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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

KENNEDY BENNETT, a senior at Yale University, studied history with a focus on social change and social movements. During a junior-year seminar, she researched the role of Black women as labor organizers in the 1930s-40s Charleston, South Carolina. In her senior essay, she explored how environmental, social, and economic factors have affected the sweetgrass basket tradition. Kennedy is currently the guest curator of an upcoming exhibit, titled "Sewn Through Time: Sweetgrass Basketmakers Reimagine a Tradition," at the McKissick Museum in Columbia, South Carolina. In the fall, she will head to Bain & Company as an Associate Consultant.

IDAN CHAZAN, is a senior at Georgetown University, studying History, Jewish Civilization, and Arabic. His main academic interests lie in the Middle East and migration, generally, and in the different waves of Jewish immigration to Israel, more specifically. Idan finds that the story of Israel cannot be properly told without an adequate understanding of the history of each of its immigrant groups – after all, the country was built by immigrants. Next year, Idan plans to complete a Master's of Arts in History at Georgetown and is interested in pursuing a PhD thereafter.

JAKE COLOSA, is a senior studying history at New York University. He is interested in nineteenth-century Atlantic history and the development and spread of capitalism around the world. Next year, he will continue his studies at NYU in pursuit of a master's degree in teaching social studies. He hopes to become a New York City public school teacher after receiving his degree..

HUBERT YEO, recently graduated from the University of Edinburgh with an English Literature and History degree. His interests lie in how literary texts of various forms and genres may be interpreted and utilised as historical sources, with critical theory playing a key role as the unifying thread. To this end, his dissertation focused on the narratives written and published by big-game hunters who operated in colonial Central and East Africa and how these might be used to explore the performance of masculinity and femininity, with the safari conceived through Homi K. Bhabha's 'third space'; additionally, the lexical continuity between hunting and photography is also interrogated. Hubert is now returning to Singapore, where he is from, to pursue a postgraduate diploma in Education and fully intends to continue reading and writing about the intersection between English Literature and History while busy being a high school teacher. His current project is looking at how cookbooks might serve as a key source of sociocultural information.

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

After a year of change and adaptation, we are privileged to present the *Columbia Journal of History*'s 2022 Spring Issue.

In a world increasingly dependent on the energy, dynamism, and hope of its future, many question why those future generations must continue to study, research, and write history. We study history because in the heart of dusty tomes and past reflections are *stories.* Stories of how we lived, what we suffered, why we loved and persevered define us and survive us as heritage and legacy. Telling these stories for the souls who were never heard, whose arguments and struggles they thought would never be honored, is ultimate justice. It is said the field of history is never a static entity. True, but we say, by telling these stories the field of history is *alive.*

From an impressive array of submissions, we selected five. From the fight of blind and disabled Romans for work and social recognition, to Jewish refugees asserting their agency and identity in starry Shanghai, to reconsidering the rationales of the Angolan War, to peasants' relationship with ecology and landscape in the largest Western European popular uprising before the French Revolution, to the creation of a romanticized cultural fantasy in Disneyland. We hope these pieces shed light on our diverse and complex negotiations with our past, and bring their stories to life.

The Editorial Board is immensely indebted to the excellence, intelligence, and hard work of each and every one of our editors. They have spent countless hours on each diction and syntax, refining citations and sourcing, and crafting narrative arguments. With the help of our spectacular new online team, these stories may be integrated to the interconnectivity and interactiveness of the web. All of this would have been impossible without the genius and dedication of our authors: Christopher, Kelly, Jack, Wendi, and Patrick. They put dazzling brilliance in prose, research, and analysis to paper, animating with passion the life and legacy of their stories.

Please enjoy.

Very Respectfully,

Kuang and Bilal
Editors in Chief

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Magnifying Marginalized Voices: Black Women Organizing in Charleston's Textile and Tobacco Industries

Kennedy Bennett

Abstract

Labor organizing during the 1930s and 1940s blended the interests of Black and white women and men on the factory floors in the Jim Crow South. Formal and informal organizing methods united workers in their efforts to improve their working conditions. Historians Peter Lau and Dana Waugh discuss, respectively, the 1945 strike at the American Tobacco Factory's plant in Charleston, South Carolina. Their texts highlight the interracial union organizing that took place, but they fail to address how race and gender uniquely defined Black women's experiences at the workplace. I use archived newspaper articles and interviews to explore how Black women endured both racial and gender discrimination in and outside of the workplace, and how they differentiated from their peers in how they organized. I extend the conversation around the American Tobacco Factory 1945 strike to related events at the Charleston Bagging Manufacturing Company. I find that Black women in Charleston sidestepped Jim Crow to ascend to leadership positions, strengthened communication channels through work songs and social networks, and encountered racist portrayal of themselves in mainstream news outlets to achieve better wages and shorter hours.

Plastered on the front page of the *Charleston News and Courier* in August 1933 was breaking news of a strike organized by Black women at the Charleston Bagging Manufacturing Company.[1] The article's subheading summarized that "40 policemen [were] called to quiet frenzied Negro workers" and that there were "jungle chants, dances" at the protest. The *News and Courier* refused to give any credit to the strikers, who had organized without an official union. Better wages were on the docket, and an effective strike depended on the Black women at the factory.

Textile and tobacco factories regularly employed Black women, who existed at the unique intersection of racial and gendered workplace discrimination. Interracial labor organizing enmeshed the interests of Black women with those of white men, white women, and Black men during the 1930s and 1940s in South Carolina. However, viewing these workers as a unified bloc glosses over the distinct motives each group had for organizing. Peter Lau in *Democracy Rising: South Carolina and the Fight for Black Equality since 1865* and Dwana Waugh in "Charleston's Cigar Factory Strike, 1945-1946" compile oral interviews, newspaper clippings, and scholarly works to chronicle the five-month strike in 1945 at the American Tobacco Company's Charleston, South Carolina plant.[2] Both of their arguments center around the Black and white workers' solidarity during the strike and whether interracial coalitions marked a shift in union race relations. Both authors acknowledge a separation by race and by gender on the factory floor and incorporate perspectives of Black women. Still, in the stories that Lau and Waugh tell, Black women's experiences exist on the periphery and not at the center. They use Black women's perspectives only to add detail to the strike's unfolding, but do not specify how Black women's experiences at the factory existed independently of the overarching interracial organizing.

Individual analysis of the different groups of workers allows for a clearer understanding of the distinct motives each demographic had and the extent to which each was willing to challenge Jim Crow segregation. In this paper, I put the Charleston Bagging Manufacturing Company strike in dialogue with a strike at the American Tobacco plant in Charleston twelve years later. These case studies reveal how race and gender shaped Black women's experiences at the workplace, and by extension, how their organizing methods differed from their coworkers.

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[1] Special thanks to Professor Celia Naylor for generously agreeing to give comments on this paper.

[2] Peter F. Lau, *Democracy Rising: South Carolina and the Fight for Black Equality since 1865* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2006); Dwana Waugh, "Charleston's Cigar Factory Strike, 1945-1946," Lowcountry Digital History Initiative, May 2014.

Southern Textile and Tobacco Industries

During the early 20th century, the tobacco and textile industries ballooned in the South. Forty percent of the nation's tobacco industry in 1939 was based in North Carolina.[3] In 1911, to prevent the company's growing monopolistic power, the Supreme Court found American Tobacco Company in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act and split its assets into four firms to promote market competition: American Tobacco Company; R. J. Reynolds; Liggett & Myers; and Lorilland.

 The Department of Labor and Bureau of Labor Statistics produced a report on labor in the South that stated "between 1899 and 1939 the Southeast's share of the spindles [textiles] in the industry increased from 22 percent to 73 percent of the Nation's total."[4] In 1939, over 60 percent of textiles from the South were manufactured in the Carolinas.[5]

The Roosevelt administration's pro-union stance and New Deal legislation solidified grounds for greater labor organizing.[6] To boost the Great Depression economy, Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, which permitted the regulation of fair-trade codes—essentially fixing wages and prices—and guaranteed collective bargaining rights. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935, or Wagner Act, established the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and forbid employers from instigating unfair labor practices (e.g., refusing to work with a NLRB-certified union or discriminating against works in a union).

Armed with the National Recovery Administration's labor codes, workers sought unionization and strength in numbers. Black women rose to leadership positions in this new landscape and advocated on their peers' behalf at the Charleston Bagging Mill and American Tobacco Company plant. Local news articles and interviews documented the narratives of workers, union leaders, factory management, and police to recount the strikes.

1933 Charleston Bagging Mill Strike

By the mid-1930s, the Charleston Bagging Manufacturing Company had been in operation for over a century.[7] Contrary to the Depression felt among businesses across the country, the

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[3] U.S. Department of Labor and Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor in the South: Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics No. 898* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 10.

[4] Ibid, 8.

[5] Ibid, 8.

[6] Read more in Paul D. Moreno, "From Progressivism to the New Deal, 1920 –1935," in *Black Americans and Organized Labor: A New History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

[7] Augustus Ladson, *Charleston Bagging Mill, 1936*, WPA Federal Writers' Project on African American Life in South Carolina, USC South Caroliniana Library.

company's mill announced on June 21, 1932 that it would double its workforce from 400 to 800.[8] Raw jute would be used at the Charleston factory to produce jute bags, which would be distributed by railroad and ship across the South.[9] By 1933, the 800-person bagging mill had a weekly payroll of roughly $6,500.[10] Despite their business success, management did not allocate funding for better workroom conditions.
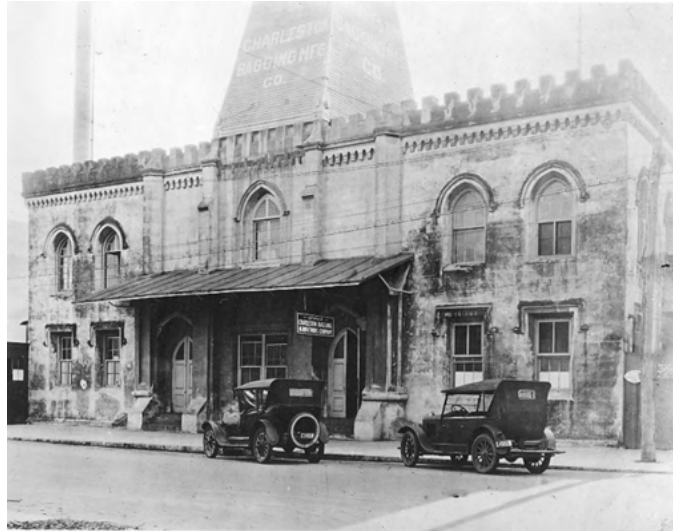
Figure 2.1. Charleston Bagging Manufacturing Company, courtesy of the Historic Charleston Foundation.

Working Conditions of Black Mill Employees

The mill only hired Black women in the 1910s as replacement labor for white women, after the latter led strikes for better pay and shorter hours.[11] Over 600 Black girls and women toiled in grueling conditions for 10 to 12 hours a day.[12] Gendered labor prevailed: women "[did] the weaving, making of bobbins, doffs, and the weighing of bales" while men attained positions as mechanics, mechanic helps, and machine operators.[13] Gendered division of labor correlated with a wage gap: women earned an average wage of $6 a week (about $120 today) while men

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[8] "Bagging Mill to Expand Here, 400 Men to Get Jobs," *The News and Courier*, June 22, 1932. Most of the newly hired employees were white men. The announcement added that the West Point Mill property would store 100,000 bales of jute imported from India over the course of two years and a $50,000 investment to renovate the property.
[9] For clarification: there was both the Charleston Bagging Manufacturing Company mill where jute bagging was made *and* the West Point Mill where raw jute material was stored.
[10] "Bagging Mill Shut As Women Strike For Wage of $12," *The News and Courier*, August 27, 1933.
[11] Ibid.
[12] "Negro Women Slave For $4 Weekly in Charleston," *Southern Worker*, September 13, 1930, http://hdl.handle.net/2333.1/kh1897kx. An advertisement of Charleston's market to merchants from *The News and Courier* on January 1, 1910 listed the Charleston Bagging Manufacturing Company as the only bagging factory in the city. I assume, then, that the Charleston bagging mill referenced in this *Southern Worker* news article is the Charleston Bagging Manufacturing Company.
[13] Ladson, *Charleston Bagging Mill.* Some men operated machines—such as calendars, which tightened bales for shipment, and toolers, which prepared raw materials—or worked in the Picker-room or shipping shed.

earned an average of $8 (around $160 today).[14] Weekly pay was as low as $4 for Black women, according to a *Southern Worker* article.[15] Some Black women worked at the mill up to 10 years, yet the highest noted pay was $7. Management adopted a punitive attitude to monitor workers: if a Black woman appeared five minutes late to work, the boss deducted 25¢ from weekly wages; if a fight broke out during lunch, the boss took $2 from her weekly paycheck of $4.[16]

In 1936, Augustus Ladson interviewed two Black employees, Frank McKinsey and D. Mills, through the Federal Writers' Project.[17] The interviewees described how three workrooms divided the textile mill: the tooler room, a "very dusty and unhealthy" space because loose material fibers floated in the air; the spinning room, which had slightly improved conditions; and the weaving room, the least exposed room to dust and particles.[18] At the time of the interview, three Black men were employed for over 50 years and many employees were company stockholders.

Outside of the workplace Black textile mill workers sought friendship and solidarity. In 1938, Black longshoremen, members of a local farmers union, and employees of the mill celebrated Labor Day with a parade of 800 participants.[19] Riding on decorated trucks and marching on the street, this celebration "was the only formal [holiday] observance" in Charleston.[20] The Labor Day parade suggests that Black workers built community both in and outside of the factory. This social network of Black workers of the Charleston bagging mill and other companies would prove useful in organizing on their own terms, without an official union.

Leading into the Strike

In 1930, an unidentified woman encouraged a union to come to Charleston and advocate for better working conditions and pay, "for there is nothing we have that we can lose."[21] Speaking to their miserable conditions, she added, "The pay we get, after the rent is taken out of it, we have enough money left for some little rice to buy, and then there is not enough. We keep on hoping that some day the bosses will have pity on us and give us a little more money, but it seems like he is not interested in us, and don't care if we starve, so I reckon we better join up in the Union and fight for our right to live."[22] Despite their calls for external support, a union did not arrive.

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[14] Ibid.

[15] "Negro Women Slave For $4 Weekly in Charleston."

[16] Ibid.

[17] The Federal Writers' Project was a federal project, enveloped in the New Deal, to provide work to unemployed writers during the Great Depression. Writers collected comprehensive information on American life through interviews and articles.

[18] Ladson, *Charleston Bagging Mill, 1936.*

[19] "Labor Day Marks Exit of Summer," *The News and Courier*, September 6, 1938.

[20] Ibid.

[21] "Negro Women Slave For $4 Weekly in Charleston."

[22] Ibid.

If the women working at the textile mill sought improved conditions, they had to depend on self-advocacy. But Black women were in a precarious situation. Few work options existed for them, mostly low-skilled and low-paid cleaning or hand labor, and those were "the hottest, hardest, dirtiest jobs" available.[23] Advocating for better working conditions and making their discontent known among supervisors jeopardized their already insecure jobs––especially without a union to protect their interests. To subdue workers' demands and labor organizing, some managers fired vocal workers.[24] Appearing content with their work conditions could protect workers from a layoff; regardless of their true feelings and their abysmal reality, workers needed an income to support themselves and families. Black women were presented with a harsh ultimatum: press for improved wages and risk their job, or safeguard their meager, yet existent, wages.

Located nearby Charleston Bagging Manufacturing, the American Tobacco Company plant developed into a formidable force. In August 1933, a temporary cigar factory code established a 30¢ minimum hourly wage for a 40-hour work week, totaling to a $12 weekly minimum (worth about $255 today).[25] The announcement resulted from an employment agreement produced under President Roosevelt's NRA.[26] Before this code, the Charleston tobacco plant had no minimum wage policy among general workers and compensation was based on a piece rate system.[27] Workers did, however, adopt a 40-hour work week the month prior.[28] News of the $12 weekly wage reached Black women working at the Charleston Bagging Manufacturing Company and encouraged them to strike for higher wages.

At 7:00 am on Saturday, August 26, 1933, Black women from the bagging mill refused to work and chanted "We want twelve dollars" upon learning of the American Tobacco Company's $12 minimum wage announcement.[29] The *News and Courier* claimed that the group "tried to persuade others, threatening to strike those who would not join them with bobbins and chopping knives" until the 150 women joined from the weaving room.[30] Using charged language, the news reported that "the agitators went into the spinning room, where a like

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[23] Michael K. Honey, *Black Workers Remember; An Oral History of Segregation, Unionism, and the Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 89.

[24] Ibid, 72 and 90.

[25] "$12 a Week Code for Cigarmakers." This cigar industry code predated the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which established a national minimum wage for multiple industries. Still, it made a resounding difference for workers' conditions in cigar factories.

[26] Seasonal employment or high production demand were the only exceptions to the 40-hour week. Still, 45 hours was the maximum for these employees. Executive or administrative employees earning $25 or more a week would not adhere to these regulations; neither would employees of emergency services, such as repairmen, engineers, or electricians.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid. Manufacturers like American Tobacco were likely able to meet the increased labor costs because their industry experienced economic activity unlike the greater Great Depression conditions.

[29] "Bagging Mill Shut As Women Strike For Wage of $12"

[30] Ibid.

number of workers already had begun their day's work [and] threatened violence to those who would not cease work."[31] Workers united in song and dance, from shouting "I ain't gonna work no more" along with more religious spirituals. Spirituals, a genre of Christian folk songs, are steeped in Black culture and tradition. These songs have mobilized, united, and uplifted Black communities through periods of social change.

General Manager Samuel R. Stauffer demanded that the power to the machinery be shut off and called the police.[32] Policemen spewed racist sentiments in their description of the scene as "pandemonium," "a jungle scene as shown in the motion pictures," and "primitive actions of the women," all of which trivialized the women's intentions and dismissed them as animalistic.[33] Plagued by dehumanizing rhetoric, these accounts reveal that white and male authorities perceived Black women as less than. These perceptions, shaped by broader social concepts of gender and race, influenced how police officers disrespectfully and violently interacted with the workers. Law enforcement's treatment of Black workers mirrored white factory management's conduct. All available policemen and detectives arrived at the mill, totaling forty. Acting police chief Joseph F. Wise ordered strikers to leave the premises and his officers "to clear the building but to strike no one with their sticks and to be as easy as possible."[34] Strikers retorted that they would not leave until paid. Police presence continued to grow as Henry W. Lockwood, police commission chairman, and Commissioners S. Marshall Sanders and Colesworth P. Means arrived. Strikers' activity dwindled by noon that day.

The following day Stauffer left for Washington, D.C. to meet other bagging manufacturers and draft standards for the industry.[35] Stauffer told the *Courier* that "his company was entirely in sympathy with the [National Recovery Administration] movement and always has tried to pay the highest wages possible to keep the business going. To meet the demands of the strikers would mean to triple its payroll, which would be impossible."[36]

There was no indication that the strike would escalate to a dangerous environment. Police lacked concrete evidence that proved chemical weapons would be an appropriate countermeasure, but law enforcement on the scene were equipped with "an ample supply of tear bombs."[37] The police imposed criminality and aggressiveness on the strikers. Police assumed that Black women would initiate or perpetuate violence, leading to a hostile situation in which they would likely argue that tear gas was warranted for crowd control. The police's assumptions of Black criminality and violence superseded rational logic. Detective William

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] "2 Arrests At Bagging Mill," *The Charleston Evening Post*, August 28, 1933.

Kangeter and motorcycle policeman C. C. Murray arrested two women on Monday, August 28: Annie Village and Daisy Caateen.[38] The *Charleston Evening Post* shockingly included both women's personal addresses in the article. Acting Chief Wise attested that one of the women "had an ugly looking hinge with a sharp hedge that could have been used for a weapon in an emergency" and "the other woman had refused to move when told to do so by the police."[39] Both women were released after investigation.

Newspaper articles detailing the police interactions with picketers featured only interviews with those associated with the police or the mill's management. Perspectives of the Black women striking or arrested were excluded from *The News and Courier* and *The Charleston Evening Post*'s reporting. Both publications portrayed the officers as arbiters of truth and neglected to corroborate their stories. The quick release of Village and Caateen may indicate a lapse in the officers' judgment for originally arresting them. Both women could have been scapegoats to remind picketters that they could easily be arrested, and to bolster the power dynamic between police and strikers.

On Tuesday, September 5, 1933––nine days after the strike began––the bagging mill adopted a set of bagging industry trade codes and reopened.[40] Stauffer requested a police detail for the reopening to ensure workers complied with the mill's expectations.[41] Adjustments included shorter working hours and, in the near future, a 25 percent increase in the workforce. The manager disclosed that only the 600 employees who had "been on its rolls for sometime" would be permitted to work again, assuming that newer employees stirred "the trouble."[42]

The Aftermath

A string of damages hit the bagging mill and storage facility over the next four years. In 1933, lightning struck the Charleston bagging mill's hemp storage on the West Point Mill property, which sparked a fire and caused $150,000 in losses.[43] In 1935, firemen spent two hours extinguishing a fire at the Charleston Bagging Manufacturing Company plant near the end of summer.[44] In 1936, a funnel cloud, or tornado that had not touched the ground, ripped through parts of the city.[45] Two 13,000-volt wires short-circuited when the roof of the manufacturing

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] "Bagging Plant Will Reopen," *The Charleston Evening Post*, September 4, 1933. The code was submitted to General Hugh S. Johnson of the NRA and its adoption was pending his approval.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] "Chief Wohlers Expects to Have Hemp Fire Out Early Next Week," *The Charleston Evening Post*, September 2, 1933.
[44] "Ugly Fire at Bagging Mill," *The Charleston Evening Post*, August 7, 1935.
[45] "Small Tornado Rips Over City," *The News and Courier*, March 21, 1936.

building ripped off. The *News and Courier* described the scene as "sparks and flames jumped high into the air" and characterized Black employees leaving the building "like ants coming out of a hill which hot water has been poured."[46] Again, riddled with dehumanizing language, depictions of Black workers trivialized the tense situation they were experiencing. In July 1937, firefighters managed a fire at the factory.[47]

Misfortune did not stop at fires and a tornado. After the national minimum wage enactment, the bagging mill closed due to insufficient capacity to meet increased labor costs.[48] On October 20, 1938, the company laid off over 400 employees from its Charleston location.[49] Low-skilled labor earned 15¢ an hour and skilled labor earned 25¢ an hour.[50] Under the law, minimum wage would be 25¢ for all employees.[51] Not only would low-skilled labor bump to 25¢, but, to be equitable, skilled labor would also increase. An unidentified businessman added that the minimum wage law put the South in a difficult position because "longer hours and better labor conditions [had] given the South an advantage which [would] be turned into a disadvantage because Southern labor [was] not as efficient as Northern."[52] The center of his argument was that a higher hourly wage could disincentivize workers from working as long and hard; employees could work shorter hours yet earn the same weekly pay as they did before the minimum wage law. Without as steep of a North-South wage differential, there would be smaller labor-cost savings and businesses had less incentive to move South. Labor exploitation would wane––a welcome benefit to workers' lives but a painful deficit to industrialists' wallets.

Remarks concerning the minimum wage law's impact give insight into the businessmen's rationalization of their decision-making. Management's final decision to shut down underscores that low-wage labor was a crucial factor in their profitability assessment. Rather than crafting alternative methods to increase revenue or lower other costs, the headquarters stopped all operations. The bagging mill's business model relied heavily on the exploitation of poor and Black workers who had few employment options and were willing to accept low wages. Low-wage labor was more than just low pay; it entailed few, if any, benefits and weak protection of workers' rights. Bagging mill employees did not have a union or other institution to defend workers against the company's unilateral decision to prioritize profit margins over employee wellbeing.

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[46] Ibid.
[47] "Nominal Damage in Bagging Fire," *The News and Courier*, July 9, 1937.
[48] "Two Factories Close Down," *The Charleston Evening Post*, October 20, 1938.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] "Other Factories Will Keep Going," *The News and Courier*, October 21, 1938.

"The wage-hour act and government competition, together with a short cotton crop" factored into the Brooklyn headquarters closing Charleston's mill.[53] In 1938, the federal government provided a subsidy of 26¢ per six yards of cotton.[54] As a result, cotton bagging sold for 42¢ per six yards while jute bagging sold for 72¢.[55] Mill Manager Stauffer argued that "if the government would remove the subsidy on cotton bagging and let it compete on its own merits I am sure cotton producers would prefer jute bagging."[56] Still, the federal subsidy to a competitive material stifled business for the local plant.

There was no official union to negotiate with the employer or establish a contract. Still, Black women convinced peers to join in a strike and sustained momentum through songs.[57] They cited a federal labor code as the premise of their organizing, which established a minimum wage for the tobacco industry. Hostility on all fronts could not diminish the workers' energy and Black women at the Charleston Bagging Manufacturing achieved the aims of their strike: a pay increase and a larger workforce to ease the burden on existing laborers.

1945 American Tobacco Strike

Similar trends emerged during the 1945 American Tobacco strike. Bustling tobacco industry activity overcame the Great Depression economic slump. It originally "operated on a moderate scale, producing hand-made cigars" until several American Tobacco Factory plants consolidated and increased production in Charleston to an average of 425,000 cigars daily.[58] Midyear in 1932, machinery was installed and the building was renovated, welcoming 1,350 employees and an annual payroll of nearly $1 million (worth $19 million today). Over the course of 1932 alone, employment expanded from 1,100 to 1,900.[59] By the summer of 1933, there were 2,500 employees and 1 million cigars and 42,000 cigar boxes produced daily, making it the largest cigar factory worldwide.[60] The tobacco plant mainly produced "Certified Cremos," which were known for their low price of 5¢––even Vice President Thomas Marshall commented that "what America needs is a good five-cent cigar."[61]

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[53] "Two Factories Close Down."

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid. Charleston's mill imported an average 12,000 tons of jute annually and, after processing the material, would ship it by railroad and steamship; their closing would impact more than their own mill workers. Other industrial companies were unaffected by the law, including the American Tobacco Company plant, which employed approximately 2,250 employees in 1938.

[57] The absence of Black women interviewed in the newspapers makes it challenging to fully assume if the strike was truly unplanned, or if workers coordinated beforehand on their own time.

[58] Manning J Rubin, "Cigar Factory Largest Manufacturing Plant in City of Charleston," *The Charleston Evening Post*, July 23, 1932. It had the capacity to produce 1,250,000 cigars daily.

[59] "City Closes Difficult Year; Hard Hit by Depression," *The News and Courier*, December 31, 1932.

[60] "$12 a Week Code for Cigarmakers," *The News and Courier*, August 15, 1933.

[61] "Cigar Factory Largest Manufacturing Plant in City of Charleston."

By 1935, the Charleston tobacco plant was the largest of the four owned by the American Tobacco Company, accruing a $26,000 average weekly payroll and $1.5 million investment in the property and equipment.[62] At full capacity, a three-shift employee rotation over a 24-hour period would yield approximately 6,000 employees and production of over 3 million cigars daily.[63]

Black Workers and Segregated Employment

A 1935 *News and Courier* article reported that the tobacco factory employed 1,800 people: 1,400 were women and were 1,200 white.[64] There were 400 men and 600 Black employees.[65] Deducing from the gaps in the news article, there were 200 to 600 Black women at the plant. A conservative estimate would assume the following: if all 1,200 white workers were women, there would still be 200 non-white women to reach the total 1,400 female workforce. Another approach to this conservative estimate would be the following: if all 400 men were Black, then there would be 200 non-male Black workers to account for the total 600 non-white workers. Realistically, 1,200 white women and 400 Black men are exaggerated numbers; these figures contradict statements of white men working at the plant. A liberal estimate would assume that all 600 Black workers were women.

The plant was segregated by floor, not department, and "the work of cigar-making [began] on the first floor where negroes process[ed] the raw tobacco."[66] Box and cigar packing took place on the second floor, and the preparation department operated in the basement.[67] Only white women operated machines to make cigar labels on the third floor.[68] The fourth and fifth floor were dedicated to machine operators and only employed Black workers.[69] Typically two to four operators worked on each machine, and "male superintendents watch over the work of girls on the machines."[70] All foremen, mechanics, and oilers were white men when the union first organized.[71] At the union's height there were only a few Black mechanics and oilers.[72]

Three types of tobacco leaves were needed for cigar-making. In 1935, wrappers arrived from present-day Indonesia, binders were sourced from Connecticut and Wisconsin, and fillers came

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[62] "Cigar Plant Here Largest in World," *The News and Courier*, October 6, 1935.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Sources only referenced Black and white workers, so it is assumed that there were no workers of other races.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Lillie Marsh Doster, "U-0386," by Otha Jennifer Dixon, *Southern Oral History Program*, June 25, 2008.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] "Cigar Plant Here Largest in World."
[71] Doster, "U-0386," by Otha Jennifer Dixon.
[72] Ibid.

from Cuba and Puerto Rico.[73] Leaf tobacco was stored and dried in Charleston for several days under certain temperature and humidity conditions.[74] Once dried, the tobacco leaves were sprayed to retain moisture, left to dry on racks, and entered the humid "sweat room" for hours.[75]

A spreader machine broke fillers into appropriate sizes.[76] Then, a conveyor belt brought the filler to the making floor. Simultaneously, in the wrapping room, tobacco leaves were stripped, also known as stemming (i.e. stems removed from tobacco leaves). In humid, unventilated, and dusty stemming rooms many women who worked in tobacco factories developed calloused hands, described feeling symptoms of respiratory diseases and malnutrition, and experienced pregnancy complications, stillbirths, tuberculosis, and fainting spells.[77] The stripped tobacco leaves wrapped around the filler on the making floor, where a machine stretched, cut, and assembled the leaves into cigars. Mechanics supervised the machines, ensuring that they correctly assembled the filler leaves, binders, and tip reinforcers. The nearly-completed cigars were transported to packing rooms to be formed into the correct shape and have holes punched on both ends. To finish the process, a machine affixed plastic caps, wrapped the cigars in cellophane, and secured them in boxes or five-packs.

The Charleston plant buckled down on its commitment to a sanitary and hygienic workplace. Each employee underwent a health examination before being hired and the company employed a doctor and on-site nurse for unexpected health concerns.[78] Renovations in 1932 included new restrooms and water fountains throughout the building. Accessibility to these services, however, fell along the color line. Company-sponsored meals "consisting of a meat course, three vegetables, bread and butter, tea, coffee, or milk, and dessert" were available for 23¢ in the "cafeteria for the convenience of its white employees… meals [were] not furnished to colored employees, but they [had] a dining room in which they [could] eat."[79]

The plant reinforced Jim Crow laws by excluding Black workers from the cafeteria and having segregated water fountains and factory floors. These policies pacified white workers, who wished for racial hierarchy to be preserved. Because white workers were enthralled by segregation policies, they failed to recognize that even their working conditions

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[73] "Cigar Plant Here Largest in World." By 1966, the wrapper leaves arrived from southern Pennsylvania and filler came from Connecticut and Virginia. "Cigar Factory Gives Charleston Boost," *The News and Courier*, August 7, 1966.

[74] Ibid.

[75] This moistening process made the leaves more elastic.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Leslie Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 227. Labor-intensive industrial jobs, like stemming, imitated the tasks forced upon Black ancestors during slavery (Dolores E. Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied*, 72).

[78] "Cigar Factory Largest Manufacturing Plant in City Of Charleston."

[79] Ibid.

were subpar. Holiday breaks were so rare that receiving one week off caused a furor among residents and the newspaper. Health benefits for a factory of 1,800 people were limited to one on-site nurse and a call-in doctor. Still, upholding racist practices seemingly convinced white workers to turn a blind eye to the poor working conditions and wages.

Unionization Along the Color Line

In 1942, diverging philosophies of the CIO (i.e. industry workers) and AFL (i.e. craft workers) created an impasse regarding which federation would represent the American Tobacco company in Charleston.[80] Departmental bargaining unions advocated by the AFL-local could maintain racial segregation, but a factory-wide union endorsed by the CIO-local would be integrated. Local 181, the AFL-cigar makers union, exploited the "white girls [fear of] replacement by negros" and already organized white workers within the production department.[81] Between the two organizing options, the segregated Local 181 would have a majority share of the production department but a small portion of the entire factory's workforce. If Black workers in the production department sought collective bargaining, they would need representation separate from white-only Local 181. AFL Organizer John R. Ograin of Chicago argued in favor of Local 181's stance and stated that one department should not be barred from union membership because another department was disinterested in organizing under a local.

Barney Henley, an organizer of the CIO-affiliated United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), aimed to mobilize the tobacco factory's production department on a larger scale. Although the CIO's tobacco packers union had no affiliated members it challenged Local 181's strategy of representing factions of the factory. Instead, the tobacco packers wanted factory-wide bargaining under one racially-integrated union.

Merle D. Vincent, Jr., a trial examiner of the National Labor Relations Board, met with labor and factory management representatives.[82] Using information from the meeting and testimony from a hearing, the national board had to decide "whether the production department [was] a proper bargaining unit, or whether Henley's demand for factory-wide bargaining [would] be upheld."[83] After reviewing the information, permitted unions were added to the ballot for workers to vote on a bargaining agent.[84] The CIO-affiliated Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers of America (formerly UCAPAWA) ultimately became the

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[80] "Basic Labor Rift Halts Unionizing," *The News and Courier*, July 16, 1942.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

plant's collective bargaining unit. The CIO's approach to race relations was inclusive, compared to the AFL's sympathy to segregation, and better aligned with the interests of Black workers.

The Strike's Outbreak

On Monday, October 22, 1945, Local 15 called a strike and approximately 1,100 Black and white employees walked out of the plant at noon.[85] Picketing briefly occurred the night before and police appeared to supervise.[86] Before the official strike, Black workers "sat down at their machines in the first strike" earlier that month in response to the termination of a union employee.[87] Local 15 President Reuel Stanfield revealed that coordinated strikes also took place at the American Tobacco Company plants in Trenton, New Jersey and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[88] Their organizing was directly in opposition to the North-South wage differential. Stanfield described the position of himself and other strikers: "We think it is about time that the workers in the South were paid decent wages. That is what we are striking for and we think that a lot of people in Charleston, workers and businessmen alike, will support us, especially now that our president, Harry S. Truman, has told them that companies can afford to give them wage increases. The boycott will give them a chance to take definite action against low wages for the South."[89] A union cemented workers' authority on the topic of wages and working conditions; it offered workers institutional backing and legitimized their claims.[90] Without the official bargaining agent, company representatives were prone to seeing workers as bickering rather than raising genuine concerns about compensation.

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[85] "Manager Says 2nd Cigar Plant Strike Violates Contract," *The News and Courier*, October 23, 1945.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] "Tobacco Union Opens Intensified Boycott Here," *The News and Courier*, November 2, 1945.
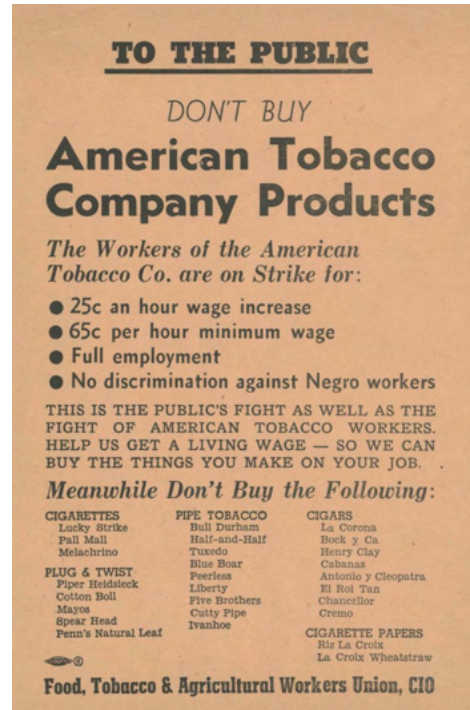[90] Michael K. Honey, *Black Workers Remember*, 72.

Figure 3.1. Flyer of the Boycott of American tobacco Company products, courtesy of the Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston.

Productivity at the factory was limited. Factory manager H. F. McGinnis explained that approximately 300 individuals worked on Tuesday, but Local 15 representative Larry Larsen countered that only 150 workers––including foremen and forewomen––were seen walking into the factory.[91] Larsen added that 12 non-union employees joined the strike and two became union members on Tuesday.

McGinnis claimed that the strike was in direct violation of the union contract signed on September 24.[92] The union had asked for a 15¢ hourly wage increase during the September contract negotiations, but employees demanded more.[93] Their strike demands included a 25¢ hourly wage increase, a 65¢ hourly minimum wage for all employees, six days of paid sick leave, a closed shop (i.e. union regulated hiring process), and a uniform contract for all tobacco plants.[94] McGinnis shared that he learned of the union's updated demands in a letter received on October 19.[95] The letter requested an amendment to the contract. McGinnis replied to Stanfield that "there is nothing in the contract as to re-negotiating any of its provisions except on the questions of wages."[96]

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[91] "Union May Pass Out Leaflets But Not Litter Street, City Rules," *The News and Courier*, October 24, 1945.
[92] "Manager Says 2nd Cigar Plant Strike Violates Contract"
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

American Tobacco Company was a giant industry leader. Union organizers recognized their uphill battle and planned accordingly. On Tuesday, October 23, 1945, a meeting in Philadelphia among union representatives from Charleston, Philadelphia, and Trenton took place to solidify uniform demands.[97] The meeting resulted in a nationwide boycott campaign of American Tobacco's products including Lucky Strike and Pall Mall cigarettes, El Roi Tan cigars, pipe tobaccos from Bull Durham, Half and Half, and Tuxedo, Piper Heidseck chewing tobacco, and Rizla cigarette papers.[98] Stanfield expected their boycott to reduce sales by 3 million Lucky Strike packages a day, assisted by nationwide CIO members' solidarity.[99]

Mayor E. Edward Wahman, Jr. was forced to permit Local 15 to distribute union literature.[100] The city was constitutionally outlawed from impeding a peaceful picketing or literature drop, but the Mayor asserted that protestors would be arrested if leaflets littered the streets.[101] No disturbances met the strike, except for a police officer breaking up a group of Black picketers waiting to swap shifts.[102] Remaining Black picketers "became frightened and left their posts [and] there was no picketing at the negro entrance from 3 until 6."[103]
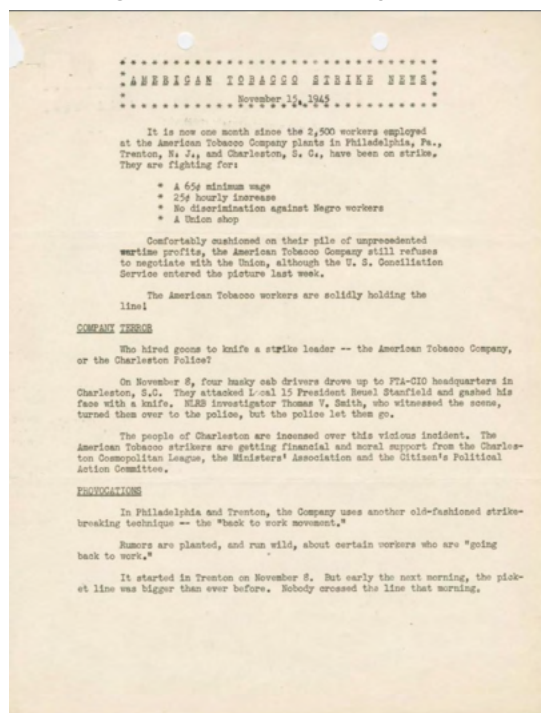

Figure 3.2. News update one month into the strike of a knife attack on Local 15 President Reuel Stanfield, courtesy of the Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston.

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[97] Ibid.
[98] "Tobacco Union Opens Intensified Boycott Here."
[99] Ibid.
[100] "Union May Pass Out Leaflets But Not Litter Street, City Rules."
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.

Black Women in Local 15's Leadership

Demands at both Charleston factories prioritized hourly-wage increases and healthier factory conditions. Because working-class Black women like Lillie Doster and Marjorie Amos-Frazier were at the forefront of union organizing, they intuitively represented the interests of workers of similar backgrounds. Representation from similar racial, gender, and class backgrounds helped in building inclusive strike demands. Lillie Marsh Doster moved to Charleston from rural Williamsburg County in 1943 in search of employment.[104] Industrial work in the city was the alternative to agrarian work or domestic or cleaning jobs in rural areas.[105] She worked at the "box shop" on the fifth floor and was one of three people operating a machine to create cigar boxes.[106] Marojorie Amos-Frazier joined American Tobacco after the strike in 1946 primarily as a cigar inspector, and her career spanned 24 years.[107] Local 15 of the FTA was "highly respected by the people" and Amos-Frazier immediately joined it.[108] Doster quickly became one of the core organizers. As a shop steward, she "would try to settle a grievance on the floor with the local foreman, and if they didn't get it settled, there was a committee made up of stewards from the department that would meet with the manager and try to settle it. And then if they didn't settle it, [she] used to write to arbitration or consideration services."[109] Women working as shop stewards shifted the power structure between them and white factory foremen, and union employment provided supplemental income.[110] In 1946, she served as the union secretary for a year and returned to the position in 1967 until the plant's closing in 1973.[111] One of the Union's first demands was air conditioning in the building.[112] Air conditioning was ultimately installed around 1964, according to a *Charleston News and Courier* article.[113] Amos-Frazier, too, served as a steward and wrote union contract negotiations with Doster and peers. The skills Amos-Fraizer developed as a steward later transferred to her tenure on city council where she "knew how to negotiate with the people at [the Medical University of South Carolina] about the image of the health department."[114]

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[104] Doster, "U-0386," by Otha Jennifer Dixon.
[105] Michael K. Honey, *Black Workers Remember*, 43.
[106] Doster, "U-0386," by Otha Jennifer Dixon.
[107] Marjorie Amos-Fraizer, "U-0385," by Otha Jennifer Dixon, *Southern Oral History Program*, 2008, https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/sohp/id/5767.
[108] Amos-Fraizer, "U-0385," by Otha Jennifer Dixon.
[109] Doster, "U-0386," by Otha Jennifer Dixon.
[110] Larry J. Griffin and Robert R. Korstad, "Class as Race and Gender: Making and Breaking a Labor Union in the Jim Crow South," *Social Science History* 19, no. 4 (1995): 425–54. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0145553200017454.
[111] Doster, "U-0386," by Otha Jennifer Dixon.
[112] Ibid.
[113] "Cigar Plant Here Largest In World."
[114] Amos-Fraizer, "U-0385," by Otha Jennifer Dixon.

As the strike endured, some workers were coerced into picketing. Doster shared that women who no longer wanted to picket faced violent threats: "the girls, so many were tired of being on the picket line and they used to load up... and let them come in through the back door, because some of the girls didn't want to come in... where we were picketing... because they had beat up some. I mean they put a beating on some of those girls one day. One good friend of mine, she was in the bed for about two weeks."[115] Harsh winter conditions did not stop Doster from picketing everyday from 6:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. as a picket captain, except for Easter.[116] Two dozen merchant seamen joined the picket lines on January 29, 1946, deepening the Charleston local of National Maritime Union's official support of the strike in October the previous year.[117]

Figure 3.3: Local 15 Tobacco workers meeting in their union hall (ca. 1950s), courtesy of the Georgia State University Southern Labor Archives.

Doster's co-steward, Lucille Simmons, regularly sang as the strike day ended. A member of the Jerusalem Baptist Church choir, Simmons adapted a Negro spiritual to include phrases like "We'll win our rights," "We're fighting for our rights," and "We'll overcome." At that moment, the strike became the birthplace of a civil rights anthem "We Shall Overcome."[118] Work songs enabled women to candidly voice their thoughts in an indirect manner and forge solidarity.[119]

Five months after the strike began, the union and company representatives reached a compromise on Saturday, March 30, 1946.[120] The number of strikers dwindled over the next few months, starting at 1,100 and ending at 450 by the time of negotiations. On April 1, 150 employees returned to the factory, which represented one-third of the employees who

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[115] Doster, "U-0386," by Otha Jennifer Dixon.
[116] Ibid.
[117] "Merchant Seaman Picket Tobacco Plant," *The News and Courier*, January 31, 1946.
[118] Doster, "U-0386," by Otha Jennifer Dixon.
[119] Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (1993): 75–112, https://doi.org/10.2307/2079698.
[120] "150 Additional Employees Return at Tobacco Plant," *The News and Courier*, April 2, 1946.

continued striking. The remaining two-thirds would likely return, although a portion probably sought jobs elsewhere. Local 15 circulated a flyer stating that workers received an 8¢ hourly wage increase, but this increase may have been more significant if strikers were more resolute in negotiations. According to Doster, no tensions continued between management and employees after the strike's end.[121]

Years after the strike, accusations stirred that Local 15 had communist ties. In light of the Red Scare, the CIO committed to removing any communist affiliations.[122] Their federation's decision devastated the FTA. These anti-communist efforts attempted to undermine the integrity of union locals and cast doubt on their objectives. The CIO expelled unions for alleged communist infiltration, and Doster confirmed that Local 15 President Reuel Stanfield and FTA President Donald "Don" Henderson identified as communists. She recalled that the CIO ousted the FTA from the federation, but local leaders "stayed organized in a group [in Charleston] because the members weren't all communists."[123] Advocating for "better working conditions because the wages [were] so low" was the engine behind Local 15 rather than political and economic ideologies.[124] Still, they were susceptible to raids after their expulsion. Amos-Frazier noted that some workers received calls and letters inquiring about potential communist affiliations. Hysteria around communism flooded the doors of FTA Local 22 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina as well.[125] Whether or not they officially or publicly declared their ideologies, union workers were vulnerable to allegations connecting them to the Communist Party; being a suspected communist *sympathizer*, without a clear definition of what it meant to display sympathy to Communist ideology, was sufficient reasoning for an informant to monitor workers' activities.[126]

Local 15 leaders overcame their union's expulsion and remained steadfast in their commitments to the Charleston plant until the factory closed. Employees' high-esteem of the union enabled the local to informally continue advocacy. These allegations did not amount to grave, long-term repercussions for Amos-Frazier. After a six-month leave of absence, she resigned to focus on city politics in 1971 and would go on to become the first woman elected to the Charleston County City Council in 1974.[127] For leaders like Amos-Frazier, the union provided a space to acquire community building skills and a positive reputation among Black and white residents. Reflecting on her political campaigning against a Republican professor at

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[121] Doster, "U-0386," by Otha Jennifer Dixon.
[122] For further reading on communism and labor organizing, see Robin Kelley's Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 267-269.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Amos-Fraizer, "U-0385," by Otha Jennifer Dixon.

The Citadel, she explained that "the Republicans, a lot of them, liked [her] because [she] had worked in the community. [She] was a member of the NAACP [and] fairly visible in the community."[128] These aspects were transferable and applicable to future career choices. She, as did other Black women, effectively organized among church members, social networks, and alliances on the factory floor. The church, workplace, and political organizations were spaces that addressed overlapping needs: kinship and community; social and economic empowerment; and a communication outlet.

Conclusion

Black women at the Charleston factories did not have distinct demands that diverged from those of Black men, white men, or white women. However, Black women in Charleston had unique lived experiences that shaped their organizing. *Why* they organized was the same as their peers, but *how* they organized differed. These women sidestepped Jim Crow to ascend to leadership positions, strengthened communication channels through work songs and social networks (e.g., support from longshoremen), and encountered racist portrayal of themselves in mainstream news outlets. Black women utilized informal and formal organizing methods, such as work songs and strikes, as they confronted both structural (e.g., lower wages for Black and female workers) and personal discrimination (e.g., racist remarks from factory management).

Labor organizing was rooted in class issues––increasing wages and benefits, improving workplace safety, and negotiating workers' interests with management. Racial and gender minorities often organized to advocate for issues that impacted parts of their identity, beyond class distinctions. Black women's opposition to the workplace environment was not only a rejection of the factory's working conditions and discriminatory structure, but it extended to a rejection of their broader social position. Jim Crow was an omnipresent set of laws and social norms that shaped daily life. Intentionally or not, Black women who initiated strikes and assumed union stewardship confronted Jim Crow.

Stepping into these leadership positions was likely a visceral reaction to their poor social and workplace conditions. As one of the Black women at the Charleston Bagging Mill stated in the *Southern Worker*, they had to "fight for [their] right to live."[129] Pay was below a livable wage and employee benefits were scarce; organizing was the only solution. Serving as a strike leader, steward, or union secretary was not for the namesake of being a leader, rather, as an opportunity to shape change in their community. Still, their leadership was in direct opposition to Jim Crow regulations that forced Black women to the lower rungs of the social ladder.

Because their experiences in and outside of the factory were so similar, Black women's factory leadership experience and skill sets transcended to other parts of their life. There was an

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[128] Ibid.
[129] "Negro Women Slave For $4 Weekly in Charleston."

ebb and flow of leadership talent between organizing on the factory floor and striking in the streets, striking in the streets and coordinating efforts with longshoremen and other trades, and coordinating efforts with leadership in the church. Organizing empowered them. When workers united in song and at strikes, it sparked hope and reimagination of what ideal conditions could look like. Singing acted as both a communication tool and method to uplift spirits. Many of these songs were rooted in religious spirituals, which have a long history in uniting Black Americans since American slavery. This fluid movement of human capital also applied to intrastate migration. Typically one individual or family unit decided to move––from a rural to urban area, or from one city to another, such as Lillie Doster––in search of better employment opportunities.[130] Each family operated of their own volition, but mass migration patterns emerged. Frequent migration prevented factory management from maintaining a stable workforce and likely disrupted reliable financial projections for the company's production capacity.

The extent of Black women in leadership was obscured by news reporting, which centered the perspectives of white male union leaders, factory management, and police. Depictions of Black women in *The News and Courier* and *The Charleston Evening Post* were limited to third person descriptions rather than reported first-hand accounts. Without interviews, Black women were unable to express themselves and their organizing interests in their own words. Instead, the authors had liberty to portray Black women in the manner they saw fit. Authors illustrated Black women on strike as *overreacting* and *animalistic*, words with racial overtones. If the unique social position of Black women is not distinguished, then their perspective is blended into the background as secondary details.

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[130] Doster, "U-0386," by Otha Jennifer Dixon; Leslie Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 236-240; Dolores E. Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 8-26, 36-63.

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HEBREW NAMES: ALIYAH AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

Idan Chazan

Abstract

This paper compares the incorporation of two groups of immigrants to Israel (olim), 1950's Mizrahi Jews and 1990's Russian Jews, on the basis of their changing names and naming trends. The socio-political elite of the 1950's mposed name Hebraization on Mizrahi olim – through legislation and media pressure – in order to assimilate them into their image of the "new Jew" and to counteract the threat that Mizrahim (and their Arab, overly religious, diasporic backwardness) posed to the emerging secular, modern Israeli culture. In contrast, Israeli veterans in the 1990's deemed the Russian olim as a less formidable social threat, permitting them a degree of cultural freedom, including the creation of a brand of Hebrew names that was different from those typical of Israeli society.

Introduction

Golda Meir, Natan Sharansky, and Shaul Mofaz are lauded for their contributions to the State of Israel. Meir was a signatory on Israel's Declaration of Independence and the state's first and only female prime minister;[1] Sharansky was a human rights activist, advocating for Jews in the Soviet Union, and later became a member of Israel's Knesset and cabinet;[2] and Mofaz was the Chief of Staff of Israel's Defense Forces before launching a political career in which he held several high ranking ministerial positions.[3] While these individuals were raised in different locations and eras – Meir in early twentieth century America, Sharansky in mid-century Soviet Ukraine, and Mofaz in mid-century Iran, they all immigrated to what is today Israel, and Hebraized their names upon arrival. The story behind why and how Golda Meyerson (née Mabovitch), Anatoly Borisovich Sharansky, and Shahram Mofazzakar Hebraized their names and "became" the personas listed above is the focus of this article.[4]

More specifically, this article will seek to contextualize the phenomenon of name Hebraization and compare its manifestations among two groups of Jewish immigrants, or *olim*: the Mizrahi Jews, who came to Israel from the Middle East and North Africa, and Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The disparate contexts of their immigrations influenced the varied approaches the Israeli state took towards Hebraizing their names – more stringent and repressive in the case of the Mizrahim, and more lenient and accommodating for those coming from the Soviet Union. This article will demonstrate how the process of name Hebraization among these two immigrant groups is representative of their integration into Israeli society as a whole.

In the field of Israeli social and cultural history, the assimilation (or lack thereof) of Jewish immigrants has long been a topic of interest. Scholars have explored the myriad ways European Zionist immigrants from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Holocaust survivors and Mizrahi immigrants in the 1950s, and later *olim* from the former

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[1] Francine Klagsbrun, *Lioness: Golda Meir and the Nation of Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 2019).

[2] Natan Sharansky and Gil Troy, *Never Alone: Prison, Politics, and My People* (New York: Public Affairs, 2020).

[3] Shaul Mofaz, *Ha'Masa Ha'Yisraeli Sheli* (Yediot Sefarim, 2022), https://www.e-vrit.co.il/Product/24461/המסעהישראלישלי.

[4] The list of famous Israelis who Hebraized their name upon settling in Israel is long. Several more will be discussed throughout this article, but a few notable figures who will not be mentioned include politicians Shimon Peres, Levi Eshkol, and Moshe Sharett; literary icons Amos Oz and Chaim Nachman Bialik; as well as musical artists Shoshana Damari and Chava Alberstein.

Soviet Union and Ethiopia were integrated into Israeli society.[5] The field of onomastics, which studies names and naming practices, offers one lens through which this integrative process can be analyzed.[6] In charting immigration history, onomastics help explain shifts in identity, cultural assimilation, and social integration.

Changing names to integrate into Israeli society originated as a trend among European Zionists, many of whom Hebraized their names upon immigration as part of their mission to cultivate a unique Hebrew culture distinct from the diaspora. This generation of immigrants, who became the dominant socio-political group in the first decade after the State of Israel was established, imposed name Hebraization on Mizrahi *olim* through legislation and media pressure. In this context, name Hebraization was a mechanism for the Israeli socio-political elite to counteract the "threat" that religious and culturally traditional Mizrahi immigrants posed to the emerging secular Jewish culture.

By the 1990s, the generation of European Zionist founders had passed. Nonetheless, Ashkenazim (Jews originally from Europe) were still the dominant socio-cultural group, and determined the degree to which immigrants would be required to assimilate. Jews from the Soviet Union were more culturally similar to Israeli Ashkenazim than the Mizrahim were: they were largely secular and represented potential political allies against the emerging power of religious and Mizrahi parties. As a result, the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union reflected a shift towards promoting the social integration – as opposed to cultural assimilation – of Jewish immigrants. Ultimately, instead of the repressive social and, occasionally, legal measures that imposed Hebrew names on Mizrahi immigrants in the 1950s, Soviet Union *olim* in the 1990s often adopted Hebrew names by choice, without fully conforming to the use of the most popular names in Israeli culture at the time.

To understand the relationship between Hebrew names and the assimilation or integration of *olim* into Israeli society, the Zionist concept of the "twin revolutions" and the connection established by Zionist leaders between the Hebrew language and immigration to the Land of Israel must first be analyzed.

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[5] See Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012); Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); Sammy Smooha, "The Mass Immigrations to Israel: A Comparison of the Failure of the Mizrahi Immigrants of the 1950s with the Success of the Russian Immigrants of the 1990s," *Journal of Israeli History* 27, no. 1 (2008): 1-27, https://doi.org/10.1080/13531040801902708; the works of Steven Kaplan, including Steven Kaplan and Ruth Westheimer, *Surviving Salvation: The Ethiopian Jewish Family in Transition* (New York: New York University Press, 1992); and Majid Al-Haj, "Identity Patterns among Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Israel: Assimilation vs. Ethnic Formation," *International Migration* 40, no. 2 (2002): 49-70, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2435.00190.
[6] See Carole Hough, *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Zionism and the Hebrew Revival

Zionism was first articulated by Theodor Herzl in the late nineteenth century with the goal of establishing a home for the Jewish people in *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel. Several strands of Zionism emerged, including political, cultural, religious, labor, and revisionist variations. Each strand advocated for different socio-political platforms, all with the goal of national revival.

One of the main pillars of the Zionist project was the call for *aliyah* (literally, "going up" in Hebrew), which refers to Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel. This took the form of five waves of immigration between 1881 and 1939.[7] In addition to physical immigration to the Land of Israel, many Zionists emphasized the need for demonstrating symbolic and ideological "movement" as well. One area that nearly all Zionists would come to embrace as a symbol of their commitment to national revival and of their movement's unity was the Hebrew language.

Prior to the late nineteenth century, the Hebrew language had not been spoken colloquially for over 1,500 years, leading many Zionist historiographers to refer to Hebrew as a 'dead' language. Yet, as Jack Fellman explains in his seminal piece *The Revival of a Classical Tongue*, Hebrew was never fully extinct, since Jews around the world continued to read and write Hebrew for religious purposes.[8] Fellman more accurately refers to Hebrew before the late nineteenth century as a "half language," as, for centuries, Jews did not use Hebrew as a spoken language and opted instead to converse in the language of their host country or hybrid Jewish dialects (such as Yiddish or Ladino).[9] This convention, which Hebrew revivalists and Zionists would regard as a symptom of an undesirable diasporic existence, is an important piece of context towards understanding the work of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda.

The significance of Hebrew to the Zionist project is encapsulated in the idea of the "twin revolutions" or "twin solution," referring to the revival of the Hebrew language and the revival of the Jewish (or Hebrew) nation, with the success of both being contingent on one another. Born in Lithuania in 1858, Eliezer Perelman excelled in his religious studies, especially enjoying his engagement with the Hebrew language. Perelman would be greatly influenced by the *haskalah* (Jewish enlightenment) movement which, among other innovations, demonstrated the diverse, modern ways in which Hebrew could be used.[10]

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[7] For a brief overview of the aliyot, see Benjamin Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), xi. For more in depth surveys of the aliyot, see Shapira, *Israel: A History*.

[8] Jack Fellman, *The Revival of a Classical Tongue: Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and the Modern Hebrew Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 11-13.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 19-20.

Perelman's studies in Paris in the late 1870s and 1880s exposed him to diverse forms of European nationalism, all of which, in his opinion, depended on the existence of a national language.[11] In this context, while the "Jewish question" was debated in Jewish and non-Jewish newspapers, Perelman first conceived of his "twin solution for the problem of assimilation: the simultaneous revival of the Hebrew nation and the Hebrew language in their historical homeland."[12] By 1881, Perelman changed his name to the Hebrew Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and immigrated to Palestine.[13]

For Ben-Yehuda, the interconnected nature of Jewish nationhood, the Hebrew language, and the Land of Israel was self-evident: they united the Jewish people, regardless of origins. However, world Jewry at the time, including the approximately 25,000 Jews in Palestine, was less convinced of the linkage; in many cases, they were staunchly opposed.[14] Ben-Yehuda thus undertook a program of ideological persuasion and institutional innovation. As mentioned, Hebrew in the 1880s was exclusively a liturgical language that lacked many conventions of modern spoken languages, including an updated and expansive vocabulary as well as fluent speakers. Jack Fellman described Ben-Yehuda's revival program in the following seven steps: 1) creating a Hebrew-speaking household; 2) appealing to Jewish populations in Palestine and in the diaspora; 3) founding Hebrew-speaking societies; 4) using a new pedagogy of immersive Hebrew education; 5) editing a Hebrew newspaper; 6) writing the *Dictionary of the Hebrew Language*; and 7) inaugurating the Hebrew Language Council.[15] These steps were meant to personalize, institutionalize, promote, and modernize the Hebrew language.

Benjamin Harshav notes that six of these seven steps, excluding the creation of the *Ha-Tzvi* newspaper, had no tangible influence on Hebrew's revival during Ben-Yehuda's lifetime.[16] According to Harshav, this was because the socio-cultural context of Palestine during the First Aliyah (1881-1903), when Ben-Yehuda immigrated, was not ripe for a socio-linguistic revolution, as most of these immigrants predated Zionism.[17] The Second Aliyah (1904-1914), on the other hand, saw the beginning of the immigration of Jews who were ideologically committed to the Zionist movement, especially the desire to discard all elements of their diasporic identity.[18] Modern Hebrew, as a tangible language and symbol of

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[11] Ibid., 22.
[12] Ibid., 23-24.
[13] Ibid., 27.
[14] Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution*, 81-82.
[15] Fellman, *The Revival of a Classical Tongue*, 37-40.
[16] Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution*, 84.
[17] The First Zionist Congress, where the official Zionist program was initially articulated, only occurred in 1897.
[18] Ibid., 111.

a new era of Jewish existence, was ideologically aligned with this wave and following waves of immigrants.

Discussing the impacts of the Second Aliyah on the revival of the Hebrew language, Harshav emphasizes several institutional successes. These included mandating Hebrew as the language of instruction in schools, culminating in the Technion's 1914 adoption of Hebrew as the main language of instruction; conducting administrative work in Hebrew; and creating social frameworks that strove to use Hebrew, including the establishment of Tel Aviv as the "first Hebrew city."[19] The significance of these institutional changes harkened back to Zionists' endeavor to rid themselves of any remnant of their diaspora existence. As Harshav explains:

The proudly pronounced adjective 'Hebrew' in expressions like 'Hebrew work,' 'Hebrew land,' 'Hebrew federation of Labor,' a 'New Hebrew Man,' and the 'First Hebrew City' indicated an opposition to the discredited, Diaspora name 'Jewish.' But, this 'Hebrew' quality was also self-evidently connected with the Hebrew *language*.[20]"

With the arrival of Jewish immigrants of the Third Aliyah (1919-1923) and Fourth Aliyah (1924-1928), Hebrew was imposed on the Jewish inhabitants of Mandatory Palestine: the "written frameworks, the meetings and assemblies, the technical literature, and so on – everything was, at least nominally, conducted in Hebrew."[21] It is important to note that Zionists from all ends of the political spectrum, from the Labor Zionists on the left to the Revisionist Zionists on the right, supported the full-scale adoption of Hebrew as the language of their national movement.[22] This is due, in large part, to the unifying nature of the language for any Jew who sought to reinvent their social identity in the image of the "new Jew" (an "*Eretz-Yisraeli*").[23] As opposed to the weak, assimilationist, and antiquated diaspora Jew, the new Jew would participate in Jewish militia units, proudly display their cultural, secular Jewish identity, work long hours in agricultural capacities, and speak a modern language.[24] In this context, Zionist leaders adopted Hebrew first names and surnames upon their immigration (and would eventually impose such names on other immigrants) as a symbolic demonstration of their commitment to national and personal revival.

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[19] Ibid., 133.

[20] Ibid., 142.

[21] Ibid., 151.

[22] Norman Berdichevsky, *Modern Hebrew: The Past and Future of a Revitalized Language* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2014), 101.

[23] Ibid., 89.

[24] Ibid.; Smooha, "The Mass Immigrations to Israel," 4-6.

Aaron Demsky, the leading onomastician studying Jewish names and historical naming practices, notes that "names and naming often express the tension between preserving personal and communal memory and creative innovation."[25] This tension adequately describes the evolution in popular Jewish names in Mandate Palestine: mediating between preservationist instincts and innovative intentions.

Between 1920 and 1948, the *Palestine Gazette* published the name changes of 28,000 Jews in Mandate Palestine, only a fraction of the total.[26] As mentioned previously, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda changed his original surname of Perelman to the Hebrew Ben-Yehuda, meaning "son of Judah" (a reference to the ancient Jewish tribe of Judah), utilizing the same root letters as found in the term "Jew."[27] The precedent set by Ben-Yehuda was followed by later Zionist leaders. As Demsky explains:

The fact that the idealistic, young elite – many from the Labor Zionist movement – would assume leadership roles and gain political and social influence, made their early name changes a model for the masses. The choice of some names, particularly those that have strong connotations of power indicated aspirations for a role of future leadership. In 1910, future Prime Minister of Israel, David Grin (1886-1973), Hebraicized his surname to the phonetically similar Ben-Gurion, 'Son of Gurion,' meaning the offspring of a lion cub. Ben-Gurion is also a historic family name, possessed by several leading political figures at the time of the Destruction of the Second Commonwealth (Temple) in 70 CE. David Ben-Gurion was likely sending the message that he saw himself as a potential leader in the modern restoration of the Jewish state and formation of the Third Commonwealth.[28]

Other Labor Zionists, such as Golda Meir, Revisionist Zionists like Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Yitzchak Shamir, and Zionist cultural icons like S.Y. Agnon also Hebraized their surnames. For these leaders, "Hebraization of family names, and sometimes even first names, was a way in which… [to] personalize the Zionist goal of establishing a national state for the Jewish people speaking their own language."[29]

Hebrew names referring to the territory, cities, or nature in the Land of Israel were among the most popular prior to the establishment of the state. Their prevalence reflects the Zionist ideology aiming to remember or cultivate a continuous, unbreakable link between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.[30] Additionally, many Zionists continued giving

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[25] Aaron Demsky, "The Hebraization of Names in Modern Israel," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 25, no. 1 (2018): pp. 67-81, 67.
[26] Ibid., 71.
[27] Ibid., 68.
[28] Ibid., 70.
[29] Ibid., 71.
[30] Ibid.

their children biblical names. However, they sought to select less popular ones that had contemporary significance, as opposed to the more traditional Moses, Isaac, and Samuel. For example, for boys, parents chose names of biblical warriors like "Ehud, Yoav, [and] Avner," while girls were commonly named after biblical feminists like "Noah and Tamar."[31] Shlomit Landman refers to such names as "renewal names" because they reflected a concerted effort to use traditional Jewish names in a modern environment and for a contemporary purpose. Demsky concurs with Landman's assessment and adds to it by explaining that many Zionists were secular. As such, they endeavored to reconstruct Jewish tradition on national and cultural terms, which meant (re-)claiming biblical and other liturgical names as secular.[32] In the end, these pre-State naming trends reflected a desire to combine traditional values with modern culture.

Oftentimes, Zionist leaders would utilize media outlets and other forms of social pressure to convince Jewish settlers in Palestine to Hebraize their names. One example of such social pressure came in a 1933 news article published in the Palestine media outlet *Davar*. The article describes a statement made by Yitzchak Ben-Tzvi, a founding Zionist and future president of the State of Israel who Hebraized his name from Yitzchak Shimshelevitz.[33] The article reads:

בן–צבי דורש מאיתנו לשרוף את כל שמות–הנכר שבקרבנו. הנחתו: עליתנו היא מעשה מהפכני, שיבה
למקור, נמחוק, איפוא, את זכרה הגלות, נחזיר עטרה ליושנה בעטפנו את שמותינו צורת שפתינו.[34]

Ben-Tzvi demands that we burn [discard of] the foreign names in our midst. His directive: our immigration to Palestine is a revolutionary act, a return to our origins; we must erase, totally, the memory of the exile by restoring our names to our original language.[35]

Evidently, Zionists like Ben-Tzvi viewed the use of foreign names as a threat to their aspirations for a modern Jewish state and culture. Seeing as the "Hebrew language was the only political national treasure that had survived from the Jewish past,"[36] Ben-Tzvi believed that foreign names only "testified that the Jews were still strangers in their own land."[37] For

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[31] Shlomit Landman, "Onomastics in a Melting Pot Society with Common Roots: Israeli Jews in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century," *Annales De Démographie Historique* 131, no. 1 (2016): 134, https://doi.org/10.3917/adh.131.0131.

[32] Demsky, "The Hebraization of Names in Modern Israel," 76-77.

[33] Berdichevsky, *Modern Hebrew*, 89.

[34] Yitzchak Ben-Tzvi, "על שינוי שמות," *Davar*, 1933, 2-2, 2.

[35] My translation.

[36] Demsky, "The Hebraization of Names in Modern Israel," 71.

[37] Ibid., 72.

this reason, in 1944, the Zionist leadership "proclaimed the 'Year of Naturalization and the Hebrew Name' and published a booklet that contained guidelines on the creation of new Hebrew surnames."[38]

Thus, prior to the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel, the most common Hebrew names sought to strike a balance between tradition and modernity.[39] The use of names that could be found in the Bible but that had not since been adopted recalled Jewish tradition while embracing a new beginning – as did the larger Zionist project of returning to the Jewish homeland through the modern form of nationalism. Zionist leaders exerted social and institutional pressure by changing their own names and authoring newspaper articles. These naming trends would evolve slightly in the 1950s, and dramatically by the 1990s, as would the governmental technologies implemented to bolster the adoption of Hebrew names. Before analyzing these evolutions, a brief discussion of onomastic theory is in order.

Onomastic Theory

Onomasticians use names and naming practices to evaluate linguistic, social, political, economic, cultural, geographic, and historical phenomena. For the purpose of this paper, onomastic theory that relates to the connection between names and social classification, power structures, and immigration will be surveyed. This will demonstrate how names and naming practices represent an opportunity for immigrants to declare new socio-cultural identifications, while offering the state an arena to assert control over its new citizens.

As a result of social trends and cultural references, names take on meaning beyond merely identifying a person. Names carry "associative meanings" whereby they refer to or recall something specific beyond the individual, such as a deceased family member, religious figure, national hero, or geographic location.[40] These sorts of names categorize an individual into a specific social and cultural group – such as a given family, religious denomination, national body, or geographic collective – even if the individual does not consciously identify with that group.

The language of a name dictates the classification of an individual within a linguistic group. Furthermore, "personal names are used to create membership categories leading to social inclusion or exclusion."[41] Immigrants to Israel consequently recognized that

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[38] Berdichevsky, *Modern Hebrew*, 89.

[39] This was very much an extension of the original mission of Cultural Zionism laid out by Ahad Ha'am. See Ahad Ha'am's essays "The Jewish State and The Jewish Problem" and "Imitation and Assimilation" in Steven J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (London: Halban, 1993).

[40] Carole Hough and Staffan Nystrom, "Names and Meaning," in *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 39-51, 48.

[41] Ibid., 56.

their choice of language for their new names played a role in declaring their new social classification.[42] As Emilia Aldrin notes, "…name change [is] a strategy for leaving an old, unwanted identity. It has also been observed that name changes may reflect a wish to declare a new political, religious, or sexual identity."[43] Consequently, there are two onomastic trends typical among new immigrants: changing their own names, and adopting new naming practices upon the birth of their children. While one may choose or wish to change one's name, institutional or state powers can also directly or indirectly impose name changes on a population through legislation and the media. Meanwhile, subtler forms of social pressure in school or the workplace suggest that "a change of name can provide a way to improve one's chances in society without having to change identity."[44]

Changing one's own name reorients an immigrant's identity in accordance with their new host society, and a similar outcome occurs when immigrants name their children according to the trends of this new, dominant culture. Naming children is as much an act of social and cultural identification for the parents as it is for their children.[45] This is because "from the parent's point of view, the choice of first name for a child is always part of the creation and display of social identities, including… acting in accordance with certain macro-societal groups."[46] In other words, as a means to identify their children and re-identify themselves, immigrant parents often select names for their children that align with the dominant socio-cultural trends in society. Thus, name choices can reflect the degree of cultural assimilation in a multicultural environment.[47]

Mizrahi Aliyah, Cultural Assimilation, and Name Hebraization in the 1950s

The State of Israel was no stranger to mass immigration. In the pre-State era, Jews from around the world, though predominantly from Europe, rushed to settle in the Land of Israel. The Jewish population in Palestine swelled, growing from 150,000 in June 1927 to 384,000 in December 1936, and to 650,000 by 1948.[48] As such, the Israeli government's

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[42] Carole Hough and Elwys de Stefani, "Names and Discourse," in *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming,* 52-66, 54.

[43] Carole Hough and Emilia Aldrin, "Names and Identity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, 382-394, 389.

[44] Ibid., 384.

[45] Ibid., 385

[46] Ibid., 388.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 115, 117.

predecessor had already instituted systems to support immigrants and present opportunities in order for the Zionist project to advance.

Despite these measures, between 1948 and 1956, the young State of Israel was unprepared financially, administratively, and socially for the mass immigration of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa. Prior to and especially after the First Arab-Israeli War, tensions rose between Jews and the governments of many surrounding countries. This resulted in a mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia, Syria, Turkey, and Libya.[49] Additionally, 120,000 Jews left Iraq and made *aliyah* in 1950, and nearly 70,000 Moroccan *olim* joined them between 1954 and 1956.[50] Many of these individuals feared their professional and economic fates and, oftentimes, for their lives if they stayed under the rule of governments that associated all Jews with the Zionist enterprise.

The conditions that Mizrahi *olim* faced during their absorption into Israeli society were difficult. The *olim* were sent to *ma'abarot*, or transit camps, that were intended to provide temporary housing units for families until permanent residences could be acquired. There, Mizrahi immigrants faced low standards of living, including poorly constructed shacks, communal restrooms and showers, and overpopulation.[51] This was worsened by feelings of ethnic discrimination and humiliation at work, in school, and on the streets.[52]

On a broader scale, the Mizrahim entered a society with a singular vision of what the national project required: cultural uniformity and cohesion. This was largely determined by *Yishuv*-era Zionists who sought to solidify the image of the "new Jew."[53] Based on this ideology, the elite of Israeli society sought to assimilate Mizrahi *olim*. Sammy Smooha describes the process of assimilation as follows:

The overwhelming majority of the old-timers [*Yishuv*-era Israelis] were Ashkenazi. They saw their newly formed culture as belonging to advanced Western cultures. Imbued with a European and colonial spirit, they regarded the Arabs as culturally backward and Mizrahim as Arabized Jews. They believed in the potential of Mizrahim to secularize, to rid themselves of their Arab backwardness, and to absorb the mainstream culture. Their approach to the immigrants was strictly assimilationist, repressive, and impatient. They expected them to immediately discard their diaspora heritage and to assimilate culturally and socially. The full

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[49] Ibid., 223.
[50] Ibid., 223-24, 236.
[51] Ibid., 235-36.
[52] Ibid., 243-44.
[53] Smooha defines the "new Jew" as "the carrier of the new Jewish culture, which was locally made, grounded in the Hebrew language, [and] detached from… life in the diaspora." Smooha, "The Mass Immigrations to Israel," 4.

admission of the immigrant to the new Jewish society was conditional on radical personal transformation and adoption of the model of the new Jew.[54]

Mizrahi *olim* were unable to change their social status or reality, unless they were willing to completely assimilate into the nascent, dominant Israeli culture, and even then, social acceptance was not assured.[55] Israeli disdain for cultural differences and individual rights in favor of a strong centralized state and culture would inform how Israeli society would interact with Mizrahim's names in the first decade after independence.[56] Ultimately, the Israeli state and its leaders viewed Hebrew names as one arena wherein social and ethnic barriers could be dissolved.[57]

In the first decade after the State of Israel was established, traditional and renewal biblical names remained the most popular in Israeli society with a few new Hebrew names interspersed.[58] The noteworthy trend in this era, though, was the almost complete absence of diasporic languages from the list of common Jewish names in Israel, despite hundreds of thousands of immigrants arriving from non-Hebrew speaking communities. Most of the typical Jewish names from Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa appeared at a frequency of only three to ten times per year.[59] This is because the "names of the diaspora were… [regarded] as the names of the 'traditional' and 'weak' Jewry."[60] Weakness, which was often defined by Jewish persecution and divison in the diaspora, contradicted Zionist and early-State Israeli projections of unified strength.[61]

For Mizrahi *olim*, "successful absorption [into Israeli society] included the possession of a Hebrew name."[62] In some instances in the late 1940s and 1950s, Israeli border administrators and school teachers would Hebraize the names of immigrants upon arrival.[63] While these actions were not usually legally mandated, they were not prohibited nor discouraged, which was seemingly interpreted as tacit approval from the political elite.[64] Oftentimes, immigrant children and adults alike would have no choice but to use their assigned Hebrew names as,

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[54] Ibid., 6.

[55] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 236-37.

[56] Selwyn I. Troen and Noah Lucas, eds., *Israel: The First Decade of Independence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 6.

[57] Demsky, "The Hebraization of Names in Modern Israel," 72-73.

[58] Landman, "Onomastics in a Melting Pot Society," 137-38.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., 133.

[61] Segev, *The Seventh Million*, 109, 159.

[62] Abraham Stahl, "The Imposition of Hebrew Names on New Immigrants to Israel: Past and Present," *Names* 42, no. 4 (January 1994), https://doi.org/10.1179/nam.1994.42.4.279.

[63] Ibid., 280-81.

[64] Ibid.; Demsky, "The Hebraization of Names in Modern Israel," 79.

for example, certain administrative forms could only be filled out in Hebrew. Social mobility and acceptance, likewise, depended on the discarding of any diasporic past. Moreover, since the Mizrahi *olim* were essentially refugees, they had little social negotiating power, and as a result, their culture was "officially labeled inferior and they came under heavy pressure to discard it."[65] As Tom Segev explains, the "Zionist dream conceived of a 'new man' in a new society, who would come to the Land of Israel in search of personal and national salvation. Those who came only because they had no other choice, however, did not fit this image and often found themselves objects of condescension and contempt."[66]

Additionally, official government-sponsored efforts to Hebraize names were also undertaken, using the media and legislative action. Mordechai Nimtza-Bi, like other *Yishuv*-era Zionists, Hebraized his surname from Netsabitski.[67] Believing in the importance and efficacy of Hebrew names toward personalizing the Zionist project, Nimtza-Bi would eventually lead the Israeli Name Change Committee.[68] In 1948, a news article in *Haaretz* described the efforts of Mordechai Nimtza-Bi to promote name Hebraization. The article reads:

אחד הפרסומים המקוריים ביותר שהופיע בתחום החוברות הזעירות ובלי ספק הקובץ הזעיר ''בחר לך שם עברי.'' כתוב בידי מר מרדכי נמצא–בי, ראש הועדה להחלפת השמות... כי היאך נתחבר? הועדה לשמות עבריים פנתה למאות אנשים, סופרים, עיתונאים, ומורים, היא ביקשה מהם להציע שמות עבריים לשמות המשפחה הנפוצים ביותר.[69]

One of the original publications that appeared as a pamphlet is "Choose a Hebrew Name for Yourself." It was written by Mr. Mordechai Nimtza-Bi, the head of the Name Change Committee. How will we connect [to the national project]? The Hebrew Name Committee turned to hundreds of people, authors, journalists, and teachers, to suggest Hebrew name substitutes for the most common foreign surnames.[70]

Ultimately, Nimtza-Bi would collate all of the Hebrew name suggestions into a single, alphabetically-organized pamphlet.[71] "Choose a Hebrew Name for Yourself" offered Israeli school teachers, social aid administrators, and immigrants themselves a list of the most common foreign surnames and corresponding suggestions for Hebrew alternatives.[72] In theory, the process of name Hebraization would be simplified, organized, and appear personalized as a result of the pamphlet.

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[65] Smooha, "The Mass Immigrations to Israel," 8.

[66] Segev, *The Seventh Million*, 34.

[67] Demsky, "The Hebraization of Names in Modern Israel," 72.

[68] Lital Levin, "The Government Tells the Country to Hebraicize Names," *Haaretz*, n.d., 1-5, 1-2.

[69] Mordechai Nimtza-Bi, "בחר שם עברי," *Haaretz*, August 12, 1948, 3-3, 3.

[70] My translation.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Levin, "The Government Tells," 2.

Mizrahi Jews were often more religious than Ashkenazi Jews living in Israel. As a result, in addition to needing to adopt names in a language they did not speak, Mizrahim were often forced to choose Hebrew names popular among secular Israelis, including renewal biblical and modern Israeli names. This was yet another identity shock: not only were Mizrahim prohibited from identifying themselves in their mother tongues, they were also pressured into identifying themselves in secular manners that did not align with their socio-cultural and religious backgrounds.

Between 1948 and 1949 alone, 17,644 Israelis Hebraized their names;[73] this was before legislative action in 1950 and 1956 that would lead to even more name changes among Mizrahi *olim*. First, in 1950, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion mandated that "anyone who represented the state in a formal capacity – be it as an athlete, a diplomat or in the military – must have a Hebrew surname."[74] This edict, while including Ashkenazi Israelis, was targeted at Mizrahi *olim* as most *Yishuv*-era state representatives already changed their names, while most Mizrahim had not. Thus, if Mizrahim wanted to advance socially and professionally, they had to adopt Hebrew names.

In July 1956, the Israeli Knesset passed the Names Law, which "established that all Israeli citizens must have first and family names."[75] This law was targeted at Arabs, both Jewish and not, who did not possess surnames as a product of their cultural backgrounds.[76] While the law did not mandate the selection of Hebrew names, government officials pressured Mizrahi Jews to adopt Hebrew family names.[77] Israeli officials ordered administrators to offer "every possible leniency" to Mizrahi Jews willing to select Hebrew surnames.[78] Legislation like the Names Law, in addition to the other efforts described above, led to 64,500 name changes between 1948 and 1956.[79]

The process of forced name changing was often traumatic for the *olim*. This sentiment is evident in the poem "Zaish" written by Erez Bitton, an Israeli immigrant of Algerian and Moroccan origin.[80] Bitton himself had his first name changed in elementary school from Yaish to Erez.[81] In many of his poems, Bitton laments Mizrahim's frustrations with having to

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Efrat Neuman, "In the Name of Zionism, Change Your Name," *Haaretz*, April 17, 2014, 1-12, 5.

[75] Moshe Naor, "The Israeli Names Law: National Integration and Military Rule," *Israel Studies* 21, no. 2 (2016): 133, https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.21.2.06.

[76] Many Arab societies did not commonly use surnames; see Naor, "The Israeli Names Law."

[77] Demsky, "The Hebraization of Names in Modern Israel," 73.

[78] Naor, "The Israeli Names Law," 143-44.

[79] Ibid., 146.

[80] Stahl, "The Imposition of Hebrew Names," 281.

[81] Gish Amit, "ארז ביטון," The Lexicon of Modern Hebrew Literature (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2021), https://library.osu.edu/projects/hebrew-lexicon/01133.php.

adopt new "Israeli" tastes and fashions, including choice of alcohol and ice cream.[82] In "Zaish," he directly describes the "frustration at not being able to be himself."[83] The final stanza of the poem reads:

<div dir="rtl">

אתה זיש זיש זיש אתה השם הזוהר אתה הנר

במדורים הרכים שבתוכי

ולואי ותעמוד לנגדי תמיד עדות לאפשרות אחרת

אתה שמקל לראשי ראש עמוס

נשען על יד דקה אחת

שלפעמים אני אומר

הנה הנה יסגור עלי הכל באחת

אני השבוי ללא בריחה

במקום במקום ובאנשים

באנשים באנשים.[84]

</div>

You are Zaish, Zaish, Zaish, you are the shining name, you are the authentic candle
In the soft spheres which comprise me
Oh, if you could only stand as part of me always, a testimony to an alternative persona
You who simplifies my overflowing head
We will recline together for a minute
Sometimes I say
Here, behold, everything could be compressed into one
I, the prisoner, incapable of escape,
In this place and that place and in the people
These people, those people.[85]

Bitton, here, uses the common Moroccan name Zaish to describe the confusing and frustrating experience of possessing two names, of living two lives.[86] The narrator desperately prefers to be called Zaish, to be Zaish (his authentic self), but like a prisoner, was stripped of his name. In this way, and in alignment with much of onomastic theory, the forced adoption of Hebrew names for Mizrahi *olim* instigated a repressive process of cultural assimilation in which immigrants had little freedom to preserve their cultural backgrounds.

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[82] See, for example, poems in Erez Bitton, *Otot: Mivchar Ve'Shirim Chadashim* (Bnei Barak, Israel: Hotsa'at ha-Ḳibuts ha-me'uḥad, 2018).

[83] Bitton, "זיש," in *Otot: Mivchar Ve'Shirim Chadashim*, 35.

[84] Ibid.

[85] My translation.

[86] Ibid.

Overall, the tactics employed by Israeli society and the state to Hebraize Mizrahi *olim's* names reflect two important, interrelated phenomena. First, these efforts depict the emphasis the Ashkenazi social and political elite placed on preventing multiculturalism in the first decade of Israel's statehood. Multiculturalism was evidently equated with an erosion of the modern Jewish culture and image of the "new Jew" that was blossoming, yet not solidified. The only way to prevent multiculturalism among Mizrahi *olim* was to assimilate them totally, including by enforcing name changes. Second, name Hebraization in the years following the State of Israel's establishment was an important facet of cementing Israeli culture as distinct from the diaspora. In this sense, the mass immigration of Arabic- and Persian-speaking Jews to Israel was a first and important test to see if all Jews could be assimilated into the national vision of strength, renewal, and innovation.

Aliyah, Social Integration, and Name Hebraization of Jews from the Former Soviet Union in the 1990s

Another mass immigration occurred nearly four decades later after President Mikhail Gorbachev changed the Soviet Union's emigration policy in 1989. Approximately 800,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union immigrated to Israel in the 1990s;[87] for "Israel this mass *aliyah* was a source of great optimism, hope for social and political renewal, and economic growth."[88] This was because the Soviet Jews were well-educated and fairly similar in culture to the Ashkenazi social elite – they were typically secular, for example.[89] As a result, immigrants from the Soviet Union were not forced into transit camps, nor were they discriminated against or ridiculed.[90] In many respects, their absorption into Israeli society was not contingent on cultural assimilation.[91]

Between the mass immigration of Mizrahi Jews and the 1990s *aliyah* of Soviet Jews, significant social and political upheavals had occurred. In 1977, Menachem Begin was elected prime minister.[92] He was to be the first prime minister that was not from the Mapai or Labor Party (the former adhered to socialist ideology and the latter was a liberal,

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[87] It is worth noting that there has long been doubt as to whether or not all the Soviet immigrants who claimed to be Jewish were, in fact, Jewish.

[88] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 422.

[89] Ibid., 453.

[90] Oftentimes, Russian *olim* skipped or spent very little time in absorption caravan sites. In contrast, Ethiopian Jewish immigrants who arrived in Israel in 1991 spent extended time in absorption centers, where they lived, ate, received medical attention, and learned Hebrew – delaying their integration into Israeli society. This shows that the Israeli state's approach to the absorption of Jews from the Former Soviet Union was specific to them and their backgrounds, and was not indicative of a general approach to immigrant absorption.

[91] Ibid., 455.

[92] Ibid., 357.

left-leaning successor). In addition, he was one of the few original Zionist leaders who did not Hebraize his name. Evidently, he did not believe that the "diasporic" elements of his identity needed to be discarded; rather, he would argue that they were integral to the Zionist project.[93]

Among the many changes that Begin would institute, his increased focus on individualism is especially significant to the onomastic trends of the era. He shifted the political conversation from questions like "What can an Israeli citizen do for the state?" to "What can the state do for its citizens?"[94] While Begin championed this evolution, its occurrence also coincided with the larger solidification of the Israeli state and culture. This was primarily a product of military successes, economic stabilization, and thirty years of cultural development. Begin's introduction of a more individualistic socio-political environment within the newly-solidified Israeli culture, as well as the Western influences of globalization and economic liberalization, had, by the 1990s, permitted an unprecedented acceptance of diversity in Israeli society.[95] Seemingly, the Zionist project was no longer threatened by outside influences eroding the modern culture being developed.

As a result of the socio-cultural climate of the 1990s, Hebrew names, "emphasizing the individual came into fashion, like Li-hi 'she is mine'; Li-at 'you are mine'; and Li-Or or Orr-li (m/f) 'my light.'"[96] Additionally, Western-sounding names became popular as a means to "express cosmopolitan and egalitarian ideas and fashions."[97] Even some non-Hebrew names, particularly Russian ones, became more widespread.[98] Generally, distinctly *Israeli*, modern Hebrew names unused in the diaspora became the most popular in this decade.[99] Thus, with the solidification and individualization of Israeli culture, innovative, non-preservationist names became socially acceptable and widespread.

When Jews from the former Soviet Union reached Israel, it was unusual "to change an immigrant's name upon arrival as an administrative act, not requiring the consent of the persons involved."[100] Instead, these *olim* were given, "time to reflect and decide for

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[93] Begin did not believe that Zionism was revolutionary in the sense that it should "cast off the shackles of tradition." Instead, he viewed Zionism as the natural next phase in Jewish history. "As a political leader, Menachem Begin sought to promote the idea that a common Israeli culture could not be based on the creation of a 'New Jew' divorced from religious tradition, but rather had to stand on traditional values and customs." See, Avi Shilon, "Menachem Begin's Attitude toward the Jewish Religion," *The Middle East Journal* 70, no. 2 (2016): 263, 272 https://doi.org/10.3751/70.2.14.

[94] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 364.

[95] Smooha, "The Mass Immigrations to Israel," 12.

[96] Demsky, "The Hebraization of Names in Modern Israel," 77.

[97] Ibid., 78.

[98] Landman, "Onomastics in a Melting Pot Society," 145.

[99] Ibid., 139-40.

[100] Stahl, "The Imposition of Hebrew Names," 286.

themselves."[101] Media outlets and legislation did not pressure Soviet Jews into changing their names either. Thus, *olim* from the former Soviet Union did not face the same social pressure nor legislative enforcement to change their names; rather than repressively assimilating Soviet *olim* into the new Israeli culture, the state leniently integrated them into Israeli society.

There are several reasons that explain the absence of any official enforcement of name Hebraization on this particular group of *olim*. First, since Israel was significantly more individualistic by the 1990s, a greater tolerance for cultural difference emerged.[102] Secondly,

The old-timers welcomed the Russian immigrants, seeing them as an asset for strengthening Israel's Jewish population, national security, and economy. The enthusiasm about the Russian immigrants was expressed not only by heads of the Jewish Agency but also by certain politicians and journalists who publicly conveyed the expectation that the immigrants would serve as safeguards against the alarming rise of the Mizrahi and Arab populations and as bulwarks of the endangered Ashkenazi-Western culture… old-timers still believed in the assimilation of immigrants, but this was a liberal and tolerant view of assimilation that allowed the new immigrants to take their time, adapt selectively, retain their language along with Hebrew, and preserve many traditions.[103]

Additionally, Jews from the former Soviet Union were often trained in key professional fields like medicine and engineering, making them more easily integratable into the workforce.[104] Still, some segments of Israeli society did pressure Soviet immigrants to change their names. For example, rabbis performing certain religious ceremonies for Soviet *olim* often required the selection of a Hebrew name. Social pressures in schools also led children to ask their parents to change their names to Hebrew.[105] Nonetheless, these efforts to Hebraize immigrant names were much less frequent, and rarely officially endorsed by the government.

In 2004, Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) published an official report comparing the names of immigrant children from the former Soviet Union to those popular in the rest of Israeli society. While name changes were a more useful metric to evaluate Mizrahi onomastic trends, in the case of the Soviet *olim*, child naming practices were better indicators of shifts in onomastic tendencies. The CBS report notes that between 1990 and

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[101] Ibid.
[102] Smooha, "The Mass Immigrations to Israel," 12.
[103] Ibid., 13.
[104] Ibid., 14.
[105] Stahl, "The Imposition of Hebrew Names," 286.

2002, over ninety percent of native Israelis named their children in Hebrew.[106] In contrast, only sixty to seventy percent of Soviet *olim* named their children in Hebrew, though this percentage increased each year after immigration.[107] Furthermore, prior to their immigration, Jews from the Soviet Union gave Hebrew names to their children less than twenty percent of the time.[108] Evidently, they did not wholly adopt the onomastic norms of Israeli society in the first decade after their immigration, as shown by the thirty to forty percent of immigrants from the former Soviet Union who did not name their children in Hebrew. While a majority of these immigrants did adopt Hebrew naming patterns, there remains the question of whether or not the names chosen mirrored the popular names in broader Israeli society.

Though they adopted Hebrew names, none of the five most common Soviet immigrant names for girls were the same as the five most popular in the rest of Israeli society. Soviet *olim* gave names like Nicole, Michal, Michelle, and Avital, while native Israelis chose names like Noa, Yuval, Shira, and Adi.[109] A similar phenomenon was observed in male names as well. Instead of the common Israeli names of Amit and Omer, Soviet *olim* named their children Daniel and Lior.[110]

Despite this divergence, some popular names from the post-Soviet Israeli community did also appear on the list of most common Israeli names. The probability a child would be given a Hebrew name increased the longer *olim* had resided in Israel before giving birth. Specifically, children born in the year of their parents' immigration were given Hebrew names significantly less frequently than children born four and eight years after their parents' *aliyah*.[111] This increased willingness to adopt Israeli names reflects, in part, their secular background in the former Soviet Union. This made choosing secular Hebrew names less abnormal and uncomfortable. Overall, there was a clear attempt to integrate into Israeli society in choosing Hebrew names, but there was also an effort to maintain some elements of their own cultural backgrounds. In other words, Soviet *olim* adopted Hebrew names without fully adopting Israeli naming norms.

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[106] For all statistics discussed in this section, the CBS report contains useful graphs that help illustrate the onomastic trends. Aviel Kranzler, "Nicole, Daniel and What Lies behind Them: Trends in the Cultural Orientation of the 1990's Immigrants to Israel as Reflected in the Names They Give to Their Children," Nicole, Daniel and What Lies behind Them: Trends in the Cultural Orientation of the 1990's Immigrants to Israel as Reflected in the Names They Give to Their Children § (2004), 1-20, 9.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., 13.

[110] Ibid., 11.

[111] Ibid., 17.

Unlike Mizrahi immigrants such as Erez Bitton, immigrants from the Soviet Union typically do not look back as negatively on their adoption of Hebrew names, if they even adopted Hebrew names at all. For example, in "a storybook for children describing the process of adjustment of a Soviet immigrant girl (Margulis), it is only after she feels part of the group that she herself decides to take a Hebrew name."[112] This reflects a common trend of Soviet Union *olim* who believed that their Hebrew names were chosen freely without interference from their new social environment. Naming, as an act of social classification, can never be devoid of social influences, but the fact that Soviet *olim* operated under this assumption represents a significant divergence between how Mizrahi and Soviet immigrants experienced their name changes.

The trends described in this section are a product of several important socio-cultural evolutions. First, the lack of official endeavors to Hebraize the names of Soviet *olim* is a manifestation of a solidified Israeli culture, one that felt less threatened by the arrival of immigrants. Second, Israeli society had become more individualistic, allowing for a greater tolerance for cultural diversity. Lastly, the secular environment that was familiar to Jews from the former Soviet Union had been well-maintained and developed by the Israeli Ashkenazi socio-political elite. These phenomena resulted in the state's feeling that forced cultural assimilation was not needed in the Soviet *olim's* case. Instead, social integration could be supported by the Israeli social and political elite as a means to promote cultural diversity, gain political clout, and incorporate hundreds of thousands of formerly-diaspora Jews into Israeli society.

Conclusion

Mizrahi Jewish immigrants to Israel between the late-1940s and 1950s were typically forced to Hebraize their names due to administrative, legislative, or social pressure. Unlike their Mizrahi compatriots, *olim* from the former Soviet Union were met more leniently, allowing them to cultivate naming practices that simultaneously allowed for their integration into Israeli society while preserving some of their own cultural traditions. In this way, the onomastic trends among Mizrahi *olim* demonstrated the state and society's concerted efforts to culturally assimilate them, while the onomastic trends of Soviet *olim* reflected an effort to socially integrate the immigrants.

The varying contexts of the Mizrahi *aliyah* and Soviet Union *aliyah* explain why the differing tactics – cultural assimilation versus social integration – were implemented. In

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[112] Stahl, "The Imposition of Hebrew Names," 286; for another example, see Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, "Lamentation - Sources Journal," *Sources: A Journal of Jewish Ideas* (The Shalom Hartman Institute, April 15, 2022), https://www.sourcesjournal.org/articles/lamentation.

the 1950s, Israel was a young and relatively poor state. This meant that the country did not have adequate resources to absorb new immigrants. However, instability and a lack of wealth alone do not explain the challenging social and cultural absorption processes. Zionist ideology and precedent, namely the significance of Hebrew to the modern Jewish culture, informed the Israeli state and society's collectivist mindset as well as their approach to Mizrahim's names. In order to preserve the social and cultural successes of the *Yishuv* era, the Israeli government passed legislation and published pamphlets urging or, more accurately, imposing Hebrew names on Jewish immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa. Cultural assimilation – here, in the form of name Hebraization – was seen as an essential element to state and nation building. Mizrahim and their non-Hebrew names were seen as a threat to the nascent Israeli culture that was integral to the success of the Zionist project.

The Soviet *olim*, on the other hand, settled into a society that had already established a strong, self-reproducing modern culture. These immigrants also happened to be significantly more alike, culturally-speaking, to the Ashkenazi socio-political elite than the Mizrahi Jews were in the 1950s. As a result of these two important contextual pieces, the Soviet *olim* did not threaten Israeli society or culture. In fact, many Israeli Ashkenazim perceived them as potential allies and supporters of their socio-political endeavors. Because of this, Jews from the former Soviet Union were not forced to abandon their naming practices, nor cultural heritage. Instead, they were offered more lenient entry points towards social integration, such as the use of Hebrew names that were pronounced similarly in Russian rather than the adoption of popular Israeli names.

Names as social and cultural identity markers are another useful lens into understanding and evaluating the potentially traumatic, confusing processes of immigration and absorption. In the case of Mizrahim, their forced name changes indicated a repressive immigration process based in cultural assimilation, while Soviet *olim's* freedom to create new, hybrid Hebrew naming practices demonstrates a more lenient absorption policy dedicated to social integration, yet respectful of cultural variety.

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AGRARIAN CAPITALISM AS A MODEL OF FAMINE RELIEF IN IRELAND, 1845-1850

Jake Colosa

Abstract

This essay will argue that both sides of the British political economic debate surrounding Ireland during the Great Famine worked towards similar ends: the transformation of the Irish agrarian order into a capitalist economic system through the creation of new capitalist farmers in Ireland. In doing so, it will demonstrate how this vision for Irish society fits into an increasingly capitalist United Kingdom and the emerging global capitalist system.

Introduction

In her 2007 book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism,* Naomi Klein coined the term "disaster capitalism." She described the concept as the practice of governments and economists taking advantage of disasters to radically reimagine or transform a society.[1] An example from her book is the response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Only two weeks after the storm made landfall, the Heritage Foundation and business leaders successfully lobbied the Bush administration to implement several policies including the suspension of prevailing wage laws for contractors, increasing the number of charter school vouchers, repealing environmental regulations along the Gulf Coast, and expanding oil drilling in the Arctic. These measures were marketed as "hurricane relief," but instead of directly helping the people affected by the storm, they lined the pockets of energy and charter school executives, enriching their business operations in the process.[2] Despite differences in scope and objectives, when the potato blight struck Ireland in the mid-1840s, British political economists saw it as an opportunity to reimagine Irish society, in striking parallel to as twenty-first century disaster capitalists.

Though British theorists had long proposed reforms to Ireland's economy and land legislation, the famine imbued this discussion with urgency, precipitating a new debate about the best way to handle the Irish crisis.[3] Prior to the famine, Collison Black identified three categories of proposals to reform Ireland's land policies. The first, and most popular, "was the view that Ireland could only prosper through the introduction of medium and large-scale farming carried out by capitalist tenants, and the conversion of the cottier population into hired laborers."[4] The second advocated for "security of tenure at rents fixed according to an independent valuation," while the third sought to defend the rights of landlords while compensating tenants for improvements erected on the land.[5] (Here, and throughout this essay, improvement refers to "the enhancement of land's productivity for profit").[6]

Still, other political economists highlighted different trends in political economy prior to the famine. David Nally described a desire by some political economists to move away from the subsistence farming model, in which most Irish peasants were forced to practice due to exorbitant rents and a confusing system of middlemen and subletting. In its place, these economists imagined a "tripartite division of labor among landlords, capitalist tenant farmers,

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[1] Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 6.

[2] Ibid., 410.

[3] Collison R. D. Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 28.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 28.

[6] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism* (London: Verso Books, 2002), 106.

and a landless pool of wage labor."[7] Thus, prior to the Great Famine, the debate about the best model for Irish society was alive and well. As the sheer scale of the crisis became evident, political economists sought to build on this earlier debate, and developed concrete proposals through which their new visions for Ireland could be realized.

In his book *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817–1870,* Collison Black argued that the political economic debate around the Irish land system in the immediate aftermath of The Great Famine fell into two categories. One side of the debate advocated for "proposals for the improvement of the condition of the existing population through schemes of reclamation of waste combined with occupying ownership of small-holdings." Proponents of this strategy, which I will refer to as the peasant-proprietorship faction, included men like George Poulett Scrope and John Stuart Mill. The other side, consisting of William Neilson Hancock, John Bright, and William Senior Nassau, sought to implement "proposals for the improvement of agriculture through emigration, consolidation of holdings and the introduction of new capital."[8] I will refer to this group of political economists as the consolidation and investment faction. However, this presentation of the debate, as falling into two distinct factions, misrepresents the often blurry boundaries and agreement between the two camps, as well as the strikingly similar visions for Irish society—one close to the vision that Nally described—that these proposals presented.

This essay will argue that both sides of the British political economic debate surrounding Ireland during the Great Famine worked towards similar ends: the transformation of the Irish agrarian order into a capitalist economic system through the creation of new capitalist farmers in Ireland. In doing so, it will demonstrate how this vision for Irish society fits into an increasingly capitalist United Kingdom and the emerging global capitalist system.

The Crisis in Context

Several factors contributed to the precarious position of Irish peasants in the mid-nineteenth century. First, unlike in England, landlords in Ireland leased only the land itself to their tenants. In England, landlords were responsible for constructing buildings, irrigation systems, and other equipment necessary for farming. In Ireland, on the other hand, this burden fell upon the tenants. Furthermore, at the end of a lease these improvements became the property of the landlord, with no compensation for the tenant that constructed them.[9] Secondly, Irish estates were sub-divided with several layers of middlemen between the farmers

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[7] David Nally, "'That Coming Storm': The Irish Poor Law, Colonial Biopolitics, and the Great Famine," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98, no. 3 (2008): 731.

[8] Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870,* 34.

[9] Ibid., 5.

and the landlords. This was due, in part, to a series of measures passed by the Irish Parliament in 1783 and 1784 which encouraged the exportation and limited the importation of wheat. Rather than encouraging the creation of large agricultural enterprises, the high demand for capital and the Irish peasantry's destitution led many estates to be subdivided so that the proprietors could find tenants who could pay the rents. "Instead of paying their laborers in money," the small farmers who occupied these subdivided plots "allowed their laborers the use of small pieces of ground whereon they might erect cabins and raise potatoes, and their labor was set off, at so much a-day, against the annual rent."[10] It was not uncommon to have two to three tenants between the landlord and the cultivator, which left cultivators paying high rents so that these middlemen might make a profit. While the practice of sub-letting was outlawed in 1826, many farmers could not afford the legal fees necessary to secure a lease, forcing many to accept rents higher than the output of their plots.[11] Thirdly, the population of Ireland grew rapidly in the early nineteenth century due to the need for cheap or free labor, and through the encouragement of the Roman Catholic church, which "depended not only on the extent of the population, but also in its continual increase" to support its operations through voluntary tithes.[12]

The unique nature of the Irish economy and the adoption of the potato were mutually reinforcing. When compared with wheat, a plot of land could "support three times the number [of people] when used for raising potatoes."[13] The many laborers who had only a small piece of a subdivided estate to support themselves and their families were thus forced to rely on the potato to survive. This left many of the Irish poor "upon the extreme verge of human subsistence" even before the Great Famine.[14] Furthermore, due to their size, potatoes were difficult to transport, and they could only be stored for several months.[15] Without wages, excess produce to sell, or opportunities for employment outside of agriculture, Irish laborers had no means of purchasing food. Thus, Irish peasants were acutely vulnerable to famine due to their dependence on the potato and their inability to store and transport food to alleviate the pressure of a poor harvest.

In 1844 a potato disease began to spread in North America. The blight started with brown spots appearing on the leaves of the potato plant, and "in less than a week" the plant would die and rot in the field.[16] By Autumn of 1845 the blight appeared in Ireland, though much of the potato crop of the 1845-46 season survived. The next year, however, saw a nearly total failure of

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[10] Charles Trevelyan, *The Irish Crisis* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1848), 21.
[11] Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870,* 5-6.
[12] Trevelyan, *The Irish Crisis,* 22.
[13] Ibid., 4.
[14] Ibid., 9-20.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 40.

Ireland's potato crop which, coupled with deficient harvests of wheat, barley, and oats, led to widespread famine across Ireland. After 1847 the blight began to subside and plentiful harvests of other food crops in the 1847-48 season helped to mitigate some of the starvation.[17] However, the damage had already been done. By 1850, one million people had died as a result of the famine, with at least as many more having emigrated out of Ireland.[18]

While the British looked down upon the Irish, they readily accepted the threat that widespread Irish rebellion posed not only to their interests in Ireland, but to the authority and strength of the British Empire. John Bright, a Member of Parliament during the famine, warned of this revolutionary potential: "Ireland is idle…and therefore she starves. Ireland starves and therefore she rebels."[19] Furthermore, he stated that "while force might be a necessary temporary expedient, force" would be "no remedy" for the inevitable uprising should the British fail to adequately respond to the crisis.[20]

In 1848, Europe was rocked by a wave of popular uprisings against autocratic governments, throwing the potential for rebellion in Ireland into sharp relief. Many of these rebellions, such as the insurrections in Italy, also included nationalist and secessionist demands.[21] If the Great Famine was not cause enough for a popular uprising, a mixing of the misery and destitution the Irish faced with the sentiments and populist ideals of the revolutions of 1848 presented a considerably more realistic threat to Britain's interests in Ireland. And of course, given its proximity to Britain itself, any major disturbance in Ireland carried the risk of spreading to Britain, where the Chartist movement was in full swing and the squalid living and working conditions of the newly formed class of industrial laborers caused anti-establishment sentiment to develop and fester.[22]

The scale of the Great Famine and the period at which it occurred necessitated a response from the British government, both to minimize the humanitarian disaster and safeguard against an uprising. Much of this response was coordinated through government workhouses created by the Irish Relief Act of 1838. The workhouses, prison-like facilities run by the government that provided food and a place to sleep in exchange for labor, quickly became overrun by the scale of the famine. As a result, in 1847, Parliament enacted a series of measures to restrict access to famine relief including: prioritizing the disabled and widows for relief at the workhouses, barring anyone that owned at least a quarter of an acre of land from receiving

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[17] Ibid., 41.

[18] Kevin O'Rourke, "The Economic Impact of the Famine in the Short and Long Run," *The American Economic Review* 84, no. 2 (1994): 1.

[19] John Bright, *The Diaries of John Bright, with a Foreword by Philip Bright,* edited by R. A. J. Walling (New York: W. Morrow & Company, 1931), 97.

[20] Ibid., 96.

[21] R.J.W. Evans, et al., *The Revolutions in Europe 1848–1849* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-5.

[22] Preston William Slosson, *The Decline of the Chartist Movement*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 95.

relief, and limiting relief to only those who had lived within their electoral division for three years or more.[23] Efforts to make government relief more efficient were paired with efforts to encourage private sector relief. Parliament established an absentee landlord tax which encouraged landlords to "either reside on their estates or to take care that they are managed, with a proper regard to the welfare of the poor."[24] While these measures helped alleviate the worst of the famine, many British politicians advocated for measures beyond direct famine relief.

British political economists seized the revolutionary spirit of the late 1840s and presented their proposed reforms as radical and democratic. By focusing their rhetoric on ameliorating the starvation, economic crisis, and famine, as well as placing the blame on the confusing land system, British officials could advocate for major shifts away from the existing Irish social order as famine relief efforts. In other words, "theories tagged as 'ameliorative' were later wielded as tools to radically restructure Irish society," just as contemporary disaster capitalists sought to ameliorate the destruction of Hurricane Katrina by expanding fossil fuel production and use across the United States.[25] Lastly, it is possible that this shared interest across ideological persuasions—to prevent rebellion in Ireland—further encouraged both sides of the debate to present a similar vision for the transformation of Irish society towards a capitalist agrarian order.

Wasteland Reclamation and Peasant-Proprietorship

In a letter to Lord John Russel, then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, George Poulett Scrope, explained the position of the peasant-proprietorship faction, which sought to create a new class of peasant-proprietors in Ireland. Wherever there existed reclaimable wasteland that the current owner is not interested in cultivating, he argued, it "should be purchased by the State, at [its] present value."[26] They proposed that the government should then create roads and irrigation systems in the area before dividing the land into plots for farms. These plots would be "either sold outright, or leased for long terms, with an option to the tenant of purchasing by installments, and under conditions to prevent subdivision."[27] These theorists thought the task of reclaiming Ireland's wasteland could not be left up to the current proprietors, nor would it be effective, they argued, to induce the landlords to lease tracts of

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[23] Trevelyan, *The Irish Crisis,* 152-154.
[24] Trevelyan, *The Irish Crisis,* 159-160.
[25] David Nally, "'That Coming Storm': The Irish Poor Law, Colonial Biopolitics, and the Great Famine," 730.
[26] George Poulett Scrope, *Extracts of Evidence Taken by the Late Commission of Inquiry into the Occupation of Land in Ireland, on the Subject of Waste Lands Reclamation; with a Prefatory Letter to the Right Hon. Lord John Russell* (London: James Ridgway, Picadilly: 1847), iii.
[27] Ibid.

wasteland to the poor. Instead, they declared the need for the creation of "a proprietary class" which would "labor with the earnest and indefatigable industry of men who know that they are working for themselves only and their children,-- as labor the peasant-proprietors of Belgium, of Switzerland, of Norway, and of France."[28]

While this proposal centered around land ownership in Ireland, at its core, it was an attempt to attract investment capital and encourage farmers to improve the efficiency and output of their farms. Rather than focusing on the effect of creating a new class of peasant-proprietors on the socioeconomic hierarchy of Ireland—and largely ignoring how this new class would fit into Irish society—Scrope and his contemporaries argued that their economic plan would enhance the productivity of Irish peasants. John Stuart Mill, another British political economist of this persuasion, stated that the present system of land tenancy "withdrew from the people every motive to industry or thrift except the fear of starvation."[29] Thus, unless changes were made to this system, Scrope and Mill argued that the Irish economy and agricultural production would stagnate. This posed a considerable threat to peasants in Ireland's poorest regions, which lacked a food surplus, so even if residents had money or were able to get cash relief, they would still not have access to food.[30]

Furthermore, this new class of peasant-proprietors was not intended to proliferate across the whole of Ireland, or to displace the landowning class. While Mill suggested a policy of "making the whole land of Ireland the property of the tenants, subject to the rents now really paid, as a fixed rent charge," he described this as a worst-case scenario to be adopted "if the nature of the case admitted of no milder remedy." This radical proposition represented a significant shift in power away from the landed class, and Mill was quick to clarify that this was the precise reason why it was suboptimal. Mill described it as "a complete expropriation of the higher classes of Ireland…which would be perfectly warrantable, but only if it were the sole means of effecting a great public good."[31] He further critiqued the proposal and argued that peasant-proprietors themselves were not capable of financing (nor were the Irish peasants capable of understanding) agricultural experiments and discovering improved farming methods. Thus the role of large estates, backed by capital investments and managed by highly educated individuals, was critical. He contended that these farms already exist to some extent in Ireland and that "it would be a public misfortune to drive them from their post."[32] And, in a stereotypical smear of the Irish, he wrote that the current tenants of Ireland are likely too lazy

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[28] Ibid., ix.

[29] John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy, With Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy* (Boston: C. C. Little & J. Brown, 1848), 385.

[30] Louis M. Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 129.

[31] Mill, P*rinciples of Political Economy, With Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy,* 394-395.

[32] Ibid.

to make the most of such an immediate transfer of property. Mill also believed that the expansion of the customary Ulster right to all of Ireland, a customary fixity of tenure in the Irish county, would produce similarly undesirable effects, and thus opposed this proposal.[33]

It is for these reasons that Mill and his contemporaries advocated for the reclamation of wastelands. "Without making the present tenants proprietors," he argued, "nearly the whole surplus population might be converted into peasant proprietors elsewhere."[34] Not only were there examples of successful implementations of this strategy, but because the landless Irish were settled on these lands, Mill argued they had every motivation to improve their situation by erecting as many improvements as possible on the land.[35] Far from being the first to make such a conjecture about industrial motivation, the argument that propriety would increase productivity was popular decades prior to Mill's writing, and was epitomized by Arthur Young's axiom: "the magic of propriety turns sand to gold."[36] Hence, Mill's proposal to establish peasant-proprietors in Ireland was a scheme to put the millions of people without land or employment to work, thereby reclaiming wasteland with propriety of the land as the source of their industry and motivation. Mill further specified that "the remaining area of the country shall not be required to maintain greater numbers than are compatible with large farming and hired labor."[37] This reiterated his support for capital-intensive farming ventures and the shift of Ireland's agriculture towards a more capitalist system, one focused on profits and investing these profits into improvements for the estate.

The scale of the plan that Mill and his colleagues advocated for necessitated a large investment of capital, which Mill saw English investors supplying, and argued for "the introduction of English capital and farming over the remaining surface of Ireland."[38] Not only was the end goal of these policies the transformation of Irish peasants into capitalist farmers and expansion of the capitalist farming model in Ireland, but the transformation, of reclaiming the wasteland and moving the surplus population onto it, would be a capitalist project in and of itself. He declared that "these well-conceived arrangements afford a mode in which private capital may cooperate in renovating the social and agricultural economy of Ireland, not only without sacrifice, but with considerable profit to its owners."[39] Thus, these proposed reforms sought to alleviate the crisis of the Great Famine by placing Ireland's surplus population on tracts of wasteland and giving them ownership of their plots. These new peasant-proprietors

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 396.

[35] Ibid., 399.

[36] Arthur Young, *Travels in France by Arthur Young during the Years 1787, 1788, 1789. With an Introduction, Biographical Sketch, and Notes,* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), 109.

[37] Mill, *Principles of Political Economy, With Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy,* 396.

[38] Ibid., 397-398.

[39] Ibid.,, 402.

would become capitalists as they invested their surplus produce into improving their land, motivated by their ownership of that very land, while the rest of the island shifts towards capitalist farming and the hiring of the Irish as wage laborers. Lastly, this transformation would be facilitated and funded in large part by investments from English capitalists, whose increased economic activity in Ireland would yield them considerable profits.

Changes to Tenancy Laws and Emigration

While the peasant-proprietor faction sought to establish a new class of peasant-proprietors in Ireland, the consolidation and investment faction sought to entirely avoid giving tenants propriety of their land, which they saw as an "open confiscation of property."[40] Similar to their opponents, however, the consolidation and investment faction also set out to transform the Irish peasantry into an industrious and efficient people through changes to the Irish land system. The primary issue they saw with the current land legislation of Ireland was the ownership of improvements constructed by tenants. British political economist William Neilson Hancock argued that not only did these improvements require an outlay of capital, which many Irish peasants did not have, but the short length of leases and fact that the landlord had full ownership over the improvements themselves meant that "the tenant's interest in all the improvements ends with his tenancy."[41] Therefore, Hancock proposed that "all improvements shall be deemed to be the property of the person who made them," and that on the expiration of a lease, the landlord must pay the tenant "the market price" for the improvements.[42] He further stipulated that this law should only apply to contracts which do not already have clauses surrounding the ownership of improvements, or cases in which no such contract exists.[43]

While this reform entailed a significant transfer of revenue from landlords to tenants, it did not seek to establish a new class in Ireland, let alone upend the existing socioeconomic strata. Indeed, theorists such as John Bright even saw this plan as being beneficial for the landed classes, as "all advance[ments] in the classes below them tends to their good without exertion on their part."[44] Once again, we see political economists proposing a plan to "save the Irish from themselves" that is explicitly designed and promoted as a plan that preserves and promotes the interests of the landed classes.

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[40] Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870,* 34.
[41] William Neilson Hancock, *On The Economic Causes of the Present State of Agriculture in Ireland: Part III,* (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1849), 6.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Bright, *The Diaries of John Bright,* 100.

The consolidation and investment faction also sought to make it easier for English capitalists to invest in Irish industries. In Hancock's view, "owners [in Ireland] have short or defective leasing powers."[45] He shared the story of a capitalist interested in creating a flax mill in Northern Ireland. The capitalist found a location near a navigable river, a large bog to be used as fuel for the mill, and a town with people looking for work who could be employed at the mill thus having their situation improved. When the owner of the land attempted to rent the property at a nominal rate and long tenure which both parties agreed upon, they found that such a lease was illegal. The owner was "bound by settlement to let at the best rent only," and there were further limitations on the length of the lease and number of acres he could lease to the capitalist.[46] As a result, he was forced to move his enterprise elsewhere, leaving the owner and local people worse off because of it. Hancock argues that these laws were "founded on the economic fallacy that parties who expend capital on land will not make the most profitable use of their own improvements if left to themselves," and that the law should be amended to provide more flexibility to landlords in dictating the terms of tenure.[47]

Nassau Senior sought to address the enormous surplus population, and thus surplus labor, of Ireland. Nassau Senior decried the enormous capital the state would have to pay upfront to fund the reclamation of Ireland's wasteland, and argued that this sum would be far greater than the cost associated with government-funded mass emigration of the Irish. At the same time, he attacked the notion of peasant-proprietorship as a solution in Ireland, arguing that it would be impossible to prevent the subdivision of the reclaimed farms.[48] The removal of the surplus population would remove the economic drain of providing relief to the millions of people without employment or land, allowing wages to rise overtime as the demand for labor increases. Coupled with reforms encouraging tenants to erect improvements themselves, these political economists believed these proposals would usher Ireland into a new age of prosperity and productivity by incentivizing Irish tenants to invest capital in their farms to increase production and sending the unproductive members of Irish society abroad.

A Unified Vision for Ireland

It was evident in the nature of the proposals put forward that these two groups of British political economists saw similar causes for the Irish crisis of the mid-late 1840s, specifically the existence of a surplus population and a lack of work ethic resulting from

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[45] Hancock, *On The Economic Causes of the Present State of Agriculture in Ireland: Part III*, 9.

[46] Ibid., 10.

[47] Ibid., 11-12.

[48] Nassau William Senior, *Journals, Conversations and Essays Relating to Ireland,* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1868), 253-255.

Ireland's land laws. The peasant-proprietor faction addressed both issues through the purchase of wasteland, and settlement of the surplus population thereupon. The consolidation and investment faction proposed compensation for improvements erected by tenants and flexibility in the terms of tenure to make the Irish more industrious, and emigration to rid the island of its surplus population. However, the intended goals and effects of these means they are not as different as Black's assessment suggested. Both plans sought to induce the Irish peasantry to become capitalist farmers, motivated by profit and ownership of the means of production, to increase and expand Ireland's agricultural production. The first group advocated for this transformation through the creation of a new peasant-proprietor class, while the second argued for a transformation of existing Irish tenants away from subsistence farming and towards capitalist farming. Therefore, as both camps supported reforms designed to transition the majority of agricultural production in Ireland towards a capitalist model, they both advocated for a similar vision of post-famine Irish society.

The two camps were also not as opposed to each other's proposals as Black suggested either. Mill himself, who Black described as the "most influential" of the advocates for peasant-propriety and reclamation of wasteland, also advocates for the use of core components of the famine relief plan put forward by his opponents.[49] In order to ensure that Ireland would truly be rid of her surplus population, his proposal called for "a very moderate additional relief by emigration."[50] That Black presented a component of Mill's argument as belonging distinctly to the opposing side of the debate suggests that the proposals made by these two factions may have more in common with one another than was previously supposed, and that there was flexibility and room for agreement in the methods employed by each side.

This flexibility in tactics further supports the idea that both sets of British political economists had similar visions for post-famine Ireland: first and foremost, that Ireland's agricultural productivity needed to be increased. In 1845, on the eve of the Famine, the projected value of Great Britain's agricultural output was two thirds higher than Ireland's, despite total agricultural acreage and number of agricultural laborers being only 50% and 15% higher in Great Britain, respectively.[51] Secondly, they believed that this increase should be facilitated by the transition of Irish peasants into capitalist farmers who are motivated by a sense of ownership to invest in the improvement of their farms. And thirdly, that this transition should be aided by, and in most cases designed to increase opportunities for, English capitalists whose investments in Irish agriculture and industry will bring Ireland's productive capacity closer to that of Great Britain.

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[49] Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870*, 30.

[50] Mill, *Principles of Political Economy, With Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy*, 397-398.

[51] Cormac Ó Gráda, "Irish Agricultural Output Before and After the Famine," *Journal of European Economic History* 13, no. 1 (1984): 153.

Therefore, the debate among British political economists during and immediately following The Great Famine was not so much a debate about the vision for a new Irish society, but rather a debate about how to best realize a shared vision: the creation of capitalist farmers and wage laborers, and thus the transition of the Irish agrarian order towards a capitalist economy.

The Physical Effects of the Debate/Famine

Between 1845 and 1850 Parliament struggled to pass measures to address the instability of the Irish land system. Despite attempts by Lord John Russell's administration to please both factions—such as a short-lived Bill to use government funds to reclaim wasteland that was gutted in the House of Commons—fierce opposition from both sides, and especially from the insurance corporations, stalled or weakened most Bills in the initial years of the famine. The only significant legislation passed in this period was the Incumbered Estates Act of 1849 which sought to facilitate the process of selling estates whose owners defaulted on their obligations. Within eight years, "3,197 properties were sold to 7,216 purchasers," but many of the purchasers were speculators, preserving many of the issues of the original system and forcing tenants in some cases to pay higher rents than before.[52]

These measures did, however, allow for some consolidation of Irish land into large estates, a process facilitated by the devastation of the famine which lessened overpopulation.[53] This consolidation, and the potato blight itself, changed the products Irish farmers produced as well. In 1845 more than two million acres were used for potato production. By 1848, this number had fallen to a mere three hundred thousand acres, and though it expanded in the following years, Irish potato production remained significantly lower than it had been prior to the famine. Furthermore, the percentage of Irish agricultural output devoted to tillage decreased from two-thirds to one half between 1845 and 1854, due to shifts in the global food market that increased demand for meat and animal products.[54] Pastures dedicated to livestock needed less labor than farms growing grains and cereal which, coupled with the ineffectiveness of the Incumbered Estates Act to allow tenants to purchase farms for themselves, meant that "the condition of the mass of the rural population was not improved, and emigration remained their only prospect of advancement."[55]

The only other major piece of legislation to address the Irish Question came in 1870. After a series of deficient harvests in the 1860s strained the tenuous economic rebound in Ireland, Parliament once again turned its attention towards the Irish land system. The Land Act

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[52] Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870*, 39-40.

[53] Ibid., 11.

[54] Gráda, "Irish Agricultural Output Before and After the Famine," 154.

[55] Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870*, 11.

of 1870 included provisions around compensation for improvements at the termination of a lease and the ability for some tenants to seek compensation for unjust evictions, but the measures were greatly weakened in the House of Lords.[56]

Throughout the decades following the Great Famine, the debate between the peasant-proprietor faction and the capital and investment faction was alive and well in Parliament and in British and Irish media. The disagreement between these two camps stalled and stopped legislation, leading to the creation of several hybrid proposals. And while the provisions that did pass largely favored the capital and investment faction, many Members of Parliament (including Lord John Russell and John Bright) vacillated in their approach to the Irish Question.[57] Ultimately, what changes did occur in Ireland were largely the result of its rapid depopulation as more than two million people died or emigrated because of the famine, rather than any government policy.

Consequently, the inability of Parliament to significantly transform Irish society through government policy suggests that capitalist class formation in Britain was incomplete at the time of the Great Famine. Contemporary disaster capitalists in the United States cooperated with one another through organizations like the Heritage Foundation to advocate for a unified slate of hurricane relief proposals to transform American society.[58] On the other hand, despite having a unified vision for Ireland as I have argued, the two factions of political economists—and by extension the monied interests they represented—failed to settle on a unified vision for how to transform Ireland into a capitalist society. However, this failure does not undermine the significance of the framing of an overall approach towards disaster relief following the famine. Instead, it provided a precedent for future disasters in the British Empire to be addressed through policies oriented around structural change and showed that the capitalist class needed to become more unified if it wanted to successfully advocate for and pressure politicians to pass significant legislation. In spite of the policy stalemate which it created, the debate between the peasant-proprietor and capital and investment factions provides further insights into British political economy in the mid-nineteenth century.

Ramifications of an Emerging Capitalism

The fact that there was widespread agreement that the creation of a large class of capitalist farmers was an integral part of resolving the land and economic crises of Ireland is significant. To start, the agreement demonstrates that British political economists sought to shift non-capitalist parts of the United Kingdom and British Empire towards a capitalist

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[56] Ibid., 65-70.
[57] Ibid., 49-70.
[58] Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism,* 410.

economic system. By the time of the Great Famine, capitalism had already been developing in England for more than a century. In the first half of the nineteenth century, after Ireland was politically integrated into the United Kingdom, the British worked to integrate the islands with one another economically as well. The last tariffs between Great Britain and Ireland were lifted by the early 1820s and they used the same currency after 1826. This had the effect of making "trade between Britain and Ireland free and intense, with product markets becoming increasingly well integrated."[59] Reorienting the production of Ireland away from subsistence farming, as was all but required for the majority of Ireland's peasants who had only a small plot of land to support themselves, and towards farming for profit would bring millions more people into the capitalist fold. The money these farmers earned would both allow them to expand their production, at once increasing the quantity of goods exported by the empire, as well as supporting new industries through their purchases of commodities.

This agreement also speaks to a growing sense of cross-ideological support for capitalism more broadly. In supporting the creation of a large class of capitalist farmers in Ireland, both sides of the land reform debate implicitly declared that agrarian capitalism is in the interests of the Irish people and the United Kingdom. Rather than one camp supporting a model similar to the feudal agrarian model that preceded capitalism in England (and was representative of the existing Irish agrarian system to some extent), political economists agreed that expanding private ownership of the means of agricultural production was beneficial to Irish society as well as the United Kingdom. Examining the debate through this lens also recontextualizes what is truly being debated. Rather than presenting opposing visions for a post-famine Ireland, the debate is now centered on the best way to create a large Irish agrarian capitalist class, or the best method to achieve a similar vision for Irish society.

This consensus around the so-called "Irish question," is likely correlated to the fact that capitalism was already beginning to take hold in Ireland. Louis Cullen argued that one motivation for the British government's insufficient direct relief efforts was an effort to protect "the fragile but extensive retail system that catered for food requirements in much of the country."[60] This assessment provides insight into why political economists sought to create a class of capitalist farmers in Ireland. If food was already a commodity to some extent in Ireland, ensuring that the Irish had a source of income to access food in a post-famine society would help safeguard against future famines. By creating more capitalist farmers, political economists also created the opportunity for an expanded class of Irish wage laborers to work on these farms, who would be able to use their wages to purchase food on these emerging markets, as

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[59] Peter M. Solar, "Why Ireland Starved and the Big Issues in Pre-Famine Irish Economic History," *Irish Economic and Social History* 42 (2015): 67.
[60] Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland Since 1660,* 132.

well as the expansion of these food markets themselves thanks to the expanded productive capacity of Irish farming due to capitalist farmers investing in improving their agricultural practices. Cullen further argued, potentially conflicting with the writings of the political economists writing at the time of the famine, that the existence of capital in Ireland is not an obstacle to the establishment of agrarian capitalism there either. He argues that there was "an abundance of capital" in Ireland, but without anywhere to meaningfully invest it.[61] This can be seen in the purchases of English shares in Irish banks and railroads, as well as contributing to the flow of capital *out* of Ireland as investors sent money to England while the Irish economy remained stagnant and difficult to invest in. The transformation of Irish peasants into capitalist farmers would help alleviate this problem by creating new enterprises and outlets for Irish capital to invest in.

Lastly, the proposed transition of Ireland towards agrarian capitalism is related to British imperialism and speaks to the links between capitalism and imperialism more broadly. Historian Ellen Meiksins Wood described this process in *Empire of Capital*. She argues that agrarian capitalism itself served as a model for future European imperialism. Describing the shift towards this model as "domestic 'colonization,'" she argued that "agrarian capitalism was reproduced in the theory and practice of empire."[62] In particular, she believed that the process of the enclosure and privatization of land, the improvement and transformation of this land into productive assets through the investment of capital, and the new property rights and land policies that were created to facilitate and protect this transformation were replicated in the practices and policies of imperialism throughout the nineteenth century. Thus, the Great Famine presented British political economists with an opportunity to extend the principles of English agrarian capitalism beyond Great Britain on a large scale for the first time. Over the following century, the British transformed vast swaths of the globe into capitalist societies similarly to their efforts to promote private ownership of the means of production, a strong focus on investing in the improvement of productive capacity, and a system of wage labor in Ireland. As one of the largest imperial powers in world history operating as capitalism began to emerge across Europe and the world, British efforts to shift their territories towards capitalist models of production helped expand and establish global networks of exchange and markets, as well as a global wage labor market, that would become the system of global capitalism, entrenched in virtually every corner of the globe today.

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[61] Ibid., 129.

[62] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Empire of Capital* (London: Verso Books, 2003), 78.

Conclusion

The Great Famine was a massive socioeconomic crisis that threatened the stability of not only Irish society, but also British society more generally. The sheer scale of the crisis meant that it was also a potential turning point for the Irish agrarian order. With millions dead or displaced, the once stable agrarian order was disrupted across much of the island, meaning that relief efforts would at once need to work to shift daily life back towards this system, or present an alternative system in order to ensure long term social stability in Ireland. As the famine unfolded, British political economists coalesced around two proposals for what this shift towards a new society might look like. One called for the creation of a new peasant-proprietor class, and the other the transformation of tenant farmers into capitalist tenant farmers.

Overall, despite differences in the reforms proposed and which Irish peasants would constitute the new capitalist class, both proposals argued that Irish peasants must be encouraged to become capitalists themselves through ownership of the means of production. For the first group this meant giving Irish peasants ownership over the land they cultivated, while the other proposal accomplished this through ensuring that tenants owned any improvements or productive assets they built or acquired during their tenancy. The existence of agreement between the two camps and overlap between their proposals also contributes to this sense of similarity between the proposals and further supports the notion that they advocated for similar visions of a post-famine Irish society.

That opposing factions of British political economists advocated for a similar new Irish agrarian capitalism speaks to developments in mid-nineteenth century British political economy in general. It shows that capitalism had established itself as the standard economic system for British economists, and that they advocated for its expansion into non-capitalist aspects of existing societies or its replacement for existing social orders. This is further supported by the writings of historians since the famine and reinforced by evidence of British efforts to establish capitalism in Ireland in the decades prior to the Great Famine. The time period in which these reforms were proposed also situates famine relief in Ireland and the goal of transitioning Ireland into a capitalist society in the broader context of British imperialism and the spread of capitalism from Europe to territories abroad.

Not only did mid-nineteenth century British political economists act similarly to modern day disaster capitalists, but in many ways they can be seen as some of history's earliest disaster capitalists. In promoting the transition of Ireland towards a system of agrarian capitalism, they helped lay the groundwork for a global capitalist economic system that would allow disaster capitalists to profit from other disasters over the following centuries. Their efforts to use the Great Famine as an opportunity to radically reimagine Ireland also created a

precedent for imperial powers and capitalist economists to view crises as opportunities for economic and social transformation, and design disaster relief to facilitate these transformations. Ultimately, the agreement among Britain's premier political economists in the mid-nineteenth century that capitalism was the solution to Ireland's problems shows the extent to which capitalism had become the predominant economic system in the United Kingdom by this period, and helps further contextualize the shift towards capitalism in the British Isles and abroad during the nineteenth century.

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A Growing Red Dot: Governmentality, Depoliticisation and Land Reclamation in Singapore and Southeast Asia

Hubert Yeo

Abstract

Through an analysis of cartographic illustrations of Singapore since 1965, this piece will illustrate how the Singaporean polity was disciplined and depoliticised into perceiving land reclamation as an ideal necessary for national prosperity, security and continued survival. The discourse surrounding this policy in various news publications and ministerial statements will also feature to augment the cartographic representations chosen. I conclude with a deconstruction of more contemporary discourses to highlight the continued inertia of the city-state in transforming its politics surrounding land reclamation in spite of this. The objective of my essay has not been to decry the Singapore government for its relentless expansion through land reclamation, but to bring about a critical examination of why and how this has come about.

Introduction: Singapura, Sunny Island *Set* in the Sea?

During an interview with *The Asian Wall Street Journal* published on August 4, 1998, five days before Singapore's 33rd National Day, the former Indonesian President B. J. Habibie disparagingly described the country as a "red dot" in comparison to Indonesia's size.[1] However, his comment now takes on an ironic note given Singapore's ever-increasing landmass. Its surface area increased from 581.5 to 725.7 square kilometres between 1960 and 2019 due to an aggressive policy of land reclamation, and this figure is only set to increase further.[2] A considerable proportion of the country's economy, along with many other public housing estates and amenities, now stand on the additional 144.2 square kilometres of land that was once the sea. The petrochemical industry, worth 124 billion United States Dollars (USD) in export value, is located mainly on Pulau Bukom, an island crafted through the reclamation of two smaller islets.[3] Changi Airport, which handled 68.3 million passengers in 2019 and had an economic impact of 36.6 billion USD in 2017 also sits on artificial land.[4]

Framed by the state through the lens of teleological progress, most of these projects have been uncontested and perceived as positive by the Singaporean polity. Through an analysis of cartographic illustrations from 1966 to 1998 and by referencing the theoretical frameworks devised by French philosopher Michel Foucault, this essay illustrates how Singaporeans have been *disciplined* and *depoliticised* into perceiving land reclamation as an ideal necessary for national development and prosperity. Inconvenient narratives raised by local communities surrounding the production and import of sand, which often destroys coastal communities and ecosystems, are either justified through discourses of continued survival, paid off or suppressed entirely by the state. Articles from the national English-language broadsheet *The Straits Times*, the now-defunct *New Nation* and *Singapore Monitor*, as well as the policy position of the Singapore government, will all feature in my essay to augment the cartographic representations chosen. Further, as the environmental repercussions of dredging sand have become more well-documented in recent years, I will conclude with an examination of contemporary discourses in Singapore to highlight the continued inertia of the city-state in transforming its politics surrounding land reclamation. This examination will be situated in the context of the 'Anthropocene', the "new epoch in the geological time scale that marks how human activities…have become the dominant force in shaping earth history, superseding natural geological, chemical, and climatological forces".[5]

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[1] Richard Borsuk and Reginald Chua, "Singapore Strains Relations with Indonesia's President", *Asian Wall Street Journal*, August 4, 1998. Factiva.

[2] "Total Land Area of Singapore", Singapore Land Authority, last modified September 18, 2020.

[3] Khuong M. Vu, "Embracing Globalization to Promote Industrialization: Insights from the Development of Singapore's Petrochemicals Industry", *China Economic Review* no. 48 (2018): 177. Elsevier.

[4] "Air Traffic Statistics", Changi Airport Group, accessed November 25, 2020.; International Air Transport Association, *The Importance of Air Transport to Singapore*, accessed November 25, 2020.

[5] Robert Hine ed., "Anthropocene", in *A Dictionary of Biology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Oxford Reference.

Theoretical Groundworks: Foucault and Depoliticisation

Foucault's model of "governmentality" is useful for deconstructing how the Singaporean polity was disciplined to accept land reclamation as a cornerstone of the country's national identity and economic policy. This model is defined as "(i) the ensemble of institutions and procedures that enable the exercise of a very specific type of power; and (ii) the tendency that has over time led to the predominance of a specific model of power...; and (iii) the processes by which previous models of power came to be governmentalized".[6] "Governmentality" builds upon Foucault's conception of "discipline", where power functions by "obtaining holds upon [the individual body] at the level of the mechanism itself – movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity".[7] Accordingly, as Singaporeans arrive at an understanding of land reclamation as a necessary feature of economic and national development policy over a *longue durée*, "so slowly as to be imperceptible to those who experience them", they become configured into and complicit in the political economy of the nation-state, and power expands to discipline them as a collective whole, "one centred on the population as a 'species body' or *bio-politics*".[8]

"Preference shaping depoliticisation" follows after the Singaporean polity believes "that they can no longer be reasonably held responsible for a certain issue" – which, in this case, refers to Singapore's land constraints and its need to reclaim land.[9] Matthew Flinders and Jim Buller refer to this as "recourse to ideological, discursive or rhetorical claims to justify a political position that a certain issue...does, or should, lie beyond the scope of politics or the capacity for state control".[10] Land reclamation was framed in cartographical representations and the discourse surrounding it by the state as an unavoidable reality. In doing so, the nation's leaders assume tacit approval from the polity that elected them and distance themselves from taking responsibility for any decisions related to land reclamation – that is, any issues arising will be blamed on Singapore's physical circumstances and not on any of the decision-makers who designed and introduced those policies. This paved the way for the relentless expansion of Singapore's frontiers as they believed it to be critical to the continued survival of the country.

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[6] Ian Buchanan, "Governmentality", in *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, *2nd Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Oxford Reference.

[7] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1991), 137.

[8] Ian Buchanan, "Longue Durée", in *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Oxford Reference.; Jeremy W. Crampton, *Mapping: A Critical Introduction to Geography and GIS* (Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 65.

[9] Matthew Flinders and Jim Buller, "Depoliticisation: Practices, Tactics and Tools", *British Politics* vol. 1, no. 3 (2006): 296, 307. Springer.

[10] Ibid, 307.

Existing Historiography

A fair amount has been written about Singapore's land reclamation policies over the past two decades, particularly after it received significant international attention when Malaysia "[invoked] the provisions of the 1982 [United Nations] Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)…[and] applied to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)" in 2002 to stop Singapore's attempts to reclaim land in Pulau Tekong and Tuas View Extension.[11] Tommy Koh, a Singaporean diplomat and the President of the Third UNCLOS, who also served as the mediator between Singapore and Malaysia during the dispute, delivered a speech in 2005 defending Singapore's sovereignty to pursue land reclamation within its waters and the importance of having and respecting an international arbitration process.[12] Akmalhisham Jasni, Sharifah Munirah Alatas and Sharifah Mastura Syed Abdullah furthered the study of land reclamation's geopolitical importance and influence on Singapore by looking at the relationship between the island city-state and the United States through the lens of "realpolitik" and the growing "presence of US (United States) military power in the [Asia-Pacific] region".[13]

Beyond the field of geopolitics, Singapore's land reclamation has also come under close analysis in the fields of geographical urban studies and social history. T. C. Chang and Shirlena Huang with their article "Reclaiming the City: Waterfront Development in Singapore" looked at "three forms of urban reclamation [which] include reclaiming functionality, aimed at infusing the waterfront with new land uses; reclaiming access, as a way of opening up the landscape to more people; and reclaiming the local, as a way to commemorate local cultures and histories," along with how Singaporeans and tourists who visited the country perceived each category.[14] William Jamieson, with his article "There's Sand in My Infinity Pool: Land Reclamation and the Rewriting of Singapore", interrogates the "significance of land reclamation in the cultural formation of identity and landscape…[through] interviews, ethnographic accounts, and autoethnography".[15] However, the dimension that has yet to receive critical attention in the existing collection of scholarship is *how* the discourses surrounding the promotion and implementation of Singaporean land reclamation as a cornerstone of the government's economic and national development policy manifested among the populace. I address this gap in my essay through

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[11] Tommy Koh and Jolene Lin, "The Land Reclamation Case: Thoughts and Reflections", *Singapore Year Book of International Law* vol. 10 (2006): 1.

[12] Ibid. HeinOnline.; Pulau Tekong is an island off the north-east coast of Singapore which is used exclusively for military training. Tuas View Extension is located at the west of the main island and is the site where many dormitories meant for migrant workers are located.

[13] Akmalhisham Jasni, Sharifah Munirah Alatas and Sharifah Mastura Syed Abdullah, "'Realpolitik' of Singapore-United States of America in the Context of Land Reclamation in Singapore", *Akademika* vol. 85, no. 2 (2015): 17. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

[14] T. C. Chang and Shirlena Huang, "Reclaiming the City: Waterfront Development in Singapore", *Urban Studies* vol. 48, no. 10 (August 2011): 2085. JSTOR.

[15] William Jamieson, "There's Sand in My Infinity Pool: Land Reclamation and the Rewriting of Singapore", *GeoHumanities* vol. 3, no. 2 (2017): 396. Taylor & Francis Online.

cartography, utilised alongside newspaper articles and publications by the People's Action Party (PAP), the ruling political party in Singapore for the last 56 years of its independence.

Cartographical Representations of Singapore's Land Reclamation from 1960 to 1980

To avoid the impression that land reclamation in Singapore transpired only after its independence, it is important to clarify that the first Singaporean land reclamation project occurred in 1822, three years after its colonisation by the British, to prepare it as a "trading centre" for the East India Company.[16] However, subsequent projects to increase the size of the country's port and create infrastructure for "public utilities and military purposes and also for coastal protection" only occurred occasionally and were interrupted by the Japanese Occupation at the start of the Second World War.[17] Land reclamation did not feature as a foundational component of economic and national development policy until after the country's independence in 1965, as Singapore now sought to distinguish itself from Malaysia and respond to the demands of population growth and the desire to attain commercial success, causing "natural spatial pre-conditions [to play] practically no further role".[18] This will be illustrated by tracking the changes in the country's physical environment on maps prepared and published by the Chief Surveyor of Singapore and the Ministry of Defence over three decades since independence, starting with the Chief Surveyor's map of Singapore in 1966 (Figure 1).[19]

Figure 1 - Chief Surveyor of Singapore. Singapore and Johor. 1:25,000. "Historical Maps of Singapore". 1966. https://libmaps.nus.edu.sg/. Accessed November 29, 2020.

[16] R. Glaser, P. Haberzettl and R. P. D. Walsh, "Land Reclamation in Singapore, Hong Kong and Macau", *GeoJournal* vol. 24, no. 4 (August 1991): 366. JSTOR.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid, 372.; On population growth: "Singapore Residents By Age Group, Ethnic Group And Gender, End June, Annual", Ministry of Trade and Industry, last modified July 17, 2020.

[19] Due to space constraints, I am unable to provide the entire map in full resolution. However, these are accessible at the 'Historical Maps of Singapore' website courtesy of the National University of Singapore, along with many other useful features such as layering and adjusting the opacity of the maps available, which helped me greatly in my analysis.

Singapore had been "integrated economically, financially and politically into the Malay Peninsula" by the beginning of the twentieth century, which served as a hinterland and supplied natural resources to ensure the continued running of all commercial activity on the island city-state.[20] Consequently, following its political separation and independence from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore spared no effort to secure its long-term viability as a sovereign state by ensuring continued access to the natural resources required for maintaining its economy and providing for the needs of a growing population. Such an undertaking is evidenced in the government's plan to create land for the construction of high-rise public flats in the East of the country, desalination plants which would supplement Singapore's water supply, along with other miscellaneous public and private developments.[21]

During Singapore's colonial history, the British East India Company used the island as a base for further trade in East Asia and located its maritime port in the south, which has now become the country's commercial core, visible in the density of roads and buildings in the area as seen in Figure 1.[22] Vegetation and mangrove swamps, respectively coloured green and pale blue on the map, cover the rest of the island in significant numbers, suggesting that urban developments have yet to affect these areas.[23] Most visually stark, however, is the accumulation of sand, primarily along the south-western, south-eastern, eastern and north-eastern coasts, which are coloured orange on the map, highlighting the ambition and scale of land reclamation projects in progress.[24] When the patent artificiality of the orange is contrasted alongside the organic green and blue of the country's natural environments, the susceptibility and vulnerability of the people who live and work in these areas to the government's expansionist intent become apparent.

In the *creative* act of land reclamation, the topographical map as a "scientific and accurate representation of the landscape" is subverted and is instead reconceived as an object of impermanence, a projection of a Singapore not in situ, but *in process*, a country which will look visibly different in the future.¹[25] What is visible is therefore not static, but "active… [for maps] actively construct knowledge, they exercise power, and they can be a powerful means of promoting social change".[26] Configured into Foucault's conception of "governmentality"

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[20] Chong Guan Kwa, *Seven Hundred Years: A History of Singapore* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2019), 300, 326, 331, 336, 349, 355. ProQuest.

[21] On high-rise flats: "More Homes for the People", *Straits Times*, July 25, 1965. NewspaperSG.; On Singapore's population growth, see n. 18.; On the construction of desalination plants to supplement Singapore's water supply: "Desalinated Water", Public Utilities Board (PUB): Singapore's National Water Agency, accessed April 21, 2022.; On private and public developments: "Giant Project Adds 1,000 New Acres", *Straits Times*, July 22, 1966. NewspaperSG.

[22] Wong Lin Ken, "Singapore: Its Growth as an Entrepot Port, 1819-1941", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* vol. 9, no. 1 (1978): 52-53. Cambridge Core.

[23] I do not distinguish between sundry tree cultivation, sundry minor cultivation, secondary jungle, primary jungle and plantations for rubber, coconut and pineapple in using the term 'vegetation'.

[24] For quantification, see "50,000 Homes to Go Up in Singapore This Year", *Straits Times*, January 2, 1965. NewspaperSG.

[25] Crampton, *Mapping*, 10.

[26] Ibid, 18.

and how power works on both the level of the individual and the wider populace, this projection of Singapore's expanding size serves to prepare the polity for an imagined future that is neither assured nor fixed, but one of constant transformation.[27] Numerous articles published in *The Straits Times* following independence serve to compel the acceptance of future upheaval for the sake of economic growth and national development.[28] The portrayal of Foucault's disciplining, institutional power working in tandem with "preference shaping depoliticisation" may be observed most vividly in an article titled 'Changing Times', published by an anonymous author in *The Straits Times* on May 20, 1966:

The changes in Singapore's shoreline now being wrought off Bedok and Siglap represent a problem for cartographers for years, even decades, to come; the island's shape will never be exactly what the maps make of it…Boundaries will bulge ceaselessly outwards, now here, now there…Who will complain if some old memories get swept away with the slums? Singapore is changing much too rapidly for nostalgia to be a force in its affairs".[29]

The rhetorical question left unanswered at the end of the excerpt is telling of "governmentality" at work – none will or may complain, for the "ensemble of institutions and procedures" constituting state power have allowed for the reimagining of a newly-independent, postcolonial state.[30] 'Slums', used here to signify the backwardness of the past, are presented as a justification for the government to embark on its land reclamation projects in a bid to modernise the country and secure its long-term viability. The term was used repeatedly in the press during the first three decades of Singapore's independence as the country sought to industrialise and come into its own as a newly independent nation.[31] By homogenising the areas external to the commercial core in the south of the country as regressive and therefore expendable, all that is constitutive of Singapore's past is compelled to submit to the pressures of future-oriented and modern development. Given the political continuity and permanence of Singapore's government, along with their disciplinary discourses espousing the necessity of land reclamation, the Singaporean polity tacitly complies. Trust must be vested, whether willingly or unwillingly, in the construction of the nation-state such that the polity moves, borrowing Benedict Anderson's characterisation of nationalism, toward "a common destiny, a common future…bound by a deep horizontal comradeship".[32] This notion of a common nationalism is, however, anything but organic, facilitated by the disciplinary power of state institutions, with cartography and written media

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[27] Buchanan, "Governmentality".

[28] "$50m Reclamation May Become Tourist Resort", *Straits Times*, July 24, 1966. NewspaperSG.; "$40 Million Bedok Project Is Fantastic – Expert", *Straits Times*, May 20, 1966. NewspaperSG.; "$276m. Allocated For Development Plans in Singapore", *Straits Times*, December 15, 1965. NewspaperSG.

[29] Buchanan, "Governmentality".; Flinders and Buller, "Depoliticisation", 307.; "Changing City", *Straits Times,* May 20, 1966. NewspaperSG.

[30] Buchanan, "Governmentality".

[31] "New City of the Future", *Straits Times*, January 26, 1977. NewspaperSG.; "Housing Estates May Become Slums Warning", *New Nation*, April 27, 1972. NewspaperSG.;
"A Trend to Quality", *Straits Times*, July 22, 1967. NewspaperSG.

[32] Benedict R. Anderson, "Indonesian Nationalism Today and in the Future." *Indonesia* no. 67 (1999): 3. JSTOR.

as enabling tools. I now turn to the map of Singapore published by the Ministry of Defence in 1978 (Figure 2). Through a comparative analysis, the transformation of Singapore's physical environment and with it, the destruction of coastal communities and ecosystems around the country, will be evidenced.

Figure 2 - Ministry of Defence, Singapore. *Singapore*. 1:50,000. "Historical Maps of Singapore". 1978. https://libmaps.nus.edu.sg/. Accessed November 29, 2020.

Over the span of twelve years, the alteration of Singapore's physical landscape due to land reclamation becomes unmistakably clear. The colours of green and pale blue, which represented the mangrove swamps and natural vegetation around the country, have all receded, particularly along the western, south-eastern, eastern and north-eastern coasts. Further, the orange which had conspicuously represented the land reclamation process in Figure 1 has now been definitively replaced by a mass of white, representing functional spaces ready for further development; the rectilinearity of these reclaimed areas which "natural geomorphological processes could not have made" further highlight the artificiality of the entire process.[33] This cartographical transition from orange to white and water to land affirms the government's intention to reclaim land and enables the Singaporean citizen viewing it to envision its future development. In the present day, land in the western region is home to the new Tuas Industrial Park, which contains several companies from Singapore's pharmaceutical, petrochemical and biotechnology industries, while the emergent space in

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[33] Sarah Novak, "To Build a City-State and Erode History: Sand and the Construction of Singapore", in *Eating Chilli Crab in the Anthropocene: Environmental Perspectives on Life in Singapore*, ed. Matthew Schneider (Singapore: Ethos Books, 2020), 62.

the eastern region is where Changi Airport now stands. This expansion of industrial infrastructure serves as a key indicator of Singapore's attempt to assert itself as a sovereign nation by striving for greater independence in ensuring greater access to natural resources, as well as economic prosperity and stability.[34] Figures 3 to 6 provide a close-up comparison of this radical transformation along Singapore's coastal frontiers.
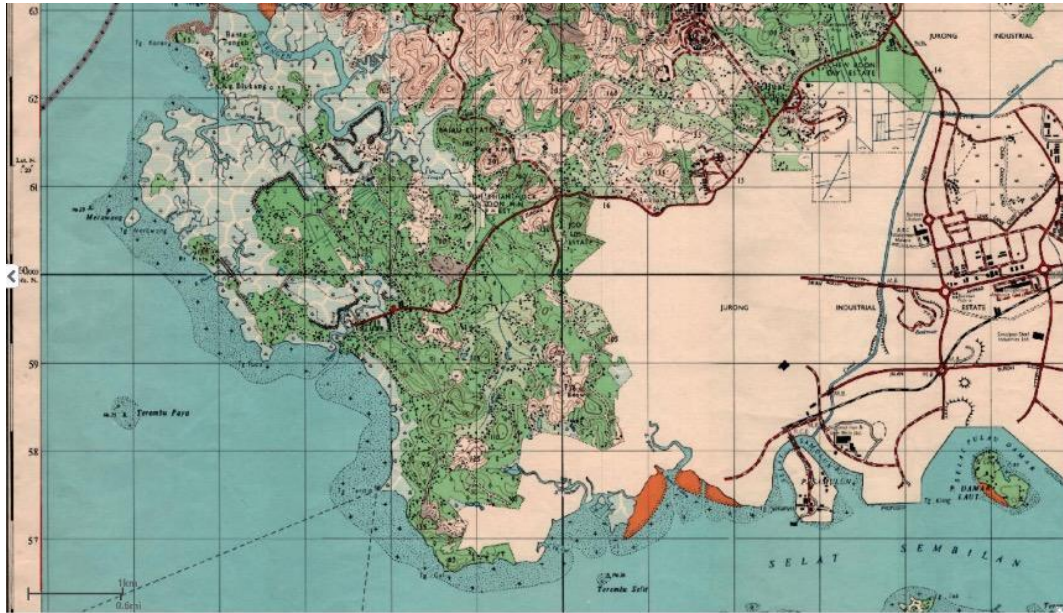
Figure *3* - Chief Surveyor of Singapore. "Jurong and Tuas". In Singapore and Johor. 1:25,000. "Historical Maps of Singapore". 1966. https://libmaps.nus.edu.sg/. Accessed November 29, 2020.

Figure *4* - Ministry of Defence, Singapore. "Jurong and Tuas". In *Singapore*. 1:50,000. "Historical Maps of Singapore". 1978. https://libmaps.nus.edu.sg/. Accessed November 29, 2020.

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[34] On Tuas: Vernon Cornelius, "Tuas", Singapore Infopedia, accessed December 1, 2020.; "Tuas Biomedical Park", Jurong Town Corporation, accessed December 1, 2020.; On Changi Airport: Bonny Tan, "Changi Airport", Singapore Infopedia, accessed December 1, 2020.

Figure *5* - Chief Surveyor of Singapore. *"*Changi, Tampines and Bedok*"*. In *Singapore and Johor*. 1:25,000. *"*Historical Maps of Singapore*"*. 1966. https://libmaps.nus.edu.sg/. Accessed November 29, 2020.

Figure *6* - Ministry of Defence, Singapore. "Changi, Tampines and Bedok". In *Singapore*. 1:50,000. "Historical Maps of Singapore". 1978. https://libmaps.nus.edu.sg/. Accessed November 29, 2020.

Another perceptible change when comparing the 1966 and 1978 maps of Singapore is the growth in the density of travel infrastructure and buildings in the south-eastern region, which signals the continuation of the government's plan to redevelop large swathes of the island for a variety of public and private developments. The map, therefore, does not merely

illustrate the literal creation of infrastructure which corroborate the Singapore government's narratives of development, but also affirms and signals their commitment to continue expanding, which underpins and drives such development. This links specifically to the *longue durée* embedded in the second category of Foucault's "governmentality", the "predominance of a specific type of power" over a protracted period, here visible in the power of the state embedded in and effected through cartography.[35] Indeed, maps "are not just as efficient documents recording the truth of the landscape, but as active instruments in the very production of that truth".[36] Figures 7 and 8 provide a close-up comparison of the difference which twelve years have rendered to the south-eastern region of the island as the physical environment yielded to the modernising pressures of urbanisation.

Figure 7 - Chief Surveyor of Singapore. "Bedok and the East Coast". In *Singapore and Johor*. 1:25,000. "Historical Maps of Singapore". 1966. https://libmaps.nus.edu.sg/. Accessed November 29, 2020.

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[35] Buchanan, "Governmentality".; Buchanan, "Longue Durée".
[36] Crampton, *Mapping*, 86.

Figure *8* - Ministry of Defence, Singapore. "Bedok and the East Coast". *Singapore*. 1:50,000. "Historical Maps of Singapore". 1978. https://libmaps.nus.edu.sg/. Accessed November 29, 2020.

The People's Action Party and Depoliticisation

The speed of such development reflects the continued dominance of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) and its leader, the founding Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, during the period after independence in 1965. Such political stability ensured that Lee and his cabinet ministers were able to influence and enact their modernising project for Singapore, advancing and controlling the discourse surrounding land reclamation and ensuring that any resistance is overcome. Lee recorded in one memoir that the prevailing "preoccupation [in housing policy] was to give every citizen a stake in the country and its future… [hence, a] sense of ownership was vital for [Singapore's] new society which had no deep roots in a common historical experience".[37] He also emphasised the need for Singapore's leaders and its people to remain "practical and hardworking…[for] it is part of the story of man's search for new fields to increase his wealth and wellbeing".[38] Making this vision a reality and viable for the long-term meant land reclamation became a cornerstone of the nation-state's economic policy, and its success depended on a cohesiveness which necessitated a discipline and "governmentality" superseding other concerns.[39] The creation of such unity within the Singaporean polity was brought about by the continuity of Lee's first three cabinets. The long-serving ministers Lim Kim San and E. W. Barker were of particular importance, as they contributed   frequently   and   significantly   to   the   National   Development,   Housing

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[37] Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story, 1965-2000* (Singapore: Singapore Press Holdings, 2000), 116-117.
[38] Ibid, 689.
[39] Buchanan, "Governmentality".

Development, Home Affairs and Environment portfolios.[40] These statutory boards were charged with executing the relentless expansion and development of Singapore in practically all areas of the island - Barker and Lim, as government ministers who took turns helming these departments, were featured regularly in *The Straits Times* and other news and media outlets to defend and influence the discourse surrounding the necessary policy of reclaiming land along Singapore's coast.[41]

The fervour for land reclamation as a means through which the country might fulfil its needs and aspirations is perhaps best exemplified in the passing of the Foreshore (Amendment) Bill of 1974 in Parliament, which "provides that Parliament's approval would be unnecessary if the area to be reclaimed does not exceed 20 acres... to expedite the construction of public works".[42] While 20 acres, which converts to approximately 80,937.1 square metres or 0.0809 square kilometres, might seem like a small amount of land and therefore negligible, I argue that the number should not be our primary area of focus. Rather, what is more significant is the intent embedded in overriding the power vested in Parliament, and therefore the people, in giving the executive branch of government full authority in figuring out the necessity and progress of land reclamation works. This, and the constant appeals for cooperation in the media by the state, are once again components of a collective process toward "preference shaping depoliticisation".[43] Flinders and Buller aptly defined this as "[involving] the construction of a new 'reality' in which the role of national politicians...[are] eviscerated by external forces or broad societal factors" – or Singapore's land constraints – thereby consigning them to actions that deal with these specific elements and for which they cannot be held responsible.[44] Much like the article 'Changing Times', attempts to defend, influence and modify the discourse among the Singaporean polity continued unabated in the early years of independence, affecting even the statutes which were present to check and balance the power which the government had to create more land in Singapore for further expansion and development. Configuring this with how maps serve as projections of power both in the private and public domain, the Singaporean polity was disciplined and depoliticised to accept land reclamation as a necessary feature of their identity as citizens of the country. Figures 9 to 16 are extracts of maps from newspaper articles published during this period, which provide a comprehensive overview of how cartography was utilised to influence public discourse and perception over a *longue durée*.

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[40] On Lim Kim San: Tien Mun Mun, "Lim Kim San", Singapore Infopedia, accessed December 1, 2020.; On E. W. Barker: Cheryl Sim, "E. W. Barker", Singapore Infopedia, accessed December 1, 2020.

[41] "Chance to See Lee At Work", *Straits Times*, September 13, 1978. NewspaperSG.; "Land to Be Reclaimed for Warehouses", *Straits Times,* July 31, 1971. NewspaperSG.; "Projects to Reclaim 371-acre Area Approved", *Straits Times*, October 20, 1971. NewspaperSG.; "Reclamation Project Approved", *Straits Times*, February 16, 1977. NewspaperSG.

[42] "'Reclaim Without Prior Approval' Bill Passed", *Straits Times*, October 24, 1974. NewspaperSG.; For the entire text of the statute, see: *Foreshores (Amendment) Bill 1974,* Bill No. 18/1974.

[43] Flinders and Buller, "Depoliticisation", 307.

[44] Ibid, 308.
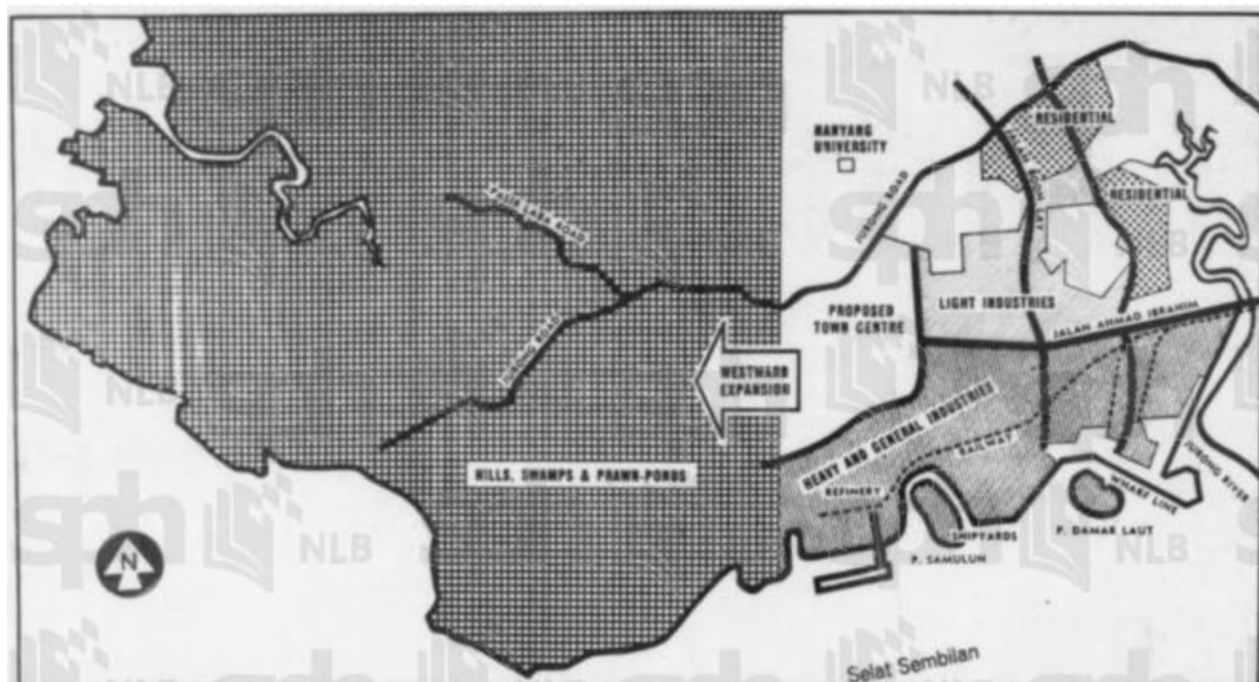
Figure 9 - From "Stretching Jurong Westwards", *Straits Times*, September 6, 1967. NewspaperSG.
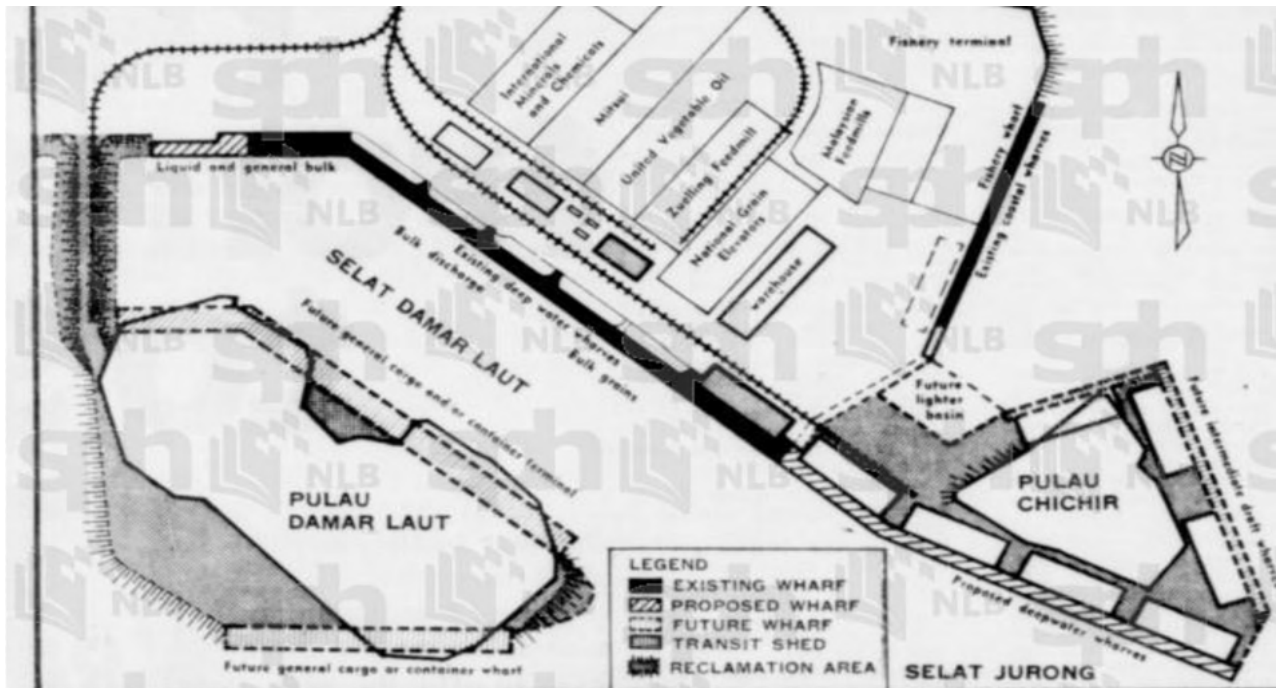http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19670906-1.2.60.
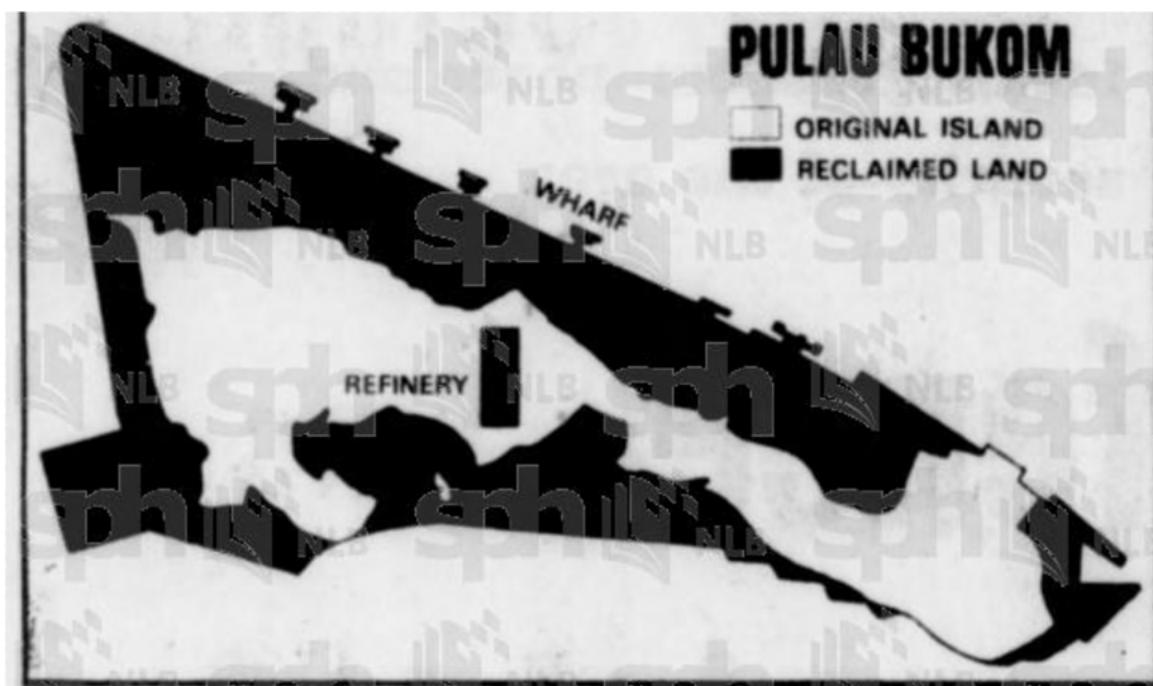
Figure 10 - From "How A Refinery Enlarged An Island and Will Join It to Another", *Straits Times*, June 11, 1968.
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Figure 11 - From "Build-up At Port Is Now Under Way", Straits Times, August 28, 1970. NewspaperSG.
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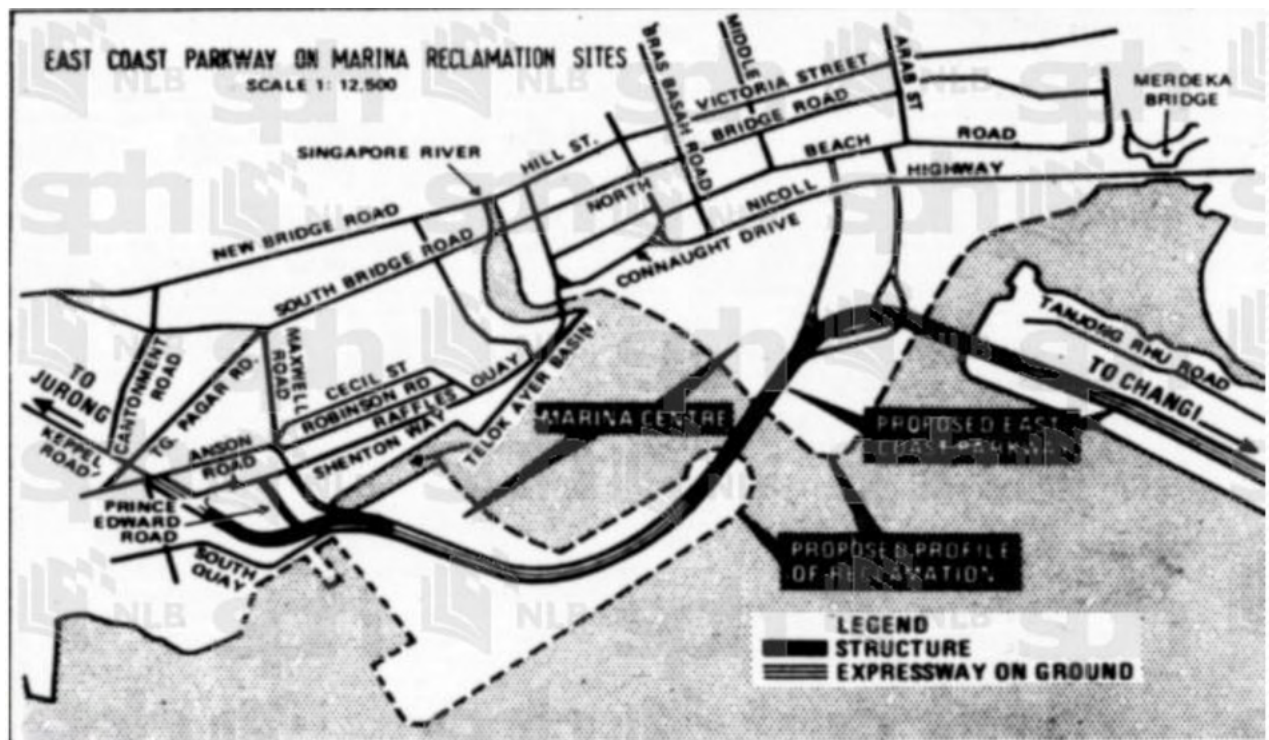
Figure 12 - From "Marina: It's D-Day Soon", New Nation, June 21, 1976. NewspaperSG.
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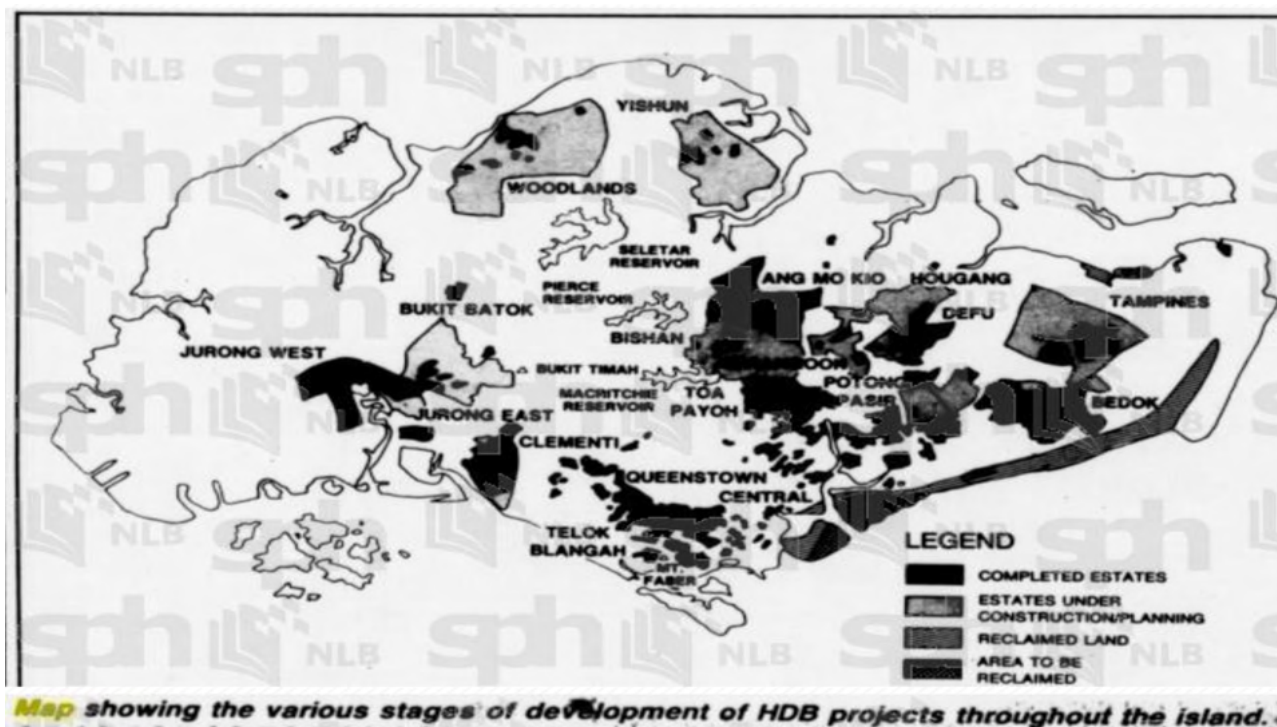
Figure 13 - From Sin Geok Oei, "New HDB Estates to Have Multistorey Carparks", Singapore Monitor, October 12, 1984. NewspaperSG. http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/singmonitor19841012-2.2.6.1.
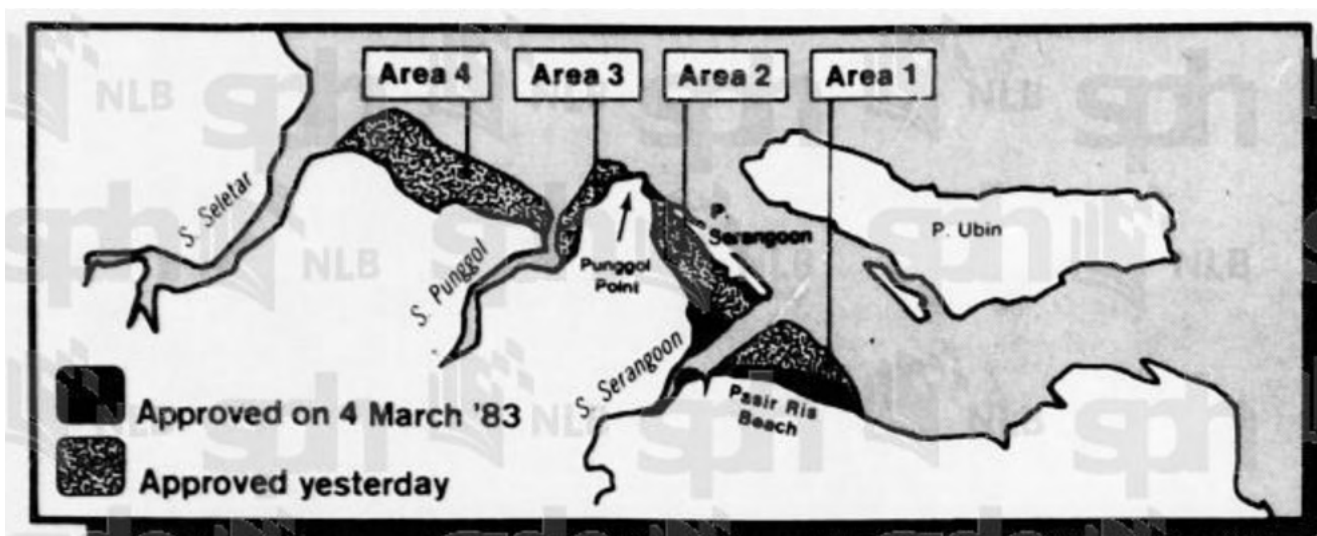
Figure 14 - From "Reclamation Project Approved", Straits Times, October 20, 1984. NewspaperSG. http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19841020-1.2.25.6.7.
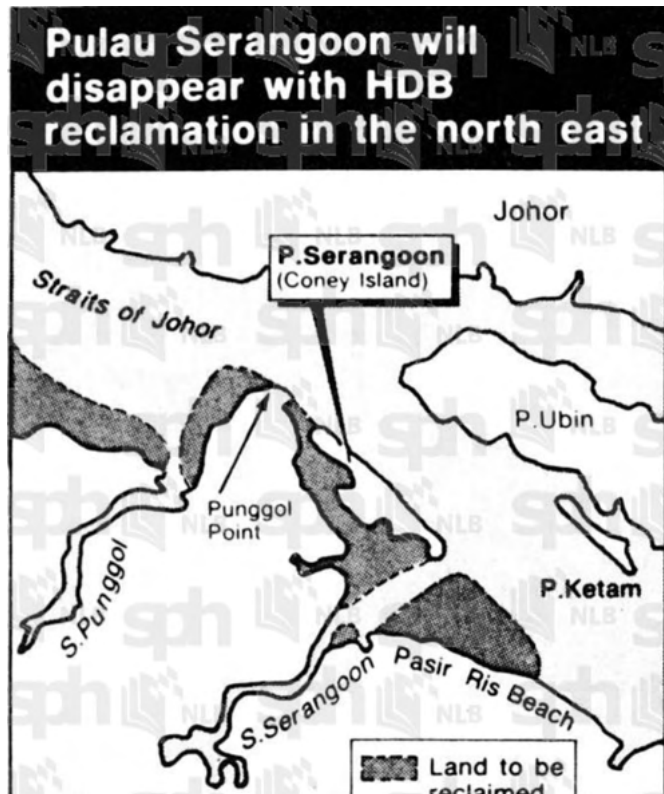
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http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19870416-1.2.27.9.

Figure 16 - From "10% More Land Here Between 1960 and 1992", Straits Times, May 4, 1987. NewspaperSG.
http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19870504-1.2.24.21.

Singapore's Land Reclamation Policy and the Anthropocene

I now turn to the environmental impact that land reclamation has had on coastal communities and ecosystems. This encompasses people who lived along the coast before being forced to move due to reclamation works, as well as the biodiversity of flora and fauna. Perhaps the most apparent disappearance of vegetation when comparing the topographical map of Singapore in 1966 (Figure 1) to the ones published in 1978 (Figure 2), 1987 (Figure 17), and 1998 (Figure 18) arises in the eastern region of the island, as the hills in and around Bedok are decimated to make way for new development. A close-up of this may be seen when comparing Figures 5 and 6, and the process was described in detail within multiple articles published in *The Straits Times*, the herculean effort needed depicted in terms such as "giant" and "huge" and conducted through "the world's most modern machinery".[45] These presented land reclamation as a wondrous feat of engineering which Singaporeans should recognise and accept as necessary for the country's long-term viability. Needless to say, resistance to the government's plans existed – a column in *The Straits Times*, published in the same year when reclamation projects being executed in the Eastern region were happening, called it "disconcerting" and stated rather bluntly that "it does the new towns no discredit to say the island would be much happier if it could do without them", although this was still framed within a larger context of understanding and compliance.[46] However, any resistance was not viewed as conducive to the long-term plans that the government had for the country and consequently, Lim had to "[appeal] to the people to cooperate with the Government in implementing the major projects".[47] In an interview discussing his housing policy, he stated:

"People just disliked to be pulled away from their place of residence and go to a new place and mix with new people. But as I said, we have no alternative. If we want to house that many people, if the people of Singapore want satisfactory housing instead of attap huts and slums, you have got to go high".[48]

In choosing to describe land reclamation as an imperative in no uncertain terms, Lim highlights Foucault's "governmentality" and Flinders and Buller's "preference shaping depoliticisation" at work.[49] Pragmatism forces power to flow from the state and into the Singaporean citizen, who is disciplined into accepting that land reclamation and constant change along the coastal regions of the country is a necessary and crucial component of life in the country, even if that means that livelihoods which have been forged for decades before independence must be forsaken for the good of the nation.

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[45] "Huge Machines Cut Time, Costs", *Straits Times*, July 22, 1966. NewspaperSG.; "Work on Land from Sea Project Starts", *Straits Times*, May 13, 1966. NewspaperSG.
[46] "New Towns", *Straits Times*, January 28, 1966. NewspaperSG.
[47] "50,000 Homes", *Straits Times*.
[48] Asad-ul Iqbal Latif, "Housing a Nation: Resettling a People", in *Lim Kim San: A Builder of Singapore* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2009), 85. Cambridge Core.
[49] Buchanan, "Governmentality".; Flinders and Buller, "Depoliticisation", 307.

Figure 17 - Ministry of Defence, Singapore. *Singapore*. 1:50,000. "Historical Maps of Singapore". 1987. https://libmaps.nus.edu.sg/. Accessed November 29, 2020.

Figure 18 - Ministry of Defence, Singapore. *Singapore*. 1:50,000. "Historical Maps of Singapore". 1998. https://libmaps.nus.edu.sg/. Accessed November 29, 2020.

Transformation in the country's ecosystems did not go unnoticed as well. Speaking at a meeting of the Malayan Nature Society in 1983, Dr Wee Yeow Chin, a botany lecturer at the National University of Singapore, asserts "the younger generation is growing up in an environment devoid of Nature" as development surges to accommodate a growing

population.[50] Articles sentimentally describing the disappearance of geological features like rivers and hills were also published as reclamation gathered apace.[51] These, however, were subsumed once again under the banner of modernisation, and the state sought to satisfy any shred of resistance and encourage citizens to comply by handing out financial compensation.[52] The third and final component of Foucault's "governmentality", which speaks of how "previous models of power come to be governmentalized", is apparent in the people's voice being overridden by the state, and its plans to accommodate the growing number of residents and achieve economic prosperity to secure long-term viability.[53] Coastal communities and ecosystems were secondary in this process. Paradoxically, while levelling hills and removing vegetation to create sand for reclamation, the state has sought to cultivate trees and repopulate its flora once the process ends – the light green which now covers areas which were once white and empty in the 1998 map of Singapore (Figure 18) represent new sundry tree cultivations. Yet, the landscape of the country has undoubtedly been transformed, and the vegetation was perceptibly manicured.

In the present day, Singapore has exhausted local sources of sand for its land reclamation projects and has now turned to regional partners of much greater landmasses to satisfy its fill, primarily Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Cambodia.[54], a documentary written and directed by Kalyanee Mam, a citizen of Cambodia, was the inspiration which led me to think about Singapore's environmental responsibility to ensure that its investments in land reclamation were accountable and ethical. Mam's production highlighted that it was anything but as she traces how sand dredging activities by private companies have resulted in the erosion of certain segments of the Cambodian coast, eventually forcing the village in which she was raised to relocate.[55] However, the first four of these five countries have halted exports to Singapore altogether due to the illegal diversion of sand meant for the land reclamation projects of these countries, and the pressure to find new sources to feed its appetite for more space has been increasing, so much so that the Singapore government has started exhuming the dead to create more land for highways.[56]

Further, the international non-governmental organisation *Global Witness* published a report in 2010 detailing how the sand trade between Singapore and Cambodia has lined the

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[50] "More Take A Closer Walk With Nature", *Straits Times*, October 6, 1983. NewspaperSG.

[51] "Our Disappearing Rivers", *New Nation*, August 25, 1981. NewspaperSG.; "Changing Changi", *New Nation*, November 11, 1976. NewspaperSG.

[52] "A Record $5.5mil. Paid By Govt For Big Housing Development", *Straits Times*, August 17, 1966. NewspaperSG.; "Govt Farming Plan For the Small Islands", *Straits Times*, December 13, 1966. NewspaperSG.; On gains outweighing cons, see: "10% More," *Straits Times*.

[53] Buchanan, "Governmentality".

[54] Samanth Subramanian, "How Singapore is Creating More Land for Itself", *The New York Times Magazine*, April 20, 2017.; Beth Timmins, "How the Scramble for Sand is Destroying the Mekong", *BBC News*, December 19, 2019.

[55] Kalyanee Mam, "When Your Land is Stolen From Beneath Your Feet", *The Atlantic*, March 11, 2019.

[56] Chris Milton, "The Sand Smugglers," *Foreign Policy*, August 4, 2010.; "Singapore Digs Up Graves to Build New Motorways, Including Bukit Brown Cemetery Where Early Chinese Immigrants Rest," *South China Morning Post*, January 3, 2019.

pockets of corrupt politicians in the latter country.[57] This has been complemented by the short documentary produced by Mam, which details how dredging activities off the coast near her village in Cambodia have led to the loss of mangrove habitats, which are important 'heatsinks' that absorb carbon from the atmosphere, as well as impacted the livelihoods of her community.[58] Additional reports by Reuters this year have also highlighted how rice farmers in Myanmar have been seeing land used to grow paddies disappear due to erosion in recent years and attribute the cause to dredging for sand exports to Singapore.[59] The Ministry of National Development in Singapore, in the face of all this, has remained relatively quiet about any attempt to address the impact which the import of sand has had on coastal communities in these affected countries, choosing instead to focus on the legality of its contractors.[60] Importing sand for expanding Singapore's landmass continues and, paradoxically, features in a national plan to tackle rising sea levels as climate change becomes a reality, which is a confounding catch-22, given how the sand used has resulted in the erosion of other localities.[61] There is a sliver of hope in recent developments which would allow Singapore to significantly reduce the amount of sand used in reclamation works, through a method adopted from the Netherlands called 'impoldering'.[62] However, discourses surrounding the politics of land reclamation in Singapore have undoubtedly been resistant to pressures to either reduce or stop sand imports altogether and continue to feature as a crucial component in ensuring that the country remains viable and prosperous in the future. How this will pan out over the coming years, especially as the world's climate emergency becomes more pressing, is still to be seen.

Conclusion: The Responsibility of Singapore's Polity

I began this essay by arguing how cartographic representations published between 1966 and 1998 were not static illustrations devoid of power. Rather, they actively disciplined and depoliticised the Singaporean polity into accepting land reclamation as an integral part of the government's policy, such that the country's long-term viability and prosperity may be achieved. I have shown how all three components of Foucault's "governmentality" were extant in this process, with the help of primary source material derived from national newspapers and policy positions from autobiographies of and interviews with key leaders

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[57] "Shifting Sand", *Global Witness,* last modified May 10, 2010.

[58] "When Your Land is Stolen From Beneath Your Feet," *The Atlantic,* March 11, 2019.; Samantha Chapman, "Mangroves Protect Coastlines, Store Carbon – and Are Expanding With Climate Change," *The Conversation*, February 9, 2018.

[59] Sam Aung Moon, John Geddie and Poppy McPherson, "As Myanmar Farmers Lose Their Land, Sand Mining for Singapore is Blamed," *Reuters*, March 4, 2020.

[60] "Cambodia Bans Sand Exports to Singapore After Pressure From Environmental Groups," *Straits Times*, July 13, 2017.

[61] Audrey Tan, "National Day Rally 2019: Land Reclamation, Polders Among Ways S'pore Looks to Deal With Sea-Level Rise," *Straits Times*, August 19, 2019.

[62] Yeo Sam Jo, "Pulau Tekong to Get Extra Land the Size of Two Toa Payoh Towns Using New Reclamation Method," *Straits Times*, November 17, 2016.

during the period examined. I concluded by looking at how coastal communities and ecosystems were secondary to the state's primary concern of securing a stable and prosperous future, transfiguring landscapes beyond recognition. Singapore has now attained great national wealth, but population pressures still exist and land reclamation projects look set to continue apace.

The goal of my essay has not been to decry the Singapore government for its relentless expansion through land reclamation but to bring about a critical examination of *how* this has come about and some of the consequences it has engendered. Singapore has run out of hills to excavate and now imports sand from other countries to sustain its activities.[63] However, given the impact this has had on the coastal communities of these countries, the well-studied ramifications of dredging coastal areas and the ecological crises which currently beset the world, the geopolitics of land reclamation in Singapore deserve greater examination over the coming years.[64] I hope that such critiques do not remain within the exclusive and privileged realm of academia, but take on political currency and relevance among civic groups recognising their responsibility in ensuring that the decisions made on the behalf of the Singapore polity are accountable and ethical.

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[63] Joshua Comaroff, "Built on Sand: Singapore and the New State of Risk", *Harvard Design Magazine*, No. 39, Fall/Winter 2019.

[64] "Rising Demand for Sand Calls for Resource Governance", UN Environment Programme, last modified May 7, 2019.

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