

Epi-Olmecs and Epi-Romans: The Unified Theory of Politics, History, and the Power of Analogies

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Abstract:

Scholars are not using the proper analytical tools for comparing polities and cultures even within the same Civilization. The Unified Theory of Politics is a new approach to History and Politics that allows for comparison across the four Civilizations of the world (Western, Central, Eastern, and Mesoamerican). Mesoamerica is a Civilization made up of numerous civilizations. These civilizations are not compared to each other properly, with Mayans, Olmecs, and Epi-Olmecs all considered equal units of analysis, which is not true. At the same time, within the Western Civilization, ancient Italy is not being properly analyzed either. The Latins, Romans, and Oscans are equal units of analysis either, yet the categorization of cultures and polities here is little better than in ancient Mesoamerica. The Unified Theory of Politics allows us to bridge seemingly impossible differences in culture, time, and place. This gives us the analytical and comparative tools to analogize between Civilizations. This article will show how the Unified Theory of Politics works by demonstrating not only that the Mayans and the Oscans are comparable with each other, but also that Olmecs and Romans are comparable with one another. This leads to the analogy of: "The Mayans are to the Oscans as the Olmecs are to the Romans". Also, the article will demonstrably prove that Italians are Epi-Romans. This article will thus show that the Unified Theory of Politics allows us to compare any polity or culture with writing to any other polity or culture with writing, regardless of culture, place, or time.

Keywords:

Unified Theory of Politics; Comparative Politics; Political Theory; History and Politics; Mayans; Romans

I. Introduction

Political Science is only starting to discover ancient Mesoamerica. This is a Civilization of the world that few political scientists study or even understand. However, it is an important part of the history of the world. It is important to understand ancient Mesoamerica if we are serious about making History and Politics a mainstream sub-field of Political Science.

Likewise, ancient Italy is poorly understood by Political Science. For those political scientists who are interested in it, ancient Italy is often approximated as "the Romans". An in-depth look at ancient Italy, however, requires more than some vague reference to "the Romans". History and Politics requires us to understand ancient Italy, at the same time that it requires us to understand ancient Mesoamerica.

However, the truly revolutionary angle of this article is that it proclaims that we can compare ancient Mesoamerica with ancient Italy. It takes the principles of an approach called the Unified Theory of Politics and applies them to the comparison of ancient Mesoamerica to ancient Italy. The basic idea of the Unified Theory of Politics is that any polity with writing can

be compared to any other polity with writing, regardless of time, place, or culture. This approach was developed in a recently-published thesis out of Rutgers-Newark.

II. Research Method

This article looks at four groups of people- the “Olmecs”, the “Mayans”, the “Romans”, and the “Oscans”. The first two groups are from ancient Mesoamerica and the last two groups are from ancient Italy. The first three groups are all reasonably well-known to the college-educated crowd, while the Oscans are not. These four groups- or cases- form a comparative case-study that shows how the Unified Theory of Politics works, but more importantly, why we need the theory. It is an analytical tool that allows us to identify and examine academic bias and obstructs the proper study of History and Politics

This article will use the Unified Theory of Politics to analyze each of our cases and to compare them to each other. It will make heavy use of analogy. While analogy is not the same thing as a perfect equation, no such thing is likely to be found in human nature. Human nature sculpts polities to look similar despite being from different Civilizations. However, it cannot, or does not, make any two cultures, especially separate by time, place, and culture, exactly equitable. However, analogy does allow us to understand how groups compare to each other across time, space, and culture. Also, it allows us to understand how groups compare to each other within the same Civilization.

The author uses the term Civilization with a capital C to indicate what we could call a “macro-civilization”, while a civilization with a small c is used to describe what we would ordinarily call a “micro-civilization”. This is for an educational reason. Students do not want to hear about “macro-civilizations” and “micro-civilizations”, but they can bear hearing about Civilizations and civilizations. In speech, the author would make it clear of the level of Civilization being used. For example, Western Civilization is clearly on a larger level of Civilization than the Greek civilization.

In the Unified Theory of Politics, the focus is on the polity with writing, or at least semi-writing. The basic thesis of the Unified Theory of Politics is that any polity with writing can be compared to any other polity with writing, regardless of time, place, or culture. Defining polity as a public entity with a defined territory and population, a polity with writing can be either a state, which has both some form of autonomy and some form of sovereignty, or what this author calls a statoid (pronounced state-oid), which is composed of other states that do not form a larger state. A state formed of smaller states is a federation, while a statoid formed of states is a confederation.

Thus, a polity in the Unified Theory of Politics’ terms is either a state or a statoid, and a stand-alone polity is always treated by the theory as a state. This broad definition of state avoids many theoretical and practical debates from Archaeology, Anthropology, History, and Political Science that only distract from the important work here. Table 1 summarizes the categorization of polities under the Unified Theory of Politics.

Table 1. Categorization of Polities under the Unified Theory of Politics

Type of Polity	Composed of States	Not Composed of States
State	Federation	Unitary

Statoid	Confederation	Not supported by the Theory
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If the Unified Theory of Politics has a normative trend, it is that there is a preference for federal states, or at least confederations, over unitary states. The Theory is based on Aristotelian assumptions. There is a certain element of “naturalness” to most polities. The Theory views local autonomy and sovereignty as more “natural” than large, unitary states. Being Aristotelian, the Theory thus views the more “natural” polities, federations and confederations as usually normatively better than the less “natural” unitary states (at least large unitary states).

By keeping a simple typology of polities, we can add extra elements without morbidly confusing students. The Unified Theory of Politics is not about simply polities, but about polities with writing. Writing can come in numerous forms, but the Theory accepts semi-writing and full (or true) writing. Full writing expresses the full (or at least most) range of its underlying language and semi-writing does not do this. A polity with writing may have semi-writing or full writing. The theory also allows polities with no proven writing (or maybe no writing at all) to be included if they are part of a culture, group, or civilization that had or eventually developed writing. Table 2 illustrates this concept.

Table 2. Polities with Writing under the Unified Theory of Politics

The Polity...	Is Part of a Wider Culture (or civilization) with Writing	Is Not Part of a Wider Culture (or civilization) with Writing
Has Some Type of Writing	It is a polity with writing	It is a polity with writing
Has No Writing (Observed or Actual)	It is a polity with writing	It is not a polity with writing

Polities with writing form civilizations and these civilizations form Civilizations. There are only four Civilizations, according to the Theory- the Western, Central, and Eastern Civilizations in the old world and Mesoamerica in the New World (or the Americas).

Civilizations are complexes of civilizations, which are themselves complexes of complex societies with writings. Thus, a Civilization is a complex of interconnected complex society complexes with writing. Such things are so rare as to only have happened four times in the history of the world, and only once in the Americas.

3.1 Literature Review- Introducing the Four Cases

In this article, the author is comparing civilizations from two completely-different Civilizations. Mesoamerica is a complete Civilization, which means that it is not part of a larger Civilization. Italy is part of the Western Civilization, but it is a distinct civilizational region, apart from Europe or the rest of the Mediterranean. Within Mesoamerica, however, there are two main divisions and all of the Mesoamerican groups which feature are in one of these divisions, Southeastern Mesoamerica. Southeastern Mesoamerica is roughly analogous to Italy in the ancient world. This first analogy sets up all later analogies in this article

This article is a case-study for comparing cases- the “Mayans” and the “Olmecs” from ancient Southeastern Mesoamerica, and the “Romans” and the “Oscans” from ancient Italy.

Comparing these four cases together forms a single case-study of how the Unified Theory of Politics works and why it is important. The first step is defining our terms- that is, taking the terms out of the quotation marks so that we can just refer to them a normal words.

The author has turned these words into quoted terms because these terms are not properly defined in the literature. Of course, how can we compare these terms if we do not properly define them? So, let us first look at how they are defined in the literature and then, we can define them properly. Only after that can we analyze and compare them.

3.2 Literature Review: What is a “Mayan”?

The term “Mayans” has a complicated history. In the recently-published thesis cited above, the tendency of archaeologists and anthropologists to call the “Mayans” simply the “Maya” was thoroughly criticized. In this article, the term “Mayans” is used because it is comparable to our other terms, such as the “Olmecs”. Mesoamericanists also fail to divide the “Mayans” up into civilizations. However, they also fail to argue for them to be treated strictly linguistically.

Coe and Houston are leading Mesoamericanists who make many of the leading mistake in the field. They acknowledge that there are four main groups of “Mayans”, which they then sub-divide further. However, they do not speak of all of four groups of “Mayans” as part of their idea “Maya civilization”. They mention the Huastecs early on, but then discard them as “Maya” because they are cut off geographically and culturally from the rest of their linguistic kin.

However, Coe and Houston do not cut off the Yucatecs in what they call “the Northern Area” of “Maya civilization”. Since the Yucatecs are no closer linguistically to the rest of the “Mayans” than are the Huastecs, this inclusion cannot be defended on linguistic grounds. Either, the Huastecs are “Mayans” (or in Coe and Houston’s terminology, the “Maya”) or the Yucatecs need to be excluded. These authors never admit that they are being inconsistent with their linguistic taxonomy.

Now, of course, we can defend this pair of decisions, just not on linguistic grounds. The Huastecs were not part of Southeastern Mesoamerica. Since the “Mayan” civilization, whatever it was, was clearly a part of Southeastern Mesoamerica, then the Huastecs logically could not be part of the “Mayan” civilization. On the other hand, the Yucatecs were clearly geographically part of Southeastern. Mesoamerica. Also, if we look for cultural and political connections between the Yucatecs and Coe and Houston’s “Classic Maya”, we will find them, unlike with the Huastecs.

However, Coe and Houston continue to err. They, along with many Mayanists, insist that the “Mayans” (discarding for the rest of the paper with the ungrammatical and problematic “Maya”) has having three “areas”- the Northern Area, the Central Area, and the Southern Area. The Yucatecs are essentially equivalent with the Northern Area. However, the other two areas are more complicated. The real problem, though, is the Southern Area.

The Thesis to which I have been referring is revolutionary in many ways. One of these ways is challenging the existence of the Southern Area, or at least denouncing it as part of “Mayan” civilization.

This is a huge and controversial charge. Coe and Houston are the template for modern academic Mayanism and rightly viewed as important scholars. The author of the Thesis argues that there is no evidence of “Mayan” civilization in the Southern Area until after the fall of the “Classic Mayans”. That Thesis argues that “Mayans” were not in control of any of the early polities of the Southern Area. A recent unpublished article by that same author argued that the Mixe-Zoqueans and not the Mayans were the sole authors of the civilization in what Coe and Houston call the Southern Area.

If we take this author’s arguments seriously, then it means that there is actually no Southern Area of the “Mayan” civilization. However, there were clearly “Mayans” in the Southern Area after the fall of the Classic “Mayans” in the Central Area. This, the author of the Thesis admits. However, this author argues that we should ask the question: What is a “Mayan”? If the “Mayans” of the Southern Area have few if any connection to “Mayan civilization” but speak Mayan languages, are they “Mayan”

Mayan languages are a real language family, but where it is proper to consider them as the sole criterion for being “Mayan” is another matter. The Spanish invented the term “Maya”. “Mayans” call themselves “Mayan” because of the Spanish, but they did not call themselves “Mayan” before that. If we only care about language, then of course all Mayan-speakers are “Mayans”. However, that is not politically and culturally important, from the perspective of the Unified Theory of Politics.

We have already shown that, analytically, the Huastecs are not “Mayans” because they are not part of Southeastern Mesoamerica. Politically and culturally, they are not “Mayan”. Since “Southern Mayans” (who make up a very large number of “Mayans” today) cannot be proven to be more than minor political and cultural players in the Southern Area during “Classic Mayan” times and afterwards, had few if any traces of “Classic Mayan” civilization, they are not related to the “Classic Mayans”. This is politically inconvenient to the Southern Mayans; however, it is firmly supported by historical, political, and cultural analysis.

Coe and Houston, however, violate their own criteria for “Mayanness” just to include the “Southern Mayans”, as this article calls them, in a Southern Area of “Mayan” civilization that does not really exist. Coe and Houston argue that the Long Count, a sophisticated Calendar and time-keeping that allows one to historically pinpoint a specific day in the past, the Mayan script, and certain types of architecture are the three most important parts of Mayan “civilization”.

However, Coe and Houston fail to prove that any of the Southern Area cities in the “Pre-Classic” period were actually “Mayan” and provide evidence that the “Mayans” of the Southern Area in the “Post-Classic” period in fact had none of the three most important characteristics that Coe and Houston themselves use to define the “Mayans”.

In the “Classic” period, when “Mayan” civilization is usually viewed at its height, the Southern Area had little to no connection to “Mayan” civilization. Even Coe and Houston admit that this is strange. They claim that the Southern Area was the focus of the “Mayan” civilization in the “Pre-Classic” period but that was basically abandoned by the “Mayans” in the “Classic” period, only to be resettled by “Mayans” in the Post-Classic period. There is no doubt that the “Mayans” showed up in the Post-Classic period and had little if any connection to the “Classic

Mayan” civilization or the earlier people of the Southern Area. The “Mayans” came from elsewhere, possibly in lands that had been “Classic Mayan”, but brought nothing but their languages, which were similar “Classic Mayan” languages in the central area, to link them to “Mayan” civilization.

The author of the Thesis and the other article claims that the Mixe-Zoqueans, mostly the Mixeans, were responsible for Izapa, Kaminalyuju, El Baul, and Takalik Abaj. He also claims that the Long Count dates in the Southern Area, all of which are “Pre-Classic” in Coe and Houston’s terminology, were written by Mixe-Zoqueans, so that there were never any “Mayan” Long Count dates in the Southern area, which explains the quandary presented by Coe and Houston. There are no real “Mayan” Long Count dates until 292 A.D., in a “Classic Mayan” city in the Central Area called Tikal.

The Central Area is what Mayanists think of when they think of “Mayan”.

Ironically, tourists and students think of the Northern Area, with its distinct Yucatec language, as most “Mayan” region, due to Chichen Itza’s popularity and the use of the Yucatec language in a recent popular movie. However, this seeming divide is mostly illusory. Both the Northern Area and the Central Area partake in “Mayan” civilization as defined by Coe and Houston. Both areas spoke “Mayan”, had similar basic architectural traits (although at times different architectural styles), the Mayan script (written in essentially the same language), and the use of the Long Count. They were thus two distinct parts of a shared “Mayan” civilization.

Linguistically, the “Southern Mayans” are closer to the Central Area “Classic Mayans” than either are to the Yucatecs. However, politically and culturally, the Central Area “Classic Mayans” and the Yucatecs of the Northern Area are more similar. The “Southern Mayans”, however, are part of Post-Classic Southeastern Mesoamerica, which makes them politically and culturally closer to “Mayan” civilization as defined above than either are to the Huastecs from the other part of Mesoamerica.

Table 3. What is a “Mayan”?

Distinctions between the four main “Mayan” groups	Part of “Mayan” civilization	Not part of “Mayan” civilization
Linguistically Closest to Each Other	“Classic Mayans” (Central Area)	“Southern Mayans” (Southern Area)
Linguistically Far from “Classic Mayan”	Yucatecs (Northern Area)	Huastecs (outside of Southeastern Mesoamerica)

So, when can we call a “Mayan” a Mayan? If we understand Huastecs as linguistically “Mayan”, but not part of Southeastern Mesoamerica and the Southern Mayans (no longer with quotations) as part of Southeastern Mesoamerica but not part Mayan civilization (also finally free of the quotations), then we can define Mayan civilization as the Central Area “Classic Mayans” and the Yucatecs of the Northern area, in all three periods as defined by Coe and Houston- “Pre-Classic”, Classic, and Post-Classic.

Thus, a Mayan without qualification writes in the “Classic Mayan” language (regardless of one’s spoken language), perhaps with some influence from the regional spoken language, uses the Long Count, has a certain kind of Mayan architecture and of course, speaks Mayan

3.3 Literature Review: What is an Olmec”?

Even this pared-down, more specific definition is not analytically-comparable to the definition of the “Olmecs” by the eminent scholar Pool. Pool, unlike, Coe and Houston, is much less interested in the taxonomy of his terms. He retreats to naming as the “Olmecs” the people of a land that he calls “Olman”. All of this terminology originally comes from the Aztecs, just the Mayans were named by the Spanish. Pool does not claim that the “Olmecs” are a sufficient, self-contained civilization as Coe and Houston clearly claim for the Mayans. He does define a region that he believes to be internally coherent (one could argue that he claims the region of Olman to be self-contained) and ethnically homogenous (to a point). He defends this region as important and distinct from all other regions and attempts in his book to defend its uniqueness.

Overall, he is quite successful in this defense. He defends the concept that the “Olmecs” existed as a distinct people, a distinct political and cultural unit, though Pool himself is the first to admit that it had its own political and cultural sub-divisions. He admits to connections with other groups of people, who were essentially ethnically the same as the “Olmecs”. However, he turns this on its head a little bit, because he can show that the material culture was different despite a common language and common macro-culture. The “Olmecs” were thus a distinct micro-culture that was clearly part of a larger macro-culture.

Pool’s basic thesis essentially holds up even when we bring in Justeson and Clark, two scholars with very different projects than Pool. Justeson, based on his long-time collaboration with Kaufman, the incredible linguist of the Mixe-Zoqueans (amongst other groups), sees stronger links between the “Olmecs” and what Clark coined as the “Mokaya” culture. Since Clark’s term is based on the inaccurate assumption that the “Mokaya” culture was based on corn, the present author prefers the term “ancient Soconuscans”. However, Clark himself points out that the term “Olmecs” is far from perfect. Either term, “Mokayans” or “ancient Soconuscans”, is correct. Justeson and Clark, in their own ways, both see the “Olmecs” as part a larger Mixe-Zoquean world.

The “Olmecs” are complicated as a concept because the term seems to include both undivided Mixe-Zoque-speakers and then speakers of Zoque languages exclusively. Since the line between Mixe-Zoque and Zoque culturally and linguistically is unclear historically, the current author uses broader terms for the peoples than Mixe, Zoque, or Mixe-Zoque, which then become Mixean, Zoquean, and Mixe-Zoquean, respectively, in most contexts. The divide in the ancient world between Mixeans and Zoqueans was not significant until a later point then when the linguistic divide began, around 1000 BC according to Clark.

The “Olmecs” are therefore technically a sub-set culture of both Mixe-Zoquean civilization and Zoquean civilization. However, the natural transition between the two seems to indicate that while the language may have divided from the Mixeans, the rest of “Olmec” culture remained recognizable, which is certainly the main point of Pool’s book. It is very likely that the Zoquean part of the Mixe-Zoquean languages was the main part of the civilization and that the Mixeans evolved away from its center. This means that the “heart” of the Mixe-Zoqueans

became the Zoqueans, while the wandering “feet” became the Mixeans. In sum, the “Olmecs” were still the same people, both before and after the Mixeans broke away linguistically.

Analytically, therefore, the “Olmecs” should be viewed as part of a single linguistic/ethnic/cultural community. Rather than call this community Zoque, as if to proclaim certainty of exact linguistic homogeneity and continuity to today’s Zoques, the current author prefers to call this ancient community Zoquean, which expresses, as does Mixean and possibly Mixe-Zoquean, some kind of vagueness. The “Olmecs” were one of three main sub-sets of the broader Zoquean community in ancient times. The ancient “Soconuscans”, or the “Mokayans”, were the second culture, on the Pacific Coast of far southwestern Mexico and northwestern Guatemala. This group seems to have been neighbors, and competed, with the Izapans of the same basic region, who were Mixean, and a another Mixean group in “the Southern Cities” of Guatemala down to El Salvador. In between the “Olmecs” and the ancient “Soconuscans”, the people of the Interior of the Chiapas, the “Chiapans” lived in various major ancient sites as San Isidro and Chiapa de Corzo, which Clark shows to be similar in the “Middle Formative” (i.e. the Pre-Classic) to La Venta in “Olman” and several sites in the northern part of the Soconusco region.

Kaufman, the great linguist, with Justeson’s help deciphered the ancient “Epi-Olmec” script and found it to be not only a Mixe-Zoque/Mixe-Zoquean language, but specifically an ancestor to all known Zoque languages. It is also viewed by Kaufman and Justeson as the direct descendant of the “Olmec” language spoken in La Venta, the second major city of the “Olmec” civilization. The term “Epi-Olmec” makes sense and is certainly better than Coe’s “Isthmian” script idea, but it brings up an important question: Are “Italians” “Epi-Romans”?

Before we can answer this question, it is important to understand that the “Olmecs” evolved directly in to the “Epi-Olmecs” and that the “Epi-Olmec” script likely evolved directly from an earlier “Olmec” script, which have been semi-writing or perhaps even full writing. Pool also emphasizes that “Olmec” and “Epi-Olmec” cultures were mostly just different periods of the same culture. However, “Epi-Olmec” culture, wherever it is acknowledged as significant and where the script is acknowledged as a properly-translated successor of the “Olmecs”, is distinctly separated from “Olmec” culture.

While the term and concept of the “Olmecs” is defensible because “Olmecs” are distinct sub-set of the Zoquean, and the larger Mixe-Zoquean, civilization, the term “Epi-Olmec” is analytically defensible for a different reason. It is a period name. The “Romans” have distinct periods as well. The “Republican” and “Imperial” periods, for example, indicate important historical differences in “Roman” civilization, without pretending that they are different cultures within that civilization. Thus “Epi-Olmec” analytically is similar to “Imperial Roman” and we would then call the other periods “Early Formative Olmec” and “Middle Formative Olmec”, which borrows somewhat from Pool’s conception of the “Olmecs”. The definition of an “Olmec” is summarized in the table below.

Table 4. What is an “Olmec”?”

Ancient Mixe-Zoquean	Did Not Take Part in the	Took Part in the Epi-Olmec
Cultures in Mexico	Epi-Olmec Script	script

Cultures Developed Later	An “Izapan” Mixean (related to the “Southern Cities” Mixeans)	A “Chiapan” Zoquean
Original Cultures	“Mokaya”/ “Soconuscan” Zoquean	An “Olmec” Zoquean

Now, dispensing with the quotations, we see that Epi-Olmec is a time period and script, while Olmec is a culture that is part of the larger Zoquean and even large Mixe-Zoquean civilizations. It is not equivalent or comparable to the Mayans, but it is a small analytical unit, analogous to the “Romans”. It is important to not assume that we know the “Romans”. In fact, many do not. If we use the terminology of the Mesoamericanists, the direct descendants of the “Romans” would be the “Epi-Romans”. Does that make Italians, the most direct descendants (as a country) of the “Romans”, “Epi-Romans”?

3.4 Literature Review: What is a “Roman”?

Why are the “Romans”, whoever they are, analogous to the “Olmecs”? After all, they are from a completely different Civilization, in the Mediterranean, in Western Civilization. In ancient Italy, there were several distinct language families like in Southeastern Mesoamerica.

One of these was Indo-European, a language family that was present in many places, much like Mayan was in numerous places in Mesoamerica. There was a linguistically-unrelated group that was mentor to the Indo-Europeans of ancient Italy. This group, the Etruscans, mentored the Italics, the main branch of the Indo-European language family in Italy. The Italics were all related to each other, but one branch of the group, the Venetics got geographically separated from the rest. Does that sound like what happened to the Huastecs? It is an analogous situation.

The other Italics were all deeply influenced by the Etruscans and each other. Two main ethno-linguistic groups formed amongst this main group of Italics. The Osco-Umbrians were the geographically and at one point, numerically, larger of the two. This group divided into two main groups over time, the “Oscans” and the Umbrians, and numerous small groups, such as the Sabines. The “Oscans” will be discussed later in more depth. The other branch was the Latino-Faliscan group, whose most important member was the Latin language.

So, Venetic is analogous to Huastec, Latin is similar to Yucatec and the “Oscans” and Umbrians resemble, in some ways, the Classic Mayans of the Central Area and the Southern Mayans. The Mayan and Italic groups are very analogous. They both have a mentor language family different from their own. For the Mayans, this is Mixe-Zoquean and for the Italics, including the “Romans”, it is the Etruscans (or Tyrrehenian) language family. They both have four main groups (simplifying a bit). One of the groups gets isolated, another is distinct from the last two, which then have some connection. The two groups, the Mayans and the Italics are thus truly analogous.

The “Romans” were not, strictly speaking, one ethno-linguistic group, even in the beginning. While the “Romans” were primarily Latin-speaking from the beginning and were Latins ethnically, there were Osco-Umbrian “Romans”, from a sub-group called the Sabines, as

well as Etruscan “Romans”. “Romans” from an early point were identified by others and identified themselves with their city, Roma (Rome), simply because they were not simply a sub-set of Latins.

However, the “Romans” are not entirely unique in this way. Teotihuacan, a city in Central Mexico, was a multi-ethnic city, likely from the beginning. In Southeastern Mesoamerica, Mixe-Zoquean cities, such as Izapa and Kaminalyuju, were likely multi-ethnic, even from early times. In Southern Italy, the city of Paestum was Lucanian (a type of Oscan) and Greek, and later, “Roman” as well. Multi-ethnicity and internal diversity were quite common in the ancient world and do not hinder the analysis or comparison.

The “Romans” all wrote in a single language from an early period. Latin was the common written language of “Romans” in Italy even as “Rome” became much larger than just one city. “Romans” in Italy, who remained closest to the original “Romans” eventually became the “Italians”. These “Italians” are directly analogous to the Epi-Olmecs.

Taking away the quotations, the original ancient Romans were a sub-set of Italic people, with a predominant Latin group, mixed with Osco-Umbrian Sabines and non-Italic Etruscans. Boatwright, et al. make it clear how Romans were a distinct people amongst the Latins, partly because they were a Latin people that was also mixed. Part of its dynamic strength came from being able to interact with many neighboring groups while having a distinct identity.

If we look at Boatwright and her colleagues’ logic, the Romans are analogous to the Olmecs, though not perfectly so. The Olmecs were Mixe-Zoqueans whose language split along the way and they remained one side of that split; the Romans, however were a Latin-speaking group that was ethnically-mixed. However, the Olmecs interacted with other Zoquean groups and also their Mixean cousins to such an extent, that they were likely somewhat ethnically-mixed themselves. In terms of written and even spoken language, the Romans were no more heterogenous than the Olmecs. They were both sub-sets of a larger group, but imperfectly so, with internal ethno-linguistic mixture and diversity. Romans are defined by the table below.

Table 5. What is a “Roman”?

Defining a “Roman”	Predominantly Non-Latin-speaking	Predominantly Latin-speaking
Not Greatly Affected by Etruscan political ideas	A “Sabine”	A “Latin”
Greatly Affected by Etruscan political ideas	An “Etruscan	A “Roman”

The above table defines the Romans a little bit differently, but it comes down to the same basic formula. Latins were part of a larger group called the Latino-Faliscans. The Faliscans were linguistically similar to the Latins but were closer to the central Etruscan homeland and became greatly culturally impacted by the Etruscans. This led to a Latin-Faliscan split. Culturally and linguistically, the Romans remained Latins, but the Faliscans became something else.

However, politically (and to a lesser extent, culturally), the Romans were deeply influenced by the Etruscans, who provided three of their seven kings. The Romans were still

Latins, but they were more influenced by the Etruscans than the other Latins who remained Latins as opposed to the Faliscans.

3.5 Literature Review: What is an “Oscan”?

The Romans were thus a sub-set of Latins, more or less, just as the Olmecs were a sub-set of the Mixe-Zoqueans and later, the Zoqueans, more or less. The “Oscans”, however, were a larger group analytically than were the Romans. While the Romans only had sub-divisions later on, one of which became the Italians, the “Oscans” had four main groups (amongst others) from an early period.

McDonald is one of the foremost experts on the “Oscans”, much as Boatwright and her group literally wrote the book in English on the Romans. McDonald’s division of the “Oscans” into groups is largely the same as those of other scholars. She acknowledges three of what the present author calls “script-groups”, two of which are the focus in this paper. The “northern group” wrote in the Oscan language, as did all these “script-groups”, but in a Latin script. This is the least important of the three groups, according to McDonald and the least common in the Osco-Umbrian Corpus, an online compilation of inscriptions in the Umbrian and Oscan languages.

The present author views the “northern group” as “Oscan” in the broad sense but not necessarily politically, just as Sabines are Osco-Umbrians linguistically and culturally, but not politically. The other two “script-groups” are the focus of both the Oscan parts of the Corpus and of McDonald’s research. These two groups, as McDonald explains, form four main groups, which are the focus of the Corpus, of McDonald’s work, and of that of the present author.

The two main “script-groups” are called by McDonald the “Central Oscan” and “Southern Oscan” groups. There are likely some dialectal differences between “Central Oscan” and “Southern Oscan”, but the main difference is script, not language. “Central Oscans” wrote in an “Oscan” script that was unique to the “Central Oscans” and was based on the Etruscan script. On the other hand, “the Southern Oscans” used a Greek-based script that was unique to them, but was essentially the Greek script. By contrast, the “Oscan” script is distinct enough to be considered a different script than the Etruscan script.

The difference in script is a major distinction amongst “Oscan” groups. Modern scholars have worked hard on this front. The “Central Oscans” are divided into two main groups, for strictly political and historical reasons. The “Campani” are the group from whence we get the name of the region of “Campania”. However, the name “Campani” comes from the name of the city of Capua, which was originally Etruscan and not “Oscan”. The “Samnites” were a polity, a confederation, called in Latin “Samnium”. There were some groups that were culturally “Samnite” who may or may not have been strictly-speaking part of the “Samnite” confederation; however, they were at least at one point politically-affiliated with “Samnium”, even if loosely, so we will count them as “Samnite”.

The “Campanians” were distinct from the “Samnites”. They lived in larger, more obviously “civilized” cities, many of which had been Etruscan or Greek at one point (and several were likely multi-ethnic). The “Campanians” lived in city-states, the “Samnites” were confederal. The two groups were politically (and to some degree, culturally) distinct and often rivals, and even enemies. The “Campanians” were major allies of the Romans at times.

South of a “script-line”, which was not a perfect line, dwelt the “Southern Oscans”. McDonald wrote an entire book on the “Southern Oscans” and their relationship with the Greeks.

These were the “Oscans” that used the Greek script to write Oscan. They, just like their relatives using the “Oscan” script, were divided into two main groups.

“The Southern Oscans” contained two groups- the “Bruttians” and the Lucanians”. The “Bruttians” are not that well-known, the least well-known in fact of the four main “Oscan” groups. They are said to have been descended from slaves that revolted from the “Lucanians”; however, the Greeks also say that the “Lucanians” treated the Greeks whom they conquered poorly when Pedley has decisively proved that this was not true. The “Lucanians” lived in city-states, like the “Campanians” and like them, many of their cities were conquered from others, especially the Greeks. In all fairness, the Greeks had conquered these lands from the native Italic peoples, who were at least distantly related to the “Oscans” and Umbrians. The “Lucanians” cities seem to have been more independent than the Samnite confederate units, but less so than the “Campanian” cities. The “Campanian” cities had a loose association, while there is evidence that the “Lucanians” had a common sanctuary at Rossano di Vaglio.

This “confederation” allowed significant autonomy and sovereignty to its members. Paestum, a multi-ethnic city at the time after the “Lucanians” conquered the local Greeks and shared power with them, was likely a member and yet it was very different from some of the other members. The “Lucanian” confederation was thus likely more internally diverse than the “Samnite” polity or the “Campanian” polities, but intermediate in both cohesiveness and strength to those polities. The “Campanians” were much less unified in times of war than were the “Lucanians” whose polity was probably dedicated to the common defense and the common religion.

The “Bruttians” were less “civilized” than were the “Lucanians” and if anything about what the Greeks is true, they were less comfortable with urban life than were any of the other “Oscan” groups. The level of Greek influence was strong on both the “Bruttians” and “Lucanians”, according to McDonald. The “Bruttians” probably were a less cohesive people than were the “Lucanians”.

The “Oscans” were thus made up of four main groups, two “Central Oscan” groups and two “Southern Oscan” groups. They did not call themselves “Oscans”, but they did speak the same language and though they wrote in different scripts, the written language, with a few differences, was the same language once transliterated. The gods were similar and while the religions were somewhat different across these groups, they were no more different than between different Mayan groups (as defined above).

Table 6. What is an “Oscan”?

Four Main Groups of “Oscans”	Wrote in The “Oscan” Script	Wrote in the Greek Script
Did Not Have a Strong Polity	A “Campanian”	A “Bruttian”
Had a Strong Polity	A “Samnite”	A “Lucanian”

Without the quotations, Oscans are a single complex language community. They had four major sub-divisions, which formed two distinct cultural groups within the larger group. They

were an ethnic group in the larger sense, similar to the present author' above definition of Mayans.

IV. Result and Discussion

Now that our four groups have been defined, it is time to analyze and compare them. This is the part of the paper which applies the Unified Theory of Politics to our four cases. Before we can analyze and compare all four cases together, let us analyze and compare each pair of cases within its Civilization, just as we analyzed each of the four cases individually.

The Mayans were a larger group than were the Olmecs. The Olmecs were a sub-set of the Zoqueans/Zoque, themselves one ethnic division amongst the Mixe-Zoque/Mixe-Zoqueans.

The Mayans, as defined here, included two major sub-divisions, the Classic Mayans of the Central Area and the Yucatecs of the Northern Area. Thus, analytically, the Mayans are a bigger group, on a higher level and less specific, than the Olmecs. In other words, the Mayans and the Olmecs are not analogous. The results of this analysis are below in Table 7.

Table 7. Analyzing Groups in Ancient Mesoamerica

Linguistic group	Mixe-Zoqueans (Mixe-Zoque)	“Mayans”
Written political culture	Zoqueans/Zoque	Classic Mayans
Regional sub-set of written political culture	Olmecs	Classic Central Area Mayans (along with the Yucatecs)

The Romans were a smaller, more specific group comparable to the Olmecs. They were a sub-set of Latins, who were a subset of the Latino-Faliscans. On the other hand, the Oscans were a sub-group of the Osco-Umbrians, but was composed of four major, distinct sub-groups—the Lucanians, the Bruttians, the Campanians, and the Samnites. These four sub-groups were in two groups. So, analytically, the Oscans are at a higher level than the Romans. The Romans and the Oscans are not analogous. The results of this analysis are below.

Table 8. Analyzing Groups in Ancient Italy

Linguistic group	Latino-Faliscans	Osco-Umbrians
Written political culture	Latins	Oscans
Regional sub-set of written political culture	Romans	Lucanians (and Bruttians, Campanians, and Samnites, in two groups)

This allows us to draw the main analogies of the paper, literally, in another table. We can compare ancient Mesoamerica to ancient Italy. The Classic Mayans, including the Yucatecs and

the Classic Central Area Mayans and the Oscans are higher-level groups. The Olmecs and Romans are lower-level groups. Thus, the Classic Mayans are to the Oscans as the Olmecs are to the Romans. Also, the Classic Mayans are to the Olmecs as the Oscans are to the Romans. These core analogous relationships are shown below in Table 9.

Table 9. Illustration of Hypothesis: Analogies across Civilizations

Type of cultural group	Ancient Mesoamerica	Ancient Italy
Written political culture	Classic Mayans	Oscans
Regional sub-set of written political culture	Olmecs	Romans

V. Conclusion

So, are Italians Epi-Romans after all? If the Olmecs are analogous to the Romans, which we have spent much of this paper proving, then there must be a group analogous to the Epi-Olmecs. The Epi-Olmecs were not a homogenous culture, but actually had internal diversity, possibly including distinct “dialects” as different from each other as languages. However, the Epi-Olmecs shared a single elite written language and likely, a single elite spoken language, much like the Italians and the Classic Mayans. The Epi-Olmecs naturally evolved from the Olmecs and were one people with them in a broad, historical sense, just as modern and ancient Yucatecs are both different and similar. This is the case with the ancient Romans in Italy and modern Italians.

In sum, the Olmecs are to the Epi-Olmecs as the Romans are to the Italians. Thus, if the term “Epi-Olmecs” is a good fit, and the present author argues that it is, then Italians are indeed “Epi-Romans”. In conclusion, the Olmecs are to the Epi-Olmecs as the Romans are to the Epi-Romans. See Table 10 below for a summary of this logic.

Table 10. Italians are Epi-Romans

The Olmecs are to the Epi-Olmecs as the Romans are to the Epi-Romans	What do you call a Zoque-branch-speaking person from Mexico during...	What do you call a Latin-branch-speaking person from Italy during...
Earlier Times	An Olmec	A Roman
Later Times	An Epi-Olmec	An Italian (an Epi-Roman)

What is the point of all of this? The Unified Theory of Politics states that any polity (or culture) can be compared to any other polity (or culture) regardless of place, time, or culture (or Civilization). We have just demonstrated this basic principle of the Unified Theory of Politics. The Theory allows us to analyze and compare cultures and polities across Civilizations.

One method that the Unified Theory of Politics uses is analogy. Analogical reasoning allows us to understand that certain terms that are used as units of equal measure- Olmecs, Mayans, Epi-Olmecs, Romans, Latins, and Oscans, for example- are not actually units of equal measure. Olmecs and Mayans really have no business being in the same sentence with each other, where it is implied that they are of the same level. They are not the same unit of analysis. Epi-Olmecs are also not the same kind of unit of analysis as Olmecs. Romans are not on the same level as Latins or Oscans. This analogical reasoning allows us to question many years of scholarship on both ancient Mesoamerica and ancient Italy in an analytical, rational, and polite way.

This case-study of the four cases shows us not to be afraid of comparing cases across the boundaries of Civilizations. The hope here is that historical-comparative research in History and Politics will adopt the Unified Theory of Politics approach and eventually all polities and cultures with writing can and will be compared, by the same scholars, which reveal larger, universalistic truths about human politics.

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