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Undergraduate

**THE
UNDERGRADUATE
HISTORICAL
AND
CRITICAL RACE &
ETHNIC STUDIES
JOURNAL
At UC Merced**

Volume 7 ↔ Issue 1 ↔ Fall 2020

**The Undergraduate Historical
and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies
Journal at the University of California, Merced**

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Letter from the Editor in Chief

It is with great pleasure that I present the third issue of the Undergraduate Historical and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies Journal at UC Merced, as a continuation of the 7th volume of the Undergraduate Historical Journal at UC Merced. As a reflection of our joint department's commitment to urgent questions of race, class, and gender in the past and present, this issue stands as a testament to the benefits of collaboration from students across disciplines.

Throughout this semester, we as undergraduate student editors have still been struggling to keep up with coursework and editing responsibilities with university operations remaining virtual. The Spring 2021 semester has been both filled with hope as we begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel of the COVID-19 pandemic and also a year of great difficulty as we navigate the many uncertainties of our day to day lives.

Cynthia Bravo, in her review of *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* by Sterano Harney and Fred Moten, discusses ideas of solidarity under oppressive systems. Maya C. Ramirez in a review of, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship and religion in the African Portuguese World, 1441-1770* by James H. Sweet explores culture under colonial rule in Africa. Jennifer Summers in her paper *Power of Patrons: The Franciscan Influence on Pietro Lorenzetti's Passion Cycle at Assisi* offers an exploration of art history. Finally, Jessica Martinez seeks to rebuild a history that has previously been erased in *The Forgotten Chinatown in Merced, California: Acceptable Otherness, 1890-1970*

This semester's board was staffed by Cynthia Bravo, Kevin Ng, Jeremy Paguibitan, Andrea Guerra, Jessica Martinez, and Jessica Olivas. I cannot thank these amazing editors enough for the work they put in this semester despite all of our challenges.

Madelyn Lara
Editor in Chief

***The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study.* By Sterano Harney and Fred Moten: (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013).**

The book *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* by scholars Sterano Harney and Fred Moten is composed of a series of essays that draws on the idea that radical Blackness supports and inspires political thought and aesthetic critique. The authors develop and expand on the concepts of study, debt, surround (colonialism made to look like self-defense), and planning in order for the reader to understand the concept of the antagonism of the undercommons.¹ The undercommons are defined as Black, Indigenous, queer, and poor people who want “to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits [their] ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls”. The purpose of this book is to explain and detail how the idea of Black survival exists despite the changes of modernity. Tied into this idea, the authors showcase the relationship between a university, a prison, and a fugitive in the perspective of colored people. In this context fugitivity is seen as a movement of escape. With these ideas in mind, the authors argue that oppressed people should work together to oppose the world that has created troubles rather than trying to amend the troubles by the oppressors rules.²

In this book the authors explain how colonialism was viewed by white people as self-defense and how their criticism endangers the sociality of common people. In response to these ideas the authors describe people of color as antagonists to white politics.³ Many Black people have relied on Black radicalism as hope in order to survive the present.⁴ According to the authors, Black crime is perceived by a white society as state violence rather than resistance to

¹ Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2013). 17.

² Ibid., 20.

³ Ibid., 20.

⁴ Ibid., 64.

state violence. Moten defends their concept of fugitivity as a necessary form of self-defense and self-preservation, especially for Black people.

Organizing the book in seven chapters Harney and Moten seek to illustrate how governance is constrained by the idea that being black automatically makes people of color an enemy of equality and peace. As a result, these ideas have hindered the success of people of color. In chapter 1, the authors use the example of Hollywood movies to explain how the false image created by white people's portrayal of colonialism as self-defense has contributed to public perception and policies targeting people of color in order to mold them into colonial society.⁵ In chapter 2, the authors showcase the relationship between universities and prisons and how they function as disciplinary regimes.⁶ Chapter 3 discusses, in twenty points, the essence of Blackness and how it attributes to the idea of governance. Chapter 4 then explains the correlation between debt and study and how it leads to a negative accumulation of debt for the undercommons.⁷ This chapter also discusses how the institution of slavery has created a political system of debit without payment as a result black radical traditions work through this debit.⁸ Chapter 5 states that the old colonial forms of command have not gone away, they have simply deputized segregation, anti-communism, mass migration, and nuclear family heteropatriarchy as new forms of oppression amid the fugitives.⁹ Chapter 6 describes how the idea of automatic subject, a fantasy that capital exists without labor is now being substituted with human capital.¹⁰ This chapter also discusses how the undercommons are experiencing a new feeling of hapticity and class consciousness.

⁵ Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 17-20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

In order to prove their argument, the scholars Harney and Moten used examples from history, popular media, essays, and interviews that showcase how Black people have been oppressed in American society and how these ideas and policies have made their way into institutions. These ideas and policies have created impediments for the success of Black people. As stated by the authors, ideas used to justify colonialism have stuck around in the politics and media of today and as a result many Black people rely on radical movements as a source of hope. The authors do a great job of demonstrating how media enables misconceptions in public perception and how these misconceptions result in policies aimed to control the common people. This book would be an excellent resource for anyone interested in understanding the importance of oppressed peoples banding together in order to face the systemic racism found in the policies of the institutions in this country.

Cynthia Bravo¹¹

¹¹ The author, being also an editor, recused themselves from the editing process of this article. It received no special treatment and was required to conform to all standard requirements.

***Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship and religion in the African Portuguese World, 1441-1770.* By James H. Sweet (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003)**

James H. Sweet analyzes the exchange of religions, rituals, peoples, and ideologies which occurred in the African Portuguese world between 1441 and 1770. Sweet's main questions he proposes include; how did African cultural practices disperse and transfer along with the general diaspora, and what roles did religion play in creating opportunities and purpose for slave communities? Sweet's main argument is that Africans in seventeenth-century Brazil used a multitude of specific "Angolan," as well as Mbundu, ritual practices, burials, and beliefs in order to acknowledge their situations.¹ This includes the ways in which whites would adopt African religions and ritualistic practices, enabling them to undermine the systems put in place by the colonial world. Sweet is able to answer the questions he proposes as well as proving his general argument through the evidence he provides, which includes specific accounts of witchcraft and rituals as well as Jesuits and Benedictines accounts. Sweet was drawn to the topic because there was a lack of evidence regarding how cultural practices in Africa moved with the diaspora. Oftentimes scholars would rely solely on attempting to find parallels between African religions and Christianity, a mold that Sweet aims to break through his book. The book provides an extensive amount of information, background, and evidence in order to illustrate the ways Africans not only recreated Africa but also heavily empowered themselves through witchcraft and ritualistic acts in Portuguese Brazil.

Sweet evaluates the political, social, and religious climate of the African-Portuguese world in order to implement a backbone to his claims regarding the

¹ James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa : Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003, 16

ways kinship and its adoption was reflective of the lives Africans would lead. Sweet focuses primarily on Brazil due to its ties with Portugal, and allocates a small portion of the book to Africa. Geographically, there was a broad diaspora of Africans to other places in Latin America, including Mexico. However, one may speculate that Sweet emphasizes the African-Portuguese world since there was a considerable amount of Africans who were transported to Brazil since it was incredibly difficult to enslave the nomadic peoples who resided there due to their semi-sedentary lifestyles.² The large amounts of communities that formed as well as the capabilities for religious freedoms allowed Sweet to focus on the African people, their cultures, and the ways their customs directly worked against the colonial attitudes which ran rampant throughout Latin America. These thoughts are supported by Sweet through his use of first-person accounts as well as court, Jesuit, and Benedictine records. He presents readers with the fact that many whites were influenced by African witchcraft, and it became used as a vehicle of power to the multitude of Africans who resided in Brazil. This is evident through the *calundu*, or divination ceremonies including human possession, which were used to cure people in Central Africa.³ Sweet cites the account of Branca, who was called upon by Felicia Pires, a Spanish woman, to remove the *calundu* which was causing her blindness. Branca conducted this by calling a spirit into her body and allowing it to possess her.⁴ This illustrates the ways in which witchcraft allowed slaves to have spiritual and judicial authority. Since Africans were called on by whites to conduct rituals which were fervently frowned upon by the Catholic

² Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003, 30

³ *Ibid.*, 130

⁴ *Ibid.*, 134

church, it allowed Africans to assert their own power in society, while removing authority from the hands of colonizers.

Sweet formulates the general idea that witchcraft was a form of resistance, commonly frequented by slaves and free blacks in order to protect their brothers or to defend themselves. In many ways, Sweet proposes the idea that the use of witchcraft was a reaction or result of the worst evil Africans had to face —The Atlantic Slave Trade. Sweet explains the injustices and temporal conditions which resulted from slavery, this included death, disease, hunger, and a large gender imbalance, all of which were able to be acknowledged through traditions of kinship. Sweet mentions the ways love, romance, and marriage mixed with witchcraft, reflecting on the struggles they were facing in Portuguese-Brazil. In order to have enough women, or wives for communities, men and women both would utilize witchcraft to fight for mates.⁵ This illustrates the way witchcraft was used in African communities, as well as the ways Western ideals of marriage were not applicable within these communities.

Sweet is able to propose a convincing argument that witchcraft and ritualistic practices transcended religious meanings since they also heavily influenced social and economic ways of life. The format of the book allows readers to understand the background of colonial life in Portuguese Brazil, the impacts of slavery as well as the history of the slave trade. The ideas presented are able to ensure that Africans in Portuguese-Brazil were able to assert their power, not because of the parallels they shared with Christianity, but because of their incorporation of witchcraft in daily life. Despite Sweet asserting obvious biases regarding the influence rituals and witchcraft had in Portuguese-Brazil, this allows him to critique past scholarship on the topic,

⁵ Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003, 45.

disproving that Africans assimilation to the colonial world was due to parallels with Christianity.

Sweet's *Recreating Africa: Culture Kinship and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* provides information on the cultural and religious impacts the Atlantic slave trade had on colonial Brazil. At a time where the Americas were being colonized and occupied by Western superpowers, Africans were able to mix their own cultural and religious influences into colonial ways of life.

Maya C. Ramirez

Power of Patrons: The Franciscan Influence on Pietro Lorenzetti's Passion Cycle at Assisi

By Jennifer Summers

The *Passion Cycle* is a fresco created for the Lower Church of the Assisi Basilica, serving as décor for religious purposes. The Assisi Basilica is the burial site of a holy figure, St. Francis of Assisi, [a prominent saint/religious figure], entombed in the Lower Church of the Basilica. As a result the Assisi Basilica has been a pilgrimage site since its completion in 1230. However, after the completion of the frescoes in both the Upper and Lower Churches, it has become a pilgrimage site for both religious and art appreciation.¹ Because of its rich cultural history, Renaissance art and architecture, the Assisi Basilica was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site by the United Nations.

Pietro Lorenzetti's personal life is as vague as the records of his work in the Trecento Renaissance period. Lorenzetti was born in Siena in 1280 or 1290 and was an active painter in the Renaissance from 1306 to 1340. Lorenzetti only signed five of his works and his name was often misspelled, leading historians to surmise that Pietro did not read or write Latin.² Historians have also debated whether he was the older or younger brother of Ambrogio Lorenzetti, another well-known Siennese Trecento artist. More academic scholarship appears to be available on Ambrogio than Pietro. Both Pietro and Ambrogio died during the first wave of the Black Plague in 1348 when it hit Siena.

This essay will discuss Pietro Lorenzetti's *Passion Cycle* fresco at the Lower Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, Italy, and the importance of its patron, the Franciscan Order, on Lorenzetti's artistic choices when executing this masterpiece. By analyzing the artistic choices Lorenzetti made when executing the *Passion Cycle* through the chronology of completion of

¹ William R. Cook, ed., *Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 60.

² Hayden B.J. Maginnis, "Pietro Lorenzetti: A Chronology," *Art Bulletin* 66, no. 2 (June 1984), 183.

other artists frescoes in the Lower Church, the influence of his patrons presents itself. The Franciscan influence is also present in the artistic choices Lorenzetti made in the portrayal of Judas, the apostle of Christ that betrayed him. And lastly, we see the Franciscan influence in how Lorenzetti placed specific scenes of *Passion Cycle* with their matching panels on the Life of St. Francis in the north transept. This paper will include discussions of four of the *Passion Cycle* scenes, *Entry to Jerusalem*, *The Last Supper*, *The Crucifixion*, and *The Death of Judas*.

Renaissance works of the Trecento period suffer from a lack of documentation. There is a lack of surviving papers from the period that record patronage, dates of creation and completion, or even in some cases, the artist that created the work. The frescoes of the Basilica at San Francesco of Assisi are no stranger to this phenomenon. When looking at the works of the Lower Basilica specifically, there was much debate amongst art historians as to the artist(s) of the *Passion Cycle* and the dates these frescoes were created and completed. In 1864, Art Historian G.B. Cavalcaselle properly credited Pietro Lorenzetti as the creator of the *Passion Cycle* of the Lower Church at the Assisi Basilica with an estimated completion date of 1320. Before Cavalcaselle had determined Lorenzetti as the artist of the *Passion Cycle*, other art historians surmised that the *Passion Cycle* was the work of other artists like Giotto, Pietro Cavallini, or Puccio Capanna. A further century and a half would pass before Art Historians like Hayden B. J. Maginnis and Robin Simon came to the consensus that Lorenzetti's *Passion Cycle* began in 1316-1317 and was completed in 1319.³ This is important to the history of the work as we now

³ Hayden B.J. Maginnis worked towards establishing 1317-1319 as the completion dates for Pietro Lorenzetti's *Passion Cycle* at Assisi in his Ph.D. dissertation. Lorenzetti and Simone Martini would have completed their frescoes in the lower church by the time the Ghibellines occupied Assisi in 1319. Historian Robin Simon's work further confirms Maginnis in the estimation of a timeline and provides detailed photographic evidence in the changes to the ribs of the transept crossings and how they interact with the Lorenzetti and Martini frescoes. Hayden B.J. Maginnis, "Pietro Lorenzetti and the Assisi *Passion Cycle*: A Dissertation" (Princeton University, 1975). Robin Simon, "Towards a Relative Chronology of the Frescoes in the Lower Church of San Francesco at Assisi," *The Burlington Magazine* 118, no. 879 (1976), 361.

know the order of completion for all of the Lower Church frescoes and how Lorenzetti was able to make artistic decisions that provide a cohesive look and narrative to the entire Lower Church.

The *Passion Cycle* at Assisi is considered Lorenzetti's masterpiece. Art Historian Joseph Polzer stated,

“the Assisi *Passion* was highly original, drawing on many kinds of sources modern and conservative... in the realm of Sieneese painting of the early Trecento his brand of realism was extremely precocious constituting a principal facet in the vital artistic developments then taking place in Tuscany.”⁴

Though Lorenzetti was known for naturalism in his works as the faces that he painted were more lifelike and realistic than any of those in his predecessors' works in the Duecento. Polzer also credits Lorenzetti for drawing upon modern and conservative techniques that allow his work to seamlessly blend in with the other works present in the Lower Church. Lorenzetti drew upon multiple influences when creating the *Passion Cycle* for the Lower Church, however, none appear more important than the influence of its patron, the Franciscans. The Assisi *Passion Cycle* would not be the last time that Lorenzetti would paint these images or other scenes from the Bible. Lorenzetti's last major work completed was a triptych altarpiece for the Siena Cathedral in 1342, tempera on panel, *The Birth of a Virgin*.

St. Francis and the Franciscan Order

St. Francis, the founder of the Franciscan order, died on October 3, 1226. Two days before his canonization in 1228, the Pope laid the first stones for the double basilica of San Francesco.⁵ St. Francis became a saint on July 16, 1228, because of the purported miracles surrounding his life and legacy. One of the many miracles of St. Francis was that he received the stigmata, the same as Christ. The stigmata is the appearance of wounds on the hands, wrists, or

⁴ Joseph Polzer, “Pietro Lorenzetti's Artistic Origin and His Place in Trecento Sieneese Painting,” *Jahrbuch Der Berliner Museen* 35 (1993), 110.

⁵ Cook, *Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy*, 6.

feet that occur from the process of crucifixion. St. Francis was never crucified, which is why his followers believed this to be one of his many miracles. A primary reason as to why the *Passion Cycle* is so important to the Franciscan Order is “[h]is stigmata are much more than an identifying attribute: they are the guarantee of his power as an advocate of the faithful.”⁶ St. Francis and his life drew parallels to Christ and the critical events of Christ’s life, like Judas and his betrayal of Christ. St. Francis took a vow of poverty, a vow that the Franciscan Order holds in the highest regard and another commonality with Christ. Judas is also critical to the story of Christ in the Franciscan order; he represents the opposite of Christ and is likened to greed and avarice. Judas chose worldly wealth over the life of Christ, with his betrayal being critical to the story of Christ, represented as despair versus hope in Franciscan Art.⁷

Both St. Francis and the Franciscans had a profound interest and passion for the Holy Land, Jerusalem. According to Maginnis, “Given this interest in the East, the tenor of Franciscan devotion, and the character of the Saint Francis Legend, it is not surprising to find references to Jerusalem in Pietro’s frescoes.”⁸ Lorenzetti’s *Entry to Jerusalem* (figure 2) vaguely references the Valley of Jehoshaphat, however, it clearly shows the Temple and its relative position to the Golden Gate. Lorenzetti’s treatment of *the Last Supper* and *Washing of the Feet* as two different locations also coincides with pilgrims’ experiences in Jerusalem, who would have visited two different sites for these two biblical events.⁹ The Franciscans valued the similarities between Christ’s life and that of St. Francis. Including the Temple where Christ

⁶ Rona Goffen, “Nostra Conversatio in Caelis Est: Observations on the Sacra Conversazione in the Trecento,” *The Art Bulletin* 61, no. 2 (1979), 216.

⁷ Janet Robson, “Judas and the Franciscans: Perfidy Pictured in Lorenzetti’s Passion Cycle at Assisi,” *Art Bulletin* 86, no. 1 (March 2004), 31–57.

⁸ Hayden B.J. Maginnis, “Places Beyond the Seas: Trecento Images of Jerusalem,” *Notes in the History of Art* 13, no. 2 (1994), 6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4–6.

expelled the money changers and merchants further coincides with the Franciscans values of poverty and devotion to worship.

Lower Church of the Assisi Basilica

Assisi's Lower Church is the site where the body of St. Francis lies. Within the Lower Church, there are two transepts, a nave, and multiple chapels. These chapels were not part of the original construction of the Lower Church, they were built at the end of the thirteenth century. The North or Right Transept is where we find Giotto's frescoes of the *Infancy of Christ Cycle*, the *Miracles of St. Francis*, and two unconnected frescoes of the *Crucifixion* and the *Madonna and Child Enthroned*. In the South or Left Transept is where we find Lorenzetti's *Passion Cycle* fresco (Figure 1) and the *Stigmata of St. Francis*. Six of the *Passion Cycle* scenes are arranged two scenes per register with three registers extending across the ceiling of the transept, culminating in the large *Crucifixion* scene. The *Crucifixion*, one of the scenes of the overall *Passion Cycle*, the total size of this scene amounts to about four of the smaller scenes put together. Directly across from Lorenzetti's *Crucifixion* on the opposite wall is his *Stigmata of St. Francis*. Lorenzetti did this purposely, by putting the two largest frescoes in opposition, the *Crucifixion* and *Stigmata of St. Francis*, he is drawing attention to the parallels between Christ's life and St. Francis. In the dado of the south transept, Lorenzetti created frescoes of the *Madonna and Child with St. Francis* as well as the fictive bench. Art Historian Hayden B.J. Maginnis believed that Lorenzetti completed the frescoes of the south transept between 1316/17-1319. Giotto completed his frescoes in the north transept in 1315 and Simone Martini completed the altarpiece fresco in 1319.¹⁰ This chronology tells us that Lorenzetti worked side by side with Simone Martini, however, Giotto and his workshop completed their work a few

¹⁰ Diana Norman, "Sanctity, Kingship and Succession: Art and Dynastic Politics in the Lower Church at Assisi," *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 73, no. 3 (2010), 325; Maginnis, "Pietro Lorenzetti"; Cook, *Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy*, 42.

years beforehand. Because the frescoes of the entire Lower Church are in conversation with one another, Lorenzetti carefully planned his works to compliment and not compete with Giotto's frescoes of the northern transept.

Completing the Frescoes of the Lower Church

Lorenzetti was the perfect match for the Franciscans to complete the *Passion Cycle* in the south transept. According to Hayden B.J. Maginnis,

“We cannot know whether it was a matter of good fortune or considered judgement, but with his arrival, the Franciscans, concerned as they were with the human aspect of sacred history, found themselves with a master whose outlook was perfectly suited to a discursive and emotive treatment of his subject.”¹¹

While most of the works of the Lower Church were already completed, it was up to Lorenzetti to find a way to bring all of those works together, while somehow finding a way to set his work of the *Passion Cycle* apart, carrying the emotion to match the beliefs and wishes of the Franciscan Order to fruition.

Franciscans are an order that observes asceticism, so it is of no surprise that controversy arose when the Basilica's frescoes and altarpieces began to adorn its barren walls and altars at the end of the thirteenth century. Pope Nicholas IV, was the first Franciscan pope and reigned from 1288 to 1292, and ordered the renewal of Assisi. Pope Nicholas' order included the decoration of the Upper Basilica and Lower Basilica, as well as expanding the Lower Basilica through his papal bull, *Reducentes ad sedulae*.¹² In his bull, Pope Nicholas advised the Franciscans that it was permissible for them to use lay funds to complete the decoration and expansion of this important church. This order was not without controversy as other religious groups connected

¹¹ Maginnis, “Pietro Lorenzetti,” 209.

¹² Cooper and Robson both uncovered evidence that the Franciscans either misread or took liberties with Nicholas IV papal bull. It is speculated that Nicholas only wanted the upper basilica decorated and the lower basilica expanded but not decorated. Donal Cooper and Janet Robson, “‘A Great Sumptuousness of Paintings’: Frescos and Franciscan Poverty at Assisi in 1288 and 1312,” *The Burlington Magazine* 151, no. 1279 (2009): 656; Angiola Maria. Romanini, *Assisi : The Frescoes in the Basilica of St. Francis* (New York : Rizzoli, 1998), 62.

with the Franciscan Order questioned their vow of poverty and the elaborate and expensive decoration of their primary church. Lorenzetti worked to produce the frescoes in a way that would unite the various factions of the Franciscan Order, such as the Spirituels and Fraticelli¹³, by choosing to portray Judas serves as a reminder of their vows of poverty and the consequences of choosing not to obey. According to Robson, it is also believed that Lorenzetti's linkage of the scenes of his *Passion Cycle* to the Franciscan allegories of Chastity, Obedience and Poverty in the north transept were also designed to appease the Spirituels.¹⁴

Judas

Lorenzetti paid particular attention to Judas in the first five scenes of Lorenzetti's *Passion Cycle*, which speaks directly to the Franciscan Order and their vow of poverty. The iconography of Judas at this point in the Renaissance is that he held the purse, and his actions were driven by money. The Franciscans viewed Judas as the antithesis to Christ, he chose to accept money from the Romans for betraying Christ. The Franciscans believed that those who followed in Judas' footsteps would fall from the grace of God. At the time that Lorenzetti created these frescoes, there was a dispute amongst the Franciscans about their interpretation of poverty within the order. Lorenzetti's inclusion of Judas in his frescoes transmits key messaging for the Franciscans about poverty and obedience to God. In the frescoes of the Upper and Lower Basilica of Assisi, Judas appears eleven times total, eight times in the Lower Church, and only three times in the Upper Basilica, with three of the images dating to the Duecento and the balance being produced in the Trecento period.

Judas and his appearances at the Assisi Basilica represent a smaller scale version of what occurred overall in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries in Italy. As Franciscan

¹³ S. Maureen Burke and Ambrogio Lorenzetti, "The 'Martyrdom of the Franciscans' by Ambrogio Lorenzetti," *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 65, no. 4 (2002), 465, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4150672>.

¹⁴ Cook, *Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy*, 44.

influence increased, so did the number of times Judas was included in these biblical frescoes. In the twelfth century only 37 images of Judas were produced, 65 in the thirteenth, and the fourteenth (or Trecento) century, we see 201 images produced. There are multiple factors for this phenomenon according to art historian Janet Robson, but it is “the demand created by the new mendicant orders and their rapidly increasing number of churches.”¹⁵ This may explain Lorenzetti’s choice to include Judas in the *Passion Cycle* for five of the twelve scenes, including scenes like the *Entry to Jerusalem* (Figure 2) where earlier artists may not have included him. In Lorenzetti’s *Entry to Jerusalem*, Judas is the first figure directly behind Christ on his donkey. Whereas in earlier works like Duccio’s *Entry to Jerusalem* 1310-11, (Figure 3) does not include Judas.¹⁶ Duccio’s *Entry to Jerusalem* is one of the 26 scenes of the *Passion Cycle* that can be found on the back of his masterpiece, the *Maesta*. Duccio includes only eleven of the twelve apostles in the lower-left corner of the scene, flanking Christ upon his entry into Jerusalem. Lorenzetti chose to include Judas where earlier artists had purposefully excluded him from their works.

Inspired by Franciscan ideology is Lorenzetti’s portrayal of the suicide of Judas. One of Lorenzetti’s known artistic influences, Giotto, chose to portray Judas hanging from a tree in his *Last Judgement: Death of Judas*, ca 1302-05, Padua, Arena Chapel. When painting *The Death of Judas* (Figure 7), Lorenzetti veered from the generally accepted interpretation that Judas hung himself from a fig tree in the valley of Jehoshaphat and chose to paint him hanging from a beam within a stone arch. According to Hayden B. J. Maginnis, there are two stories relating to the suicide of Judas, one that he hangs himself from a fig tree, the other according to a thirteenth-century visitor is that there is a street in Jerusalem called “the street of the arch of

¹⁵ Robson, “Judas and the Franciscans,” 31.

¹⁶ Duccio’s *Entry to Jerusalem* 1310-11, tempera and gold on wood, Museo dell ‘Opera del Duomo, Siena

Judas¹⁷ and that is where he supposedly hanged himself. The latter story is one that the Franciscans' would have been familiar with as St. Francis founded the Order of the Friar's Minor in Jerusalem in 1209. Within the Order of the Friar's Minor exists a custodian priory known as the Custody of the Holy Land who is charged to protect Jerusalem and the holy land. The Franciscans have been present in Jerusalem since 1217 and would have had knowledge of the street with the arch where Judas had hanged himself.

Narrative Scenes in Opposition

With an accurate timeline in place for the various expansions and decorations of the Lower Church in place, it is critical to note that Pietro Lorenzetti would be working on the South Transept after all other artists and artisans (except for Simone Martini) had completed their work in the church. Lorenzetti placed specific scenes of the *Passion Cycle* in certain locations so that it would correspond with the imagery in the opposite transept.¹⁸ The *Passion Cycle* corresponds with the allegory of Obedience.¹⁹ Cooper notes in his chapter of Cook's *Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy*, that "these cycles were created in dialogue with the tomb."²⁰ St. Francis viewed himself as an obedient and loyal servant to God and the Franciscans valued that trait. Lorenzetti purposely aligned the subject matter of the frescoes to emphasize the life of St. Francis and create cohesion amongst other artists' works in the narrative of the entire Lower Church.

Lorenzetti also made a powerful link in iconography within the south transept. Opposite *The Crucifixion* in the south transept is the *Stigmata of St. Francis* fresco. Many changes were made to the layout of the Lower Church over time because of the popularity as a pilgrimage site,

¹⁷ Maginnis, "Places Beyond the Seas," 6.

¹⁸ Hayden B.J. Maginnis, "Assisi Revisited: Notes on Recent Observations," *The Burlington Magazine* 117, no. 869 (1975), 512.

¹⁹ Cook, *Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy*, 44.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

which most likely led to the removal of an altar that damaged *The Crucifixion* scene of the *Passion Cycle* (see Figure 5 with damage shown). Despite the damage, the monumental scene beckons appreciation and its meaning remains when viewed against the Stigmata of St. Francis. Maginnis notes, “[T]he lower central part of the Crucifixion was damaged by the installation of an altar in 1607, but from a sixteenth-century source we know that soldiers casting lots for Christ’s robes were depicted at the foot of his cross.”²¹ By placing these two monumental scenes opposite one another in the south transept indelibly links the two stories of Christ’s crucifixion and St. Francis receiving the stigmata.

The *Crucifixion* scene of the *Passion Cycle* at Assisi is not the only time that Lorenzetti would paint this particular scene of Christ’s life. When painting the *Crucifixion*, Lorenzetti relied on the four gospel accounts in the Holy Bible. However, according to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which owns Lorenzetti's *The Crucifixion*, 1340s, tempera and gold leaf on wood (Figure 6), in addition to relying on the bible for inspiration, he also used “contemporary devotional literature.”²² Devotional literature were books or other forms of printed materials that contained prayers, psalms or gospels. Lorenzetti would have had access to any of the devotional literature that the Franciscans used at the time. The Franciscans continued to influence Lorenzetti long after he completed the *Passion Cycle* at Assisi.

Conclusion

Though influenced by other artistic styles of European cultures and other Italian Renaissance artists like Duccio and Giotto, the most important artistic influence on Lorenzetti

²¹ Maginnis, “Pietro Lorenzetti,” 200–201.

²² The Metropolitan Museum of Art states that Lorenzetti was influenced by Saint Bonaventura’s “Meditations on the Life of Christ.” Historians like Sarah McNamer have debated and come to the consensus that it was not Saint Bonaventura that wrote the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, nor do we know who wrote them and have settled on pseudo-Bonaventura as the author. McNamer’s research also positions the dates of *Meditationes Vitae Christi* authorship between 1336 to 1360. Sarah McNamer, “Further Evidence for the Date of the Pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi*,” *Franciscan Institute Publications* 50 (1990): 235–61. “The Crucifixion, Pietro Lorenzetti, 1340s,” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, n.d.

with respect to the *Passion Cycle* at Assisi were the Franciscans. The Franciscan Order and their beliefs inspired Lorenzetti, not only in the Assisi *Passion Cycle* but in his later works like *The Crucifixion* completed in the 1340s. Lorenzetti's ability to link the scenes of the frescoes from the south transept to the north proved monumental in appeasing the detractors of the Assisi frescoes. Lorenzetti painted new interpretations of biblical scenes that had not been seen before. His portrayal of Judas and the inclusion of Judas in the scenes of the *Passion Cycle* were meant to appeal to the Franciscan Order. Yet, these choices spoke to a larger audience and evoked a stream of religious pilgrimages and eventually art appreciation pilgrimages that would visit the Lower Church.



Figure 1. Pietro Lorenzetti, *Passion Cycle*, fresco, 1416/17-1419, south transept of the Lower Church at the Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi, Italy.



Figure 2. Pietro Lorenzetti, *Entry to Jerusalem*, fresco, 1416/17-1419, south transept of the Lower Church at the Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi, Italy.



Figure 3. Duccio, *Entry to Jerusalem*, tempera and gold on wood, 1311, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena.



Figure 4. Pietro Lorenzetti, *The Last Supper*, fresco, 1416/17-1419, south transept of the Lower Church at the Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi, Italy.

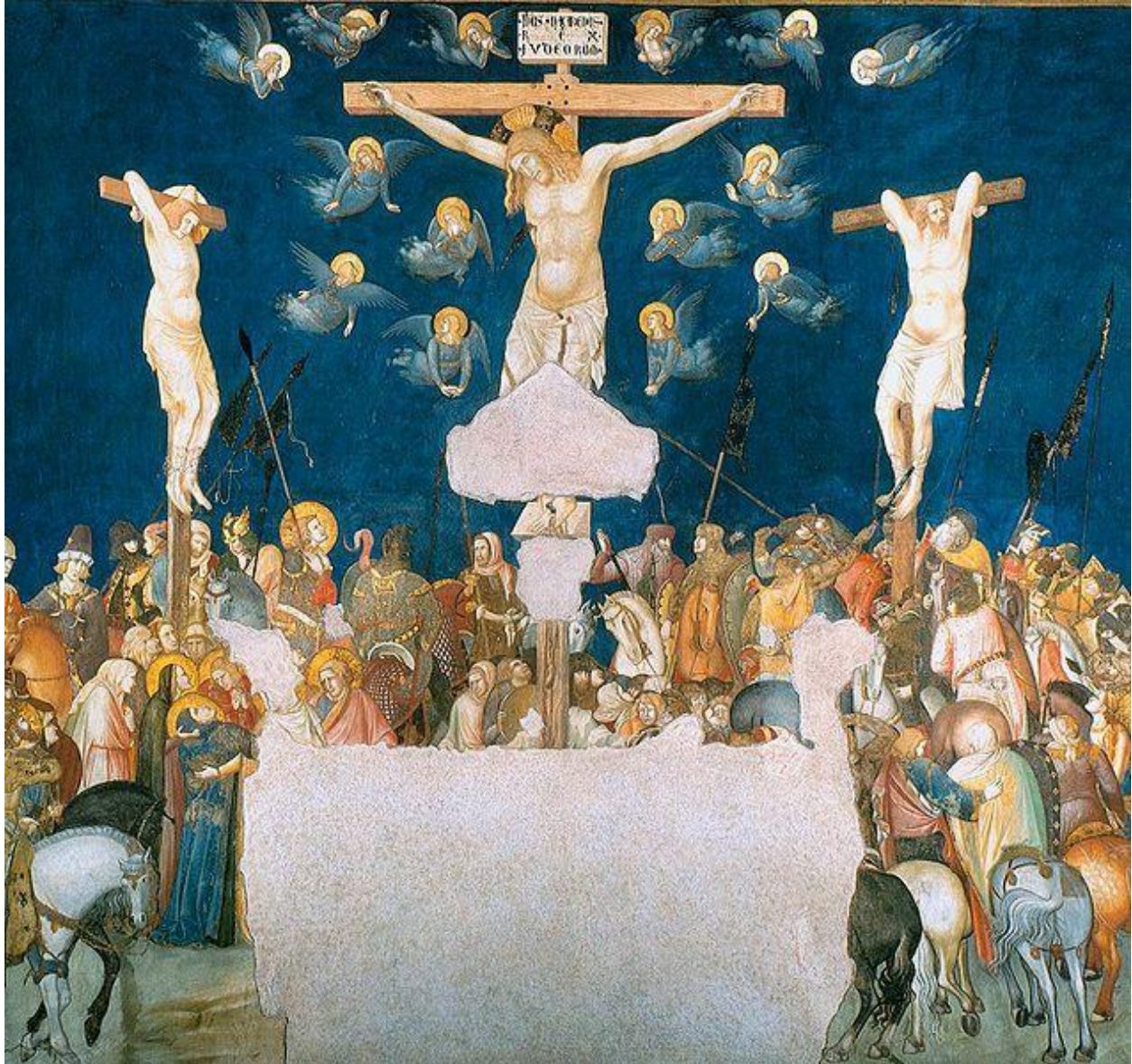


Figure 5. Pietro Lorenzetti, *The Crucifixion*, fresco, 1416/17-1419, south transept of the Lower Church at the Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi, Italy.



Figure 6. Pietro Lorenzetti, The Crucifixion, tempera and gold leaf on wood, 1340s, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 7. Pietro Lorenzetti, *The Death of Judas*,²³ fresco, 1416/17-1419, south transept of the Lower Church at the Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi, Italy.

²³ Luciano Bellosi, *Pietro Lorenzetti at Assisi* (Assisi, Italy: Dada Publication, 1982).

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The Forgotten Chinatown in Merced, California: Acceptable Otherness, 1890-1970

By Jessica Martinez¹

From the early 1860s, Chinese railroad builders helped establish the town of Merced California, thus becoming some of the first residents along the Central Pacific Railroad. In Merced, Chinese individuals made up much of the workforce within sectors of city development, domestic work, and as business owners, all while experiencing anti-Chinese sentiment due to the political climate of the time. This racism resulted in violence against the Chinese population all across California. Anti-Chinese sentiment had a negative effect on archival preservation, noting their impact on Merced's social and political sphere, due to the lack of resources and individuals not wanting to take on these tasks or only acknowledging the community negatively. This research will present the diverse profiles of individuals whose complex lives helped portray the inner workings of the Chinese community. Shining a light on the overlooked communal struggles of the Merced Chinatown from 1870's-1970's with the use of newspaper articles, death records and other official Merced County City records. Analyzing the marginalization experienced by individuals in the subcategories of business, laborers, laundry workers, wives, and sexworkers, in order to try and give back power into their existence and representation.

Like many other immigrant groups, Chinese immigrants were met with different stereotypes that continued to justify oppression created by the White society. During the 19th century caricatures and literature only portrayed this population in cunning ways due to the "Yellow Peril." The 'yellow peril' historically represents a western fear that Asian immigrants were evil and would take over the country with their 'savage ways.' White society saw them as a

¹The author, being also an editor, recused themselves from the editing process of this article. It received no special treatment and was required to conform to all standard requirements.

detachment to society, refusing to assimilate into Western culture and posing a serious threat to their white supremacist ideals.² Business owners, oftentimes laundrymen, were looked down upon for taking up jobs contrary to the times' gender norms. Workers were thought to steal jobs from white workers while sending all their earnings back to China with no contribution to the country's economy. Due to wage discrepancies and high prices for traveling tickets, Chinese workers were seen paying off their passage for many years, or just trying to help their families but still being involved in local economies. This paper will first introduce jobs males were most seen taking on such as business owners, laborers, and doctors. It will then analyze the different roles women were occupying; wives and other occupations within the community.

Business Owners:

Within the Chinese enclaves, there was a set social hierarchy that resembled the social position of their home country; business owners and merchants occupy the higher class stature. This class was known for establishing communication bridges with the white population while generally providing services in Chinatown as a proactive to racist business owners. Businesses ranged from laundromats (wash houses), convenience stores, to gardener peddlers. "Their business generally provided a sense of community such as storekeepers. They sold imported goods from China and local goods peddled by gardeners to continue participating in the cultural cuisine and customs."³ Bringing a small piece of their homeland into the United States for those who were homesick or tried to continue their cultural resistance.

Some business owners like laundrymen were seen as defying gender norms by obtaining jobs in female role sectors. Helping form a shift from a restrictive labor market to a self

² John Kuo Wei Tchen, Dylan Yates, *Yellow Peril!:An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*, (London:Verso, 2014)

³ Sarah C Lim, "Remembering the Merced Chinese: The Builders of the Great Central Valley", M.A. diss.(California State University, Stanislaus, 2000), 30.

employed economy by allowing self employment to escape any violence or abuse from employers. The merchant and business owner this project focuses on is Hung Wo Sing, who began making a name for himself in 1873 as a successful storekeeper after acquiring a significant amount of property. He was born in China in 1839, although it is not clear when he migrated to the US, he began appearing in census records in 1880 and in tax deeds. He owned a total of 7 properties, deed records demonstrate him paying taxes on houses number; 12, 20, 21, 22, and house 24, modern day 14th St and L. It is not clear what kind of store he owned, tax records only note 'goods', 'merchandise' and mules for transportation which he was taxed for as noted in the County assessment Rolls.⁴ Owners of multiple properties were often seen renting out to other Chinese residents since it was almost rare for white individuals to rent out to minorities. This can be inferred by cross analysing census records and tax deeds; tax records show us those living in the properties while tax records show another individual playing for those properties.

Mr. Wo Sing had a wife, Shee For, in addition to two second-generation daughters living with him. Chinese men were not usually seen having a family in the US, as most immigrated alone. Due to the lack of women migrating to the US there were disproportionately more men than women. This was a result of harsh immigration laws, expensive voyage tickets and the ability for men to find more job opportunities. Wo Sing's family status helped portray how businessmen were some of the few to have family due to their monetary advantages.

Laborer:

The second level were laborers, divided into subcategories of industrial jobs, house servants, cooks, and those working in merchant's trade. These individuals were a vital asset to

⁴ Merced County Record, "Merced County Assessment Rolls (1875-1990) "

the economic growth of the Chinatowns and the city of Merced. Females made up the last category and often served as wives of merchants, second-generation daughters, and sex workers. Wives were seen running family businesses while still having to care for the family. The few children seen in Chinatowns came from wealthy families, second-generation Chinese-Americans, or children with contract based employment. Families pooled their resources to send a man while others came through contract labor systems.⁵ Men had better chances to obtain work and send money back to their families. Nonetheless, regardless of gender, social and class status individuals all suffered from the same stereotypes. Those with lower class statuses faced the hardest forms of racism.

Railroad workers were the foundation of the Merced community, helping industrialize it allowed an increase of population. Ah Loy, was a railroad worker for the Pacific Improvement Company in Merced. As mentioned before, record keeping of Chinese individuals was very hard to find, when not painted negatively. Ah Loy was a very common name of the time within the Chinese population, thus in order to create a profile for this particular Ah Loy, there was a need to cross match his age and race with census and death records. Although his occupation also matches Merced county Gleaning records, census and coroner's records, allowing researchers to this can be the same person. It can be concluded he first arrived in Merced around the year 1880 due to an individual with the same name, occupation, place of residency, and age which can be found in the census of the same year making him 14 years old.⁶ His presence in census records at that young age draws questions of possible child labour and to whom he could have been related to. Mr. Loy died on August 21, 1888, at the age of 22 after a deadly accident with train

⁵ Sarah C. Lim, *Remembering the Merced Chinese*, 20.

⁶ Merced County Records, "Merced County Census Records" (1880)

cars owned by the company first reported on August 25th in the *Merced Express* newspaper.⁷ He had 5 dollars in gold and 5 cents in silver in his possession that in today's economy translates to roughly \$130, a very high quantity for a worker. He was also found with a pocket knife and a pipe, which were all turned over to the County Treasurer of Merced. Turning in possessions over to the county or a public fund was seen as an excuse to steal from the deceased. False claims of putting back the money into the community or using it for burial expenses were used. When in reality the Chinese community came together to bury individuals or families from China were seen to pool needs to transport their relatives back home.

Workers were known to smoke from pipes both cigar and opium. Opium within the worker population was identified as relievers of pain and energy generators, as mentioned in historian Sarah Lim's "*Remembering the Merced Chinese*".⁸ There is no proof Mr. Loy had an addiction to opioids, but it is important to point out, workers had to turn to opium usage in order to meet the demand of this bone aching work. Proving the narratives of being lazy workers wrong or drug addicts were wrong. This was just a result of constant workers exploitation faced by many Chinese workers. Coroner E.S. O'Brien ruled his death "resulted from an accident and no blame was attached to any person."⁹ There is no record of a lawsuit filed against the company. In the beginning years of railway industrialization, these accidents were extremely common. Employees often did not receive the proper training in addition to the trains being uncontrollable. Chinese workers had no form of established unions in Merced county to protect them from exploitation or lack of settlement from employers. Similar to others, Mr. Loy did not obtain remuneration as we modernly see individuals obtaining from a company with hazardous

⁷ "Ah, Loy," *Merced Express*, (August 25th, 1888), 125.

⁸ Sarah C Lim, "*Remembering the Merced Chinese*" 5-6.

⁹ Merced County City Records, "Coroners Register of Merced County 1870-1910" (1888), 14.

work environments. Americans were oftentimes seen turning such jobs away at the same time employers saw Chinese workers as a source of cheap labor due to the dual wage system, their main importance was to create profit with no regard for these immigrant lives.

Doctors:

Doctors were also seen taking this role of bringing a piece of home overseas. Kee Kow was a 52-year-old doctor in Merced in 1880. Other doctors like Chong Sing (38) were also present in Merced County.¹⁰ In the 1875 assessment rolls, which are used as an estimator for a property's value, describe a doctor registered as a taxpayer for the property house #5 on the south side of that street in Snelling, CA. Doctors peddling Chinese medicine were known as 'herb and roots doctors' in the United States. The book *Herbs and Roots* by Tamara Venit-Shelton, emphasizes the importance of Chinese doctors in underrepresented communities that didn't benefit from Western medicine.¹¹ Chinese doctors were also taking up other occupations like merchants or business owners since the USA did not allow for the practice of their medicine due to lack of working permits to practice medicine or being unable to obtain a medical license due to prejudice. A practice seen even during modern times by immigrants who cannot exercise their careers due to discrimination and legal status.

Women:

Second generation Chinese Americans were rarely seen during 1870's, most of the female population included sex workers, wives of wealthy merchants, or small children brought to work as house servants. One of the well-documented sex workers was Lizzie, a Chinese woman residing in Snelling. Lizzie was born in 1833 in Guangzhou, China. Although her actual

¹⁰ Merced City Records, "Merced County Census Records" (1870)

¹¹ Tamara Venit-Shelton, "*Herbs and Roots: A History of Chinese Doctors in the American Medical Marketplace*" (Yale University Press, 2020)

name has never been reported. She began appearing in Merced County reports in 1880.⁹ She was the only Chinese woman of the time to own her own plot of land which she was seen paying taxes for a house for a little over 5 years. The property was located in Snelling on the North Side of the Chinatown house, No.8.¹² Lizzie was a well-known individual within the community, as a “Mistress Whore” titled provided by the 1880 census registers.¹³ The vulgar title can reflect how Chinese women in that line of work were perceived by American officials. Her distinction of gender and class status is very prominent just in her title. Instead of giving her the title such as “Head of household or Mistress of home” like the titles issued to Chinese males who owned property.

Prostitution houses were very profitable due to the demand on the bachelor workers, “The business of prostitution was thriving in the foothill Chinese communities because white prostitutes generally would not serve Chinese men and because only a small number of Chinese women were in America.”¹⁴ Although some women perceived prostitution as a job with mobility to migrate to other cities or become financially independent, most were forced into this line of work. Like Lizzie, many women throughout the US helped produce a local economy by providing bachelors with companionship in an unfamiliar country. Lizzie gave a new outlook on how to perceive sex work in this situation, it can be seen as just another source of income. Women became part of the working class whether helping run a business or being a sex worker while demeaning titles stigmatize that line of work. Proving that although some individuals did fall within the stereotypes, their complex personhood gave depth and complicity to them. Like mentioned, Lizzie was only seen as a simple sex worker by the white community and sexist

¹² Merced City Records, “Merced County Assessment Rolls (1875-1990),” 1880.

¹³ Merced County, “Merced County Census Records” (1880).

¹⁴ Sarah C Lim, “*Remembering the Merced Chinese*,” 40.

norms. Nonetheless, she went against this simple title by being the only woman recorded during that time to owe property and using her circumstances to her benefit.

Stigmatization and criminalization of the work was unsafe by nature but the pressure from the American public and the disregard from women bodies created more unsafe work environments. On March 29, 1870 California lawmakers passed a resolution to control the number of Chinese women moving to the United States to stop prostitution.¹⁵ This proposal called for a stricter screening of migrants and their purposes coming into the states. California delegates and the Chinese community set in a debate about the criminalization and migration of sex workers. After the late 1930s, Merced prostitution began to decrease with the Chinese population.

Another female figure was Mrs. Lai Hoo, who was reported dead on December 17, 1903, in Chinatown home number 21 due to pneumonia and lung congestion at age 40.¹⁶ There is no clear correlation between Mrs. Lai Hoo and Mr. Wo Sing, owner of the home. Mr. Sing can again be seen as a community leader by providing residency to those of the community as a form of communitary aid. Hoo did not appear in the 1900 census nor in the tax and deed records, making the coroner's record the only form of writing that proves her existence so far. The exorbitant amount of money sets her apart from the many Chinese individuals listed. At the time of death, she had \$300.95 which was turned into a public fund. Implying she was married into a wealthy family or she had a successful business that was not recorded or has yet to be uncovered. Proving city documents available to us do not show the full picture of how successful these residents were, debunking the false narrative Chinese were a malacic to the

¹⁵ Sucheng Chan, "The Exclusion of Chinese Women". In *Entry denied: Exclusion and the Chinese community in America 1882-1943*. (Temple University Press, 1994), 50.

¹⁶ Merced City Records, "Coroners Register of Merced County 1870-1910," (1903), 68.

American society. Wives at the time helped run the husband's business, making them highly knowledgeable about industry affairs. The lack of male documentation linked with Ms. Hoo makes it seem she had wealth of her own and knew how to administer it.

Social hierarchy was a very important part of the Chinese community allowing different power dynamics. Some merchants and business proprietors were the spokesmen for their people to bridge the white and Chinese populations. However, this position did not ensure businessmen from suffering racist attacks. The white population believed Chinese laundromats and laborers were the principal factors causing the loss of jobs throughout Merced county. Employers in the fields of railroad work, lumber cutting, milling, and ranching preferred hiring Chinese employees.¹⁷ Employers praising them for their hard-working mentality, but ultimately benefiting from their wage exploitations. Local laundry owners were faced with strong anti-Chinese sentiments along with industrialized workers. Contrary to public belief, Chinese doctors were also present in the communities where medical aid by western doctors was denied on the basis of race.

Racist acts done by private individuals and the displacement of these Chinese individuals were the downfall of the Chinese community. In 1960 the last building of the original Chinatown was destroyed, erasing any physical evidence of the once-thriving Merced Chinatown. The few pictures and archival records have allowed me to create written evidence of the lives and social structure the community had. Noting how individuals of different social hierarchies helped empower others and help their community, such as laborers. Being the backbone of the industrialization of the city they were often exploited with bone aching jobs and taken advantage of well after their deaths. In order to honor those who came before us it is important to present

¹⁷ Sarah C Lim, "*Remembering the Merced Chinese*," 50.

their lives and impacts they had in the community of the once standing Chinatown. Especially to those women whose stories are often overlooked due to sexist ideals, yet contributed so much to the city and community. These stories and personal profiles still continue to exist in the Merced community causing a form of resistance.

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