

# HERODOTUS

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## HERODOTUS

*Herodotus* is a student-run publication founded in 1990 by the Stanford University Department of History. It bears the name of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, the 5th century BCE historian of the Greco-Persian Wars, credited as “the Father of History.” His *Histories*, which preserve the memory of the battles of Marathon and Thermopylae, were written so that “human achievements may not become forgotten in time, and great and marvelous deeds... may not be without their glory.” Likewise, this journal is dedicated to preserving and showcasing the best undergraduate work of Stanford University’s Department of History, chosen with a blind peer review selection process. For more information about the journal, please visit us online at [herodotus.stanford.edu](http://herodotus.stanford.edu).

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

When landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead produced his earliest sketches of the Stanford University Main Quad in 1888, the History Corner figured prominently into the plan. Rounding the Oval by carriage, the first students to arrive at the university would have met with a monumental Memorial Arch that was itself the keystone of the rhythmic array of sandstone buildings. At the Quad's smoothed northeast corner stood the Department of History. Today students pass through the same wooden double doors and ascend the grand staircase to attend a broad offering of over 200 history courses. Under the tutelage of 51 History Department professors, undergraduates of many majors study the history of myriad times and places, from ancient Rome to modern Afghanistan.

*Herodotus'* mission is to publish and disseminate the best work of undergraduate students of history at Stanford University. Today, more resources are available to history students than ever before. Not only do we have some six million books through our extraordinary Stanford University Libraries, but also millions more available online through initiatives like the Google Books Library Project. The mass of books and articles is both a blessing and a curse. Amidst the tempest of information, the covers of *Herodotus* bound a sanctuary of young academic work. The essays in this journal are selected for their persuasive analysis, precision, prose, and appeal. This year's volume brings together a wide range of academic interests, focusing on the roles of individuals in American and European political and scientific development. We hope our readers will enjoy this volume and continue to delight in reading history.

HERODOTUS

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# THE UNLIKELY COURAGE OF IMAGINED POLITICAL SYSTEMS

## **Introduction by Professor Jack Rakove:**

This essay was written for a colloquium on Creative Political Thinking that pivoted on the innovative writings of three major figures: Machiavelli, Locke, and Madison. In addition to examining and thinking critically about their works, the class was also conceived to ask an important though elusive question: How does one go about identifying and explaining the act of thinking creatively about political phenomena? In this essay, Becca Siegel tackles that question by exploring the role of utopian political thinking in England and America, from Thomas More's writing of *Utopia* in the early sixteenth century to the American constitutional experiments of the late 18th century. In her story, the American opportunity to design institutions as a practical matter serves as a foil to the challenge facing Englishmen in a much more conservative society. The essay very cleverly juxtaposes these differences in situation to provide an intriguing account of what made utopian thinking possible, even perhaps necessary.

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## The Unlikely Courage of Political Systems

Becca Siegel

When Sir Thomas More set out to amend the turmoil in his native England – contentious social life, battles between humanism and the monarchy, and the Protestant Reformation – he started practically. More took political office in 1504 in order to bring about simple social changes. Soon, however, he found his vision for England had outgrown his facilities as a member of Parliament. At that moment, More faced a choice: continue to protest social disorder and the Protestant Reformation from his office in a very limited, modest and practical manner, or imagine an impossible, perfect alternative. More chose the latter, and in 1516 published what became his most important work: *Utopia*. In it, he imagined a perfect political system, free from the turmoil and disorder of sixteen-century England. When colleagues and peers questioned the feasibility of his political system, More admitted the impossibility of his Utopia. Yet in a feat of creativity, he pressed on.

More was not the first to think about political systems that could never exist. Plato's Republic started the trend nearly two thousand years prior, but More was the first to use the word "utopia" to imagine a perfect political system. In doing so, he set a bold new path for political theorists who chose to defy the limits of practicality when imagining what political society could become. The theorists who followed in his utopian footsteps – John Locke, James Harrington, David Hume and others – did so with boldness and resolve. These early-modern Englishmen were not limited by feasibility, and their work was arguably more influential because it knew no practical bounds. In an increasingly utilitarian world, where applicability was valued above all else, their work was also a significant departure from the norm in the field. "There [was] a deep kind of practicalism present in the field of political theory," argued historian David Estlund.<sup>1</sup> By breaking this mold, these theorists displayed a courageous creativity.

Originally titled "Nowhere," *Utopia* critiqued modern Britain, and then presented a foil with the island nation called Utopia, from the Greek eu meaning "good," ou meaning "no" and topos meaning "place."<sup>2</sup> In Book I, More surveyed problems in the England, namely unjust wars perpetuated by power-hungry kings and an entrenched bureaucracy. In Book II, More's creativity came alive when he outlined the commonwealth of Utopia – a nation with none of the ills of England. "It may be asked," Richards writes,

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“whether anything in the Utopian scheme is possible. It certainly depends on isolation, which... is impossible.”<sup>3</sup> The impossibility of More’s commonwealth limited its application value, but also allowed More to better articulate many of his ideas.

The reason for More’s creativity was, in part, because of his intimate relationship with the monarchy and with the church. More was a close personal advisor to King Henry VIII, and a devout Catholic – so devout that he was canonized in 1935.<sup>4</sup> Yet his work criticized both institutions. Though the island of Utopia had a prince, he could “not conspire together to change the government and enslave the people; and therefore when anything of great importance is set on foot... the matter is referred to the Council of the whole island.”<sup>5</sup> Such a sentiment threatened the rule of Henry VIII, but More was able to make such statements because his commonwealth of Utopia was a hypothetical one. Since Utopia did not – and could not – exist, More had greater latitude to present theories that challenged the status quo. Similarly, More argued for religious toleration in his writing. In his commonwealth, there were “several sorts of religions, not only in different parts of the island, but even in every town; some worshipping the sun, others the moon or one of the planets: some worship such men as have been eminent in former times for virtue or glory... the greater and wiser sort of them worship one eternal, invisible, infinite, and incomprehensible Deity.”<sup>6</sup> The Catholic Church, of which More was a prominent member, did not share the belief that there ought to be multiple religions and that those of different religions ought to tolerate one another. Indeed, More’s writing of Utopia in 1516 preceded Martin Luther’s *Ninety-Five Theses* by just one year. In the early sixteenth-century, the last thing the Catholic Church encouraged was religious diversity and toleration. While More’s religious conceptions in *Utopia* ran counter to the dominant Catholic mentality of the time, he managed to maintain favor with the church. In part, this was because More authored other works that upheld the authority of the Catholic church. In 1528, his *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* argued for a “visible Catholic Church as the guardian of the true Christian faith.”<sup>7</sup>

For most of his life, More was an ardent support of Catholic absolutism. He was canonized in 1935 for his “unfailing devotion” to the Church.<sup>8</sup> The discrepancy between More’s religious writing in *Utopia* and religious writing through the rest of his life begs a discussion of its own. More was able to express an opinion at odds with the Catholic Church – an opinion that was quite creative and far ahead of its time – yet still remain a Catholic in good standing. Like his critique of the monarchy, More’s critique of the Catholic Church in *Utopia* only worked because he was not constrained by the fear of implementation. Utopia would never exist, so the radical ideas it embodied were less threatening to institutions that relied on the preservation of the status quo. Therefore, by creating an imagined soci-

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ety, More demonstrated creativity and courage, allowing him to articulate theories that were not popular among those in power.

A century and a half later, John Locke found himself in a similar situation. His political theories did not always match with the dominant, popular or advantageous practices of the time. Locke's theories for a commonwealth seemed applicable to both England and the New World. However, the construction of a new commonwealth that would emerge from the state of nature was fundamentally utopian. The perfect Lockean commonwealth could only arise from Locke's state of nature: "To understand political power right and derive it from its original," he wrote, "we must consider what state all men are naturally in."<sup>9</sup> Without originating from the state of nature, it would have been impossible to create the utopian commonwealth Locke outlined in his *Second Treatise*.

However, this state of nature, as Locke defined it, did not exist in the seventeenth-century, and would not exist in the future. The state of nature was "a state of perfect freedom" and "equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another."<sup>10</sup> This state may have existed pre-historically, but in the seventeenth-century and in the foreseeable future, the existence of a state of nature was an impossibility. Some argue that America was a form of the state of nature. The Amerindians, they say, practiced "individual self government" and were "free to order their actions within the bounds of natural laws."<sup>11</sup> Tully argues against this idea: Amerindians, he writes, "lacked the state-centered European society, yet they performed the functions of government."<sup>12</sup> Those who knew much about the culture of Amerindians would presumably understand that, while quite different from European political structures, political structures of "national, clan and family systems of community property and distribution" disqualified America as an example of the state of nature.<sup>13</sup>

Arguing that Locke knowingly conceptualized an impossible commonwealth assumes that Locke knew his state of nature did not and would not exist. In other words, Locke knew America was not a state of nature. Tully argues that "many Europeans observed" the existence of Amerindian governmental structures.<sup>14</sup> Given Locke's familiarity with the new world – due in large part to his work on the Constitution of Carolina – he was likely also familiar with basic Amerindian practices. On the New World, Farr asserts that "Locke knew virtually everything."<sup>15</sup> There were reasons, however, why Locke may have known about the governments of Amerindians but chose to downplay their existence. By insinuating that America lacked political societies, Locke gave consent for "appropriation without consent" by the settlers.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, by "downgrading the status of the aboriginal peoples to that of beasts or savages" – and therefore ruling out any existing political societies – Locke defended colonial occupation of Amerindian lands.<sup>17</sup> There were personal and patriotic incentives to down-

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play the existing governmental structures. Personally, he had investments in the colonies, and those investments would grow with additional land seizure from Amerindians. Furthermore, in “arguing for the superiority of commercial agriculture over Amerindian hunting... Locke may also be arguing for the superiority of English colonization over the French fur-trading empire.”<sup>18</sup> Locke’s defense of colonization was a foil to French integration. Seventeenth-century America was not a Lockean state of nature. Though he insinuated otherwise, Locke’s extensive knowledge of the new world, coupled with incentives to downplay the existence of Amerindian political structures, stress a critical point: Locke was aware that America was not a true state of nature.

Given that a perfect Lockean commonwealth must originate from a state of nature, and that Locke was aware no state of nature existed in reality, it follows that a Lockean commonwealth could never exist, and that Locke knew this to be the case. Some may reason that this weakens the importance of Locke’s *Second Treatise*. However, it is also an example of Locke’s creativity – though his commonwealth would never come to fruition, Locke imagined it into being. In doing so, Locke presented a bold argument for what he could only fathom.

Around the same time, James Harrington presented a more clearly utopian political theory. His *Commonwealth of Oceana* aimed to “persuade his countrymen to grasp the opportunity created by the collapse of the Protectorate to design the constitution afresh.”<sup>19</sup> This desire – to completely rebuild the political society from scratch – necessitated a certain creativity of its own. Harrington’s work utilized a fictitious utopian society to illustrate his ideas for England. Unlike More, and to some extent Locke, Harrington took his theories one step further by actively and vocally calling for their immediate implementation in England. Harrington knew that the window for making significant changes to English political society was small. Cromwell seized power in 1653, and *Oceana*, published just three years later in 1656, was a direct response to the sudden transformation of political society. Harrington viewed this as a fleeting opportunity for substantial institutional changes.<sup>20</sup>

On the surface, it is puzzling that, given these time constraints, Harrington chose to write about a fictitious state instead of simply diagnosing England’s problems and then presenting direct solutions. However, Harrington’s views were sweeping – “he believed that political stability and health could be attained only by a radical departure from the practice of the present.”<sup>21</sup> In a creative way, Harrington dampened the immediate force of his theories by applying them to the fictitious commonwealth of Oceana. This allowed him to articulate his points fully without fear of dismissal or restrictions of realism. In this regard, distancing Oceana from reality actually allowed for a more persuasive diagnosis for the very real problems of

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England.

The ideas he wished to articulate, argues Worden, “were eccentric to the prevailing character of the movement.”<sup>22</sup> Specifically, in the commonwealth of Oceana, “property [was] the foundation of all government.”<sup>23</sup> Harrington also asserted that power ought not to rest in the same hands for too long. To counter this, he recommended an agrarian law. A utopian state was also a useful analytical tool for Harrington because he was not fond of rigorous fact collection: “Harrington’s claims about recent English history were not based on research. His statements about both the pace and the extent of the transfer of land were vague when they were not guessed.”<sup>24</sup> An imagined society did not have as high a requirement of empirical evidence, so “in the hands of his supporters and successors, both the chronology and the arithmetic were subjected to less criticism.”<sup>25</sup> This left Harrington more room to articulate theoretical ideas. When not bogged down in the exact quantitative details, Harrington was better able to present solutions.

It is important to highlight the difference between a fictitious state and a utopian state. The former implies only that the state *does not* exist, the latter insists that it cannot exist. A utopian state requires perfection, and thus is necessarily impossible to achieve. There is some question as to whether or not Oceana was simply an imagined state or a utopian one. While Harrington did not present much clarity on the issue, his great admirer David Hume did. Hume found several impossibilities in Oceana. First, Hume argued that the agrarian law, the central legal framework for Oceana, was “impracticable.” “Men will soon learn the art which was practiced in ancient Rome,” Hume wrote, “of concealing their possessions under other people’s names, till at last the abuse will become so common that they will throw off even the appearance of restraint.”<sup>26</sup> Harrington’s *Agrarian* was a theoretically useful idea, but not a particularly applicable one. Additionally, Harrington sought a “division-free government,” but later pointed out that it was “impossible that there should be any government without some division.”<sup>27</sup> Finally, Harrington most clearly indicated the utopian, not just fictitious, nature of Oceana by arguing “that popular government [of Oceana]... reaches the perfection of government, and has no flaw in it.”<sup>28</sup> By making the government of Oceana perfect, Harrington made it decidedly impossible to realize. As Pocock writes, because Oceana “employs devices of fiction to portray the arrangement of an ideal state, it exhibits characteristics which we call utopian.”<sup>29</sup>

Yet Harrington’s theories had immense value. *Oceana* was Harrington’s seminal work, and not coincidentally his only imagined society. Despite its utopian nature, Oceana was very clearly meant to be a model for England.<sup>30</sup> *Oceana* therefore differed from Utopia because it did not present a “no-place,” but instead a “fictionalized but instantly recognizable England.” At the time of writing, England faced a critical government trans-

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formation, and the specific nature and time-space of England was not lost on Harrington. “What is being idealized is not a commonwealth isolated from the history of mankind, but the immediate present or imminent future which Harrington presents England as occupying in history,” argues Pocock.<sup>31</sup> Harrington wrote at a special moment in English history, and in order to call for an overhaul of the political system, he had no choice but to present an alternative system. His influence – and his distance from other theorists of the time – was a result of offering “not only a diagnosis on England’s problems but a cure.”<sup>32</sup> By employing fiction, Harrington was able to show what ought to be done, not just what was already occurring. In this way, he expressed far more political creativity than his contemporaries – who simply diagnosed.

Harrington also provided inspiration for David Hume’s “Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth,” the essay that ostensibly influenced James Madison in 1787. In it, Hume presented his own utopian commonwealth, but more importantly, aimed to conceptualize works like *Utopia* and *Oceana*. Hume’s writing provided a theoretical framework for imagined political societies. He was, first, an advocate for utopian thought, arguing that the impossibility of a perfect commonwealth should not prevent the conceptualization of a perfect commonwealth. The foundation of this belief was the idea that there were, objectively, better and worse forms of government. “As one form of government must be allowed more perfect than another independent of the manners and humors of particular men,” he wrote, “why may we not enquire what is the most perfect of all?”<sup>33</sup> As Hume understood it, the fact that a perfect government would never exist in reality was only an excuse to bring it to life in theory. “All plans of government, which suppose great reformation in the manners of mankind, are plainly imaginary. Of this nature, are the Republic of Plato, and the Utopia of Sir Thomas More.”<sup>34</sup> Major change, Hume asserted, would only come about through these imaginary societies.

By imagining these commonwealths, More, Locke, Harrington and Hume broke from their contemporaries, who often focused on theories defined by practicality. In many ways, these men were remarkably similar: English, early-modern theorists with close ties to the government. This begs the question: what factors led this particular class of political thinkers to create such utopias? The emergence of utopian thought in England, J.L. Talmon argues, was in part because “those at the helm [of English political society] were concerned primarily with keeping order... with preventing discontented, than with making the peoples free and happy. The peoples then...decided to shake off tutelage and be masters of their own fate and makers of their own salvation.”<sup>35</sup> Talmon asserts that the culture of English leadership between More’s *Utopia* and Hume’s *Perfect Commonwealth* was so dedicated to preserving the status quo that it did not accept even small

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suggestions for changing political structures. Because of this, ambitious political theorists had no choice but to completely re-imagine the entire system if their work was going to have any practical value. The entrenched practices of the empire left little room for political creativity for these theorists. The sad irony of the time was the even conservative reforms were unlikely to be implemented, so it made some sense for the likes of More, Locke, Harrington and Hume to focus less on rational changes, and instead illustrate sweeping, utopian principles.

The best example of this is its foil: in America, Madison and the Founding Fathers drafted the Constitution under very different circumstances. Instead of an ingrained political system set on the preservation of the status quo, the founders operated with the intention of changing everything. It seems counter-intuitive: those in societies with the least room for reform imagined the boldest of ideas. The Founding Fathers of the United States, however, were tasked with designing a working governmental system, and they had the freedom to build that system from the ground up. There was room for great political thought within the rational constraints of America, but more importantly, there was a necessity for realism. In striving for a “more *perfect* union” – not a perfect union – the Founding Fathers compromised their beliefs in order to create a functional political system. Utopian thought did not have a place at the Constitutional Convention in the same way it did in England.

However, this tells only part of the story. While those in power in England attempted to preserve the status quo, the mentality of subjects changed as well: “The evils and injustices of this life could no longer be regarded as merely temporary or temporal; therefore, they ceased to be tolerable, and men began to put their faith in the achievement of perfect justice.”<sup>36</sup> Social pressure to fix, or at least attempt to fix, all ills in the Empire increased from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. This, coupled with limited options for implementation of structural changes, naturally pushed bold and creative political theorists towards utopian and imagined societies.

Using the terms “bold” and “creative” also implies some inherent benefit to imagined utopias in political thought, over political theories that are purely realistic. This is not entirely true: there were times in history where each method was advantageous. In eighteenth-century America, utopian political theories would have had little value, as the framers of the Constitution were faced with the very real task of developing a government system. However, in an entrenched, absolutist government system, like that of England through the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, imagine commonwealths made far more sense. First, they allowed for theorists to separate their philosophical work from the rest of their lives. More, Locke and Harrington all had one foot in the existing government. More was an important councilor to Henry VIII.<sup>37</sup> Locke worked closely with

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Shaftesbury, who previously served as the Lord Chancellor (coincidentally, the same role that More served in the century prior). Harrington was the gentleman groom of the royal bedchamber. Their livelihood and popularity were dependent upon a high level of allegiance to the government – these men were intimately connected to the status quo. They were able to maintain their positions, however, because of their use of utopian thought. Radical theories practiced on the island of Utopia or in the Commonwealth of Oceana were far less threatening to the existing government than specific recommendations for England. Though very thinly veiled, the utopian societies allowed these theorists to express more true beliefs without the fear of punishment from the monarchy or church.

They also allowed, generally, for more radical and robust political thought. For example, More was, according to historian G.C. Richards, “at least four centuries in advance of his time: in the more favorable position given to women, in the education of women, in the provision of municipal hospitals, in sanitary reform, in the limitation of capital punishment, in the provision for old age, and in the reduction in the hours of labor.”<sup>38</sup> While progressive political philosophy was possible without utopian thought experiments, the imagined utopias of these theorists advanced political theory immeasurably. Scholars accept that More, Locke, Harrington and Hume changed the course of Western political theory, in part because their ideas broke with the norm in exceptional ways. It was imagined, utopian societies that allowed for this groundbreaking work.

Creativity in political theory can manifest itself in several forms. Yet in envisioning political societies that could never exist, and boldly pursuing them regardless, More, Locke, Harrington, Hume and others went beyond the norm to truly disrupt the progress of political philosophy. By stepping past the bounds of realism, these theorists demonstrated immense creativity; they outlined detailed political structures of societies that others could only fathom. Furthermore, they did all this despite general criticism from their contemporaries: most political philosophers believed that “political theory... must be practical.”<sup>39</sup> The necessity for practical application limited political philosophers in their pursuit of a more perfect union. As Rousseau pointed out, “The limits of the possible in moral matters are less narrow than we think. It is our weaknesses, our vices, our prejudices that shrink them.”<sup>40</sup> By overcoming the limits of what others deemed “possible,” the political theorists who imagined utopian commonwealths – commonwealths that could never exist – exhibited a creative courage that changed the course of Western political philosophy.

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## ENDNOTES:

- <sup>1</sup>David Estlund, "What Good Is It? Unrealistic Political Theory and the Value of Intellectual Work," *Analyse & Kritik* 33, no. 2 (2011): 395.
- <sup>2</sup>G.C. Richards in Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. G.C. Richards. Oxford: 1923, ix.
- <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, xx.
- <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, xviii.
- <sup>5</sup>Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. G.C. Richards. Oxford: 1923, 168.
- <sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.
- <sup>7</sup>Sir Thomas More in Louis Karlin, "More's Dialogue Concerning Heresies And the Idea of the Church," *Thomas More Studies* 3rd ser. (2008), 36.
- <sup>8</sup>*Sir Thomas More Society*, St. Thomas More Society of San Francisco, California, n.d. Web, 17 Mar. 2013.
- <sup>9</sup>John Locke, "The Second Treatise of Government: An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government," in *Political Writings of John Locke*, ed. David Wootton, London: 1993, 262.
- <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 262-3.
- <sup>11</sup>James Tully, "Rediscovering America: The *Two Treatises* and Aboriginal Rights," in *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*, Cambridge University Press, London: 1993, 141
- <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 153.
- <sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup>James Farr, "Locke, Natural Law, and New World Slavery," *Political Theory* 36 (2008): 504.
- <sup>16</sup>Tully, "Rediscovering America: The *Two Treatises* and Aboriginal Rights," 145.
- <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 147.
- <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 165.
- <sup>19</sup>Blair Worden, "English Republicanism," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, ed. J.H. Burns, Cambridge: 1991, 450.
- <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 450.
- <sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 444.
- <sup>23</sup>David Hume in Worden, "English Republicanism," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought*, 451.
- <sup>24</sup>Worden, "English Republicanism," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought*, 453.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup>David Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth," in *David Hume's Political Essays*, ed. Charles W. Hendel, New York: 1953, 146.
- <sup>27</sup>James Harrington, "The Commonwealth of Oceana," in *The Commonwealth of Oceana and a System of Politics*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: 1992), 53.
- <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.
- <sup>29</sup>Pocock in James Harrington, "The Commonwealth of Oceana," in *The Commonwealth of Oceana and a System of Politics*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: 1992), xvi.
- <sup>30</sup>Harrington, "The Commonwealth of Oceana," in *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 2.
- <sup>31</sup>Pocock in Harrington, "The Commonwealth of Oceana," in *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, xvii.
- <sup>32</sup>Worden, "English Republicanism," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought*, 453.
- <sup>33</sup>Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth," in *David Hume's Political Essays*, 145.
- <sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 146.
- <sup>35</sup>J.L. Talmon, "Utopianism and Politics," in *Utopia*, ed. George Kateb, New York: 1971, 93.
- <sup>36</sup>Talmon, "Utopianism and Politics," in *Utopia*, 94.
- <sup>37</sup>Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), 4.
- <sup>38</sup>Richards in More, *Utopia*, xxi.
- <sup>39</sup>David Estlund, "What Good Is It? Unrealistic Political Theory and the Value of Intellectual



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Work,” *Analyse & Kritik* 33.2 (2011): 395.

<sup>40</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Frederick Mundell Watkins. *Political Writings: Containing The Social Contract, Considerations on the Government of Poland, Constitutional Project for Corsica, Part I*, Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, 98.



COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION,  
THE INDIVIDUAL,  
AND THE “ROBBER BARON:”  
LELAND STANFORD

**Introduction by Professor Richard White:**

Cole Manley’s paper on Leland Stanford represents both the kind of paper the assignment in History 150B, a survey of nineteenth-century U.S. history, was designed to produce and a piece of historical writing that goes beyond the bounds of the assignment. It can stand on its own, separate from its origins, as a fine historical essay. What I want students to do is to use archival sources from Special Collections and elsewhere to write upon subjects or themes that my lectures touch upon. The Stanford Papers are a key source. Most students write about Jane Stanford or Leland Jr. since Leland Stanford’s papers were destroyed, but Cole pushed beyond the sources that I made available to use other surviving sources to develop a portrait of Leland Stanford that is located firmly within a specific nineteenth-century context of debates over individualism and cooperation. Cole’s treatment of Stanford is deft, insightful, and will be surprising to those with only a cursory, or clichéd, familiarity with the era. Among other things, he gives readers substantial insight into the complicated motives and thinking that went into the creation of Stanford University.

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## Cooperative Association, the Individual, and the “Robber Baron”: Leland Stanford

Cole Manley

In the late 19th century in America, a major railroad magnate claimed, “that the benefits resulting from co-operation shall be freely taught. It is through co-operation that modern progress has been mostly achieved. Co-operative societies bring forth the best capacities, the best influences of the individual for the benefit of the whole, while the good influences of the many aid the individual.”<sup>1</sup> These words could have been proffered by the Knights of Labor, Farmers’ Alliance, or Populist Party. They were spoken, instead, by Leland Stanford in his founding address on the opening of Stanford University in 1891. Why would someone the historian Matthew Josephson labeled a robber baron who “owned California” promote the benefits of cooperation?<sup>2</sup> To answer this question, one must first consider what cooperative association meant in the late 19th century.

During the “Gilded Age,” powerful capitalists controlled much of the economy, and class inequalities were huge and widening. By 1890, the richest “1 percent of Americans received the same total income as the bottom half of the population.”<sup>3</sup> The response to such rampant inequality was the formation of cooperative associations like the Farmers’ Alliance, an agrarian movement, and the Knights of Labor, an organization of skilled and unskilled workers.<sup>4</sup> The Knights proclaimed in an 1886 statement of principles that one of its two main aims was to “secure to the workers the full enjoyment of the wealth they create [and]... all of the benefits... of association; in a word, to enable them to share in the gains and honors of advancing civilization.”<sup>5</sup> The Knights further organized to supersede the wage system with a “co-operative industrial system” that would help guarantee equal pay for equal work for both sexes.<sup>6</sup> The Alliance similarly organized to reduce the economic exploitation of farmers, and both groups emphasized the cooperation of labor to protect its political and economic welfare.

These cooperative associations did not deny the liberty or industry of individuals. In the Knights’ declaration, “no one [member] shall be compelled to vote with the majority” and the group was organized to make “industrial and moral worth, not wealth, the true standard of individual [as well as]... national greatness.”<sup>7</sup> There remained a place for individualism, the belief that one’s fate is in one’s hands, within the Knights. But by the late 19th century, it was obvious with an industrial economy turning workers into wage laborers that one’s fate was often not in one’s hands. The Knights

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of Labor, and men like Leland Stanford, accepted a variation of individualism: that within the corporation workers should control their work as individuals. It was amidst great social upheaval that these two ideas—cooperative association and the role of the individual—influenced Stanford and his founding of Stanford University.

This paper analyzes Stanford's views on cooperative association and the role of the individual from the 1860s to 1891. By surveying this period, we can better understand how Stanford's interpretations of these ideas shaped the university he endowed. In evaluating Stanford's speeches in concert with historical accounts of Stanford, Hubert Bancroft's biography, Richard White's *Railroaded*, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, and other sources, I argue that Stanford had a cooperative vision for the university that cannot be explained away as mere political maneuvering. This was due to the development and strengthening of a belief in cooperative association that we can see through multiple personas of Stanford—the railroad owner and manager, the politician, and the founding trustee. Yet, while I posit that Stanford's cooperative vision transcended politics, I argue that his unclear statements on the role he saw for the individual in the university ultimately weakened Stanford's cooperative dream, and, in turn, Stanford's founding statements for the university.

### **Stanford as Railroad Owner and Manager: From Friendship to Association**

Stanford's place as one of the "Big Four" railroad magnates earned him the dubious distinction of "robber baron." He gained this stereotype as president of the Central Pacific Railroad from 1863 until 1893 and as the first president of the Southern Pacific Company from 1884 until 1890. But contrary to the robber baron mold, by the 1860s Stanford evidenced a belief in a cooperative vision for the corporation with links to his later dream for the university.<sup>8</sup>

This belief took years to strengthen, and at first looked like little more than the hope for some vague friendship between labor and capital. In the 1860s, Stanford weakly articulated this hope to the laborers who constructed the Central Pacific Railroad and built up his fortune. To Stanford, the railroad workers were "friends, [and] 'were engaged in a common enterprise' and ought to be bound together with a 'common bond of sympathy.' The key attributes of friendship were such bonds of sympathy, reciprocity, loyalty, and a presumption of mutual independence."<sup>9</sup> As to what these bonds would look like, Stanford explained that "[f]riends did favors for one another and worked toward common goals."<sup>10</sup> Clearly, Stanford's idea of what cooperative association meant for his workers in the 1860s was narrowly and confusingly construed. The workers should bond through "sympathy" but not associate for a greater share of the wealth in unions.<sup>11</sup>

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Moreover, that Stanford felt labor should be friends with capital must have seemed somewhat preposterous to many in his audience of workers. Irish and Chinese laborers died constructing the Central Pacific, while Stanford extolled a limited and vague belief in friendship between labor and capital. Nevertheless, even if Stanford showed great naiveté towards labor in the 1860s, in such an address there are also the germinations of his later acceptance of cooperative association on a more practical level. To the farmers of Southern California, Stanford expressed a belief in cooperative association that moved beyond friendship and towards the mobilization of farmers for their, and his, collective economic profit. Beginning in the 1870s, Stanford supported the Grange and other farmers' cooperative movements.<sup>12</sup> He believed that there could exist a symbiotic relationship between the farmers and the Southern Pacific which carried their products. In *Sunset Limited*, the historian Richard Orsi explains that

*[b]y the mid-1880s, it had become company policy to encourage farm cooperatives to organize production... to reserve more profits to the farmers to encourage... general economic development in the state. In 1885, Stanford... played a major role in the calling of a series of growers' meetings across the state [where he] exhorted the farmers to form a statewide fruit cooperative.<sup>13</sup>*

By 1885, Stanford greatly extended his initial clamoring for friendship into direct action for the mobilization of cooperative associations of farmers. To be sure, this growing belief in cooperative association was not entirely driven by selflessness: Stanford knew that his railroads needed to carry goods to be profitable, and that the cooperation of farmers was critical to supplying this demand. Yet Stanford's actions as a railroad manager emphasized association in a way that transcended a purely individualistic motive. He saw that farmers needed more than friendship—they needed cooperation, organization, and strength in numbers. As his 1885 call for a statewide fruit cooperative attests, Stanford had become much more serious about the benefits of cooperation, and this extended to his political life, as well.

### **Stanford as Senator:**

#### **Affirming a Belief in Cooperation through Legislation**

From his tepid appraisal of friendship to his more meaningful calls for association in the 1870s and early 1880s, Stanford complicated his traditional characterization as a selfish and greedy robber baron. The cooperative beliefs which he developed as early as the 1870s also evolved through his political persona as California Senator. Ironically, in advocating cooperative values as Senator, Stanford first had to buy his way into the Senate.<sup>14</sup> Yet, once in office, Stanford's inclinations to help farmers associate extended to politics. He began to develop the broader view of association that would

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frame his founding of the university.

As California Senator from 1885 to 1893, Stanford broadened his actions on behalf of cooperative association for not just farmers but all workers. Lee Altenberg in a 1990 article summarizes that “a large part of Stanford’s legislative efforts were toward bills that would give worker cooperatives the necessary legal structure and sources of credit in order to flourish.”<sup>15</sup> Once in the political sphere, Stanford moved to protect and extend the associations he called for as a manager and which developed in Southern California. In just his second year in office, 1886, Stanford introduced a bill in the Senate to create worker cooperatives, a bill with roots in his previous efforts on behalf of farmers. He explained his evolution in saying that

*[t]he great advantage to labor arising out of co-operative effort has been apparent to me for many years.... [as] through co-operation, labor could become its own employer.<sup>16</sup>*

With greater political freedom as a Senator, Stanford generalized the benefits of cooperation he saw for farmers to all laborers.

To some journalists at the time, though, Stanford’s acceptance of cooperative association seemed much more a political stunt than an actual commitment. In a *Los Angeles Times* article from 1891, soon after Stanford re-introduced his 1886 bill for cooperatives, the editors belittled

*[this] scheme for... how the laboring millions may avoid work and grow rich by the simple process of cooperation... [as] nearly as rose-hued as Bellamy’s... Mr. Stanford had no expectation that his benevolent scheme would be crystallized into law; he only desired to get before the country, and before the laboring masses who have votes to give, his alluring project for their amelioration.<sup>17</sup>*

Such a stinging condemnation of Stanford’s motives saw the bill as nothing more than a political ruse. However, the editorial presented no quotes or testimony backing up its claim. Of course, most agree that Stanford did want to become president, yet this political motive is insufficient in explaining away the 1891 bill. For one, the bill was not the first time Stanford had publicly expressed support for cooperatives: In 1886, he had done the same. Furthermore, the attack does not account for Stanford’s longer-term support for cooperative association within the “Big Four.” The 1891 editorial also overlooks the vital role Stanford thought cooperative association should play as the founder of a university. In this third persona, we see that from 1885 to 1891 Stanford’s beliefs in association had extended from farmers to laborers to students.

### Students and Cooperative Association

By 1885, Stanford had supported the cooperative associations of laborers as both a manager and a politician. The next logical step in this evolution was for Stanford to support the cooperative association of what he saw as the laborers of his university—students. In deeper analysis of two of Stanford’s speeches, along with correspondence from Bancroft’s biography, we see a founder who wanted his university to reflect cooperative principles of students working together for the betterment of the school, society, and themselves.

In a November 14, 1885 address to the trustees of the university at their first meeting, Stanford evoked a belief that cooperation could help not just his students but all of humanity. Stanford lectured the Trustees that through the intelligent application of cooperative

*principles... there will be found the greatest level to elevate the mass of humanity, and... to [grant] the poor man complete protection against the monopoly of the rich... Hence it is that we have provided for thorough instruction in the principles of cooperation [and that we have] it early instilled into the student’s mind that no greater blow can be struck at labor than that which makes its products insecure.*<sup>18</sup>

This elevation of humanity was at the center of Stanford’s vision for the university: a global one based on the fruits of cooperative education. But in order to benefit humanity, students first had to associate and sympathize with labor.

Students were to be instructed in the “principles of cooperation” to protect the poor man—the working class—from the rich—the Stanfords of the world.<sup>19</sup> Students were to understand the position of labor, something Stanford recognized in managing the Central Pacific. He did not want students to see themselves as distinct from or superior to labor. Rather, through cooperation Stanford hoped that students could elevate themselves and, in the process, the masses of humanity. In this selection, Stanford’s explicit reference to labor is a link to his earlier history as a railroad manager, when he saw how labor could be both abused by capital and helped through association. In this address to his wealthy trustees, Stanford extended a broad, humanitarian, and cooperative vision to the students he hoped to educate.

Stanford saw many benefits of association. According to Stanford’s 1885 address, cooperative education could be a remedy for “an unequal distribution of wealth.”<sup>20</sup> He explained how this could happen by arguing “[t]hat this remedy has not been seized upon and adopted by the masses of laboring men is due wholly to the inadequacy of educational systems... It will be the aim of the university to educate those who come within its atmosphere in the direction of cooperation.”<sup>21</sup> In this statement, Stanford generalized the benefits of association. He posited that the graduates of the university could help the “masses of laboring men” adopt the belief in co-

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operative association they internalized.<sup>22</sup> In so educating his students, Stanford could educate a larger swath of labor. By 1885, Stanford connected the cooperative association of his students to the cooperation of the laborers his students would ultimately teach. He had advocated for the cooperation of railroad workers, the cooperation of farmers, and, now, the cooperation of students as a means of educating and uplifting the masses.

Six years later, Stanford reiterated his hope that the university would teach its students cooperation for the welfare of humanity. His October 1, 1891 address on the opening of the university was to a much different audience than that of 1885. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5000 people were present from throughout the Santa Clara Valley, San Francisco, and San Jose.<sup>23</sup> Despite this much larger and more economically diverse crowd, Stanford publicly reaffirmed that “the benefits resulting from cooperation shall be freely taught. It is through co-operation that modern progress has been mostly achieved. Co-operative societies bring forth the best capacities, the best influences of the individual for the benefit of the whole, while the good influences of the many aid the individual.”<sup>24</sup> His words were backed up by a long history of supporting the cooperation of labor. By 1891, this was not a political stunt; it was an appeal from someone with direct experience. As a railroad manager, Stanford had seen the literal fruits of the “co-operative societies” he spoke of, and it was unsurprising that he wanted the university to value similar societies for students. As to how exactly Stanford wanted his students to associate—whether in student clubs, co-operative housing, or something else—he was unclear. Yet throughout the 1891 speech, Stanford returned to his general hope for cooperation.

In perhaps his most radical restatement of this commitment, Stanford expressed the highest of hopes for cooperative education. He argued that

*the great masses of the toilers now are compelled to perform such an amount of labor as makes life often wearisome. An intelligent system of education would correct this inequality. It would make the humblest laborer's work more valuable... would dignify labor; and ultimately would go far to wipe out the mere distinctions of wealth and ancestry. It would achieve a bloodless revolution and establish a Republic of industry, merit, and learning.*<sup>25</sup>

To Stanford in 1891, as in 1885, students could correct the immense class inequality of the time through cooperation. The workers of the world were “toilers,” something Stanford undoubtedly saw in managing the Central Pacific. By 1891, we see some oblique knowledge on the part of Stanford that the toil of the working class cannot continue, and that cooperative education is the panacea. His was a halcyon vision for the university and paralleled Edward Bellamy's educational model in *Looking Backward*.

Bellamy's utopian novel, published in 1888 to huge popularity, de-

scribed an America that achieved a “bloodless revolution” similar to Stanford’s vision.<sup>26</sup> The revolution implemented a public school system with “equal education” for all from ages 6 to 21 which helped eliminate all class inequality.<sup>27</sup> Of course, Stanford was founded as a private university—not a public one—but, with free tuition and in Stanford’s speeches, we see a desire to educate as much of the masses as he can.<sup>28</sup> It is clear that, far from moving away from cooperative association, Stanford expanded the benefits of cooperation: now, not only should students learn to cooperate, but in such cooperation they might correct the wide class divisions so plaguing the “toilers.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Complicating Stanford’s Cooperative Vision: The Role of the Individual?**

Stanford’s halcyon vision was not as clearly nor as simply conveyed as Bellamy’s. What role would the individual play in the kind of cooperative associations of students Stanford supported? How did Stanford see the individual as related to cooperative association? While I argue that Stanford’s cooperative vision transcended politics, his unclear statements on how he thought the individual student should relate to the larger collective—the university—weakened this cooperative dream, and, in turn, Stanford’s founding of the university as a cooperative place. On the one hand, Stanford’s answers to these questions were ultimately unclear and insufficient because he never explained how much students should value personal success over the cooperative success of the university. In the same 1885 address in which Stanford thought cooperative education could promote the general welfare, there is evidence of a man unwilling to do away with a potentially contradictory view of the individual.

Deeper analysis of this address reveals that Stanford wanted his university to help students reach a high level of personal success, an important revelation because of its implications for the cooperative spirit Stanford professed. In the address to his Trustees, Stanford argued that the object of the university should be “not alone to give the student a technical education, fitting him for a successful business life, but... also to instill in his mind an appreciation of the blessings of this government [and] a reverence for its institutions...”<sup>30</sup> Stanford attempted to expand the object of the university, but, in so doing, showed the value he still placed in a “successful business life.”<sup>31</sup> There is confusion in this part of Stanford’s argument as to what the central object of the university should be. Should it be to help students get rich through a technical education? Stanford realized it cannot be that alone.

Yet in this admission, Stanford revealed one complication weakening the cooperative ethos of the university: he was unable to divorce himself from the value he saw in “business life.” Such a life propelled Stanford to great riches and great fame. Consequently, Stanford reserved the hope that

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with all his talk of cooperation for humanity the university would make his students value personal success, too. This alone is unsurprising coming from Stanford, a man with great wealth. The error Stanford made was not in the reference to “business life” alone, but in his inability to elaborate on this hope as related to the object of a university. If he had then continued that through a successful business life students would be able to educate their laborers as to the fruits of cooperation, he would have made a stronger link to his cooperative dream. He made no such elaboration, and, thus, students, faculty, and historians are forced to guess as to what value Stanford still saw in a more individualistic business life.

In 1891, Stanford’s opening address did little to clarify how he hoped the personal success of his students should relate to the cooperative success of the university, or the humanity he liked to reference. A *San Francisco Chronicle* article summarized the object of the university using the same terminology in the 1885 grant: to “qualify students for personal success and direct usefulness in life.”<sup>32</sup> In his 1891 address, Stanford evoked a strong belief in cooperative association, but as the article attests, the object of the university was still unclear. What did he actually mean by “personal success?”<sup>33</sup> Stanford wanted graduates of the university to be useful and practically minded, but should they be useful for themselves first, for their personal success, or for their community, state, or nation? Once again, the vagueness of this summation mired and muddled his address. If Stanford had clarified that “personal success” meant success insofar as one helped the nation ease its class inequalities, this would have cemented the link between the individual and the collective. As it stood, the individual student’s place in the university and beyond the university remained unclear.

Stanford’s inability to explain how the individual should relate to or value the collective can also be seen in 1885. In a different section of his address to the Trustees, Stanford instructed that “[i]t will be the leading aim of the university to form the character and the perception of its industrial students into that fitness wherein associated effort will be the natural and pleasurable result of their industrial career.”<sup>34</sup> Once again, Stanford praised “associated effort.”<sup>35</sup> In this selection, it is clear Stanford wanted his industrial students, meaning students in engineering and the hard sciences, to value association both during college and beyond it in their careers. But as to the specific things these students should associate around—clubs, societies, study groups—he does not specify. This vagueness plagued him in 1885, and it plagued him in 1891. Moreover, it weakened the cooperative dream he had so consistently evoked.

### Conclusions

Stanford died in 1893, just two years after the founding of the university. With more time he may have clarified how he felt the individual should relate to the cooperative. Stanford’s own views on association

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changed during his life, and it was perhaps because he was still refining these views that his vision for the university was so confusing. Nevertheless, in surveying the progression of Stanford's life—from his days as a railroad mogul to a politician to a trustee—we see a man more complicated than the robber baron stereotype. Stanford's cooperative vision for the university extended from his earlier personas, and his actions in support of cooperative association went beyond political motivations.

Stanford's speeches did have some effect. In 1891, students took to Stanford's cooperative beliefs and formed "the Leland Stanford Junior University Cooperative Association...which operated the first campus bookstore for seven years."<sup>36</sup> On the whole, though, the university did not support cooperative association in meaningful ways. One class in the 1891 course catalogue entitled "Co-operation: Its History and Influence" disappeared from the record in later years.<sup>37</sup>

If Stanford had lived longer, he may have seen his university move closer to the cooperative ideals he preached, but he just as likely may have seen it abandon them. Even with Stanford's wealth, he and the university were not immune to the political and social environment in the United States. Both the decay of the Populist Party after 1896 and the bloody history of labor-capital relations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries symbolized the difficulty in preaching cooperative education as an antidote to class conflict, let alone as the founding doctrine of a university. Leland Stanford tried, though, and that is more than most people realize or give him credit for today.

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## ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup>Opening Day, 1891 and Program of Exercises, 1891, Leland Stanford Papers, Box 5a, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew Josephson, *The Robber Barons* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), 203.

<sup>3</sup>Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 117.

<sup>4</sup>These associations were not socialist. As Lee Altenberg points out in a 1990 article on Leland Stanford entitled "Beyond Capitalism," "[c]ooperatives were seen not as an end to free-enterprise, but as a freeing of enterprise for common people from domination by the 'plutocracy' of wealthy industrialists."

<sup>5</sup>"Labor: Its Rights and Wrongs," accessed February, 25, 2013, 30-31.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 31

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 30

<sup>8</sup>Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 254.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>Richard Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 320.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>14</sup>White, *Railroaded*, 254

<sup>15</sup>Altenberg, "Beyond Capitalism."

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>"Mr. Stanford and the Presidency," *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1891, Accessed March 1, 2013.

<sup>18</sup>The Leland Stanford Junior University: Circular of Information No. 1 and 2, 1891, Leland Stanford Papers, Box 5b, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California.

<sup>19</sup>The Leland Stanford. Box 5b.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>"The Leland Stanford Junior University: The Opening Ceremonies," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 2, 1891, Accessed March 1, 2013.

<sup>24</sup>Opening Day, 1891, Box 5a.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications), 28.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>28</sup>An 1891 magazine article buttresses this point, attributing to Stanford "the plan of establishing at Palo Alto a complete system of education, the best of its kind in the world, in the three lines of art, technics, and liberal culture, from the earliest kindergarten work to the highest graduate special training." Milicent Shinn, "The Leland Stanford, Junior, University," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* (San Francisco, CA: Overland Pub. Co.), Accessed March 1, 2013.

<sup>29</sup>Opening Day, 1891, Box 5a.

<sup>30</sup>The Leland Stanford, Box 5b.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>"The Leland Stanford Junior University: The Opening Ceremonies," *San Francisco Chronicle*.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of the Life of Leland Stanford: A Character Study* (Oakland,

CA: BIOBOOKS), 114.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>36</sup>Altenberg, "Beyond Capitalism."

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

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## JUDAH MONIS AND PURITAN HEBRAISM

### **Introduction by Professor Caroline Winterer:**

In the Puritan-dominated commonwealth that was colonial Massachusetts, Judah Monis (1683-1764) stands out not only as a Jew but also as a Jewish scholar: his important contribution to American history is to be North America's first college instructor of the Hebrew language. Through the figure of Judah Monis, Doria Charlson's paper opens to us an important but little-known chapter of New England Puritanism, in which Puritan scholars joined forces with Jewish scholars to attempt to come to a mutual understanding of the Old Testament. To the Puritans who rejected Catholicism, the Old Testament symbolized the purity of the original word of God, uncorrupted by the later accretions of the New Testament. This fusion of Christianity with a fascination for Judaism and Jewish learning was known as "Christian Hebraism," and Judah Monis was its most spectacular early American manifestation. Within a decade of arriving in Massachusetts, Puritans had founded Harvard College with the express intention of training future ministers, a line of work that required the ability to read the Old Testament in the original Hebrew. Monis became a tutor at Harvard College, and took it upon himself to publish a Hebrew grammar to assist his often bewildered students, who were struggling to master Latin and Greek at the same time. He also became something of a local celebrity when he converted to Christianity, an act that caused no little controversy and murmuring among the local Puritan theocracy. Charlson's paper nicely sums up Monis' importance for American history and for scholars of religion: "While he remains to this day an inherently Jewish figure, Monis blurred the lines between Christianity and Judaism and believed that Hebrew scholarship was beneficial to both groups."

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## Judah Monis and Puritan Hebraism

Doria Charlson

On March 27, 1722, Judah Monis (1683-1764) awoke as a Jew. That evening, he fell asleep as a Christian. Witnesses to his conversion in Cambridge, Massachusetts were swept up in the occasion, as it was touted by Puritan leaders as an incredible affair. After all, it was not often that a Jew was willing to convert to Puritanism, a religion whose very definition included strict and disciplined observance of Christian law. A lesser known, but equally important, characteristic of this group was an intense yearning to create a land founded on the principles of the Old Testament, where Puritans sought salvation by living as New Israelites. Yet this embrace of ancient biblical law proved problematic for these insular, religious leaders of Puritan society who struggled to create a closer connection with God through the Old Testament, but without the proper knowledge to do so. When he moved to Cambridge in 1720 to assume a position at Harvard as the instructor of Hebrew, Monis seemed to be the perfect answer to this conundrum. Monis, a Jewish immigrant with scholarly knowledge of the Old Testament and the Hebrew language, provided a vital opportunity for the Puritans to learn Hebrew and the Bible from an authentic source and his subsequent conversion to Christianity solved the Puritan hesitance and distrust of outsiders. The embrace and acceptance of Monis in the Puritan community highlights their profound desire to achieve a more pure, divine state in the Massachusetts colony. As a former Jew, Monis became the primary link between the original language of the Holy Scripture, along with the laws and customs of the Israelites, and the Puritans of New England. Understanding God through the Old Testament in its original state was such an important task that Puritans celebrated Monis's Jewish background, rather than demeaning it. The Puritan desire to become closer to God created the opportunity for Monis to acculturate into an otherwise extremely isolated society. Although this acculturation was dependent on his conversion, Monis entered the Puritan community of Massachusetts at an optimal time; because of the obsession of Puritan elites to transform themselves into New Israelites, particularly through the study of the Old Testament in Hebrew and applying those laws and practices to their daily lives, there was a distinct need for a authentic Hebrew teacher who would be able to ensure that future generations could continue to embrace the principles and practices of Puritan Hebraism.

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The tradition of Puritan Hebraism began long before Monis arrived in Cambridge in encounters between Jews and Puritans in Europe, as Puritans sought to more deeply connect with the Bible in its original form. Amsterdam was a key location in this exchange both as the pre-eminent trading capital in seventeenth-century northern Europe and as a famed refuge for the religiously persecuted. It was in the city's diverse population of global traders that Puritans first began to seriously consider the study of Hebrew as a crucial part of their own religious practice. Puritanism developed as an offshoot of Calvinism in England in the late 16th century. Because of persecution in England, a significant population of Puritans immigrated to Amsterdam, where Puritanism and Judaism first came into close contact. Amsterdam became the pre-eminent trading capital in northern Europe in the seventeenth century and, because of its diverse population of traders from all over the world, in addition to its religiously diverse (meaning Protestant and Catholic) citizenship, became a beacon for minorities and religious tolerance in Europe and a space for religious and cultural interaction. As historian Michael Hoberman postulates, for Christians "proximity to actual Jews offered English dissenters in Holland an occasion not for outright apostasy but for the direct engagement of Judaic teaching," establishing a foundation for engagement with Jewish practices and beliefs.<sup>1</sup> Protestant leaders began to delve into studies of Hebrew and Judaism to further "their inquiries into the 'original' language of God whose use in the Torah...could be understood to be a 'configuration of divine light,'" which they believed would lead to ultimate salvation and redemption.<sup>2</sup> As Puritans began to seek more religious freedoms and economic opportunities across the Atlantic, interest and dedication in the study of Hebrew and Judaic texts grew and became increasingly important aspects of contemporary Puritan theology.

Puritanism in the New England colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reflected a close connection to Judaism, particularly the laws and practices of the Old Testament. As the Old Testament was viewed as the most significant and holy text, the ability to read and understand it in its original language and form was key in order to grasp the history, nuance, and original meaning that could not be found in translations. Almost all early Puritan leaders studied Hebrew and it became a requirement for attendance at and admission to Harvard College, which was founded as a Puritan seminary, because Hebrew was deemed as necessary to the study of religion as Greek and Latin. Many historians suggest an even closer relationship between Puritanism and Judaism than is implied by the mere study of Hebrew as a technique to deepen understanding of the Scripture. Puritan society became intensely preoccupied with the Old Testament both in theory and in practice, in an effort to "deepen the Christian experience and, more particularly, to move Christianity as far as possible from the merely ceremonial and paganistic elements that Puritans were so eager to reject."<sup>3</sup> In 1652, the

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General Court passed ordinances against the violation of the Old and New Testaments, and the laws of the Old Testament began to be adopted in the public sphere across the region.<sup>4</sup> Puritan customs became more connected to ancient Jewish law - for example, the Ordinance stated that the Puritans “forbade the celebration of Christmas..., and the Sabbath began on Saturday.”<sup>5</sup>

Despite the increasing similarities in practice and the proliferation of the idea that Puritans were a group that was also chosen by God, Puritans still wanted Jews to convert to Christianity. Historian Milton Klein writes,

*Puritans also evinced great interest in the history of the Jews, but the result of their curiosity was an ambivalent attitude. On the one hand, they searched the Scriptures for texts relevant to their own history, and many saw themselves as new Israelites - “chosen people”...For Jews who did not heed the call to conversion, however, New England clergymen expressed the most virulent sentiments, denouncing them for backsliding and threatening them with divine retribution for their rejection of Christ.<sup>6</sup>*

There are many instances of the Puritans referring to themselves as the new colony of Israel - people who were forced from their ancestral homes and kept tradition alive through pure worship of the ancient texts. Puritan New England infused the Old Testament into all aspects of everyday life, which can be seen from the names of their towns to the laws of the land and curriculum in the schools. Although Judaism and Puritanism became increasingly intertwined in eighteenth-century New England, the Puritan leadership believed that, despite their understanding of the Old Testament, Jews had to convert to Christianity to fully experience God and eventual redemption.

In Puritan Massachusetts, the conflict between needing spiritual and holy knowledge that lay outside of their reach and the isolationist tradition of Puritanism was mediated by Judah Monis’s perceived authenticity as a European immigrant, religious scholar, and teacher of Hebrew, which allowed for him to be accepted and celebrated when other outsiders could not. Monis was born in 1683, although the location of his birth has not been verified and is the subject of some controversy. It is widely assumed, though, that he is a descendant of Sephardic Jews, likely from Portugal, as his name “Monis” is so similar to “the common Portuguese name ‘Moniz,’” suggesting a “*marrano* origin.”<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the fact that Monis lived, for at least a portion of his life, in Amsterdam, where there was a significant Sephardic Jewish community with contacts in the Christian world, points to his Portuguese heritage. Similarly, because of his time in Amsterdam, Judah Monis was in the unique position to have experience in the world of significant religious studies and also in the world of business, as he operated a variety of small shops in the cities he lived in. His prior work in the business sphere almost certainly helped his academic career, as his skills in self-advocacy, bartering, and compromise were necessary while negotiating the terms of

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his employment at Harvard later in his life. Upon arriving in the colonies in 1715, after having lived in Amsterdam and Livorno, he settled in New York and operated both a small storefront in addition to charging money as a Hebrew tutor to both Jews and Christians.

In the colonies, Monis became established as a Hebrew tutor and grammarian and built up his reputation and networks in the colonies. Shortly after arriving in New York, Monis began corresponding with influential Christian leaders including Samuel Johnson, the future President of King's College (later Columbia University), Increase and Cotton Mather, and John Leverett of Harvard, presumably to inquire about teaching possibilities, the Hebrew language itself, and to promote his manuscript.<sup>8</sup> Monis was searching for not only a position as a tutor, but also for prestige and acknowledgement by some of the most prominent religious thinkers of the time. By cultivating and maintaining these relationships, Monis seemed to feel as though his career would benefit from a new location. By 1720, the year Monis moved to New England, he had already written a preliminary manuscript for his Hebrew reader *Dickdook Lashon Gnebreet*, which would later become the Hebrew textbook for his classes at Harvard. Benjamin Colman, a prominent Puritan preacher who would later deliver a discourse at Monis's conversion, noted that he was established a reputation as a "learned and pious man" who "writes and interprets [Hebrew] with great readiness and accuracy." Monis kept company with many Christian scholars in Cambridge who sought out knowledge of Hebrew to better understand the Old Testament and Scripture.<sup>9</sup> It is likely that through his encounters with Christian students and clergy that he was able to attend Harvard and eventually graduated with an M.A in 1723 -- just one year after he became the first Hebrew instructor -- as the first Jewish student to matriculate at Harvard in the eighteenth-century.<sup>10</sup>

Judah Monis's conversion, as highlighted through the discourse of Benjamin Colman, brought to light the values and priorities of, and the problems facing the Christian community of Cambridge. The role of Colman's discourse was to not only deliver an oration on the necessity of the salvation of the Jews (meaning their conversion to Christianity), but also to attest to Monis's morals and his willingness to act as a true Christian. On only the second page of his address, Colman put forth his hope that Monis "may minister unto the conversion of his Brethren; who were once the peculiar people of God and still beloved for the Father's sake."<sup>11</sup> It is evident that Colman and other spiritual leaders hoped that Monis would be the catalyst in a more significant Jewish conversion, perhaps not unlike the mass conversion of Jewish children in Berlin, an event about which Cotton Mather wrote and spoke of often, and one that proved miraculous and wondrous in his eyes.<sup>12</sup> Towards the end of his discourse, Colman again highlighted conversion of Jews as a necessary step on the path towards salvation.

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He noted that it was the duty of Christians to “pray and desire” and work toward the ability to unveil “the Spiritual Blindness [of] the Jewish Nation, [which was] judicially laid upon them for rejecting Christ,” which would lead to freedom and the salvation of these unbelievers. In the context of a decentralized and weakened Church, Colman effectively was able to unite the entirety of the Congregation against a common body, i.e., the Jews.<sup>13</sup> Not everyone, though, was uniformly pleased with Monis’s conversion, as is evident in the preface to Monis’s own response and discourse to the event, boldly titled “The Truth,” which was also given in 1722, likely soon after the event itself.

Although Monis himself made no specific affirmation that he would participate in actively converting Jews, his published works about his conversion spoke to the tension he must have perceived from Jews across the colonies.<sup>14</sup> The preface of his work “The Truth” was addressed and dedicated to his “Brethren according to the Flesh” and began with a noticeably apologetic tone for one who professed to have experienced a spiritual revelation based on years of textual study.<sup>15</sup> Monis did, in fact, write that he was “very sorry” if Jews were disappointed with the news of his conversion. Trusting in his God of “Love and Mercy” to maintain his love of the Jews and of “all Mankind,” Monis believed that would allow him to act as an agent of the Church.<sup>16</sup> He wrote that he hoped God would “have mercy upon [the Jews] and, in due time take the Vail from before the eyes of [their] Understanding, so that [they] may see the veracity of Christ.”<sup>17</sup> By using the same metaphors for religious revelation as Colman and the popular discourse around Jewish conversion, Monis rhetorically aligned himself with his newfound position as a Puritan. Throughout “The Truth,” though, Monis expressed desires of maintaining relationships with Jews, despite the fact that he simultaneously denounced their religious practices and fundamental beliefs. Although Monis goes on to refute the Old Testament as the only source of divine knowledge and accepts Jesus Christ as the Lord, he asked that his fellow Jews remember the commandment from the book of Leviticus, “Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thine heart...thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self.”<sup>18</sup> From the dedication of his discourse, “The Truth,” it is evident that Monis felt torn between his new role as a Christian and the benefits that would come with that (either spiritual, as in eventual redemption, or professional, as in being allowed to teach at Harvard), and his familial, religious, and ancestral bond to the Jewish community -- a relationship that continued to challenge Monis throughout his life.

Considering this fascination with Judaism, it is no surprise that Cotton Mather and other prominent Puritans took an interest in Monis. Nevertheless, the exact motivations of Puritan elites remain unclear, although historians have offered many theories, none of which are conclusive, to explain why prominent Puritan theologians such as Cotton Mather

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took a particular interest in Judah Monis, a newly-arrived Jew who was part shopkeeper, part linguist. The conversion of Jews to Christianity was by no means a new goal, as for centuries, Jews around the world had been forced and coerced into or banished for not changing their religion. Conversion was, however, an intense preoccupation of many Puritan leaders in Monis's time. Mather was intensely preoccupied with the conversion of Jews. In his letters and diary entries, dating from 1710 through to the mid-1720s, Mather discussed his dismay at his inability to convert a particular Jew. He wrote in April 1711,

*I cried unto the Lord that I might yett see one [Testimony], and a very Rich one, in the Conversion of that poor Jew; for whose Conversion and Salvation we have been for six or seven Years more than ten, waiting on Him. And for this purpose, I now again did committ that Soul into the Hands of my Saviour, and His Holy Spirit, with a strong Faith of thy being, O Lord, able to enlighten him and sanctify him, and conquer all his Obstinacy.<sup>19</sup>*

From this we can glean that Mather viewed the conversion of Jews as a spiritual and communal triumph, which is one reason that Monis's story might have been so important to him and his fellow clergy.

Historians, including Michael Hoberman, point to the anxiety over decentralization of the Puritan faith, a softening of the rigid structure of the religion, and declining trust in the clergy around the time of Monis's arrival in Massachusetts as a major contribution to excitement and importance of his conversion. He notes that "the waning orthodox influence figured more prominently in the story of Judah Monis than did the eschatological zeal that had fueled earlier Puritan rhetorical efforts to convert Jews."<sup>20</sup> Although Hoberman suggests that Monis's conversion was more of a publicity stunt to revitalize the increasingly removed Puritan clergy than a statement about Puritan-Jewish relations, the circumstances surrounding the conversion were nonetheless significant and momentous. Regarding shifting powers within the Church, Monis arrived at the perfect time "as it coincided with a broadly based appeal on the part of Harvard authorities to revive the spirit of the fathers by reasserting their power of the individual conversion experience as a communal spectacle."<sup>21</sup> No matter what internal conflicts (whether theological, spiritual, or societal) might have existed in the Church at this point, Monis's conversion was particularly significant as it represented a moment in time when the community came together to witness a profession of their faith.<sup>22</sup>

The circumstances surrounding Monis's conversion are unclear at best; however, the lengths to which Monis and prominent Puritan leaders went to legitimize his conversion and assure the community of its sincerity, suggest that there was serious doubt about the authenticity of Monis's religious practices. In his public sermon just before Monis's baptism, Colman attested to Judah Monis's character, his intelligence, his authenticity, and

his capacity to urge others of his “brethren” (the Jews) to convert, in a way that seems much more political than sincerely religious. Many sources cite Monis’s lifelong observation of the Sabbath on the “seventh day” (Saturday), rather than on the Christian Sabbath of Sunday, raising questions from Jews and Christians alike about Monis’s true religious inclinations. Historian George A. Kohut writes, “we cannot help saying that his observance of the Jewish Sabbath is proof enough of his adherence to the ancestral creed, and that, like the Marranos of Spain..., he remained loyal to Israel at heart, whilst apparently devoted to Christianity.”<sup>23</sup> Other historians, though, claimed otherwise. Shalom Goldman, for example, cited Monis’s love of Abigail Marret (the daughter of the storeowner for whom he worked upon arriving in Cambridge) as the primary reason for his conversion, as Monis would have to convert in order to be baptised and allowed to marry Abigail. Jacob Marcus of Hebrew Union College, on the other hand, suggested that, in spite of his observance of the seventh day Sabbath, Monis never gave anyone, particularly his sponsors at Harvard College any reason to doubt the seriousness with which Monis took his conversion. The fact, Marcus argued, that Monis married a Christian woman and became a “zealous convert” seemed to be enough to convince Increase Mather and other major players in Puritan New England, and therefore should suffice as evidence that Monis had, for all intent and purposes, truly become Christian.<sup>24</sup> Monis’s endorsements from such esteemed leaders as the Mathers bolstered his reputation and legitimized him as one who could transmit authentic Hebrew scholarship to a new generation of Puritans.

Christian Hebraism accompanied the Puritan migration to the Massachusetts Bay Colony and was of fundamental importance for the education of Puritan leadership in the colonies. At the time of Harvard’s founding in 1636, over half of the clergymen in New England were graduates of Cambridge University, whose curriculum served as a template for the creation of Harvard’s academic requirements and priorities. Much like at Cambridge, the study of the “Learned Languages,” Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, were of much importance; however, Harvard was unique in that “in its early years Harvard...was more closely focused on the study of Hebrew and the Bible than any parallel institution in Europe.”<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the heightened emphasis on Hebrew scholarship drew upon the influence of the first immigrants to Massachusetts. William Bradford, Governor of Plymouth Colony and passenger of the Mayflower was a dedicated Hebraist. Bradford wrote in one of his “Hebrew Exercise” readers,

*Though I am growne aged, yet I have had a longing desire to see with my owne eyes something of that most ancient language and holy tongue in which the law and Oracles of God were write; and in which God and Angels spake to the holy patriarchs of old time; and what names were given to things from the creation. And though I cannot attain to much herein, yet I am refreshed to have seen some glimpse hereof, (as Moyses saw the land of canan a farr off), my aime and desire is to see*



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*how the words and phrases lye in the holy texe and to discerne somewhat of the same for my owne contente.*<sup>26</sup>

Bradford's notion of Hebrew as a language to be learned in order to attain greater holiness was not uncommon. In addition to William Bradford, many of Harvard's founders considered themselves Hebraists, including Harvard's first two Presidents, Henry Dunster and Charles Chauncy, the latter of whom "requested that a chapter of the Hebrew Bible be read, in Hebrew, at morning chapel services."<sup>27</sup> Throughout Harvard's first century, Hebrew was a cornerstone of the curriculum and all students were required to take classes in the subject as well as translate scriptures from Hebrew to Greek or English. At one point, Harvard even devoted all of Thursday to learning of Hebrew. As is clear from the curriculum, Harvard's leadership determined that Hebrew and the "classical heritage were hallmarks of an educated person" -- necessities for graduates to become cultured and bred in the "humanistic European tradition."<sup>28</sup>

Although the Hebrew language enjoyed strong support from Harvard's first leaders, the reception of the Hebrew requirement by students, especially moving into the eighteenth-century, was mixed, at best. From the beginning, Harvard's administration prioritized the study of Hebrew. The College Laws of 1655 explicitly stated, "all students shall read the Old Testament in some portion of it of Hebrew into Greek...In the first yeare after admission, for foure days of the weeke all students shall be exercised in the Study of Greeke and Hebrew Tongues."<sup>29</sup> Despite the push towards Hebrew literacy by the leadership of the College, Hebrew was an intensely despised subject, which no doubt affected Monis and his effectiveness as a teacher. Students found it much more difficult to justify learning the "ancient" language of Hebrew, which occupied a peculiar place in the Puritan narrative, as opposed to Greek and Latin which were known world-wide as the learned languages. Above all, students associated Hebrew with Jews and "with religious piety and obscurantism, not qualities that would endear them to students."<sup>30</sup> Perhaps it was this affiliation with Judaism that turned students away from Hebrew, but more likely was the perceived lack of relevance for the language or the methods through which Monis conducted his courses. As the number of students entering Harvard as seminary students decreased, the application of Hebrew in daily life beyond the College was lost on many students, which was one factor in the drastic decline of the language's popularity in the mid- and late-seventeenth century.

It is likely that the combination of Hebrew being viewed as a boring or archaic subject, coupled with Monis's own teaching practices, resulted in many accounts of Monis's unpopular instruction techniques and his inability to control his students. Around the time of Monis's arrival at Harvard, the College began to shift away from rote memorization and recitation as pedagogy, in favor of the lecture method. Although most languages were

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still taught by copying text, memorization and recitation, students particularly hated learning Hebrew in this fashion. From President Wadsworth's meeting minutes, it is evident that the study of Hebrew consisted of a thrilling regime of "writing the Hebrew and Rabbincall, copying Grammar and reading, reciting it and reading, construing, parsing, translating, composing, and reading without [vowels]."<sup>31</sup> Because Monis's manuscript was not published until 1735, for the first thirteen years of his tenure, he required his students to copy the textbook word for word for the purpose of memorization. In one copy of one of Monis's texts that was preserved, one particularly perturbed student changed the title page from "composed and corrected by Judah Monis, M.A." to "confuted and accurately corrupted by Judah Monis, M(aker) of A(sses)."<sup>32</sup> This vulgar critique likely referenced Monis's limited command of the English language, the obscurity of his subject, and the difficulty of the Hebrew grammar and was only one of many significant discipline problems Monis faced throughout his career at Harvard. As early as 1725, only three years after his conversion and appointment, notes from the Corporation meeting show that Monis asked for the ability to levy a fine "not exceeding one shilling" to students who missed his classes regularly.<sup>33</sup> Fines failed to correct the problem and the behavior continued, as is evidence by the meeting notes of April 15, 1729 when it was requested that "Resident Members of ye Corporation be desired to project some effectual methods to secure ye better attendance upon ye private Theological Lectures and ye Hebrew Instructions...before ye Corporation at their next meeting."<sup>34</sup>

Along with Monis's rocky relationship with his students, Monis's salary and the indifference of Harvard's governance regarding the disciplinary problems he faced reflected his precarious status. Prior to Monis's arrival at Harvard, Hebrew was taught much like many of the other subjects -- through the use of tutors, in the same style as Oxford University in England. Upon his arrival at Harvard, Monis was the first person to be granted the title of "instructor" rather than "tutor;" however, the difference in name did not necessarily equate to a higher status. Monis's starting salary in 1722 was £50, a relatively meager sum, in addition to a "remission of tuition, a small stipend and a 'chamber in the house."<sup>35</sup> After his marriage to Abigail Marett, Monis purchased some of his own land off campus and became the proprietor of a small storefront. Monis continued to operate his general store in Cambridge for years after he was appointed at Harvard, which ironically seemed to contribute to his low pay. Notes from a meeting of the Harvard Corporation on May 4, 1725 read "Inasmuch as Mr. Judah Monis... has time for and is actually engaged in the Management of Secular businesses we think it not reasonable he should have so much Salary as when he personally resided at the College."<sup>36</sup> Monis could not make enough as an instructor to support himself and his wife; however, his means of earning extra income detracted from his value as an instructor. Monis's unremark-

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able salary and compensation severely contrasts the importance placed on Hebrew as a subject at Harvard. Monis's problems did not subside. As late as 1758, there are disciplinary reports of students throwing "bricks, sticks, and ashes at the door of the Hebrew school."<sup>37</sup> Given the resentment and poor reception of his subject by students, Monis should be given credit for his desire to codify the Hebrew language and enlighten new generations with knowledge of the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, Monis exhibited throughout his life the same characteristics that must have been necessary for a career that was not particularly well received - a tenacity and strength of conviction that stands out even centuries after his death.

Despite difficulties in his classroom, Monis was still able to publish his Hebrew Grammar *Dickdook Lashon Gnebreet*. It was the earliest example of American Hebrew studies, the hallmark of Monis's career, and contributed to the development of Hebraic studies in the colonies. Although it was not published until 1735, Monis had produced at least a rudimentary version of his grammar by 1720. As he wrote to the Harvard Corporation on June 29, 1720, Monis "make[s] bold to present" his "Essay to facilitate the Instruction of Youth in the Hebrew Language."<sup>38</sup> Monis was an ardent self-promoter throughout his career and his early letter to Harvard indicated his belief that his grammar contributed greatly to the scholarship at the time. Indeed, Harvard found Monis to be a well-respected and well-educated Hebraist, as many ministers from Boston and Cambridge came to know him, which almost certainly led to his conversion and appointment as the Hebrew instructor.

Although Monis's Hebrew grammar was one of the skills and accomplishments with which he most proudly presented himself, the process of its publication was drawn out for years. His grammar was put on the back burner for over a decade and perhaps due to the complaints of students and Monis's desire to better control his classes by providing them with adequate materials, Harvard's leadership began the process of publishing the manuscript. It was, in fact, a fairly arduous process if only for the typeface itself. Prior to Monis's work, there were no Hebrew or Greek typefaces in the colonies, meaning anything printed with that lettering had to be printed in Europe. The publication and printing processes took almost six years from beginning to end. In 1729, the Corporation dispensed to Monis the funds necessary to print one of his grammars and eventually bring over the type fonts with the help of a benefactor, Mr. Thomas Hollis. Isidore Meyer speculated that Monis's work might have been the foreshadowing of the Harvard University Press, as it was the earliest publication to have a committee to review the content, in addition to the financial backing of the university.<sup>39</sup> Harvard ordered one thousand quartos and his book was made used for at least two generations of students there, in addition to Dartmouth and other institutions in New England in the years following their founding.<sup>40</sup>

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Although it is not a masterpiece, Monis's Grammar offered a glimpse into the trends of Hebraic scholarship in the early eighteenth century. In his proposal for printing by subscription, Monis wrote his work is "design[ed]" for all those who wanted to "obtain a clear idea of the primitive language" through individual study.<sup>41</sup> Monis differentiated his grammar from other contemporary works -- like those of Wilhelm Schickard, a German Hebraist - and promised that his own publication would be "considerably larger" and more comprehensive than that of the German scholar.<sup>42</sup> A notable feature of Monis's work was the inclusion of a translation of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed. Indeed, in the preface to the Grammar, Monis further noted that his phrases were the most contemporary and his rules were the "best, clearest, and most necessary ones to qualify any (tho of mean capacity) to understand the Word of GOD, according to the Original."<sup>43</sup> The preface provided more evidence that Monis was his own promoter. In fact, Monis sold the book from his home, in addition to from a bookseller, Daniel Henschman, in Boston for eight shillings.<sup>44</sup> Regarding the manuscript itself, scholars have produced mixed reviews (ranging from "poor" to "adequate") of Monis's work and whether it was actually the "best" of its time. Regardless of its quality by modern standards, Monis's grammar filled an immediate need for scholarship in the North American colonies and provided for an occasion to bring Hebrew type to the New World and expand the literature, at least somewhat, on the Hebrew language. What can be said is that the work was concise and accessible compared to similar books, which was the key to its relative success and that it served its purpose well as a tool to further the Hebrew language program at Harvard in the mid-eighteenth century.

Monis and his leadership helped create a foundation for Hebrew scholarship not only at Harvard, but also in all of the New England colonies for generations after his death, despite declining interest in the subject. Monis was the first instructor of Hebrew; however the first professorship in Hebrew was not instated until after Monis's retirement. One of Monis's first students, Stephen Sewall (1734-1804), was hired in 1761 as the first institutionalized professor of Hebrew at a North American university, and he was endowed as the inaugural "Hancock Professor of Hebrew and other Oriental Languages" in 1764 by Thomas Hancock, a wealthy merchant and uncle of John Hancock.<sup>45</sup> Sewall was a talented and accomplished scholar and classicist who studied not only Hebrew, but also Aramaic, Syriac, Samaritan, and dabbled in Ethiopian and Persian.<sup>46</sup> Sewall's diversity in scholarship and research expanded the professorship to include subjects beyond just the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic texts, which perhaps further shifted academic interests away from the Hebrew language. Sewall held his professorship for two decades and upon his retirement, and Hebrew became an optional subject.<sup>47</sup> Although Sewall witnessed a decline in the number of students en-

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rolled in his courses and in the popularity of Hebrew, his influence was still significant in the realm of Hebrew scholarship. As a distinguished scholar, Sewall became known throughout the colonies and, in the 1770s, became a close affiliate of Ezra Stiles, a minister from Rhode Island who would later become the President of Yale University, and a committed Hebraist.

Though Monis was not directly involved in the creation of the Hebrew departments in various universities, nor was his Grammar used beyond the eighteenth century, he nonetheless established the precedent and the place of Hebrew in higher education in the colonies. Among the first universities in this country, almost all of them included Hebrew in the curriculum. Samuel Johnson of Columbia University was a known Hebraist (and as previously stated, actually corresponded with Monis), and demanded that all tutors were versed in the language. Two seminal Presidents at Yale (Timothy Cutler and Stiles), were also well-recognized Hebraists at a college that required its graduates know Hebrew since its founding in 1701.<sup>48</sup> The Philadelphia Academy (later, the University of Pennsylvania), founded in 1740 created its first chaired professor in Hebrew and Oriental Languages in the 1780s and Dartmouth (founded 1769) used Monis's grammar until professor John Smith wrote his own updated grammar in 1772.<sup>49</sup> Despite questionable success and popularity at Harvard, the College in addition to Yale, Columbia, Princeton (founded 1746), Brown (founded 1764), and Johns Hopkins (founded 1876) have all taught Hebrew "without interruption from their beginning."<sup>50</sup> In this way, it is evident that Hebrew scholarship remained an important aspect of higher education in the United States as a critical component of classicism and a "gentleman's" education well into the nineteenth century.

When Judah Monis entered the Church on the morning of his conversion in 1722, it is doubtful that he anticipated the long, fulfilling, and at times, tumultuous and challenging career that lay ahead of him at Harvard. Marked by oscillating interest and support from the university, Monis's tenure at Harvard was not an easy one; however, he was able to leave a lasting impact in the form of his Grammar, the teaching of his students, and a tenacity and passion for the Hebrew language that has remained his legacy. The study of Judah Monis and his contributions to scholarship of the Hebrew language and Christian Hebraism highlights the role of Hebraic influence in colonial North America and traces the development of Hebrew as a cornerstone for classicism in higher education in New England and beyond. Monis is by no means a household name; however his trajectory is not uncommon among immigrants to this country - coming to the colonies to gain religious and professional freedoms, and making personal choices about his religion and his lifestyle that he believed would further his professional ambitions and allowed him to more easily assimilate into the majority culture of Puritan New England. While he remains to this day an inherently Jewish figure,

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Monis blurred the lines between Christianity and Judaism and believed that Hebrew scholarship was beneficial to both groups. His passion lay in the study of Hebrew and he was determined to teach and codify the language to the best of his ability in order to ensure the passing of knowledge to future generations. Hebrew was an integral part of the system of higher education in the colonies that was ensured and enhanced by Monis's works and his ability to promote them. While his impact might not be tangibly felt in the literature and scholarship of Hebrew today, he helped to sculpt Hebraic scholarship in the colonies, whose legacy continues to this day.

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## ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup>Michael Hoberman, *New Israel/New England*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 8.

<sup>2</sup>Hoberman, 8.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>4</sup>S. Broches. *Jews in New England: Six Monographs - Historical Study of the Jews in Massachusetts (1650-1750)*. (New York: Bloch Publishing Co, 1942), 7.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Milton M. Klein, "A Jew at Harvard in the eighteenth century," *Massachusetts Historical Society* 3, no 97 (1985) : 138. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25080947>.

<sup>7</sup>The term *marrano* refers to Jews who lived in the Iberian Peninsula (namely Portugal, but also Spain) and were forced to convert to Christianity during the Inquisition beginning in 1492; however, they maintained Jewish practices in secret for many generations; Hoberman, 92.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas S. Kidd, *The Protestant Interest: New England After Puritanism*. (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press: 2004), 152.

<sup>9</sup>Benjamin Colman, "A Discourse Had In the College-Hall At Cambridge, March 27. 1722. Before the Baptism of R. Judah Monis: By Benj. Colman, V.D.M. To Which Are Added Three Discourses Written by Mr. Monis Himself, The Truth, The Whole Truth, And, Nothing but the Truth. One of Which Was Deliver'd by Him At His Baptism." Boston: Printed [by Samuel Kneeland] for Daniel Henchman, and sold at his shop over against the Old Brick Church in Cornhill, 1722. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. [http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/retrieve.do?inPS=true&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=stan90222&tabID=T001&bookId=0375000700&resultListType=RESULT\\_LIST&contentSet=ECCOArticles&showLOI=&docId=CW3319525475&docLevel=FASCIMILE&workId=CW119525475&relevancePageBatch=CW119525475&retrieveFormat=MULTIPAGE\\_DOCUMENT&callistoContentSet=ECLL&docPage=article&hilite=y](http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/retrieve.do?inPS=true&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=stan90222&tabID=T001&bookId=0375000700&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&contentSet=ECCOArticles&showLOI=&docId=CW3319525475&docLevel=FASCIMILE&workId=CW119525475&relevancePageBatch=CW119525475&retrieveFormat=MULTIPAGE_DOCUMENT&callistoContentSet=ECLL&docPage=article&hilite=y). Page 4. Accessed: 19 October 2012.

<sup>10</sup>Harvard University Archives.

<sup>11</sup>Colman, 4.

<sup>12</sup>In January 1717, Mather wrote in his diary, "My, Faith Encouraged, being published, in which the strange Conversion of the Jewish children in Berlin, is accompanied with an Address unto the Jewish Nation; I propose to send it, unto as many of the Jews, in several Places and Countreys as I can." Cotton Mather, as compiled in *Diary of Cotton Mather, Volume II 1709-1724* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co). 52.

<sup>13</sup>Colman, 26.

<sup>14</sup>Up until the mid-1800s, there was not a significant Jewish community in Boston. Therefore, it is assumed that Monis's apparent guilt about his conversion was caused by other communities where he once lived, by the small number of Jews in the Boston area, or perhaps his family. Jonathan D. Sarna, Ellen Smith, and Scott-Martin Kosofsky, *The Jews of Boston*. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press), 2005.

<sup>15</sup>Judah Monis, "The Truth" in Colman, i.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, i.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, i.

<sup>18</sup>Leviticus 19, as qtd by Monis in "The Truth" in Colman, ii.

<sup>19</sup>Mather, 62.

<sup>20</sup>Hoberman, 89.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>23</sup>George A. Kohut, "'Judah Monis, M.A., the First Instructor in Hebrew at Harvard University (1683-1764).'" *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 14.4 (1898): 218. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/527966>.

<sup>24</sup>Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew, 1492-1776*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 1098.

<sup>25</sup>Shalom Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina



Press, 2004), 10.

<sup>26</sup>Sarna, 12.

<sup>27</sup>Goldman, 10.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid, 38.

<sup>29</sup>“College Laws of 1655” (Cambridge: 1655) in Isidore S. Meyer, “Hebrew at Harvard (1636-1760)” *American Jewish Historical Society*, no. 35 (1939), 155 in [Collection of Journal Articles and Pamphlets On Various Facets of Hebrew and Semitic Philology, Linguistics and Language].

<sup>30</sup>Goldman, 38.

<sup>31</sup>Benjamin Wadsworth served as President of Harvard College from 1725-37; Meyer, 164.

<sup>32</sup>Hoberman, 112.

<sup>33</sup>Meyer, 164.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 165.

<sup>35</sup>Hoberman, 96.

<sup>36</sup>Meyer, 163.

<sup>37</sup>Goldman, 36.

<sup>38</sup>Judah Monis, as published in “May Meeting. Gifts to the Society; Judah Monis; The Boston Petitions of 1664” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* ser 3, vol 52 (Oct 1918-Jun 1919): 290. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25080090?seq=9>

<sup>39</sup>Meyer, 166.

<sup>40</sup>*American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), vol 15, s.v. “Judah Monis.”

<sup>41</sup>Judah Monis, “Proposal for Printing By Subscription,” 1734. *America’s Historical Imprints*, Accessed 12 November 2012. [http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iwsearch/we/Evans?p\\_action=doc&p\\_theme=eai&p\\_topdoc=1&p\\_docnum=1&p\\_sort=YMD\\_date:D&p\\_product=EVAN&p\\_text\\_direct0=u433=\(%203798%20\)%7Cu433ad=\(%203798%20\)&p\\_nbid=T5AB58GMMTM1MjgzNTk4NS4yMjMzNzk6MT0xMz0xNzEuNjYuNDcuMjE0&p\\_doref=](http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iwsearch/we/Evans?p_action=doc&p_theme=eai&p_topdoc=1&p_docnum=1&p_sort=YMD_date:D&p_product=EVAN&p_text_direct0=u433=(%203798%20)%7Cu433ad=(%203798%20)&p_nbid=T5AB58GMMTM1MjgzNTk4NS4yMjMzNzk6MT0xMz0xNzEuNjYuNDcuMjE0&p_doref=)

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Judah Monis, *Dickdook leshon gnebreet. A grammar of the Hebrew tongue, [electronic resource] : being an essay to bring the Hebrew grammar into English, to facilitate the instruction of all those who are desirous of acquiring a clear idea of this primitive tongue by their own studies; in order to their more distinct acquaintance with the sacred oracles of the Old Testament, according to the original. And published more especially for the use of the students of Harvard-College at Cambridge, in New-England. [Two lines of Hebrew text] Composed and accurately corrected, by Judah Monis, M.A.* (Boston: Jonas Green) 1735. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Accessed 10 December 2012. <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=stan90222&tabID=T001&docId=CB127105666&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>.

<sup>44</sup>Monis, “Proposal for Printing By Subscription”.

<sup>45</sup>Robert Pfeiffer, “The Teaching of Hebrew in Colonial America,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol 45, no. 4, April 1955. JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1452938>, 370.

<sup>46</sup>Pfeiffer, 370.

<sup>47</sup>It is not clear whether Sewall retired, or was removed from his professorship due to events related to his alcoholism. Goldman, 50.

<sup>48</sup>Pfeiffer, 371.

<sup>49</sup>*American National Biography*; Pfeiffer 371.



MOBILIZING THE COLONIES:  
THE IMPERIAL ROLE OF  
BOTANY IN EIGHTEENTH-  
CENTURY FRANCE

**Introduction by Professor Jessica Riskin:**

## Mobilizing the Colonies: The Imperial Role of Botany in Eighteenth-Century France

María del Carmen Barrios

As innocuous a subject as it may seem, the science of botany enjoyed a powerful position within the imperial framework in eighteenth-century France. A cultural sensation as much as a scientific discipline, the fascination with plants would influence everything from court fashion to economic policy, and inspire a generation of public servants to defy the heterogeneity of colonial natural environments. In a chapter of history replete with tales of political intrigue, the story of the transplantation of nutmeg and clove from present-day Indonesia to the Caribbean establishes how plant mobilization became a crucial state interest for the imperial powers during the eighteenth century.

In this paper I argue that the nutmeg and clove transfer projects transformed the botanists Pierre Poivre, Jean-Nicolas Céré and André Thouin into consultants to the colonial state. The mobilization of plants of potential economic significance represented a marriage of colonial objectives with scientific knowledge. The spice enterprise can thus be presented as a case study of “the Colonial Machine” described by McClellan and Regourd, in which scientific (specifically botanical) knowledge became subservient to the notion of imperial magnificence.<sup>1</sup> I will construct this argument by describing the role each of these characters played in the nutmeg and clove transplantation scheme, and their respective relationships to the colonial enterprise. In this way, I hope to portray the political importance of scientific knowledge in eighteenth century France while drawing on the center-periphery dynamic of colonial relations.

### The Enterprising Pioneer

Pierre Poivre was born in 1719 in the French silk-weaving city of Lyon. Renouncing a career in the Church after losing his right arm during the return journey from his first mission to China, the Philippines, and Malay in 1745, Poivre decided instead to offer his services as botanical scout to the *Compagnie des Indes*. In 1747, after having spent time in Batavia (Jakarta), and on a brief sojourn in Île de France (Mauritius) before returning home, he secured a commission from the *Compagnie* to obtain the nutmeg and clove plants, and establish commercial relationships with Cochinchina (southern Vietnam).<sup>2</sup> The idea was not novel. As far back as 1729 the *Compagnie* had formulated a manifest of sorts stipulating their interest in

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gaining access to the market for the *épiceries fines* of the Molucca's, which the Dutch East India Company (V.O.C.) monopolized. The plan made clear that the interest in such an endeavor lay in its presumed profitability. It also established the Mascarene Islands as the cultivating ground for the proposed French spice trade.<sup>3</sup>

Although Poivre's commission was not the first instance of the *Compagnie* showing interest in the spice trade, it was the first occasion in which an actor's scientific knowledge was recognized as integral to the success of the mission. The *Compagnie's* statement of 1729 envisaged a company ship mooring at one of the uninhabited Moluccan islands and identifying the nutmeg and clove plants via a drawing and written description of each species.<sup>4</sup> The plan did not outline any need to consult or have a botanical expert on board. The *Compagnie's* commission of Poivre, who claimed to have previously seen the plant during his travels in the Philippines, and had the added qualification of botanical training from his religious instruction, indicated that botanical knowledge was sufficiently well regarded for a self-styled botanist to receive the assignment over the merchants the *Compagnie* usually employed. He was considered a prime candidate to launch the spice plant transplantation project that had lain fallow for more than twenty years chiefly because of his knowledge: of the East Indies, of their languages, but especially, of his anticipated cargo.

Poivre set sail on his mission from Pondicherry in 1750. After an extended stay in the Philippines owing to transportation difficulties, Poivre sent the governor of Île de France, Pierre Félix David, a missive detailing the development of his mission in 1752. He informed the governor that he was now in possession of 32 nutmeg plants, which he had planted himself, and obtained from a Chinese contact.<sup>5</sup> He also sent a detailed description of the plant, much like that which had first been envisaged by the *Compagnie* to be used for identification purposes. To this physical description he added a treatise on the cultivation of the nutmeg. The document touched on how to multiply the plant, quality of terrain required, convenient time to plant the seeds, appropriate methods of transplantation, and gathering practices. While he attributed most of the information to personal experience while planting his own specimens, he legitimated his claims by presenting some of his proposed practices as coming directly from the "able gardeners of Banda."<sup>6</sup> The exotic (and therefore unknown) nature of the crop warranted the inclusion of native practices not as a mere side-note, but as indices of the instructions' authenticity.

Unfortunately, Poivre's first voyage would not amount to tangible results for the *Compagnie*.<sup>7</sup> Of the 32 plants and several dozen germinated seeds in his possession, only 5 plants would make it alive to Île de France, and of those, none would survive the plotting of Jean Baptiste Fusée-Aublet, botanist and apothecary of the *Compagnie*, who, charged with the care of

the plants, would see Poivre's efforts reduced to one dead seedling and a single germinating seed.<sup>8</sup> The friction between the two men would eventually drive Poivre back to his country estate in France in 1755.

Soon enough, the enterprising spice consultant was recalled to Île de France as General Commissioner of the Navy and Intendant to the Mascarene Islands, in 1767. The end of the Seven Years' War and the signing of the Treaty of Paris (1763), which left the French Empire severely diminished, had resulted in the effective liquidation of the *Compagnie*. The colonies were retroceded to the Crown, and the Navy undertook their administration.<sup>9</sup> This new colonial order that Poivre was to oversee made the spice transplantation project a priority, on official order from the Minister of the Navy:

*Next to the culture of food crops, that of spices would be the most advantageous or rather the one really useful crop. [...] This is a very interesting undertaking, and Mr. Poivre would immortalize his administration if he were to succeed in the attempts of turning the colony into a competitor of the Moluccas in this commodity. [...] The quest should be pursued with the utmost diligence notwithstanding the poor results which might attend the first attempts.*<sup>10</sup>

The physiocratic ideology promoted by Controller-General Bertin, which insisted that a nation's economic welfare depended on the soundness of its agricultural sector, had come to imbue the colonial administration.<sup>11</sup> Physiocratic principles not only informed Poivre's primary concerns while intendant, but also effectively *required* that spice transplantation become one of them.

Success presented itself in 1770, with the help of Simon Provost. A former employee of the *Compagnie*, Provost was a resident of Île de France whom Poivre outfitted to continue the covert raids in the Moluccas. In June, Provost returned from his first trip with eighty nutmeg trees, several thousand germinating nutmegs (seeds), five clove trees, and a large crate of germinating clove seeds.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the plants began wilting soon after, and a second expedition was organized, this time instructed to collect more cloves than nutmegs. In June of 1772, the second expedition landed on Île de France, with what can only be expected was a cargo of equal or larger proportion, as it boasted a store-ship that the first expedition had not.

The year before, Poivre had received a letter from the new Minister of the Navy, the Marquis de Boynes, instructing him to send seedlings and germinating seeds to Cayenne.<sup>13</sup> De Boynes framed the request as a precaution to protect the prized new species Poivre had acquired, but had in fact intimated in his correspondence a wish to remove all spice plants from the Mascarenes and instead develop an exclusive trade in Cayenne.<sup>14</sup> In no position to refuse, Poivre managed to convince de Boynes that it was best to await Provost's return from his second voyage rather than risk a second

transplantation with a specimen from the first voyage. Poivre kept his word, but the plants that were sent to Cayenne reached Guiana rotten. A second shipment from Poivre's successor in 1772 would prove more successful: three cloves and one cinnamon tree would remain alive by 1778.<sup>15</sup>

Poivre left Île de France in October 1772, a few months after the second expedition had returned from the Moluccas, and returned to his country estate near Clermont-Ferrand. What he left in place were the premature beginnings of a colonial spice exchange that would cast his protégé, Jean-Nicolas Céré, against the power of the imperial center. As executor of the machination that gave rise to the ensuing exchange, Poivre proved instrumental to the successful transplantation of the plants because of his botanical knowledge and political clout. His contribution to the understanding of the spices' cultivation and his arrangement of both successful raids made him a key accomplice in the schemes of the *Compagnie*, and subsequently the Crown, to subordinate colonial natural environments in order to achieve financial gain.

### An Unwilling Accomplice

When Céré assumed his duties as custodian of the *Jardin du Roi* in Île de France on March 31st 1775, it had not been without considerable work on behalf of Poivre. Although Poivre had expressly suggested Céré as supervisor of the *Jardin* in his instructions to his successor, the new Intendant, Maillard Dumesle, had no intention of complying. For three years, the *Jardin* was mismanaged and its contents neglected, for which Maillard was accused of treachery given his background as intendant of Cayenne, considered a rival for the épicerie market.<sup>16</sup> Of the more than four hundred live specimens that Poivre had left at his departure, only 80 nutmegs and 46 cloves were left when Céré finally assumed his position as Director of the *Jardin du Roi* à l'Île de France, which only occurred after Poivre had goaded the new Minister of the Navy, Antoine de Sartine, to directly order Dumesle to appoint Céré.<sup>17</sup>

A protégé of Poivre's, Céré was born in Île de France in 1737. Owner of Belle Eau, the contiguous estate to Poivre's Mon Plaisir (sold to the Crown on his departure and rechristened the *Jardin du Roi* in Île de France), Céré acquired a botanical knowledge as robust as that of his instructor. Coupled with his facility at initiating friendly correspondences, Céré's qualities established him as an essential player in keeping Île de France connected to the politico-botanical world of eighteenth-century France.

After the first two attempts to send spice plants to Cayenne proved reasonably unsuccessful, appeals from the Caribbean colonies for the spice plants of the Mascarenes ceased for a few years. Céré instead directed his worries to tending the travel-weary plants: by 1776, the first "creole" (germinated in the Île de France) cloves were picked; two years later, the first

creole nutmegs were harvested.<sup>18</sup> As spice harvesting developed in the nearby island of Bourbon, Céré developed an interest in agricultural research on both species. By 1783, he was convinced that nutmeg was dioecious, and that the difference in shape of its seed depended on the sex of the plant. He included this assertion in his report to the colonial authorities on the cultivation of the transplanted spices late that year.<sup>19</sup> Poivre had alluded to this piece of information in his own description of the plant in 1752, but he dismissed the supposition because of lack of consensus among botanists. Céré's indefatigable promotion of his discovery would prove integral to securing the nutmeg's transoceanic transplantation.

By the 1780's Céré's star in botanical circles was rising. Following his success with the nutmegs, the King granted him a pension of 4,000 livres, with encouragement from Bertin, the former Controller General. In 1788, he was awarded a gold medal by the *Société Royale d'Agriculture* for his horticultural work.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, in 1784, he began a correspondence with the Comte d'Angiviller, *Directeur Général des Bâtiments et Jardins du Roi à Versailles*.<sup>21</sup> Marginally in charge of artistic promotion, D'Angiviller was one of the most enthusiastic remitters of plant specimens to the *Jardin du Roi* in Paris. André Thouin, head gardener at the *Jardin du Roi*, noted d'Angiviller for his frequent packages to the *Jardin*. Beginning in 1778, all seeds and seedlings that d'Angiviller obtained from flatterers and functionaries were automatically redirected to Thouin at the *Jardin du Roi*.<sup>22</sup> Céré's dispatch to d'Angiviller in March 1784 of buds of clove and some nutmegs would have been noticed first by the shrewd keeper of the Empire's botanical network.

### The Imperial Machinist

André Thouin was born, lived, and died in the *Jardin du Roi*, rechristened the *Muséum Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle* after the Revolution. Precocious inheritor of his father's position as head gardener at the *Jardin* (he was only seventeen when appointed), Thouin became the keeper of an international botanical network that stretched farther afield than even the French Empire at its apogee. He managed to set into place a system of patronage in which his long-lasting correspondence with peers in (mostly) European gardens was coupled with a massive exchange of seeds and live plant specimens that made Paris's *Jardin du Roi* the center of a global flora economy of which Thouin alone was the manager. Additionally, his relationship to his patron, the Comte de Buffon, intendant of the *Jardin du Roi* and giant of the scientific establishment, gave Thouin a higher position in the régime than an ordinary gardener would have enjoyed.<sup>23</sup>

Given the *Jardin's* connections, it is not surprising that the Comte de La Luzerne, newly appointed Minister of the Navy in 1788, *économiste*, and botany aficionado, would call on Thouin with his idea for a colonial bo-



tanical exchange. On the 5th of January of that year, La Luzerne wrote Thouin of his great project, which he envisioned would distribute seeds from and among the colonies in order to develop a rich agricultural economy that would bolster the Empire after its tragic losses of the Seven Years' War.<sup>24</sup> Thouin immediately sketched out a plan of the project, depicting himself and the *Jardin du Roi* as indispensable to the organization and restocking of all colonial gardens. He envisaged a grand plan in which gardeners formed at, and loyal to, the Parisian center would direct all colonial programs, effectively appointing himself as the head of a powerful politico-botanical project that the physiocrat La Luzerne had envisioned as an opportunity to revitalize the ailing Empire.<sup>25</sup> In uniting state interest with science, Thouin was setting up botany to serve as a tool for imperial resurgence.

In Île de France, news of La Luzerne's appointment reached an irritated Céré. He had already rejected advances by La Luzerne, then Governor of St. Domingue, to send specimens of both plants to the Caribbean in 1786, and even an order on behalf of the then Minister of the Navy, Maréchal de Castries, in 1787 had not succeeded in extracting the plants from the Mascarenes.<sup>26</sup> The plants that he had so zealously guarded from the schemes of the empire had to be given up. In February 1788, he duly sent the plants to the Caribbean colonies, apologizing for the absent white pepper, with which his student had not yet returned from India.<sup>27</sup>

Thouin was unaware of this development as he devised a plan of his own. No live specimens of nutmeg or clove had ever made it to Paris, and when he found out that a ship was leaving France for the Mascarenes in February, he jumped at the chance to acquire them. Per the new plan he had formulated with La Luzerne, colonial plant exchange was to be directed from Paris. He therefore arranged for one of his own students, Joseph Martin, to deliver a cargo of plants (including mint, potato, azaleas and cherry trees) to Île de France, as part of the official Crown correspondence between the *Jardin du Roi* and the colonies. In return, Martin would be allowed to transplant the spice plants to the Caribbean and, more importantly, Paris. His return voyage took him to Cayenne, Martinique, and Saint Domingue, where he delivered a second shipment in six months, of spice plants that Céré had safeguarded for years. On Martin's arrival with the shipment in France in late summer of 1789, Thouin would state, "this delivery is the most significant and precious of all those made to the *Jardin du Roi* since its foundation."<sup>28</sup> The shipment included clove, nutmeg, cinnamon, and a palm tree, all new species for the *Jardin*, collected and tended by a colonial administration which had been cast aside by Thouin and La Luzerne's schemes for imperial dominance.<sup>29</sup>

Using government channels, Thouin translated his European seed and specimen network into a tool for colonial exchange without ever leaving Paris. His extended reach in all matters botanical established him as a

scientific custodian for the Crown, and then the Republic, whose power he wielded through forced mobilization across the Empire.

### **Conclusion**

In its exchange of plant specimens, the French empire used botanical knowledge to capitalize on the plasticity of colonial natural environments. Poivre, Céré and especially Thouin all served as colonialist advisers to botanical mobilization projects which aimed to establish European hegemony over the natural world: Poivre, by appropriating the spice plants while acting in name of the *Compagnie des Indes* and the Crown; Céré, by both ensuring their survival on French colonial soil and staging their distribution throughout the territories; and Thouin, by orchestrating the plants' administrative exchange from the *Jardin du Roi* in Paris, and therefore acting as the regulating authority of botany's institutional core. Imperial power was thus manifested in the control of natural resources in the colonies, and in the perceived capacity to tailor the broader natural environment to correspond with the economic and political interests of the empire. It was scientific knowledge that enabled the transplantation of nutmeg and cloves from their natural setting in the Moluccas, to the Mascarenes, and eventually the Caribbean, converting botany into a tool of empire.

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## ENDNOTES:

- <sup>1</sup>James McClellan III and François Regourd, "The Colonial Machine: French Science and Colonization in the Ancien Regime" *Osiris*, 2nd Series, Vol. 15, Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise (2000), 49.
- <sup>2</sup>E.C. Spary, "Of Nutmegs and Botanists: the Colonial Cultivation of Botanical Identity" in *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics In the Early Modern World*, edited by Schiebinger, Londa L., and Claudia Swan, 187-203. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, 190.
- <sup>3</sup>"Plan for the Acquisition of Spice Plants" in Madeleine Ly-Tio-Fane, *Mauritius and the Spice Trade: The Odyssey of Pierre Poivre*. Port Louis, Mauritius: Esclapon, 1958, 39-41.
- <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 40.
- <sup>5</sup>"Poivre's observations on the nutmeg-tree" in Ly-Tio-Fane, *Odyssey*, 46-52.
- <sup>6</sup>"les habiles Jardiniers de Banda", 48.
- <sup>7</sup>Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Orgins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 188.
- <sup>8</sup>Spary, "On Nutmegs," 194.
- <sup>9</sup>E.C. Spary, *Utopia's Garden: French Natural History From Old Regime to Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, 123.
- <sup>10</sup>*Mémoire du Roi pou servir d'Instructions aux Sieurs Duman et Poivre* in Ly-Tio-Fane, *Odyssey*, 9-10.
- <sup>11</sup>Grove, 189-90.
- <sup>12</sup>Spary, "Of Nutmegs" (2005), 198.
- <sup>13</sup>"Spice plants for Cayenne" in Ly-Tio-Fane, *Odyssey* (1958), 136-7.
- <sup>14</sup>"Céré's Dilemma" in Ly-Tio-Fane, *Odyssey* (1958), 140.
- <sup>15</sup>Julien Touchet, *Botanique & Colonisation En Guyane Française, 1720-1848: Le Jardin Des Danaïdes*. Petit-Bourg: Ibis rouge, 2004, 151.
- <sup>16</sup>Touchet, 57.
- <sup>17</sup>Ly-Tio-Fane, *Mauritius and the Spice Trade: The Triumph of Jean Nicolas Céré and His Isle Bourbon Collaborators*. Paris: Mouton, 1970, 36.
- <sup>18</sup>Spary, "Of Nutmegs" (2005), 200.
- <sup>19</sup>"Céré's Report" in Ly-Tio-Fane, *Odyssey*, 100.
- <sup>20</sup>McClellan and Regourd, 43.
- <sup>21</sup>"Céré to the Comte D'Angiviller" in Ly-Tio-Fane, *Triumph*, 258.
- <sup>22</sup>Spary, *Utopia's Garden*, 67.
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, chapter 2.
- <sup>24</sup>André Thouin, *Le Jardin Des Plantes à La Croisée Des Chemins Avec André Thouin, 1747-1824*. Paris, 1989, 174.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 175-9.
- <sup>26</sup>"Céré Declines ..." and "Castries Orders..." in Ly-Tio-Fane, *Odyssey*, 138-9
- <sup>27</sup>"Plants are Sent..." in Ly-Tio-Fane, *Odyssey*, 141-2.
- <sup>28</sup>"Cet envoi est le plus considerable et le plus précieux de tous ceux qui ont faits au Jardin du Roi depuis sa fondation." Thouin, 195.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 194.





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# THE FRUITS AND FARMERS OF REVOLUTION: AGRICULTURAL IMAGERY IN FRENCH AND AMERICAN RHETORIC

## **Introduction by Professor Jessica Riskin:**

Revolutionaries in both America and France filled their writings, propaganda, slogans and symbols with agrarian images. These included ripe fruit, rich harvests, fertile fields and honest, laboring people and animals. In “The Fruits and Farmers of Revolution,” Rachel Purcell offers an analysis of all this eighteenth-century revolutionary agricultural imagery. She suggests that in both cases, the political rhetoric offered nature as a basis for the political order and celebrated agriculture and agrarian citizenship. At the same time, Rachel argues, agrarian citizenship meant quite different things in the two contexts. The American figure of the farmer was ostensibly classless, a self-sufficient individual making his living from the land. The French peasant, in contrast, represented an ancient class and its ancient traditions. The two visions of political transcendence came together in the Enlightenment ideal of nature as the sole legitimate basis for social and moral life. Thus Rachel’s essay beautifully shows both the common themes of the American and French Enlightenments and Revolutions, and the breadth of possible meanings these themes encompassed.

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## The Fruits and Farmers of Revolution: Agricultural Imagery in French and American Rhetoric

Rachel Purcell

Grand festivals, satirical theater, record-breaking pamphlets – these are the fruits of revolution. In the propaganda hailstorm that accompanied the French and American Revolutions, nature assumed a mighty position in rhetoric that nearly deified the agrarian lifestyle. The newly built America and revolutionized France sought to create for themselves a national identity with carefully constructed rhetoric, which held much symbolic power. The revolutionary and nation-building periods in France and America had many common factors, but a particularly notable one is that of their focus on the nature of the common man who works the land. The French referred to this social class as “peasants,” a term that refers to the French feudal history of the oppression of this class. The Americans preferred the word “farmers,” identifying these people within an occupational category rather than a predetermined social class. The rhetorical representation of the peasant/farmer was varied, but the overwhelming tone was reverence for the “virtue” established by their moral nature and priorities. The French and American men of the land were held as virtuous by philosophers, primarily for their connection to the simplest kind of life and their rich bond with the natural world. During the pre- and mid-revolutionary periods of each nation, the premier writers of the time lauded the agrarian citizen.

In order to examine this rhetorical theme in France and America, and then its implementation in each new nation’s founding, I will begin with the most influential writers of the time. In France, one of the most powerful revolutionary ideologies came from Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès and his 1789 essay on the social hierarchy, “*Qu’est-ce que le tiers état?*” (“What Is The Third Estate?”). Sieyès was very much influenced by his social environment and the philosophers who preceded him (namely, Jean-Jacques Rousseau), and he was an advocate for the people closest to the land. But as the Revolution in France progressed, the nation struggled in its quest for a new beginning, and the overwhelming power remained urban and intellectual. As such, the agrarian example in France became more of an ideal image than an active reality. This will be evident with my examination of Robespierre’s Festival of the Supreme Being and Fabre d’Eglantine’s Revolutionary Calendar, both of which betray the superficiality of the French fixation on agriculture. The French situation provides a contrast to American ideology.

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In the American colonies, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* was one of the most influential works in establishing a revolutionary viewpoint, and it was preceded by John Dickinson's *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, which idealized the American farmer. The influence of these writings and the ideologies that they popularized are evident in other American propaganda of the time, especially in the pamphlet play *The Fall of British Tyranny*, by John Leacock. I will show that in America, unlike in France, the idea of agrarian virtue and relationship to the state of nature was actively employed by influential writers in the building of the new nation, particularly on the part of the second president, Thomas Jefferson. With a basis in writings by masters such as Sieyès and Paine, both French and American revolutionaries recognized and lauded the virtues of the agrarian citizen, but during their subsequent nation-building periods, the French relied on intellectual references to "Nature" as a unifying whole, whereas American rhetoric was more firmly rooted in the role of the individual farmer.

### **French Foundations: Sieyes And Rousseau**

Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès (3 March 1748 – 20 June 1836) was an abbé made famous by his public answer to the question: "Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?" Notably Sieyès, as a member of the clergy, was not part of the Third Estate whose case he had taken up. The Third Estate in France was composed of all classes and occupations beneath that of the clergy and nobility. Sieyès's social class set him apart, and he acknowledged that fact in his own writing, saying, "When the nation achieves its freedom it will remember with gratitude the patriotic writers of the first to orders who were the first to abjure archaic errors and who preferred the principles of universal justice to the murderous conspiracies of corporate interest against the interest of the nation... [but] We can be free only with the People and by the People."<sup>1</sup> In establishing this, he was already setting up a distance between himself as an advocating voice and the subject of his exploration. He considered himself a patriot but not one of the People of the nation and claimed that he himself could have no physical part of the People's freedom. This distinction is crucial both to Sieyès's central argument and the understanding of the broader social trend of speaking *about* the lower peasant class from a comfortable distance rather than incorporating their contributions in a wider sense.

In keeping with a crucial eighteenth-century rhetorical theme, Sieyès made reference to the idealized idea of the "state of nature." He insisted that "a nation must not subject itself to the shackles of defined procedure... We must conceive the nations of the world as being like men living outside society or 'in a state of nature,' as it is called."<sup>2</sup> If society is defined to be the rules and regulations of the French monarchy and aristocracy, then the people of the Third Estate were the furthest removed from society (though

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they are certainly not unaffected by it). In Sieyès's view, the Third Estate and peasant class were deeply tied with the state of nature, as its definition refers to this hypothetical space outside of society, the most "natural" state of men. The peasants' connection to the land also placed them physically close to "Nature," even though the concept of Nature is philosophical as well as naturalistic. The state of nature refers to that which is fundamental, and the people closest to the physical land, in Sieyès's mind, were then the first connection between man and Nature: "Since land and water provide the basic materials for human needs," Sieyès wrote in 1789, "the first class, in logical order, includes all the families connected with work on the land."<sup>3</sup> In saying so, Sieyès began to redefine the social hierarchy in terms quite different from traditional hierarchies, in which people were ranked by orders of fairly arbitrary, hereditary privilege without regard to an individual's contribution to society in general. Sieyès's new hierarchy placed the peasants in the "first class."<sup>4</sup> This new hierarchy was logical rather than traditional, in that it built from the ground up, valuing demonstrated usefulness, and suggesting that those who physically provide for society are those who should be first in the line of respect.

Sieyès continued to devalue his own privileged class in society by describing the two privileged Estates as the precise opposite of that which is useful. He defined "a nation" as, "A body of associates living under common laws and represented by the same legislative assembly, etc," thereby concluding that "the nobility does not belong to the common order, nor is it subjected to the common laws. Thus its private rights make it a people apart in the great nation."<sup>5</sup> Though he himself was an abbé, Sieyès was a part of a philosophical contingent that feared, for practical long-term economic reasons, the dominance of a class accustomed to luxury and non-productive lifestyles. The physiocrats, as they were called, were economists who believed that the wealth of a nation was derived from the value of its land's production. For these physiocrats, a more agrarian-centric society was a wise economic move as well as a symbolic ideal.<sup>6</sup> The two upper classes were not economically productive, and they were the cause of the systematic oppression of the people who did contribute raw materials to the nation's wellbeing. Indeed, Sieyès insisted, "The Third Estate is the nation...As they alone are the trustees of the general will, they do not need to consult those who mandated them about a dispute that does not exist."<sup>7</sup> This moment in Sieyès's writing is highlighted by historian François Furet as "perhaps one of the abbé Sieyès's greatest strokes of genius" in its "substitution of one birth date for another, in other words, the definition in time of a new national identity."<sup>8</sup> The new national identity was founded on the Third Estate. The historic moment of nation creation in Sieyès's work set the tone for the agrarian ideal. For the French, the state of nature was the place to return to. Their rhetoric of their revolution was based around a theoretical desire to

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return the land to the People of the nation, or, to return to an earlier state of society where the agrarian lifestyle was central.

It is impossible to truly understand Sieyès's conception of the state of nature without discussing its origins in French philosophical thinking. Though the concept of the state of nature seems to have been first discussed by John Locke in his 1689 *Second Treatise on Government*, the French understanding likely originated from Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau's 1754 *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* was a foundational philosophical piece during the French Enlightenment that preceded the revolutionary era. The *Discourse* set up a definitive opposition between civilized, corrupt society and the peaceful, happy life of primitive humanity. Nearly all of the famously established philosophers after 1750 considered Rousseau's state of nature concept the primary accepted philosophy; very few philosophers offered different hypotheses to explain the fundamental state of man.<sup>9</sup> Rousseau opened his *Discourse* with a hypothetical description of the untouched world: "The earth left to its own natural fertility and covered with immense woods, that no hatchet ever disfigured, offers at every step food and shelter to every species of animals. Men, dispersed among them, observe and imitate their industry, and thus rise to the instinct of beasts."<sup>10</sup> The language was immensely powerful. Men "rise" to the status of "beasts." Rousseau clearly believed that men on their own are of a status so inferior to nature itself that animalistic beasts have a better understanding of how life should be lived in a relationship with nature. Man's ability to reason is in fact a weakness, as it allows for manipulation and laziness (to the detriment of society). In fact, Rousseau took a very strong stance on corruption by intelligent men: "This author, to argue from his own principles, should say that the state of nature, being that where the care of our own preservation interferes least with the preservation of others, was of course the most favourable to peace, and most suitable to mankind."<sup>11</sup> The state of nature is not one of a cooperative, organized society. His fundamental argument was that the disruption of the state of nature by dependence on one another is the point at which men become unequal. Only in a world of true self-sufficiency could there be peace. Sieyès was a follower of Rousseauian philosophy, as he argued in the context of contemporary French society that the people most connected with the essentials of life provided by the land were the purest in society.

For Rousseau and Sieyès, wisdom did not lie in age but in youth – according to Rousseau, the state of nature represented the youth of mankind, and he could illustrate it in looking beyond France. Rousseau was a major proponent of the idea of the "noble savage." His understanding of the state of nature cannot function without it. Rousseau's *Discourse* took up the savage as a wondrous example:

*The example of the savages, most of whom have been found in this condition, seems to confirm that mankind was formed ever to remain in it, that this condition is the*

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*real youth of the world, and that all ulterior improvements have been so many steps, in appearance toward the perfection of individuals, but in fact towards the decrepitness of the species.*<sup>12</sup>

The savages to whom he referred were the native peoples of French colonies abroad, who lived largely in small agrarian communities. The (mostly fictional) image of the noble, foreign savage was immensely appealing to the urban French elite, and they eagerly sought to apply the same virtuous exoticism to their own peasants.<sup>13</sup> The parallels to be drawn between Rousseau's "savages" and Sieyès's Third Estate demonstrate the extraordinary distance between the idealistic French conception of lives tied to nature and the reality of that lifestyle. The youthful, naturalistic mentality was celebrated, but it was difficult to actually act within this mindset given the lack of understanding on the part of the educated elite. The peasant, like the savage, was a philosophical symbol.

Wealth, for Rousseau, was a corruptive influence. Sieyès, as the reader will recall, similarly asserted that luxury makes for a class of useless individuals. Rousseau scorned the hereditary wealth of the nobility as a self-imposed "yoke" bringing men further away from the freedom of the state of nature. He wrote, "Leaving him a great deal of leisure, he employed it to supply himself with several conveniences unknown to his ancestors; and this was the first yoke he inadvertently imposed upon himself," resulting in "continuing in this manner to soften both body and mind."<sup>14</sup> He argued that the luxury of comfort makes nobility unfit to rule due to their softness, which was a constant fear for Sieyès and the physiocrats. Later in his *Discourse*, Rousseau maintained that "the only real goods which men can possess" are "lands and cattle," whereas riches are only made of invented "signs to represent them."<sup>15</sup> The conclusion, again, was that the land-tied peasant people were most in touch with natural, essential values of life. The wealthy, with their invented signs, created an arbitrary symbol of power: money. This is hugely ironic, given that Rousseau's words were ultimately used to implement ideas of agrarian virtue that were more or less entirely symbolic, and therefore somewhat arbitrary themselves. As is clear from Sieyès's influential essay, the firm emphasis on natural states of ownership and connection to physical land was hugely powerful in the French revolutionary imagination. The agrarian lifestyle of the peasant was lauded as the virtuous opposite to the corrupt lives of the elite, made soft by their wealth. The idealization of the peasant, however, was almost always manifested in intellectual symbols rather than practical recognition of the peasant people.

The reality of the peasant lifestyle was entirely different from the philosophical idealization by urban intellectuals. The peasant in eighteenth-century France was plagued with food shortages, frequent invasion of public storage facilities, and lingering oppression by the quasi-feudal system which left "seigneurs" as large-scale landlords.<sup>16</sup> These hardships are not

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emphasized or even represented by Rousseau or Sieyès, and as such, the image of the peasant people becomes secondary to the idealization of “Nature.”

### **The Festival Of The Supreme Being**

Robespierre’s Festival of the Supreme Being was an enormous, symbolic façade for the “importance” of agriculture in the regenerated France. Maximilien Robespierre, the primary instigator of the infamous “Reign of Terror” within the French Revolution, had his own high-minded, utopian ideals related to nature. He believed in the fundamental moral principles which “all men have in common,” and which were dictated by natural laws imposed by a hypothetical, deified Nature.<sup>17</sup> His declarations and opinions, moreover, were directed towards “the people,” rather than “man.”<sup>18</sup> Robespierre was more concerned with the universal and general cause than that of any specific class or population. He seemed bent on enforcing a universal agricultural imagery to define the new, pure nation after the forcible removal of the monarchy and aristocrats. In the new secularization of the state, he actually considered Nature a substitute for one almighty God. In his declaration for the Festival, Robespierre says: “The Author of Nature linked all mortals together in an immense chain of love and happiness. Perish the tyrants who have dared to break it!”<sup>19</sup> This was a reference to both the state of nature, to which he sought to return, and the corrupting influence of the former monarchy (an opposition established by Sieyès and Rousseau). In celebrating the existence and the worship of Nature, Robespierre was attempting to bring the focus of the people to the land rather than a more obscure, institutionalized version of a deity.

His methods were extravagant, but superficial. Robespierre mapped out the Festival of the Supreme Being in extreme detail. Robespierre’s instructions called for “embellishing the houses with garlands of flowers and greenery,” and “each male citizen and young boy will hold an oak branch in his hand” while “mothers will hold bouquets of roses in their hands, and girls will carry baskets filled with flowers.”<sup>20</sup> The symbolic overtones were far from subtle. Robespierre wanted to illustrate the simple, natural beauties of the French nation, and align its citizenry with the same kind of poetic ideal present in the Revolutionary Calendar (to be discussed shortly). The Festival was also intended to be a celebration within the city of the countryside’s abundance, a festival of dairy products, fruit, bread, and female fecundity.<sup>21</sup> The irony was the lack of actual representation by the people who were to provide such products for the nation. In fact, according to Robespierre’s plan, it was the representatives of the National Convention who would carry in their hands “bouquet[s] of wheat stalks, flowers, and fruits.”<sup>22</sup> It was the urban government representatives, then, who were actually being given credit for the nation’s abundance, rather than the people of

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the newly united under the Supreme Being.

While the idea of hearkening back to a vague concept of the state of nature is certainly Rousseauian, the association of the National Convention with abundance goes to show just how far Robespierre diverged from the essential philosophies. In Rousseau's hypothetical utopia, the government was a symbol of lost youth and innocence, and would never assume the role of benevolent provider. Robespierre's singular elevation of Convention representatives within the Festival of the Supreme Being shows that symbolic appeal to nature was no more than symbolic. The Festival still idolized the governmental, urban patriots of the moment over the men and women who actually worked with the land. While the agrarian imagery had some symbolic power, it was employed in the urban environment where the Revolution's sweeping changes were made possible. Robespierre's Festival was imagined from a very intellectual standpoint. The urban, intellectual dominance meant that the virtues of the peasant class's connection to nature were acknowledged, but not genuinely rewarded. This is in significant contrast with the governmental view of the farmer in early America, which was incorporated into rhetoric that was more definitively rooted in economics.

The use of significations of harvest and nature is also illustrated by engravings such as that below, created by Antoine Alexander Joseph Cardon, between 1793 and 1795.



"Humanité, patrie, liberté."

Antoine Alexander Joseph Cardon

The engraving, titled "Humanité, patrie, liberté," depicts France's Lady Liberty standing on a pedestal with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and a cannon. Behind the pedestal is a rising sun and rolling countryside, and on either side of it are large bales of hay, wheat, and other harvest products. Just as the Festival of the Supreme Being consistently invoked visual imagery of agrarian life, this engraving shows harvest items without acknowledging the people of the nation who brought it to the pedestal. If

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anything, the peasant is realized in the image of Lady Liberty herself: an impossible ideal and standard. The idealized peasant was portrayed only through the fruits of his labor, which are appropriated as broad symbols.<sup>23</sup> The rising sun behind the idyllic countryside also falls in line with the large ideas behind the Revolutionary Calendar. Nature is used to indicate a new beginning, and hope for new opportunities. Such symbols do not take into account the truth of the wreckage of what remained of the feudal system in the French countryside. The overwhelmingly utopian portrayal of an abundant Nature fostered widespread misunderstanding about the realities of life outside of French cities.<sup>24</sup> The peasants, on whose backs the harvest was actually reaped, were left out of the worship of Nature. This is, again, a very different picture from the American farmer, who himself was lauded as an icon in the founding of the new nation rather than being relegated to the role of an invisible producer.

### **The Revolutionary Calendar**

France's Revolutionary Calendar, whose details were proposed by Phillipe-François Fabre d'Eglantine in his *Report on Behalf of the Commission to Draw up the Calendar* in October 1793, was one of the primary indications of the level of metaphorical flourish and superficiality that French revolutionaries resorted to. It's crucial to note that Fabre D'Eglantine, the man who headed a committee appointed by the National Convention to create a new Revolutionary Calendar, was a poet. This fact alone speaks volumes to the priorities of the National Convention in the creation of the calendar: they were searching for aesthetic rather than a practical design. Granted, Fabre d'Eglantine's responsibility was, primarily, to name the months in the new system. Although the calendar was never widely implemented, it stands as the perfect example of the high rhetoric of nature that the revolutionaries sought to build from the idealization of the peasant class's connection to the land. The new names of the months were based on seasonal natural phenomena, and the days of festival were based around the harvest rather than the Christian feast-days. In its replacement of Church-related indicators with nature-related indicators, the calendar represented the interaction between division of time and symbolic frameworks of meaning.<sup>25</sup> It combined the logical and mathematical with the rhetorical. This combination was also evident in Sieyès's writing, which redefined the social hierarchy based on logic while also heightening the rhetorical appeal of the agricultural class. Like Sieyès's writing, the calendar represented a highly intellectualized application of "Nature."

Fabre d'Eglantine sought to use the Revolutionary Calendar to influence the daily lives of the French people. He was anxious that the National Convention "must seize this fortunate opportunity to use the calendar, the most common everyday book of all, to bring the French people back to

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agriculture. Agriculture is the political element of a people such as we."<sup>26</sup> It is clear that, like Rousseau and Sieyès, he saw agriculture as the ideal baseline of virtue and political/economic success. In order to bring the people back to agriculture, he proposed the following names of months:

**Autumn**

Vendémiaire (Vintage)  
 Brumaire (Fog)  
 Frimaire (Frost)

**Winter**

Nivôse (Snow)  
 Pluviôse (Rain)  
 Ventôse (Wind)

**Spring**

Germinal (Buds)  
 Floréal (Flowers)  
 Prairial (Meadow)

**Summer**

Messidor (Harvest)  
 Thermidor (Heat)  
 Fructidor (Fruit)<sup>27</sup>

Notably, the calendar did nothing but *refer* to various states of the natural world. It was not created to place any emphasis on actual pastoral events or agricultural techniques. It did not address the needs of the peasants, or the labor of their social class. The calendar had a purely symbolic nature with no practical application in terms of agriculture. It supposedly drew focus to agriculture, but it failed to apply any of the virtues of the agrarian people to the nation's true identity or developing new government. Rather, the government reformers hoped that by associating their calendar with Nature, they could suggest that it reflected the natural order, and therefore be accepted as a valid development in the establishment of a new nation.<sup>28</sup> The idealized peasant was merely a vehicle for communicating the values of virtue, merit, and hard work.<sup>29</sup> These were the values that Fabre d'Eglantine hoped to instill with his daily calendar reminders to the people on the state of the harvest.

Indeed, Fabre d'Eglantine did not even attempt to claim that his calendar had the direct power to change people's actions, only their "conceptions." In his report, he wrote: "We conceive nothing except through images: in the most abstract analysis, in the most metaphysical combination of ideas, our understanding only proceeds by means of images, our memory only rests and relies upon them."<sup>30</sup> While imagery can undoubtedly be powerful, the overall result of the calendar was questionable. It was advertised as a way to break, in time, from the oppressive past, and this is something that Sieyès would have supported in the creation of an entirely new nation. That nation was supposed to be different, defined by its return to nature and agriculture, but the calendar was ultimately a representation of how complexly intellectual this rhetoric was, thereby negating the intended simplicity of the agrarian mindset. The fruits of Nature were lauded, but the people who harvested them were absent.



### American Foundations: Paine And Dickinson

Just as a discussion of eighteenth-century French philosophy must include Rousseau, any commentary on American nation-building rhetoric must make reference to Thomas Paine. Paine was the author of the most widely read pamphlet of pre-revolutionary America, and this pamphlet had undertones of agrarian self-sufficiency. *Common Sense*, published in 1776, was printed in a record twenty-five American editions and four foreign editions in its first year alone, ultimately selling half a million copies worldwide.<sup>31</sup>

Thomas Paine's pamphlet was a radical outcry against British abuses of the American colonies, and gave abundant reasons for America's natural right to seek independence from Britain. In a foreshadowing of Jefferson's later insistence on agrarian idealism in American politics, Paine painted a picture of an America unfettered by any need for foreign assistance. To Paine and his audience, America's natural resources were one of her greatest assets. Paine wrote: "No country on the globe is so happily situated, or so internally capable of raising a fleet as America. Tar, timber, iron, and cordage are her natural produce. We need go abroad for nothing."<sup>32</sup> Such logic implied that America did not need to develop any new economic system in independence, as the nation was already more than prepared to support herself. Self-sufficiency was the most important weapon in the colonists' arsenal, and this was the foundation for the idea of agricultural production as a safeguard of liberty and freedom.<sup>33</sup> Besides supporting the farmers who lived off of their land and fed the domestic population, agriculture also provided America with staple exports, which Paine was not unaware of, having written, "The commerce, by which she hath enriched herself, are the necessaries of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom in Europe."<sup>34</sup> Thus for Americans, nature was a source of economic wealth in addition to being a source of rhetorical foundations of independence.<sup>35</sup> The appeal to natural resources was not simply metaphorical; it was of immediate economic concern in a nation that was, theoretically, soon to be independent. Unlike the French "peasant," a label that was indicative of a lower social standing, the American "farmer" image was not tied to a given social class. Because of the need for agriculture, an American farmer could have any amount of wealth.

The first half of *Common Sense* deals directly with the uselessness of the British regime to the American people. If there was one thing that Paine particularly detested, it was any sort of inherited privilege. He maintained that the monarchies and aristocracies of European nations were in fact adding nothing to the societies over which they ruled: "The two first [monarchical and aristocratical tyranny], by being hereditary, are independent of the people; wherefore in a constitutional sense they contribute nothing towards the freedom of the state."<sup>36</sup> This reasoning is extremely similar to Sieyès's conclusion that only the people physically producing the nation's

resources are useful to the nation's functioning. The hereditary nature of the privileges of nobility and higher classes takes away from their virtue, as virtue is connected with real work. The powerful rhetorical image of the self-sufficient farmer, the Yeoman American, is heavily influenced by its opposite counterpart, the lazy and arbitrarily privileged.

Paine, like Rousseau, also wrote with the seductive language of youth. "Youth," he wrote in *Common Sense*, "is the seed time of good habits, as well in nations as in individuals...The intimacy which is contracted in infancy, and the friendship which is formed in misfortune, are, of all others, the most lasting and unalterable."<sup>37</sup> The American nation was perfectly primed for the Jeffersonian concept agrarian idealism (which would closely follow the revolution), because it was historically youthful in a way that France could never claim. The youthful nature of the American nation was easily likened to the state of nature in its complete absence of a monarch or governmental system, and its vast expanse of virgin land where the independent farmer could flourish. In vying for American independence, Paine wrote, "Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built upon the ruins of the bowers of paradise."<sup>38</sup> The people of the French Revolution had to claim regeneration amidst the ruins of palaces; the Americans had the real hopeful expectations of a "child" nation. Indeed, America was the child of Great Britain – an image reinforced repeatedly in propaganda both for and against the Revolution. In breaking away from the parent nation, America evolved in the image of the self-made man, or the self-sufficient yeoman (a concept particularly popularized by Thomas Jefferson, discussed later in this piece).<sup>39</sup> America found herself free in her lack of an inherited identity. The concepts of youth and newness were fundamental to the early American conception of the agrarian example, whereas in France, the youth of mankind went further back to a theoretical state of nature.

It is in fact difficult to find relevant images in the propaganda of the American revolutionary period. Much of the most influential propaganda was in the written form, and that is what primarily survives today in academia. An enormous percentage of cartoons and propagandists' engravings focused on vilifying the British, rather than lauding the American. The American Revolution was driven largely by those in the new nation who had the highest levels of education and intellectual involvement. As such, the pamphlet was the most popular form of propaganda during this time period. It was the accepted medium on both sides of the Atlantic for publicizing ideas in both the colonies and Great Britain, because it had "greater dignity" than other forms, but also "greater length" than newspaper articles or broadsides.<sup>40</sup> It was a medium much preferred by the intellectual classes, and thus some of the most powerful revolutionary propaganda came through in pamphlets. Paine's *Common Sense* was released in such a form, and

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achieved enormous circulation. There were, however, other highly circulated pamphlets during the American revolutionary period. One of the other influential works was originally printed as a series of letters from 1767-1768. These were the *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, penned by one John Dickinson, a wealthy, land-owning farmer.

John Dickinson's *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* pre-date Jefferson's most famous writings, but their influence on one another is clearly discernable. Dickinson, it may be said, created the character or role of the virtuous farmer. His Letters from a Farmer were a condemnation of the newly-imposed Townshend Acts, which heavily taxed the colonists' importing of manufactured goods (which they were forbidden to produce domestically). Dickinson, in his own right, was not actually an advocate of American independence as of 1767. He was offended by what he viewed as British abuses of power over the colonies, but his Letters push for reconciliation rather than independence. This does not, however, make him of any less powerful in the growing rhetorical idealization of the American farmer. The Letters were less about questions of taxation and more about discerning the emerging truth in answer to the question: what is an American?<sup>41</sup> Dickinson was one of the first widely read, popular sources to promote the image of the American farmer in a setting that was beginning to become revolution-minded.

John Dickinson, the man, was extraordinary, rather than average. Besides his occupation as a landowning farmer, he was a well-educated lawyer who would go on to fight in the Revolution. He did not, however, choose to portray himself in his influential *Letters*. He wrote as the much more simply-labeled, "Farmer," and introduced himself in his first letter in the following passage: "My farm is small, my servants are few, and good; I have a little money at interest; I wish for no more...Being master of my time, I spend a good deal of it in a library, which I think the most valuable part of my small estate."<sup>42</sup> These few lines spoke volumes to the celebrated virtues of the colonists. Dickinson created a character as narrator, one that was not necessarily enormously wealthy, but one that was extremely content. He was his own master in this role, and purportedly uses the extra time that comes from this privilege to educate himself further and spend time with his books. The farmer of the American imagination was more than a simple-minded agrarian; the farmer was the intellectual example as much as he was the moral example. Moreover, Dickinson portrayed himself as a farmer who has retired from an active occupation, and is far removed from the urban troubles caused by the Townshend Acts. The Townshend Acts, after all, were primarily intended to raise revenue for Great Britain on urban imports, and to punish New York for their noncompliance with earlier Acts. In speaking as an outsider, Dickinson gave his own opinion more significance, as he was one who should be affected very little by the conflict within the cities, but

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did his civic duty regardless in reading up on current events and contributing his own words.<sup>43</sup> As the historian Stanley K. Johannesen asks, “Should a plain and honest man in the golden harvest-time of his own life and that of his clan, trouble himself with the difficulties of a neighbor?... The Farmer’s answer is resounding: If any charter may be abrogated, any ancient liberty snuffed, no patrimony is safe.”<sup>44</sup> This is in stark contrast with Sieyès’s distance from the cause of “the People.” Both were writing as outsiders, but Sieyès believed his distance prevented him from having any active effect on the cause. Dickinson, on the other hand, used his outsider status to further contribute to the idea of unity across classes.

Besides leading by the example of his own semi-fictional character, “A Farmer,” Dickinson explicitly defined the American character within his *Letters*. His second letter, in speaking against the injustice of the British tax on imported goods that colonists are not allowed to manufacture themselves, made the bold claim: “This continent is a country of planters, farmers, and fishermen; not of manufacturers.”<sup>45</sup> This simple statement was a foundation for what Paine and Jefferson wrote several years later. In framing the American nation as a continent more or less devoid of manufacturers and developed business organization, Dickinson placed the colonies as a whole into a state of relative simplicity compared with the older, more stratified British Empire. They were more innocent and child-like for their lack of manufacturers, and it is the seeming violation of this innocence by the Townshend Acts that he so objected to. Dickinson also defined America as “a continent,” and “a country,” rather than as a collection of unrelated colonies. Even though Dickinson was not advocating for independence at this time, he was beginning to use the language of unification within the language of agriculture. The character of “A Farmer” became an emblem of a continental identity.<sup>46</sup> In his third letter, Dickinson spoke of a time in the near future in which “It will be impossible to determine, whether an American’s character is most distinguishable for his loyalty to his Sovereign, ...[or] his love of freedom, of affection for his native soil.”<sup>47</sup> In the evident, growing divide between Britain and her colonies, Dickinson’s use of the term “native soil” in his Farmer persona seems to imply a connection to the material land rather than a merely metaphorical land tied to the sovereign. Dickinson’s *Letters*, as a precursor to Jefferson, demonstrates the pervasiveness of the agrarian idealism in the American colonies’ emerging identity.

### **The Fall Of British Tyranny, Or, American Liberty Triumphant**

As previously noted, the pamphlet form of propaganda was immensely influential in revolutionary America. There were, however, several forms that the pamphlet medium could take. One was the pamphlet play. As has been documented by historian Norman Philbrick, there were several

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such dramatic works circulated during the revolutionary period. These plays may have been the closest thing that the American Revolution had to real revolutionary spectacle that was non-violent in nature. Yet the plays were more often read in pamphlets than actually performed. Philbrick maintains that there are moral, economic, and legal reasons for this, but the primary reason for a literary rather than dramatic reception was that the theater was, at the time, stigmatized as a corrupter of morals.<sup>48</sup> The pamphlet plays, despite their lack of actual dramatism, are significant because they were a more popular form of propaganda. Their small amount of satirical spectacle is the closest American equivalent to the likes of the Festival of the Supreme Being in France, at least in terms of agricultural imagery.

I will be examining, in particular, a play attributed to John Leacock and titled, *The Fall of British Tyranny, or, American Liberty Triumphant*. While the bulk of the play, written and distributed in 1776, revolves around mocking various British governors and authority figures, there is an interlude in the middle of the play (the third act of five total acts) that features the songs and shenanigans of a few simple shepherds, Dick and Roger. It is this scene that is interesting in its relevance to the ideal of agrarian innocence. The two shepherds Dick and Roger are random characters appearing in this scene alone, in which they play up the loss of American purity and youthfulness to British aggression with very little subtlety. Roger tells Dick a tale of how the flock that he was herding was set upon by a pack of wolves. Roger describes the wolves as “murdering leaders, with premeditated malice, keen appetite, and without provocation,” who “as if the devil had entered into them, ran violently down the hill, and fixed their talons and jaws upon [the flock], and as quick as lightening eight young innocent lambs fell a sacrifice to their fury.”<sup>49</sup> The imagery in the description of this scene is immensely powerful: the shepherd figure is one with heavy Christian implications, aligning the roles of the shepherds with that of Christ. The Christ-like shepherds are leading and herding the innocent lambs of the nation, which are then slaughtered mindlessly and needlessly by malicious and clever wolves that obviously represent the British. This scene in *The Fall of British Tyranny* further promotes the idealization of the agrarian citizen by linking his role as a spiritual or moral guide with that of the Christian savior. Because of the satirical genre, the godly pastoral representation is exaggerated enormously in this case. Nevertheless, it speaks to the enduring notion of the virtuous and noble farmer throughout the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary period in America. It is the farmer himself who is deified – this is in contrast with the god-like “Author of Nature” in Robespierre’s Festival of the Supreme Being. Robespierre’s Author is a hazier intellectual concept, applied to Nature as a whole. The Americans’ association of divine virtue is more directly applicable to the people.

After Roger tells the story of the lambs and wolves, the two shep-

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herds of *The Fall of British Tyranny* break into a song that is similarly representative of the moral elevation of the agrarian Americans. It is the “Song of St. Tammany” which contains the following lyrics:

*In freedom's bright cause,  
Tamm'ny pled with applause,  
And reason'd most justly from nature;  
For this, this was his song, all, all the day long:  
Liberty's the right of each creature, brave boys.*

*“He, as king of the woods, of the rivers and floods,  
Had a right all beasts to control;  
Yet, content with a few, to give nature her due:  
So gen'rous was Tammany's soul, my brave boys.”<sup>50</sup>*

The “Saint Tammany” to whom the song refers was an Indian chief said to have been cooperative with colonists and celebrated for being “certainly a full-blooded American.”<sup>51</sup> The song bears striking resemblance in its lyrics to a traditional tune sung as an anthem of Philadelphia’s Sons of Liberty.<sup>52</sup> The Sons of Liberty were an enormous influence in inciting the American Revolution, and to reference them was to invoke a very deep idea of patriotism. Designating that comparison to the agrarian, shepherd characters of the show highlights their significance to Leacock and to the American imagination.

The presumed author, John Leacock, was in fact a member and possible founder of the Philadelphia branch of the Sons of Liberty, which was organized under the name “Society of the Sons of St. Tammany of Philadelphia.”<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, Leacock was also involved with the American Philosophical Society, and at one point in his life embarked on an “agricultural experiment” in which he began creating a vineyard in an “altruistic and patriotic scheme” to provide the public free access to what he grew.<sup>54</sup> This altruistic agrarian nature is one that he emphasized as an ideal and uniquely American quality in *The Fall of British Tyranny, or, American Liberty Triumphant*, and Leacock speaks from personal experience.

In likening common shepherds to the Sons of Liberty themselves, the playwright revealed the proliferation of the ideal of liberty in eighteenth-century America as related to the heroic agrarian citizens. Jefferson would go on to insist that working with the physical land of America was an act of patriotism, and this earlier propaganda play was an example of precisely that expectation of agrarian heroism. The shepherds were likened to God Himself on one level, and to the Sons of Liberty (pillars of patriotic action) on another level.

### **Letters From Thomas Jefferson**

Thomas Jefferson was the first American Founding Father to truly

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uphold the philosophical ideal of the virtuous tiller of soil in American rhetoric. Jefferson (April 2, 1743 – July 4, 1826), like many of the men considered to be the “Founding Fathers” of the nation, was himself a farmer and actively involved in agricultural experimentation. This image of Jefferson was both public and private. He was well known for his “agrarian ideal,” and foresaw the United States as a “republic of Yeomen.”<sup>55</sup> Jefferson continually sang the praises of the agricultural lifestyle in private correspondence to his close friends. Near the end of his life, he wrote the following to James Madison: “

*My health is entirely broken down within the last eight months; my age requires that I should place my affairs in a clear state...and above all things are the delights I feel in the society of my family, and the agricultural pursuits in which I am so eagerly engaged.*<sup>56</sup>

Jefferson was not a peasant, but rather a farmer. He acknowledged the virtue of farmers from all wealth brackets, rather than aligning the occupation with a specific social class. To Jefferson, America was a land of farmers, actively seeking the Republican ideal close to the state of nature. America had been able to develop in a relative wilderness, so the comparison was easy to make. In his response to the Frenchman DeMeunier’s article on the United States for the French Encyclopedia (“Etats Unis de l’Amerique,” *Dictionnaire d’Economie politique et diplomatique, l’Encyclopedie methodique*), Jefferson wrote scathingly: “An industrious farmer occupies a more dignified place in the scale of beings, whether moral or political, than a lazy loungeur, valuing himself on his family, too proud to work, and drawing out a miserable existence by eating on that surplus of other mens’ labour.”<sup>57</sup> The farmer is defined in more utilitarian terms – not only is he close to the hypothetical, quasi-spiritual Nature, he is industrious and useful. Here, he not only elevated the moral status of the farmer, but also aimed a blow at the same “useless” social classes so often attacked by Sieyès. Moreover, he tied together the moral and political with a deliberate, immediate intention missing from the French philosophers’ essays.

For Americans living in the decade immediately post-revolution, the new nation was founded on the idea of spacious, fertile land. The Revolution had been supported by the same rhetoric. To Madison, Jefferson wrote:

*I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they are chiefly agricultural; and this will be as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America. When they get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, they will become corrupt as in Europe.*<sup>58</sup>

This statement goes to the heart of the difference in the representation of the French and American Revolutionary periods. The French sang the praises

of agriculture just like the Americans did, but the French ultimately retained an urban revolutionary setting populated by intellectuals. The Americans, on the other hand, scorned the idea of corruption fostered by urbanization, and built their nation's foundations on the idea of wide-open agricultural space.

Seeing this corrupt, crowded future in the centuries to come, Jefferson's ideology was consistent with that of the Rousseauian "youth in nature" concept. Complex civilization outside of the agrarian lifestyle, for Jefferson, was an inevitable danger. America's extreme youth, however, would preserve it for centuries from such a fate. It would have been unrealistic to expect that the entire nation would remain primarily agrarian, especially given the substantial urban development in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia in the late eighteenth century. But still, Jefferson hoped to see an agricultural focus in government in terms of its representatives and its legal priority.

The French consistently referred to the virtues and ideals of an agrarian, peasant mentality, but their actual governments remained rooted in urban leadership. Jefferson, on the other hand, went beyond extolling the hypothetical lessons to be learned from men of the land, and instead showed true dedication to actively bringing them into government. In a particularly powerful letter to Arthur Campbell, Jefferson wrote:

*All can be done peaceably, by the people confining their choice of Representatives and Senators to persons attached to republican government and the principles of 1776, not office hunters, but farmers whose interests are entirely agricultural. Such men are the true representatives of the great American interest, and are alone to be relied on for expressing the proper American sentiments.*<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, as Andrea Wulf argues in her brilliant book on the Founding Fathers' agricultural interests, the small farmer became the symbol of the guardian of liberty, and this made agricultural improvements and even the mundane tasks of farmers into patriotic and political acts.<sup>60</sup> Agriculture was brought to the forefront of actual political spheres rather than being used as a symbolic example of a perfect or quasi-utopian system. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, Edward Rutledge remarked, "You are so great a Friend to the Dignity of Man and so thoroughly convinced of its being nearly connected with an agricultural Life, that you must be pleased to hear how extensively your Countrymen have turned their Minds to rural Affairs. Societies, for their promotion, are forming in various parts of America."<sup>61</sup> The alignment of man's dignity with a rural concentration is extremely characteristic of post-colonial American society. This time period did not actually boast a classless society, but one where the abundance of opportunity, particularly in agriculture, became a fundamental asset to and expectation of citizens. Jefferson's career as a politician following the event of American

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independence capitalized on the rhetoric of agrarian self-sufficiency and virtue established during the Revolution. Unlike the French conception of the peasant, the American farmer was a real and tangible character, emulated not just in moral concepts but also in physical methods.

I do not mean to suggest that Jefferson represents a perfect example of an American farmer. His statement, cited earlier, condemning the men who “[eat] on that surplus of other mens’ labour” is ironic given the fact that he owned hundreds of slaves.<sup>62</sup> Jefferson was interested in agriculture and its development, but he was not personally participating in the heavy labor. Nevertheless, his representation of himself as a land-owning farmer is important. The leaders of the French Revolutionary rhetoric (Sieyès or Robespierre, for instance) did not represent themselves as such. Nor did they have Jefferson’s passion for involving the agricultural-minded citizenry in government’s proceedings. Jefferson, despite his slaves, embodied the ideal of the man who served his term in government and then returned to his rural home. The fact of his owning slaves, while problematic, does not negate his belief that the American nation was founded on agriculture. It also does not negate the significance of the idealization of the farmer himself (with silent slaves behind him), as opposed to the French idealization of the broader philosophical concept of a Nature linking everyone together.

### Conclusion

Evidently, the great thinkers of both the French and American revolutions were fascinated by the conception of agriculture and agrarian citizenship. Though their classifications for workers of the land differed, the French and the Americans lauded their peasants/farmers as men of virtue, honorable for their association with land and nature. This rhetoric was deeply ingrained in philosophical foundations founded in the Enlightenment and Rousseau’s understanding of the state of nature. Sieyès’s influential “Qu’est-ce que le tiers état?” and Paine’s *Common Sense* demonstrated recognition of national identity based on agricultural productivity. Sieyès and Paine also represented their emerging national identities as youthful and therefore free of past bonds. But as the revolutions progressed and the nation-building began, the French and American ideals diverged. France had revolutionary leaders like Robespierre and Fabre d’Eglantine. Their dedication to agriculture came in the form of intellectual symbols manifested in the Festival of the Supreme Being and the Revolutionary Calendar. Agricultural rhetoric was significant in France, but it was used ultimately to foster a sense of unity and universal connection to Nature. The actual peasant was not acknowledged for his work by French intellectuals; only the fruits of his labor made any appearance in the Festival and calendar. The American application of agricultural imagery focused more directly on individuals. Dickinson, Leacock, and Jefferson stood as examples (if

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sometimes problematic ones) of the revered American farmer, who was not defined by social class. The farmer stood for self-sufficiency and individualism, while the French peasant stood for the massive foundation of society, an integral part of a larger whole.

Ultimately, the utilization of agricultural imagery in nation-building reveals fundamental differences in French and American philosophies. The French revolutionaries sought universality and unity, and they used the concept of nature (and Robespierre's God-like Author of Nature) as a force of unification. The American revolutionaries, in their quest for independence, also created the Yeoman, the individual. Their emphasis on nature was demonstrated in the appreciation for the American farmer, a powerful individual with no constraints of heredity or urban society. American individualism, as represented through the revolutionary farmer, is still present in American patriotic rhetoric today. Meanwhile, the French have recently elected a socialist president. These are generalizations, but they touch on why the revolutionary rhetoric of agriculture in France and America are intrinsically part of a larger story of community and individualism.

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## ENDNOTES:

- <sup>1</sup>Emmanuel-Joseph Sièyes, "What Is the Third Estate?" in *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, ed. Keith Baker et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 167.
- <sup>2</sup>Sièyes, "What is the Third Estate?" 172.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid, 155.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid, 155.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid, 157.
- <sup>6</sup>Amy S. Wyngaard, *From Savage to Citizen: The Invention of the Peasant in the French Enlightenment* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 112.
- <sup>7</sup>Sièyes, "What is the Third Estate?" 179.
- <sup>8</sup>François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981): 2.
- <sup>9</sup>Daniel Mornet, *Le Sentiment de la Nature en France* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1907), 68.
- <sup>10</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, ed./trans. Greg Boroson (Dover Thrift Edition, 2004): 4.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid, 19.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid, 33.
- <sup>13</sup>Wyngaard, *From Savage to Citizen*, 171.
- <sup>14</sup>Rousseau, *Discourse*, 31.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid, 37.
- <sup>16</sup>John Markoff, "Peasant Grievances and Peasant Insurrection: France in 1789," *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 62, No. 3 (1990): 449.
- <sup>17</sup>Alfred Cobban, "The Fundamental Ideas of Robespierre," *The English Historical Review* Vol. 63, No. 246 (1948): 30.
- <sup>18</sup>Cobban, "The Fundamental Ideas of Robespierre," 32.
- <sup>19</sup>Maximilien Robespierre, "The Festival of the Supreme Being," in *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, ed. Keith Baker et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987): 387.
- <sup>20</sup>Robespierre, "The Festival of the Supreme Being," 385.
- <sup>21</sup>Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988): 115.
- <sup>22</sup>Robespierre, "The Festival of the Supreme Being," 389.
- <sup>23</sup>Wyngaard, *From Savage to Citizen*, 71.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid, 153.
- <sup>25</sup>Eviatar Zerubavel, "The French Republican Calendar: A Case Study in the Sociology of Time," *American Sociological Review* Vol. 42, No. 6 (1977): 872.
- <sup>26</sup>Philippe-François Fabre d'Eglantine, "Report on Behalf of the Commission to Draw up the Calendar," in *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, ed. Keith Baker et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987): 365.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid, 367.
- <sup>28</sup>Zerubavel, "The French Republican Calendar," 873.
- <sup>29</sup>Wyngaard, *From Savage to Citizen*, 71.
- <sup>30</sup>Fabre d'Eglantine, "Report on Behalf of the Commission to Draw up the Calendar," 365.
- <sup>31</sup>Norman Philbrick, introduction to *Trumpets sounding: propaganda plays of the American Revolution* (New York: B. Blom, 1972), 11.
- <sup>32</sup>Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*. (New York: Signet Classics, 2003): 43.
- <sup>33</sup>Andrea Wulf, *Founding Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011): 8.
- <sup>34</sup>Paine, *Common Sense*, 23.
- <sup>35</sup>Michael Rogin, "Nature as Politics and Nature as Romance in America," *Political Theory* Vol. 5, No. 1 (1977): 12.
- <sup>36</sup>Paine, *Common Sense*, 8.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid, 47.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid, 5.

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- <sup>39</sup>Rogin, "Nature as Politics and Nature as Romance in America," 17.
- <sup>40</sup>Philip Grant Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1941): 209.
- <sup>41</sup>Stanley K. Johannesen, "John Dickinson and the American Revolution," *Historical Reflections* Vol. 2, No. 1 (1975), 39.
- <sup>42</sup>John Dickinson, *Letters from a farmer, in Pennsylvania, To the inhabitants of the British colonies*, Eighteenth Century Collections Online / Gale / Stanford University Libraries (London: 1774), Letter I, pg. 5.
- <sup>43</sup>Pierre Marambaud, "Dickinson's 'Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania' as Political Discourse: Ideology, Imagery, and Rhetoric," *Early American Literature* Vol 12, No. 1 (1977): 67.
- <sup>44</sup>Johannesen, "John Dickinson and the American Revolution," 41.
- <sup>45</sup>Dickinson, *Letters from a farmer, in Pennsylvania, Letter II*, pg. 21.
- <sup>46</sup>Johannesen, "John Dickinson and the American Revolution," 38.
- <sup>47</sup>Dickinson, *Letters from a farmer, in Pennsylvania, Letter III*, pg. 30.
- <sup>48</sup>Philbrick, introduction to *Trumpets sounding*, 13.
- <sup>49</sup>John Leacock, *The Fall of British Tyranny, or, American Liberty Triumphant*, in *Trumpets sounding; propaganda plays of the American Revolution*, ed. Normal Philbrick (New York: B. Blom, 1972): 97.
- <sup>50</sup>*Ibid*, 99.
- <sup>51</sup>Francis A. Cabeen, "The Society of the Sons of Saint Tammany of Philadelphia," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* Vol. 24, No. 4 (1901): 441.
- <sup>52</sup>*Ibid*, "441.
- <sup>53</sup>Francis James Dallett Jr., "John Leacock and the Fall of British Tyranny," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 78 (1954): 463.
- <sup>54</sup>*Ibid*, 461.
- <sup>55</sup>Eric Kaufman, "'Naturalizing the Nation': The Rise of Naturalistic Nationalism in the United States and Canada," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 40, No. 4 (1998): 670.
- <sup>56</sup>The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition, ed. Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008), To James Madison, 27 April 1795.
- <sup>57</sup>The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition, IV. Jefferson's Observations on Dêmeunier's Manuscript.
- <sup>58</sup>The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition, To James Madison, 20 December 1787.
- <sup>59</sup>The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition, To Arthur Campbell, 1 September 1797.
- <sup>60</sup>Wulf, *Founding Gardeners*, 117.
- <sup>61</sup>The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition, From Edward Rutledge, 14 October 1786.
- <sup>62</sup>The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition, IV. Jefferson's Observations on Dêmeunier's Manuscript.
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# LIBERAL GOVERNOR, CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION: ROBERT EDEN AND MARYLAND'S MODERATION

## **Introduction by Professor Caroline Winterer:**

Scott Bade's excellent essay reminds us that the thing we call "The American Revolution" can also be seen as thirteen separate revolutions, as each of thirteen of Britain's colonies in North America separately revolted in addition to joining their compatriots in the unitary revolution we remember today in the Declaration of Independence of 1776. Each one of the 13 separate American revolutions had its own particular character. Bade has focused on the velvet revolution of the proprietary colony of Maryland, whose royal governor, the methodical Robert Eden, had the curious distinction of being well liked by many colonists before, during and even after the Revolution. Eden is here placed in his context, among the motley crew of people who made of the royal governorships in North America, a place where nepotism reigned supreme. As one of Bade's pie charts nicely illustrates, fully a third of the royal governors were British titled nobility, a rank that the federal Constitution would later forbid to members of the U.S. government. The revolution in Maryland is not among the events we normally teach in the survey courses on the American revolutionary period; the somewhat bland Robert Eden has likewise been forgotten amid the more spectacular personalities of the American Revolution. But Bade's paper is a reminder of how skilful historical detective work can bring lost people and lost events back to life.

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## Liberal Governor, Conservative Revolution: Robert Eden and Maryland's Moderation

Scott Bade

When on 4 July 1776, the delegates of the Continental Congress declared independence, they did so as the United States of America and not thirteen colonies. Although they had coalesced together behind this new American nationhood, the colonists who threw off British government had not acted in concert until then. To grasp the American Revolution, we must first understand that there were actually thirteen smaller revolutions that had to take place before victory could be declared on the whole. John Hancock's flamboyant signature could only achieve so much; in a colonial world operating on a provincial level, each newfound state had its own extant constitution and its own coterie of officials. For the Revolution to succeed, the revolutionaries would either have to persuade each royal government to acquiesce, or remove it by force. They would have to have their own revolutions.

These thirteen revolutions varied in nature. Some colonial governors found themselves fleeing to warships, others under arrest, and others leading counterrevolutionary forces. Some governors, however, stayed in the good graces of their colonial subjects after their depositions. Excluding Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut, who was always a supporter of the Patriot cause, and governors who were merely deputies filling the void of their predecessors, only three of the last colonial governors returned to their states after the War: John Penn of Pennsylvania, Joseph Wanton of Rhode Island, and Robert Eden (later 1st Baronet) of Maryland.

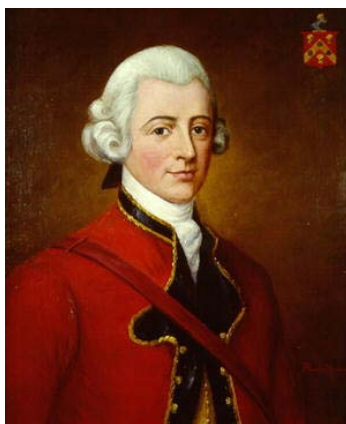
Of these three cases, the case of Governor Eden best furthers our understanding of the complexities of the Revolution at the provincial level. When he died—in Maryland—in 1784, he was eulogized in the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser* as “much respected for his many amiable Qualities.”<sup>1</sup> That Governor Eden, a Loyalist, was so well-remembered in his former colony just a year after the Revolution's end speaks volumes for how he comported himself during the Revolution. It also speaks volumes for the Revolution in Maryland.

Caught between radical Virginia and the Congress in Philadelphia, Maryland—and its relative conservatism—is easily swallowed up in the narrative of the American Revolution by the revolutionaries that surrounded it. Nonetheless, the Revolution in Maryland—calm as it might have been—was no less important than the ones in its sister colonies. In focusing on the

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conduct and treatment of Governor Robert Eden, Maryland's story not only exemplifies the Revolution's conservative nature, it underscores the federal conflict that would befall the Confederation government and foreshadows states' rights as an ideology in American politics. Lacking the fervor of Massachusetts or the battlefields of the Southern Campaign, Maryland and its last royal governor nonetheless represented the struggles that had to occur on a provincial level to make the Revolution American.



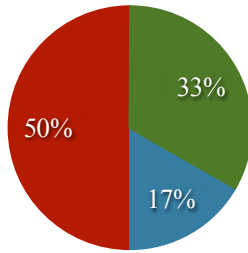
### Gubernatorial Context

Born to a prominent family in his own right, Robert Eden owed his position in Maryland to his wife, the Honorable Caroline Calvert. Calvert was the daughter of Charles Calvert, 5th Baron Baltimore, and, at the time of her marriage to Eden, the sister of Maryland's proprietor, Frederick Calvert, 6th Baron Baltimore.<sup>2</sup> A soldier by profession, Eden was appointed, by sheer nepotism, to the governorship of Maryland by his brother-in-law in 1768.<sup>3</sup> When he arrived in 1769 however, his background matched those of the other colonial governors well.

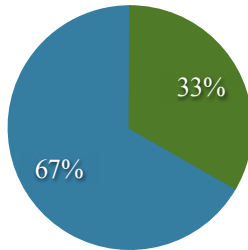
Despite Maryland's proprietary status, the colony's administrators, like Robert Eden, were from the same social milieu as their neighboring peers. In his survey of the colonial system, Leonard Labaree separated all the royal governors in America into three categories: provincial notables, military leaders, and British civil servants (often the sons of prominent families aspiring to officialdom). Only a few could be called "professional" colonial administrators in the sense of the nineteenth-century British Empire. These executives reflected the diversity of the civil service, but were still a group culled from the upper classes: of the 300 governors and deputies from 1624 until 1783, one-fourth were peers or sons of peers, fifty-four were members of the House of Commons before or after their governorship, many attended Oxford or Cambridge, and many more had read law at one of the Inns of Court in London.<sup>4</sup>

### Demographics of the Royal Governors in 1775

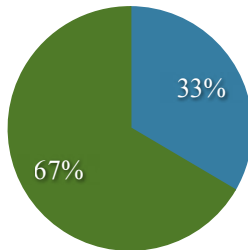
● Colonist/American   ● British   ● British (with colonial family connections)



● Nobility/Titled (or related)   ● Commoners



● Family ties to colony governed   ● No ties



Note: Figures are based on the twelve royal governors in 1775. They do not include acting governors. The governors are: Lord William Campbell (SC), Robert Eden (MD), William Franklin (NJ), Gen. Thomas Gage (MA), Josiah Martin (NC), John Murray, Earl of Dummore (VA), John Penn (PA), Jonathan Trumbull (CT), William Tryon (NY), Joseph Wanton (RI), John Wentworth (NH), James Wright (GA).

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Eden fit right in amongst his peers, but the colony he governed was far from ordinary. While most colonies were royal colonies, with governors directly appointed by London, there were two other types: corporate and proprietary.<sup>5</sup> As the latter, Maryland was one of three such colonies in mainland North America at the time, which meant that it was essentially the palatinate of the Calvert family and controlled by a hereditary proprietor.<sup>6</sup> While Maryland's proprietor sometimes exercised power as governor, this was not the case in the 1760s. Since 1733, the Calvert barons had lived in England, and proprietary governors were appointed to rule in their steads. These governors had a dual purpose to both serve the king and the proprietors; their primary role was as "guardians of the land system and of the lord proprietor's revenue," which was akin to the income the king received from the royally chartered colonies.<sup>7</sup>

Maryland's proprietary element also made for a unique political climate. The 1760s had seen battles between Governor Horatio Sharpe and the "court" party and the "anti-proprietary movement" in the House of Delegates, which included future signers of the Declaration of Independence Charles Carroll, William Paca, and Samuel Chase. Eden inherited some of these fights when he took office, but by the early 1770s, had been able to pacify the assembly on many issues that had pit the upper house (the Council) against the lower one. Nonetheless, as the radicals further cut their teeth protesting the Stamp Act and later the Townshend Duties in the 1760s, they honed a movement that would easily take up the mantle of independence a few years later.

### **"Spirit of Resistance"**

To say that that revolutionary crisis crept up on Maryland would be an understatement. After the issue of the Townshend Duties was resolved, news of imperial affairs was almost nonexistent in Maryland, with the main papers reporting very little between late 1770 and the Boston Tea Party in 1773.<sup>8</sup> This changed in 1774, when the Maryland Gazette printed the full text of the Boston Port Act.<sup>9</sup> As throughout the colonies, many in Maryland were sympathetic to Boston's plight and started organizing themselves mid-year.

For Robert Eden, however, the Revolution started on 8 November.<sup>11</sup> Arriving from England, where he had spent five months visiting family and attending to official business, Eden found his colony only slightly turbulent. In his absence, Maryland had had its own version of the tea party, when the owner of the Peggy Stewart, a ship carrying tea, capitulated to a threatening mob and burned the ship.<sup>12</sup> Finding the province calm aside from that incident, Eden wrote to William Legge, 2nd Earl Dartmouth, the Secretary of State of the Colonies, that "the province has been tolerable quiet since I arrived, but the spirit of resistance against the tea act, or any

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mode of internal taxation, is a strong and universal here as ever." His trip to England notwithstanding (and keeping in mind the Peggy Stewart incident), he was not out of touch with his subjects, writing in the same letter that "I firmly believe that they will undergo any hardships sooner than acknowledge a right in the British Parliament in that particular, and will persevere in their non-importation and non-exportation experiments in spite of every inconvenience that they must consequently be exposed to and the total ruin of their trade."<sup>13</sup>

Eden was, however, in conflict with Maryland's legislative branch. Having anticipated that the Assembly would act in sympathy with Boston's radicals, Eden prorogued the Assembly before his departure in 1774. This failed to prevent association with northern assemblies, as Maryland Whigs simply created a parallel and extra-legal legislature in June: the Maryland Convention.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, Eden faced a situation in which his legitimacy was recognized and his person respected, but his authority had been mostly usurped by an unconstitutional body. By the end of 1774, Maryland in effect had two governments.

Eden was not alone in facing insurgent assemblies. Across the colonies, assemblies were asserting themselves in spite of the best efforts of the royal governors. In Boston, the Massachusetts Government Act annulled the provincial charter and eliminated the direct election of members of the lower house as of 1 August 1774. Although Governor Thomas Gage dissolved the legislature, its members met anyway, creating the Massachusetts Provincial Congress on 7 October.<sup>15</sup> In North Carolina, the rump of the House of Burgesses declared itself in solidarity with Boston and appointed three representatives for the First Continental Congress.<sup>16</sup> Some colonies were more cautious, however; Georgia remained firmly in the hands of royal government, not even sending delegates to the first meeting of the Continental Congress in September.

There was some precedent for the Continental Congress that met in Philadelphia—seven northern colonies had met in Albany to coordinate Indian defense in 1754—but no constitutional basis. The colonies had been governed as separate units from their inception, and save several administrative and military posts that covered the whole of North America, there was little official coordination amongst the British North American colonies.

Nonetheless, most colonies, including Maryland, sent delegates to this meeting. Traveling in England, Governor Eden had been powerless to stop his colony's delegates from attending. Realizing that his power was limited, he decided not to waste his political capital blocking the Convention's every move, which had adjourned in any case. When it reconvened in April 1775 though, Eden was tested as tensions worsened in New England and in Virginia. The Convention's resolutions were optimistic, calling for "a happy reconciliation of the differences between the mother country and

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British colonies in North America,” but events would intervene.<sup>16</sup> Ever the military man, Governor Gage in Massachusetts ordered the seizure of powder in Concord on 18 April; the resulting Battles of Lexington and Concord sparked the start of open hostilities between the colonists and the British.

The “shot heard round the world” on Lexington green was certainly heard in Maryland. Governor Eden was determined, however, to maintain order, and to that end, when he was asked by the colonial militias to “furnish four Counties with Arms &c. such as they are,” he struck a middle ground. In a letter to his brother William in England, Eden wrote that “Given the presence of parading militias,” and reluctant to cause provocation, such compromise was the “better mode of proceeding, than refusing, as the Event shews.”<sup>17</sup> Eden may not have been able to prevent a tea party, but he could prevent a war in Maryland.

### **“To Preserve the Peace of the Province”**

This determination came from Eden’s firm belief that Maryland was immune to the radical activity now engulfing the other colonies and that rebellious activity would not spread. In the same letter to his brother, he wrote: “In this Province, there are very many, I really believe a Majority of Friends to Government; and we have talked American Treason openly in this Town for some Time.” Confidant in his own position, his attitude toward the rabble-rousers in Massachusetts was dismissive: “You need be under no Uneasiness about me: I am well supported, and not obnoxious to any unless it be to some of our infernal Independents, who are in League with the Bostonians.”<sup>18</sup> Coupled with the Convention’s moderate tact, Eden was relatively unconcerned. Maryland was not Virginia and certainly not Massachusetts. From his vantage point in Annapolis, optimism was the lens through which he viewed events. Writing to Lord Dartmouth on 5 May 1775, he was hopeful that “the Time is not far distant. . .when Peace and Harmony will be restored and Confidence re-established on a permanent Basis.”<sup>19</sup>

Eden had reason for this confidence in Maryland’s rebels. Unlike in other colonies, where the merchant and planter classes mobilized a coalition with the lower classes against the existing aristocracy, in Maryland, the Patriot faction was different. A continuation of the “country” and “anti-proprietary” party of earlier years, it remained the purview of just the wealthy planter class, which did little to actively curry the favor of the lower classes. This social homogeneity amongst rebel leaders in Maryland allowed them to be much more conservative in their politics.<sup>20</sup>

Without recognizing Congress or the Convention as legitimate authorities, Eden realized their importance in preventing escalation of the conflict and did not oppose Maryland sending delegates to Philadelphia. Given their known conservatism, he instead hoped the Marylanders would

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be able to bring reason to the northern rebels, writing in a letter to Lord Dartmouth: "I think I can affirm that the Delegates of Maryland (or a very great Majority of them) go from hence fully determined to do all in their Power to bring about a Reconciliation."<sup>21</sup> He even enclosed the proceedings of the Convention in his packet to Dartmouth, thinking them of use for the Ministry in understanding the colonial position, but also tacitly recognizing its existence at the least.

Although the remainder of the year saw Eden lose more and more power to the Convention, his decision not to strenuously oppose it made for a markedly peaceful year in Maryland. Eden stood in sharp contrast to other Loyalist governors. After trying to seize gunpowder from the Virginia militia, Governor Lord Dunmore fled to a warship in May. Amidst civil unrest in New York, Governor William Tryon did the same. By the end of 1775, he was working to arm Loyalists in New York, had recruited local gunsmiths to the British side, and was organizing an intelligence network along the Atlantic seaboard.<sup>22</sup> Eden, unlike his peers, avoided antagonizing rebel authorities, which meant the maintenance of some semblance of order.

These efforts at cooperation culminated during the Christmas season, when Eden actively sought out prominent members of the Convention and ultimately held a dinner summit with a small group of them at the home of Charles Carroll. The result of this dinner was measured cooperation with the Convention. In January 1776, Eden forwarded the Committee of Safety's instructions to the Convention's delegates in Philadelphia to England, hoping Lord Dartmouth would see that if moderation prevailed, a settlement could be reached.<sup>23</sup> The Convention agreed with Eden, and trusted him. In forwarding his correspondence through Philadelphia, the Convention took Eden at his word that his letters to his brother "contain nothing unfriendly to America." The Council wrote of both its and Eden's optimism:

*[Eden] believes [the instructions] contain the real Sentiments of the People of this Province. . . [Sending the instructions to Lord Dartmouth] cannot be productive of an ill effect; it may be of the greatest Service; it may possibly bring about some Overture to a general Reconciliation.*<sup>24</sup>

Yet throughout the winter, Eden's authority steadily eroded as the Convention assumed more and more political power. In March, Eden performed one of his last services to Maryland when he brokered the exit of the Otter, a British ship that had sailed into Maryland waters and engaged in some conflict with locals. Once again, Eden's first priority was the maintenance of stability, and the Council was thankful, writing to him that "We are much obliged to your Excellency for the Paines you have taken to preserve the Peace of this Province and beg that you will still exert your Endeavours for the Restoration of those happy days that we enjoyed under a constitutional Dependence on the Mother Country."<sup>25</sup>

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### “A Dangerous Correspondence”

Despite his best efforts, Eden could not stay out of conflict for long. In April, he found himself in the middle of multiple power struggles—the Annapolis Convention versus more radical Baltimore; Maryland versus the Continental Congress; Virginia versus Maryland—as a result of his correspondence with several figures in England. At the beginning of April, Continental forces in Virginia intercepted a packet of letters to Governor Eden that were being transported from the safekeeping of Lord Dunmore, who had been waiting for the opportune moment to forward them to Annapolis. The letters were considered fairly damaging. While the text from his brother William, in which Robert is praised for “acting the dignified, determined part, and are showing yourself a Friend to both sides of the Atlantic” was fairly benign, Lord George Germain’s response to Eden’s previous dispatches was less so. Germain had replaced Lord Dartmouth and, lacking the caution of his predecessor, spelled out military plans to occupy the South and spoke of the potential arrival of the British fleet.<sup>26</sup> This alarmed the commander in Virginia, Major General Charles Lee. Lee consulted with the Baltimore County Committee of Observation, and was told by the Committee chairman, Samuel Purviance, that the Annapolis Convention was “timorous and inactive,” and “afraid to Execute the Duties of their Station.” Armed with this information, Lee chose to bypass Annapolis, and after consulting the Virginian Council of Safety, sent the letters to the Continental Congress and Baltimore, two places where separatist sympathies were greater.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, Annapolis found out about the letters.

The different tenors of the Revolution became evident as all sides reacted to Eden’s epistolary indiscretions with different priorities in mind. Lee ordered Eden’s arrest and in Baltimore, thinking that Eden might try to flee upon learning his letters had been intercepted, Purviance deployed soldiers under his command to obstruct any possible maritime escape and take Eden “under strictest Guard to Baltimore” if he were found on a ship.<sup>28</sup> In Philadelphia, Congress took Lee’s line, voting on 16 April in support of Lee’s view of events. John Hancock, the president of the Congress, accused Eden in a letter to the Council of Safety (the Convention’s standing committee) of “carrying on a dangerous Correspondence with the Ministry of Great Britain, who seem desperately bent on the Destruction of America.”<sup>29</sup> Enclosed with Hancock’s letter were orders from Congress, which came “to a Resolution that the Person and Papers of Governour Eden be immediately seized, from which there is Reason to believe, we may not only learn but probably defeat, the Designs of our Enemies.”<sup>30</sup>

On the same day in Annapolis, the Council was much less alarmed. After receiving word of the letters, its members waited a whole day before acting, and then they simply sent a delegation consisting of Charles Carroll,

William Paca, and John Hall to meet with Eden. The delegation asked Eden for copies of the letters, to which Eden replied that he had sent them away. Eden reassured them of his intentions as governor: "I had, and have, no Intention during these Times, of leaving the Province, whilst my continuing here can in my own Opinion, tend to preserve its Tranquility."<sup>31</sup> Eden proceeded to rebut the charges made by Lee and Congress. He asked the Convention how could he be acting against Maryland if no troops had arrived at his supposed request, and assured the Council that he only wished to maintain stability: "I have above told you my Resolution of continuing in my Station, as long as permitted, or the ostensible Form of the established Government can contribute to preserve the Peace of the Province. . . So long as Maryland can reap any peaceful Benefit from my Service, [and] provided. . . my peaceable departure not be impeded." Although personal safety was in the back of his thoughts, Eden's priority was stability in his colony; indeed he was outraged at the very thought that the Council thought he had requested troops, concluding his letter by writing of his "insulted Station" and that that if action were taken against him, he "shall consider [himself] treated as an Enemy, and as such a proceeding as a Breach of that Confidence I have implicitly reposed in [the Convention]."<sup>32</sup> Unlike in other colonies, where governors saw their job as crushing the rebellion, Eden saw his job as conciliatory. Ever a moderate, he pinned his hopes on men acting as he was, in an even-mannered and measured fashion.

If the royal governor in any other colony were accused of aiding England and being "desperately bent on the Destruction of America," it is likely that colonial authorities would not have granted him leniency or taken him at his word. Maryland, however, with its popular governor, was not any other colony, and the emissaries charged with confronting Governor Eden gave him a day to reply, implicitly trusting his word that his letters were not injurious to the Patriotic cause. While he undoubtedly helped his case by handing over some letters from his brother and Lord Dartmouth, the Council was in the end apologetic to Eden. In its reply to Eden's rebuttal of the charges made by Lee, the Council explained its actions and expressed regret for having suspected him of malfeasance: "[W]e sincerely lament the Necessity of the Times, which urging us to guard against every Possibility of Danger, forced us to a Measure so disagreeable to us and which may prove an unmerited Treatment of your Excellency." Extraordinarily, the Council basically continued to acknowledge Eden as the *de jure* governor, writing that "We thank your Excellency for your Resolution of continuing in your Station as long as permitted or the ostensible Form of the established Government can contribute to preserve the Peace of the Province, and we cheerfully acquiesce in your Excellency's Assurance that as the Convention is shortly to meet, they shall find you here."<sup>33</sup> Despite his indignation, Eden followed up with a commitment not to leave the province.<sup>34</sup>

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The Council's response is noteworthy in two ways. First, the mutual respect between Maryland's rebel leaders and its royal governor is remarkable. By April 1776, most royal governors had either fled, been deposed, or were safely surrounded by British troops. In Maryland, the Patriots were apologizing to the royal governor for possibly helping out the British. Second, the Council's reply to Eden indicates the nature of Maryland's priorities vis à vis governance. Maryland's revolutionary leaders wanted above else continuity of government; given the choice between possible anarchy and stability, the Council chose stability, even if it was in the person of the royal (and proprietary) governor. Here again, Maryland's leaders were departing from the other colonies in how they viewed current events; intrinsically more conservative than their counterparts elsewhere, they did not want to risk a complete collapse of civil authority.

The most striking part of the Council's response to Governor Eden was its final passage, however. "With ardent wishes for a speedy Reconciliation upon honorable and constitutional Terms, We have the honor to be with sincere respect, &c," the Council wrote.<sup>35</sup> The letter, it should be noted, was dated 18 April 1776, barely two and a half months before independence would be declared. Maryland still acknowledged its royal governor and independence, it seemed, was not on the tip of anyone's tongue.

While the Council had prevented their hot-headedness from prevailing, it felt Maryland had been insulted by Congress, Virginia, Charles Lee, and Charles Purviance. Before it even received word from Philadelphia, the Council wrote to its deputies there, explaining the "Alarm of a very interesting Nature" that was under control, and complaining of the Committee of Safety of Virginia's "improper" steps.<sup>36</sup> Thomas Johnson, one of Maryland's delegates to Congress, was no less outraged, writing of General Lee and Purviance's attempts to get Governor Eden arrested that "I esteem it a vile injurious calumny calculated like his conversation with Gen Lee to spread suspicion and distrust of the only executive in our province."<sup>37</sup> After receiving Hancock's instructions, the Council was livid at this attempt to depose Maryland's governor and sharply rebuked Hancock:

*To dissolve the Government and subvert the Constitution by the Seisure and Imprisonment of the Gouverneur; we conceived to be a Measure of too much Delicacy and Magnitude to be adopted without calling and consulting the Convention of this Province: we saw no Necessity urging us to such an Extreme, and were therefore determined not to expose the Province to immedate [sic] Anarchy and Convulsion, if an Assurance could be obtained from the Governor; that he would not depart before our Convention met to decide upon this important Business. He cheerfully gave us this Assurance and that we feel no Apprehensions of Danger from him. Under these circumstances we cannot comply with the Request of Congress in any other Manner than we have done, and flatter ourselves they will rest satisfied and consider us excusable.*<sup>38</sup>

The Council's letter not only underscored its commitment to order, but also betrayed Maryland's deeply conservative attitude toward the Revolution, once again confirming that royal government was better than no government at all. Maryland was committed to a revolution of order on its own timetable and no one, least of all John Hancock or Charles Lee, would rush Maryland's judicious removal of proprietary rule.

These sentiments were echoed days later on 22 April in a letter from the Council to its delegates in Philadelphia, "We consider the Authority of the whole Province trampled upon and insulted," the Council wrote to its delegates, foreshadowing the future American propensity toward states' rights. "We feel for you," they continued, "the Insult offered by Mr Hancock in not admitting you to his Presence must have been grating — our Province is the Object of Attention, and we are to be plunged into all the Horrors of Anarchy, only to gratify a few individuals out of Congress."<sup>39</sup> Maryland's leaders were jealous of the colony's sovereignty, and even the war effort could not undermine their confidence in their own institutions. On 16 April, the Council summoned Samuel Purviance, and questioned him regarding the attempted arrest of Governor Eden.<sup>40</sup> The council "highly disapprove[d] and condemn[ed] his conduct" and that of General Lee, "whose interference in the domestic affairs of the Province is dangerous."<sup>41</sup> Maryland had a simple message for its colonial allies: its sovereignty was not to be trifled with.

### **"To Depart Peaceably"**

Notwithstanding its defense of its maligned governor, when the full Convention met, it became clear that Eden's position was no longer tenable. Eden knew his exit at this point was inevitable, and he had been quietly preparing for such an eventuality since the letters were first intercepted.<sup>42</sup> Even if the Council believed Eden had no hostile intent, its members did not want a situation in which Eden would be forced to choose between disobeying direct orders from London or cooperating with colonial authorities. Evident, however, is that the Council was weary of disestablishing colonial government outright. The solution: if Eden were to leave Maryland and transfer power to Richard Lee, the President of the Council, government could be preserved without creating a constitutional crisis. To that end, the Council wrote a letter to Eden "that the Publick quiet and safety require that he leave the Province, and that he is at full liberty to depart peaceably with all his effects."<sup>43</sup> Even in deposing him, however, Eden was treated so courteously it is hard to believe he was being forcibly removed from the province. The delegation that delivered the resolution to Eden told him that it was the intention of the convention "to preserve, as far as may be, the ostensible form of government, in hopes it may have some influence towards a reunion" with Great Britain. Astonishingly, its members also offered to allow him to

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stay in Maryland if he promised to cease all communication and cooperation with the British, an offer they likely did not expect him to take up.<sup>44</sup> He did not disappoint, electing to leave instead at the earliest possible convenience. The Convention complied with this, and carried out a negotiation to permit the calling off Maryland's shore of a British warship to ferry the governor to England.

Eden might have been leaving Maryland in the good graces of Maryland's leaders, but Virginia (perhaps sore over its failure to arrest him), complained that Eden's safe passage was nothing more than an effort to "promote our destruction," and accused Maryland of falling under the false influence of Eden and the proprietary element. The Council was in no mood for further interference from Maryland's southern neighbor where Governor Eden was concerned. Charles Carroll complained of Virginia's "injurious treatment" to the Council and Maryland's deputies in Philadelphia were sharper still, writing to the Council that

*We are astonished at the ungenerous and malevolent Turn given to the Proceedings of our Convention by that of Virginia, and hope they will be as unsuccessful in their nefarious attempt to stir up the People of Maryland against their representatives, as they have hitherto been in their Endeavours to render the Councils of that Province suspected. We are exceedingly sorry to observe this unfriendly disposition in a neighbouring sister Colony, but hope there will be found spirit enough in the Convention of Maryland to resent this most injurious Treatment in the manner it deserves.*<sup>45</sup>

Virginia did not carry out its threats to impede Governor Eden's departure, perhaps realizing the degree of attachment to which Maryland held its outgoing governor. His exit briefly was mired by a dispute over the loading and unloading of cargo and passengers. To the end, however, Marylanders addressed Robert Eden as "Excellency."

### A Temporary Exile

Once in England, King George III honored Robert Eden by creating him a baronet of Maryland. Eden was further rewarded with one of the largest pensions of any Loyalist in England. As the war was ending, Eden accompanied the Proprietor, Henry Harford, back to Maryland in order to appeal for lost property. While staying in Annapolis, he was active socially, and was present when General George Washington paid a visit.<sup>46</sup> By all accounts, his former subjects welcomed him. Unfortunately, worn by the stress of the preceding years and ill with dropsy, Eden died in August 1782. The regard in which Maryland's people held him however was apparent by the announcement of his death in the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*: "A few Days ago departed this Life, at Annapolis, with great Resignation and Serenity, after a long Indisposition, Sir Robert Eden, Bart. who resided as Governor of this State previous to the late Revolution. This

Gentleman was a Branch of a respectable dignified Family, and was much respected for his many amiable Qualities."<sup>47</sup>

With his British peers moving on to other positions and his American ones mostly retiring in exile, Eden's return to Maryland before the signing of the Treaty of Paris is surprising to anyone looking back on the Revolutionary Era. At the time though, it was hardly seen as controversial. Eden had lost power, but he had not lost his friends. Most high officials of a government overthrown by revolution are not entertained or eulogized by their former subjects; Marylanders did both, however, for Robert Eden.

### Conclusion

Sir Robert Eden, Bt. was by no means the most important royal governor in America and Maryland was by no means the most important colony in the American Revolution. Their intertwined stories, however, importantly challenge the narrative of America's foundation as both united and inevitable. In looking at Maryland, we see that the Revolution's outcome was neither preordained nor unified. Given the turmoil that engulfed America in 1776, it was perhaps inescapable that Robert Eden would be deposed and that Maryland would support independence. Those truths were not self-evident to Marylanders—as late as six weeks before independence, the Council bid Eden help effect reconciliation in England, and as late as days before independence its members saluted the him with the respect of a sitting, not deposed, governor.

As has been held by Eden's two biographers, Bernard Steiner and Rosamond Beirne, Maryland's treatment of Eden signified above all the colony's great conservatism and moderation, and indeed, Maryland might have treaded just as carefully under a different governor. Unlike other colonies, its Patriot elite, uncoupled from an alliance with the lower classes, was less radical than elsewhere. But without a moderate governor to work with, the rebels' own moderation would not have been enough. They found that governor in Robert Eden. Eden's respect of the Convention and Maryland's people allowed for a peaceful Revolution in his colony. Lord Dunmore and William Tryon fled to warships, William Franklin was arrested, Thomas Hutchinson's home was burned to the ground, and, lest we forget, Governor General Thomas Gage resorted to force and precipitated the shooting war. Robert Eden's measured reaction to revolution, his shrewdness in letting Maryland's rebels have a little slack, might well have been so they could hang themselves in a proverbial noose. There was no accident, however, in the regard in which he was esteemed by both sides. His attempts to ensure tranquility were much more than can be said for his peers in other colonies, and he was rewarded for it both by his people in their treatment of him and the King upon Eden's return to London. Eden demonstrated that not all British officials were indifferent, uncaring, or tyrannical, and that had more men

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like him been in the Ministry, peace might have prevailed.

Maryland's final respects to its late governor when he died in Annapolis were a rarity in most post-revolutionary societies. But Maryland had an extraordinary Revolution. Restrained and deliberate, concerned more with order than throwing off the *ancien régime*, Maryland was not united in its opinion of Eden, and he certainly had his detractors. Nonetheless, the staunch defense of Eden inadvertently exposed deep fissures within the Patriot cause. Machinations around Eden showed that Maryland trusted its royal governor more than the Continental Congress, and certainly more than Virginia. Its revolutionary Convention and Council protected him from General Charles Lee and censored its own allies for attempting to arrest him. Through Eden, Maryland anticipated the ideology of states' rights by asserting its right to handle its royal governor and rebuffing the temerity of both Congress and Virginia to interfere in its affairs. Amidst a war, such conflict might have been surprising, but underscored the deep notions of provincial rights enshrined in the colonial ethos. The Convention's defense of Robert Eden tells us of its opinion of him, yes, but also of the internal factional battles that could have undermined the Patriotic movement.

When the colonies declared independence from Great Britain in July 1776, they did so united and unanimous. If we go back just a few months and go south just a few miles of Philadelphia however, we are reminded that the standard reading of the fight for independence was not so straightforward. The Revolution in Maryland, as it related to Robert Eden, helps us understand that the American Revolution was one of many smaller ones.

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## ENDNOTES:

<sup>14</sup>“Obituary of Sir Robert Eden,” *The Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, 12, 72 (10 Sept. 1784), 2.

<sup>2</sup>Eden’s grandfather and father were baronets (not the Maryland baronetcy that Robert would later acquire, which would be a new creation) and sat in Parliament. His brother William Eden, Baron Auckland would become President of the Board of Trade and was as MP as well; another brother, Morton Eden, Baron Henley, would be a diplomat and Privy Counsellor. See: Steiner, Bernard Christian. *Life and Administration of Sir Robert Eden*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1898.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 11.

<sup>4</sup>Labaree, Leonard Wood. *Royal Government in America: A Study of the British Colonial System Before 1783*. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1930), 43.

<sup>5</sup>The corporate colonies, Connecticut and Rhode Island, had relative independence from London, partially explaining Trumbull’s easy disloyalty to the Crown. See: Rakove, Jack N. Interview by the author. Stanford University, Stanford, California. October 2012.

<sup>6</sup>In addition to Pennsylvania and Delaware, which were governed by the same proprietor.

<sup>7</sup>Barker, Charles Albro. *The Background of the Revolution in Maryland*. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1940), 125, 140.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 368.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, 369.

<sup>10</sup>Steiner, *Life and Administration*, 422.

<sup>11</sup>State of Maryland. “The Burning of the Peggy Stewart.” Maryland State House. <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/speccol/sc1500/sc1545/001100/001111/text/label.html>.

<sup>12</sup>Steiner, *Life and Administration*, 423.

<sup>13</sup>Maryland Convention, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, A. 1774 (Maryland, 1836).

<sup>14</sup>Lincoln, William, ed. *Journal of the Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838).

<sup>15</sup>Provincial Congress of North Carolina, Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 1774, at 1,041 1,049 (North Carolina). Accessed December 7, 2012. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr09-0303>.

<sup>16</sup>Resolution of the Convention. April 29, 1775, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836).

<sup>17</sup>Robert Eden to William Eden, December 1774. “Correspondence of Governor Robert Eden,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, (Vol. II 1907), 2.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Robert Eden to Lord Dartmouth, 5 May 1775, “Correspondence of Governor Robert Eden,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, (Vol. II 1907), 8.

<sup>20</sup>Crowl, Philip A., “Maryland During and After the Revolution: A Political and Economic Study,” (Ph.D diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1942), 20-21.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Nelson, Paul David. *William Tryon and the Course of Empire: A Life in British Imperial Service*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 137.

<sup>23</sup>The Committee of Safety was the standing committee of the Convention, which met continuously while the Convention was adjourned.

<sup>24</sup>Council of Safety to Delegates of Maryland in Congress, 23 January 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland. 1836), 109.

<sup>25</sup>Steiner, *Life and Administration*; Council of Safety to Robert Eden, 10 March 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 233.

<sup>26</sup>Thomas Johnson to Council of Safety, 17 April 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 347.

<sup>27</sup>Steiner, *Life and Administration*.

<sup>28</sup>Examination of Mr. Samuel Purviance, Junior Chairman of the Committee of Observation for

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Baltimore County, 24 April 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 376-377.

Examination of Mr. Samuel Purviance, Junior Chairman of the Committee of Observation for Baltimore County, 24 April 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 376-377; Samuel Purviance to Captain Samuel Smith, 14 April 1776; presented as testimony as part of "Examination of Mr. Samuel Purviance," 24 April 1776. *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 373-374.

<sup>29</sup>John Hancock to Council of Safety, 16 April 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 334.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 335

<sup>31</sup>Robert Eden to Charles Carroll, John Hall, and William Paca, 17 April 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 337.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>Council of Safety to Robert Eden, 18 April 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 339.

<sup>34</sup>Council of Safety to Deputies of Maryland in Congress, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 340.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>Thomas Johnson to Council of Safety, 17 April 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 347.

<sup>38</sup>John Hancock to Council of Safety of Maryland, 16 April 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 349.

<sup>39</sup>Maryland's delegates were not present during certain proceedings involving the Gov. Eden question. See: Council of Safety to Delegates of Maryland in Congress, 22 April 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 369.

<sup>40</sup>Examination of William Lux by Council of Safety, 24 April 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 375-383.

<sup>41</sup>Council of Safety, quoted in Steiner, *Life and Administration*, 128.

<sup>42</sup>Beirne, Rosamond Randall. "Portrait of a Colonial Governor: Robert Eden, I—His Entrance." (*Maryland Historical Magazine*, September 1950), 173.

<sup>43</sup>Maryland Convention, quoted in Steiner, *Life and Administration*, 130.

<sup>44</sup>As characterized by Steiner.

<sup>45</sup>Charles Carroll (barrister) to William Hayward, 12 June 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 485; Delegates of Maryland in Congress to Council of Safety, 11 June 1776, *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland*, (Maryland, 1836), 478.

<sup>46</sup>Beirne, Rosamond Randall, "Portrait of a Colonial Governor: Robert Eden, II—His Exit." (*Maryland Historical Magazine*, December 1950), 300.

<sup>47</sup>"Obituary of Sir Robert Eden," *The Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, 10 September 1784.

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# THE CHAPPE SEMAPHORE: AN EMBLEM OF REVOLUTION- ARY RESTRUCTURING AND UNIFICATION IN THE FRENCH NATION-STATE

## **Introduction by Professor Jessica Riskin:**

In France during the eighteenth century, a succession of rulers at the end of the Old Regime and through the Revolution took on a series of projects of systematization, rationalization, and unification. These included the invention and promulgation of a standardized system of weights and measures, the metric system, a standardized calendar, new methods of tax collection, weapons-production and agricultural reforms, and the creation of a system of telegraphy as a means of long-distance communication. In “The Chappe Semaphore,” Suzanne Stathatos examines the invention of the first widely used (semaphore) telegraph by the engineer Claude Chappe with the help of his brothers, in particular Ignace Chappe. Theirs was not the first project in optical telegraphy but it was the first to be systematically adopted. The Chappe telegraph ultimately connected all of France, allowing first the Revolutionary leaders and then Napoleon to coordinate their armies and lands. Suzanne argues that the advent of the Chappe telegraph rested upon a combination of social, technical and intellectual factors including the existence of new public engineering institutions such as the *Ecole polytechnique*, and of governmental and intellectual interest in formal languages, systems, nomenclatures and codes. Connecting the telegraph to the political and economic landscape in which it arose, Suzanne offers a historically rich, nuanced and gripping account of this turning point in the early history of modern communications and modern administration.

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## The Chappe Semaphore: An Emblem of Revolutionary Restructuring and Unification in the French Nation-State

Suzanne Stathatos

The year was 1794. France found itself in the middle of a bloody Revolution. The Republic had begun, King Louis XVI had been executed, the Committee of Public Safety had risen to power, and the Reign of Terror decimated the French aristocracy. On the morning of August 31, 1794, French revolutionaries destroyed the Château de Chantilly in the French countryside outside of Paris. The Chateau was the principal seat of the house of Condé, a branch of the royal family. The revolutionaries wanted to spread the news of this conquest, which they viewed as a national victory for the newly-founded Republic. So, a semaphore telegraph's arms cut through the sky, a ripple of semaphores came alive across the countryside, and word of this triumph reached Paris by the afternoon:

*CANOT*:<sup>1</sup> Here is the telegraphic message that we have just received. Condé is restored to the Republic. Surrender was at six o'clock this morning.

*GOSSUIN*: Condé is restored to the Republic; let us change the name it's name to that of Nord-Libre.

*CAMBON*: I want this decree be sent to Nord-Libre by telegraph.

*GRANET*: I want that at the same time as you inform Condé, by telegraph, of its name change, you also inform the Northern army that it remains worthy of the homeland.<sup>2</sup>

This transmission revealed the power of rapid communication in France. The semaphore telegraph was both a means to communicate a message across a large distance and to spread revolutionary nationalistic sentiment across the French state. Until the 1790's, long-distance communication had largely relied on couriers, coastal watchtowers, and the postal service. Although the telegraph had been widely discussed by the end of the seventeenth century in the context of romantic communication, the French state did not adopt the telegraphic system of communication until the early stages of the French Revolution.<sup>3</sup>

The semaphore telegraph had not been developed for a century due to lack of a favorable social structure and the failure of effective political support. The French state had not been willing or able to support a nationwide endeavor, and there was no pressing need in which instantaneous communication needed to replace a pre-existing postal service or messenger structure. By the late seventeenth century, although the idea of a bidirectional telecommunication system had been advanced, serious experimenta-

tion of such systems would have required substantial investment. Until the 1790s, messengers and the postal service met the everyday needs of governments and merchants and fire signals were used for emergencies.<sup>4</sup> As France engaged continuously in wars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries--notably, the Seven Years' War, the Revolution, and then the Napoleonic wars--the needs for rapid telecommunication became increasingly present. The Old Regime took steps to invent a telegraphic system, to reinvent formal languages and nomenclatures and the Revolutionary governments continued this endeavor.

The pressure of war demanded an improved communication mechanism, partly because alternate communication mechanisms had fallen into disrepair, and partly because warfare required increased communicative speed and efficiency. The horse-drawn postal coach could relay information at a speed of around ten kilometers per hour. The advent of the semaphore telegraph brought transmission speed up to 500 kilometers per hour.<sup>5</sup> Like other social services in the Revolution, the French postal service fell into chaos and became inoperable. The army drafted men and took employees from the working sector. Some men fled the country as refugees or were jailed or executed. In the early 1790s, roads fell into disrepair, banditry increased, and rebels disrupted the mail service. Furthermore, postal surveillance became an issue, as conspiring and contentious authorities violated the privacy rules protecting postal correspondence.<sup>6</sup> The postal service did not revive until the newly founded Directory restored it in 1795. Therefore, uninterrupted, quick communication across the country required a new system.

While it is true that wartime often stimulates innovations that persist through antebellum society, as the optical semaphore did in this case, the Chappe brothers' semaphore arose as a result of other aspects of the same period. The French government before and after the Revolution restructured the French calendar, developed the metric system, and reframed French politics. The eighteenth century saw a rise in the understanding and implementation of reason and scientific practice.

France in the eighteenth century saw a rise in interconnected political and intellectual structures, including the presence of public engineering institutions and intellectual interest in formal language and mathematical systems. The Ancien Régime's policies established the beginnings of public engineering institutions, which would later evolve into the National Convention's establishment of the *École Polytechnique* after the Revolution.<sup>7</sup> The Old Regime was also interested in instrumentation, such as the invention of lens instruments, and the government and intellectual realms were interested in formal languages, systems, nomenclature, and mathematics. The *École* was a new state-run institution of higher education and research. State officials promoted unification and standardization, in nationwide methods of measurement and communication. The new Republic adopted

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and implemented standardized systems of measurement, weights, and language. Science, reason, and the Republic became intertwined. The rise of the Republic and the promulgation of nationwide systems also promoted a growth in nationalist sentiment.

Taking this as a point of departure, one may ask how the semaphore telegraph is connected to the nature of citizenship, nationalism, and other scientific developments at a given time and place? The French language and information dissemination in France provided the newly created nation-state with a means to unite. The Chappe telegraph helped unite the nation; however, its development also reflects the French government's nature, attitude regarding the public and private sphere, and attitude toward equality. This essay examines the period after the French Revolution from 1790 to approximately 1830. The French development and use of the semaphore telegraph illustrates how leaders of the Republic thought that the government should strictly regulate science, society, and the military. In France, the state provided the means to develop the semaphore technology, and authorities policed these technological developments accordingly. The optical semaphore gained traction in France only by gaining enough political and social leverage—a stable economy, political framework, and societal cohesion were necessary to support the rise and longevity of the optical telegraph.

I will begin by giving a background of the development, implementation and operation of Claude Chappe's semaphore telegraph. This background will demonstrate the necessity of the governmental branch in implementing a nation-wide communication system, and will illustrate the importance of mathematics and logic when inventing the telecommunication system. I will continue to examine other structural reformations during this period, including the establishment of a new Republican calendar and on scholars' fascination with signs and language, to relate what was happening with science and linguistics in France to the advent of the semaphore telegraph in the post-French Revolution period. In the second part of my analysis, I explore the political implications of the semaphore telegraph, and examine how the government used the telegraph and how it restricted its use by others. To demonstrate how France's semaphore both absorbed and mirrored the political and scientific atmosphere of post-Revolutionary France, I will look at the work of Ignace Chappe, at correspondence sent amongst politicians, and at newspapers, periodicals, and Assembly notes in France about the semaphore and privacy rights. Technological progress during this time mirrors societal and political developments and concerns.

### **The Claude Chappe Semaphore**

In the summer of 1790, Claude Chappe, a French engineer, and his four brothers, set out to create a system of communication that would allow the central government to receive intelligence and to transmit "orders over

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a long distance in the shortest possible time.”<sup>8</sup> Growing up as the nephew of a celebrated eighteenth century astronomer, Claude Chappe developed a passion for science. He applied himself to math and physics, and published several scientific articles in journals and magazines.<sup>9</sup> Chappe was sent to a seminary and became the head of a religious community near Brûlon, in North-western France. There, he conducted basic signaling experiments.<sup>10</sup> After having studied some telegraphic history, including the works of Robert Hooke, Guillaume Amontons, and Marcel, commissioner of the navy at Arles, Claude Chappe began experimenting with his own telegraphic system in 1790.<sup>11</sup> He tried several different methods of communicating at a distance, including the use of electricity, the use of sound in conjunction with the telegraph, and black and white shutters; and he experimented with different shapes for the telegraphic arms.<sup>12</sup>

In 1790, Claude Chappe constructed a new type of semaphore telegraph. In his *Histoire de la télégraphie*, Claude’s brother Ignace Chappe described some of the challenges of creating and constructing an effective optical telegraph. There were issues with styling, the situation and placement of the machine, the number of machines and the clarity of their signaling arms, and the promptness of signals.<sup>13</sup> Two significant weaknesses of the optical telegraph included the reliance on human dexterity and the requirement of clear lines of sight between stations: an optical system could not operate well at night (until they put lanterns on the arms of the semaphores) or in the rain or fog. After substantial experimentation, the Chappe brothers finally adopted the T, called a *régulateur*, a thirty-foot-high post with a moveable crosspiece. *Indicateurs*, or 6-foot boards, were at both ends of the *régulateur*. Each *indicateur* could be placed in seven positions, totaling up to 98 positions that could be used for dispatch signals and 98 positions used for the regulation and policing of the lines, which were needed to indicate attention. These were all connected through a system of pulleys and steel rods with lead counterweights. The telegraph used the arm positions as numbers, which corresponded to words or phrases in a codebook. The first codebook had approximately 10,000 entries in it.<sup>14</sup> Operation of the system required skill and dexterity. Each intermediary station had two *stationnaires*. One would watch the upstream station and the other would move the arms into the same position for the downstream station to retrieve the message. At each end station was a *directeur* who translated outgoing messages into telegraphic style, and then turned telegrams into code (Figure 1).<sup>15</sup> Each station had its own signal if a breakdown occurred and the message had to be interrupted.

### **France, Communication and the Age of Reason**

The French Revolution erupted during a period of intellectual vigor in Europe. Enlightenment theories and scientific practices suffused

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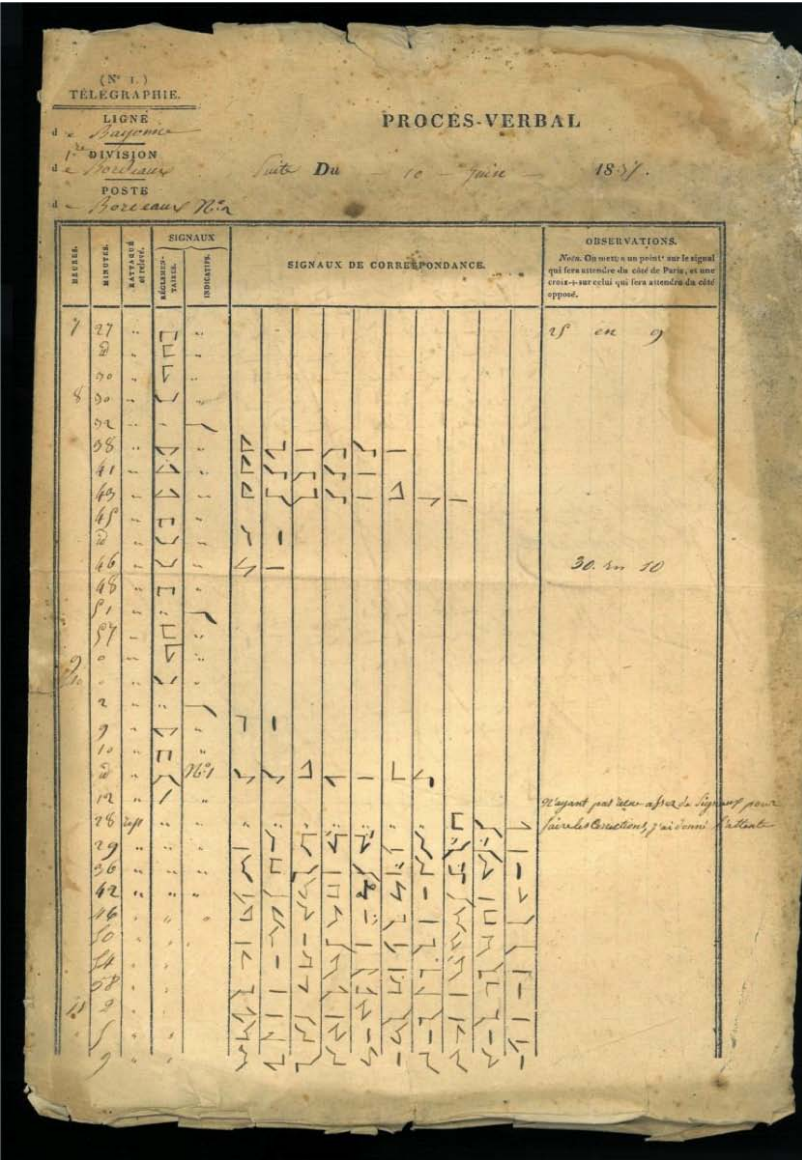


Figure 1: Proces verbal du post de Bordeaux N.2-6 Juin 1837<sup>15</sup>

French politics, engineering, and philosophy. The semaphore telegraph responded both to the Revolution's wartime need for a quicker means of communication and to the principles of the Age of Reason. After Revolutionary fervor subsided, the semaphore persisted not only because the pressure of war continued, but also because the culture of reason and science continued from the Enlightenment in France and Europe.<sup>16</sup> The Enlightenment had promoted scientific thought, skepticism, and intellectual interchange throughout France through the salons, through texts such as Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, and through the rise of philosophes, including Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montesquieu. Appreciation of scientific thought, therefore, continued through the Revolution.

The Age of Enlightenment included a renewed fascination with the political and social structure of ancient, or classical, civilization. A general nostalgia for the ancient Roman Republic pervaded French nationalistic sentiment. Many Enlightenment ideals, including the notions of equality and the political structures of classical societies, influenced French philosophes, the structuring of the new Republic, and contributed to the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which was published in the wake of the Revolution. French inventors, including Charles-Gilbert Romme and Chappe, also analyzed how ancient civilizations structured themselves from the ground up.

Charles-Gilbert Romme, who was elected to the National Convention in September 1792 and served as a member of the Committee of Public Education, was determined to redefine the units of timekeeping in France. As further discussed below, he hoped to rebuild France with an entirely clean slate that reflected the newly liberated Republic—including a new system of time. He looked toward the Roman Republic and its establishment of the Gregorian calendar. He referenced the Egyptians, who arose as a Republic distinct from the Orient under a similar situation as the newly formed French Republic. The Egyptians, who Romme called “the most enlightened of antiquity,” made all months equal at thirty days each.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Ignace Chappe looked towards ancient times when describing the history of telegraphs. He noted how the Roman telegraph largely inspired the French telegraph: “we still find in France the remains of some towers erected by the Romans for these communications server.”<sup>18</sup> Caesar's court used voice signals to communicate across long distances. In antiquity, maritime signals by flag were also popular: Those in antiquity used “flags to send correspondence across the sea. They did not leave us a signal codes, but there are a few traces in history of how they used them; Greek fleets carried flames.”<sup>19</sup> Both Ignace Chappe and Romme drew inspiration from antiquity due to the Enlightenment philosophy that pervaded the Revolutionary times.

Political principles and practices from antiquity also influenced the governmental structure of the young Republic. Enlightenment principles

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encouraged equality, citizenship and inalienable rights. The Legislative Assembly resembled the imperial Roman Senate. The Age of Reason encouraged the rise of scientific methodology. Its effect can be seen in the First Republic's attempts to systematize and restructure common conventions, including time, language, and communication. From July 1789, the National Assembly debated a new administrative partitioning of France to enforce national unity. Some, like Bertrand Barère, a member of the Committee of Public Safety, promoted the restructuring of administrative partitioning because that change could "remove all memories of history, all prejudice... Everything must be new in France and we want to date [time] only from today."<sup>20</sup> Romme's Republican calendar made September 22 the French New Year, and the first year would be known as 1792, the first year of the Republic. The Chappes' semaphore telegraph system was part of a similar restructuring of society—it changed the way groups communicated with one another. By examining the restructuring of the calendar and the French language system, I will demonstrate how the advent of the semaphore telegraph reflected the restructuring of the calendar and the language system in France.

### **A New Time for the New Era**

In the spirit of the Revolution, Charles-Gilbert Romme was adamant about revolutionizing the French calendar system. He served as the National Conventions president, and pushed for a new republican calendar in a report given on September 20, 1793. Romme argued that this calendar would remove all religious and royalist influences from the current calendar, would reflect the new egalitarian and transparent nature of the French government, and would push France toward adopting the decimal system.<sup>21</sup>

Romme advocated the new calendar to emulate a new state that would arise out of the Revolution. He denounced what he called the "vulgar era," hailed the new system of weights and measures based on the metric system, and focused on the clarity that the new era should provide. Romme argued for the republican calendar because the new era required effective and accurate systems of measurement: "You have undertaken one of the most important projects regarding the progress of arts and the human spirit, which can only succeed in the time of the Revolution; it is to make diversity, inconsistency, and inaccuracy of weights and measures not hamper industry or commerce, and to take a measurement that relates somehow to the earth, remains fixed, and does not vary."<sup>22</sup> He called the old system of measurement inexact, superstitious, and ignorant. Just as French citizens had been freed from the rule of the aristocracy, Romme said that they could be "freed" from the current inequality posed by the calendar. He saw the government and the revolution as a signal, where for the first time, France had a "torch of freedom that will one day enlighten all mankind."<sup>23</sup> He argued that the calendar should be independent of all opinion and religion, and should be

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based on the decimal system. In addition, he suggested a new nomenclature for the days of the “*décade*” (the equivalent of the week) to reflect attributes of industry, liberty, and the revolution. The ten days in the *décade* were called the Level, the Cap, the Cockade, the Pike, the Plow, the Compass, the Fasces, the Cannon, the Oak, and the Repose.<sup>24</sup> The introduction of this French calendric system demonstrated a break from the Ancien Regime and the Catholic Church. It contributed to the reshaping of time in France.

The advent of the Chappe semaphore also contributed to the changing conception of time in this period. When Claude Chappe requested funding for his semaphore telegraph from the Committee of Public Instruction of the French National Convention, he focused on its rapidity of transmission of messages between two posts. He emphasized the government’s need to “transmit intelligence information and orders in the quickest possible time.”<sup>25</sup> Messages sent using the semaphore could travel 255 kilometers (i.e. the distance from Paris to Lille) in one to two minutes, or 760 kilometers and 120 stations between Paris and Toulon in twelve minutes.<sup>26</sup> Deputy Joseph Lakanal, who presided with Romme on the committee evaluating the Chappe telegraph, became a stalwart advocate of the communication system after observing its speed. On July 12, 1793, Chappe demonstrated his semaphore to the Committee at Saint-Fargeau (in Northern France) and Saint-Martin-du-Terte, thirty-five kilometers away. Deputy Pierre Danou waited at the Saint-Fargeau station, and Lakanal remained at Saint-Martin-du-Terte. Danou’s message reached Lakanal in 11 minutes, and Lakanal successfully sent a reply nine minutes later.<sup>27</sup>

The new telegraphic time, which permitted almost simultaneous communication across long distances, mirrored Romme’s desire for the French Republican calendar. While Romme prepared his report on the telegraph, he also worked with scientists (including Lagrange and Monge) to create a republican calendar that would sever time and structure from the Old Régime and Christianity. Both of these processes were inspired by the rational and scientific principles of the Scientific Revolution, which arose from the Age of Enlightenment.

### **Signs and Language**

The structural reforms of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries arose as a means to unify, simplify, and rationalize the political life of the Republic.<sup>28</sup> In a similar vein, during this period, French scholars and politicians, such as the Marquis de Condorcet, searched for ways to standardize and nationalize the French language. Again, this relates to how French philosophers, linguists, and other thinkers wished to understand the intellectual operations at the base of all reasoning. It also relates to how new basic associations were central to the establishment of a new central government and Republican mentality.

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Roch-Ambroise Cucurron Siccard, a French abbé and instructor of the deaf, advocated the universalization of language. He argued that the vagaries of conventional usage were an impediment to understanding. Through a universal language, all French people would have an equal opportunity to acquire knowledge of complex French ideas. He suggested the adoption of his general mode of instruction to fix a language or attach “dissociated signs and ideas in the minds of all citizens.”<sup>29</sup> Siccard’s linguistic suggestions were important to the time period in two ways. First, they highlight the movement towards the adoption of uniform signs to facilitate clear and effective communication. Second, they demonstrate the power of language in unifying and, to a certain extent, equalizing the French population. The creation of new language systems reflected the rise of reasoning and mathematics adopted from the Enlightenment, Revolutionary notions of equality and liberty, and the nationalistic fervor to unify the people under one Republic.

Universal written language systems’ popularity continued during the period. Many French intellectuals developed a strong interest in planning and constructing nonverbal systems of communication, including telegraphs, stenographs, shorthand, and pasigraphs (in which written symbols represent concepts).<sup>30</sup> Condorcet’s project shows one the most poignant examples of the logic behind the development of a universal language. The Marquis de Condorcet, who held high office under both the Legislative Assembly and the National Convention and served as secretary of the Academy of Sciences, worked toward a universal language because he equated it with the future progress of the human spirit, and as a means to save the French populace from potential dangers in the future.<sup>31</sup> Condorcet began by applying his invented language and sign system to the sciences. In his first six *Folios*, Condorcet expounded the principles of an algebraic, general language. He called science the easiest way to form a universal language: through mathematics and algebra. Condorcet proposed symbols to represent how variables would relate, beginning his linguistic depiction of mathematics with signs that indicated introduction, closing, success and error. His mathematical approach to the design of signs reflects the importance of equality and logic during this period. In his later *Folios*, Condorcet analyzed the ways in which intelligence operates in nature and science. He extended his language to include metaphysics, linguistics, morals, and politics; however, according to Granger, a historian who studied Condorcet’s universal language system, records of these have not been found.<sup>32</sup>

The Chappe telegraph was an application of contemporary work on codes, nomenclature and formal languages. Members of small societies that studied the sciences related to humanism hoped that new linguistic projects could help bring “scientific rigor, precision, and objectivity to underdeveloped realms of human inquiry, from literature to legislation.”<sup>33</sup> The

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semaphore telegraph emphasized its logical, analytical schematic. Its roots in logic stemmed from its foundation in a numerical system. The semaphore used numbers to relay what messages were being sent when, and to relate shapes to words and phrases in a code book. Ignace Chappe remarked on the importance of science, math, and numbers in signaling systems when he wrote, "The use of numbers indicating words diminishes the number of signs needed to express each word."<sup>34</sup> Chappe praised the efficiency of using numbers with telegraphic systems. He recalled Bergstrasser, a professor at Hanau, who modified the traditional method of using unique characters by using a numeric system; this significantly increased the messaging speed.<sup>35</sup> The addition of symbolic language created more efficiency in signaling methodology.

Both Condorcet and Ignace Chappe advocated for their respective language systems partly because each of them understood the need for efficiency and accuracy in the establishment and growth of the new Republic. Condorcet focused on the benefits of simplicity in establishing a new language system when he wrote, "The purpose of the universal language does not express all possible nuances, but only those that are necessary to distinguish. We must avoid complications to seek accuracy."<sup>36</sup> Joseph De Maimieux, a German noble who emigrated to France during the Revolution, created a language system that depended on only twelve characters.<sup>37</sup> This may have been a jab at the opaque language used in the French court before the Revolution. The common language also reflected the increasing power of the common man. Ignace Chappe's goal in creating the telegraph was "not to find a language easy to learn without a dictionary...but to find the means to express many things with few signs."<sup>38</sup> Chappe also understood the importance of efficiency in communication. He expressed this by emphasizing the benefits of using an algebraic universal language for the semaphore, saying "We see from these considerations how the few signs that I have just proposed suffice for establishing a universal algebraic language, and that is how this language, once being established, could then hear it at the same time as the science and improve it, and add new signs if it seemed incomplete."<sup>39</sup> Intellectuals in France were motivated to find new, more efficient means of passing messages.

Finally, the movement to universalize language systems in France represented a movement to unite the French. Apart from the move towards reasoning and rationalization, a universal language also reflected a means in which all ideas could be shared across all classes. Ignace Chappe commended the universality of Leibniz's language. Leibniz's "language is almost universal, in that it shows combinations of numbers instead of words; and the manner of expressing these numbers is generally known, and the language can be applied to all of the words in the dictionaries." Although its symbols corresponded to an already existing language, the telegraph's translation

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and transmission of these signals supported and encouraged a universal language system, as the directeurs interpreting and relaying the signals across the country would have to understand and translate these symbols. The rise of the semaphore telegraph illustrates the broader shift in France towards universal language systems for purposes of increased logic, efficiency, and nationalism.

### **Political Implications of the Semaphore Telegraph**

The Chappe semaphore represented the stability and technological goals of the newly installed French government after the Revolution. It showed how the scientific and rational values of the Enlightenment permeated the new political structure and replaced the pre-existing symbols of royal and religious power. It also reflected the weakness and strengths of the government both during and after the French Revolution.

### **Volatile State of Political Affairs during the Revolution**

Politicians' initial hesitation to adopt the semaphore demonstrated the volatile, fearful nature of the French civilians and rising politicians during the Revolution. The French Revolution was a dynamic but bloody period. The absolute monarchy collapsed, radicals waged war in the cities and in the countryside, and citizens lived under the Reign of Terror between 1793 and 1794. France concurrently faced external threats from outside its borders. During and after the Revolution, civilians viewed language as a branch of politics. Garat and Roederer, members of the executive committee of public instruction in the National Convention, worried that the French public heard too many miscommunications. Some thought universal languages, or the spreading of language with the semaphore, were dangerous. Mercier, for example, warned in 1802 that despotic governments might try to force their language onto people who should have the right to use their national language as they wished.<sup>40</sup> Some feared that politicians used a certain language for manipulation, as it would disguise "ostensibly self-evident ethical truths associated with humans in their original, uncorrupted state."<sup>41</sup> During the Revolution, many in France were skeptical of authority, and this could be seen in the fear expressed by officials regarding the semaphore.

The civilians' hostile, violent reactions to the early semaphore also reflected the fragility of France's revolutionary political state. In 1792, the Chappes debuted their semaphore in Paris, placing their telegraph apparatus on one of the pavilions of the Étoile. A mob of hostile Parisians promptly destroyed the semaphore. When the Chappes implemented the semaphore in Belleville, again, it came down. Local citizens were suspicious. The citizens may have feared that enemy forces would intercept the semaphore message, or they may simply not have comprehended the new instrument. Regardless, they did not understand the purpose and use of the semaphore. This demonstrated the lack of transparency of the new political structure and

the instability of the novice republic. Before the semaphore could thrive in France, it needed a more stable and informative government.

### **The Rise of the Semaphore due to a Strong Political State**

The rise of the semaphore, which only a strong state could make possible, also demonstrates the economic stability of France after the Revolution. Without an economically stable state, a national telegraph would not have been possible. Before the French Revolution, the Academy of Sciences had examined many message-transmitting technologies. Some of these included the use of sound, oral signs systems, musical instruments, and binary systems.<sup>42</sup> For example, in 1783, Dom Gantry proposed to the Academy two new methods for long-distance telecommunication. Condorcet deemed these new proposals feasible and clever, and was prepared to continue with them. However, Gantry said that he needed more money and time to conduct his experiments, which the almost-bankrupt royal government could not give him. Therefore, the experiments never happened, and no system of mass communication was developed at that time.<sup>43</sup>

Funding of scientific projects required a strong government with reliable access to capital. Chappe approached the French Assembly after conducting experiments in Brûlon because he needed governmental funding to continue pursuing his project on a national level. Posts were fairly expensive to implement, estimated in 1805 to be up to 3,500 francs.<sup>44</sup> Claude Chappe initially addressed the Legislative Assembly in Paris in March, 1792. After telling them of his invention, the Assembly had the Committee of Public Instruction hear his plan. However, the Legislative Assembly ended in September 1792 without taking any action. France only made true progress toward a national semaphore system after the National Convention had assembled. A national telegraph needed the resources that a solid political structure could offer.

In addition, the semaphore needed a strong administrative system to provide physical and civil infrastructure to support the towers in place. When the semaphore telegraph was initially set up in Paris, a mob of Parisians pulled it down and demolished it. Later, when the Chappe brothers set up a device in a park in Belleville (a neighborhood in Paris), a mob assembled and burned it.<sup>45</sup> In response, Chappe sent a letter in October 1792 to the Convention asking that he be officially authorized to rebuild his telegraph in Belleville. In April, the Committee of Public Safety appointed Deputies Joseph Lakanal and Pierre Claude François Daunou to observe the stations and report on their use. This included reporting anyone who interfered with the telegraph system. On July 2, 1793, Lakanal issued a report in which he suggested that the Convention draft a bill ordering mayors of the areas in which telegraphs operated to take measures to prevent damage to the machines.<sup>46</sup> To further protect the new invention from potential mob threats, semaphore

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stations were placed near alarm bells. These alarms protected the city from attacks on the semaphore as well as attacks on other important government bodies, demonstrating the alignment of the state with the semaphore. The first station of the Landau line, for example, was located next to the national alarm bell “to call for help in the event of an attack on the Thermidorian Convention by the Paris mob.”<sup>47</sup> This governmental protection allowed the Chappe brothers to construct and maintain semaphore stations throughout France. It demonstrated that the semaphore could protect the French state if the state protected the structures.

The extension of the semaphore lines supported and followed the extension of territory controlled by the French state. Every succeeding French government built upon and augmented the size of the telegraphic network. Under the Directory, from 1795 to 1799, the Chappe brothers built lines east to Strasbourg, west to Brest, and north to Brussels. Napoleon augmented the network south to Lyon and Marseilles. As Napoleon conquered more territory, the government built new lines to incorporate that land. These new lines relayed messages from Turin, Milan, Venice, Amsterdam, and Antwerp, to name a few.<sup>48</sup> The semaphore established and maintained the French state’s ability to communicate across long distances. By installing these lines, the French Republic could govern larger territories, while unifying those in the Republic.

The government funded the semaphore telegraph in France; therefore, the government used the semaphore to augment its influence, both in the military and in establishment of the new state. Ignace Chappe, Claude’s older brother, served as an elected deputy in the Legislative Assembly in Paris, so the Chappe’s had a representative in the political world; but others also saw the potential of the semaphore. Lakanal perceived the potential role of the semaphore in building the French state and promoted the invention to the rest of the Convention. Through this political support, the Chappe semaphore received recognition and, more importantly, funding. Ignace Chappe noted that it was expensive to conduct research and even more expensive to construct and maintain the semaphores.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, funding from the newly stable state built and supported the semaphore, which in turn reinforced the French state.

### ***The Semaphore’s Relationship to French Nationalism***

I have already discussed how the semaphore language system acted as a national unifier, but the telegraph also helped nationalize the French state in other ways. The semaphore telegraph diminished the distance that had impeded effective state communication. By reducing the time it took for a message to travel from one place to another, the semaphore reinforced the internal connections of the Republic. Ignace Chappe understood this benefit of the semaphore. He noted how the telegraph likens the French citi-

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zens to neighbors, as it transmits signals quickly and utilizes a simple language.<sup>50</sup> Chappe already recognized the power of the semaphore telegraph as a unifier. In 1793, he wrote Lakanal and argued that “the establishment of the telegraph is...the best response to the public’s publicists who think that France is too large to form a Republic. The telegraph shortens distances and, in a way, brings an immense population together at a single point.”<sup>51</sup> This concept also attracted Lakanal. He urged the Convention to seriously consider funding the semaphore due to its ability to communicate over long distances and to be militarily advantageous.

### **A Symbolic Unifier**

In addition to unifying the state on a practical level by accelerating long-distance communication, the semaphore also symbolically resembled the organizational and nationalistic feats of the Republic. The organization of the semaphore mirrored the organization of the larger state. The semaphore had a strict and tightly organized structure, in which Chappe ordered the directors to ensure that they were sufficiently doing their job. Chappe acted as the chief of the semaphore system, under the Emperor. Operation of the semaphore machine involved a hierarchy of smaller, bureaucratically organized parts. As I described in the Claude Chappe Semaphore section, there were directeurs, who acted as administrators of stationnaires and their regulateurs. The stationnaires, or signalmen, staffed the semaphore towers and physically relayed each message. The French political system had been overhauled from an aristocracy, in which a king and the elite ruled, to a Republic with a bureaucracy. New branches of government such as the Directory represented the French people at a political level. Rather than have only one element in charge of the semaphore (like how the aristocracy had been in charge of France), the semaphore system had different levels that worked together to accomplish a common goal. The semaphore’s bureaucratic nature resembled the bureaucratic aspect of the Republic. Both systems used a bureaucratic structure. Thus, the organization of the semaphore mirrored the bureaucratic nature of the new Republic.

The imagery and placement of the semaphore also served to unify the French people by emphasizing the progress of the Republic. The semaphore was placed atop monumental and high-standing structures, partly out of utility, and partly to send a broader message of national pride to the people of France and to other European countries. For example, the government installed the semaphore on the roofs of the Tuileries, the National Palace, and the Louvre, each of which had national significance.<sup>52</sup> German scholar and author of the *Synthématographie*, Bergstrasser, understood the symbolic function of the telegraph when he said, “I fear that the French use their telegraph for nothing other than a political goal; it is used to entertain the Parisians, who, their eyes forever riveted to the machine, say, ‘It’s working, it’s

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not working.’ They take advantage of this to attract the attention of Europe and so to imperceptibly attain their goal.”<sup>53</sup> In addition, when demonstrating the semaphore, the Chappe brothers often used France’s three colors: red, white and blue.<sup>54</sup> Linking the national colors to the new French invention reinforced the attachment of the optical semaphore to the French state. By doing so, it connected the pride of the new state to the pride of the new invention. Thus, the semaphore acted as a political tool to broadcast a larger message to Europe: France was scientifically, economically, and politically successful.

### **The Power of the Semaphore**

Effective communication confers military power. The French semaphore was funded and implemented in a military context. The government supported it based on anticipation of how useful it would be in battle, and its first messages were relayed during times of war. As a result of the semaphore’s political and military power, the French government controlled its use. France, which had just undergone a mass Revolution that redefined order and livelihood, needed to establish a strong government to emerge as a unified state. In addition, France faced threats from beyond its borders, as countries prepared to attack France at a time when it was weak. Despite the new government’s praise of equality, the French government monopolized the use of the semaphore telegraph. Romme clarified this when he acknowledged how the revolution created a situation in which the people of France would live up to the virtues of the Republic. He said, the revolution “instills republican virtues [in the French] every day.”<sup>55</sup> He understood that the new republic was built on the basis of governmental control, and French civilians were supposed to support and believe in the new system. The strength and exclusivity of state control reflected the military rigidity of contemporary France.

### **Control and War**

Beset by enemies both within and beyond its borders, the French government adopted the semaphore telegraph to speed military communication and gain a strategic military advantage. During the French Revolution, the National Convention needed rapid communication with the leaders who were attempting to subdue the countryside and the generals who were defending the borders, some of whom the Convention did not fully trust.<sup>56</sup> After the Revolution, Napoleon, encircled by attackers, recognized the military and political advantage of the semaphore and used it extensively for both military and political purposes. He communicated frequently with his brother in law, Prince Camille Borghèse, spouse of Pauline Bonaparte, governor general of Turin, and with his son viceroy, Prince Eugène. The Emperor often used the semaphore telegraph for military messaging. When he was in

Milan, and an Austrian offensive threatened the French border, the military used the telegraph to quickly warn him and obtain orders.<sup>57</sup> On March 5, 1809, Chappe wrote to the directors of Lyon and Turin, “the Emperor has ordered that the Paris Milan [line] is put in operation on the field,” and Napoleon wrote Eugene telling him of this new placement of the telegraph.<sup>58</sup> Bonaparte placed lines at places that he considered convenient and extended them into territories he conquered. Using the telegraph, Napoleon rallied his generals, directed the movement of armies, and announced victories. This conferred a strategic advantage against enemy nations which did not yet have a centralized, speedy communications network. By transmitting messages regarding Napoleon’s campaign that were to be communicated to the larger republic, the telegraph also maintained the morale of the empire, acting as a state-wide secretary.<sup>59</sup> The nature of telegraphic communication in France was imperial and martial.<sup>60</sup> In this sense, then, it reflected the importance of the military in the new Republic.

The French government installed, operated, and monopolized the use of the semaphore telegraph due to the military and political power it conferred. As Lubrano understood, “Communication is the lifeblood of societies. The way we choose to interact is an integral element of the way we structure our society, and an essential element in affecting control.”<sup>61</sup> The new French government controlled this form of information processing to maintain military security and to reinforce its general authority over French society. The French government also adopted unitary control so as to avoid the problems that could arise if multiple institutions owned the telegraph.

The French government owned and controlled all aspects of the semaphore. Administration of the telegraph was placed initially under the authority of Director General of Bridges and Roads, and then, in 1809, Minister of the Interior. Just before Napoleon entered into war with Russia, he put Abraham Chappe on his staff to direct the use of the telegraph for military purposes. The engineering division of the war ministry controlled telegraph administration, and the emperor was at the forefront of this ministry. All telegraphic messages were to be approved by Napoleon himself. When the Emperor could not review proposed telegraphs (if he was away on campaign), he authorized his Arch-chancellor Cambacérès to approve the transmission of signals from the ministers of war, of finance, of the treasury, of the Marine, and of the police. The French government also determined where the semaphore line should be placed: “When the government wanted to make the telegraph as useful as possible, it would make a general map of the placement of telegraphs, which would be in all county departments to serve administrative, military, marine, and at time commercial correspondence.”<sup>62</sup> The government, therefore, controlled telegraphic communication.

Because the semaphore was so closely aligned with the govern-

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ment, and because its messages could travel so far, regulators of the semaphore focused strongly on keeping its messages secure and within the French borders. The semaphore had strict security standards and regulations. While advocating the telegraph to the Convention, Lakanal emphasized the fact that transmitted messages would remain secret. Only the men in charge of the telegraphs would know the vocabulary of the signs, and this vocabulary would remain confidential with them. Discipline was severe and the government checked on employees frequently.<sup>63</sup> The emperor required those who were administering the telegraphs to be “highly organized, competent... conscientious and motivated, because any failure of a subordinate obviously had consequences for the line.”<sup>64</sup> The administration was concerned about maintaining the secrecy of the messages because the messages were political or military in nature. Therefore, the messages stayed within the French political realm.

The stringent control of the semaphore helps explain why the government was the sole user of the device. As the semaphore became increasingly popular amongst the French citizenry, the government received suggestions that the semaphore should be used for commercial purposes. The government opposed these suggestions, as it was concerned about the dangers of unrestricted access. The Chamber of Deputies voted in spring of 1837 to forbid anyone but the government from sending information from one place to another using the telegraphic semaphore. They also decided to punish any person or persons transmitting telegraphic signals without government authorization.<sup>65</sup> Those using clandestine telegraphs were fined or arrested. In July 1847, the Minister of the Interior, Locove-Laplagne declared in the Chamber of Deputies, “The telegraph must be a political instrument, not a commercial instrument.”<sup>66</sup> This control reflected the strictly political nature of the semaphore, and the controlling nature of the French government in military correspondence.

### **The Semaphore’s Role in the Market**

The government’s opposition to a privatized semaphore also reflected the state’s opposition to capitalism. Romme believed that if industries could privatize the telegraph, “the lines would fall into the hands of parties...of the richest speculators who would remove any chance of success from the poor.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, Romme viewed French state control of the semaphore as protective of the common people, rather than exclusionary. Some may have opposed a commercialized system because that would undermine their Revolutionary efforts to equalize the common man (it might impose a wealth-based hierarchy). In addition, the French associated the control of information with the military. Because the government used the telegraph for military communication, it may have made little sense to them to commercialize the telegraph—the government would not commercialize

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other parts of the military, because that would give the private sector leverage over the government. In France, the public was not allowed to use the telegraph until November of 1850, and official dispatches still had priority. The French government monopolized the telegraph, and did not allow others to commercialize it even when budget cuts began to jeopardize its operation.<sup>68</sup>

The story of Ferrier and his commercial telegraph provides an example of the anti-capitalistic nature of the French state. In 1832, Alexandre Ferrier launched a subscription to constitute the capital of a private telegraph company intended to link the main European cities.<sup>69</sup> He envisioned a system that would connect the markets and relay stock market information quickly. The President of the Council and Minister of the Interior, Caimir-Perier, supported Ferrier along with several other deputies. However, in June 1833, the French administration withdrew its support for the proposal and instead voted for a telegraphic monopoly by the government.<sup>70</sup> This insistence on state monopoly demonstrates the French suspicion of capitalistic encroachment. There was also concern that additional traffic in the lines transmitting telegraphs would disrupt essential state communications. The government wanted to ensure, that its messages had priority. To maintain equality across sectors and to ensure governmental priorities, the telegraph remained under state control.

### **A Taste of Britain**

Due to the constraints of this paper, I do not have enough space for a comprehensive comparison of the semaphore system in France to that in Britain. However, I would like to note certain features of the telegraph system in Britain, particularly those relating to the interconnectedness of the British telegraph with the British market, to better understand how else the semaphore system could have been implemented in France, and why it was not implemented the same way in both countries.

The French government's focus on state control can be particularly seen when comparing the use of the semaphore in France (government-implemented, government-used only) to the use of the semaphore in Britain (government and market-implemented and used). Most European telegraph systems were run by a state monopoly, as the telegraph was considered to be militarily and politically important. In England, the Admiralty—the branch of the British government that controlled the Navy—built and funded the first semaphore telegraph in response to wartime needs. However, the British government did not prevent rising British industry from developing and using such systems later. The outbreak of war and news of the Chappe telegraph inspired amateurs to invent their own telegraphic systems. The British developed their version of the telegraph after observing the way the French were communicating and after obtaining drawings of the Chappe telegraph.

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After receiving reports of the French telegraph, in 1795, Lord George Murray and John Gamble proposed methods to the Admiralty to build visual telegraph systems.<sup>71</sup> Like the Chappe brothers, Gamble understood that the telegraph should transmit messages using the clearest signaling devices possible, should not be prone to errors, and should be able to use concurrent scientific discoveries and principles. The Admiralty authorized construction of a semaphore system and used it for wartime communications.

However, in contrast to the French, the British government did not prohibit commercial use of the telegraph and did not prevent private industries from building their own systems. This was consistent with British culture. British subjects were generally suspicious of the state and centralization. They distrusted “state competence to do profitable work.”<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, if private industries implemented their own telegraph systems, those industries had to pay for them. This reduced the need for governmental financial assistance. It also allowed the development of multiple telecommunication systems.<sup>73</sup> In Britain, merchants, traders, and those involved in the stock market predominantly used the telegraph system. Kieve, who cited the BPP, said that most users were “stockbrokers [and] mining agents...racing and betting men, and others who were engaged in business.”<sup>74</sup> When John Gamble, Chaplain on the Staff of the King, addressed the Duke of York and Albany, the Prince Bishop of Osnaburgh, and other political figures about his observations on telegraphic experiments, he suggested several new modes of telegraphic use, and highlighted the importance of distant communication.<sup>75</sup> While the Admiralty tended to reject suggestions for other telegraphic means because it had already adopted a Claude Chappe semaphore system, private industry was free to experiment with other methods.<sup>76</sup>

One of the founders of the French semaphore noted the advantages of the English system. When comparing the use of the French semaphore to telegraphic communication in other countries, Ignace Chappe said, “It is not necessary to use the effects of coal smoke to explain the futility of such a machine.”<sup>77</sup> Chappe noted the efficiency of England’s form of market development as he advocated for opening the French semaphore telegraph to the commercial realm. Chappe emphasized the industrial success of England, and noted how the French had been trying “in vain for thirty years to make a good telegraph” when England accomplished it quickly with the help of industries.<sup>78</sup> Based on what England had done, Chappe encouraged expansion of the French semaphore system into the commercial realm.

England did worry a bit over its semaphore’s deep connections with industries. In 1854, public control of the telegraph system became a statewide debate. The *Quarterly Review*, a journal known for its intellectual character, asked why the Electric Telegraph Company should virtually possess a monopoly of telegraphic communication in Britain, positing that news should not rely solely on one company without strict government

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surveillance.<sup>79</sup> John Lewis Ricardo--Chairman of the North Staffordshire Railway, founder of the Electric Telegraph Company, and staunch advocate for free trade--argued that the British telegraph should shift to the public enterprise. He saw the telegraph as "an engine of diplomacy, so important an aid to civil and military administration, so efficient a service to trade and commerce."<sup>80</sup> By the 1840s, the British government increasingly regulated public utilities, and by 1868, according to Kieve, public opinion tended to believe that state intervention would be beneficial to nearly all great enterprises," including the telegraph.<sup>81</sup> There were advantages as well as disadvantages to private use of the telegraph in Britain. However, the differences in culture and values between Britain and France tend to explain the contrast between their respective use and development of the telegraph. Generally, Britain had a free-market economy and advocated a separation of the market and the state. The Republic was building a state, associated the semaphore with military goals, and was suspicious of capitalism, so the state wanted to control the semaphore. Because the British telegraph was used for economic goals, the telegraph was originally funded by the government, but grew in the economic sector.

### Conclusion

Ultimately, the optical semaphore system in France came to an end in the late 1840s. The optical telegraph had inherent limitations. Bad weather, including wind, storms, and fog, impeded vision and prevented operation of the system. People also had difficulty operating the semaphore at night in the dark. Chappe understood this and put lanterns on the arms of some telegraphs, including the Montmartre station and the station "that is elevated on the *Hôtel de l'Administrative* in Paris."<sup>82</sup> However, telegraphic operations at night were still prone to error.<sup>82</sup> The system was also vulnerable to the human error of each signalman on the line. When the electric telegraph became available, it offered substantial advantages: it could operate regardless of darkness and weather, it had greater speed of transmission, and it had fewer opportunities for human error. The electrical telegraph was introduced in the 1830s and eventually supplanted the optical telegraph.

Although the electronic telegraph ultimately replaced the Claude Chappe semaphore, the creation and implementation of the optical telegraph illustrate the values of the French nation-state after the French Revolution. With the establishment of a new Republic, politicians, including Romme and Condorcet, focused on re-inventing basic elements of measurement to represent the new state. Many of these measurement systems continued through Napoleon's Empire. The restructured systems, including that of the semaphore, reflected the continuation of principles from the Age of Reason through the Revolution and into the nineteenth century.

The implementation and operation of the semaphore also gave

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military and political strength to the emerging French state. The process demonstrated the necessity of a strong government to fund, construct and protect semaphore lines throughout the nation; the national government funded the system and introduced laws to protect it from harm. The new semaphore system then strengthened the Republic, and later, the Empire. The system enabled speedy and accurate military and political communication and increased nationalistic sentiment. It allowed the French to prevail against encircling enemies. The French government monopolized the semaphore telegraph because it transmitted messages relating to political or military affairs. The Claude Chappe semaphore both absorbed and demonstrated the dynamic French bureaucracy and Empire; it also contributed to and highlighted other technological and structural innovations, including formal language systems and the Republican calendar. In contrast to the English, the French restricted commercial access to the semaphore because of the French emphasis on centralized government and suspicion of capitalism. Although it was ultimately superseded, the advent of the Chappe semaphore rested upon a combination of social, technical, and intellectual factors that reflected the values of the emerging French Republic and reinforced the continued existence of the French nation.

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## ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup>Canot, Gossuin, Cambon and Granet were members of the Committee of Public Safety

<sup>2</sup>*Le moniteur universel*, 1 and 2 September 1794. Translation by myself.

<sup>3</sup>In 1684, the English scientist Robert Hooke presented the first technical description of a device for transmitting signals by semaphore in his work, "Method for making your thoughts known far away." (Gerspach, 1860, 48). He also described the string telephone, arguing that it was a way to transmit sound over a long distance. In 1690, French physicist Guillaume Amontons conducted an experiment on semaphoric communication in the Luxembourg Gardens. Scientists conducted several experiments in the eighteenth century; however, none of the experiments led to an effective long-term device for long-distance communication.

<sup>4</sup>Headrick, Daniel R. *When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the age of Reason and Revolution, 1700-1850*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 195.

<sup>5</sup>Dilhac, J.M. *The Telegraph of Claude Chappe—An Optical Telecommunication Network for the XVIIIth Century*, Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Toulouse, accessed February 2, 2013. <http://www.ieeeeghn.org/wiki/images/1/17/Dilhac.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>Headrick, 188.

<sup>7</sup>The Ancien Régime was the aristocratic, social and political system that lasted in France from the 15th through the later 18th century, when it was overthrown by the French Revolution and the First Republic was founded.

<sup>8</sup>Chappe, Ignace-Urbain-Jean. *Historie de la télégraphie*. Par M. Chappe L'ainé. 1840, Au Mans: C. Richelet. xii. Translation by myself.

<sup>9</sup>Koenig, Duane. "Telegraphs and Telegrams in Revolutionary France." *In The Scientific Monthly*. Vol. 59 No. 6. December, 1944. 431.

<sup>10</sup>Koenig, 432.

<sup>11</sup>Chappe, 45.

<sup>12</sup>They could have used cannons, drums, trumpets, bells, gongs, clocks or a mixture of those.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. 75.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. 195.

<sup>15</sup>Headrick, 196.

"Procès verbal du poste de Bordeaux Juin 1837," last modified September 25, 2012, <http://www.claudechappe.fr/document-proces.php>.

<sup>16</sup>Headrick, 198.

<sup>17</sup>Romme G. *Rapport sur l'ère de la République. Convention Nationale*, 20 Septembre 1793, 7. Translation by myself.

<sup>18</sup>Chappe, 29.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. 79.

<sup>20</sup>Ozouf, Mona. "La Révolution et la Perception de l'espace national" in *L'École de la France, essais sur la Révolution, l'utopie et l'enseignement*. Paris, 1984: 33, Translation by myself.

<sup>21</sup>The French government had advocated the base-ten system in its push toward the metric system, too.

<sup>22</sup>Romme, 1.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, 10.

<sup>25</sup>Lubrano, Annteresa, *The Telegraph: How Technology Innovation Caused Social Change*. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 10.

<sup>26</sup>Headrick, 197.

<sup>27</sup>Koenig, 433.

<sup>28</sup>By structural reforms, I am referring to the reforms of time, space, and measurement.

<sup>29</sup>Rosenfeld, Sophia, *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2001), 141.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, 199.

<sup>31</sup>Condorcet, *Language universelle et formation des sciences*. 197. Translation by myself.

<sup>32</sup>Granger, Gilles-Gaston, "Language universelle et formation des sciences, Un fragment inédit



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de Condorcet” in *Revue d’histoire des sciences*, Volume 7, Nom. 3. (1959), 195.

<sup>33</sup>Rosenfeld, 209.

<sup>34</sup>Chappe, 137.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, 57.

<sup>36</sup>Condorcet, 205.

<sup>37</sup>“Pasigraphie. Cours en douze séances, par l’inventeur de ce nouvel Art.” 1798. Archives de l’Institut de France. An advertisement for a course in De Maimieux’s pasigraphie. The ad shows the twelve characters that make up this system.

<sup>38</sup>Chappe, 136.

<sup>39</sup>Condorcet 214.

<sup>40</sup>Rosenfeld, 225.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, 243.

<sup>42</sup>Chappe 63.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. 66.

<sup>44</sup>Descotes-Genon, Jean. *Le Télégraphe Aérien Chappe Au Dessus Des Alpes En Chartreuse Et à Miribel-les-echelles*, 1806-1814, (Abbaye de la Rochette: Solaro, 1998), 11.

<sup>45</sup>Koenig, 431

<sup>46</sup>Lakanal, Joseph. *Rapport Sur le Télégraphe*. July 2, 1793.

<sup>47</sup>Koenig, 434

<sup>48</sup>Descotes-Genon, 36-54.

<sup>49</sup>Chappe, 107.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid, 142

<sup>51</sup>Headerick, 198.

<sup>52</sup>Chappe, 56. All of these buildings were significant structures in the Old Regime that were converted to structures for the people. The Louvre had been a palace but turned into a national museum during the French Revolution in 1791, when the Assembly declared it to be a museum to host the monuments of the sciences and arts. The Tuileries served as the home to the Constituent Assembly and later the National Convention. When Napoleon rose to power, he made the Tuileries the imperial palace.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, 148.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid, 155.

<sup>55</sup>Romme, 2.

<sup>56</sup>Headerick, 197.

<sup>57</sup>Descotes-Genon, 26. Translation by myself.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, 27.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid, 42.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid, 25.

<sup>61</sup>Lubrano, 30.

<sup>62</sup>Chappe, 133. A note on his introduction, discussing commercial correspondence. In the introduction of his book, Ignace Chappe urged his readers to adopt the semaphore telegraph for commercial purposes. Therefore, he may have included this reference to commercial use to support his argument. It should be clarified, though, that the semaphore telegraph in France was not (or rarely) used for commercial purposes during Chappe’s time.

<sup>63</sup>Descotes-Genon, 16.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid, 15.

<sup>65</sup>Koenig, 346

<sup>66</sup>Lubrano 99.

<sup>67</sup>J-M Portalis, Chamber of Deputies, February 28 1837, Parliamentary Archives, vol 107. (Paris, 1837)

<sup>68</sup>When government budget cuts began to jeopardize the semaphore network, Claude Chappe suggested that the network increase its revenue by transmitting news dispatches, announcing ships’ arrivals and departures, relaying messages to and from the stock exchange, and disseminating other public information. In the introduction of his book, Ignace Chappe urges his readers to commercialize the telegraph. The government, though, rejected these commercial

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pursuits.

<sup>69</sup>Ferrier, Alexandre. *Etablissement de télégraphes publics de jour et de nuit*, Paris: 1832.

<sup>70</sup>Manuscript note: Minister of the Interior's office on breaking off negotiations, August 4, 1833: *Archives Nationales*, F90-1456.

<sup>71</sup>Gamble, John. *Observations on Telegraphic Experiments or the different modes which have been, or may be adopted for the purpose of distant communication*, 1795.

<sup>72</sup>*The Economist*, Vol 26, 11 April 1868, 412.

<sup>73</sup>Lubrano, 99.

<sup>74</sup>Kieve, 9.

<sup>75</sup>Gamble, 1795.

<sup>76</sup>Kieve, 9.

<sup>77</sup>Chappe, 171.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid*, 173.

<sup>79</sup>Kieve, 119.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid*, 121.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid*, 145.

<sup>82</sup>Chappe, 121. The italicized words are not translated because an Hôtel in Paris does not have a direct translation. It is often a governmental building of some sort.

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## AUTHORS

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