

## **EARLY MODERN WORKSHOP: Jewish History Resources**

**Volume 2: Jews and Urban Space, 2005, University of Maryland**

### **Domestic Interiors of Two Viennese Jewish Elites**

David Horowitz, Columbia University, USA

**ABSTRACT:** The probate inventories of mid-eighteenth-century Viennese Court Jews provide a rare opportunity to reflect upon the role of material consumption in the processes of acculturation and class formation among Central European Jewish elites during the decades preceding the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment). Probate inventories are lists of assets and possessions drawn up by government officials in the process of settling the estate of the deceased. These inventories require cautious interpretation by the historian, but potentially yield precious rewards since they afford a glimpse into the individual's complex material world.

**This presentation is for the following text(s):**

- Domestic Interiors of Two Viennese Jewish Elites

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## **EARLY MODERN WORKSHOP: Jewish History Resources**

**Volume 2: Jews and Urban Space, 2005, University of Maryland**

### **Introduction to Domestic Interiors of Two Viennese Jewish Elites**

David Horowitz, Columbia University, USA

**Notes:** Introduction to select probate inventories from *Nachlässe der Wiener Juden im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* edited by J. Taglicht, Vienna, 1917.

The probate inventories of mid-eighteenth-century Viennese Court Jews provide a rare opportunity to reflect upon the role of material consumption in the processes of acculturation and class formation among Central European Jewish elites during the decades preceding the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment). Probate inventories are lists of assets and possessions drawn up by government officials in the process of settling the estate of the deceased. These inventories require cautious interpretation by the historian, but potentially yield precious rewards since they afford a glimpse into the individual's complex material world.

Court Jews exerted an important influence on the gradual opening of German Jewry to outside society and culture. For one thing, many Court Jews' in major cities like Berlin and Vienna adopted changes in lifestyle that reflected the cultural impact of their close contact with the Christian elites whom they encountered in their dealings at German courts. The documents presented here demonstrate how urban Court Jews and their families began to create domestic environments resembling those of the Christian nobility and wealthy bourgeoisie. Recently historians have begun to recognize that the consumption of goods is about more than fulfilling essential bodily needs, but rather the goods people use communicate values and social choices. Thus, examining the consumption patterns of Court Jews offers insight into the mentalité of Court Jew society in a way that more traditional documentary evidence does not. One should be careful not to assume that these Jews were simply communicating a desire to integrate into Christian society, which was a distinctly nineteenth-century German-Jewish aspiration. Rather, the evidence here forces us to confront the complex motivations behind their choices of consumption as they negotiated between two worlds.

The first inventory represents the home of Judith Oppenheimer (1671 - 1738), widow of

Emanuel Oppenheimer (1657 – 1721) and the daughter-in-law of Samuel Oppenheimer, the first Court Jew to resettle in Vienna after the expulsion of the Jews in 1670. Judith's husband Emanuel inherited his father's contract to supply Emperor Leopold I's military and upon Emanuel's death in 1721, Judith took control of her husband's firm and kept it afloat for nearly 17 years. By the time Judith died in 1738 she had fallen into debt; nevertheless her probate inventory contains a detailed description of her richly appointed apartment. The text and translation do not represent Judith's entire lengthy inventory, but rather a majority of the material possessions described.

The second inventory is that of Isaac Nathan Oppenheimer (1679 – 1739), the stepson of the famous Court Jew Samuel Wertheimer. Although Isaac does not appear officially to have held the title "Court Jew", he was a successful financier with connections to the Imperial Treasury and was also related by marriage to an important Court Jew family.

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## EARLY MODERN WORKSHOP: Jewish History Resources

Volume 2: Jews and Urban Space, 2005, University of Maryland

### Domestic Interiors of Two Viennese Jewish Elites Probate Court in Vienna, 1730s

Translated by David Horowitz, Columbia University, USA

**Notes:** Introduction to select probate inventories from Nachlässe der Wiener Juden im 17. und 18 Jahrhundert edited by J. Taglicht, Vienna, 1917.

#### Judith Oppenheimer <sup>[1]</sup>

After the death of Judith Oppenheimer an embargo [was] placed on [the estate] in the presence of her children. No testament. Children: Wolff Emanuel whose three children have the Jew [Isaac] Arnsteiner as a guardian; then Elias Oppenheimer, married [an living] in Hamburg in the Empire; Samuel married [and living] here; Beer Oppenheimer, married [and living] in Worms; Abraham, single 22 years old; Eleonore, married to Wolf Wertheimer; Veronica, married to Menasses; Helena [married to] Nathan Oppenheimer.

April 23, 1738  
Johann Parzer

#### Inventory

Concerning the estate of the Jewess Judith Oppenheimer, deceased in the month of April 1738, widow of the former imperial Court Factor<sup>[2]</sup> and privileged Court Jew Emanuel Oppenheimer, deceased about eighteen years ago... The below effects were recorded and fairly appraised by the court appraiser...

#### ...*Silverworks*

6 wall candelabras

1 *Schusselreif*

1 Sugar bowl with spoon

1 soup bowl with lid

2 horseradish pots with spoon

11 pair of knives along with 12 small and one large serving spoon

13 pair of knives with forks entirely of silver; along with 20 small and 1 large serving spoon  
 11 decoratively gilded cups  
 2 gilded salt containers  
 1 *lavoire* with candle  
 1 gilded spicebox  
 1 gilded double carafe<sup>[3]</sup>  
 1 decoratively gilded bottle  
 12 gilded cups  
 6 gilded pelican cups<sup>[4]</sup>  
 4 white serving trays  
 3 gilded salt containers  
 1 gilded pitcher  
 1 white silver coffe pot  
 1 silver *Kohlenpfandl* (?)  
 various silver pieces  
 13 gilded coffee spoons  
 3 pyramid dishes  
 1 gilded inkpot with *Strähbuchse* (?)  
 1 white inkpot  
 5 pair of knife scales  
 1 box of filigree <sup>[5]</sup>  
 2 pyramids next to two silver sheets  
 1 *Spybeck* (?)  
 2 *Spieltazen* (?)

Total: 120 mark 14 Loth 2 Q at 17 fl. 36 kr. Per mark = 2,127 fl. 57 kr.

*More Silver and other precious objects*

1 silver *Brüllenfuteral* and box – 10 fl. 30  
 silver coinage  
 1 wine cellar (rack?) with 2 bottles, the screws of silver next to a golden funnel and a scraper – 20 fl.  
 1 small gallantries chest with silver working 13 fl. 12  
  
 1 green coverlet<sup>[6]</sup> with silver gilded Hebrew letters, 27 roses (made from) good pearls and fake stone insets, 6 gilded bells and 10 silver rings – 300 fl.  
 1 large gold and silver coverlet with curtains and also with pearls and stones – 420 fl.

Total: 800 fl. 7 kr.

*Porcelain*

3 confection dishes – 18 fl.  
 1 of same – 10 fl.  
 29 of same – 20 fl.  
 5 Japanese confection dishes – 10 fl.  
 3 pieces of Japanese water beakers<sup>[7]</sup> – 24 fl.  
 2 of same with lid – 16 fl.  
 2 of same with lid – 12 fl.  
 1 of same – 8 fl.  
 1 baking dish and tray – 8 fl.  
 1 beaker – 3 fl.  
 5 of same but smaller – 15 fl.  
 1 of same with lid 4 fl.  
 2 Japanese teapots – 8 fl.  
 2 cups with 6 bowls – 12 fl.  
 2 Japanese water carafes – 8 fl.  
 1 porcelains mug with flower top and silver attached – 16 fl.  
 1 teapot – 2 fl.  
 1 *speypot* – 2 fl.  
 4 Japanese sugar pots with high foot (?) – 4 fl.  
 1 Indian figure of wood and silver – 6 fl.  
 17 pairs of tea saucers – 15 fl.  
 9 pairs of same – 7 fl.  
 30 pair various teacups, among them many broken – 6 fl.  
 6 chocolate cups with handles – 6 fl.  
 1 rinsing beaker with tray – 5 fl.  
 1 teapot with tray – 4 fl.  
 2 pedestal table lamps of white and red ivory with silver and carved figures – 40 fl.  
 1 Saxon porcelain soup bowl with top and tray with gilded silver spoon – 15 fl.

Total porcelain – 350 fl.

*Old, used silver and gold lace*

A good deal of lace mixed together – 29 fl.

Very wide gold lace – 66 fl.

Very wide silver lace – 30 fl.

Gold lace – 11 fl. 5

Total lace: 139 fl. 45 kr.

[...]

*Women's clothing*

- 1 blue quilted satin dress - 13 fl.
- 1 taffeta nightgown – 16 fl.
- 1 sack of Dutch cloth
- 1 sack of white mohar – 16 fl.
- 1 violet *Grodituren* dress and nightgown – 22 fl.
- 1 black and white nightgown – 20 fl.
- 1 pair of brown silk stockings – 2 fl.
- 4 pair of gloves – 1 fl.
- 1 grey damask nightgown – 32 fl.

[...]

### **Isaak Nathan Oppenheimer<sup>[8]</sup>**

[...] *In dining room*

- 21 sheets of heavy wool cordon (about 84 elles) – 4 fl. 30 kr.
- 1 mirror – 7 fl
- 2 leather armchairs 1fl 12kr
- 6 other chairs at 24 kr = 2 fl. 24 kr.
- 4 stock chairs (Stocksessel) 48 kr.
- 1 canopy covered with drill (cloth) 2 fl.
- 1 chest for crystal with 14 pieces (bottles and glasses) – 4fl
- 1 old chest with drawers including table – 51 kr.
- 1 old sideboard (Schenkkasten) – 1 fl
- 2 yellow round soft-wood tables with red cloth coverings – 1fl 30
- 2 square soft-wood tables – 24 kr.
- 1 round table 12 kr
- 4 old curtains – 30kr
- 1 brass hanging chandelier (about 50 pfund) – 20 fl.
- 9 brass wall chandelier – 5fl
- 1 brass lichthacken (?) – 1 fl 80
- 1 red damask catafalque (Paradebett) with silver boarder, cover and accessories – 70 fl.

*In adjoining room*

- 26 sheets of red brocade cordon with 4 curtains (125 elles) – 60 fl.
- 6 armchairs of Creuzelnaht (cross-stiching?) with figures – 36 fl
- 2 old tables – 24 kr.
- 2 stocksessel 18 kr.
- 6 glass wall candelabras – 7 fl 30 kr.
- 1 large mirror with silver frame – 50 fl.
- 2 identical English writing boxes<sup>[9]</sup> - 30 fl
- 1 rectangular table with Turkish carpet – 2 fl. 30 kr.

*In bedroom*

- 5 sheets of Dutch cordon – 55 fl.
- 2 identical mirrors with glass frames – 36 fl.
- 4 old chairs with arm rests – 5 fl.
- 3 striped armchairs 4 fl. 30
- 4 old stocksessel 1 fl.
- 2 identical hardwood chest of drawers – 8 fl.
- 1 old writing box – 5fl.
- 6 old green window curtains – 1 fl.
- 3 red window cloths 45 kr.
- 1 black-stained crystal holder together with table – 3 fl.
- 4 old tables – 1 fl. 8 kr.
- 1 mantelpiece comprised of 10 pieces of delftware – 2 fl.

*In children's room*

- 5 (aufgerichtet) beds (unappraised because children still sleeping there)
- 1 brass Sternlamp<sup>[10]</sup> - 5 fl.
- 1 large, old black chest – 3 fl.
- 1 round table with wings – 1 fl. 15 kr.

*In small adjacent room*

- 3 large hardwood chests – 12 fl.
- 1 large and 2 small Turkish rugs – 10 fl.
- 1 pair of green curtains – 4 fl.
- 3 old green rugs – 45 kr.
- 7 servant beds (Dienstboten Better) and accessories – 14 fl.

*In back room*

- 1 table with Turkish rug – 1 fl. 36 kr.
- 1 small mirror with black frame 2 fl.
- 1 large iron cashbox<sup>[11]</sup> - 8 fl.

Total value of all movables=511 fl. 4 kr.

[...]

**Endnotes**

<sup>[1]</sup> Lived 1671 - 1738

<sup>[2]</sup> *Oberfactor* was one of the privileged titles bestowed on Court Jews.

<sup>[3]</sup> Inventory employs the French *bocal*.

[4] *Pelikanbecher* - "An alembic having a tubulated head, from opposite sides of which two curved tubes pass out and re-enter at the body of the vessel; used in distilling liquors by fermentation," (*OED*).

[5] A decoration fashioned from silver wire.

[6] Evidently for ritual purpose - a *challah* cover perhaps

[7] *Wasserhumpen*

[8] Lived 1679 - 1739. Apartment had 6 rooms: dining room, adjoining room (*nebenzimmer*), bedroom, childrens' room, small adjoining room (*nebenzimmerl*), back room through hallway. Isaak had 14 children.

[9] Decorated boxes for holding writing utensils.

[10] Also called "Sabbath lamp" with 7 flames in the shape of a star.

[11] *Kassetruhe* (or cash chest).

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