

History Happenings

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All the Single Ladies

By Dr. Cookie Woolner

I'm a new Assistant Professor in the History Department who specializes in gender, sexuality, and race in modern American culture. I'm giving an upcoming pizza talk during Women's History Month entitled, "All the Single Ladies": Spinsters, Bachelor Maids, and Unmarried Women in American History," which will examine how unmarried women's position in U.S. society has changed over time. Here I'll give a preview of some of my talk's subject matter, focusing on late 19th and early 20th century America, my favorite era to research and teach.



Ethel Waters, an American blues, jazz, and gospel singer

My research interests focus on unconventional women's lives, such as queer women in the era before gay and women's liberation, as well as female performers, such as singers and actresses. Unmarried and single women also transgress social norms and traditional roles for women in society, but another reason I'm interested in this topic is personal, as I've spent most of my adult life as a single woman ("of a certain age," even). It's hard not to notice the many spoken and unspoken privileges that couples – especially heterosexual and married ones, but queer and unmarried ones too – are given, economically and socially. There's also a lot of overlap between the social stigma of being unmarried and/or being queer: both groups are often perceived as immature, not full adults. Marriage, children, and home ownership are consistently held up as the true markers of adulthood in American culture, and the achievements of successful womanhood. Indeed, doctors in the late 19th and early 20th century saw relationships between marriage as a retreat from adult female sexuality and the maternal and marital roles and responsibilities usually attached to it.

At the same time, many white, middle-class women who didn't marry or have children at this time were among the first generations of female college students, who went on to enter into the professions. For example, almost half of the women who graduated from my alma mater the University of Michigan between 1889 and 1908 did not get married.¹ Educated white women's increased participation in the public sphere and decreased involvement in marriage and motherhood led President Theodore Roosevelt to proclaim in 1903 that such choices could lead to "race suicide" for the white race. Later in

¹John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*. New York: Harper and Row, 1988, p. 190.

1922, the popular women's magazine *Ladies' Home Journal* ran an article entitled "College Women and Race Suicide" that decried the low rates of childbirth by women who attended elite women's colleges. These examples show that the increasing population of single, unmarried, and un-reproducing women that accompanied the growth of women's educational opportunities was seen as a threat to the white race and thus humanity itself.



The Chicago Tribune, 1906

Concerns that single women, women entering the professions, and queer women might contribute to race suicide affected African American communities in the urban North in the early 20th century as well. During the early Great Migration, black women often had an easier time finding domestic work in northern cities than black men did in finding factory work, so uneven sex ratios led to concerns about “surplus women” who wouldn’t be able to find husbands. This was particularly distressing in the era of Marcus Garvey’s immensely popular black nationalist organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), that captivated southern migrants with the goal of worldwide liberation of all people of the African diaspora. As part of this aim, the UNIA called for the propagation of the race, so the duty fell on black women to take up maternal and wifely roles. This made unmarried women as well as queer women suspect figures who stood in the way of achieving Garvey’s vision. Indeed, a sensationalist 1920s article in *Negro World*, the official newspaper of the UNIA, claimed that older unmarried women – often teachers – were seducing young innocent women and converting them to lesbianism. The author went on to say of these predatory older women, “they have a way of discouraging the young girls, and endeavor to fill the places of the men,” as “most of them prefer that they die maidens.”² Therefore, in both black and white communities in the early 20th century, single and unmarried women were viewed as threats to the ideal perceived social order.

However, despite the pressure on women to marry at this time, cultural texts by and about single women still offered transgressive representations of free and independent women enjoying life outside of – or after – marriage. In 1904, soon after Theodore Roosevelt raised concerns over white female college graduates’ low rates of marriage and children, a young female college professor writing under the *nom de plume* “a Bachelor Maid” in the *Independent* penned an article entitled, “Why I Do Not Marry.” The author declared she was “appalled” by “the hideous inequality of the conditions which marriage offers” to a husband and wife. Specifically, while for men, “gaining a home life” was “an incentive to help his chosen profession” rather than an obstacle, women’s focus on domestic duties often forced them to give up “every other dear ambition” in their life, including dreams of a career outside the home.³ This “Bachelor Maid” saw little personal gain from being saddled with caring for a husband and family on top of her busy career in higher education. As more and more women entered college and the professions, growing pride in their achievements and independence emerged, as this 1904 author reveals – yet her choice to anonymously penned her diatribe also suggests that such a position was quite controversial in its boldness.



² John Houghton, “The Plight of Our Race on Harlem, Brooklyn and New Jersey,” *Negro World*, April 21, 1923, p 8.

³ A Bachelor Maid, “Why I Do Not Marry,” *Independent*, 1904, vol. 56: pp. 1482-1486.

Not just elite women touted their independence from men and marriage in this era. Many of the African American female blues singers of the 1920s, who came from humble backgrounds, created subversive representations of women flaunting their single status with pride. Singer Ethel Waters, for example, who would go on to a successful career on Broadway and Hollywood, recorded a song in 1925 entitled, “No Man’s Mamma.” This song was a joyous celebration of single life after a difficult marriage described as a “five year war.” Waters compares her feeling of freedom upon leaving behind her husband to that of a man getting out of prison. The chorus declares: “I can come when I please, I can go when I please/ I can flit, fly and flutter like the birds in the trees/ Because I’m no man’s mamma now! / Hey, hey!”⁴ While divorce was often considered a shameful subject, Waters, approaches the topic in a positive light, focusing on her newly found freedom and her delight in her autonomy.

As I have shown here in this short preview from my upcoming talk, despite the larger societal concerns that the decreasing rates of marriage and childbirth would lead to “race suicide” in both white and black communities in the early 20th century, representations created by single women themselves nevertheless showed them enjoying their lives and making choices that best met their own personal life goals. While women began to take on new roles in the public sphere – from college professor to successful blues singer – they reevaluated their relationships to traditional family life. While some sought to enjoy marriage, motherhood, and work, others focused on their careers, as well as romantic and platonic relationships with other women. As women in the 21st century marry in fewer numbers than ever before – yet still often feel pressure to focus on having a family – learning about what life was like for single women in the past can help us better understand why our society still treats single women like anomalies, despite their vast presence.

Food in the Classroom

By Dr. Benjamin Graham

Despite a reputation for bookishness and unfashionable attire, most historians get their kicks out of being rebels. Our exterior might suggest a stuffy existence (think poorly fitting suit-coats donned with leather elbow-patches), but our minds and scholarship tend to aim for something fresh—an insurgent history that subverts expectations. Ideally, this perspective-bending aspiration carries over to the classroom, where a surprise or two helps demonstrate the analytical power of history and its wide-ranging utility as a discipline. There is an array of methods for achieving these kinds of ah-



Dr. Benjamin Graham, Assistant Professor, Medieval History

⁴ Ethel Waters, 1925-1926, *The Chronological Classics*, Vol. 672 (Allegro, 1990).

hah moments, but one recurring theme that has worked to some effect in my classes is the stuff humans put into their bellies—food.

Historians—particularly medieval historians, like myself--didn't think much about food a few decades ago. The mundane consumption of bread and gruel seemed awfully unimportant next to the affairs of kings, queens, and popes. However, a closer look at people's relationship with food has begun to topple old assumptions and challenge all sorts of historical orthodoxies. In my world history course, for instance, we challenge traditional ideas about the impact of agriculture on the development of our species. The Neolithic revolution is usually viewed as a watershed moment that unlocked an era of progress, including the development of cities, states, and writing-systems. More recent research by bioarchaeologists like George Armelagos has shown, however, that human reliance on domesticated plants, i.e. farming, had a generally negative impact on health, particularly on people at the bottom of the social ladder.⁵ The average height for a man declined six inches in the centuries after the adoption of agriculture, suggesting profound nutritional deficits caused by abandoning a hunting-and-gathering lifestyle.



In the same vein, early medieval historians are rethinking our understanding of one of the great ruptures in European history, the decline and fall of the Roman Empire around the year 500 CE. Rome's fraying state is traditionally interpreted as ushering in an age of darkness—literally, the Dark Ages. Things were gloomier because the empire no longer supported the construction of enormous bath houses, level roads, or long-distance trade. However, new research from early medieval gravesites has shown that the skeletons of peasants in rural Italy exhibit improved health in the centuries after Rome's collapse. They lived longer, contracted fewer diseases, and had fewer babies (labor was always a leading cause of death for women in the Middle Ages). The Dark Ages, from the perspective of peasants in Italy, were actually the golden ages—the best possible time to be alive. Again, the most plausible explanation for improved health stems from a more diverse diet that included harvesting food from woodlands and marshes, instead of the widespread wheat fields that dominated the Roman Empire's agricultural portfolio.



The diffusion of a single food can also provide a compelling narrative of global-interconnectedness. The twin stories of domesticated rice—one deriving from China (*O.sativa*), the other from western Africa (*O. glaberrima*)—offers a fascinating case study for the environmental parameters of food adoption. Asian rice moved very slowly across the Eurasian continent after its domestication 10,000 years ago, at least in part because of the heavy water demands such cultivation entails. *Sativa*'s most frenetic period of diffusion

⁵ See A. Mummert, E. Esche, J. Robinson, and G. Armelagos, "Stature and robusticity during the agricultural transition: Evidence from the bioarchaeological record," *Economics and Human Biology*, vol. 9 (2011), pp. 284-301.

corresponded with the channels provided by the hydraulically inclined, early medieval Caliphates, whose political powers connected Persia to the tip of Spain. From about the 8th to the 10th century CE, a great variety of new aquatic instruments brought “much more water to much more land” than ever before, and rice followed the water.⁶

In the inland delta of the middle Niger River, in Mali, a form of African rice called *glaberrima*, was domesticated independently around the 2nd century BCE.⁷ It spread throughout western Africa and was the dietary staple for the Ghana, Mali, and Songhai empires. The stories of the two domesticated species of rice tragically intersected in the Americas, where post-Columbian *sativa* production was facilitated by enslaved, female west-Africans, whose previous practice and expertise in *glaberrima* agriculture made them particularly valuable assets on European rice plantations in places like South Carolina. This episode, told brilliantly by Judith Carney, represents only the last phase involving these two plants, and demonstrates how food history casts new light on familiar historical episodes.

Food history can subvert key aspects of regionalism and nationalism: cuisine. The Margherita Pizza, for instance, has recently come under copyright protection in the



European Union, as a protected cultural product of Italy. Such legislation elides the deep global forces that enabled the creation of complex foods. Using deep historical analysis of food, we can see that the three principle ingredients of this legislated pizza—wheat, water-buffalo mozzarella, and San-Marzano tomato sauce—derived from people and places well beyond the Italian peninsula. Wheat was domesticated in the eastern Mediterranean, near the border of Syria and

Turkey. The water buffalo came from the Indus River valley and only arrived to southern Italy at the end of the first millennium CE, possibly as part of the “Islamic agricultural revolution” that brought *sativa* rice to northern Africa. The tomato was a New World plant, indigenous to Chile, and landed ashore in Italy in the 16th century CE.

Pizza, when viewed as a product of historical forces, suddenly looks less Italian. Nothing impresses my undergraduate students quite like changing the way they think of pizza. These moments of food-induced rebellion are good for the discipline of history precisely because they encourage us to think more broadly about the forces that shape our lives and the importance of historical perspective. Food’s intimacy and familiarity make it a powerful tool in the classroom. If anyone is interested in seeing how far we can take this concept, I encourage you to sign up for my class in the fall of 2017, *The Omnivore’s Past: A History of Food and Eating*.

⁶ A. Watson, “The Arab Agricultural Revolution and its Diffusion, 700-1100,” *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1974), pp. 8-35.

⁷ J. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Harvard University Press, 2002), 38-9.

Peace in Colombia, at Last

By Dr. Guiomar Duenas Vargas

After 52 years of military struggle the Colombian state and the guerrillas have come to an agreement. The path to peace has been tortuous and it took 4 years of negotiations in Habana, Cuba, where a peace treaty was finally negotiated and signed by President JuanHISTORY HAPPENINGS—3 Manuel Santos and Rodrigo Londoño (“Timochenko”), the head of the Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC), on September 26, 2016. But a few days later Colombians unexpectedly rejected the agreement by a margin of just 0.4 percentage points.



President Juan Manuel Santos, third from left and Rodrigo Londoño the FARC leader embracing after signing a peace treaty, The New York Times, Oct. 8, 2016

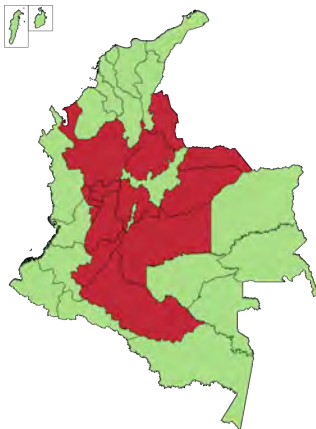


What follows is a Q&A session between Dr. Vania Barraza Toledo, Associate Professor of Spanish from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, and Dr. Guiomar Duenas-Vargas, Professor of Latin American History from the Department of History, about the elusive quest for peace in Colombia.

Pictured L-R: Dr. Guiomar Duenas-Vargas and Dr. Vania Barraza Toledo.

Vania Barraza Toledo Guerrilla movements spread in Latin America after the Cuban Revolution but they faded soon after. Why did they persist in Colombia?

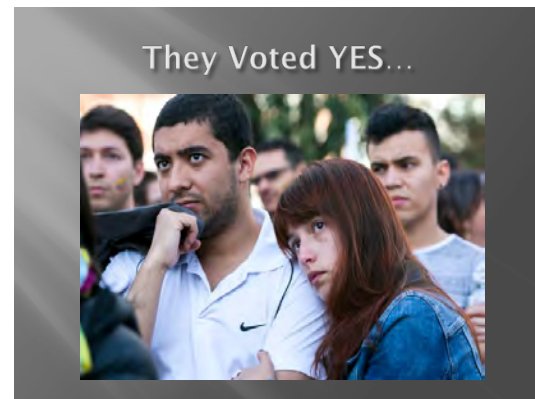
Guiomar Duenas-Vargas. The armed conflict in the country has unique features. It is the oldest and largest armed conflict in the hemisphere. It began in 1964, the year the FARC took arms against the institutions of the Colombian state. Geography and history have contributed to the long war. Colombia's mountain chains, thick tropical lowlands, and inhospitable western coast make it hard for the authorities to reassert control. Colombian history also presents a rare case. There has not been a military dictatorship, as was the case elsewhere in Latin America in 1970s; and it is one of the oldest democracies in Latin America. But the complete political control by two traditional parties, Liberal and Conservative, has left little room for the inclusion of popular sectors in the political realm. Guerrillas have filled this power vacuum.



49.78 % (green) voted YES
50.21 (magenta) voted NO

Vania Barraza Toledo. Why did Colombians reject the Peace Agreement?

Guiomar Duenas-Vargas. The roots of rejection are multiple and entangled. Some voted NO (The plebiscite was straight forward: Vote NO if you are against the peace agreement, or YES, if you are in favor) because they disliked President Juan Manuel Santos; others, because the treaty recognizes the rights of gay people. This gave former president Alvaro Uribe, the loudest voice against peace, an opportunity to capitalize on the feelings of conservative Catholics who had criticized Santos' liberal attitudes on issues such as same sex marriage, and tolerance toward LGBT people. Gender issues—largely brought to the political arena by popular and university women—were tergiversated by Alejandro Ordóñez, the ultraconservative attorney general, who led a crusade against what he wrongly defined “gender ideology,” as the tool to destroy family values.



Registering disappointment, Julia Symmes Cobb and Nicholas Casey, Oct 26, 2016, The New York Times

Vania Barraza Toledo. But, I suppose opposition to the FARC is widespread in the country...

Guioamar Duenas-Vargas The vigorous campaign against the referendum by Uribe is grounded in his deep-rooted aversion to the FARC. In fact, many Colombians share his feelings. They fear, dislike, and distrust the revolutionary forces for the violence they have inflicted across some regions. The narrative, shaped over decades, is that the atrocities that have been carried out in Colombia in terms of displacements, kidnappings, extortions, and murder, were exclusively the work of the FARC. This is not entirely true, though. Our war is unique. It doesn't involve two factions, as is usual, but several: The state, the guerrilla groups – several at times, two at present: the FARC and the ELN – and the paramilitary groups. The latter were created to fight the guerrillas. They expanded and became powerful while tightening their ties with state agents. Paramilitary groups committed atrocities against the civil population. In fact, they – and the Colombian armed forces – have been the major causes of violence in Colombia. According to a recent study 63.1% of massacres committed between 1980-2006 can be attributed to paramilitary forces, 10% to state armed forces, 21.4% to unknown perpetrators (common criminals), and 5.2% to guerrilla groups.⁸

Vania Barraza Toledo. Why did former president Alvaro Uribe sabotage the Peace Treaty?

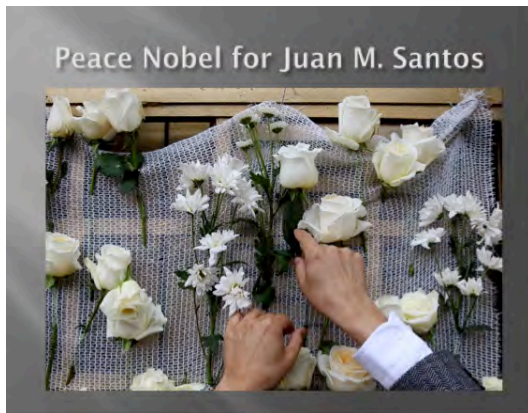
⁸ Adriaan Alsema, "How Colombia's Newspapers consistently misinform the public on the armed conflict." *Colombia Reports*, Oct 18, 2016.



Former President Alvaro Uribe Velez, Opposes the peace accord.

Guioamar Duenas-Vargas. Uribe's main presidential determination was to lead a crackdown on insurgency. But he was not able to defeat the FARC during his two terms as president. Juan Manuel Santos – Uribe's Minister of Defense – opted for a peace accord instead. Uribe, frustrated by what he considered Santos' betrayal, started a campaign to discredit the president, using Twitter to attack his administration on a daily basis. He portrayed the peace talks as concessions to *Castro-Chavismo*, referring to the alliance between the Cuban and Venezuelan governments. This vilification machinery helped him to rebuild his political brand and shape public opinion. It was not surprising that he rallied his followers to vote NO the day the referendum occurred. He moved his partisans to the voting box by spreading anger and indignation.

Vania Barraza Toledo. And then president Santos was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace? How did the prize affect the peace process?



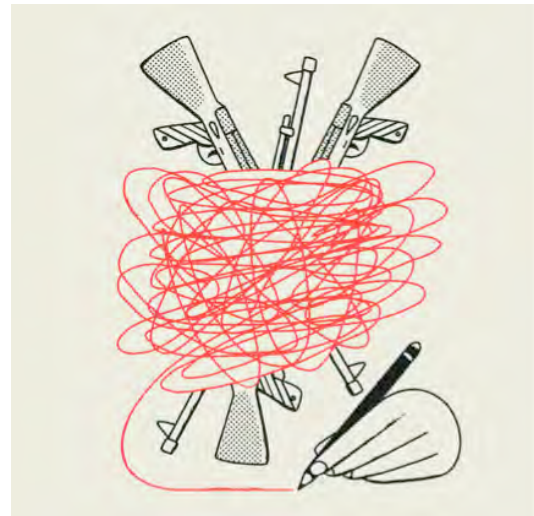
A man places white roses outside a government building to celebrate the Nobel Peace Prize for President Santos, Daily New Herald, Nov 5.

Guiomar Duenas-Vargas. Yes, five days after the debacle of the referendum that left the country in shock, the Norwegian Nobel Committee recognized President Santos, “for his resolute efforts to bring the country’s more than 50-year-long civil war to an end.” The prize oxygenated the peace process, enhancing Santos’ authority and credibility and encouraged those in favor of peace to revisit the accord.

Vania Barraza Toledo. But after the dramatic events you are presenting here, it seems that a new agreement has been finally approved?

Guiomar Duenas-Vargas. Yes. A week after the referendum the peace commissioners returned to Habana to modify the initial deal. After a hectic 40 days of discussions—in which the government and the FARC commissioners heard out the opposition

— they reached a new agreement. Changes tackled a range of topics such as prison sentences for members of the FARC, definition of places in which the rebels would be confined after rendition of their arms, discussion on how courts would deal with drug trafficking offenses, the FARC’s commitment to list all its assets in order to give reparations to the victims of the armed conflict, and the withdrawal of the promise to grant seats to rebels in Congress — one key demand of Uribe, who thinks that allowing rebels political presence would be unfair and dangerous to the governing institutions. The Colombian Congress approved the revised peace accord with the country’s largest rebel group on November 24, 2016. Uribe is calling his followers to a “Civil Resistance,” against the new deal.



The Economist, The editorial Board, Nov. 14, 2016

Doing field work in Luxor, Egypt

By Cristina Rose, Ph.D. Student



The opportunity to visit Egypt is something every student of Egyptology dreams of, and thanks to the support of the History Department of the University of Memphis and in particular Dr. Peter Brand, I was able to travel to Egypt with Dr. Brand to participate in the Karnak Great Hypostyle Hall Project in Luxor, Egypt. Begun in 1990 at the University of Memphis, this project is one of very few long-standing epigraphic survey missions operating in Egypt and is, thankfully, one which encourages the participation of Egyptology graduate students in on-site fieldwork in Egypt.

Dr. Brand and I traveled to Luxor to begin our Fall/Winter 2016 field season in the Hypostyle Hall of Karnak Temple. Building on the accomplishments of previous field seasons, the goal this year was to record those inscriptions and reliefs decorating the 122 “smaller” columns of the Hypostyle Hall which were created by the 20th Dynasty pharaoh Ramesses IV (r. 1153 - 1147 BCE). Additionally, the 12 “large” columns located along the hall’s main East-West processional route were comprehensively photographed by professional archaeological photographer Owen Murray, who has worked with us in previous seasons and whose photographs form an integral part of our documentation of the Hypostyle Hall. Several other professors and students of Egyptology from around the world also joined us in the daunting task of copying, recording, documenting, and collating this huge amount of inscriptional data, including two of my fellow Egyptology Ph.D. students at the University of Memphis: Emily Coate and Taylor Deane.

During the course of our six-day workweeks, a normal day for our team consisted of leaving our apartments at 6:00 am to begin work at Karnak Temple around 6:30 am. Once on site, we would split into several small teams of two or three students each and would meticulously transcribe the Ramesses IV inscriptions on the columns. Our focus was to record the hieroglyphs in the various Ramesses IV inscriptions, making certain that our documentation not only accurately captured the sequence of the hieroglyphic signs themselves as they appear in the inscriptions, but also identify any unusual or unique forms of the signs,



University of Memphis students Emily Coate (seated, left) & Taylor Deane (center) at work in the Hypostyle Hall with Egyptian university student Hazem Shareed (seated, right)

anything unusual in the positioning of the bandeaux and/or cartouche friezes, any peculiarities in the grammar of the inscriptions, and elements like paint traces that remain *in-situ*. Our workday usually ended around 1:30 pm, when both the Egyptian sun and the flood of tourists to Karnak Temple became too intense for us to accomplish much more of significance. We would then head back to our apartments for a team lunch, and spend the rest of the afternoon entering the data collected that day into our digital records and planning our areas of focus for work on the following day.

We were able to visit many sites in and around the Luxor area such as the magnificent temples of Seti I and Ramesses II at Abydos as well as the Temple of Hathor at Dendera. We also visited the newly re-opened tombs of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings and of Nefertani in the Valley of the Queens on the west bank, in addition to many of the other royal and non-royal “nobles” tombs which riddle the western desert hills overlooking the Nile. Being in Egypt during the fall/winter also allowed us to meet with many prominent Egyptologists. I am especially grateful to our colleagues from the University of Chicago’s Epigraphic Survey for giving us a personal tour of their work at Medinet Habu, the mortuary temple of Ramesses III located on Luxor’s west bank, and for inviting us to celebrate Thanksgiving at Chicago House, the Epigraphic Survey’s headquarters in Luxor.

Working in Karnak Temple, visiting numerous other sites throughout Egypt, and interacting with many prominent international Egyptologists has positively impacted my own work as an Egyptologist graduate student at the University of Memphis. Experiencing the architectural and iconographic realities of an ancient Egyptian temple first-hand has given me a level of insight into what an ancient Egyptian temple *is* that is impossible to reach through studying these structures at a distance. Likewise, visiting ancient tombs provides contextual understanding for a primary source text like the so-called “Tomb Robbery Papyri” in which ancient tomb robbers describe their break-ins to royal tombs as part of their own criminal trials.



Fig. 1

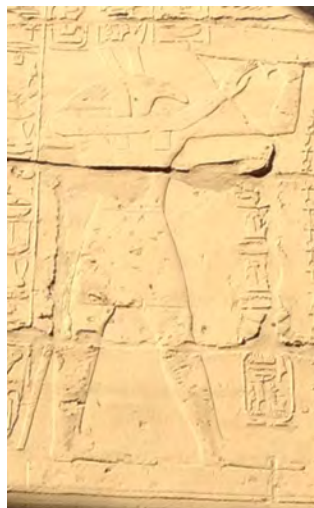


Fig. 2

Figure 1: *A figure of the god Amun (L) which was defaced and repaired in the pharaonic era, facing a figure of the king (R) whose face has been damaged by much later religious iconoclasm. Column located in the Festival Court of Thutmosis III, Karnak Temple.*

Figure 2: *A large intact figure of the god Seth located in the Hypostyle Hall of Karnak Temple (North Wall West Half (interior) of the 2nd Pylon).*

Most significantly for the development of my own research, however, is the direct observation of Seth, whose name and image was subject to an often overstated amount of defacement during the pharaonic era. There are numerous examples of both intact and defaced images of Seth within Karnak, and there are also examples of defaced (and repaired) images of the god Amun with which to compare them. A preliminary study of these examples has raised important questions for me concerning, for example, the manner of the defacement itself, distinguishing between pharaonic defacement and more modern religious iconoclasm, and questions about whether the defaced image was covered or left as a visible “scar” within a larger decorative program. These questions are shaping my dissertation topic and were only reached through working on-site as part of the Hypostyle Hall Project, and I am therefore very grateful for the opportunity.

Cemeteries: the feelings for local histories

An interview with Dr. Andrei Znamenski

Guiomar Duenas-Vargas. Last summer you were traveling to several European countries to do conference presentations. Will you share your experiences with us?

Andrei Znamenski. I do not want to rehash my conference presentations here, which can be found on academia.edu and researchgate.net. Let me tell you instead about my visit to a cemetery in Estonia—a country that I visited during one of these talks.

Guiomar Duenas-Vargas. A cemetery?

Andrei Znamenski. Yes, a cemetery in a university town of Tartu.

Guiomar Duenas-Vargas. What is so special about this cemetery?

Andrei Znamenski. It is an old town cemetery, where I ended up looking for a grave of Alexander von Bunge (1803-1890), a Baltic German explorer and botanist, who provided one of the first ethnographic descriptions of the Altai—an Inner Asian area that I have been studying for the past fifteen years. Looking for his grave, I realized that the cemetery was a true “history museum,” a window into the turbulent history of Eastern Europe and the Russian/Soviet Empire. So, driven by curiosity, I spent the whole day there exploring graves.

Guiomar Duenas-Vargas. Why did these graves arouse your interest?

Walking through them was like peeling the layers of Eastern European and Russian/Soviet history, where one cultural and historical layer was superseded or supplemented by another. When I was wandering amid the graves, I was thinking about the words of Dr. Ronald Lora, one of my graduate mentors in the 1990s. He liked to mention to us that exploring a cemetery was one of the best ways to feel local history. So I was doing just that.

Guiomar Duenas-Vargas. Did you find the grave of the traveler-ethnographer you were looking for?

Andrei Znamenski. Oh, yes. It was a beautifully aged gravestone. To me, that is how an ideal tombstone should look: an aged rock or a block of a marble that is half-hidden in the ground, covered with green moss, and engraved with various esoteric symbols. Many old graves at this cemetery have this romantic appearance. Some of them sample coats of arms, membership in Masonic lodges and guilds (below).



The Tartu town cemetery had emerged as a Baltic German graveyard in 1773; to prevent epidemics, Catherine the Great abolished a practice popular among aristocrats to bury their kinfolk around churches, so they had to set up cemeteries. In the 1700s and the 1800s, Estonia was part of the Russian Empire, and, like neighboring Latvia and Lithuania, it was ruled by Baltic German aristocrats. These descendants of Teutonic and Livonian knights dominated local Baltic peasants and craftsmen. Exploring these German graves, one can get a glimpse of the multiethnic nature of the Russian imperial elite, a large percentage of which had German names. By the way, these Western elements coexisted with Mongol-Tatar aristocratic lineages that were incorporated in the empire from her eastern borderlands. When I teach my “Russia before 1917” class, I always stress this to my students who might be misled by an “ethnic” adjective in such expressions as the “Russian Empire” or “Russian colonization.” In fact, one of the grave stones which I ran across had inscriptions engraved both in German and Cyrillic (*pictured right*). After 1917, the German segment of the population was totally phased out from the Baltic areas. I would like to add that many of these people, who were disempowered and lost their elite privileges, moved to Germany; where, like Alfred Rosenberg, they channeled their frustrations into ethnic animosity and reinvented themselves as active national socialists.



After 1917, when Estonia became independent, the Tartu cemetery was “indigenized,” which one can see in the emergence of graves with dedications engraved in Estonian language in plain Latin with hardly any Gothic elements. Then, in 1940-1945, the Soviet Union occupied the country and launched a campaign of ethnic engineering, exiling indigenous Estonian elite and ideological “infidels” to Siberia and bringing in Russian people in order to change the country’s demographics. This population change found its reflection in the design of gravestones: in addition to decaying German and modern Estonia tombs, the cemetery now sported several red stars as well as names and dedications in Cyrillic. Since many



Estonians who actively or passively resisted the Soviet occupation died away in the Siberian exile, people of Tartu erected in the center of the cemetery a large collective gravestone to pay tribute to the memory of all of those victims of the Soviet “trail of tears” (*pictured left.*)

Guiomar Duenas-Vargas. It must have been a tragic event in the history of that small country.

Andrei Znamenski. Yes, it was. In fact, I happened to come to Tartu in June, when Estonians commemorated the first and largest Siberian deportation (of more than 10,000 people) that took place on June 14, 1941. I could not figure out, at first, why so many houses suddenly displayed national flags with black ribbons tied to them. Then colleagues from the local

university, where I conducted a seminar on the history of religions, explained to me the reason. So, walking through that cemetery, one could explore four overlapping layers of local history: the first one that was informed by German hegemony; a brief indigenous rule during the interwar period; then the fifty years of the Soviet domination; and, finally, again, a return to the indigenous rule.

Incidentally, nowadays, rejecting the symbols of recent Soviet occupation, the Estonians seek to reclaim as their own the Baltic German culture—the legacy of their earlier oppressors. It is a recurring trick popular memory plays with distant and recent hegemonies, which one can also observe in many others parts of the world. Another interesting example of how history and memory games are played in this area is different attitudes toward World War II in Estonia and neighboring Russia. The former relegates National Socialism and Stalinism to the same category of totalitarian occupational regimes (*pictured below*). In contrast, in present-day Russia, where leftovers of Stalinism mutated with popular nationalism, writers, historians, and educators are penalized for placing Hitler and Stalin into the same historical basket. So, exploring graves, especially in such countries like Estonia that became places where civilizations and ideologies met and collided with each, allows one to literally feel history.



Clio's Closet across Campus

By Amanda Lee Savage

Clio's Closet had a very successful fall semester. We partnered with several new organizations, including the students and staff in Residence Life, the Student Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (SAND), and the Pan-Hellenic Greek Life Organization. We received so many clothing donations that we had to limit the scope and scale of our clothing closet—we are now only accepting professional and interview clothing. Most importantly, we are now in close conversation with the university to take Clio's to the next level: a university-supported clothing closet and food pantry.

Because Clio's continues to be unstaffed to protect the privacy of students, faculty, and staff in need, we don't have a mechanism in place to collect data concerning usage. We know Clio's is filling a need because of the amount of food, clothing, and toiletries that we're replenishing. That being said, I do receive referrals from other departments and organizations, so I can tell you this: we were able to provide food for a veteran and his wife when both lost their jobs and were on the verge of losing their homes; a student's family home burned down in November, and several members of the Student History Society raided Clio's Closet for clothes for this student, her sibling, and her parents; we were able to provide baby clothes and diapers for a pregnant 19 year old sophomore.

Memphis’s overall poverty rate is 26%, and 43% of children are impoverished. As Dr. Elena Delavega reports in the 2016 Memphis Poverty Fact Sheet, “Memphis is no longer the poorest MSA in the nation overall” but “it remains the MSA with the highest child poverty.”⁹ Many of our students enrolled at the university grew up and live in Shelby County, and thus a significant percentage of our students are disproportionately affected by poverty before they even arrive at the University of Memphis. This is compounded by the fact that by 2020 more than 65% of jobs in the U.S. will require postsecondary education, suggesting that choosing *not* to attend college due to financial reasons will *not* be an option for anyone hoping to elevate themselves out of poverty.¹⁰ Many college students often do not qualify for the social programs available to offset the cost of food or housing. This is where Clio’s Closet comes in, to help bridge that gap and meet those needs.



Though Dr. Chrystal Goudsouzian and I have done a lot of this work, we certainly don’t do it alone. Not only do we rely on our relationships with our donors, we’ve been fortunate enough to work with a variety of undergraduate and graduate students over the last two years. This Spring Jenni Turner (*pictured left*), a junior history major, is working with us to coordinate donations across campus and generate more student interest and support among the undergraduate population. We’re thankful for the following organizations, all of which have committed to donating food, clothing, or toiletries to Clio’s Closet.



The EGSA held a bake sale and toiletry drive in early February. Pictured L-R are EGSA leaders Taylor Deane, Amanda Shaffery, and Amber Ward.



Members of the Student Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (SAND) restocked Clio’s Closet in December after collecting nutritious food items for the pantry at their monthly meetings during the Fall semester.

⁹ Delevega, Elena. *Memphis Poverty Fact Sheet*. Memphis, TN: Benjamin Hooks Institute for Social Change, 2016.

¹⁰ Goldrick-Rab, Broton, and Eisenberg. *Hungry to Learn: Addressing Food and Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates*. University of Wisconsin-Madison: Wisconsin Hope Lab, December 2015.