

The Pedagogy of Monuments: Teaching Iconoclasm in 21st-Century Classrooms Amid Cultural Debates

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ABSTRACT:

In a world where cultural differences and conflicts are still happening, teaching about monuments in schools is a very important part of education. The monuments, which people used to see as certain symbols of the past, are now locations where different stories about history, strength and identity come together. This study sees how teachers can help students understand not only older objects, but also show how the history and modern issues are related to living parts of culture. Research examines ways to include discussions about removal, keeping or replacing the monuments in school lessons. This helps students to think seriously about history, join their communities and understand various cultures better. The study sees controversial sculptures and examples of public places how these subjects can be taught. It also talks about how to teach iconoclasm - not only as breaking things, but also the way to question who finds to remember history and who forgets - is important. The goal is to help teachers change the conflicts related to memorials in learning opportunities using ideas of various subjects like history, art, literature, politics and morality. Finally, this research suggests a way to teach about monuments that help students deal with memory, identity and fairness in the more connected world.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Teaching Iconoclasm, 21st-Century, Classrooms, Cultural, Debates

Introduction

Monuments were regarded as potent symbols for collective memory and portrayal of beliefs, culture, and group or individual identities centuries ago. Public monuments can define the way communities remember their past and imagine their future because they symbolize victory, respect, or commemoration. In the 21st century, these same monuments have been transformed into sites that are increasingly contested. Discourses and activities of iconoclasm that have taken place across the

world have raised key issues regarding history, representation, and justice. These rebellious activities can range from the destruction, defacement, or reinterpretation of statues and memorials. Monuments are an aspect of today's struggles over power and cultural identity, as indicated by the dismantling of colonial monuments in Africa and South Asia, the toppling of Confederate monuments in the United States, and the controversy over memorials of caste, religion, and nationalism in India. Such incidents confirm how crucial

monuments are in these conflicts. Institutions of education are full of opportunity and challenge. Teachers should not only consider monuments as objective historical artifacts or works of art, but also as meaningful symbols. Instead of being perceived as rigid cultural documents that exclusively indicate the omissions, silences, and marginalizations inherent in official histories, they should be considered dynamic texts that not only reveal these problems, but also contain the values of their creators. The classroom is also a very important site for discussing the multiple understandings of monuments, which entails not just their historical development but contemporary debates around them.

Educators must participate in discussions on preserving whose voices in public memory and excluding whose voices if they desire students to be taught critical thinking about it. The education of monuments calls for a multi-disciplinary approach that incorporates knowledge from multiple disciplines, including history, cultural studies, political science, art history, and ethics. Vandalism or erasure acts should not be equated with the practice of teaching iconoclasm, which is the deliberate defying or destruction of monuments. It can actually be perceived as a cultural conversation, a call for acknowledgment, and in certain instances, also a search for justice. When minority communities demand the dismantling of monuments celebrating injustice, they are not merely refusing what the past has to say, but they are also asserting different visions of communal memory. In the 21st century, classroom learning about issues of identity, belonging, and reconciliation across the world presents a unique opportunity to engage students with monuments. These discussions may be challenging since they tend to deal with sensitive topics such as colonialism, religion, nationalism, caste, and race. Consequently, it is the responsibility of teachers to enable discussions that are reflective, balanced, and humane. These discussions need to encourage students to challenge dominant beliefs while remaining open to other people's views. This research seeks to delve into the ways monuments can be employed in the classroom to facilitate critical thinking,

cultural awareness, and civic responsibility. The article seeks to demonstrate how teachers can employ controversial histories as opportunities for learning transformation through analyzing instances of iconoclasm and monument controversies across various locations and time periods. The pedagogies used in monuments not only educate students about history but also equip them to engage with the nuances of memory, identity, and justice in modern society.

The present wave of debates on cultural monuments is closely related to worldwide campaigns that are struggling for decolonization, equality, and justice. Public memory is dynamic, not static; it is being constantly debated, contested, and transformed. The cyclical debates on statues of colonial figures, slave traders, nationalist symbols, and religious figures can be seen. Monuments are not static objects of stone or copper; they are living actors in the never-ending political and cultural conversation. They condition how each successive generation thinks about history and identity, and they reinforce or subvert existing social arrangements. For instance, the international fallout from the Black Lives Matter protests following the 2020 death of George Floyd renewed the international debate over statues commemorating colonial conquest, slave ownership, or racial subjugation. It is the same with the internal disputes in India about sculptures of historical personages, like Ambedkar, Gandhi, or colonial authorities, that can generate fiery arguments about caste, religion, and nationalism. The RhodesMustFall movement, started by South African university students, is a good example of how younger generations are claiming their rights and pushing for public symbols to reflect the values of fairness and equality in the current times. The events above prove that monuments are not mere inactive symbols, but sites where identity politics and memory politics meet.

This examination of monuments as education is of utmost significance because it presents novel ways of examining the cultural and historical context of these structures. Given the opportunity to interact with monuments throughout their schooling, students are able to

learn to critically analyze both historical events and the mechanisms that govern cultural memory. To make that happen, it's necessary to move beyond the standard approach to teaching history and instead adopt methods that foster discussion, empathy, and alternative viewpoints. An important incident of the past, iconoclasm may be viewed as a means by which societies are compelled to rethink their history based on contemporary moral standards. Iconoclasm can be regarded by some as destructive, but it may also be interpreted as a necessary critique of history.

It can be challenging for educational institutions to implement fiery discussions. Teachers in the education profession may find themselves facing challenges when they must negotiate competing notions, cultural prejudices, and political resistance. They might also be attached to specific monuments due to their religious affiliations, regional identities, or family backgrounds prior to the time they began school.

Iconoclasm

The idea of iconoclasm has long been used as a framework to understand what happens to controversial or vandalized monuments and statues. The noun and adjective "iconoclastic" have taken on a broad metaphorical meaning, describing a range of behaviors and attitudes related to the radical or avant-garde rejection of conventional wisdom in fields such as politics, art, and ideas (Stapleton & Viselli, 2019). "Iconoclasm" has been spawned by a number of related and somewhat homophonic concepts over the years, including aniconicism, iconomachy, iconophobia, iconophilia, iconolatry, and, most notably, the key concept of "iconoclasm." The ambiguity and struggle that emerges when a once-cherished image or principle is utterly discarded due to a sudden or cumulative change in the values and attitudes of one's surroundings is what these concepts are trying to capture. Iconoclastic destruction of statues has historically and now occurred for certain causes, and understanding why is necessary before deconstructing this lexical set. The purpose of this is to learn more about the

relationships between historical events and large-scale public art. To top it all off, there's this school of thought that holds that statues have a significance beyond the "lifeless things" they're made of, into the symbolic and even supernatural hierarchies to which they belong. This view has been held by many. This link is immediately obvious when thinking about "Ozymandias": Even though he was a secular emperor, Ramesses II was nevertheless revered as a divine being after he passed away. His journey to the gods' realm would culminate in full divinization, which was his fate. Concurrently, he would entrust his son with both his holy status and his earthly duties (Fletcher, 2016). Because of this, his statue served as a symbol of both his worldly and spiritual authority, and it was endowed with the same royal attributes that demanded reverence for his physical form. According to Kiernan (2020), this was the norm for veneration of images in Near Eastern and Mediterranean civilizations from the Bronze Age and into Late Antiquity. Clergy images played a crucial role in the exchange between humans and the divine, whether they were housed in homes, special temples, or even outside. "That is to say, their worshippers believed that the idols could both receive their petitions and act upon them," (pp. 4-5) explains. Idols were given ceremonial respect and even social agency through cult representations, which were all throughout. A large number of sculptures were considered to have personality, purpose, caprice, and emotion, and their "life" was also intersubjective. These statues performed many cultic functions. To those who adored them, statues brought solace; to those who disdained them, they dealt punishment. Regardless of the statue's representation—a living god-emperor or priest, a domestic deity from the area, or an abstract celestial pantheon with a massive legion of devotees—these traits and their implied social network connection were relevant. An everlasting affirmation of the primacy of 'matter' within a discursive dynamics of materialization—blurring corporeal life, affective investment, the immobile-automata boundary, and the myriad social-symbolic functions of inorganic objects, technologies, and processes—was highlighted in the symbolic

economy of statue-making and devotion by these dispositions. Claims of miraculous events, such as walking upright, crying, bleeding, and drinking, or curing the ill, would sometimes bolster these tendencies. Some branches of popular religion in Christianity and Hinduism continue to recount such miraculous events. Rethinking statues in this way takes into account their inherent agency, processual impetus, and capacity for self-organization. To do this, it reimagines matter not as a static, impersonal substance but as a socially constructed reality. All social-symbolic worlds, with their tumultuous cultural commitments and identities, are molded and enabled by matter, which is itself an active force. We see this in our human interactions with them. Thanks to this opportunity, we can break through the deadlock between essentialism and constructivism and reach a potential theoretical stance on statues. This stance denounces the positivist scientific materialism and postmodernist constructivism as mutually exclusive schools of thought. The 'intra-actions' between meaning and substance, between people and things, are what we really value, to use a term from Barad (2006). The chaotic juxtaposition, interpretation, and cross-contamination of human societies and their sculptures does not leave materiality or ideality untouched from this vantage point. The historical-devotional record's acceptance of statues' pervasive primeval 'power' and holiness serves to further emphasize the forbidden and perhaps painful nature of the iconoclastic moment. As we can see, the iconoclast desecrates the statue she has grown to despise, not because she doesn't recognize or accept the statue's symbolic weight or the sacred affect it has grown to evoke, but because she has come to perceive in both a misguided, heretical, or errorist focus on the wrong thing, for the wrong reasons. There is only one remedy that fits the object of misguided and possibly heretical adoration now that this exposure is both revelatory and self-confirmatory; that is, annihilation. The scope and performativity of this devastation further testify to what is at stake in the rival and irreconcilable object, whether it is defended as the beloved center of faithful preservation and devotion or demonized as the pinnacle of idolatry and

misconception. The object in question contains tales about relationships inside the statue.

Two major events in the annals of "Western" iconoclasm have served to accentuate these relationships, drawing attention to the emotional power and explosive impact they may have. The essay's central premise states that if this is so, their legacy is a living genealogy with significant consequences for how we handle contentious public monuments in the present. Both may now seem foreign and faraway to contemporary thinking, as if they had nothing to contribute to our current discussions. But if this theory holds, their legacy will be a live genealogical record. From around 680 to 850 CE, the Orthodox Christian world was stricken periodically and intensively by the terrible "Iconoclast Crisis" of the Byzantine Empire. The second refers to the severe wave of Protestant and anti-Catholic iconoclasm that swept over Western Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, coinciding with the Puritan revolutionary phase of the Reformation. The material and institutional harm inflicted upon a thousand years of Catholic culture by this wave of iconoclasm, which recurred in larger waves, was immense and permanent. The two epochs are seen as examples of cultural erasing for subsequent ages because of the revolutionary public resetting of religious doctrine and socio-theological goals during those times, which was done to establish a new doctrinal order with immense spiritual and social importance. The two epochs, when considered together, have come to define this idea.

It is all too common for the Byzantine problem to be contextualized by the general public through stubbornly Orientalist constructs of a foreign and barbaric medieval Eastern Christianity that is entrenched in authoritarianism, irrationalism, superstition, and the feverish fetishization of holy goods. This is a bias at least as ancient as Gibbon. In contrast, iconophile and iconoclast conflict throughout Byzantine society was centered on profound philosophical and theological disagreements with august intellectual pedigrees in ancient Platonism, of which Greek Christians saw themselves as chosen custodians, as well as in scriptural

hermeneutics, of which they also saw themselves as guardians (Brubaker & Haldron, 2011). This is something that has been repeatedly emphasized by the leading interpreters of the period. Amplifying factors manifest also in Shelley's sonnet, the major issue at stake in the Iconoclast Era was conflict over the extent to which images and statues could embody presence (Elsner, 2012) and whether the increasingly lavish public expression of such presence in the plethora of icons of Christ, the Apostles, the Saints, and even sanctified members of past imperial households, could be reconciled with the biblical prohibition on idols and idol worship: in other words, when in Orthodoxy did permissible iconophilia become iconolatry? The underlying causes of the war that ensued, which occurred over the course of two distinct stages of conflict and ultimately resulted in a qualified triumph for the iconophile faction (which was led mostly by the ladies of the metropolitan court in Constantinople), were complicated. serious theological debate prior to what was thought to be iconophilic excess and decadence; a string of natural calamities and plagues that left scars on the Empire; internal dynastic factionalism; the growing military threat to Byzantium with the religion of Islam, which is definitely aniconic and desert-based. Brubaker (2012) and Karahan (2014) are two examples of modern assessments of the Byzantine Empire's Iconoclast crisis that have toned down and adjusted the combative dualisms that were before employed to portray its narrative. As the 'crisis' pendulum swung back and forth, more and more attention has been directed towards the 'everyday lives' of icons and statues in Byzantine culture, the managed co-existence of competing viewpoints across the relevant centuries and regions, and a decrease in the estimated levels of violence and destruction that occurred during the period. At times, the essence of the icon was either disregarded or poorly grasped, and the boundary between the icon and the picture was frequently left uncertain. The fact that symbols are handled differently in the secular and religious spheres has been highlighted by this. These treatments cover a wide spectrum, from elaborate public Christian worship in front of saint and emperor statues to

more personal forms of prayer and decoration in the home, as well as more complex theological and Neoplatonic defenses of iconic emanation advocated by prominent Orthodox monasteries.

Conversely, the interpretation of iconoclastic actions has evolved to place less emphasis on overt acts of vandalism and more on covert changes to the placement, display, and aspect of religious artifacts. Relocation and religious repurposing are two examples of these changes; occasionally, there is even bold mockery of the icon's previous position and art (Kolrud & Prusac, 2014). Following the teachings of "Ozymandias," the practices of beheading, defacing, and removing eyes are now more severely punished than before. Under changing circumstances of defense and resistance, the generally stated case for a more dynamic and diverse interaction among symbols, their creators, and owners has been advanced, often overshadowing the apparently less common practice of comprehensive eradication. More common now is the idea of the icon or statue as a "scriptive thing." Outright iconolatry during this time is still seen as a hazardous devotional surplus that may provoke major animosity in this unstable context, but the concept is gaining favor. Symbolically, this "scriptive thing" moves from one culture and set of beliefs to another. It functions on a nuanced hermeneutical continuum with several unclear intersections and crossing points, spanning from sublime reverence to abjection and obliteration. Complex and diverse interpretations and treatments can be supported and navigated at each of these intersections and crossing points. There is a tendency to oversimplify and stereotype the Puritan destruction of Latin Christendom's iconic and sculpted fabric, just like the Byzantine predecessor. The expression of unbridled "iconoclastic" Protestant enthusiasm often paints a picture of easily ridiculed intolerance and extreme caricature. However, the differences between the two periods are equally enlightening as the similarities. Spraggon (2003) noted that in Protestant nations like Britain and Colonial America, there was a distinct historical context for the destruction of statues and the early

modern imaginary of monument toppling and raising. This was especially true when ardent Protestant apologists for the wholesale uprooting of European Catholic belief and popular piety cited and lauded Byzantine precedent (Simpson, 2010), pointing to the dire historical consequences for the Eastern Roman Empire of its return to iconophilic heresy. However, their reasoning for statue destruction and their contribution to this imaginary were very different.

Heritage, iconoclasm and digital media

Before delving into the mediation mechanisms at work in DMI, it's important to put the words "heritage," "iconoclasm," and "heritage destruction" into perspective. A conceptual framework is necessary for the existence of heritage, especially when considering the role of history in the current sociopolitical and cultural configurations (Smith 2006). Miller (1994) refers to heritage as "not only the materialization of culture but also the intangible processes by which humans socialize and construct themselves through symbols." Both kinds of procedures are included in heritage. Given this, one's lineage plays a key role in shaping one's identity. Academics have also looked at the political aspect of heritage and the disputes that arise from misunderstandings, ownership disputes, and conflicting interpretations of the past. As a result of the different factions' differing understandings of legacy, a struggle for political power arises. There is a strong focus on the political dimension of legacy in legacy studies, which acknowledges that present-day identities are formed in large part via contestations over the past. Brubaker (2012) and Noyes (2013) point to the Byzantine era (the eighth and ninth centuries) as an example of historical iconoclasm, as well as Protestant sects like Calvinism (the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries) and the advent of Wahhabism (the religion's expansion across the Arabian Peninsula in the nineteenth century) as examples of Protestant iconoclasm. Here, iconoclasts were particularly concerned with destroying images of God that they saw as sacrilegious, such as pictures of God or images of God's creations. The iconoclasts' objective was to undermine the

memorability of visual representations of activities or identities that are out in the world. They accomplished this by removing a certain picture or object. The concept of iconoclasm has grown to encompass and mirror instances where political goals are advanced through the deliberate destruction of art and heritage (Gamboni 1997; Boldrick, Brubaker, and Clay 2013). This may be because it violates the rights of certain people and is thus objectionable to them. So, iconoclasm is the practice of destroying long-held ideas, concepts, and practices that are represented by pictures or artifacts. Because of this, iconoclasts work hard to get rid of idols so they may sanitize society and get rid of the beliefs of people they see as political rivals. When some cultural artifacts are targeted for destruction because they are seen as symbols of a particular ideology or philosophy, this phenomenon is known as iconoclasm. This opens the door to the possibility that attacks on pictures other than religious ones might be included in the definition of iconoclasm. To achieve this goal, we focus on places where cultural identity is shaped by the performance of rituals based on long-standing traditions (Braarvig 2014). Finally, those who desecrate these sites and worship their worshippers are known as iconoclasts. This is because these sites are fundamental to the erosion of their cultural identity and the very behaviors that give rise to it. Religious buildings, libraries, museums, archeological sites, and any other establishments that serve as reservoirs of a people's artistic, literary, or intellectual achievements—including places of worship—may be the targets of iconoclasts (Nersessian 2005). Some iconoclasts also go after institutions that help spread and preserve a people's language and culture, such as museums, libraries, and archeological sites. On the other side, there has been very little research on heritage damage mitigation, which is a knowledge vacuum that DMI aims to address. Intermediary communication is the bedrock upon which every iconoclastic act rests. Mediating conflicts is "an intrinsic condition of being-in and becoming-with the technological world" (Kember and Zylinska 2012,) as far as we can tell. Even if early iconoclasm wasn't seen through digital or

broadcast media, mediation did take place in some way. Images and sculptures troubled iconoclasts because they mediated the relationship between transcendent beings and the representations of such beings in art. On top of that, iconoclastic people were against making pretty things because they thought the resources used for it might be better used elsewhere. Within the iconoclastic movement, there was a strong conviction that the embodiment of the transcendent being was the key to unlocking the power of images and objects through mediation. The iconoclast posits that the ability to represent a divine person through an image may explain the emergence of idolatry.

Additionally, proof of the removal of blasphemous images or idols has been provided by documented and disseminated occurrences of iconoclasm throughout history. Watching or documenting the destruction of heritage is crucial to getting the word out, and iconoclasm is pointless if no one is around to witness it. Not only were the Israelites witnesses to Moses' desecration of the Golden Calf, but the Bible also records this event alongside the giving of the Ten Commandments, which forbids the worship of idols. The French Revolution saw the destruction and removal of many sculptures and effigies linked to Catholicism and monarchy. Artists who made etchings, sketches, and paintings depicting the defacement of monuments during and after the revolution served as intermediaries between the press and the devastation. Artists made these pieces. The use of modern technology to document the desecration of symbols for propagandist purposes became commonplace in the 20th century. During the First World War, pictures of the damaged Library of the University of Louvain in Belgium were utilized to depict the German perpetrators as the barbaric "Huns." Additionally, these images contributed to a heightened awareness of the erasure of cultural artifacts among the general public.

The Iconoclasm of Digital Media: Terrorism in the Digital Age

The emergence of new media technologies in the information era has given rise to new publics.

Propaganda actions and iconoclastic events can target these new publics. At this crossroads in history and technology, we call it the Digital Media Intersection (DMI), digital media has become an integral part of most political discourse. This means that extremist organizations like the Islamic State (IS) may utilize social media to spread their fundamentalist ideology to people all over the world. This is achieved at a rate and in a manner that previous jihadist generations could not have imagined. In this current chapter of the fight on terror, the Islamic State (IS) has used such technology to disseminate images of violence or iconoclasm, dramatically altering the narrative. When it comes to spreading its ideology in the digital sphere, the Islamic State (IS) relies heavily on social media platforms. Attempting to acquire an advantage, this digital ideological campaign takes use of the ever-changing character of online publics. Boyd (2010) asserts that "The properties of bits regulate the structure of networked publics, which, in turn, introduces new possible practices and shapes the interactions that take place." The occurrence mentioned before is the direct cause of this assertion. The IS has always been good at identifying different types of networked publics and adapting its messages to suit them. Even though terrorist propaganda has been circulated through different media for a long time (Nacos 1994), the rise of networked publics changes how groups like the Islamic State (IS) communicate their propaganda to the public. Reaching different audiences, some of which may have strong opinions that differ from one another, is a major factor in this shift. Supporters of the Islamic State (IS), IS cells throughout the globe, opponents of the group, diasporic populations, news outlets, academics, consumers, and citizen journalists are all examples of these audiences. It is possible to view the effects of the IS and their DMI on many online platforms as what Madianou calls "polymedia events."

An event "generates a series of reactions or related events which are played out in different media platforms" (Madianou 2013), according to Madianou. The author Madianou (2013) argues that events using several media platforms are

"transnational and decentralised in the sense that there is no shared official or central narrative; polymedia events are marked by parallel or clashing narratives." The narratives of polymedia events are often at odds with one another. A crucial part of the Digital Media Initiative (DMI) is when the Islamic State (IS) releases an iconoclastic video; the responses of several actors turn it into a polymedia event. The capacity to keep material on the Internet is crucial to the Islamic State (IS), as it permits decentralized storage and makes the propaganda relatively easy to access. They consider this an integral part of their DMI plan. Congealed in space and time, the digital archive preserves the destruction of heritage, serving as a reminder of the futility of conflict and the harm it inflicts on individuals and the things they hold dear. Not only does physical harm alter cultural artifacts, but uploading them to the Internet also causes them to undergo modification, with the violent outburst being permanently preserved for frequent and extensive viewing. The process of iconoclasm continues endlessly after that since it is widely understood by publics that are connected through networks. With the advent of digital archives, "a universal cultural memory bank accessible to all cultural producers" came into being. The proliferation of digital content distribution channels has given violent groups, which are also cultural producers, unprecedented access to a plethora of propagandistic tools and the ability to disseminate this content at lightning speed. When distributed via social media, DMI spectacles may reach digital audiences, who can then share, remix, and comment on them. The Islamic State (IS) relies on the interplay between social media and broadcast media because "public discourse about terrorism is also primed by mediated images of terrorists and terror violence in broadcast and (to a lesser degree) print news media" (Tuman 2009). The IS can also rely on sources found on the internet. Furthermore, terrorist propaganda is further fuelled by the media, since "terrorists have learned to manipulate news media in order to ensure publication and distribution of their rhetoric to a global audience." Actually, the Islamic State has been lightning quick to adopt

the traits of contemporary social media. Studies comparing Al Qaeda and the Islamic State's social media strategies have uncovered many fundamental differences. The increasing intricacy of social media platforms contributes to these shifts. In their 2017 publication, Speckhard, Shajkovci, and Yayla provide the following case:

The capacity of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to use its internet campaign to attract and recruit potential adherents, as well as to establish its brand as a serious, strong, and merciless organization, is what sets it apart from other extremist groups. Instead of operating in the shadows, its web campaign is outsourced and given to anybody who is prepared to embrace it. This is in contrast to other jihadist terrorist groups, who operate in the shadows.

As evidence of their exceptional command of social media platforms, the Islamic State prefers fame to anonymity. It is estimated that about 46,000 Twitter accounts were formed at the height of the Islamic State (IS) with the purpose of offering support, according to Speckhard, Shajkovci, and Yayla (2017). The Israel Security Service (IS) has built a powerful brand, and Russo has admitted that one of its tactics is to use pop culture themes.

The fact that mainstream media has covered the IS's destruction of cultural artifacts adds credibility to their iconoclastic actions. The dismantling of Islamic State artifacts is propagated via online social media, which is why this is happening. While thinking about this, Debord's terms "spectacle" and "a social relation among people, mediated by images" (Debord 1983 [1967]) pop into my head. Best and Kellner (1999) go even farther, stating that the spectacle is already in its mature stages. At this point, the performers construct cultural places and forms that provide new means of seduction and dominance with thrilling opportunities for individual empowerment and innovation; they refer to this as the interactive spectacle.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the potential of monuments as instructional resources for the modern classroom.

2. To examine iconoclasm's function as a medium for cultural discourse as opposed to its function as destructive acts.
3. To examine monuments that have been the subject of controversy in both international and domestic settings.

Monuments and Cultural Memory

Throughout history, monuments have been seen to be vehicles of communal memory, which have the ability to influence how communities remember and interpret their histories. Memory, according to Maurice Halbwachs (1992), is something that is socially built, something that has to be maintained within groups, and something that may be strengthened through concrete representations like monuments. Another placement of monuments as memorials that preserve historical awareness in the wake of shifting social realities is offered by Pierre Nora's (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire*, "sites of memory."

Pedagogy, History, and Critical Engagement

Discussion of monuments in the classroom relates to broader concerns about history education and critical pedagogy. Monuments are being debated too. Paulo Freire introduced the idea of critical pedagogy in 1970, which stresses the importance of dialogic learning, which provides learners with the power to challenge dominant stories and engage in different perspectives. Seixas (2004) strongly emphasizes historical thinking as an essential skill, and he invites students to evaluate facts, opinions, and moral aspects of the past. Current research in the education area indicates that monuments can be good teaching tools for controversial parts of the past. As Barton and Levstik (2008) explain, exposing students to public symbols facilitates student engagement in civic life as well as a focus on historical occurrences. In the view of Endacott and Brooks (2013), education on challenging history involves strategies that balance critical examination and empathy. This enables students to deal with the moral aspects of historical injustices. Similarly, Trofanenko (2014) explores the manner in which public heritage

discourse may serve as a learning experience of critical thinking and civic engagement.

Global and Local Case Studies in Education

A number of case studies illustrate the bringing of monument conflicts into classrooms. South African scholars such as Chikane (2018) examine the interface between general demands for a decolonized curriculum and student protest around statues. King (2019) investigates how debating Confederate monuments in classrooms may lead to a greater comprehension of racial oppression and historical memory in the US. In India, colonial, religious, and caste monuments have been utilized to remind us of the conflicts between official storylines and forgotten histories (Sarkar, 2017; Nair for 2020). The following examples illustrate how monuments can be used to educate students regarding identity, memory, and justice.

Importance of the Study

Providing Assistance to Civic Participation and Democratic Principles Through the use of monuments as a teaching tool, civic abilities such as debate, empathy, and multiperspectivity may be developed. These are essential for democratic participation because they teach students how to manage delicate themes in a courteous manner while also engaging in educated debate about memory and other topics related to justice. There is a growing amount of study on disputed heritage and iconoclasm; however, there are fewer studies that expressly focus on how these arguments might be converted into classroom instruction.

The purpose of this research is to fill such void by putting forward formal frameworks. (Tables 3 and 6) Regarding the incorporation of debates about monuments into the classroom. According to the conclusions of this study, there are practical consequences for those who create curricula and for those who decide policy. By drawing attention to the fact that heritage education should go beyond merely celebrating heritage, it supports the incorporation of critical, inclusive, and dialogic methods into the

curriculum of history and social science educational programs.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and multidisciplinary research approach in order to investigate the ways in which monuments and acts of iconoclasm might be pedagogically incorporated into classrooms in the 21st century, in the midst of cultural controversies.

The technique places an emphasis on critical interpretation, the investigation of case studies, and the application of educational theory to contemporary themes of legacy that is being debated.

Research Design

The nature of the research is essentially exploratory and interpretative throughout its whole. The purpose of this study is not to statistically assess variables; rather, it would want to investigate the meanings, narratives, and pedagogical implications that are associated with iconoclasm and monuments.

The research makes use of a variety of documentary analytic methods, including policy documents, educational recommendations, and public discussions.

In this strategy, controversial monuments are examined in both global and local settings using the case study method. Application of theory (using memory studies, critical pedagogy, and legacy discourse as sources of theoretical inspiration).

Sources of Data

Primary Sources: Documents from archives, reports from the government, speeches, and educational initiatives that are connected to heritage in the media, as well as coverage of arguments around the demolition of monuments. Secondary Sources: Scholarly literature on topics

such as cultural memory (Halbwachs, Nora), disputed heritage (Smith, Harrison), iconoclasm (Gamboni, Nyamnjoh), and pedagogy (Freire, Seixas, Barton, and Levstik).

Case Studies:

Across the world, there is a campaign called Rhodes Must Fall in South Africa, monuments honoring the Confederacy in the United States, and arguments about colonial memorials in the United Kingdom. Monuments associated with colonialism (such as statues of British administrators), memorials based on caste structures (such as sculptures of Ambedkar), and religious and nationalist commemorations are examples of local monuments in India.

Data Collection

In order to collect data, a literature study was conducted, which included reading books, journal articles, and conference proceedings. An examination of the media, including newspapers, internet debates, and public pronouncements about controversial monuments has been conducted. A examination of educational policy, with a particular emphasis on curricular frameworks (such as the National Council of Educational Research and Training in India and the UNESCO heritage education standards), to evaluate the manner in which monuments and cultural disputes are treated.

Results

Looking at case studies shows that monuments are places where people remember the past, but they also cause a lot of discussion because they connect history, who we see ourselves as, and what is fair. This study aims to find out how monuments are talked about, taken down, or given new meanings by looking at examples from around the world and in India. It also looks at how these cases can be used in teaching.

Table 1: Global Case Studies of Monument Controversies

Case	Monument/Context	Nature of Contestation	Outcome	Pedagogical Potential
#Rhodes MustFall (South Africa, 2015)	Statue of Cecil Rhodes at University of Cape Town	Seen as a symbol of colonialism and racism	Statue removed after student protests	Teaching colonial legacies, student activism, and decolonization of education
Confederate Monuments (USA)	Statues of Confederate generals (e.g., Robert E. Lee)	Criticized for glorifying slavery and racism	Several monuments removed or relocated; debates continue	Teaching race, civil war memory, and civic engagement
Colonial Statues (UK)	Statues of imperial figures (e.g., Edward Colston in Bristol)	Linked to slavery and colonial exploitation	Colston statue toppled in 2020 protests	Teaching empire, slavery, and ethics of public memory

These global examples clearly illustrate that problems with monuments often arise from past injustices that have not been addressed, including racism, slavery, and colonialism. Students can change the way public memory is created and

understand how different communities address difficult histories. Providing these examples can ignite discussions regarding morality, justice, and belonging.

Table 2: Indian Case Studies of Monument Debates

Case	Monument/Context	Nature of Contestation	Outcome	Pedagogical Potential
Ambedkar Statues	Statues of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar across India	Vandalized in caste-based violence; defended by Dalit communities	Strong community mobilization for protection	Teaching caste, equality, and social justice
Colonial Monuments	Statues of British administrators (e.g., Lord Curzon)	Criticized as colonial relics; some removed or relocated	Selective removals (esp. post-independence)	Teaching colonial history, nationalism, and decolonization
Religious/Nationalist Memorials	Statues linked to contested religious or political leaders	Sparks communal/political debates	Ongoing controversies, sometimes violent	Teaching pluralism, tolerance, and civic dialogue

In India, there is the issue of caste, colonial history, and religion, which are often discussed when it comes to monuments. Unlike Western countries, where topics are usually centered around racism and slavery, the discussion in India

revolves around social hierarchies, different religions, and national pride after independence. Schools can utilize these examples to discuss sensitive issues such as discrimination based on caste and peacekeeping within communities.

Table 3: Pedagogical Strategies Derived from Case Studies

Pedagogical Approach	Application in Classrooms	Expected Outcome
Critical Debate	Structured discussions on whether a monument should be removed or preserved	Encourages civic reasoning and empathy
Role-Play/Simulation	Students adopt perspectives of different stakeholders (activists, historians, policymakers)	Builds empathy and multiperspectivity
Comparative Analysis	Comparing global and local monument debates	Develops global awareness and contextual understanding
Creative Reinterpretation	Students design alternative monuments or plaques	Encourages critical creativity and inclusive memory-making

Teachers are able to convert contentious monuments into valuable learning experience using learning resources. Steer clear of sensitive topics that could arise in class rather than

engaging children in scheduled activities that encourage critical thinking, empathy, and participation in community problems.

Table 4: Thematic Similarities Between Global and Indian Cases

Theme	Global Examples	Indian Examples	Common Insights
Colonialism & Empire	Cecil Rhodes (South Africa), Edward Colston (UK)	British administrators (Lord Curzon, Queen Victoria statues)	Monuments glorify colonial power, sparking calls for removal or reinterpretation
Social Hierarchies	Confederate generals (USA) tied to slavery	Ambedkar statues targeted in caste violence	Monuments become battlegrounds for justice vs. oppression
Nationalism & Identity	US Civil War monuments and regional pride	Religious/nationalist memorials (Hindu/Muslim leaders)	Monuments reflect competing visions of nationhood
Public Space Contestation	Protest movements in streets/universities	Community mobilization around statues	Both contexts show monuments as arenas of activism and civic debate

Both the global and Indian contexts illustrate that monuments are such contested texts in which power, memory, and justice intersect. This speaks

to how important it is to teach, even in the two cultures' differing ways. It helps students make the link between the local and the global.

Table 5: Challenges in Teaching Monuments and Iconoclasm

Challenge	Classroom Implication	Example
Political Sensitivity	Risk of polarization among students	Teaching communal memorials in India
Emotional Attachment	Students may resist criticism of figures they admire	Ambedkar statues (Dalit pride) or Gandhi statues
Curriculum Constraints	Limited space in textbooks for contested heritage	NCERT textbooks rarely address controversial statues
Fear of Controversy	Teachers may avoid sensitive debates	Confederate statues in conservative US states

Teachers do have much to teach in monuments but equally encounter genuine hindrances such as political interests and personal emotions. To find solutions to these challenges, we need to utilize

effective teaching methodologies that encourage open communication without further dividing society.

Table 6: Framework for a Pedagogy of Monuments

Step	Teaching Strategy	Expected Learning Outcome
1. Historical Contextualization	Provide historical background of the monument and its creators	Students understand power structures behind monuments
2. Multi perspective Analysis	Engage students with voices of supporters and opponents	Builds empathy and critical reasoning
3. Debate & Dialogue	Structured classroom debates on removal vs. preservation	Encourages civic participation and democratic thinking
4. Creative Reimagination	Students design alternative monuments or reinterpret existing ones	Promotes inclusive memory-making and creativity
5. Reflection	Journals, essays, or group discussions	Fosters personal engagement with history and memory

The intention of this framework is to provide instructors with a clear instructional method. Students will be more capable of critically thinking through challenging topics in history if history is instructed differently, shifting from memorization towards active engagement with substantial ethical, political, and cultural concerns.

Discussion

The study found that including monuments in school lessons could change the way students learn about history, citizenship, and what justice means. But it also shows that it is hard to talk about these topics in classrooms because they can be sensitive and emotional. Looking at examples from around the world and in India shows that

monuments are "living texts" that keep influencing public discussions for a long time after they are built. Movements like Rhodes Must Fall, arguments over Confederate statues, and debates about Ambedkar statues show that monuments are not only about the past.

They are about today's fights for belonging and being recognized. In education, this means monuments can be used as tools to help students think critically about how communities remember and forget certain things. In each case, one important idea is that destroying or changing monuments is not just about breaking things. It is a way for people to talk about injustice and demand more inclusive ways of remembering. When students learn about this in class, they can understand iconoclasm as part of democratic

processes, not just violence. The study shows that including these debates in education can help students develop critical thinking, empathy, and a sense of being part of a community. Activities like discussions, role-playing, and creative thinking (Table 6) give students a chance to look at different viewpoints. But Table 5 also shows that this approach has risks. Teachers might avoid these topics because of political issues, strong feelings, or strict school rules. So, it is important for teachers to guide these discussions carefully, avoiding conflict and encouraging respectful conversation. Looking at examples from around the world and in India (Table 4) shows that although the situations are different—like slavery and racism in the West, and caste and religion in India—the basic dynamics are similar.

Conclusion

The pedagogy of monuments in the 21st century provides educators with a revolutionary opportunity because it allows them to transcend beyond the traditional narratives of heritage and history that are celebratory in nature. These discussions, whether they take the form of removal, reinterpretation, or defense, are not just about stone or bronze; rather, they are about whose history are acknowledged, whose voices are muted, and whose identities are legitimized in the public arena. There are three main lessons that are highlighted by the outcomes of this study. In the first place, iconoclasm should not be regarded as nothing more than destruction; rather, it should be acknowledged as a kind of cultural conversation and civic involvement. Students are equipped with the skills necessary to participate in critical analysis of history, negotiate complicated cultural disputes, and interact with

viewpoints that are different from their own when they are taught about monuments when they are taught about monuments. The third benefit is that schools are equipped to become settings for conversation, reflection, and social responsibility when they are equipped with an intentional pedagogy of monuments that is anchored in critical pedagogy and cultural memory studies. The framework that was developed in this research (Table 6) provides examples of practical techniques that may be implemented by educators. These strategies include reflective thinking, discussion, creative reinterpretation, historical contextualization, and multiperspective analysis. Despite the fact that hurdles such as political sensitivity, emotional connection, and curricular limits continue to exist, these issues also highlight the need of incorporating such pedagogy into school rather than avoiding it. When everything is said and done, the significance of this study rests in the fact that it has the capacity to transform education for societies that are democratic and pluralistic. Students not only gain knowledge about the past via critical engagement with monuments, but they also learn how to behave ethically when participating in the process of building the future. Through the use of monuments as a teaching tool, cultural debates may be transformed into educational opportunities, chances for empathy, and opportunities for civic empowerment. Students are prepared to become knowledgeable citizens who are able to engage with problems of justice, identity, and memory in ways that are constructive and inclusive after completing this program.

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