


## ARTICLE

## Grete Mostny and the Making of Indigenous Archaeology: European Immigration, White Racial Hegemony, and Chilean Nationalism

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### Abstract

Forced migration as a reaction to National Socialism represents individual as well as simultaneously collective, transnational, and global experiences. Not only identity-forming categories but also forms of knowledge are profoundly reshaped by processes of displacement and resettlement. The paper argues that the biography of the archaeologist Grete Mostny (1914–91) offers an exemplary case study of such processes of adaptation on individual, collective, and academic levels. Due to her escape from Austria to Chile as a persecuted Jew in 1938/39, Mostny's identity as a white European (female) scholar attained a whole new significance and became the door opener for her interdisciplinary career at the interface of archaeology and anthropology in her new homeland. Her research in Chile was a product of a global event—namely mass forced emigration from Europe—as well as of factors on the micro level, such as her European descent and her academic education, which gave her certain privileges in her new environment. When Mostny arrived in Chile in 1939, a new European and U.S. hegemony had already begun to dominate academia in the country, which was trying to modernise itself and move from the academic periphery closer to the centre. Mostny, the once racially persecuted scholar, fit well in this process by making use of her “European” knowledge and her networks. In 1954 she received international attention when she put together a pioneering interdisciplinary research team to study El Niño del Cerro El Plomo, a four-hundred-year-old Inca mummy found in the Andes five thousand metres above sea level. Nationally, Mostny's study contributed, beyond all measure, to the Andean state's identity, as it re-evaluated and enhanced Chile's prehistory. In a time of political and social tensions in Chile, the rediscovery of its Indigenous prehistory—even by a foreign white scholar—helped to overcome the old shadows of colonial historical research, perhaps because in the immediate present the Indigenous movement in Chile offered little potential for consensus. This article uses Mostny's transnational biography as a lens through which to detect these connected histories and entangled hegemonies in the fields of anthropology and archaeology, which have become instrumental in the formation of Chile's national identity. Moreover, the paper shows that the category of race played a central role in the field of knowledge production and career development, not only for Grete Mostny.

**Keywords:** academia; exile studies; National Socialism; displacement; resettlement; Austria; Chile; anthropology; archaeology; production of knowledge; white racial hegemony; inequality; nationalism

Forced migration as a reaction to National Socialism represents at the same time an individual as well as a collective and transnational experience. Identity-forming categories are profoundly reshaped by processes of displacement and resettlement. I argue that the life of the scholar Grete Mostny (1914–91) offers an exemplary case study of such a process of adaptation. As a result of her flight from Austria to Chile in 1938–9, her identity as a white European attained a whole new significance and actively facilitated her career at the interface of archaeology and anthropology in her new homeland. It led to her promotion in 1964 to director of the renowned Museo Nacional de Historia Natural (National Museum of Natural History) in Santiago de Chile.

As this essay is the first research paper about Grete Mostny, it will provide detailed biographical insights into her life. As one of the main arguments of this chapter reveals, her career and her field of research was a product not only of a global event, namely mass forced emigration from Europe as a result of being terrorised by the National Socialists, but also of many micro-level processes. By adopting a micro-spatial perspective, as Christian G. de Vito suggests,<sup>1</sup> I point out the intertwining of global and micro history and map out the different frameworks that enabled Mostny to advance and become a renowned scholar with a lasting impact on academia and museum studies in Chile.

Furthermore, in my essay I categorise Chile in terms of the level of knowledge production as falling between the periphery and the core (after Immanuel Wallerstein)<sup>2</sup> and propose to see what lies between: Chile as an academic semi-periphery in the making. Key figures, like Mostny herself, were educated in the core territories of scientific studies, thus in Chile too, they continued to orientate themselves towards international (“Western”) knowledge production and reproduced themselves through self-recruitment.<sup>3</sup> I will highlight in particular the role of European immigrants and the niche they were carving out for themselves by shaping academic structures. In such an environment, Mostny, too, could rise to become an influential scholar by contributing to a partial decolonisation of knowledge, through links between Chilean nationalism, nation-building, and Indigenous history. This article uses her transnational biography as a lens through which to detect these connected histories and hegemonies in a politicised archaeology, which since the end of the nineteenth century has become a driver of the formation of Chilean national identity.<sup>4</sup>

### Vienna, the Starting Point for a Global History of Knowledge

Vienna’s academic community had flourished in the period around 1900, but found itself in an ever-deepening crisis in the interwar years (1918–38/39). Political developments, as well as the economic situation, increasingly threatened the autonomy of scholars from the 1930s onwards. The situation had already been worsening in the aftermath of the First World War. Nevertheless, despite precarious circumstances, in the years following 1918 researchers generated ideas that were substantial enough to have a global impact on the developments that occurred throughout the twentieth century. This impact grew with the forced emigration of many of these innovators, particularly around the time

<sup>1</sup> Christian G. de Vito, “History Without Scale: The Micro-Spatial Perspectives,” *Past and Present* 242:14 (2019), 348–72.

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, “Semi-peripheral Countries and the Contemporary World Crisis,” *Theory and Society* 3:4 (1976), 461–83; Manuela Boatcă, “Semiperipheries in the World-System: Reflecting Eastern European and Latin American Experiences,” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 12:2 (2006), 321–46.

<sup>3</sup> Mario Orellana Rodríguez, *Historia de la Arqueología en Chile, 1942–1990* (Santiago de Chile: Bravo y Allende Editores, 1996); Gustavo Politis, “The Socio-Politics of the Development of Archaeology in Hispanic South America,” in *Theory in Archaeology: A World Perspective*, ed. Peter J. Ucko (London: Routledge, 1995), 197–235.

<sup>4</sup> Stefanie Gänger, “Conquering the Past: Post-War Archaeology and Nationalism in the Borderlands of Chile and Peru, c. 1880–1920,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4 (2009), 691–714.

of the *Anschluss* (annexation) of Austria by National Socialist Germany in March 1938. Sigmund Freud and many of his psychoanalyst colleagues were forced into exile, as was the founder of modern social research, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, to name but a few of the best-known figures.<sup>5</sup> A similar fate befell Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich August von Hayek of the Austrian School of National Economics,<sup>6</sup> the Vienna Circle philosophers studying logical empiricism, and Hermann Mark, researching high polymer chemistry.<sup>7</sup> Most representatives of these innovative research fields moved or fled to other centres of research, in particular the United States and Great Britain, and their research and knowledge transfers have already been well documented. On the one hand, this renders visible the gaps that these forced departures tore in Austria's academic landscape. On the other, it shows how these transfers resulted in adaptations to the travelling bodies of knowledge:<sup>8</sup> the Vienna Circle and modern social research, for example, were placed on a more academic and less politicised footing.<sup>9</sup> Leaving their home countries—whether voluntarily or not—enabled many of these researchers to pursue an international career. It is obvious that this also applied to Grete Mostny, and yet she differed from the established scholars mentioned above and presented an exception on several levels and due to many different parameters.

### Austrian Years

Grete Mostny was born on 17 September 1914 in Linz, the provincial capital of Upper Austria. The First World War had started six weeks previously. Mostny came from a well-off family of Jewish background. Her grandfather Leopold Mostny had been the richest Jewish industrialist in town.<sup>10</sup> He was a city councillor for the German Nationalist Party in Linz Urfahr for twenty-five years and—a surprising anecdote—rented a flat to a certain Hitler family in 1894–5, among them Adolf Hitler, who was barely five years old at the time.<sup>11</sup>

Her father, Paul Mostny, worked with his brothers in the family business, a spirit, liqueur, and vinegar factory, but died in 1929.<sup>12</sup> From this point on, Grete Mostny's mother, Julia Mostny, now a widow, had to take care of two children alone: Kurt Mostny was born in 1919, five years after his sister.

The First World War was over by the time Grete Mostny started school in 1920. She grew up in the fledgling First Republic in an industrial city of, at that time, around a

<sup>5</sup> Christian Fleck, *Etablierung in der Fremde: Vertriebene Wissenschaftler in den USA nach 1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Janek Wasserman, *The Marginal Revolutionaries: How Austrian Economists Fought the War of Ideas* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Johannes Feichtinger, "Hermann Mark (1895–1992): Viennese Born 'Ambassador' of Macromolecular Research," in *Neighbours and Territories: The Evolving Identity of Chemistry*, ed. José Ramon Beromeu-Sánchez et al. (Louvain: Mémosciences, 2008), 219–29.

<sup>8</sup> The standard work on this is certainly Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press New, 2013). However, Latin America or South America is not considered here either.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald Holton, "On the Vienna Circle in Exile: An Eyewitness Report," *Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook* 3 (1995), 269–92; Christian Fleck, *Transatlantische Bereicherungen: Zur Erfindung der empirischen Sozialforschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Michael John, "Beschlagnahme Vermögen und 'Arisierungen' in Linz," in *Bericht über den achtzehnten österreichischen Historikertag in Linz 1990*, ed. Verband Österreichischer Geschichtsvereine (Linz: Verband österreichischer Geschichtsvereine, 1991), 89–96, 93.

<sup>11</sup> Roman Sandgruber, *Hitlers Vater: Wie der Sohn zum Diktator wurde* (Vienna: Molden, 2021), 97, 281.

<sup>12</sup> Sabine Reitner, "'Arisierungen' im Nationalsozialismus am Beispiel der Linzer Firmengruppe Mostny, Mostny & Brück sowie S. Spitz" (MA thesis, University of Linz, 2002); Verena Wagner, *Jüdisches Leben in Linz: 1849–1943*, vol. 1 and 2 (Linz: Wagner, 2008).

hundred thousand inhabitants. Mostny must have been an excellent student, graduating as a valedictorian from the Girls High School in June 1933.<sup>13</sup> At this point Austria was no longer a democracy. In March 1933, Engelbert Dollfuß (Dollfuss) had disbanded the parliament, marking the beginning of the years of the first Austrian dictatorship, Austrofascism. Initially this had no immediate consequences for Mostny, who enrolled at the University of Vienna in autumn 1933 and stated her religion as Roman Catholic on her registration form. This placed her among the vast majority of Austrian students. She studied at the Faculty of Philosophy in the largest and oldest university in the country. Her middle-class family background enabled her to study in the capital, along with her cousins Helga and Trude Mostny (born 1913 and 1914), who were around the same age, and to choose her subject based on actual interest rather than economic necessity. Their social background was unambiguous: they were “high daughters” from wealthy families. That Grete Mostny did not simply make do with being a manufacturer’s daughter but was an enthusiastic student can be seen from her transcripts. Evidence of her extraordinary and persistent commitment to academia runs through her entire biography. In just under four years she completed at least ninety-five courses and was trained in an interdisciplinary manner.<sup>14</sup>

By far the most courses that Mostny took—at least thirty-one—were with the Egyptologist Wilhelm Czermak. He had been the director of the Institute of Egyptology and African Studies since 1931 and had been active even longer, networking in secret cliques of professors such as the anti-Semitic Bärenhöhle (literally, Bear’s Den) and the Deutsche Gemeinschaft (German Community), as well as the Deutsche Klub (German Club),<sup>15</sup> which had been successfully hindering the careers and blocking the *Habilitationen* (teaching licences) of the few remaining left-wing and Jewish scholars at the University of Vienna since the early 1920s. These circles played a significant role in the radicalisation of the universities and their shift to the right. Besides Czermak, most of the professors in the fields of Egyptology, Semitic, and African studies were German Nationalists and anti-Semites, such as Rudolf Geyer or Hermann Junker.<sup>16</sup> In this anti-Semitic and antidemocratic atmosphere, Mostny focused intensively on her studies, and we have no evidence on how she perceived the political affiliations of her teachers and how she coped with their racist prejudices.

Mostny learned Arabic and Egyptian, Italian, Kanuri, Coptic, and Swahili, and about the languages of the Hittite and Tuareg peoples.<sup>17</sup> Alongside this she attended numerous seminars led by a range of renowned teachers, including the philosopher Dietrich Hildebrand (epistemology), who was a loyal supporter of Austrofascism, and Karl Bühler (theory of language), an internationally recognised psychologist. By this point there were barely any left-wing or social-democratic teachers left at the University of Vienna. When the anatomist Julius Tandler was forced to retire on political grounds in early 1934, one of the last social democrats left the university. As a student Mostny

<sup>13</sup> Marion Mostny, *Conversations with my Grandchildren: A Journey Through Three Continents* (North Charleston, S.C.: Booksurge, 2007), 213.

<sup>14</sup> Archive of the University of Vienna (hereafter AUW), enrolment forms of Grete Mostny, Faculty of Philosophy (Winter semester 1933/34 to 1937/38).

<sup>15</sup> Klaus Taschwer, *Hochburg des Antisemitismus: Der Niedergang der Universität Wien im 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Czernin, 2015), 99–132; Andreas Huber, Linda Erker, and Klaus Taschwer, *Der Deutsche Klub: Austro-Nazis in der Hofburg* (Vienna: Czernin, 2020), 89–116.

<sup>16</sup> Clemens Gütl, “Das Institut für Ägyptologie und Afrikanistik im Schnittfeld von Wissenschaft und Politik (1923–1953),” in *650 Jahre Universität Wien. Aufbruch ins neue Jahrhundert*, vol. 4, *Reflexive Innensichten aus der Universität Wien. Disziplingeschichten zwischen Wissenschaft, Gesellschaft und Politik*, ed. Karl A. Fröschl et al. (Göttingen: V & R Unipress/Vienna University Press, 2015), 501–12.

<sup>17</sup> AUW, enrolment forms of Grete Mostny, Faculty of Philosophy (Winter semester 1933/34 to 1937/38).

took part in *privatissima*, or small group lectures, was a member of the so-called Totenbuchrunde (Book of the Dead circle, dedicated to reading and interpreting the Egyptian Book of the Dead), and soaked up what Vienna and in particular the discipline of Egyptology had to offer: an advanced interdisciplinary constellation in the fields of African studies, anthropology, ethnology, Oriental studies, and prehistory.<sup>18</sup> This cross-disciplinary practice would become one of her most important academic attitudes and shape her identity as a scholar throughout her life.

After just two years of study, she was given the opportunity to work in the Egyptian-Oriental Collection at the Kunsthistorisches Museum<sup>19</sup> (Art History Museum) in Vienna and wrote her PhD thesis on Egyptian women's clothing.<sup>20</sup> Mostny did not pursue an explicit gender-specific approach in Egyptology—it would be a long time before this perspective reached academic ground. She sought to use her studies to become an Egyptologist at one of the most renowned institutes working in that particular field worldwide. At the same time, it was clear that as a woman in an androcentric society and, in particular, in academia, this would be no easy task. At that point no woman had ever been appointed to a full professorship at an Austrian university. In addition, little by little the Austrofascist regime was reversing the gains in women's emancipation made during the First Republic: in 1933, for example, it removed the civil equality between men and women that had been anchored in the constitution.<sup>21</sup> When female students were given opportunities to prove themselves in academic life, this was always dependent on the active support of a man. The limits on what was possible for women were determined by men.<sup>22</sup>

### Escape to the Academic Semi-Periphery: From Vienna to Valparaíso

Having submitted her doctoral thesis in the winter semester of 1937–8 and having passed the first of the two required exams, Mostny took part in an expedition to Luxor (Valley of the Kings in Egypt) with a research group from the University of Milan. Mostny was twenty-four years old at this time and had been quick to prove herself in academia. The assessments of her PhD thesis also highlighted her excellence, with only one or two formal mistakes found that could be held against her.<sup>23</sup> When she returned from Milan to Vienna on 9 March 1938, only six days remained before her second and final exam. After this she would be permitted to bear the title of Doctor. But during the night of 11–12 March, German troops marched into Austria and the country ceased to exist. From one day to the next, National Socialist “racial laws” defined Grete Mostny as an alien and a Jew: since her mother came from a Jewish family then so did she, despite the fact that she had been baptised as a Catholic in Linz in 1916. The University of Vienna shut down for a few weeks immediately after the Anschluss and there was no chance for Mostny to take her degree on 15 March, as planned. The extended Mostny family was stripped of its wealth by the National Socialists, the family business in Linz was seized

<sup>18</sup> Gütl, “Das Institut für Ägyptologie und Afrikanistik,” 510; Gertrud Thausing, *Tarudet. Ein Leben für die Ägyptologie* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1989), 38.

<sup>19</sup> Mostny does not appear in the archives of the Kunsthistorische Museum and the Egyptian-Oriental Collection. It is likely that she was not employed, which also corresponds to the time, but probably worked on a voluntary basis. She was, as Thausing recalls, supported by Hans Demel in this respect. See Thausing, *Tarudet*, 38.

<sup>20</sup> Grete Mostny, “Die Kleidung der ägyptischen Frau im alten Reich” (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1937).

<sup>21</sup> Federal Law Gazette for the Federal State of Austria, 1/1934-II, Article 16, Paragraph 2, 1 May 1934.

<sup>22</sup> On the political and anti-Semitic framework of the University of Vienna during Austrofascism, see Linda Erker, *Die Universität Wien im Austrofascismus. Österreichische Hochschulpolitik 1933 bis 1938, ihre Vorbedingungen und langfristigen Nachwirkungen* (Göttingen: V & R Unipress/Vienna University Press, 2021).

<sup>23</sup> AUW, Rigorosenprotokoll Nr. 14004 of Grete Mostny, 10 December 1937, Faculty of Philosophy.

and for example Leopold Mostny was deported to the National Socialist ghetto/concentration camp Theresienstadt/Terezín, where he also died in 1942.<sup>24</sup>

Grete Mostny reacted quickly to the threat and returned to Milan. Here, together with her brother, Kurt Mostny, she submitted an initial application for a visa to Chile. A Chilean friend of the family tried to intervene privately on their behalf. The refugee aid committees for academics set up in London and New York concentrated on England and the United States;<sup>25</sup> South America was not seen as a desirable destination for researchers looking to flee. However, the visa application for Chile was denied.<sup>26</sup>

At the beginning of 1939, Mostny travelled from Milan to Brussels<sup>27</sup> and, in February 1939, was issued a passport by the German embassy bearing the name Sara Margarete Mostny.<sup>28</sup> “Sara(h)” was the discriminating additional name used by National Socialist Germany to label all women who were to be persecuted as Jews. Her brother was given the additional name “Israel.” Grete Mostny was able to enrol at the Free University of Brussels. In March 1939, together with her brother and her mother, who had fled via Czechoslovakia to join her children, she finally obtained a visa for Chile. Before the end of the 1939 summer semester, Grete Mostny had managed to have her four years of study recognised in full, to pass the required exam in French, and to be awarded her doctorate in the discipline of Oriental Philology and History with honours.<sup>29</sup>

Mostny’s brother had already set off for Chile a few weeks before she obtained her doctorate. Now, with her degree in her pocket, Grete Mostny also left Europe behind her, sailing from France on the ship *Reina del Pacífico* and crossing over to Chile.<sup>30</sup> After Argentina and Brazil, this country boasted the greatest number of European immigrants in South America for the years 1933 to 1945.<sup>31</sup> The number of refugees from German-speaking countries who arrived in Chile during this period was just under thirteen thousand (there were only 3,700 Jews living in Chile in 1930, but 8,300 by 1940).<sup>32</sup> As in many other South American countries, refugees in Chile were confronted with a certain anti-Semitism,<sup>33</sup> but at the same time there were intellectuals like Pablo Neruda who supported refugees from Europe. After the November Pogrom in the German Reich in 1938 especially, Chile was no longer an insider tip for exiles and around the end of 1939 and beginning of 1940, it looked temporarily as though the country would close its borders. However, apart from a brief halt in immigration in 1940, this did not actually become a

<sup>24</sup> Reitner, “‘Arisierungen’ im Nationalsozialismus,” 83; Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance, Database: Austrian Victims of the Holocaust, Leopold Mostny.

<sup>25</sup> Johannes Feichtinger, *Wissenschaft zwischen den Kulturen: österreichische Hochschullehrer in der Emigration 1933–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2001). On academic women’s networks (which did not play a role for Mostny because the focus was on Great Britain, the U.S.A., and Germany, and Latin America was again left out), see Christine von Oertzen, *Science, Gender, and Internationalism: Women’s Academic Networks, 1917–1955* (New York: Palgrave, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Mostny, *Conversations*, 213.

<sup>27</sup> Mostny had been registered with the Foreign Police in Brussels since 23 September 1938; see Archives générales du Royaume (AGR), Fremdenpolizeiliche Meldung in Brüssel 18.10.1938, Mostny, Grete, file nr. A311.853, Justizministerium. Dienst für Öffentliche Sicherheit. Ausländerpolizei.

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Interior Fund, National Archives of the Administration of Chile (hereafter ARNAD), Act of naturalisation of Grete Mostny, 5.4.1946, Decree 2200, Vol. 11812, Ministry Interior Fund.

<sup>29</sup> Archives of Université Libre de Bruxelles (AULB), Fichier des inscriptions 1938/39, Mostny Grete.

<sup>30</sup> ARNAD, Application for residence of Grete Mostny, 3.8.1944, Decree 3041, Vol. 15023, Ministry Interior Fund.

<sup>31</sup> Irmtrud Wojak, *Exil in Chile: Die Deutsch-jüdische und politische Emigration während des Nationalsozialismus 1933–1945* (Berlin: Metropol, 1994), 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>33</sup> Gustavo Guzmán, “Indifference, Hostility, and Pragmatism: An X-Ray of Chilean Right-Wing Attitudes toward Jews, 1932–1940,” in *Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers in Latin America: Jewish Latin America*, vol. 12, ed. Raanan Rein et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 42–65.

reality, although asylum practice became increasingly stringent and was concentrated solely on family reunification. But the three Mostnys had managed to get there in time and could now start to build a new life. According to their application for a temporary residence permit in 1939, on her arrival Grete Mostny had very little by way of financial capital but—as it turned out—she had a great deal of academic capital.<sup>34</sup>

It seems that Mostny had known that without a degree, she would have little chance of working in academia in exile and the strategy of refusing to emigrate without her doctorate therefore paid off. Yet alongside her education at renowned European universities were a number of other factors that enabled Grete Mostny to rapidly gain a foothold in her new homeland. A factor that cannot be ignored is coincidence, which cannot be quantified or compared but assumes a prominent aspect in researching forced migration, as well as careers in general. As early as 1919, Max Weber, in his classic essay *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (Science as a Vocation), had emphasised the significance of coincidence as a code-termining variable of academic life.<sup>35</sup>

Significantly, Mostny's arrival in Chile coincided with a structural window of opportunity: academia in Chile (as in Argentina) was in a phase of modernisation.<sup>36</sup> This was clearly manifested in, among other things, the appointment of several researchers from Europe and North America in the two preceding decades.<sup>37</sup> Chile was already a destination for Germans after the failed revolution in 1848 and the southern parts of the country especially were already dominated by German immigrants.<sup>38</sup> In the 1930s, the universities went through a phase of reforms and as a part of the process saw the import of many renowned German-speaking scholars. Chile's move from being positioned in something of an academic periphery to a position of semi-periphery was well supported by these experts.

Mostny was fortunate on an individual level as well. While on the crossing to Valparaíso she got acquainted with an Englishman, whose name is not recorded in the sources, who introduced her to Richard Edward Latcham (Ricardo Latcham), thereby giving her one of the first important contacts in her professional network.<sup>39</sup> Not only did Latcham research in a field still in the process of being established, but he had been teaching prehistory at the Faculty of Philosophy and Education of the University of Chile since the 1930s.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, he had been director of the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural since 1938. This was the oldest and most important museum in Chile, founded in 1830, just twelve years after the Chilean Declaration of Independence from the Spanish Empire.<sup>41</sup> In September 1939—two months after her arrival in the country—Latcham appointed Mostny as an unpaid assistant in the anthropology section. The sources do not reveal how she could afford to work unpaid in the museum. What is clear, however, is that in

<sup>34</sup> ARNAD, Application for residence of Grete Mostny, 3.8.1944.

<sup>35</sup> Max Weber, *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 2011), 8.

<sup>36</sup> In Venezuela, this period was also one of modernisation and change, as Sebastian Huhn shows in his contribution to this issue concerning the history of Venezuela and the white immigration and resettlement policy.

<sup>37</sup> Claudio Gutiérrez and Flavio Gutiérrez, "Carlos Grandjot, tres décadas de matemáticas en Chile: 1930–1960," *Boletín de la Asociación Matemática Venezolana* 11:1 (2004), 55–84, 64.

<sup>38</sup> Sandra Carreras, "Los emigrados germanohablantes en América del Sur: expresiones e interpretaciones de su compromiso político," in *Identidad en cuestión y compromiso político: los emigrados germanohablantes en América del Sur*, ed. Sandra Carreras (Madrid: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2019), 7–18.

<sup>39</sup> Rosario Letelier Vial, "La doctora Grete Mostny y los estudios de prehistoria en Chile," *El Mercurio, Revista de la Universidad de Chile* (17.8.1978), 4.

<sup>40</sup> Joanna Crow, "Rethinking National Identities: Representations of the Mapuche and Dominant Discourses of Nationhood in Twentieth-Century Chile" (PhD diss., University of London, 2013), 69.

<sup>41</sup> Miguel Angel Azócar and Rosario Ruiz, "Pionera de la Museología Chilena. Dra. Grete Mostny Glaser," *Museos* 17 (1993), 16.

Santiago de Chile she lived with her mother and her brother: the latter, like many European male immigrants, was able to find work relatively quickly.

### The White Hegemonic Production of Knowledge

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Englishman Latcham had been a pioneer of ethnographic and archaeological research on the Mapuche and—like most of Chile’s renowned scholars at that time—he was a white immigrant. Archaeology as an academic discipline had developed in South America only in the second half of the nineteenth century and was dominated by Europeans, who used it as a tool to improve their knowledge of Chile, but also as an intellectual exercise.<sup>42</sup>

One of the first archaeological papers was published in Argentina in 1877, but in line with contemporary practice it was written not in Spanish but in French, which was one of the three leading academic languages at the time, alongside English and German. Its intended audience was definitely not in South America. Archaeology was a European and later predominantly U.S. field of academic activity, almost entirely without local participation. The history of South America was researched as an object, without facilitating the long-term national production of knowledge in South America itself. In other words, after liberation from colonisation, there remained an asymmetric relationship of power within academia. Independence in political matters was far from being matched by academic autonomy or equality—quite the opposite.<sup>43</sup> But in the newly established museums, such as Argentina’s Museo de Ciencias Naturales de La Plata (La Plata Natural History Museum), one of the largest in South America, or the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural in Chile, there had been no opportunity initially for Indigenous people or local archaeologists to participate in the study of their own history. Two of the few exceptions were José Toribio Medina, who published about the Mapuche prehistory as early as 1883 and provided financial support for research,<sup>44</sup> and the pioneer Julio Tello in Peru, the first Indigenous archaeologist, who only started working in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>45</sup> Besides them, those researching the history of South America—and researching the Indigenous groups, some of whom were threatened with extinction—were male and came from North America or Europe. Whether in Argentina or Chile, the academic disciplines of archaeology, prehistory, and early history—and therefore research into these countries’ own pre-Columbian history—was firmly in foreign hands.<sup>46</sup> The white racial domination of research was accompanied by the persistent marginalisation of local (including Indigenous) voices.

Andean archaeology, in which field Mostny worked following her arrival in Chile, was led predominantly by European and especially by German-speaking researchers.<sup>47</sup> So from the very beginning there was a relationship of inequality in the context of origin, race, and ethnicity. The settlement of numerous Germans, Austrians, and Swiss in Chile in the nineteenth century had a semicolonial aspect. From at least the turn of the century, academic relations with German scholars and Germany had grown and the German Max Uhle became—as Gustavo Politis points out—an “outstanding figure” in archaeology.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Politis, “Socio-Politics,” 198.

<sup>43</sup> Gänger, “Conquering the Past,” 696.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Politis, “Socio-Politics,” 204.

<sup>46</sup> Sandra Carreras, “Científicos alemanes en instituciones argentinas: Apropiaciones y desarticulaciones,” in *Entre espacios: la historia latinoamericana en el contexto global*, ed. Stefan Rinke (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin Universitätsbibliothek, 2016), 2599–2611.

<sup>47</sup> Politis, “Socio-Politics,” 200.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*



Alongside the aforementioned Richard Latham and Max Uhle, other figures who played a significant role in researching pre-Columbian history, and therefore important also in Mostny's professional biography, were Alexander Lipschütz and Richard Schaedel, as well as Junius Bird and Hans Niemeyer Comely. Ethnologists from Austria such as Martin Gusinde and Gerhard Reichel-Dolmatoff were also indirectly important to her career.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to the German-speaking, French, and English scholars, U.S. interest in researching South American prehistory had strengthened by around 1900.<sup>50</sup> In the perspective of Edward Said, we can state that these North American scholars simply exploited South America as a source,<sup>51</sup> purporting that only they, with their unique expertise, could discern the extent of the research potential. Under this premise, the Peruvian Inca's ruined city of Machu Picchu was rediscovered in 1911 by an expedition from Yale University led by Hiram Bingham and then researched intensively. The finds were even physically taken to the United States, and only after an agreement reached in 2008 were they transferred back into Peruvian ownership.

It was precisely in this transplanted and exclusive research setting, in which there was still no formal training as an anthropologist available and thus no local competition,<sup>52</sup> that Grete Mostny would find a new home from 1939 onwards. Her multifaceted identity would bring with it certain sociopolitical, and therefore structural, privileges.<sup>53</sup> In Chile, it was to her advantage to be a European who was also in possession of an advanced degree and had distinct professional connections to researchers.

### Advancement through the Exchange, Application, and Adaptation of Knowledge

Grete Mostny's career in Chile took off rapidly just a few months after her arrival. After only a brief period at the museum, in 1940 she landed her first professional coup: based on her training in Vienna and Luxor, she worked on two sarcophagi from Egypt, published papers on them in the same year in Spanish, and raised her profile.<sup>54</sup> She could do so because there were simply no trained Egyptologists at the museum at that time, and so she occupied her first academic niche. It was not to be the last. After this, one opportunity followed another: in 1941 and 1942, in collaboration with the English archaeologist Junius Bird from the renowned American Museum of Natural History in New York, she carried out the first excavations on the north coast of Chile (Arica).<sup>55</sup> Excavating in Arica also had great symbolic value: the northern border region had been an embattled and politically significant zone for decades. Chile had occupied Arica during the War of the Pacific (1879–84) and two state-financed expeditions followed. One goal was to explore the area and the other to bring the first artefacts—now on Chilean soil—to Santiago de Chile. The finds were exhibited in the Chilean National Museum and presented as Chilean heritage, regardless of the fact that until a few years earlier it had been foreign territory. With the help of archaeology, nationalist identity was pursued and “proved” with exhibits: Stefanie Gänger calling them “the conquered objects.”<sup>56</sup> So starting in

<sup>49</sup> Carlos Aldunate and Eliana Durán, “Homenaja a Grete Mostny,” *Revista Chungará de la Universidad de Tarapacá* 22 (1989), 9–11, 9.

<sup>50</sup> Politis, “Socio-Politics,” 200.

<sup>51</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

<sup>52</sup> Dolald D. Brand, “The Status of Anthropology in Chile,” *New Mexico Anthropologist* 5:3 (1941), 55–71, 55.

<sup>53</sup> Levke Harders, “Migration und Biographie. Mobile Leben beschreiben,” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 29:3 (2018), 17–36, 23.

<sup>54</sup> Grete Mostny, “Las momias egipcias conservadas en el Museo,” *Boletín* 18 (1940), 87–102.

<sup>55</sup> Nieves Acevedo C., “Recordando a Grete Mostny Glaser al cumplirse cien años de su natalicio,” *Boletín del Museo Nacional de Historia Natural* 63 (2014), 225–37, 226.

<sup>56</sup> Gänger, “Conquering the Past,” 694.

the nineteenth century and up to the excavations of Bird and Mostny, archaeology in Chile helped to consolidate historical national narratives.

In 1943, barely twenty nine years old, Mostny was appointed head of the anthropology section of the museum by the Chilean Ministry of Education. As a woman of her age, she would never have attained a position of similar importance in an Austrian museum, not until a long time after the Second World War. In the documents regarding her promotion, it is clear that she could only obtain this kind of post because she was a “key worker,” and on this point the museum again emphasised her training in Europe as a marker of quality, alongside her experience at the museum.<sup>57</sup> This is proven by the letter of recommendation which shows that Mostny’s expertise was recognised and encouraged. As the biographies of many other refugee scholars make clear, this support was not a given but rather a rarity, over which the émigrés themselves had little influence. In contrast, in the context of the general conditions in which refugees found themselves in the country, dependency on patrons, national laws, or other structural frameworks was immense and, broadly speaking, it was the same in the global political situation as well.

Apart from the factor of luck, which is an elusive concept in academia, what were the most important parameters that determined the success or failure of exiled (Austrian) scholars? A cursory comparison with other exiles in the geopolitical and academic semi-periphery around that time shows that professional expertise, flexibility, and social and research capital were decisive factors for success or failure in exile.<sup>58</sup> All this was played out in the context of white hegemony and of the history of discrimination in the context of origin, race and ethnicity concerning non-white people, which was one pillar of an academic career at that time (not only in Chile).

In his study of German-speaking social scientists in exile in the United States (admittedly a centre of research), Christian Fleck also highlights the age dimension. Furthermore, his comparison of the careers of several exiled social scientists shows that “industriousness” improved professional chances.<sup>59</sup> Mostny’s own initiative and her ambition fit this image: she seized the chances she was offered, learned Spanish quickly, and was prepared to apply, adapt, and expand her rich body of existing knowledge. The fact that she was healthy and had hardly any social obligations (especially no children) was certainly also a starting advantage.

Moreover, the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural proved to be the ideal place for this early career researcher to utilise her skills while building networks, chiefly among male European and North American colleagues. After her promotion to section head in 1943, as the country’s top anthropologist she worked in many fields simultaneously, and at countless interfaces. She was no longer an Egyptologist, rather she focused solely on the pre-history and early history of the Andean state and made her mark in the field of national and identity-building historiography.

What role did being a woman play for Mostny and her career path? That she was perceived as a young woman and stood out as such was obviously clear to her at the time, but was only worthy of brief comment. When she travelled to Buenos Aires for work in 1945, the journalist María de Alvarado interviewed the aspiring female researcher for the Argentinian women’s magazine *Maribel*. But not without first revealing what her

<sup>57</sup> ARNAD, General Management of Libraries, Archives and Museums, 10.3.1943, Decree 1638, Vol. 8740, Ministry of Education Fund.

<sup>58</sup> On Egypt, see Hilde Zaloscer, *Eine Heimkehr gibt es nicht: Ein österreichisches Curriculum vitae* (Vienna: Löcker, 1988). On exile in the Philippines, see Christine Kanzler, “‘Ich kann überall Wurzeln treiben. . . .’ Einblicke in das Leben und Werk der Wiener Botanikerin Mona Lisa Steiner (1915–2000),” in *Frauen schreiben gegen Hindernisse II. Zu den Wechselwirkungen von Biografie und Schreiben im weiblichen Lebenszusammenhang*, ed. Susanne Blumesberger (Vienna: Praesens, 2010), 103–12.

<sup>59</sup> Fleck, *Etablierung*, 414.

expectations were of meeting a female archaeologist: she was expecting an older, somewhat “dry” and masculine woman. So the person she actually met surprised her all the more. Mostny seemed much less astonished by these clichéd presuppositions. In the interview she explained that she also thought in line with such stereotypes and if someone spoke of an archaeologist, she would also always imagine a grumpy old man.<sup>60</sup> In another newspaper interview, Mostny was more explicit, and the double emphasis on subjective (and in tendency sexist) aspects is surely not accidental: “From my experience, it has been an advantage and a privilege for me. . . I was once young and pretty, and the men were very nice.”<sup>61</sup> What applied to her certainly did not apply to all women in academia and nothing is known about her cooperation with other women.

A milestone in her career came in 1946, with her collaboration with the Latvian medic and anthropologist Alexander Lipschütz (Alejandro Lipschutz), who had studied in Germany and Switzerland. Lipschütz, who came from a Jewish family, had also spent a short time conducting research in Vienna. At the end of the First World War, he worked at the Biologische Versuchsanstalt (Institute for Experimental Biology) with the physiologist Eugen Steinach in Vienna on research into sex hormones, before being appointed to a chair at the University of Tartu in Estonia. From there he emigrated to Chile, where he was appointed professor at the University of Concepción in 1926. At the end of the 1930s he took over the Institute for Experimental Medicine in Santiago and was a professor of physiology at the University of Chile.<sup>62</sup> Mostny worked with him on a specialised type of anthropology at the intersection of physical and biological anthropology, known as bioarchaeology. With Lipschütz she published the study “Blood Groups in Tribes of Tierra del Fuego and Their Bearing on Ethnic and Genetic Relationships” in the renowned journal *Nature*.<sup>63</sup> Long versions of this study and further findings from the research were published in 1946 and 1947 in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*.<sup>64</sup> At that time, there were only around two hundred living members of the three tribes: the Selk’nam, the Yámana, and the Alakalof. The scientists looked at physiological differences—for example blood groups—in order to discover something about kin relationships within the three Indigenous groups. Today a critical rereading of their research approaches could highlight a potential racial framework of their research.

Since there was still no formal training as an anthropologist available in Chile, the experts all came from different disciplines and thus the intersection with the fields of medicine, law, and biology is hardly surprising. They were all “autodidact” anthropological researchers, Lipschütz and Mostny included.<sup>65</sup> Lipschütz may well have influenced Mostny’s career even further, specifically with regard to her engagement with Chile’s Indigenous history. The scientist, who was a member of the Communist Party of Chile and a founding member of the Instituto Indigenista Chileno (Chilean Institute of Indigenous Peoples) and the Sociedad Chilena de Antropología (Chilean Anthropological

<sup>60</sup> María de Alvarado, “La mujer que vive en el pasado,” *Revista Maribel* 14:654 (1945), 20–1, 60–8, 20–1.

<sup>61</sup> “Ser mujer: un privilegio para mí.” *La Tercera* (26.4.1983), 20 (suplemento). Underlined parts of the quote are provided by the author.

<sup>62</sup> “Alejandro Lipschütz Friedmann (1883–1980),” *Memoria Chilena/Biblioteca Nacional de Chile*, <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-336944.html> (2.5.2022).

<sup>63</sup> Alexander Lipschütz, Grete Mostny, Louis Robin, “Blood Groups in Tribes of Tierra del Fuego and Their Bearing on Ethnic and Genetic Relationships,” *Nature* 157:3995 (1946), 696–7.

<sup>64</sup> Alexander Lipschütz, Grete Mostny, Louis Robin, “The Bearing of Ethnic and Genetic Condition on Blood Groups of Three Fuegian Tribes,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 4:3 (1946), 301–22; Alexander Lipschütz, Grete Mostny, Hans Helfritz, “Physical Characteristics of Fuegians: An Analysis Aided by Photography,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 5:3 (1947), 295–322.

<sup>65</sup> Brand, “Status of Anthropology in Chile,” 59.

Society), was also considered an *indigenista*, a scholar and supporter of Chile's Indigenous population, on the basis of his scientific and political activities.<sup>66</sup> With his many research interests, the medic saw in the question of race and ethnicity the source of inequalities and class struggle in Latin America. This perspective was also crucial to his interpretation of Chilean national history and was highly politicised. Lipschütz's work really did bring about change in the country and was instrumental in the attribution of greater national and historical significance to Indigenous peoples, and it also represented a countermovement against the demand for their assimilation. In 1969, Lipschütz was the first researcher to be awarded the Premio Nacional de Ciencias de Chile, a national science prize, which he received not for his research in the field of endocrinology but explicitly for his cultural and political work in the context of the Indigenous movement.<sup>67</sup> In 1972, under Salvador Allende's government, he served as a consultant on the drafting of the Indigenous Law aimed at improving the situation of Indigenous Chileans. His engagement ended abruptly with the beginning of the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in 1973.

At the time of her collaboration with this politically high-profile scientist, Grete Mostny was thirty-two years old and in just a few years since her arrival she had gone from being an individual refugee without institutionalised refugee aid or help getting established in academia to a permanent migrant and, ultimately, an Austro-Chilean. After 1939, Chile was no longer simply a staging post on the way to Chicago or New York but her new homeland and sphere of action. The connection she felt must have been very strong and was formalised in 1946 when, with the support of the museum, she became a Chilean citizen.<sup>68</sup> Three years later—along with all other Chilean women—she gained the right to vote.

### Chilean History through the Lens of Chilean Nationalism

In 1949, Mostny, at just thirty-five years old, was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Cusco in Peru, during the second Congreso Interamericano Indigenista (Second Inter-American Indigenous Congress).<sup>69</sup> This was a striking honour, in the light of the previously mentioned territorial conflicts between Chile and Peru. One year later, in addition to her position at the museum, Mostny was also made Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology and American and Chilean Prehistory at the University of Chile.<sup>70</sup> That same year in Austria, the physicist Berta Karlik, exactly ten years Mostny's senior, was appointed Associate Professor at the University of Vienna and seven years later (in 1957) she became Austria's first female full professor. Grete Mostny had got there two years earlier, becoming a full professor in 1955, after the U.S. anthropologist Richard Schaedel (Yale University) had spent 1953 and 1954 successfully building up the Institute of Anthropology at the University of Chile (Centro de Estudios Antropológico) focusing on historical and social anthropology.<sup>71</sup>

Mostny's professorship allowed her to contribute to the ongoing professionalisation of the discipline of anthropology at Chile's universities and finally to the training of Chileans themselves.<sup>72</sup> To Mostny, they represented the country's academic future, but it took until

<sup>66</sup> Crow, "Rethinking National Identities," 70.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>68</sup> ARNAD, Letter of recommendation of Enrique Ernesto Gigoux without date, Act of naturalisation of Grete Mostny.

<sup>69</sup> Acevedo C., "Recordando a Grete Mostny Glaser," 226.

<sup>70</sup> Austrian Presidential Chancellery (APC), Files of the Office of Honour, Notification from the Deputy Director of the Cabinet Heinz Hafner, 26.6.2019.

<sup>71</sup> Politis, "Socio-Politics," 213; Tom D. Dillehay "Richard Paul Schaedel (1920–2005)," *Andean Past* 8 (2007), 45–54, 45; Orellana Rodríguez, *Historia de la Arqueología en Chile*, 169.

<sup>72</sup> Acevedo C., "Recordando a Grete Mostny Glaser."

1966 for the first training curriculum in anthropology in Chile to be implemented at the University of Concepción.<sup>73</sup>

In the 1950s, Mostny also became a public intellectual in that she began to report on her work in newspapers for a broader audience. In 1954 she published her work *Culturas Precolombinas de Chile* (Pre-Columbian cultures of Chile), which took up and developed Richard Latcham's *La Prehistoria Chilena* (1928). This book would later become a standard work under the title *Prehistoria de Chile* and run to several editions. It dealt with the pre-Hispanic history of the country and emphasised the protection and diffusion of national cultural heritage as it contributed to the formation of national identity.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, in the 1950s, the Partido Demócrata Cristiano (Christian Democratic Party) under Eduardo Frei Montalva in particular was able to gain considerable power and within a few years became the country's most important party. It is not clear how Grete Mostny positioned herself vis-à-vis the Christian Democrats, but she may have had a certain affinity to it. She was able to take an important career step in 1964 under their government (but more on this later).

In 1954, Mostny received international attention. Agricultural workers had discovered a mummy in the Andes, five thousand metres above sea level, on the mountain Cerro El Plomo near Santiago, and sought out Mostny at the museum. It was the corpse of an eight-year-old boy, dubbed El Niño del Cerro El Plomo, which dated to around the year 1550. Mostny secured the find for the museum and put together a pioneering interdisciplinary research team, which studied the discovery from the perspectives of histology, parasitology, radiology, and odontology, amongst others.<sup>75</sup>

Mostny again contributed the expertise gained through her studies in Vienna and the excavations in Luxor. Alongside coordinating the research team, her main task was to analyse the clothing of the permafrost mummy. Her knowledge about mummies gained in Egypt was now used to analyse mummies in Chile. It turned out that the boy had been sacrificed alive to the mountain gods around four hundred years ago in accordance with Indigenous rituals. The mummy of Cerro El Plomo immediately attracted international recognition, since it was the first case of a freeze-dried Incan mummy found to date and studied scientifically. The results of Mostny's research were published in 1957 in the *Boletín del Museo Nacional de Historia Natural*.<sup>76</sup> The introduction, summary, and a part of the analysis were written by Mostny, under whose name the comprehensive report was published.<sup>77</sup>

Looking back, El Niño del Cerro El Plomo contributed most importantly to the Andean state's sense of identity, and brought Mostny international recognition and a high level of popularity in society as well as in the scientific community.<sup>78</sup> At the heart of this was a reevaluation and enhancement of Chile's prehistory and early history, which were gradually emerging from the shadows of colonial historical research. The mummy represented a unique find, unlike any other in the world, and its discovery—as well as the accompanying interdisciplinary study—contributed to a new empathetic view of Incan history as

<sup>73</sup> Héctor Mora Nawrath, "La institucionalización de las Ciencias Antropológicas en Chile: Una aproximación a las dinámicas socio-organizativas y cognoscitivas en la conformación del espacio científico, 1860 y 1954" (PhD diss., Universidad Nacional de La Plata, 2018), 193.

<sup>74</sup> Andres Troncoso, "Grete Mostny," in *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, ed. Claire Smith (Cham: Springer, 2008), 1–3, 3.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>76</sup> Museo Nacional de Historia Natural, eds., "La momia del cerro El Plomo," *Boletín del Museo Nacional de Historia Natural* 27 (1957/59).

<sup>77</sup> The same year as the discovery, 1954, she also became a member of the International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences.

<sup>78</sup> Orellana Rodríguez, *Historia de la Arqueología en Chile*, 189.

Chilean history. The report ended with a review, concluding that the arrival of the Spaniards heightened the disorder of the Inca Empire which subsequently led to its dissolution, along with the suppression of Indigenous customs.<sup>79</sup> These historical customs began to receive renewed attention. The ritual in which the child was sacrificed could have been criticised; after all, the child was sacrificed alive. But here, in her conclusion, Mostny decided to say that she found the remains of a ritualistic sacrifice that showed how active and widespread the Inca Empire of Chile was in the time before the Spanish Empire conquered Chile. In the mythology of the Indigenous population, the mummy takes its place as the “chief guard” or “guardian child” of the mountain god El Plomo. Those who consider themselves descendants of the peoples of the Inca state of Tawantinsuyo gather on 21 June each year for the winter solstice and New Year celebrations. Since 2009, such an event has been held in front of the Natural History Museum in Santiago regularly. On this occasion, the museum allows participants to visit the boy’s body.<sup>80</sup> Thus to this day it bears a national and religious significance comparable to the excavations in Atapuerca for Spain (site of the first known human inhabitants of the European continent)<sup>81</sup> or to Ötzi in the South Tyrolean Alps (the oldest Copper Age corpse conserved naturally through freeze-drying in Europe).<sup>82</sup>

After having run the anthropology section at the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural for almost twenty years, Mostny was promoted to museum director in 1964 and subsequently played a pivotal role in the establishment of museum studies in Chile. Joanna Crow writes that the government invited Mostny to become director,<sup>83</sup> perhaps precisely because she concentrated primarily (and very professionally) on the past and not the present.

As director of the museum, she began to operate as a museum manager in the then still nascent field of museum studies and exploited her international contacts for her work in Chile. A few years previously she had cofounded the Asociación de Museos de Chile (Association of Chilean Museums),<sup>84</sup> which later became the Comité Chileno de Museos (Chilean Committee of Museums). Mostny became communicator and manager. At “her” museum she set up activities such as the Juventudes Científicas de Chile (National Science Fair for Teenagers) and took a pioneering role in pursuing agendas around science education and popularisation, part of which included developing a “science suitcase” that travelled around the country as an accessible teaching tool for Chilean prehistory, a very low-threshold and decentralised approach to education.<sup>85</sup> The extent and farsightedness of her educational interests can be seen from the fact that even in the 1970s she was already beginning to develop museological measures for people with impaired vision.<sup>86</sup> She had gone from archaeologist to museum expert and populariser.

Before leaving the museum on her retirement in 1982, she had represented Chile in the Asociación Latinoamericana de Museológica (Museological Association of Latin America);

<sup>79</sup> Grete Mostny, “La momia del cerro El Plomo,” *Boletín del Museo Nacional de Historia Natural* 27 (1957/59), 113–15, 115.

<sup>80</sup> “INTI RAYMI 2016,” *Museo Nacional de Historia Natural*, <https://www.mnhn.gob.cl/sitio/Contenido/Cartelera/63000:inti-Raymi-2016> (1.6.2021).

<sup>81</sup> Oliver Hochadel, *El mito de Atapuerca: Orígenes, ciencia, divulgación* (Barcelona: Ediciones UAB, 2013).

<sup>82</sup> Hans Heiss and Hannes Obermair, “Erinnerungskulturen im Widerstreit. Das Beispiel der Stadt Bozen/Bolzano 2000–2010,” in *Der Grenzraum als Erinnerungsort. Über den Wandel zu einer postnationalen Erinnerungskultur in Europa*, vol. 34, ed. Patrick Ostermann et al. (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 63–79.

<sup>83</sup> Crow, “Rethinking National Identities,” 169.

<sup>84</sup> Azócar and Ruiz, “Pionera de la Museología Chilena,” 16.

<sup>85</sup> Mouat, “Grete Mostny,” 11.

<sup>86</sup> Azócar and Ruiz, “Pionera,” 16.

had been a permanent member of the International Congress of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences; the Latin American Association of Museums; the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in Chile; and the Anthropology Committee of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History, to name but a few of her memberships.<sup>87</sup> In 1982 she was also awarded one of the most prestigious national orders of Chile, the *Mérito Docente y Cultural Gabriela Mistral*.<sup>88</sup>

Her life outside of work only came to public attention in 1980 with her marriage to Juan Gómez Millas, Chile's former minister of education (1952) and rector of the University of Chile (1953–63).<sup>89</sup> Her first husband (place and year of the wedding are not disclosed), Fischel Efraim Wassner Altschuller, who probably came from a Polish background,<sup>90</sup> had died in 1963. Little is known about him.<sup>91</sup> This is certainly not the case for Gómez Millas: He and Mostny got to know each other at the latest in the late 1950s through their joint work at the University of Chile and much later became an official power couple. Juan Gómez Millas was a controversial figure; he was extremely popular (as a former rector and minister) but was also the founder of the far-right Nationalist Party of Chile (*Partido Unión Nacionalista de Chile*) which had existed from 1943 until 1945. This political involvement was at that time—and even later—not a public issue. Apparently, the relationship gave a huge boost to Mostny's name recognition.

### Politics and National Historical Narratives

During the time of Salvador Allende (1970–3) and through the dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet (1973–90), nothing much is known about Mostny in particular—except for her memberships in numerous institutions and wide-ranging activities in science education. It appears that she did not openly take a stand on political matters. Perhaps, and this can only be a presumption in the absence of any evidence, she cultivated an “apolitical” understanding of academia (with the aim of separating daily politics from supposedly politically uninfluenced research), and perhaps she had already laid the foundations for this in Vienna, looking beyond the anti-Semitic attitudes of the 1930s.

In reports relating to the period of Pinochet in Chile, it is simply noted that despite budget cuts and politically motivated dismissals under the dictator, she managed to steer the museum safely through it. This certainly represents one of the biggest gaps in the research on Grete Mostny's biography. Unlike the Marxist Alexander Lipschütz, who published on and taught about the socioeconomic situation of the Mapuche until 1973 in Chile, Mostny is thought to have been conservative or at least not left-wing in her politics.<sup>92</sup> To all appearances, she never took a prominent public stance on questions of sociopolitical developments or Indigenous rights.

<sup>87</sup> Troncoso, “Grete Mostny,” 2. Today a professorship and a Chilean museum prize of the ICOM both bear her name.

<sup>88</sup> “Gobierno Condecora a Grete Mostny,” *El Mercurio* (28.7.1982), CS.

<sup>89</sup> The historian Enrique Riobó at the Universidad de Chile is currently working on a dissertation on Juan Gómez Millas.

<sup>90</sup> See ARNAD, *List of Naturalisations in Chile (1874–1959)*, Ministry Interior Fund.

<sup>91</sup> Grete Mostny's sister-in-law called him Paul in her memoirs; she probably confused him with the father of Kurt and Grete Mostny.

<sup>92</sup> The sources do reveal that in 1953, Mostny's brother, as part of his application for naturalisation, submitted a letter of recommendation by Radomir Tomic, a well-known politician of the Christian Democratic Party. See Salvatore Bizzarro, *Historical Dictionary of Chile* (London: Metuchen, 1987), 484; Stefan Rinke, *Kleine Geschichte Chiles* (Munich: Beck, 2007), 141–2. Her sister-in-law Marion Mostny was Tomic's assistant for many years. Kurt and Marion Mostny left Chile for the United States with their five children in 1963, fearing a “second Cuba.” See Mostny, *Conversations*, 223.

While—it seems—Grete Mostny offered no public criticism, unlike Lipschütz and others, her field of research was nonetheless politically sensitive. It dealt with nothing less than the national history of Chile before the conquest by the Spanish or, in other words, with Chilean nation-building and nationalism. She became a communicator by shaping a new national historical narrative, emphasising that the history before the conquest was worth researching and that knowledge about it should be part of the Chilean confrontation with its own history. Crow put it in a nutshell when she wrote that Mostny probably “clung on to past traditions, making no effort to link them to contemporary society.”<sup>93</sup>

Whether her own experiences as a displaced scholar determined her decision to focus on a marginalised history must remain an open question. That she did not step forward politically—so far as we know from current research—may have been for several reasons. Perhaps her history of exile or her aim to become a member of Chilean society played a role here. Perhaps she did not wish to stand out yet further than was already the case as a migrant and a woman in academia. Only conjecture remains.

### Global and Micro Biography

Grete Mostny had been forced to flee Europe to save her life. As she boarded a boat in the port of La Rochelle in western France in July 1939 and arrived at the Chilean port of Valparaíso a few weeks later, she could not have known that forced migration would offer career opportunities which, as a young woman and a persecuted Jew, she would never have had in Vienna. On the individual level, we can observe that Mostny emigrated with just a doctorate to her name and no research of her own to show yet beyond this, let alone her own “school.” And she did not transfer to an established, international centre of research (unlike Lazarsfeld, for example, who moved to Columbia University), but rather to the academic semi-periphery, to Chile.

There is no decisive answer to the question of which frameworks determined Grete Mostny’s ability—in comparison with other aspiring scholars—to build and enjoy a successful career in exile. Yet from what has been discussed, some factors and contexts do become apparent. She was an ambitious scholar and had received excellent training in Vienna, Milan, and Brussels, while there were no equally well-educated academics in her field of research in Chile at that time. Her linguistic talents and her youth—Mostny was twenty-five when she arrived in Valparaíso—and good health made it easier to get used to life in exile. Her generation, that is those aged fifteen to twenty-five, enjoyed rapid professional and social advancement, something Mostny achieved as well.<sup>94</sup> Not only did Mostny become a Chilean citizen in a short span of time, Chile was her new homeland and became the centre of her professional life.

The transplantation from Vienna to Santiago inverted, or at the very least shifted, the values attached to categories of geographical and academic background and thus those pertaining to Mostny’s career: suddenly being a European with a good education from the universities of Vienna and Brussels took on a new value. These were characteristics that had hardly made her unique during her previous studies up to 1938. The value attached to individual aspects of her identity (as a researcher) were dependent on the context: in Vienna in 1938 she was just another Jew to be driven out.

By the time she arrived in Chile, there was already at least one generation of foreigners researching in her field and they and their male networks were to form the basis and professional capital for Mostny’s career as a researcher. A field such as anthropology—and a museum-based role at that—offered the well-educated young woman development and

<sup>93</sup> Crow, “Rethinking National Identities,” 170.

<sup>94</sup> Wojak, *Exil in Chile*, 268.



management opportunities. In a completely different academic field, Mostny might not have been able to establish herself, either in Chile or elsewhere. But at the interface of archaeology and historical anthropology there was still much research to be done, and perhaps it was precisely Chile's position on the academic semi-periphery, away from the well-worn "exile trails," that was the decisive factor. When she then encountered El Niño del Cerro El Plomo in 1954 she had the chance to put her professional expertise to the test and utilise it to answer new questions. By this point she had certainly already made a name for herself, but that name now gained prominence outside Chile's expert community because she was producing genuinely new findings. Her research on the first Inca human sacrifice in the region to be studied scientifically made an important contribution to national historiography and identity, as the southernmost discovery of a mummy in the entire Inca territory.<sup>95</sup>

She became someone who crossed borders not only in her life but also in her identity as a researcher. The advantages of interdisciplinary studies, which she had seen modelled already in Vienna in the early 1930s, continued to shape her throughout her life, and this was instrumental in how she produced knowledge. Her interactions with her students and colleagues, as well as her ability to adapt and transform her knowledge, which ranged from "Viennese" Egyptology and anthropology to Inca research to communicating history, would all contribute to her transfer of knowledge and to a partial decolonisation of knowledge through links between Chilean nationalism and Indigenous history and archaeology.

## Two Final Observations

In his poem "Memory," Johann Goethe asks, "Why wander around in the distance, when good things lie nearby?" In the case of Mostny and her research on Chilean history the answer was twofold. First, Mostny was persecuted by the National Socialists and had to leave Austria to start a new life twelve thousand kilometres away, and only in this foreign country could she establish herself. Second, what was worth remembering in Chile, which historical figures could be agreed upon, lay in the distant past: a four-hundred-year-old mummy discovered at 5,400 metres above sea level. The present provided little potential for cultural consensus. Social and political struggles dominated Chile in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly on the question of how to deal with Indigenous people's present and future, as well as their past. In order to carve out a role for herself in Chilean national consciousness, Mostny found a popular focus in the distant past.

Mostny looked back at the age of sixty-three, when she was made an honorary member of the Chilean Society of Archaeology. The year was 1977, the fourth under the dictatorship of Pinochet in Chile, and Mostny found clear words in her acceptance speech to explain her success and the course her life had taken. She summed it up thus: "I was formed by the University of Vienna, perfected by the University of Brussels, and taken in by the University of Chile to pass on to new generations that which I had learned from those who went before."<sup>96</sup> Applauding her in the audience were the Austrian ambassador, as well as Juan Gómez Millas and numerous colleagues and pupils of hers. And at the same time, her blind spots also become clear. For her, her education and the conditions in Chile were the key that allowed her to seize a unique opportunity. What she did not say, nor probably (could) see, was that she had come to Chile at a time when

<sup>95</sup> Helga Kostka and Robert Kostka, in *Aconcagua und die Anden bis zum Wendekreis des Steinbocks*, ed. Robert Kostka (Gnas: Weishaupt Verlag, 2006), 133–8, 138.

<sup>96</sup> Francisco Mouat, "Grete Mostny 1914–1991," *Museo Nacional de Historia Natural, entidad perteneciente a la Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos (DIBAM), dependiente del Ministerio de Educación*, [https://www.mnhn.gob.cl/sites/www.mnhn.gob.cl/files/images/articles-5237\\_archivo\\_01.pdf](https://www.mnhn.gob.cl/sites/www.mnhn.gob.cl/files/images/articles-5237_archivo_01.pdf) (5.5.2022), 31.

inequalities and white racial hegemony dominated the production of knowledge and she had carved out a niche by utilising this basic structure of academic power. The role of white European immigrants in the field of academia, especially in the decades before her, was monopolistic and she was able to build on that. This was one among many factors influencing the extraordinary career of Grete Mostny. I argue that with Mostny as a case study, we see how many different factors influenced the professional reinvention of scholars abroad. Future research has to reckon with the analysis of racial hegemonies and inequalities as an important parameter in our investigation of histories of European displacement and resettlement. After all, the category of race played a central role in the arena of knowledge production and career development, as well as in the everyday lives of the refugees and displaced persons.

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