The Ozark Historical Review

Volume 51

Department of History
J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences
University of Arkansas

2024

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Volume 51

Published annually by the Department of History
J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences
University of Arkansas
2024

ISSN 2325-4211 (ONLINE)

ISSN 2325-4238 (PRINT)

The Ozark Historical Review
Volume 51, Spring 2024

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Into the Canebrakes: Arkansas and the NAACP's Campaign for a Federal Anti-Lynching Law

MARY CLAIRE DURR

Racial tensions in the United States were high following World War I. Homebound soldiers faced a profoundly changed world. Black veterans felt the country owed them a debt for their service, while white Americans feared the integration of society they could sense on the horizon. The Great Migration and competition over jobs further shaped the nation during this period, as did the increasingly unreliable nature of the cotton economy. As race relations worsened and violence driven by racism increased, various groups intensified their efforts to secure freedom and safety for Black Americans. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples, or the NAACP, began to scout out cases they could employ in the fight to enshrine federal protections against racial terrorism. Arkansas was the perfect opportunity for this venture, as the 1919 Elaine Massacre and the 1921 lynching of Henry Lowery exemplified the brutal violence African Americans faced at all levels in the state. Due to the aggressive reaction of white Southerners to Black collective action and possible economic equality, the NAACP harnessed specific instances of racial violence to create stronger civil rights laws through political actors like William Pickens.

Around 1910, a flux of African Americans began leaving southern states for the Midwest, East Coast, and California.[1] Several factors influenced this decision. Most acute was the antagonism and violence from Southern whites, which became increasingly intense following the war in 1919. Conflicts related to the availability of fertile soil drove some of the earliest migrants out of Arkansas, but as national priorities shifted towards the oncoming conflict, the "stream that had previously been a steady leak turned into a torrential flood."[2] Black Americans,

Mary Claire Durr is a M.A. student in history at the University of Arkansas. She graduated from the University of Arkansas with a B.A. in History and in English. Her research focuses on the queer experience in the South. She produced a senior honors thesis on the history of drag in Arkansas and her M.A. thesis will examine lesbian and women-led communes in the Ozarks.

[1] Michael K. Honey, *Sharecropper's Troubadour: John L. Handcox, the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, and the African American Song Tradition* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 33-35.

[2] Donald Holley, "Leaving the Land of Opportunity: Arkansas and the Great Migration," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2005), 247.

relying on connections they had created during the immediate emigration from the South following Emancipation, moved in massive numbers.[3] In Arkansas, Black emigrants made up "as much as a third of the statewide population [of African Americans] in the 1940s and 1950s, and almost as much again in the 1970s."[4] The need for industrial labor during WWI and WWII, combined with the cessation of European immigration, meant that, for the first time, African Americans could find jobs in large numbers outside the South. As a result, white and Black Arkansans alike realized that the conditions were right for thousands to vote with their feet and find better opportunities elsewhere.[5]

Beyond the lure of Northern factory wages and better race relations, push factors further aggravated living conditions in the South. While the region had never been considered a particularly safe place for African Americans, the turn of the century brought with it a new set of triumphs and challenges. As thousands left the South for new opportunities, plantations were left with fewer workers to harvest the crops. For the first time, tenant farmers had the upper hand in the planter/sharecropper power dynamic. Fewer laborers meant better collective bargaining power as planters scrambled to hire enough people to tend to their land. High demand for cotton should have raised wages as the price per bail went up, but Southern elites relied on traditional farming practices to divest their workers of their money. Through refusing to keep written accounts, enshrining predatory pay practices, charging croppers with exorbitant debt from advanced credit, and resorting to violence when nothing else worked, white planters kept their grip on the social and economic pulse of the South.[6]

But after World War I, African Americans withheld their labor for better pay/conditions and began to make "broad demands that challenged planters' control over their lives."[7] The influx of cash wrought from better cotton prices and worker's demand for fair wages allowed, for some Black Southerners, the purchase of luxury goods (such as cars) and the opportunity for women to refuse domestic jobs and instead stay at home.[8] In a dangerous turn of events, however, Southern whites were suddenly confronted with the reality that African Americans were able to exert control over their private and economic lives in visibly overt ways.

To make matters worse, the Ku Klux Klan enjoyed a second iteration due to wartime fears of change. In 1915, the Second Klan was founded in Georgia. Southern author W.J. Cash detailed the priorities of this revitalized group in his book, *The Mind of the South*. He pointed to its "100 percent Americanism," which emphasized that the Klan was "anti-Negro, anti-Alien, anti-Red, anti-Catholic,

[3] Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 535.

[4] Holley, "Leaving the Land," 249.

[5] Hahn, *A Nation*, 537.

[6] Jeannie Whayne, *Delta Empire: Lee Wilson and the Transformation of Agriculture in the New South* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2011), 51.

[7] Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, *American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 43.

[8] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 44.

anti-Jew…vastly moral, [and] militantly Protestant."[9] In other words, they were decidedly at odds with anything that was not white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. Even incoming immigrants who may now be perceived as white, (Italians, Eastern Europeans, etc.) were subject to the same prejudice and racial violence as African Americans. The violence that had already been enshrined as a way to deal with non-compliant Blacks was reignited in a new wave of hate that threatened to engulf anyone who did not fit the standards of white supremacy.

But white Southerners were not the only ones that felt called to action during this period. Due to both those who fought and those who supported them from home, the war effort emphasized in the consciousness of Black Americans a renewed drive for freedom and equality. As they came home, they felt it was only right that their sacrifices during the war ensured safety and prosperity for themselves and their families.[10] WWI had been billeted as a war to ensure democracy; the Black Americans who fought in it believed that surely that cause must be won on the home front too. Onlookers on the domestic front heard from publications like the NAACP's *Crisis* the discrimination Black Americans faced abroad, but they also obtained information about their "troops' military achievements…[and] the anti-colonial movements that were sweeping Africa."[11] In many ways, this dissemination of knowledge led to more Southerners organizing. Even if they were not directly involved in the NAACP due to choice or distance, "fraternal orders, churches, and kin networks yoked the countryside to towns," emphasizing to community members that such organizations existed for the securement of their prosperity.

When Marcus Garvey entered the picture, involvement in fraternal and social organizations reached new heights. Judged by historian Steven Hahn as "the largest and most powerful pan-African movement the world has seen," Garveyism united the various factions of Black racial activists in his message.[12] Garvey's group, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), supported the religious roots of African American activism, fused his meetings with the rituals and traditions of the Negro lodge, and supported African repatriation. By appealing to a wide array of Black Americans, Garvey's work set off the creation of hundreds of Garvey Clubs, the informal name for the various chapters of the UNIA. As he infused Christianity and quasi-militarism, he even became renowned as a "Black Moses." The popularity of Marcus Garvey thus aggregated in the South, a region known for its investment in both areas. In fact, more than 80 percent of the 400 UNIA chapters were found in rural Southern

[9] W.J. Cash. *The Mind of the South* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1941), 337.

[10] Cherisse Jones-Branch, "'Fighting, Protesting, and Organizing': African Americans in World War I Arkansas," in *The War at Home: Perspectives on the Arkansas Experience during World War I*, ed. Mark K. Christ (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2020): 83–102.

[11] Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, "African American Struggles for Citizenship in the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas in the Age of Jim Crow," *Radical History Review*, no. 55 (1993): 33–51.

[12] Hahn, *A Nation*, 540.

locales, like in the Arkansas towns of Blytheville, Cotton Plant, Earl, and Hughes. This terrified planters, who were aware that lodges were historically a place for civil and political activism for African Americans. Nothing good, they felt, could come of educated, worldly congregations of Blacks.[13]

In fact, on August 16, 1917, only months into U.S. involvement in the war, Mississippi Senator James Vardaman spoke to the issue on the Senate floor. His view was that Black patriotism was a threat to the United States, since if the country were to "impress the negro with the fact that he is defending the flag, inflate his untutored soul with military airs, teach him that it is his duty to keep the emblem of the Nation flying triumphantly in the air," then, "it is but a short step to the conclusion that his political rights must be respected."[14]

Vardaman and those like him saw the writing on the wall, and they were not happy about it. Only eleven days after the armistice was called for in November, a black veteran named Charles Lewis was lynched in Kentucky. Months later in Arkansas, two more black veterans (Clinton Briggs and Frank Livingston) were murdered as well.[15] Lewis was accused of robbery while in uniform. Livingston was accused of murdering his employers. Briggs simply refused to step off the sidewalk to accommodate a white woman walking in the opposite direction. All were brutally attacked by a mob of men; none received justice. While their stories are not unique, they do exemplify how lynching became the end-all solution for any slight (real or perceived) white Southerners experienced from their Black neighbors.

There was no shortage of work to be done concerning Black/White relations. According to the NAACP's website, a race riot in Springfield, MO became the "final tipping point that led to" the NAACP's creation.[16] From its conception in 1909, NAACP leadership realized that "eruptions of anti-black violence–particularly lynching" would not end without a sustained effort to change public opinion. The organization took various actions to fuel the anti-lynching movement. W.E.B. Du Bois employed the NAACP's newspaper, *The Crisis*, to combat lynching, perhaps most infamously with a photo essay called "The Waco Horror," which highlighted the grievous torture and murder of seventeen-year-old Jesse Washington. In 1919, the NAACP published a statistical study detailing lynching in the U.S. from 1889-1919. From 1920 to 1938, the NAACP even hung a flag from their national headquarters that accurately read "A man was lynched yesterday" (there would not be a full year without a recorded lynching until 1952). These actions were all vital in changing the cultural landscape of the United States. In each instance, an end to racial violence and the procurement of equality for all Americans were at the forefront of the charge.

Although it failed, the first federal Anti-Lynching Bill introduced by a white individual demonstrates the degree to which the NAACP campaigned against

[13] Hahn, *A Nation*, 540; Honey, *Sharecropper's Troubadour*, 58.

[14] Equal Justice Initiative, "Lynching in America: Targeting Black Veterans," 2017, p. 25, https://eji.org/reports/targeting-black-veterans.

[15] EJI, "Lynching in America," 28-30.

[16] "Our History," The National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples, accessed December 10, 2023, https://naacp.org/about/our-history.

lynching. Leonidas Dyer of Missouri introduced that Anti-Lynching Bill, or the Dyer Bill, in 1918 as a response to racial violence in his city of St. Louis. Dyer had a largely Black constituency there, many of whom had likely immigrated to the area during the Great Migration. But following consecutive race riots in May and July of 1917, St. Louis suddenly seemed to be too much like the very places from which Black Southerners had fled. As in many other cases, the mob attacks of May and July stemmed from competition over jobs. Dyer, disgusted by what he had seen, presented the bill to Congress in April of the next year. Although it initially passed by a fair margin in the House of Representatives (230-119) in 1922, the bill floundered on the Senate floor due to Southern filibusters. Much of the same rhetoric from the Civil War reappeared in the case of the Dyer Bill; senators claimed that it was up to each state to choose their response to lynching, and besides, lynching was the preferred punishment for those who dared to fraternize with white women. Neither the NAACP nor Dyer backed down. They instead redoubled their efforts by sending letters to prominent officials, distributing pamphlets, and releasing memorandums that emphasized the horror lynching victims experienced.

However, the most tangible differences in the lives of African Americans were made due to public outcry following the Elaine Massacre and the lynching of Henry Lowery, both of which received international attention. Like Lowery's murder, the massacre in Elaine, Arkansas (Phillips County) began due to white fears of Black collective action and Black demands for fair prices concerning their labor.[17] African Americans in Elaine joined the Progressive Farmers and Household Union of America, founded in Arkansas by Robert Lee Hill, which functioned as a "cooperative for selling their cotton to the highest bidder."[18] The PFHUA members behaved in ways common to fraternal orders. They "identified themselves with secret handshakes and passwords," and were more than aware of what was at stake. Their constitution ended with the pledge, "We Battle for the Rights of Our Race; In Union is Strength." This group concerned the white residents of Elaine for many reasons. Black residents already outnumbered whites ten to one there, a figure often cited as being one of the earliest indicators of the pressure cooker that was Phillips County. Nationwide, that "red summer" of 1919 (named for the blood that ran through American streets) saw "employers respond with fierce repression" to a wave of strikes and unions demanding better pay. Moreover, wartime needs for uniforms and clothing "jumped the price of cotton from 7 cents a pound in 1914…to 43 cents by the summer of 1919," further deteriorating the relationship between whites and blacks.[19]

[17] Jeannie Whayne, "Henry Lowery Lynching: A Legacy of the Elaine Massacre?" in Michael Pierce and Calvin White, eds., *Race, Labor, and Violence in the Delta: Essays to Mark the Centennial of the Elaine Massacre* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2022), 65-80.

[18] Honey, Troubadour, 35

[19] Honey, Troubadour, 34.

While the increased value of cotton worked well for the wealthy planter class, the mostly Black populace that processed the crop found themselves in the midst of "virulent, racial violence." Sharecropping was a system that both workers and planters were malcontent with.[20] While planters were upset at having to pay for labor they previously exploited for free, Black sharecroppers felt frustrated at their lack of social mobility. Land was expensive, and planters were often unable to garnish wages—that is, if they decided to pay their workers fairly. Since literacy had been outlawed for Black Americans before the Civil War, few freedmen were able to read, leaving them vulnerable to fraud.

The passing of Black Codes further embittered race relations. By 1880, most state legislatures in the South had made it illegal for a tenant farmer or sharecropper to "leave the employment of the planter for whom he worked if he owed a debt."[21] Those that left were liable to be captured and forced to return by local constables, leading to the debt peonage system. Thus, conditions were ripe for immigration to the North; however, as Black Americans joined unions in various industries, brutal clashes over labor commenced. Employers demonstrated the degree to which they were willing to play whites against blacks to destroy any threat to their economic supremacy.

African Americans still in the Southern states were not better off. Poor whites found it impossible to own land, and difficult to rent it, as most of the tenant farms housed only Black Southerners. In Phillips County, like most of the South, planters "preferred" Black labor because it was cheaper than white labor.[22] Planters also found Black sharecroppers easier to control. Besides the indebtedness generated by the sharecropping system, the legal and political system was designed to subjugate African Americans. Furthermore, whites used terrorism to keep African Americans down. The Klan had reestablished itself only four years earlier, growing during wartime because of "100 Percent Americanism" and the violently racist 1915 film, *The Birth of a Nation*. As in every other iteration of the group, they utilized white supremacy to suppress whoever they felt was a threat to the status quo.[23] Thus, it was no surprise when terror came to Elaine, nor was it a surprise when Lowery was lynched almost a year later. Both situations were precipitated by intense, bloody conflict, mostly over fair labor practices and Black collectivism.

Attempts to protect members from white retaliation were perhaps the first death knell for the PFHUA. Planters were incensed that those they employed had the gall to organize; they simply "perceived the economic exploitation of their sharecroppers as a right and sought to sustain the entitlement by intimidating tenant farmers who joined the union."[24] In the fall of 1919, however, the group moved forward with a suit against their landlords that was intended to secure

[20] Whayne, "Henry Lowery Lynching," 66.

[21] Whayne, "Henry Lowery Lynching," 70.

[22] Jeannie Whayne, "Low Villains and Wickedness in High Places: Race and Class in the Elaine Riots," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Autumn, 1999), 295.

[23] Jeannie Whayne, *Delta Empire*, 135.

[24] Brian K. Mitchell, "Soldiers and Veterans at the Elaine Race Massacre," in *The War at Home*, 130.

"their fair share of the largest cotton crop in southern history."[25] A cropper from Ratio, Arkansas reached out to the prominent Republican attorney U.S. Bratton, who was known for his work securing the rights of African Americans. The man requested Bratton represent over 60 PFHUA members in their attempt to sue Northerner Theodore Fauthauer, as the manager of his plantation had "refused to issue itemized statements of accounts and had sold their cotton without any compensation."[26] Bratton agreed and planned for the croppers to meet with his son Ocier, an accountant and returning veteran.

The trouble started upon Ocier's arrival in Ratio a few weeks later. Only forty minutes into a meeting with the would-be plaintiffs, a group of "six to eight white men with guns rode up on horses," informed everyone that the meeting was over, and dragged Ocier into the waiting clutches of a mob of about thirty men.[27] Likely due to his whiteness, Ocier would eventually be put on a train to Helena by the deputy sheriff, narrowly missing the bloodbath that was to follow. At the same time, other members of the PFHUA were meeting at the Hoop Spur Church to discuss hiring Ocier's father. They were well aware of the danger of the meeting and posted armed guards outside. When shots ripped through the building, the church's guards retaliated, killing "W.A. Adkins, a white special agent of the Missouri Pacific Railroad."[28]

The sheriff of Elaine raced into action, mobilizing troops of men sent in by various business entities (including the railroad and local plantations). They were led by officers seasoned in combat from World War I, who quickly burned down the church and dispersed a mob of 300 men intent on hunting down Black people. The mobilization of white vigilantes did not end there; planters in Elaine called for reinforcements from the surrounding locales in droves. An estimated six hundred to one thousand whites from "all over the Mississippi and Arkansas Delta" came into Elaine armed to the teeth.[29] A contemporary account put together by Ida B. Wells (one of the cofounders of the NAACP) emphasizes the ferocity of the interlopers, noting how they "chas[ed] and hunt[ed] every Negro they could find, driving them from their homes and stalking them in the woods and fields as men hunt wild beasts."[30] White claims of a Black-led "insurrection" aimed at murdering planters for their land led to Governor Charles Brough personally escorting 538 federal troops into Elaine, "including a twelve-gun machine-gun battalion that had just returned from France."[31] Few Black Southerners bought this story. As Wells explained, "some excuse was necessary for their action, and the persons capable of planning and executing such a terrible deed were not above furnishing that excuse."[32]

[25] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 84.
[26] Woodruff, 84.
[27] Woodruff, 85.
[28] Woodruff, 86.
[29] Woodruff, 86.
[30] Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *The Arkansas Race Riot* (Chicago, 1920), 11.
[31] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 86.
[32] Wells-Barnett, *The Arkansas Race Riot*, 9.

The incoming men were commanded by Colonel Isaac C. Jenks. There can be little doubt about what his goals were; Jenks first evacuated white women and children by train to Helena and then ordered his soldiers to shoot on sight anyone who refused to surrender. For days, the Black citizens of Elaine faced murder, gruesome torture, and non-stop interrogations concerning the PFHUA and suspected insurrection. Jenks, his men, and the hordes of armed white Southerners supplied from neighboring counties terrorized any African American they could find in a 200-mile radius. From September 30th to October 7th, when Col. Jenks withdrew, Phillips County became little more than a glorified hunting ground for white Arkansans to take out their racism and economic dissatisfaction on their Black counterparts. In fact, as federal troops entered Arkansas, they imprisoned hundreds of African Americans.[33] Army records recorded "an official death toll of twenty-five blacks and five whites," however, unofficial estimates mark it as much higher.[34] The massacre led to even more devastation in that it pushed hundreds more to escape Phillips County and even the South at large. Unfortunately, the tragedy of Elaine did not end with the murders of over 200 Black men, women, and children.[35]

On the evening of October 2nd, a committee was formed by the white leaders of the town to interpret and sanitize news of the massacre before it became public. Seven men including the acting sheriff, the appointed sheriff, and several wealthy Helena planters and businessmen constituted the group. They insisted that interloper Robert Hill (of Drew County) and similar nefarious actors from the North conspired to upend "the history of good race relations in Phillips County."[36] The Committee of Seven compiled a report that insisted that "the present trouble with the negroes in Phillips County" was "not a race riot."[37] Rather, it was a meticulous and well-thought-out plan to incite an uprising led by an organization "established for the purpose of banding negroes together for the killing of white people." They even cited the slogan of the PFHUA to buttress their claims; after all, it stated upfront the Black intent to "battle for the rights of [their] race."

The committee, its report, and the "insurrectionists" gathered by Jenks and his men all culminated in a grand jury indicting 122 Black men and women on October 31, 1919; seventy-three of the indictments included charges of murder. Trials began in November, and due to voter suppression, all-white juries consistently convicted the Black defendants. In one case, the trial took only eight minutes. As the dust settled in Elaine, twelve men received death sentences and sixty-seven others received time in prison from one to twenty-one years for various offenses related to the insurrection. Robert Hill had escaped to Kansas and was able to avoid attempts by planters to extradite him; however, although he "was free, with the denial of the writ of certiorari, there was nothing now to

[33] Mitchell, "Soldiers and Veterans," 136.
[34] Whayne, *Delta Empire*, 122.
[35] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 84.
[36] Woodruff, 93.
[37] Woodruff, 92.

keep Brough from setting execution dates for the six Moore defendants.[38] U.S. Bratton was convicted of barratry and had to leave Arkansas for the remainder of his life.

It would take a United States Supreme Court case to bring the truth of Elaine to light. *Moore v Dempsey* overturned the convictions of six of the twelve men in 1923.[39] Governor Thomas McRae had to order the release of the remaining six in 1925 based on the concession that the men plead guilty to second-degree murder.[40]

Death estimates regarding the Elaine Massacre range from dozens to over 800 Black individuals killed. No white perpetrators were ever charged.[41] The massacre illuminated two things concerning race and livelihood in America. It was clear that as long as they could help it, white elites would threaten violence to ensure that Black laborers remained overworked, underpaid, and happily compliant with their poor treatment.

But it also became increasingly clear that Black Americans would no longer tolerate white abuse and the debt peonage system that sharecropping had become.[42] Black Americans had tasted economic benefits and social equality in a way they never had before and refused to turn back the clock. Imbued with their experiences in WWI, African Americans in the South utilized cultural knowledge honed from years of proto-political engagement to collectively organize.[43] Pre-WWI agricultural laborers, particularly Black ones, had little to no control over where they worked, how long they worked, or how much they were paid. As previously mentioned, that changed following rising cotton prices, the industrialization of the North, and an uptick in Black collectivism. Black sharecroppers were ready and willing to organize and organize well. Furthermore, the presence of guards outside the union meeting at Hoop Spur Church points to the willingness of Black-led groups to arm its members. Garvey Clubs facilitated the philosophy of "self-help, self-defense, and separatism" that seems to resonate within the story of the PFHUA.[44]

Black activism was a personal and economic affront to Southern businessmen. They were angry about the prospect of paying fairly for Black labor and at any contention that African Americans were human beings deserving of

[38] Grif Stockley, *Blood in Their Eyes: The Elaine Massacre of 1919*, revised edition (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2020), 217.

[39] Stockley, *Blood In Their Eyes*, 218.

[40] "Elaine Massacre of 1919," CALS Encyclopedia of Arkansas, last modified August 18, 2023, https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/elaine-massacre-of-1919-1102. This only came after a lengthy back and forth with attorney Scipio Jones, especially after Gov. McRae declared the men would be given "indefinite furloughs" in December of 1924, "making them subject to being returned to the penitentiary almost at will." Ultimately, Jones met again with McRae the day before he was set to leave office—finally, he was able to ensure the complete freedom of the Elaine Twelve. However, they were never officially pardoned.

[41] Wells, "Arkansas Race Riot," 55.

[42] Honey, *Troubadour*, 29.

[43] Hahn, *A Nation*, 50-52.

[44] Whayne, *Delta Empire*, 135.

equal rights. Thus, to "squelch the nascent labor movement, planters arrested dozens of blacks, assassinated labor leaders, and murdered countless sharecroppers."[45] The attack in Elaine sent a message not only to those in Phillips County but to all "African Americans throughout the alluvial empire" that any defiance to the regime would be met with brutal retaliation.[46]

Like the Elaine Massacre, Henry Lowery's lynching sprung from white reaction towards the upset of the economic status quo and organized Black action.[47] On Christmas Day 1920, Lowery approached the home of planter O.T. Craig in Mississippi County, Arkansas. As a tenant farmer on Craig's land, Lowery was seeking a written settlement that would enable him and his family to leave Craig's farm to pursue employment elsewhere. Craig's land was adjacent to that of Lee Wilson, his brother-in-law, and not unimportantly, the largest cotton producer in the South at the time of his death. Following Lowery's arrival at Craig's home, a fight erupted that contemporary sources describe in varying shades. *The Log Cabin Democrat* out of Conway claimed that Lowery was "drunk on home made whiskey" or as another source put it, "crazed on white mule wine," when he followed a fleeing African American woman into Craig's home.[48] After Craig "remonstrated" against Lowery's supposed pursuit, the aforementioned publication claims that he "shot and killed him." Yet another article asserted that "as Mr. Craig started to question" Lowery, "he was met by a bullet."[49] The choice in wording was not lost on contemporary readers. The *News Scimitar* out of Memphis emphasized that as Craig's adult daughter, "Mrs. Williamson came to her father's rescue," Lowery attacked again, causing her to fall "mortally wounded at the aged man's side." The same paper reiterated that Lowery was "crazed by moonshine liquor." After shooting Craig and his daughter, Lowery attempted to escape from Craig's two sons, Hugh and Richard. He wounded them both and disappeared into the surrounding forest. Aided by his lodge brothers, Lowery was "hidden in the swamps, supplied with medical care and food" and eventually spirited away in a train car headed south.[50] Sources vary on the degree to which both men were harmed. Some claim that Richard ("Mr. Dick") was "perhaps fatally wounded," whereas his brother, Hugh, was "seriously wounded."[51] Both of the adult men seemed to have lived, but it was obvious that the white media had a vested interest in painting Lowery as a drunken killer who shot first and asked questions later.

William Pickens, field secretary for the NAACP, released a scathing report in 1921 that described a much different series of events. He had gone to Arkansas to get the full facts of the case as a part of the organization's mission to keep records

[45] Karlos K. Hill, *Beyond the Rope: The Impact of Lynching on Black Culture and Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 113.

[46] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 106.

[47] Whayne, "Henry Lowery Lynching," 77.

[48] "Negro Murderer Sought by Posse," *Log Cabin Democrat*, December 27, 1920.

[49] "Negro Slayer at Large; Kills Two, Wounds Brothers," *News Scimitar* (Memphis), December 27, 1920.

[50] Whayne, "Henry Lowery Lynching," 72.

[51] "Posse Fails to Run Down Negro," *Cleveland County Herald*, December 30, 1920.

on lynching. But it was not his first foray into such matters. During his time as the Vice President of Morgan College, Pickens was an outspoken activist. In July of 1918, he sent a telegram to President Woodrow Wilson imploring him to release a letter "denouncing lynching cases," noting that doing so would "kill more Germans than any other ammunition [Wilson] could send them."[52]

Pickens's findings on Lowery culminated in a NAACP pamphlet, "An American Lynching," that was expeditiously distributed across the United States and various continents in 1921. Pickens also published piece in *The Nation* in 1921 called "The American Congo-Burning of Henry Lowery." In it, Lowery posits that the agricultural South is the American counterpart to the Congo. Instead of "rubber and ivory," the American Congo's resources are "cotton and sugar."[53] The laborer there is naught but a slave, kept in bondage by a "cunningly contrived debt-slavery," that conspired to "give the appearance of civilization and the sanction of law." As he expounded on the Lowery case, it became clear that two versions of the story persisted. Pickens first tackles the woman Lowery had supposedly chased a mile into the Craig's home. She was employed by the Craigs, as a cook with ties to Craig's son, "Mr. Dick." Therefore, Pickens contends, it is only natural for the woman (named Bessie) to enter the Craig home and announce a visitor. In any case, after Lowery stepped foot onto Craig's property and began to speak with him, violence ensued. Pickens, for his part, claims that Craig threw a "billet of wood…striking Lowery."[54] A manhunt quickly followed; posses assembled, the bloodhounds were called in from Mississippi, and trains were stopped to comb through them for Lowery.[55] But Lowery evaded arrest for at least five days, enraging Arkansas governor Thomas McRae, who was still dealing with the repercussions of Elaine.[56] A newspaper out of Columbia, MO, dated December 30, conveyed the frustration the posse was having in tracking Lowery down. Interestingly, it also described Craig's relation to Wilson and listed a reward he was providing in the case of Lowery's seizure: "$10,000…dead or alive."[57] Robert E. Lee Wilson was the owner of multiple company towns and proprietor of the Wilson and Company enterprise. He thus had a vested interest in what happened to Lowery beyond the bounds of familial association. Wilson,

[52] William Pickens to Woodrow Wilson, telegram, July 27, 1918, RG165 War Department: General and Special Staffs, Military Intelligence Division, Series 10218, Casefile 10218-194, NARA, Washington DC, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001360-019-0902&accountid=147070. Further correspondence in the casefile indicates that F.P. Keppel, the Third Assistant Secretary of War, was in favor of such a declaration. A War Department Memorandum cites the possibility of improving the morale of Black soldiers, who had "heard much information…to the effect that wholesale lynching of colored people is under way…while they are battling in France."

[53] William Pickens, "The American Congo–Burning of Henry Lowery," *The Nation* 112 (March 23, 1921): 426.

[54] Pickens, "The American Congo," 427.

[55] "Negro Killed Man and Woman," *Hayti Herald* (Columbia, MO), Dec. 30, 1920.

[56] Whayne, Delta Empire, 132.

[57] "Negro Killed Man and Woman," *Hayti Herald* (Columbia, MO), Dec. 30, 1920.

while having somewhat of a reputation for fair treatment of sharecroppers, overall maintained "an attitude toward black labor [that] involved a complicated combination of Old South paternalism and Progressive Era concern for social inferiors."[58] As previously discussed, if tenant farmers or sharecroppers got the notion that planters were amenable to demands for correct pay and treatment, the cotton economy of the South had bigger issues than just sagging prices.

For days Lowery subsisted in the swamps of Mississippi County, relying on the goodwill of his lodge brothers to eat.[59] He eventually made his way to El Paso, Texas. Hesitant to leave the country due to not wanting to abandon his wife and children, Lowery took up the pseudonym S.M. (or Sam) Thompson and began to work as a janitor. Disaster struck when he attempted to write to Morris Jenkins, another lodge brother, concerning his family and "how many and who he had shot."[60] The letter was intercepted by authorities who quickly dispatched two men, including Wilson Deputy Sheriff Jessee Greer, to fetch Lowery, who was finally arrested on January 19th, 1921. Upon capture, it was reported that Lowery became "violently hysterical," and began to beg for his captors to kill him. *The Commercial Appeal* quoted Lowery as saying "if they ever get me back in Turrell, they'll burn me…I know it, boss. For God's sake, shoot me now or give me a razor and I'll do the job myself." Lowery had good reason to feel that way, considering the Red Summer and the Elaine Massacre, which had taken place just a year before. And, although he likely was not aware of this at the time, the encroaching Deputy Sheriff Greer "was widely recognized as representing Lee Wilson's interest."[61] Although Wilson's scheming would ultimately win out, several people attempted to save Lowery from his fate.

NAACP activists did their best to protect both Lowery and the Odd Fellows lodge brothers who had helped him. A "prominent black doctor" and civil rights promoter Lawrence A. Nixon visited Lowery and understood the danger he was in.[62] The president of the El Paso NAACP branch, L.W. Washington, sent a telegram to a Dr. E.C. Morris, the president of the National Baptist Convention in Helena, Arkansas, requesting that Morris "wire or see the governor for protection on [Lowery's] arrival and at trial.[63] Together with Frederick Knollenberg, the attorney hired by the local Arkansan NAACP chapter, they attempted to ensure that Lowery would not be lynched. The governor, Thomas McRae, was already facing not just local, but international pressure for the Elaine Massacre and likely wished to avoid another scandal. Thus, he called for Lowery to be brought back to Arkansas unharmed. The *El Paso Times* released a report on the 23rd of

[58] Whayne, *Delta Empire*, 124.

[59] "Mob Burns Negro After 100-Mile Trip," New York Times, Jan. 27, 1921, in Jeannie Whayne Research Files, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

[60] "Lowery, In Jail, Asks Police to Kill Him," *Commercial Appeal* (Memphis), Jan. 20, 1921, Whayne Research Files, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

[61] Whayne, *Delta Empire*, 130.

[62] Whayne, 130.

[63] L.W. Washington to E.C. Morris, telegram, Jan. 20, 1921, Whayne Research Files, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

January describing how "police in several Arkansas cities" aimed to intercept Lowery "on instructions of Governor McRae" in order to place him in jail, rather than "taking him to Wilson, where mob violence is feared."[64]

Unfortunately, the wheels of fate had already begun to turn, and "the Arkansas governor found that he had little influence" over Lowery's fate.[65] On January 23, 1921, the *News Scimitar* reported that Lowery was taken back to Wilson, and after a "short debate over whether he should be hung or burned," he asked for permission to see his wife and children.[66] This was granted, alongside a request to eat. Then, Henry Lowery was chained to a heavy log, piled in brush, and set aflame. As the fire roared, Lowery attempted suicide by swallowing coals, but they were swiftly removed by members of the mob, which was estimated to be anywhere from three to five hundred people, including schoolchildren. It was over a half hour later when he was finally pronounced dead.[67]

There were immediate and widely felt consequences for Lowery's murder. According to historian Jeannie Whayne, as "the state was still dealing with the fallout over the Elaine Massacre…once again, national and international outrage was aroused."[68] Gov. McRae denounced the event as being "the most disreputable act ever committed in Arkansas" and expressed his bewilderment at the circuitous path the deputies took from El Paso to Arkansas.[69] Articles from as far away as New York claimed that due to the actions of the mob in Nodena, "the United States is the most barbarous nation in the world." "What is this strange civilization we think we practice?" the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* asked. The NAACP released a collection of newspaper clippings called "An American Lynching: Being the Burning at Stake of Henry Lowry at Nodena, Arkansas, January 26, 1921, as Told in American Newspapers," and sent copies to the House of Representatives, the Senate, and various nations around the world. The news of Lowery's death even reached multiple offices in Japan, leading to the release of an official statement from the Japanese government condemning lynching.[70]

[64] "Negro Killed White Man and Daughter on Christmas Day, Officers Say; Arrested Here," *El Paso Times*, Jan. 23, 1921, Whayne Research Files, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

[65] "Negro Killed White Man," *El Paso Times*, Jan. 23, 1921.

[66] "Arkansas Negro Seized on Train at Sardis, Miss.," *News Scimitar* (Memphis), January 26, 1921, Whayne Research Files, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The paper also noted that the residents of Nodena and Wilson "alleged that three other negroes…likely would be taken by the mob and lynched along with Lowery." This did not happen, but it demonstrates the degree to which Lowery's lodge connection bothered these white Arkansans.

[67] "Arkansas Negro Seized," *News Scimitar* (Memphis), Jan. 26, 1921.

[68] Whayne, *Delta Empire*, 130.

[69] "Negro Cremated by Arkansas Mob; Was Caught Here," *El Paso Times*, Jan. 27, 1921, Whayne Research Files, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

[70] James Weldon Johnson, "Japan Condemns American Lynching," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, July 7, 1921, Whayne Research Files, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The Japanese government claimed that the U.S. was rife with lynchings because "the spirit of America is in favor of it," and even though Americans may cry freedom and democracy,

Pickens' coverage of the event within the NAACP packet echoed similar sentiments.

Combined with "A Ten-Year Fight Against Lynching," a smaller pamphlet that detailed the various ways the NAACP was involved in the campaign to end racially motivated mob violence, the NAACP did its best to change the hearts and minds of Americans. "A Ten-Year Fight" details Lowery's death and serves as a call to action for the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill. Although they had "published the only statistical study on lynchings," "sent out hundreds of news releases," "held more than 2,000 public meetings," and sent "literature on lynching all over the world," the horrific torture of Henry Lowery beget an understanding that "much remains to be done."[71] The pamphlet concludes with a rallying cry to put firmer pressure on Congress and to "drive home to every American citizen the truth that lynching is a disgrace and a danger to the whole nation."[72] As both "The American Congo" and "A Ten Year Fight" circulated throughout the nation, and perhaps, the world, Dyer's bill failed to pass. Although there would be successive attempts into the 1930s to get a federal law on the books with the Costigan-Wagner Bill, Southern senators would continue to block all efforts at federalized racial equality.

Furthermore, the Elaine Massacre and the Lowery lynching further ignited white fears of Black-run lodges/fraternal groups. Following Lowery's brutal end, *The Memphis Press* published a small article out of Blytheville, Arkansas, which described the white response to the knowledge that Lowery belonged to "several negro lodges."[73] The article fixated on the role such organizations played in the lives of Black Arkansans. There was "considerable talk," the newspaper reported, about launching a campaign to "break up the various negro lodges," not just in Blytheville, but Arkansas at large. The piece also drew in common racialized tropes used in white media; many of the groups, they claimed, had been organized by "smart eastern negroes for the double purpose of inciting the southern negro and for getting what money they could out of him." Black Arkansans, of course, were happy to gruel in the fields for little pay and they were not intelligent enough to spot any interlopers with sinister machinations. In consideration of those traditional Southern falsehoods, the lodges that served as a lifeline for Lowery and others could not possibly have been led by Black Southerners. It was in the best interest of the white press to continue to push that narrative. If they were to acknowledge anything else, it would not only inflame white sensibilities but also alert African Americans to the fact that those who ruled over Arkansas had reason to be afraid of Black collectives.

"they do not hesitate to trample upon these very same principles…[in order to] perpetrate the foulest deed ever conceived."

[71] NAACP, "A Ten-Year Fight Against Lynching," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, May 9, 1921, Whayne Research Files, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

[72] NAACP, "A Ten-Year Fight Against Lynching."

[73] Ralph Roddy, "Kill Negro By Inches," *The Memphis Press*, Jan. 27, 1921, Whayne Research Files, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

Regardless of efforts to achieve otherwise, there was not a federal anti-lynching law on the books until the 21st century. After decades of persistence from the NAACP, Black lodges/societies, and numerous civil rights activists, lynching finally became a federal hate crime after President Joe Biden signed the Emmitt Till Anti-Lynching Act in March 2022. Congress passed it by a margin of 410-4. The U.S. Senate also passed a resolution that apologized for its long failure to create anti-lynching legislation. The massacre in Elaine and the murder of Henry Lowery were pivotal to the shift in public thought that eventually led to the resolution. Furthermore, the collective actions taken to ensure equal pay at Elaine, alongside the Odd Fellows and NAACP treatment of Henry Lowery, were direct examples of the importance of Black political mobilization.

Failures in Federal Responses to Natural Disasters Along the Mississippi River

Alex McEachern

The Mississippi River once represented the frontier of the United States, then became the center of its power. Even before the Louisiana Purchase absorbed the river, it was a gateway to the vast interior of North America. French settlers established New Orleans as a commercial hub in 1718, well before American settlers thought of revolution. Connecting nearly 40% of the continental United States, the Mississippi River Watershed became an American superhighway. This made the waters of the Mississippi extremely powerful, enhancing trade opportunities and making travel easier. Goods flowed down the river towards the Gulf of Mexico to be shipped to the rest of the country and the world. Steamboats became a common sight by the 1820s, connecting settlers in the expanding frontier to established cities in the East. The economic prosperity brought by the river fueled the growth of cities like New Orleans, Memphis, and St. Louis, turning them into bustling centers of commerce. Plantations and farms in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas lined the banks of the river. While the river provided enormous economic benefits, it was susceptible to flooding, as the vast networks of tributaries meant rainfall and snowmelt upriver had ripple effects downstream. Economic progress led to deforestation and increased runoff, further destabilizing the ecosystem of the river.

The most prominent flood in the river's history is the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, which displaced hundreds of thousands along the Lower Mississippi River. Eighty years later, a similar disaster hit further south, as Hurricane Katrina sunk New Orleans under its rain through the destruction of levees designed to keep water out of the city. Katrina represents a modern companion to the Great Mississippi Flood, as it reflects the same flooding those along the river have always dealt with. Both disasters required an immense federal response, with the Red Cross taking charge in 1927 and FEMA taking that role in 2005. This essay will explore the federal response to the Flood of 1927 and its various shortcomings, then compare this reaction to the crisis of Katrina.

This agricultural history of the Lower Mississippi River, the portion south of Illinois, has deep ties to slavery and the Jim Crow laws that followed. Each state that the Lower Mississippi flows through either seceded from the Union or had the practice of slavery while remaining in the Union. The river became a symbol of "both liberty and bondage," with its close ties to the movement of slave labor and products

but also the possibility of escape upriver.[1] Union campaigns down the Mississippi would be a common theme of the Civil War, with gunboats and troops moving downriver to attack Confederate strongholds like Vicksburg. This strategic importance would not go away after the war, as the new system of sharecropping quickly evolved to take the place of slavery.

Sharecropping in the South was not exclusive to former slaves, as many white farmers joined the ranks of newly freed African Americans in this new system. This "new" system did not change the power dynamics present before the Civil War, as the wealthiest landowners kept their land and power over the region. While slavery was abolished, the vast majority of former slaves did not have the resources or land at their disposal to create independent farms. While some land redistribution legislation had been proposed, it did not come close to passing, and there was little change in who owned the land. This meant many slaves went right back to work for their former masters, with minimal improvements in their standard of living. Sharecropping would dominate the South until the 1940s, meaning many of those affected by the Flood of 1927 were the descendants of slaves, living and working on the same land their parents and grandparents had toiled on.[2]

The Mississippi Alluvial Plain encompasses the eastern half of Arkansas as well as vast areas of Mississippi and Louisiana, regions which were most affected by the 1927 flood. While flooding was common, these regions still attempted to mitigate the effects through a variety of methods. One of the most prominent was the levee, an embankment that is intended to protect low-lying areas from river overflow. While levees are primarily made of steel or concrete today, during the early 20th Century they were primarily earthen creations.[3] Levee construction today is overseen by the US Corps of Engineers, a group formally established by Congress in 1779 as a wing of the army. By 1802 they were a separate entity, "contributing to both military construction and works 'of a civil nature.'"[4]

During the early 20th Century, the Corps of Engineers had a much more passive role in the management of the Mississippi River, as their primary focus was not to protect the surrounding regions from flooding. Instead, the Corps prioritized keeping the river open for commerce, as they did not have the authority to begin

Alex McEachern is a M.A. student in history at the University of Arkansas. He is from Frisco, Texas and previously studied at the University of Missouri where he graduated with a B.A. in history. His thesis research focuses on the intersection between professional baseball and the civil rights movement in the American South.

[1] O. Vernon Burton, Troy Smith, and Simon Appleford, "African-Americans in the Mississippi River Valley, 1851-1900," Northern Illinois University Digital Library, 2016.

[2] David E. Conrad, "Tenant Farming and Sharecropping," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=TE009.

[3] John M. Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How it Changed America* (New York City: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 190.

[4] "The Beginnings to 1815," U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, https://www.usace.army.mil/About/History/Brief-History-of-the-Corps/Beginnings.

building projects like the construction of new levees.[5] Today, they state that their mission is to "reduce disaster risk," but this was not always the case.[6] Federal power was still looked upon with suspicion in the deep South. The wounds of the Civil War meant the South was not kind to federal agencies coming in and telling them what to do. This meant the system of flood mitigation was not nearly as cohesive and effective as it could be, as the Corps of Engineers knew how to limit the damage of flooding, but were not able to implement their ideas. This would be rectified in the aftermath of the disaster, with the 1928 Flood Control Act, granting the Corps of Engineers greater power to control flooding through controlled outlets and floodways, establishing the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project.[7]

Despite these issues, much of the lower Mississippi had levees meeting the 1882 standard of construction, which called for levees containing 31,000 cubic yards of earth. By 1927, this standard had reached 421,000 cubic yards of earth, a massive increase that was not fully realized by the time of the 1927 flood.[8] Some regions had been able to construct more extensive levees, largely through the influence of wealthy landowners. In the northeast corner of Arkansas, in Mississippi County, landowners had influenced the Corps of Engineers to improve the flood control system beginning with the 1897 flood.[9] By the Great Flood of 1927, this short system of levees and drainage ditches had become extensive, and it performed well during the crisis, but this was a rarity along the length of the river.

The origins of the 1927 flood can be traced back to an unusual pattern of heavy rainfall in late 1926 and early 1927 in the Great Plains and the Ohio River Valley. These regions were in the Mississippi River Watershed, meaning all this rainwater moved downstream toward New Orleans through the Ohio and Missouri Rivers' connections to the Mississippi River. The scale of rainfall was unprecedented, leading to a rapid rise in water levels. The US Weather Bureau, which tracked water levels in the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Rivers, noted that water levels in late 1926 were the highest ever known.[10] The saturated ground was unable to absorb additional water, contributing to excess runoff, exacerbating the flooding. In addition to the heavy rainfall, the natural environment along the Mississippi River had been significantly altered by human activities long before the flood. Deforestation, driven by the demand for timber and agricultural expansion, had stripped large areas of the river basin of their natural vegetation. The removal of trees, which play a crucial role in stabilizing soil and regulating water flow, disrupted the ecological balance present before human activity. This meant that less water was

[5] "Past Floods - Lower Mississippi," U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, https://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/Missions/Mississippi-River-Flood-Control/Past-Floods-Lower-Mississippi.

[6] "Mission and Vision," U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, https://www.usace.army.mil/About/Mission-and-Vision.

[7] "Multipurpose Waterway Development," U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, https://www.usace.army.mil/About/History/Brief-History-of-the-Corps/Multipurpose-Waterway-Development

[8] Barry, *Rising Tide*, 190.

[9] Jeannie Whayne, *Delta Empire: Lee Wilson and the Transformation of Agriculture in the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 143.

[10] Barry, *Rising Tide*, 175.

absorbed into the ground through their roots, exacerbating runoff and contributing to the swelling of the river.[11] In addition to deforestation, the removal of wetlands along the Mississippi River further compromised the natural mechanisms that could have mitigated the impact of heavy rainfall. Wetlands act as natural sponges, absorbing excess water and releasing it gradually. However, as demands for agricultural land and urban development increased, wetlands were drained and filled, reducing their capacity to buffer against flooding. The loss of these natural barriers left communities along the river more vulnerable to the destructive forces of rising water levels.

These factors contributed to the unprecedented amount of water flowing downriver, with water gauges along the river reading that the river was in flood stage for as many as 153 consecutive days in 1927.[12] Then, the onset of spring brought even more rain to the region, "raining harder and longer than anyone could recall over a vast area."[13] By early April, 35,000 refugees had already been forced to leave their homes, with the worst yet to come. As the months continued there was little relief, and, despite government confidence in the levee system, levees began to fail along the river. Water inundated the land surrounding the bursting Mississippi.[14]

The federal response to this crisis began in April of 1927, through collaboration between the Red Cross and the federal government. President Calvin Coolidge appointed Herbert Hoover, the secretary of commerce and future president, to lead this collaboration along with DeWitt Smith of the Red Cross. The Red Cross had both a wide-ranging fund-raising apparatus as well as local branches that could help coordinate aid.[15] Hoover had lofty goals, planning to rebuild the region along with rescuing and sheltering thousands along the river who had lost their homes. This multifaceted approach included emergency relief and medical care, with one of the priorities being the need to establish emergency shelters to provide a haven for the displaced population. These shelters, often set up in schools, churches, and other community buildings, offered food, clean water, and basic medical care to those who had been displaced. Medical workers were sought, with field nurses finding work providing medical care and giving vaccines.

Mary Emma Smith was a public health nurse employed by the Arkansas State Board of Health to promote nursing.[16] During May and June of 1927, she traveled across eastern Arkansas inspecting the various clinics set up by the Red Cross and reporting her findings back to the Board of Health. In one report, she listed her various visits to multiple counties, detailing the state of the clinic, and her work

[11] Susan Scott Parrish, "The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 Laid Bare the Divide Between the North and the South," Smithsonian.com, April 11, 2017, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/devastating-mississippi-river-flood-uprooted-americas-faith-progress-180962856.

[12] Barry, *Rising Tide*, 181.

[13] Barry, 186.

[14] Barry, 186-189.

[15] Barry, 273.

[16] Nancy Gilien and Anna Gentile, "Celeste Campbell and the Introduction of Public Health Nursing to Pope County," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (2009): 52–75.

there. Most of these clinics were well organized, with professional staff who were effective in their treatment. Smith described the nurse who worked in Crittenden County as "experienced in rural work," noting they quickly would get a clinic up and running. Another clinic in Craighead County had a "good working program already organized before the nurse arrived."[17] Further visits to Monroe and Jackson counties yielded similar results, as their refugee camps and clinics had swiftly established connections and treated victims of the flood. These observations indicate that the Red Cross was effective in certain regions through their swift organization of clinics, as only one to two months after Hoover took over as head of the flood effort, relief was reaching the areas of Arkansas that needed it most.

Other areas, however, were not as quick to recover from the flooding, as Smith saw firsthand during her visits to Poinsett County, just south of Craighead and north of Crittenden. She noted that the flood waters did not recede for several months there and towns were isolated, limiting access for relief. Sickness was widespread, and despite the presence of "a very capable nurse," relief efforts were arduous.[18] Pellagra, a disease resulting from niacin deficiency, was running rampant as people were unable to get adequate nutrients during the crisis. A total of 4,905 people were treated across three camps in Poinsett County.[19] While some areas with larger populations treated many more individuals, the continued isolation of these camps would have pushed relief workers to a breaking point.

In terms of number of patients treated, the largest refugee camp was in Forrest City in St. Francis County, treating 15,850 individuals by 1929. During Smith's visit there in 1927, she noted that "the nursing program was not developing," as well as they had hoped.[20] In addition, some counties were hostile to outside help, like Mississippi County where the county health officer was not cooperating with the State Board of Health. These issues paint a complicated picture of clinic relief efforts. In some areas they provided much-needed aid quickly. In others they were victim to external pressures. The continued flood and lack of cooperation indicate the Red Cross's lack of oversight power and the need for cooperation across a massive region to treat everyone who needed aid.

An additional failure of the Red Cross was their inability to anticipate the spread of disease in refugee camps. Despite warnings about the spread of venereal disease, the Red Cross failed to take measures to limit its spread until the "situation reached a crisis." This issue spread across racial lines, as both white and black refugee camps dealt with the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, according to historian Pete Daniel, the outbreak was not limited to just the refugees,

[17] Report of Mary Emma Smith, Field Nurse, Arkansas State Board of Health, 1927, American Red Cross Records, Box 738, 224.11/5, Jeannie Whayne Research Files, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

[18] Report of Mary Emma Smith, JWRF.

[19] Persons cared for in Camp, American National Red Cross Mississippi Valley Flood Relief, October 3, 1929, American Red Cross Records, Box 741, 224.63, Whayne Research Files, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

[20] Report of Mary Emma Smith, JWRF.

as there was widespread "promiscuity between guards and girls" in the camps.[21] The Red Cross, being a puritanical institution from the north, was wholly unprepared for the need to worry about issues arising from sexual promiscuity. It contacted the American Social Hygiene Association of New York to send in a team of doctors to give lectures in the camps on the consequences of these diseases and how to avoid transmission.[22] The use of outside help was necessary due to the Red Cross' desire that reports of venereal disease be "hushed up," as they feared reports of disease would put a damper on fundraising efforts.[23] While most in the refugee camps welcomed this advice, there was some push back from Louisiana Adjutant General L. A. Toombs, who objected on the basis of "immorality."[24] He also stated that the doctors, being from New York, could not possibly understand the conditions in the South. This sectional divide is one that would need to be crossed in order to effectively provide aid to the people who needed it the most.

Further issues in relief efforts come up when examining the Red Cross' treatment of African American refugees, as there are clear disparities in the distribution of aid for African American refugee camps. The South had passed Jim Crow Laws from around 1890 to 1910, meaning public spaces, including refugee camps, were segregated under the guise of separate but equal. Living conditions in the segregated camps for African Americans were significantly worse than in white camps. They were overcrowded and lacked many basic amenities. These abuses were intentional. For instance, the county relief committees "routinely" offered the planter class relief goods, despite Red Cross rules to discourage the practice.[25] These goods were intended for sharecroppers, yet the planters chose to not pass them down the line to their tenants. Their wealth and lack of need should have prevented the planter class from receiving aid intended for refugees, but this practice was widespread. These planters would then turn around and charge their tenants for the aid, something explicitly against Red Cross regulations. As part of the sharecropping system, white planters were already charging their tenants for anything and everything that they might need to survive.

Abuses towards black refugees did not stop there, with forced labor and prison-like conditions keeping African Americans in camps and at work. They were often assigned menial tasks, such as manual labor and cleanup duties.[26] White workers and officials were given preferential treatment, enjoying better accommodations and job selection. Black men were the primary workforce along the levees, with hundreds of men filling and sealing the Greenville, Mississippi levee to prevent further flooding. This work began as a collaboration between white organizers and black workers but was essentially forced labor, as a handbill read, "Volunteer at 6

[21] Pete Daniel, *Deep'n as It Come: The 1927 Mississippi River Flood*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 170.
[22] Daniel, 171.
[23] Daniel, 175.
[24] Daniel, 171.
[25] Barry, *Rising Tide*, 334.
[26] Barry, 328.

o'clock Sunday morning or be forced to go 6 o'clock Sunday evening."[27] After these original successes conditions for black workers only worsened, as rations were reduced for African Americans, with whites keeping the highest quality Red Cross food for themselves.[19] Will Percy led the Red Cross efforts in Greenville, with a tight bond forming with Hoover after a visit he took to the area.[28] Despite the clear abuses Percy inflicted upon refugees, Hoover did little to prevent continued exploitation.

Perhaps the practice most indicative of the horrific conditions facing African American refugees, many black sharecropper tenants were not allowed to leave the refugee camps until their landlords came and identified them. This practice created a situation where the displaced individuals were not only victims of a natural disaster, but also subject to the control of those who held power in the region. These white landowners had the authority to determine the future of African American refugees, limiting their options on when they could get back to work or leave the area. Walter White, the future executive secretary of the NAACP, wrote to President Hoover in June 1927 demanding this practice stop.[29]

White detailed a list of injustices to Hoover, explaining what he witnessed or investigated at several refugee camps. In Vicksburg, he described local industries taking refugees from the camp and putting them to work with beatings and general brutality. White spent a large portion of this letter attempting to clarify the "economic exploitation which prevails under the share-cropping or tenant farming system."[30] Hoover, who was born in Iowa and grew up in Oregon, would have been less familiar with the sharecropping system, and perhaps would have had trouble understanding the situation at hand. African Americans were targeted when speaking out against this peonage, with lynchings of some and intervention by the NAACP preventing the execution of more.[30] While Hoover would not have been familiar with the challenges that faced relief in the South, it is clear these efforts were tainted by the deep racism and systemic issues with the sharecropping system.

The response of African American leaders and communities to the discriminatory conditions in the Red Cross camps was multifaceted. Frustration and anger at the treatment fueled demands for fair conditions in these camps. African American leaders and newspapers, such as W.E.B. Du Bois and the *Chicago Defender*, used their platforms to expose the disparities and advocate for equal treatment in relief efforts. The *Chicago Defender* worked to spread word of these abuses, both to inspire change and to inspire black farmers to leave the region and move north.[31] The Great Migration had begun a little more than a decade prior, with the Flood of 1927 representing another catalyst for the northward movement.

Hoover, perhaps already eyeing the 1928 Presidential Election, prepared media strategies to distract journalists from the abuses and shortcomings in aid, prioritizing a story of harmony between the races. Hoover may have feared that

[27] Barry, 326.

[28] Barry, 329.

[29] Walter White to Herbert Hoover, June 14, 1927, American Red Cross Records, Box 734, 224.031, Whayne Research Files, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

[30] White to Hoover, June 14, 1927.

[31] Myles McMurchy, "'The Red Cross Is Not All Right!': Herbert Hoover's Concentration Camp Cover-Up in the 1927 Mississippi Flood," *Yale Historical Review* 5, 1 (2015): 88.

"even a slight blemish in his flood relief role would mar his political appeal."[32] These efforts led to the mainstream narratives for the crisis emphasizing cooperation and healing between the races, something that did not take place. Hoover downplayed deaths from drowning, clinging to a statistic that stated only six people had drowned after the Red Cross began coordinating efforts, despite significant evidence the death toll was much higher. He stood by this claim and never retracted it despite visiting the impacted area often where he almost certainly would have seen evidence to the contrary.[33] The aim to obscure the state of relief efforts seems to be a coordinated effort throughout the Red Cross, with the Boston chapter calling on newspapers to "arouse public sympathy."[34] These cover-ups were largely intent on increasing fundraising, a goal that it would achieve. Despite the flow of necessary funds, however, this media campaign hid the truth of what was happening to these funds once they reached the South. Hoover had formulated some plans for land reformation, granting small farms to African Americans to break up the sharecropping system, but the plans never came close to fruition. A 1968 correspondence from Meyer Mathis, director of the Office of Administrative Analysis, Information, and Statistics, indicates that there are no records of Hoover's scheme.[35] Therefore, it is difficult to find any evidence Hoover seriously attempted to implement this idea, and the status quo of sharecropping continued through the relief.

The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 represented the shortcomings of the sharecropping and small government of the South, as many of the issues present could have been alleviated or even prevented. The disconnected levee system was known to be weak, and the Federal Corps of Engineers knew how to fix it, they simply did not have the authority to implement their plans. The relief effort relied on centralized federal funding, organizing relief efforts through the Red Cross, and finding medical professionals who could help. The discrimination against African Americans did not stop with relief efforts, as they were targeted for forced labor in subpar conditions. While the Red Cross clearly made effective relief efforts in many areas, too often they fell in line with discriminatory practices and failed to improve the regions they entered. Red Cross resources were distributed to those who did not need them, and relief camps were corrupted by racism. Despite good intentions, it is clear the Red Cross turned a blind eye to African Americans and focused on raising more funds, rather than bringing attention to the crisis at hand.

Over the next 80 years, the Mississippi River and the surrounding area would be shaped by new flood control methods, notably through the Flood Control Act of 1936. This put the US Army Corp of Engineers in charge of flood control, leading to the federal levee system securing the river in place by the late 1930s. While this made the river easier to navigate, it also had the side effect of sinking New Orleans,

[32] Daniel, 125.
[33] Daniel, 126, 132.
[34] McMurchy, "'The Red Cross Is Not All Right!,'" 91.
[35] Meyer Mathis to Dr. Bruce A. Lohof, October 4, 1968, American Red Cross Records, Box 734, file 224.08, Whayne Research Files, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

as it no longer received sediment deposits from upriver, as "sediment sailed straight into the Gulf."[36] While the levee system prevented flooding from the river, it increased the risk of flooding from the Gulf of Mexico as Southeast Louisiana eroded away.[37] In 1965, Congress approved the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project, or LPVHPP, intended to protect greater New Orleans from a hypothetical hurricane known as a Standard Projected Hurricane.[38] This was a hurricane expected to arrive once every 200 years, representing the lower of two standards intended to guide construction plans. The LPVHPP was meant to be a concrete wall around the city to protect from storm surge from Lake Pontchartrain to the north and to the east. This project was continually delayed and revised, and would not be completed by the arrival of Katrina in 2005. At one hearing, a scientist suggested abandoning the city altogether, prophetically noting that he would rather "experience the hassle of moving than the nightmare of being in this city when a levee does not function properly."[39]

Hurricane Katrina made landfall in August 2005, representing that once in 200-year storm scientists predicted. Katrina originated as a tropical depression over the Bahamas on August 23, 2005, and steadily gained strength as it traversed the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico. This rapid intensification was one of the reasons for its devastation, as the storm had weakened after making landfall in Florida. However, once reaching the warm water of the Gulf of Mexico it rapidly intensified, meaning people were less prepared to evacuate as the storm had quickly ballooned in strength. By August 28, it had intensified into a Category 5 hurricane, boasting wind speeds of 160 miles per hour.[40] The storm's immense size and power made it a formidable force, and meteorologists issued dire warnings for the Gulf Coast, particularly the city of New Orleans. The National Weather Service warned that Katrina could cause "human suffering incredible by modern standards."[41]

New Orleans was reliant on levees and pump stations to protect the city from flooding. Pump systems in the city date back to 1913, with engineer Albert Baldwin designing pumps that utilized subterranean canals.[42] Katrina's storm surge was too much for this system, as it breached levees in New Orleans, causing widespread flooding that overwhelmed the city's inadequate infrastructure. This led to power outages and the failure of the pump stations, leading to a drowned New Orleans. The destruction was extensive, with homes destroyed, businesses submerged, and communities displaced. The human toll was equally devastating, with over 1,300 fatalities and countless others injured.

[36] Andy Horowitz, *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 35.

[37] Horowitz, 36.

[38] Horowitz, 86.

[39] Horowitz, 89.

[40] Horowitz, 117.

[41] National Weather Service, New Orleans, Urgent Weather Message, 4:13 PM CDT, Aug. 28, 2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20060301101418/http://www.srh.noaa.gov/data/warn_archive/LIX/NPW/0828_214001.txt.

[42] Barry, *Rising Tide*, 228.

Similarly to the 1927 flood, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina exposed significant shortcomings in the federal response, particularly the actions of FEMA, the agency tasked with coordinating disaster relief. FEMA, or the Federal Emergency Management Agency, was established in 1979 to respond to disasters at the federal level. FEMA's response was marred by inadequate preparation and discrimination against the African American population, whether intentional or not. One glaring example of discriminatory response was the delayed and insufficient evacuation efforts. Many residents, disproportionately African American and economically disadvantaged, lacked the means to evacuate before the storm. The evacuation plans were largely geared towards those with personal vehicles and financial resources, leaving behind a vulnerable population unable to escape the impending disaster. The lower areas of the city were primarily inhabited by poor residents, many of whom were African American. This concentration of black residents in low lying areas like the Lower Ninth Ward stems back to the city's expansion after World War Two. The city had embarked on a plan to drain the swamps which surrounded the traditional city and expand outwards. These swamps, despite being further from the river, were on lower ground, as the sediment brought downstream by the Mississippi elevated the area close to the river. This meant the new, subsidized developments were more at risk of flooding, a fact proven during a 1947 hurricane that overpowered levees and drainage pumps in the area. Development of these areas continued however, African Americans were still concentrated in the areas in 2005. While FEMA cannot be blamed for this systematic issue, these communities are the least likely to have been able to evacuate before the storm hit, meaning they should have been a priority to the federal response.[43]

FEMA director Michael Brown stated that the high death toll was a result of "people who did not heed the advance warnings," seemingly arguing it was the victims fault for not leaving the city.[44] This completely ignored the reality for many residents, as approximately 132,000 residents did not own a vehicle, and could not have possibly made it out of the city. When combined with a lack of rail or bus infrastructure, thousands of residents had no other choice than to turn to shelters like the Superdome, which became a symbol of the failure of relief efforts. Thousands sought refuge in the football stadium, where inadequate supplies, unsanitary conditions, and a lack of medical care contributed to a humanitarian crisis within the greater crisis outside. FEMA was completely unprepared for the number of people seeking shelter, with FEMA director Michael Brown describing the demand as a "fascinating phenomena."[45] Generator failure meant the stadium lost air conditioning and running water, further making the situation worse. By August 30 the stadium was described as "uninhabitable," with evacuation needed to

[43] Karen M. O'Neill, "Broken Levees, Broken Lives, and a Broken Nation after Hurricane Katrina," *Southern Cultures* 14, no. 2 (2008): 100-102; Horowitz, *Katrina*, 48.

[44] Horowitz, *Katrina*, 127-128.

[45] Matthew Davis, "FEMA 'Knew of New Orleans Danger,'" BBC News, Oct. 11, 2005.

prevent further disaster.[46] One of the main shelters FEMA prepared became uninhabitable within 48 hours of landfall, completely failing in its purpose. Refugees were sent to Texas and other surrounding states, some never returning as their homes had been destroyed. In the aftermath of Katrina and the resurgence of the New Orleans Saints football team, the Superdome would become a symbol of hope and recovery, a far cry from its image during the crisis.

A majority black city was quickly portrayed in the worst possible light, impacting recovery efforts in the immediate aftermath of the storm. Media coverage of the residents stuck in the city was shockingly racist, as media outlets played into deep-seated stereotypes to portray black people as "criminal, savage freeloaders."[47] Photographs of white residents were captioned as them "finding" supplies, while similar pictures portraying black residents were captioned with the term "looting." Reports of atrocities flowed out of New Orleans, as the media made it seem as if there was a complete breakdown of the social order, and lawlessness reigned in the city. Reputable news sources like CNN and the *New York Times* propagated the idea that "rampaging gangs" ruled the streets, and the lack of order led to complete chaos. The New Orleans Police Chief would go on national television to claim people in the Superdome had descended into an "animalistic state," going so far as to claim babies were being raped.[48] Most all of the shocking stories were fictional and played into disgusting stereotypes that African Americans could quickly plunge the social order into chaos. Unfortunately, authorities responded to these stories in full force, with New Orleans police officers shooting "at least nine people during the week after the storm."[49] The National Guard and police believed they needed to take the city back from roving gangs, which was a complete fabrication.

During the crisis, FEMA was slow to adapt to the changing situation and refused help from outside sources like private corporations. Walmart, a company renowned for its logistical prowess and supply chain efficiency, was among the corporations that sought to contribute to the relief efforts. But FEMA's bureaucratic red tape and hesitancy to engage with the private sector led to missed opportunities for collaboration. During the crisis, Walmart supplied their stores, with a caravan of 13 tractor-trailers spotted heading into the city.[50] With a vast network of stores, distribution centers, and a sophisticated supply chain management system, Walmart was well-equipped to provide essential goods and services quickly and efficiently.[51] Despite some of the motivation behind Walmart's actions being to protect their capital interests, one can acknowledge that cooperation between federal relief and private corporations could have alleviated some of the issues in the days following the disaster.

[46] Dept. of Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned* (Feb. 2006), 39.

[47] Horowitz, *Katrina*, 121.

[48] Horowitz, 122.

[49] Horowitz, 123.

[50] "An Open Letter to the President," *The Times-Picayune*, Sept. 4, 2005.

[51] Steven Horwitz, "Wal-Mart to the Rescue: Private Enterprise's Response to Hurricane Katrina," *The Independent Review* 13, no. 4 (2009): 511–28.

The heath care infrastructure in New Orleans was hit especially hard during the storm. Hospitals tried their best to deal with the rapid surge in demand and maintaining the care of their own patients. Despite CNN reports that the hospital had evacuated, Charity Hospital employees and patients watched these reports incredulously from the very hospital that reportedly was now empty.[52] The hospital had lost power and there was no running water, with staffers noting how dependent modern medicine was on electricity. No air conditioning meant 100° F temperatures in some rooms, and no power meant countless machines stopped working. Blood bags went bad without refrigeration and patients had to be monitored extra closely as the electronic monitoring that had become commonplace could no longer be relied upon. [53] One young doctor noted that the situation made it "like suddenly being blindfolded and handcuffed in terms of how we practice medicine."[54] Even the evacuation of the various hospitals in the city was affected by race and class. The doctors in Charity knew they would be last because they "had poor people," in their hospital, "nobody had any illusions about that."[55] Evacuation attempts were disorganized, as some patients from Tulane University Hospital were turned away from the Superdome as it lacked the dialysis machines they were seeking. Disease ran through shelters and hospitals, exacerbated by a lack of running water for toilets. Despite these horrific conditions, medical staffs acted heroically, saving countless lives by holding out in hospitals and relief shelters treating those who needed it the most.[56]

Hurricane Katrina stands as a stark reminder of the devastating impact natural disasters can have on communities, exposing systemic vulnerabilities and highlighting the need for comprehensive disaster preparedness and response strategies. The storm left a trail of destruction and revealed deep-rooted issues related to social inequality, inadequate infrastructure, and ineffective emergency management. The aftermath of Katrina exposed the disproportionate impact on marginalized communities, particularly those in the poorest areas of New Orleans. The inadequate response from local, state, and federal authorities highlighted the importance of coordination and communication in times of crisis. The failure of levees and flood control systems underscored the need for resilient infrastructure to withstand the forces of nature.

One of the glaring similarities between the 1927 Mississippi flood and Hurricane Katrina is the lack of adequate preparedness by the authorities. In both instances, warning signs were present, but governmental agencies failed to take proactive measures to mitigate the potential impact. In 1927, heavy rainfall and rising river levels were evident, yet poor levee construction and maintenance exacerbated the flooding. Similarly, with Hurricane Katrina, meteorological

[52] Jed Horne, *Breach of Faith: Hurricane Katrina and the Near Death of a Great American City* (New York City: Random House Inc, 2006), 133, 136.
[53] Horne, 136.
[54] Horne, 137.
[55] Horne, 140.
[56] Horne, 142-144.

warnings of an impending disaster were issued, but inadequate infrastructure led to levee and pump failure. These failures to anticipate the extent of these disasters led to longer recovery times and more fatalities. These failings extended to the healthcare response, as aid struggled to get to those who needed it the most. Disease spread through healthcare centers in both 1927 and 2005, as they were unable to stay sanitary due to the flooding. Refugee camps in 1927 suffered from terrible conditions, something that would be repeated in 2005 in the Superdome and in New Orleans hospitals.

The inadequacy of evacuation plans also stands out as a shared flaw of responses to the Great Mississippi Flood and Katrina. In 1927, thousands of African Americans were forced to flee their homes, often with little warning, exacerbating the human toll of the disaster. Similarly, during Hurricane Katrina, the evacuation plans disproportionately favored those with means, leaving behind many who lacked the resources to escape the storm's path. The lack of transportation and resources for vulnerable populations resulted in scenes of desperation and suffering eerily reminiscent of the 1927 flood. Furthermore, both disasters exposed the underlying socioeconomic disparities that left marginalized communities more vulnerable to the impacts of the floods. In 1927, African American sharecroppers and laborers, already facing economic hardship, saw their homes and livelihoods destroyed. In 2005, the victims of Hurricane Katrina were predominantly from low-income backgrounds, lacking the means to evacuate, rebuild, or recover swiftly.

The disproportionate effect of these crises on African Americans stems from two different sources, with the first being intentional and the second being a product of systematic issues in New Orleans. The policy to put black refugees to work and to prevent them from leaving reeks of slavery, with 1927 Arkansas and Mississippi having laws on the books to discriminate against African Americans. In 2005 African Americans were concentrated in the areas most prone to flooding, due to the poverty rate in the black community and the lower property values of these areas. In addition, the inability of these communities to evacuate stems primarily from their low income rather than by intentional action.

The Mississippi River remains an important fixture of the American economy, through the continued role it plays in shipping goods domestically and abroad. The failures in the response to the 1927 Mississippi flood and Hurricane Katrina serve as cautionary tales about the importance of proactive preparedness, effective coordination, and addressing societal inequalities today. These disasters, separated by nearly 80 years, demonstrate that lessons from the past must be learned and applied to enhance our ability to respond to future crises.

Women and Religion in the Mongol Empire

KARLIE BARNETT

In 1206, tribal and clan chiefs in Central Asia assembled to declare a Mongol named Temujin as their leader, thus earning him the title Chinggis Khan. Following this event, conquests undertaken by the Mongols and their allies soon solidified the creation of an empire that spanned most of Eurasia. After Chinggis Khan's death in 1227, his empire dissolved into four khanates covering the regions of China, Central Asia, Iran, and the Golden Horde of Russia, which came to be ruled by Chinggis Khan's four sons and their descendants. Women have already been shown to be an integral part of these events, although how their relationships with religion influenced this process has been given less attention.[1]

The purpose of this article is to explore these relationships, seeking to contextualize and analyze them during the rise of the Mongol Empire, as well as its extension into the successor khanates. This article contributes toward the effort to uncover the impact of women on the making of the Mongol Empire in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It also considers how women among the Mongols interacted with religion in varied and distinct ways and how these relationships influenced the development of Eurasian religions and the Mongol Empire overall. These interactions, which took place in the personal realm, the political realm, and in the realm of patronage, had profound effects on the development of Eurasian religions and the Mongol Empire.[2]

Karlie Barnett is a M.P.S. student at the Clinton School of Public Service in Little Rock. She graduated from the University of Arkansas in 2023 with a B.A. in History and Political Science, with minors in Gender Studies and Religious Studies. Her undergraduate research primarily focused on how religion intersects with the political and public sphere, particularly within Asia. This article is adapted from her honors thesis.

[1] Peter Jackson, "The Mongol Age in Eastern Inner Asia," in *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*, ed. By N. Di Cosmo, A. Frank, & P. Golden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 29-30, 43; Bruno De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran: the Khātūns, 1206-1335* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 1; Anne Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[2] The scope of this study is confined to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries for which there is more source material regarding women and religion. In addition, much of the source material is from the early Mongol Empire, as well as the Ilkhanate and the Yuan dynasty, leading to a larger focus on those areas. Due to the tendency of sources from this period to only record the experiences of the highest classes of society, elite women are the focus of this article. Lastly, many of these sources come from outsiders, meaning that the

The Status of Women in Mongol Society

Unlike the women of nearby sedentary societies who were secluded in the private sphere, Mongol women largely operated in the public sphere due to the Mongol's nomadic lifestyle where every member had to contribute to the group's survival.[3] Ibn Battuta, the North African traveler, noted that both the royal and common women of the Golden Horde had "respect shown to [them]" and they were "visible" to anyone passing through the area.[4] This fact stands in stark contrast to the popular belief that women within the empire enjoyed little power over their lives due to the perceived "masculine" nature of Mongol warfare and society. This was a system that gave agency to women, although it must be emphasized that it benefited elite women the most.[5] Within this system, women had the critical job of camp management, which enabled the men to focus on hunting and fighting.[6]

Although women's work was important to surviving nomadic life, their status in relation to other Mongol women determined their specific responsibilities and the amount of influence they had. This hierarchy of status among men and women was integral to steppe life and was determined by lineage and marriage, even after the implementation of Chinggis Khan's merit-based social and military system.[7] The women who enjoyed the most status were the wives of the ruling house, known as *khatuns* or "royal and aristocratic women."[8] This category of elite women included those who were married to Mongol khans and nobles, whose wealth often meant they took multiple wives. Within this elite category, there was another strict hierarchy among the wives that was determined by marriage order.[9] The first wife

bias and nature of the content must be considered when drawing conclusions about the relationship between women and religion. With all of this considered, I do not attempt to make sweeping generalizations about Mongol women and religion, but to highlight those instances where their impacts were apparent.

[3] George Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 232.

[4] Ibn Battuta 'Abdallah, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta A.D. 1325-1354, Volume 2*, edited by H.A.R. Gibb, C. Defrémery, and B. R Sanguinetti (Cambridge England: Hakluyt Society, 1962), 146-147.

[5] Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire*, 9; Eiren Shea, *Mongol Court Dress, Identity Formation, and Global Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 73.

[6] Barbara Frey Näf, "'Compared with the Women the…Menfolk have little Business of their own': Gender Division of Labour in the History of the Mongols," in *The Role of Women in the Altaic World: Permanent International Altaistic Conference*, ed. by Veronika Veit, 44th Meeting, Walberberg, August 2001 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 71.

[7] Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire*, 10.

[8] Bruno De Nicola, "Ruling from Tents: the Existence and Structure of Women's Ordos in Ilkhanid Iran," in *The Mongols and the History of Iran: Art, Literature and Culture from Early Islam to Qajar Persia*, ed. by R. Hillenbrand, A. Peacock and F. Abdullaeva (London: LB. Tauris, 2013), 127.

[9] Morris Rossabi, "Khubilai Khan and the Women in his Family," in *From Yuan to Modern China and Mongolia: The Writings of Morris Rossabi* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 330; Christopher Dawson, *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955), 18; Bruno De Nicola, "Women's Role and Participation in Warfare in the Mongol Empire," in *Soldatinnen: Gewalt und Geschlecht Krieg vom Mittelalter bis Heute*, ed. by K. Klaus Latzel, S. Satjukow and F. Mausbach (Paderborn: Schoningh, 2010), 95.

was considered to be the "senior wife," making her the most important.[10] She was tasked with managing the largest royal camp (or *ordo*), while several of the junior wives that followed her controlled smaller camps. After those wives, the remaining junior wives and concubines lived among these camps and answered to the women that ran them.[11]

The administration of the camps further reflected this hierarchy, as well as the importance of women to their functioning. The senior wife took on a managerial role when her husband was not present at the non-combatant camp, and she often accompanied her husband on military campaigns to manage the traveling camp. Ibn Battuta observed this in his meeting with the senior wife of Özbek Khan, who was cleaning a tray of cherries while supervising numerous female servants who were also cleaning trays, indicating her position of oversight. Other tasks included the oversight of the imperial guard's domestic tasks, animals, clothing needs, and the domestic workforce.[12] Funding supported their management duties, seen in Ghazan Khan's decree to earmark funds for every *ordo*, which included money for "the ladies' board, provisions….for camels and pack horses, and for wages for maids, eunuchs, custodians, kitchen help, caravan drivers, muleteers, and other servants and retinue as necessary."[13] Left over funds would be set aside in the "lady's treasury," highlighting how the women in charge of these camps were able to use funds as necessary to run them.[14]

Despite these descriptions of how Mongol women enjoyed more status in comparison to women in sedentary societies, Mongol women were not fully equal to men. Mongol society was patrilineal, meaning that men were the primary owners of wealth. In theory, women were allowed to own property, but wealth and family holdings were typically passed onto the sons in an average Mongol family.[15] Rashid al-Din noted this custom in his description of Ilkhanate financial decisions, where Ghazan Khan endowed the *ordo* properties to "male offspring, not the females."[16] Still, there was a degree of economic autonomy allowed to Mongol women, especially those of the elite class. These women often brought a dowry to their marriage, which was their own personal property that was later passed down to her children.[17] They were also entitled to gain control over their husband's patrimony if

[10] Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire*, 14.

[11] Broadbridge, 14; De Nicola, "Ruling from Tents," 128.

[12] Broadbridge, 19, 21; Ibn Battuta 'Abdallah, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, 487-488.

[13] Fadl Allah Rashid al-Din, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'u't-tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles: A History of the Mongols*, 3 vols, trans. and annotated by Wheeler M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1998-99), 746.

[14] Rashid al-Din, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'u't-tawarikh*, 746.

[15] Rossabi, "Khubilai Khan and the Women in his Family," 329; De Nicola, "Ruling from Tents," 127.

[16] Rashid al-Din, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'u't-tawarikh*, 746.

[17] Anonymous, *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*, §43.

widowed, allowing them to become an independent economic unit.[18] Their wealth increased further through their entitlement to a portion of the profits that emerged out of their *ordos*, as well as their entitlement to a share of the "booty" acquired from the Mongol Empire's military campaigns.[19]

The motherly duties of Mongol women added more significance to their role in society, particularly in relation to succession and childrearing. The status of Chinggisid wives determined which of their children would be likely to succeed the khan, with the children of the senior wife being the top candidates to the throne. This is reflected in Chinggis Khan's decision to divide up his empire among the four sons from his senior wife, Börte. In raising future rulers, mothers had the task of educating their sons on Mongol values, norms, and morals.[20] Sorqoqtani Beki, wife of Tolui Khan and mother of Möngke Khan, Khubilai Khan, Hülegü Khan, and Ariq Böke, took on such a role towards her children, grooming them to become effective rulers who "did not swerve one hair's breadth from the *yasa* and law of their ordinances."[21] Due to the *khatuns'* notable social role as wives and mothers and their economic resources, they were often able to assert significant political influence. Mongol *khatuns* and princesses were included in the *quriltai*, which was a meeting of Mongol nobility that convened after the previous khan's death in order to elect the next ruler of the Empire. Imperial women could even become regents in the period after a khan's death and before the next *quriltai* could be convened, and they often asserted influence even if they were not a regent in name. Lastly, *khatuns* were an important part of the diplomatic system. Ambassadors and envoys were often received in the *ordos* of these ladies, signaling their social and political importance to the Mongols. Thus, women in the Mongol Empire enjoyed considerable influence and status, allowing them to have a significant impact on the realm in a variety of ways.[22]

Religion in the Mongol Empire

Women also operated within the religious context of the Mongol Empire. The native religion of the Mongols has traditionally been described as "shamanism."[23] This system involves divination and ancestor worship, as well as a belief in the presence of numerous spirits who could be contacted through the intercession of a

[18] Yoni Brack, "A Mongol Princess Making Hajj: The Biography of El Qutlugh Daughter of Abagha Ilkhan (r. 1265–82)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic* Society 21, no. 3 (2011): 340.

[19] Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, 60; Rashid al-Din, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's*, 745.

[20] Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire*, 30; Anonymous, *Secret History*, §269; Herbert Franke, "Women under the Dynasties of Conquest," in *China under Mongol Rule*, (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), 37.

[21] 'Alā'al-Dīn'A_ta-Malik Juvaynī, *The History of the World-Conqueror*, trans. by J. A. Boyle (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 244.

[22] Franke, "Women under the Dynasties of Conquest," 37; Hend Gilli-Elewy, "On Women, Power, and Politics During the Last Phase of the Ilkhanate," *Arabica* 59, no. 6 (2012): 720; *The History of the World-Conqueror*, 240; Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire*, 32-33.

[23] Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*, 182.

shaman or shamaness.[24] These spirits exist under the dome of "eternal heaven," known as *tenggeri*, which has the power to protect and shape one's destiny.[25]

The Mongol's heaven was amoral, meaning people were treated unequally. Those who were treated the best by heaven were the Mongol royal family. The khan enjoyed the most favor of heaven as he hailed from a line of divine genealogy. In having the favor of heaven, khans gained political legitimacy as they connected heaven and earth under one government. Their rule was validated by heavenly signs, meaning prosperity had to be bestowed on the Mongol nation to show the khan possessed the blessings of heaven. Such prosperity required expansion beyond the Mongolian Plateau, motivating Chinggis and his allies to move beyond the steppe in search of other riches and luxuries. In pursuing these conquests, the Mongol Empire began to form, increasing the possessions of the Mongols and their knowledge of the outside world.[26]

Before this expansion, other religions were also known in the steppe. Turco-Mongol tribes such as the Kerait, Naiman, Ongut, and Merkit were converts to Nestorian Christianity, with the Kerait converting as early as 1007.[27] Beyond their proximity to Christianity, the Mongols were well connected to Chinese and western sedentary societies by way of trade, making them well aware of other traditions such as Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. Upon the expansion of the Mongol Empire, the Mongols came into more direct contact with these faiths. Encounters with the religions of conquered populations now had more important implications, especially since the Mongols had to establish a governing policy towards these domains. Despite the violence of their campaigns, the Mongols realized the most effective way to govern was to adopt a policy of religious tolerance towards the conquered peoples, thus allowing a variety of faiths to flourish under their rule. This decision, which was established as Mongol policy in the *yasa* of Chinggis Khan, was politically motivated as choosing to not challenge a population's religion increased the chances that the population would not challenge Mongol rule.[28]

The decision to maintain religious tolerance was further based in the desire of the Mongols to "keep the goodwill of whatever god was ruling in the heavens,"

[24] Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*, 182.

[25] Brian Baumann, "By the Power of Eternal Heaven: The Meaning of Tenggeri to the Government of the Pre-Buddhist Mongols," *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 35 (2013): 247.

[26] Baumann, 246, 250; Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*, 201; Anonymous, *Secret History*, §1; Jack Weatherford, *The Secret History of the Mongol Queens: How the Daughters of Genghis Khan Rescued his Empire* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2010), 44.

[27] Nestorian Christianity is a sect that was more popular in the East at this time, which believed Christ to have two very separate divine and human natures; Erica Hunter, "The Conversion of the Kerait to Christianity in A.D. 1007," *Zentralasiatische Studien* 22 (1989): 142.

[28] Baumann, "By the Power of Eternal Heaven," 263; Bruno De Nicola, *Unveiling the Khatuns: Aspects on the Role of Women in the Mongol* Empire (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2011), 190-191; Hunter, "The Conversion of the Kerait," 146.

meaning they were willing to court a variety of religions.[29] Abaqa Khan of the Ilkhanate demonstrated this through his visit to Sufi shrines and his attendance at a Christian Easter service in an effort to gain divine aid. State actions were another important avenue for keeping the favor of the God who brought Chinggis Khan his victories, seen in the Mongols extension of patronage to the religions of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Daoism to ensure their rule would continue to receive heavenly validation patronage. However, upon the disintegration of the Empire into khanates and the need for Mongol rulers to reconcile their relationship with the smaller conquered populations, Mongol religious policy was altered from one of tolerance to adjustment. Ghazan Khan of the Ilkhanate was one such ruler, who initially targeted Christians and Jews by giving them a restricted *dhimmi* status upon his conversion to Islam in 1295. However, these restrictions lasted a few months, signaling that Ghazan only desired to even the playing field as Christians and Jews had enjoyed more status than Muslims at the Ilkhanate court in the period before his conversion.[30] This strategy, termed the "Chinggisid balancing-act," highlights another way the Mongols sought to maintain an overall sense of equity among their subjects.[31]

Alongside this pragmatic approach to religion was a policy of religious favoritism, which the Mongols pursued to garner subject support, increase the blessings bestowed upon them, and shore up political legitimacy. This was an element of Mongol religious policy established by Chinggis Khan, stemming from his granting of favors to certain religious communities or individuals on account of them proving themselves to be truly holy, making their prayers, which should include prayers for the khan, able to be received by Heaven. This meant that, depending on the ruler and the sociopolitical context, certain religions received more benefits than others under Mongol rule, such as exemption from taxation and forced labor.[32]

With this, Mongol rulers did convert to other religions, although such conversions occurred for a variety of reasons. On a scholarly level, there are arguments that the Mongols converted out of either political or personal reasons, with both views having adequate evidence. This highlights the individual relationship the Mongols had with religion that varied by time and place as Mongols based their decisions off the social context of the time. Politically, adopting other religions helped the Mongols in the realm of diplomacy. Taking on a religion

[29] Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*, 181; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, "Sufis and Shamans: Some Remarks on the Islamization of the Mongols in the Ilkhanate." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42, no. 1 (1999): 7.

[30] Jackson, "Mongol Khans and Religious Allegiance," 115, 118; Christopher P. Atwood, "Validation by Holiness or Sovereignty: Religious Toleration as Political Theology in the Mongol World Empire of the Thirteenth Century," *International History Review* 26, no. 2 (2004): 250; Peter Jackson, "Mongol Khans and Religious Allegiance: The Problems Confronting a Minister-Historian in Ilkhanid Iran," *Iran* 47 (2009): 252; Anatoly M. Khazanov, "The Spread of World Religions in Medieval Nomadic Societies of the Eurasian Steppes," *Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia* 1 (1994): 27.

[31] Jackson, "Mongol Khans and Religious Allegiance," 117.

[32] De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran,* 209; Atwood, "Validation by Holiness or Sovereignty," 110, 245.

different from one's enemy helped to ideologically differentiate themselves, and it also facilitated the process of appealing to co-religionists in the fight against said enemy.[33] The Mongols' personal relationship with religion also varied, seen in how they often did not convert "once and for all," but switched religions if they so desired.[34] Öljeitü, Ghazan's successor, was originally a Christian, then a Buddhist convert, and then a Muslim who teetered between the Hanafi and Shafi'i Sunni schools before finally transitioning to Shi'ism. Switching religious traditions this many times in one lifetime points to the notion that not every conversion was politically motivated. Öljeitü was also said to have been influenced in his conversions by certain individuals at court, such as *bakshis* (Buddhist scholars) and the Shi'i Muslim Taj al-Din Avaji.[35]

In their relationship with religion, it is more accurate to characterize the Mongol conversions as a process of adaptation rather than adoption. *Tenggerism* became interpreted and reinterpreted upon its contact with other religions throughout the Mongol expansion, but it was never completely left behind. That is, despite their conversions, the Mongols were unable to fully leave behind their native religion, especially as it was so connected to their nomadic way of life.[36] Successful conversion occurred when syncretism was achieved, allowing an "alien urban religion" to become nativized and thus accessible by the Turco-Mongol tribes.[37] Syncretism had political implications as well. The phenomenon of syncretism was politically useful in that it allowed accommodation to the culture and beliefs of the diverse areas that the Mongols governed, aiding the Mongol religious policies of tolerance and adjustment. Further, the combination of multiple religious ideologies provided the ruler with more sources of political legitimacy.[38] For example, upon the adoption of Islam in the Ilkhanate, rulers in the Ilkhanate were able to draw upon the two "most powerful notions of dynastic legitimacy," Allah and the Mongol's Eternal Heaven.[39] Religion thus had a central role in the Mongol Empire, and its relationship to individuals had important consequences for both religion and empire.

Women and Religion

Women in the Mongol Empire had varying and distinct relationships with religion. However, it must be remembered that the period's sources are largely

[33] Khazanov, "The Spread of World Religions," 14, 21; De Nicola, *Unveiling the Khatuns*, 190-191.

[34] Khazanov, "The Spread of World Religions," 15.

[35] A. Bausani, "Religion under the Mongols," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 5, ed. by J.A. Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 543.

[36] Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*, 200, 201; Khazanov, "The Spread of World Religions," 14.

[37] Khazanov, "The Spread of World," 25.

[38] Baumann, "By the Power of Eternal Heaven," 271; Johnathan Z. Brack, "Mediating Sacred Kingship: Conversion and Sovereignty in Mongol Iran" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2016), 320.

[39] Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2017), 385.

limited to descriptions of Mongol women at the highest echelons of society, meaning the knowledge of the relationship between Mongol women and religion is restricted to only the elite. With limited information, scholars should avoid sweeping generalizations about Mongol women and religion, and their relationships and influence vary by time, place, and individual. Regardless, these women were still able to have significant influence on the development of Eurasian religions and the Mongol Empire because of their high status and the economic independence that came with it. The overall religious tolerance of Mongol rule also meant they could interact with and influence many different religions. This influence primarily occurred in the personal realm, the political realm, and in the realm of patronage.[40]

Mongol women were often syncretic in their religious belief and practice, yet this did not make them any less devoted to religion. Their adherence to their faith, which included partaking in religious rituals and interacting with religious leaders, led them to protect and promote that religion while influencing the religious outlook of those individuals close to them. Politically, religious Mongol ladies were influential in terms of what policies were implemented in relation to the governance of religious communities, which was critical for the support or non-support of those communities, as well as the survival or suppression of various religions in the Mongol Empire. They held incredibly important roles as diplomats, uniquely suited to form relationships with co-religionists from abroad. The Mongol Empire benefited from their diplomatic role in terms of being better equipped to forge alliances, establish contacts, and carry out negotiations with other states. Mongol ladies were actively involved in religious patronage as well. Those religions receiving female patronage benefited in that their religious activities were supported, allowing them to survive, and sometimes thrive, under Mongol rule. Female patronage also helped to assert the political legitimacy of the Mongols, and it served as a significant contribution to Mongol religious policy in terms of aiding in the governance of a diverse domain and helping to ensure the continuation of God's favor.

The Personal

Mongol women had a manifold relationship with religion, each having their own approach towards the rituals and figures involved. Knowledge of female religious involvement varies by time and place due to what sources are available, and, although we can infer from their religious actions, little is known about their true religious beliefs as the sources are largely outsider accounts. Still, women's personal religious involvement, which includes the promotion and protection of religion and influencing the religious views of others in power, had important effects on religion and empire.[41]

As discussed, the relationship between the Mongols and religion was often syncretic, and this extended to Mongol women as well. *Ordos*, managed by Mongol ladies, were accommodating for syncretism, functioning as multi-faith spaces where

[40] De Nicola, *Unveiling the Khatuns*, 17; Brack, "A Mongol Princess Making Hajj," 340.
[41] De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran*, 197-198.

religious figures could be received and different rituals could take place.[42] Qutay Khatun, one of Möngke Khan's wives, was visited by William of Rubruck and a Christian monk in her *ordo* to receive healing for her sickness. Although William of Rubruck called her a "pagan," which likely meant she followed the native Mongol religion, the monk had her "adore the cross," prayed over her, and had her drink a holy water concoction in an effort to revitalize her health.[43] She soon recovered, leading Möngke to allow William of Rubruck and the Christian monk to leave camp with the cross carried high on a lance. While it is not clear what Qutay's genuine religious beliefs were, this story highlights how Mongol women could be open to multiple religious practices, how orthodox religious figures viewed syncretism, and how *khatun* interactions with religion could influence the views of their husbands.

Another important Mongol woman recorded as being syncretic was El Qutlugh Khatun. El Qutlugh, a Muslim Mongol lady, was the daughter of Abaqa Ilkhan. She demonstrated syncretism in her combination of Islamic and Chinggisid beliefs and practices. After peace was established between the Ilkhanate and the Mamluks, El Qutlugh was the first of Chinggisid descendant to perform the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca after official caravans once again departed from Baghdad. Along this route, she hunted in the royal style, continuing the Mongol steppe tradition of using the royal hunt to communicate one's social status and political authority. She also gave charity along the way in her completion of this pillar of Islam.[44] El Qutlugh therefore demonstrated her Islamic piety through religious ritual while simultaneously asserting her Mongol heritage. Other Mongol women were also recorded as going on *hajj* once Ilkhanate-Mamluk relations became peaceful, shown by artwork that depicts women in traditional Mongolian headdresses, or *boghtaghs*, undertaking the trip.[45]

In the period's sources, other Mongol women were described in relation to one specific religion, although history makes it likely they had a syncretic aspect to their beliefs as well. Regardless, many Mongol ladies were recorded as having strong individual faiths. Nestorian Christianity was widespread among elite Mongol women. Möngke Khan's wife Qutuqtay Khatun was a Christian who, while syncretic in terms of her visits to both Nestorian churches and Buddhist temples, was committed to the Christian community. She stayed with the Christian priests present in the camp until she would climb "drunk…into a cart, while the priests sang and howled, and she went on her way."[46] She also had prior knowledge of and took part in religious ritual as noted by William of Rubruck, who described her participation in a church service where she followed the Nestorian custom of placing

[42] Bruno De Nicola, "Patrons or Murids? Mongol Women and Shaykhs in Ilkhanid Iran and Anatolia," *Iran Studies* 52 (2014): 145.

[43] Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, 165-168.

[44] Brack, "A Mongol Princess Making Hajj," 333, 347, 350, 352.

[45] Hajj miniatures provided by Dr. Kelly Hammond from a personal correspondence with a colleague.

[46] Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, 163.

her forehead on the ground, touching the statues with her right hand, and raising that hand before entering the church.[47]

Christian beliefs are recorded among other Mongol women as well, especially in the case of the early Ilkhanate. The senior wife of the first Ilkhan Hülegü was Dokuz Khatun, who was lauded by Christians for her commitment to her faith, termed "the believing queen" by Bar Hebraeus.[48] This praise is further epitomized by Bar Hebraeus' statement that "great sorrow came to all Christians throughout the world" upon her death as she "made the Christian religion triumphant."[49] While it is unlikely that Christians everywhere mourned after her death, this comment is a testament to her Christian piety and support of the religion. This religious dedication was apparent in her daily life as her *ordo* was described as a church, and she was often accompanied by Armenian and Syrian priests in her travels. Rashid al-Din even links her to the reason that the Ilkhan Hülegü showed favor towards Christianity, particularly as a result of her wifely role. During Hülegü's sack of Baghdad, Dokuz is credited with being the reason the Christian community did not experience as much damage and violence as other religions, noted as having requested immunity for them. This was critical for the survival of Christianity through the initial violence of Mongol conquest, especially as other religious communities like Zoroastrians failed to survive the attack.[50] Hülegü's desire "to please [Dokuz]" also led him to build many churches, ensuring that the Nestorian and Jacobite churches thrived at this time as a result of her influence.[51]

Another wife of Hülegü, Qutui Khatun, also personally promoted Christianity. During a period of rivalry between Christianity and Islam in Azerbaijan, she traveled to Maragha to encourage the Christian community to revitalize the ritual of blessing water on the day of the Epiphany. Bar Hebraeus links her intervention to the restoration of divine grace to the community, causing the cold to disappear and vegetation to grow again. While the outcome of her intervention may be an exaggeration, this level of support from a powerful Christian Mongol woman likely aided the survival of Christianity in this region. The religious beliefs of these women also influenced their roles as mothers, leading some Ilkhan wives to baptize their children as Christian as seen in the baptism of the Ilkhans Ahmad Tegüder and Öljeitü. In addition to religious motivations, such baptisms could be politically motivated as Öljeitü's baptism under the name of "Nicholas" was also an attempt to win Christian support in the Mongol fight against the Mamluks. Overall, the introduction of Christianity into the Mongol lineage through intermarriage and the presence of Christian wives was important for the representation of Christianity at

[47] Dawson, 161.

[48] Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l-Faraj 1225–1286*, trans. by E. A. Wallis Budge, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1976), 444.

[49] Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l-Faraj,* 444.

[50] Grigor of Akanc (Akner), *History of the Nation of the Archers*, ed. with an English translation and notes by Robert P. Blake and Richard N. Frye, *Harvard-Yenching Institute: Harvard Journal of Asiatic* Studies 12, no. 3/4 (1949): 341; Rashid al-Din, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's*, 963; Aptin Khanbaghi, *The Fire, the Star, and the Cross: Minority Religions in Medieval and Early Modern Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 55, 60.

[51] James D. Ryan, "Christian Wives of Mongol Khans: Tartar Queens and Missionary Expectations in Asia," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 8, no. 3 (1998): 416.

an elite level, which further raised its status in the eyes of both Mongols and non-Mongols.[52]

Islam as a religion at the elite level became stronger in the later years of the Ilkhanate, a process that Mongol women had an important part in. The adoption of Islam by the Ilkhanate in 1295 under Ghazan Khan was the result of a bottom-up process of Islamization in which women played an important role. Tughan Khatun, another daughter of Abaqa Ilkhan and wife to the Amir Nawruz, is credited with facilitating the reconciliation of Nawruz and Ghazan in 1294 after they had a falling out.[53] To solidify this reconciliation, Ghazan is said to have promised to "adorn his sincere neck with the necklaces of the Islamic faith."[54] While this may not have been the event that caused Ghazan's conversion, as he likely did it to align with the majority and growing Islamic population, it points to how women were a part of the process of Islamization and helped to extend the religion to other converts. These converts could continue to promote the religion themselves, seen in Ghazan's decree that all Mongols and Uighurs had to adopt Islam.[55]

Religiosity went beyond the Ilkhanate to the Yuan dynasty as well. Chabi, Khubilai Khan's senior and most beloved wife, was known to be a devout Tibetan Buddhist.[56] She gave her first son the Tibetan name of Dorji, and her second son, who had the Chinese name Chen-chin, was deeply interested in Buddhist doctrine, just "like his mother Chabi."[57] This points to how mothers could influence the faith of their children, thus continuing or at least promoting that religion in the Mongol lineage. Chabi had a great impact on the religious views of Khubilai as well. She is thought to have promoted his learning in the teachings of Buddhism from Buddhist monks at the Yuan court like Hai-yün. Khubilai's conversion to Tibetan Buddhism was also thought to be, at least partially, a result of Chabi's influence. Converting to Buddhism was an act in line with the actions of other nomadic dynasties in China, and this form of Buddhism was the most alien to the Chinese, giving him an ideological tool that distinguished the ruler from the ruled. However, due to his well-documented love for Chabi, her commitment to Buddhism, and the presence of Chinggisid Buddhist monks in China, it is likely that his conversion had a personal element to it as well.[58]

Interactions with religious figures were another aspect of the personal relationship between Mongol women and religion. Elite Mongol women often attracted religious figures due to their political importance and economic

[52] Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l-Faraj*, 460; Bausani, "Religion under the Mongols," 541; Ryan, "Christian Wives of Mongol Khans," 416; Hunter, "The Conversion of the Kerait," 148.

[53] De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran,* 198; Charles Melville, "Padshāh-i Islam: The Conversion of Sultan Mahmud Ghazan Khan," *Pembroke Papers* 1 (1990): 166.

[54] Melville, "Padshāh-i Islam," 166.

[55] Melville, "Padshāh-i Islam," 172.

[56] Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol* Empire, 238-239.

[57] Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times, 20th Anniversary Edition, With a New Preface*, 1st ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 138.

[58] Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times*, 16; De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran,* 200.

independence, making them valuable sources of support.[59] Christian missionaries were one group that "targeted" Mongol Christian women due to their high position at court, although the role of female agency in this interaction must also be recognized.[60] These missionaries hoped to utilize Mongol female influence to initiate the conversion of Mongol khans, drawing upon the historical precedent of European holy women successfully converting pagan kings. Once alerted of the prominence of Christian wives in the Ilkhanate by the Mongol envoy to the West, Nestorian monk Rabban Sauma, Pope Nicholas IV dispatched letters to the Christian wives of Arghun, who he urged to convert Ilkhan princes to the "true faith."[61] These initial missionary efforts on behalf of the papal court eventually died off, and many Mongol women later converted to the Islamic faith of the majority Persian population. Still, while it is unknown whether these women tried to convert the khans surrounding them, this interaction between Christian priests and elite Mongol women highlights the exalted status of Christianity in the Mongol Empire at this time and how efforts to proselytize included an important role for Christian Mongol women.[62]

This leads us to the interactions between Islamic religious figures and Mongol women. Sufi shaykhs also recognized the importance of Muslim Mongol ladies as sources of support and as religious followers overall. Sufi shaykhs were recorded as having close relationships with Mongol ladies, particularly in the Ilkhanate, serving as members of *ordos* and family mediators in addition to their religious roles. These relationships occurred with both mainstream and outsider Sufis, seen in how the Sufi dervish 'Abd al-Rahman situated himself within the class of noble Mongol ladies due to his personality and ability to perform tricks. One of these ladies included the mother of Tegüder, which, as noted earlier, was a Christian, highlighting the syncretic nature of her practices and contacts.[63]

Syncretism was apparent in other interactions between Sufis and Mongol women, emphasized in the case of Baghdad Khatun's visit to Shaykh Safi al-Din alongside her husband, the Ilkhan Abu Said. This shaykh refused to look at the unveiled Baghdad Khatun due to the scriptural Islamic belief that it was forbidden to look at the spouse of someone else. Thus, even though Baghdad Khatun was a Muslim, this situation shows how her syncretic practice was sometimes at odds with the interpretation of Islam by other Muslims.[64]

The mere recording of these relationships between Sufis and Mongol ladies has a political element to it, although these stories are also a testament to the frequency of these personal religious interactions. Hagiographies of Sufi saints that include anecdotes from the shaykh's life, are the main source for information on Sufism from this period. Such anecdotes include interactions with important individuals, such as elite men and women, to elevate the status of the shaykh and

[59] De Nicola, "Patrons or Murids," 144.
[60] Ryan, "Christian Wives of Mongol Khans," 415.
[61] Ryan, 411, 418.
[62] Ryan, 421.
[63] De Nicola, "Patrons or Murids," 153; De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran,* 195; Amitai-Preiss, "Sufis and Shamans," 30.
[64] De Nicola, "Patrons or Murids," 152; De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran,* 196.

the Sufi order. Mongol ladies were therefore one group mentioned in hagiographies, described as having a variety of interactions with shaykhs. In Safi al-Din's hagiography, Malikah Qutlugh, a daughter of Gaykhatu Ilkhan, was described as a follower of Shaykh Zahid Ibrahim, the spiritual master of Shaykh Safi al-Din. She is said to have sent a message to the shaykh to request relief from her state of misfortune, and the shaykh is said to have performed a miracle from afar to relieve her from this state. While the validity of this interaction is unknown, it shows that personal interactions between shaykhs and Mongol ladies were common enough to be plausibly included in hagiographies. They further served as a way for hagiographers to connect shaykhs to the powerful Mongol dynasty, thus elevating their status. In this way, the high status and religion of Mongol women added prestige to certain Sufi orders, which likely had a positive impact on that order in terms of its growth and survival.[65]

Although these are just a few examples from the highest echelons of Mongol society, Mongol women's personal religious views and actions were critical for the promotion and protection of religion, and often influenced the faith and actions of those around them.

The Political

Another area where religious Mongol women operated was in the realm's domestic and foreign affairs, which had important impacts on religious communities under Mongol rule and the maintenance of that rule. Their political influence was largely personal, although it was institutionalized in those instances where women assumed political control. This is apparent in the domestic affairs of the empire in a variety of instances. Qutui Khatun was thought to have ruled behind the scenes under her son Tegüder, who had converted to Islam and only reigned for a short time in the Ilkhanate.[66] Due to her Christian background and control of the administration, she is believed to be the reason he undertook positive fiscal policies towards Christianity, which included freeing churches, priests, and monks from "taxation and imposts in every region."[67] Laissez-faire fiscal policies such as this one likely aided the survival and expansion of Christianity at this time.

Mongol women's involvement in religion and politics also included a continuation of the Mongol policy of religious tolerance, which allowed the Mongol Empire to secure a hold over its subjects. Sorqoqtani, a Nestorian Christian, was an important figure that ensured this balance between religion and politics. Granted an appanage by Ögedei Khan, she prioritized religious and racial tolerance in her own governance of the land's diverse people.[68] Like many other Mongols, she realized the importance of this leadership style in preventing the divisive nature of religion from arising, which would have created instability and challenged Mongol rule. Her political methods had great influence on her sons in terms of ensuring

[65] De Nicola, "Patrons or Murids," 150-153.
[66] De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran,* 215.
[67] Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l-Faraj*, 467.
[68] Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*, 242.

their knowledge of and sympathy towards different religions, which they utilized when they went on to rule various parts of the Mongol Empire. Her role in orchestrating the marriages of her sons to other diverse religious women, such as the Christian Dokuz Khatun and the Buddhist Chabi mentioned earlier, further helped to ensure this political policy was continued.[69] The mere presence of religious Mongol women was important to garnering domestic support for Mongol rule. With the influx of the Mongols into Persia, non-Muslims were "culturally 'demarginalized'" due to the lack of institutional support of Islam, and the presence of co-religionists among the Mongols, particularly the *khatuns*, motivated them to support Mongol rule.[70] These co-religionists included Dokuz Khatun and Despina Khatun, who served as protectors of Christians and gave them access to court, allowing them to take part in administration and assert their influence despite the growing Muslim population.[71]

Mongol women ensured cooperation with the religious communities of the realm in other ways as well. As an elite Christian woman, Dokuz Khatun was significant in gaining Christian support in the Ilkhanate Christian community. Following her death, the Ilkhans after Hülegü kept her *ordo* within those of the Christian faith in an effort to maintain the Christian alliances she formed during her lifetime. Therefore, even after her death, Dokuz continued to aid the Mongols in their effort to assert political legitimacy over Christians in Iran. This was critical for khans like Öljeitü, who was Muslim and likely needed to maintain a level of Christian support, especially since he was recorded as not being particularly favorable to Christians during his rule. Under the Yuan dynasty and the rule of Khubilai, Chabi ensured the maintenance of internal religious contacts and cooperation with Buddhist communities. One important contact was 'Phags-pa lama, a Buddhist monk at the Yuan court who had a relationship with Chabi. 'Phags-pa lama and Khubilai had a dispute concerning where they held authority, which was resolved by Chabi as she helped them come to the conclusion that 'Phags-pa lama would have precedence in matters of spirituality and Khubilai would have precedence in temporal matters. This mediation ensured Khubilai's favorable outlook on Buddhism, enabling cooperation between the Buddhist church and the Yuan dynasty, which garnered benefits for Tibetan Buddhism under Khubilai's rule.[72]

Once again, religious Mongol women were significant in their diplomatic ability to connect with co-religionists, particularly those from abroad. The Mongols capitalized on this fact and connected their visitors to the women who shared their religion. For example, William of Rubruck was taken to "the dwelling that had belonged to one of [Möngke's] wives," who was the Christian Oghul Qaimish that had passed some years prior.[73] This again suggests that the *ordos* of Mongol *khatuns*

[69] Rossabi, "Khubilai Khan and the Women in his Family," 339.
[70] Khanbaghi, *The Fire, the Star, and the Cross*, 79-86.
[71] Khanbaghi, 63.
[72] De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran*, 157; Khanbaghi, *The Fire, the Star, and the Cross*, 71; Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times*, 41; Rossabi, "Khubilai Khan and the Women in his Family," 348.
[73] Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, 154.

held religious and political significance even after their death and were likely useful tools of connection with outsiders. Mongol women also undertook diplomatic functions during their lifetime. The Christian Qutuqtay Khatun spent time with priests and monks from abroad, likely aiding the Mongols in forming positive connections with them. Other female diplomatic duties included helping to build alliances with other states. In the context of growing missionary activity and increasing diplomatic contacts with the papal court, the Ilkhanate responded to a defeat by the Mamluks by seeking an alliance with the West. Despite messages sent by several khans, the initiation of papal-sponsored contact and missionary activity did not occur until after Pope Nicholas IV had heard about the high positions of Christian wives at the Ilkhanate court. This led him to send numerous letters to *khatuns*, urging them to convert Arghun Khan to Christianity. While no alliance against the Mamluks came from these interactions, Ilkhanate Christian wives still served as important brokers between the Mongols and the West in this period as they motivated them to access the Mongol court, contributing to peaceful and more understanding relations between the two sides.[74]

Thirty-five years after the papal court dispatched these letters to the East, the Mongols and the Mamluks finally achieved peace. This development was, at least in part, due to the intervention of religious Mongol women. El Qutlugh of the Ilkhanate was recorded as having corresponded with the Mamluk Sultan during the Sultanate's dismal relations with the Ilkhanate. It is unlikely that her correspondence was espionage-related since she was a proud Chinggisid, seen in her rejection of a proposal from a Mamluk commander on account of him being inferior to her Chinggisid royal blood.[75] Instead, this communication is thought to have occurred due to her commitment to Islam and her wish to "'advise faithfully the people of Muhammed'" towards peace with the Ilkhanate.[76] There is no evidence that El Qutlugh was actively involved in the negotiations that led to peace between the Mamluk Sultanate and the Ilkhanate, but she was still an important member of the early "'peace party'" that likely expediated the process, especially on account of her influence as a fellow Muslim.[77] All of these actions point to how religious Mongol ladies supported and protected religious communities, as well as to how they served as important liaisons between these communities and the Mongols, which had political benefits for the Mongol Empire.

Patronage

Being of Mongol heritage, elite women in the empire had enough independent economic resources and influence to be significant patrons of religion with such patronage involving material or social support. Patronage was not limited to one religion, and, as always, varied by individual, time, and place. Female

[74] Dawson, *The Mongol Mission,* 163; Ryan, "Christian Wives of Mongol Khans," 413, 415, 417.

[75] Brack, "A Mongol Princess Making Hajj," 344.

[76] Brack, 346.

[77] Brack, "A Mongol Princess Making Hajj," 346.

patronage was typically a preexisting tradition in the regions the Mongols took over, so, in many instances, Mongol women were continuing policies of those who were previously in power. By being patrons of religion, Mongol ladies supported religious activities in the empire, which also had the effect of asserting the political legitimacy of the Mongols and buttressing the Mongol religious policy of tolerance, albeit with some favoritism, that allowed them to obtain the favor of both their subjects and God.[78]

Female patronage in the history of the Mongol Empire can be found early on. Right before Ögedei's death, his wife, Töregene Khatun, was largely running the empire, seen in her issuing of an edict in 1240 to authorize and protect the printing of the Daoist Canon that was already in progress. This edict came during a time when Buddhists were increasingly hostile towards Daoists due to them receiving more favors at Mongol court, which highlights how favoritism was not always politically useful.[79] Töregene's edict thus served to ensure that no one would interfere with the printing of the Canon, stating that anyone who did would "be punished for his transgression."[80] This was a win for the Daoists as the reprinting of "such an authoritative and impressive body of Daoist scriptures" would have increased their prestige in China.[81] Töregene patronized Daoism even when it was not politically convenient for her as well. Before she assumed control of the Empire's administration, she had donated a full set of Daoist scriptures to the leader of the Quanzhen sect in 1234, just as Lady Li, principal concubine of the Chin emperor Chang-tsung, had done twenty-seven years earlier.[82] In this way, she continued the female tradition of patronage already present in this part of the empire that helped to strengthen those religions, and she continued the Mongol policy of patronizing religions in order to gain support for their rule.

Sorqoqtani was another active patron of religion, and her approach is even more representative of the Mongol's political strategy of utilizing patronage to consolidate their power. In her rule over her own appanage of the Mongol Empire in China, she patronized a variety of religions. Despite her Nestorian Christian background, Sorqoqtani was a patron of Buddhism and Daoism, which helped her to gain the favor of her Chinese subjects. She patronized Islam as well, seen in her donations given to build a *madrasa* in Bukhara and to establish a *auqaf*, or religious endowment, for the Muslims of the villages surrounding Bukhara. In supporting a wide variety of religions under her rule, she ensured the continuance, and possible expansion, of religious activities while simultaneously contributing to Mongol religious policy, thus benefitting from the political value of religious tolerance.[83]

The Yuan also benefited from the religious patronage of Mongol women. Chabi was a supporter of many religions, patronizing Islamic financial ministers,

[78] De Nicola, "Patrons or Murids," 146.

[79] Igor de Rachewiltz, "Some Remarks on Töregene's Edict of 1240," *Papers in Far Eastern History* 25 (1981): 42, 52.

[80] Rachewiltz, "Some Remarks," 42.

[81] Rachewiltz, 47.

[82] Rachewiltz, 45.

[83] Rossabi, "Khubilai Khan and the Women in his Family," 338; Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire,* 240.

Buddhist monks, and Confucian scholars, thus aiding the Yuan in attempting to acquiesce the subjects under their rule.[84] Along with her efforts to uphold religious tolerance, she also operated in line with another element of traditional Mongol religious policy in terms of favoring one religion. Marco Polo describes how Buddhist activities in China required "enormous sums," and how the lamas "stood much higher than the priests of other creeds, living in the palace [of Khubilai] as if in their own house."[85] Although this may be a coincidence, her death coincided with the beginning of Khubilai's persecution against other religions such as Islam and Judaism.[86] Despite these reversals after her death, the impacts she made during her lifetime were significant to supporting a variety of religious activities, and her influence on Khubilai may have been connected to the survival of those religious activities at that time and to his adherence to the Mongol policy of religious tolerance. Through all of this, Buddhist patronage appears to have been maintained as official Yuan policy. This can be seen in the existence of a Yuan dynasty mandala that was funded by Tugh Temür, great-grandson of Khubilai, and his wives, apparent from their portraits at the bottom of the mandala, thus highlighting how Mongol women continued traditions of religious patronage that benefited both religion and empire.[87]

In addition, the Ilkhanate had several Mongol women who took part in activities of religious patronage. Female financial patronage had already long been a tradition in Persia, seen in how Seljuq women supported Muslims through charitable acts and financed many religious buildings for the Muslim community. Mongol women in the Ilkhanate continued this tradition of female patronage, which helped the Mongols consolidate their rule. Dokuz Khatun, the Nestorian Christian, was an ardent patron of Christianity. As the wife of Tolui and later Hülegü, she acquired great social status and economic wealth, allowing her to be an influential patron of religion. She and Hülegü are credited with commanding the Catholicus Makikha to build a church in Baghdad, and a mural inside a Turkish church that was originally thought to be Helen and Constantine is now thought to depict Hülegü and Dokuz. This development in the scholarly interpretation of the art is based on the adoration of Dokuz by local Christians, further signaling the impact of her patronage. Under her influence, the early Ilkhanate had more Christian buildings being financed than Islamic ones. Marriage alliances brought in even more benefits for the Christians of Persia, especially the marriage of Despina Khatun to Abaqa Ilkhan. Upon her arrival, Despina is said to have founded a church in her *ordo*, providing a place of worship for Jacobite Christians at Abaqa's court. As patrons, these women supported the activities of Christians by providing them with locations

[84] Rossabi, "Khubilai Khan and the Women in his Family," 351.

[85] Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, The Venetian: Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, 2 vols, trans. by Sir Henry Yule (London, 1903), 319.

[86] Atwood, "Validation by Holiness or Sovereignty," 251.

[87] *Vajrabhairava Mandala*, 1330-32, silk tapestry, 96 5/8 x 82 5/16 inches, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/37614.

for their religious activities, critical for the survival of their religion and making the onset of Mongol rule more appealing to Christian subjects.[88]

As Islamization picked up in Persia, aided by the marriage of Muslim women into the dynasty and by the growing number of Mongol converts, so too did Islamic patronage. Gaykhatu Ilkhan's daughter, Malikah Qutlugh, was a patron of Sufism, recorded as sending gifts to the Shaykh Zahid Ibrahim in his hagiography. Interestingly, he is said to have rejected them since he claimed they were of military, Turkish, and royal origin, making them impure. This rejection was likely due to the views held by the author of the hagiography as the shaykh was later recorded as accepting an endowment from the Ilkhan Abu Said, but it does show that it was common for royal Mongol women to send gifts to shaykhs at this time, which aided shaykhs and Sufism in its functioning. After the conversion of Ghazan Ilkhan in 1295, Islamic patronage activity in the Ilkhanate continued to increase. Bulughan Khatun, wife to Ghazan, had little record of patronage activity before 1295, but, following his conversion, she became a significant patron of Islam. She is thought to have funded a sepulchre in an Erzurum *madrasa*, and she built a *khanaqah* for Sufi dervishes in Baghdad.[89]

Aided by their economic and political status, women among the Mongols made important contributions in their pursuit of religious patronage. Their support, whether that be the construction of religious buildings or patronage of specific religious figures, was critical to the functioning of those religions and to the shaping of the religious landscape under Mongol rule. There was an extremely important political dimension to their work as well. Patronage of religion, particularly through the financing of religious buildings, was a way for the Mongols to assert their own political prestige to the common people. This was incredibly important for the Mongols, whose nomadic nature and consistent conquests meant physical expressions of their legitimacy were important to remind the sedentary population who was in charge.[90] Mongol women were integral to asserting this idea. Lastly, their overall religious patronage helped to solidify the support of their subjects and to obtain the favor of God, which was necessary for the continued stability and maintenance of Mongol rule.

Conclusion

Following the peak of the Mongol Empire, the status and influence of women progressively deteriorated. Khubilai's daughters did not have near as much political influence as Chabi, and the growing Islamization of the Ilkhanate and its eventual dissolution meant Islamic norms of female seclusion reigned once again. By modern

[88] De Nicola, "Patrons or Murids," 146-147; De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran,* 91, 214-215; Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*, 243.

[89] Melville, "Padshāh-i Islam," 172; De Nicola, "Patrons or Murids," 149, 151; Judith Pfeiffer, "Reflections on a 'Double Rapprochement': Conversion to Islam among the Mongol Elite during the Ilkhanate," in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. by Linda Komaroff (Boston: Brill, 2006), 379; Pfeiffer, "Reflections on a 'Double Rapprochement,'" 376.

[90] De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran,* 211.

times, it became against social custom for Mongol women to take part in fighting and rituals, a reversal of the medieval status quo.[91]

Despite this growing patriarchy and increasingly restrictive social expectations, the impacts made by Mongol women on religion and empire cannot be forgotten. Women in the Mongol Empire made significant contributions through their relationships to religion, particularly through their personal relationship to religion, their connections with religion in the political realm, and through their religious patronage activities. In this, they supported and sustained religions in the Mongol Empire through their influence on the powerful individuals surrounding them, their personal activities, their role in administration, and through financial and social support. In turn, the Mongol Empire benefited greatly from their activities in terms of being better equipped to obtain the support of subjects, successfully conduct relations with other states, and to ensure stable rule over a diverse domain, all while keeping the favor of the God in the heavens. The relationship between religion and women in the Mongol Empire was thus an integral part of the development of both the Mongol Empire and Eurasian religions.

[91] Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times*, 252; Brack, “A Mongol Princess Making Hajj,” 358; Julie Ann Stewart, "Wife, Mother, Shamaness, Warrior Woman: the Role of Women in Mongolian and Siberian Epic Tales,” *Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia* 5 (2002): 319.