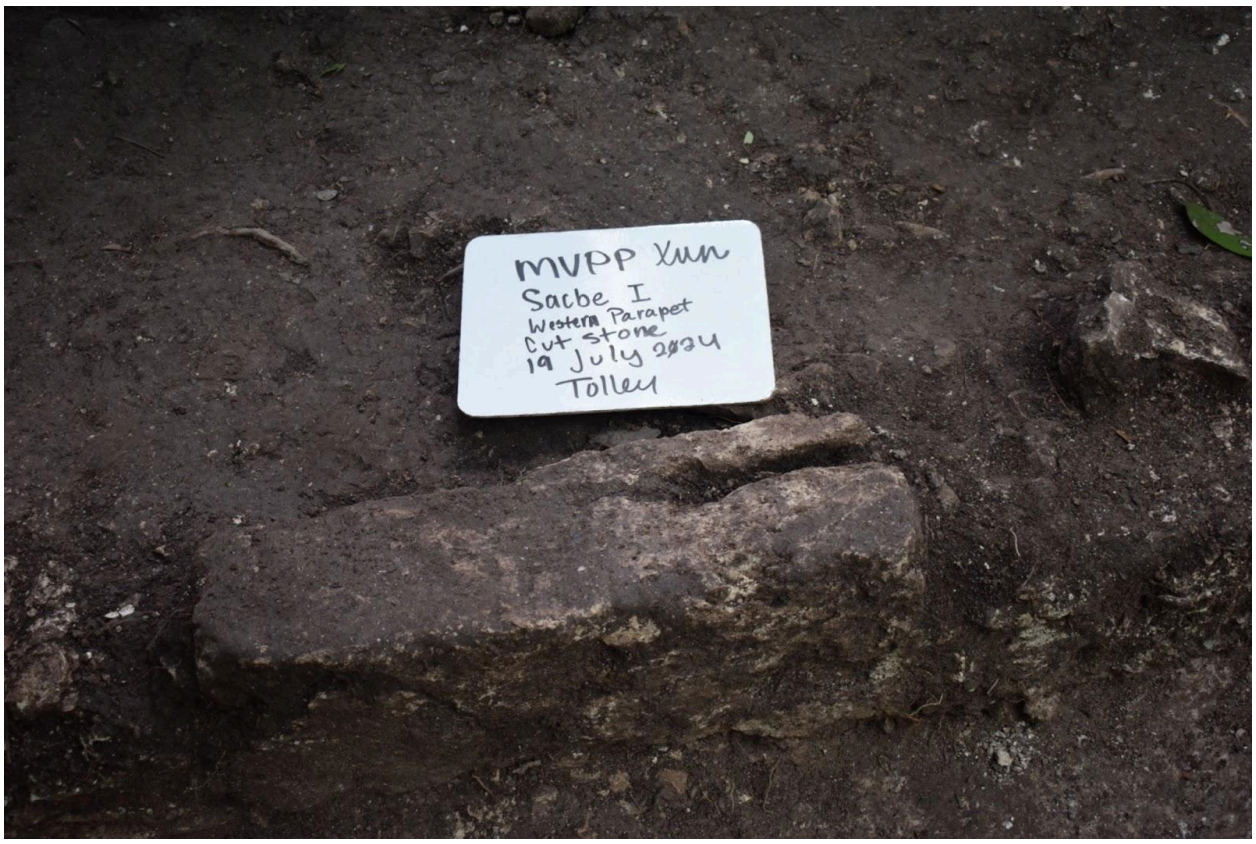



*Figure 7*. Cut limestone, part of the western parapet's inner/eastern wall of Sacbe I, Operation 29.




*Figure 8*. Cut limestone blocks in Structure D-7, Operation 30.

Excavations of the limestone quarry did not yield any tools, which limits our ability to date the feature at this time. Future excavations may reveal tools or other artifacts that date the feature. Operation 29 excavations of this feature reveal conflicting evidence for dating. There is evidence that the quarry potentially dates before the Late Classic period, as a portion of the modified bedrock extends beneath the adjacent eastern parapet wall. Additional excavations on

the parapet and Sacbe I would be needed to verify this theory. Lithic flakes recovered in the quarry confirm that tool use occurred in the feature. A sample of the recovered lithics across the different suboperations was identified in the field laboratory as tertiary flakes by Dr. Rachel Horowitz. The finished cuts in the bedrock correspond with the cut limestone in Group D's architecture and on the inner facing wall of Sacbe I's parapet. This correlation indicates the quarry might have been used for local construction during the Late Classic.

### *Artifact Analysis*

Basic artifact analysis was conducted on ceramic sherds from each excavated unit and lot. Of the total 1,789 ceramics recovered during the 2024 excavation season, 37 sherds were identified as Belize Red (19), Savana Orange (10), or Mount Maloney Black (7). Most recovered sherds were too heavily eroded to properly identify. While the artifact data is minimal, the identified sherds align with the ceramic dating of previous excavations at Group D and the overall Classic Xunantunich area.

#### *Sacbe I*

The majority of the ceramic sherds recovered on the sacbe and in the parapet were too eroded to be properly identified. The presence of Mount Maloney Black and Belize Red ceramic types corresponds with previous research that determined Classic Xunantunich was occupied in the Late Classic II and Late Classic III. These ceramic types are both prominent in Xunantunich's archaeological record (LeCount et al., 2002). Minimal Savana Orange ware is also present in the parapet fill, indicating a possible repurposing of Preclassic ceramics in constructing Sacbe I.

#### *Limestone Quarry*

The majority of ceramic sherds recovered in the quarry area were too eroded to properly identify. Because the quarry is situated between D-7 and the Late Classic platform (D-8), I

believe it is possible the ceramic data collected from the quarry may have been washed into the area from D-7 and/or the platform (D-8) over time. Identifiable sherds from the quarry correspond with the identifiable ceramics on Sacbe I and its parapet.

## Discussion, Conclusions, and Future Directions of Research

### *Discussion and Conclusion*

The 2024 excavations demonstrate the need to assess how and why structures are built within Group D and how the understanding of construction contributes to wider discussions of ancient social landscapes. Why structures are built is indicative of social conditions and perceived needs for socially constructed spaces. Previous excavations demonstrate the ritual purpose of Group D and the continued understanding of the locale's ritual significance. The connection between Group D and Plaza A via Sacbe I further illustrates the locale's ritual significance.

While the findings of the 2024 excavation season yield many questions, they demonstrate the possible local use of materials to construct Group D's structures and Sacbe I's parapets. Sacbe I's terminus at Group D demonstrates that the southern portions of the causeway were likely built contemporaneously with its northern counterparts, based on construction style uncovered in earlier research (Keller, 2006). Because excavations of Sacbe I were taken down to bedrock, there is no evidence of a Preclassic formal pathway on the eastern edge of the causeway's Group D terminus.

The limestone quarry was an unexpected discovery. The initial aim of excavating outside Sacbe I was to investigate the possibility of ritual-related refuse to further support dating of the terminus and how the connection of Sacbe I and Group D creates a ritual landscape. It is possible that ritual refuse exists outside of Sacbe I, either closer to D-8 or further north on its pathway, or on the other side of the sacbe (unexcavated). It is also possible that rain over time washed away

these items, as the recovered ceramic evidence and state of the eastern parapet's inner facing wall demonstrate poor preservation conditions. The quarry itself raises questions about construction at Group D, which relates to discussions of the social landscape of Group D and wider Xunantunich by demonstrating the perceived need to create and/or recreate ritual space.

Through this special project, I gained significant knowledge in both archaeological excavation and laboratory methods, as well as knowledge of Maya *sacbe* and quarries. I gained an understanding of how *sacbeob* and quarries were constructed and utilized by the ancient Maya, which has led to questions regarding the implications of a quarry being located near a ceremonial architectural group at Xunantunich. This experience has sparked my interest in pursuing a Ph.D. focused on exploring the methods by which Xunantunich's population procured building materials for their structures, and how these materials were transported, both through formal infrastructure and informal routes, across the site.

*Future Directions of Research*

Beginning in the 2026 MVPP field season, as part of my dissertation research, I aim to continue excavating the limestone quarry uncovered during the 2024 excavation season. The purpose of this excavation will be to expose the possible continuation under Sacbe I and determine the quarry's boundaries. This will inform us about the dating of the quarry based on it possibly continuing under the Late Classic structures. The continued excavations may also reveal tools used in the quarry – key evidence in dating the feature. I also plan to reopen the quarry excavated by Braswell (1998) to determine if the feature is a quarry, whether it was depleted of resources or abandoned like the limestone quarry uncovered in 2024, and the dating of the feature. By dating the two quarries in Group D, I will determine if they were utilized to construct local structures in Group D and investigate the labor energetics involved in employing these

resources. This data will provide information on ancient construction and the required labor and energetic costs.

I also aim to address questions of how Group D's ritual significance transcended from Xunantunich's Preclassic occupants to its Late Classic occupants. The limestone quarry potentially extends beneath the Late Classic causeway (Sacbe I), raising questions about the time frame the quarry was utilized. The dating of this feature and the possible quarry excavated by Braswell relates to the social landscape of Group D and wider Xunantunich, because the features demonstrate moments of expansion and can provide evidence about the materials builders utilized in the construction of Group D: local materials, a combination of local and imported materials, or solely imported materials. I also plan to research architectural energetics to investigate the efforts Xunantunich's residents were willing to expend to create and recreate a ritual space. This expenditure will reflect on the hierarchical dynamics that undoubtedly played a part in the Late Classic revitalization of Group D. Because Group D is also connected to Plaza A via Sacbe I, analysis of the energetics of movement and construction will expand on how Group D's ritual significance was bolstered by efforts to modify and reuse a Preclassic space in the Late Classic. Investigating the energetics of a complex social landscape will help us make sense of Group D's history and revitalization, as well as other places at Xunantunich and other ancient Maya sites

I hope to utilize GIS least-cost pathways to assess possible movements of quarry materials within Group D and wider Xunantunich. Understanding the physical pathways used to build Group D's structures is important within the context of Xunantunich's social landscape because it demonstrates the energy costs of Group D's construction and other structures at Xunantunich (Preclassic and/or Late Classic). Assessing the cultural landscape of Xunantunich

and archaeological energetics will contribute to larger discussions about the acquisition and movement of resources across the landscape and the creation of social spaces. My research at Group D will contribute to larger discussions in these areas. My investigations will connect to questions of the construction of other areas at Xunantunich to further understand the reoccupation of this site and reoccupation at other ancient Maya sites.

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# CA XŌCHIHUA IN OQUICHTLI

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**Abstract:**

*When looking at the understanding of gender and sexual identity, a key way in which we can get to these questions is through language and how it is used. For this paper, I look at the understanding and connection of gender and sexuality for early post-Conquest Nahua through linguistic analysis, primarily focusing on gender expression through key linguistic features and the ties those have on expressed sexual identity. Starting with brief notes on Nahuatl and material manifestations of gender in pre-Hispanic ceramics as a base, I explore how terms for "men" and "women" are expressed and defined before focusing on the phonetic and grammatical ways women and men were differentiated. I then tie these briefly into understandings of Xochihua and what it meant, at the time, to be Nahua.*

**Suchioa**: In suchioa cioatlatole, cioanotzale…
— Florentine Codex, Book 10, Folio 25r

*The pervert: The pervert speaks as a woman, of womanly discourse.*

**Patlache**: In patlache: ca tlahelcioatl… oquichnacaio, ôoquichtlaque, ôoquichtlatoa, oquichnenemi.
— Florentine Codex, Book 10, Folio 40v

*The hermaphrodite: The hermaphrodite is a dirty woman, of men's flesh and blood, of man's body, of man's speech, of man's living*

## 1. Introduction

The imposition of the Colonial system in New Spain had irreversible effects on the conceptualization of gender and sexuality in the Indigenous lands of Mesoamerica. This is not just due to the introduction of European thoughts and ontologies, but also – and importantly here – the Spanish language and Christianity through the Catholic Church that both acted as extensions of not just the materiality of Colonialism that was present in New Spain, but the cultural conquests that followed and indeed their spiritual heart. As inherently foreign entities to the people of Mesoamerica, and throughout this paper specifically the Nāhua, how language, religion, and state are tied intimately in the efforts of Conquest and Colonization cannot be overstated. They form the basis for the deconstruction and reanalysis, as a whole, of Indigenous cosmologies and understandings of the world, of which gender and sexuality form a significant part.

There are a few reasons for this, which, while I won't be going into as much as I could, I do recommend looking into the *encomienda* system, the *repartimiento* system, and the *New Laws* (of 1542). There are plenty of other systems brought to the Americas implemented by the Conquests and important people involved in them, but I want to focus my attention specifically on the linguistic aspects as seen through Nāhuatl. Nāhuatl, the language of the Nāhua people to

this day, the language of the Aztec Empire, and a Lingua Franca (and co-official language) of New Spain, offers invaluable insight into how gender and sexuality are conceptualized by the Indigenous peoples of the central Valley of Mexico, as much today as in the early Colonial period, which is my focus throughout this paper. There are two methods through which I will aim to understand this connection: the features of the Nāhuatl language itself, grammar-wise through morphology and syntax, and then the use and meaning of language through semantics and pragmatics.

**2. Disclaimers**

*Before continuing*, a few disclaimers. While I am focusing on the early post-Conquest period and the Classical Nāhuatl stage of the language (NCI), that does not mean Nāhuatl is not used today as the native language of certain Nahua peoples. Indigeneity and language can be tricky subjects in Mexico, whether that be through the analysis of languages as "dialects" or "languages" (as is common with Nāhuatl), or the connection between Indigeneity and language use. This last point boils down to a very important question concerning Indigeneity: is language knowledge essential to being Indigenous? Language is important to identity and forms *a* cornerstone of culture, but is not *the* keystone – if we limit Indigeneity to containing a certain knowledge of the Indigenous language of the people, are we excluding Indigenous peoples who have had no choice but to lose their language? The history of Colonialism and the Conquest is a messy one, and while I have no immediate connections to the issue as my family has been Hispanicized for *generations* and even more recently anglicized, I felt it was important to bring up as I seek to talk about Indigeneity and Indigenous languages. *En bref*: the Nahua people are still here, but not all of them speak Nāhuatl.

Another note before going into the linguistic analyses: as I mentioned, the Colonial period and imposition of the new Colonial system in New Spain fundamentally changed the nature

surrounding how gender and sexuality were and are today understood. This leads me to the point that the sources we have are, without doubt, fundamentally influenced by the Catholic Church and the new Colonial system in Mexico. While archaeology can be used to understand the materiality of gender and sexuality, especially pre-Conquest (which I discuss briefly), when looking at language and linguistic embodiment of identity, ceramics can only do so much. The linguistic sources that we *do* have that amply aid us in the discussion of these ideas are from after the founding of New Spain and, as such, need to be understood as such. Yes, they greatly help us in understanding language, gender, and sexuality, but there is bias that we need to take a critical look at so as to not fall into the trappings of replicating a Colonial understanding that is at odds with the lived experiences of the Nahua post-Conquest. Not impossible by any stretch of the imagination, but there has to be a variety of sources used and a mental note that, when looking at post-Conquest sources, nothing should be taken strictly at *face value*.

**3. Brief Grammatical Notes**

An essential element of the Nāhuatl language that speakers of Indo-European languages might not get right away if that each "word," in of itself, contains within itself what J. Richard Andrews calls the *nuclear clause*, which can serve as "(1) as a complete simple sentence; (2) as either a main or a dependent clause in a complex sentence; or (3) as a conjoined clause in a compound sentence" (Andrews 45). Andrews gets into this quite a bit, but to demonstrate it as simply as I can, let's take the following example: **Xōchitl** [ˈʃoːtʃɪtɬ]. **Xōchitl** can further be broken down into two parts: **-xōchi-** (the stem), and **-tl** (the absolutive suffix). The "dictionary form" of **xōchitl** can be understood as "flower," but should be better understood as "they.sg (are) [a/the] flower" *or* "they.pl (are) [the] flowers." For my own ease of understanding Classical Nāhuatl, I translate it simply as **xōchitl** *(3sg/flower)* or *(3pl/flower)* depending on the context. This example also highlights another essential point in Classical Nāhuatl: the lack of gender on the whole in

Classical Nāhuatl. Going into gender and sexuality, this will be important to keep in mind – take for example the following two sentences, both taken from James Lockhart's *Nahuatl as Written*:

| tehuatl | ni-mo-macehual |
|---|---|
| **2SG.PRON** | **1SG.SBJT-2SG.POSS/NML-subject** |
| | *I am* your *subject* |

| amo | ∅-qual-li | ∅-tlaca-tl | amo | ∅-nech-palehuia |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **not** | **3SG.SBJT-good-ABS** | **3SG.SBJT-person-ABS** | **not** | **3SG.SBJT-1SG.OBJ/V-help** |
| | | *[He] is not a good person, [he] does not help me* | | |

In neither of these sentences is any person inherently gendered as an aspect of the language as would happen in Spanish. The masculine inference of the second sentence is due to the context of it, not due to any feature of what is being said itself. This holds true for a lot of Classical Nahuatl, but there are gendered terms for certain nouns as we will get into, alongside differences in the *cultural* uses of terms that do not inherently have gender.

**4. Brief Archaeological Notes on Gender**

Now, before further delving into the language of gender and sexuality for the Nahua in post-Conquest Mexico, I want to take a brief look at pre-Conquest Mexica ceramics as, while more of an indicator of pre-Colonial Mexica gender dynamics, they still reflect the general outlines of some Nahua (specifically the Valley of Mexico) gender dynamics that are seen to this day.

**TABLE 1** ***Distribution of Action or Occupation in Mexica Ceramics by Gender and Culture***

| ACTION / OCCUPATION | GENDER | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Man** | **Woman** | **Unknown** |
| *Warrior* | **7** | – | – |
| *Religious Impersonation* | **5** | – | – |
| *Musician* | **4** | – | – |
| *Adolescent* | **2** | – | – |
| *Old* | **2** | – | – |
| *Priest* | **1** | – | – |
| *Load Bearer* | **1** | – | – |
| *Royal/aligned* | **1** | – | – |
| *Commoner* | **1** | – | – |
| *Sick/Deformed* | **1** | – | – |
| *Dead* | **1** | – | **1** |
| *With Children* | – | **3** | – |
| *In Bed* | – | **2** | **1** |
| *Religious Devotion* | – | **1** | **1** |
| *Cooking* | – | **1** | – |
| *With Animals* | – | **1** | – |
| *With Nature* | – | **1** | – |
| *Hearth/aligned* | – | **1** | – |
| *Autosacrifice* | – | – | **2** |

For my methodology, I went through the digital collection for the Mexica for Mexico's *Museo Nacional de Antropología* (MNA), its *National Museum of Anthropology*. I mainly looked at ceramics noticeably concerning gender, and then organized them according to the action they were doing and by the associated gender, discounting from **TABLE 1** deities and unknown actions.

Looking at the table, there are two prevalent things that we can see right off the bat: 1). men are much more prevalent in ceramics than women, and 2). there is a distinct difference in the manners of how women are depicted versus how men are depicted. While I don't like applying Western understandings of the gender divide to non-Western socio-cultural contexts, that men are shown in much more public aspects than women who are shown in more family or "private" aspects is visible — *at least in this very simple look at ceramics*. And this is only to speak of the Mexica and not wider Mesoamerica. Keep these in mind when we start looking at the division of gender and its ties into sexuality, as these will be important in understanding how the gender divide is conceptualized and *who* should be doing *what*. Men, for their part, are mainly shown in this collection as warriors, religious impersonators, musicians, and in age differences. Women (in ceramics numbering over 1 piece), are shown with children and in bed. That men are seen as more "active" and dominant than women, who are seen in a more "passive" and subservient light, is not lost in the linguistic differentiations that define both *man* and *woman*, and how non-standard sexual and gender identities embody transgressions beyond these boundaries.

**5. The Language of "Man" and "Woman"**

With the archaeological depictions of man, *oquichtli*, and woman, *cihuātl* out of the way, how do these hold up against the definitions of either term in grammars and dictionaries? Fear not! I've compiled a comparative table below.

**TABLE 2** ***Comparative Definitions of Man (Oquichtli) and Woman (Cihuātl) in Nahuatl Grammars and Dictionaries***

| | *OQUICHTLI* | *CIHUĀTL* |
|---|---|---|
| Molina 1571 | Man, or male in ever species (78) | Woman (22) |
| Karttunen 1983 | Man, male, husband (180) | Woman, wife (35) |
| Bierhost 1985 | Man, consort, husband, brave, | Woman, wife, female, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | warrior, male, "woman who assumes the masculine role in a lesbian relationship," surrogate [male sexual organ] (252-53) | effeminate (87) |
| Wood | Man, husband, masculinity, manliness, courage, bravery | Woman, wife, uterus, possibly hymen |

For the most part, there is nothing seemingly *out of place* when it comes to *oquichtli* and *cihuātl*, but — especially as seen through Bierhost and Wood — we start to see a difference in how *oquichtli*, specifically, is defined, with Lockhart stating that "in verbal compounds it often refers to valor" (Lockhart 228). *Oquichtli* also seems to hold different meaning when compounded with other words (Nahuatl being agglutinative), which we can see through the following definitions also provided by Lockhart:

**OQUICHHUAH.** *Married woman, person with a man* (Lockhart 228).

**OQUICHŌTIA, NIN.** *For a woman to marry* (Lockhart 228).

**OQUICHŌ-TL.** *Manliness, valor* (Lockhart 228).

**OQUICHTLATQUI-TL.** *Man's gear, the typical possessions of a man* (Lockhart 228).

*Cihuātl*, as given in *Nahuatl as Written*, is not treated the same in Nahuatl compounds:

**CIHUĀCAL-LI.** *A house at times occupied or inherited by women (full definition not well understood)* (Lockhart 215).

**CIHUĀHUAH.** *Married man* (Lockhart 215).

**CIHUĀMŌN -(TLI).** *Daughter-in-law* (Lockhart 215).

**CIHUĀPAN.** *(In the) women's quarters* (Lockhart 215).

**CIHUĀPIL-LI.** *Lady, noblewoman* (Lockhart 215).

**CIHUĀTLAMACHTIA, NITLA.** *A possible ad hoc construction for a warrior who acts like a woman* (Lockhart 215).

**CIHUĀTLAQUI-TL.** *Woman's things, household goods* (Lockhart 215).

Between both *oquichtli* and *cihuātl*, we see that there is an amount of differentiation that takes place when joining *cihuātl* with certain nouns. Not only does *cihuātl* indicate that the following noun (*the first noun in a compound acts as an adjective*) is either related to women or seen as embodying perceived behavior of women, but also to indicate that certain things is the woman equivalent of a noun, like the difference between actor and act*ress*.

## 6. Neutrality and Custom

I mentioned earlier that nouns are, overall, neutral in terms of gender, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they are in practice. Compared to *oquichtli* and *cihuātl*, *pilli* is an ungendered term for "lord" or "child" and can be used for both men and women; however, in practice, it is customary when referring to women to note specifically that a woman is being referenced by using the gendered stem -*cihuātl*- (Andrews 295). Andrews earlier states that with animate-entity[1] noun stems, either gendered term can be used to refer to its sex, but with humans they are usually neutral but *can* follow that same pattern if desired *or customary* (Andres 286). Another term like this relates to divinity (especially in the plural): *tēteoh* **[3PL.divinity]**, but *cihuātēteoh* **[3PL.divinity.F]**. *Cihuātēteoh* also refers to "divine women," or those women who died in childbirth.

Aside from the differences between gendered terms and then gendering otherwise neutral terms due to custom, there are also differences in custom between which term *itself* is used. One of these differences can be seen between *conētl* and the aforementioned *pilli*. For Michel Launey, the difference is that *conētl* refers to a small child mostly in relation to the mother, while *pilli* "is not necessarily young and is in relation with the parents in general" (Launey 20). According to

[1] Nahuatl differentiates between *animate* and *inanimate*, with that difference usually being between animals and "objects," though this *isn't* always the case. When referring to sex, Andrews means that in Nahuatl we can add a stem *oquichtli*- or *cihuātl*- to an animate nounstem (like *mazā-tl*, "deer") to signify that they are either male (*oquichmazātl*, "buck") or female (*cihuāmazātl*, "doe") (Andrews 286).

Bierhost, *conētl* can also be used to refer to one's husband, or father (Bierhost 92).

**7. Man's Speech**

*7.1 Phonetics*

Nahuatl phonetics are notoriously difficult, especially consonants such as ***/t͡ɬ/,*** though this is far from the only one. There is a big distinction between syllable-initial voiced and syllable-final devoiced consonants in some consonants: ***/l/*** versus ***/ɬ/***; ***/n/*** versus ***/n̥/***, ***/j/*** versus ***/ç/***, ***/kʷ/*** versus ***/kʷ/***, and ***/w/*** versus ***/w̥ /***. One of these distinctions, however, should not be treated as the rest of the phonetic inventory of Classical Nahuatl. While the voiced-devoiced difference hold up for the aforementioned sets of consonants, there is one set that cannot be held as equal to all Nahuatl speakers, and that ***/w/*** versus ***/w̥ /***, which, per Andrews, "are used by male speakers" (Andrews 2003). So, as a note, generally when learning Classical Nahuatl in particular, the language that is being learned uses the masculine pronunciation of the voiced and devoiced consonant usually written as *hu-* and *-uh* in Classical and Neoclassical orthographies (and those that take on that same standard). Look at the following 8 examples example2 (4 each voiced and devoiced):

| **Huēhueteōtl** | **Nanāhuātzin** | **Ānāhuac** | **Mācēhualli** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Old, Old God* | *Swollen Glands (rev.)* | *[Place] Next to the Water* | *Commoner* |
| [**we**ːwe**ˈ**teoːt͡ɬ] | [nɑnɑːˈ**w**aːtsin] | [ɑːˈnɑː**w**ɑk] | [mɑːseːˈ**w**ɑlːi] |
| **Tōnatiuh** | **Poliuhqui** | **Icnīuhtli** | **Xiuhtecuhtli** |
| The sun, day | Something lost | Friend, companion | Lord of Fire/Turquoise |
| [toːˈnɑtiw̥] | [poˈliw̥ki] | [ikˈniːw̥tɬi] | [ʃiw̥ˈteːkʷt͡ɬi] |

*7.2 Grammatical Patterns*

**7.2.1 The Vocative**

Nahuatl doesn't have a lot of nominal declensions, I'd say that they don't have noun cases as it is, but rather constructions that can be formed from the noun itself that evoke nominal declension. The vocative is one of these, which itself has two forms: a "faux" vocative and then a "true" vocative. The faux vocative is formed with the second-person, a "supplementary subject whose head is in an optative" verb form (Andrews 147). Due to the translation into English (and Spanish) it has been called a vocative, but it's really a *"sort of vocative"* more than anything.

| ∅-xi-huāllauh | in | ti-cihuā-tl |
|---|---|---|
| **3SG.SBJT-2SG.IMP-come** | — | **2SG.SBJT-woman-ABS** |

*Come, you, woman!*

That said, the faux vocative, from what I've found, is not gendered in the way that it is utilized, but I thought it essential to discuss the ungendered faux vocative before heading into the "true" vocative so as to avoid confusion between the two.

The *true* vocative form is formed by the *third person*, and no command or admonition has to be in the accompanying clause (Andrews 147). As we are discussing this under the section of men's speech, there has to be a relation between gender and vocative, and that'd be right. This is not in the use of the vocative as a case, however, but rather in its specific formations. For men, this is accomplished by adding an *-é* as a suffix to the noun *form* (<u>not</u> stem) (Andrews 147, Wright Carr 105, Launey 81). This is also the only exception to the rule of penultimate stress (Andrews 147). Take the following two examples from Andrews (147):

| ∅-xi-huāllauh | ∅-cihuā-tl-é |
|---|---|
| **3SG.SBJT-2SG.IMP-come** | **3SG.SBJT-woman-ABS-VOC** |

*Come, O woman!*

| ∅-xi-huāllauh | no-cihuā-huān-é |
|---|---|
| **3SG.SBJT-2SG.IMP-come** | **1SG.POSS-woman-POSS.PL-VOC** |

*Come, O, my wives!*

**7.2.2 "Bonding"**

Men also have a special form of relating to a group of men, compared to what women can linguistically. Andrews separates this into two: the modifier and the supplement. In this part, I will be talking about the modifier, and in the following I will be discussing the supplement.

This is an idiomatic expression that can be used by men when using *oquichtli*, so long as the man in question has some sort of relationship to other men — whether that be a social or familial tie (Andrews 429). To form the "male-bonding modifier" (as named by Andrews), the man who seeks to do so uses the first person plural subject pronoun marker (*to-*) on *oquichtli* (which takes the plural *oquich**tin***), and there is "no agreement between the subject pronoun and that of a cooperating [noun]" with modification (Andrews 429).

| Cē-(meh) | t-oquich-tin | ōmpa | ∅-yāz |
|---|---|---|---|
| **one-(PL)** | **1PL.POSS-man-man.PL** | **there** | **3SG.SBJT-go.FUT** |

*One man (of us) will go there*

The previous example, taken from Andrews (429), can also be understood as *"one of us men will go there,"* focusing on being part of an in-group. Here we can see that men focus on, dare I say, kinship relations in how they speak about said groups and actions taken amongst them, which is also taken when referring to women as "one of you women" (Launey 267). The way women explore this is later discussed under 8.3.3.

### 7.2.3 Supplementation

Finally, for the men, there is the "male-bonding supplement," which Andrews describes as when *oquichtli* is used as a supplement that speaks to men in a more generalized notion. Much like the modifier bond above, but instead of speaking about a *part* of the group, they are speaking *of* the group of which he's a member, using the first-person plural subject, although the noun's head pronoun can be third person (Andrews 146).

## 8. Women's Speech

*8.1 Phonetics*

The phonetics exhibited by women are largely the same, with one key difference, the consonants represented by syllable-initial *hu-* and syllable-final *-uh*. Instead of representing the sounds ***/w/*** versus ***/w̥/***, they instead represent the sounds ***/β/*** versus ***/ɸ/***, respectively (Andrews 28, Wright Carr 100.) The previous examples for the vocalization for one would thus be closer to as follows:

| **Huēhueteōtl** | **Nanāhuātzin** | **Ānāhuac** | **Mācēhualli** |
|---|---|---|---|
| [**β**eːβeˈteoːt͡ɬ] | [nɑnɑːˈβaːtsin] | [ɑːˈnɑːβɑk] | [mɑːseːˈβɑlːi] |
| **Tōnatiuh** | **Poliuhqui** | **Icnīuhtli** | **Xiuhtecuhtli** |
| [toːˈnɑtiɸ] | [poˈliɸki] | [ikˈniːɸtɬi] | [ʃiɸˈteːkᶲt͡ɬi] |

Note that even with the *-cu(h)*, and by extension *-uc,* follow the same changes, from ***/kʷ/*** and ***/kʷ̥/*** to ***/kᵝ/*** versus ***/kᶲ/***.

On a side note that's important in understanding language transmission, these voicings of *hu-*, *-uh*, *cu-*, and *-uc* are kept in some contemporary variants of Central Nahuatl. Some variants have taken on a full aspiration, and this of course changes variant to variant, though the central variants are much more conservative than other other variants such as Huasteca (the most widely

spoken variant of Nahuatl today), which has been highly hispanicized in both pronunciation and grammar. I take this to suggest that the language transfer of Nahuatl in the region of the Central variant has been passed down, by and large, by women. Given the history of colonialism and migration, I don't find this surprising, but that's for another paper.

*8.2 Interjections*

Nahuatl has a wide variety of interjections, and while they're not typically gendered (by my looking at Andrews*), there is one that he explicitly states is used by women, and that is *nō*, meaning "woe!" or "alas!" (Andrews 42). Other examples of interjection include *āuh* (approval or surprise), *hue/ya* (alas!), and *iye* (yes!). Men, for their part, have the vocative noun-form final *-é,* which is bound to said noun-form (Andrews 42).

*8.3 Grammatical Patterns*

**8.3.1 The Vocative**

The vocative for women serves the same role as it does for me, however the way that the construct it differs. For women, the vocative case is formed by keeping the third person ending and moving stress from the penultimate to the last syllable (in this, the *-é* is not the **only** exception to the rule, but rather represents the only systemic exception: that of the vocative) (Launey 82, Wright Carr 106). Launey provides four examples on this regard (82):

| ∅-cihu**á**-tl | ∅-Pedr**ó** | ∅-tē-tēcuh-**tín** | ∅-pil-**lí** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3SG.SBJT-woman-ABS** | **3SG.SBJT-Pedro** | **3PL.SBJT-lord.PL-lord-PL** | **3SG.SBJT-lord-ABS** |
| *Woman!* | *Pedro!* | *Lords!* | *Child!* |

Compared to the men's formation, there are two main ways that the formation women take differ: 1). they don't take the final *-é*, 2). they keep the ending for the third person (plural or singular) and move the stress to *that* syllable. One may note that Pedro has a null subject marker

for the third person singular subject prefix (which, along with its plural counterpart, is inherently inferred), this is because names in Nahuatl are inherently in the third person singular.

### 8.3.3 "Bonding"

Whereas men explore the themes of actions taken by an individual from a group as an extension of that group, women, much as is generally done in English and Spanish, say "a woman," *cē cihuātl*. They can additionally show *possession*. Launey provides the following two examples (267):

Cē no-cihuā-poh

**one 1SG.POSS-woman-like/equal**

*One woman like myself*

Cē to-cihuā-poh

**one 1PL.POSS-woman-like/equal**

*One woman like ourselves*

While women don't necessarily refer to another as being part of an in-group as the men do in their constructions, they *can* refer to another as being equal; rather than being an expression of an in-group, it's, to me, a representation that while exterior to the woman speaking, they exist on equal ground. This is not to say anything of how kinship networks are expressed within social boundaries at a personal level, just looking at the linguistic level of how these ideas are expressed through language.

This concludes the discussion regarding gender and language itself, which while short, provides a look at exactly *how* gender is expressed through the patterns of language whether that be through phonetics, or grammatical patterns (social customs surrounding word use aside). With

this laid out, the last few pages will be looking at how these tie into sexuality and, by extension, sexual transgression (at least regarding post-Conquest inherently Colonial sources), especially in terms of the *xōchihua*.

**9. Xochihua**

[2]

Xochihua as a term translates to "flower-bearer," which the University of Oregon site *Online Nahuatl Dictionary* (Wood) further describes as

> *A possessor of flowers; someone who bewitches or seduces women (Wimmer 2004, citing Sahagún); Sahagún describes a doer of evil, a feminine man, and a*

[2] *The perverts and the damnation of the sodomite*. 2023, Digital Florentine Codex, J. Paul Getty Trust, https://florentinecodex.getty.edu/book/10/folio/25v/images/b44cae48-70a6-4b07-a688-fb713ae9b189

*"pervert" in different books.*

The name is not coincidental when it comes to understanding sexuality and gender. The flower, in this instance, represents a cross-dressing figure (Sigal 21), which can be seen in the above image where there are two men present in women's clothes, speaking with a flower, *xōchitl*, between them. Sigal further defines the meaning of the flower is Nahua cosmovision as a "vital metaphor" that "is used to emphasize the importance of philosophy, poetry, and song; it is a general symbol of life's dualities" (Sigal 21). Thinking back to the quote from the Florentine Codex about the "suchioa" (this is how it is written in the codex and does not reflect and later orthographic standards), being a possessor of flowers should not be seen quite in a positive light despite the other connotations that they have. Whether this reflects pre-Hispanic thought or is influenced by the Catholic overseers is much out of the purview of this essay, but yet again something to keep in mind. This is especially as Sigal says on the next page that "other primary sources maintain with convincing regularity that the xochihua was a cross-dresser" (22).

The image of the flower in the above image signals both sexuality and excess, which can also be seen throughout the codex (and other sources), such as the following set of images of prostitutes, an *āhuiyani*:



3

[3]

Again, flowers are a symbol of both sexuality and its transgression. This can be further understood in a *cihuāteōtl*, *Xōchiquetzal*, who Herself is represented by flowers (and quetzal, precious feathers, hence Her name "flowery quetzal." She is a deity associated with sexuality and pleasure, and if we tie that into both the *xōchihua* and the *āhuiyani*, it further reinforces the ideas of flowers being connected with sexuality and, under certain conditions, *excess*. Concerning this idea, Sigal says that in pre-Hispanic Mexico, an "interpreter and other Nahuas would have known that the figure was a cross-dressed male by identifying the significance of the flower, here thus a privileged signifier of a particular gendered performance incorporating transvestism" (Sigal 22).

In a society that highly prizes masculinity and what it means to be *oquichtli*, transgressing those norms is highly stigmatized, but also *institutionalized*, given how much language goes into constructing these views and understandings of what it means to be gendered and what it means to *transgress* gender, the *xōchihua* being seen as effeminate. Seeing as there's a word specifically for men who behaved as women (that we saw earlier, ***cihuātlamachtia, nitla***), this is of no particular surprise. This is further proven by the fact that many nobles has a *xōchihua*, much as a domestic servant, to perform chores at home, at the temple, accompany warriors to war, and provide plenty of other *services* to warriors when at war, and also to priests and nobles in as a servant (Sigal 23). On this last note, there was a subdivision of *xōchihua*, *cuiloni*, who particularly embodied the passive sexual role of the *xōchihua*, which shared similarities with how taking a passive role was seen in the Classical world of Greece and Rome (though in its own social context). Again, the Florentine Codex, where Sigal is doing his analysis is a post-Conquest text, which means that understandings of the Classical world may have been in the understanding that the Spanish had when looking to understand what it meant to transgress social boundaries concerning sexuality and gender in Mesoamerica. This is just but theory, but as a pillar in the

[3] *In ahuiyani*. 2023, Digital Florentine Codex, J. Paul Getty Trust, https://florentinecodex.getty.edu/book/10/folio/39v/images/db319d6d-6a36-4426-a2ac-e8924f4dd6ac

development of the Western world and its culture, it's an interesting thought.

**11. Conclusions**

As I come to a close, the intricate interwoven web of how gender, sexuality, and language interact with each other is as prevalent and, to an extent, evasive as ever. We can understand how language is used, we can understand its limitations, we can understand the theoretical applications of it, but that doesn't always mean that we get the whole picture of what it meant to be any particular person in the Colonial post-Conquest Nahua world. How men had the ability to embody their identity through language versus how women could, and the subtle changes in how they shaped — and passed down — that language is undeniable, especially when looking at the state of Nahuatl today. When understanding *oquichtli*, *cihuātl*, and *xōchihua*, there is an underlying foundation to this all: gender and sexuality are not solid and immovable forms — they can change, and how we engage with those aspects in language tells us a lot about *who* we are. Not only our place in society, but the deeper cultural implications of what it meant to be *Nahua*.

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# Man-Made Monster

# Gloucester

# Refection Reflections

## (With a Side Order of Impending Doom)

By: Elizabeth San Miguel

Department of Creative Writing

**Abstract:**

*Drawing inspiration from William Shakespeare's King Lear and Mary Shelly's Frankenstein, my poems, Gloucester and Man-Made Monster, capture the distortion that takes place as a derivative of disillusionment, heartbreak, and betrayal. Through the embodiment of fictional characters such as the Earl of Gloucester and Frankenstein's Monster, the poems grapple with the grotesque nature of grief and illustrate the parts of ourselves that are changed, or lost, in love's absence.*

**Man-Made Monster**

I am a wretched thing.
A byproduct of an egotistical man.
An amalgamation of parts, not
altogether whole.
Disfigured,
a distortion of
what once was
and is no longer.
I, who was once a mine of love,
now a dead woman walking,
whose heart doesn't function as
it did before.
What I'd give
for love's electricity
to breathe new life
into what has turned cold.
For cataracts of woe
to not blind my eyes to
the goodness of the world.
Curse my creator!
You who have spurned me!
Why put me together
only to flee?
All men hate the wretched, but
I am what you made me.

An odious monster

whose defects are a derivative

not of character

but rather

Heartache.

**Gloucester**

Out, vile jelly!
Take with you the tears
that come with a bastard's betrayal.
Rip these orbs out of their orbit
and in its place, let two black holes
consume the constellations
of my countenance.

Never have I
scorned the ability of sight
as I do now.
Rid me of these horrors!
These visual manifestations
of adoration turned abhorrence,
of friend turned foe,
of lover turned libertine!

In you, I beheld an orchard,
a paradise of pleasure.
Pluck my eyes from me now,
like a forbidden fruit
with nectar
as deceivingly sweet
as the saliva left behind
by the kiss of Judas.

Condemn me to eternal darkness,

for living in light

no longer refracts

rosy rays.

They say eye for an eye,

but what are we to make of matters

pertaining to

the heart?

**Refection Reflections (With a Side Order of Impending Doom)**

There is something so tender and evocative in
sharing a meal with your parents.

I feel it now
as I sit down to eat.

Dad chomps away,
his smacks inaudible to his aged ears,

and Mom shares a story
that she's forgotten she's already told me.

Even in this cacophony of dining,
there is a sense of languor in the air that silences me.

It is not hunger
that churns my stomach.

And though the onions of a Patty Melt may be pungent,
it isn't they that dampen my eyes.

But rather,
it is the recognition that

I will be 24 this year,

and Dad is just a year away from being considered a senior.

I've spent nearly a quarter of life
sharing meals with the same company,

and it isn’t nearly enough.

Maybe it's the way Mom’s hair is decorated with wisdom,
or how Dad’s skin has been speckled with kisses by the sun.

Or the way my head never met my pillow without a goodnight kiss, or
how I was tucked into bed more snug than any bug I’d ever known.

Or the way Dad kept promises,
that were left unkept to him.

Or the way Mom fought for me,
even when I couldn’t fight for myself.

Or the way I have never known a day,
and never want to know a day,

where I am forced to be
in their love’s absence.

It is in this moment,
that I have realized

my parents are the truest companions I have ever had,
and the closest thing to magic I will ever know.

What an honor it is to be the embodiment
of something so divinely guided!

For the convergence of two separate entities
to be seen in my countenance.

Hold me, Mother! Hold me, Father!
I'm not ready for goodbye!

I do not wish for death to blow out the candles
and for your light to vanquish.

When the scythe taps on the door,
know that whoever is knocking is an unwelcome guest.

Do not go! Do not answer!
Stay in your seat!

We have yet to get to the sweetest part of our course.

# What We Carry, What We Lose:

## Objects, Artists, and the Presentation of Mexican Migration

By Sailor Stanley

Department of History

**Abstract:**

*This paper examines how contemporary artists transform objects of Mexican migration into sites of public memory. Analyzing Tom Kiefer's photography, Susan Harbage Page's anti-archive, Margarita Cabrera's sculptural transformations, and Elizabeth Z. Pineda's cyanotypes and performances, I argue that these artists construct an alternative archive that challenges dehumanizing political rhetoric. Objects function as tools of survival, identity preservation, and evidence of state violence. The paper compares three modes of presentation—photography, direct display, and artistic transformation—and asks how each shapes public understanding of migration. This paper also questions who holds authority to tell these stories, contrasting white artists and Mexican artists. By tracing objects from borderlands to museums, this paper demonstrates that public memory is not discovered but actively created through choices that determine which objects matter, whose stories are told, and how viewers are invited to respond.*

## I. Introduction

Artist Elizabeth Z. Pineda remembers her mother's cooking. Not as recipes, but as proof of her culture and identity. "I made cyanotypes of my birth certificate, marriage license, and the only picture of me I have as a child on corn husks to give them the validity taken away from them," she explains. "Shortly thereafter, I realized that the experience made me question my belonging and the idea of home, what home is, who has a right to dictate what home is, and who has a right to it. Home is ultimately my mother and her cooking... This is the heart and intent of this work. It gave me the validity I lost. It permitted me to feel whole again. I believe it also gives others a voice; one through a humble corn husk."[4]

Pineda is one of several artists transforming objects related to Mexican migration into art. The U.S.-Mexico borderlands are often discussed in terms of security, sovereignty, and illegality. Missing from these discussions is the reality of being a migrant and the everyday objects they carry and leave behind. A water bottle wrapped in duct tape. A single blue shoelace. A toothbrush, bristles splayed and dirty. A child's backpack with the character Miffy on it. These objects—discarded by the thousands who cross the border every year—constitute an alternative archive of Mexican migration. In recent years, artists and museums have turned these objects into sites of remembrance. Tom Kiefer photographs them. Susan Harbage Page collects them. Margarita Cabrera transforms them into sculptures. Pineda turns documents into art.

This paper asks not only how these artists present the story of Mexican migration, but why they present it the way they do. In what ways are these artists channeling public memory and contributing to it? The answer lies in the objects themselves, and the choices artists make when presenting them. These choices shape how the public understands the humanity and trauma embedded in migration.

[4] Pineda, Elizabeth Z. “Maíz.” Elizabeth Z. Pineda.

The twenty-first century has witnessed a dramatic transformation of the U.S.-Mexico border. Following the U.S. government passing legislation such as the Illegal Immigration Reform, Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, as well as the post-9/11 securitization of borders. The goal of the U.S. government was to deter migrants, but the actual effect was redirection. Border policies pushed migrants away from ports of entry and into the dangerous stretches of desert and mountains in the borderlands. Since 1998, thousands of migrants have died in the borderlands.[5] Hundreds of thousands more have been detained, deported, or abandoned by smugglers. In public discourse, Mexican migrants are rarely seen as people. Instead, they become "illegals," "criminals," "job stealers." These framings share a common failure: they erase the human reality of migration. They cannot account for the weight of a child's toy carried three hundred miles or the decision to abandon your shoes. This paper argues that artists who present migrant objects help humanize migrants by showing what is stripped away through political rhetoric and legislation.

This paper argues that the material culture of Mexican migration—the objects migrants carry and the objects they leave behind—offers an alternative archive, one capable of showing the nuance, humanity, and specificity of the migrant experience. Objects function as tools for survival, identity preservation, and emotional resilience. In contrast, the objects left behind bear witness to the violence, danger, and trauma embedded in the act of crossing the border. These objects are not trash; they are testimony. But these objects do not stay in the borderlands. Increasingly, they are recovered, photographed, and displayed in museums and galleries. Moving

[5] U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Border Patrol Fiscal Year southwest border sector deaths (FY 1998 - FY 2020) | U.S. Customs and Border Protection. https://www.cbp.gov/document/stats/us-border-patrol-fiscal-year-southwest-border-sector-deaths-fy-1998-fy-2020.

an object from the site of trauma to the space of display transforms its meaning. Each mode of presentation tells a different story and shapes public perception differently.

This paper focuses on the objects themselves and the artists who bring them to the public. In *El Sueño Americano/The American Dream*, Tom Kiefer's photographs show objects deemed non-essential by the Border Patrol, while Elizabeth Z. Pineda's art highlights documents associated with migration. Susan Harbage Page's *Objects from the Borderlands* presents objects she picked up along the border, photographed as found and later in her studio against colorful backgrounds. Margarita Cabrera's *Blurring Borders* reimagines Border Patrol uniforms as sculptures of desert plants. Their choices of what to collect and how to frame it shape how the public understands Mexican migration.

Scholars across disciplines have examined migrant material culture from different angles. Jason De León documents the physical consequences of U.S. border policy through archaeological methods. Maruška Svašek and Chiara Giuliani & Kate Hodgson examine how objects carry emotion and memory across transnational spaces, though they focus on settled migrants rather than discarded belongings. Susannah Radstone and Rita Wilson analyze how memory and trauma translate across contexts. Diana Flores Ruiz explores competing stories told through objects, and Hana Masri uses a queer lens to reveal the vulnerabilities of LGBTQ+ migrants. This paper builds on these foundations by asking what happens when objects leave the borderlands and enter museums—and how the artists who present them shape public memory in the process.

This paper is guided by several research questions. How do migrant objects function as tools of survival, identity, and resilience? What do they reveal about state policy and the hardships of migration? How do museums and artists select and curate these objects, and what narratives

emerge from display, photography, and art? How do exhibitions differ between white artists and Mexican or migrant artists? And what are the ethical implications of telling migration stories through objects, including who has authority to speak for them?

This paper's methodology is interdisciplinary, drawing on public history, anthropology, museum studies, and material culture. It analyzes the objects themselves using documentation of the artists' works. It then compares the three modes of presentation—direct display, photography, and artistic transformation—to see how each shapes narrative and public perception. The primary sources are the exhibits: Tom Kiefer and Elizabeth Z. Pineda's *El Sueño Americano/The American Dream*, Susan Harbage Page's *Objects from the Borderlands*, and Margarita Cabrera's *Blurring Borders*. Secondary sources provide theoretical support without displacing the centrality of the objects and their presenters.





(Page, Susan Harbage. *Objects from the Borderlands: The U.S.-Mexico Border Anti-Archive*, Greensboro Project Space, Greensboro, NC, 2018; Kiefer, Tom. *El Sueno Americano/The American Dream*, Coconino Center for the Arts, Flaggstaff, AZ, 2023; Cabrera, Margarita. *Blurring Borders*, McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX, 2022.)

## II. Historiography and Theoretical Framework

Migrant material culture has been examined from different angles by scholars of multiple fields. Anthropologists, museum studies scholars, memory scholars, and art historians have approached the objects left behind in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands asking different questions and reaching different conclusions.

*Material Culture of Migration*

Jason De León provides the most foundational work on migrant material culture in the borderlands. In *The Land of Open Graves*[6] and his article "Better to Be Hot than Caught,"[7] De León argues that objects migrants carry represent a standardized but contradictory set of tools shaped by U.S. border enforcement policies. His methodology combines archaeological surveys, use-wear analysis, and ethnographic interviews to document physical suffering that is otherwise invisible. De León's work is foundational but has limitations. He centers his own emotional responses in ways that can overshadow migrant voices. His graphic descriptions risk sensationalizing the subject. Moreover, he focuses primarily on male Mexican migrants and documents objects in the desert as they were left—but he does not analyze what happens when objects leave the borderlands. This is a significant gap because once objects enter museums or galleries, their meaning changes. They are no longer evidence of a single crossing but become public testimony, shaped by curatorial choices that De León never examines.

Where De León focuses on physical and political dimensions, Maruška Svašek focuses on the emotional aspects. In Moving Subjects, Moving Objects, Svašek develops three concepts: transit (movement through space), transition (changes in meaning and emotional value), and transformation (changes in identity). She argues that objects are active agents, not passive holders of memory. This means objects do things. A rosary carried across the desert does not just represent faith; it actively provides comfort and anchors identity in chaos.[8] Her framework

[6] Jason De Leon and Michael Wells, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. 1st ed. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015. doi:10.1525/9780520958685.
[7] Jason De Leon, "'Better to Be Hot than Caught'": Excavating the Conflicting Roles of Migrant Material Culture." *American Anthropologist* 114, no. 3 (2012): 477–95. doi:10.1111/j.1548-1433.2012.01447.x.
[8] Maruska Svasek, *Moving Subjects, Moving Objects: Transnationalism, Cultural Production and Emotions*. Edited by Maruška Svašek. 1st ed. Vol. 1. New York: Berghahn Books, 2012. doi:10.1515/9780857453242.

explains why migrants carry what they carry, but it focuses on settled migrants' homes, not the borderlands where objects are abandoned.

Chiara Giuliani and Kate Hodgson's Memory, Mobility, and Material Culture bridges this gap. Objects create continuity and function as "vessels of memory."[9] Johanna Carvajal González shows how Erika Diettes' Relicarios—reliquaries containing objects from disappeared victims—turns the museum into "a space where they meet the dead person, the one that disappeared."[10] A reliquary is traditionally a sacred container for the physical remains of a saint. By placing ordinary objects into reliquary-like displays, Diettes transforms them into sacred relics. The museum becomes a site of pilgrimage and mourning. This transformation happens through context: the object itself does not change, but how viewers are asked to see it changes entirely. Mastoureh Fathi demonstrates that ordinary objects become symbols of national identity after displacement: "The straw did not convey these meanings when she was in Syria. The item became a staple of her identity as a Syrian woman only after she was in Turkey."[11]

*Memory, Trauma, and Translation*

Susannah Radstone and Rita Wilson's *Translating Worlds: Migration, Memory and Culture* expand "translation" beyond language to a process of parsing how people bring the familiar and unfamiliar into conversation. For this paper, "translation" means understanding how an object's meaning changes when it moves from the Borderlands to a museum or gallery. A water bottle found in the brush means one thing; that same water bottle photographed and hung in a

[9] Chiara Giuliani and Kate Hodgson, eds. *Memory, Mobility, and Material Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2023: 2. doi:10.4324/9781003112457.
[10] Johanna Carvajal González, "Why Is a Museum a Place to Rest in Peace? 1: Relicarios by Colombian Artist Erika Diettes." In *Memory, Mobility, and Material Culture*, 1st ed., edited by Chiara Giuliani and Kate Hodgson, 1: 64. Routledge, 2023. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003112457-5.
[11] Mastoureh Fathi, "Memories of Material Home: Refugee Women's Depiction of Absent Objects." In *Memory, Mobility, and Material Culture*, 1st ed., edited by Chiara Giuliani and Kate Hodgson, 1: 105. Routledge, 2023. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003112457-8.

gallery means something else. The artist acts as a translator, deciding what the object says and what should be heard by the audience.[12] Maria Tumarkin critiques the Melbourne Immigration Museum for presenting a flat version of migrant interiority that suppresses grief. The museum, she argues, focuses on successful settlement and grateful assimilation, avoiding the complicated emotions of trauma, ambivalence, and loss. This sanitized presentation does a disservice to migrants and to visitors, who never confront the full reality of migration and displacement. She calls for the "translations, non-translations, and counter-translations of memories across and between the domains" because this allows us to confront difficult emotions. This framework can be applied to U.S. museums presenting the story of Mexican migration. [13]

Alexandra Bounia and Andrea Witcomb's *The Ethics of Collecting Trauma* addresses ethical responsibilities in displaying collective trauma. These responsibilities include avoiding retraumatization, sharing authority with source communities, and being transparent about collecting methods. There is significant debate about whether these principles are achievable or even desirable in all contexts.[14] James B. Gardner provides a framework: museums must ask what to collect, when, how, and for whom. On collecting from migrants: "What is a museum's ethical obligation to them as people rather than just subjects of a collecting initiative?"[15] Alexandra Bounia identifies three tropes of collecting forced migration: archaeological activism (using excavation methods to document suffering as evidence), curatorial initiative (rapid-response

[12] Susannah Radstone and Rita Wilson, *Translating Worlds: Migration, Memory, and Culture*. London; Routledge, 2020.
[13] Maria Tumarkin, "Having Left, Not Having—yet—Arrived: Migrant Interiority, Translation, and Memory." In *Translating Worlds*, 1st ed., edited by Susannah Radstone and Rita Wilson, 81. Routledge, 2021. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429024955-5.
[14] Alexandra Bounia and Andrea Witcomb, *The Ethics of Collecting Trauma: The Role of Museums in Collecting and Displaying Contemporary Crises*. 1st ed. Edited by Andrea Witcomb and Alexandra Bounia. Oxford: Routledge, 2024. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003139485.
[15] James B Gardner, "Toward A Higher Standard: Museums, Communities of Trauma and the Public Trust" in *The Ethics of Collecting Trauma: The Role of Museums in Collecting and Displaying Contemporary Crises*. 1st ed. Edited by Andrea Witcomb and Alexandra Bounia, 83. Oxford: Routledge, 2024. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003139485.

collecting by museums), and artistic appropriation (artists collecting objects to create installations). She warns that appropriation may universalize refugee experiences and erase individual stories.[16]

*Representation, Power, and Perspectives*

Diana Flores Ruiz examines how objects tell competing stories through counter-narratives that challenge dehumanizing framings. Her work asks: who gets to tell the story of migration, and whose stories are left out? Hana Masri's article "Queer Border Objects" applies a queer lens to Tom Kiefer's photographs of birth control packets and condoms. Masri argues that acknowledging the sexual realities of migration—including assault, survival sex, and queer desire—humanizes migrants in ways that avoid sanitized or victim-only narratives. These objects "communicate migration as a process intimately shaped by sexual and gender norms."[17] Together, Ruiz and Masri demonstrate how we talk about migrant bodies—their sexuality, their gender, their humanity—shapes whether the public sees them as people or as threats. Amy K. Levin's Global Mobilities highlights the "residues of border control"—material remains left by migrants and enforcement.[18] Susan Harbage Page and Inés Valdez argue that viewing these residues "makes us aware of how the frailties and vanities of our own habits of seeing reinforce unspoken ideologies of power."[19]

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[16] Alexandra Bounia, "Collecting (Forced) Migration: The Ethics of Collecting 'Neglected things'" in *The Ethics of Collecting Trauma: The Role of Museums in Collecting and Displaying Contemporary Crises*. 1st ed. Edited by Andrea Witcomb and Alexandra Bounia, 198-214. Oxford: Routledge, 2024. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003139485.
[17] Hana Masri, "Queer Border Objects and the Sucio Material Politics of Migration in the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands." *QED (East Lansing, Mich.)* 5, no. 2 (June 2018): 2. https://doi.org/10.14321/qed.5.2.0001.
[18] Amy K. Levin, ed. *Global Mobilities: Refugees, Exiles, and Immigrants in Museums and Archives*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; Routledge, 2017: 9. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315695563.
[19] Susan Harbage Page and Bernard L Herman, "Longing: Personal Effects from the Border." *Southern Cultures* (Chapel Hill) 16, no. 1 (March 2010): 31. https://doi.org/10.1353/scu.0.0099.

*Historiographical Gaps*

These frameworks share a common concern: how objects mediate between migrants and the public. Together, they show that migrant objects are never just objects. They are evidence, memory, testimony, and art. But none of these scholars specifically analyze what happens when objects move from borderlands to galleries and how different modes of presentation shape public memory. This paper moves beyond existing scholarship by following migrant objects from the borderlands into museums. Specifically, this paper argues that these exhibits do not just document migration; they actively create public memory by deciding which objects matter, whose stories are told, and how viewers should feel.

Svasek and Giuliani & Hodgson highlight how objects carry memory and emotion within migrant homes and transnational networks. This paper extends their insights into objects that never reach a home—objects discarded, seized, or lost. These objects carry a different kind of memory: not of settlement and adaptation, but of rupture and movement. The public archive formed from these abandoned things remembers migration differently than the private archive of a family photograph kept on a mantel.

Bounia and Witcomb provide ethical frameworks for museums collecting trauma. This paper adapts those frameworks to a different reality: objects whose owners may be dead, undocumented, unable or unwilling to be found. When no one can speak for the dead, who has authority to display their toothbrush, their child's shoe, their documents? This paper argues that ethical presentation requires transparency about what is known and what is not, and that artists who share identity with migrants have a different claim to authority than artists who do not.

This paper also compares three modes of presenting migrant objects—photography, direct display, and artistic transformation—asking how each mode shapes how the public understands

migration and trauma. It also asks who is telling the story. Kiefer is a white former janitor who worked for the state. Page is a white artist walking the border. Cabrera is a Mexican-American artist working with immigrant communities. Pineda is a Mexican immigrant speaking from personal experiences. These positionalities shape what gets collected, how it gets presented, and who has authority to speak. By tracing objects from the borderlands to museums and comparing how different artists present them, this paper contributes to a framework for understanding migrant material culture as living testimony that is translated and transformed.

## III. Objects: Survival, Identity, and Trauma

The objects migrants carry across the U.S.-Mexico border are not random belongings. They are carefully chosen tools for survival, anchors of identity, and sources of comfort. A water bottle wrapped in duct tape, a child's backpack with a cartoon character, a birth certificate folded into a pocket, a single shoe abandoned in the brush, each object tells a story that political rhetoric cannot capture. This section analyzes what these objects reveal about the migrant experience, drawing on the work of Tom Kiefer, Elizabeth Z. Pineda, Susan Harbage Page, and Margarita Cabrera.

### *Tools of Survival and Comfort*

Survival in the desert requires more than determination. It requires specific tools and resources, yet migrants often carry inadequate supplies due to economic constraints and the chaotic conditions of crossing. De León's book shows that most migrants carry only one to two gallons of water when the minimum needed for a three-day crossing is 4.8 gallons. A gallon weighs 8.35 pounds; four gallons alone adds 33.4 pounds to a migrant's load. The water bottles themselves can heat to over 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer sun.

Tom Kiefer's *El Sueño Americano/The American Dream* documents what happens to these tools after migrants have been processed at border protection stations. Working as a janitor at a U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility in Ajo, Arizona, Kiefer collected objects that were deemed "non-essential" or "potentially lethal" and thrown into the trash.[20] His photographs show things like water bottles, toothbrushes, religious items, medications, and clothing—items that represent the bare minimum for hygiene, health, and the care of children during a journey that can last days or weeks. By photographing these objects, Kiefer transforms discarded trash into testaments of human needs.



(Kiefer, Tom. *El Sueño Americano / The American Dream* – Miffy, Aqua, 2019; Black Combs and Brushes, 2013; Duct Tape Water Bottle, 2017)

Susan Harbage Page's Objects from the Borderlands takes a different approach to collecting objects related to migration. Walking the border near Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Mexico, Page collected over 867 objects over eleven years.[21] Where Kiefer photographs objects seized by the state, Page recovers objects that were left behind—wet clothing discarded after crossing; hygiene products left at pickup sites, shoes too damaged to continue wearing. Her method of photographing objects first in the landscape, as they were found, then against colorful backdrops in her studio, emphasizes their dual nature: they are both evidence of a

[20] Tom Kiefer, "El Sueño Americano / the American Dream." Tom Kiefer.
[21] Susan Harbage Page, "U.S.–Mexico Border Project." Susan Harbage Page, October 9, 2017.

specific moment of crisis and artifacts worthy of contemplation. An eyeshadow palette or a comb speaks to the desire to fit in, to present a presentable self when arriving at a new life. These objects are not merely functional; they are tools for preserving dignity in conditions designed to strip it away. The "anti-archive" Page creates refuses the authority and pretensions of objectivity that traditional archives claim. By keeping objects dirty and acknowledging that their stories are incomplete, Page shows how migrants' lived experiences should not be restricted to conventional museum frameworks.



Page, Susan Harbage. *Objects from the Borderlands: The U.S.-Mexico Border Anti-Archive - Love Shoes,* Hidalgo, Texas, December 2013; *Shoestrings, Belt, Socks, Shirt and Pants*, near border wall, Hidalgo, Texas, 2013; *Anti-Archive Object No. 806,* Brownsville, Texas, 2014.)

*Identity Preservation and Resilience*

Objects do more than keep migrants alive. They preserve identity and provide comfort. Across all four artists' work, personal objects and narratives emerge as powerful evidence of how migrants resist erasure. Is photographing or collecting discarded objects enough to tell migrant stories? No. But it is a start. The objects alone cannot speak. They require interpretation, context, and the voices of migrants themselves. The artists discussed in this paper balance these tensions in different ways.

Official documents appear repeatedly. Kiefer photographed passport photos that were seized and thrown away. Page collects them, found lost or abandoned along the border. Both collections include children's items like shoes, backpacks, and clothing. These objects humanize

migration in ways that statistics and data cannot. The objects are testaments to love, sacrifice, and what it takes to survive.

Elizabeth Z. Pineda takes this further in her Maíz series. A cyanotype is a photographic printing process that produces blue prints. She makes cyanotypes of her own birth certificate, marriage license, and only childhood photograph she brought with her when she migrated on corn husks. "To give them the validity taken away from them," she explains.[22] Printing these documents on corn husks reclaims their importance. The state sees paper documents as proof of identity. Pineda argues that identity is also carried in food, in tradition, in memory, and in mother's cooking. The corn husk becomes a vessel of validity. Corn holds deep significance in Mexican tradition; it is not merely food but a cultural foundation. By printing these identity documents on corn husks, Pineda reclaims the material as something that nourishes and sustains. Pineda states, "I believe it also gives others a voice" —this suggests that a goal of her work was to create a space for collective recognition.[23]




(Pineda, Elizabeth Z. Maíz - Licencia Valida, Acta Valida, Self-Portrait – Hija del Maíz, 2022)

[22] Pineda, “Maíz.” Elizabeth Z. Pineda.
[23] Pineda, “Maíz.” Elizabeth Z. Pineda.

Religious objects appear in both Kiefer and Page's work. Kiefer photographs rosaries and Bibles—the latter often marked or written in. Page's Anti-Archive includes items carried for spiritual protection like necklaces and Bibles. Anne Sigfrid Grønseth's research on Tamil refugees in Norway shows that amulets and ritual objects create relationships and generate comfort.[24] The same is true for Mexican migrants.




(Kiefer, Tom. *El Sueño Americano / The American Dream* – Virgen de Guadalupe, Necklace, 2019; 5 Minutos, 2018; Nueva Testamentos, 2013)

Cabrera's Blurring Borders exhibition includes *Pepita Para El Loro Para Que Hable O Calle* (A nugget for the parrot so that it speaks or stays quiet), a piece inspired by Mexican parrots endangered by the pet trade. The title, drawn from a Mexican proverb, invites reflection on voice and silence. Who gets to speak? Who is silenced? The embroidered Border Patrol uniforms in the exhibition give voice to migrants directly; their own words and images stitched onto the fabric.

[24] Lisette Josephides and Anne Sigfrid Grønseth, *The Ethics of Knowledge Creation: Transactions, Relations, and Persons*. 1st ed. Vol. 31, edited by Anne Sigfrid Grønseth and Lisette Josephides. New York: Berghahn Books, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781785334054.




(Cabrera, Margarita. *Blurring Borders, 2022*)

*Evidence of Danger, Violence, and Trauma*

The objects left behind bear witness to what migrants endure. De León's use-wear analysis of shoes—holes worn through soles, repairs made with scavenged materials—documents blisters, the most common documented injury after environmental exposure.[25] But blisters are not the worst. Page's collection includes objects like bras and underwear, which are known signals that a woman has been raped.[26] This sexual violence while migrating is so prolific that "rape trees"—trees hung with bras and underwear—are common along the border.[27] The article "The Things Migrants Carried" describes smugglers' wristbands—color-coded plastic that serves as "proof of payment." Those without wristbands report being held until relatives paid fees of at least $6,000.[28]

Kiefer's photographs include items that evidence the state's role in trauma. The objects he rescued from the trash were seized by officials—not because they were dangerous but because

[25] Jason De Leon and Michael Wells, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. 1st ed. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015. doi:10.1525/9780520958685.
[26] Susan Harbage Page. "Borderlands-Evidence from the Rio Grande Virtual Exhibition." Gregg Museum of Art + Design, 2019: 6.
[27] Hana Masri, "The Performative Speech and Silence of Rape Trees: Staging Sexual Violence Against Migrant Women in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands" (2013). *International Studies Honors Projects*. 19.
[28] Molly Hennessy-Fiske and Carolyn Cole, 2021. "The Things Migrants Carried — and Dropped — as They Crossed the Border." *The Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2021.

they were deemed "non-essential." A child's toy is non-essential. A photograph of family left behind is non-essential. A Bible is non-essential. The state's definition of necessity strips migrants of comfort, identity, and hope. Even though these objects are discarded—the question of who speaks remains. Is it the migrants, or is it artists speaking for migrants? That distinction matters. Kiefer and Page do not claim to speak for migrants; they present objects and invite viewers to draw conclusions. Cabrera and Pineda, as Mexican and Mexican-American artists, claim a different kind of authority—one based on shared identity and, in Cabrera's case, direct collaboration. Neither approach is better but being transparent about who speaks and on what authority is ethically vital.

Pineda's work confronts violence directly. Her *Reverencia*: Arizona Migrant Death Mapping series consists of silk scrolls printed with the names of migrants who died crossing the border. *Ceremonia*, a film documenting a day-long performance in the Ironwood Forest National Monument, shows Pineda wearing a twenty-yard-long blue silk cloak—blue for grief—as she walks through the desert calling out the names of the dead and saying "sin nombre" for those whose names are not known. She types their names on handmade corn-husk paper as she walks. Her work goes beyond documentation. This is memorialization and a refusal to let the dead be forgotten. Pineda's work is most powerful as a model—an invitation for others to remember in their own ways. The silk scrolls displayed in galleries do the work of repetition, reaching audiences the performance alone could not.

The desert itself participates in the violence migrants face while crossing the border. De León's work explores necroviolence—the specific treatment of corpses perceived as offensive or inhumane—which prevents proper burials and denies families closure.[29] Pineda's work intervenes

[29] Jason De Leon and Michael Wells, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. 1st ed. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015: chapter 3. doi:10.1525/9780520958685.

in this erasure. By speaking the names aloud, by typing them onto corn husks, by performing grief in the very landscape where people died, she insists that the dead are not gone. They are not "sin nombre." They were someone.





(Pineda, Elizabeth Z. Reverencia, Ceremonia, Maíz - Self-Portrait)

Cabrera's approach to border violence is transformative. The Border Patrol uniforms she and workshop participants embroider are the literal symbols of state violence. To cut them, to stitch them, to embroider them with stories of survival is to disarm them. The uniforms lose their "prickling armor," as Angelique Szymanek puts it, and become vessels of memory, expressions of resilience, acts of reclamation.[30] This transformation does not erase the violence. It refuses to let violence have the final word.

**IV. Modes of Presentation**

While the objects themselves contain powerful narratives, the way they are presented determines how these narratives are interpreted. The works of Tom Kiefer, Susan Harbage Page, Elizabeth Z. Pineda, and Margarita Cabrera highlight three modes of presentation: photography, direct display, and artistic transformation. These modes differ not only in technique, but in who

[30] Angelique Szymanek, "Haptic Encounters: Margarita Cabrera's Space in Between." *Art Journal (New York. 1960)* (New York) 79, no. 3 (July 2020): 78. https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2020.1801098.

holds authority, how much context is preserved, and what relationship the viewer is invited to have with the object. Each mode also raises different ethical questions about consent, appropriation, and the limits of representation.

Kiefer's photographic work isolates objects from their original context and places them against plain backgrounds. On one hand, isolation elevates the objects, forcing viewers to confront them as worthy of attention. On the other hand, this removal risks detaching the object from the conditions that produced it. The desert, the journey, and the moment of abandonment are no longer visible. However, Kiefer's work resists full detachment because of the institutional context in which the objects were acquired. These objects were confiscated and discarded by the state. Their presentation, therefore, implicitly critiques systems of power. By carefully arranging and photographing what the state deemed "non-essential," Kiefer exposes the violence and depersonalization embedded in that classification. The viewer is asked to reconcile the dissonance between the state's judgment and the object's obvious humanity. Yet the ethical tension identified by Bounia's concept of "artistic appropriation" is present. Kiefer, a white American artist employed by the state, raises questions about authority: who has the right to frame these narratives? The photographs invite empathy, but they also centralize the artist's gaze as the primary lens through which migrant experience is viewed. Kiefer does not consult the owners of these objects — because he cannot.

Page's direct display approach emphasizes context and continuity. Her "anti-archive" resists the clean separation seen in Kiefer's work. By photographing objects as she found them and later in her studio, Page preserves the context these objects exist in. The initial image situates the item within the landscape, maintaining its connection to a specific moment and place. The studio image, often set against a colorful background, invites contemplation and re-interpretation.

This dual presentation aligns closely with Giuliani and Hodgson's concept of objects as vessels of memory. Rather than isolating the object, Page layers its meanings. The viewer encounters the object as something that has moved—through space, through hands, through interpretive frames. This movement mirrors Svašek's framework of transit and transition, emphasizing that meaning is not fixed but accumulative. However, while Page seeks to preserve context, the transition into gallery space inevitably alters meaning. The objects become part of a curated narrative, shaped by the artist's decisions about selection, arrangement, and display. Her "anti-archive" is still an archive, still a form of authority.

Cabrera and Pineda's artistic transformation alters objects fundamentally. Cabrera takes Border Patrol uniforms—symbols of border enforcement and exclusion—and cuts, embroiders, and reshapes them into sculptures of desert plants. This process involves the Mexican community, who contribute their own stories through stitching. The resulting works are collective acts of meaning-making and memory preservation. Here, artistic transformation functions as a reversal of power. Materials associated with surveillance and control are reworked into artworks that showcase community resilience. Cabrera's work aligns with Flores Ruiz's concept of counter-narratives, actively challenging dominant representations of migration by centering migrant voices and experiences. Crucially, Cabrera's collaborators are not subjects but co-creators. This model directly addresses the ethical concerns raised by Bounia about artistic appropriation: migrants are not silent objects of representation but active participants in making the art.

Similarly, Elizabeth Z. Pineda transforms personal documents into pieces of cultural and personal significance. By printing them on corn husks, she recontextualizes bureaucratic identity within a framework of cultural continuity. Her performative and memorial works extend this transformation into embodied practice, where the act of naming and remembering is central.

Pineda's authority to speak for the dead comes not from community collaboration—she works alone—but from shared identity and experience. She is a Mexican immigrant. The documents she transforms are her own. The names she calls out are her people.

These different modes of presentation demonstrate that there is no neutral way to present migrant objects. Each approach emphasizes certain aspects of the migrant experience while obscuring others. The differences between the artists also reveal the importance of positionality. Kiefer and Page, as white American artists, tend to allow the objects to speak for themselves, positioning themselves as mediators of migrant stories. Cabrera and Pineda, as Mexican and Mexican-American artists, engage in reinterpretation and reclamation, embedding their work within cultural knowledge and lived experience. This distinction shapes not only the look of the art, but who has authority to tell the story and what ethical responsibilities attach to that authority.

Ultimately, these modes do not compete with one another. Together, they form a broader visual and material discourse on migration. By moving between documentation, preservation, and transformation, migrant objects are not only saved from disappearance but are continually reinterpreted. This ongoing process reflects Radstone and Wilson's concept of translation: meanings are not fixed but negotiated across contexts. In the transition from the borderlands to museums, from object to artwork, migrants become active parts of how migration is remembered, understood, and contested.

**V. Conclusion**

This paper has traced migrant objects from the borderlands to museums and galleries, asking not only how artists present these objects, but why they present them the way they do. The answer reveals that public memory is not found; it is made. Kiefer's photographs, Page's

anti-archive, Cabrera's transformed uniforms, and Pineda's memorial performances each construct a different version of what migration means and who migrants are.

This paper contributes a replicable method for analyzing material culture and curation in other migration contexts. The three modes identified here—photography, direct display, and artistic transformation—apply beyond the U.S.-Mexico border. In the Mediterranean, in Southeast Asia, along any border where people flee and things are left behind, scholars and curators can ask the same questions: Who collects? Who presents? Who speaks? And who is silenced? The framework developed here offers a model for analyzing how public memory is formed when trauma is present.

The question of who holds power in creating this art is central. Kiefer and Page, as white artists, inevitably mediate migrant stories through an outsider's gaze, no matter how empathetic. Their work is valuable because it brings attention. It humanizes. It also forces viewers to confront what the state discards and the dangers of crossing the border. But it is not the same as Cabrera's community collaboration or Pineda's lived experience. Neither approach is inherently better, but they are different, and those differences are important to how public memory is created.

In an era of dehumanizing political rhetoric, the smallest object—a shoelace, a toothbrush, a child's toy—can become a powerful carrier of memory. Pineda understood this when she printed her birth certificate on a corn husk. "It gave me the validity I lost," she said.[31] It permitted me to feel whole again. I believe it also gives others a voice; one through a humble corn husk."[32] The question is not just what objects mean. The question is who gets to tell their story, how they tell it, and whether we are willing to listen.

[31] Pineda, “Maíz.” Elizabeth Z. Pineda.
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# Bodies of Knowledge:

## Enslaved Women, Medical Authority, and Gynecology in the Antebellum South

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**Abstract:**

*This article examines the emergence of professional gynecology in the antebellum American South by placing the development of white male medical authority alongside the longstanding reproductive expertise of enslaved Black midwives. While existing scholarship has explored either the experimental practices of physicians such as J. Marion Sims or the communal healing traditions maintained by enslaved women, these subjects have often remained analytically separate. This research argues that the rise of gynecology depended not only on the exploitation of enslaved women's bodies through surgical experimentation but also on the systematic delegitimization of Black women's reproductive knowledge. Drawing on plantation records, physicians' writings, formerly enslaved people's narratives, and recent historiography, this paper demonstrates how white physicians consolidated professional authority by redefining generations of midwifery knowledge as unscientific "folk" practice while elevating institutional medical training as the sole source of legitimate expertise. Recovering the central role of enslaved midwives not only reshapes the history of nineteenth-century medicine but also provides critical historical context for contemporary discussions of Black maternal health, reproductive justice, and trust in medical institutions.*

**Introduction**

Despite the growing prominence of formally trained physicians in the mid-nineteenth century, healthcare on plantations in the Antebellum South had long relied on enslaved women, particularly enslaved midwives, who served as primary caregivers during pregnancy and childbirth. These women drew on generations of accumulated knowledge, combining practical experience with herbal remedies and community-based practices.[33] As historians have shown, enslaved midwives were often trusted figures within their communities, responsible for guiding women through labor and delivery in environments where physicians were not always present. Their work constituted a form of reproductive expertise that existed alongside, and at times in tension with, emerging forms of professional medicine.[34] This dual system of care rooted in community knowledge and formal medical training complicates narratives that position physicians as the sole producers of medical knowledge in the Antebellum South.

Furthermore, historians of slavery and health have indicated that enslaved communities maintained their own systems of healing, in which midwives played a central role in reproductive care. Historian Sharla M. Fett has expertly demonstrated that enslaved people developed "working cures" that combined spiritual, herbal, and experiential knowledge, allowing them to navigate systems of power that often denied them adequate medical care.[35] Similarly, Historian Tanfer Emin Tunc has examined the relationships between mistresses, midwives, and physicians on plantations, highlighting the complex dynamics that shaped pregnancy and childbirth in the antebellum South.[36] These scholars assert that enslaved women were not only subjects of medical

[33] Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 112.
[34] Tanfer Emin Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor: Pregnancy and Childbirth on the Plantations of the Antebellum American South, 1800–1860," *Women's History Review* 19, no. 3 (July 2010): 405.
[35] Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures,* 11.
[36] Tanfer Emin Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 397.

intervention but also active participants in systems of care, possessing forms of knowledge that were essential to their communities.

At the same time, the development of gynecology in the Pre-Civil War South cannot be understood solely as a story of scientific innovation, but must also be situated within the social, racial, and gendered structures of the Antebellum South that made such innovation possible. The legal and economic realities of slavery rendered enslaved people's bodies accessible to white physicians in ways that free patients' bodies were not. Enslaved women, in particular, occupied a unique position within this system. Their reproductive capacities were of immense economic value to slaveholders, and their bodies became sites of both labor and medical intervention.[37] Physicians operated within this framework, developing their practice and place in history as "great" physicians through access to a population that was forced to endure their treatment. At the same time, racialized beliefs about Black women's bodies, including assumptions about pain tolerance, biological difference, and reproductive function, helped justify invasive and experimental procedures.

In the Antebellum South, the operating room was not only a site of Enlightenment-era scientific advancement, but also a space where enslaved women were subjected to repeated surgical experimentation in the name of medical progress. One of the most infamous gynecological actors from the Antebellum era is J. (James) Marion Sims, often referred to as the "father of American gynecology," who developed his practice and body of knowledge through a series of experimental procedures performed on enslaved women.[38] These operations, conducted without anesthesia, relied on the coerced participation of women who could not refuse treatment. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Sims's work was celebrated as foundational

[37] Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (University of Georgia Press, 2017), 4.
[38] L. Lewis Wall, *Tears for My Sisters: The Tragedy of Obstetric Fistula* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 102.

medical progress. However, more recent scholarship has reframed these procedures as deeply embedded in the racial and gendered hierarchies of enslavement. This shift raises a broader concern about how medical authority in the antebellum South came to be defined through practices that depended on the exploitation of enslaved women.

Historians of medicine have increasingly examined the role of enslaved women in the development of gynecology, particularly through the work of physician J. Marion Sims. Deirdre Cooper Owens's *Medical Bondage* has been invaluable in reframing the origins of American gynecology, demonstrating how enslaved women's bodies were central to the production of medical knowledge. Owens argues that racialized beliefs about Black women's biological differences shaped both the treatment they received and the ways physicians interpreted their bodies.[39] This foundational work has brought to light the exploitative nature of the origins of modern gynecology and has resulted in a turn towards a contested debate between scholars within the History of Medicine and the public about the contested legacy of Sims. For example, just a year after Owens' book was published, a statue of Sims was removed from New York City's Central Park because of his tumultuous reputation.[40]

Scholars have also sought to recover the experiences of enslaved women themselves, emphasizing both their suffering and their constrained forms of agency. Historian Harriet E. Amos Doss, for example, has examined the lives of the enslaved women who served as Sims's patients, framing their experiences as a "sisterhood of shared suffering" shaped by repeated surgical intervention and limited autonomy.[41] Work such as Owens's and Doss's underscores the difficulty

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[39] Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage*, 2.
[40] Keith Wailoo, "Historical Aspects of Race and Medicine: The Case of J. Marion Sims," *JAMA* 320, no. 15 (October, 2018): 1529.

[41] Harriet E. Amos Doss, "The Enslaved Women Surgical Patients of J. Marion Sims in Antebellum Alabama: Sisterhood of Shared Suffering," in *Alabama Women: Their Lives and Times, ed. Jenny Luke et al.* (University of Georgia Press, 2017), 82.

of reconstructing enslaved women's perspectives from sources produced largely by physicians and slaveholders, while also highlighting the importance of centering their experiences in historical analysis. By focusing on the lived realities of these women, historians have challenged earlier narratives that treated them as passive subjects of medical progress.

The historical analysis of physicians, and Sims in particular, is more complex, as a lively debate has emerged about his reputation as "the father of American gynecology." Scholars generally recognize that by modern standards, Sims was not an ethical physician. However, scholars like L. Lewis Wall challenge Historians of Medicine to reconsider presentist critiques of Sims, arguing that he was a man of his time and his contributions to the medical field are significant and meaningful.[42] On the other hand, historians and scholars who consider the social and historical context of Sims' practice are not as willing to brush his malpractice under the rug. Historian Keith Wailoo argues that Sims' work contributed to a troubled legacy of prejudice against Black women patients on the part of physicians, and this legacy should be brought to light and considered.[43] These scholars represent a classical historiographical debate within the History of Medicine: whether the focus should be on the physician or the repercussions of their work.

However, these strands of scholarship focused on medical experimentation and enslaved women's healing practices have often remained separated into their own academic spheres. While historians have convincingly demonstrated that enslaved women's bodies were used to advance gynecological knowledge, and others have highlighted the importance of midwifery within enslaved communities, few studies have examined how these two systems of knowledge interacted with one another. This separation obscures the ways in which professional medical authority was constructed not only through the use of enslaved bodies but also through the

[42] L. Lewis Wall, "J Marion Sims and the 'forgotten women of gynaecology'," *British Journal of Midwifery* (2021), 173.
[43] Keith Wailoo, "Historical Aspects of Race and Medicine: The Case of J. Marion Sims," 1530.

marginalization of existing forms of Black women's expertise. Bringing these strands together allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how gynecology developed within the context of the Antebellum South.

This paper brings these bodies of scholarship into conversation by examining how professional gynecology emerged in relation to, and in tension with, enslaved women's reproductive knowledge. It argues that the rise of gynecology in the Antebellum South depended not only on the exploitation of enslaved women's bodies in surgical experimentation, but also on the racialized delegitimization of enslaved midwives' expertise, as white physicians consolidated authority by redefining Black women's reproductive knowledge as folk or herbal practice rather than modern and medical. By placing enslaved midwives alongside figures such as J. Marion Sims, this research challenges narratives that frame the development of gynecology as a linear story of scientific progress headed by "great doctors".[44] Instead, it reveals a more complex history in which medical knowledge was produced through both coercion and competition, shaped by systems of racial and gender domination that determined whose knowledge counted as legitimate. Before examining how white physicians claimed authority over women's health in the Antebellum South, it is important to recognize that enslaved women had long maintained extensive systems of reproductive and communal healing.

**Established Knowledge: Enslaved Midwives and the Practice of Reproductive Care**

Plantation midwives in the Antebellum South were also known as "grannies," "nurses," and "doctresses." These midwives were enslaved women who treated both black and white

[44] Susan M Reverby and David Rosner, "'Beyond the Great Doctors' Revisited: A Generation of the "New" Social History of Medicine" in *Locating Medical History: The Stories and Their Meanings* ed. Frank Huisman and John Harley Warner, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

patients on the plantation and dealt in much more than just childbirth.[45] Midwives treated most ailments, from upset stomachs to serious injuries, and only in rare cases were professionally trained, white physicians called to treat illness on the plantation.[46] The social position of the plantation midwife was paradoxical in nature, as her status as an enslaved worker denigrated her status despite her invaluable presence in saving lives within the plantation community. Overall, enslaved plantation midwives embodied generations-long healing expertise amid being required to labor alongside the rest of the enslaved population. The plantation's survival hinged on the presence of the plantation midwife in more ways than one.

Enslaved midwives were more than just women's health or general health experts. These women were usually domestic laborers, meaning they served a variety of positions within the plantation household. They nursed children, cleaned the house, laundered the clothes, and sometimes cooked the food. One plantation owner in South Carolina, James Henry Hammond, born in 1807, wrote an extensive manual on how his plantation was run, including the role of the midwife and nurse. Hammond wrote that nurses and midwives were managers of sorts who were tasked with making sure that mothers and children were properly clothed, behaved, and adhered to their schedules.[47] Enslaved mothers who worked in the field or in the house dropped off their young children at the children's house, under the supervision of the nurse. Thus, the healers on the plantation were also the caretakers of many young children and their mothers, which was another full-time job in itself.

The children's house was attached to the plantation "hospital" so that the nurse and the midwife could heal and watch children at the same time. It is also important to note that

[45] Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures,* 112.
[46] Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures,* 111.
[47] James Henry Hammond, *Plantation Manual, 1857–1858*, manuscript, James Henry Hammond Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress https://www.scpronet.com/modjeskaschool/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/James-Henry-Hammond-Plantation-Manual.pdf, 10-12.

Hammond declared that no formal physician was allowed to practice on the plantation, leaving the nurse and the midwife to care for all members of the plantation, white or Black.[48] For their labor throughout the year, Hammond wrote that on each Christmas, the Nurse would be rewarded one dollar while the midwife was given two dollars.[49] Hammond's regulations on the labor, responsibility, and reward for the nurse and midwife reveal that their position was highly important and often juggled alongside many other jobs, not to mention the labor these women likely had to do for their own families after working hours.

Midwives also came to the position of caretaking in indirect ways. Some historians demonstrate that many enslaved midwives started as field laborers who got injured and were rendered unable to do the job they were assigned to before. The injured women were nursed back to health by other enslaved midwives who often trained the injured women while they were being healed. Then women who were not able to return to fieldwork were made to stay in the nurse house and became healers and midwives.[50] One example of this is Phoebe, an enslaved woman in South Carolina, who was deemed a nurse after a gynecological injury that made her unable to perform fieldwork any longer. A few years after she was mentioned as "injured" in her enslaver's records, she was listed as "nurse," and worked alongside a handful of other enslaved women on the plantation as healers.[51] It is interesting to note that the arduous labor endured by enslaved women put their bodies and value at risk when it resulted in gynecological injuries, yet, it was these injuries that led them to become healers and midwives for similar ailments in other enslaved women on the plantation. One can assume the pain endured from gynecological injuries meant

[48] James Henry Hammond, *Plantation Manual, 1857–1858*, 12.
[49] Hammond also notes that this Christmas reward could be revoked if the women, at any time throughout the year, were found to be insubordinate or having broken any rules. James Henry Hammond, *Plantation Manual, 1857–1858*, 20.
[50] Diedre Cooper Ownes, *Medical Bondage*, 61-62.
[51] Diedre Cooper Ownes, *Medical Bondage*, 61.

that enslaved midwives were intimate with the experiences of these injuries beyond their highly specialized knowledge of the Black female body.

Other scholars reveal that knowledge and skills about healing were passed down, even to healthy and able enslaved women, through generations, tying back to West African roots. Elderly enslaved women engaged in "fireside training" where they taught younger Black women — often their daughters, granddaughters, or nieces — the practices of their trade under the moonlight, after fieldwork for the day was completed.[52] On some plantations, specific families of women were known as the community healers, and the knowledge of medicine and healing was maintained within this matriarchal system. For example, one enslaved woman named Elsey in South Carolina travelled to other nearby plantations to heal other enslaved people, and in her absence, Elsey's daughter took over the role of nurse and child-caretaker at their home plantation on Thorn Island.[53] Thus, despite their status as enslaved women — historically, some of the worst treated enslaved people — plantation mistresses like Elsey or Phoebe were essential and central to plantation life. They used knowledge passed down from woman to woman, often through generations, to use traditional, cultural healing remedies, and these remedies were the only way people were healed on the plantation throughout the early-to-mid nineteenth century.

These herbal and cultural practices were called "working cures" because they were rooted in non-invasive, natural remedies of healing, for pregnant or birthing mothers in particular, which defied the invasive nature of medicine practiced by traditional, white, male physicians.[54] The grandson of one plantation midwife who practiced for over three decades recalled that his grandmother's favorite cures consisted of a variety of roots like black snake root and briar roots as

[52] Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures, 130.*
[53] Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures,* 130-131.
[54] Diedre Copper Owens, *Medical Bondage*, 51.

well as sasparilla.[55] Dellie Lewis, whose grandmother was an enslaved midwife in Alabama, recalled several of the remedies her grandmother used to treat ailments for women on the plantation. Lewis's grandmother used cloves and whiskey as well as dried watermelon seeds to ease pain in pregnant women, and she even made them sleep with an axe under their bed to cure night sweats.[56] The herbs and other traditional practices were integral to the knowledge employed by plantation midwives and nurses because it symbolized agency that they could control their own lives and health to an extent.[57] These women embodied medical authority, legitimacy, agency, and independence in a time when Black women were seen as commodities before anything else. Autonomy was rare in the days of the Antebellum plantation, but with herbal medicinal practice passed down through generations of Black women, these midwives and doctors could maintain their heritage, heal their kin, and do so in a non-intrusive, humanizing way that was a rare luxury in the Antebellum period.

As special as the practices of the plantation midwife were, they were not often seen or respected by traditional, white doctors, however. These white, male physicians were classically trained in universities and medical schools and believed that the skills required to practice medicine were not "naturally" learned, but instead carefully built up over years of traditional training.[58] This meant that the authoritative voice of the white physician inherently dismissed generations of women who learned how to heal from their ancestors because their training did not meet the standards of traditional training. Furthermore, physicians ridiculed Black midwives as incompetent when coming in to finish births and other medical procedures started by enslaved midwives or nurses on the plantation.[59] Thus, even though enslaved women did most of the

[55] Diedre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage*, 51-52.
[56] Federal Writers' Project, "Interview with Dellie Lewis," in *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States* (Work Projects Administration, 1941; Project Gutenberg, 2011).
[57] Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures*, 196-197.
[58] Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures*, 47.
[59] Diedre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage*, 54.

healing work on the plantation in the Antebellum South, white, male physicians dismissed their knowledge, expertise, and authority.

This tension between physicians and enslaved midwives often came at great cost. If midwives' herbal practices were not approved or allowed by physicians to help patients on the plantation, lives could be lost. Easter Sudie Campbell, a formerly enslaved midwife who practiced healing for over forty years, recalled a moment of contention with a white physician that resulted in the death of a baby:

> I'se been granning foh nigh unter forty year en I'se only lost two babies… One of dese war de white man's fault, dis baby war born wid de jaundice en I tolds dis white man ter go ter de store en git me sum calomel en he says, "whoeber heard of givin a baby sech truck," an so dat baby died.[60]

According to Campbell, she had only ever lost two babies born alive in her career. She recalled the story of how a white physician challenged her remedy of calomel for a baby born with jaundice, and it resulted in the baby's death. Although we cannot be certain that the remedy would have worked, or if the physician did in fact hinder the baby's chance at life, we can be sure that the struggle between the physician and the enslaved midwife over who had authority to heal on the plantation put many patients at risk. Instead of allowing enslaved midwives to assist as legitimate practitioners of medicine, healing and birthing on the plantation evolved into a platform in which white physicians could tout their medical theory and training to boost their practice and legacy. Black women, healers and patients alike, paid the price.

**Claiming Authority: Physicians, Experimentation, and the Making of Gynecology**

The rise of Gynecology in the mid-nineteenth century coincided with increasing innovation in medicine as a whole on the part of Antebellum physicians. In what is known as the

[60] Federal Writers' Project, "Story of Easter Sudie Campbell," in *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States* (Work Projects Administration, 1941; Project Gutenberg, 2004).

early modern period in the history of medicine, the nineteenth century saw a rise in surgery and anatomical dissection due to the development of sterilization treatments and, in the mid-nineteenth century, the discovery of anesthesia.[61] These innovations opened the door for surgeons and physicians alike to learn new ways of healing and caregiving, and the gynecological practice was one of those developments.

At the same time, physicians also had an increased interest in the bodies, diseases, and "peculiarities" of Black bodies.[62] The rise of racialized medicine used formal, scientific language to explain and codify biological differences between the races, often used as a tool to explain African Americans' inferiority to whiteness. Physicians like Samuel A. Cartwright, a Louisiana physician who practiced medicine in the Antebellum period, used their formal training to examine the Black body and come up with pseudoscientific reasons to explain why African Americans were resigned to servitude under white authority. At the outset of his career, the Medical Association of Louisiana charged Cartwright with investigating "the diseases and physical peculiarities of the negro race," and he gave distinct reasons for why African American bodies were different from white bodies. He wrote, "Even the negro's brain and nerves, the chyle and all the humors, are tinctured with a shade of pervading darkness".[63] These "discoveries" contributed to harmful rhetoric about African Americans and influenced the evolution of cruel treatment of Black bodies in modern medical practices. Cartwright contributed to authoritative and dominant conversations about Black bodies that dissected their every imperfection while simultaneously spreading rhetoric that supported the institution of slavery and white supremacy. These conversations undoubtedly influenced the ways that doctors thought about and treated African

[61] Tatsuo Sakai and Yuh Morimoto, "The History of Infectious Diseases and Medicine," *Pathogens* 11, no. 10 (October 4, 2022): 2, 5, https://doi.org/10.3390/pathogens11101147.
[62] Samuel A Cartwright, "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," in T*he New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* (May, 1851): 691.
[63] Samuel A Cartwright, "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," 692.

American patients. Such was the case for J. Marion Sims, also known as the Father of American Gynecology.

Sims was a Southerner through and through; he was born in 1813 in Lancaster County, South Carolina. He got his medical training from South Carolina College, The Medical College of Charleston, and Jefferson Medical College — the last was the only college not in the South, as it was in Pennsylvania.[64] Sims returned to the South in 1835 to begin his professional practice in medicine, and at first, he had absolutely no interest in surgery, much less women's health, in his early career.[65] What's most important about his early career and education is that he was in the same spaces and participated in conversations where ideas about African Americans, in a social and medical sense, matched those of Cartwright and other planter-class physicians. With this understanding, it is easy to see how Sims' evolution into gynecological surgery meant that enslaved women paid the price for Sims' medical innovations.

Sims started his surgical practice under unique circumstances. He built a small hospital on his home property so that he could treat enslaved patients who plantation owners would bring to him.[66] This private space, paired with a constant stream of enslaved patients who needed intense medical attention, laid the groundwork for his surgical practice to grow. One of Sims' first operations, which were not done in a sterile operating room but in his small, open, general hospital, was on an enslaved man named Sam who suffered from osteosarcoma of the lower jaw.[67] For the operations, Sam was strapped down to a barber's chair at his legs, abdomen, arms, wrists, and head. He was in company with over a dozen other medical students and doctors who were there to observe Sims at work.[68] Sims was to perform the operation on Sam's jaw, and before he

[64] Heena K. Vaswani, et al. "A Pioneer in Women's Health, Dr. James Marion Sims (1813–1883)." *Cureus* 16, no. 11 (November 29, 2024): 1.
[65] Seale Harris, *Woman's Surgeon: The Life Story of J. Marion Sims* (The Macmillan Company, 1950), 73.
[66] Seale Harris, *Woman's Surgeon,* 75.
[67] Seale Harris, *Woman's Surgeon*, 79.
[68] Seale Harris, *Woman's Surgeon*, 80.

started, he noted that Sam "appeared to be very much alarmed."[69] Sam suffered through the operation, often thrashing and yelling out in pain, but despite the torture, returned to his enslaver fully healed. Sims was now officially on the map as an up-and-coming surgeon. After Sam's surgery, Sims wanted to improve on his technique, as he was dissatisfied with the large scarring left on Sam. He operated on another enslaved man, George, who did not survive.[70] This detail is telling because it is one of the first signs that reveal Sims' main intentions for treating enslaved people. Not to help them with their illnesses or ailments out of goodness, though this may have been one of the objectives, but surgical innovation and development of his practice was why he continued to strap down African Americans and operate on them. Sims wanted to be a pioneer of the practice.

After practicing dental surgery and general medicine for a decade, Sims stumbled into gynecological surgery in 1845 because of a random house call to help a woman who incurred an injury after falling off a horse.[71] In the month before treating this woman, Sims turned away three enslavers who brought young Black women to him describing the same complications after birth, a small hole between the bladder and vagina, also known as a vesicovaginal fistula. One of the enslavers who brought Lucy, a young enslaved woman, to Sims just before this house call was one of Sims' old friends and adamant that Sims should help Lucy with her complication.[72] After discovering a technique for treatment of the fistulas while assisting the woman in the house call, he returned to his home hospital and asked if the three enslaved women, Anarcha, Betsy, and Lucy could be leased by Sims from their enslavers so that he could try to treat them.[73] He

[69] Seale Harris, *Woman's Surgeon*, 80.
[70] Seale Harris, *Woman's Surgeon*, 81.
[71] J. Marion Sims, *The Story of My Life* (Appleton and Co., 1884.) 230-233.
[72] Seale Harris, *Woman's Surgeon*, 84.
[73] J. Marion Sims, *The Story of My Life*, 236.

expanded his hospital for African American treatment from eight to sixteen beds so that he could house patients and servants alike for his newfound passion, then he got to work.

For four years between 1845 and 1849, Sims performed dozens of surgeries on these enslaved women, each new operation presenting new complications than the last, but in Sims' eyes, he was inching towards success. He even developed new tools, like the speculum, to aid him in his operations.[74] In his autobiography, after failed operations on Lucy and Betsy, Sims writes, "I thought I could make improvements in the operation, and Anarcha was the next case."[75] This reflects the attitude that he had with Sam and George: surgical innovation where the suffering of African Americans is a small price to pay for progress. By the end of his experiments, Anarcha endured thirty operations, and when each of these women was healing between surgeries, they were made to be surgical assistants on one another's operations.[76] Through trial and error, and through the suffering of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy, Sims perfected the treatment of the vesicovaginal fistula, and he was celebrated as a foundational physician for women's health.

When he tried to perform the same operations on white women with the same ailments, Sims realized that white women were not like the "loyal and uncomplaining" enslaved Black women he experimented on. These white patients could not bear the pain of the operations and forced Sims to stop before the surgery was complete, wearing out the patient, assistant, and surgeon.[77] This observation is the heart of the importance of Sims and his experimental surgeries. Anarcha, Betsy, and Lucy had no agency in their status as subjects of innovation, and thus had no other choice than to endure the torturous pain of dozens of surgeries. Yet, because white women had the choice to refuse treatment and because their pain was respected more, Sims became

[74] J. Marion Sims, *The Story of My Life*, 235.
[75] J. Marion Sims, *The Story of My Life*, 240.
[76] Seale Harris, *Woman's Surgeon*, 92, 102.
[77] Seale Harris, *Woman's Surgeon*, 109.

frustrated when their pain prohibited him from completing his operation. Racialized beliefs about whether or how much pain Black patients endured, stemming from rhetoric like Samual A. Cartwright's, contributed to harsher treatment of Black patients, where they were made to endure more than other white patients could handle.[78] This notion meant that the delegitimization of Black women's pain and knowledge contributed to the rise of professional gynecology, led by white physicians such as Sims. However, surgical experimentation alone did not secure physicians' dominance over reproductive medicine. White doctors also relied upon rhetoric, institutional authority, and racialized assumptions to undermine the legitimacy of enslaved midwives and reposition themselves as the primary authorities on childbirth and women's health.

**Decentering Expertise: Race, Rhetoric, and the Delegitimization of Black Women's Knowledge**

Back on the plantation, midwives and physicians worked together, sometimes in tension, to provide mothers with the care they needed before, during, and after birth. In the nineteenth century, white plantation mistresses started to be cared for by a mix of trained physicians and the Black midwives that had always treated them.[79] While plantation mistresses were wary of letting male physicians with whom they were not familiar treat them, these practitioners depended on being let into this space in order that their field would be seen as legitimate and authoritative. With the emergence of more standardized, practiced medicine in the mid-nineteenth century, plantation mistresses were beginning to see classically trained physicians for more routine care, not just for complicated or risky births.[80] Thus, these white male physicians often worked in and around enslaved plantation midwives, and required the decentering of their authority so that the physicians could take their place.

[78] Diedre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage*, 112-114.
[79] Tanfer Emin Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 405.
[80] Tanfer Emin Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 405.

Before these physicians were regularly accepted into the birthing rooms of plantation mistresses, they first needed to prove their presence was necessary. This was done through emphasizing the importance of traditional training in universities and the fact that white male physicians were better suited to practice professional, scientific medicine on patients than women, and especially Black women.[81] Thus, there was an attempt to shift the way that people thought about birthing and women's health. Instead of being something that is isolated to the women's sphere, where female friends and enslaved midwives helped mistresses throughout the process, birthing was now a professional matter and should be left to the trained, white, male physicians. This shift in who claimed authority over the process happened gradually, but ultimately meant that black midwives were pushed to the margins in mistresses' birthing experiences; enslaved midwives did, however, maintain their practice among the Black community.[82]

In order to center their expertise, while delegitimizing Black midwives' experience as practitioners, physicians sometimes diminished the herbal and cultural methods of healing that enslaved midwives practiced by calling them names in attempts to undermine the generational knowledge that these women held. One enslaved midwife from Virginia, Mildred Graves, recalled that when she was called to assist two physicians on a birth, she was met with mockery as the physicians said they "don' won't any witch doctors or hoodoo stuff."[83] Using the term "witch doctor" or "hoodoo" in a derogatory way, in the presence of a birthing mistress, was an attempt to otherize and delegitimize the authority of the Black midwife. These tensions contributed to the dismissal of enslaved women's knowledge by physicians in an attempt to boost their own authority in the birthing space.

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[81] Tanfer Emin Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 405-406.
[82] Tanfer Emin Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 407.
[83] Charles L. Perdue, *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-slaves* (University of Virginia Press, 1992), 121.

Furthermore, the introduction of physicians brought with it a shift in birthing methods and strategies that conflicted with the traditional, communal methods of midwives. For example, birthing stools, which allowed the mother to deliver the baby while sitting vertically, letting gravity assist in the process, were dismissed by physicians who opted for horizontal birthing methods using beds.[84] While the horizontal method of birthing allowed for physicians to administer medications and use surgical techniques like using forceps with more ease, it hindered the mother from her usual birthing experience. With these new methods, other women were excluded from the birthing chamber, including friends and midwives, and more importantly, the use of the new medical tools was dangerous because it led to a higher risk of infection, hemorrhaging, and death.[85] Similarly to how Sims viewed his goals for his procedures on Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy, these physicians in charge of new birthing methods prioritized standard of practice and professionalism over what was best for the women themselves.

These negative attitudes towards enslaved midwives by white physicians that fueled tension were rooted in racialized beliefs about Black women that permeated the white planter class community. Bennett Dowler, a Southern antebellum physician, has an even more telling attitude towards Black midwives. In an 1854 medical journal, he critiques New Orleans, saying there is, “no other place in Christendom… in which the female practitioners are less educated, being chiefly negresses or mulattresses, or foreigners without anatomical, physiological, and obstetrical education, and consequently unacquainted with the mechanics of parturition.”[86] According to Dowler, African American midwives were not fit to successfully treat birthing mothers because they were not white and lacked formal education. Rhetoric like this, common for

[84] Sally G McMillen. *Motherhood in the Old South: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Infant Rearing* (Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 95-96.
[85] Tanfer Emin Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor,” 406.
[86] Bennett Dowler, “Obstetricial Cases and Physiological Remarks,” *The New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 11, no. 1 (July 1854): 21.

the nineteenth century, contributed to the invalidation of enslaved midwives' experience and expertise, and thus claimed that white physicians were the only medical authority when it came to birthing.

While it is clear the tension between midwives and physicians in the mistresses' birthing chambers had dire consequences for patients and midwives alike, it is also true that not all physicians were entirely antagonistic with enslaved midwives. Many physicians worked alongside midwives just fine, and even when physicians became the predominant caregiver in the plantation birthing chamber, it was still midwives who were the first on site because they were in much closer proximity to their mistress than physicians.[87] Furthermore, some physicians allowed enslaved midwives to train under them, showing even deeper relationships of cooperation. Clara Walker, an enslaved midwife, trained under a physician in Arkansas for five years. She was assigned to train under Dr. McGill when she was thirteen, at the request of her mistress. She delivered around two hundred babies, often by herself.[88] Thus, there was nuance to the relationship between plantation midwives and physicians, as was the case throughout the Antebellum South. However, stories like Clara's are often overshadowed by the effects that the legacy of gynecology and birthing has on Black communities. Ultimately, white physicians became the predominant presence in birthing chambers, and gynecologists like Sims developed their practice at the expense of Black women patients. This legacy continues today, and the only way to grapple with the issues at present is to understand the tumultuous history of gynecology and midwifery in the nineteenth century.

[87] Tanfer Emin Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 407.
[88] Tanfer Emin Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 411.

## Conclusion

The history of gynecology in the Antebellum South is not simply a story of scientific progress, innovation, or the emergence of modern medicine. Rather, it is a history deeply intertwined with slavery, racial hierarchy, and competing claims to medical authority. By placing enslaved midwives alongside physicians such as J. Marion Sims, this paper demonstrates that the rise of gynecology depended not only on the exploitation of Black women's bodies, but also on the systematic marginalization of Black women's knowledge. Enslaved midwives possessed generations of reproductive expertise rooted in communal healing, herbal medicine, and experiential care, yet white physicians increasingly dismissed these practices as primitive, unscientific, or illegitimate in order to consolidate professional authority.

This process was not accidental. As professional medicine expanded in the nineteenth century, physicians required more than surgical innovation to establish dominance over reproductive healthcare. They also needed to delegitimize the longstanding authority of women healers, particularly Black midwives whose practices challenged physicians' claims to exclusivity and expertise. Through racialized rhetoric, formal medical institutions, and claims of scientific superiority, white physicians transformed childbirth from a communal and women-centered process into a professionalized medical event controlled increasingly by male doctors. In doing so, physicians elevated their own authority while simultaneously erasing the intellectual contributions of enslaved midwives from dominant narratives of medical history.

The legacy of this history extends far beyond the Antebellum South. Modern tensions surrounding Black maternal healthcare, reproductive justice, and trust in medical institutions are deeply connected to the historical processes explored throughout this research. Contemporary scholars and reproductive justice advocates have increasingly emphasized that Black maternal

mortality rates, disparities in treatment, and distrust of physicians cannot be separated from the long history of exploitation and exclusion within American medicine. Organizations such as Physicians for Reproductive Health have highlighted how Black midwives were systematically pushed out of reproductive healthcare during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through racist and misogynistic campaigns that portrayed them as dangerous, uneducated, and unhygienic.[89] Similarly, the American Civil Liberties Union notes that the professionalization of obstetrics and gynecology often depended upon the suppression of Black midwives, whose practices were framed as threats to scientific medicine and white professional authority.[90] Organizations and activists like these are continually grappling with this complicated history to fight for reform within the field of healthcare and gynecology.

Interestingly, many of the practices and philosophies associated with enslaved midwives have since been reabsorbed into modern medicine and deemed legitimate healthcare. Today, educational institutions train certified nurse-midwives as highly respected medical professionals who provide holistic, patient-centered reproductive care. Modern midwifery programs emphasize culturally respectful healthcare, patient autonomy, emotional support, and collaborative birthing practices — many of the same principles that enslaved midwives practiced generations earlier outside the bounds of institutional medicine.[91] What was once dismissed as "hoodoo" or "unscientific" healing has now become incorporated into the professional medical system itself.

Ultimately, centering enslaved midwives alongside physicians such as Sims complicates triumphalist narratives of medical progress. The development of gynecology was not a straightforward march toward innovation led solely by brilliant physicians. It was instead a

[89] Taryn Graves, "The Racist History of Medicine and Treatment of Black Midwives," Physicians for Reproductive Health, April 17, 2025, https://prh.org/updates/racist-history-medicine-treatment-black-midwives/.
[90] Michele Goodwin, "The Racist History of Abortion and Midwifery Bans," ACLU, July 1, 2020, https://www.aclu.org/news/racial-justice/the-racist-history-of-abortion-and-midwifery-bans.
[91] Yale School of Nursing, "Nurse-Midwifery Specialty," accessed May 12, 2026, https://nursing.yale.edu/academics/master-science-nursing/masters-specialties/nurse-midwifery-specialty.

contested process shaped by coercion, racial violence, gendered hierarchy, and struggles over whose knowledge would be considered legitimate. Black women's bodies were used to advance surgical medicine, while enslaved midwives' expertise was dismissed to elevate professional authority. Recovering these histories reinserts these overlooked figures into the history of medicine and fundamentally changes how the history itself is understood and reckoned with today.

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# Women of the White Revolution:

## The White Revolution's impact on women's political mobilization

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**Abstract:**

*This article discusses Iranian women's political mobilization during the reforms of the White Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. The focus on how socioeconomic status affected women's mobilization aims to address how women from different backgrounds collectively organized to combat policies that were not indicative of the needs of the people. Imbalance in the accessibility of women's activism varied based on women's proximity to urban areas and socioeconomic status. Women of different backgrounds were not completely barred from activism but instead mobilized through different avenues. This paper positions the White Revolution as an event that exacerbated class disparities and distanced the needs of Iranian women from the government, which catalyzed women's mobilization. Addressing socioeconomic status was meant to overtly show that the organization of Iranian women was dynamic.*

Through a series of reforms, disparities between rural and urban populations were examined during Mohammad Reza Shah's reign in Iran. In an effort to modernize Iran in the 1960s and 1970s, general reforms were imposed on the rural population and women, facilitated through the White Revolution. Through the efforts of modernization, women's rights were toyed with by the Iranian government, with contributions that failed to address the needs of the different demographics of women throughout Iran. While reforms uplifted urban upper-class women, rural women remained underserved and exploited by the imposition of new labor incentives. Upper-class educated women ran the mainstream women's rights movement throughout the White Revolution. Although the reforms of the White Revolution began to decline, women outside of the mainstream women's movement took on active roles in political activism. Motivated by distrust in the Iranian government and injustices in Iran, the White Revolution created a women's movement that ebbed and flowed, mobilizing urban upper-class women and then mobilizing rural, middle-class, and leftist women. Although women across Iran were not served equitably by the Shah's reforms on women's rights, the reforms enticed women of differing socioeconomic status to take political action. The Iranian White Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s exacerbated disparities between rural and affluent women in the pursuit of women's rights, and catalyzed women's political mobilization.

**The White Revolution**

Issued through a series of reforms in the 1960s and 1970s, the White Revolution consisted of points that addressed land reform, the condition of the lower class, and women's rights. Mohammad Reza Shah, the leader of Iran, was inspired by Western democratic ideals and applied his vision to create a movement towards Western modernity in Iran, translated into the White Revolution. Announced on January 9, 1963, in a national referendum, the White Revolution originally consisted of six points, from land reforms to the political rights of

women.[92] The Shah envisioned a changed government in which Iranians were politically active. The Shah believed political participation was not feasible without reforming literacy programs to alleviate the large illiterate population.[93] Economic strength in Iran, both internally and economic independence from outside countries, was a prominent goal of the reforms.[94] A reformed internal economy was pursued through land reforms, which were intended to provide the rural lower class with the resources to gain financial status, increase agricultural production, and further develop rural land.[95] Reforms targeted the lower classes through literacy programs and land reforms, which were collectively pursued under the White Revolution to create the Shah's vision of a modernized Iran.

The White Revolution was used as a tactic to maintain and support the centralized power of the Shah. The rhetoric perpetuated by the Shah emphasized the unprecedented nature, the lasting implications, and the effortless tactics of the reforms.[96] In the Shah's book *Mission For My Country,* published in 1961, the Shah rationalized the need for his powerful position in the implementation of reform in Iran. The Shah addressed the preliminary stage that the government was in to align himself as an integral part of the Iranian government. The Shah stated that "In a country where tradition still weighs heavily, nothing could be more unrealistic than to suppose that locally-based parties will spontaneously appear and flourish. So I consider my role as King requires that I encourage parties."[97] The Shah positioned himself as a propagator of the newly implemented parliamentary democracy. The acknowledgment of the political parties and their role in the government was vital to connect the Shah as the mediator of the success of the parties.

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[92] Gholam Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah* (University of California Press, 2009), 691.
[93] Gholam Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah* (University of California Press, 2009), 221.
[94] Rouhollah K. Ramazani, "Iran's 'White Revolution': A Study in Political Development," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 2 (1974): 130.
[95] Rouhollah K. Ramazani, "Iran's 'White Revolution': A Study in Political Development," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 2 (1974): 131.
[96] Ali M Ansari, "The Myth of the White Revolution: Mohammed Reza Shah, 'Modernization' and the Consolidation of Power," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2001): 15.
[97] Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Mission for my Country* (McGraw Hill, 1961), 173.

The obfuscation that the Shah perpetuated to compensate for his reign was not widely accepted by the Iranian people. Doubt in the Iranian government permeated into outside sources as civil unrest arose, which connected Western countries like the U.S. closer to Iran.

The U.S. closely monitored Iran and was aware of the distrust that the Iranian people had in the government. In 1961, the U.S. president at the time, JFK, understood the value that Iran had and formed a special task force focused on Iran within the National Security Council.[98] In 1961, McGeorge Bundy, a member of the Iranian task force, asserted that there was a growth of civil unrest within Iran. Bundy acknowledged the damage that the Iranian elections had on trust between the people and the government. Bundy stated, "They may well give rise to violent expressions of dissatisfaction over the rigging of the results."[99] The American task force was aware of the civil unrest in Iran and the part that the Shah played in Iranian's distrust in the government. The Shah set up an ostensible election, in which the Iranian people did not have actual representation. The U.S. was alert to the political repression that the Shah had cultivated and understood that Iranians could counter repression through violence. Throughout the political repression, the Shah strategically placed himself in a position to be an advocate for the success of Iran, with Iran's success directly proportional to the Shah's power.

The White Revolution emphasized the modernization of Iran through reforms and Iran's partnership with the West. The initiation of the White Revolution coincided with compliance with the West, particularly the United States. In 1964, the Shah announced that a legal exemption would be placed for U.S. personnel working in Iran.[100] Controversy and unrest, due to the Shah's conduct in power and the reforms implemented, controlled the Shah's western alliance. Internal

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[98] April R. Summitt, "For a White Revolution: John F. Kennedy and the Shah of Iran," *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 4 (2004): 563.
[99] Philip J. Halla, *Iran: General, 1961: January-February,* PDF, 1961. https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/jfknsf-115-006#?image_identifier=JFKNSF-115-006-p0007
[100] Ansari, Ali M. "The Myth of the White Revolution: Mohammad Reza Shah, 'Modernization' and the Consolidation of Power." *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2001): 20.

strife, the loss of power, and the threat of a Soviet invasion impacted how the Shah chose to evolve Iranian society.[101] While the Shah aligned himself with the U.S., this alliance distanced him from the Iranian people and led to further dissatisfaction with the Shah's performance in power. The reforms clashed with traditional structures in Iran as they were applied with a Western approach.

The Land Reform of the White Revolution was not indicative of the needs of the rural population, and perpetuated a disconnected model of modernity. The land reforms were imperative for cooperation between the rural peasantry and the government.[102] The land reforms of the White Revolution were targeted to bolster the rural community and aligned the Shah as a champion of a new era in Iran. The Shah embraced the opportunity to endorse the land reforms, which added to the altruistic framework of the White Revolution. According to Ali Ansari, the Shah relied on the unprecedented nature of the reforms in Iranian history and reaffirmed the lack of bloodshed in the land reforms to appeal to the farmers affected by the reforms.[103] Land reforms upset the traditional structure of the agricultural sector. Ansari included the negative reception of the land reforms from the landowners, with reforms viewed as a project that excluded people impacted directly by the reforms.[104] The reforms provided agency to individual farmers but disrupted traditional systems and upset the landlords. Land reform was an instrumental component in the White Revolution, but with the rise of the Shah's plan to pull Iran towards modernity, and altered the traditional system in rural areas. The status of rural women was altered with the execution of land reforms.

The restructuring of the farm system in rural Iran changed the social dynamics of rural women. The land reforms enabled farmers to act autonomously from landlords. Changes in the

[101] April R. Summitt, "For a White Revolution: John F. Kennedy and the Shah of Iran," *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 4 (2004): 562.
[102] Kurush Shahbaz, "Iran's White Revolution," *World Af airs* 126, no.6 (1963): 17.
[103] Ali M Ansari, "The Myth of the White Revolution: Mohammad Reza Shah, 'Modernization' and the Consolidation of Power," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2001): 15.
[104] Ali M.Ansari, "The Myth of the White Revolution: Mohammad Reza Shah, 'Modernization' and the Consolidation of Power," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2001): 10.

dynamics of the agricultural system altered the role that women traditionally held as proponents of agricultural work. The reforms enabled farmers to hire workers to complete farm work previously conducted by women.[105] Women were invited to contribute to the income of their household. Paidar Parvin in *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran* asserted that while rural women had employment opportunities in the textile sector, as well as a minority employed as teachers, women were subjugated further as consumers.[106] Employment opportunities for women did not lead to an exuberant increase in the agency of rural women, but tied women to exploitative working conditions. Women comprised the majority of the labor force in the textile sector, with an increase in women's employment as the White Revolution continued.[107] Land reform failed to revolutionize the status of rural women and siloed women into working conditions that further subjugated them.

**Women's Legal Status**

The White Revolution addressed the modernization of the status of Iranian women. Reza Shah Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's father, initiated the push to modernize women's image in Iran. Andre Vogel defined Reza Shah's model of modernity as a Western model that pushed women into the public view and relied on clothing to succeed this model.[108] Reza Shah enacted the de-veiling of women, and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi continued with the uplift of de-veiled women in the public sector.[109] A motivator for further reform aimed at the status of women was women's central role in Iranian society and as a representative of Iranian values. Restrictions on women were lifted to represent the alignment of the White Revolution with the West and

[105] Fred Halliday, *Iran Dictatorship and Development* (Penguin Books, 1979), 191.
[106] Parvin Paidar, *Women and the political process in twentieth-century Iran,* (Cambridge University, 1995), 161.
[107] Parvin Paidar, *Women and the political process in twentieth-century Iran,* (Cambridge University, 1995), 161
[108] Andre Vogel, "The Source of Change Within Society: A Brief Survey of Modern Iranian Women's Movement," *Undergraduate Journal of Global Citizenship* 2, no.4 (2018): 6.
[109] Roksana Bahramitash, "Revolution, Islamization, and Women's Employment in Iran," *The Brown Journal of World Af airs* 9, no. 2 (2003): 231.

permeate the new cultural values.[110] In addition to regulations on women's clothing, Iranian women were granted suffrage and legal rights by the Family Protection Act (1967). Women's suffrage was a prominent part of the legislation passed that addressed the legal status of women in Iran.

The enfranchisement of women in the 1960s was a controversial act that upset the religious leaders in Iran. Iranian religious leaders were in disagreement with the alliance that Iran established with the U.S., and used that rationale to disagree with the mission of the White Revolution.[111] The dissatisfaction with the White Revolution was not confined to the alignment with the West, but also to the reforms that addressed the status of women. Prominent religious leader Ruhollah Khomeini, and leader in the Iranian Revolution, confided privately to the Prime Minister of Iran a year before the White Revolution and expressed his view that enfranchisement of women was contrary to Islam.[112] Opposition from religious leaders did not end the White Revolution, and the Shah continued to implement reforms on Iranian women's status, which included women's suffrage.

Legislation that worked to elevate women's position in society continued beyond suffrage. Arzoo Osanloo connected Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to his father, Reza Pahlavi, as their motives aligned with the perspective of a public perception of altruistic leaders.[113] Additionally, Osanloo noted that the Shah's grant of suffrage was rooted in a patriarchal role that the Shah saw himself in, in which he granted women the vote if they were deserving and obedient.[114] In March of 1963, the government officially codified women's suffrage and catalyzed legal reform aimed at women's rights. Shortly after the passage of women's suffrage in 1963, the Family Protection

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[110] Roksana Bahramitash, "Revolution, Islamization, and Women's Employment in Iran," *The Brown Journal of World Af airs* 9, no. 2 (2003): 231.
[111] Andre Vogel, "The Source of Change Within Society: A Brief Survey of Modern Iranian Women's Movement," *Undergraduate Journal of Global Citizenship* 2, no.4 (2018): 8.
[112] Andre Vogel, "The Source of Change Within Society: A Brief Survey of Modern Iranian Women's Movement," *Undergraduate Journal of Global Citizenship* 2, no.4 (2018): 9.
[113] Arzoo Osanloo, "Lessons from the Suffrage Movement in Iran", *The Yale Journal Forum* 129, (2020)501
[114] Arzoo Osanloo, "Lessons from the Suffrage Movement in Iran", *The Yale Journal Forum* 129, (2020)501

Law (FPL) of 1967 and the subsequent revision of the FPL in 1975 were implemented.[115] Women's suffrage was used as a point of mobility towards modernity, rejecting antiquated law as the Shah reformed Iran to meet a new standard. Although women gained suffrage, this act was counterintuitive, as the Iranian government monitored the elections and politics. The Family Protection Law of 1967, along with women's suffrage, added to the legal reform for Iranian women. Both the Family Protection Law and women's suffrage enabled the mobilization of middle- and upper-class women.

The Family Protection Law of 1967 addressed two very important components the status of women in marriage and divorce. Divorce, outlined in the FPL, placed restrictions on the impact that divorce had on women and restricted the rights that men had in divorce proceedings. If the divorce between the husband and wife was amicable, then the court would issue a non-reconciliation certificate.[116] The purpose of the FPL's regulation of divorce was to create a basis for the rights that a spouse had in court. The issue of the non-reconciliation certificate by the court was important to the agency women had in the cessation of a marriage. The certificate of non-reconciliation played a crucial role in determining the custody of children. If the certificate was issued, the court would determine the adequate arrangements for the safety of the children, including the custody arrangement.[117] Additionally, the FPL asserted the restriction of polygamy without the consent of the first wife, which was an offense that could have been brought to court.[118] The FPL was a form of general legislation aimed at redefining the influence that women had in both divorce and custody proceedings. The FPL did not eradicate the patriarchal social structure that limited women's social mobility, but enabled women's transition into the workforce. Although the reforms did not explicitly exclude a specific demographic of women, urban upper-class women were the main beneficiaries of the reforms. In addition to the

[115] Arzoo Osanloo, "Lessons from the Suffrage Movement in Iran," *The Yale Journal Forum* 129, (2020) 503.
[116] Ali Raza Naqvi, "The Family Protection Act of Iran," *Islamic Studies* 6, no. 3 (1967): 242.
[117] Ali Raza Naqvi, "The Family Protection Act of Iran," *Islamic Studies* 6, no. 3 (1967): 244.
[118] Ali Raza Naqvi, "The Family Protection Act of Iran," *Islamic Studies* 6, no. 3 (1967): 243.

legality of women's social status, educational reforms contributed to the pursuit of a women's movement within the White Revolution.

**Social Reforms Impact on Women**

Prior to women's educational reforms in the White Revolution, women's education was addressed in urban spaces and continued to progress under Mohammad Reza Shah. Under the Pahlavi dynasty in 1935, women were formally allowed to attend the University of Tehran.[119] Higher education opportunities for women continued throughout the Pahlavi dynasty. By the end of the Pahlavi dynasty, women's enrollment at universities had reached 30.9%.[120] Higher educational institutions became another avenue for the mission of modernization of the White Revolution. Institutions were secularized, in an effort to align with the West.[30121] The secularization of the higher institutions, in addition to their proximity to urban spaces, separated rural and urban women. While women were steadily incorporated into higher education, that increase was not indicative of Iranian women as a whole.

Under Mohammad Reza Shah, literacy reforms were a vital part of the education reforms established by the White Revolution. The Shah's sister, Ashraf Pahlavi, was an advocate for literacy programs. Ashraf Pahlavi was the chairman of the International Panel for the World Literacy Awards and led programs in Iran aimed at eradicating illiteracy.[122] The Shah was credited as a pioneer for literacy through his promotion and endorsement of the outreach of literacy research at the International Institute for the Study of Teaching Methods in Fighting Illiteracy in

[119] Mitra K. Shavarini, "The Feminisation of Iranian Higher Education," *International Review of Education* 51, no. 4 (2005) 333.
[120] Mitra K. Shavarini, "The Feminisation of Iranian Higher Education," *International Review of Education* 51, no. 4 (2005) 334.
[121] Mitra K. Shavarini, "The Feminisation of Iranian Higher Education," *International Review of Education* 51, no. 4 (2005) 333.
[122] Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, "Iran's Contribution to Literacy." *Convergence* 4, no. 4 (1971) 1, https://login.libweb.lib.utsa.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/irans-contribution-literacy/docview/1437905229/se-2.

Tehran.[123] The efforts of the Shah's literacy programs led to further educational opportunities that were not exclusive to urban spaces. The perceived eradication of illiteracy was a prominent component in the White Revolution, although the methods that powered literacy programs did not have the same outcomes throughout the different demographics in Iran.

The Literacy Corps was a prominent component in the mission to eradicate illiteracy and actively served rural women. The Literacy Corps was staffed by high school graduates who received rudimentary training and worked in remote areas in Iran.[124] The efforts to eradicate illiteracy contributed to a rise in literacy rates. The Literacy Corps catered its pedagogy to women differently from what was taught to men. The girls who were taught by the Literacy Corps were taught how to read, home economics, and how to be agents of the facilitation of modernization in the White Revolution.[125] While the pedagogy of the literacy corps enabled girls to read, it imposed a patriarchal model on girls. The mission of the Literacy Corps did not envision a systemic change for women, and perpetuated women's status as vital in the domestic sphere. The impact of the Literacy Corps in rural areas had issues with the established religious schools that functioned as the educational institutions that served the rural villagers.[126] Although the Literacy Corps attempted to support the rural populations, the already established education systems were hard to infiltrate. Regardless of the acceptance of the literacy programs in rural areas, there was a gap in the effectiveness of literacy programs in urban and rural spaces.

From 1956 to 1966, there was an increase in literacy rates amongst rural and urban women, although, when compared to urban women, rural women experienced a paucity in the increase of literacy. Educational opportunities prior to the White Revolution were more

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[123] Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, "Iran's Contribution to Literacy." *Convergence* 4, no. 4 (1971) 2, https://login.libweb.lib.utsa.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/irans-contribution-literacy/docview/1437905229/se-2.
[124] David Mitch and Gabriele. Cappelli, *Globalization and the Rise of Mass Education*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 318.
[125] David Mitch and Gabriele. Cappelli, *Globalization and the Rise of Mass Education*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 318.
[126] David Mitch and Gabriele. Cappelli, *Globalization and the Rise of Mass Education*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 319.

accessible in urban areas than in rural areas. A line of continuity in the illiteracy disparities between rural and urban women continued throughout the White Revolution. Jacqueline Rudolph-Touba pulled from the Iranian census to compare the lives of rural and urban women throughout the 20th century. The Iranian census conducted in 1956 found that 20.5% of urban women were literate, compared to 1% of literate rural women.[127] The literacy rates of 1966 still asserted the gap in outreach to rural women. In 1966, 36% of urban women were literate compared to 3.4% of rural women.[128] While both sectors presented a shift towards higher literacy rates over ten years, urban areas saw about a 15.5% increase in literacy, while rural areas only saw a 2.4% increase.

The literacy disparity is not confined to the failures of the White Revolution via literacy reforms. Prior to the White Revolution, the elite urban families sent their children to schools abroad.[129] Urban women had a propensity to have access to educational opportunities, with educational institutions occupying urban spaces. Cultures in urban and rural areas were not synonymous, and the application of the education reforms did not produce the same results in both areas. In Urban spaces, women had different job opportunities that were not available to rural women.

Women were integral to both the urban and rural workforce, yet there were still large disparities in the conditions of women in the rural sector. Land reforms changed the traditional family environment in rural areas. This coincided with a pull for rural women to enter the domestic sector, as farmers gained assistance outside of their immediate family. Rural women also occupied one of the most underpaid and degrading conditions in the workforce: the textile sector. Rural women occupied cloth weaving and carpet weaving jobs, which were the

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[127]Jacqueline Rudolph-Touba, "Impact of Societal Institutional Changes on the Iranian Family," *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 3, no. 1 (1973) 64.
[128] Jacqueline Rudolph-Touba, "Impact of Societal Institutional Changes on the Iranian Family," *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 3, no. 1 (1973) 64.
[129] Jacqueline Rudolph-Touba, "Impact of Societal Institutional Changes on the Iranian Family," *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 3, no. 1 (1973) 63.

occupations that paid the lowest wages and had poor working conditions.[130] In urban areas, women had the capacity to work in professional jobs, such as teaching, clerical work, and even government jobs. In 1971, an estimated 200,000 urban women were in the professional sector, with 45% in teaching positions, 44% in clerical work, and 11% in the medical sector.[131] A prominent contributor to the polarizing status of rural and urban women was educational accessibility. Education was more accessible in the urban areas, which contributed to a higher literacy rate and enabled women to seek jobs that were not as labor-intensive.

**Women's Political Mobilization**

The Women's Organization of Iran perpetuated disparities in the advocacy for different demographics of Iranian women. The Women's Organization of Iran (WOI) reinforced reforms that addressed the women's movement embedded in the White Revolution. The WOI was a mainstream organization that connected the women's movement to the Shah. In "Performance the economic-society of the Iranian women's organization for the working women of Iran," Shaukat Afshari described the creation of the WOI as an avenue to appease leftist groups that advocated for women's and workers' rights.[132] The restriction of the WOI because of the involvement of the government controlled how the WOI served women. The Shah controlled the narrative of the WOI with policy proposals vetted by the Shah himself.[133] The WOI was a prominent women's organization for affluent women in Iran, but the WOI functioned as an entity supported by the Iranian government. In addition to the government restrictions, the WOI relied on the involvement of educated, affluent women as leaders of the organization and strong activists for the WOI.

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[130] Fred Halliday, *Iran Dictatorship and Development* (Penguin Books, 1979), 191.
[131] Fred Halliday, *Iran Dictatorship and Development* (Penguin Books, 1979), 192.
[132] Shoukat Afshari, "Performance the economic-social of the Iranian Women's Organization for the working women of Iran since 1966-1976 AD," *Economic History of Iran* 13, no. 1 (2024): 344.
[133] Janet Afary, "Steering between Scylla and Charybdis: Shifting Gender Roles in Twentieth Century Iran," *NWSA Journal* 8, no. 1 (1996): 39.

The WOI was not independent from the Iranian government or the Shah. Asharf Pahlavi, a women's rights activist and sister to Mohammad Reza Shah, served as the WOI president.[134] Ashraf was instrumental in the consolidation of 17 other women's organizations in Iran, which was replaced with the High Council of Women's Organizations, situating herself as an honorary chair.[135] The involvement of Ashraf Pahlavi in the WOI and the proximity to the government popularized the organization. The influence that Asharf had was used for important legislation like the Family Protection Act, although this bill remained controversial with Nezhat Nafisi, a woman elected to parliament, because the bill was not more protective of women.[136] Ashraf Pahalavi was a product of her environment, she was directly aligned with the Shah, which impacted the activism she led but also enabled her to bring awareness towards women's rights. The circumstances that affluent and privileged women like Ashraf were in remained consistent with those of the women involved in the WOI.

Upper-class women from prominent families were represented in the WOI. Urban affluent women from politically motivated and educated families had the opportunity to have access to education in Iran and even abroad. Women who were able to engage with higher educational opportunities and had support from their families were enabled to contribute to the WOI. The Iranian Oral History Project collected the stories of leading women in the women's movement throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Amongst the women interviewed through the Oral History project was Maryam Shamlu. Shamlu was a member and leader in the WOI in the 1970s. Shamlu was born in Iran but was educated in France.[137] In France, Shamlu was involved in the women's

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[134] "Statement regarding the Passing of Princess Ashraf Pahlavi." *AllAfrica.Com,* 2016, https://login.libweb.lib.utsa.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/wire-feeds/statement-regarding-passing-princess-ashraf/docview/1755828656/se-2.

[135] Zhinia Noorian and Brian Griffith, *Mother Persia: Women in Iran's History*, (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 212.

[136] Zhinia Noorian and Brian Griffith, *Mother Persia: Women in Iran's History*, (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 213

[137] "Interview with Maryam Shamlu" by Mahnaz Afkhami, *Foundation for Iranian Studies.* 1983, https://fis-iran.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Maryam-Shamlu-English.pdf (accessed November 16, 2025)

movement, and continued her work within the women's movement in Iran.[138] Shamlu was already involved in an outside women's organization in her time in France, prior to her involvement in the WOI. Farangis Shahrokh, a secretary of the high council for the WOI, was born to an affluent family.[139] Shahrokh was from a Zoroastrian family and leveraged her social standing towards activism for not only women but relationships between the muslim community and the Zoroastrian community.[140] Social class and education influenced the accessibility of women's organizations like the WOI. The women's movement exhibited by the WOI was one that aligned with the elite, not only because of the partnership that the WOI had with the government, but women who were represented by the organization.

The White Revolution failed to resonate with a diverse demographic of women. A systematic change in women's status or the unification of women through Iran was not a part of the mission of the White Revolution. Class divide transcended employment pursuits, education, and political mobilization of women. The Shah had a vision of modernity for the White Revolution, which placed the status of women as facilitators of modernity. The discrepancies with which women were served by the reforms put urban affluent women, women who had already been exposed to higher education, as the main beneficiaries of the reforms. The outreach towards rural women through the literacy corps had little impact on a shift in rural women obtaining a formal education. For women, the mission of the White Revolution was not to change the systemic position of women. The inauthentic and general implementation of reforms contributed to women's dissatisfaction with the Shah. While women gained considerable legal rights, the reforms were not indicative of the culture of rural or middle- and lower-class spaces.

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[138] "Interview with Maryam Shamlu" by Mahnaz Afkhami, *Foundation for Iranian Studies.* 1983, https://fis-iran.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Maryam-Shamlu-English.pdf (accessed November 16, 2025)
[139] "Interview with Ms. Farangis Shahrokh" by Mahnaz Afkhami, *Foundation for Iranian Studies.* November, 1983, https://fis-iran.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Farangis-Shahrokh-Yeganegi-English-pdf.pdf (accessed November 16, 2025).
[140] "Interview with Ms. Farangis Shahrokh" by Mahnaz Afkhami, *Foundation for Iranian Studies.* November, 1983, https://fis-iran.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Farangis-Shahrokh-Yeganegi-English-pdf.pdf (accessed November 16, 2025).

The Shah's reforms were aligned with a Western vision of modernity, one that did not resonate with the traditional systems in place in Iran. Women's dissatisfaction with the reforms manifested in political action and the mobilization of women against the Shah.

**Political Mobilization Against the Shah**

Repression from the Iranian government motivated women to mobilize against the Shah. The Shah controlled the political scene in Iran with the use of police supervision and surveillance, which restricted women's movement.[141] The restriction of women's mobilization under the Shah encouraged women to seek out other methods of organization that were not controlled by the government. Women who were dissatisfied with the Shah's conduct in power were unable to join prominent women's organizations like the WOI that had the ear of the Shah. Reforms associated with women's rights were conducted through the approval of the government by groups of upper-class women, with the government approving the reforms in pursuit of the expansion of the Shah's mission.[142] Leftist women, independent women's movements, and rural women gravitated to spaces that expressed dissatisfaction with the government and enabled discussion on the women's movement that diverged from what was parroted by the WOI.

Dissatisfaction with the Shah enabled women to gravitate to leftist political movements. Leftist movements in Iran offered women an alternative to the mainstream WOI that was aligned with the same government that continued to restrict political expression. The Tudeh party in Iran, a communist party, allotted resources to support Iranian women before the reforms on women's rights of the White Revolution.[143] The accessibility of leftist organizations to lower class women emulated the exclusionary practices of the mainstream organizations. Educational space provided

[141] Haideh Moghissi, "Islamic Cultural Nationalism and Gender Politics in Iran," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2008): 545.
[142] Haideh Moghissi, "Islamic Cultural Nationalism and Gender Politics in Iran," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2008): 545.
[143] Hammed Shahidian, "The Iranian Left and the 'Woman Question' in the Revolution of 1978–79," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 2 (1994): 224

the opportunity to engage with other politically motivated people. Radicalization was fostered by the environment that women were in, including their educational and social environment. In "Women and Clandestine Politics In Iran, 1970-1985," Hammed Sahidian delineated the propensity of women who lived in cities with a historic precedent of radicalization to circulate leftist ideas along with engagement in a community of leftist organizations.[144] The association with others that affirmed and perpetuated ideas within the leftist movement impacted the exclusion of rural women. Sahidian explained that with different family dynamics and labor force, those factors created social pressure on lower-class rural women that impacted the accessibility of political participation.[145] Women in rural areas were employed by the textile sector that had exploitative labor practices, and with the rise of land reforms by the White Revolution, women were pulled into earning another income for their household.

Leftist women took on a directly combative role against the Shah as opposition to the Iranian government continued. The increase in women involved in the leftist Guerrilla movement in the 1970s put women in fatal positions, with women being executed and killed in shootouts.[146] The increase in the mobilization against the Shah in the late 1970s increased the momentum of women in leftist organizations. The Shah's forces killed 172 women who were a part of the Central Committee of the Iranian People's Guerrillas.[147] Leftist movements were monitored by the Iranian government through the SAVAK (Iranian secret police), which imprisoned and killed leftist women.[148] The stories of the mistreatment of Iranians who opposed the government further incited movements. Women who were killed by the Shah's military were publicized as martyrs through the circulation of portraits and stories of the women who were killed.[149] Leftist women

[144] Hammed Shahidian, "Women and Clandestine Politics in Iran, 1970-1985," *Feminist Studies* 23, no. 1 (1997): 16.
[145] Hammed Shahidian, "Women and Clandestine Politics in Iran, 1970-1985," *Feminist Studies* 23, no. 1 (1997): 14.
[146] Afshin Matin-Asgari, "Twentieth Century Iran's Political Prisoners." *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 5 (2006): 699.
[147] Zhinia Noorian and Brian Griffith, *Mother Persia: Women in Iran's History*, (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 231.
[148] Arielle Gorden, "From Guerrilla Girls to Zainabs: Reassessing the Figure of the 'Militant Woman' in the Iranian Revolution," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 17, no. 1 (2021):75.
[149] Arielle Gorden, "From Guerrilla Girls to Zainabs: Reassessing the Figure of the 'Militant Woman' in the Iranian Revolution," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 17, no. 1 (2021):75.

remained integral to the mobilization against the Shah, with women imprisoned and killed. Women were also involved in political action through demonstrations. A third of the demonstrators in 1977 and 1978 were made up of women's participation.[150] Opportunities to engage in mass demonstrations were largely held in cities, like Tehran, which hindered the opportunity to engage in political action. Tehran remained a vital hotspot for demonstrations that included women leading up to the Iranian Revolution.

The uprising against the Shah in the late 1970s further mobilized Iranians across the political spectrum. The unification of diverse political factions was driven by the unjust and odious actions of the Shah, which culminated in the uprisings against the Shah from 1977-1978.[151] In "Structural Causes of the Iranian Revolution," Ervand Abrahamian identified the disparities between social classes that were exacerbated in the White Revolutions despite the efforts by the reforms.[152] Abrahamian connected the increase in poor living conditions as the White Revolution continued, not only in cities but in the country, with few beneficiaries of the welfare reforms.[153] Rural families were not solely dissatisfied with the Shah, as Iranians across the country identified the injustices in the Shah's regime. In January of 1978, street protests organized by a religious group of students advocated for the exiled religious leader Khomeini.[154] Protests continued against the Iranian government with the assembly of different political factions mobilized through their joint outrage.[155] The collectivized mobilization from multiple political factions to oust the Shah was backed by a culmination of motives. Different factions were motivated to unify through dissatisfaction with the Shah's actions. Demonstrations accelerated the movement to oust the Shah, with women involved in direct action through protest and

[150] Zhinia Noorian and Brian Griffith, *Mother Persia: Women in Iran's History*, (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 234.
[151] Peter Seeberg, "The Iranian Revolution, 1977–79: Interaction and Transformation." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 41 no.4 (2014): 488.
[152] Ervand Abrahamian, "Structural Causes of the Iranian Revolution," *MERIP Reports*, no. 87 (1980): 23.
[153] Ervand Abrahamian, "Structural Causes of the Iranian Revolution," *MERIP Reports*, no. 87 (1980): 23.
[154] Fred Halliday, "THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION: UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT AND RELIGIOUS POPULISM," *Journal of International Af airs* 36, no. 2 (1982): 191.
[155] L. P. Elwell-Sutton,"The Iranian Revolution," *International Journal* 34, no. 3 (1979): 406.

demonstrations.

Women's political mobilization continued in Tehran, with the involvement of women in the Jaleh Square Massacre. On September 8, 1978, a demonstration of 20,000 people commenced in Tehran's Jaleh Square.[156] The demonstration in Jaleh Square was in protest of the Shah's repressive rule and was powered by the growing conservative religious movement.[157] Women dissatisfied with the Shah were not only mobilized through leftist organizations but also through religious demonstrations. In the Jaleh Square protests, women wore traditional veils as they marched and were subjected to violent altercations between the demonstrators and the Shah's soldiers.[158] Women who wore veils contributed to political action, as Reza Shah had previously outlawed the veil, and Mohammad Reza Shah continued with the regulation of women's religious clothing. Iranian women who aligned themselves with the conservative religious movement contributed to women's political mobilization. The reforms led by the Shah were a point of contention for the contributions of conservative religious women who were politically active.

Village women contributed to political action against the Shah's regime as a result of the dismissal of their needs. Mary Hegland asserts that village women in Aliabad were not motivated by feminism or through the pursuit of women's rights, but instead mobilized because of the mistreatment of their village by the Iranian government.[159] Aliabad women maintained a network that supported them to commute to a larger city, Shiraz, to participate in a mass demonstration.[160] The mass demonstration that the Aliabad women participated in included women across different

[156] *Black Friday In Tehran, Iran (8 september 1978)* from https://login.libweb.lib.utsa.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/encyclopedias-reference-works/black-friday-tehran-iran-8-september-1978/docview/1679044256/se-2.
[157] Los Angeles Times, "Iranian Soldiers Fire on Crowd; 58 Reported Slain:Iran Protest Deaths," September 10, 1978. https://login.libweb.lib.utsa.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/iranian-soldiers-fire-on-crowd-58-reported-slain/docview/158638294/se-2?accountid=7122. (Accessed December 1, 2025).
[158] Los Angeles Times, "Iranian Soldiers Fire on Crowd; 58 Reported Slain:Iran Protest Deaths," September 10, 1978.
[159] Mary Elaine Hegland,"Women and the Iranian Revolution: A Village Case Study," *Dialectical Anthropology* 15, no. 2-3 (1990): 185.
[160] Mary Elaine Hegland,"Women and the Iranian Revolution: A Village Case Study," *Dialectical Anthropology* 15, no. 2-3 (1990): 189.

political factions.[161] Through general land reforms aimed at appeasing the rural population but perpetuating injustices, the Shah unified people unjustly affected by the reforms. The reforms led by the Shah alienated the rural population and contributed to the factionalization with religious movements.

The Iranian Revolution evolved women's social and legal status. The fall of Mohammad Reza Shah through the efforts of diverse political groups enabled Ayatollah Khomeini to rise to power. In February of 1979, Khomeini took power and began to sever the unification of non secular groups with his religious agenda.[162] Early in Khomeini's rise to power, he restored the Islamic courts and law and enforced the veiling of women that was previously outlawed by the Pahlavi dynasty.[163] The previous Family Protection Laws were annulled under Khomeini.[164] Discarding the FPL, which regulated women's legal rights in marriage, divorce, and custody of their children at the beginning of Khomeini's rise to power, set the tone for Khomeini's agenda regarding women. Women remained politically active throughout the rise of Khomeini and continued to publicly protest the injustices of a new regime.

Women were active in protests for the advocacy of women's rights in 1979 following Khomeini's descent to change women's rights. On March 8th, 1979, which marked International Women's Day, protests broke out in major Iranian cities such as Tehran, Tabriz, and Abadan.[165] In a memorandum issued by the CIA, protests led by women stemmed from Khomeini's criticism of the clothing of the women who worked in the government and Khomeini's announcement to end

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[161] Mary Elaine Hegland, "WOMEN AND THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION: A VILLAGE CASE STUDY," *Dialectical Anthropology* 15, no. 2/3 (1990): 189.
[162] Nikki R.Keddie, "IRANIAN WOMEN'S STATUS AND STRUGGLES SINCE 1979," *Journal of International Af airs* 60, no. 2 (2007): 22.
[163] Nikki R.Keddie, "IRANIAN WOMEN'S STATUS AND STRUGGLES SINCE 1979," *Journal of International Af airs* 60, no. 2 (2007): 22.
[164] Nikki R. Keddie, "Women in Iran Since 1979," *Social Research* 67, no. 2 (2000): 401.
[165] United States Central Intelligence Agency National Foreign Assessment Center Office of Regional and Political Analysis. 1979. Iran: Women's Movement. https://login.libweb.lib.utsa.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/iran-womens-movement/docview/1679063567/se-2?accountid=7122.

coeducation in Iran.[166] Mass protests powered by women resulted in violent altercations for those who protested. In a New York Times article that followed the news of the outbreak of protests for women's rights, there were reports that women were stoned, verbally abused, and even stabbed.[167] Participants in the protests willingly risked their safety for their activism. The rise of Khomeini shifted the political activism that women powered, and women continued to emerge as prominent components in the mobilization against another unjust government.

Separated by social class and geographic location, women throughout the White Revolution faced an evolving status. Land Reforms on the rural population were resolved by the Shah to counter poverty, but were not indicative of the culture of what the rural population needed to have social mobility. Additionally, the land reforms tied women to an exploitative labor force, with land reforms evolving the family structure, allowing women to contribute to the income of the family. The income of rural women was supplemented by employment in the textile sector, which gave low wages and housed poor working conditions. The pursuit of the eradication of literacy programs alleviated a small portion of the illiteracy in the country, and did not lead to higher educational opportunities that changed the job opportunities that rural women held. Inversely, women in urban areas were affected disproportionately more than rural women. Upper class women had a propensity to live in urban areas with access to higher education, not only in Iran but abroad. Higher education opportunities enabled women to segue into mainstream advocacy organizations, like the WOI.

While the WOI was directly affiliated with the Shah's regime, women in the WOI were able to openly advocate for a fixed agenda for women's rights.  Without intent, the Shah's White

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[166] United States Central Intelligence Agency National Foreign Assessment Center Office of Regional and Political Analysis. 1979. Iran: Women's Movement. https://login.libweb.lib.utsa.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/iran-womens-movement/docview/1679063567/se-2?accountid=7122.

[167] Youssef Ibrahim, "Foes of Khomeini Focusing on issues of Women's Rights,"The New York Times, 1979. https://login.libweb.lib.utsa.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/foes-khomeini-focusing-on-issue womens-rights/docview/120938001/se-2.

Revolution empowered women across the political spectrum to mobilize. During the White Revolution, urban women took on a proactive role in the pursuit of amending the position of women, which was pursued through legislation. As the White Revolution progressed and dissatisfaction with the Shah grew, women outside of the mainstream purview of women's organizations, like leftist organizations, were prominent in the political mobilization against the Shah. While rural women still faced difficulties in their political advocacy, rural women were presented with opportunities to join in demonstrations that called for the ousting of the Shah. Additionally, the White Revolution unified women who were aligned through a common enemy, the Shah. The disparities between rural and affluent women were aggravated by the White Revolution through the injustices present in the reforms, and women sought out a political outlet through the ousting of the Shah.

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# Songs of Pride:

## How the Irish told their Story in the mid-19th Century

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**Abstract**

*During the Irish Potato Famine, Irish immigration to the United States skyrocketed, peaking in the 1860s and 1870s. Ireland is one of several countries with a strong historical connection to music and oral tradition. When the Irish immigrated to America, they brought their musical storytelling tradition with them. Ireland also had a very low literacy rate at the time, around 50 percent on average. As a way to get around their illiteracy in a country that prioritized the written word, Irish immigrants sang. By singing of their struggles, ambitions, and accomplishments, Irish immigrants found a way to tell their story.*

During the Irish Potato Famine, or the Great Hunger, Irish immigration to the United States skyrocketed. The Great Hunger itself lasted from 1845 to 1852, but the emigration it caused continued into the 1870s. When traveling to "the land of the stranger," wherever it was, the Irish carried a musical storytelling tradition with them and sang songs about their struggles, ambitions, and accomplishments.[168] Ireland is one of several countries with a strong historical connection to music and oral tradition. This long oral tradition partly explains their low literacy rate in the mid-19th century.[169] When coming to America specifically, this musical tradition became important because it was the only way illiterate Irish immigrants could tell their story, including their struggles, political ambitions, and their role in becoming American.

Throughout the hundreds of songs the Irish sang during this time in America, one theme repeats itself: pride. This theme of pride is most notable in the Civil War era, when entire brigades of Irish Americans fought and died. The 19th-century Irish immigrant and Irish American communities used songs to express their pride in themselves, their heritage, and the struggles they faced and overcame as a people. Even in songs not directly tied to the Civil War, figures like Michael Corcoran and Thomas Meagher, both Civil War generals of Irish ethnic units, continued to represent the Irish population.

Irish culture has a long history of storytelling through songs. Even before they had written language, and continuing after they became colonized by England, the Irish sang songs to remember and tell one another their history.[170] Songs and music are so deeply embedded in Irish culture that relatively few studies have been published focusing solely on music.

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[168] Milner, Dan. *The Unstoppable Irish: Songs and Integration of the New York Irish, 1783–1883*. 1st ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 135
[169] Milner, Dan. *The Unstoppable Irish: Songs and Integration of the New York Irish, 1783–1883*. 1st ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 89
[170] Moloney, Mick. *Far From the Shamrock Shore: The Story of Irish-American Immigration Through Song.* New York: Crown Books, 2002. 4

In the late 18th century, when the Irish first began coming to America specifically because of their ideals of citizenship and equality, they sang songs, both new and old, that expressed their pride in their struggle for democracy.[171] They often used these songs and the motifs in them to show their dual loyalty to both their homeland and their adopted country. But even after settling in America and trying to become citizens in their own right, the Irish still showed great pride in their original home.

Music and songs are important to history, largely because they help humanize the people we study by, quite literally, giving them a voice and helping historians hear their emotions more easily than simply reading memoirs and diaries. Especially since only about 50 percent of Ireland could read, songs become even more important, since they were among the only ways the average Irish immigrant could speak out.[172] The instruments used and the singer's inflection, among other elements of a song, help convey the artists' emotions. Even in songs with a more melancholy tone or subject matter, they still find ways to demonstrate Irish pride through their symbolism.

The historiography on Irish American music history is lacking overall, and throughout researching, only a handful of sources that are entirely focused on Irish American music within this time frame came to light. This lack of secondary sources is actually not surprising, given how commonplace music is throughout the world. Catherine Bateson even mentions in the intro of her book, *Irish American Civil War Songs: Identity, Loyalty and Nationhood,* that music was so prevalent on the front lines of the Civil War that letters to and from Irish soldiers rarely mention it. She insists that this absence in the historical record does not reflect an absence of music, but

[171] Lohman, Laura. "Virtual Citizenship and Revolutionary Transatlantic Republicanism in the Musical Lives of Exiled United Irishmen." *American Music (Champaign, Ill.)* 40, no. 2 (2022): 180–210. 186
[172] McMahon, Cian T. *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840-1880*. 1st Edition. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 17

instead reflects the normalization of it.[173] Because of this, most of the secondary sources used are not directly related to music but instead provide context for various events within the period of focus.

This lack of attention in the contemporary record also affects the available primary sources, all of which are songs published in the 1860s. With only the relevant context, I want to let these songs of pride speak for themselves, just as they did when they were written. Unfortunately, this means that authors will be credited where possible but largely ignored. A normal practice of the day was for songs to be "written" and published anonymously, more for a quick paycheck than for lasting fame.[174] While Irish immigrants and Irish Americans who could write would do this, it was just as common for someone to sing a song they had made or already knew, and for another to publish it anonymously after hearing and transcribing it.

This research includes both original publications and modern recordings where possible. Modern musicians, such as David Kincaid, have helped to keep these emotions alive even after 160 years. Since music is meant to be listened to, not just read at tempo, the ability to convey the emotions these songs are meant to carry is undeniably important, especially for a study like this, where emotion is a main factor. While most of the songs mentioned in this study do have recordings, they are not always reliable. 20th-century artists would often record only part of the original song, and while these partial recordings are accurate to the lyrics they include, by cutting out half or more of the song, cover artists can leave out a large part of the original intent. These partial records are still important, however, as they can show how society changes its expectations and norms.

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[173] Bateson, Catherine V. *Irish American Civil War songs : Identity, Loyalty, and Nationhood*. Louisiana State University Press, 2022. Introduction

[174] Milner, Dan. *The Unstoppable Irish: Songs and Integration of the New York Irish, 1783–1883*. 1st ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 5

Before starting on this topic, a note on publication is required. In the 19th century, publishers printed music in three main formats. The first, and most specialized, is sheet music. These are sheets of paper that have both the lyrics of a song and the musical notes of the accompanying instrument, or the notes that the singer would hit. This was the most expensive way to have music, since it was not only sold at a higher price, but the owner also had to be able to read the song lyrics or the music notes, preferably both. This meant that the owner of sheet music had to be more educated than the average, working-class American.

The second form of publication, and on the opposite side of the scale, was broadsides. These were the cheapest option, published as individual songs, with just the lyrics. The owner would either have already heard the song to know what tune to carry or know what "air" the song was meant to be sung to. An air would be a note at the top of the page, denoting what other song this one was to be sung to. This is much like how children are taught to sing their ABC's to the tune, or air, of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star".

The last publication of music was songsters. These align with what a modern audience would consider an album. Songsters would have dozens of songs all in one book, roughly small enough to fit into a pocket. These songs, however, just had lyrics sometimes with airs, like a broadside. Like albums or custom playlists today, songsters were collections of songs performed by the same person or sharing the same theme. One of the songs in this study comes from *Joe English's Irish Comic Songster: Containing a Fine Collection of Irish, and Other Popular Songs, as Sung by Joe English, the Celebrated Comic Vocalist*. This title indicates that the 49 songs it contains are Irish, some of them funny, and that all were performed at some point by Joe English.[175]

[175] Milner, Dan. *The Unstoppable Irish: Songs and Integration of the New York Irish, 1783–1883*. 1st ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 7-9

No matter what form a song was published in, all of the songs presented here are songs of Irish pride in various forms. Starting with general pride in their Irish roots, to the everyday struggle to obtaining a job, the turmoiled years of the Civil War, and the attempts to unite their homeland under freedom, Irish Americans wore their pride on their sleeves.

**"...for the wearing of the green."**

Ireland is a country of colonialism, and its people have been oppressed for centuries. They were most heavily oppressed by their closest neighbor, England. This oppression showed itself in many ways, and followed the Irish population even in their exodus from their homeland. While I will not touch on the Great Hunger in detail, it is an important example of the English treatment of those they ruled in Ireland. When the blight killed more than half of the potatoes, the staple of the Irish diet, the English felt this was a trial by fire the Irish needed to endure to become more civilized, and it is felt that the British government let Ireland starve for the first years of the blight.[176]

One song that shows Irish rebellion even in the face of death is the 1865 "Wearing of the Green," written by S. Behrens. It uses not only the color green, but also the shamrock, to symbolize the pride and strength of the Irish diaspora. These national symbols were already used as identifiers in the 19th century. The song, on the whole, describes the country's current state and the repression felt from the English.

It opens without delay as its first lyric informs the listener,

> Oh! Paddy dear, and did you hear, the news that's goin (sic) round,
> The Shamrock is forbid (sic) by law, to grow on Irish ground;[177]

[176] McMahon, Cian T. *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840-1880*. 1st Edition. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 31
[177] LSMC 239.4

Not only is green clothing outlawed, but the penalty is death, and according to the narrator, "they're hanging men and women there for wearin' of the green." This connects to the multiple instances that Irish people were killed by the English for showing pride or asking for equal treatment.

At the end of each of the three verses, the song drives home the pride the Irish have in Ireland's nationality via symbols like the color green. The last verse brings to focus the lack of options the Irish have and the potential consequences of them.

> But if at last our color should be torn from Ireland's heart,
> Her Sons with shame and sorrow from the dear ould (sic) soil will part;[178]

The verse mentions going to America, though reluctantly, "where, thank God, we'll live and die, still wearin' of the green," as opposed to dying without their nationality. The Irish are so proud of their heritage and their national symbols that some would rather flee their homeland carrying those symbols with them than shelter themselves in English oppression.[179]

The second verse shows the narrator's natural inclination towards Ireland. He states that "when the law can stop," grass from growing or leaves from changing with the seasons, then he will stop wearing green in his hat.[180] This implies that it would be completely unnatural for an Irish person to discard their national color. It also shows the absurdity in England's attempts to eradicate Ireland's national pride and what symbolizes it.

If there were only one quote to show the pride this song carries, it would be easy to point out.

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[178] LSMC 239.4
[179] LSMC 239.4
[180] LSMC 239.4

You may take the Shamrock from your hat, and cast it on the sod,
But 'twill take root and flourish still tho' under foot 'tis trod,[181]

Again, the shamrock had already been established as an Irish symbol at this time, and this particular lyric essentially summarizes Irish history after English colonization. More importantly, it shows their perseverance in the face of oppression, since, no matter what hardships they face, the Irish will find a way not only to survive and adapt but to "flourish".[182]

**Pride in the Face of Adversity**

The Irish have immigrated to the United States even before the American Revolution, but the Great Hunger increased this migration to levels America had never seen before.[183] Because of this, during the mid-19th century, the Irish became the first major ethnic immigrant block the United States would see.[184] A combination of factors, including the Irish being Catholic in a Protestant country and the Irish-British relations that carried over to America, led to widespread discrimination against the Irish population.

During the 1840s, a movement had become vocal against immigration overall and, to a lesser extent, against Catholicism; this movement was known as the Nativists. The group had been present in American politics on and off since the American Revolution, and with Irish refugees coming to the United States because of the Great Hunger, Nativism was on the rise.[185] This discrimination by the Nativists and the American population on the whole is notable in the working conditions the Irish faced, and in the prejudice they faced before working. While the

[181] LSMC 239.4
[182] LSMC 239.4
[183] Williams, W. H. A. *'Twas Only an Irishman's Dream : The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800-1920*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996. 1
[184] Moloney, Mick. *Far From the Shamrock Shore: The Story of Irish-American Immigration Through Song.* New York: Crown Books, 2002. 14
[185] Johnson, Tyler V. *Devotion to the Adopted Country : U.S. Immigrant Volunteers in the Mexican War*. Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press, 2012. Introduction

Irish made up a huge percentage of domestic workers and unskilled laborers overall, the idea of "no Irish need apply" or NINA was prevalent throughout the 19th century. It was so common, in fact, that multiple songs are titled "No Irish Need Apply" directly and indirectly, three of which will be brought up here. These songs show that the Irish population still had pride in themselves even when facing anti-Irish sentiments.

The Irish responded to the NINA attitude in part by singing about their better qualities, such as their hospitality to strangers. This is evident in two songs, "No Irish Need Apply," from 1863 by Kathleen O'Neil, and "What Irish Boys Can Do: Answer to - No Irish Need Apply," an undated song - published sometime between 1850 and 1870 - by William Sutherland. O'Neil and Sutherland's songs mirror each other almost phrase for phrase. The songs are so similar, in fact, that it is hard to believe the lyrics were drawn from each artist's personal experience and opinion. More likely, the ideas and imagery used were drawn from general talking points and counterarguments of the day. This can be compared to today, when a political argument or counterargument is made and then quickly picked up by everyone who agrees with it. The similarity between Kathleen O'Neil's and William Sutherland's songs mirrors this copy-paste practice.

In O'Neil's "No Irish Need Apply," published at the height of the Civil War, multiple references are made to the general hospitality that the Irish are known for. Lyrics such as…

> Pat would give his last potato, yes, and give it with a will,
> Nor whisky, which he prizes so, in any case deny,[186]

lean into established stereotypes while also highlighting the Irish people's kind, giving nature. This is reflected in Sutherland's undated song "What Irish Boys Can Do - Answer to: No Irish

[186] LSMC no plate number

Need Apply". Not only does Sutherland present almost the exact lyrics regarding Pat giving out his last potato and his best whiskey, but also,

> If you were sick and weary, and had no place to rest,
> The bed you'd get, thought poor perhaps, would be Pat's very best.[187]

Both verses show different examples of how Irish people respond when asked for generosity. This emphasis on hospitality shows the general disdain toward NINA attitudes. and hint at the disappointment immigrants had when faced with NINA when they had done nothing to deserve it.

The mirroring of lyrics continues in notes of the Irish fighting experience throughout both songs. Both mention the Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, an Irish noble who fought in the Battle of Waterloo and played a significant role in Britain's victory. O'Neil relates Wellesley directly to the hypocritical idea of NINA when she says,

> They think now of their hero, dead; his name will never die,
> Where will they get another such if 'No Irish need apply,[188]

while Sutherland is more subtle and keeps with his song title with the lyric

> And didn't he badly whip the French on the plains of Waterloo?
> Which plainly showed to the whole world what Irishmen can do.[189]

Wellesley is not the only Irish war hero that either artist mentions, but the references between the two contribute to the idea that these songs, in particular, were not wholly original.

As an Irish noble who fought on the British side, Wellesley was most likely a Protestant or Orange Irishman. There were tensions between Orange Irish and Green, or Catholic, Irish, but this relationship does not play any part in the music of the 19th century. This is due to the taboo of discussing religion in general. In fact, "if…songs were our only surviving documents about the 19th century American Irish, we would scarcely know that most of them were Roman Catholic,"

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[187] LCP Wolf 2558
[188] LSMC no plate number
[189] LSMC and LCP Wolf 2558

at all.[190] The nuances of the Green/Orange religion were also mostly lost on Americans. They prioritized nationality first when determining an immigrant's place in America.[191]

O'Neil's and Sutherland's songs have an overall calm tone when talking about NINA and the Irish opinions of it, but this is less so the case in John Poole's "No Irish Need Apply". Written in the early 1860s, this version describes a specific instance in which the narrator, a newly arrived Irish immigrant, confronts the person who advertised their job as "no Irish need apply". In the song, the Irishman goes to see the advertiser, who is casually reading the newspaper. After both men confront each other, the Irish immigrant "gave him such a welting as he'd get at Donnybrook," and after they come to something of an agreement, the Irishman reiterates "When next you want a beting (sic), add: no Irish need apply!" [192, 193]. Not only does Poole's song have active violence, but it is also the main focus of the song.

While the three artists pull from different stereotypes, Poole from the pugilist image of the Irish as fighters, and O'Neil and Sutherland from the drunkard image, all three still have similarities. Poole does not mention Wellesley but does bring up two other Irish war heroes. Both he and Sutherland mention Meagher and Corcoran, Irish generals in the Civil War, who helped improve the Irish population's reputation. The publications used for Sutherland and Poole do not have exact publication dates, only a range of 1850 to 1870, but it is clear that they were written during or possibly shortly after the Civil War.

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[190] Williams, W. H. A. *'Twas Only an Irishman's Dream : The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800-1920*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996. 6

[191] Milner, Dan. *The Unstoppable Irish: Songs and Integration of the New York Irish, 1783–1883*. 1st ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 2

[192] LCP Wolf 1607

[193] The Donnybrook Fair took place for several centuries outside Dublin, Ireland. During that time the fair became especially known for the number of fights and brawls that took place there. Here the narrator uses the phrase "a welting as he'd get at Donnybrook" to stress how bad the physical fight was between himself and the advertiser.

Poole also uses the same hospitality image as O'Neil and Sutherland in his second-to-last verse…

> Sure, Paddy's heart is in his hand, as all the world does know,
> His prates (sic) and his whiskey he will share with friend or foe;
> His door is always open to the stranger passing by;[194]

And like O'Neil, Poole brings attention to the hypocrisy of NINA with the last few lines of his song…

> And when for freedom and the right they raise the battle-cry,
> then the Rebel ranks begin to think: No Irish need apply.[195]

The similarities and the near-exact copying of phrases across these three songs further show the Irish population's overall disapproval of NINA.

Poole's version of "No Irish Need Apply" became "the most celebrated song among Irish Americans in the 1860's," despite taking advantage of several negative stereotypes.[196] Even though NINA was a facet of life more than 100 years ago, the "No Irish need apply" mentality remains a hallmark of Irish American history and of 19th-century America. Meaning that preserving the Irish reaction to this blatant discrimination, especially via song, an important part of Irish culture and a way to work around their literacy, is a way to take back this time period for Irish history. These three songs also show the pride that the Irish population maintained despite the hardships of the job market and their attempts to push back against it.

**The Civil War**

The Civil War is an important part of both American history and Irish-American history. During the Civil War, Irish Americans reversed some of the negative stereotypes and were closer

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[194] LCP Wolf 1607
[195] LCP Wolf 1607
[196] Moloney, Mick. *Far From the Shamrock Shore: The Story of Irish-American Immigration Through Song.* New York: Crown Books, 2002. 16

to "becom[ing] true Americans," than in the past decades.[197] During the 1860s, Nativist prejudices were still prevalent, and discrimination against the Irish had become somewhat normal, as can be seen above with the experience of NINA. This would lead to Irishmen enlisting in the American army in huge numbers, in part to show their "willingness to sacrifice for their new country," and hopefully gain the equal treatment they wanted.[198]

The fastest way for an Irishman to show his merit was to join the 69th, or the New York 69th Volunteer Regiment. It was an all-Irish unit that became one of the five Irish ethnic units that made up the Irish Brigade, and is the most famous of the five. Led first and most famously by Michael Corcoran, but largely by Thomas Meagher, the 69th plays a significant role in Irish songs. Scarcely an Irish song directly connected to the Civil War would not at least mention the men of the 69th, and at least four different songs mention the regiment in the title.

The New York 69th would earn its reputation as dauntless soldiers early on. They became a regiment after the First Battle of Bull Run, when they protected the retreating Union Army.[199] During all the major battles of the Civil War, the 69th was a boon to the Union. "Their discipline under fire, their ability to complete complex manoeuvres in the face of the enemy, and their self-control," throughout the Civil War all contributed to their lofty reputation.[200] Their actions on the battlefield certainly did not diffuse the "fighting Irish" stereotype, but it did at least change the perception of that stereotype to something more pride-inducing for all of America.

One song that shows the pride and bravery of the sons of Erin is "The Irish Volunteer" by Joe English. This version is from *Joe English's Comic Songster*, as mentioned in the introduction. The songster was published in 1864, but by then, all the songs had been associated with Joe

[197] Milner, Dan. *The Unstoppable Irish: Songs and Integration of the New York Irish, 1783–1883*. 1st ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 121
[198] Johnson, Tyler V. *Devotion to the Adopted Country : U.S. Immigrant Volunteers in the Mexican War*. Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press, 2012. 2
[199] Kenneally, Ian. *Courage and Conflict: Forgotten Stories of the Irish at War*. Cork: The Colins Press, 2009. 114
[200] Kenneally, Ian. *Courage and Conflict: Forgotten Stories of the Irish at War*. Cork: The Colins Press, 2009. 115

English's performances of them. "The Irish Volunteer" is most likely from 1861 or 1862. I date the song itself to those years because the last chorus mentions George McClellan, "whom the army now reveres - He'll lead us on to victory." McClellan led the Army of the Potomac from July 1861, after the battle of Bull Run, until late 1862, when he was replaced by Ambrose Burnside.[201] Even though McClellan was widely revered by the Irish American community, and some songs call for his return, the short period during which McClellan actually led the army dates the song to his tenure.

Of all the songs presented, "The Irish Volunteers" has the heaviest focus on community pride. It does not have a repeated chorus, each one instead refers to different points of pride that the whole Irish community can support. Phrases such as "the harp of Erin… the flag we all revere," "the land of our adoption," and three choruses that touch on fighting for the Union combine to bring all of the Irish American community into focus, and the pride they have in their journey and fight to become Americans.

The first verse and a half is about the narrator's life before immigrating to America, and importantly, tells the listener about his father, who "fell upon old Vinegar Hill, like an Irish volunteer.".[202] This is a reference to the 1798 uprising, in which the United Irishmen fought for, but failed to secure, equal representation in their government. This specific reference connects the Irish fight for democracy with the American reputation of democracy. It also shows the family and community lineage that the Irish had with equal and fair citizenship. By starting with a family member who died fighting for liberty, the narrator naturally calls attention to the current Civil War and its fight for continued democracy, in which the Irish were a large part of the force.

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[201]Kenneally, Ian. *Courage and Conflict: Forgotten Stories of the Irish at War*. Cork: The Colins Press, 2009. 116; 126

[202] English, Joe. *Joe English's Irish Comic Songster : Containing a Fine Collection of Irish, and Other Popular Songs, as Sung by Joe English, the Celebrated Comic Vocalist.* New York. Dick & Fitzgerald. 1864. 16

The fourth verse briefly recounts the Prince of Wales's visit to America, a major source of moral pride for the Irish community. Almost exactly six months before the start of the Civil War, Prince Edward, heir to the British throne, visited New York City. Part of his welcome to the city was "some 6,000 or 7,000 men" standing in parade dress when he exited his ship.[203] Among those who should have been there was the New York 69th Volunteer Militia, but they were noticeably absent.[204] Justified publicly as an extra and unnecessary duty for "a part-time militia unit," the Irish hostility for England on the whole, and especially for the monarchy that had left many Irish starving only a few years before, was the unspoken main factor for the units' absence.[205]

The verse mocks the way so many New Yorkers came to welcome the Prince "in gold and tinsel too," even though less than 100 years earlier Americans had fought to expel British rule.[206] Since the Irish had such a long and bloody history of trying to resist English oppression, the visit by the monarchy was seen as an insult. The last line of the verse and the chorus highlight the Irish view of the Prince and the absence of the 69th from his visit.

> They wouldn't give a d—n for kings, the Irish volunteers!
> We love the land of Liberty, its laws we will revere,
> "But the devil take nobility!" says the Irish volunteer.[207]

These few lines again reference the double standard of America, famously fighting for its liberty against the British throne, but seemingly forgetting that its laws outlaw nobility or a monarchy. They also show the strong opinion that the Irish population held regarding England and its ruling class.

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[203] Milner, Dan. *The Unstoppable Irish: Songs and Integration of the New York Irish, 1783–1883*. 1st ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 122
[204] Milner, Dan. *The Unstoppable Irish: Songs and Integration of the New York Irish, 1783–1883*. 1st ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 122
[205] Milner, Dan. *The Unstoppable Irish: Songs and Integration of the New York Irish, 1783–1883*. 1st ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 126
[206] English, Joe. *Joe English's Irish Comic Songster : Containing a Fine Collection of Irish, and Other Popular Songs, as Sung by Joe English, the Celebrated Comic Vocalist.* New York. Dick & Fitzgerald. 1864. 17
[207] English, Joe. *Joe English's Irish Comic Songster : Containing a Fine Collection of Irish, and Other Popular Songs, as Sung by Joe English, the Celebrated Comic Vocalist.* New York. Dick & Fitzgerald. 1864. 17

Joe English's songster contains several songs that depict the Irish journey toward becoming American, but "The Irish Volunteer" is a prime example of the Irish's perceived place in the United States. The song shows their long fight for liberty and democracy, and how close they hold it to their hearts. Not only are the Irish immigrants willing to fight and die for their own liberty, but they have also come to America and will do the same for their adopted country.

**The Fenians**

Among Irish Americans were the Fenian Brotherhood, who took pride in Ireland, their Irish roots, and, most importantly, Irish independence. The Fenians were founded in 1858 in New York, and their main purpose was to free Ireland from British occupation.[208] The Fenians became a large group in America, but their existence was short-lived; their zenith was in the mid 1860s.[209] While largely unacknowledged in American history, they are most infamous for their two failed "invasions" of Canada in 1866 and 1870, which played a significant role in their demise.[210]

The Fenian movement in America drew inspiration from Young Ireland, an Irish movement in the 1840s that advocated for Irish independence. The Young Irelanders wanted a fully united Ireland, based on shared history and regardless of religion or class.[211] To do this, they used newspapers and oral traditions to redefine Irish Nationalism, and they were highly successful. Influencing ideas of Irish identity in three different countries, their newspaper, *The Nation,* became an overnight success and was the most popular paper of its time.[212] The Young

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[208] Padden, Michael. *May the Road Rise to Meet You : Everything You Need to Know about Irish American History*. New York: Plume, 1999. 140-141
[209] Bateson, Catherine V. *Irish American Civil War songs : Identity, Loyalty, and Nationhood*. Louisiana State University Press, 2022. Ch 5.
[210] Padden, Michael. *May the Road Rise to Meet You : Everything You Need to Know about Irish American History*. New York: Plume, 1999. 142-143
[211] McMahon, Cian T. *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840-1880*. 1st Edition. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 38; 11
[212] McMahon, Cian T. *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840-1880*. 1st Edition. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 38; 11

Ireland movement ended in 1848, with most of its leaders imprisoned and/or exiled from England. Several of those exiled leaders would find their way to America and would have various influences on American history, though none were directly involved with the Fenians.

The Fenian movement itself advocated for military intervention to force Irish independence. Knowing that they needed help from somewhere, the Fenians wanted the United States to lend men and arms to their cause.[213] The American Civil War put a pause on any real action, but did not scrap the Fenians' hopes. Throughout the war and shortly after, the Fenians recruited Civil War Irish soldiers into their brotherhood. The hope was that these soldiers would gain invaluable battle experience. This was a double-edged sword, however, as the soldiers who returned had, in fact, experienced all that a battlefield could offer, making many of them reluctant to fight in another war.[214]

In 1866, the year that the Fenians would first try to invade Canada, *the Fenian War Echoes* collection was published in New York. It is a collection of 11 songs, all of them referencing Irish independence in various ways. They are all by different authors, and several are anonymous. Notably, *Fenian War Echoes* #10, "Our Own Again", was a poem written by Thomas Davis, one of the Young Ireland founders who died in Ireland in 1845, long before *The Fenian War Echoes* was published.[215] This inclusion shows the connection between the Young Ireland movement and the Fenian Brotherhood, as well as the enduring legacy of Irish independence. No doubt an entire dissertation can be written on *The Fenian War Echoes* and the symbolism embedded in each song. Of the 11, only two will be analyzed here.

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[213] Bateson, Catherine V. *Irish American Civil War songs : Identity, Loyalty, and Nationhood*. Louisiana State University Press, 2022. Ch 5.
[214] Bateson, Catherine V. *Irish American Civil War songs : Identity, Loyalty, and Nationhood*. Louisiana State University Press, 2022. Ch 5.
[215] McMahon, Cian T. *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840-1880*. 1st Edition. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 23

*Fenian War Echoes* # 7, "The Memory of the Dead: Who fears to speak of Ninety Eight," is an anonymous song about the uprising of 1798. As the last violent rebellion, "98" is referenced in multiple songs from the 1860s to connect past and present struggles and the pride in them. The 1798 uprising was prompted by the Irish Parliament and how little representation the Irish actually had in it. Hoping "for a new parliament representative of all segments and sects of the Irish population," the Irish were quickly massacred by English soldiers.[216] As the name implies, "The Memory of the Dead" continuously references those killed in 1798 and their enduring memory, as well as the pride men should have in that memory. Each verse has two parts: the start being the memory of 1798 and the deaths it saw, and the end of the verse demanding that "true men, like you men," will remember the event and act accordingly(song).

The first two verses are foils to each other and show that no matter what the popular reaction to 1798 might be, the Fenians will always have pride in it. The song opens with the lines…

> Who fears to speak of Ninety Eight?
> Who blushes at the name?
> When cowards mock the patriot's fate,
> who hangs his head for shame?[217]

These lines show the Fenians' defiance in a Saxon country by remembering their at-times bloody heritage. The second verse reinforces this idea and opposes the imagery from the first verse, when it ends with "All true men, like you, men, Remember them with pride." Despite what England and America might think of Irish independence, the 1798 uprising was a major source of pride and fighting spirit among the Irish diaspora. The continual reference to "true" men shows the belief that if an Irishman is willing to ignore or forget Independence, he is not a true Irishman.

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[216] McMahon, Cian T. *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840-1880*. 1st Edition. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 14; 26
[217] LSMC 238

The sixth and final verse of the song shows the lengths the Fenians will go to for Irish independence and serves as a direct call to arms.

> Then here's their mem'ry may it be, For us a guiding light,
> To cheer our strife for liberty, And teach us to unite.
> Through good and ill, be Ireland's still, Though sad as their's your fate,
> And true men, be you men, Like those of Ninety Eight.[218]

This verse drives home the Fenians' desire for Irish independence and their demand for fighting bodies to achieve it. Being the last verse of the song, it leaves the listener in emotional turmoil. On the one hand, the song forces its listener to remember the dead and "Alas, that might, can vanquish right," while on the other hand, also make the listener realize that "true men, like you," can, and should, make a stand with pride for the "right" cause, no matter the consequences.[219]

By contrast, *Fenian War Echoes* #2 "The Fenian Girl's Song," does not make a direct call to arms in the same way as "The Memory of the Dead" does. Instead, "The Fenian Girl's Song" is a mix between a call to arms and a love song. This song is also anonymous, being attributed to "a Fenian sister," and is written from a woman's perspective on the movement.

The Fenian girl opens the song saying that she will boast of her Irish identity "with far greater pride than glitt'ring wealth or Fame," even in the face of such material goods that "the Saxon lass" has to show(song). In fact, a Fenian girl needs to have pride in that lack of material goods, as shown by verse two…

> My Linsey dress is plain I know, My hat is humble too,
> But then it shows what Irish girls for Irish rights can do.[220]

This Fenian girl knows that in war she will have to go without certain commodities and is already preparing. She also believes it is better to go without a fancy hat or dress, since dressing more

[218] LSMC 238
[219] LSMC 238
[220] LSMC 232

humbly helps conserve materials that Fenian soldiers will need. This point is continued at the start of the next verse…

> Then English goods we won't receive, Victoria will blockade,
> But Fenian girls will be content with goods that's Irish made;[221]

Not only does this Fenian girl know that a war will mean a lack of goods, but she is perfectly fine with "goods that's Irish made," as opposed to English-made.[222] This first half of the song is part of the call to arms portion, calling women to support the arms that their men take up. Even though women cannot go to the front lines and truly take up arms in the traditional sense, "The Fenian Girl's Song" is an indirect call to arms, urging women to do their part to help the men fight for Irish rights.

Several verses become what can best be described as a love song when this Fenian girl brings men into the equation. Verses three and four show the reciprocal feelings between Fenian men who can soldier on the front line, and their sweethearts back home. She tells her female listeners not to worry about the men going to war because "Your Fenian love, can ne'er forget, the girl he left behind."[223] Verse four then shows men one of the rewards they will get upon their return home. The Fenian girl states that "when my Irish home is free…The Fenian lad, I love the best, shall have by heart and hand."[224] Up to this point, the song fits within the love-song genre and serves as an indirect call to arms for both Fenian women and prospective Fenian men.

The fifth and final verse is the only direct call to arms. This Fenian girl directly addresses both the risk and the reward the men will face in fighting for Irish liberty.

> Go to the field where duty calls, and win your fair one there;
> Remember that our brightest smiles, are for the true and brave,

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[221] LSMC 232
[222] LSMC 232
[223] LSMC 232
[224] LSMC 232

And that our tears are all for those, who fill a Fenian's grave.[225]

This Fenian girl is aware that by going to war many brave men will die, but the song overall shows that the risk is worth the reward of Irish liberty. While verse five is the closest thing to a direct call to arms, it still intwines with the love song of the previous verses. The notes that the women's "brightest smiles" are for those that return and that their tears will be for those who do not, have the unmistakable tone of romanticism.[226]

Placing "The Memory of the Dead" and "The Fenian Girl's Song" in relation to the height of the Fenian movement, as well as being on the eve of their first Canadian invasion, shows the pride that the Fenians felt and their excitement for Irish freedom. Neither song shys away from the reality of a war, but they both reinforce the glory that can be had in fighting. Their Canadian invasion ended in failure and, later, ridicule, but before that, the Fenian Brotherhood stood tall and unflinching in their desire for Irish recognition and independence.[227]

*The Fenian War Echoes* songs are clearly propaganda, and publishing an entire collection touches on the cultural importance of music for the Irish. By the mid-1860s, literacy among the American-born population was comparable to that of other groups, Irish Americans included.[228] But since Famine immigrants still had a lower literacy rate and were among those with the highest commitment to Irish independence, music was the best way to reach potential soldiers.

**The Modern Music Risk**

Like with any historical item, removing a song from its intended context can change its meaning. This is a problem that historians have faced for time immemorial, as it introduces

[225] LSMC 232
[226] LSMC 232
[227] Padden, Michael. *May the Road Rise to Meet You : Everything You Need to Know about Irish American History*. New York: Plume, 1999. 143
[228] Bateson, Catherine V. *Irish American Civil War songs : Identity, Loyalty, and Nationhood*. Louisiana State University Press, 2022. Ch 2.

biases, both intentional and accidental, into the interpretation of the item one studies. Songs fall into this category doubly so, as music is so commonplace that the general population has ready access to it without being exposed to the context of the piece, unlike a museum that strives to contextualize its exhibits. Many people in the general population will find a song they like, and it can be easy to simply listen to it without thinking about the deeper meaning of its lyrics. Nowhere is the problem of context more obvious than in "Pat Murphy of Meagher's Brigade."

The song is about "honest Pat Murphy, of Meagher's Brigade,"[229] and his last day in the Civil War. The main purpose of the song is to show the sacrifices Irish soldiers made and their opinions of those sacrifices and of the war itself. Pat Murphy has heroic ideas and explicitly says to himself in the second verse, "I'll fight till I die - if I shouldn't be kilt (sic) - For America's bright starry banner."[230] Towards the end of the song, Pat Murphy dies in an unnamed skirmish, and with an untold number of other soldiers.

While the song lacks specifics, it likely was written in response to the Battle of Fredericksburg. The start of the second-to-last verse, "The battle was over - the dead lay in heaps," has a striking similarity to how Ian Kenneally describes the Irish Brigade's march up Marye's Heights in his book *Courage and Conflict: Forgotten Stories of the Irish at War.*[231] Regardless of the specific battle, the point of "Pat Murphy" remains in its anonymity, as it is meant to show pride in "Meagher's Brigade" and the brave Irishmen in it. The publication used here has no publication year, but the seemingly casual mention of Jeffery Davis and the abolitionist movement clearly dates it to the Civil War years. The song was published in a

[229] Kincaid, David. *The Irish Volunteer-Songs of the Irish Union Soldier 1861-1865.* Sound recording. Salem: Rykodisc, 1998. Spotify. (2026)
[230] LCP Wolf 1849
[231] Kenneally, Ian. *Courage and Conflict: Forgotten Stories of the Irish at War*. Cork: The Colins Press, 2009. 130

broadside with an air noted - but with no sheet music directly connected to it, it is understandable that not all musicians will go searching for it.

The song has been recorded a handful of times, but this study will focus on the recordings done by David Kincaid in 1998 and by Mick Moloney in 2002. Kincaid's recording of "Pat Murphy" comes from his album *The Irish Volunteer*. Kincaid is something of a historical preservationist, so his recording gives listeners a better sense of what the song sounded like to its intended audience.[232] His version is more upbeat, so the death of Pat Murphy towards the end of the song is somewhat glossed over. This makes sense in the original context as, despite the title, Pat Murphy is not the actual focus of the song. Moloney, however, uses a slower tempo and more mournful tone from the beginning, which prepares the listener for Pat Murphy's inevitable death. This difference greatly affects how the song impacts its listeners and the interpretation they derive from it, depending on which artist plays it.

The biggest difference between these two recordings, however, is the actual content of the lyrics. Kincaid's recording is timed at four minutes and 40 seconds, while Moloney's is only four minutes and 16 seconds. This 24-second discrepancy is explained in part by the omission of an entire verse from Moloney's version of the song.

> Jeff Davids, you thief, if I had you but here,
> Your beautiful plans I'd be ruinin':
> Faix (sic), I'd give ye a taste of me bayonet, bedad (sic)
> For trying to burst up the Union,
> There's a crowd in the North, too an' they're just as bad –
> Abolitionist spouters (sic) so scaly –
> For throubling (sic) the naigers (sic) I think they deserve
> A whack from a sprig of shillaly (sic).[233]

Moloney most likely omits this verse because of the political and racial connotations it brings in. He recorded it in the early 21st century, when disagreeing with abolition and using such strong

[232] David Kincaid (@david_kincaide_official), Instagram
[233] LCP Wolf 1849

language to refer to African Americans had a different level of acceptance than it did in the 1860s when the song was originally published. In Kincaid's recording, this verse contains the only major revision: changing "naigers" to "negros". "Negro" was still a taboo word in 1998, but by including it, Kincaid preserves the song's overall spirit.

This verse shows the complex relationship between Irish Americans and the Civil War on the whole. On the one hand, the Irish were fighting and dying by the hundreds "in defence (sic) of the flag of [the] Union" and became lauded as some of the bravest soldiers on the battlefield.[234] On the other hand, they were also one of the lowest classes of people in the American social hierarchy and had a vested interest in the continual enslavement of African Americans. Given the original listener's context, this verse is unassuming. But when the context is more than 130 years removed, not only is the chosen phrasing controversial, but the whole verse throws Pat Murphy - and by extension the whole Irish population - into a less-than-heroic light.

The omission from Moloney's 2003 recording shows the problems that can occur when taking a historical item, in this case a song, out of and away from its intended context. While songs are an easy and accessible medium for the general public, listeners are at the mercy of the artist. In this case, Moloney's aversion to racial language and implications erases the complexity that Irish Americans had. Kincaid's version, while potentially offensive, prioritizes the historic reality of the 19th century.

**Conclusion**

When faced with Nativism and the hardships that being Catholic in a Protestant country entailed, the Irish held onto the one thing that could not be taken from them: their pride. Both their ability to take advantage of their illiteracy through musical word rather than spoken word,

[234] Kincaid, *The Irish Volunteer,* and Milner, *The Unstoppable Irish,* 133

and their pride in themselves, led the Irish to use music to make their voices heard when they otherwise would not have been. In seeking support for their independence, the Fenians used songs to show their pride and to persuade men to join their cause. During the Civil War, songs rallied support to the Union cause and reminded the Irish population of the democracy they had already been fighting for for decades. When faced with discrimination in the job market and with the difficult choice to leave their homeland, the Irish sang of their pride even during hardships.

All of these instances show the journey of Irish immigrants being accepted as fellow Americans over the course of just 10 years. Despite arriving in America at a great disadvantage, the Irish found ways to maintain and express their pride via their songs. This ability to interact with society in a way that was both accepted and listened to shows the importance of music to the historical record.

A large part of music in any time, however, is the unspoken social context surrounding the songs. “Pat Murphy of Meagher’s Brigade” is a key example of the social context that is important to fully understanding historical songs. There are several audio recordings for historical songs named here that show the absence or replacement of that context. All examples show how changing seemingly small or outdated parts of a song can drastically change its meaning, sometimes for better or for worse.

S. Behrens’s “Wearing of the Green,” has dozens of modern recordings, but only one that is fully accurate. Patrick O’Malley’s 1961 rendition of “Wearing of the Green” is an almost exact replication of Behrens’s original work. Most other recordings are only partial songs, having only the first two verses. Possibly the most circulated recording of the song is the 1985 version by The Wolfe Tones. Their rendition, however, adds a chorus to drive home the point that Irish people are dying for showing their colors, and changes roughly half of the second verse. The new verse

shows the family lineage and expectation that the narrator has for his country. While this still exemplifies the cultural pride that the Irish have, it erases the natural, embedded pride that the Irish have for their country, which Behrens wanted to highlight.

Conversely, John Poole's "No Irish Need Apply," which was the most popular song addressing NINA in the 1860s, has only been recorded a few times. First by Pete Seeger, a well-known folk singer, in 1954. Seeger records only the first four of six verses, and also adds a chorus

> Some may think it a misfortune to be christened Pat or Dan,
> But to me it is an honor to be born an Irishman.[235]

The addition of the chorus does not take away from the message of the song, however, as it further highlights the nostalgia of Irish discrimination and pride during the 1860s. In 2002, Mick Moloney also recorded the song more completely, with Seeger's chorus, but still leaves out the one of the six verses.

Poole's song is a broadside, and there are no airs listed, so there is  no way to know if the mood of either song is accurate to its original intention or how much so. Since Poole's song became the most popular out of the three, there may have been no need to list the air at the time, as a general audience would already know it. It also may have been printed on a different version of the song, as it was normal for broadsides and music sheets to be printed with slightly different notes and visuals depending on when they were published and by whom.[236] This possibility again shows the importance of the unspoken social context that these songs originally belonged in.

Finally, David Kincaid recorded "The Irish Volunteer" and "Pat Murphy of Meagher's Brigade" in his 1998 album *The Irish Volunteer*. Kincaid can be called a musical historical

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[235] Seeger, Pete. *Frontier Ballads* "No Irish Need Apply".of Sound Recording. Washington D.C.: Folkways Recordings, 1954. Spotify. (2026)
[236] Bateson, Catherine V. *Irish American Civil War songs : Identity, Loyalty, and Nationhood*. Louisiana State University Press, 2022. Ch 2.

preservationist and a musical historian, and his songs are extremely accurate.[237] The majority of his songs are from the Civil War, and he strives for period-accurate instruments where possible, changing the lyrics little if at all when recording them. These two songs are no exception, with Kincaid only changing a few words throughout.

All four of these songs and their various recordings are examples of the Irish community making their voices heard, and maintaining their pride, both past and present. The fact that any of these songs have survived for more than 160 years, when their intended audience could not read them and were not meant to read them, is a testament to the ability of the Irish to be heard through untraditional ways, such as music and song. Even when literacy did improve for Irish-Americans, the Irish continued to write songs so that anyone in their community could hear their voice and know their journey.[238]

[237] David Kincaid (@david_kincaide_official), Instagram

[238] Bateson, Catherine V. *Irish American Civil War songs : Identity, Loyalty, and Nationhood*. Louisiana State University Press, 2022. Ch 2.

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LCP The Library Company of Philadelphia: American Song Sheets, Slip Ballads and Poetical Broadsides Collection, 1850-1870.

LSMC The Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection


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# “Guadalupe, Respóndeme!”:

## Iconoclasm as Spiritual Warfare and Performative Testimony of Faith in Transnational Latin American Pentecostalism

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**Abstract:**

*While the scholarship on Pentecostalism often focuses on glossolalia, healings or pneumatology, the material rejection of ‘idolatrous’ sacred objects remains largely an under-examined practice in the literature. The destruction of these objects function as not only spiritual warfare via the destruction of once-sacred objects reclassified as demonic or idolatrous, but also as a performative testimony of faith.*

*This paper utilizes a hybrid methodology, combining both a mini-ethnographic case study and digital ethnographic data to examine the practice of image breaking as performative testimony within Spanish-speaking Pentecostal communities in the U.S. and Latin America. To contextualize this data, I use two frameworks from global Pentecostalism to better situate the theology and experience of Pentecostal iconoclasm before applying it to the transnational Latino Pentecostal context: 1. I examine the Pentecostal aesthetic landscape to illustrate the range of Pentecostal attitudes towards art and where Catholic/Eastern Orthodox art falls outside of Pentecostal acceptable use; 2. I use examples provided in Ghanaian Pentecostalism as described by Birgit Meyer to view iconoclasm in the context of a “theology of rupture” in which conversion aims to sever the past entirely.*

*I argue Pentecostal iconoclastic activity produces dialogue in the public performance of image-breaking: In the transnational Latino Pentecostal context, the performative destruction of Catholic images generates a dialogue with those who are both still Catholic and those who have recently left. The act itself is public and celebratory in nature, characterized by upbeat music, testimonies and preaching, transforming destruction into a demonstrable moment of spiritual liberation for other believers, new converts from Catholicism — and especially for those who still hold onto these images as sacred.*

While the scholarship on Pentecostalism often focuses on glossolalia, healings or pneumatology, the material rejection of "idolatrous" objects remains largely an under-examined practice in the literature. In the Pentecostal context, targets of destruction include both sacred images (such as rosaries, icons, depictions of Catholic saints, charms or votives for ancestor worship) and secular or occult objects (such as heavy metal posters or physical copies of secular music). The act itself is usually public, celebratory in nature, and characterized by upbeat music, testimonies and preaching, transforming destruction into a moment of spiritual liberation. As Pentecostalism is the "premier non-Catholic religion of Latin America" — the U.S. included — with more than 60,000 new converts in the U.S. annually, this ritualized destruction serves not only to reinforce the separation of the sacred and the profane, but also as a testimony to Catholics and former-Catholic alike, producing a tactile, embodied dialogue within the Latin American religious landscape.[239]

This paper utilizes a hybrid methodology, combining both a mini-ethnographic case study and digital ethnographic data to examine the practice of image breaking as both spiritual warfare and performative testimony within Spanish-speaking Pentecostal communities in the U.S. and Latin America. Because Latino Pentecostal iconoclasm is not yet documented in the literature, I will use two frameworks from global Pentecostalism to better situate the theology and the experience of Pentecostal iconoclasm before applying it to the transnational Latino Pentecostal context. First, I will examine the Pentecostal aesthetic landscape to illustrate Pentecostal attitudes towards art as differentiated from traditional Protestant, Calvinist-influenced iconophobia. Here, I will explore where Pentecostalism *encourages* art via pneumatological imagination and in

[239] R. Andrew Chesnut, "Cornering the Market: An Anatomy of Pentecostal Success," in *Competitive Spirits*, by R. Andrew Chesnut (Oxford University PressNew York, NY, 2003), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195161847.003.0003; Barry A. Kosmin and Seymour P. Lachman, "From the Ethnic Factor to the New Age," in *One Nation under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society* (The Crown Publishing Group, 2011).

viewing the artists as co-creator with God using examples from prophetic or live worship art. I will then use this analysis as a baseline with which to compare the ontologies and semiotic ideologies of Pentecostal art itself against those in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, with a focus on Birgit Meyer's concept of "bad objecthood."[240] In doing so, I will show where art transgresses these Pentecostal boundaries of acceptable use.

In the following section, I will examine the complete, radical nature of Pentecostal conversion to contextualize image breaking in the framework of rupture. Here, I will use examples provided in Ghanaian Pentecostalism as described by Birgit Meyer to explore how anti-memory practices actively rewrite the new convert's pre-Christian history in highly negative terms in order to distance one's self from it: essentially, remembering in order to forget. The aim of this analysis is to contextualize examples of "idol breaking" and iconoclasm within the context of "making a complete break with the past."[241] Then, I will look at the example of Restoration House in Puerto Rico, a Pentecostal rehabilitation complex to explore the role of testimony in conversion and the cosmology of Pentecostal conversion, focusing on how accounts of conversion stress deliverance from evil over repentance of personal sin.

With these two frameworks — 1. How devotional statues and Orthodox icons fall outside the acceptable use range of Pentecostal art and 2. Conversion as radical rupture, a break from the past and deliverance from evil — we can then explore examples of Pentecostal iconoclasm in transnational Latin American Pentecostalism. First, we will analyze a mini-ethnographic case study detailing iconoclastic activity in a Spanish-speaking congregation in Texas in the 1980s; I

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[240] Birgit Meyer, "Mediating Absence: Effecting Spiritual Presence Pictures and the Christian Imagination," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (2011): 1029–56, https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2011.0035.

[241] Birgit Meyer, "'Make a Complete Break With the Past': Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, no. 3 (1998): 316–49, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006698X00044.

then examine three recent instances of digitally-documented public image breaking. Here, I argue that Pentecostal iconoclasm in this hemispheric context, seen through the lens of aesthetic discernment and the theology of rupture, constitutes both an action of spiritual warfare and a performative testimony of faith.

## Part I

*Pentecostal Aesthetic Theology*

In this section, I will examine the Pentecostal aesthetic landscape to illustrate Pentecostal attitudes towards art. To do this, I will differentiate Pentecostal semiotic ideologies and ontologies of artwork from both 1. Calvinist Protestantism and 2. Catholicism/Orthodoxy. In the first section, I will situate Pentecostal aesthetics in the context of Calvinist Protestantism to show that while there are clear theological continuities with Protestant iconophobia, Pentecostals carry a variety of theologically-supported positions towards religious images in practice.[242] Here, I will explore where Pentecostalism encourages art, including depictions of the divine via pneumatological imagination and in viewing artists as co-creator with God using examples from prophetic or live worship art. I will then use this analysis as a baseline with which to compare Pentecostal semiotic ideologies and ontologies of artwork itself against those in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, using examples of a devotional statue of the Virgin Mary and the Byzantine icon, the *Christos Pantocrator.*[243] In doing so, I will show where art transgresses these Pentecostal boundaries of acceptable use.

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[242] Birgit Meyer, "'There Is a Spirit in That Image': Mass-Produced Jesus Pictures and Protestant-Pentecostal Animation in Ghana," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 1 (2010): 100–130, https://doi.org/10.1017/S001041750999034X; Meyer, "Mediating Absence: Effecting Spiritual Presence Pictures and the Christian Imagination."

[243] *Christos Pantocrator*, n.d., Encaustic on wood, 84 x 45.5 cm, Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spas_vsederzhitel_sinay.jpg.`

The range of positions that Pentecostals may take towards religious artwork may be inferred from a sample of views held by Pentecostals in Ghana, an area which has had exposure to a wide range of spiritual positions on the material world (Ewe, Catholic, and missionary Calvinist Protestantism). On one side of the spectrum, anthropologist Birgit Meyer details numerous examples of depictions of the Sacred Heart — which would have been brought to Ghana by Catholic missionaries — used by Pentecostals in daily life for everything from personal devotion, ethical reminders in the home and protection at sea.[244] She writes, "This is remarkable, because at the leadership level, Protestantism and Pentecostalism have long deployed a heavily iconophobic stance, according to which Catholics are likened to 'heathen' worshippers of 'idols' and 'fetishes.'"[245] Traditional Protestant semiotic ideology held that the material and spirit were entirely divorced from one another: images cannot *contain* the divine.[246] This argument is not very different from the Council of Hiereia's iconoclast response in 754 CE during the period of Byzantine Iconoclasm: the *horos* stated that Christ is both man and God, and to paint the likeness of Christ is either to "circumscribe the uncircumscribable character of the Godhead" or "confuse that unconfused union" — both of which are blasphemous.[247] Notably, the recommendation that the worshipper should "paint in himself their virtues as living icons" is not unfamiliar to Calvinist Protestantism, and as we will see, some uncompromising Pentecostals in the modern day.[248]

Protestant missionaries in Ghana would have destroyed objects associated with traditional African spiritual practices, as they did to the Ewe tribe, to demonstrate this very belief.[249] Ewe

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[244] Meyer, "Mediating Absence: Effecting Spiritual Presence Pictures and the Christian Imagination," 1042–45.
[245] Meyer, "Mediating Absence: Effecting Spiritual Presence Pictures and the Christian Imagination," 1044.
[246] Meyer, "'There Is a Spirit in That Image.'"
[247] Jaś Elsner, "Iconoclasm as Discourse: From Antiquity to Byzantium," *The Art Bulletin* 94, no. 3 (2012): 379, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2012.10786048.
[248] Elsner, "Iconoclasm as Discourse: From Antiquity to Byzantium," 380.
[249] Meyer, "'There Is a Spirit in That Image.'"

tradition holds that that material world can function as a host for the spiritual, but Protestant iconoclastic activity inadvertently reinforced this core belief, overlaying their own concepts of demonic forces over the Ewe concepts of the spirit.[250] For those with a Ewe background, images and material objects are not to be used, not because the material is *divorced* from the spiritual, but because evil spirits may inhabit these objects to work in the material world.[251]

While images of Jesus are pervasive in many Pentecostal circles, this creates a dilemma for those who adhere to a semiotic ideology that enforces a radical separation of the material and physical like Protestantism.[252] These individuals may believe that a "purer" religion could exist without distracting physical objects. Consequently, they find themselves in the uncomfortable position of navigating how to access, know and feel the presence of the divine when these objects are prohibited for not only encouraging idolatrous behavior but also for hosting or allowing demonic influence (as a means by which the image may acquire the status of "bad objecthood").[253] Birgit Meyer writes that "calling the name of Jesus is much stressed, as well as the experience of being 'filled with the Holy Spirit,' an experience in which the believer's body is held to function as prime medium and index of divine presence."[254] This is quite difficult, however, owing not only to the large range of semiotic ideologies within Pentecostalism and the prevalence of the use of images in personal devotion, but also because of the necessity of the material: Birgit Meyer argues that these images function to "mediate absence" "that renders present what is not 'there'".[255] In another article, she claims that "the idea of an immaterial

[250] Meyer, "'There Is a Spirit in That Image,'" 112.
[251] Meyer, "'There Is a Spirit in That Image,'" 106–13.
[252] Meyer, "Mediating Absence: Effecting Spiritual Presence Pictures and the Christian Imagination."
[253] Meyer, "Mediating Absence: Effecting Spiritual Presence Pictures and the Christian Imagination," 1050.
[254] Meyer, "Mediating Absence: Effecting Spiritual Presence Pictures and the Christian Imagination," 1050.
[255] Meyer, "Mediating Absence: Effecting Spiritual Presence Pictures and the Christian Imagination," 1036.

religion is a fiction; even a semiotic ideology that denounces religious things and pictures cannot do without material forms".[256] Even for the most staunchly iconophobic Pentecostal churches, there remains a Pentecostal aesthetic landscape which includes the Bible itself, church interiors and equipment and aspirations of modernity and middle-class prosperity.[257]

In more recent years, Pentecostalism has grown more open to the use of visual and material 'symbols' (e.g. Italian olive oil prayed over and used for anointing) and live worship art or Christian-themed art displayed on Church grounds.[258] Félix-Jäger writes that

> "people are formed aesthetically through visual art and architecture, and many Pentecostal churches are beginning to understand this as an important aspect of their spiritual formation. While it may be better to opt for a Spirit-filled community over a beautifully affective environment, Pentecostals are beginning to aim for both, seeing these aesthetic options as a false dichotomy."[259]

Some Pentecostal churches have embraced live worship or prophetic art, in which an artist will take part in spontaneous live painting during a worship service.[260] As shown in the videos "Endless Dance: Live Worship Painting by Vanessa Horabuena" and "[Extended] Touch of Heaven + Alabaster Heart | David Funk | Bethel Church," artists typically speed paint on one side

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[256] Meyer, "'There Is a Spirit in That Image,'" 127.
[257] Steven Félix-Jäger, "Material Visions of the Good Life: Pentecostalism, Visual Culture, and the Prosperity Gospel," *Pneuma* 41, no. 2 (2019): 279–90, https://doi.org/10.1163/15700747-04102002.
[258] Meyer, "'There Is a Spirit in That Image,'" 113; Steven Félix-Jäger, "Arts and Aesthetics: The Pursuit of Beauty through the Outpour of the Spirit," in *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology*, 1st ed., by Wolfgang Vondey, ed. Wolfgang Vondey (Routledge, 2020), 339, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429507076-37.
[259] Félix-Jäger, "Arts and Aesthetics: The Pursuit of Beauty through the Outpour of the Spirit," 339.
[260] Steven Félix-Jäger, "Introduction," *Pentecostal Aesthetics*, 2015, 204–5, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004291621_002; Félix-Jäger, "Arts and Aesthetics: The Pursuit of Beauty through the Outpour of the Spirit," 338; Vanessa Horabuena, *Live Worship Painting: The Lion and Lamb Passover*, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9qWjdhduI0; Vanessa Horabuena, *Worship Painting w/ Vanessa Horabuena - "The King of Heaven,"* 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNVNPUvjSnQ; Vanessa Horabuena, *Endless Dance: Live Worship Painting by Vanessa Horabuena | @joycemeyer @nataliegrantmusic*, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpVA1StzkU8; Vanessa Horabuena, *I Painted The Face of Jesus...And The Crowd Went Silent!*, 2026, https://youtu.be/pIDPG8sDCAU?si=tvYvL_K2SkRaK3nb; Proverbs Media Group, *God's Canvas | The Story of Vanessa Horabuena*, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgQuY2A9RpY; Bethel, *[Extended] Touch of Heaven + Alabaster Heart | David Funk | Bethel Church*, 2021, https://youtu.be/8eMCJSbmI3g?si=keJuwChcREzZuzBa.

of the stage where music, singers and sometimes other forms of embodied art such as praise dancing, spontaneous dance or flag twirling take place.[261] The artist may have a planned composition ahead of the service that emphasizes the pastor's sermon points, or they may depict an unplanned work based on their own inspiration and impressions in the moment.[262]

Painters may see their own creative process as prayer and worship itself, with bidirectional communication between artists and the Holy Spirit who inspires the piece.[263] Sometimes, like in the example of Paint and Worship's video, "$10,000 ART/ "The Bride of Christ" art by Paint and Worship/ prophetic art with prophetic word," painters may report having a specific word or message they received during the creative process.[264] Here, painter Julyza Ruiz reads the exact words she heard from God: she says "I heard the Lord so clearly speak to me and I wrote down the prophetic word and he said 'Walk in purity my beloved. Walk in love all the days of your life, for I am your bridegroom and you are my bride. You are perfect, wholly without blemish. There is no sin in you or upon you for my son Jesus's blood has cleansed you and made you whole…".[265] In another example, Christian worship artist and performance speed painter Vanessa Horabuena, associated with the Church for the Nations in Phoenix, a Spirit-filled non-denominational church with Pentecostal-style worship, often prays before, during, and after: "I hear God say to me 'I

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[261] Félix-Jäger, "Arts and Aesthetics: The Pursuit of Beauty through the Outpour of the Spirit"; Horabuena, *Endless Dance: Live Worship Painting by Vanessa Horabuena | @joycemeyer @nataliegrantmusic*; Bethel, *[Extended] Touch of Heaven + Alabaster Heart | David Funk | Bethel Church*.

[262] Félix-Jäger, "Arts and Aesthetics: The Pursuit of Beauty through the Outpour of the Spirit," 338; Horabuena, *Endless Dance: Live Worship Painting by Vanessa Horabuena | @joycemeyer @nataliegrantmusic*; Bethel, *[Extended] Touch of Heaven + Alabaster Heart | David Funk | Bethel Church*.

[263] Alana Sawrey and Emma M. Austin, "Praying through Artmaking: Imaginal Dialogue with Artistic Archetypes and Opportunities for Pentecostal Aesthetic Expression," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 34, no. 1 (2025): 133–58, https://doi.org/10.1163/17455251-bja10069.

[264] Paint and Worship, *$10,000 ART/ "The Bride of Christ" Art by Paint and Worship/ Prophetic Art with Prophetic Word*, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnklxAdZixg&list=PLOoCOWB-62OUHhcdpKn3tSMTTOmoUbYyl&index=11.

[265] Paint and Worship, *$10,000 ART/ "The Bride of Christ" Art by Paint and Worship/ Prophetic Art with Prophetic Word*.

want you to worship me like you're a kid again, you're just dancing for me.'"[266] While not restricted to Pentecostalism, the prophetic art movement sees art as a means of prayer, both listening to and hearing from God, and the art produced is a product of collaboration with the divine, sometimes a physical, visual prophetic message or spiritual reminder.

Recognizing the diverse perspectives within Pentecostalism — ranging from viewing photographs as potentially demonic or at least distracting and idolatrous, to seeing art as a product of collaboration between the artist and the Holy Spirit as co-creators —we now examine two oft-confused categories of art from the Catholic and Eastern rite/Orthodox traditions: 1. Devotional or sacred images, as seen in the example of a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes and 2. Icons, as seen in the example of the *Christos Pantocrator*.[267] The first, a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, would depict the Virgin in all-white with a light blue sash around her waist, a rosary over her arms, and a yellow rose on each foot (see Fig. 1).[268] The image was created in the 1870s by well-known religious sculptor Joseph Fabisch to remember a Marian apparition that is believed to have taken place in Lourdes, France in 1858 when she appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous, then a child. The location of the grotto in Lourdes is sacred and now has an association with healing, especially with the use of Lourdes water: a statue was placed in the original location of the apparition to aid devotional practice. While the original was made from Carrara marble, devotees may obtain a certified replica or another faithful reproduction, provided the essential elements of the images are the same (the white mantel, blue sash, rosary and yellow roses): this image received a canonical coronation in 1876.[269] These are sacred images used in churches, other sacred spaces, or the home, as a mental reminder and focal point for attention in prayer. If

[266] Proverbs Media Group, *God's Canvas | The Story of Vanessa Horabuena*.
[267] Joseph-Hugues Fabisch, *Our Lady of Lourdes*, 1864, Carrara marble, Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, Lourdes, France; *Christos Pantocrator*.
[268] Fabisch, *Our Lady of Lourdes*.
[269] "Take the Statue of Our Lady of Lourdes Home with You," Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes.

destroyed, a beautiful piece of art is destroyed, but one's connection to the Virgin Mary is unaffected: the image is simply an aid in prayer.

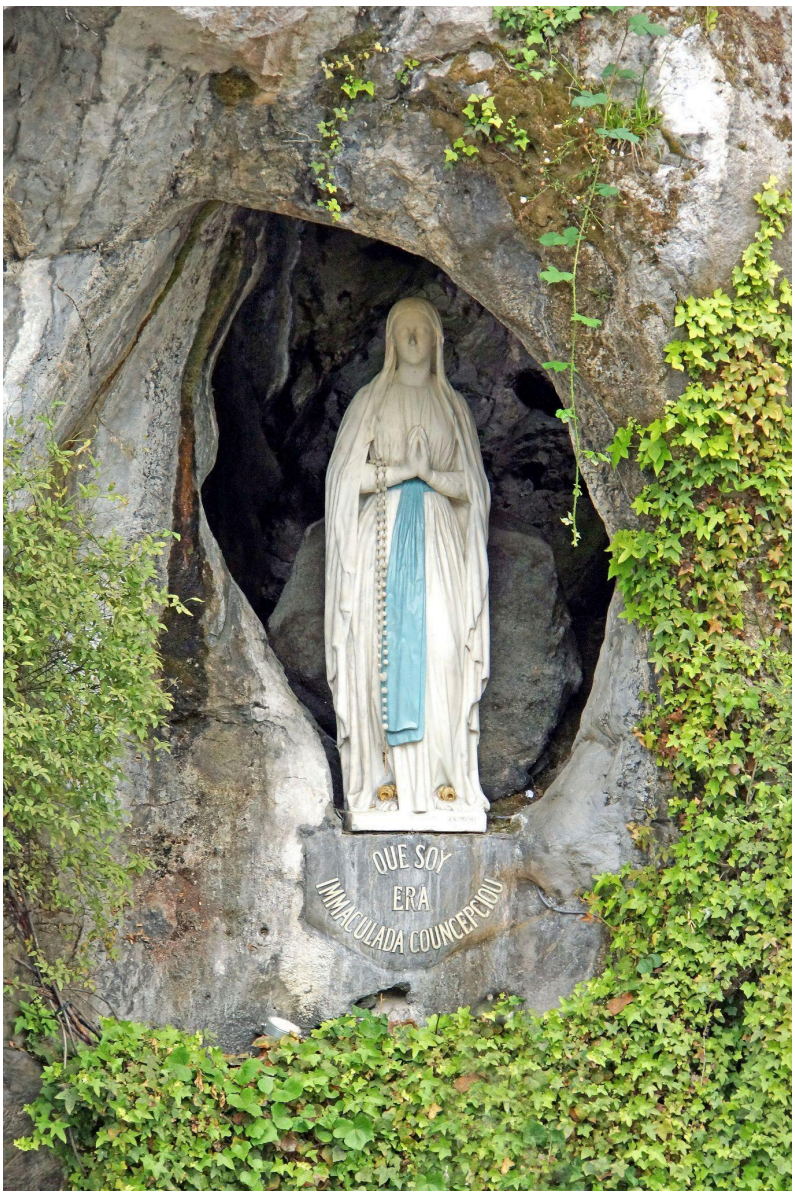



Fig. 1. Joseph-Hugues Fabisch, Our Lady of Lourdes, 1864. Carrara marble. Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, Lourdes, France. (Photo by Dennis Jarvis; available via Wikimedia Commons).

This may be contrasted with the icon: here, I will turn to the *Christos Pantocrator,* a 6th century encaustic icon of Jesus Christ (see Fig. 2).[270] At St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of

[270] *Christos Pantocrator*.

Mt. Sinai, its distant residence likely protected it from the iconoclasts of the 8th century.[271] In the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, icons are "symbols that *make present* what they convey"; they are not representational like portraits in the Western art tradition or even the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes just discussed.[272] Rather, they are *sacramental* in nature: they are physical objects which function as a touchpoint between the physical and spiritual worlds (Meyer might say they "mediate absence" – making present what is not present).[273] For this, icons are "written" by an iconographer in prayer (never "painted"), functioning as a *visual sacred text*.[274] In *Letters to a Young Catholic,* George Weigel describes the *sacramental imagination* of Catholicism as "the core Catholic conviction that God saves and sanctifies the world through the materials of the world."[275] The icon is a part of this imagination: rather than simply *represent* or *depict,* the icon *makes present* that which it conveys. Instead of simply saying "this is what this man looked like," the *Christos Pantocrator* was written to effect the *encounter with* Christ Almighty.[276] In an icon, as the viewer looks at Christ in the painting, it is also believed that Christ is looking back, and this capacity is not diminished in replicas of the image. Because these images function as sacred windows to the divine, icons are typically blessed by a priest, including replicas to designate them as such. Ontologically, the *Christos Pantocrator*, unlike other depictions, facilitates an encounter with the Christ, participating in the reality of the prototype.[277]

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[271] George Weigel, "Letter Three: St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai/The Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem," in *Letters to a Young Catholic*, Revised and Expanded edition (Basic Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2015).
[272] Weigel, "Letter Three: St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai/The Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem."
[273] Meyer, "Mediating Absence: Effecting Spiritual Presence Pictures and the Christian Imagination."
[274] Weigel, "Letter Three: St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai/The Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem."
[275] Weigel, "Letter Six: The Olde Cheshire Cheese, London," in *Letters to a Young Catholic*, Revised and Expanded edition (Basic Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2015).
[276] Weigel, "Letter Three: St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai/The Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem."
[277] Elsner, "Iconoclasm as Discourse: From Antiquity to Byzantium"; Weigel, "Letter Three: St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai/The Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem."



Fig. 2. Christos Pantocrator, 6th century. Encaustic on wood, 84 x 45.5 cm. Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. (Source: Wikimedia Commons).

With an understanding of the ontologies of Catholic or Orthodox sacred images and icons, we now return to the Pentecostal aesthetic landscape and notice where religious art may have some functional overlap. Influenced by contemporary Anglican theologian Jeremy Begbie, Pentecostals are influenced by the concept of God as creator and human as co-creators in the creative act of producing art, and many artists would cite the Holy Spirit as inspiration: and so, when the artwork is produced in prayer and worship, and is seen as a creative collaboration with

the divine, we might see some similarity here. Both Pentecostal prophetic artists and Orthodox iconographers would consider the art they do *prayer &* they both create these images *inspired by God.*

Some images do not fit this framework, providing context for Pentecostal anxieties with images, particularly Catholic ones. In his article "Inspiration and Discernment in Pentecostal Aesthetics," Felix-Jager outlines a method for Pentecostal artistic discernment based on the fruits of the Holy Spirit: "Spirit-inspired rituals are those that promote social cohesion, enable religious devotees to negotiate social change, are emotionally and aesthetically transformative, bring liberation and healing, and intensify human creativity."[278]

The evaluation of artwork concerns both the ontological nature of the object (secular or cursed/demonic) and the actions it encourages in viewers (idolatry). Birgit Meyer highlights these concerns through an illuminating example in Ghanaian Pentecostalism: she recounts a story of a woman who displayed an image of Jesus in her own home, but her sister warned her against this saying: "There is a [demonic] spirit in that image...they use the eyes."[279] This view of images is influenced by Ewe spirituality which holds that spirits need physical hosts to act in the material world: in Ghanaian Pentecostalism, even a picture of Jesus may "slip" into what she terms "bad objecthood."[280] In this case, the anxiety is not merely around an object which encourages an idolatrous response, but also around the potential for this object to host an evil spiritual presence ("bad objecthood").[281] This particular anxiety is specific to Ghana, but Pentecostal semiotic

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[278] Steven Felix-Jager, "Inspiration and Discernment in Pentecostal Aesthetics," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 23, no. 1 (2014): 85–104, https://doi.org/10.1163/17455251-02301009; Amos Yong, "Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions" (PhD dissertation, Boston University, 1999), Publication No. 9923992, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, https://www.proquest.com/docview/304493464.
[279] Meyer, "'There Is a Spirit in That Image,'" 121.
[280] Meyer, "'There Is a Spirit in That Image,'" 121.
[281] Meyer, "'There Is a Spirit in That Image.'"

ideology and theology allows room for it. In the case of a depiction of the Virgin Mary, which would encourage a devotee to pray in front of it, no distinction between "veneration" and "worship" is made: the Virgin Mary is not God and must not be prayed to. According to Pentecostal artistic discernment based on the fruits of the Spirit, the Spirit could not encourage idolatrous behavior: the depiction would then transgress Pentecostal boundaries of acceptable use, and may even fall into "bad objecthood."

*On the Image of Guadalupe in Latino Catholicism*

This sentiment among Pentecostals is important for the discussion at hand because where the destruction of Catholic imagery is concerned, the Virgen de Guadalupe, is the most common religious image among Catholics in Latin America (see Figure 3); as such, it is a primary target in the filmed instances of Latino Pentecostal iconoclasm we will discuss later. The image of the Virgen de Guadalupe is deeply significant to many Latino Catholics, embedded in the religious landscape: Fr. Elizondo, in his 1988 work *The Future is Mestizo*, writes that Guadalupe is not merely a Christianized figure but one who actively incorporates the blood, identity, and suffering of the indigenous: he writes that "one cannot know, understand, or appreciate the Mexican people without a deep appreciation for Guadalupe."[282]

[282] Virgilio P. Elizondo, *The Future Is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet*, Rev. ed (University Press of Colorado, 2000).



Figure 3. Virgen de Guadalupe, ca. 1531. Oil and tempera on maguey fiber (cactus cloth), 170 x 105 cm. Basilica of Guadalupe, Mexico City. (Image: Wikimedia Commons).

The story begins on the morning of December 9, 1531, when Juan Diego, a recent native convert to Catholicism, was on his way to mass in Tlatelolco and unexpectedly heard beautiful singing. Moments later, he witnessed an apparition of the Virgin Mary on Tepeyac, the very site of worship of the goddess Tonantzín, radiating like the sun, and not with a European complexion – but an indigenous one. Juan Diego's "Beloved Maiden" was Mary, now as *La Morena,* the mother

of God who would bring life to *mestizos* of the New World (Figure 3). Fr. Elizondo writes that without Guadalupe, "there would be no Mexico today. There would simply be new Spain and the descendants of the native peoples, co-existing but never merging into one people."[283] The significance of Guadalupe is the creation of a Catholicism that embraced indigenous heritage and demonstrates how deeply embedded Guadalupe is for not only spirituality in Latin America, but also for embracing the new *mestizo* identity. In the last section, we will discuss the unique dialogic significance of Pentecostal iconoclastic activity towards Guadalupe in the transnational Latino spiritual context.

In the next section, I will explore the second pillar for contextualizing transnational Latino Pentecostal iconoclasm towards Catholic sacred images and icons: the complete, radical nature of Pentecostal conversion through the lens of "rupture." Here, we will explore how Pentecostal converts are "born again" and so encouraged to "make a complete break with the past."[284]

*Theology of Rupture*

We will now turn to the second pillar of understanding transnational Latin American Pentecostal iconoclastic activity: conversion as complete rupture, break with the past. To do this, I will use examples provided in Ghanaian Pentecostalism as described by Brigit Meyer to explore how anti-memory practices actively rewrite the new convert's pre-Christian history in highly negative terms in order to distance one's self from it: essentially remembering in order to forget. Then I will look at the example of Restoration House in Puerto Rico, a Pentecostal rehabilitation complex to explore the role of testimony in conversion, focusing on how accounts of conversion stress deliverance from evil (over repentance of personal sin). The aim of this analysis is to

[283] Elizondo, *The Future Is Mestizo*.
[284] Meyer, "'Make a Complete Break With the Past': Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse."

understand Pentecostal conversion as total: "making a complete break with the past."[285] Those who convert are considered to be "born again," encouraging a radical rupture with one's pre-Christian or even Catholic past — even to the extent of breaking with any image or object which may encourage one to slip back into their previous life.

The concept of "rupture" in Pentecostal conversion, though now garnering more academic attention, is primarily documented by the anthropologist Birgit Meyer, who conducted her fieldwork in Ghana. In her article "Make a Complete Break with the Past," Meyer focuses her attention on what might be considered post-conversion rituals like deliverance which function to sever the new convert's ties to the past.[286] While conversion may take place in a single moment, "deliverance is not considered to be brought about instantly, but rather is regarded as a long-term process" and it not something which comes automatically.[287] She cites a 1993 booklet written by Ghanaian pastor S.Y. Kwami which details areas of deliverance including "deliverance from the immediate past," "deliverance from the ancestral past," (which may include a break from African rituals, which are "completely diabolized" in this view), "deliverance from occultic bondages" and "deliverance from demonic control and influence."[288] In this context, "virtually all other religions other than Pentecostalist Christianity" are considered "occult," and when they make use of ritual object such as "talismans, rings, black powder…candles, incense, amulets," etc… "Kwami asserts that anybody whoever had any connection with any of these organizations prior

[285] Meyer, "'Make a Complete Break With the Past': Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse."
[286] Meyer, "'Make a Complete Break With the Past': Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse."
[287] Meyer, "'Make a Complete Break With the Past': Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse," 321–23.
[288] Meyer, "'Make a Complete Break With the Past': Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse," 324.

to becoming born again has to denounce such links and destroy all objects related to them."[289] In this way, converts are encouraged to take a deep inventory of their own past — including that of their ancestral past — to rewrite this narrative in highly negative terms (e.g. a view that might see Ewe ritual as demonic), to diabolize, and to then separate, liberate and forget the past; essentially, what Meyer terms an "anti-memory practice" which is remembering the past to forget the past.[290]

The phenomenon of total conversion in Pentecostalism is worldwide and tied to a Pentecostal epistemology of rupture: anthropologist Hansen writes in her book *Addicted to Christ* that the "ultimate goal of the encounter is to achieve  a complete break with pre-conversion ways of seeing the world, and to re-people the world with enchanted experiences, beings, and passions. Christian knowledge, then, only is gained through radical rupture with everyday perception."[291] The rupture "separates people both from their pasts and from the surrounding social world… as Gill reports from Bolivia they sharply distinguish between their pre- and post conversion lives."[292] These choices are then reinforced when the convert works to stay within their new Pentecostal community, which enforces a specific moral code including conservative dress and abstinence from relations outside of marriage and drinking alcohol.[293] Hansen and Robbins identify other postconversion "rituals of rupture" which aim to solidify the break including everything from sleep deprivation, prolonged fasting, attending *culto* or service multiple days a week, spirit baptism and deliverance practices.[294] These deliverance practices may include the destruction of

[289] Meyer, "'Make a Complete Break With the Past': Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse," 324.
[290] Meyer, "'Make a Complete Break With the Past': Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse"; Meyer, "Mediating Absence: Effecting Spiritual Presence Pictures and the Christian Imagination."
[291] Helena Hansen, *Addicted to Christ: Remaking Men in Puerto Rican Pentecostal Drug Ministries* (University of California press, 2018), 25.
[292] Joel Robbins, "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, no. 1 (2004): 127, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.32.061002.093421.
[293] Hansen, *Addicted to Christ*; Robbins, "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity."
[294] Hansen, *Addicted to Christ*; Robbins, "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity," 128.

belongings, media and religious objects which have ties to the pre-conversion life, with the aim of "freeing" the new convert from past bondages.[295] Citing Loret Mariz, Hansen notes that "Being free means being free to reject evil.... According to this model, the individual is fragile and the force of his own will is not strong enough to escape evil.... For this reason, accounts of conversion do not stress repentance of sins but deliverance from evil."[296]

Hansen, who did her fieldwork at a Pentecostal drug ministry in Puerto Rico, Restoration House, discusses the role of testimony as a narrative tool in creating and telling stories of rupture, allowing the faithful to clearly delineate their pre- and post-conversion lives. She describes testimony as a tool for self-orientation in both the physical and spiritual realm: in narrative "the apparent disorder of addicted pasts became part of a grander design, and which portended a victorious future."[297] As such, testimony is not only a tool for those who may need to hear it, but it is an equally important tool for self-alignment and the cultivation of one's own faith.[298] As such, a new convert may perform iconoclastic activity, either in the home or publicly, to not only demonstrate that they are no longer "bound" by their past life, but that they also have the power to rewrite their new lives and reject sin and demonic influences. When public, this is both a demonstration to witnesses and a demonstration to the self, marking an important rite of passage within Pentecostalism.

## Part II

In the previous section, we discussed two frameworks with which to view Pentecostal iconoclastic activity: 1. How devotional statues and Catholic/Orthodox icons fall outside the

[295] Meyer, "'Make a Complete Break With the Past': Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse."
[296] Loret Mariz as quoted in Hansen, *Addicted to Christ*, 43–44.
[297] Hansen, *Addicted to Christ*, 37.
[298] Hansen, *Addicted to Christ*, 37.

acceptable use range within Pentecostalism 2. Conversion as radical rupture, making a complete break with the past and deliverance from evil. Within Pentecostalism, iconoclastic activity — though not well-documented or discussed academically — is a worldwide phenomenon. In the examples above, new converts in Ghana, Bolivia, and Puerto Rico participated in the breaking of objects as a postconversion ritual. In the next section, I will turn to examples of Pentecostal iconoclasm in the transnational Latin American context. First, I will provide details from a mini-ethnographic case study, taken from a semi-structured interview, which details iconoclastic activity in a Spanish-speaking congregation in Texas in the 1980s. Then, I will proceed to discuss the digital ethnographic data: three examples in the Latin American hemispheric context in which iconoclastic activity was briefly filmed in a public setting. Finally, I will discuss the significance of the specific destruction of Catholic images in the transnational Latin American context in the context of testimony, rupture and iconoclasm as dialogue.

*Iconoclasm of Catholic Imagery at the Templo de Alabanza, Dallas, TX*

Templo de Alabanza was a Spanish-language Pentecostal church located in Oak Cliff. The building itself was an old, converted theater, painted with Old City Jerusalem on its interior with reliefs on the wall to create the appearance of a colonnade. The church held Spanish-only services and Dallas locals would attend church events several times a week, gathering in this space for worship, prayer and healing services, Bible studies and more. In a semi-structured interview, I asked Antonio, a former congregant, about the church's history, semiotic ideology, views on media consumption and secular music before he narrated his experiences with the church's practice of image-breaking. Antonio described the church itself:

> In the early 80s, services were held at 2010 W. Jefferson in an old converted movie theatre. In those days, you could tell it had been an old movie theatre because the seats and layout were very much in the style of a theatre. The church was probably one of the most vibrant, up-and-coming Latin Pentecostal churches in the U.S. at the time. I had never

> seen a Spanish-language church that appeared to have the same energy and resources as the Anglo ministries I watched on television. In those days, most Spanish-language churches in Dallas were small and had very few resources. The Templo of the 80s was not the same as the Templo of the 90s or 00s because they eventually changed leadership. Even the building today has no association with the original ministry that converted the old theatre. I think about those days often because there was always this anticipation and expectation that they could be the biggest in the world. They were extremely popular. The pastor at the time was dynamic and liked, and he even held classes on Sundays (between services) that you could take where he would teach people "how to preach."[299]

In the Templo de Alabanza, the material world was treated as a broken place and not the ultimate home for any of the faithful. This concept is expressed explicitly in music and sermons, and allows the faithful to rewrite the way they view their world and life circumstances. Antonio recounted this belief:

> This world is not my home. There's a place waiting for me. God has a place waiting for me. God has a reward for me in heaven. Sometimes you get the sense that there wasn't a lot of expectation for this world being any good...we shouldn't be too attached to it. It's temporary. That this world that, that the danger is being too attached to it, right? That there's, there's a danger that you can turn, and I remember hearing this so explicitly, like so directly: you have to be careful not to turn your car or your possessions or your house into an idol, that you, you have to be careful not to turn anything material into an idol. Nothing...you can't put something before God and something you can't give too much importance to anything physical or material…Now you've edged God out.[300]

This ideology creates the backdrop for iconoclastic activity in that a fear of the bad use of material objects is imbued into every object: any object could slip into "bad objecthood" if its importance is placed before God. This also extended into media consumption, which could be another attachment to "the things of this world." Antonio recalled a story of a couple who was afraid of having the appearance that they watched too much TV:

> I got the sense the pastor didn't really, you know, that he was talking about how, you shouldn't be consuming so much media, consume so much TV…the pastor did a drop in visit on one of [the] couples. And so it's the big tube TVs, right? It's basically furniture. So he walks in and starts talking to them, he puts his hand on the TV to see if it had been on, see if it was warm. That's what they said after he left, that he put his hand on the TV to see

[299] Antonio (pseudonym), follow-up interview by author, May 9, 2026, San Antonio, TX.
[300] Antonio (pseudonym), "Interview with 'Antonio,'" (San Antonio, TX), March 12, 2026, Personal Interview.

> that like, oh, are y'all, is this thing on all the time or that kind of thing, right? And so they got super embarrassed. Because they turned it off when he got there.[301]

In another instance, secular media is not simply viewed as an attachment or potential temptation to idolotry, but that it is actively demonic, making the breaking of physical media an act of spiritual warfare. Antonio narrated a moment from his childhood:

> I walk in the house, and my dad comes, walks in from my bedroom, and takes the metal box that I used to keep on my stuff in, like you know, under the bed, that stuff I don't want them to read or see, like, my journal, and my cassette tapes that were secular music, and just dumps it, dumps everything out in front of me. And then he takes the, it was Depeche Mode, the Violator album, which is the first real full-length secular cassette I ever bought. It's a classic now, right?...And so he threw them in the sink. and poured water on him. Like, he was really pissed and they were yelling. Both of them were just basically yelling at me about bringing that into the house and how I'm wasting my money...up to that point, we had been pretty much told that, like, that music has demonic influence.[302]

It is within this context that Antonio describes the moment in which he witnessed the breaking of Catholic images at the Templo de Alabanza:

> So, this was just a midweek service. I didn't even know if it was, like, I don't even know where they came from, who brought them, but there was a bunch of, like, uh, what looked like Catholic, you know, idols...So they put down a big giant, it looked like it looked like a bunch of bed sheets sewn together. And they covered the entire front of the altar with it. And then they brought out these oval statues and there was a bunch of them. So they told the men to come to the front, we're going to start the music up and you're going to smash them with your feet. And so the music starts right, and it's usually like 145 BPM, like really fast. *Dun keh dun keh dun keh dun keh*, right, real fast. And so they start going like wild and stuff, and then here come the idols, right? Here come the statues, I mean. They throw them down and they're just stomping on them. And they're also like saying that idols must be destroyed and, you know, the only thing that has power is God and Christ and the Holy Spirit…I remember this guy, he had just like some church shoes, some dress shoes on, and he just stomped [on the statue], his foot went right through, because I guess they're hollow? His foot went right through it. And he just looked so happy, really happy about that.[303]

Labelling these objects as "idols" rather than sacred images allows the participants to perform a linguistic iconoclasm that precedes the physical act. This semantic shift effectively de-sanctifies

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[301] Antonio (pseudonym), "Interview with 'Antonio.'"
[302] Antonio (pseudonym), "Interview with 'Antonio.'"
[303] Antonio (pseudonym), "Interview with 'Antonio.'"

the object, reclassifying what might be seen as a holy mediator in Catholicism as a material deception that must be destroyed to liberate the believer's space and spirit. For a former Catholic, this act would have been especially meaningful as a postconversion ritual aimed at making a definitive break with one's own now-idolatrous past. We will now turn to three examples of Pentecostal iconoclasm which were filmed and posted online in recent years, analyzing them through the lenses of Pentecostal aesthetic theology and semiotic ideology, and conversion as rupture.

*Digital Ethnographic Data*

In this section, I discuss three filmed instances of recent Pentecostal iconoclastic activity with Catholic images. The first video, "Ex-católico destruye idólatria," is recorded at a gas station "Lima Viaje Fresco."[304] The speaker is ex-Catholic and is speaking to a man named Frank, who works at the gas station. After reciting verses from Psalm 115 (quoted again below), he destroys Catholic images to, as he states, prove they have no power to do good or evil, and challenges the fear that God will punish for breaking images saying: "*todo es una obra mentirosa es una tanta mentira que el vaticano ha lanzado en el mundo entero"* (English: It is all a deceitful work, it is such a huge lie that the Vatican has launched into the whole world).[305] Here, the speaker is referring to both sacred images and icons in the Catholic tradition, claiming that the Vatican has created these knowing they are idolatrous, but lies to the whole world. In this video, we see an example of performative, dialogic image-breaking: the pastor addresses a Catholic fear that God will punish an individual for destroying a sacred image by the demonstration of its destruction.

[304] Camino de salvación, *Ex-Católico Destruye Idólatria*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxKj2BsQ5Pc&list=PLOoCOWB-62OUHhcdpKn3tSMTTOmoUbYyl&index=4.
[305] Camino de salvación, *Ex-Católico Destruye Idólatria*.

For those watching, the message communicated is that the image itself is powerless, the Vatican is deceitful, and destroying the image will invoke no punishment.

The second video, "Increíble!! Pastor Destruye Imágenes, Ídolos de la Iglesia Católica," takes place on a public street where the pastor destroys both Catholic statues, like the Virgin de Guadalupe and the Divine Child, as well as folk magic items like *aquas de ruda* (rue water).[306] Notably, he says this must be done in public, claiming that destroying idols privately in a room "has no authority."[307] Tearing a printed image of the Virgen de Guadalupe, the pastor shouts: "*La Guadalupe no tiene poder*! *La Guadalupe no tiene poder*!"[308] Because the images are Catholic, this statement is important for understanding the *performative* and *dialogic* nature of public iconoclasm: this pastor believes it's necessary to do this in public — for Catholic onlookers. He wants Catholics to see that the idols – specifically Guadalupe among others – are powerless to defend themselves against a "simple pastor." Some Biblical justification for iconoclasm is found in the texts referenced in the video: Ex. 32: 7-14, 19-29.[309] This is Moses' petition to God on behalf of the idolators who made the golden calf. The pastor sees himself as fulfilling a Mosaic role: he is tearing down the corrupting objects to appease God's wrath on behalf of the idolators, while extending grace, salvation, and the cleansing blood of Christ to those trapped in idolatry (in this case, Catholics).

In third video, entitled "predicador rompe imágenes catolicas," this pastor ("predicador" or public street preacher) speaks to the *pueblo ecuatoriano* about the statue of the Virgen de

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[306] Oscar Ramirez, *Increíble!! Pastor Destruye Imágenes, Ídolos de La Iglesia Católica*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkrZsoX_GuE&list=PLOoCOWB-62OUHhcdpKn3tSMTTOmoUbYyl&index=3.
[307] Oscar Ramirez, *Increíble!! Pastor Destruye Imágenes, Ídolos de La Iglesia Católica*.
[308] Oscar Ramirez, *Increíble!! Pastor Destruye Imágenes, Ídolos de La Iglesia Católica*.
[309] Oscar Ramirez, *Increíble!! Pastor Destruye Imágenes, Ídolos de La Iglesia Católica*; *The Holy Bible: New King James Version* (1982).

Guadalupe he is holding.[310] The incident is posted in two short videos in which the pastor breaks an image of the Virgen to demonstrate to a [rhetorial] "*amigo catolico"* that the statue is powerless. The pastor repeatedly holds his microphone to the statue while asking questions and making rhetorical demands: *"Guadalupe, Guadalupe respóndeme, respóndeme si está viva."*[311] When, of course, the statue does not respond to his interrogation, the crowd laughs. This is a performance. While the video references texts such as Ex 20: 4-5 and Dt 4: 15-18, the Biblical justification for this video is primarily found in Psalm 115 "The Futility of Idols and the Trustworthiness of God":

> Their idols are silver and gold,
>
> The work of men's hands.
>
> They have mouths, but they do not speak;
>
> Eyes they have, but they do not see;
>
> They have ears, but they do not hear;
>
> Noses they have, but they do not smell;
>
> They have hands, but they do not handle;
>
> Feet they have, but they do not walk;
>
> Nor do they mutter through their throat.[312]

In each video, a message is communicated to a Catholic audience: that the Vatican has lied to the whole world, that images of the Virgin Mary are powerless, and that the right thing to do is not simply to avoid their use, but to break these images and free one's self from idolatry. Helena Hansen writes that "Pentecostal cosmology holds that power is located not in people, but in

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[310] MiguelHndz, *Predicador Rompe Imágenes Catolicas*, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/shorts/EzpxFgeshYo.
[311] MiguelHndz, *Predicador Rompe Imágenes Catolicas*.
[312] *The Holy Bible: New King James Version*.

spirits. In this cosmos, freedom is not human autonomy, it is liberation from evil spirits, enabling individuals to submit their will to the Holy Spirit."[313] According to this logic, if power is located not in people, but in spirits, then Mary herself could not have had power either — much less an image of her.

**Discussion**

We just discussed four different examples of Pentecostal iconoclastic activity towards Catholic images in the transnational Latin American context. In each, the act was performative and dialogic: preachers specifically addressed Catholic onlookers, often speaking of the Virgen de Guadalupe, and even those who would practice other indigenous spiritualities (rue water is destroyed in one video).[314] At the Templo de Alabanza, those who may have been former Catholics were invited up to smash the "idols" in the church: when I asked Antonio what he believed was the rationale or mentality behind the image-breaking he witnessed, he answered:

> I do know that they felt, from being in that service, they felt like they were number one doing the Lord's work, okay? Two, that it was our obligation or responsibility to do this. Three, that maybe some of you in the congregation need to come do this. Right? For whatever reason, maybe. Maybe you haven't let it go enough. Stuff like that got said very directly.[315]

That the necessity for congregants to participate in the breaking of Catholic idols in this small Spanish-speaking congregation calls attention to the drastic change in the religious landscape among Latinos in the U.S. since the 70s: that at estimated rates of 60,000 annually, Latino Americans are leaving the Catholic Church for charismatic Pentecostal church communities throughout the nation.[316] For many converts in this hemispheric context, the past is

[313] Hansen, *Addicted to Christ*, 43.
[314] Oscar Ramirez, *Increíble!! Pastor Destruye Imágenes, Ídolos de La Iglesia Católica*.
[315] Antonio (pseudonym), "Interview with 'Antonio.'"
[316] Kosmin and Lachman, "From the Ethnic Factor to the New Age."

marked by oppression, struggle, and perhaps severe poverty or addiction.[317] In the U.S., Francisco Olazábal experienced marginalization within the Assemblies of God and formed the Concilio Latinoamericano de Iglesias Cristianas (CLADIC).[318]

Unlike Alcoholics Anonymous, Pentecostal ministries do not force individuals to admit they are powerless in the face of addiction, which may hardly be a mechanism of change for individuals experiencing powerlessness already. In one example, Hansen spoke with Juan, a convert to Pentecostalism: he said his mother was Catholic, "and the Catholics let you smoke and drink, they don't teach that God is against that. Then he heard who Jesus was."[319] In this case, Pentecostalism offered radical healing from his affliction of substance abuse and offered a better life; at the time he spoke with Hansen, he was both a staff member of Restoration House and a university student. The focus in Pentecostalism that spiritual liberation and victory: although individuals do not have power, the Holy Spirit does.[320] This spiritual liberation and affirmation of the Holy Spirit's power (which is exclusive of all others) extends itself into the space of image breaking when the image is tied to a pre-conversion past.

For Latin American preachers, iconoclasm is not merely a public display of smashing wood or metal with no power: it's a performative declaration of spiritual victory in which an object, many times an image of Guadalupe herself, which may be seen to have some spiritual power, is reclassified as idolatrous — or worse, demonic — and smashed to demonstrate faith, to show God alone has power, and to break the heavy chains of a past life. As the pastor smashes

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[317] Hansen, *Addicted to Christ*; Chesnut, "Cornering the Market"; Tony Tian-Ren Lin, *Prosperity Gospel Latinos and Their American Dream*, Where Religion Lives (The University of North Carolina Press, 2020).
[318] Gastón Espinosa, "El Azteca: Francisco Olazabal and Latino Pentecostal Charisma, Power, and Faith Healing in the Borderlands," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67, no. 3 (1999): 597–616, https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/67.3.597.
[319] Hansen, *Addicted to Christ*, 28.
[320] Hansen, *Addicted to Christ*, 43–44.

this image, he is breaking the chains of a past life and declaring spiritual freedom and independence to serve God and change medical or socioeconomic circumstances. As the Holy Spirit, and Christ as liberator of the oppressed are invoked, the public smash of the Virgen de Guadalupe itself symbolizes deliverance from heavy, demonic forces that would hold one back from worshipping God. The act is not only personal testimony, which is both just as important for the one delivering as the one listening, but also a dialogic, demonstrative act for those who are Catholic or formerly-Catholic. Importantly, as is the case with all aspects of Pentecostalism, the communication is not a propositional theological pronouncement for one to contemplate and assent to from a distance, but rather an act which is experiential, sensory and embodied with an open invitation for all to participate and do likewise. Liberation is accessible for all, here and now: one must only believe.

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, Pentecostalism displays a variety of attitudes towards art, and these attitudes are not perfectly consistent worldwide: but Pentecostal aesthetic theology allows room for these varied positions and time for discernment.[321] Where Pentecostal art is encouraged, prophetic artists engage in participatory prayer to produce work as co-creators with God. But even prayer is passing: Pentecostalism does not recognize the use of icons as images which facilitate an encounter with the divine, instead drawing from older Protestant semiotic ideology that the material and spiritual are indeed separate. This semiotic ideology forms one basis on which religious image destruction is justified: not all images fall under Pentecostal acceptable use cases.

Another basis is formed through the theology of rupture: as Pentecostalism is a mechanism for radical healing and deliverance, new converts “make a complete break with the

[321] Meyer, “‘There Is a Spirit in That Image.’”

past."[322] Where iconoclastic activity is examined, one might look back to Helena Hansen's observations that "Pentecostal knowledge is experiential. It is based on a sensory theology, a theology of emotional and tactile encounter — some call it possession — that is all-encompassing."[323] As images are broken, so too are the chains of the past, and the believers are delivered from oppression.

As seen through the lens of Pentecostal aesthetics and semiotic ideology, as well as through conversion and rituals of rupture, Pentecostal iconoclasm can be understood as spiritual warfare, as well as dialogic and performative testimony of faith. I explored three examples, combining both a mini-ethnographic case study and digital ethnographic data to examine the practice of image breaking as both spiritual warfare and performative testimony within Spanish-speaking Pentecostal communities in the U.S, and Latin America. For Spanish-speaking Pentecostal communities across the U.S. and Latin America, the gritty, public smash of an "idol" is a message of deliverance, victory and freedom.

[322] Meyer, "'Make a Complete Break With the Past': Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse."
[323] Hansen, *Addicted to Christ*, 25.

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# Strictly Sectionalism?:

## A Reexamination of the Annexation Debates

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**Abstract:**

*The annexation of Texas has been considered an intensely sectional controversy that helped accelerate the political, social, and class divisions that resulted in the American Civil War. Scholars have concluded that annexation formed one of the key stepping stones on this road to disunion and have virtually ignored the critical part that three Whig senators' cross-party votes played in the ultimate political resolution.*

*What caused these unusual cross-party votes? Can sectionalism alone adequately explain their motivation? This paper opens a reexamination of the annexation of Texas with the twin objectives of posing a new interpretation for the controversy and simultaneously explaining why three Whig senators crossed party lines to approve such a momentous territorial addition. While slavery and territorial expansion remained important to the debates, the final deciding votes hinged on economic factors, particularly the impact on the price of cotton. Three Whig senators chose pocketbook over party, launching both Texas and the United States on entirely new trajectories.*

**Introduction**

Each summer, mid-nineteenth-century Washington D.C. political and social elites sought refuge from the sultry summer humidity in Western Virginia's mountains. One popular gathering spot, the Red Sulphur Inn, often hosted political and social gatherings, where sensory experiences such as tastes, speeches, sounds, and shoulder-slapping touch formed a community and communicated political and social meaning to enthusiastic participants. In 1844, a central political question animated these meetings: should the Republic of Texas be joined to the United States?

At such a meeting at the Red Sulphur in August that year, a speaker named James Mason of nearby Winchester angrily denounced a recent vote by the United States Senate to reject a Treaty of Annexation that had been agreed with the Republic of Texas. Hidden in the audience that night sat one of those U. S. Senators, Henry Johnson of Louisiana. Obviously irritated by the implied criticism, Johnson surprised everyone, rose, and "demanded the speaker's authority". He went on to justify his no vote on principle and attempted to explain his fellow Senators' votes as motivated by principle as well.[324] The fact that only six months later Johnson would reverse this stance and cast one of the three deciding votes for annexation remained unknown to that night's audience. This incident demonstrates how a confluence of passionate antebellum politics coupled with constituent pressure intensified debates about Texas. It also sets the stage for a new analysis of the issue, its resolution, and an explanation for why three Whigs cast cross-party votes to finally approve annexation.

[324] Senator Henry S. Johnson had just voted no in June with the Senate majority to reject President John Tyler's negotiated annexation treaty with Texas, ostensibly over the constitutionality of the treaty method, but his sensitivity to the criticism reflected his concern for how his pro-annexation Louisiana constituents would view his vote. Ultimately, he would prove to become one of the three dissident Whigs who tipped the balance and approved the measure in February 1845, discussed in detail further in this article.

The annexation of Texas has generally been considered an intensely sectional controversy that helped accelerate the political, social, and class divisions that resulted in the American Civil War.[325] Analyzing the heated political conflict and the deciding, cross-party votes cast by three Southern Whig Senators complicates the predominant sectional/partisan view of this pivotal issue. This new framing shows that conflicting economic interpretations of the effects of the Texas acquisition caused the deciding split leading to the incredibly narrow and controversial final U. S. Senate approval of annexation. The continent-defining question culminated with members of the monied, business class landing on alternate visions of how the addition of the vast, fertile cotton and sugar growing area would affect Southern land values and commodity prices.

This article will first characterize the political atmosphere surrounding the public discussion of the Texas issue and the 1844 Presidential election. Further, by delving beneath the surface of the much-discussed sweeping themes of sectionalism, slavery, and territorial expansion that previous scholars have used to characterize this period, a new economic explanation emerges as the final deciding factor in the crucial Senate votes approving the annexation. Finally, evaluating cotton pricing data from the years following annexation can determine which economic view proved more prescient. This reexamination of a critical inflection point in American and Texan history utilizes newspaper records, private documents from archives, congressional speeches, and both political and sensory analysis techniques to shed new light on this complex and divisive topic.

**Background**

To understand the significance of the implications surrounding the potential addition of Texas to the United States, we need to understand the developments that took place in the

[325] For excellent scholarship examining annexation see works by Michael F. Holt, Joel Sibley, Amy Greenberg, David Pletcher, and Justin Smith, all listed in the bibliography and referenced various times in this paper.

preceding decades. Anglo growth in Mexican Texas led to tension with Mexico and eventually open warfare, famously winning Texas its independence between 1835 and 1836. Almost immediately, groups inside Texas and in the U. S. actively lobbied for annexation. Both President Andrew Jackson and his successor Martin Van Buren carefully considered annexation but opted not to provoke Mexico by pursuing it. Jackson did, however, acquiesce to a formal recognition of the Texas Republic's independence.[326]

As the new Texan Republic struggled both economically and militarily through its first few years, the prospect of annexation lingered in the background as a potential solution and endpoint. Ongoing and intermittent open clashes with Mexico – which never formally recognized the independence of its former colony—coupled with active frontier conflict with raiding Native American tribesmen, left Texas insecure and politically vulnerable. At the same time, Southern white planters seeking fertile land fueled a vigorous immigration. Texas captivated the American imagination with an outsized, almost mythical appeal, vast economic potential, and rebellious reputation. This fascination and lure translated into a series of highly contentious political conflicts, exacerbated American partisan competition, and caused international tension not only with Mexico but European powers as well.

In 1844, U. S. President John Tyler seized upon the Texas enthusiasm to attempt to reinvigorate his failing presidential administration by negotiating an annexation treaty with Texas. Texan President Sam Houston recognized the great advantage this treaty promised but shrewdly pursued other options as well, including a potential British-brokered Mexican formal recognition coupled with a British trade agreement. Tyler's negotiated treaty was rejected by the U. S. Senate in June 1844, vaulting the Texas issue to the forefront of that year's presidential election

[326] For a detailed discussion of Texas, Mexico, and early attempts to achieve annexation see Smith's first chapter, "The Beginnings of the Annexation Question" in Justin Harvey Smith, *The Annexation of Texas* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919).

campaign between pro-annexation Democrat James K. Polk and the lukewarm equivocating Whig Henry Clay. Widely seen as an endorsement for annexation, Polk's victory created the political opening for the outgoing Tyler to raise annexation with Congress.[327] The resulting contentious debates, bitter partisan battle between Whigs and Democrats, and narrowly decided vote form the backdrop for this analysis.

The Whig party descended from the same Jeffersonian Republican parent as their Democratic arch-rivals yet emphasized a more muscular central government that promoted banking, protective tariffs, and internal infrastructure improvements. Whigs remained committed to activist government, commercial interests, banks, and especially a protective tariff. Democrats, on the other hand, completely unlike the modern party of the same name, aggressively opposed government power, and decried government intervention in economics, finance, and infrastructure: they viewed government as a tool for the upper-class elites and consistently advocated for the "common man". Democrats, however, ironically supported vigorous government military action, especially for territorial expansion. More land provided increased opportunities for everyday citizens to better themselves and their families, they reasoned. This key attraction of the annexation potential bolstered nationwide Democratic support.[328] The 1840s two-party system and the study of party origins is well travelled scholarly ground, yet one notes an economic underpinning to both sides and a natural concern for putting food on the table, common to rich, poor, Northerner, Southerner, slaveholder, or abolitionist alike.

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[327] See Holt's *Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* and Joel Sibley's *Storm over Texas* for the narrow deciding vote count in New York tipping the balance to the Democrats. For a fascinating look inside the political dynamics of 1844, see Greenberg's *A Wicked War*. Amy S. Greenberg, *A Wicked War : Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. invasion of Mexico*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).

[328] Holt's *Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* provides a digestible summary of the origins of the Whig party. A succinct summary of the ideological positions of, and differences between the 1840s Whigs and Democrats is contained in Horace Greeley, "The Grounds Of Difference Between The Contending Parties," *The Whig Almanac and United States Register* (1843), https://archive.org/details/whigalmanacunite1843amer/page/n7/mode/2up?q=grounds+.

Sources also show that the potential for adding vast swathes of cheap, fertile land remained shadowed by the major fear that annexing Texas would trigger a war with Mexico. The Texas Republic and Mexico continued in an active state of war that was never settled until after Mexico's defeat by the U. S. in 1848.[329] Whigs particularly feared the potential war scenario; Democrats, following the spirit, if not always the tempered actions, of their inspirational icon Andrew Jackson, often assumed a more bellicose tone and postured with increasing bravado for an opposite conclusion.[330]

While hawkish Democrats discussed relations with Mexico, Whigs feared annexation's implications for relations with Great Britain much more. Great Britain's sophisticated diplomatic and trade leaders had successfully maneuvered their two largest cotton suppliers, the Southern U. S. and the Republic of Texas, into a continuing competition to sell to the largest world market. The British, ever prioritizing their own commercial interests, sought to keep the two supply sources separated into competing camps. Annexation alarmed them, so they actively schemed to thwart any potential combination to maintain a self-sovereign Texan Republic.

These British schemes bore fruit as two or more complicated social, political, and economic projects that included a variety of offers designed to entice Texas away from Annexation. Supposedly secret, many conditions and elements of these plans became public knowledge and were widely reported on, especially inside Texas, including the potential for abolishing slavery in return for remuneration for planters and British support for a permanent Mexican recognition of Texas. These promises hinged on a commitment by Texas to remain

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[329] For accounts of the ongoing Texan / Mexican warfare, especially the busy year 1842, see Sam W. Haynes, *Unsettled Land: From Revolution to Republic, the Struggle for Texas*, 1 ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2022). 318-320.
[330] For excellent scholarship about the causes and progress of the Mexican War, please see Guardino and Greenberg's books. Most modern scholars agree that while the annexation of Texas placed Mexican / American tensions at high alert, the actual war was purposefully instigated on Polk's orders by American troop movements near the disputed Texas / Mexico border. Peter Guardino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Harvard University Press, 2017).; and Greenberg, *A Wicked War : Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. invasion of Mexico*.

independent of the U. S. and as a firm cotton supplier to Britain. While monied interests in the American South dreaded the potential impact such a mass manumission would create, Texan President Anson Jones felt so confident in an improved negotiating position that he wrote, "all eyes are now strained towards the U. S. to see what the Senate will do [to move on annexation] … in a few weeks they may all be turned to England and France. I am satisfied we will do very well in either event which may happen."[331] In fact, Texas shrewdly worked negotiations on both fronts, with the Mexican government in cooperation with Britain, and separately with the Tyler administration. By 1845 both options solidified into firm proposals, one from the U. S. to accept proposed annexation, the other European-brokered permanent peace and official recognition by Mexico. Texan President Anson Jones publicly presented both options to the Texan legislature, and later to the entire voting public, to choose "the alternative of Annexation or Independence"[332]. As we now know, both the Texan government and voting populace overwhelmingly chose annexation.[333]

**Previous Frames of Analysis and Literature Review**

Scholars have situated annexation within three primary analytical frameworks, viewing the debates and controversy primarily as a sectional conflict centered on slavery, a Whig/Democratic partisan conflict, or an international relations bombshell involving up to five different nations (Texas, the U. S., Great Britain, France, and Mexico). To a large extent, all of these factors were important in shaping this very complex set of issues.

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[331] Anson Jones, Letter to Washington D. Miller, May 3, 1844 R4-7-2, Washington Daniel Miller Papers, Texas State Archives.
[332] "President Jones' Message Independence or Annexation," *Texas National Register* (Washington, Texas), June 19, 1845.
[333] Vote tallies of the Oct 13 Referendum, tallied on Nov 10, 1845 – For: 4,254; Against: 267. "Ratification of Texas Annexation, 1845 Vote Totals," 2024, https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ref/abouttx/annexation/voters.html.

Earlier works, exemplified by Justin Smith's *Annexation of Texas* and David Pletcher's *Diplomacy of Annexation*, placed Texas as a centerpiece of dynamic international relations considerations.[334] By its very nature, the annexation issue comprised a complicated international relations issue; this was essentially a merger of two nations, albeit of vastly unequal population size. Both Smith and Pletcher have accurately evaluated the international dimensions and the implications for relations with Mexico and Great Britain. The Mexican issue caused a great deal of consternation at the time; Mexico continued to regard Texas as its own soil, and American acquisition, however accomplished, would (and did) imperil its relationship with the U. S. Sam Haynes adds to this body of work, showing how Americans' fears of Britain as both a recent foe and the world's pre-eminent military power shaped political debate, especially about Texas.[335] While these studies have rightly focused on political and military implications, they have not emphasized potential economic and trade issues and the impact on trade relations with the Southern planters' main buyer.

Beginning in the 1990s, preeminent scholars of the antebellum period William Freehling, Michael Holt, and Joel Silby ably framed the Texas debates as stepping stones on an inexorable march toward Civil War.[336] Their foundational work underpins most current antebellum scholarship utilizing detailed analyses of party dynamics at local, state, and national levels. Much

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[334] Smith, *The Annexation of Texas*., Justin H. Smith, "The Mexican Recognition of Texas," *The American Historical Review* 16, no. 1 (1910)., David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation; Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973).

[335] David Pletcher's *The Diplomacy of Annexation* documents the complicated processes for acquiring Texas and Oregon and focuses on the international relations implications, given the unsettled boundary conflict of the Pacific northwest. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation; Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War*., Sam Haynes' "Anglophobia and the Annexation of Texas" provided a more modern refocus on the fraught tensions and American fear of British military might. Sam W. Haynes, "Anglophobia and The Annexation of Texas," *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism* (1997). Haynes, "Anglophobia and The Annexation of Texas.", Justin Smith's *The Annexation of Texas* remains a comprehensive "play by play" account especially recounting the details of the congressional debates. Smith, *The Annexation of Texas*.

[336] William W. Freehling, *The Road To Disunion Vol 1: Secessionists At Bay* (Oxford University Press, 1990). Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of The American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Joel H Silbey, *Storm Over Texas: The Annexation Controversy and the Road to Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

of what we now know about Whigs and Democrats stems from their works, including the complicated interweaving of sectionalism and slavery concerns into regional and national politics. Texas' nebulous western boundaries and the potential division of Texas into multiple states proved highly polarizing and cemented slavery and sectionalism as essential elements of the controversy.[337] While Silbey and Holt attribute the Texas votes to partisan and sectional differences, Freehling illuminates the congressional discussions of Texas as a potential "outlet" for diluting slavery across more territory, maintaining the institution while alleviating pressure from abolitionists. Other more recent works by Andrew Torget and Alice Baumgartner have added a transnational view, showing how the cotton economy and slavery underpinned economic and social tensions resulting in the political and sectional conflicts.[338] Their addition of economic considerations helps build the background for this study.

Most historians have pictured antebellum politics in a two-party framework; however, new scholarship has challenged the prevalence of this bipolar dynamic. Historians Rachel Shelden and Erik Alexander argue that fluidity, not statism, dominated nineteenth-century American politics.[339] "Dismantling the Party System" demonstrates that decentralized and regional interests influenced political orientation as much as traditional top-down party platforms. By illuminating regional micro-fissures inside the presumed monolithic national party structure, their work helps to create a pathway for my analysis of an economic split within the Southern Whigs. Still, it appears overly ambitious to consign the entire two-party model to the intellectual trash heap. Evidence does not suggest that the dissenting Whigs intended their cross-party votes as a rebellion against

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[337] Freehling, *The Road To Disunion Vol 1: Secessionists At Bay*. These debates were extensively chronicled in the Congressional Globe records for both House and Senate in January and February 1845.
[338] Alice Baumgartner, *South to Freedom : Runaway Slaves to Mexico and The Road to The Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2020). Andrew J. Torget, *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).
[339] Erik B. Alexander Rachel A. Shelden, "Dismantling the Party System: Party Fluidity and the Mechanisms of Nineteenth- Century U.S. Politics " *The Journal of American History* (December 2023).

the party or towards forming a new party; indeed, each remained with the Whigs after this vote. Another explanation is needed.

**The Final Vote: A Sensory and Political Experience**

No one could have predicted that the heightened tension of extreme partisan politics, international attention, and national/international debate would eventually be decided by a handful of contentious votes in the United States Senate chambers. February 27, 1845, appeared to observers to be a typical chilly, drab mid-Atlantic region winter day. By ten-thirty that evening, the exhausted Senators finally held their last vote on the issue. According to multiple newspaper reports, the Senate galleries were still "crammed" with "an anxious and interested multitude" of spectators. After a loud, heated, even raucous long day of debates, the bill was ordered to a third and final reading. The final vote tallied 27 senators for, 25 senators against. The Joint Resolutions allowing the President to effectuate an annexation of Texas had passed. Even the senators themselves seemed stunned at the enormity of the decision; the final vote culminated in "a profound silence".[340]

The silence did not last long. The next days brought the news that three Whig Senators, John Henderson of Mississippi, William D. Merrick of Maryland, and Henry S. Johnson of Louisiana, had broken party ranks and voted with their Democratic opposition to approve the measure. The partisan and appalled Whig press accused the three of outright corruption, selling out their party, or even acting as traitors. With an understandably opposite and jubilant reaction, Democratic papers lauded them as heroes, and at Jacksonian celebratory gatherings even toasts

[340] "A Foreign State Annexed To The United States," Article, *Boston Atlas*, March 7, 1845, Gale.

were drunk in their honor; the "democracy of the nation" was "indebted to these courageous votes," one inebriated celebrant enthused.[341]

As news of the final resolution spread, the fact that the three decisive votes had crossed party lines shocked contemporary observers and reporters. The three Senators instantly became both heroes to their party opposition and villains to their party compatriots. While many modern scholars find it unsurprising that three Southern Whig politicians sided with the Southern viewpoint, this interpretation does not tell the whole tale. Simple sectional evaluation cannot explain why ten Southern Whigs voted *against* their Southern section to deny annexation. Neither can sectionalism alone explain why two of the three rebellious Southern Whigs had voted with their party against annexation as recently as eight months before. To add nuance and new dimensions to this analysis, we must return to the very foundation of the Whig party's principles. Economic issues, not merely sectional or partisan concerns, formed the final wedge that split the Southern Whigs and motivated the three to approve the resolution. At the end, the history-altering vote came down to two different interpretations of how the addition of Texas would affect the cotton economy. Whig senators Henderson, Johnson, and Merrick feared that rejection of annexation would lead Texas to consummate a rumored British / Texan alliance, leading to a significant commercial disadvantage for U. S. cotton. Opponents of annexation argued that the addition of such a large and fertile cotton-growing territory would so dramatically increase cotton supply that prices would collapse, severely damaging U. S. planters.

Historian Robert Holt argues that the Whigs formed a truly cross-sectional national party, whose adherence to national policies helped bridge the gap between North and South. We have ample evidence of this Whig national orientation; Southern Whigs voted with their Northern

[341] "Celebration of the Anniversary of General Jackson's Birth Day, and the Annexation of Texas," Article, *Mississippi Free Trader and Natchez Gazette*, 1845/03/18/ 1845, Gale.

Brethren on key national issues such as the Tariff and in support of banking. Annexation fit right into this pattern as well; Whigs were almost unanimously against territorial expansion (as discussed above). In early 1844, former Whig congressman John Botts of Virginia, who had remained nationally influential, addressed the New York Whigs who were gathered to celebrate Henry Clay's birthday. Botts' "forcible arguments in vindication of Whig policy" included speaking about "the restoration of the Currency, the establishment of a Protective Tariff, and Distribution of the proceeds of the Public Lands". He, however, opposed annexation of Texas in "the strongest terms", because it could lead to disunion. "He was not a Southern man with Northern feelings, but a Southern man with National feelings".[342] For the time being, Whig priorities remained unified across sections.[343]

The Southern Whigs also strongly supported the national Whig agenda, advocating for a high tariff to protect domestic manufacturing, further investment in transportation infrastructure, and a National Bank. This helps explain the preponderance of Southern Whigs (ten out of thirteen) voting against annexation and maintaining solidarity with their Northern compatriots.[344] The Southern Whigs had mostly remained united by their common concerns for their business prospects, yet as we shall see, also split on Texas implications for those prospects.

The decisive split between the Southern Whigs that determined the final vote came down to two interpretations of how the price of cotton, agricultural markets, and values of Southern lands would be affected. These two views were heavily influenced by recent lived experience of a depressed cotton market. Prices had remained low in the recent decade, and this

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[342] "Celebration Of Henry Clay's Birthday, and Mr. Botts' Speech," Article, *Cleveland Daily Herald*, 1844/04/17/ 1844, Gale.

[343] Holt further argues that the later decline of the cross-sectional Whig party in the early 1850s helped speed the process toward disunion. The Whig's successors, the Republicans, were primarily a Northern-only party and this increased the sectional tension in an already explosive political conflict.

[344] Charles Grier Sellers, "Who Were the Southern Whigs?," *The American Historical Review* 59, no. 2 (1954), https://doi.org/10.2307/1843625.

underperformance created great financial stress on planters across the country. Fear of a continued "depression" in land values and a "collapse" in prices formed a powerful motivator for opponents of annexation.[345]

Pricing fears also animated a second main view. Southern U. S. cotton competed directly with Texas cotton for market share with the world's largest buyer, Great Britain. While both competitors received the same basic prices for their products, either on the New York or London exchanges, their cost basis, and therefore their profit margins, of course, differed, although British import duty applied to both Texan and American cotton. Southern planters feared a nightmare scenario: one in which Texan cotton could be exported to Britain, duty-free. British machinations toward potential interference in Texas, as discussed above, led many, including our three dissident Whig Senators Johnson, Merrick, and Henderson, to conclude that a British / Texan political alliance would also include a commercial aspect: reduced or eliminated duties on imported Texan cotton. A reduction in Texan cost structure could allow them to undercut American sales prices while still retaining their current profit margins. This potential competitive disadvantage chilled some planters enough to strongly advocate beating Britain to the punch by annexing Texas first, precluding their nightmare scenario.

With a differing view of the potential impact, opponents of annexation anticipated market oversupply and a resulting depreciation of their lands. Even though Texas cotton would continue to be sold to Great Britain irrespective of whether Texas joined the U. S. or remained independent, some planters feared that annexation would stimulate both new settlement and increased capital investment into the State of Texas, leading to dramatic production increases. This supply surge could cripple prices, leading to calamitous financial impact across the South, greatly depreciating the value of Southern landholdings and ruining financial fortunes.

[345] Cotton pricing and past/future data are discussed later in this paper.

This oversupply fear filled contemporary correspondence, newspaper articles, and congressional speeches. Representative Thomas H. Bayly of Virginia, addressing the U. S. House in the January 1845 annexation debates, succinctly laid out these fears. Answering a previous speech by Rep. J. R. Ingersoll of Pennsylvania, Bayly stated: "the gentleman from Pennsylvania says that this is at present an overproduction of cotton … and that by annexation of Texas that overproduction will be increased." Interestingly, he goes on to state his counter to that fear, "by refusing to admit Texas we do not annihilate her; on the contrary, with a free trade treaty with England, the production of cotton there will be much more stimulated than if she is joined to us".[346] In the Senate, debate also focused on this production issue. Senator Archer of Virginia laid it out plainly; in the event of annexation, he stated, "A depression, and a great one, in the price of these [Southern] lands must be immediately experienced." He went on to state that a rush of small planters to this "new El Dorado" would even more dramatically increase Texas production, and the "market was already glutted".[347]

Even the most ardent Democratic advocate for annexation, Senator Robert J. Walker of Mississippi, acknowledged that his opponents were making this oversupply argument, although he concluded that the fears of a British / Texan trade alliance outweighed this.[348] Nor was cotton the only concern, but also the price of sugar. Annexation would, according to one editorial, "greatly depreciate the value of all lands in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi … destructive to the sugar interest".[349] The *Columbus Enquirer's* sarcastic article "Immediately or Sooner" pilloried the entire annexation project: "Are not the lands of Georgia and other States sufficiently depreciated in value, without leaving them rendered utterly valueless by this scheme of territorial

[346] "Debate on the Annexation of Texas," Article, *National Intelligencer*, 1845/01/11/ 1845, Gale.
[347] "Speech of Mr. Archer, of Virginia, Delivered in the Senate of the United States," Article, *National Intelligencer*, 1844/06/27/ 1844, Gale.
[348] "Letter of Mr. Walker, of Mississippi, Relative to the Annexation of Texas," Article, *New York Herald*, 1844/03/07/ 1844, Gale.
[349] "Texas and Louisiana," Editorial, *National Intelligencer*, 1844/04/06/ 1844, Gale.

aggrandizement?" This article goes on to imply that Southerners who advocated for annexation were "mad".[350]

One of the most vigorous opponents of annexation came from the pro-annexation Southern state of Louisiana, Senator Alexander Barrow.[351] The collegial and influential Senator was popular on both sides of the aisle, and his words carried weight.[352] Barrow opposed the measure both times it was the focus of debate in the U. S. Senate, at the June 1844 rejection of Tyler's treaty, and again at the final February 1845 vote, concentrating his arguments on the oversupply and price collapse fears. Annexation, he contended, "within three years would increase the growth of that staple [cotton] from thirty-five to fifty percent. Cotton growers now can barely live in Louisiana … the prices were so low that it was a losing business; but were prices likely to be raised by adding to the Union the finest cotton region in the world?"[353] For Barrow, at least, oversupply concern overrode the popularity of annexation in his home state. His fellow Louisianan Whig Senator Henry Johnson, as we will shortly discuss, came to the exact opposite conclusion.

As scholars such as Sam Haynes have noted, many American leaders were greatly alarmed by the national security implications of British interference in Texas.[354] Proponents of annexation additionally feared the potential commercial advantages an independent Texas might gain through

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[350] The Columbus Enquirer, "Immediately, or Sooner," Editorial, *Raleigh Register*, 1844/05/31/ 1844, Gale.
[351] We have evidence that the legislature of Louisiana wrote to its congressional representatives to ask them to support annexation: Resolutions of the Legislature of Louisiana : Relative to the Annexation of Texas to the United States, (Washington, D.C. 1845). As this paper also discusses, Barrow's fellow Whig Louisiana Senator, Henry Johnson, took the exact opposite position.
[352] Rachel A. Shelden, *Washington Brotherhood: Politics, Social Life, and the Coming of the Civil War* (University of North Carolina Press, 2013). 150.
[353] "Speech of Mr. Barrow, of Louisiana, on the Resolution for the Annexation of Texas," *National Intelligencer*, 27 Feb. 1845. Nineteenth Century American Newspapers.
[354] Scholars such as Holt, Haynes, Pletcher, and Llerena Friend have discussed the British involvement in Texas and its implications for annexation. These analyses mostly center on the slavery issue -- how British efforts to influence Texas towards abolition would impact the Southern state. Haynes and Pletcher also show the larger issue of global U. S. / British relations and the very real threat that U. S. leaders felt from hegemonic aspirations of the British global giant.

an alliance with Great Britain; this potential for a British – Texan trade alliance weighed on contemporary minds. One of James K. Polk's correspondents, a self-proclaimed Southern planter named Mr. Iveson L. Brookes, wrote at length railing against the Whigs' opposition to annexation. Blaming "the new system of Whiggery in which Clay, Adams, and Webster seem to be leaders" for "combining those measures which would fix upon the country Clay's American System, drive Texas to an alliance with England", he concluded that the alliance would "render our great Southern staple worthless".[355]

While arguing that by admitting Texas the cause of abolition would be served, the *N. Y. Courier* in March 1844 also summarized many Southerners' trade impact fears: "Texas in twenty years will grow all the cotton that Great Britain will require. She will admit British goods free of duty, and in return, Great Britain will exclude the cotton of the U. States unless we too receive her goods free".[356] The anti-Texas Whig *National Intelligencer* published a letter in June 1844 decrying potential "discrimination in the British market in favor of Texas cotton."[357] So widespread was the discussion that even in the north this topic raised eyebrows; the *New York Herald* portrayed an independent Texas as a weak "cats-paw" of England.[358]

Several sources went in depth on the potential impacts beyond king cotton. "Mr. Wilkins' Letter," published in the *Mountaineer* in April 1844, characterized a U. S. rejected Texas with no other option than to become a "commercial dependency" of Britain. This would set up a dangerous situation where American "flour, beef, pork … iron … glass" and other goods would

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[355] Cutler, *Correspondence of James K. Polk*. 381.
[356] "The N. Y. Courier & Enquirer, Gives The Following Reasons for Annexation," Article, *Mountaineer*, 1844/03/29/ 1844, Gale. This illustrates the wide dispersion of conversation on the British / Texas topic. As to annexation promoting abolition, the author argues that since the 1807 U. S. law prohibiting slave imports would now apply to Texas, the increasing labor needs of expansion there would require slave labor transfers from other states, reducing the number of slaves in the current U. S. Other sources also postulated that slaves would be sent towards Texas in event of annexation.
[357] "Debate on the Texas Treaty," Article, *National Intelligencer*, 1844/06/13/ 1844, Gale.
[358] Correspondence of the Herald, "Galveston," Article, *New York Herald*, 1844/05/27/ 1844, Gale.

be excluded from Texas, whose imports would remain primarily British.[359] Nevertheless, the main focus remained on impacts to cotton. Rejection of annexation would lead to "discriminating duties", Texas as a great "commercial rival", and so encouraging smuggling that even an "army of custom-house officers" could not prevent it.[360]

Now turning to the three dissident Southern Whigs and their economic justification for approving annexation against their party's wishes, we begin with Senator Henry S. Johnson of Louisiana. In 1844, Johnson was in the first year of his five-year term, and since he was not up for re-election for some time, he may have initially felt somewhat insulated from direct electoral consequences for his actions.[361] Elected as a Whig, with a career filled with anti-Jacksonian politics, his vote against Tyler's annexation treaty in June 1844 was unsurprising. Louisiana's other senator Alexander Barrow, also a fellow Whig, followed suit and voted no. The Congressional Globe did not record any speeches from Johnson during May or June 1844 on this topic, but according to *The Bloomington Herald*, Johnson had been predicted to number among the treaty's opponents.[362] Johnson was torn between the pro-annexation energy in Louisiana and the powerful pull of Whig national unity. He claimed that his no vote had been based on concerns about the constitutionality of the treaty mechanism used to merge with a foreign nation.[363] As we have seen by the incident at the Red Sulphur Inn, he had obviously been irritated by the resulting criticism.

By 1845, Johnson felt more emboldened to chart his own path and reveal his main concern, that of his business interests. In his Senate speech in February 1845, Johnson carefully analyzed several aspects of the economic arguments. First addressing Virginia Senator Archer's

[359] William Wilkins, "Mr. Wilkins' Letter," Article, *Mountaineer*, 1844/04/26/ 1844, Gale.
[360] "The Advantages of Annexation," Editorial, *Mississippian*, 1844/05/22/ 1844, Gale.
[361] Johnson had been elected in a special election in 1844 to replace the deceased incumbent senator. Johnson served a five-year term.
[362] "Expected Vote on Tyler Treaty," *Bloomington Herald, Indiana*, June 7, 1844.
[363] Other Senators were similarly and quite seriously concerned about this constitutionality question.

contention that annexation would be "ruinous to the sugar and cotton planters of Louisiana", Johnson countered by explaining that, himself a sugar and cotton planter and aligned in interest with "the planters of Louisiana", he "did not believe that annexation would produce the ruinous consequences". Instead, even though emigration of resources and slaves to a new Texas state might increase production and put price pressure on Southern planters, he feared a greater danger, that if

> "Texas be not annexed that she will enter into a treaty with England, by which her cotton would be received in British ports free of duties on condition that British goods to be received in Texas free of duties and whether such a treaty would not be injurious to the planters of Louisiana? [364]

While Johnson "deemed it proper to say that he concurred with the views expressed by the legislature of Louisiana in these resolutions", he had gravitated toward a serious business concern when making his final determination on the vote. Two episodes also reveal his extreme sensitivity to the views of his constituents: the incident at the Red Sulphur (described earlier) and a fascinating letter uncovered in the Briscoe archives in Austin.

Immediately after the fateful February 28 vote, on March 8, 1845, Johnson visited Mississippi Senator and ardent annexation supporter, Robert J. Walker. We have seen above that Walker functioned as one of Polk's key campaign lieutenants and one of the most active and vocal advocates of annexation. We do not know what exactly Johnson and Walker discussed in that meeting, but we have the brief letter Johnson wrote to Walker as a follow-up. Johnson wrote,

> "I enclose a copy of my remarks on the Texas question as prepared by myself. Will you be prepared to suggest, on a separate piece of paper, any alterations you may deem proper to any portion of the remarks, so as to make them correspond with what you may add on all the points addressed to in our conversation at your office today." [365]

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[364] Remarks of Mr. Johnson of Louisiana, In Senate, February 27, 1845 - On the House joint resolution for the annexation of Texas to the United States., (The Congressional Globe, 1845). Note this citation covers the subsequent quotes from this speech as well.

[365] Henry S. Johnson, Letter to Senator Robert J. Walker of Mississippi, March 8, 1845 Briscoe Center For American History, University of Texas, Austin.

Johnson wanted to conform his public remarks, which would be reported in his home state's local presses, to align with the Democratic official position in support of annexation. According to historian Rachel Shelden, Congressmen often annotated and revised their speeches after the fact to tailor them for written publication and distribution.[366] In this case, Johnson was concerned about how his views contrasted with those of his fellow Louisiana Whig Senator John Barrow, who had voiced emphatic opposition to annexation. In fact, had Barrow not so publicly and energetically opposed annexation, Johnson implied in his letter to Walker that "but for his [Barrow's] remarks I would not have said a word on the question."[367] Johnson was obviously concerned about the public fallout among his constituent Whig supporters who would have been very disappointed with his cross-party, pro-annexation vote. Additionally, in a floor speech preceding the final vote, Johnson alluded to "letters he had received from his friends in Louisiana, at the last session of Congress" -- obviously as a result of his vote against the Tyler treaty –to which he had replied that he expected that Texas "would ultimately be so annexed."[368] We can assume these letters were not classified as fan mail. We cannot know which influence weighed more heavily in Johnson's decision, constituent pressure or fear for his planting business, but we can see that in his final vote he determined that they coincided.

Henderson appears as the most straightforward and clear-cut case of the three cross-party voting Whigs. His previous "yes" vote for the Tyler treaty eight months before had placed him squarely outside the bounds of acceptable Whig behavior. This pro-Democratic vote, however,

[366] Shelden, *Washington Brotherhood: Politics, Social Life, and the Coming of the Civil War*. 30.
[367] Johnson, Letter to Senator Robert J. Walker of Mississippi.
[368] Remarks of Mr. Johnson of Louisiana, In Senate, February 27, 1845 - On the House joint resolution for the annexation of Texas to the United States., Short.

had done him no favors in the 1844 Senate election; he had been upended by his Democratic opponent, Jesse Speight, in an election defeat four days after the final February 28, 1845 vote.[369]

On the Senate floor in February 1845, Henderson began his speech with an evaluation of the merits and constitutionality of the method of annexation. In particular, he highlighted the potential economic threats from a British Texan potential economic alliance. "Can we of the South consent, if we may prevent it, that the nations of Europe shall have two markets for the procurement of this great staple [cotton] on our own shores and waters, over one of which we have no control?" He also called upon "northern manufacturers" to take note of the risks of losing a substantial Texan market to British control, in their "race of competition with England". Finally, he concluded by addressing the slavery issue, "but for the question of slavery, this measure would meet with but little opposition from several quarters where now most violently opposed."[370]

The limited evidence available indicates that Henderson considered the views of his pro-annexation Mississippian constituents, his business interests, and his animosity towards abolitionism when making his choice on the Texas issue. Having gone on record with his previous support for the measure, his consistency surprised no one. Reading between the lines, we can see how the confluence of the importance of slavery as an essential part of his commercial enterprise with his concern for the effect of territorial expansion on product supply motivated him to vote. A businessman to the core, Henderson chose what he considered to be self-interest over the gravitational pull of Whig national politics.

While adopting the prevailing Whig optimism preceding the vote, the March 1, 1845, edition of Washington, D.C.'s *Weekly Herald* reported that Senator William Merrick of Maryland

[369] "Bioguide, Jesse Speight," https://bioguide.congress.gov/search/bio/S000715.
[370] Speech of Mr. Henderson, Of Mississippi, in Senate, February 20, 1845, On The Resolution of the Annexation of Texas, (The Congressional Globe, 1845).

had "been instructed by the Legislature [of Maryland] to vote against annexation, and will obey. You may consider the resolution as defeated, and annexation at an end this session."[371] Little did the Whig-promoting editors know that literally only the day before their hopes had been dashed by Merrick's surprise "yes" to the joint resolutions approving annexation.

A native Marylander, fifty-one-year-old Merrick had served in the War of 1812, pursued a legal career, and held several state political positions before his election to the U. S. Senate in 1839.[372] In May 1844, Merrick had announced he would not seek reelection for his Senate seat.[373] This certainly set him up to be relatively free of political pressure, since he could operate with less concern for the political consequences of his votes. However, only a month later, he eschewed controversy and voted with his fellow Whigs to reject the Tyler Treaty. This vote matched the expectations in the popular press.[374] It appears that even though Merrick personally favored annexation, as shown by his decisive vote only eight months later, the headwinds against the measure in the June 1844 vote would have rendered a cross-party vote futile and damaging. Yet the winds were changing, at least dying down, and set the issue once again upon the precipice of a knife's edge.

Before the final 1845 vote, Polk's national victory provided enough momentum for annexation that Merrick felt free to voice his personal views. Speaking on the floor of the Senate, Merrick built his case with the economic argument decrying the dangers of a potential Texan-British alliance. "The great advantages that would be secured to our internal trade by our Union with Texas have been pointed out and are most obvious. The fatal reduction in the value of our greatest staple, cotton, that must happen if Texas shall not be united to us, but shall form that

[371] "Washington," *Weekly Herald* (New York, NY), March 1, 1845.
[372] "William D. Merrick," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Duhurst_Merrick.
[373] "Multiple News Items," *Mississippi Free Trader and Natchez Gazette* (Natchez, Mississippi), May 5, 1844.
[374] "Expected Vote on Tyler Treaty."

intimate and reciprocal commercial connection with England which she must, if we reject her, have also been pointed out. Texas would then supply the English market with cotton on terms, as to the duties levied on that article, which we cannot enjoy, and which, giving to her cotton-growers greater profits, would soon swell her productions." The slave-holder Merrick also railed against a "dark spirit of abolitionism" and passionately stated that he "Were this the last hour of my existence, or the latest breath I had to draw, I feel that I could not spend that time and breath better than by giving the vote I intend to give in favor of this joint resolution".[375] Merrick tied the economic risk and the economic risk of abolition of the main slave labor source together. Clearly, he had been thinking of his livelihood.

Senator R. J. Walker of Mississippi states, "Texas would then be our great rival in the cotton markets of the world, with two vast advantages … in sending to England her cotton free of duty, … and receiving manufactures of England, free of duty … these two causes combined would give the Texas cotton planters an advantage of at least 20 percent over the cotton planters of the Union," he concluded.[376] On the other side, most Whigs railed against the potential explosion in supply that they considered likely to follow acquisition of Texas, as American capital and resources, including more slave labor, were pumped into the promising new business market. It is remarkable that business, pricing, and supply arguments frequented the debates at taverns, barbecues, and in newspaper articles just as much as did the political and moral discussion of slavery. Whichever side the Southern Whigs landed on, and the majority did remain united with their Northern colleagues, financial concerns provided a primary motivation.

[375] Speech of Mr. Merrick, of Maryland, in Senate, February 21, 1845 - On the joint resolution from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, for the annexation of Texas., (The Congressional Globe, 1845).
[376] "Letter of Mr. Walker, of Mississippi, Relative to the Annexation of Texas."

**Cotton Prices and Market 1840 - 1860**

Cotton pricing data reinforces the validity of Southern planters' concerns about Texas land availability, tension with their primary market, Great Britain, and the resulting impact on their personal profits or losses. According to a U.S. Department of Agriculture report published in 1895 titled *Production and Price of Cotton For One Hundred Years*, the decade of the 1840s was a very trying time for planters. Prices hovered in the 3 or 4 cent per pound range from 1843 to 1848, with one exception of an increase in 1847 to 6.03 cents per pound. The report summarizes for the decade of the 1840s that

> "So far as prices are concerned this was the most remarkable decade in the history of cotton planting in this country. Not only were the lowest prices on record reached in the United States, but it was the longest known period of continuously low prices. It was remarkable also for unprecedently large crops, … and for the enormous accumulation of stocks in Great Britain, clearly indicating that production or supply had exceeded the demand."[377]

This dismal recent pricing experience clearly hovered over the debates about Texas, providing real-world context to the economic implications of the political question and heightened general anxiety that annexation could worsen the oversupply. Yet at the same time, the competitive advantages an independent Texas might achieve in negotiating a special trading agreement also weighed on American cotton suppliers' minds. Both concerns colored the debates and proved of particular concern for the Southern Whigs.

After annexation during the 1850s, however, prices rebounded, despite a gradually growing supply. The Watkins report states that during that decade planters enjoyed a period of "unexampled prosperity" and that "consumption increased greatly in Europe and America, keeping fair pace with the gradually increasing crops".[378] Texas really did not have as big an impact on world cotton prices or supplies as had been predicted. In 1849 Texas formed 2% of the

[377] James L. Watkins, Production and Price of Cotton For One Hundred Years, (Washington, D. C. 1895). 8.
[378] Watkins, Short Production and Price of Cotton For One Hundred Years. 10.

U. S. market supply at 58,073 bales. By 1859, Texas' share had grown to 10% at 2,866,938 bales, but prices had remained relatively stable over that period, at approximately 5 cents per pound. The report concludes that other factors, especially European demand, were much more definitive in impacting prices. Therefore, in retrospect, annexation did not have as dramatic an effect as either side had predicted, but clearly formed a very pertinent and potent issue for voters and politicians at the time.

**Conclusion**

The national and international debates around Texas had featured contentious issues including the expansion of territory, the availability of affordable land, proliferation of the polarizing institution of slavery, and future directions for one small and one large republic. After the cacophony of these raucous national and international debates, the "profound silence" in the Senate chamber after the final vote must have resonated more forcefully than the cannon fire from Capitol Hill that celebrated the news. Partisans of both sides had poured so much personal energy, engagement, activity, and belonging into this controversy that individuals felt a hollow, almost exhausted sensation at its resolution. For many opponents of annexation, that tiredness quickly turned to anger, especially at the three Southern Whig senators who voted with the Democrats. For others, dread formed, a growing concern for the American union's continuity. The celebratory cannon fire portended much more and threatened repeats of those sounds in the coming years ahead.

Ultimately, however, the answer to the question "was the Texas issue strictly a sectional one?" is no. While slavery, sectional rivalry, and partisan conflict played major parts in the epic drama, the final, deciding factor hinged on potential effects on the price of cotton. Three Whig

Senators chose pocketbook over party and launched the United States and Texas on an entirely new and merged trajectory.

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