

**WHEN THE ALPS MET THE ANDES: GERMAN MIGRATION TO  
CHILE IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

When the Alps Met the Andes: Impact of German Migration to Chile in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

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This thesis analyzes how the Chilean nation-building politics of the mid-nineteenth century enabled German immigration and sustained its subsequent influence in Chile. It explores the origin of Germans in Chile starting in the mid-nineteenth century, acknowledging how the Chilean government distanced itself from Spanish imperialism in their newfound independence and filled the infrastructural gap with immigrant activity from German-speaking Europe. The analysis of the German settlements in Chile reveals how the Chilean government valued Germans as the ‘ideal immigrant’ in their growing country. The Chilean state’s receptivity

toward wealthy German migrants granted Germans societal mobility in Chile. Understanding how the Chilean state supported and welcomed multiple waves of German immigrants illuminates the process of German presence becoming ingrained in Chile, from the geopolitics of the south and relations with the native Mapuche people to the establishment of German institutions and business relations in metropolitan cities. This background provides a possible explanation regarding how Germans obtained and maintained a privileged position in Chilean society, securing a status that would withstand the onset of world wars and the related stigmas that followed. By tracking the origin of these German migration movements and relating them to the political motives of the Chilean state, this research allows for a better view of how German immigrants were instrumental in the formation of Chile as a nation-state.

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## INTRODUCTION

The sustained presence and status of Germans and German institutions in Chile provides evidence of the South American country's receptivity to immigrant influence from German-speaking Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. Since Germany was not officially established as a state until 1871, the term "Germans" or "German immigrants" in this thesis refers to people coming from Prussia and the German Confederation, mainly the state of Hesse. Although these German immigrants were a minority in Chile, their contributions to industry, education, and the economy considerably aided the formation of Chilean infrastructure. The research in this project clarifies the critical role that the German immigrants played in the Chilean nation-building project and highlights how trust between the two groups developed. This thesis argues that, within the context of nation-building, it was the Chilean political elites' receptivity toward German immigrants which enabled the outsized influence of this immigrant population on Chile's development as an independent country. This Chilean political class determined how it wanted the nation-building process to take place and, consequently opted to incorporate German immigrant influence into underdeveloped areas of Chilean society, such as industry, agriculture, and education.

This thesis begins with an overview of sources from Zavala, Heberlein, and Penny to connect the motives of Chilean elites and how the German immigrants responded accordingly. It complicates the notion of a dominant, unilateral colonizing force traveling from Europe to South America as modelled by Spanish imperialism. This nuance points to an alternative narrative that focuses on the Chilean state's autonomy and its calculation of German migration for the purpose of constructing Chile as a nation-state. The examination of Chilean political motives reveals the

receptivity to German-speaking immigrants for the purposes of Chilean nation-building and modernization. The Chilean government's hand in these migratory movements prevented Chile from being a satellite state for what was to develop in Germany. This perspective allows for a contextual understanding of how Chilean officials monitored the way "Germanness" or *Deutschtum* became ingrained in the country's infrastructure through incorporating German technology in agriculture, pedagogy, and business in Chile.

The next section explicates the vision of Chilean political heads in regard to Chile as an independent, sovereign nation-state no longer controlled by Spain. In constructing this conceptualization as a reality, political officials focused on solidifying the country's borders and drew attention to Chile's societal gaps pertaining to infrastructure, industry, and education. They looked to non-Iberian European influence as a means to improve these faulty areas. Germans fit the non-Iberian European profile, as they were white and were perceived to have a "good work ethic." On account of this biased perception, political heads in Chile saw Germans as a group that could populate the south to occupy indigenous lands below the Biobío River, help solidify the Chilean border, and contribute to the modernization of the country. The thesis then transitions to discuss the first waves of German immigration that occurred as a result of Chilean campaigns and how they fed into the Chilean government's nation-building agenda. The German immigrants who arrived in the mid- to late-1840s consisted of several wealthy German families and came on their own accord, not that of the German government, largely due to the fact that there was no unified German state to establish the motives or direct movements abroad. The independent settlement of familial units created a steady base for the minor German community to exert their desire to work, to educate, and to produce capital in a country eager for growth. The Germans' role in Chile's development directly relates to the Chilean government's



autonomous regulation of German activity to benefit Chilean politics, culture, and economy from 1840 to World War I. Ultimately, this thesis provides answers to the following questions: How could a small and insular foreign population have such an outsized effect on its host country, yet not be overtly dominant in its approach? If German immigrants were not actors of a unified German state when they first arrived to Chile, how does the process of their colonial activities relate to colonialism writ large? How were German ideas and institutions constructed to be ingrained and maintained in Chile? The following answers to these questions illuminate the ways in which the interplay between colonialism and nationalism affected the establishment and development of the Chilean state.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly literature regarding German migration to Chile concentrates on the early interactions of German and Chilean actors, motives of Chilean elites in recruiting immigrants from German-speaking Europe, the consequences of their eventual settlements, and the subsequent “soft power” maintained by Germans in Chile. Dr. Regine Heberlein, who specialized in German colonialism and postcolonial politics at Princeton University, investigates textual evidence to understand how the German settlements formed in Chile in her book *Writing a National Colony: The Hostility of Inscription in the German Settlement of Lake Llanquihue*. Heberlein identifies key German and Chilean figures by referring to various letters, journal entries, official documents, emigration pamphlets, etc. Her analysis of primary materials pieces together the correspondence with scholarly backing and provides the circumstances that surrounded the colonies’ beginnings. When referring to the term “colony,” Heberlein explains that the German communities in Chile were never products of a German protectorate. Rather, the word *colonia* in Chile indicates “any agrarian settlement without connotations of a satellite nation” (Heberlein xxii). Although some German figures, like Alexander Simon, leaned into a rhetoric of German national colonization of South America, Heberlein asserts that Chilean sovereignty would have ascendancy over any activity on Chilean soil. In order to support her views, Heberlein includes a selection from Eduard Poeppig, a German naturalist who had spent extensive time in Chile towards the end of the 1820s and was well acquainted with the country and its government. Poeppig counsels against Simon’s political aspirations when he writes, “I caution against the belief that seems to have taken root, as against a most pernicious error, that the Chilean government will tolerate a state within a state” (Heberlein xxii). Poeppig’s warning

clarifies the role of Chilean government officials and the type of immigrant activity they would permit and prohibit. The discourse as explained by Heberlein identifies the strict terms set by Chilean officials in the first stages of German immigration. These conditions, however, would shift and loosen in the decades to come, especially with the growing interest in German business and knowledge production. Heberlein's work serves a critical role in this thesis to comprehend the conception of these colonies, especially in the south.

Dr. José Manuel Zavala, an associate professor in the Department of Historic Sciences at the University of Chile, delves into why Chilean intellectuals perceived Germans as the "model immigrant" for their growing nation. The terms "ideal" or "model immigrant" denote a bias in favor of Northern Europeans, who were viewed favorably by Chilean scholars in the mid-nineteenth century. Zavala investigates this favoritism and offers the arguments of intellectual figures of Vicente Pérez Rosales and Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna who formed Chilean immigration policy during the second half of the nineteenth century (Zavala 10). The findings reveal that Germans fit what the Chilean government sought because they did not have a colonizing history nor a strong connection to their homeland prior to 1871. Their perceived work ethic, skills, and available capital served as tantalizing qualities for developing industries like agriculture in Chile. Zavala details how a solid agricultural industry was seen as a means to Chile's modernization, development, and construction of a new, independent society. For these reasons, Chilean policymakers identified Germans as ideal immigrants to settle Chile's southern provinces. By directing them to these areas, the Chilean government could also occupy and make a formal advance on indigenous land. This study explicates why Germans were selected as the "ideal Chilean immigrant," yet it excludes the result of their arrival and how they lived up to the expectations of aforementioned policymakers. It also lacks an in-depth explanation of the

Chilean state's role in embracing Germans as a key factor for building their newly independent nation-state. To acknowledge these areas, this thesis connects Chilean policymakers' vision and government goals with the reality of German immigrants' arrival and activity in Chile.

Glenn Penny, a professor of German History at the University of California, Los Angeles, draws on the variety of German influence in relation to institutions founded by German immigrants and the respected reputation they gained from elitist figures in Chile. He investigates how the concentration of German communities resulted in the firm establishment of German schools and businesses in Chile. Penny's work explains how German immigrants brought "German things" to Chile and gained "soft power" by connecting with elites in the mid to late nineteenth century. The terms "soft power" and "German things" are, however, never explicitly defined. Additionally, the political background in Chile is not fully presented nor are the interactions between Germans and indigenous people of Chile. To provide a clear context of German migration to Chile and how German immigrants gained a respectable place in Chilean society, this thesis clearly defines "soft power" and how German institutions and businesses became influential in Chile. Works from Heberlein, Zavala, and Penny contribute great insight to various aspects of German immigration to Chile, yet they lack in a critical analysis of the movements. This thesis fills the gap in scholarly literature through clarifying the contextualization of German immigrant settlements in Chile

# 1. CHILEAN NATION-BUILDING CONTEXT

## 1.1 Why European Migrants

While Chilean officials sought to disassociate from Spain after independence in 1818, the early government of Chile was still drawn to European ideals, albeit non-Iberian Europe (Zavala 12). They considered controlled immigration from Northern Europe as a means to realize their nation-building project which consisted of, but was not limited to: gaining international recognition as an independent country; solidifying territorial hegemony and borders in the south; developing land and industries using modern technology; boosting the economy and trade; and improving education (Heberlein 32). Sociocultural anthropologist Noel Salazar explains how foreign immigration could facilitate some of these goals:

The first Chilean governments had two main motives in attracting European migrants: the colonization of the South of the country (finishing the task that the Spanish colonizers had begun) and the widespread belief that the Europeans, as hard workers, would automatically bring with them development (including “improving the race”) and modernization. (Salazar 239)

Salazar’s explanation demonstrates how the Chilean government sought to exercise their newly earned sovereignty by making use of European migrants to populate the south and modernize the country. These ideas were central components of the nation-building project in Chile, yet revolved heavily around the migrants’ place of origin. The Chilean officials’ objectives point to a new dynamic, in which the Chileans reappropriated the colonial project started by the Spanish to their own ends. This Chilean colonialism came to be seen as a marker of the progress made by the newly independent nation-state.

Closely considering the classification of the “European” immigrant profile and the way that they could “improve the race” points to the Chilean officials’ explicit bias for white, non-Iberian immigrants. They distanced themselves from Spanish, Iberian influence by looking in the opposite direction, upwards to Northern Europe. For example, the early Chilean governments under both Bernardo O’Higgins and Ramón Freire showed a preference for Swiss, English, and Irish immigrants due to their Northern, non-Iberian European background (Young 38). Chilean officials perceived people from these areas as more hardworking and productive, especially for agricultural and industrial purposes. Salvador Sanfuentes, a Chilean politician and lawyer, supported these notions and worked to realize immigration from Northern Europe for the benefit of Chile (Heberlein 31). Yet, the Chilean government’s inability to settle internal wars and political disagreements in the late 1820s led to instability and economic exhaustion throughout the 1830s (Young 39). These domestic conflicts postponed the enactment of formal migration policies to initiate Northern European movements to Chile until the 1840s.

## **1.2 How Germans Became the Desired European Immigrant**

Once internal disagreements were resolved and President Manuel Bulnes assumed office in 1841, Chileans could further engage in a discourse on nationhood that was oriented towards Chile’s civil and economic progress. This shift in power created a political opening that allowed individuals to explore intellectual thought under Bulnes’ more liberal government. Chilean intellectuals that became prominent during this time were known as “Generation of 1842” (Blumenthal 2). Their philosophy measured human progress in accordance with the French Enlightenment. Figures like José Victorino Lastarria promoted the development of arts, trade, science, and industry for the advantage of Chilean society. This Eurocentric focus suggested that people from non-Iberian Europe excelled in art, education, and business, and would, therefore,

bring much progress to Chile in its growing stages as a nation (Zavala 11). Ideas from “Generation of 1842” primed the Chilean government to reconsider pro-immigration policies that had been discussed twenty years prior, especially for the positive economic implications that could come of it. Chilean intellectual value for European influence created the basis for opening up Chile to foreign immigration.

While casting this non-Iberian European vision, the Chilean state came to value Germans as the ideal immigrant because of promotional efforts made by Bernardo Philippi and Salvador Sanfuentes as well as the understanding that Germans possessed work ethic yet lacked a strong connection to their European homelands. Bernardo Philippi was a German naturalist from Charlottenberg bei Berlin. He spent extensive time exploring Chile for scientific purposes and grew extremely fond of the places he visited in the late 1830s (Young 480). During his travels, he realized the potential of Valdivia and Llanquihue, located in rainy and woodsy southern Chile. Philippi was drawn by the “economic underdevelopment, sparse population, and the consequent lack of competition” of the area (Young 482). These three factors presented opportunities for Germans to fill the agricultural and industrial gaps. Philippi’s imagined southern Chile as an ideal destination for German immigrants to forge their new home. Philippi went out of his way in 1842 to sell the idea of German immigration to the Chilean government by writing persuasive memorandums to Chilean officials (Young 481). Historian George Young writes that Philippi encouraged Chilean officials to link Germanness with “ethos of perseverance, industry, and respect for public authority” (Young 490). He thoroughly emphasized the hard-working reputation of Germans so that Chilean officials would be open to welcoming German immigrants. Since the officials had already held Northern Europe in high regard and wanted to target the lands Philippi referenced, they were receptive to the German naturalist’s ideas. The

state also considered his knowledge and cartography skills as useful while they plotted their next move to officially acquire land in the south. There, they aimed to strengthen Chile's borders, develop agriculture and industry, and uphold sovereignty over the indigenous Mapuche populations. The intersection of Philippi's personal goals and the Chilean government's national vision transformed shared interests into an aligned partnership (Heberlein 31-33). Consequently, government administrators decided to connect Philippi with the Chilean politician Salvador Sanfuentes, who had supported pro-immigration initiatives in the 1820s that were never enacted. Philippi's relentless efforts and positive description of the Germans' talents made the Chilean government and Sanfuentes inclined to embrace their arrival in South America.

The Chilean government not only favored the Germans because of Philippi, but also because of the weak bond between the Germans and their homelands. The disorganization of territories in German-speaking Europe resulted in shifting allegiances and frustrations. The growth of the Germans' dissatisfaction in regards to the persistent instability resulted in high rates of emigration (Heberlein 23). A majority of German emigrants left for the United States, while a minority looked to places in South America like Brazil or Argentina. Monitoring these migratory trends made the Chilean government less intimidated by the Germans because they were not unified as a nation nor had a navy to carry out formal expeditions (Young 490). Additionally, the German immigrants' lack of a political connection to Europe convinced Chilean officials that the Germans posed less of a threat than the French, Spanish, or English (Zavala 16). As a result of the intellectual ideas from "Generation of 1842," Bernardo Philippi's pro-German platform, and the nonexistence of a unified German nation-state, the Chilean government became open to German immigration as an opportunity to facilitate Chile's growing state and infrastructure. From then, the Chilean government began to create and implement



policies to support the German migratory movements in the interest of developing Chile as a nation-state.

### **1.3 Early Immigration Policies for Germans**

Although slow at first, the Chilean government acted on Bernardo Philippi's desire to develop the land in the south as a means to set up infrastructure and mobility. Philippi offered to build out the roads going into Valdivia in exchange for some land by Lake Llanquihue. Philippi's negotiation did not require an outpouring of expenses from the Chilean government, so they agreed to the project (Young 485). The state favored Philippi's proposed actions, but it took them much longer to provide proper backing (Heberlein 34-35). Rather than waiting on Chilean approval, Philippi connected with wealthy German merchants Ferdinand Flindt, and later Franz Kindermann in the port city of Valparaíso to fund his endeavors. They privately acquired land in Valdivia for Philippi to set his German settlement plan into motion. His brother Rudolph Philippi assisted in the process by recruiting nine affluent German families from Rothenberg located in the principality of Hesse-Cassel (Wegge 430). These families consisted of a couple blacksmiths, an industrial mechanic, a carpenter, a cabinetmaker, a shoemaker, a gardener, and a shepherd (Jefferson 19). Private German wealth allowed for the first immigration movements to begin in 1845, to which the Chilean government under President Manuel Bulnes thereafter acknowledged. With this awareness, they created a colonization law that these German families adhered to once they arrived in Chile. This legal effort came to be the Law of Selective Immigration of 1845, which encouraged farmers and artisans from German-speaking areas to come to Chile, especially places in the south like Valdivia, Llanquihue, La Frontera and Chiloé (Marcella 578). The measures outlined in this law included a reimbursement for their trans-Atlantic travels and a six-year tax exemption in order to further develop the land as well as grow

commercial industries (Young 493). It also formally allowed the Chilean state to “take possession of territories for the purpose of colonization” (Heberlein 36). The power of this law also made the immigrants who arrived under these conditions naturalized citizens of the republic. This allowed for the Germans to easily assimilate in Chile, supporting its structure as a nation-state.

Towards the end of the 1840s, a larger number of Germans emigrated from their homelands due to the social, political and economic unrest that culminated in the revolutions of 1848 and 1849. Because many German emigrants were already looking to the Americas and moving to places like the United States, Argentina, and Brazil, the Chilean government made considerable effort in promoting their country as an alternative colonization destination (Young 491). Philippi used the lack of turmoil in Chile as a selling point when he returned to Europe from 1848-1851 in order to promote the remote South American country as the ideal immigration destination. He emphasized Chile’s natural beauty as well as its new, growing societal structure, something that Germans did not have in Europe. The relentless efforts of Bernardo Philippi and immigration policies developed under the Bulnes administration and allowed for the influx of German settlers, especially in the south of Chile. Philippi died in 1852, yet his work with the Chilean government set the foundation for future German immigrants in Chile. His vision carried on to other pro-immigration agents who worked under the Chilean government for years to come. According to historian George Young’s analysis of Chilean census data, roughly 3100 German immigrants made Chile their new home in the 1850s (Wegge 417). The aspirations of Philippi and the goals of Chilean officials intersected in their scheme to take German immigrants and make them players in the nation-building process of Chile, particularly in the south.

## 2. POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF EARLY GERMAN SETTLEMENTS

The southern landscape of the Lake District, or *Los Lagos* in Spanish, served as an interest point for both the Chilean government and Chilean colonization agents, although much of this land was not technically a part of colonial Chile nor the republic following independence from Spain. The *Los Lagos* region, named for its many lakes at the foothills of the Andean Mountains, was primarily inhabited by the indigenous Mapuche people. The Chilean government's disdain for the presence of the Mapuche along with the fact that the areas were not officially part of the republic caused the state to refuse the recognition of the Indigenous community's claim to land (Heberlein 80). To counter the Mapuche's presence in the south, the government attempted to mobilize German immigrants into these areas to assert Chilean national dominance over the native population. While it is well recorded how Chilean colonization agents regarded the arrival of the Germans, as evidenced by the writings of Salvador Sanfuentes, Vicente Pérez Rosales, and Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, there is a dearth of documentation in terms of how the Mapuche viewed this new encroachment. Chilean officials tended to favor German immigration to the south in the 1850s and 60s as a means to pacify the Mapuche, cultivate agrarian reform, and build lucrative industries. According to them, Chilean-directed German immigration served the growth of the Chilean state because the Germans could contribute to the strengthening of the population, the modernization of the country, and the solidification of Chile's borders. The colonization agents' efforts emphasized the Chilean government's direct benefit of German immigration to the south. As a result, the Chilean state supported these migratory movements, allowing for German immigrants to establish solid communities in the South American country.

## 2.1 Mapuche Populations and German Interactions in the South

Much of the land advertised to Germans by the Chilean state in the south was near to or inhabited by the indigenous Mapuche population. The term Mapuche translates to “people of the land” in Mapudúngun, the Mapuche language, and it includes the indigenous groups of the Pehuenche, Hilliche, Puelche and Lafquenche. The Mapuche lived in areas spread out from south of the Biobío River to Chiloé, a small island, despite the Spanish imperialist efforts to drive them away or the Republic of Chile’s refusal to recognize their presence (Keller 1-2). The Chilean government considered where the Mapuche lived as “unsettled,” or *baldíos* in Spanish, because it was not developed according to the state’s standard (Heberlein 80). Chilean officials longed for this land to not only be authorized as a part of the republic for sovereignty reasons, but also navigable and cultivated for agricultural and industrial purposes.

The native Mapuche population that resided there were, however, not concerned with the government’s vision because it actively disregarded their established presence. They resisted any and all efforts made by the state to annex Mapuche land for Chile. For this reason, most Chilean citizens and government officials categorized the Mapuche as barbarians whose existence was a barrier to the nation’s progress (Hutchinson 157). Their unwillingness to cooperate with the state resulted in geopolitical tension, so the Chilean government sought alternative ways to pacify the Mapuche and gain full control of the south. Salvador Sanfuentes, a Chilean official, became adamant on occupying the southern provinces. He suggested foreign, namely European influence as a means to assert dominance over the Mapuche. Dr. Regine Heberlein explains Sanfuentes’ thought process of pioneering these discriminatory ideas:

[He] formulated the following administrative priorities: to stem the exodus of young and affluent whites and to appropriate the territories in the interior of the province, which were

considered to be illegally defended by the natives and were consequently declared “baldíos,” that is, unsettled. In order to reduce native territories in the provinces, especially Araucania, Sanfuentes advocated for an aggressive cultural assimilation program... He was amendable to B. Philippi’s notion of forming a national [German] enclave because, as he argued, that measure would prevent the moral deterioration which excessive contact with local populations entailed. (Heberlein 31-32)

The fact that the Chilean government classified these lands as “unsettled” speaks to the conflation of the natural region with its native people. Sanfuentes claimed these entities as desperate for civilized development and productive transformation, and wealthy migrants were identified as a facilitator in both of these regards. Philippi redefined Sanfuentes’ “European” migrant as the “German” migrant in the 1840s, and the two men worked together to realize foreign immigration to Chile. Philippi also mirrored the Chilean assessment of the Mapuche people by positioning them as an obstacle to development. Heberlein writes, “the notion of knowledge he [Philippi] employs is steeped in a Eurocentric discourse that disenfranchises and erases the nonwhite [native] subject” (Heberlein 131). Philippi’s identifies the Mapuche people as a problem in the south, and the German immigrants as a solution, particularly for their ability to develop the land for economic gain. The arrival of German immigrants in these areas meant that the state could accomplish their constructive goals not only to counter the Mapuche population, but also to create profit. Sanfuentes’ and Philippi’s objectives demonstrate how Chilean receptivity to Germans worked on a basis that purposefully dispossessed a large portion of the native population.

This anti-Mapuche, pro-German rhetoric continued into the 1850s and 60s, while Vicente Pérez Rosales under President Manuel Montt and Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna under President

José Joaquín Pérez served as immigration agents. They continued to promote German immigration into Mapuche communities, such as Melipulli, located near Lake Llanquihue and on the ocean (Heberlein 77). The Chilean government considered this location as a potential port, though it was heavily wooded. Out of the Chilean government's desire to transform the area into a viable harbor, officials made plans to clear the forests and invite German immigrants to settle there. On February 12, 1853, Melipulli, which translates as the "town of four hills" in the Mapudúngun language, was renamed as Puerto Montt. This new toponym honored President Manuel Montt, who feverously supported German immigration to Chile (Heberlein 81). The renaming and appropriation of Mapuche land in places such as Melipulli demonstrate the concerted efforts of the Chilean government to expunge the Mapuche from the land they coveted for their national enterprise.

Upon the German immigrants' arrival and settlement in Chile, they interacted with the Mapuche to the extent they could benefit from their knowledge of the land. The German settlers described them as "neighbors [...], guides [...], customers [...], greeters on small boats that surround the arriving ships [...], and informants [...]" (Heberlein 81). German immigrants minimized the Mapuche's presence and agency in their written accounts, letters, and records. In time, the Mapuche's consumption of alcohol, mainly supplied by German immigrants, was exploited by Chilean officials. Vicente Pérez Rosales, a Chilean statesman and adventurer who advocated for German immigration to the south, for instance, noticed the Mapuche's demand for alcohol. He detailed how to encourage intoxication as a means to acquire land. Pérez Rosales wrote:

When a citizen wanted to become the sole proprietor of some communal land, all he had to do was look for the nearest Indian chief, get him drunk.... and supply the chief and his people

cheap liquor and an occasional peso; that was enough to let him appear before a notary with a seller and witnesses, or declarations under oath, to certify... what was being sold lawfully belong to that seller. (Hutchison 164)

As noted in Pérez Rosales' assessment, the Chilean republic absorbed these portions of southern lands through manipulation and coercion. This method facilitated the granting of more territory to German immigrants brought in by Pérez Rosales. The Chilean lawmaker and liberal intellectual Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, systemized Pérez Rosales' plans once he assumed the position as secretary of the government immigration commission in 1864. Vicuña Mackenna classified the Mapuche habitation as an issue that had yet to be settled by the settlement of German migrants to the south. After trying various methods of pushing native populations out, Vicuña Mackenna expresses how the continuous immigration scheme would finally eradicate the Mapuche according to the Chilean government's preference (Zavala 17). The idea of continually funneling European immigrants to these areas seemed like a feasible option because it kept the Chileans somewhat separated from the tension, yet granted them the direct benefit of European industrial influence. The Chilean government dedicated substantial effort to erasing the Mapuche from their national narrative by incorporating German immigrants into the southern landscape. This prospect gave way to the Chilean government concentrated interest in the German immigrants' potential to grow the country's agricultural sector.

## **2.2 Agrarian Reform**

Out of the Chilean government's interest in cultivating the Mapuche's "unsettled" land and modernizing their country, German farmers and industrialists were heavily incentivized to create agricultural colonies in the south. Agriculture in the Republic of Chile relied on the latifundia system, which consisted of owners with "large swathes of agricultural land" (Zavala

12). This system held Chile back in reaching its potential for a higher yielding capacity of crops and profit. Many Chilean citizens in the north also doubted the agricultural potential in the south and claimed that the land could not even support the production of wheat (Hutchison 163). In order to combat the latifundia system and negative perceptions, large strides needed to be made in technology, land ownership, and labor relations (Zavala 12). The creation of the National Agricultural Society in 1838 and the circulation of intellectual thought on modernization came to support foreign immigration to further stimulate agrarian reform (Zavala 16). Thus, agriculturists from German-speaking Europe were targeted for their ideal aptitude when creating policies for potential immigrants in the mid 1840s. Immigration agents Philippi and Sanfuentes, who worked at the discretion of the Chilean government during this time, proposed action plans to channel German farmers to the south in order to “unlock” its agrarian potential (Kradolfer 5). As stated in section 1.3, legal efforts like the Law of Selective Immigration in 1845 rewarded immigrant farmers with tax exemptions on the land they were to cultivate. This legal basis clarified the intention of the Chilean government and how they desired productive immigration. Germans fit this profile, plus the geography and the climate of places like Valdivia, Chiloé, and Llanquihue mirrored qualities of the Germans’ European homelands (Kradolfer 1). This meant the immigrants would be somewhat accustomed to the land they were entrusted with.

Following in Philippi’s and Sanfuentes’ footsteps, Vicente Pérez Rosales continued to advocate for German immigration on the premise of agrarian reform for Chile. Pérez Rosales promoted consistent and stable agricultural practices as the foundation of the country’s development, for a growing society required reliable food production (Zavala 12). The heavily wooded parts of the countryside required demanding labor and unwavering commitment to transform the land to an agricultural colony. The immigrants were granted land ownership



because the government trusted the Germans for their work ethic. Pérez Rosales believed that if Germans were to own the land, they would tend to it with responsibility. In 1854, he expresses:

If the owner of the land would dedicate a proportional part to ensuring the continuous supply of the labor required in order to make sure that the remaining land can yield as much as possible; if the part dedicated to such a humane and beneficial purpose is divided into small farms granted under ownership to an equal number of honorable and hard-working families, under certain obligations and moderate terms, this would permanently ensure the labor required to cultivate the rest of the land. (Zavala 12)

Pérez Rosales' perception concentrated German immigrants in these southern spaces, separate from areas under the latifundia system, to realize their talents for the innovation of the Chilean state. He claimed that this reform would serve as a method for modernizing change, yet not encroach on the *criollos*, who were the elite, land-owning oligarchy of Chile. Because land ownership in the south was contested on account of the Mapuche population, the government considered it fair game for foreign agricultural colonies. Dr. José Manuel Zavala explains that controlled immigration to “‘new lands’, not on those controlled by large-scale ownership of Spanish roots... would allow the required changes to be introduced” (Zavala 12). Directing German immigration to the south meant that the government could avoid meddling with the Creole land structure that upheld the nation-state in the legacy of Spanish imperialism. To the Chilean government's advantage, the German immigrants could bring necessary agrarian change without disrupting the wealthy elites who monopolized a majority of the power in Chile. The Chilean government therefore gladly welcomed incoming Germans for their potential to progress, not dominate, the nation and its embedded Creole structure.

### **2.3 Southern Chile: An Ideal Destination**

The political aspirations of the Chilean government as well as its enthusiasm for German agricultural colonies during the mid-nineteenth century facilitated a smoother transition for immigrants to settle and build community in Chile, especially in the south. The Chilean state's eagerness to welcome and reward foreign newcomers presented an ideal opportunity that was attractive to Germans living in Europe in the 1840s. During this time, rapid industrialization and economic crises produced an inauspicious environment for the inhabitants of German-speaking Europe. The cost of basic necessities exceeded what a majority of the population there could afford, so many Germans chose to flee Europe in order to evade these adverse conditions (Bernedo and Bilot 16). Additionally, political persecution of liberal thinkers and the revolutions in 1848 and 1849 resulted in large rates of emigration (Bernedo and Bilot 17). Those who left their homelands craved a security that was impossible to obtain in Europe due to the tumultuous circumstances. Compared to their provinces of origin, the relatively orderly civic situation in Chile presented an alternate, more stable foundation for a freer life. The Chilean state's political preference of Northern Europeans granted Germans numerous opportunities involving personal mobility and the land acquisition. On the whole, this desire for individual freedom, rather than a German national agenda, motivated the Germans' flight to Chile. The immigrants' determination to create a more advantageous future for themselves coincided with the Chilean government's urge to advance their national program.

Most Germans who came to Chile had the monetary capacity to fund the transatlantic journey southward and travelled in family units. That is to say, their affluence permitted them to emigrate from Europe in order to sustain and insure their wealth in a what they considered to be

a more economically stable environment abroad (Bernedo and Bilot 18). Travel fares to Chile were roughly double the amount needed to go to the United States because the South American country was further from Europe and remotely located. The stark cost difference resulted in wealthier Germans opting for passage to Chile (Wegge 420). The first groups of immigrant waves consisted of families because the Chilean government rewarded family groups who were committed to travelling and settling together. Specifically, the Chilean colonization law of 1845 stipulated that the state would grant passage and benefits to European immigrants only if there were married (Bernedo and Bilot 26). In this way, the Chilean state strategically constructed an affluent, family-oriented demographic of German immigrants primarily in the *Los Lagos* region.

Throughout these early stages of welcoming immigrants, the Chilean government occasionally failed in providing the necessary resources and funding as it had promised. The shortcomings on part of the Chilean state, however, did not discourage the Germans because they still had more freedom in South America than back home in Europe. In Chile, the political conditions and economic mobility produced less stress for the German immigrants as compared to their homelands. They marketed these positive attributes and used them to persuade their friends and relatives to join them in South America. Their personal testimonies greatly contributed to the increase of German immigrants who came to Chile. In time, Germans settled not only in the rural, southern regions, but also in urban areas like Santiago and Valparaíso. The subsequent influx of German immigrants resulted in a series of changes that affected all parts of Chilean society.

### 3. EVOLUTION AND COMMODIFICATION OF GERMAN CULTURAL INFLUENCE

Germans who settled in Chile in the 1840s, 50s, and 60s felt at home in the South American country because the government provided political freedom, welcomed them for their European values and background, and championed their capital wealth. This hospitality allowed for Germans to comfortably settle and innovate sectors of Chilean society without losing their Germanness or *Deutschtum*. Total assimilation was not the goal, even from the host country's perspective, because the Chilean government wanted to profit from their maintained identity. The Chilean state took what they valued in the German immigrant community and molded it to their nation-building plan. This method meant that they regulated the extent to which Chile was "Germanized," which largely revolved around the growth of Chile's society, particularly in education and finance. Although the immigrants themselves did not operate on a German national agenda for the in the first few decades of their arrival, the establishment of German school systems and businesses suggest that they were willing to become pseudo-colonizers on behalf of the Chilean state. Thus, German knowledge production and business affairs in Chile became the bedrock of German-Chilean relations. In 1871, the formation of Germany brought a new dynamic to the way the Chilean government viewed German immigrants in their country. It approached these cross-cultural interactions with a newfound caution in order to avoid intimidation of a strengthened European power. At the same time, Germany's increasing dominance in the world market made it an advantageous trading partner for Chile from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and throughout both world wars. The line between preserving Chilean

autonomy and defining a relationship with the new Germany marks the development of and degree to which German immigrants in Chile shared their culture.

### **3.1 Germanization: A Consequence**

To understand the function of the German presence in Chile after being settled there for several decades, geography professor and cartographer Mark Jefferson addresses the reputed *Germanization* of Southern Chile and larger cities in the early 1920s. By this time, many German immigrants had established themselves in Chile, yet Jefferson asserts that their presence in the South American country did not equate to the *Germanization* of their Chilean surroundings. The Germans he encountered in urban areas were those that “belonged to the upper class, spoke Spanish, and were among the most intelligent looking people to be seen” or German workmen in the countryside that “were engaged in some handicraft, as carpentry or shoemaking; but they were always a minority” (Jefferson 11). Jefferson claims that the small number of Germans as well as the rate of their assimilation into Chilean culture implied that the *Germanization* of Chile was unsuccessful and, therefore, a myth. This poses the following questions: how is success of *Germanization* classified in Chile? And who measures its impact?

German immigrants did not come to Chile in order to “Germanize” the South American country, rather they were drawn by gaining personal economic and political freedom that Chile offered. The process through which Chile was “Germanized” happened not as a premeditated strategy on the behalf the incoming Germans, rather as a consequence of them maintaining German culture for their personal identities. This cultural maintenance occurred through speaking the German language, founding local sports clubs, building industries, and establishing German schools (Bernedo and Bilot 26). All of these components cultivated cultural unity among German immigrants and culminated in their distinctive profile.

The Chilean government welcomed German activity because it stimulated the type of community engagement that officials wanted to promote among Chileans. Anthropologist and sociologist Dr. Sabine Kradolfer clearly states how the Chilean government “wanted to welcome European immigrants, who were regarded as bearers of a culture superior to that of the Creoles and who could therefore participate actively in the economic, cultural and social development of the country” (Kradolfer 5). Chilean officials, like Vicente Pérez Rosales, deemed Germans as models of “cultural superiority” because of their determined value of productivity. This rhetoric implied that the Chilean government considered their citizens as part a “culture of inferiority” due to the lack of ambition when it came to work and social progress. This rhetoric suggests that the Chilean government embraced German immigrants as cultural missionaries, not to dominate Chilean society but rather to develop it further. Colonization agents and authoritative officials in Chile revered the Germans’ presence because they believed it to bring productivity, civil engagement, and innovation to their growing nation (19). Their respect boosted German settlements and allowed immigrant communities to secure their presence in all parts of Chilean society. As noted by Alexander Maxwell and Sacha Davis, whether rural or metropolitan, Germans made it a priority to establish solid institutions like schools to “maintain Germanness across generations in a multicultural context” (Maxwell and Davis 8). This concept was not a threat to the Chilean national identity because the schools and other institutions emphasized the same values the government wanted to embrace.

### **3.2 German School Systems**

Although the German institutions allowed for the continuation of German culture overseas they were not exclusive to Germans or German-Chileans. The Chilean government’s active involvement with these German institutions shows that they were not only receptive to the

German impact on their education system, but also extremely interested in promoting it. Chilean leaders were impressed by German teachers, some of whom came specifically to educate in these schools and their pedagogical skills which set a new standard for knowledge production in the South American country. These schools became increasingly popular throughout Chile due to their academic rigor, organized lesson plans, literacy rates, and reliable structure (Penny 529). A majority of the Chilean population was illiterate at this time, so quality education was highly valued to bridge this gap. Historian Glenn Penny explains that the potential of educational advancements motivated the Chilean state to support the founding of German schools and allocate “funds in exchange for their educating numbers of non-German Chileans” (Penny 543). The growth in popularity of these schools resulted in Germans gaining *soft power*, also known as cultural or economic influence, in Chile. This *soft power* leveraged German reputability in Chile and resulted in roughly thirty German schools being established in Chile by the start of the twentieth century (Penny 543). These institutions produced everyday interactions between cultures. The school setting transformed cultural differences from an obstacle to a point of contact for Chileans and Germans to learn from each other, build connections, and collaborate. In remaining open to German educational systems within a South American context, the Chilean government sustained a relationship with German immigrants and, later, Germany itself.

German schools created and maintained a strategy of economic openness to the German market in the South American country. Trust and knowledge were exchanged at these institutions, so Chile’s confidence in engaging with Germans, German-Chileans, and German companies increased. Penny writes about how German schools “became sites where the production and consumption of German things were concentrated and multilayered” (Penny 529). These “things” consisted of German school supplies, pedagogical methods, curriculum, etc.

This indicates that German schooling systems in Chile grounded the country's receptivity to the influence of German educational practices and later extended to the development of mutual, commercial interests.

### **3.3 Economic Interdependence**

Due to the growing network formed in German schools in Chile, German-Chilean relations developed and further advanced with the formation of the German nation-state. The German immigrant community in Chile had stabilized by the start of the 1870s, coinciding with the solidification of Germany in 1871 (Penny 364). Penny articulates how Germans coming to South America during this time “ran parallel with the newly unified German state's imperial project without being a product of an officially sponsored *Weltpolitik*... more out of a sense of self-interest than a desire to promote national agendas” (Penny 364). *Weltpolitik* encompassed Germany's interest in colonizing foreign lands as an imperial power, but the new German nation-state did not see Chile in this way. Rather, the German government perceived Chile as an economic partner that was primed by the ethnic Germans already living in there.

Thus, the newly unified German government assessed the Germans who had fled abroad and settled in Chile. German political leaders recognized this diaspora as an untapped network and worked to make use of it by developing solid relations with Chile (Penny 522). In this degree, officials in Imperial Germany exploited the dispersed German population as a tool for strengthening the prominence of their nation-state as a world power. To accomplish this, the German government needed to dedicate substantial effort to rekindle the connection with those abroad. The cultural influence already promulgated by German immigrants in Chile mimicked imperial seeding, yet it could not fully realize as a German satellite state due to the Chilean government's regulations of foreign influence and the absence of loyalty to Germany as a nation-



state on behalf of the German immigrants in Chile. Nevertheless, this cultural foundation allowed for German officials utilize its German ties in the South American country so as to develop a commercial relations and economic advancements abroad.

Germany continued to grow its business relationship with Chile as a stable trading partner in the international market. The increased economic exchanges and commercial activities between Chile and Germany contributed to a sustained connection between the two countries. Carlos Sanhueza, an associate professor at the University of Chile, writes that by 1880, “Chile became the most important commercial partner of the German Empire among the Latin American countries” (Sanhueza 54). Chile exported mainly raw materials such as wheat, copper, and nitrate (Bernedo and Biolt 36). The latter of the three became the main source of trade with Germany, while exports from Germany to Chile included manufactured products (Sanhueza 54). Going into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, German companies such as Siemens, Bosch, and Bayer opened offices in Chile from 1907-1915. However, the onset of World War I complicated international trade and put these businesses at risk. To prevent commercial failure, German entrepreneurs and industrialists founded the German-Chilean Chamber of Commerce in Valparaíso in 1916 (“Uniendo Lo Mejor de Dos Mundos”). The chamber helped to protect German businesses in Chile and boosted market collaboration in the middle of World War I. Germany continued to purchase Chilean copper and nitrate, while Chile bought tools, equipment for railways, and weapons from Germany. By 1936, Germany surpassed the United States by becoming Chile’s central trading partner (Mount 12). Chile kept working with Germany, even leading up to the end of World War II, largely due to the fact they were not willing to sacrifice the benefits of their growing economic relationship (Penny 544). During this time, the Chilean state prioritized the benefits from German immigration and German trade, while resisting the pressure to cut ties for

as long as they could. Through welcoming immigrant commercial activity and leaning into their growing relationship with Germany, Chile made itself available to further German influence. This disposition led Chile to become more dependent on the profits from local German businesses and Germany itself.

## CONCLUSION

The research in this thesis addresses how political endeavors carried out by the Chilean government during the mid-nineteenth century allowed for German immigrants to actively contribute to Chilean society, mobilizing German ideas and institutions abroad for years to come. These investigations reveal how the Chilean state's domestic colonial project and receptivity to German influence was motivated by the admiration for Northern European ideals and how they could be used to facilitate the development of Chilean society and infrastructure. Through this controlled European immigration scheme, the Chilean government sought to confirm their autonomous power as an independent nation-state by regulating who came into their country and what activity they were allowed to do. The realization of Chile's national agenda directed immigration to specific areas so that the government could utilize German settlement in a way that benefited the growing nation. Specifically, the Chilean state incorporated the German immigrants in its plan to grow the agricultural sector, pacify the Mapuche people, solidify southern borders, improve education, and stimulate trade. German immigrants responded accordingly and brought the desired innovation these different sectors of Chilean society. The Germans cooperated with the government's vision because they were supported by the Chilean state and benefitted from what the South American country had to offer them. German-Chilean relations operated on reciprocity that positively affected each side, starting with Germans in Chile and, later, expanding to Germany itself. What began as an internal project to strengthen Chile as an independent nation-state became an external economic and cultural exchange that persists with Germany to this day.

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