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Nominated articles must include footnotes and a bibliography that conform to the Chicago or Turabian style guide. Articles should be submitted as word documents or rich text files. Further details can be found at <http://cujh.columbia.edu>.

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FATHERLAND: Gendered Spaces in Early 20th Century Germany

Matt Dutton

The 2016 US presidential election can be seen as a triumphant reversion to tradition in a battle against a perceived feminization and internationalization of American society according to many in the “alt-right.” Though there is no true binary that exists between the simple concepts of masculine and feminine, there are many whose votes were cast out of a buried fear of a new world of acceptance, equality, and, most importantly, international interdependence. Many liberals who voted against Donald Trump are now faced with the fact that the man they had likened to Hitler and labeled as a misogynist, bigot, and bully had become the President of the United States. In general, many political commentators and pundits are alarmed by the current rise in far-right wing politics and organizations within the West and thusly have tried to compare and contrast contemporary politics with that of 1920-30’s Germany.^{1 2} However, one fundamental aspect of German culture during this time has been completely ignored from such analyses, which is an understanding of how the modernization, liberalization, and political reinvention that Germany experienced from the late 19th into the early 20th century drastically affected its national consciousness. These forces both international and national manifested themselves through a cultural questioning of gender roles and their functioning at large, but also the innately personal investigation of what it meant to be German woman or man in the face of a dynamically changing world. During this period of German history, the social consciousness of Germany was deeply imbedded within a discussion of itself within the context of internationalization, thus events such as the industrialization and urbanization of German cities, World War One, and the Nazis’ seizure of power were understood through a gendered corporeal lens which itself was a product of such events and their inspiration.

Many popular explanations for the events of 1930’s Germany mostly rely upon an economic appreciation for the Treaty of Versailles and its relationship to

¹ Gregor Aisch, Adam Pearce and Bryant Rousseau. "How Far Is Europe Swinging to the Right?" The New York Times. May 22, 2016. Accessed February 19, 2017.

² Doug Rossinow "Leftists and Liberals in the Political Heartland." Boston Review. January 13, 2017. Accessed February 19, 2017.

how Germany fared during the later world wide depression. However, to fully incorporate an analysis of Germany at this time, a discussion would have to include the intersection of changing gender dynamics, the male body and its representation of national virility, and the modernization of society. The questions resulting from and the social anxiety caused by these phenomena will be explained and analyzed through their depiction in art, intellectual discourse, magazines, and other cultural artifacts of the era. The scope of this paper will be looking at the broad trends of German social life starting before WWI and continuing through the Nazis' seizure of power. Through a corporeal and spatial understanding of German society, this paper will provide an alternate reading of the Nazis' quest for *lebensraum*, or "living space," as the reclamation of previously masculine spaces that were deemed as becoming feminized. It challenges the traditional understanding of the Nazis' quest as a simple statement towards territorial reconquest by positing that Hitler's use of the term was aimed more towards an understanding of the German nation and its people as corporeal beings. Thus, the social phenomena during this time period in Germany were understood and experienced through a corporeal consciousness or an understanding based off of the physical, cultural, and aesthetic nature of the German man's body. This is evident through analysis of the Nazis successful attempt at re-domination and remasculinization of German society in its entirety. It is through a dissection of the masculine body that much of Weimar and Nazi Germany can be understood. During early 20th century, the male body was constructed first and foremost to represent the history and future of the German people.

Context

A key element of today's zeitgeist is the way in which increasing globalization and modernization is affecting both the economic and social world.³ ⁴ Modern consciousness is preoccupied with notions of the world as a unitary whole - whether it be the issue of climate change, immigration, or foreign trade. However, the weight of globalization on the consciousness of the average American is greatly felt and is discussed on both sides of the political spectrum. Technology and liberalism can be seen in the early 20th century in a similar fashion. The impacts of liberalism and technology, though widely experienced, were felt most intensively during this time within Germany, as argued by Jeffrey

³ Michael, Gonchar. "Rethinking Globalization | Investigating the Benefits and Drawbacks of Global Trade." The New York Times. November 16, 2016. Accessed February 19, 2017.

⁴ Charlie Spiering. "Obama Defends Globalization, Commits to 'International Order'". Breitbart. June 29, 2016. Accessed February 19, 2017.

Herf in his book *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*. Herf's term "reactionary modernism" is in reference to the collection of authors and thinkers such as Ernst Junger, Oswald Spengler, and Carl Schmitt, spread throughout Europe but most densely located in Germany. In their writing, these men employed concepts emanating from Nietzsche's concept of the romantic will.⁵ As Herf argued, the question concerning technology split German intellectuals into two factions, who either saw technology as liberating or corrupting the German *Volk*.⁶ What gave the reactionary modernists a potent political message was their ability to frame the controversies of modernization as another obstacle for the German nation to overcome by subjugating it. The divergence that emerged in reaction to technology and modernity manifested itself in various commentaries, each providing its own reasoning yet never overcoming the divisiveness of modernity. A major ideological component of reactionary modernism was what Herf termed as "steel-like romanticism" in which technology and the future were seen as emancipatory agents.⁷ Through the reclamation of Germany's imperial or "iron" past, the reactionary modernists sought to forge a new "steel-like" future with modernity's new technologies and by doing so, provide the solution to Germany's division.

The Nervous Male: Pre WWI

Reactionary modernism as a political ideology was born from the quotidian experiences of men during the early part of the 20th century, when the status of men and their intercourse with the objective world was drastically shifting. During the height of Wilhelminian Germany and its increasingly industrial society, a public discourse began to emerge alongside new technologies, forms of labor, and heightened velocity of life. In 1867, Eric Erichsen published his work "On Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System" in which he details what he calls 'Railway Spine.'⁸ Besides the obvious physical damage that one would occur during a train crash, the victims would also develop post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological afflictions as a result.⁹ His accounts of the

⁵ Jeffrey Herf. 1984. *Reactionary Modernism : Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*. Cambridge Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Chapter 1, p 1-18

⁷ *Ibid.*, p 209

⁸ JE, Erichsen (1867). *On Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System*. Philadelphia, PA: Henry C. Lea.

⁹ Robert, Scaer(2007). *The Body Bears the Burden: Trauma, Dissociation, and Disease, Second Edition*. Philadelphia, PA: Haworth Press. pp. 23–55

traumatic experiences of those who were subject to railway and other motor accidents were an early insight into the impacts of technology on the body. Erichsen's work made its way into German intellectual discourse through Thomas Mann's "The Railway Accident."¹⁰ In the story, Mann describes the experience of a man in the moment of a train crash and reflects on how the crash represented the state of a modernized Germany. In the moment of the crash, "both the male body and the locomotive are portrayed as agents of progress,[...] [yet] these same forces can lead to their downfall."¹¹ Here, progress and speed are tightly interwoven to form the notion of a shifting social sphere in which modernity has become physically felt; the increased rate of change to society only endanger the subject. Intensifying the velocity of change and progress is what David Prickett argues gave rise to the 'crisis of masculinity' in early 20th century Germany. In Prickett's article, "The Acceleration of the Masculine in Early 20th Century Berlin," he concludes that the increased velocity of change experienced by German men led to an "inability to cope with rapid changes in the world around him and those within him," thus causing many cases of male hysteria.¹² Within German cultural commentary of the time, the speed and dimensions of urban life were analyzed for how they would affect the German body, nerves, and will. Within the framework of time and speed, masculine maturation was thought to be a process of organic origin, taking time, and fragile in nature.¹³ In contrast, the feminine was juxtaposed as inorganic and easily adapting to the stresses of urban life. The fear was that the German urban male was going to become "weak nerved" or in today's reinventions "soft" or "cucked," thus succumbing to money, sex, and most terrifyingly of all, unproductiveness. What becomes apparent is a binary in which the masculine man as productive, law abiding, and organic is positioned against the feminized man who is unproductive and indulges himself in the pleasures of consumerism.

Similar to the dichotomy mentioned above, in his publication of *The Metropolis and Mental Life* in 1905, Georg Simmel painted a clear black and white contrast between the metropolitan man and the more traditional German man. Simmel's argument revolves around his evaluation of the new metropolitan being who, in stark contrast to the German will, responded not with emotion or

¹⁰ DJ, Prickett. 2012. "The Acceleration of the Masculine in Early-Twentieth-Century Berlin." *German Life and Letters* 65 (1): 20-35.

¹¹ Thomas, Mann. "Das Eisenbahnunglück : Novellen." (Book, 1961). 2016. Accessed November 23, 2016.

¹² Prickett, "The Acceleration of the Masculine in Early-Twentieth-Century Berlin." p 27

¹³ Ibid., p 30

personality but with rationality.¹⁴ The cause of such phenomena was the dynamics in which metropolitan life occurred, from which the spatial, architectural, and temporal framework of the metropolitan shaped and formed those experiencing it and thus created a new form of human interaction, to which Simmel feared. The divide between the metropolitan and the German rural was also projected into Frantz Lang's *Metropolis*, where the above "metropolis" was depicted as highly organized and modern, yet within it containing a depiction of Eden with flares of classical architecture. The characters originating from the metropolis moved freely and organically, while the workers who lived in the simple, inorganic, and barren underworld moved like clockwork. In the example of *Metropolis*, the divide between Germans living within and outside of the metropolis is emphasized as if they are two separate beings.

It was not just the aspect of metropolitan life that threatened traditional masculinity, it was also the newer forms of industrial labor that were characteristic of modernizing Germany. Karl Marx's analysis of *Capital* in 1867 outlines the ways in which industrialization, capitalist production, and the subsequent rise of unskilled labor produced what Marx called "estranged labor;" a case where the workers are alienated from their labor, the object of their labor, each other, and themselves.¹⁵ The result of such alienation is a man removed from life whose body is degraded and rendered as another piece of a machine. It was this consciousness of the working class and their oppression by capitalists and their mechanized form of labor that further solidified class division within Germany.¹⁶ Also in line with Marx's conclusion that capitalism inherently creates an industrial reserve army, the population of Germany expanded from 41 million in 1871 to 65.3 million in 1911, which was mostly concentrated in the urban industrial centers, and thusly the population boom exacerbated a feeling of disorientation and claustrophobia when one could not find a place within society.¹⁷ ¹⁸ The fact that thinkers like Marx, Simmel, Weber, and many others' analyses of technology's effects upon German society were mirrored by films like *Metropolis* in the early to late 1920s demonstrates that the growing geographical,

¹⁴Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*. Edited and with an introduction by Donald N. Levine. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971, pp. 324-39.

¹⁵ Karl, Marx. 1844. "Estranged Labour." Pp. 32-38 in *Social Theory: The Multicultural Readings* (2010) edited by C. Lemert. Philadelphia: Westview Press.

¹⁶Karl, Marx. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*. New York: Vintage Books, 1977. Chapter 15

¹⁷ Marx. *Capital*, Chapter 25

¹⁸ *Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft*, pp. 102-103; and Walter G. Hoffmann, *Das Wachstum der deutschen Wirtschaft seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* Berlin, 1965, pp. 173-174 (immigration figures).

class based, and ideological divide would persist throughout German social thought even after WWI, and its epicenter would continue to be the German male body and modernity.

The Nervous Male: The First World War

Many Germans saw WWI as an opportunity to revitalize the German Nation and provide an opportunity for German men to demonstrate their loyalty to the nation and to become productive members of the national community. In 1925, Adolf Hitler published *Mein Kampf*, in which he described the general mood of European men in 1914. He stated, “a struggle for freedom had broken out[...] the existence or non existence of the German nation” was at stake.¹⁹ Many Germans saw WWI as the chance for their country to overcome the emerging divide between the metropolitan and the rural. The decay of traditional masculinity, as caused by the influences of technology and metropolitan life, was to be remedied and rejuvenated by the war. However, it was not just the emerging metropolitan that was deemed feminine, but also the fear of a decaying German military. “Two articles published in November of 1906 linked [ambassador] Eulenberg,[...] with General Kuno Count Von Moltke” to having sexual affairs with one another.²⁰ The article and ensuing scandal only continued the current perception that German men, and consequently the German nation, were becoming “weak nerved” or effeminate. However, the national war effort and mobilization seemed to become the will of Germany and was seen as an opportunity to regain its virility. The soldier became the epitome of the flexed German nation in which the sacrifice and will of German people was cast. Even homosexuals, who otherwise were not welcomed or celebrated in Germany at the time, were redeemed and valued in their wartime efforts as soldiers.²¹ Men like August Stramm depicted the front as a source of national unity, brotherhood, and virility that seemed necessary to the survival of the German nation.²² Stramm, like many others, sought to capture the essence of the front through his poetic verse which, due to its brevity, highlighted the sharp and active nature of his subject. In a sense, the purpose of his poems “Storm” and “Battle” were to jerk the reader

¹⁹ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, eds. Alvin Saunders Johnson, John Chamberlain, et. al. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939, pp. 210-13.

²⁰ David James Prickett. 2008. "The Soldier Figure in Discourses on Masculinity in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany." *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 44 (1): 68-86.

²¹ Prickett, "The Soldier Figure", pp. 69

²² August Stramm, “Gewitter” [“Storm”] and “Schlacht” [“Battle”] (1914), in *Das Werk [Works]*, edited by René Radrizzani. Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1963, pp. 111-12, 77-78.

into the physical consciousness of the soldier, linking the domestic front to the war front.²³

The general perception of the war as beneficial to German men and the nation as a whole was echoed in the field of psychiatry where psychiatrists would prescribe military service as cures to hysteria and other neurological phenomena. The medical term for this prescription became known as the “iron bath.”²⁴ This prescription was given to the “weak nerved” German man as was WWI was the medication for the impotent German nation.²⁵ The war and national mobilization depicted the German people as springing from the trenches of metropolitan life, feminized men, and social division, as well as charging forward into the future. However, the glorious future that Germany had believed it was charging into was, in reality, the killing fields of the Somme, the humiliation of Versailles, and the political upheaval of the Spartacist revolution. The war would not act as the unifier so many people had hoped it would be, but instead would take a toll upon Germany that would complicate the future of its politics. The trends that many Germans saw as the decay of their nation and way of life would only become more prominent as their nation experienced defeat, and in this defeat, the preexisting gender-spatial hierarchy would be questioned.

The Nervous Male: Weimar

The complexity of Weimar Germany and its vast array of political parties and ideologies created the opportunity for the aforementioned trends of social discourse to take hold in politics. In 1918, Heinrich Mann published his work, *The Loyal Subject*, where he describes a man named Diederich who emphatically follows Emperor Wilhelm throughout the city of Berlin and eventually reaches the horse of the Emperor, falling on his face as the Emperor laughs.²⁶ Mann’s story can symbolize both the German nation and its citizens by relating them to his idea of the “loyal subject.” The German nation can be seen as the “loyal subject” desperately trying to become the next global empire and, in its failure, losing some of its most valuable land. At the same time, the German people who believed in the nation's movement towards empire and whose lives were shattered

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Paul Frederick Lerner, 2003. *Hysterical Men : War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930*. Cornell studies in the history of psychiatry; Cornell studies in the history of psychiatry. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

²⁵ Lerner. *Hysterical Men*, Chapter 6

²⁶ Heinrich Mann, “The Loyal Subject”, The German Library Volume 64 New English translation Copyright (c) 1998 by The Continuum Publishing Company by arrangement with S. Fischer Verlag GmbH

upon its altar also add to this idea. The defeat of Germany opened up the nation to contestation and while the Spartacist Revolution was noble in its efforts, it could not protect itself from the coalition of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), who wanted to rebuild the rubble of Germany, and the *Freikorps*, who fervently held onto the dream of national mobilization. Like many other political debates of the time, the ideological composition of German politics and the fervour it inquired dampened the likelihood of a successful leftist revolution, even though the Bolsheviks had created a model of doing so, because it was too radical a prospect for the transitional government and its core structure to be threatened by the far left. Consequently, this forged an unusual alliance between the center-left SPD government, who had recently been divorced from their revolutionary counterparts, the communist Spartacist league, and the *Freikorps* who were radicalized veterans and citizens who formed their own paramilitary organization and fought against leftists in general. The combination of opposing ideological camps to defeat the communist threat would survive so long as the SPD government, and its reformist politics, could maintain its position against Germany's more radical political components. The story of the Weimar Republic would be the attempt to keep this alliance intact while, in reality, its ideological contradiction would only become more pronounced.

The trends that had caused anxiety amongst the German people prior to WWI became even more intense during the Weimar Republic. Liberalization and what the Germans categorized as "Americanism" were seen as alien, pervertedly rational, and soulless importations that facilitated the corruption of the German nation and will.²⁷ At the 1929 International Advertising Show in Berlin, the "Ad Man" was revealed in order to argue the new methods of advertising that would be employed as encouragement for the next wave of consumerism. These new tactics of marketing were designed for the "penetration into the consumer's psyche," as to influence them subconsciously into a desired consumer habit.²⁸ Modernity in Germany was a battle over the German mind and the German citizen was caught in the crossfire. As Paul Lerner argues in his book *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930*, German psychiatry after the war did not renounce its view of the war as beneficial, and tried to remedy the war's trauma with the creation of what Lerner

²⁷ Rudolf Kayser, "Americanism" (1925), in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, edited by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. © 1994 Regents of the University of California. Published by the University of California Press, pp. 395-97. Reprinted with permission of the University of California Press.

²⁸ Hans Wündrich-Meissen, "Ad man", "Aufgaben des Beraters," in *Die Reklame* 22 (1929), pp. 445-46.

calls the “patient-worker relationship.”²⁹ The point of said relationship was not to solve the underlying issue of psychological trauma caused by WWI, but rather to rehabilitate the traumatized so that they could become productive again. The attempt to deny or ignore certain issues that the war had wrought upon German society only caused the erosion of support for the establishment and for the continued social upheaval caused by new technologies, “American” ideology, and foreign capital.

The loss of German territory in Europe, colonial territory abroad, rising unemployment, and boundless inflation, as well as the reparations their country was expected to pay caused many German men to feel humiliated, emasculated, and stagnant. Depictions of Germany’s leaders like Gustav Stresemann, who finalized German reparations by signing the Locarno Treaty of 1925, portrayed him as soft, fat, of having breasts, and indulging in homosexual relations with France’s leader, Aristide Briand.³⁰ In sharp contrast to this new order of feminized statesmen, Hindenburg, then reaching eighty years of age, was depicted as the bearer of the German world and of the glorious past as he had an honoured military record and was a prominent statesmen through Germany’s transition into the Weimar republic.³¹ The literal loss of appendages by German men during the war was related to the loss of German territory in the war’s conclusion. The post-war realities of amputation, lostness, and psychological castration, juxtaposed to that of the depictions of Hindenburg as the old Imperial Germany which was full bodied, muscular, and in action were in stark contrast to the depiction of the new Germany. This new or post-war Germany was seen as feminized, soft, and due to its perceived homosexual nature, unproductive in the eyes of many men who still held onto the dream of wartime mobilization. These images of the German body and its symbolic representation of the nation were deeply reinforced by the fact that during the world-wide depression, which Germany felt the most, the day-to-day image of starving Germans with fat leaders became a corporeal consciousness. The divisions within Germany were ever growing and the reason for them was that modernization, the application of technology, and liberalization of Germany’s social sphere came to represent the SPD government and the outside world while amongst “traditional” German men, these phenomena were perceived as alien and as being thrust upon the German nation, risking the destruction of the German people.

²⁹ Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, Chap 5

³⁰“L’Amour Et Psyché à La Genevoise.” GHDI - Image. Accessed November 15, 2016.

³¹Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz / Nationalgalerie, SMB, Verein der Freunde der Nationalgalerie / Jörg P. Anders © 2012 Christian Schad Stiftung Aschaffenburg / ARS, New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

The beginnings of the reactionary modernists and the Nazis was to reclaim the German man's body. The early movement that sought to do this was the *Lebensreform* or "life reform" movement, but unlike the upcoming reactionary modernists, the life reform movement focused more on reviving or returning to more "traditional" lifestyles such as nudism, physical activity and health, rather than naturalizing modernity as the reactionary modernists sought to.³² Building off of movements like life reform, authors such as Hans Suren continued to cultivate and author a subculture that attributed the downfall of modern man to its abandonment of its "natural" state in favor of an unhealthy fashionable life. To many commentators of the time, the site of this demise and its potential resurgence were located within the German body. One of Suren's more known works of the time was *Man and Sunlight*, in which he detailed the ideal German male body and the ways in which to achieve it; his tenants being nakedness, sunbathing, and physical exercise.³³ Suren's belief was that the German people were falling into impotency and the only way for it to counteract that was to revive a Greco-Roman idealization of the male body. Though Suren's work fell as an anti-technical argument, the act of looking back to history and his cult of the body were early markers of where German political discourse was heading. The cult of the body that been been developed within German society and these movements were easily adopted by the NSDAP, whose appeal was that they provided a message about the effects of modernity on the German body, and therefore nation, that resonated with many Germans throughout the 1920-1930s and was partly responsible for their early growth as a party. Ideologically the Nazis did not just believe in returning to a natural lifestyle, but instead manifested the ideas of the reactionary modernists by seeing the fusion of nature and modernity as the ancestral right of the Aryan race.

Through their realization of reactionary modernist thought, the Nazis made their own interpretations and connections as to how exactly Germany and Germanness were being lost to the forces of modernization and liberalization. The images like those mentioned above contrasting the old Germany as muscular, full bodied, and actionable against images of the Weimar Governments as fat, feminized, and unproductive were replicated by the Nazis but had one key difference- the Weimar official was replaced with the Jew. The antithesis of the steel-like, geometric, and productive Aryan was the Nazis' depiction of the

³² "Fidus, Back to Nature – A Couple (1910)." *GHDI - Image*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Apr. 2017.

³³ Hans Surén, *Man and Sunlight*, authorized translation from the 67th edition by David Arthur Jones. Slough [England]: Sollux, 1927, pp. 124-26, 176-79.

feminine, misshapen, and ugly Jew.³⁴ ³⁵ Thus, the social problems that had plagued Germany in the early 20th century became embodied within the Jew. Social division, liberalization, and the impotence of German men could all be blamed on the international Jewish world order as described by the Nazis. Even outsiders who came to Germany realized what the Nazis' reclamation of the German body had surmounted to.

In 1933, Anthony Bertram commented on the Nazi body that, "when you see them beside the bodies of old Germany, you realise what Germany had won. These beautiful bodies are the soldiers of modernism."³⁶ It was the reconstruction of the German male body as encapsulating the old imperial nostalgia, as described by Petra Rau in her article "The Fascist Body Beautiful and the Imperial crisis in 1930s British Writing," and its fusion with the technological advancements of modernity, that overcame the tension that many European countries were facing at the time.³⁷ Though no anatomical manipulation had occurred, the ideological framing of the revitalized German man readied for the seizure of technology and the revitalization of the German people themselves captured the national imagination of both Germans and other nations alike. The steel-like male body coupled with the expulsion of the constructed, cancerous Jew came to symbolize the Nazi solution to the social anxieties facing Germany. Rearmament, annexation, and the persecution of the German man's antithesis, the Jew, were the processes in which the German man felt revitalized under the rule of Hitler who was constructed as the model to follow.³⁸ Hitler was often depicted similarly to that of Hindenburg as the strong father figure who would lead the German world into the future.³⁹ Though Hitler was not a physically strapping man, the force in which he delivered his message, his decorated military service, and the propaganda that surrounded his character were reason enough to believe in his cause. In the face of the perceived slow castration of German society, the Nazis' vibrancy and leader were to reclaim all that was lost and expel the seemingly parasitic Jewry within the German body.

Much of what has been discussed has outlined the ways in which technology and modernity were perceived in the eyes of German men as

³⁴ *Appeal of the German Workers' Front after the Dissolution of the Free Trade Unions: Then as Now, We Remain Comrades*. German History Documents and Images, Online.

³⁵ "Albert Einstein: Authorial Fame Seems to Be Relative!" GHDI - Image. September 1933. Accessed November 23, 2016.

³⁶ Anthony, Bertram (1933) *Pavements and Peaks*. London: Chapman and Hill p 70

³⁷ Petra Rau. 2009. "The Fascist Body Beautiful and the Imperial Crisis in 1930s British Writing." *Journal of European Studies* 39 (1): 5-35.

³⁸ "Er ist der Sieg," *Das Schwarze Korps*, Calvin College Archive, 20 April 1944, pp. 1-2.

³⁹ "The Reich Will Never Be Destroyed If You Are United and Loyal" (1933)." GHDI - Image. 2016. Online

fundamentality challenging traditional notions of nation, society, and masculinity—these questions of modernity and technology eventually being resolved by the Nazis’ fusion of technology and the Greco-Roman or ancient Aryan male body. However, the changing dynamics of masculinity and male life during early 20th century German history transpired in direct tandem with the challenging of traditional womanhood by women across the globe and subsequently in Germany. To gain a more full comprehension of German society during this time, one must examine women and how this period was an explosion of Women’s rights and activism. However, such activity and reinvention was perceived as another transgression of modernity upon the German male, and how the changing role and aesthetic of women in German society would challenge traditional gender dynamics and ultimately was for the most part crushed by the Nazis.

The New Woman: Context

The new woman became a product of discussion and controversy throughout the Western world beginning in the late 19th and early 20th century. This worldwide trend would later become known as the first wave of feminism, and its impact upon the Western world would be profound. The new woman amongst the middle and upper class was more educated, had a different aesthetic, and challenged preexisting notions of womanhood. Namely, she wanted suffrage, personal and economic freedom, and change in traditional marital norms. While the new woman was a point of debate in most Western countries; the preexisting and coinciding debate within Germany created a unique reaction to her within Germany. Feminist voices, such as Rosa Luxemburg, Helene Stöcker, and Emma Ihrer quickly became embroiled within the discourse of German social commentary. The struggle that women like Rosa Luxemburg faced was the beginning of a reactionary movement that saw the German nation and body as under attack from the Western, and eventually Jewish, female body. The following section will outline the ways in which the new woman pushed the boundaries of German gender relations and, because of this push, was deemed dangerous to the German nation.

The New Woman: Pre WWI

Coinciding with the rapid industrialization and urbanization of Germany, many women found more social and economic opportunities to gain more actual within society. In 1893, Helene Stöcker published the work “The Modern Woman,” in which she describes the uniqueness of the modern woman as a

fundamentally different being.⁴⁰ To her, the modern woman was a celebration of femininity. She was not a woman “becoming exactly like a man,” but rather becoming “a freer-human being.”⁴¹ It was in Stocker’s mind that the new woman sought intellectual companionship and community within the large metropolitan centers that were forming in Germany, where such personal connections could be found. The metropolitan centers of Germany, most notably Berlin, were both a source of excitement, expansion, and freedom for women, as well as, a seeming earthquake to conservative masculine values. The fear of the speed and dimensions in which life was taking place in the metropolis was perceived as harmful to masculinity and as damaging men’s maturation, emotional intelligence, and, ultimately, will. On the other hand, women of all classes were bursting out of the home and into the streets, factories, and libraries of the new urban centers. Though the class composition of the movement was predominantly middle class women who had the means to become educated, there was a vibrant connection between women’s rights and worker’s rights. Women who had entered the workforce became subject to the brutal nature of early industrial factories and many joined the Social Democratic and Communist Movements in hopes of attaining further independence and rights. Women like Rosa Luxemburg and Emma Ihrer became two of the most important voices in rallying proletarianized women. In a speech given in 1912 calling for women’s suffrage, Rosa Luxemburg declared: “Both monarchy and women’s lack of rights have been uprooted by the development of modern capitalism... they continue to exist in our modern society... because monarchy and women’s lack of rights have become the most important tools of the ruling capitalist class.”⁴² It was the economic enfranchisement of many German women that produced ground for them to stand equal to men as proletarians. The uprooting of the monarchy and the preexisting imperial order were the means by which many women gained space within the German nation.

The rights that women were fighting for were both public and private. In 1905, Ernst Goldmann published an article discussing the legislation that was in place that left a husband’s ability to use corporal punishment up to his personal discretion.⁴³ The controversies of corporal punishment, abortion, and reproductive

⁴⁰ Helene Stöcker, “Die moderne Frau” [“The Modern Woman”], *Freie Bühne [The Free Stage]*, Jg. 4 (1893), pp. 1215-17.

⁴¹ *Idid.*, p 1216

⁴² Rosa, Luxemburg “Women’s Suffrage and Class Struggle.” Rosa Luxemburg: Women’s Suffrage and Class Struggle (1912). Accessed November 15, 2016.

⁴³ Ernst Goldmann, “Zuschrift eines ‘bekanntem, für die Frauensache sehr interessierten Berliner Rechtsanwalts,’” [“Letter from a ‘Well-Known Berlin Lawyer with a Strong Interest in Women’s Matters’] in *Die Frau. Monatschrift für das gesamte Frauenleben unserer Zeit [Woman: Monthly Magazine for all Aspects of a Woman’s Life in our Times]* 11 (1904), p. 500.

rights were the battles in which women tried to take control of their bodies. What is important to note is that these domains that the new woman was entering and gaining some level of rights over were traditionally domains of male domination. Thus, returning to the framing of modern capitalism as “uprooting” the imperial social structures of Germany quite literally is the emergence of the new woman into geographies that previously were controlled by men. This symbolic loss of territory by men to the new woman appeared to men of the time as an alien force that was cornering their way of life.

The New Woman: WWI and Weimar

The onset of WWI was a time of national unity with the exception of the split that occurred between the pro-war SPD and the anti-war Spartacus league. The mobilization of the German nation and the commitment of many of its men to the front left a void back home which women would fill. “Between March 1914 and March 1918 the number of women working in the traditionally male-dominated metal and electrical industries multiplied by over eight times, and in machine-building by a spectacular thirty-five times. In the same period, by contrast, the number of women employed in textiles fell by over a third, and in clothing by almost one half.⁴⁴ Certainly the war had its benefits and disadvantages to varying industries, but the overall trend of female mobilization made it so that women were entering more traditionally male industries - the consequences of which would be felt once the men returned in defeat.

The conclusion of WWI and the Spartacist revolution had profound effects upon the women of Germany. The war had inspired a sense of national unity and masculine rejuvenation. However, in defeat, the current trends of female liberalization became more pronounced. German men coming back from the front came home largely to women who successfully filled their jobs during the war. In 1919, German women were given the right to vote under the new SPD government and they used this new right consistently, showing turnout rates as high as 80% as well as becoming members of parliament themselves.⁴⁵ Although women had won many of the political battles after WWI, the social divisiveness of the new woman and their emergence into the public and private sphere was still contested.

⁴⁴ International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-10-08.

⁴⁵ Carol Woodfin(2004). "Reluctant Democrats: The Protestant Women's Auxiliary and the German National Assembly Elections of 1919". *Journal of The Historical Society*. 4 (1): 71–112.

The established laws surrounding abortion, marriage, and other matters of the family and the home became heated topics in Weimar Germany, causing a social fear that the birth of the new woman meant the death of the German family. In 1929, Helene Stöcker published “Marriage as a Psychological Problem,” where she explains the decreasing number of marriages and the increase of divorce in Germany as a problem of incompatibility.⁴⁶ To Stöcker, German men were not ready for the maturity, compassion, or intellectual breadth that would be necessary for the new women to become engaged in marriage as men were either too traumatized by the war or believed in marriage as an institutional control and right. As many sociologists would point out, the family is the smallest unit of the state or, in this case, the nation. While the metropolitan man was deemed feminized for his many unproductive sexual encounters, so too was the new woman deemed as his corruptor. Women and men during the Weimar period experienced a loosening of sexual norms and took full advantage of this. With the rise of sex in the private sphere came a rise of sexual advertising in the public sphere. The emergence of the untranslated term “sex appeal” in Weimar society marks the international influences that dictated social and sexual relations.⁴⁷ It was precisely the commodification and liberalization of sexual experiences that most severely jeopardized the strength of the German nation in many German minds. In 1929, Else Herrmann published “This is the New Woman,” in which she lays out how the new woman was a departure from the woman of yesterday; namely how the new woman is no longer focused on securing her future, but rather the present.⁴⁸ The new woman was a direct threat to the reproduction of the German nation because her primary concern was herself and not her womb. Many men saw this aspect of the new woman as the slow decline into degeneracy and ultimately nonexistence.

In its defeat, Germany was experiencing the strengthening of the modernizing effects of foreign capital and culture that was producing the perceived erosion of masculinity and the male body, as well as the enfranchisement and expansion of women. Returning to a spatial metaphor for

⁴⁶ Helene Stöcker, “Marriage as a Psychological Problem” (1930), *Sexual Reform Congress* (London, September 8-14 1929), ed. Norman Haire. London: Kegan Paul, 1930, pp. 604-05; reprinted in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, edited by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. © 1994 Regents of the University of California. Published by the University of California Press, pp. 705-08.

⁴⁷ Anita, “Sex Appeal: A New Catchword for an Old Thing” (1928), in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, edited by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. © 1994 Regents of the University of California. Published by the University of California Press, pp. 667-68. Reprinted with permission of the University of California Press.

⁴⁸ Elsa Herrmann, “This is the New Woman” (1929), in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, edited by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. © 1994 Regents of the University of California. Published by the University of California Press, pp. 206-08.

German society, women before and during the war had expanded the spaces where they could take place as a subject, while men felt those spaces that they previously dominated being encroached upon. WWI only added to this by physically removing the limbs, colonies, and territories of the German nation. There were no spaces in which the relationship between men and women was not fundamentally changed. It was women's expansion into the previously exclusive male life and their changing aesthetic that caused many German men to believe that women were becoming masculine, and men feminine. The woman depicted in Christian Schad's "Sonja" wore short hair, donned a stoic face, and was set within the bustling social sphere of the metropolitan clubs.⁴⁹ This new female body codified the shifting dynamics of gender relations within Weimar, and received harsh backlash. In March of 1925, the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* published an article titled "Enough is Enough! Against the Masculinization of Women," where the author, to their last stroke of the pen, smeared the image of the new woman as an entity that was unattractive, unwanted, unnatural and nothing that a "real man" would be attracted to.⁵⁰ In the author's mind, the new woman was an abomination while "real men" still wanted "real women," or in other words women who stayed in their assigned place. Here again the floating balance of gender relations within Germany was a point of debate and contention which would not be easily resolved.

The emerging divide between what the reactionary modernists called *Zivilization* and *Kulturkritik* was caused by questions of modernity and technology.⁵¹ The liberalization of German women and the German home led to a further metaphorical loss of the German man's body. It was *Zivilization* that had brought this feminization onto the German man and will, by allowing and welcoming foreign interests, capital, and culture into Germany. The rights and expansion of women during Weimar as a product of this liberalization were deemed as non-German and threatening to the old Imperial German masculinity. The solution that would be put forth from the Nazis would be devastating for the liberal progress made during Weimar. In 1934, Hitler made a speech to the Nationalist Socialist Women's League where he stated: "If the man's world is said to be the state, his struggle, his readiness to devote his powers to the service of community, then it may perhaps be said that the woman's is a smaller world. For

⁴⁹ Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz / Nationalgalerie, SMB, Verein der Freunde der Nationalgalerie / Jörg P. Anders © 2012 Christian Schad Stiftung Aschaffenburg / ARS, New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

⁵⁰ "Enough is Enough! Against the Masculinization of Women" (1925), in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, edited by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. © 1994 Regents of the University of California. Published by the University of California Press, p. 659.

⁵¹ Herf, *Reactionary Modernism : Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*. p15

her world is her husband, her family, her children, and her home.”⁵² The Nazi efforts to modernize and rejuvenate the German man's body coincided with their attempt to make the female body the essence of culture, tradition, and history.⁵³ The Nazi quest for *lebensraum* and racial purity would lead women to be sanctioned to the domain of the home. For it was only the Aryan woman who could birth Aryan men to go and fight for the survival and triumph of their race. Though Aryan women received stipends and benefits from motherhood, their lives outside the home were essentially limited to attending the local Nazi rallies.⁵⁴ Feminism, as it took form in Germany, was deemed a part of *Zivilization*, and therefore as Jewish by the Nazis. In all essence of the meaning of *lebensraum* as living space, the conquest of living space was in fact the reclamation of the German male body. The restoration of previously lost German territories, the expulsion and extermination of the parasitic Jew, and the relegation of German woman to matters of the home can be understood as ways in which the Nazis sought out to erase the social divisions caused by modernity and technology. Within a spatial and corporeal framework, the Nazis’ solution to these divisions can be understood as a rebirth of the German male body and a reconquest of the *lebensraum* for the German nation and body to take place. The consequence of such action was the expulsion of all perversions of the German body, including the Jewish body, feminism, homosexuals, other racial groupings, and so on and so forth.

Conclusions

The construction of the German man’s body was perceived as the marker for the health of the German nation. During the early part of the 20th century, questions concerning modernization and technology were fraught in German society. A sphere of anxiety emerged that understood the processes of liberalization and the application of technology as a threatening force to traditional masculinity. Beginning in the late 19th century, many doctors and commentators noticed the rate at which the world they lived in was changing. The very foundations of Germany’s imperial body were uprooted by the surging forces of capitalism. The shifting spheres of German social life provided opportunities for the emergence of the new woman to expand into traditionally male dominated

⁵² Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism, 1919-1945*, Vol. 2: *State, Economy and Society 1933-1939*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000, pp. 255-56.

⁵³ "Germany Grows through Strong Mothers and Healthy Children": Propaganda Poster by the Mother and Child Relief Agency (1935)." GHDI - Image. Accessed November 15, 2016.

⁵⁴ Fritzsche, Peter. *Life and Death in the Third Reich*. N.p.: Harvard UP, 2008. Print. Chap 1 Volksgemeinschaft

functions. By doing so, the new woman caused even further disruption of German society's patriarchal operation. While WWI was seen as an opportunity for Germany to overcome the divide that had emerged, the country's defeat only intensified the divisive forces within the nation. The general consensus amongst the emerging reactionary modernists was that the German nation was falling into degeneracy because technology and modernization had challenged traditional male roles and encouraged consumerism, rationality, feminism, and other "American" imports. The Nazis were to overcome the German nation's perceived degeneracy by reclaiming the essence of the nation which was the German man's body. By incorporating the essence of the imperial and the technological within the new "steel-like" man, the Nazis had successfully constructed technology as the rightful tool for the Aryan man. What was at stake for the German nation and German men was not only the fate of their will, but also the ability for them to exercise control and dominance in both society and the world.

The events that would follow the Nazis and their ideology were not to be forgotten. The Nazis today are a constant political and popular reference as the boogymen or the epitome of racism. While what the Nazis did and thought should be condemned eternally, to keep them so far from home is only a self-serving mechanism that allows the passive individual to believe that they are self-righteous. The reality, however, is far from the truth. The rhetoric, imagery, and ideology employed by the Nazis and conservatives in general have been demonstrated to limit the rights and social spheres of the oppressed. These methods should not sound so unfamiliar. Within the national consciousness lies an inherent connection with gender, historically masculinity, which is exclusionary for those who are deemed as threats to that gender thus problematizing the nation state at its base unit, the civilian. This paper is not questioning whether Germany during this period was sexist. Surely, it was extremely so. Instead, this paper pulls into questioning the very foundation of the nation state and its political and social imagination as well as providing a historical basis for which further analyses of today's globalization and its effects on a nation's consciousness can be contrasted with and extrapolated upon. The basis for which the Nazis became understood and popular is not unique to any one nation or culture, but rather is a constant element within nationalistic thought and thusly is at the utmost importance to understand in order to comprehend contemporary national politics.

RETAIL TRADE TRANSITION IN THAILAND: Emerging Consumer Culture and Successful *Central* Transformation (1947-1974)

Pataraphand Chirathivat

In the post-Cold War era, developing economies emerged at a pace that both fascinated and bewildered their Western counterparts. While the magnitude of their growth is vividly discernible and widely acknowledged, the source of this growth is not. Assuredly, this process did not occur overnight, nor can its decisive factors be grouped into distinct categories—rather, it is a complex interplay that consists of both competition and collaboration between old agrarian economies and new industrial development. Thailand, strategically positioned in the center of Southeast Asia, is one beneficiary of the transformative Cold War era. Between the years of 1947 and 1991, during which Western domination operated in every facet of Thai society, the nation experienced profound changes that were visible from all angles.¹

Prior to the 1950s, Thailand's main method of consumer consumption stood in the form of shophouses. Shophouses were typically small wooden shops, joined in ubiquitous row houses. Shophouses were also generally intimate, even though they brought in faraway imports to local communities.² This traditional economic form dominated Thailand's market economy until it was replaced by the contemporary department store. Alongside this transition, Thailand began to develop a culture of consumerism which pervaded everyday lives. How this consumer culture came to be, how the introduction of department stores facilitated this culture, and why it has culminated in today's society are all crucial questions.

The emergence of department stores from a background of traditional shophouses is inextricably linked to the shift towards modern consumerism in

¹ Some changes were so radical, that the very foundation upon which various institutions, customs, and lifestyles were once fixated had been shaken. For one, given the aid and resources furnished by Western powers, Thailand's economy skyrocketed. It would seem, that the effects of this sudden spur in economic growth was echoed all throughout—evident in not only macro-analyses of national GDP, but more discernibly in the shifts of spending behavior within households.

² Ara Wilson, *The Intimate Economies of Bangkok: Tomboys, Tycoons, and Avon Ladies in the Global City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 62.

Thailand. To exemplify this link, this essay examines one department store, Central, in close detail throughout its development within the Cold War era context. To start, the essay will consider the larger societal setting within which Central was first established. Here, it is evident that political, economic and cultural factors persistently intertwined with Central's fate throughout the years. Then, the essay will explore the history of Central's growth alongside that of the Chirathivat family, the founders of the current day retail empire. By examining Central's making from both vantage points, it will be clear the company's success were a result of not only hard work but also smart adaptation. In other words, Central was the product of both larger structural changes in society that supported Central's aspirations as well as the agency of those who ran its day-to-day business. Thus, Central will offer a window into the when, how, and why of the ascending consumer culture that instituted itself in developing Thailand after WWII.

After WWI, waves of immigrants -- some permanent immigrants, some merely sojourners -- arrived in Thailand seeking work, opportunities and economic profits that could be sent home in the form of remittances.³ In exchange, the immigrants, often from China, and their descendants were key to Thailand's development. These newcomers brought with them strong-willed beliefs in hard work, thrift and persistence, beliefs that solidified their standing in this new country.⁴ Amongst them was Tiang Chirathivat (original last name Zheng 郑 in Chinese), who hailed from Hainan, a small island in the South China Sea, arriving in Thailand in 1927.⁵

In 1929, Tiang opened his own shophouse, a business that would become Central department store decades later, the largest chain in Southeast Asia. Of all the elements that contributed to Central's success, one critical factor was its ability to bring Western influences into Thailand during the 1950s-1970s. Toward this end, it is critical to understand how Central served as both the "pioneer" and "legitimizing" in this localization process, terms coined by Chinese historian Sherman Cochran in *Chinese Medicine Men*. According to Cochran, the localization of Western ideas can be traced through two phases. In the first, "pioneers" learn about the West and "transform what was once totally strange into something a little less strange, gradually desensitizing people to the newness of

³ Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 49.

⁴ William George Skinner. *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957).

⁵ Tiang Chirathivat is my paternal grandfather. This is how I have access to abundant sources.

the new, making it less conspicuous, more palatable.”⁶ As “pioneers,” members of the Chirathivat family traveled to Western countries and brought back previously unseen products, everything from Italian glassware to American cosmetics. They also brought Western practices such as fixed pricing and window displays.

By introducing a more luxurious lifestyle to the Thai public (first to the Bangkok elite and later to the emerging middle class), Central transformed the typical Thai consumer experience. For instance, Central was one of the first department stores to allow consumers to experience products before buying them, as well as the first to offer a wide variety of goods ranging from watches, handbags, shoes, home décor to clothing, accessories, and food, all in one complex. In Cochran’s phase two, “legitimizers achieve broad acceptance” for changes they make which “in a short time before would have been acceptable only on the acculturated fringes.”⁷ In this case, Cochran argues that the indigenous Chinese entrepreneurs were able to act as direct agents for promulgating consumer culture, and did so by selectively appropriating foreign marketing strategies while retaining traditional Chinese practices. As such, these hybridized Chinese companies were resilient to any political chaos and turmoil.⁸ While convincing, Cochran focuses exclusively on the native Chinese, leaving open the question of the role of immigrants in economic development. This paper presents a unique case of immigrant economic success.

A migrant from China where department stores already existed, Tiang was an “importer” of retail innovation.⁹ Tiang’s beginnings as an outsider in Thailand—with none of the connections that Philip Kuhn would call a “corridor”¹⁰—uniquely positioned him and his business at a crossroad of two cultures. At the same time, through effective advertising and public events acquired abroad, Central normalized the use of Western products and practices which had been unfamiliar to the Thai public only a short time before. In this way, Central’s service both as a “pioneer” and “legitimizer” was a key criterion for its success.

⁶ Sherman Cochran, *Chinese Medicine Men: Consumer Culture in China and Southeast Asia*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸ Sherman Cochran, *Chinese Medicine Men*, 3-15.

⁹ Kerrie L. Macpherson, eds. *Asian Department Stores* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 66-89.

¹⁰ Often, in migrant situations, there is a long-term connection that facilitates the journey from one country and culture to the other, but in the Chirathivat family case there was no preexisting network, as argued above.

This paper explores Central's role in the development of Thai consumer culture within the Cold War context.¹¹ Specifically, the paper contends that the Cold War, which grounds the primary American interests for infiltrating Thailand, is also the preliminary condition that sets up the shift in Thai consumer culture. While U.S. presence within its satellite states during the Cold War was a political confrontation indeed, perhaps the more enduring but often neglected implication is the cultural confrontation that took place simultaneously. By placing the promises of American capitalism and lifestyle on display, the Thai experienced first-hand a public spectacle of modern consumerism. The Chirathivat family, situated within this larger context and acutely aware of these societal changes, identified them as opportunities for economic profit and development. In promulgating this, Central performed a delicate dance—straddling global cosmopolitanism and Thai authenticity. Ultimately, Central, through its volitional engagement with the Thai public, contributed to the emergence of a distinct consumer culture in Bangkok during the Cold War era.

Part I: Foundations for Modern Consumerism in Thailand: U.S. Presence in the Cold War

On the international front, post-WWII Thailand befriended a superpower that would become its long-term partner. The United States, as Thailand's new patron, infiltrated the country from all angles. To use Thailand as a military base for containing the spread of communism, the U.S. first needed to create massive change within the country to prepare it for this role. In U.S. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes' words, one should "regard Thailand not as [the] enemy but as a country to be liberated from the enemy,"¹² the enemy in this case being communist states. Toward this end, the U.S. promoted economic growth through private capitalism and worked to instill Western ideologies of democracy in the Thai public. Massive social and economic development was soon enabled,

¹¹ It should be noted that there is often a lack of transparency in the literature concerning the transition from the colonial period to the Cold War. For many parts of Asia, the colonial era was marked by intimidation and terror, the Chinese being the most recognized victims. However, with the disintegration of colonialism, transnational movements flourished. The Chinese in particular began to climb the economic ladder after independence in the "new nations" of Southeast Asia (including Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand etc.) Specifically, the case in which a Chinese immigrant in Thailand was able to infiltrate the foreign culture, ultimately pioneering a business that would be key to the establishment of Thai modern consumer culture. As Kuhn has pointed out, in comparison with Indonesia and Malaysia, the history of the Chinese minority in Thailand is unique, there is certain "eagerness" on the parts of the native Thai "to accept the Chinese who conform outwardly to Thai standards of behavior." Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*, 315.

¹² Likhit Dhiravegin, *Demi Democracy: The Evolution of the Thai Political System*, (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1992), 126.

notably in communications, infrastructure and social welfare projects. Against these shifts, Thailand's societal landscape altered drastically.¹³

The early form of consumer culture that Thailand took on was unsurprisingly, heavily influenced by that of the United States. With U.S. presence dominating its satellite states' affairs on every front, U.S. cultural norms were transported to these nations along with the democratic ideals and military weapons. Most Thais experienced a commercializing revolution that transformed every aspect of life into potential outlets for consumption. Thailand too became (as the U.S. already was) a "cornucopia of consumable experience," as captured by Baudelaire's image of the flaneur.¹⁴ Everything in Thailand was on display: in shopping centers, arcades, department stores, international exhibitions and more. Here, the proliferation of these new patterns of consumption seemed to create a "modern carnival, and the [in this case the Thai] consumer is the fee-paying audience for the spectacle and experience of modernity."¹⁵

While Thailand's outlook on mass consumption was reflective of U.S. consumption, it was more importantly, an echo of the larger political climate of the Cold War era altogether. The rivalry aspect of consumption was most vividly memorialized in the famous Kitchen Debate between Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in 1959.

In Nixon and Khrushchev's discussion, a special aspect of Cold War rivalry centered on consumption is voiced loud and clear. This was not about the consumption of household goods themselves, but about what they represented. Nixon began by proudly introducing Khrushchev to the newest model of a dishwasher in the American exhibit of the U.S. embassy in Moscow. Khrushchev brushed it off, saying that the Soviet Union already has such petty things. Nixon explained that houses similar to this one could be bought by most Americans for \$14,000, to which Khrushchev scoffed replying, "your American houses are built to last only 20 years...we build firmly. We build for our children and grandchildren."¹⁶ Nixon, unmoved by Khrushchev's statement, made it known that American houses do last more than 20 years, but even if they did, "Americans want a new home or a new kitchen after twenty years...the American system is designed to take advantage of new inventions and techniques."¹⁷

¹³ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit. *A History of Thailand*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 140.

¹⁴ Don Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 1997), 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶ "Kitchen Debate Transcript", CIA, July 24, 1959, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/16/1959-07-24.pdf

¹⁷ *Ibid.*,

From The Kitchen Debate, it is clear that consumption, just as everything else in the Cold War was a method through which the U.S. sought to outcompete the Soviet Union. The example highlights how being in the U.S. orbit would entail a cultural re-alignment in addition to an economic and military one. This type of mentality and attitude was played out even down to the level of individual households that sought to compete with their neighbors for who had the better color television.

With such a strong American presence in Southeast Asia during the Cold War, it is no surprise that consumer culture in Thailand developed in a similar trajectory. Due to the influx of U.S. aid, localized economies expanded alongside with increasing disposable incomes. Simultaneously, a larger middle class emerged that began to demand consumer goods on an unprecedented scale. In 1957, total private consumption by the Thai public was merely 34.5 billions of baht (\$1.725 billion). In 1969, a little over a decade later, this number had more than doubled to 89.5 billions of baht (\$ 4.48 billion USD).¹⁸ Effectively, the Thai public began seeking new avenues for spending. Thai households not only looked for more convenient and less time consuming ways of shopping, but also desired a guarantee of quality and variety at the same time.

Even in the midst of this Westernization, Thai consumer culture retained unique characteristics. First, most retail purchases still took place in shophouses and traditional markets, which were highly local and informal. Second, haggling was always a part of purchasing, as there was no fixed price. Finally, the vast majority of Thai consumers were still buying mostly local goods. In the decades after the 1950s, Central would balance its cosmopolitan aspiration against this Thai culture.

Part II: Central as the Watershed of Retail Trade Transformation

2.1.From Genesis: A Hainanese Family Growing Up Authentically Thai in Shophouses

“Central Trading” on Si Phraya Road, contrary to popular belief, was not the first business of the Chirathivat family despite being officially labeled as the first Central retail store. Mr. Tiang Chirathivat and his first wife, Waan relocated from Hainan Island, China, to Bangkok in 1927. Waan’s parents had moved to Thailand in the years prior. After two years of working at his in-laws’ store “Ang Fong Lao” selling unhusked rice (khaosan), Tiang decided to branch off on his own by moving to Thonburi across the Chao Phraya River. There, he opened a small shop selling miscellaneous amenities (Ran Cho Huay). Soon after, the

¹⁸ James C. Ingram, *Economic Change in Thailand 1850-1970* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 226.



Portrait of Tiang Chirathivat
A photo from Central's private collection

Chirathivat family moved once again into a two-story shophouse in Thonburi that became known as Saam Liam (“Three Corners”).¹⁹ The shophouse served two functions: the ground floor sold coffee, basic foods, and other small commodities while the second floor was the family’s living space, and also allowed Waan to work as a tailor. The store’s offerings came mostly from Sampeng, the major wholesale market in Bangkok’s Chinatown at the time, and together with Samrit, his first son, Tiang traveled across the Chao Phraya River to buy these goods and bring them back for resale. Despite being limited to selling only a small variety of goods, the Three Corners shophouse was successful. Not only did the shophouse offer financial support for the family it also provided the family a

space of their own as it expanded.

Three Corners sustained the Chirathivat family until 1945, when Tiang and his eldest son, Samrit established “Central Trading” in the Western quarter of Central Bangkok. It was here that Central’s modern retail business began, and where the first fortune was made. Central Trading sold both imported literature and trendy clothes in vogue with Western fashion. At the time, it was the sole distributor for a large variety of magazines, including *American Photography*, *Popular Photo*, *Architecture Digest*, *Time Magazine*, *Life Magazine*, *Seventeen*, *Burda*, and others. While these magazines were different in content, they were all similar in that they disseminated a portrayal of Western culture, where everything appeared carefree, wonderful, and aspiring—spurring desires in the Thai public to emulate the foreign lifestyle.²⁰ As Suchitra Chirathivat described, “Central Trading was the first bookstore with foreign magazines, and so many foreigners

¹⁹ Samrit Funeral Commemoration, Chirathivat Samrit, Nangseu thi raleuk ngansoh (Samrit Chirathivat, Funeral/cremation remembrance book), November 3, 1992 copy of manuscript from Suthiphand Chirathivat.

²⁰ Central Department Store, *Built To Last: Six Decades of Central, the Store that Inspires Generations* (Bangkok, Thailand: Central Department Store, 2007), 18-21.

frequented Central Trading for the latest news and updates. Customers comprised of technocrats, expats, diplomats, famous writers, and government officials or civil servants.”²¹ In other words, Central captured the market, recognizing the demands of both foreign and Thai residents.

At the same time, Central Trading’s location was cardinal to its success. It sat on Si Phraya Road, a major avenue cross-cutting between Charoenkrung and Rama IV roads, allowing Central to place themselves in a community popular with foreigners.²² The area was populated with important government offices and successful businesses. Included were the Oriental Hotel, the first Western hotel built in Bangkok, East Asiatic



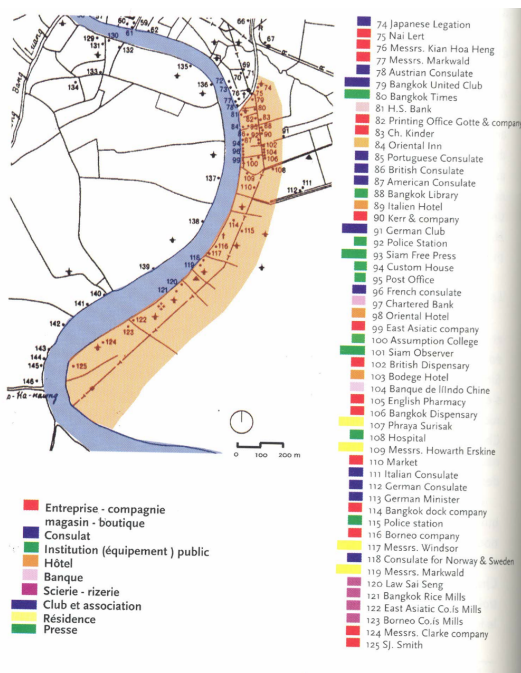
Tiang with his first wife, Waan, and his five children circa. 1940s
A photo from Central's private collection

Company, the famous Dutch trading company, the Chartered Bank, the Main Post Office, the French Consulate, the German Consulate and many others.²³ In this way, Si Phraya Road held a semi-colonial flair that was comparable to other treaty ports of the time like Shanghai or Yokohama. By all means, Central too was swept up in the cosmopolitan nature of things. In fact, the Chirathivat family was a pioneer to this end, sending family members abroad and having them return equipped with new skills and ideas. Yet, as the family later learned, a successful business does not only entail a blind following of cosmopolitan trends, but also connection with its roots.

²¹ Interview with Suchitra Chirathivat (First younger sister of Samrit), conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December 21, 2015.

²² These developments had begun during the reign of His Majesty Rama V, a period of Thailand’s modernization that brought along tremendous economic growth, allowing businessmen to speculate on land and build roads connecting each parcel of land formerly utilized otherwise. With a number of roads built increasingly in the following reign of King Rama VI, the value of these buildings connected to the land continued to increase. Pasitkasem. “The Competitive Behavior of Department Stores,” 29.

²³ Similar to remittance firms of the 1940s which utilized its connections to the postal office in order to maintain operations and business ties.



The Close Proximity of Central Trading to the French Consulate (96) and Oriental Hotel (98) *Davisi Boontharm, Bangkok: Formes du Commerce et Évolution Urbaine Recherches: Ipraus, 2005, 246*

The location of Central Trading was an unusual place for a Chinese immigrant to open a store. The Chirathivat family, despite its Chinese roots, did not surround itself with a Chinese community. By living apart from the rest of the Chinese community, the Chirathivat family *could* not and *chose* not to rely on Chinese ethnic networks to carry them in rough times.²⁴ In other words, the “corridor” defined by Philip Kuhn as “the extension of the migrant’s old environment, a channel of connections that keep the migrant in a meaningful relationship to the old lineage” was not available to the Chirathivat family.²⁵

Rather than orienting themselves firmly towards the society of origin, the Chirathivats were quick to integrate with their new home. Unlike other migrants who struggled to “commit themselves mentally or behaviorally to a permanent break” from the old, members of Central were predominantly focused on innovation, rather than tradition.

Without the support of an expansive ethnic network, the Chirathivats turned to building their own family. Tiang married three times and had 26 children. Living under a single roof, the children were instilled with characteristics such as hard-work and resilience by the Patriarch Tiang himself from an early age. Tiang carried these attributes from his humble beginnings as a coolie, and passed them on to his children, who put these values to practice in

²⁴This deviated from the other Chinese immigrant families who conducted business. In particular, the Teochiu, a numerically dominant sub-ethnic group known for being smart businessmen (Teochiu was 56% of the Chinese population in Thailand, Hakka around 16%, and Hainanese at only 12%), often relied on intermarriage and community leadership to build their businesses’ strength. The Bangkok Bank for instance, was grown out of a cooperation between nine Teochiu families that worked across import, construction, gold and liquor trade, and manufacturing. The Chirathivat family, being the minority Hainanese, was not part of this network, and thus relied little on it. (Richard J Coughlin, *Double Identity: the Chinese in Modern Thailand* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), 7. Chris Baker, and Pasuk Phongpaichit. *Thailand, Economy and Politics*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 123.)

²⁵ Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, 49.

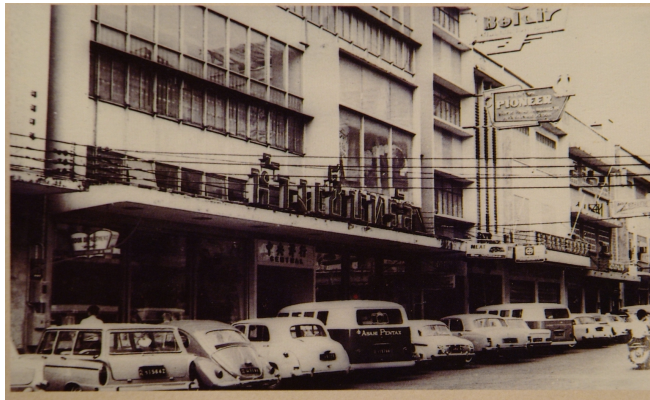
operating the family enterprise. Tiang also enrolled his children in Western schools, which facilitated Central's later expansions.

With the growing demand for Central Trading as a magazine and book business, the limited space of this location could no longer cater to all the store's needs. In 1950, Central Trading moved to Chareonkrung Road (meaning "new road" in Thai), a more centrally located store in the Western trading quarter, with a three-section building.²⁶ Here, the store expanded to include goods such as clothing, handbags, shoes, gifts and books that were popular among the evolving public. At this point however, Central was still a general or convenience store at best.

2.2 First Central Retail Transformation: Reaching Towards Global Cosmopolitanism

It was not until 1956 that Central opened its first department store branch at Wang Burapa, a more modern and fashionable Thai and foreign-concentrated retail community. This store was the first of its kind, a complete department store that included various kinds of products and services available all under one roof. It included everything from clothing, home furnishing, audio equipment, other electronics, and home utensils to books, representing an expanding consumer target base. The store had a selling area of about 1000 square meters, and two floors out of the five-story building. The first floor was cosmetics, shoes and clothing, the second floor was dedicated to selling books, the third floor was merchandise storage and living space, the fourth was where ready-to-wear clothing would be made, and the fifth was storage.

Moreover, the new space included an open space for parking, a clear representation of the increasing buying power of the Thai public and its new modes of transportation as well as consumption. The distinct spatial reorganization of Central was also a reflection of the increasing demands by consumers and their requests



Central Department Store Wang Burapa Branch
A photo from Central's private collection

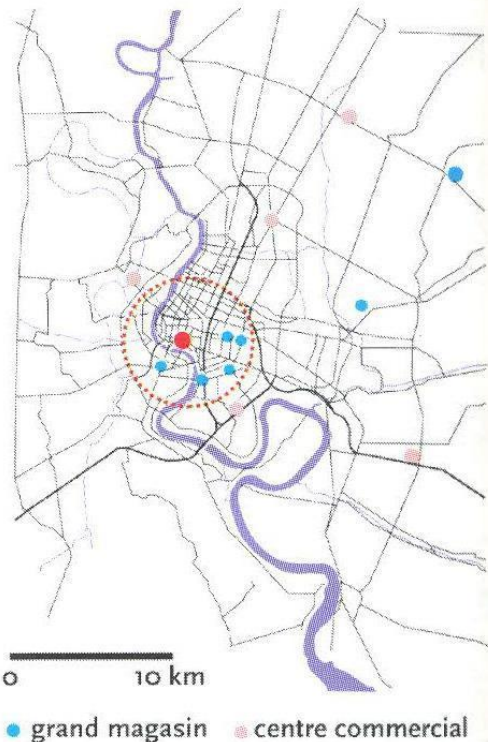
²⁶ In 1951, Bangkok population continued to grow, already over 800,000 people, in its expanding metropolitan area. Pasitkasem. "The Competitive Behavior of Department Stores," 34.

to have needs met in a particular manner. Being the largest store in the Wang Burapa area, Central introduced fixed pricing: a small yet radical transformation for the Thai retail scene. From this point on, customers could no longer bargain for the price they saw as suitable. Determined to legitimize fixed pricing, Central offered only the best quality of goods and services at reasonable prices, as well as excellent experiences in shopping.

Moreover, during the time at which Central moved to Wang Burapa, the life of urbanites in Bangkok was also modernizing. This shift caused the store to become significantly more Western in its choice of products, store decoration, product display, and price setting all in the hopes that cosmopolitanism could be attained through diversification. Many of the goods at Central were imported and

offered glimpses into a Western lifestyle that was immediately distinguishable from the moment customers stepped in.²⁷

One of the first generation employees at Central Department Store, Somsak Plengsombut, explained that “clothing, accessories, perfumes and cosmetics were displayed in glass three-shelf service counters.”²⁸ This was novel at the time, unseen anywhere else, attracting the curious passer-by. The product brands sold included Crepe de Chine, Helena Rubinstein, Estee Lauder, Ayer, 4711 Cologne, and Worth Perfume. Central Department Store’s location at Wang Burapa also helped. Located between the three largest and most popular theatres of Bangkok (The King, The Queen and The Grand), Central became a trendy hotspot for the younger generation. Barbaro Sato



The red dot marks the exact location of Central Wang Burapa
Davisi Boontharm, Bangkok: Formes du Commerce, 349

²⁷ Total population at this point is over 1,500,000 people in 1962, and those who lived in Central Bangkok reported an average monthly income of 1519 baht, or 3,314 baht per capita, a number that is shockingly high and unprecedented. Pasitkasem. “The Competitive Behavior of Department Stores,” 33-34.

²⁸ Interview with Somsak Plengsombut, conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December, 23, 2015.

examines a similar phenomenon in Japan, where movie-going produced a considerable amount of new desires for consumer products, as “movies offered testimony to the modern girl’s fascination with American customs” They “symbolized the trends prevalent in today’s world, Hollywood in a sense, controls the world.”²⁹ At the same time, movie going was associated with “consumerism.”³⁰ Suthichai Chirathivat (4th eldest son), a fan of Elvis himself, remembers that “young boys with slicked-back hair, jersey shirts and flared jeans would dance to rock ‘n’ roll, and the girls would wear circle skirts and knit tops, clothing pieces that could all be purchased at Central. After shopping, the kids may run over to the Grand Cinema and catch the latest Elvis film.”³¹

In 1964, Central opened another branch at Rajchaprasong shopping center, another new modern retail center. Although smaller in size, this branch provided modern services such as the first beauty salon. This time, Central advertised the new store with a specific audience in mind: women. Previously, stores in Thailand had not catered specifically to female customers. In opening the Rajchaprasong store, Central hoped that amid the changing dynamics surrounding gender, a beauty salon would appeal to the masses. Prior to opening, Suchitra Chirathivat had just returned from her long study trip abroad to meet with well-known moguls of the global beauty industry such as Helena Rubenstein, and the heads of Lancôme and Estee Lauder to negotiate plans for bringing these beauty brands into Thailand. In particular, Helena Rubenstein was someone whom Suchitra worked closely with abroad and also invited to Thailand as a business advisor. Suchitra recalled, “most Thai women of that time knew little regarding skincare via cosmetics, and with the opening of the beauty salon at Central Store,



The Opening of Rajchaprasong’s Store in 1964
A Personal copy of Suchitra Chirathivat

²⁹ Sato, Barbara. *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 69.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

³¹ Interview with Suthichai Chirathivat(Fourth Eldest male), conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December, 16 2015.

Rajchaprasong, Central was able to introduce these novel practices to the larger public.”³²

Beauty specialists and other cosmetics specialists were flown into Thailand to conduct free workshops and demonstrations that were open to the public, and women across all class lines were able to immerse themselves in this new trend. Some of the specialists were cosmetologists from Estee Lauder, and of course Helena Rubenstein herself. Rubenstein’s beauty products promoted a new identity for women, linking the use of its cosmetics with the concept of the new modern woman, something that Central also sought after. Even more, in order to better appeal to the Thai public and balance Western influences with Thai authenticity, Central adapted its marketing strategies by depicting Thai women in cosmetic ads as opposed to earlier versions where only foreign women were featured.

While the newest branch of Central was largely successful, its size was its shortcoming. The size of this location greatly limited its ability to expand, and thus, was unable to compete with other chains nearby. One in particular was Thai

Daimaru, a Japanese department store chain. Thai Daimaru sold mostly Japanese products, and was not as comprehensive as Central. Yet due to its size and modern facilities such as escalators and air conditioning, Thai Daimaru gained a large following of loyal customers. Naturally, Central was obliged to upgrade if they wished to stay relevant in the market.

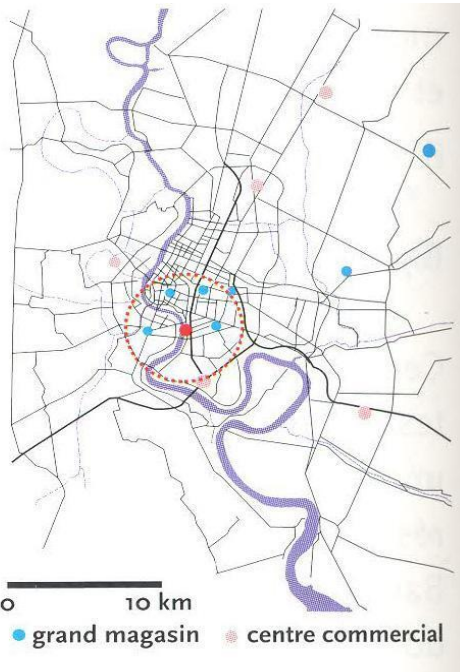


Suchitra Chirathivat with Helena Rubenstein
A personal copy of Suchitra Chirathivat

³² Interview with Suchitra Chirathivat (First Sister of the family), conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December 21, 2015.



Ads of Cosmetic at Central from Bangkok Post (*Central Marketing advertisement. "Helena Rubinstein's Institution," Bangkok Post, November 26, 1958.*)



The red dot marks the exact location of Central Silom (*Davisi Boontharm, Bangkok: Formes du Commerce, 349.*)

Ads of Cosmetic at Central from Bangkok Post
2.3. Second Central Retail Transformation: Straddling Global Cosmopolitanism and Thai Authenticity (*Central Marketing advertisement. "Estée Lauder," Bangkok Post, February 25, 1970.*)

Three years later, Central inaugurated its own head office on Silom Road in 1967. The office was state-of-the-art: a large building of nine floors, the store itself being five stories, and the rest as office floors with a warehouse located near the sales floors for convenience. Central, taking lessons from Thai Daimaru, had air conditioning as well as escalators and elevators. It provided a modern shopping experience focused on the comfort and enjoyment of its customers, rather than strictly efficiency.

One of the most eye-catching aspects of this new location was Central's window displays, which were the sum of its merchandise, the trends that the products represents and the narrative that they tell. The windows allowed any onlookers or passerby to discover all the latest products from every corner of the world and experience the changing of retail seasons. The first window display of Central was composed by Mr. Graham Smith.³³

Smith was an Australian designer who actualized creative ideas for installations that were previously only imagined. With passion and dedication, he trained the younger members of his staff to carry on the tradition. Sudhitham Chirathivat (8th eldest son) explains that "Central was the first department store to be fronted by windows that had seasonal displays of goods from abroad, including USA, England, Italy, all presented innovatively and all very well received, it soon became the talk of town."³⁴ In this way, window displays altered the relationship between a commodity and the customer. Previously, potential customers were the desirable objects, but this refashioned the products as the objects desired. In this way, Central was able to strategically generate more demand than supply, turning around what was



Central Department Store in its Silom Location
with Window Displays
A photo from Central's private collection

³³ Central Department Store, *Built To Last*, 68-69.

³⁴ Interview with Sudhitham Chirathivat (Eighth Eldest male), conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December, 15, 2015.

previously the reverse.

In its Silom location, Central was known by Bangkokians as “the” department store, offering everything from large parking lots, a supermarket, and a wide variety of both imported as well as domestic goods.³⁵ In this set-up, the concept of “one-stop shop” had become tangible to customers. Also importantly, the Central store served the interests of those from all financial backgrounds and income levels, breaking down the barriers of class. In other words, a “democracy of goods” was promised: Central made it possible for everyone to enjoy products at affordable prices.³⁶ In fact, even those who had no money could still “enjoy” the spectacle by entering into the department store, viewing the products on display and immersing themselves in the culture from which the product had been imported, thereby gaining satisfaction from it without having to make a purchase.³⁷ Customers included everyone from ordinary Thai citizens to even, as Somsak Plengsombut recalls, “members of the royal family such as the Prince, or the highest general of police and military generals.”³⁸ In particular, Somsak Plengsombut remembers “the prince used to buy specifically the Ice Cologne 4711 from Central, and every time he would buy this in bulk, 2 or 3 dozens even.”³⁹

The “democracy of goods” was not achieved overnight. In its earlier days, the public held the impression that Central was “too expensive” and “wasteful,” which went against the beliefs of the generally frugal population of Bangkok. Somsak Plengsombut noted, “most people of the time bought goods from Bangkapi, a wholesale trade center that included many shops that had been there

³⁵ Central’s consistent moving of stores from Wang Burapa to Rajchaprason and then Silom was not coincidental. With its continued success, space limitations, traffic problems and the changing center of business were all good enough reasons for moving. In 1967, of the total population of Bangkok, which was 2,008,039, only 37% were in areas outside of Rajchaprason, Silom, Yaovaraj, and Wang Burapa. In order to serve the demand of consumers in a more convenient manner, Central moved near its customers. Because it economized on the amount of time it took for customers to buy everything they needed, Central became the obvious choice. Pasitkasem. “The Competitive Behavior of Department Stores,” Pasitkasem. “The Competitive Behavior of Department Stores,” 35.

³⁶ Roland Marchand’s concept of democracy of goods asserted that although the rich enjoyed a great variety of luxuries, the acquisition of their one most significant luxury would provide anyone with the ultimate in satisfaction. Moreover, the wonders of mass production and distribution enabled every person to enjoy the society’s most significant pleasures, conveniences, or benefits. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 217-222.

³⁷ Ibid.,

³⁸ Interview with Somsak Plengsombut, conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December, 23, 2015.

³⁹ Interview with Somsak Plengsombut, conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December, 23, 2015.



Queen Sirikit visiting Central counter at the Red Cross Fair with Suchitra Chirathivat behind the counter

A photo from Suchitra Chirathivat's private collection

weeks at Central. This was similar to the democracy of goods in that even people who were not part of the cosmopolitan elite, or people who could not travel themselves could gain knowledge of “popular geography” through Central’s displays and products.⁴² “Popular geography” is a term that describes circumstances under which consumers can learn about the world from everyday goods sold in department stores. Central brought the world to its customers, passing information about the region’s culture, history, and traditions.⁴³ Or in some cases, the store went as far as to offer “the chance for customers to ‘*Travel with Central*’ and win free trips to the countries of the respective weeks, an

for decades, unlike Central, which stood alone as a single establishment in Silom.”⁴⁰ In addition, the location itself was close to the end of Silom Road, which posed further inconveniences for customers, who would have to travel farther than otherwise required. Moreover, the Chirathivat family had borrowed a large sum, 40 million baht to open the store, but was having difficulty paying back the money. This created immense pressure for the family, especially the patriarch, Tiang. In 1968, due to many near bankruptcy incidents and overall stress, Tiang passed away from a heart attack.⁴¹ In his place, the children all stepped in.

In Tiang’s absence, the family brainstormed new ways to use the department store space more effectively, avoiding any further financial loss. One idea that was particularly successful was cultural

⁴⁰ Interview with Somsak Plengsombut, conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December, 23, 2015.

⁴¹ The family mourned his death extensively. But as always, the business needed to continue.

⁴² Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 111.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 111.

opportunity that many would not have otherwise had.”⁴⁴

In 1969, culture week was Italian Week. Central contacted the Italian trade commissioner at the embassy in Bangkok, and as Suchitra Chirathivat remembers, “we traveled to Italy ourselves to search for products that Central could bring in with the help of those in the trade commission, we wanted it to be as authentic as possible.”⁴⁵ Some of the products from Italy included polished goatskin, elegant



First Floor of Central Silom
Photo from Central's private collection

Florentine statues, jewelry, marble tables, glass decorative flowers and exquisite costume change purses. Even more, Central brought in an Italian glassblower from the Murano Islands in Venice to demonstrate this ancient art in Central's stores during Italian Week. Suthichai Chirathivat described the scene at the time, “people would surround the glass blower and observe with awe while he exercised his craftsmanship. News spread fast, predominantly among the upper classes by word of mouth or through Central's advertising efforts. A continuous flow of customers ensued.”⁴⁶

With such high demand, Italian week was extended for another week and everything was sold out. The planning for this event however, was by no means a simple task, taking almost an entire year to import over a thousand different items. “At this time,” Somsak explained, “Italian glass was very popular amongst the upper class elites in Thailand. Yet it was too fragile for them to bring it back themselves, so when Central sold it, people were more than willing to pay the high price for this delicate product.”⁴⁷ With the success of Italian Week, Suthichart Chirathivat (6th eldest son) remembers that “other embassies began to

⁴⁴ Interview with Suthichart Chirathivat (Sixth Eldest male), conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December 22, 2015.

⁴⁵ Interview with Suchitra Chirathivat (First Sister of the family), conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December 21, 2015.

⁴⁶ Interview with Suthichai Chirathivat (Fourth Eldest male), conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December, 16 2015.

⁴⁷ Interview with Somsak Plengsombut, conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December, 23, 2015.

contact us for cultural week, as opposed to the other way around!”⁴⁸ This led to a slew of other similar events; notable ones include American Week after Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. During the week, a prototype of Apollo II, the spaceship that had been used, and even Armstrong’s genuine spacesuit was put on exhibit.⁴⁹ The open display of Armstrong’s spacesuit broadly attracted the public’s attention, and was a spectacle for any passerby whether or not they spent money in the store. Other weeks included Australian Week. Suthichart recalls being flown to Australia by the embassy themselves to prepare and plan for the event, which was “a high honor, but also speaks volumes to the importance of Central even on the world-stage at such an early period in its development.”⁵⁰

The overriding amount of attention that Thailand received from the U.S. in 1969, also known as the height of the Vietnam War next door, made American Week all the more popular. Ads proudly stated that it was in “cooperation with the U.S. government” and included

pages of products marked as “1st ever!” spiking the public’s curiosity. Not to mention, Neil Armstrong had personally visited Thailand three months prior, and Richard Nixon visited a few months before then.

In one way, Central’s success with cultural weeks was largely linked to the well-received “cosmopolitanism” that the business was pioneering to promote. By exposing customers to an international culture through such popular events, it encouraged the Thai public’s heated interests in the Western world to engage with



Ads of International Weeks at Central from Bangkok Post Central Marketing advertisement. “American Week,” Bangkok Post, February 7, 1970. Central Marketing advertisement. “Italian Week,” Bangkok Post, August 29, 1970

⁴⁸ Interview with Suthichart Chirathivat (Sixth Eldest male), conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December 22, 2015.

⁴⁹ The US Embassy contacted Central as part of the global publicity following the 1969 moon landing. The advertisement below announces that the “American Week” was organized “With the Co-operation of The U.S. Government.”

⁵⁰ Interview with Suthichart Chirathivat(Sixth Eldest male), conducted by Pataraphand Chirathivat at Bangkok, Thailand, December 22, 2015.

“the new”. Thus, Central was able to make cultural weeks its “educational mission”, which served as the medium through which Thai people could learn and connect.⁵¹

Despite the influx of international cultural weeks, Central steered clear of endorsing *solely* foreign nationalities. During the height of nationalistic protests in the early 1970s, Central advertised for Thai Week. Deeper U.S. involvement in Thailand drew denunciations by dissident organizations that complained the United States had “propagandized their reactionary thoughts and rotten culture into our society.”⁵² Some went further as to state that the American imperialists had “sucked out people’s blood and each year take away tremendous amounts of wealth from our natural resource; at the same time spreading poisonous American culture among our youths.”⁵³ In the eyes of the dissident Thai, Americans were pure hedonists who prioritized materialistic goods and pleasures over “the excellent culture, tradition and morality of the Thai nation.”⁵⁴ Yet ironically, while these harrowing public announcements stirred up stronger reactions within the Thai public than ever before, most of the same public continued to consume in line with the American way.



Central’s Ad for Thai Week Alongside News of Students Protests from Bangkok Post
Central Marketing advertisement. “Thai Products at Thai Prices,” Bangkok Post, October 21, 1973

Acknowledging the increasingly tense political climate, Central supported Thai nationalism by selling domestic products at reasonable prices, including Thai pottery and ceramics, elephant chairs, royal barge candlesticks, and handmade fruit baskets. The store also put on shows by Thai classical dancers, all of which were positively received by Thai customers, a nice contrast after international cultural weeks. To this extent, Central was active in responding to the political landscape, using it to their own marketing advantage

⁵¹ Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium*, 123.

⁵² Ann L. Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders Gender*, 42.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

and ensuring customer loyalty. At the same time, by promoting Thai goods, Central hoped to legitimize local products that are part of Thai traditional culture as additional aspects of modernity. In this respect, the term legitimization has expanded to encompass not only the normalization of Western products, but also of marginalized local and regional commodities. Here, it becomes clear that while Central hoped to stand as an authentically Thai business, the need for cosmopolitanism was also at play. The two were held in contest with each other, and needless to say, something that Central needed to balance well in order to remain popular with the masses.

Conclusion: Setting Strong Foothold in Retail Transformation

Central's success did not happen overnight, nor was it coincidental. It was the result of a myriad of interplaying factors that worked together at the right time and in the right place. This paper has argued that Central owes its success to straddling Western and Thai consumer cultures. In the beginning, Tiang Chirathivat was an immigrant who did not rely on ethnic networks, but rather, opened his store in non-Chinese areas catering to a Thai and Western audience by selling imported magazines and books. The family's initial status as immigrants made them outsiders by nature, a position that forced them to straddle the two worlds.

With the start of the Cold War, Central tackled a society that had mounting tensions and conflict with the U.S. On one hand, Central hoped to ride the wave of rising cosmopolitanism and advertised itself as the single reliable source for Western culture. This included, but not limited, to hosting various international cultural weeks, bringing in unseen products, and personally inviting Western business moguls to collaborate. As a result, Central became a global enterprise in the eyes of the Thai public. On the other hand, with the overwhelming tide of Western influence, the Cold War also represented a period of turmoil and deep conflict for the majority of Thais regarding their own outlooks on what it meant to be Thai. This identity crisis gave rise to student protests and public outrage as sentiments of strong nationalism swept over the nation. In response, Central maintained Thai authenticity by advertising local goods and selling Thai products.

All of this crisis contributed to the emergence of modern Thai consumer culture as an interplay between local and cosmopolitan elements. Central contributed to "popular geography" through cultural displays in stores that allowed consumers to virtually experience cultures outside of Thailand. Popular geography was merely one of the ways in which Central pioneered a "democracy of goods" in Thailand. By putting on a spectacle for any and all passersby, Central made it possible for those unable to afford the luxurious imported goods to

visualize all that Western consumer culture had to offer. Above all, Central legitimized the status of both Western and Thai goods through its inclusive advertising tactics, communicating to consumers that both were of equal quality.

Today, Central has grown into the largest department store chain in Southeast Asia. In recent years, Central has also moved abroad, acquiring department store chains in Vietnam, Indonesia, Denmark, Italy, and Germany, etc. Yet, despite its global expansion, Central has retained its status as a family business. Their success is an important parable in the economic history of Southeast Asia which echoes the importance of family connection in Thai business.

FROM OBJECTS TO OBJECTIVITY: Uncovering Women's History at Modern House Museums

Brian Whetstone

As British colonists settled in the New World, they transplanted traditional English legal and cultural mores. *Feme covert* featured among these imported practices. As in Europe, *feme covert* denied married American women rights over their children, property, and personal agency. Initially outlined by William Blackstone in his 1765 *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, *feme covert* asserted that husband and wife were one entity before English common law. Although united, matrimony was not egalitarian. Wives were relegated to the legal status of dependents and were barred from signing contracts, owning property, voting, or controlling personal financial earnings. Supposedly unfit to manage these affairs on their own, husbands subsumed the autonomy of their wives, maintaining a sharp break between public and private spheres.¹ The hardscrabble reality of life in the American colonies frequently chipped away at these boundaries between public life and private homemaking. Married women were often forced to take on roles forbidden by *feme covert* and local courts of equity tailored laws to suit these exceptions. Still far from sharing an equal status with their husbands, white colonial women were nonetheless extended a number of privileges not provided to their English counterparts across the Atlantic.²

While *feme covert* has since been erased from statute books, its ideological underpinnings—that women are not only inferior, but also dependent upon men—remain enmeshed in traditional historical narratives. These lasting strands of *feme covert* remain most problematically entangled within the narratives of historic house museums. The traditional American house museum model relegates the women connected to these homes to the status of dependents and places the family patriarch at the forefront of tours and publications. Paradoxically, a near-

¹ William Blackstone, "Chapter the Fifteenth: Of Husband and Wife," in *Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England, Book the First: On the Rights of Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765-1769), 430, accessed January 12, 2016, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/blackstone.asp.

² Glenda Riley, *Inventing the American Woman: An Inclusive History*, Vol. 1, *To 1877* (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 2007), 17.

obsession with domestic and material culture permeates these narratives but ignores or misinterprets the women most intimately connected with this culture. Many house museums have adopted this model, including the Frank House in Kearney, Nebraska, a private mansion built for George Frank and his wife Phoebe in 1889.³ This *feme covert* mentality becomes obvious when one examines the portrayal of three women who lived or worked at the house: Phoebe Frank, Eliza Galloway, and Georgina Grothan.

Unfortunately, the historiography of museum studies has largely ignored house museums, and contemporary house museum professionals have acknowledged the problems that face these institutions, but offered no claims for their origins.⁴ What scholars have overlooked is that the problematic and paradoxical model adopted by America's house museums is a unique hybrid of two historical developments: the transformation of museums over the last two centuries, and the emergence of the house museum in 1860. No longer serving their original domestic function, house museums have simultaneously attempted to interpret narratives through a lens of domesticity and traditional museum practice. An examination of the American museum reveals the emergence of the house museum model, and the Frank House exemplifies that house museums continue to reinforce *feme covert* mentality as they glorify the domestic sphere as the defining sphere of female existence without any attribution of women's roles within these spaces.

Despite their exclusion from traditional museum historiography, house museums have nevertheless been deeply influenced by the transformation of museums over the last two centuries. After the Civil War, museums emerged as leading intellectual and cultural forces where knowledge was disseminated for a Victorian public obsessed with a categorical "search for order."⁵ This search only

³ To establish context, I will relay a brief history of George Frank and the Frank House here: George and Phoebe moved to the Kearney area in the early 1880s. Not long after settling in Kearney, George established the G.W. Frank Improvement Company. George's company served as an umbrella organization for numerous industries under his purview, most importantly an electric power plant that supplied electricity to the homes and businesses of the town. George, after securing designs from his architect son (also named George), began constructing a mansion that would serve as private retreat and spacious showplace—the home was completed in 1889. George and Phoebe would spend little time at the house; an economic panic in 1893 left George in exhaustive financial straits (as he would describe in letters, his debts pressed down on him daily like a "hot iron") and he left the Kearney area in 1900 after Phoebe died.

⁴ See Donna Ann Harris, *New Solutions for Historic House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic House Museums* (New York, NY: AltaMira Press, 2007) and Franklin Vagnone, *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2016) for commentary on problems faced by historic house museums.

⁵ I borrow this phrase from Robert Wiebe's *The Search for Order: 1877-1920*. As Wiebe explains, surrounded by an increasingly modernizing and secularizing world, late 19th century Americans sought a new social order.

became more frantic as turn of the century Americans were increasingly confronted with disorder and chaos in the face of burgeoning cities, expanding industry, and heterogenous immigrant groups arriving daily. The rise of museums was directly linked to this search for order: displays shifted from confusing amalgamations of unrelated objects and Barnumesque sideshows to carefully ordered arrangements of objects by a categorical “type” (spears, arrowheads, etc...). This scientific and orderly typifying of objects provided a universally accessible framework for conveying knowledge to any museum visitor, regardless of geographic location, class, race, or ethnicity.⁶ This interpretation of objects helped solidify museums as the “most modern and up-to-date” facilities in the minds of fin-de-siècle Americans.⁷

Objects were fundamental not only for the creation and distribution of new information, but also provided a foundation for Victorian Americans to understand the world. Steven Conn writes, “Late nineteenth-century Americans held a belief that objects...were sources of meaning.”⁸ Conn refers to this as an “object-based epistemology.”⁹ Objects could not inherently portray their meaning to the casual observer, however. It took rigorous classification and arrangement on the part of museum curators to reveal this information to the general public. Most curators were consumed with the way they displayed objects, thus developing the rows and rows of glass display cases filled with carefully arranged specimens. While tedious to the modern observer, the seemingly endless glass cases played an important functional role for a 19th century museum visitor. The cases forced visitors to “stare at objects and consider them first on their own terms and then in relation to neighboring objects.”¹⁰ Until the end of the 19th century, museum curators believed that the way objects were arranged within displays conveyed narratives and knowledge to a museum visitor.¹¹

Without utilizing long galleries and glass display cases, the development of house museums borrowed from existing museum interpretation. America’s first house museum, George Washington’s Mount Vernon, was created in the years of political and social unrest preceding the Civil War. The estate had come into

⁶ Sally Gregory Kholstedt, “Thoughts in Things’ Modernity, History, and North American Museums,” *Isis* 96, no. 4 (December 2005): 589, accessed August 17, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/498595>.

⁷ Sophie Forgan, “Building the Museum: Knowledge, Conflict, and the Power of Place,” *Isis* 96, no. 4 (December 2005): 573, accessed August 17, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/498594>.

⁸ Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life: 1876-1926* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 112-140.

public scrutiny after John Washington, a distant relation of the first president, offered to sell the home to the federal government for the immense sum of 200,000 dollars. Rumors of Northern speculation at the site motivated Ann Pamela Cunningham, daughter of a prominent Southern planter, to send an appeal to “Southern Ladies” to save the house.¹²

To Cunningham, Northern interest in the home presented a “cultural and economic (if not military) assault on the South.”¹³ By couching her rhetoric within the grand tradition of the woman as protector of the home, Cunningham navigated tensions of *feme covert* ideologies restricting women’s activities in the public sphere while simultaneously reinforcing these ideologies to legitimize her efforts to save Mount Vernon. Raising money to purchase the home from John Washington became Cunningham’s top priority by means of her creation of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association (MVLA). Yet after the MVLA’s conception it became clear that both Northern and Southern women were interested in Mount Vernon as a historic shrine to one of the nation’s founders. Both sides, North and South, could claim George Washington as one of their own, making Mount Vernon an apolitical site seemingly safe and disconnected from the political and social turmoil of antebellum America.¹⁴

In 1860 the MVLA succeeded in raising the funds to purchase Mount Vernon just before the cataclysmic events of the Civil War.¹⁵ Not to be put off by the war, Cunningham pressed on with the restoration and transformation of the home into a museum. By the war’s end, Cunningham’s efforts reached fruition when Mount Vernon became the nation’s first house museum and a veritable American “Mecca.”¹⁶ The MVLA’s success proved that creating house museums was appropriate womanly work, and the model of interpretation the MVLA created set the standard for a majority of historic house museums after 1860.¹⁷

The MVLA model is flawed, unfortunately, despite being the model that other house museums have adopted. Most obvious is the excessive significance ascribed to the family patriarch—in this case George Washington. This intensity of focus stemmed from Cunningham’s concerted efforts to preserve the home as a

¹² Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America’s House Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴ George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 43-44.

¹⁵ Grace King, *Mount Vernon on the Potomac: History of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), 120-121.

¹⁶ Jean B. Lee, “Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca: Mount Vernon, 1783-1853,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (2001): 260, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4249931.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

¹⁷ West, 7-20.

patriotic shrine singularly devoted to the life of the first president. The intensity of focus on the family patriarch led historian Charlotte Smith to dub Mount Vernon a “Great Man” house museum. This method of interpretation shaped by the MVLA ultimately masked the female labour and agency of both Mount Vernon’s historic inhabitants and female preservationists.¹⁸ Paradoxically, it was women that reinforced these problematic interpretations well into the 20th century. Many house museums created post-1860 utilized Great Man ideology; they also glorified the material culture of the domestic sphere without connecting women’s roles to this culture. Indeed, Cunningham requested that Mount Vernon be filled with attractive furnishings to better highlight the house itself, although these objects were not historically accurate to the time that Washington or his immediate family had lived there.¹⁹ This particular fascination with furniture and the architecture of Mount Vernon directly borrowed from the epistemology of American museums in the 19th century. In order to present information about George Washington to visitors, Cunningham applied a modified object-based epistemology to understand the estate. Rather than creating displays tucked behind neat glass cases, Cunningham used the material culture within the domestic spaces of Mount Vernon to convey information about the first president.

As the 19th century progressed into the 20th, museums were eclipsed as the center of intellectual life by American colleges. Growing tensions between these competing institutions quickly began to chip away at the legitimacy of an object-based study of history. Academic historians rejected the object-centric study of the past and turned to historical manuscripts to understand history. As Conn iterates, “Americans by the mid-twentieth century no longer heard objects the way their predecessors had.”²⁰ This intellectual shift from objects to manuscripts was complete by the 1920s, but it took much longer for museums to adopt these standards.²¹

The newfound cultural and intellectual authority wielded by American colleges created a rift between museum professionals and academic historians. In 1940, museum professionals of the American Historical Association broke away and formed the independent American Association for State and Local History. This split from academic historians created a hierarchy within the museum profession, in which house museums and their curators occupied the bottom

¹⁸ Charlotte Smith, “Civic Consciousness and House Museums: The Instructional Role of Interpretive Narratives,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 21, no. 1 (July 2002): 74-88, accessed December 9, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41053894.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

¹⁹ West, 33.

²⁰ Conn, 18.

²¹ *Ibid*, 16-17.

rung.²² Stagnating at the bottom of this hierarchy, house museums remained overlooked by culturally elite museum administrators and audiences alike. Only house museums with a connection to a patriotic or influential individual retained legitimacy and made the push to professionalize. As Patricia West has documented, this push for professionalization began at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello in the 1920s and marked a turning point for house museums. Like doctors pushing midwives out of the medical field, male preservation professionals slowly began removing women's authority from preservation activities. Male patrons were not drawn to any old house, however. In the nationalist hype immediately following both World Wars, it was the homes of great patriotic men that instilled a sense of "Americana" amidst a perceived erosion of cultural and racial homogeneity.²³ Without these patriotic ties, many house museums fell beyond the purview of museum and preservation professionals alike.²⁴

As some house museums slowly professionalized, most museums rapidly changed their approach from object display to visitor experience. By the last quarter of the 20th century, curators agreed that objects no longer "spoke" the way they had to their predecessors a century prior. Instead of warehousing and obsessively arranging collections, museum professionals argued that a museum's

²² Stuart D. Hobbs, "Exhibiting Antimodernism: History, Memory, and the Aestheticized Past in Mid-twentieth-century America," *The Public Historian* 23, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 39, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.1525/tph.2001.23.3.39.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

²³ T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Harvey Green, "Looking Backward to the Future: The Colonial Revival and American Culture," in *Creating a Dignified Past: Museums and the Colonial Revival*, ed. Geoffrey L. Rossano (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield). Lears, in a sweeping analysis of American culture between 1880 and 1920, documents the subconscious crisis of cultural authority many middle-upper class white Americans experienced in a rapidly modernizing, secularizing and racially diversifying world.

Disenfranchised with modern life, many Americans turned to a romanticized past to soothe their anxieties about the world around them. The resultant effect of these implications was the antimodernist movement. Reflected in art, architecture, and literature, antimodernists turned to a mythologized past to establish and reaffirm racially pure and nationalistic origins. While Lears examines the Arts and Crafts and Gothic Revival movements, I would argue that the increased interest in house museums is also a product of antimodernism that was fueled by mounting cultural anxiety amongst white Americans. The creation of house museums wielded a dual purpose: the preservation of a patriotic home solidified a historic and cultural tie to the past and utilized the home as an educational site to foster cultural allegiance in foreign-born American citizens. Similarly, Harvey Green analyzes the Colonial Revival and its place in the museum profession. Like the Arts and Crafts and Gothic Revival movements, Colonial Revival served as a way to placate deep-seated anxieties in the American elite by looking to a romanticized past.

²⁴ West, 93-127. As West iterates, house museums had long been seen as sites to instill cultural allegiance as great patriotic shrines. The use of period room displays helped foster a consumer economy interested in the collection and creation of American and Colonial antiques. The creation of this economy and interest in the Colonial drew male patrons to sites that had previously been under the authority of volunteer women's groups.

focus should shift to visitors' experiences. However, house museums remained uninfluenced by this trend and continued to "speak" in a language late 20th century visitors could no longer understand. Instead of broadening interpretation to enhance a visitor's experience, narratives remained inextricably linked—and ultimately dependent upon—the study and classification of objects. Despite the intellectual rejection of an "object-based epistemology" in the 1920s, objects and narrative remain entangled in house museums, as exemplified by the Frank House's modern-day interpretation.²⁵

Like many house museums, the Frank House was not exempt from Mount Vernon's influence and the contentious history of museum interpretation. Its transition from private home to museum clearly illustrates the influence of both of these movements. The convoluted twists and turns of the museum's creation began in 1972 with the closure and gifting of the Nebraska State Hospital for Tuberculosis campus to nearby Kearney State College (KSC)—now the present-day University of Nebraska at Kearney. Since 1911, the house had been used as a staff dormitory by the hospital. Dilapidated and empty, the mansion presented a unique challenge to KSC's administration, particularly to then-president Brendan McDonald. Talk of converting the home into a dormitory, presidential residence, or even demolition circulated amongst college administration. While the Frank House's fate remained undecided, a group of volunteer women, mirroring the spirit of the MVLA, expressed interest in the site as Kearney's 1973 centennial celebration approached. Carol Bacon and Linda Raymond led this group, forming the Ladies' Day Centennial Committee. As rumors surrounding the fate of the Frank House continued to grow, Bacon and Raymond took the home under their protective wing.²⁶

Having recently been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, community interest in the structure piqued.²⁷ *The Kearney Daily Hub*, the local newspaper, claimed that the house was one of "Kearney's most historic landmarks."²⁸ The home was aesthetically unique to the community as well: a Colorado red sandstone façade, ten-foot tall Louis Comfort Tiffany-designed

²⁵ Stephen E. Weil, "From Being about Something to Being for Somebody: The Ongoing Transformation of the American Museum," *Daedalus* 128, no. 3 (Summer, 1999), accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027573>.

²⁶ "Women's Events Being Planned for Centennial," *Kearney Daily Hub*, hand-dated June 1973, newspaper clippings folder, Frank House Archives, Kearney, Nebraska. From this point the archives of the Frank House will be abbreviated as "FHA."

²⁷ "National Register of Historical Places Inventory-Nomination Form," prepared by Persijs Kolberg, February 23, 1973, accessed August 23, 2016, http://www.nebraskahistory.org/histpres/nebraska/buffalo/BF05-161_Frank_House.pdf.

²⁸ Carol Lomicky, "Estimated 3,000 Tour Frank Home Wednesday," *Kearney Daily Hub*, June 28, 1973.

stained glass window, and hand carved woodwork were features few (if any) homes in Kearney could boast.²⁹ The architectural beauty of the home and its late Victorian-era origins were a major draw for the Ladies' Day committee, who made the home their location for planned activities. On the day of festivities, the committee used the home to facilitate a fashion show, tea party, a ceremony honoring Kearney's oldest women, and tours of the home.³⁰

Rather than attempt to interpret any tangible history of the Frank House or its former inhabitants, these tours instead admired the interior beauty and physical space that the house encompassed: in essence, a decorative arts tour. Using their influence in the Kearney community, the committee furnished the home with pieces borrowed from furniture and antique stores. Much like Cunningham's disinterest in historically appropriate furnishings for Mount Vernon, the Ladies' Day Committee filled the home with whatever they deemed appropriate to show off the house. Rather than using domestic objects to understand the home's inhabitants, the Ladies' Day committee used furniture to understand the broadly defined Victorian era.³¹ The Ladies' Day committee had effectively crafted the Frank House's lasting impression: one marked not by historical interpretation but a space, according to Raymond, for "events with a picturesque background."³²

Despite the push to utilize the home only as an attractive events space, McDonald soon formulated a plan that attempted to set the course of the Frank House on an entirely different path. McDonald envisioned the Frank House as the Center for Nebraska Studies (CNS), a modern cultural institution devoted to preserving and sharing the cultural and historical resources of Nebraska in the form of exhibits and programs. McDonald asked Marian Johnson, an elementary school teacher and amateur antique collector, and her husband Halvin, a psychology professor at KSC, to establish a temporary residence on the second floor of the home and oversee its transformation.³³ By 1974, the Johnsons had moved into the house, and Marian began to restore the structure to its physical state when the Franks lived there from 1890 to 1900, a trend effectively narrowing the interpretation of the museum to the Franks alone. While focusing on the physical restoration of the home, McDonald made it clear that the house

²⁹ The sandstone façade was the most obvious visually striking element of the home. When the state tuberculosis hospital owned the house it was nicknamed "The Stone House."

³⁰ "Women's Events Being Planned for Centennial."

³¹ Ibid.

³² Linda Raymond, phone interview by author, Kearney, NE, 14 August 2015, in possession of author.

³³ Brendan McDonald to Marian and Halvin Johnson, January 25, 1974, "The Center for Nebraska Studies: A Proposal," Marian Johnson correspondences, FHA.

was to be “more than a period house. It has to be alive.”³⁴ An editorial in the *Kearney Daily Hub* reiterated McDonald’s sentiment, adding that the house should “not solely be a repository for articles of the past.”³⁵

The house was officially unveiled as the Center for Nebraska Studies in April 1974 as a series of paintings by Clarence Ellsworth, a Nebraskan artist, were displayed.³⁶ However, this marked the end of CNS’s involvement with the Frank House. Despite McDonald’s hopes to keep the house “alive,” the museum’s intent soon became obscured by stuffy Victorian furnishings, mannequins sporting the height of Gilded Age fashion, and an array of both donated pieces and Johnson’s personal furniture. By 1976 the concept of a Center for Nebraska Studies had been unceremoniously dumped, never mentioned again by Johnson or McDonald until 1981 when McDonald attempted to resurrect the organization elsewhere on KSC’s campus. His renewed efforts would again be met with failure.³⁷ Despite signing an agreement drafted by McDonald stating the house would be a temporary living situation, Johnson and her husband Hal spent the next sixteen years (1974-1991) at the house until they retired and moved to South Dakota.³⁸ Now fully in the throes of period house museum ideology, the extinguishing of CNS set the stage for the Frank House to fully implement the Great Man model created at Mount Vernon and the object-based epistemology scrapped by museums in the 1920s.

Narrowing the Ladies’ Day committee’s object-based interpretation of the Victorian era, Johnson utilized the house and its contents as objects to understand the specific architectural history of the home and George Frank. Johnson did not primarily research the women of the house. By alternating between the lenses of an object-based study of the past and a patriarchal focus on the home’s history, Johnson constructed a materialistic Great Man narrative for the fledgling house museum. In doing so, Johnson rejected the dominant pioneer and frontier history of the area and emphasized the Franks, particularly George, as east coast elites. This narrative culminated in the form of a spoken tour received by visitors to the museum. Much of the tour revolved around George Frank, the architecture, and

³⁴ “Johnsons Move into Frank Home,” *Kearney Daily Hub*, Saturday, March 2, 1974.

³⁵ Editorial, “Definition Unsettled; Also Solution,” *Kearney Daily Hub* article found in Frank House archives, hand-dated April 1974.

³⁶ “Ellsworth Paintings to Be Unveiled,” *Kearney Daily Hub*, April 19, 1974.

³⁷ “Towards a Center for Nebraska Studies,” April 6, 1981, Brendan McDonald Correspondences, University of Nebraska at Kearney Archives, Kearney, Nebraska; John Mayeski to President Brendan McDonald, in reference to establishing a Center for Nebraska Studies, January 15, 1981, Brendan McDonald Correspondences, UNK Archives.

³⁸ Brendan McDonald to Marian and Halvin Johnson, January 25, 1974, “The Center for Nebraska Studies: A Proposal,” Marian Johnson correspondences, FHA.

furniture within the house itself as well as recent restoration efforts. This hierarchy lorded over actual critical interpretation of the museum.³⁹

A video recorded by Johnson gives insight into this approach. In 1990 Johnson and her husband recorded a two-hour long video that provides a fascinating look into the kind of tour many visitors would have received at the house. Johnson spends the majority of the video discussing furniture in the house. Coupled with her descriptions, Johnson consistently bemoans the former staff of the state hospital, pointing out the many alterations in need of restorative correction. A quick biography of George Frank is given at the beginning of the tour; Phoebe is only mentioned in passing as his wife.

Later, Johnson reveals to the viewer her “gallery,” a temporary wall covered in photos of George Frank, George William Frank (the architect of the house), and photos of the house taken circa 1889. Johnson barely mentions the women of the house. Much like the MVLA and other female preservationists, Johnson’s interpretations worked insidiously to conceal the agency of the women of the house and further the concept of *feme covert*. Johnson was quick, however, to memorialize her own presence in the home’s narrative as its caretaker. Also displayed are photos depicting recent restoration efforts such as the newly restored roof, completed in 1984. Johnson’s gallery is a physical projection of her interpretation of the Frank House; it is also the only textual or didactic display visitors encountered at the home. Indeed, Johnson did not need text or historic documents to interpret the house—to Johnson, the house and objects spoke for themselves.⁴⁰

Johnson’s video tour is an important resource in understanding how the home was presented to visitors, yet her work off-camera also provided an interpretive foundation for later directors to follow. Behind the scenes, Johnson’s attention to the objects and restoration of the Frank House bled into her understanding of its historic inhabitants. Like empty glass display cases of 19th century museums waiting to receive an arrangement of objects, the rooms of the Frank House were the stage for Johnson to apply her own “object-based epistemology.” The brief representation of Phoebe highlights this process. Johnson’s tour narrative claims Phoebe to have been an avid home decorator,

³⁹ This interpretation survived well into the 21st century—I know as I gave this very tour as a tour guide working at the home from 2011-2015. Johnson’s narrative remained virtually unchanged from the time she left the house in 1991 to 2016 when a newly hired director began challenging Johnson’s longstanding narrative.

⁴⁰ Marian and Halvin Johnson, “Johnson Frank House Tour” (home video), directed by Halvin Johnson, filmed February 1, 1990, FHA.

George's financial savior upon his near-bankruptcy in the Panic of 1893, and a direct descendent of William Penn.⁴¹ However, much of Phoebe's story is untrue.

The persistent image of Phoebe as a home decorator was one conjured up by Johnson as a vehicle for the material culture of the home, and thus demonstrates the restricting nature of a *feme covert* mentality. For example, Johnson claimed that two urns in the house's collection were purchased by Phoebe to match a light fixture. Rather than a matching set, the urns highlighted were from two different makers, and only one could be traced back to the Frank family.⁴² Similarly, a historic bathroom renovation was attributed to Phoebe. Johnson, operating within her own object-based epistemology and Great Man narrative, claimed Phoebe renovated the bathroom to provide ease of access for George after a leg injury.⁴³ There is no evidence to support this claim and it is more likely that a later owner or the state hospital made this alteration.

Much of Phoebe's narrative ignores reality. Rather than being exclusively concerned with interior decorating, Phoebe enjoyed a life beyond the walls of the Frank House as a respected member of the Kearney community serving as president of an Episcopal Ladies' Guild and leading Bible studies for local children.⁴⁴ The reality of Phoebe's life within the home is ignored as well. Despite a fascination with elaborately arranged Victorian interiors, Johnson gave little consideration to the immense amount of labor on the part of servants and organization and oversight on the part of Phoebe to maintain such lavish surroundings. As historians have noted, indicating "at home" or "keeping house" on census records entailed far more than genteel domestic stagnation.⁴⁵ Indeed, "domestic work demanded full-time attention and energy" from domestic servants and wives alike.⁴⁶ Additionally, Johnson fabricated genealogical ties to famous

⁴¹ Frank House Tour Guide Notes, last updated c. 2010, FHA.

⁴² Accession record of Pitcher, Object I.D. number 1979.05.001, Frank House PastPerfect database, accessed January 13, 2016; Accession Record of Pitcher, Object I.D. number 1987.07.006, Frank House PastPerfect database, accessed January 13, 2016.

⁴³ Frank House Tour Guide notes, last updated c. 2010, FHA.

⁴⁴ The Cherrier Directory and Publishing Company, *The Hub City Directory of Kearney for 1891* (Kearney: The Hub Printing Company, 1891), 19; Obituary in *The Kearney Daily Hub*, "Mrs. George W. Frank," April 24, 1900; Obituary in *The Kearney Daily Hub*, "Obituary: Mrs. G. W. Frank, Sr.," February 5, 1900.

⁴⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, "Inhabitants in Corning Township, in the County of Adams, State of Iowa," August 17, 1870, compiled by A. L. Wells. Unfortunately, the 1890 census (the only census that would have documented Phoebe while she was alive in Kearney) was lost in a fire. However, the 1870 census, taken when the Frank family lived at their home in Corning, Iowa, documents Phoebe as "keeping house." Their home in Corning, known as Edgewood, was of a comparable size to their mansion in Kearney, indicating a similar volume of work from Phoebe and domestic servants.

⁴⁶ Riley, 121.

figures of American history, claiming Phoebe to be a descendent of William Penn. This insistence on a pedicured ancestral lineage overlooked Phoebe's actual links to American figures: Phoebe is related to the Reverend James Pierpont, founder of Yale University.⁴⁷

Phoebe's narrative exists within a vacuum stripped of historical context and grounded in dated gender ideology; indeed, her portrayal reflects the Victorian doctrine of True Womanhood—an ideology that asserted women's societal value was in the home—more so than reality. Likewise, the interpretation of Eliza Galloway, a former slave who worked as a domestic servant for the Franks, was only ever discussed to distance George Frank from the political and social context of the 1890s. Eliza was presented as a member of the family and whom George's brother had saved from a life of poverty. Supposedly plucked from the squalor of New York City after the death of her husband and children and placed on a train heading west to Kearney, Eliza made her home at George and Phoebe's new mansion as the head cook and chief of staff. After Phoebe's death and the subsequent sale of the Frank House in 1900, Eliza was gifted the entirety of the family silver and china collection.⁴⁸

In reality, Eliza lived with her respective husbands or on her own—sometimes in near poverty—while she worked for multiple families in the Kearney community as a laundress and domestic servant.⁴⁹ Eliza also made her way to Kearney on her own; there was no philanthropic action on the part of the Frank family to transport her across the United States. After heading west via train, Eliza stopped in Kearney after hearing rumors of rockslides further down

⁴⁷ “Copy of Record Made by John Pierpont, Poet, in his own Handwriting in Possession of Mrs. Geo. W. Frank, 1892,” FHA.

⁴⁸ Frank House Tour Guide Notes, last updated c. 2010, FHA.

⁴⁹ “Letter From Old-Time Kearney Resident is a Tribute to Long Career of Old Eliza Galloway, Former Slave,” *Kearney Daily Hub*, March 20, 1930; County Relief Administration: Application for Relief, September 10, 1935, Eliza Galloway manuscripts collection, FHA; J. C. Morgan, *Directory of the City of Kearney, Buffalo County, Nebraska. For the Year 1888. Giving a List of the Inhabitants, Business Firms, Educational, Social and Religious Associations* (Hastings, NE: Gazette-Journal Company, 1888), 44; R. L. Polk and Co., *Kearney City Directory: 1913-1914, Volume V* (Sioux City, Iowa: R. L. Polk & Co., 1913), 60; R. L. Polk & Co., *Kearney City Directory: 1915-1916 Volume VI* (Sioux City, Iowa: R. L. Polk & Co.), 61. These city directories are from years where Eliza was unmarried. When married to her second husband, James Galloway, and third husband, Frank Red, Eliza's occupation was omitted for her husbands' occupations as a Pullman porter and car washer, respectively.

the tracks.⁵⁰ Portraying Eliza as the product of benign, racially blind benevolence gave greater social prestige to George Frank, creating a mythical 19th century aristocrat distanced from typical treatment of domestic servants.⁵¹

Unlike her historical counterparts, Georgina Grothan was excluded from the home's narrative. Georgina—and her physician husband, Ole—were only incorporated into the narrative by Johnson in order to understand the Frank House's physical progression over time. The addition of French doors in the drawing room and the construction of partition walls were attributed to Georgina and her husband. The narrative speculates that Georgina and Ole may have made alterations to the second floor of the home—the area of the house they used for a sanitarium.⁵² Like Phoebe's supposed renovations, there is no evidence to support Georgina or Ole overseeing changes to the house.

Little is mentioned about Georgina beyond fictitious renovations yet her life story is fascinating. Born in Saybrook, Illinois in 1867, Georgina attended Northwestern University's Women's Medical School and obtained her degree in 1893.⁵³ Specializing in gynecology and obstetrics, she and her husband moved to St. Paul, Nebraska, where they operated a clinic and joined the Nebraska State

⁵⁰ “Employed by G. W. Frank at Frank House,” undated *Kearney Daily Hub* article clipping, Eliza Galloway manuscripts collection, Frank House Archives, University of Nebraska at Kearney, Kearney, Nebraska. Because Eliza was illiterate, little documentation of her life remains other than speculation on the part of newspaper reporters when she was alive and any federal, state, or county documents. While Johnson seemed to merely pull a narrative for Phoebe out of thin air, there is some documentation that provides an origin for Eliza's interpretation. In 1975, a woman named Rosina Stearns contacted Johnson, informing Johnson that she had known Eliza when she was still alive and wished to disclose her memories of Eliza. Stearns had taken care of Eliza in the latter years of her life, and both Stearns and her husband lived in the Frank House when it was still operated by the state of Nebraska as a dormitory for the Nebraska State Hospital for Tuberculosis. It was ultimately Stearns that laid the groundwork for Johnson's interpretation of Eliza, although she provided many cautionary notes throughout her letters that Johnson should not accept her testimony as truth and that “these ‘memories’ I leave written down sound extravagant and need careful sifting and discarding for the formal ‘Legend’ you need and you will write for your purpose...”. Johnson ignored these warnings and drafted her final narrative of Eliza from Stearns' statements and compiled it into the tour she presented to visitors of the house. Sources like the correspondence with Stearns coalesced into the notes received by tour guides at the house which I have cited elsewhere, but many of the claims Johnson made about Phoebe and Eliza she simply made up and relayed via her tour of the home. The correspondence between Stearns and Johnson are in the Marian Johnson Correspondences collection of the FHA.

⁵¹ Enobong Hannah Branch and Melissa E. Wooten, “Suited for Service: Racialized Rationalizations for the Ideal Domestic Servant from the Nineteenth to the Early Twentieth Century,” *Social Science History* 36, no.2 (Summer 2012): 169-189, accessed June 12, 2015.

⁵² Frank House Tour Guide Notes, last updated c. 2010, FHA.

⁵³ Junior Class of the College of Liberal Arts, *The Syllabus*, (Chicago: Kehm, Fietsch, and Wilson, 1893), 70; Northwestern University Woman's Medical School, *Woman's Medical School Northwestern University (Woman's Medical College of Chicago) The Institution and Its Founders, Class Histories: 1870-1896* (Chicago, IL: H. G. Cutler, 1896), 115.

Medical Association.⁵⁴ Opening a private sanitarium at the Frank House with her husband in 1907, her time in Kearney was cut short after becoming entangled in a scandalous divorce a few years later when her husband had an affair with a nurse at their sanitarium.⁵⁵ She remained in Kearney until 1914 when she moved back to the Chicago area.⁵⁶ Unable to place Georgina within the confines of a romanticized domestic sphere, Johnson chose instead to simply ignore Georgina, preferring table settings and teacups to Georgina's expertise in gynecology. As it would seem, without a tie to George Frank, there remains little worth remembering.

Johnson's object-based epistemology was also inextricably linked with the image of the home as an events space with a "picturesque background"—the image so sharply crystallized during the centennial in 1973. The first six years of the house under Johnson's tenure highlights this relationship. From 1974 to 1980 there were only two "exhibits" at the home: the unveiling of the Clarence Ellsworth paintings and a showing of quilts that belonged to Johnson. Within her personal notes, Johnson recorded over twenty other major events at the house. Some events focused on the architectural beauty of the house; a "Victorian Exhibition" and ice cream social focused almost solely on Victorian architecture and material culture. Indeed, the architectural beauty of the house that captivated the Ladies' Day Committee in 1973 remained a central focus of Johnson throughout her tenure at the home. The rest of the events Johnson included in her notes were receptions, tea parties, or major restoration efforts at the house. Nearly every event recorded orbited around the display, or required the display, of objects.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Corwin W. Frederick, enumerator, St. Paul, Nebraska Census, Ward 2, June 10, 1900; Julie Spilinek, "Say Ahhh," *Historically Speaking* (Second Issue, 2014): 3; Georgina Grothan, "Evil Practices of the So-called Midwife," *The American Gynæcological and Obstetrical Journal* 7 (July 1895): 680-681; Georgina Grothan, "Chloroform in Labor," *Proceedings of Nebraska State Medical Society: Twenty-Eighth Annual Session*, (1896): 131-138; Georgina Grothan, "Progress in Therapeutics in the Diseases of Children," *Western Medical Review* 7 (January to December, 1902): 273-274; Georgina Grothan, "Ectopic Gestation with Special Reference to Diagnosis," *Nebraska State Medical Association Western Medical Review* 8, no. 7 (July, 1903): 40-42; Georgina Grothan, "The Treatment of Pneumonia in Children," *The Medicus* 9, no. 11 (November, 1901): 343-346.

⁵⁵; "Dr. O. Grothan is Married," *The Kearney Daily Hub*, December 14, 1910; Record of Divorce for Georgina Grothan and Ole Grothan, 1910, housed in the Vital Records office of the state of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska.

⁵⁶ R. L. Polk & Co., *Evanston City and North Shore Directory: 1922-1923, Volume VI* (Chicago, IL: R. L. Polk & Co., 1922), 577; *Census of Women Physicians* (Chicago, IL: The American Women's Hospitals, 1918), 27.

⁵⁷ Marian Johnson, Unofficial List of Events at the Frank House, 1989, found among Johnson's numerous personal notes made for her own purposes, FHA.

The Frank House has, for the most part, overcome *feme covert*'s harsh confines under new administration. In fact, the Frank House has since been renamed the G.W. Frank Museum of History and Culture in order to reflect a more inclusive mission.⁵⁸ This is a result of staff making conscientious efforts to break from the traditional Frank narrative and incorporate the remainder of the house's history. Additionally, the women of the house are not only included, but also featured in the tour. By moving beyond the narrow period of Frank family interpretation and incorporating others tied to the house, the Frank House, and other house museums like it, have the ability to chip away at the Great Man narrative.⁵⁹

The Frank House is not unique in its transformation from private home to museum; the shadows cast by Mount Vernon and the object-based epistemology of the 19th century loom over many house museums. This shadow reinforces the *feme covert* mentality by limiting interpretation at house museums to family patriarchs and material culture. Paradoxically, the domestic sphere is perceived to be the defining sphere of female existence, yet women are often disconnected or downplayed from the very domestic culture with which they were so intrinsically connected. Indeed, the portrayal of Phoebe and Eliza was one-dimensional (and Georgina non-existent), and by exposing their stories to a larger historical context, their lives could contribute to a deeper and multifaceted history of the Frank House. The inclusion of Georgina and other women connected to the home's history create a rich tapestry of stories that museum staff can portray. By rejecting the glorification of material and domestic culture, and connecting women to a larger world beyond the parlor or dining room, it is possible to lift the still-constrictive bonds of *feme covert* and allow all women of American history to finally enter our national historical narrative in meaningful ways.

⁵⁸ Sara Giboney, "New Frank House Name Emphasizes Museum History, Culture," *UNK News*, February 25, 2016, accessed March 3, 2016, <http://unknews.unk.edu/2016/02/25/new-frank-house-name-emphasizes-museum-history-culture/>.

⁵⁹ Franklin Vagnone, *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press), 175-179.

LETHAL LIMITS

Ethnoreligious Boundaries in Medieval Christian and Islamic Iberia

Benjamin Goldstein

In 711 CE, Arab and Berber Islamic forces invaded the Christian Visigoth kingdom in Iberia, modern day Spain and Portugal. After the invasion, various forms of Islamic polities dominated the peninsula until around the 11th century, when the few remaining Christian kingdoms of the north began to make earnest military campaigns of “reconquista”, or reconquest. By the mid-13th century, the majority of the Peninsula had fallen under Christian rule, with the exception of Granada, which held out until the end of the 15th century. During these nearly eight centuries of mixed Christian and Islamic rule on the peninsula, the ethnoreligious demographics shifted over time and differed from place to place; in Cordoba in the 9th century under Muslim rule, the Christian population seemed to be transitioning towards minority status due to conversions to Islam, while in 14th century Castile under Christian rule, Muslims were becoming the minority due to conversions to Christianity. However, despite the changing and diverse demographics of Christians and Muslims in this historical and geographic space, the significant Jewish populations always featured as a distinct minority, an “other”, existing between one dominant, ruling group, and the conquered people.

Many historians⁶⁰ over the decades, if not centuries, have looked at this vibrant space of interactions between Muslims, Jews and Christians—specifically under Muslim governance—with some degree of admiration, and then gazed disparagingly upon seemingly endless waves of Jewish persecutions in Christendom. And indeed, many great artistic, scientific, and cultural advances emerged from the more amicable of these ethnoreligious relations; vibrant poetry in a number of languages flourished, magnificent structures like the El Transito Synagogue of Toledo and the Mosque of Cordoba rose into the sky, and polymath

⁶⁰ Maria Rosa. Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2012); Chris Lowney, *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006).

scholars of all three faiths engaged in serious intellectual and religious study, often interacting with each other. Certainly, anti-Jewish sentiment and action, from crusade-related massacres to expulsions to persecutions during the black death formed a crucial dynamic of the Jewish experience in northern and western Christendom, including parts of Christian Iberia. However, these models' specific focus on the alleged marvel of "convivencia", or coexistence, of the three cultures under Islamic rule, as contrasted against a totally oppressive treatment in Christendom, has come under significant criticism in modern historiography. Mark Cohen's *Under Crescent and Under Cross*, while acknowledging that Jews overall fared "more securely in the medieval Arab-Islamic world than under Christendom"⁶¹, demonstrates in his nuanced analysis that such an analysis "ignored the Jews' inferior legal status and the fierce persecution of non-Muslims...and other occasional outbursts of hostility and violence in Spain..."⁶² Bernard Lewis in his *Jews of Islam* adds that these flare ups of ethnoreligious violence generally occurred when these "dhimmis [non-Muslim tribute-paying citizens] were not keeping their place...acting arrogantly...[and] getting above themselves."⁶³ Neither Muslim Al-Andalus nor Christian Iberia was a totally pacific, amicable space of ethnoreligious coexistence; tensions, social divisions and occasional violence marked both societies, especially for their Jewish populations.

In this paper, I argue through two distinct case studies that the role of the court Jew in Islamic and Christian Iberian societies allows us to understand the fragility of any peaceful "convivencia" of the period. Court Jews were both perceived as a highly valuable resource in navigating between the other two Abrahamic ethnoreligious groups, and a serious threat to the larger ethnoreligious order, should they become too powerful and influential upon the Islamic or Christian leader. The use of court Jews by either Christian or Islamic polities thus opened up the court and its leaders to accusations of improper associations with and involvement in government of Jews, further endangering the court Jews themselves and the larger Jewish population of the polity.

I propose that comparing specific moments of violent breakdown in these complex ethnoreligious hierarchies and orders may illuminate the theoretical "proper" positions of all participants in the given society. Furthermore, specifying these breakdowns to instances of court Jews, in both Christian and Islamic polities, falling from political power identifies a common "other" shared between

⁶¹ Cohen, Mark R. *Under Crescent and Cross: the Jews in the Middle Ages*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008, xiii.

⁶² Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, ix.

⁶³ Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 53.

both orders. This type of comparison informs an understanding of how different societies with similar issues of ethnoreligious diversity defined the limits of accepted behavior from the “other” and reacted when these limits were allegedly breached.

Samuel and Joseph ha Nagid: A Family of Court Jews

The trajectory of Samuel and Joseph ha Nagid of eleventh-century Islamic Granada and Samuel ha-Levi of fourteenth-century Christian Castile demonstrates the usefulness but precariousness of court Jews in Islamic Iberia. Both Samuel and Joseph ha Nagid, father and son respectively, attained high advisory positions in the court of Granada. Whereas Samuel ha Nagid died peacefully after many years of service to the king, Joseph ha Nagid, allegedly succumbing to arrogance and a hunger for power, was killed along with much of the Jewish quarter of Granada, by an anti-Jewish mob.⁶⁴ Samuel ha-Levi was an important financial advisor in mid-14th century Castile to King Pedro “El Cruel” until the king executed him upon accusations of illegally hoarding the royal treasury.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, it is not exceedingly clear in either case that the murder or execution of the court Jew was the *direct* result of any vehement anti Jewish sentiment among the rulers and/or the populace. However, as will be demonstrated in this essay, in both cases, political opponents of the current regimes launched propaganda campaigns smearing the leaders for their improperly close relationships with court Jews, which supports a possible connection between the dominant anti-Jewish rhetoric and the fall of the two court Jews. Furthermore, both cases clearly demonstrate that in the richly multi-ethnic and multi-religious landscape of Medieval Iberia, the dominant Muslim or Christian societies established boundaries for the political involvement of the Jewish “other”; social strife and increased ethnoreligious tensions occurred when such boundaries were allegedly broken.⁶⁶ The inherent fragility of the Jewish community’s status thus allowed political rivals to pointedly, and perhaps lethally,

⁶⁴ For an overview of the Samuel and Joseph Nagid case, see Eliyahu Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, Volume 2, Translated by Aaron Klein and Jenny Machlowitz Klein. (Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia, 1992), 65, 116-124; Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 165-166; Norman A. Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands - A History and Source Book* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 165-166.

⁶⁵ For an overview of the ha-Levi case, see, Benjamin F. Taggie "Samuel He-Levi Abulajia and the Hebraic Policy of Pedro I of Castile 1350-1369." *Fifteenth Century Studies* 5, (1982), 191-208; Yitzhak Fritz. Baer, *A History of Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publ. Soc., 1961). 362-364.

⁶⁶ For a similar argument on ethnic hierarchy and social destabilization in Christian and Islamic lands, see chapter 6 of Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 107-136.

exploit anti-Jewish rhetoric by both attacking the court Jews for violating norms in their political involvement and by blaming their political opponents for being accomplices in the Jews' mischief.

Samuel ha Nagid: the David of his Age?

The Samuel/Joseph Naghrela narrative began in 993 with the birth of Samuel in Córdoba to a Jewish family who supplied him with a varied, multicultural education in both the Hebrew and Arabic traditions. However, according to ibn Daud, a Jewish scholar writing in the mid 12th century, upon a Berber invasion of the city, Samuel fled the city and ended up in Granada, where he rose in the court, most likely due to the strength of his writing.⁶⁷ Although ibn Daud's chronicle depicted Samuel's ascension as exceedingly meteoric, other scholars comment that it "appears more likely that Samuel rose gradually to his high office after overcoming all sorts of obstacles,"⁶⁸ which the chronicle of the Tibyan, written by a Muslim former Granadan noble in late 11th century, supports.⁶⁹ Eventually, after backing the winning side in an internal political court struggle, Samuel rose to become the right-hand man to King Badis.

Samuel, during the course of his life and service to the Muslim Kingdom of Granada, wrote copious amounts and varieties of poetry, corresponded with leading Muslim intellectuals, counseled the king, and even led the king's armies into fruitful battles⁷⁰ until his peaceful death in 1054.⁷¹ Despite his extensive power and influence, the surviving Muslim and Jewish chronicles that discuss Samuel all described him as a "*dhimmi*⁷² who would not lust after power" who maintained "humility,"⁷³ especially as juxtaposed to his less cautious and more "haughty"⁷⁴ son, Joseph. Most authors generally accept the dynamic of Samuel as the careful and diplomatic father and Joseph as the reckless firebrand son at face value; for example, Cohen draws directly from the language of Ibn Daud's writing

⁶⁷ Abraham ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, ed. and trans. Gerson D. Cohen, in *The Jews of Arab Lands - A History And Source Book*, 212.

⁶⁸ Jefim Schrimann, "Samuel Ha-Nagid, the Man, the Soldier, the Politician," *Jewish Social Studies* 13 (1951), 103.

⁶⁹ Amin T. Tibi, *The Tibyān: Memoirs of 'Abd Allāh B. Buluggīn, last Zīrid Amīr of Granada* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 55-56

⁷⁰ The information about Samuel's martial activities come from his own sources, and are neglected in Muslim chronicles, which Schrimann ascribes to a sense of shame at having a Jew lead in such a typically muslim position. Schrimann, "Samuel Ha-Nagid," 107

⁷¹ Schrimann, "Samuel Ha-Nagid," 118

⁷² An arabic term denoting a non-muslim tribute-paying individual under Muslim rule.

⁷³ Abraham ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, 213

⁷⁴ Abraham ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, 213

to claim that Joseph died because he “had become haughty in his position.”⁷⁵ However, upon a closer examination of all the sources, it is possible that Samuel’s behavior paved the road towards the anti-Jewish buildup that would result in Joseph’s death and the massacre of 1066; Joseph’s alleged “haughty” qualities may not be completely to blame.

Samuel may not have exactly kept his head down. In a legal and religious culture where *dhimmi* state service was theoretically banned,⁷⁶ Samuel proclaimed himself the “David of my age”⁷⁷ in his writing, had a Muslim poet named Al-Munfai write “fawning panegyrics”⁷⁸ of him, and urged his fellow Muslims “to kiss both your hands out of dignity [to satisfy God] as though they were the cornerstone of the Ka 'abah⁷⁹, because your right hand is made for prosperity and your left hand is made for rich gifts.”⁸⁰ The writings of Al-Munfai only survive in the writings of a later Muslim scholar, ibn Bassam, documented in the early 12th century. Al-Munfai also compared the Naghrelas to the full moon due to their brilliance, and claimed that “the other kings imagined themselves despicable because of an excess of shame while their bowels quivered for them [the Ibn Naghrellas] out of panic.” Lastly, he then even professed how ibn Naghrela had convinced him to convert to Judaism:

I’ve succeeded in this world and obtained my desire through you; and through you I hope to attain my aspiration in the Hereafter. I obey the law of the Sabbath [openly] among you.⁸¹

Brann argues that Al-Munfai’s exaggerated praise is simply a “conventional literary topos and an instance of praise for a patron wherein the poet pressures a rhetorical conceit to its extreme,” and that Al-Munfai did not actually convert to Judaism. However, Ibn Bassam, who passed down Al-Munfai’s poetry to the present, took Al-Munfai quite literally. He responded to Al-Munfai’s panegyrics by exclaiming:

⁷⁵ Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 67

⁷⁶ Cohen writes that although Islamic jurists and leaders occasionally deemed *dhimmi*s unfit for office, these guidelines were routinely broken. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 66.

⁷⁷ Menocal, Maria Rosa. "Culture in the Time of Tolerance: Al-Andalus as a Model for our Own Time." *Palestine - Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture* 8, no. 4 (Apr 30, 2002): 173.

⁷⁸ Abraham ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, 58.

⁷⁹ A supremely holy site in Mecca.

⁸⁰ Arie Schippers, “Al-Munfai and his Poetical Connection with Samuel ha Nagid ibn Naghrilah in Katrien De Graef, ed.”, In *Ba'al Milim: Liber Amicorum Julien Klener*, 143

⁸¹ Brann, *Power in the Portrayal*, 52.

May God's curse be upon him because of the compensation he received and may He remove him from belief in that religion he embraced on account of money. I do not know what is more incredible in the affairs of this admitted sinner who was insolent toward his Lord: that he preferred this accursed Jew over the prophets and messengers or that he attributed to him such success in this world and the next. On the Day of Judgement, may God raise him by the Jew's standard and forbid him entry to Paradise but by His mercy.⁸²

Ibn Bassam took offense at Al-Munfatil's alleged apostasy from Islam and financial connections between Al-Munfatil and ibn Naghrella, while generally demeaning "this accursed Jew." However, in the rest of ibn Bassam's critique of ibn Naghrella, it must be noted first that the author, writing several decades after the events he recounts, conflates Samuel and Joseph during his narrative, making it difficult to tell whom exactly ibn Bassam is criticizing. Ultimately, the negative characteristics or behaviors ascribed throughout the narrative to the allusive "ibn Naghrela" ended up including aspects of both Samuel and Joseph's life. For example, ibn Bassam wrote:

Among the extraordinary events of that period of fractious order and tribulations was the elevation of that Jewish scoundrel who upbraided all who ascribed to a revealed religion. Even the Jews, with their accursed religion, did not heed him nor did they trust him regarding esoteric matters. His father Ysuf [Joseph], a man from the common folk of Jews, had fine manners for one of them and a favorable character for their like.⁸³

In this quote, ibn Bassam repeated the motif of the father being more grounded, humble and moderate, yet he mistook the father as Joseph. He then explained how the son succeeded the father's position but grew arrogant so that:

A mass of people followed in his footsteps...he strayed too far and was not mindful of the consequences...he boasted of his refutation of religion...The position in which the government installed him was a source of rage for the Muslims day and night. For that matter the Jews sensed there would be disaster on his account and complained of his tyrannical rule...Nevertheless, he remained steadfast in his extremist views and turned away from the path of God in his relations with others.⁸⁴

⁸² Brann, *Power in the Portrayal*, 90

⁸³ Brann, *Power in the Portrayal*, 92

⁸⁴ Brann, *Power in the Portrayal*, 92

Bassam's lament reflects complaints from chronicles and other sources that were leveled against Joseph, as will be detailed in the next session. The emphasis on the Jewish community's distaste for the son's "tyrannical" rule should be noted as particularly revealing regarding the concern that even the Jewish community itself had for maintain ethnoreligious stability. From ibn Bassam's perspective, both Muslims and Jews protested when a non-Muslim became "haughty" and power-hungry to the point of potentially losing faith in their religion. It is evidently clear that wide swaths of the spectrum of society perceived violations of the ethnoreligious order as dangerous.

Additionally, Ibn Bassam also suggests that Samuel may have had a role to play in the growing discontentment with the Naghrela family and the Jewish community in Granada. He discussed a famous correspondence of religious polemic between Samuel and ibn Hazm⁸⁵, writing that Samuel "openly expressed calumny against Islam."⁸⁶ However, he mistakenly attributed this correspondence, and his criticism of the Jew involved, to Joseph. Nonetheless, under a framework likely derived from the earlier chronicles⁸⁷ of deeming the father to be moderate and the son immoderate and examining the nature of this polemic, it becomes clear why Ibn Bassam confused the exchange with Joseph's life.

Ibn Hazm's *Refutation of Abu Muhammad ibn Hazm against Ibn al-Nagrila the Jew, who god curses*, provides significant evidence to suggest for Samuel ibn Naghrela's reckless behavior. Some historians question whether the *Refutation* was actually directed at Samuel and, therefore, also doubt that Samuel wrote an anti-Koranic polemic, as Samuel is never specifically named in the document itself, and the title could have theoretically been written by a later editor.⁸⁸ These scholars suggest that the *Refutation* may have served as a more general critique of the role of non-Muslims in society and used a generic straw-man to flesh out arguments. Nonetheless, ibn Bassam, a somewhat contemporary commentator, believed the *Refutation* to be a response to an actual polemic from Samuel systematically criticizing the Koran and Islam. Ibn Hazm smeared Samuel in his polemic for excessive dominance over the Muslim state's affairs, blaming the rulers for permitting such societal decay.⁸⁹ Ibn Hazm complained to God how

⁸⁵ Ibn Hazm was a prolific Muslim Iberian scholar (994-1064) who wrote extensively on comparative religious studies, see van Arendonk, C., "Ibn Ḥazm", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, First Edition (1913-1936)*, Edited by M. Th. Houtsma, T.W. Arnold, R. Basset, R. Hartmann.

⁸⁶ Brann, *Power in the Portrayal*, 100

⁸⁷ See later sections of the essay and Amin T. Tibi, *The Tibyān: Memoirs of 'Abd Allāh B. Buluggīn, last Zīrid Amīr of Granada* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986).

⁸⁸ Brann, *Power in the Portrayal*, 70-71, 74-76.

⁸⁹ M. Perlmann, "Eleventh-Century Andalusian Authors on the Jews of Granada," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 18 (1948), 281-282.

“the rulers of our faith [are] absorbed in worldly affairs [and] neglect the observance of their religion...Non-Muslims become arrogant and infidels wag their tongues.” He then referenced the specific Jew that his refutation attacks:

A man who was filled with hatred towards the Apostle- a man who is, in secret, a materialist, a free-thinker, a Jew - of that most contemptible of religions, the most vile of faiths... loosened his tongue... and became conceited in his vile soul, as a result of his wealth. His riches, his gold and his silver robbed him of his wretched senses; so he compiled a book in which he set out to demonstrate the alleged contradictions in the Word of God, the Koran... By God, his argumentation proves how poor is his knowledge, how narrow his mind, about which I already knew something. For I used to know him when he was naked, except for charlatantry, serene, except for anxiety, void except of lies⁹⁰

By saying “By God, his argumentation proves how poor is his knowledge, how narrow his mind, about which I already knew something. I used to know him”, Ibn Hazm mysteriously hinted at some past association with the Jew, but refused to specifically name him in the text. An earlier relationship between Ibn Hazm and Samuel ibn Naghrela was documented in Ibn Hazm’s earlier works, leaving Samuel as the most likely recipient of this refutation and therefore the author of an anti-Koranic polemic. Additionally, Ibn Bassam specifically referenced Samuel as having engaged with Ibn Hazm in an “openly expressed calumny against Islam.”⁹¹ Regardless, Ibn Hazm painted a scenario in which Samuel’s increased “riches” caused him to lose his “wretched senses” and, therefore, violate acceptable behavior for a Jew by criticizing the Koran. Samuel, who accumulated enough power to become “the highest ranking Jewish courtier in all of Spain,” did not always rise above dangerous confrontation and self-aggrandizement—“he never suffered from false modesty.”⁹² And this combination of Jewish power and pride, though not adversely affecting Samuel during his life, may have contributed to his son’s fall from power and the ensuing massacre of the Jewish community.

As historians study the narrative accounts of Joseph’s brief time in power as well as his sudden, deadly fall, they should resist the temptation to consider Samuel as an untouchably wise and prudent leader while labeling Joseph as the irresponsible youngster who ruined everything his father had so carefully

⁹⁰ Perlmann, "Eleventh-Century Andalusian Authors", 281-282.

⁹¹ Perlmann, "Eleventh-Century Andalusian Authors", 271; Brann, *Power in the Portrayal*, 93

⁹² Norman A. Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 57.

constructed. Samuel's accumulation of power did not go unnoticed, as Ibn Bassm demonstrated through his distaste for Al-Munfatil's work and conflation of the Ibn Hazm polemic with Joseph. However, the chronicle sources are murky focus on Joseph's behavior alone as the reason for his downfall. Joseph's murder and the anti-Jewish massacre may have been more of a steady buildup of ethnoreligious tensions than a singular moment of crisis, albeit perhaps exacerbated by poor leadership on Joseph's part, of resentment towards the Naghrela family's ascent to power and relations with the Muslim community.

Joseph ibn Naghrela and the Massacre of Granada

Nonetheless, both Jewish and Muslim chronicles describe Joseph's pompous behavior as a defining aspect of his short reign, and key in his downfall. Ibn Daud, an Iberian Jewish scholar writing around 1160,⁹³ commented that "Of all the fine qualities which his father possessed he lacked but one...his father's humility. Indeed, he grew haughty – to his destruction."⁹⁴ He then directly correlated the court's "jealousy of him" to his death and the destruction of the Jewish quarter.⁹⁵ The *Tibyan* provides more detail regarding the buildup to the massacre but must be considered carefully due to its author. Abd Allah. A Berber emir of Granada exiled to Morocco in 1090 due to invasion, Abd Allah was the son of a crowned prince whom Joseph, according to the chronicle, had poisoned during an internal power struggle.⁹⁶ He therefore often seemed to harshly criticize Joseph while defending his grandfather's decision to rely on Samuel by clearly explaining Samuel's defined limits. He wrote that Badis, his grandfather:

Employed Abu Ibrahim[Samuel] because of his utter lack of confidence in anyone else and the hostility of his kinsmen. Moreover, Abu Ibrihim was a jewish dhimmi who would not lust over power. Nor was he an Andalusian against whom he needed to be on his guard lest he scheme with non-Berber princes...Abu Ibrahim, however, was not accorded any power over Muslims in any issue whether right or wrong.⁹⁷

⁹³ Resianne, Fontaine. "Abraham Ibn Daud", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/abraham-daud/>>

⁹⁴ Abraham ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, 213.

⁹⁵ Abraham ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, 213.

⁹⁶ Tibi, *The Tibyān*, 63-64

⁹⁷ Tibi, *The Tibyān*, 56

The utility of the Jew's "other" status from a political standpoint becomes clear as Samuel, due to his status as a Jew, was perceived as unlikely to have the sociopolitical weight or connections to mount any serious opposition or political plots. However, in defending his grandfather's legacy against attacks of excessive and improper reliance on Jews, Abd Allah clarified that Samuel still knew and remained within his delineated role.

Abd Allah also described how Samuel counseled his son to proceed after his death; Joseph was told that "the wazirs controlled much of the country and had exclusive control of revenue [so] he should do his best to undermine their position as soon as the position of the ruler was consolidated." He then also taught his son how to "dispose of them", for which Joseph is called a "swine." From this narrative, Samuel and Joseph conspired to undermine the legitimate government, leaving both Father and Son with stained historic reputations.

Regardless, Abd Allah emphasizes how his grandfather still "would never allow the Jew to accuse a Muslim of any offence, nor did he place him a position to do so." Instead, Joseph "would, for instance, intrigue against some person or other through the eunuch...one of those whom Badis trusted." The *Tibyan* described Joseph as a ruler who grew his power through scheming and bribery "by boastfulness and mendacity, the Jew gave people the impression that he wielded power. But such power...was achieved only by subterfuge and machination."⁹⁸ Thus any improper power that Abd Allah ascribed to Joseph came not from his grandfather's willing gift, but through unscrupulous and more nebulous means.

The *Tibyan* also painted an increasingly power-hungry Joseph matched with an increasingly restless public.⁹⁹ After the author's father died at the hands of Joseph, "The people were in turmoil and wanted to kill the Jew...they expected my grandfather, the sovereign to punish him."¹⁰⁰ Yet, through deceit and subterfuge, Joseph deflected the accusations and remained in power. During various ensuing cases of increasing tension and suspicion in the court, Joseph allegedly thought he "would be put to death"¹⁰¹ and was advised by Jewish elders to "save yourself...[go]to whatever part of the country you choose." As the narrative closed in on Joseph's death, Joseph schemed among the court to "get the government of Granada into his hands"¹⁰² and even made some tentative military

⁹⁸ All quotes from this paragraph can be found in Tibi, *The Tibyān*, 60.

⁹⁹ For this section, I use the portion of the *Tibyan* in Stillman's sourcebook; Sultan Abd Allah of Granada, *Kitāb al-Tibyān*, trans. Bernard Lewis, in *The Jews of Arab Lands - A History and Source Book*, 217-225.

¹⁰⁰ Abd Allah, *Tibyān*, 218

¹⁰¹ Abd Allah, *Tibyān*, 221

¹⁰² Abd Allah, *Tibyān*, 223

mobilizations and outside calls for help. Meanwhile, Babis became “devoted...to drink and idleness,”¹⁰³ an interesting departure from the previous emphasis on careful cultivation of his character and relationship with Jewish advisors. Then, on December 31, 1066, a drunken slave of Badis ran into the town falsely claiming that Joseph had killed the king and enacted a coup d'etat; Joseph attempted to run away but died at the hands of the growing mob, along with “every Jew in the city.” Babis tried to stop the murder and riot but was unable to and went to his deathbed unaware of Joseph’s true “misdeeds.”¹⁰⁴

In the *Tibyan*, Joseph certainly came across as a conniving, power hungry figure who fell from power because of his misconduct and breach of acceptable levels of political agency in the society. Joseph’s sins occurred without the approval or even knowledge of Badis, a benevolent but apparently myopic leader. Joseph’s underhanded accumulation of power, especially when he dared to orchestrate the death of a Muslim prince, provoked the ire of the masses. The mere notion of a Jew in a court advisory position was not shunned in the *Tibyan*; only poorly regulated, unchecked political access for a Jew was portrayed as potentially deadly to the state, and likely to erupt in ethnoreligious violence.

Another Islamic source of the age also emphasized the importance of Joseph’s overstepping of accepted socioreligious bounds, and the ruler’s negligence in permitting such an abomination. Perhaps influencing Ibn Bassam’s later laments of the king’s excessive permissiveness, an 11th century Muslim poet and jurist from Granada named Abu Ishaq wrote a stinging poem criticizing the court and their relationship to the Jews of Granada.¹⁰⁵ He claimed that the ruler “has made a mistake...he has chosen an infidel as his secretary when he could, had he wished, have chosen a believer.”¹⁰⁶ Abu Ishaq took a more extreme position than Abd Allah by suggesting the basic impropriety of Jews in advisory positions; Abd Allah, on the other hand, emphasized the Jews’ potential utility but need for limits. Abu Ishaq also saw that “through him [Joseph], the Jews have become great and proud and arrogant...how many a worthy Muslim humbly obeys the vilest ape among these miscreants?”¹⁰⁷ Joseph’s ascent to power connected directly to the Jewish community's elevation and the Muslim community's depression; the accepted social order allegedly became dangerously unstable when a Jew accumulated too much power. Yet the king was not indicted or

¹⁰³ Abd Allah, *Tibyān*, 224

¹⁰⁴ Abd Allah, *Tibyān*, 225

¹⁰⁵ Teresa Garulo, “Abū Ishāq Al-Ilbīrī,” In *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Three, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson.

¹⁰⁶ Abū Ishāq of Elvira, “A Poetical Attack on the Jews of Granada”, trans. Bernard Lewis, in *The Jews of Arab Lands - A History and Source Book*, 214.

¹⁰⁷ Abū Ishāq, “A Poetical Attack”, 214.

slandered, as he was “a clever man...[whose] judgment is sure and accurate.” Nonetheless, Abu Isha admonished him to not “choose a servant from among them but leave them to the curse of the accurst!”¹⁰⁸ Abhelp u Ishaq described the various ways the Jewish population itself had grown haughty and disrespectful of their Muslim overlords, and then urged his king to not “consider it a breach of faith to kill them—the breach of faith would be to let them carry on.”¹⁰⁹

The summation of all the sources dealing with Joseph and Samuel Naghrella point to several key conclusions. Whether or not Joseph’s unique disposition was key to the tragedy of 1066, or if (as I posit) it arose out the tensions created by Samuel’s behavior and actions, one thing remains clear: court Jews sticking their fingers where they didn’t belong, like in higher levels of government and positions of extensive control over Muslims, and especially in plotting directly against the state, , caused angst in the social order. Ibn Bassam even suggested that social discomfort caused by Jews in leadership spread to the Jewish community itself, who became uneasy with Joseph’s conduct; the Muslim community certainly reacted harshly and violently to the disruption in the socioreligious order, as the sources agree. The Jewish “other,” with so much potential to help dominant, politically endowed groups navigate the complex ethnoreligious makeup of the time, had its risks; and improper management of these risks made the state and the Jewish population subject to rhetorical *and* physical attack from dissatisfied outside sources. Around 300 hundred years later and 200 miles away, another court Jew would find himself killed, albeit this time by the order of a Christian king, in a context of anti-Jewish propaganda levied by political outsider groups.

Samuel ha-Levi: Jewish Treasurer in a Christian Kingdom

In 1350, Samuel ha-Levi, a Jew from the respected and established Abulafia family of Toledo, joined the fractious court of Pedro I of Castile after having served in a financial capacity for the king’s chief minister, Juan Alfonso de Alburquerque¹¹⁰. The court was marked by intrigue and tension. Pedro, during his reign (1350-1369), would marry and separate from two different women, one of whom was supposed to help strengthen French-Castilian diplomacy; he would carry on a much frowned upon relationship with his mistress, Maria de Padilla,

¹⁰⁸ Abū Ishāq, “A Poetical Attack”, 215.

¹⁰⁹ Abū Ishāq, “A Poetical Attack”, 216.

¹¹⁰ Benjamin F. Taggie “Samuel He-Levi Abulajia and the Hebraic Policy of Pedro I of Castile 1350-1369”, 196.

and struggle against a faction led by his illegitimate half-brother Enrique.¹¹¹ In a civil war against Enrique, which internationalized when English and French forces took sides in the conflict,¹¹² Pedro ultimately died in 1369 at the hand of his half-brother, who then became king and founder of the Trastámara dynasty. By that date, Samuel ha-Levi had already been dead for around nine years, executed on order of the king for allegedly hoarding and misusing state-collected money.¹¹³ Unfortunately, due to the scarcity of sources specifically relating to ha-Levi,¹¹⁴ an examination of sources dating to after the death of ha-Levi is necessary in order to analyze Pedro's larger relationship with the Jewish community as well as the outside *perception* of that relationship.

The main sources available to examine ha-Levi's career are problematic. Pedro Lopez de Ayala's *Crónicas* includes many relevant snapshots of his life but is biased in that it was written by a figure deeply embedded in the court politics of the day and who switched to the Trastamaran rebel side in 1366. The chronicle was completed twenty years after Pedro's death and almost certainly suffered from a mix of ideological and political bias as well as shoddy historiographic methods.¹¹⁵ Two different French chronicles, the *Chanson* of Bertrand Du Guesclin and the *Chroniques* of Jean Froissart, provide an outside perspective on ethnoreligious relations during Pedro's reign and the Civil War.¹¹⁶ It should not be assumed that any alleged observations of the authors, such as the status of Jews in Castile, are objective representations of Castilian society any more than simply reflections of French assumptions or biases. The *Cortes* of both Pedro and Enrique, where the king arbitrated requests and complaints of a vaguely representative slice of the population, in addition to a variety of miscellaneous surviving sources collected in Yitzhak Baer's monumental work¹¹⁷ and elsewhere,

¹¹¹ For an overview on the life of King Pedro, see Clara Estow, *Pedro the Cruel of Castile: 1350-1369* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).

¹¹² The English, under the Black Prince, supported Pedro, while the French supported Enrique.

¹¹³ Pedro López de Ayala, *Crónicas de los reyes de Castilla, Don Pedro, Don Enrique II, Don Juan I, Don Enrique III*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Impr. de A. de Sancha, 1779).

¹¹⁴ Estow suggests posited that Enrique destroyed much of Pedro's records after seizing the throne; Estow, *Pedro the Cruel*, xxiv.

¹¹⁵ Bretton Rodriguez, "Competing Images Of Pedro I: López De Ayala And The Formation Of Historical Memory," *La corónica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures* 45, no. 2 (Spring 2017):.

¹¹⁶ Jean Froissart, *Sir John Froissart's Chronicles of England, France, Spain, and the Adjoining Countries*, vol. 4-5 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme [etc.], 1806-1808). Due to lack of knowledge in medieval French, for Guesclin, I had to rely on a thesis summarizing and analyzing the work; Renske Van Asten, *Fact or fiction? Cuvelier's Story on Bertrand du Guesclin's Exploits in Spain, 136-1369*, Master's thesis, Leiden University, 2013 (Leiden University Repository, 2013).

¹¹⁷ Yitzhak Baer, *Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien*, vol. 2 (Im Schocken Verlag, 1929).

round out the bulk of relevant source material. Although almost all of these sources raise methodological concerns, through a cautious careful exmanation of the material, a specific context for the death of the *tesorero mayor* Samuel ha-Levi arises.

King Pedro's Alleged Judeophilia: A Weapon in Enrique's Hands

Especially in later years of the Pedro-Enrique conflict, Pedro's domestic and international enemies levied accusations of judiophilia toward his rule. Several historians have mined the records on Pedro's reign to determine whether these accusations have any objective merit; did Pedro's relationship with the Jewish community, especially with his promotion of Samuel to *tesorero mayor*, break with previous precedents? Although this is a worthy historiographic area of debate,¹¹⁸ what matters most for this study's analysis is that the sources and historiography widely concede that, deserved or not, Pedro was the recipient of consistent claims of judiophilia and morophilia. Furthermore, a review of the primary sources demonstrates the rationale for this reputation.

According to Ayalala, in 1355, Enrique sacked a Jewish quarter of Toledo in 1355 where allegedly "up to 1200, men and women, children and adults died." However, "some knights[of Pedro] who had left the king helped the Jews, and together they defended the greater Jewish quarters"; Pedro figured as the savior of the Jews against Enrique's persecution in this account.¹¹⁹ Pedro later issued a pardon for those who had participated in the siege of Toledo, but he excluded from this pardon a large swath of people, including the "Moors of Toledo", and a following list of individuals who all "were discovered to have committed evil deeds against my Jews in my Jewish quarters in Toledo."¹²⁰ In his *corte* at Valladolid in 1351, Pedro struck down a request to remove¹²¹ Jewish judges, claiming that "The Jews are a weak people that deserve defending because...the Christians could damage them in the summons and lawsuits the Christians would enact."¹²² In another petition, in which Pedro proclaimed all ungrounded disputes over repayment of debts to Jews to be invalid, he continued to use the Jews' status

¹¹⁸ Estow argues that his "reputation as the champion of Jews and Moors...is undeserved." Baer agrees, noting that although "Pedro was then generally called the 'king of the Jews' though his conduct toward them was no different from that of his predecessors." Taggie contrasts this view by seeing "Pedro's policy towards the Jews as an enlightened one, dictated no doubt by pragmatism." See Estow, *Pedro the Cruel*, 179; Yitzhak Fritz. Baer, *A History of Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publ. Soc.), 1961, 364. Taggie "Samuel He-Levi Abulajia", 11.

¹¹⁹ Ayala, *Crónicas*, 184-185

¹²⁰ Baer, *Die Juden*, 187-188.

¹²¹ The german in Baer's summary reads "Aufhebung des besonderen Judenrichters."

¹²² Baer, *Die Juden*, 173-174.

as a “weak people” to justify his actions in favor of the Jews.¹²³ Furthermore, Pedro’s surviving records are rife with various other examples of Jews serving in the country, of which ha-Levi only became the most prominent.¹²⁴ The fragmentary record demonstrates Pedro’s concern for the Jewish community—a group of his subjects that he considered to be especially weak and requiring his defense. Additionally, Samuel ha-Levi constructed the new and magnificent El Tránsito synagogue in Toledo during his reign, a feat which would have required royal permission. Monsalvo Antón ascribes the royal permission as another sign of Pedro’s favorable behavior towards the Jews, and as another source for popular anger against the king and the Jewish community.¹²⁵ Furthermore, as Estow admits, “Pedro’s apparent defense of ‘his Jews’ offered his opponents, especially Enrique, a powerful ideological tool with which to undermine the king’s authority.”¹²⁶

A supplicatory letter of Enrique to the city of Covarrabias reflected how Pedro’s enemies weaponized his alleged ties to Jews. Enrique’s letter charges Pedro as “that tyrant enemy of God and the holy mother church,” with “overtaxing the [Christian] citizens and workers of all the land, while bettering and enriching the Jews and Moors, *enseñorandolos*”¹²⁷ and disgracing the Catholic faith. Jean Froissart, a well-travelled court historian writing in medieval French in the mid to late 14th century, also echoed these sentiments asserting that Pedro “was very rebellious and refractory to all the regulations and commands of the church... [he] wanted to subdue his Christian neighbors”¹²⁸ and that Pedro reportedly made alliances with “enemies to God, and infidels.”¹²⁹ The complaints of Froissart were “sent daily to the pope, entreating him to put a stop to them”; Pope Urban then allegedly sent ambassadors to Pedro to, unsuccessfully, order him to come to Rome “to purge and clear himself from all the villainous actions he was charged with.” According to the nineteenth-century historian Heinrich Graetz, relations between Pedro and the pope were so strained that, upon the former’s death, the latter “could not contain his delight on hearing the news of Don Pedro’s death.” “The church must rejoice,” he [the pope] wrote, ‘at the death

¹²³ Baer, *Die Juden*, 174-175

¹²⁴ For examples of other prominent Jews during Pedro’s reign, see Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 364 and Estow, *Pedro the Cruel*, 169.

¹²⁵ See footnote forty in Estow, *Pedro the Cruel*, 168.

¹²⁶ Estow, *Pedro the Cruel*, 155.

¹²⁷ Literally, “making them lords”, but also possibly referring to a general political raising of the group

¹²⁸ Froissart, *Chronicles*, 212. See later in the essay for a summary of the origins and history of the

¹²⁹ This insult references Pedro’s alliances with “the kings of Benamarine, Granada and Tremecent”; Froissart, *Chronicles*, 214.

of such a tyrant, a rebel against the church, and a favorer of the Jews and Saracens. The righteous exult in retribution."¹³⁰ Likewise, Froissart commented that Pedro's army consisted of a "great number of Jews and infidels", justifying Enrique's refusal to take prisoners after a battle.¹³¹ Froissart also made the bold claim that Enrique, speaking to the French knight Bertrand du Guesclin, commented that the English might "make war upon us, to replace by force this Jew, who calls himself King of Spain, upon our throne;"¹³² likewise, when Enrique and King Pedro engage in their final, fateful duel, the former calls to the latter "Where's the Jewish son of a whore who calls himself King of Castile?"¹³³ Although calling Pedro a Jew may seem a bit outlandish, and perhaps a simple hyperbolic insult, there may be more weight to this narrative, as Bertrand du Guesclin's own chronicle demonstrates.¹³⁴

In Cuvelier's Chronicle on du Guesclin,¹³⁵ Pedro decided to kill his French wife, Blanche de Bourbon, based on advice from Jews, who throughout the narrative provided copious amounts of counsel to Pedro. Thereafter, the good Catholic Castilians turned their backs on Pedro and allied themselves with Enrique. The mass' suspicions were vindicated when a Jew came to Enrique, received baptism, and confessed that *Pedro* is the true bastard of the brothers; he is also secretly the son of a Jew.

Although Entwistle's claim that "We know the slander on King Pedro's birth was current coin in the Trastamaran camps and court in the year 1369,"¹³⁶ may seem a bit too bold, the sources certainly demonstrate how all claims of improper association, be that political, military or even "genetic", with Jews became a rhetorical weapon for Pedro's enemies. Although the sources from Pedro's enemies, which exist as the only sources to directly slander Pedro for judiophilic tendencies, certainly suggest that these discoveries or allegations of Pedro's association with Jews were damaging to Pedro's political weight and reputation, the true efficacy of the Trastamaran propaganda campaign may simply remain lost. Furthermore, the relationship between this campaign and

¹³⁰ Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1967), 126.

¹³¹ Froissart, *Chronicles*, 352.

¹³² Froissart, *Chronicles*, 243.

¹³³ Estow, *Pedro the Cruel*, 259.

¹³⁴ I do not propose here that Pedro was Jewish, only that there may have been significant rumors about his ancestry as a result of this atmosphere of anti-Jewish propaganda.

¹³⁵ This Chronicle detailing Bertrand du Guesclin's military exploits was written in medieval French between 1380-1392 by a largely unknown author, possibly identified and commonly referred to as Cuvelier. Asten, *Fact or fiction?*, 3-4

¹³⁶ William J. Entwistle, "The "Romancero del Rey Don Pedro" in Ayala and the "Cuarta Crónica General", *The Modern Language Review* 25, no. 3 (1930), 307.

Pedro's relationship with the Jewish Samuel ha-Levi remains difficult, but perhaps not impossible, to determine due to the nature of the main chronicle of the period.

The majority of illuminating information on Samuel ha-Levi's life comes from Ayala's chronicles. He is first mentioned in 1350 as having previously served as the *almoxarife*¹³⁷ of Juan Alfonso de Albuquerque, a noble who had recently fallen from Pedro's grace, and as having just received a promotion to "Tesorero mayor."¹³⁸ Throughout the narrative, ha-Levi accompanied Pedro's retinue on various sojourns; during his time of favor with the king, he seemed to have wielded significant influence: he traveled to Portugal for diplomatic purposes in 1358, managed property acquisitions from the estates of rebel nobility, and was often referred to as the king's "grand privado é consejero".¹³⁹ Ha-Levi's most admirable moment was captured in Ayala's 1355 chronicle ha-Levi lamented the king's nearly emptied coffers and humbly proposed a new taxation method which was, allegedly, so successful that his plan marked "the beginning of the king's great treasure."¹⁴⁰ He also amassed significant amounts of wealth,¹⁴¹ though much of it, as Ayala notes, was plundered by Enrique's forces in 1354 in Toledo.¹⁴² Nonetheless, Ayala dedicated roughly five lines to describing the vast variety and quantities of different forms of wealth in ha-Levi's possession upon his arrest and execution in 1360. That specific section, detailing don Pedro's fall from grace, is unfortunately vague and short. The king learned of the great treasures amassed by ha-Levi and arrested him and his family; Pedro then learned that much of his family's wealth came from the king's treasury. Ha-Levi was taken to Seville where he was imprisoned and unsuccessfully tortured to determine if he was hiding more treasure; he died as a captive.

Did ha-Levi's Jewish identity have anything to do with his arrest, torture, and death? It is uncertain if he was killed for being a Jew because the sources are ultimately unclear. However, if, as Estow and Baer argue, Pedro was in fact not as judiophilic as his critics claimed him to be, than a Jew amassing power and wealth, as the Ayala narrative emphasized, might have deeply troubled him. Furthermore, Estow concedes that Ayala's narrative of Levi facing arrest simply for hoarding the king's money seems unlikely. She notes that ha-Levi's position,

¹³⁷ Tax collector

¹³⁸ This can be translated as "treasurer of the realm." Ayala, *Crónicas*, 30.

¹³⁹ "Great advisor and counselor"

¹⁴⁰ Estow, *Pedro the Cruel*, 170; Ayala, *Crónicas*, 193.

¹⁴¹ Taggie argues this wealth may have allowed for him to patronize the construction of the el Tránsito. Taggie, "Samuel He-Levi", 196.

¹⁴² This episode serves as another example of Enrique's anti-Jewish, or perhaps "tough-on Jews", portrayal in juxtaposition to the depiction of Pedro's patronization of Jews. Ayala, *Crónicas*, 171.

as described by Ayala, was to manage and personally hold the king's finances and, therefore, comments that it would have been reasonable "that any one-point great deals of money could be found in their possession."¹⁴³ Levi possessing a significant amount of Pedro's money would not have been strange on a pragmatic level. Estow fails to provide an alternative, more realistic rationale for the king's behavior. It is possible that a court official maintaining large amounts of wealth was acceptable, but a Jew with access to all that wealth and power was on more shaky grounds. Additionally, these grounds, weakened by ha-levi's connections to riches and influence, became even more unstable with the dispersion of Enrique's anti-Jewish propaganda.

Evidence of popular anti-Jewish sentiments playing a role in the Enrique-Pedro conflict also supports the notion of the effectiveness of the propaganda in tapping into underlying anti-Jewish sentiment. Ayala wrote how Enrique led a Jewish massacre in Najara in 1360, but only because "the people did it [helped with the massacre] with goodwill."¹⁴⁴ The other reports from Ayala of Enrique targeting Jewish populations during his conquest,¹⁴⁵ combined with the previously mentioned evidence from French chronicles of popular resentment of Pedro's alleged judiofilic tendencies, illustrate a scenario where it may have made sense for Pedro to act "tough-on Jews," to use modern political parlance. Pedro distancing himself from and even killing his Jewish financier with, allegedly, too much power and influence, might have been a way to distance himself from such claims.

Comparing the Naghrela Family and ha-Levi

Regardless of whether or not ha-Levi's death came about due to his Jewish identity, like Joseph Nagid's death almost certainly did, the comparison between the stories of ha-Levi and the Nagids remains fruitful. In both cases, the problem of maintaining social order via proper regulation of the Jewish "other's" position was paramount. Furthermore, breakdown of this order and regulation, or even mere allegations of a breakdown, became a potent weapon in the hands of the current political order's enemies to exploit underlying currents of anti-Jewish sentiment. When Joseph (and possibly Samuel) Nagid began to be perceived at court as too influential and arrogant, their court sponsor became the recipient of anti-Jewish propaganda urging the king to distance himself from Jewish advisors. Joseph, and much of the Granadan Jewish community, would then die in a

¹⁴³ Estow, *Pero the Cruel*, 202.

¹⁴⁴ Ayala, *Crónicas*, 301.

¹⁴⁵ Ayala, *Crónicas*, 298, 303, 515

“popular” anti-Jewish mob attack. In fourteenth-century Castile, ha-Levi would also rise to prominence in the court,¹⁴⁶ become recognized for his assistance to the king, and ultimately face execution for improperly hoarding the king’s treasure.

The rise and fall of the Naghrellas and Samuel ha-Levi demonstrate the fragile nature of the *convivencia* that modern day scholars have ascribed to the ethnoreligious landscape of medieval Iberia.¹⁴⁷ While the era of “the three religions” certainly produced instances of amicable toleration, inter-religious dialogue, and culturally rich artistic and scientific production, the society’s ethnoreligious framework was not without cracks. At certain times of stress, both Muslim and Christian societies hardened the boundaries between minority and majority ethnoreligious groups, and punished those who violated these restrictions on the social order. Cohen agrees that concerns regarding hierarchies and boundaries between majority and minority religious groups marked both Christian and Muslim polities during the period.¹⁴⁸ Jews did not assimilate into the mainstream population in either case; instead, they occupied marginal, lower positions in the defined social order in which the majority religious order firmly placed itself on top. While Cohen concedes that within this system “individuals were capable of crossing barriers,”¹⁴⁹ he also comments that both societies tended to “object... to any alteration in the “right order” of society, especially when perpetrated by infidels.¹⁵⁰ In other words, Jews could try to cross the “barriers” and assume greater influence, but only at the risk of bending the social order to the point of breaking. While *convivencia* may have existed in some form, neither Christian nor Muslim polities enjoyed totally egalitarian or peaceful inter ethnoreligious relations.

The inherent fragility of any *convivencia* of the period is further demonstrated by the role of the anti-Jewish propaganda from both cases that tapped into popular resentment and slandered the king for improper associations with Jews. Both cases occurred in the context of anti-Jewish propaganda tapping into popular resentment and slandering the king for improper associations with Jews; clearly a preoccupation with making sure that the Jewish “other” remained in the correct, subservient position dominated both cases. As previously demonstrated, the anti-Jewish propaganda and writings from Granada focused on

¹⁴⁶ However, as Estow notes, he still remained a financial advisor (unlike the Nagid’s more varied and extensive duties). Nonetheless, he clearly wielded extensive economic power during his time in favor at the court. Estow, *Pedro the Cruel*, 167.

¹⁴⁷ One should note that scholars generally use *convivencia* to emphasize the tolerance during and in places of Muslim rule, with occasional forays into Christian kingdoms. See first footnote of the paper for the historiography of *convivencia*.

¹⁴⁸ Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 107-116.

¹⁴⁹ Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 115.

¹⁵⁰ Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 116.

the improper prominence of Jews in court and their arrogant, presumptuous social status, thereby lowering the status of the Muslim majority. In Castile, Enrique's propaganda focused on how Pedro, who himself was alleged to be a Jew — the ultimate case of Jews' improper relations with the court — was “ennobling”¹⁵¹ Jews (and Moors) at the expense of the Christian majority. In both cases, the politically dominant groups of either Muslims and Christians required the Jewish “other” to help mediate their ethnoreligiously diverse societies, yet there was always the concern of this “other” rising to such prominence as to lose that “other” status at the expense of the dominant group's status and welfare.

Enrique's interactions with Jews after his victory over Pedro in 1369 also demonstrated the phenomenon of tension between accepting and rejecting Jews in the political sphere. Although Jews continued to face various waves of popular anti-Jewishness after the civil war, Enrique's policy towards Jews largely became the “well-trying traditional Jewish policy, taking Jews under his protection and confirming their privileges.”¹⁵² Yet, even though Enrique still relied on Jews, he made clear. In his Cortes at Burgos in 1367, he received a petition claiming that “many of the cities and villages and places of our kingdoms have suffered many evils and damages and death...that came in past times because of the advice of Jews who were counselors or officials of kings' past...who wished ill and damage upon the Christians.” He sympathetically responded that “we will keep in mind what you have asked of us, but never was such a petition requested of previous kings. And although some Jews may walk in our house, we will not put them in our counsel nor gave them power, for damage to our land could come of this.”¹⁵³ Enrique, like both Pedro and King Badis of Granada, could not completely reject the Jews; yet, in the face of a clear popular anti-Jewish sentiment, he desired to limit and regulate their place within the political structure. In all of these diverse, messy worlds, court Jews were a necessary evil to be managed with care, lest popular sentiment and political enemies catch wind of the encroaching Jewish threat.

¹⁵¹Serrano, *Fuentes*, 217.

¹⁵²Baer, *History of Jews in Christian Spain*, 367.

¹⁵³Baer, *Die Juden*, 197.