Herodotus

*Herodotus* is a student-run publication founded in 1986 by the Stanford University Department of History and the History Undergraduate Student Association (HUGSA). It bears the name of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, the 5th century BCE historian of the Greco-Persian Wars. His Histories, which preserve the memory of the battles of Marathon and Thermopylae, were written so that “human achievements may not become forgotten in time, and great and marvelous deeds . . . may not be without their glory.” Likewise, this journal is dedicated to preserving and showcasing the best undergraduate work of Stanford University’s Department of History. Our published pieces are selected through a process of peer review. As a final note, *Herodotus*’ volume numbering system erroneously begins at 1990 rather than at 1986. We have, however, chosen to retain the existing numbering system for the sake of continuity.

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Editor’s Note

After a year away from campus, a majority of Stanford’s instructors, staff, and students have now returned to a place both strange and familiar. The Farm’s sandstone archways are still intact, the stained glass of Memorial Church still illuminates Main Quad, and Green Library’s stacks are still a labyrinth, but these continuities hide more fundamental changes to daily life. The persistent COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in a new era of masks and social distancing. Since the last publication of Herodotus, the pandemic has also set the stage for bitter international conflicts, threats to global democracy, and trenchant calls for racial and economic justice. The future is, to say the least, uncertain. Learning from the past is perhaps our best chance at preparing for what lies ahead.

The contributors to this year’s edition of Herodotus have written exceptional papers while attempting to adjust to this new “normal.” Their work not only exemplifies the value of sifting through the archive, but also of finding ways to return to the present. The calls for political enfranchisement by 18th-century Black men, the subversive photography of 19th-century Chinese-Americans, and the tenuous expressions of sexual agency by 20th-century Ghanaian women all shed light on the different foundations of our mixed, uncertain, evolving modernity. Through vignettes of crisis and resilience, these papers collectively demonstrate that the past is a mirror for our own time. They teach us how to return to a present at once strange and familiar.

HERODOTUS
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“HOW NOT TO BE SEEN”: THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF MARY TAPE

Ekalan Hou

Introduction by Gordon H. Chang, Senior Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Olive H. Palmer Professor in Humanities

In this compelling essay, Ekalan Hou engages the work of Mary Tape, one of the earliest Chinese American female photographers, a social activist, and a San Francisco resident in the late 19th century. Ekalan offers artful analyses of photographs that she recovered from the Tape family archives and focuses on the ways that Tape seemed to “hide” her subjects in plain sight, akin to the strategies of evasion used by marginalized people and communities during the Chinese Exclusion era. Ekalan provides artistic and social contexts for Tape’s photography — from the picturesque conventions that relegated Chinatown to a ruined place to the efforts of the California Camera Club, of which Tape was a member, to visualize westward expansion — to locate evidence of Tape’s artistic resistance to marginalization. Engaging with both traditional historical documentation and art sources, Ekalan’s interdisciplinary study provocatively examines the violent racialization and objectification of Chinese Americans through aestheticization.
“How Not to be Seen”: The Photography of Mary Tape

Fig. 1: Thomas Arthur Brown, *Tape Family Portrait*, 1884. Left to right: Joseph, Emily, Mamie, Frank, Mary Tape. Courtesy of Alisa Kim.
The Tape family portrait (Fig. 1) was taken in 1884 in the midst of the California Supreme Court case *Tape v. Hurley* (1885) that demanded Chinese children’s equal right to education. Mamie Tape, the dignified child standing in the center of the photograph, was turned away from Spring Valley Primary School despite California’s law that every school “must be open for the admission of all children between six and twenty-one years of age residing in the district.”\(^1\) Frustrated by her daughter’s exclusion, Joseph Tape retained William Gibson to sue on Mamie’s behalf. The Tapes’ affidavit reads:

> It is admitted that Joseph Tape and Mary M. Tape, the parents of the child Mamie Tape, are at present and have been domiciled in the City and County of San Francisco for more than fifteen years last past. That during all this time they have been clothed in the American costume, and that Joseph Tape discarded his queue (which is considered as a badge of Chinese citizenship) some fifteen years ago and has never worn one since. [...] It is admitted that Mamie Tape is a child of good habits, good character and good health. That her playmates are the American children in her neighborhood, that she is dressed as white children of her station in life. That the language used by this family in their home is the English language.\(^2\)

The portrait taken at Thomas Arthur Brown’s photo studio reflects their statement. The Tapes are dressed in American costume and pose like their respectable white counterparts (Fig. 2). Joseph Tape rests his right hand on his thigh, while his left hand encircles Emily, as Alfred Currie Rulofson Sr. does with his child. The Tape family portrait is not merely

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a private souvenir, but serves as legal evidence, a public document of identity and status, and an expression of its subjects’ “conscious will to be seen, reconstituted and remembered as such by present and future generations.”

The Tapes’ attempt to integrate into the white middle-class did not result in recognition nor acceptance. Although the Superior Court Justice James McGuire ruled that “To deny a child, born of Chinese parents in this State, entrance to the public schools would be a violation of the law of the state and the Constitution of the United States” (a ruling upheld by the California Supreme Court when the school board appealed the decision), the school superintendent Andrew Jackson Moulder lobbied for the state legislature to introduce Assembly Bill 268 to establish “separate schools for children of Mongolian or Chinese descent. When such separate schools are established Chinese or Mongolian children must not be admitted into any other schools.” Moulder vowed “to resist, to defeat, and to prohibit” the admission of African, Chinese, and Miwok children, who he claimed would “demoralize our schools.”

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The Tapes tried to send Mamie back to Spring Valley on April 7, 1885, before the opening of the Chinese Primary School on the edge of Chinatown. She was turned away despite the Supreme Court ruling, with the excuse that Mamie lacked the proper vaccination papers and that the classes were at capacity. Mary Tape published a letter to the Board of Education in the *Daily Alta* in protest, writing:

You had better come and see for yourselves. See if the Tape's is not same as other Caucasians, except in features. It seems no matter how a Chinese may live and dress so long as you know they Chinese. Then they are hated as one. There is not any right or justice for them. [...] May you Mr. Moulder, never be persecuted like the way you have persecuted little Mamie Tape. Mamie Tape will never attend any of the Chinese schools of your making! Never!!!

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Mary Tape was confronted with what Lily Cho calls the “distance between the person in diaspora and the citizen.” While Tape was aware of the mediation necessary for the diasporic person to perform citizenship—thus her emphasis on American costume and Chinese dress, she was met with the unbridgeability of the gap between her Chinese lineage and the American civil liberties that she hoped to claim. Her letter marks “the moment of the breaking of the illusion of some kind of naturalized continuity between diaspora and citizenship,” of realizing that the family portrait taken at T. A. Brown’s is a doomed project of an impossible assimilation. Mary Tape took up photography herself and joined the California Camera Club in 1891— in the wake of her recognition that studio portraiture cannot suture foreignness to citizenry. Although her membership in the Camera Club may be viewed as a means of social demarcation and as an assertion of her proximity to whiteness, she was looking for pockets of refuge within the master’s house that ensured her and her family’s survival. In this paper, I approach Tape’s photography from the category of the picturesque, which structured dominant perceptions of Chinese culture and shored up American expansionism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Situating her practice in a context in which Chinese people were relegated to antiquated objects and to tourist attractions that offered a taste of the other, I examine how Tape shielded her

8 Mary Tape, “Chinese Mother’s Letter,” Daily Alta California, April 16, 1885, 1.
10 Ibid.
family from the perils of visibility while remaining in this violent framework, how she used the camera to not be seen, and how she hid from while dwelling within the institution of her dispossession and objectification.

*Picturesque Chinatown*

Three years before Mamie Tape’s trial, Will Brooks wrote about the “perfect bit of broken china” that is San Francisco Chinatown in *The Californian.* He laments the possible disappearance of a picturesque people through assimilation, writing:

> The discerning eye can detect the traces of an insidious undermining, which threatens in the course of time, like the wearing of a stone, to overthrow the walls of his strict exclusiveness, and let in upon him the light of our greater, but not so picturesque, civilization. Let us rejoice, that for the present the Chinaman is still heathen, and perhaps unpleasant, but yet undeniably picturesque. Let us look upon him for himself, regarding him more as a piece of animated bric-a-brac—which he largely resembles—than anything else.

Brooks masks the picturesque, which is determined by the picturer—“the discerning eye”—rather than the pictured, as a neutral adjective in his description. Western civilization’s designation for the “Chinaman” becomes his essence and is used as rationale for his objectification. Chinese

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14. “Picturesque habits of viewing, representing or constructing aesthetically pleasing objects—whether they be landscapes, artefacts or human figures—have been seen to rest on the suppression of the interpretative and narrative signs which marked earlier representation. This characteristic has been identified by commentators as the basis on which the Picturesque translates the political and the social into the decorative, and so, as the route to the naturalisation of the Picturesque image.” Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics Since 1770* (Cambridge:
people have sealed their own fate in Brooks’ self-justifying argument; their possession of a “peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture” predestines their being made into one.\textsuperscript{15}

Chinese people’s alignment with the picturesque makes them suitable sitters for photographs. Although William Gilpin was writing for painters in his essay “On Picturesque Travel,” his statement that “the picturesque eye is perhaps most inquisitive after the elegant relics of ancient architecture; the ruined tower, the Gothic arch, the remains of castles, and abbeys. These are the richest legacies of art. They are consecrated by time” resonates with Roland Barthes’ writing on photography almost two centuries later.\textsuperscript{16}In \textit{Camera Lucida}, Barthes describes the \textit{punctum} of photographs as Time, the overlap between \textit{this will be} and \textit{this has been}, and the horror over “an anterior future of which death is the stake.”\textsuperscript{17}Brooks, by situating himself in the not-so-picturesque but inevitable future of Chinatown, mourns a loss that had not yet happened but was bound to take place. Chinatown was picture-perfect because it had death inscribed in its future.\textsuperscript{18}

Chinatown’s foretold extinction is nowhere more


18 The murderous impulse occasionally comes to the forefront of Brooks’ writing. In a description of the “toy dishes” at a Chinatown teahouse, Brooks writes: “seating ourselves at a less pretentious board, [we] request the “boy” to bring us some tea and sweetmeats. If he brings us cakes, we will not kill him; but we will not eat the cakes, lest they kill us.” The cutification of the Chinese waiter and dishes are inextricable from the consumers’ “sadism and desire for mastery.” Brooks, “A Fragment of China,” 7. Sianne Ngai, \textit{Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 65.
evident than in Arnold Genthe’s *Old Chinatown*, a book of photographs published two years after the “older, more picturesque San Francisco fell to dust and cinders in the great disaster of 1906.”19 “Picturesque” rarely appears without “old” by its side in Genthe’s book; he attaches a temporal dimension to the word—one of obsolescence. In his foreword to the book, Will Irwin writes that, “If, in these writings, I use the past tense, I do not mean to imply that our Californian Chinese have changed their natures or their manners. [...] It is just that your lenses and plates record only the past; and, I, embroidering your work, have tried to keep in tone.”20 The foundation of Irwin and Genthe’s work is the catastrophe that has already occurred. When Irwin writes that Chinatown was “falling everywhere into pictures,” he reveals the concurrence of Genthe’s artistic production and Chinatown’s dissolution. Chinatown is the negative that never existed before prints, the absent original that copies cannot reanimate into being, a space of simulation with which “no dream of authentic contact could ever be made into flesh.”21

Chinese immigrants became a fantasy and a haunt—elusive as smoke and thin as joss paper. Robert Fletcher writes in *Ten Drawings in Chinatown*: “there was only a sensation of presence, a feeling as of some one following close beside us, without any sight or sound of a bodily presence. It was like a bad dream.”22 Chinese people’s uncanniness reveals the violence inherent in Euro-American subjects’ wish to penetrate the “other”’s culture, but what happens when

How Not to be Seen

the picturesque object—the conceptual tool with which Western civilization defines itself—occupies the viewing eye? How do those who are ontologically opposed to the “ideal of a natural and an agential personhood”—who are more animated bric-a-brac than human—live and be?

Mary Tape's photographs provide examples of fugitive tactics that the ornament may use to take respite from a white world while living in it. She understood the violence of capture. When she told a reporter from the San Francisco Examiner that she hoped to develop dry plates with increasingly fast exposures to photograph “trotters in motion and birds in their flight,” she parallels her shooting of pictures with her husband's hunting of birds. Their trophies—her photographs and his specimens—hung side by side in the family library. Mary Tape is careful when pointing this sublimation of a gun at her family and co-ethnics, as the disposessed would be when wielding an instrument that allows people to be possessed. In her book Picturing Model Citizens, Thy Phu contrasts Tape's photograph of her daughters Mamie and Gertrude with their white playmate (Fig. 3) with Genthe's photographs of Chinatown denizens. While Genthe delighted in scaring Chinese people with his “black devil box”—projecting and twisting his mystification of Chinatown into Chinese superstition (Fig. 4), Tape was willing to “encounter her subjects—rather than set upon and symbolically conquer them.” In addition to Tape's

28 Arnold Genthe, As I Remember (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936), 34-5; Thy Phu, Picturing Model Citizens (Philadelphia:
intimacy with her sitters, Phu notes that Tape's photograph suggests the possibility of integration. It is not set in a “forbidden space” impenetrable to most white people except the intrepid photographer, but presents the commingling of white and Chinese children.  

Fig. 3: Mary Tape, *Gertrude and Mamie with Playmate*, c. 1892.

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Tape not only subverted conventions of Chinatown street photography but also used strategies of diversion to shield her children from the violence of the camera. The luminous fruits in Mamie’s hands form a still-life against the white dress that serves as their tablecloth. With what appears to be a localized study of Paul Cézanne’s *Grapes and Peach on a Plate* (1877-1879; Fig. 5), Tape involves the viewers in the game that the girls in the photograph play. We, too, are focused on the fruits that are the subjects of the white girl’s choice and of Mamie’s hiding. In addition to the composition within the composition, the background of Tape’s photograph distracts from its subjects. At first glance, the slanted lines across the wall seem to be shadows of exposed beams and ridges, and the thin rectangle behind the white girl appears to be a door leading to the interior of the house. This assumption falters, however, when one realizes that the “shadows” do not extend to the ground, nor do they extend to the “door” that now resembles more a curtain hanging off a beam. The recession of the lines also con-
founds: where do they lead? Do they end at a staircase or lap siding? Why do they recede so much more steeply than the boardwalk upon which the girls stand? Trapping viewers in the act of questioning with the razzle dazzle background, Tape forestalls their consignment of the children to that-has-been. She twists reification into a riddle to avert the catastrophe of the photograph. The girls are not reducible to a picture but become an enigma; they hold off the possessive eye with an unanswerable but insistent puzzle.

Fig. 5: Paul Cézanne, Grapes and Peach on a Plate, c.1877-1879.

Fig. 6: “Which Hand Do You Oil on canvas. Courtesy of The Barnes Foundation. Choose?,” SF Morning Call, 12.
The effectiveness of Mary Tape’s strategies may be measured by the extent to which they were resisted in copies of her photograph. In Leland Gamble’s feature of her in the *San Francisco Morning Call*, he writes that the lantern slides that Tape takes pride in are “fully worth it, as some of the reproductions with this article will prove.” The article features “Which Hand Do You Choose?” (Fig. 6), “The Largest Redwood Tree in Marin County,” and “Sister and I,” but the prints are altered from the original. In the print of the three girls, only the white girl is still wearing a plain dress, while Mamie’s floral and Gertrude’s plaid dress distract from the fruits in Mamie’s hands. The fruits have also devolved into unintelligible outlines: the grapes resemble kale and the peach fuses with its shadow to become a carrot, if not a knife. The still life dissolves into a hodgepodge of patterns, if not a subconscious threat, and the background is cropped and bleached. Both points of diversion are eliminated. The doorway that frames the original photograph is also removed. All barricades that establish critical distance and prevent the viewer’s uninhibited access to the girls are undone. Mamie and Gertrude become, once more, picturesque victims of the camera, another iteration of Genthe’s “tiny, yellow flowers.”

Notwithstanding *San Francisco Morning Call’s* retouching of her photograph, Tape finds a hideaway to the violent framework of photography that is always already turning Chinatown into a ruin and subjecting its denizens to crushing objecthood. Shielded by the gemlike fruits and the vertiginous space, the girls escape into their game. Tape disarms the doom inscribed in the picturesque with her puzzling composition. She quizzes the viewers like Mamie does her white friend, but leaves the choice suspended and

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31 Genthe, *Old Chinatown*, 63. “I do not know of a more picturesque subject for the hand camera than the “Children of Chinatown,” with their clear and smooth olive skin, their mysterious black eyes, and the rich silk dresses worn on festival occasions with such natural grace and wise dignity.” Arnold Genthe, “The Children of Chinatown,” *Camera Craft* 2, No. 2 (1900): 100.
the secret untold. Objectification is postponed if wonder never ends.

**California Camera Club and Landscapes of Capture**

The pursuit of the picturesque did not end at Chinatown’s borders but extended to the American West. Elizabeth Hampsten writes in “Land in Time and Space”: “The west and the camera shutter opened up together, each rushing the other along, as photographs recorded, and bragged about, and advertised the “new” lands.”

A group of amateur photographers formed the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association in 1883, and at the Association’s third annual exhibition in 1888, a reviewer from the *Daily Alta* wrote that, “California climatic conditions, beauty of landscape and general picturesqueness of scenery all greatly favor the work of the camera.”

The amateur photographers regarded themselves as pioneers who transformed the wilderness into respectable objects for contemplation. The picturesque shored up the imperialist ego: all that the “eye” can see ought to be subdued by the westward-moving “I.”

In 1890, George W. Reed, a member of the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association expelled for selling his photographs of the Golden Gate on a royalty basis, formed the California Camera Club. The Club was open

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to all who were interested in photography, both amateurs and professionals. It provided them with a large darkroom and portrait studio, arranged monthly outings to enrich its corpus of "the finest California scenic views," and put forth its own photography journal—*The Pacific Coast Photographer* from 1892-1894 and *Camera Craft* thereafter. The Club would grow to become the largest Camera Club in the United States by 1900, recording 425 active members in the same year. Mary Tape became a member of the Club in 1891 and was featured in *The Pacific Coast Photographer* in the following year. She is referred to as a "bright and intelligent Americanized Chinese lady" who is "becoming a slide expert. She probably does what but few amateurs have undertaken—the manufacture of her own slide plates." The Camera Club’s recognition of Tape did not preclude its members from perceiving the Chinese as a primitive people to be dominated and Chinatown as a tourist destination. Club members photographed the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, where a walk-through exhibit named “Underground Chinatown” entertained visitors with wax figures of Chinese smokers inviting white people into

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38 “The Print Exhibition,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, No. 9 (1892): 166.

39 An editorial in the *San Francisco Chronicle* notes that, “Chinatown possesses a strange fascination for the amateur and his camera. He has seen every feature of the loathsome place time and again, but he wants to have it as it looks under the glare of his flashlight. He wants to thrust open the door of a crowded, ill-smelling opium-smoked den, and scare the copper-colored inmates into realistic visions of the hereafter. He wants to obtain a picture no one else possesses. His wish is to catch the Celestials as they live, as they eat, work and sleep.” “The Camera in California,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 24, 1893, 9.
opium dens, slave traffickers plotting abductions of white women, and prostitutes beckoning to passersby. They displayed photographs in the Liberal Arts Building at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair, where Mary Tape’s grandchildren Emily and Harold were spectacles in the human zoo that is the “Chinese Village” (Fig. 7-8). In a photo album of Club outings, a group of white Club members also dressed themselves in Qing clothing and took group portraits holding fans (Fig. 9). They flirted with “other ways of experiencing the universe” and sampled Chineseness like an excursion to Yosemite or Santa Cruz — it was a trip without consequence, a taste of the “exotic” that only reinscribed the status quo. How did Mary Tape, who recognized California Camera Club and Western expansionism’s irreversible influence, resist their imperializing eye?


Fig. 7: Pike Pictures, *Emily Lo*, 1904.

Fig. 8: *Youthful Contingent of Chinese Village*, 1904. Front row: third Courtesy of Linda Doler. from right: Emily; right: Harold. Courtesy of St. Louis Public Library.
Understanding the conventions of landscape and travel photography, whereby Chinese people are always curious attractions viewed through an ethnographic lens, Tape created pockets of hiding in her photographs. In an unlabeled photograph (Fig. 10), four people stand at the mouth of a tunnel, too far from the camera to be identified (although Mamie has appeared in similar clothing and posture in other photographs as the woman on the right). Only a keyhole of landscape is visible, framed by a looming darkness. The Chinese subjects stand at the edge of the shadow cast by the tunnel; they teeter at the fringe of a memory of their forefathers’ labor and fungibility. The photograph looks askance at Chinese railroad workers’ toil—their hellish confinement in the maw of the Summit tunnels (Fig. 11) where:

The air was thick with rock dust, acrid fumes lingered from previous explosions, water dripped and flowed from fissures in the cold rock, and sharp, heavy icicles hung
down in the winter. Air temperature ranged from cold to frigid. Rock fragments flew through the air and into eyes and mouths. A moment of distracted attention, mistiming, or simple error and there would be a smashed hand, arm, or fingers. 

As landscape photography is an *a priori* mode of encounter and the viewer’s subjectivity is the landscape’s true point of reference, the temporality of the tunnel becomes layered through Mary Tape’s eyes. This is no virgin land to be conquered by pioneering California Camera Club members, but a site where a history of oppression is activated. Tape clicks the shutter before any of her subjects can enter the shadow; she summons but eschews the recurrence of trauma. In their haziness, the Chinese figures conjure the ghosts of their co-ethnics, but Tape prevents them from being captured or indentured.

![Fig. 10: Mary Tape, Untitled, n.d.](image)


In addition to shrinking her subjects beyond visibility and placing them outside the reach of a historical penumbra, Tape protects her children through concealment and camouflage. It is difficult to notice Frank, Emily, and Gertrude in Tape’s photograph of Cascade Cottage (Fig. 12) at first glance. The immediate focus of the photograph is the erect flagpole at its center, echoed by the vertical composition and the trees that reach skyward. The image is a reflection of the national ego par excellence. The United States brings order and provides anchorage to wilderness while inheriting its majesty. Supplementing the immaculate uprightness of the flag is its excessive multiplication; the patriotic reminder appears at the entrance of the cottage and replicates itself at every column. The human subjects are easily overlooked in the photograph and hide in its patriotic proclamations. Gertrude leans against the gate; her body is covered by the fence and her head blends into...
the lights and shadows of the thicket behind her. Frank is a chameleon on the staircase: his dark suits allow him to fuse with the steps while his hat catches the lightness of the handrail. Emily peaks from behind the flagpole and mimics it with her white columnal dress. They are “naturalized” within the landscape in their various disguises and secrete themselves in an image of nationalism that they are deemed too foreign to take part in.

Fig. 12: Mary Tape, *Cascade Cottage*, n.d. Courtesy of Linda Doler.

Mary Tape was enacting Hito Steyerl’s tactics “to be invisible in plain sight” and “to become invisible by becoming a picture”—lessons 2 and 3 in *How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* (2013)—before they were theorized as such. In Steyerl’s video, she lists seven ways of being invisible in plain sight: to pretend you are not there, to insist “I am completely invisible,” to scroll, to swipe, to erase, to shrink, and to take a picture; and eight ways of becoming invisible by becoming a picture: to camouflage, to conceal, to cloak, to mask, to be painted, to
disguise, to mimicry, and to key. Tape shrinks her Chinese subjects in the photograph of them at the mouth of the tunnel. In the photograph of Cascade Cottage, Gertrude is concealed, Frank is camouflaged, and Emily mimics the flagpole. In every case, Tape is also employing the strategy of taking a picture to be invisible in plain sight (Fig. 13). Rather than extricating herself from a regime of violent visualization, she takes up the camera to find the trace of resistance within the restraint. She takes up the master's tool to cause a dehiscence from within the system of her dispossession; she finds freedom from the building block of containment and makes wings out of fetters.  

![Fig. 13: Screenshot of Hito Steyerl, *How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* (2013), 03:01. Courtesy of Artforum.](image)

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Coda: Hiding in Shadows

During one of my conversations with the Chinese-American photographer Reagan Louie, who lived in and pictured Chinatown in the 1970s (Figs. 14-15), he shared the following thoughts about Chinatown's alleyways:

Chinatown's alleyways receive little daylight, remaining mostly in shadow. In the brief moments when the sun shines into the narrow lanes, the light casts calligraphic shadows against the walls - a fleeting poem to the spirit and life of Chinese people. Like the momentary sunlight, the alleyways are fugitive spaces; impermanent, transient. Historically Chinatown alleyways were havens for actual fugitives, paper sons. Well hidden in the shadows, life could go on, furtively.47


Contrary to Genthe’s reified vision of Chinatown and California Camera Club members’ desire to suspend a civilization mid-decay, Louie describes Chinatown's alleyways as shifting spaces that reflect and shelter a people always trying to evade capture. For Louie, what is at stake is the “fugitive movement in and out of the frame, bar, or what-

47 Reagan Louie, correspondence with author, November 18, 2021.
ever externally imposed logic—a movement of escape, the stealth of the stolen that can be said, since it inheres in every closed circle, to break every enclosure.” I see echoes of Louie’s words in Tape’s photographs from more than a century ago. In her portrait of her husband (Fig. 16), Joseph Tape fuses with the dancing, calligraphic strokes that the wisteria casts on him. His body passes errant and vagrant as the shadow, soon fading, soon darkening, and soon disappearing. The camera touches him only momentarily—the way the eclipse of a petal grazes his forehead or meets his shoulder.

Fig. 16: Mary Tape, *Joseph Tape*, n.d. Courtesy of Linda Doler.

ALL-AMERICAN: THE STANFORD CHINESE STUDENTS’ CLUB AND EARLY CHINESE INTEGRATION AT STANFORD

Daniel Shangpei Wu

Introduction by Estelle Freedman, Robinson Professor in U.S. History, Emeritus

In this revealing case study of Chinese students at Stanford University in the early twentieth century, Daniel Wu explores complex responses to exclusionary racial prejudice on campus. Forced to segregate themselves, the Chinese students created a vibrant community space from which they attempted both to celebrate their own culture and to integrate into American life. Wu makes excellent use of print and archival sources to illustrate how these students sought acceptance by their American-born peers, at times adopting western prejudices about China and claiming their own exceptional status as elites. This essay speaks poignantly to the challenges of acculturation at Stanford and in modern America.
All-American: The Stanford Chinese Students’ Club and Early Chinese Integration at Stanford

On a December evening in 1916, Stanford students returned from their classes to find an unfamiliar face in their dormitory: J. W. Lum, a junior from a wealthy family who had finally secured a coveted spot in the dorm, Encina Hall, after a year of rejections. Unlike the rest of the men staying at Encina Hall, Lum was Chinese. This prompted a tense discussion among the Encina residents. “How come there is a Chinaman here?” they asked. “We don’t want any Chink here.” The students threw Lum out of Encina Hall and tossed his belongings onto the street after him. They were unapologetic in explaining why they took such action against Lum, even as the incident made newspaper headlines and drew condemnation from Stanford president Ray Wilbur. “A Chinese may be a good classmate,” students told the San Francisco Examiner, “but he does not make a good roommate.” Barred from his designated housing on campus, Lum sought the help of other Chinese students and eventually found lodging in a Chinese family’s cafe in Palo Alto.

Anti-Chinese racism at Stanford did not always manifest as dramatically as it did at Encina Hall. But Lum’s ordeal captured the tensions that Stanford’s earliest community of immigrant Chinese students navigated as they studied at the university between 1892 and 1930. Entering a country that openly harbored anti-Chinese prejudice, the first Chinese students at Stanford responded by forming a student community, the Chinese Students’ Club, to support each other and build networks of solidarity across

3 “Students Bar Chinese as Roommate.”
4 Frank Y. Chuck, 6.
the Bay Area. The club’s activities chart a complex relationship that Stanford’s first Chinese students developed with their American surroundings. Through the club, Chinese students advocated fiercely for the promotion of Chinese culture and against racism. But, they framed their advocacy as a search for acceptance from Americans and pursued integration at Stanford by adopting American traditions and pastimes. Ultimately, the identity that the Chinese Students’ Club constructed at Stanford could not escape American beliefs about China: Chinese students were better than the country they came from by virtue of their proximity to Western values and culture, yet they were still unable to become fully American.

The first Chinese students immigrated to the U.S. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. When they arrived, they were fascinated by American culture and student life. They traded silk clothes for double-breasted suits and leather shoes, and they struggled to stomach steaks and ice cream. Inspired by the autonomy of American student governments and societies, they formed their own organizations to unite Chinese student communities and inspire Chinese patriotism abroad. Weili Ye describes these cross-cultural exchanges as part of a Chinese search for modernity. As they observed China’s political and societal struggles from afar, Chinese students in the U.S. explored American culture to “regenerate Chinese culture by a careful selection and digestion of Western knowledge.”

In this way, Chinese students in the U.S. joined a common search for a new Chinese identity among all Chinese students at the turn of the century. As historian Rana Mitter describes, the Chinese desire to modernize at the turn of the 20th century sprung from decades of instability that several generations of Chinese endured between the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the transition to a weakly governed Republic of China. The humiliation of China’s exploitation at the hands of Britain and Japan and

emergence of triumphalist ideas like Social Darwinism convinced a generation of Chinese that a culture supposedly underpinned by Confucian conservatism was unprepared for the modern world. This spurred an urgent movement to reconsider Chinese culture and adopt values from the West. Mitter notes that Chinese students, many of whom were educated abroad, were at the forefront of this movement. Historian Tamara Venit’s account of the Stanford Chinese Student’s Club suggests that Chinese students at Stanford shared these concerns. According to Venit, the club paid close attention to political developments in China in the 1910s and 1920s, and many members returned to China after graduating from Stanford to continue educational work at home. I additionally argue that the Chinese Students’ Club further aligned themselves with the Chinese search for identity by interpreting their task of promoting Chinese interests at Stanford as one of acculturation. First, I establish the backdrop of anti-Chinese prejudice in the Bay Area and at Stanford that Chinese students encountered. Next, I discuss the activities of the Chinese Students’ Club in two categories — community building among like minded students and local Chinese, and activism for Chinese causes and against racism — and how the activities within these categories reveal the club’s deferential attitudes towards American students and culture. I finally argue that Stanford’s Chinese students were moved by both the anti-Chinese prejudices they encountered on campus and their own critical opinions of the Chinese public. They sought to learn American pastimes to present themselves acceptably to American eyes, believing that the solution to Chinese weakness was adopting an American industriousness and civility.

To describe the Stanford Chinese Students’ Club’s

activities, I rely primarily on the online archives of the *Daily Palo Alto* (known today as the *Stanford Daily*) and the *Chinese Students’ Monthly*. Both newspapers published regularly during this time period and covered the Chinese Students’ Club’s activities in detail, often with reports and opinion articles from club members that allow me to describe the attitudes of club members towards China and American activities. I supplement this with oral histories and the digitized record of the Stanford Chinese Club’s minutes as recorded by club secretaries. Finally, I use the online archives of Bay Area newspapers to illustrate the anti-Chinese prejudice in California that Stanford students encountered off-campus.

**Chinese Students and Anti-Chinese Prejudice in the Bay Area**

Chinese students first arrived in the United States in the 1870s and 1880s, years before Stanford was founded in 1885, as part of education missions sponsored by the ailing Qing government’s Self-Strengthening Movement. Initially bound for colleges in the East and Midwest, many of these students first set foot in America not far from Palo Alto. In 1872, thirty-four New York-bound Chinese students disembarked in San Francisco with the passengers of the *Great Republic*, a steamer arriving from Hong Kong.

Fewer Chinese students initially settled in California than on the East Coast, but their numbers grew gradually alongside the large Chinese population in the Bay Area. In 1874, San Francisco announced plans to establish a Chinese consulate in the city and receive fifty students from “East-

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8 Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China’s Name*, 8. The Qing government’s attempts to reform Chinese industry and education between 1861 and 1895 were an early sign of the Chinese desire to modernize by emulating the West. See Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, 33-35.
ern Colleges.” In the 1880s, mission schools like Oakland’s Presbyterian Chinese Mission school held large community performances and sent students for further study at seminaries in Cincinnati. San Francisco remained an important way station for Chinese students traveling between China and U.S. colleges anywhere in the country, and Chinese students often passed through or stayed in the city. In 1881, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on twenty-five Chinese students from New England colleges lodging in the city as they waited for the departure of a steamer to return to China.

Exclusionary anti-Chinese prejudice was prevalent in the Bay Area at the time. Unemployment from the economic downturn of the 1870s triggered a wave of resentment towards California’s large population of Chinese laborers, who had just entered the Californian workforce after the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. “Anti-Chinese Clubs” held meetings openly advertised in major newspapers. Humor publications shared crude racial caricatures to spread fears of a racial immigration crisis. Historian R. Scott Baxter describes that, in response, Chinese populations formed homogeneous communities like Chinatowns and neighborhood associations to defend themselves from racial harassment. Even these were targeted by violence. San Jose’s multiple Chinatowns were repeatedly struck by arson attacks. In San Francisco, the exotic imagery of a segregated Chinatown fueled a racial imagination of California’s Chinese tied to vice, disease, and an inability...
to assimilate that intersected with discourses about immigration and protecting white labor. In 1873, a reporter decried a steamer arriving in San Francisco from China as a “Coolie invasion.” “No small-pox was discovered,” he wrote, “but the coolies themselves are a scourge which is equally fatal.”

Within this troubled context, Americans perceived Chinese students as a more civilized group, distinguished from the bulk of the Chinese population in California because of their American education. Class played a role in the favorable press coverage towards Chinese students, the majority of whom came from privileged seaport regions and elite missionary schools in China. The qualities that made Chinese students more civilized overwhelmingly hewed to white American appearances and moralities. As evidence of their “high class,” one account described arriving Chinese students as “delicate featured,” “much lighter-complexioned than any of their countrymen here,” “intellectual-looking” and “richly dressed.” Another paper praised twenty-five Chinese students from the East Coast for adopting American tastes and sporting interests and highlighted their “cosmopolitan” tones of voice. “Most of them,” the reporter said, “have nearly or quite lost the jerky and obstructed method of vocal delivery which distinguishes Chinese speech from the flowing utterance of the American or European.”

**Chinese Immigrants at Stanford**

Stanford hosted Chinese immigrants on its campus from


16 “From China,” *The San Francisco Examiner*, July 14, 1873.

17 Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China’s Name*, 10.


the university’s inception. Chinese workers pulled weeds from the lawns around Main Quad, Chinese cooks worked in the dorms and Walter Fong, the first Chinese-born student to graduate from Stanford, enrolled in 1892. The first generation of Chinese students to arrive at Stanford encountered exclusionary prejudices consistent with those found in the Bay Area press. In 1893, community members just off campus in Palo Alto forced a Chinese person trying to open a laundry out of the town by threatening to boycott his business. In the following year, students complained of Encina Hall residents “annoy[ing]” the dorm’s Chinese laundrymen. Dr. Frank Y. Chuck, who studied at Stanford in the 1920s, recalled that Chinese students could not be elected to any fraternities or societies.

J. W. Lum’s ordeal at Encina Hall in 1916 was the most prominent case of anti-Chinese racism at Stanford in the early 20th century. It showed that prejudice against Chinese students was commonplace and extreme enough to affect basic arrangements like housing, even though the university administration nominally opposed it. Within the Stanford community, the incident elicited strong responses both supporting and opposing Lum’s eviction. In February 1917, campus newspaper The Daily Palo Alto published a letter from student J. D. Bush lambasting an anti-Chinese piece from another student publication, the Stanford Illustrated Review. Bush deemed the article “absurd and mischievous” for claiming that “there is between the Oriental and Caucasian people a social difference which demands that a line be drawn somewhere.” Bush additionally accused both the

21 “Palo Alto Notes,” The Daily Palo Alto, November 11, 1893.
22 The Daily Palo Alto, January 31, 1894. Interestingly, this article expressed much more concern for the harassment of Stanford-employed Chinese workers who “come there in pursuit of a legitimate livelihood” and threatened reprisal.
23 Frank Y. Chuck, 8.
Illustrated Review and popular cartoon humor magazine the Chaparral for “railing at the Chinese students with extravagant and absurd burlesque parody in words and pictures.”

As much as the Chinese populations of San Jose and San Francisco did on a regional level, Chinese students created their own community to support each other. In Stanford’s earliest years, the university’s Chinese student population remained too small — no more than three Chinese students were enrolled at the university at any time before 1910 — for a robust community to form, despite the attempts of some students. That changed in September 1911, when seven male Chinese students from Stanford gathered in Palo Alto to form the Stanford Chinese Students’ Club. The seven students that year comprised Stanford’s largest ever Chinese student population and “incited a growth of Chinese spirit, both in and out of the University,” according to a report submitted by the club to the Chinese Students’ Monthly. “At present the club is looking forward to an increase in community,” it concluded. “The prospects are bright and promising for 1912.”

Activism and Community Building

The Chinese Students’ Club pursued two goals in their advocacy for Chinese interests at Stanford: building community and promoting awareness of Chinese culture and affairs. Closest to home, the Chinese Students’ Club first secured a stable location for Chinese students to live and study. According to Frank Y. Chuck, members of the club came to the aid of J. W. Lum immediately after his eviction

24 “Another Viewpoint,” The Daily Palo Alto, February 1, 1917. The articles from the Chaparral and Illustrated Review were not available in any digitized record of Stanford publications.
from Encina Hall in 1916.\textsuperscript{28} This episode of discrimination was still fresh in the club’s mind a few years later as members pushed to create a dedicated space for Chinese students on campus.\textsuperscript{29} In perhaps their most significant early accomplishment, the Chinese Students’ Club in 1920 bought and refurbished a clubhouse on 528 Salvatierra St., the first of its kind for Chinese students in the country.\textsuperscript{30} The club raised over eight thousand dollars from Stanford alumni and Chinese merchants in the region in just a few months between November 1919 and February 1920.\textsuperscript{31} A report to the \textit{Chinese Students’ Monthly} rejoiced that the club had at last “found an ideal place… for the discussion of problems so vital to the Chinese students and China, and also have the satisfaction to ‘feel at home.’”\textsuperscript{32} In 1922, twenty-one of the twenty-three Chinese students on campus lived in the clubhouse.\textsuperscript{33}

As the fundraising for the clubhouse showed, the Stanford Chinese Students’ Club also succeeded in establishing strong relationships with a wider community of Chinese immigrants in the Bay Area. They doggedly fundraised in San Francisco, using maps to go door to door between every listed Chinese store in the city.\textsuperscript{34} Even without the impetus of the clubhouse project, the Chinese Students’ Club regularly organized social occasions to help Stanford’s Chinese students connect with each other and other Chinese immigrants from numerous backgrounds. Venit notes that most club members were wealthy enough to travel regularly to San Francisco and found comfort in “a place where they could immerse themselves in Chinese culture,

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{28}] Frank Y. Chuck, 6.
\item[\textsuperscript{29}] Ibid., 7.
\item[\textsuperscript{30}] “Club News,” \textit{The Chinese Students’ Monthly}, February 1920.
\item[\textsuperscript{33}] Venit, “The Chinese Who Are Living in the Vicinity,” 19.
\item[\textsuperscript{34}] Frank Y. Chuck, 6-7.
\end{itemize}
entertainment and politics.” The club also held socials on campus and at the homes of local Chinese families, and extended invitations to students from surrounding schools such as the University of California at Berkeley. One such occasion in Oakland in 1916 attracted between fifty and sixty students from Stanford, the University of California, and other schools. The club proudly declared it a success for “afford[ing] ample opportunity for fostering closer contact and more comradeship among the students of the two universities and other institutions.”

The Chinese Students’ Club also used social events to court American interest and promote an awareness of Chinese culture in Stanford’s wider community. The club held dinners with professors, community leaders and Stanford graduates, and hosted their own “Chinese Nights” for Stanford’s Cosmopolitan Club, a campus organization for international students. The nights consisted of Chinese musical and drama performances and lectures on Chinese culture that aimed both to entertain and educate Stanford’s American students. The Stanford Chinese Students’ Club also networked on a larger scale by hosting conferences to bring together Chinese students from national associations. The club participated in the Chinese Students’ Alliance’s (CSA) annual Western Conferences, where Chinese students from college student organizations across the country gathered to socialize and discuss Chinese affairs. From 1924, the club even began to host editions of the conference at Stanford. Winning hosting duties from the Chinese Students’

36 Stanford Chinese Club records, Stanford Special Collections, Stanford University, Stanford, CA; Chinese Club minute book, November 6, 1916, 6.
37 Ibid.
Club of the University of California, who usually hosted the conference, was a considerable achievement for the smaller Stanford club. In August 1924, the first edition of the conference held at Stanford welcomed a hundred delegates, some from as far away as Washington. The conference had the cooperation of the university—acting president William Durand spoke, and the delegates were housed in Stanford dorms. It also earned approving reviews from the *Chinese Students’ Monthly*, the CSA's newsletter, which hailed the Stanford club as an inspiration for its “healthy enthusiasm for cooperation.” Stanford frequently hosted the conference in subsequent years and saw graduate student Lincoln Tan elected as president of the western section of the CSA in 1925.

The CSA conferences also aided the Stanford Chinese Students’ Club efforts to promote the image of Chinese immigrants by normalizing the presence of politically motivated Chinese students on campus and showing them in an impressive light to the rest of the Stanford community. The language in *The Daily Palo Alto*’s headlines progressed from describing the gathering of Chinese students as a “conclave” in 1924 to an “annual session” and “alliance” in 1928. That year, two editorials wrote approvingly of the conference from explicitly American perspectives. One welcomed the participants of the conference onto campus and sympathetically invoked comradeship between their two countries — “like his American neighbor, the welfare

of his country comes first with the Chinese student.” The other remarked admiringly that “the delegates will be able to discuss [China’s national affairs] because politics is one of the favorite pastimes of the Chinese student.”

This seemed true; many more of the Stanford Chinese Students’ Club’s activities aimed to support Chinese communities in the Bay Area and in China. In the early years of the organization, members proposed that the club publish two newspapers, one to share Chinese political news to Chinese students nationwide and another to share “knowledge of the present situation of China” with Chinese immigrants living in San Francisco. The club did not realize some of its loftier initial proposals due to financial constraints, but it was able to produce several examples of effective activism on campus. On several occasions in the 1920s, the club organized famine relief drives to send monetary donations back to China. In 1925, the club established a free night school in the clubhouse for Stanford’s Chinese cooks and laborers to teach them English and discuss Chinese affairs. Interestingly, the club did not discuss Stanford’s own connections to the Transcontinental Railroad and the Chinese workers that built it.

Members of the Stanford Chinese Students’ Club also protested directly against instances of racism on campus and in the surrounding community. In 1928, the Chinese Students’ Club protested the screening of East of Suez, a silent film that featured a racist caricature of a mandarin as a villain, at Palo Alto’s Stanford Theatre. The club won a profuse apology from the theater’s manager, who pledged

48 Ibid.
never to show a film with racist caricatures at the theater again and affirmed that he had “the highest esteem and admiration” for China. The club's success with the Stanford Theatre is noteworthy considering the documented prejudices of Palo Alto residents just a decade earlier. It also demonstrated the authority that the club was able to assume with both Chinese students at Stanford and the Stanford Theatre's management. After the protest, the *Chinese Students’ Monthly* praised the Stanford club as a model of Chinese activism: “this little incident clearly proves that protests by local Chinese students were by no means always fruitless,” a report wrote.

**Adopting American Culture**

Between 1911 and 1930, the Stanford Chinese Students’ Club succeeded in creating a Chinese community on campus that became a leading Chinese student group on the West Coast, produced tangible change in the local community and began to normalize the presence of Chinese students at Stanford. They also believed, however, that improving the Chinese image at Stanford required participation in Stanford’s American culture. When prejudices and cultural barriers prevented them from integrating fully with the campus community, they used the Chinese Students’ Club as an alternative vehicle to play sports or socialize with each other in American ways. Soon, the Chinese Students’ Club’s own social programming with other Chinese communities reflected American conventions and pastimes.

Elements of acculturation appeared from the club’s onset. English was the primary language of the Chinese Student’s Club’s records — a vote to make Chinese the official language was defeated in 1929 — and members used English as a common language for members who only spoke

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50 Ibid.
Cantonese.\textsuperscript{51} As early as 1916, socials held by the Chinese Students’ Club in Oakland featured popular American activities such as dancing, parlor games, and short vaudeville sketches.\textsuperscript{52} At Stanford, the Chinese Students’ Club’s activities seemed to allow its members to make further inroads with other Stanford clubs like the Cosmopolitan Society, which elected a founding member of the Chinese Students’ Club, A. P. Lowe, as club president in 1913.\textsuperscript{53}

The Chinese Students’ Club also served as the group through which Chinese students participated in sporting competitions and traditions at Stanford. Intramural and intercollegiate athletics became a large division of the Chinese Students’ Club’s activities — the club had a dedicated athletic committee and chairman — that allowed the club to connect with both Chinese students at the University of California and other Stanford communities.\textsuperscript{54} In October 1916, the club began to arrange tennis and basketball competitions with Chinese students at Berkeley.\textsuperscript{55} In sporting events with the California Chinese Students’ Club, the club enthusiastically embraced the jocular American culture of university rivalry: correspondents H. W. Yee and H. H. Wu called the California club their “traditional rival” and declared “we are 100 per cent sure to get old ‘Cal’s’ ‘goat’” in a 1920 \textit{Chinese Students’ Monthly} report. The same report implied that a basketball team would “put the Stanford Club on the map,” showing the degree to which the club had begun to value sporting success.\textsuperscript{56} After 1920, the Chinese

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Stanford Chinese Club records, Chinese Club minute book, November 6, 1916, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{53} “Local Intelligence,” \textit{The Chinese Students’ Monthly}, November 1913.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{55} “Chinese Students Plan Contests with U.C.,” \textit{The Daily Palo Alto}, October 13, 1916.
\end{itemize}
Students’ Club also appeared regularly among teams competing in Stanford’s intramural basketball competitions. A review of the participating teams shows that the club was one of the two teams (the other being the Japanese Club) formed around a nationality or student organization, serving as a direct alternative for Chinese students to the fraternities and dorms that other teams organized around.57

The club engaged in American activities even in homogeneous Chinese events outside of Stanford’s social structures. The programming of the CSA Western Conferences hosted by the Stanford Chinese Students’ Club in the 1920s included athletics events in Western sports like tennis and track and field, along with Latin oration competitions, dance parties and banquets.58 The language of the conference reports in the *Chinese Students’ Monthly* suggests that the Western Conferences’ athletic and social occasions were at least as important as their discussions of Chinese affairs, and perhaps a higher priority for the students involved. According to a participant, “if you haven’t been to the dance, you haven’t been to the Conference.” Another speculated about “stealthy romances” happening throughout the weekend.59 The Stanford Chinese Students’ Club’s largest community event provided a landmark social occasion that allowed Chinese students to compete in sport, socialize, and pursue relationships, but did so through American events and traditions. A minor but striking observation in 1925 from the Western Conference evidences the extent of acculturation. The conference secretary was discouraged to

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59 Ibid. Tellingly, the conference reports contain some of the very few and most explicit mentions of relationships and student social lives in the Stanford Chinese Students’ Club’s reports to the *Chinese Students’ Monthly*. 
report that only four contestants competed in the Mandarin Oration that year.  

The Stanford Chinese Students’ Club’s changing attitudes towards gender also demonstrate how Chinese students adopted American values. Chinese students challenged what they characterized as a conservative Chinese culture that subordinated women and aligned themselves with arguments familiar to American feminism, framing the conflict as the modernization of an outdated aspect of China. The first Chinese women, F. Tong, M. Tong and L. Mei, joined the Chinese Students’ Club in 1919 and quickly involved themselves in the club’s activities. In 1921, Chinese women at Stanford performed in “Rainbow,” a Chinese play presented by the Chinese Students’ Club, in an occasion described as a break of old Chinese customs with “the entrance of Chinese women into theatrical casts for the first time in the history of the Chinese stage.” An opinion article in the *Chinese Students’ Monthly* decried that “Chinese women existed for centuries… solely for the propagation of the species” and reported a range of dissenting opinions from the students of “modern China” who argued for equal opportunities in employment and education for Chinese women. While Chinese students re-evaluated the gender roles described by Chinese culture, they appeared to internalize American gender roles as part of their acculturation. Mei and the Tongs were described as “charming young ladies” in their introduction to the Stanford Chinese Students’ Club. In 1925, the Chinese Students’ Alliance’s Western Conference at Stanford culminated in the crown-

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ing of a “King” and “Queen” in a “tribute to beauty and manliness.”

The Limits of Integration

Despite adopting American activities and conventions, the Chinese Students’ Club’s social integration with Stanford was incomplete. The way Chinese students participated in campus activities like intramural sports showed the lingering effects of prejudice and segregation: the Chinese Club fielded a separate intramural basketball team because its members could not join the fraternities that teams normally organized around. Outside of the Chinese Students’ Club’s internal events and Cosmopolitan Club performances, American students observed their Chinese peers struggling to integrate on campus. In 1927, Stanford’s Y.M.C.A. secretary said of Japanese and Chinese students: “They are anxious to make contacts and have a decided contribution to make, but they are naturally timid and rebuffs discourage them.” Bessie Jeong, an American-born Chinese student, suggested that Chinese students on campus had “an inferiority complex because they must take an unimportant place in University life here after having been leaders in their own colleges. American-born foreigners don’t have as much trouble, but the Chinese and Japanese must make adjustments — they have to learn the language and customs.”

Jeong’s comments identify an important dynamic that limited Chinese integration at Stanford and shaped the identity that the Chinese Students’ Club constructed instead. Chinese students appeared to endorse a hierarchy that positioned themselves above the Chinese population they emigrated from but below the American students they sought to emulate. When the Chinese Students’ Club’s

65 “A Sketch (Very Impressionistic) of the Stanford Conference,” The Chinese Students’ Monthly, November 1925

discussed Chinese politics, members often adopted a paternalistic view towards the country and population they were trying to support. “The general intellectual level of the mass of our countrymen is low,” club secretary J. A. Mei wrote in a 1916 report to the *Chinese Students’ Monthly*, “and the position of the college students in the present China is strategic.” The club’s programming of events and lectures stressed that members carried a unique loyalty and obligation towards China: speakers at the club’s 1919 anniversary dinner for the Republic of China gave speeches titled “Your Duty” and “What can you give to our Country.” The prevailing academic discourse on campus also cast China and Chinese students in a similar light. Talks by professors and diplomats at Stanford reminded students of China’s poor literacy rates and political instability. In a speech to a conference of Chinese students at San Francisco later printed in the *Chinese Students’ Monthly*, Stanford Oriental History professor P. J. Treat addressed Chinese students directly to inform them of their unique responsibility. “It will be your duty, when you return to China,” he said, “to serve as interpreters of America and American thought to the people of China.” Larger gatherings of Chinese student groups embraced this attitude as well; the 1928 Chinese Students’ Alliance’s Western Conference’s theme was “Chinese Students as Pioneers of the New China.” The club avoided pejorative criticism and did not stoop to the prejudiced stereotypes of the 1890s newspaper stories that preceded them. But the division they appeared to internalize, be-

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between educated Chinese attending elite institutions and the rest of the Chinese public, reflected previously discussed sentiments in California that Chinese college students were more civilized and better informed than the rest of their compatriots.

Even if Chinese students at Stanford saw themselves as a privileged strata among Chinese, they were still dependent on the approval of an American campus. The Stanford Chinese Students’ Club’s founding report to the Chinese Students’ Monthly outlined what the club believed should be done to combat the prejudices facing the Chinese community at Stanford. They stressed not only building community but changing the perceptions of the rest of Stanford by “throwing them into contact with the students of other nationalities.” Acknowledging the racial prejudice present in California, the Chinese Student’s Club believed that they needed to show the American public the “ideals of the Chinese pupil” to improve Chinese standing in California.72

The language of the Chinese Students’ Monthly reports on “Chinese Nights” at Stanford suggests that the Chinese Students’ Club highly valued opportunities to display themselves to “American friends” and paid close attention to how they were received.73 In January 1921, the club reportedly borrowed hundreds of dollars’ worth of embroideries and lanterns to stage an extravagant series of Chinese plays, dances and musical performances for one such night.74 A report afterwards boasted, “we just could not stop the cheers and claps from the audience! The local papers described it as the best ‘Night’ ever brought to the campus.”75

When advancing Chinese interests came into conflict with the Chinese Student’s Club’s harmony with the rest of the university, some Chinese students even opted to

72 Ibid.
74 “Unique Oriental Skit to be Played Tonight Before Corda Fratres,” The Daily Palo Alto, January 10, 1921.
prioritize preserving a non-confrontational image towards Americans. When the club convened to discuss protesting against the Stanford Theatre’s screening of *East of Suez*, some students opposed the eventual decision to send a letter of protest and “proclaimed themselves to be ‘wiser’ — never to do anything futile.”\(^{76}\) The club responded with remarkable timidity to a scathing 1925 *Daily Palo Alto* editorial that argued Chinese Students’ Club members should be ordered off campus for supporting anti-foreigner strikers in Shanghai. Club chairman C. C. Wu defended their actions but concluded, “our Club wishes to assure the campus of its good feeling and gratitude toward the University public and regrets very much that a cablegram... should have caused this misunderstanding among our American friends.”\(^{77}\) These considerations did not prevent Chinese Students’ Club members from being effective community organizers and advocates. But it explains their eagerness to adopt American pastimes and enter American spaces, even if they could only participate as a segregated Chinese unit, and their preoccupation with the American reception of their demonstrations and performances on campus. Chinese students at Stanford felt privileged with a unique opportunity to learn from American culture. In their eyes, this elevated them above the general Chinese population but burdened them with the imperative to cast their community in as positive and agreeable a light as possible.

The Chinese Students’ Club continued to welcome Chinese students and host events until 1971, when Stanford tore the clubhouse down to make room for the new Law School.\(^{78}\) Tensions crept into the club’s increasingly


\(^{78}\) Dong Hao Zhong, “The Story of a Chinaman,” *The Stanford Daily*, November 6, 1991. The club would be replaced by a Chinese Student Association (C.S.A.) that played a similar role for Chinese students on campus. The C.S.A., in turn, was the predecessor to the Association of Chinese Students and Scholars at Stanford that continues to operate today.
diverse community in the years before it dissolved. Divisions formed between three factions of Chinese students at Stanford: American-born Chinese students and immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Though a lively group of Chinese students could usually be found at the clubhouse playing Chinese chess or reading Chinese newspapers, many new students felt isolated and struggled to make contact with other Chinese students. A surprising number of them seemed reluctant to associate with the club or the Chinese community on campus. According to student Sue Gasiorkiewicz, Chinese students did this in an attempt to conform to the “Ivory Tower image” of a Stanford student who did not outwardly associate with any groups or communities. Gasiorkiewicz concluded that the Chinese Club, despite its forty years of operation at Stanford, had not been able to “unite the Chinese students on campus.” But the state of the Chinese Students’ Club that she observed in 1968 demonstrated the club’s success in achieving many of the group’s objectives at the start of the century. The Chinese Students’ Club sustained a welcoming community on campus for students to promote Chinese culture until Stanford seized their house from them. By then, Chinese students at Stanford numbered in the dozens, and they had the luxury to focus on their studies or how best to integrate instead of avoiding evictions and scrambling to find places to live. Gasiorkiewicz’s observations also show how inescapable the desire to integrate was for Chinese students, even forty years later. Ironically, refusing to even identify with the diaspora community of the Stanford Chinese Students’ Club became the next escalation in a decades-long project to conform to American practices at Stanford.

J. W. Lum, Frank Y. Chuck and the rest of Stanford’s first generation of Chinese students set the course for the Chinese community on campus by interpreting that their goal at Stanford as Chinese students was to acculturate and

80 Ibid.
conform to American conventions. They responded to the anti-Chinese prejudices of California and other students at Stanford, as well as their own frustrations with China, by exploring American culture. This did not prevent Chinese students from building a robust network to support each other at Stanford and beyond, mirroring the way their countrymen gathered to defend each other from racism in Chinatowns across the Bay Area. It did not prevent them from protesting against racism and educating Stanford about Chinese culture, with surprisingly effective results. But it did change the mentality with which Chinese students approached their culture and their behavior at Stanford. Chinese students at Stanford explored American practices to appear modern and fulfill their responsibility of modernizing what they believed to be an outdated and stagnant culture. They did so even as remaining barriers of culture and racism at Stanford prevented them from integrating completely on campus, and forced them to participate in American activities as a separate tier of Chinese students.
LOUD AND CLEAR: HOW BLACK AMERICANS’ DEMOCRATIC DEMANDS CONTRIBUTED TO THE RISE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY DURING THE LATE 18TH CENTURY

Andrew Matejka

Introduction by Jonathan Gienapp, Assistant Professor of History

Andrew Matejka wrote this insightful and engaging paper in my seminar, “The Rise of American Democracy.” In it he tackles some big and important questions. How and when did the United States become a democracy? Did the nation’s founding commitments, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution, help point the way to a more democratic society even if, for decades to come, so many Americans were denied the right to participate? Andrew turns these questions on their head. Through a careful analysis of petitioning in the early republic, he shows how Black Americans repeatedly and creatively laid claim to the nation’s founding ideals and the documents in which they were embodied to demand equal rights. Even though few Black Americans could vote, they nonetheless made their demands heard by petitioning their governments at both the state and federal level, condemning slavery and encouraging lawmakers to take action against it. Often these pe-
titions failed to encourage direct action, underscoring the limitations of America's early democracy. But the petitions also impressed numerous lawmakers, precisely because of how skillfully they leveraged America’s ideals and legal commitments. As Andrew powerfully argues, moreover, regardless of what came of them, the very fact that Black Americans made these demands demonstrates the vital ways in which they contributed to the rise of American democracy.
Loud and Clear: How Black Americans’ Democratic Demands Contributed to the Rise of American Democracy During the Late 18th Century

Introduction

The history of democracy in the United States is filled with contradictions. For many Americans, particularly Black Americans, it is as much a story of struggle as it is a story of success for others. American democracy did not come into existence in one identifiable moment; instead, it has been defined and redefined over centuries. A reasonable starting point, however, is the Declaration of Independence. While this famous document did not establish a government structure, it did articulate, to all Americans, the values that would guide them as they built their republic — values that Americans have drawn on to make claims about democracy in the United States ever since. In 1776, Thomas Jefferson, on behalf of the Continental Congress, penned the now universally recognized words: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”\footnote{Thomas Jefferson, et al, July 4, Copy of Declaration of Independence. -07-04, 1776. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib000159/} The Declaration of Independence and the ideals it espoused later served as a model and inspiration for hundreds of such other documents across the world — and marginalized groups in the United States itself.\footnote{“More than half of the 192 countries now represented at the United Nations have a founding document that can be called a declaration of independence. Most of those countries came into being from the wreckage of empires or confederations, from Spanish America in the 1810s and 1820s to the Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Their declarations of independence, like the American Declaration, informed the world that one people or state was now asserting—or, in many cases in the second half of the twentieth century re-assert-}
the Declaration was written by a slaveholder and signed exclusively by white men, it came to be a valuable symbol of democracy and a tool to argue for rights not only for white Americans but also Black Americans. They looked to the language of the Declaration, and later the Constitution as well, to appeal for rights in the late 18th century – a time when they held very few rights in the United States.

When Jefferson wrote that “all men are created equal” there were more than 500,000 people in the United States living in bondage under legally sanctioned chattel slavery. Jefferson himself owned hundreds of enslaved people at Monticello. Even prior to Jefferson’s Declaration, a like Thomas Paine and Samuel Johnson noted the hypocrisy of the budding American independence movement in the midst of slavery. In 1775, Paine wrote, “[Americans] complain so loudly of attempts to enslave them, while they hold so many hundred thousands in slavery and annually enslave many thousands more, without any pretence of authority or claim upon them.” Similarly, Johnson asked, “How is it we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of Negroes?” But for the most part slavery was decidedly not a major, divisive issue among the colonies prior to the American Revolution. Yet, after Jefferson’s Declaration and the Revolutionary War, slavery became a defining—its sovereignty and independence. Many looked back directly to the American Declaration for inspiration” see David Armitage, “The Declaration of Independence in Global Perspective,” The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2019.

3 Historians agree that the number of enslaved people numbered at least 500,000 by 1776. Census data shows that by 1790 the official count was 697,681 men, women, and children. For further analysis of the early American slave see Ira Berlin, Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America (Cambridge: Harvard College, 1998); Jonathan Gienapp, “A Transformative Revolution?” (Zoom, Stanford University, November 4, 2020).

issue in the development of American democracy.\(^5\)

The United States Constitution was particularly important in the structuring of American democracy. If the Declaration expressed the values that have come to define American democracy, the Constitution provided a goal for those values and a framework for how they would be manifested in American government and society. The Preamble to the Constitution stated the new federal government’s purpose to “form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”\(^6\) Like Jefferson’s expression of values in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution’s opening was widely read and has become universally identifiable in association with American democracy. Again, like the Declaration, white men wrote the Constitution, but Black Americans utilized the document frequently to make legal appeals for democratic rights in the late 18th century.

Recent criticisms of early American democracy, however, have levied accusations that the United States was perhaps not even a democracy after the American Civil War ended legal chattel slavery and certainly did not approach a democracy prior to the war due to the exclusion of Black Americans from the democratic process and the pervasive suppression of their rights.\(^7\) On the surface, the experience of Black Americans prior to the Civil War contrasts with the notion of an expanding democracy. The stark exclusionary aspects of American society explains why some critics have not viewed the antebellum United States as democratic at

\(^5\) “Virtually no abolition movement existed prior to the Revolution anywhere in the world, but after the revolution there was a permanent, organized, and enduring movement in the United States. Prior to the Revolution slavery was never a problem, after the Revolution it was never not a problem” see Jonathan Gienapp, “A Transformative Revolution?” (Zoom, Stanford University, November 4, 2020).

\(^6\) U.S. Const. pmbl.

all. As American democracy changed and developed over the final decades of the 18th century and into the 19th century black Americans in many ways saw a reduction in rights and the growth of a slave system that defined their experience in America. But while many white Americans limited Black involvement in American democracy prior to the Civil War, Black Americans actively sought to participate in American democracy and recognized the importance of the United States’ democratic values. Despite the contradictions between what founding documents like the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution said and who the authors may have intended to include, Black Americans turned to these documents from near the moment they were publicized to appeal for rights and argue against slavery in the United States. This was not a fight against America’s democracy and the founding ideals that have since guided the nation but an appeal for inclusion in this democracy. These treatises and petitions show how Black Americans, despite being denied many rights, not only recognized America’s democratic ideals but actively worked to participate in American democracy and contributed to the rise of American democracy in the Founding Era.

**Early Petitions to State Legislatures and the Declaration of Independence**

8 In the 19th century many state legislatures like the Ohio legislature, among others, introduced “black codes” intended to subjugate free Black populations and limit the freedoms Black Americans could enjoy if they were not enslaved. For further discussion of the legislative suppression of Black rights see Kate Masur, *Until Justice Be Done: America's First Civil Rights Movement, from the Revolution to Reconstruction* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2021); Ironically while American democracy was rising and expanding to include many people formerly left out of the democratic process in the 19th century slavery experienced explosive growth with nearly 4 million Americans living in slavery when South Carolina seceded from the United States in 1860 and instigated the Civil War see Jonathan Gienapp, “A Transformative Revolution?” (Zoom, Stanford University, November 4, 2020).
In 1776 shortly after Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, Lemuel Haynes, a Black minister and member of the Continental Army from Massachusetts, wrote a treatise addressing slavery in the United States entitled “Liberty Further Extended: Or Free Thoughts on the Illegality of Slave-keeping.” Haynes looked to the claims of equality and the declaration of rights in the preamble of the Declaration of Independence to argue not that the Declaration was wrong but that these rights also belonged to Black Americans. Haynes, who fought in the Revolutionary War, agreed with the purpose and message of the Declaration writing “to affirm, that an Englishman has a right to his Liberty, is a truth which has Been so clearly Evinced, Especially of Late, that to spend time in illustrating this, would be But Superfluous tautology.” Haynes believed that the American colonies’ claims in the Declaration were valid which shows that he believed the establishment of a nation “deriving [its] powers from the consent of the governed” in a democratic fashion would secure the liberty and rights of its citizens. Haynes further agreed that these rights were “Endowed By their Creator” when he wrote “Liberty, & freedom, is an innate principle, which is unmoveably placed in the human Species… Liberty is a Jewel which was handed Down to man from the cabinet of heaven, and is coaeval with his Existence. And... proceed[s] from the Supreme Legislature of the univers.” Haynes argued that the values in the Declaration applied universally to all men universally, Black and white alike. Haynes wrote “an African... has an undeniable right to his Liberty... Liberty is Equally as precious to a Black man, as it is to a white one.” Thus, Haynes showed that the democratic values of the Founding documents were not only held dearly by white Americans in the late

10 Jefferson “Declaration of Independence”
11 Haynes, “Liberty Further Extended.”
18th century but mattered to Black Americans as well. The most notable part of Haynes’ argument is that the rights referred to in the Declaration of Independence were not rights created by the Declaration but instead God-given rights that could only be secured, not created, by a government. In his eyes these rights already belonged to Black Americans and the creation of an independent United States was a chance to secure them. This did not come to fruition, but the Declaration provided a basis for Haynes to claim that the slave trade and American slavery was illegal. Haynes wrote that “he that would take away a man[ʼs] Liberty assumes a prerogative that Belongs to another, and acts out of his own domain” and further argued that “the practise of Slave-keeping, which so much abounds in this Land is illicit… If I have a perticular previledg granted to me by god, and the act is not revoked nor the power that granted the benefit vacated… then he that would infringe upon my Benifit, assumes an unreasonable, and tyrannic power… no one has the Least right to take [these rights] from us without our consent.”

It is no coincidence that Haynes, a minister, believed so deeply in certain rights given by God alone, but his claim that slavery was illegal and emphasis on consent shows how Haynes used the Declaration to not only make ideological claims but also legal ones. Democracy as a system of government rests on the consent of the people, and Haynes claimed that Black men belonged in “the people” as much as white men did. The Declaration of Independence was not a legal document the way the Constitution was, but it included democratic ideals that served as a basis for American democracy. Though Haynes did not participate in democracy in the traditional sense via voting, his use of the Declaration of Independence in his essay sheds insight into the development of democratic thinking in the United States. Ultimately Haynes’ writing showed a faith in the foundation of the United States and a strong belief that American democracy could and should include Black

12 Haynes, “Liberty Further Extended.”
Americans. Thus, while Black Americans were excluded from much of the United States’ democratic process in the 18th century they contributed to the rise of American democracy through their belief that it was a legitimate force for securing liberties and rights.

Haynes made a compelling argument, and he was not the only Black American that articulated their opposition to slavery in the 18th century. He was not even the first. In 1773 and 1774, enslaved Black Americans in Massachusetts petitioned Governor Thomas Hutchinson, his council, and the province's House of Representatives to liberate them from bondage.13 Both petitions reveal how Black Americans made appeals against slavery prior to the Revolutionary War which gave way to later petitions authored in clearly distinct manners from these earlier ones. The 1773 petition was far from demanding, offered no suggestions for ending slavery, and instead appealed for relief on the basis of Hutchinson and the legislature’s “Humanity and justice... Wisdom, justice, and Goodness.”14 The 1774 petition was more forceful, claiming that “[Black men] have in common with all other men a naturel right to our freedoms without Being depriv’d of them by our fellow men as we are a free-born Pepel and have never forfeited this Blessing by aney compact or agreement whatever.”15 In addition to expressing a belief in natural rights the petitioners did not defer to the legislature to determine what action they should take and instead demanded that “an act of the legislative to be pressed that [enslaved people] may obtain our Natural right our freedoms and our children be set a levity at the years of

13 “Slave Petition to the Governor, Council, and House of Representatives of the Province of Massachusetts, May 25, 1774” in Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 5th Series (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society), 432-433.
15 “Slave Petition to the Governor, May 25, 1774”
Twenty one.”\(^{16}\) This petition was much more specific and shows that enslaved people in the United States understood the concepts of the natural rights that ultimately featured so prominently in the Declaration of Independence. While both these petitions argued against slavery, the manner in which the author’s crafted their arguments was different than petitions to the Massachusetts legislature after 1776.

A 1777 petition in Massachusetts to the state legislature by Prince Hall, a free Black man, was similar in content as it pertained to natural rights and consent but borrowed language from the Declaration of Independence and referenced the American Revolution. Hall and the petitioners referred to their right to freedom as “Natural and Unalienable,” the language used in the Declaration, and expressed their astonishment that “It have Never Bin Considered that Every Principle from which America has Acted in the Course of their unhappy Difficulties with Great Briton Pleads Stronger than A thousand arguments in favors of your petitioners.”\(^{17}\) Hall’s petition shows the impact of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution on Black democratic thought in the United States because prior to the American Revolution “[Black petitioners in Massachusetts] Long and Patiently waited the [end of slavery] petition after petition… but with Grief Reflect[ed] that their [lack of] Success hath been but too similar.”\(^{18}\) Hall argued that the conflict with Britain, which Jefferson outlined in the list of grievances in the Declaration of Independence, was a clear argument for the freedom of Black Americans because in the context of British control white Americans understood what subserviency felt like.

Hall wrote this petition despite acknowledging that previous petitions, like those in 1773 and 1774, were

\(^{16}\) “Slave Petition to the Governor, May 25, 1774”

\(^{17}\) Prince Hall, “To the Honorable Counsel & House of Representatives for the State of Massachusetts Bay, January 13, 1777,” petition, 1777, in “African Americans and the End of Slavery in Massachusetts,” (Massachusetts Historical Society, 2019).

\(^{18}\) Hall, “To the Honorable Counsel, January 13, 1777”
unsuccessful. Still, he believed that the American Revolution fundamentally changed the institution of slavery in the United States. Although Hall's petition was ultimately rejected, this argument reveals that Black Americans understood the democratic ideals of the Declaration of Independence, believed them to be anti-slavery, and wished for the government to recognize them for Black Americans. In doing so, Hall contributed to the rise of American democracy by accepting the ideals of the Declaration that are so fundamental to democracy in the United States. The change in messaging between the pre-Revolution petitions and the post-Declaration of Independence petition shows how the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution provided a basis for Black Americans to make stronger claims against their slavery and for their rights. The petitions help prove that the Declaration of Independence was important and valuable to Black Americans and not merely a document for white men.

It was not only in the Northeast, however, where Black Americans made claims to broader rights based on the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution or state constitutions. In 1791, several free Black men in South Carolina petitioned the state legislature to repeal the 1740 Act for the better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and other Slaves which predated the United States by several decades. While the men did not ask for full equality with white South Carolinians, they argued that due to the law they were “debarred of the Rights of Free Citizens” and that they “ha[d] been and are considered as Free-Citizens of [South Carolina].” They legally justified their claim to citizenship in part because “in the Enumeration of Free Citizens by the Constitution of the United States for the purpose of Representation of the Southern States in Congress [free Black men] ha[d] been considered under that descrip-

19 Hall, “To the Honorable Counsel, January 13, 1777”  
20 “Memorial to the South Carolina Senate” in Records of the General Assembly, Petitions, 1791, No. 181, (South Carolina Department of Archives and History).
tion as part of the Citizens of this State.”

Furthermore they argued that “they ha[d] since the Independence of the United States contributed and do now contribute to the support of the Government by cheerfully paying their Taxes... and now are in full enjoyment of the Rights and Immunities of Citizens Inhabitants of a Free Independent State.”

Although the state legislature rejected the petition, the claims made by the petitioners went further than just appealing to democratic ideals, instead making a legal argument showing faith in the United States’ democratic institutions. The “Rights of Free Citizens,” which the petitioners felt were violated by the 1740 law, included the “power to give Testimony on Oath,” the ability to recover debts, and the right to a jury. These rights are far more specific than those referred to in the Declaration of Independence and the various claims made by Black Americans in the 1770s because they were drawn directly from the United States and South Carolina Constitutions. This petition shows a faith in American democracy because it reveals that the rights and privileges dear to white Americans mattered just as much to Black Americans. The petition is not an argument against these rights but an appeal for their correct application, showing how Black Americans endorsed the rights guaranteed under the United States Constitution and genuinely believed in American democracy despite their legal exclusion from it.

Later Petitions to Congress and the Constitution

Given that Black men could not vote in the majority of the United States, there was no shortage of petitions by free Blacks that invoked the nation's democratic ideals in their appeal. In 1797 Absalom Jones, a free Black minister like
Haynes from decades earlier, became the first Black man to petition the United States Congress over the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, which he believed violated free Black men's rights. Writing on behalf of four free Black men who had gained their freedom in North Carolina and moved north, Jones argued, “may we not be allowed to consider the [Fugitive Slave Act] morally and politically, a Governmental defect, if not a direct violation of the declared fundamental principles of the Constitution; and finally, is not some remedy for an evil of such magnitude highly worthy of the deep inquiry and unfeigned zeal of the supreme Legislative body of a free and enlightened people?” Jones described the act and slavery as a whole as “unconstitutional” but stated that the petitioners did not “hope, or presume to ask for the interposition of [Congress], beyond the extent of [its] constitutional power or influence.” Jones’ petition shows how much faith he had in American democracy because he believed that the Constitution, the fundamental framework of American democracy, should protect free Black men just as it did white men. Jones did not criticize the Constitution or the structure of American government for the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act but instead called the act a “defect” which implies that this anti-democratic law was a departure from a democratic Constitution. Furthermore, he called the act “a direct violation of principles of the Constitution” which shows that the values embedded in the Constitution mattered to him as a Black man. While Jones could not vote, he believed in the power of the legislature to protect Black rights while understanding and valuing the democratic ideals foundational to the Constitution.


27 Jones, “1797 Petition from Slaves Freed from North Carolina”

28 Jones, “1797 Petition from Slaves Freed from North Carolina”

29 Jones, “1797 Petition from Slaves Freed from North Carolina”
Though Congress rejected Jones’ petition in 1797, the debates among white congressmen in the U.S. House of Representatives reveals that there were white men at the time who recognized the basis for the claims made in the petition. The main debate among congressmen was not that the rights claimed by these Black men did not belong to free men – Congress knew they did. Instead, the congressmen who were opposed to the petition rejected it on the grounds that the petitioners were not free men. Thomas Blount of North Carolina said the men, who had been emancipated in his state, “were slaves, and could, of course, be seized as such.”\(^{30}\) John Heath of Virginia “was clearly convinced that these people were slaves, and therefore hope their petition would [not be acted upon by the House].”\(^{31}\) William Smith of South Carolina claimed that “these men [were] slaves” and “not entitled to the attention from [the House]” because giving the petition attention would “encourage slaves to petition the House” and “would have a tendency to invite continual applications.”\(^{32}\)

The rhetoric of the Southern congressmen revealed the paradox and tension that existed in the United States in the late 18th century as a result of the American Revolution. The American Revolution secured the natural rights of freemen and determined that those rights would be protected in the United States. Thomas Blount and William Smith fought in the Revolutionary War to secure those rights and thus could not argue that freemen did not have a right to petition Congress. Surely Blount and Smith believed they did. They also did not believe that Black men should be able to. Therefore, they labeled them as slaves to avoid denying that free men had the right to petition. Without the Declaration of Independence, American Revolution, and later US Constitution making clear the democratic ideals of the United States and rights of Americans Blount and Smith would have had much less an issue simply denying

the rights of free Black men. Thus, the debate among the opponents of Jones’ petition shows how the Founding Era fundamentally changed the relationship between Black Americans and democracy in the United States.

Of course, the men petitioning were not slaves and were living legally and freely in the North. Several other congressmen noted this and criticized the Southern congressmen for refusing to accept this fact. George Thatcher of Massachusetts stated the Southern congressmen were “much mistaken in asserting that these petitioners to be absolute slaves” and they “certainly [were] free people” and he “could not see how there would be a propriety in rejecting their petition” since they “had an undoubted right to petition the House, and to be heard.”

John Swanwick of Pennsylvania, who presented the petition, was astounded by the claims of the Southern congressmen and “could not have thought… that [Blount] was so far from acknowledging the rights of man, as if to prevent any class of men from petitioning.” Also from Pennsylvania, Samuel Sitgreaves asked “was there anything in these [free]men that should prevent every kind of assistance being bestowed on them? Had they not an equal right to be heard with other petitioners?”

Later in the debates, Thatcher found the language used by the Southern congressmen to label the free petitioners as slaves was “quite new language — a system of conduct which he never saw the House practice, and hoped he never should.” According to Thatcher, this language “opposed the Constitutional freedom of every State where the Declaration of Rights had been made; they declare that every man is born equally free, and that each have an equal right to petition if aggrieved” which was a “doctrine he never heard objected to.” Thatcher further argued that “these were a set of men on which the fugitive law had no power”

and thought “they claimed protection under the power of the House, which always ought to lean towards freedom.”  

Though “[the House] could not give freedom to slaves,” Thatcher hoped that “[congressmen] would never refuse to lend their aid to secure freemen in their rights against tyrannical imposition.”

The debate among the supporters of the petition reveals that white Americans recognized that denying free Black petitioners the chance to be heard by Congress was undemocratic and antithetical to the rights articulated by the Declaration of Independence and secured by the Constitution. Though the House ultimately voted to reject the petition by a margin of 50 to 33, the debate reveals that some prominent white Americans recognized that free Black men had a Constitutional right to petition Congress and partake in the democratic process.

The debate only occurred because Jones and the four petitioners demanded that they had the right to be heard by Congress and did not merely think they deserved to be heard. The debate among the congressmen forced Congress to discuss Black rights at a very early point in American history because the Black petitioners demanded that they do so. This response and consideration by the government, though ultimately not in their favor, shows that Black men did indeed contribute to American democracy during the late 18th century.

Despite Congress rejecting his 1797 petition, Absalom Jones, alongside 71 free Black men living in Philadelphia, again petitioned the House of Representatives in 1799. This petition also focused on the Fugitive Slave Act but made further arguments against slavery as an institution and the international slave trade.

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petitioners were “authorized to address and petition Congress [on behalf of free Black people]” because free Black men were “objects of representations in [Congress], in common with [the petitioners] and every other class of Citizens within the Jurisdiction of the United States, according to the declared design of the present Constitution formed by the General Convention and ratified in the different States.”

Jones made a claim for Congress to consider his petition based on the Constitution and even quoted the Preamble to emphasize his point. He showed tremendous faith in the democratic institutions of the United States despite previous petitions being denied, which shows the development of democratic culture among Black Americans in the late 18th century. Jones did not merely believe that Black men deserved to be heard in Congress but rather that they had the Constitutional right to be heard, a powerfully democratic claim.

Furthermore, Jones claimed that the international slave trade and the Fugitive Slave Act were unconstitutional. In regards to the slave trade he asked if “any Commerce, trade, or transaction, so detestably, shock the feelings of Man, or degrade the dignity of his nature equal to this, and how increasingly is the evil aggravated when practiced in [the United States].”

Describing life for a free Black man

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42 Jones, “Petition of the People of Colour within Philadelphia.”
43 Jones cited this portion of the Preamble “We the People of the United States in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the Common Defence, and to secure the blessings of Liberty, to ourselves and posterity, do ordain &c.” see Jones, “Petition of the People of Colour within Philadelphia.”.
44 Jones described the process of the slave trade writing “these poor helpless victims like droves of Cattle are seized, fettered, and ferried into places provided for this most horrid traffic, Such as dark cellars and garrets, as is notorious at Northurst, Chester-town, Eastown, and divers other places. After a sufficient number is obtained, then, are forced on board vessels, crowded tinder latches, and without the least commiseration, left to deplore the sad separation of the dearest ties in nature, husband from wife, and Parents from children thus pocket’d together they are transported to Georgia and other places and there inhumanely, exposed to sale” see Jones, “Petition of the People of Colour
after the Fugitive Slave Act, Jones wrote that “with circumstances peculiarly hard and distressing for many of our afflicted Brethren in order to avoid the barbarities wantonly exercised upon them, or thro fear of being carried off by those Men-stealers, have been forced to seek refuge by flight; they are then hunted by armed men, and under colour of this law, cruelly treated, shot, or brought back in chains to those who have no just claim upon them.” Jones used these experiences to show that the natural rights of Black people were clearly and egregiously being violated under American law. The violation of Black rights was important because “in the Constitution and the Fugitive bill, no mention is made of Black people or Slaves — therefore if the Bill of Rights, or the declaration of Congress are of any validity, we beseech that we as men, we may be admitted to partake of the Liberties and unalienable Rights therein.” Jones argued that the values expressed in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution were legitimate but only if they were protected for free Black Americans as well. Jones believed that American democracy had the ability to protect these rights, showing his faith in it, but that it was not valid if it was racially exclusive. This was not a claim against American democracy but an argument to fulfill its promise showing the desire for Black Americans to participate in and improve the American democratic process.

Ultimately, Jones’ 1799 petition died in committee, but like the petition of 1797, it created a fierce debate among congressmen about Black rights and democracy as it related to race. The debate was so fierce that Samuel Goode from Virginia proposed that since “parts of [Jones’ petition] which invite Congress to legislate upon subjects from which the General government is precluded by the Constitution, have a tendency to create disquiet and jealousy, and ought therefore to receive the pointed disapproba-

45 Jones, “Petition of the People of Colour within Philadelphia.”
46 Jones, “Petition of the People of Colour within Philadelphia.”
tion of [the House of Representatives].”

George Thatcher, a supporter of Jones’ 1797 petition in addition to the 1799 petition, was shocked and said that it was the “first time he had ever known any petition or part of a petition to receive the ‘pointed disapprobation of the house’ by a resolution, even though the object of it was not with the power of the House.” Furthermore, Thatcher argued that it was “a plain contradiction to tell [the petitioners] that they had professed it their wish to destroy slavery” and “it would be a plain demonstration that they hugged slavery as slavery, and loved it for its very odiousness.”

The 1799 petition shows the tangible impact of Black democratic participation in the late 18th century because Jones’ petition created heated debate in the House and ultimately caused the House to make a resolution in a manner which it had never done before.

Furthermore, several congressmen commented specifically on the language that Jones used in the petition and how that made his argument compelling. Samuel W. Dana of Connecticut argued that “if the petition before the House contained nothing but a farrago of the French metaphysics of liberty and equality… or if it was only the effects of a religious fanaticism,” he would have thought “the subject quite out of the power of Congress” and “might be disposed to think it quite wrong.” But when he looked at the language of the petition he saw that it was “addressed in language which was very decent, and which expressly declared that the petitioners did not wish the House to do what was inconsistent with the Constitution, but only asked an amelioration of the severities under which people of their color

50 Ultimately the language of the resolution was changed to say the petition “ought therefore to receive no encouragement or countenance from this House” rather than “pointed disapprobation” and the House approved it with 85 yeas to 1 nay, George Thatcher see Annals of Congress, 6th Cong., 1st sess., 244.
labored” and “thought it ought to be received and committed.” Thatcher believed that the reason for receiving the petition was clear cut “whether the petitioners were Black or white, whether they could write, or whether not, was entirely immaterial: they had stated their sufferings under a law of the United States, and that was argument enough for a respectable reference.” The significance of language is crucial as Jones drew upon the Declaration of Independence and Constitution to make a legal rather than moral argument, and the congressmen recognized this. They understood the democratic values these documents represented and the rights Americans had in the early republic and thus could not deny the validity of Jones’ argument. While Jones did not participate in American democracy through the vote, his petitions and the debates they sparked in the House demonstrate how Black Americans drew upon the democratic ideals fundamental to the United States and the documents that articulated them to make themselves heard in the American democratic process.

**Conclusion**

One common fact connects the writing of Lemuel Haynes, the petitions of free Black men in South Carolina and Massachusetts, and the repeated attempts of Absalom Jones to be heard in Congress; they were all ultimately unsuccessful in ameliorating the conditions of enslaved Americans and free Blacks in the United States. This failure was not a failure on behalf of the authors to create compelling arguments — they did — but instead a result of the many difficulties and racist systems that kept them from participating in American democracy. While the ultimate

53 Several Southern congressmen said the petition should not be considered because many of the signers couldn’t write to which Thatcher responded “Because they could not write, were not their rights to be secured to them? Strange doctrine! A great reason why they could not write was their being brought up in early life in slavery” *see* *Annals of Congress*, 6th Cong., 1st sess., 232.
government inaction in response to the various petitions and arguments shows a lack of white legislators listening to Black men, the debates that resulted from their writings shows that white legislators surely heard them. Despite mostly lacking the right to vote, a right crucial to democracy, Black Americans did not sit idly by. Instead, Black Americans actively participated in early American democracy in manners other than voting. They made compelling arguments based on the democratic ideals of the United States’ founding documents and continuously believed that they had a right to petition despite constant rejection by state legislatures and Congress. The rise of American democracy was not linear. There were many Americans who lost and gained rights in the closing decades of the 18th century and during the 19th century, but the rise cannot be measured simply by ability to vote. American democracy rose on the back of democratic sentiment, a desire to participate in the democratic process expressed by the most marginalized Americans. Thus, it was not the refusal of various American governmental institutions to act on Black demands for democratic participation that shows an undemocratic United States; the demands themselves demonstrate how Black Americans contributed to the very development of American democracy.
A RECIPE FOR DENIAL: 
THE POLITICS OF HOLO-
CAUST MEMORY IN COM-
MUNIST HUNGARY, 1945-
1989

Matyas Kisiday

Introduction by Norman M. Naimark, 
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The study of genocide has many dimensions. Usually, scholars look at the “story” of genocide, its origins, course, and conclusion, examining the process, the perpetrators and victims, and analyzing causation. But a crucial dimension of genocide studies is that of memory and, in many cases, denial. Usually, denial is part and parcel of the carrying out of genocide itself. But its reverberations on respective societies and polities last until long after the last victims are buried and mostly forgotten. Matyas Jose Kisiday’s paper for my advanced research seminar on genocide, “A Recipe for Denial,” dealing with Holocaust memory in communist Hungary, explores the ways in which the political fortunes of Hungarian nationalism after World War II served to distort the country’s collaboration in and initiation of the mass murder of the Jews. It demonstrates, in particular, the role of the Hungarian Communist Party, both in its Stalinist and post-1956 configurations, in the denial of Hungarian responsibility for the Holocaust. Using the rich memoir and secondary historical literature, as well as the papers of Imre Pozsgay in the Hoover Institution, a Hungarian communist
who played a key role in the transition to post-communism, Kisiday also demonstrates the ways in which the Hungarian polity, even after the fall of communism, encouraged its citizens to blame the Holocaust on the Germans and on a handful of fascist provocateurs. He points out the shocking similarities between the ways the communists and the post-communists, including Hungary’s present authoritarian leader, Victor Orban, have sought to displace Hungarian guilt for the killing. Moreover, he links denial to both communist and post-communist policies towards Hungarian Jews that sought to undermine the claims of Zionism and promote the cause of assimilationism. As a result, as Kisiday shows, the Hungarian policy towards the Jews and the Holocaust remains a prisoner of unrepentant Hungarian nationalism, just the kind of nationalism that brought such suffering to the Hungarian Jewish population in the first place.

The current state of Holocaust memory in Hungary approaches denial and often strays into the realm of apologetics. Though the small nation was the site of one of the most rapid and calculated genocidal episodes of the Shoah — with over half a million Jews deported to Auschwitz in mere months — acknowledgment of Hungarian culpability has been minimal at best. A relative scarcity of academic literature dedicated to the subject further evidences the hesitancy to discuss the Holocaust in Hungary. Scholars describe this disconcerting trend of Hungarian Holocaust memory as “denationalization” — the process by which responsibility for the atrocity is shifted from the Hungarian government and populace and placed instead solely on the occupying German force.¹ Denationalization is not the inevitable result of decaying collective memory, but rather the product of a deliberate government strategy to cleanse Hungary of culpability and incorporate the Holocaust into a broader national narrative of Hungarian victimization. The structures and mechanisms that enable this systemic top-down reshaping of collective memory are far from unfamiliar to the Hungarian nation.

The genesis for this disheartening state of Hungarian Holocaust memory lies primarily in the years of repressive silence of the communist era. In the immediate post-war years, the pluralist Hungarian government prioritized nation building over Jewish reconstruction, and the 1948 communist takeover not only continued this trend, but deepened its scope and intensity. Following the Stalinist model, the communist government in Hungary chose to subsume the suffering of Hungary’s Jews within a broader narrative of national suffering at the hands of belligerent fascist occu-

piers. Decades of effective silence in the postwar period, during which communist authorities allowed for no discussion of the Shoah within Hungary, extended from the Stalinist era leadership of Mátyás Rákosi to the less repressive period under János Kádár. The silence of the communist years both enabled a lack of accountability within the Hungarian collective memory of the Holocaust and created a blank slate upon which new narratives, such as denationalization, could be impressed after the fall of the communist state.

**I. Liberation and the Immediate Post-War Years, 1945-1948**

With the advance of Soviet forces on Hungary in 1945, the prospect of liberation brought hope to Hungarian Jews. Tragically, the vast majority of Hungarian Jews had been deported in the spring and summer of 1944. Though some remained hidden in the countryside, the majority resided within Budapest, where no significant deportation efforts had been made in part due to Regent Miklos Horthy’s deportation halt the previous year. While the Siege of Budapest continued into the early months of 1945, Jews in the city waited in the overcrowded and unsanitary ghettos for liberating forces to arrive. Some Hungarian Jews eagerly anticipated the Soviet advance on an ideological basis, as they had participated in communist political movements of the interwar period. Most, however, simply longed for the end of fascist oppression and extermination efforts. The belief was that any power that was not a Hitler-ite fascist would provide an opportunity for Hungarian Jews to rebuild and live with the reasonable degree of autonomy that they had

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in the past. The realities that accompanied Soviet liberation as the Red Army took over Budapest were concerning, but not enough to dispel most Jews’ hopes regarding the end of fascist terror. While the Soviets did indeed halt the explicit persecution of Jews, this was hardly a relief; the Red Army’s behavior toward the general Hungarian population tended towards the horrific. Soviet pillaging, which devastated Eastern Europe during the latter half of the war, hit rural Hungary with a particularly destructive force. As a Budapest Jew who lived through the genocide and liberation, Eva Beck witnessed widespread rape and plunder at the hands of the Red Army, but recalls that the hope of reuniting with family and the elation of liberation led her to turn a blind eye to these acts at the time. The behaviors Beck witnessed were not isolated cases. The Soviets themselves took part in the long tradition of Eastern European antisemitism, which contributed to their lack of regard for the liberated Hungarian Jews. Just nine years old at the time of liberation, Peter Milch recollects the childlike disappointment he experienced when he “announced [his Jewish identity] with pride” to Soviet Soldiers and was met with disregard. Upon taking control of Budapest, many Jews were left in the urban ghettos. It is doubtful that any Hungarian Jews who experienced liberation would draw an explicit comparison between the disappointing behaviors of Soviet liberating forces and the deliberate persecution and extermination carried out by Hitler-ite fascists, but the Red Army’s atrocities and general disregard for human decency foreshadowed difficulties ahead. For Hungarian Jews in particular, the Soviets’ con-

5 Eva Beck, interview by Virginia Major Thomas
donement and enabling of specifically Jewish persecution formed an ominous warning for the future of Jewish life in communist Hungary.

This looming oppression did not descend immediately. Jewish life following liberation and the end of the war was diverse. The fascists were gone, and explicit, state-sponsored persecution of Jews ceased. Despite the occupying Soviet force, Jewish politics thrived under the democratic pluralist system. In the wake of the period of powerlessness that was Nazi persecution, Jewish political organizations and leaders began to make their mark on the new political landscape. At the same time, growing Zionist movements stemmed from frustrations with wartime Jewish leadership's perceived ineptitude and the belief that assimilation as a method for Jewish survival failed. Although the prospects of postwar Jewish reconstruction seemed hopeful from a top-down perspective, a more comprehensive view of Jewish life in immediate post-war Hungary was much less optimistic.

Surviving Jews who returned to their homes found either largely empty towns or new inhabitants in their former residences. Many were left questioning the survival of missing loved ones whom did not immediately return home. Katalin Pecsi recalls mourning the death of her father, who her uncle had seen being thrown into a mass grave alive. Fortunately for the Pecsi family, Katalin's father returned home, having been rescued and nursed to health by Soviet soldiers. This sort of happy reunion was, unfortunately, a rare occurrence. As one of the few children left in his town after the Holocaust, Gabor Kalman recollects the bittersweet memory of his bar mitzvah — one of the first after the genocide, attended by only four children and a handful of people, and officiated by a rabbi sent from Budapest. A common experience for Jewish survivors returning

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7 Kovacs, 129.
8 Kovács, 130-131.
9 Katalin Pécsi, interview by Virginia Major Thomas.
from camps and ghettos was to find Christian squatters inhabiting their old homes, who frequently looted and often attempted to sell Jewish possessions. Kalman remembers the disconcerting discovery of his family's furniture on sale at a local market.\textsuperscript{11} Most Jewish survivors returned to an environment of desolation — a significant blow to the budding atmosphere of hope constructed during liberation. The pain of returning to ravaged homes drove many Jewish Hungarian survivors to leave the country in search of new beginnings.

Despite improved standing in the political sphere, Jewish survivors found few solutions to their post-war challenges in the public domain. Though Hungarian political discourse displayed outward sympathy for the “Jewish question,” Hungarian authorities seldom sided with nor acted on behalf of the Jews when it mattered. In response to widespread calls for the return of Jewish property, the Hungarian government asked Jews to “understand” the suffering of the Christian families who inhabited their former homes.\textsuperscript{12} Moreover, a campaign against “black marketers” amidst economic crisis in 1946 largely targeted Jews, though a sizable portion of black market activity consisted of the sale of Jewish properties by Christian looters. The hope experienced during liberation rapidly faded, as many Jews felt Hungary returning to its antisemitic ways. Even the People’s Tribunals — post-war reconciliation courts orchestrated largely by the Soviets — failed to fully recognize the suffering of the Jewish people, and instead extended the narrative to the victimization of Hungary as a nation.\textsuperscript{13} In the aftermath of the war, Jewish reconstruction took a backseat to Hungarian nation building. The governing powers prioritized placating the Christian majority over potentially

\textsuperscript{11}Kalman, 62.  
\textsuperscript{12}Kalman, 62.  
divisive action — Jewish reconstruction included. For this same reason, the complicity and outright guilt of many Hungarian Christians in the events of the Hungarian Holocaust were left largely undiscussed. Even in the context of democratic pluralism before the communist takeover, the wartime suffering of Hungarian Jews was minimized to the point of erasure, in favor of a more palatable narrative of Hungarian victimization. Hungarian Jews were simply not enough of a priority to the overwhelmingly Christian, conservative, and widely antisemitic Hungarian public.

II. Rákosi, Stalinism, and Setting the New Norm, 1948-1956

Under the Stalinist leadership of Rákosi, many of the Hungary Communist Party’s (MKP) centralization efforts directly impacted the Jewish community and Holocaust narrative, whether or not they explicitly intended to do so. The brief period of democratic parliamentarianism in Hungary came to an abrupt end in 1948 when the communist party seized power through fraudulent elections under orders from Moscow.\(^\text{14}\) Led by Mátyás Rákosi, the new communist authority quickly began liquidating opposition and centralizing authority. The shaping of an official Holocaust narrative was both a means and an end goal of the communist party. Because the Party’s aim was to establish complete control over — and near ideological homogenization of — Hungarian society, discourse that deviated from the Party line on any topic was prohibited. In this case, the Party line on the Holocaust, and more broadly, the war, followed the Soviet model: the war as an ideological struggle for survival against fascists. According to this narrative, all citizens of socialist nations suffered equally under fascist oppression.\(^\text{15}\)


Their class-based ideology demanded homogeneity, leaving no room for the discussion of racially motivated violence, as no single group could be singled out as exceptional on any basis other than class. This exclusionary logic defined the communist Holocaust narrative and informed official policy regarding Jews. The manifestation of these principles took many forms, ranging from class-based relocation campaigns to oppressive laws against Zionism.

Among the earliest and most prominent antisemitic campaigns in communist Hungary were the anti-Zionist efforts of the late 1940s and early 1950s. While still small in scope, the postwar growth of a new Zionist movement in Hungary has been attributed to the perceived failure of wartime Jewish leadership, the impossibility of assimilation, and the aid Zionist groups provided to Jewish families during the war and genocide.\textsuperscript{16} The communist government, however, viewed Zionists as reactionary because of their opposition to the communists' stated goal of hegemony. To this end, some within the government accused the Zionist movement of “trying to finish what the fascists started, the separation of Jews from the Hungarian nation.”\textsuperscript{17} This view, though seemingly absurd, exemplifies the idealistic dedication and outlook of the communist authority. Any opposition to the government was branded as fascist or reactionary, regardless of how irrational the logic employed might have been.

The MKP used calculated and subversive political maneuvers to eliminate the Zionist movement. Instead of overt arrests, the young communist government employed a strategy of clandestine infiltration to make it appear as if the Zionist movement collapsed from within.\textsuperscript{18} Jewish communists loyal to the central party authority were sent to infiltrate the leadership of the Zionist movement. With the placement of loyal party members in decision-making posi-

\textsuperscript{16} Kovács, 129-130.
\textsuperscript{17} Kovács, 131-132.
\textsuperscript{18} Kovács, 134-135.
tions, Zionist leadership dissolved by March 1949. A combination of outside pressure, such as anti-Zionist articles in the Jewish newspaper Új Élet, and undue faith, stemming from many Zionists own long-held Marxist ideals, led to the movement’s downfall. Rákosi’s famed “salami tactics” were executed to perfection against the Zionist movement, quietly and embarrassingly ousting it from power and placing Hungarian Jews even more firmly in the increasingly uncontested control of the MKP.

Though the Zionist movement was formally defeated by 1949, the term “Zionist” became a frequently-used political weapon throughout the Stalinist era. Alongside “rightist deviant,” “fascist,” “bourgeois,” and “class enemy,” the brand Zionist was leveled against political enemies and those targeted by purges alike. Charges of Zionism were brought against many Hungarians, particularly those of upper-class Jewish descent. Most notably, however, Jewish members of Rákosi’s inner circle were tried for Zionism during the purges of 1950-1951. Prominent figures of the anti-Zionist campaign of 1949 such as István Szirmai and Lájos Stöckler were convicted of Zionism during this time. László Rajk, who would become the central martyr figure of the 1956 revolution, was also tried and executed on charges of Zionism, among other offenses. The perceived threat of Zionism contributed to the paranoia that solidified communist control over the population and Rákosi’s leadership position. Most importantly, it became a linguistic weapon against Hungarian Jews who deviated from the Party line or who were considered potentially subversive in the eyes of the Party.

The pre-war wealth of many Hungarian Jewish families, compounded by longstanding Hungarian antisemitic perceptions of Jews as bourgeois, led to the disproportionate targeting of Hungarian Jews during campaigns against

19 Kovács, 133-134.  
20 Kovács, 137.  
21 Kovács, 135-136.  
22 Kovács, 135.
so-called “class enemies.” The political campaign that most broadly impacted Hungarian Jews and the shaping of the Holocaust narrative was the struggle against these class enemies, the elimination of whom Stalinist socialism used as a vehicle for power consolidation and population control. The application of this strategy varied with the circumstances of each nation in which it was implemented. In Hungary, those targeted by anti bourgeois campaigns were often descended from Hungarian nobility.23 Many Hungarian Jews were among the upper echelons of Hungarian society in the pre-war period, and were thus targeted by these campaigns. Moreover, those who had opened and operated successful private business in the interwar period quickly found themselves out of favor with the communist central authority. Gabor Kalman’s family lumber business was seized under the industry nationalization campaign in 1949, and his entire family was branded as “class aliens,” effectively confining them to restricted socioeconomic mobility for much of his adult life.24 For example, despite attending a prestigious Jewish high school, Kalman was barred from acceptance into any state universities because of his class alien status and attendance at a religious institution.25 Being branded as “bourgeois” or a “class alien” ironically confined targeted individuals to a state of poverty and social immobility.

One branch of the communist anti-bourgeois campaigns that particularly impacted Hungarian Jews were the relocation campaigns, through which many “class alien” individuals and families were relocated to the countryside to perform manual labor and had their property seized by the government. Kalman was fortunate enough to escape relocation, though he recalls living in constant fear of “the

24 Kalman, 62.
25 Kalman, 64-65.
Matyas Kisiday

knock in the middle of the night.”

Others, however, were not as fortunate; Peter Hollander was deported to the countryside to perform manual labor in the home of a kulak family. Despite Hollander’s ideological commitment to Soviet socialism, he fell victim to the relocation campaigns because of his grandfather’s status as a former capitalist. The class enemy and relocation campaigns did not, of course, universally harm Hungarian Jews. The majority who lived in the lower strata of Hungarian society were left unharmed and even found success in the communist system. Dénes Bara, for example, was unscathed by the campaigns and thrived in the medical field because his grandfather was considered a “worker.” For many Hungarian Jews, however, the reality of life under Stalinism was grim regardless of their economic status. Though physically violent antisemitism had largely been eliminated in the communist era, the social and political alienation directed against Jews to coerce them into assimilation created a novel form of state-sponsored antisemitic violence.

A final and more nuanced impact of communist antisemitic policies were the divisions created within the Hungarian Jewish community. Many Hungarian Jews were ideologically communist, and many more adopted the doctrine after liberation. As a result, many accepted the Party line of assimilation, and placed their communist ideals ahead of their Jewish identity. Oftentimes, these sentiments had reasonable and well-intentioned sources; Peter Kenéz recalls from his adolescence a young friend “whose ideology had two sources: resentment of the rich, and fear of antisemitism,” and who “was convinced that only the communist[s] stood between us and the viscerally antisemitic Hungarians.” Unfortunately, these well-intentioned sentiments

26 Kalman, 68.
28 Dénes Bara, interview by Virginia Major Thomas.
29 Kovács, 134.
often manifested in unsavory and self-destructive ways. Peter Milch’s high school experience — in which a dogmatic principal who had been a ghetto supervisor during the war sabotaged Milch’s entrance into state universities — serves as one particularly striking example.\textsuperscript{31} Milch recalls being privately questioned by the principal, named Mr. Kertész, who concluded that Milch’s sister was a Zionist because of her attendance at a Jewish high school and subsequent relocation to the United States.\textsuperscript{32} Upon graduating, Milch found that he was the only student not accepted into state universities, despite finishing at the top of his class on his graduation examinations.\textsuperscript{33}

These examples, though specific and seemingly insignificant when examined individually, are emblematic of broader self-censoring of Hungarian Jews. Most notably, Rákosi and much of his “inner circle” were of Jewish origin. This was seldom addressed by Rákosi, and the “overbearing” effort to control Hungarian Jews is viewed by many scholars as an attempt to minimize his own Jewishness in the eyes of a suspicious Moscow and deeply antisemitic public.\textsuperscript{34} Regardless of the intention, the line of “communist first, Hungarian second, and Jew third” was a policy that spanned the whole of Hungarian Jewish society, from rural villages and academic institutions, through to the very core of the Party authority. Outward “Jewishness” could prove dangerous to anyone, regardless of social or political status, and thus ideological overcompensation was an effective method for many Hungarian Jews to go about their lives unmolested in communist Hungary.

The restriction of Jewish life in communist Hungary is inextricably linked to the definition of Hungarian Holocaust memory. Historian Randolf Braham concisely summarizes this point: “[Holocaust] memory in communist Hungary bent under tight government control with the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Milch, 86-87.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid.}, 87.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Patai, 629.
\end{itemize}
goal of monopoly on thought and the political interests of Moscow.”

The subversion of Jewish political leadership during the anti-Zionist campaigns granted the communist government a monopoly on official discourse in the Jewish political sphere. Population control efforts such as the campaigns against class enemies restricted discourse in the Hungarian Jewish community on a more grassroots level. Not only were Jews restricted in the spaces they could inhabit and express themselves religiously, culturally, and intellectually, but the adoption of a “Communist first” mentality among many Jews enhanced that atmosphere of danger that restricted open discourse. The environment of paranoid hegemony fostered by the Hungarian government during the period of Stalinism both prevented the open sharing of wartime lived experience for Hungarian Jews, and filled the vacuum created by that repression with an alternative Holocaust narrative in tune with the assimilative Party line.


János Kádár’s ascension to power in the wake of the 1956 revolution ushered in a new brand of less overtly oppressive, yet increasingly insidious, population control. Though the communist government’s interactions with the Jewish community became accordingly more subtle, they were still fundamentally coercive. While working to legitimize his authority over a bitter and jaded Hungarian population, Kádár simultaneously increased control over the Jewish population through his manipulation of the discourse — and consequently, collective memory — of the Holocaust. Kádár tactfully molded his strategy according to changing circumstances, at times using covert surveillance and quiet political maneuvering, and later staging boisterous propaganda campaigns to drive the Party line into the minds of Hungarian Jews and the general population. By 1963, Kádár achieved stability both in his leadership position and in

35 Braham, 262.
Holocaust discourse and memory.

The 1956 revolution was a period of conflicting sentiments and uncertainty for Hungarian Jews. Despite fears of a rise in antisemitic violence amidst the chaos, few, if any, incidents of physical harm towards Jews occurred. Many Hungarian Jews bought into the revolutionary sentiment and prioritized their national identity. Gabor Kalman, whom the communist government had branded a class alien, took the opportunity presented by the revolution to cast off his class status and participate in the uprising as “foremost, a Hungarian.” Other Hungarian Jews who had been ideologically committed to communism before the revolution became disillusioned with the system by the government’s response to the widespread movement. Eva Beck was one such individual, who recalls that she “changed her mind around the time of the revolution,” and “viewed Kádár as a traitor.” Though Kalman and Beck are examples of the numerous Hungarian Jews that adopted the revolution, many still were not convinced. The open stance of Jewish leadership in support of the government and against the “rightist counterrevolution” further exacerbated their uncertainty, which largely derived from a fear of resurgent antisemitic violence should the revolution succeed. Regardless of their stance on the revolution, thousands of Hungarian Jews saw no future for themselves in Hungary and fled the country to start new lives elsewhere.

The immediate aftermath of the 1956 revolution was a bleak one for Hungarian Jews. Historian András Kovács contends that “after 1956, the gap between the Jewish people and the Hungarian government became unbridgeable.” Given the isolation felt by Hungarian Jews, this certainly appears to be the case. Hungarian Jews were ideologically disillusioned, separated from family members

36 Kovács, 140-141.
37 Kalman, 70-71.
38 Eva Beck, interview by Virginia Major Thomas.
39 Bohus, 760.
40 Kovács, 147.
who had fled the country, and effectively abandoned by their leadership, which had become entirely dependent on the communist government. Kádár’s resumption of close surveillance of the Jewish population, performed covertly for fear of rekindling revolutionary sentiments, aggravated these circumstances.\(^{41}\) Publicly, Kádár continued to characterize the 1956 uprising as a counterrevolution, instigated by outside provocateurs; he connected the event to the ongoing Jewish issue of assimilation by suggesting that the counterrevolutionaries, like the Zionists before them, wished to separate the Jews from the Hungarian people. In this defeated and isolated state, the communist authority succeeded in suppressing Jewish identity and expression. Thus, the memory of the Holocaust — already becoming muddied by temporal separation — grew increasingly distorted by the politically orchestrated inexorable silence.

In 1960-61, the Kádár government confronted its most significant direct challenge to the perpetuation of their Sovietized Holocaust narrative. Adolf Eichmann, a high-ranking officer in the Waffen SS who was central to the implementation of the final solution in Eastern Europe, was arrested in Argentina by Israeli authorities and was to be tried in Israeli courts for his role in the wartime atrocities. In particular, Israel charged Eichmann with planning and executing the deportation of Hungarian Jews in 1944. Hungary’s centrality to the Eichmann trial presented an enormous threat to the perpetuation of the official Holocaust narrative sponsored by the MKP. The trial would challenge the Party line of national, ideologically-motivated persecution by naturally centering Jewish suffering and victimization. Rather than censoring the information uncovered by the Eichmann trial, Kádár attempted to distort the facts of the case by oversaturating its media coverage, in an effort to “further the political goals of antifascism.”\(^{42}\) Witnesses and journalists sent to participate in the trial were instructed to emphasize the nationality and class of wartime victims

\(^{41}\) Kovács, 145.

\(^{42}\) Bohus, 747-748.
ahead of their race, in accordance with the Party line, while being cautious not to incite antisemitism amidst Hungarians domestically.43 Both at home and abroad, Kádár insisted that a handful of fascists committed the atrocities that took place in Hungary, primarily against lower-class Hungarian citizens. The genocide of Hungarian Jews was being explicitly recast as a diametric class struggle on the international stage.

Kádár’s effort to reinforce the Party Holocaust narrative by distorting the Eichmann trial was a resounding failure. The facts brought forth during the trial directly contradicted the Party narrative and became impossible to ignore. Historian Kata Bohus examined the contents of newspaper articles that covered the Eichmann trial before and after it took place. Her findings indicate that articles written during and after the trial discuss specific Jewish suffering much more frequently and in-depth, as opposed to those written before the trial which followed the Party line much more closely.44 The failure of Eichmann propaganda campaign proved how flimsy the communists’ Holocaust narrative truly was. The consequences of this failure, however, were minimal. The communist state’s propaganda machine proved extremely effective at nullifying the repercussions of the information brought forth and the event faded from public discourse as quickly as it appeared. The absurdity or weakness of the Party’s Holocaust narrative were irrelevant so long as it maintained its monopoly on public discourse, and the Party’s supremacy trounced its political blunders.

Following the unusual events of the Adolf Eichmann trial, Jewish life and the Holocaust narrative stabilized in Hungary. Silence and self-censorship became the uncontested norm. Katalin Pecsi was raised without knowledge of her Jewish heritage, despite her parents coming from prominent Jewish families and surviving the Holocaust.45 Pecsi cannot recall her father ever speaking of his experi-

43 Bohus, 747-748.
44 Bohus, 762.
45 Katalin Pecsi, interview by Virginia Major Thomas.
ence at Auschwitz, in spite of the depression it caused him. Of course, this could have arisen from a personal difficulty with confronting trauma, but the added danger of discussing wartime Jewish victimization in communist Hungary very likely contributed to Mr. Pecsi’s isolation. By this time, the overwhelming silence on the Holocaust had become institutionalized in the Hungarian education system. School textbooks did not discuss the genocide in their coverage of the war. A comprehensive codex titled “Information Hungary,” published in 1968 by the National Academy of Sciences, dedicated a single sentence to the Holocaust out of its thousands of pages. Hungarians who received their primary education in the mid-1960s or later display little knowledge of the Holocaust in Hungary, and many have no knowledge of the Adolf Eichmann trial. It is by this era that the stability of the Kádár government was fully entrenched, and official state censorship and institutionalized self-censorship, primarily of Hungarian Jews, operated in conjunction to distort the memory of the Hungarian Holocaust.

Challenges to the official state Holocaust narrative in Hungary were infrequent and largely ineffectual between the 1960s and the collapse of communism in 1989. Nobel prize-winning author Imre Kertész recalls struggling to publish his now-famous semi-autobiographical novel, _Fatelessness_, in the mid-1970s because its narrative of the Holocaust went entirely against the Party line. When it was finally published, only about 2,000 copies were printed, and the book saw limited circulation. Even in the mid-1980s, as Kádár was phased out of power due to his age and the communist government’s decline in authority, open publi-

47 Patai, 619.
cations’ discussion of the Holocaust or other “Jewish affairs” were limited in distribution and closely monitored by the government. An article in a 1984 copy of Új Élet presented facts about the Second World War and the Holocaust as novel information.49 Private publications from Jewish academics began to arise around the same time, including the “Shalom Manifesto” — which declared that the Hungarian Jewish people were incompatible with the communist system — and Magyar Zsidó — a privately published newspaper that discussed taboo topics such as the Holocaust.50 The presence of these papers in the collection of Imre Pozsgay — a prominent political figure in the late communist era — suggests that even while losing legitimacy, the communist government had a vested interest in keeping a close watch on the business of problematic and potentially subversive groups. The commonality shared by all these publications, however, was that they saw little to no real circulation, and thus, sparked little to no meaningful public discourse or change. So long as the MKP remained in power, the Party line on issues central to the Party doctrine, such as the ideological Holocaust narrative, was not subject to change.

The period from 1960-1989 was, with the notable exception of the Adolf Eichmann trial, largely consistent when it came to Hungarian Jewish life and Holocaust memory. The days of mass arrests and violent repression under Mátyás Rákosi had been replaced by a more subtly subversive information-based effort to control public discourse led by János Kádár. Imre Kertész summarizes Jewish life under Kádár’s leadership: “You couldn’t be openly antisemitic, that wasn’t tolerated, but it was all false. They used ‘persecuted’ instead of ‘Jew.’ It was risky to say ‘Jew.’ So in a way we became invisible. We were there as the victims of the persecution from which the Soviet army had supposed-

50 Magyar Zsidó, 1987, Imre Pozsgay papers, Box 35, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.
ly saved us but we couldn’t be there as Jews." More explicit, perhaps, are the words of Hungarian historian Raphael Patai: “In contrast to the Nazi genocide, the Hungarian communists’ approach to solving the Jewish question was mild and nonviolent. It did not aim at killing the Jews but at killing the Jewishness in them.” Viewed in tandem, these quotes describe the self-censorship gradually forced upon Hungarian Jews by the MKP. Ultimately, this self-censorship contributed to the undermining of Jewish identity and assimilation of Hungarian Jews into the homogeneous ideal of the Soviet model of socialist society. The subversion and rewriting of official Holocaust memory is both a symbol and a tragic consequence of this assimilative process.

**IV. Conclusion**

When the Red Army finally withdrew and Hungary made its peaceful transition to democracy in 1989, the future of Hungarian Holocaust memory appeared hopeful. There were, of course, fears of resurgent Hungarian antisemitism that seem to accompany every period of Hungarian stability. A small newsletter from the Hungarian Jewish Cultural Association released only a month before the formal regime change relays these fears to its readers quite clearly. Despite the fear and uncertainty, there was little to no initial resurgence in physically violent antisemitism. In fact, Jewish politics once again found room to thrive and encouraged open discourse. A 1990 publication of Új Élet included an open letter to the nascent Hungarian Parliament on its cover page that “cleared the air” regarding the previous forty-five years. The letter openly discussed the events of the Holocaust as survivors (and newly available Western literature) more honestly portrayed them, and decried the

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51 Kertész and Cooper, 44.
52 Patai, 617.
54 Új Élet, Pozsgay papers.
defunct communist government for its suppression of Hungarian Jews.

Unfortunately, the novelty of free expression has not led to an honest depiction of the Holocaust in Hungarian public consciousness. Over three decades after the collapse of communism in Hungary, no progress appears to have been made. The official narrative of the Holocaust in Hungary still undermines the racial element of wartime atrocities with sweeping nationalist rhetoric. The widespread participation of Hungarians in the genocide is ignored, with the blame directed at a handful of fascist “outside provocateurs.” I do not intend to accuse the current far-right leadership in Hungary of plagiarizing their communist forebears. Instead, I call attention to the similarities between two authoritarian governments' desires to co-opt and redefine a tragic episode of guilt in their nation's history as one of universal victimization. Historian Jelena Subotic argues that the present Holocaust narrative stems from its deployment as a tool for nation building — or rebuilding — after the collapse of communism.  

There is indeed truth to this assertion, but no novelty. An examination of existing evidence displays that the shaping of the Holocaust narrative and its weaponization for the purpose of assimilative political homogenization has been a powerful nation-building tool for every Hungarian government since the end of the Second World War, regardless of asserted ideology. The mechanisms, rhetoric, and tactics of shaping memory have remained largely consistent for three quarters of a century; these have been weaponized against Hungarian Jews, their cultural identity, and their place in Hungarian society.

The root problem inherent to the present issue of Holocaust memory in Hungary is one of accountability, and I contend that the repressive years of communist rule are to blame. The Hungarian Communist Party’s overbearing effort to achieve complete control over Hungarian society

demanded a holistic subversion of Jewish political and cultural autonomy. Jewish suffering in the context of the Holocaust, as well as Jewish identity more broadly, became taboo in communist Hungary given that the regime perceived Jewish existence as a challenge to complete ideological hegemony — the foremost goal of the communist authority. The immediate consequence was the ubiquitous restriction of open discourse related to Jewish wartime suffering and lived experiences. Thus, the long-term consequence of the communists’ repressive silencing of Hungarian Jews is determined as the root cause of the destructive lack of accountability. Repression enabled the proliferation of a distorted and dishonest narrative of the Holocaust, and, as a result, Hungarians never confronted their own complicity in the genocide. The communist government’s obsession with achieving universal control and hegemony was incompatible with truthful, open discourse of the Holocaust, much less the pursuit of any meaningful restorative justice. The present apologist state constructed by the MKP continues to deal real, concrete damage to the Hungarian population, which, unless addressed, will perpetuate for decades to come.
PROSTITUTION AND FEMALE (IN)DEPENDENCE IN COLONIAL GHANA, 1900-1950

Niloufar Davis

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Vagina of Adwoa
If someone ‘eats’ you (has intercourse with you)
And fails to reward you,
Slay him!

“Slay him!” Indicative of the inextricable link between sexuality and material gain that had been established in colonial Ghana by the twentieth century, this Asante nubility rites song (bragoro) illustrates how women’s sexuality, spirituality, and capacity for accumulation represented interstices of freedom that cut through the opaque wall of colonial control.

By assailing expectations of femininity and gender relations, prostitutes’ institutionalization – and very existence – provide insight into the ways in which female sexuality and male perceptions thereof informed and permuted gender relations. How did colonial rule and the concurrent rise of cocoa in 1910s Asante affect gender relations and women’s agency over their sexuality, capacity for material accumulation, and relationship with marriage? Did male policing of female bodies and morality exterminate the institution of prostitution, or merely permute its forms and expressions? These questions will be explored

through an examination of the effects of colonial rule on gender relations through the rise of the colonial cash economy, the concomitant rise of urban prostitution, social and religious burdens that accompanied the rise of prostitution, and prostitution as a colonial instrument. Overall, this essay argues that while the advent of the cocoa trade and the colonial cash economy did provide women with novel routes of income and hence autonomy over their bodies and sexuality, the fear that this rise in sexual autonomy instilled in colonial administrators and chiefs resulted in policies that significantly restricted women’s self-determination.

Scholars of colonial policy in the Gold Coast have argued that the introduction of cocoa as a colonial cash crop in the 1880s, and the resulting rapid expansion of cocoa production during the 1910s, significantly disrupted the sustenance-based labor system of Asante by increasing women’s labor burdens. While conjugal labor characterized agricultural production in the precolonial era, the impacts of indirect rule and the rise of cocoa on economic relations were twofold: firstly, the rise of cocoa shifted the degree of reciprocity of conjugal labor in agriculture. Previously, farmed food crops provided the wife’s “only material and guaranteed return of her labor”; the shift to cocoa diminished this return on investment and made the wife dependent on the “continued obligation of her husband... to provide part of her subsistence”. That is to say, in the


5 Tashijian and Allman, “Marrying and Marriage on a Shifting Terrain: Reconfigurations of Power and Authority in Early Colonial Asante,” 243–44.
Prostitution and Female (In)Dependence

cocoa era, land ownership remained with the husband, and the wife’s labor was still expected, but now with a lack of guaranteed mutual assistance. The migration of couples to the cocoa frontier in search of uncultivated land exacerbated the issue of a unidirectional flow of labor because often only the husband was able to obtain the property rights to the land, and thus travel eroded the previously reciprocal nature of agricultural production.6

Secondly, colonial “customary” interventions, specifically the prohibition of pawnning in Asante in 1908, inflamed this decrease in reciprocity. Pawnship, whereby the family of a free wife effectively made a request for a loan from the husband in return for increased marital rights to the wife’s labor and compliance, was widely practiced due to the control it gave the husband over his now-pawn-wife’s labor. Under Asante law, as anthropologist Robert Rattray put it, “the wife was now under a definite obligation to rise up when called upon and accompany the husband to his farm, to cook for him, and to perform the household duties.”7 Given that few men had the means to hire labor to replace the lost labor of his pawns, the 1908 prohibition resulted in free wives’ labor becoming a primary factor of production in the spread of cocoa farming.8 Note that this illustrates the pervasive and perverse impacts that colonial forces had in breaking down the social security systems in place in rural areas that had somewhat protected women prior to colonial intervention.9

6 Tashijian and Allman, 245.
Gender historians have noted, however, that between 1920 and 1935, once Asante’s cocoa industry had been established, the emergent colonial cash economy represented an opening for female agricultural independence. As seen in Figure 1, women in local markets had opportunities to become the producers and traders of cocoa, and therefore, given the social and economic disruptions that forced women to reconsider marriage as a valuable source of capital, many wives made the shift from being exploitable labor to exploiting, themselves, chances for economic autonomy. Notably, this newfound potential for economic freedom made the institution of marriage “fragile”, as Emmanuel Akyeampong argues, because it broadened women’s conjugal expectations and thus changed the very definitions of marriage and non-marriage. Women would divorce numerous husbands or refuse to marry if they failed to cultivate cocoa farms for the women, challenged matrilineal inheritance in customary courts, and demanded


Whether women embraced their changing roles in the sexual economy or were forced into migration due to unreciprocated labor obligations and a deterioration in the social security systems in rural Asante precipitated by indirect rule, the rise in cocoa led to a mass movement of women from rural areas into the cities. Facing relatively low levels of education and a plethora of colonial antiwomen employment policies, many women became beer brewers or, as is examined by this essay, prostitutes.\footnote{Ahlberg, “Is There a Distinct African Sexuality? A Critical Response to Caldwell,” 24; Akyeampong, “Sexuality and Prostitution among the Akan of the Gold Coast c. 1650-1950,” 167–68.} The prominence of migrant prostitutes in Gold Coast cities was true for the duration of the pre-war, inter-war, and post-war times. For example, the majority of prostitutes working in Sekondi and Takoradi in the 1930s were Kru and Nigerian women — by 1941, there were approximately 1200 women from southern Nigerian provinces working as prostitutes in southern Ghana.\footnote{Saheed Aderinto, “Journey to Work: Transnational Prostitution in Colonial British West Africa,” \textit{Journal of the History of Sexuality} 24, no. 1 (January 2015): 106; Saheed Aderinto, “Pleasure for Sale: Prostitution in Colonial Africa, 1880s-1960s,” in \textit{Prostitution: A Companion to Mankind}, ed. Frank Jacob (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016), 474; Akyeampong, “Sexuality and Prostitution among the Akan of the Gold Coast c. 1650-1950,” 161.}

The unique element of the colonial cash economy was that it enabled migrant women to accrue material wealth by selling sexual services. Given that prostitution had very low financial barriers to entry and required no start-up capital, many migrant women sold sexual services upon arrival in cities like Accra or Sekondi-Takoradi.
to secure their first temporary place of residence. Once prostitution became a woman’s primary stream of income, it permitted, arguably for the first time, a reliable source of wealth and asset accumulation. While not all women became wealthy, prostitutes charged a standard rate of two shillings — earning them the epithet of ‘two-two’ women — and demand was sufficiently high that average monthly earnings ranged from £10 to £30 per month. These earnings expanded women’s “material horizon” by finally providing an independent source of income that enabled the purchase of urban property.

What were the socio-political consequences of prostitution in southern and central Ghana? For women in cities like Sakondi-Takoradi and Accra, hubs of prostitute enclaves, migrant prostitutes came to emblematize sexual and economic freedom to the extent that prostitutes’ behaviors and mannerisms became widespread symbols of female nonchalance. What was particularly alluring about prostitutes was their ability to secure independent streams of income and accrue wealth, suggesting that some young, urban women were as disillusioned by the institution of marriage and its economic restrictions as the rural women who fled it. Due to this allure, migrant prostitutes, who often operated out of hotels like the iconic Columbia Hotel in Sekondi-Takoradi, cultivated much of the social scene and fashion trends. Furthermore, it is important to note that

18 Emmanuel Akyeampong, “Urbanization, Individualism & Gender Relations in Colonial Ghana, c. 1900-1939,” in Africa’s Urban
because indigenous women subscribed to behaviors commonly associated with prostitutes, the line between ‘prostitute’ and ‘respectable woman’ became blurred, and, therefore, prostitutes were not precluded from being worthy of marriage in men’s eyes. This was also significant for the reconfiguration in the sexual economy because prostitutes then came to represent “independent...accumulators” for whom marriage was only one choice of many; in so doing, they changed how many women self-perceived and self-styled their femininity with marriage as a merely optional component.19

It must be noted, however, that women’s autonomy was not absolute and significantly limited by the religious parameters within which they operated, and therefore Akyeampong’s characterization of prostitutes as women who “asserted their autonomy and their control over their own sexuality, and independently accumulated wealth” may be an overly-optimistic view with which to view the female liberation that came as a product of prostitution.20 While many prostitutes remained in the cities, some chose to return to their places of origin, and this necessitated religious and spiritual ‘purification’.21 Communities that practiced this spiritual purification believed it a necessary process to “neutralize the malevolent spiritual forces that might follow them into the village as a result of their numerous sexual contacts with strangers”.22 This is evident, for example, in the testimony of Hausa leader Kadri English, Past, ed. David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 226.


whose rejection of prostitution amongst Hausa women was deeply embedded in Hausa faith:

Chastity is essential in Mohammadanism especially among women; prostitution is a thing outside our creed – good Hausa women who were living good lives in Northern Nigeria change for the worse on arrival on the Gold Coast colony in which evil influences are somewhat paramount (NAG, ADM 11/1/922 no. 35)\textsuperscript{23}

Figure 2: The mugshot of the Nigerian brothel-keeper Janet Ogban. She was convicted of brothel-keeping in Takoradi. Date: unknown. Source: National Archives Ibadan.

Purification, however, was not entirely externally-enforced, and many women sought spiritual cleansing from rural shrines prior to social reintegration into their old communities or before departing for the cities again where they would return to prostitution.\textsuperscript{24} Contrary to arguments that

\textsuperscript{23} Kadri English, “Kadri English, Hausa Tribal Ruler, to District Commissioner of Accra, 13 May 1925” (National Archives of Ghana (Accra), May 13, 1925), ADM 11/1/922, no. 35.

suggest that rural-to-urban migration meant that “women were able to break the barriers imposed on them by native laws and custom,” prostitution evidently still represented a religious infraction, and women were still largely unable to change both external expectations of their behavior as well as self-conceptions of their femininity that remained deeply embedded in religious practice.

Moreover, the implementation of venereal disease (VD) laws, the arrest of unmarried women, and the language of sexual vice used to describe prostitution presented further limitations to prostitutes’ full realization of economic and cultural autonomy as they remained subject to the behest of male chiefs and colonial administrators. While one might frame the economic independence prostitutes were able to gain as a “step[ping] outside the traditional social and spatial constraints imposed on women to facilitate accumulation”, it is important to remember that the bandwidth of economic independence was still restricted by patriarchal Victorian gender ideas and masculine loci of power.26

Luise White and Saheed Aderinto posit that the entrenchment of prostitution within the otherwise overwhelmingly male colonial urban economy was a functional consequence of the (colonial) capitalist system. White, in her analysis of prostitution in colonial Nairobi, argues that “prostitution is a capitalist social relationship…because wage labor is a unique feature of capitalism: capitalism commoditized labor”;27 by using the example that many precolonial African countries rarely incorporated direct payment for sexual services, Aderinto suggests that the relationship to wage labor articulated by White was a direct product of the advent of colonial rule in the late nineteenth century.

The reason why sex was important to the “business of empire” is fairly intuitive; in order to maintain large reserves of exploitable labor, specifically for mining and military enterprises, female sexuality and reproductive capacity were essential for the colonial administration to control. Colonial authorities, therefore, sought to regulate rather than abolish prostitution within military and mining contexts to have a reliable source of companionship to relieve disaffected, abused male workers, and to secure prostitutes as a reliable source for children to replenish the labor force.

Outside of the fences of military and mining barracks, however, to understand the causes for the moral panic that precipitated the implementation of VD laws and the arrests of unmarried young women in rural Asante, we must first understand how different men perceived prostitution and its effects on gender relations. This question is important because prostitution, in many ways, exists as a fault line within the spaces of marriage and the political economy of gender; the capacity for material accumulation by selling sex is diametrically opposed to the ownership that marriage, and all its expectations of reproductive, emotional, and agricultural labor, has of the female body. Hence, examining the language used by Gold Coast colonial

administrators and chiefs to articulate prostitution reveals much about the fear elicited by increasing female sexual and economic freedom.

The expansion of prostitution outside of militarized, regulated spaces represented an alleviation of the regulation on women’s sexualities, and with that, behavior deviating from the Christian and Victorian ideals that constituted the colonial civilizing mission. Colonial architecture and city-planning represented a form of control over the colonized peoples’ movement, and hence the establishment of red-light districts in cities like Accra were considered an impediment to the ‘civilization’ of Ghanaian cities and as informal resistance to the colonial project.32 The fear was, in the words of Dr. Andrew Fleming, a British doctor working across the British colonies, that “stray women…[would] spread disease all over the country…a growing menace [which] should be combated to prevent a serious problem from developing.”33 His colleagues, including “Adviser in Venereology to the War Office”, R. R. Willcox, attributed this “menace” to “girls on the move” or the “travelling prostitutes”.34 The lexis of “stray”, floating women that characterized prostitutes as mere vectors of disease, devoid of any social agency is unsurprising but telling – the control of the movement of these migrant women quickly became a colonial imperative. The reaction to instances of venereal disease also reflected the biomedical interest in ‘civilizing’ African sexuality. Colonial officials believed Africans were more prone to contracting venereal diseases because of tropes regarding African promiscuity and fears that African women were psychologically ‘damaged’ by too much “west-

ernization”. Colonial interventions to prevent venereal diseases and restrict the flow of prostitutes, when viewed from the lens of the civilizing mission, can therefore be explained by a paternalistic attempt to revert the urbanized women to their ‘tribal’, childlike state through a patriarchal control over their sexuality.

Colonial programs for preventing the spread of venereal diseases took a variety of forms, most prominent of which were the Contagious Diseases Acts (CDAs) passed by the Cape Parliament in 1885. This law criminalized venereal diseases and legitimated the detainment and medical inspection of female prostitutes in cities, mining settlements, and military camps. If they were found with symptoms of venereal diseases, medical officers were empowered to detain these women in “Lock Hospitals”. These processes were incredibly violent and are remembered by many women who endured them as *chibeura* (to open something by force). For example, Mrs. Furiana Gosa, a woman from Mozambique who left for Southern Rhodesia to escape forced labor, remembers the experience of *chibeura* as:

> I got into the room, I was asked to take off my skirt... Then, wonder of all wonders, this white man began touching and poking at my private parts. It was the worst experience that had ever happened to me. Even my husband had never looked at my private parts like that. I just wished the earth would open up and swallow me...I had to close my eyes tight to stop myself from crying because of the shame that I felt. (Jackson, 204)

The physical force exerted upon prostitutes in this manner, and the speed with which the policies came into action suggests, however, that the implementation of CDAs was moti-

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vated by a factor other than the colonizing mission alone. 

Arguably, the most significant factor that led to the implementation of the CDAs was the risk that female sexual independence posed to the colonial political economy. The belief that syphilis and gonorrhea would constrict the fertility of African women engendered a fear in colonial administrators that prostitution risked depleting and undermining the ready availability of labor needed to maximize the exploitation of the colonies, as suggested by R. R. Willcox's report on venereal disease in British West Africa, the entirety of which is devoted to the “abnormal[ly]” high rates of these diseases amongst the civilian and military populations of the Gold Coast. 38

Between 1929 and 1933, colonial administrators enlisted chiefs as the arbiters of “customary law” to police urban prostitution and engage in the capture of unmarried women in rural areas to regulate women's reproductive capacities and engagement with marriage. Articulated using the language of venereal disease and moral crisis, the arrests were primarily about shifting power relationships and the spaces in which women were carving out for themselves in the colonial cash economy. 39

Specifically in Akan societies, motherhood was seen as the climax of the female experience, and therefore prostitution and women opting out of marriage represented an aberration of the indigenous moral economy and a threat to male hegemony. 40 The 1929 Free Women’s Marriage Proclamation, a collaboration between chiefs and colonial administrators, catalyzed the process of widespread arrests of unmarried women (asigyafo). 41 In accordance with this proclamation, a “gong-gong” was beaten to announce the

38 Aderinto, 477.
arrests of unmarried women; women were detained and only released upon giving the name of a man whom she would agree to marry. To free the woman, the man would be summoned, would have to agree to the marriage, and then pay a “release fee” of £5.\textsuperscript{42} Interestingly, chiefs’ true justification for compliance with this policy was incongruent with the official sentiments reported back to colonial administrators. Betrayed by their nostalgia for “the good old days of our ancestors…[when] no girl or woman dared to resist when given away in marriage to a suitor by her parents and relatives as is the case now,” chiefs evidently revered the times of female acquiescence.\textsuperscript{43} Conversely, in official reports, they underscored the prevalence of venereal diseases in their divisions — the Mansu Nkwantahene reported that “the object of beaten gong-gong is to prevent venereal diseases…prevalent within the Division” — and assured administrators that they would continue with the detentions unless “there is any justifiable reason to encourage prostitution and its attendant prevalence of sterility and venereal diseases.”\textsuperscript{44} It seems, therefore, that chiefs utilized the colonial fears of the changing terrain of the gendered political economy to force a reversion to a time of male hegemony over female labor and submission; the interests of administrators and chiefs converged to produce almost omnipresent attempts at curtailing female moral, bodily, and economic autonomy.

In conclusion, the rise of cocoa precipitated a moral and economic crisis due to shifting gendered power dynamics, whose effects were arguably most crystallized and distilled in the arena of prostitution and female sex. While some scholars have characterized the early twentieth century as a watershed moment for female independence,

\textsuperscript{43} Allman, 133.
\textsuperscript{44} Mansu Nkwantahene, “Report of the Mansu Nkwantahene Regarding the Detention of Unmarried Women.” (National Archives of Nigeria (Kumasi), 1907), ARA.
where the rise of cocoa meant that women were able to cultivate their own cocoa farms or accumulate wealth through prostitution, this is arguably an overly optimistic view of the agency which the colonial cash economy lent women. This freedom was conditional and relative; women’s agency did increase relative to the 1910s and early 1920s when women provided unidirectional service to their husbands on cocoa farms, but it was limited by the omnipresent hand of colonialism and the patriarchal Victorian gender ideas it dragged with it.
CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF THE COMMONS’ “RULE OF 1706,” 1700-1740

Daniel Ferreira

Recent studies of British parliamentary institutions have attributed a good amount of importance to the House of Commons’ rule of 1706 that “this House will receive no Petitions for any Sum of Money, relating to the publick service, but what is recommended from the Crown.”¹ For historian John Brewer, the rule of 1706 “gave the Treasury a monopoly over fiscal legislation.”² And for political scientist Gary W. Cox, “the implementation of the ‘rule of 1706’ left no loophole by which unofficial members [i.e. those without government posts] might breach the ministerial monopoly” on shaping the government budget, so that “the British mitigated the risk of overfishing in the fiscal common pool by denying unofficial MPs the right to propose expenditures.” As a result, Cox argues, the government earned enough trust to levy longer-term taxes, and ministries became much more stable.³ A closer look at the origins and early enforcement of the rule of 1706, however, paint a rather different portrait of its importance. My findings suggest that the rule of 1706 had little bearing over parliamentary procedure in the early eighteenth century, and by extension, over British taxation and ministerial stability during that period. My argument is divided into four sections. Section 1

¹ Journals of the House of Commons, 1803 reprint (henceforth CJ), xv, 211 (11 December 1706).
investigates the origins of the rule of 1706, in a decision to which I argue Parliament was not very committed. Section 2 builds on that lack of commitment and shows that the rule of 1706 did not matter in practice, and that it was disregarded well into the 1720s. Section 3 accounts for the post-1714 increase in petitions recommended by the Crown to the Commons, and argues that the rule of 1706 had little to do with it. Section 4 concludes the argument, arguing that the Commons’ practice to accept financial legislation only from the Ministry developed organically, and that only after this practice had developed did the rule of 1706 start being invoked as its basis.

1. The Origins of the Rule of 1706

How did the rule of 1706 come about? In his authoritative 1796 treatise on Commons procedure, John Hatsell introduced what would become the canonical account on its origins:

The great number of petitions that were presented to the House of Commons, at the commencement of the Session which began in October, 1705, from persons either claiming an arrear of pay as officers, or making some other demand upon the public, made it necessary for the House to put some restriction upon these applications; which, their being often promoted by Members who were friends to the parties, and carrying with them the appearance of justice or of charity, induced the rest of the House to wish well to...; and by these means large sums were granted to private persons improvidently, and sometimes without sufficient grounds.⁴

A rough quantitative analysis of parliamentary business confirms Hatsell’s general claim. Though there was nothing

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particular about the session of 1705, since 1700 the Commons had received an unprecedented number of petitions related to personal financial relief, that did “induce the rest of the House to wish well to”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Petitions</th>
<th>Bills Proposed</th>
<th>Bills Passed</th>
<th>Committees</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1705-1708</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
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Note: The same committee could receive many similar petitions.
Source: See Appendix C.

Table 1. Petitions, Committees and Bills for Personal Financial Relief in the Commons, 1688-1708

The increase in petitions was, in great part, a collateral effect of the Williamite Wars in Ireland (1688-1691). Over a decade after the war ended, there were still people “claiming an arrear of pay as officers,” as Hatsell put it. And other petitions had to do with the unstable situation of Irish lands forfeited from “rebels” during the war. Originally, the government was supposed to sell the forfeited lands to generate revenue, but throughout the 1690s, William III used the royal prerogative to grant many of them to military commanders and personal favorites. In turn, the Commons passed the Act of Resumption in 1700, which reversed most of William's grants and allowed some of the original owners to reclaim their lands. Parliament attempted to compensate the recipients of the short-lived land grants with “an Act for the relief of the Protestant purchas-

5 For examples, see CJ, xiv, 172 (2 February 1703 [1702 O.S.]); CJ, xv, 47-8 (1 December 1705), 183 (2 March 1706 [1705 O.S.]).
ers of the forfeited estates in Ireland” (1702), but its efforts ultimately proved insufficient. As a result, parties who felt they deserved compensation for these unpredictable shifts in land tenure flooded the Commons with petitions, be they original owners or Protestant buyers. (Of course, some of these petitions had nothing to do with Irish forfeitures, and could themselves be quite ironic: in early 1706, the “Provost and Corporation of Moneyers” petitioned for financial relief after having their coins stolen by some “500 Labourers”).

In spite of this context, the exact motivations for passing the rule of 1706 remain unclear. There is scant information about its passage in the Commons’ Journals, and the parliamentary diaries for this period are far from comprehensive. It could have been an initiative from the Ministry after realizing the extent of expenses that resulted from personal financial legislation since 1702. Indeed, the rule was passed in the same day that the ministry-controlled Committee of Ways and Means submitted a report to the whole House. It could also have arisen from MPs being tired of dealing with so many petitions, especially those that took a significant amount of time. For example, a certain Colonel John Rice’s request for army arrears took seven years to be solved by the Commons amidst petitions, committees, bills, counterpetitions, and enquiries on fraud.

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7 For examples, see *CJ*, xiv, 371 (9 March 1704 [1703 O.S.]), 486 (18 January 1705 [1704 O.S.]); *CJ*, xv, 101 (21 January 1706 [1705 O.S.]).

8 *CJ*, xv, 109 (24 January 1706 [1705 O.S.]). For more examples, see the asterisk-note in Hatsell, 214.

9 I found no information about the rule in *The Private Diary of William, First Earl Cowper, Lord Chancellor of England* (Eton, 1833); or in W.A. Speck, “An Anonymous Parliamentary Diary, 1705-6,” *Camden Fourth Series* 7 (1969), 29-84. An extensive search through the papers of British politicians at the time could probably yield fruits in this regard.

10 *CJ*, xv, 211 (11 December 1706). For the chairman of the committee’s allegiance to the Ministry, see Appendix A.

11 Query “Col. J. Rice” in “The Commons’ Journals database on
Another example were evidently opportunistic petitions — in January 1706, the executor of a countess who had a disputed claim to an Irish forfeiture petitioned Parliament to pay the deceased countess’ creditors with whatever money the government raised from selling the property.\(^{12}\)

In spite of those reasons for supporting the rule of 1706, there seemed to have been no memorable catalyst that prompted its passage. It simply seemed adequate to the circa 115 MPs who were sitting in the House at the time.\(^{13}\) These circumstances later led to a certain amnesia about the rule of 1706, which would play a negative impact upon its fulfillment. This will be explored in the following section.

2. The Inefficacy of the Rule of 1706

It did not even take until the end of the parliamentary session for the House of Commons to flout the rule of 1706. By February 1707, the usual petitions involving Irish forfeitures were as present as ever in MPs’ agenda,\(^{14}\) as well as petitions from chartered companies and indebted subjects for relief.\(^{15}\) Only a handful of petitioners bothered to get a recommendation from the Crown (see Figure 1). And those that did were somehow exceptional — like a January 1708 claim to compensation for the loss of another Irish forfeiture, and for a reversal of the outlawry of the petitioner’s husband. Given the magnitude of the request, it is plausible that seeking the Queen’s recommendation had less to do with requirements of parliamentary procedure and more to do with the petitioner’s attempt to increase her chances of

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\(^{12}\) CJ, xv, 108 (24 January 1706 [1705 O.S.]).

\(^{13}\) There were 125 MPs who voted on 6 December 1706, and 109 who voted on 16 December 1706. The rule was voted on the 11th. See CJ, xv, 204 (6 December 1706), 213 (16 December 1706).

\(^{14}\) See, for example, CJ, xv, 274, 284 (4, 11 February 1707 [1706 O.S.]), 316 (28 February 1707 [1706 O.S.]), 317 (1 March 1707 [1706 O.S.]).

\(^{15}\) CJ, xv, 281 (8 February 1707 [1706 O.S.]).
success in the Commons.\textsuperscript{16}

By 1710, the number of petitions concerning Irish forfeitures finally started to decrease. However, this was promptly compensated by demands for financial assistance triggered by the financial crisis of 1709-10.\textsuperscript{17} The rule of 1706 continued without observance — so much that the House felt the need to reiterate it in June 1713.\textsuperscript{18}

Still, petitions for public money continued to be tabled in the House irrespective of the King’s assent. In September 1715, two men asked Parliament to compensate them for highway repairs in Kensington;\textsuperscript{19} and in May 1717, a petitioner asked for a rebate on a salt tax, since the ship carrying the salt had sunk.\textsuperscript{20} Adding to that, in February 1721 the House presented the greatest testament to its inobservance of the 1706 rule. On that occasion, the South Sea Company petitioned the House for a bailout of over 7 million pounds after having caused the greatest financial collapse in Britain’s history thus far. For the first time in Commons records, MPs tried to block the petition from being tabled explicitly on grounds of the rule of 1706. Nevertheless, the House voted 255-166 to flout the rule and forward the petition to a Committee.\textsuperscript{21}

Throughout the 1720s, observance of the rule of 1706 remained unreliable. In February 1724, traders involved with the Bahamas claimed to have been “bubbled out of their money and could not recover it without help of Parliament, and therefore prayed relief.” The Commons were about to send this petition to a committee, but were stopped short by Sir Robert Walpole, who “hop[ed] gentle- men would not begin to unravel the misfortunes of the year [17]20 for then there would be no end that all other unhap- py projects would then be revived and nothing but more

\textsuperscript{16} CJ, xv, 504-5 (20 January 1708 [1707 O.S.]).
\textsuperscript{18} CJ, xvii, 417 (11 June 1713).
\textsuperscript{19} CJ, xviii, 298 (3 September 1715).
\textsuperscript{20} CJ, xviii, 562 (21 May 1717).
\textsuperscript{21} CJ, xix, 422 (13 February 1721 [1720 O.S.]).
petitions preferred daily.”22 Had the rule of 1706 been in full swing, these discussions would have never happened in the first place. The petition would have simply been dismissed for not carrying a recommendation from the Crown.

Similarly, in March 1726 a certain Daniel Campbell petitioned Parliament to compensate him for damages he had “suffered by the mob at Glasgow, when they rose in opposition to the malt duty upon a supposition that he had been one occasion of it.” The bill “was opposed by Hungerford, saying [the petitioner] ought to have applied to the Crown and not to Parliament,” whereas Sir W. Young argued that only a parliamentary committee could properly judge the petition’s merits. Ultimately, the petition did go to a committee, showing once more that the rule of 1706 mattered little to the Commons.23

3. The Growth in Recommended Petitions

Nonetheless, the rule’s inobservance did not mean its aims could not be achieved by other means. From 1715 onward, there was a significant growth in the amount of petitions recommended or consented to by the monarch, a good portion of which was financial in nature:

This post-1714 surge was, at first, prompted by the Jacobite Rising of 1715. The rebels had their lands forfeited, and as a consequence their families were often left destitute. This led many of these rebels to petition Parliament for a small allowance, which would allow them to survive after the irrecoverable loss of their estates. And as a rule, these petitions were presented on recommendation of the Crown. This meant that for the first time in practice, a whole class of petitions received the monarch’s recommendation before being presented to the House. The reason for the King’s consent in these petitions probably had less to do with the Ministry’s financial concerns, and more to do with the sensitive political nature of dealing with the rebels. Nevertheless, this created an important precedent of sending petitions to the King at a larger scale.

Why ask the King to recommend petitions, though? Because the costs of getting his approval, it seemed, made these petitions much easier to pass in the Commons. For

24 See, for example, CJ, xviii, 730 (13 February 1718 [1717 O.S.]).
example — in February 1724, a petition for a £5,000 relief concerning a forfeited estate was presented to the Commons. What happened next illustrated the power of a Crown recommendation:

Argument for [the petition] was mercy and the King the fountain of mercy, and since he was willing the House should not refuse, and if mercy was taken away there could be no repentance and then people would become desperate. The question carried to refer it to the Supply by 217 against 75.25

Finally, the Ministry also played an active role in taking control over financial petitions. Thanks to Sir Robert Walpole’s political clout, the Ministry sometimes got to say, out of its own volition, that certain petitions required the King’s consent before being appreciated by the Commons. This was the case with the Colony of Georgia trustees’ yearly petitions for funding. In 1738, one of the trustees wondered whether he should petition to the House of Lords, “as we are used to do,” or “obtain if we can that his Majesty will recommend it in a message to the House [of Commons].”26 And by 1740, even though he wished the trustees could “draw [themselves] out of the Ministers’ hands, and put [themselves] into the Parliament’s,” he realized there was no way to petition the Commons without having Sir Robert Walpole on board.27

All these processes — the King’s increasing custom to recommend petitions, the authority of royal recommendations in Parliament, and Robert Walpole’s growing power — played a role in bringing about what the rule of 1706 never did: a de facto ministerial monopoly over the budget.

4. Conclusion

The *Liverpool Tractate* on the Procedure of the House of Commons, written around 1763, had the following to say about the rule of 1706:

> All Petitions which may affect Publick Money though in ever so small or remote a degree must come recommend-ed from the Throne or at least have His Majesty's Consent signified to them; for the 11th December 1706 It is re-solved That this House will receive no Petitions [the rule of 1706 continues…]^{28}

Following the Tractate’s tradition, authors from John Hatsell to Gary W. Cox have espoused the view that the rule of 1706 blocked financial petitions from being presented without the consent of the monarch. In this article, however, I have shown that this was not the case. From 1706 to 1740, the rule was invoked only once vis-à-vis a petition that affected the “Publick Money” — and even then, the Commons chose to ignore it. Ministerial monopoly over financial petitions, and hence over personal financial legislation, was not a result of the rule of 1706. Rather, it developed organically due to many other reasons.

> It was only retrospectively — once the ministerial monopoly had already been established — that people like John Hatsell or the *Liverpool Tractate*’s author began paying attention to the rule of 1706. After all, the rule seemed to provide a simple origin story to parliamentary financial practices and did not require them to tackle the hodgepodge of events that actually gave birth to these practices. This article has attempted, rather tentatively, to face the latter. In doing so, I hope it helps to drive us away from oversimplifying narratives of parliamentary institutions and brings us to appreciate the complexity of parliamentary history.

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Appendix C. Methodology for Table 1

To build the Petitions column, I manually counted occurrences of petitions whose descriptions contained the word “relief” in the indices to the CJ. I did not count petitions for relief that evidently had nothing to do with personal financial legislation.

To build the Bills Presented column, I queried “The Commons’ Journals database on CD-ROM” (see Appendix E) for all bills (type = PRES) that were personal (hoppit_subj contains 00) and that contained the words “relief” or “relieve” in their names.

To build the Bills Passed column, I queried “The Commons’ Journals database on CD-ROM” for all passed bills (type = CUP) that were personal (hoppit_subj contains 00) and that contained the words “relief” or “relieve” in their names.

To build the Committees column, I manually queried “The Commons’ Journals database on CD-ROM” for petition committees (type = CT-P) whose description contained the word “relief.”

Appendix D. Methodology for Figure 1

To get the count of bills recommended by or consented to by the monarch, I manually searched for occurrences of the string “confent” (OCR reads the long s as a f) and “recom- mend” in the indices to the CJ. If a match was associated with any petition, including those that had nothing to do with finance, I counted one occurrence. I did not include petitions for something to be recommended to the King, since these obviously do not apply to the phenomenon being studied.

Appendix E. The Commons Journals’ Database
The House of Commons, 1690-1715, published in 2002, comes with a database of parliamentary activity during that period. It includes bills presented, bills passed, committee activity, tellerships, and other activities in the Commons.29

The database comes inside a CD-ROM equipped with Blackwell IdeaList, a proprietary software that allows the user to query the database. The database itself came encoded in a proprietary format catered to Blackwell IdeaList. Unfortunately, IdeaList is a very limited software for performing basic data operations like aggregations. So to perform this article’s analyses, it became necessary to “free” the data into a CSV that could be used by software like R. To do so, I reverse-engineered the IdeaList format and wrote a Python script to export its data.
