

The "Brazilian Native" on Display: Indianist Artwork and Ethnographic Exhibits at the World's Fairs, 1862-1889

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Abstract

Between 1862 and 1889, the Empire of Brazil participated in the most important world's fairs in Europe and North America. Although these mass gathering events focused on technological development and commodities, representations of Brazil's population and culture also played an important role in the elites' project to promote a "progressive and civilized" country abroad. Nevertheless, the exhibition planners not only displayed machines, scientific instruments and manufactures goods. For them, it was equally important to combine ideas of modernity with the celebration of a glorious pre-Columbian past. By this line of thought, the Empire of Brazil emerged as the result of a long-term teleological process, taking ancient indigenous cultures as its historical starting point. However, this discourse, as exemplified by Indianist artwork and ethnographic exhibits, was highly ambivalent.

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Introduction

[1]Between 1862 and 1889, the Empire of Brazil under D. Pedro II participated in the most important world's fairs in Europe and North America. During this period, no other Latin American country invested more resources in international exhibitions.¹ Although the fairs in London (1862), Paris (1867), Vienna (1873), Philadelphia (1876) and again Paris (1889) focused on technological development and commodities, representations of Brazil's population and culture also played an important role in the elites' project to display the monarchy as "the most advanced part of the tropics."² Within the huge body

¹ For Imperial Brazil at the world's fairs, see Margarida de Souza Neves, "Los escaparates del progreso. Brasil en las exposiciones internacionales del siglo XIX," in: *La nación expuesta. Cultura visual y procesos de formación de la nación en América Latina*, ed. Sven Schuster, Bogotá 2014, 83-100; José Luiz Werneck, *As arenas pacíficas do progresso*, PhD diss. (Universidade Federal Fluminense), Rio de Janeiro 1992; Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, "Os trópicos como espetáculo: a participação brasileira nas exposições universais de finais do século XIX," in: *Galerías del progreso. Museos, exposiciones y cultura visual en América Latina*, ed. Beatriz González-Stephan and Jens Andermann, Rosario 2006, 195-219; Livia Lazarro Rezende, *The Raw and the Manufactured: Brazilian Modernity and National Identity as Projected in International Exhibitions (1862-1922)*, PhD diss. (Royal College of Art), London 2010; Sandra Jatayh Pesavento, *Exposições universais. Espetáculos da modernidade do século XIX*, São Paulo 1997; Maria Inez Turazzi, *Poses e trejeitos: a fotografia e as exposições na era do espetáculo*, Rio de Janeiro 1995; Jens Andermann, "Tournaments of Value: Argentina and Brazil in the Age of Exhibitions," in: *Journal of Material Culture*, 14/3 (2009), 333-363.

² Francisco Ignacio de Carvalho Moreira, *Relatorio sobre a Exposição Internacional de 1862*, London 1863, 2.

of literature on national representations of Latin American countries at the world's fairs, there is a growing consensus that the exhibitions organizers – the "wizards of progress," as Mauricio Tenorio Trillo has called them – used these events to define how a modern nation could and should look.³ By no means did they desire to deliver an accurate picture of the social, cultural and economic realities of their countries, which they felt were not yet a match for European levels of material progress. For Imperial Brazil, the world's fairs were instead an excellent opportunity to emulate its European and North American "mentors," at least in a symbolic manner.

[2]In this context, recent studies have increasingly focused on the visual and performative dimension of the world's fairs.⁴ Usually, the images projected at the exhibition grounds during the second half of the nineteenth century centered on three main ideals: "progress," "civilization" and "race." To this effect, Brazil and its Spanish-American neighbors mounted stands and pavilions to promote their manufactured products, their huge natural resources, as well as to encourage the immigration of European settlers – not only to increase the agricultural workforce, but also with the intention to "better the race."⁵

[3]Nevertheless, Brazil's exhibition organizers did not just display machines, scientific instruments or manufactured goods, as most European visitors would have expected of a modern nation. For them, it was equally important to combine ideas of modernity with the celebration of a glorious pre-Columbian past. According to this perspective, the Empire of Brazil appeared as the result of a long-term teleological process, taking ancient indigenous cultures as its historical starting point. As a way of nation-building, D. Pedro's vast realm was presented as the culmination of thousands of years of "American History," refuting certain European ideas of the New World – a "continent without history" – in the words of Hegel.⁶ Therefore, the Brazilian exhibition organizers presented a wide range of pre-Columbian objects at the world's fairs pavilions, usually stemming from Rio de Janeiro's National Museum, which specialized in Natural History, Ethnology and Anthropology.⁷ Besides those ethnographic displays, they also exhibited paintings, sculptures and photographs, generally portraying Rousseau-inspired "noble savages."

[4]Though Brazil could hardly surpass the splendor of Mexico's and Peru's pre-Hispanic temples at the world's fairs, the Imperial elite tried hard to construct its own "Antiquity,"

³ Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*, Berkeley 1996, 48.

⁴ In the case of Brazil, the aforementioned studies of Neves, Andermann, Rezende and Turazzi have a clear focus on visual and material culture.

⁵ Thomas Skidmore, *Preto no branco. Raça e nacionalidade no pensamento brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro 1976, 154-162.

⁶ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, Stuttgart 1989 [1822-1837], 140-141.

⁷ L. de Castro Faria, *As exposições de antropologia e arqueologia do Museu Nacional*, Rio de Janeiro 1949, 8-10.

focusing primarily on the relics of the extinct Amazonian Marajó-culture.⁸ Thus, after several unsatisfactory attempts between 1862 and 1876, Brazil's foremost ethnologists and anthropologists finally succeeded in mounting an elaborate ethnographic display within the so-called Amazonian Pavilion at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1889. Ironically, this achievement coincided with the downfall of the Empire, which was overthrown by a military coup on November 15, 1889, just two weeks after the closure of the exhibition. Overall, the elite's intention to create a "Brazilian Antiquity," an equivalent to Europe's Greco-Roman past, was driven by its desire to strengthen its own legitimacy as the "descendants of noble races" which had supposedly populated the continent before the arrival of Columbus. In some elite clubs of the Second Reign (1840-1889) it even became fashionable to study indigenous languages such as Tupi or to include supposedly indigenous symbols into one's coat of arms.⁹ Nevertheless, Brazil's Indianist discourse was highly ambivalent.

[5]On the one hand, many members of the elite conceived the country's pre-Columbian history as a large collection of items that could be used deliberately to create a sort of proto-national nucleus, in order to provide the nation under construction with a suitable myth of origin. However, the glorification of all things Indian did not include Brazil's existing indigenous population but only some "advanced but extinct" cultures, therefore separating past and present in an artificial way. While the abstract nation-state with its homogenizing force should appear as the legitimate heir of a great "American civilization," the contemporary descendants of those "noble races" were by no means empowered through this discourse.¹⁰ In fact, many of the existing indigenous tribes in the vast Brazilian hinterland were regarded as obstacles to progress and therefore actively combated. In this context, early Brazilian ethnologists and anthropologists developed an instrumental approach to indigenous cultures, which they grasped as useful "deposits" providing elements for the official narration of a "glorious past."¹¹

[6]With few exceptions, the role of artistic Indianism and ethnography as part of the Brazilian sections at the world's fairs has not yet been explored in a profound manner.¹² Since the analysis of Indianist artwork and ethnographic displays at the fairs reveals little understood aspects of Brazil nationalism, this is a true academic void. Much better than

⁸ For a comprehensive overview on our current state of knowledge on the Marajó-culture, which probably flourished between 600 AD and the early colonial period, see Denise Pahl Schaan, *Cultura marajoara*, Rio de Janeiro 2009.

⁹ Edwin Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America*, London 2009, 174; Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *As barbas do imperador. D. Pedro II, um monarca nos trópicos*, 2nd edition, São Paulo 2010, 219-225.

¹⁰ Beatrice Kümin, *Expedition Brasilien. Von der Forschungszeichnung zur ethnografischen Fotografie*, Bern 2007, 127.

¹¹ Marcus Vinícius de Freitas, *Charles Frederick Hartt, um naturalista no império de Pedro II*, Belo Horizonte 2002, 35-46.

¹² For one particular exception, see Marta Amoroso, "Crânios e cachaça: coleções ameríndias e exposições no século XIX," in: *Revista de História* (São Paulo), 154 (2006), 119-150.

many written sources, the exhibits presented at the Brazilian stands or inside the national pavilions demonstrate the range and reception of the aspired "Antiquity." These images and objects were not only successfully integrated into the political iconography of the Empire, they even survived its downfall.

[7]In what follows, I will interpret Indianist artwork and ethnographic exhibits as components of a more complex nationalist discourse. Beyond this level of analysis, I will focus on the performative dimension of these representations, drawing on sources that provide us with information about their reception and the possible intention of the exhibitors. In accordance with the most important discursive strategies related to the construction of a "Brazilian Antiquity," this article is divided into two thematic sections. First, I will look at the strategies deployed to evoke the figure of the "noble savage" in contemporary Indianism. Then, I will delve into the equally important creation of an "ancient Brazilian civilization" by ethnologists and anthropologists.

Displaying the "Noble Savage"

[8]When the Empire of Brazil made its world's fairs debut at the Great London Exhibition of 1862, there were just a few indigenous artifacts from the National Museum on display, which were listed as "ethnographic curiosities" in the official catalog.¹³ Strangely enough, one famous Indianist painting by the Franco-Brazilian artist Claude Joseph Barandier, entitled *Indígenas*, was shown at the preparatory National Exhibition in Rio de Janeiro in 1861, but not in London.¹⁴ The reason for not exhibiting abroad this highly stylized depiction of an "indigenous family" with fairly European features in their "natural habitat" – a kind of Amazonian Garden of Eden – is unclear, as there are no commentaries in the press, nor archival sources on the matter. In general, Brazil tried to present itself as an almost European country in London. Because of diplomatic tensions between Britain and France over the question of slavery and the uncertainty of the outcome of the Civil War in North America, which had begun just the year before the opening of the world's fair, the Brazilian exhibition planners carefully avoided focusing on the multiethnic composition of their society. As they were not eager to be perceived as a slaveholding nation, the display of the Brazilian population in London consisted of a few portraits of the Imperial family and some "illustrious personalities."¹⁵

[9]Only five years later, at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867, Brazil exhibited for the first time substantial parts of the National Museum's ethnographic collection as well as some artistic Indianist representations by members of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts.

¹³ Comissão Diretora da Exposição Nacional, ed., *Catalogo dos productos naturaes e industriaes remettidos das provincias do Imperio do Brasil que figurarão na Exposição Nacional*, exh. cat., Rio de Janeiro 1862, 33-34.

¹⁴ Comissão Diretora da Exposição Nacional, ed., *Recordações da Exposição Nacional de 1861*, Rio de Janeiro 1862, 33-34.

¹⁵ Comissão Diretora da Exposição Nacional, ed., *Catalogo dos productos naturaes e industriaes remettidos para a Exposição Universal em Londres*, exh. cat., London 1862, 105-110.

Overall, the Brazilian exhibition in Paris was still far from perfect, as the section was organized in a rather chaotic manner and overloaded with all kind of objects. Most of the critical comments in the press identified Brazil's conflict with Paraguay (1864-1870) as the main reason for the rather dissatisfactory presentation.¹⁶ Though Brazil waged this war in collaboration with Argentina and Uruguay (the Triple-Alliance), the Imperial Army had underestimated the tenacity of the enemy and suffered heavy losses in the battlefield. After five years of bloody fighting, Paraguay's leader Francisco Solano López was finally killed by Brazilian troops in March 1870. Paraguay was ruined, around 60% of its population had perished and vast parts of the countryside were completely devastated.¹⁷ However, despite its victory against the "barbarous" enemy, i.e. the allegedly uncivilized descendants of the indigenous Guaraní, the war also had direful consequences for the Brazilian economy and affected the participation in Paris in a negative way.

[10] In a context shaped by the war against Paraguay, some Brazilian exhibition planners felt uncomfortable with the presentation of indigenous culture in Paris. For them, these objects represented exactly the kind of "barbarism" they were combatting across the Paraná River.¹⁸ They also argued that due to its reduced budget, the Empire of Brazil should better concentrate on displaying manufactured goods and machinery, instead of objects that could raise doubts over its "degree of civilization."¹⁹ However, the French exhibition organizers insisted on an ethnographic display. As the correspondence between the Brazilian Commission President Francisco Inácio de Carvalho Moreira (baron of Penedo) and the Ministry of Commerce, Agriculture and Public Works in Rio de Janeiro reveals, the French explicitly requested "exotic" objects. They wanted Brazil to display "images and costumes of the locals," especially its "Indians, peasants and gauchos."²⁰ As a peripheral country eager to be accepted in the ranks of the "civilized" nations, Brazil had to "play by the rules." Ultimately, this was what the world's fairs were all about. Both Europe and North America perceived them as arenas to extend, in a symbolic way, their

¹⁶ "L'Exposition," in: *Le Figaro* (Paris), 27 June 1867, 1-2; "O Dr. Semana, preparando-se para representar o Brasil na Exposição de Paris," in: *A Semana Illustrada* (Rio de Janeiro), no. 320, 27 January 1867, 1; Apart from some critical press articles, even the Brazilian commissioners recognized that the war had negative consequences for the presentation in Paris and thus offered their excuses, as stated in the official country-guides, which were usually translated into French, English and German. For an example, see Comissão à Exposição Universal de Paris, ed., *Das Kaiserreich Brasilien bei der Pariser Universal Ausstellung*, Rio de Janeiro 1867, s. p. (preface).

¹⁷ Thomas Wigham, "The Paraguayan War: A Catalyst for Nationalism in South America," in: *I Die with My Country: Perspectives on the Paraguayan War, 1864-1870*, ed. Thomas Wigham and Hendrik Kraay, Lincoln 2004, 191-198.

¹⁸ *Catalogo dos Instrumentos de Optica e Scientificos apresentados à Exposição Nacional Brasileira pelo estabelecimento de José Maria dos Reis*, exh. cat., Rio de Janeiro 1866, 6.

¹⁹ Julio de Villeneuve, *Relatorio sobre a Exposição Universal de 1867*, vol. 1, Paris 1868, XXVII-XXVIII.

²⁰ The baron of Penedo to the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works, Rio de Janeiro, 31 December 1865, Palácio do Itamaraty, Arquivo Histórico, Rio de Janeiro, Exposições 1862-1867, Offícios a diversos sobre Exposições, doc. 4. 316-2.16.

struggle over the geopolitical distribution of power, by creating a kind of miniature globe divided into centers, peripheries and colonies.²¹

[11] Thus, in 1867 the National Museum reluctantly sent some ethnographic exhibits from the provinces of Amazonas and Pará to Paris, mainly feathers, jewelry, weapons, utensils and ceramics.²² Some of the objects were labeled with explanatory charts in order to shed light on their origin. Though most of these descriptions pretended to be scientific, by referring to academic studies, there was no real anthropological understanding of indigenous culture and history. On the contrary, the few explanations provided of ritual practices, such as the physical deformation of the members of the Pamari-tribe or the preparation of arrow poison at the expense of human sacrifice by the Turá-tribe, indicated a pronounced lack of empathy. Thus, the practices of those "uncivilized tribes" were considered to be "disgusting."²³ However, such openly negative descriptions were extremely rare in Paris. The overall representation was dominated instead by the romantic Tupi-Indian from colonial times, as celebrated in the best-selling contemporary novels of José de Alencar and other Indianist writers.

[12] A representative example of the visualization of the "noble savage" at the Paris exhibition was the painting *Moema* by the Empire's most acclaimed artist Victor Meirelles (Fig. 1). From the early 1860s onwards, Meirelles had become the main contributor to Brazil's official iconography, soon earning him the emperor's personal patronage. As a member of the conservative Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, Meirelles sought to promote national cohesion and foster patriotism through art, which is why he devoted himself to mythical and historical themes as well as Indianism.²⁴

[13] In the foreground of his oil painting, which was inspired by José de Santa Rita Durão's early Indianist poem *Caramuru* (1781), lay the dead Indian girl Moema on a tropical beach. Durão's lyrical text, the content of which is still known to many Brazilians in the current education system, alludes to a story from the early colonial period.²⁵ It recounts the tale of the Portuguese castaway Diogo Correia Álvarez, whose ship ran aground off the coast of Bahia in 1510 and whose comrades fell into the hands of the local Tupinambá-tribe. While the other castaways were killed by the Tupinambá, they spared Álvarez, received him in their tribal community and gave him the name Caramuru. Apparently, Álvarez integrated quickly into the tribe, whose language he also

²¹ Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31/2 (1989), 217-236.

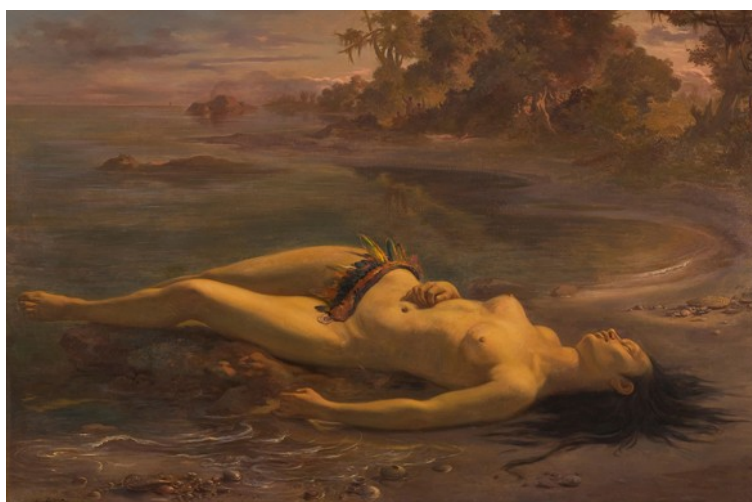
²² Noah Elkin, *Promoting a New Brazil: National Expositions and Images of Modernity, 1861-1922*, PhD diss. (Rutgers State University), New Brunswick 1999, 225.

²³ Comissão Diretora da Exposição Nacional, ed., *Catalogo da segunda Exposição Nacional*, exh. cat., Rio de Janeiro 1866, 666-668.

²⁴ Cybele Vidal Neto Fernandes, "O ensino de pintura e escultura na Academia Imperial das Belas Artes," in: *19&20* (Rio de Janeiro), 2/3 (2007), http://www.dezenovevinte.net/ensino_artistico/aiba_ensino.htm (accessed 11 April 2015).

²⁵ Fernandes, "O ensino de pintura".

learned. Finally, the tribe's chief gave him his daughter Paraguaçu in marriage. Although after 1510 Álvarez had regular contact with European sailors, who were sailing along the Bahian coast in search of the valuable brazilwood, he stayed with the Tupinambá. Only in 1526 did he decide to leave on a French ship heading for Normandy. His departure led to the creation of a legend, which would be the topic of both Santa Rita Durão's poem as well as Victor Meirelles' painting. According to this legend, many of the indigenous women who were secretly in love with Caramuru plunged into the sea out of jealousy when they witnessed that Álvarez and Paraguaçu were departing together. One of these women, destined to perish in the waves, was the beautiful Moema.



1 Victor Meirelles, *Moema*, 1866, oil on canvas, 1.29 x 1.90 m. Museu de Arte de São Paulo

[14] In his comprehensive study of Brazilian Indianism during the Imperial era, David Treece has shown that the story became one of the most popular themes in literature, painting and sculpture because the image of the dead Moema was in perfect accordance with the contemporary discourse of the noble but dead Indian.²⁶ Just like the authentic Moema, who stood symbolically for a savage but noble race, all Indians incapable or unwilling to accept the advance of "civilization," i.e. colonization, Christianization and racial mixing, were doomed. Paraguaçu, however, by setting out for Europe and thus accepting the gradual process of acculturation, symbolized the "right" path for a modern nation under construction. According to this perspective, Meirelles' painting could be seen as an exemplary comment on the de facto politics relating to Brazil's indigenous population. As Rebecca Earle has pointed out, in this respect, the theme of the doomed Indian lover was also of central importance for Spanish-American Indianism, in literature as well as in painting.²⁷

²⁶ David Treece, *Exiles, Rebels, Allies: Brazil's Indianist Movement, Indigenist Politics, and the Imperial Nation-State*, Westport 2000, 58-65.

²⁷ Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish-America, 1810-1930*, Durham 2007, 123-124.

[15] Although the figure of the Indian girl stands out both as a result of the chosen composition as well as the light falling on her torso coming from the background, Meirelles applied complementary ochre tones, thus effectively blurring the division between the contours of the body and the surrounding natural setting. According to Sonia Gomes Pereira, this artistic approach was typical of Indianist concerns to visualize the perfect harmony between man and nature. In this context, the painting was also representative of the new trend of deferring the neoclassical tradition in favor of a more modern romantic style.²⁸

[16] However, because of amateurish planning, the *Moema* could not be shown in the official Fine Arts Palace at the 1867 world's fair. In fact, the opening of the Brazilian section was so behind schedule that the exhibition planners had to liberate exhibition space for other countries. In the end, the canvas was exhibited within the Brazilian section, instead of the Fine Arts Palace, framed by a giant wall painting of a "pristine rain forest."²⁹ Contributing to the "tropical" overall impression of the Brazilian presentation in Paris, the *Moema* was generally considered to be one of the more glamorous exhibits of the section, which also included some smaller sculptures, diverse landscape paintings, as well as agricultural, industrial and scientific exhibits. Thus, lithographic prints of the painting were reproduced in French, German and British journals.³⁰ In his official exhibition report, however, the artist, art critic and former director of the Academy of Fine Arts, Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre, pointed out that the *Moema* was neither an outstanding painting nor had it left a special impression on the audience. In addition, he criticized the Brazilian section as a whole for being hopelessly overloaded.³¹

[17] Nevertheless, nine years later, at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, Meirelles would be far more successful with his monumental canvas *A primeira missa no Brasil*, which had already been painted in 1860 (Fig. 2). Although the composition of this picture was actually inspired by Horace Vernet's *Première messe en Kabylie* (1854), to the point that some accused Meirelles of plagiarism, it was regarded as one particularly successful example of the technical skills of the Academy of Fine Arts' painters.³² The picture's most outstanding feature was its triangular composition, with the large wooden cross, the altar and the priest at the top, the clerics and soldiers to the right and to the left, and finally the indigenous bystanders in the foreground, thus symbolizing Brazil's social order since colonial times. According to Dinah Guimaraens, the painting was exemplary for the political iconography of the Second Reign, since its purpose was to legitimize the Empire's

²⁸ Sonia Gomes Pereira, *Arte brasileira no século XIX*, Belo Horizonte 2008, 38.

²⁹ Villeneuve, *Relatório sobre a Exposição*, XLIII; "L'Exposition," in: *Le Figaro* (Paris), 27 June 1867, 1-2.

³⁰ Villeneuve, *Relatório sobre a Exposição*, XLV.

³¹ Villeneuve, *Relatório sobre a Exposição*, 444.

³² Jorge Coli, *Como estudar a arte brasileira do século XIX?*, São Paulo 2005, 34-36; Augusto Emilio Zaluar, *Exposição Nacional Brasileira de 1875*, Rio de Janeiro 1875, 6.

pyramidal social structure in times of political uncertainty.³³ In the 1860s and 1870s these political uncertainties emanated particularly from the rise of republicanism and the gradual process of slave emancipation since 1871, when the Imperial government declared the so-called Law of the Free Womb. By this law, all children of slaves were born free – at least theoretically – thus implicating the end of slavery in the near future. However, for conservative groups, such developments could be understood as a threat.

[18] On a superficial level, the scene depicted the discovery and occupation of Brazil by the Portuguese in 1500, which was symbolically accomplished by celebrating a Holy Mass. But the underlying message contained the claim that the Empire's legitimacy stretched back to the days of discovery and conquest and derived directly from God. Thus, the painting was to confirm the endurance of the "alliance of crown and cross" as well as the hierarchical social structure of the colonial period. As already mentioned, this kind of historical legitimization and self-assurance was especially important in a time of growing internal tensions, which threatened the monarchy's very foundations. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the depicted Indians are confined to the role of passive observers, accepting the new religion brought to them without any resistance and in paradisiac harmony. It is also known that D. Pedro II personally chose the picture for the Philadelphia exhibition, which he then attended in company of his wife and a group of his advisers.³⁴



2 Victor Meirelles, *A primeira missa no Brasil*, 1860, oil on canvas, 2.68 x 3.56 m. Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro

³³ Dinah Guimaraens, *A reinvenção da tradição: ícones nacionais de duas Américas*, PhD diss. (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro), Rio de Janeiro 1998, 130.

³⁴ Guimaraens, *A reinvenção da tradição*, 130.

[19] Referring to the production of the painting, Jorge Coli recalls that Meirelles was instructed by his mentor Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre to address the issue of the discovery of Brazil on the basis of Pero Vaz de Caminha's famous letter on the discovery of Brazil.³⁵ Caminha was a clerk on board the expedition of Pedro Álvares Cabral, who landed on April 21, 1500 on the coast of Bahia. As the correspondence between Porto-Alegre and Meirelles shows, the construction of a national icon was the declared aim of this endeavor. Hence, Porto-Alegre not only suggested the envisioning of the first Mass described by Caminha, but also the depicting of as much tropical vegetation as possible, such as coconut palms.³⁶ That there were actually no coconut palms in Brazil in 1500 did not matter at all. In this regard, Coli rightly notes that the deliberate historiographical and artistic appropriation of Caminha's letter was entirely a phenomenon of the nineteenth century, as the event of the discovery was only transformed into an element of nation-building in 1817, when the letter was first published in the *Corografia Brasilica*.³⁷

[20] Thus, in the context of the Philadelphia exhibition, the painting was intended to underpin the myth of "racial harmony," propagated by Brazilian historiography at least since Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius' famous 1843 essay on the historic influence of the "three foundational races" (Indians, Africans and Europeans) on the formation of Brazilian nationhood.³⁸ In a brochure on the painting's central importance for the Brazilian presentation in Philadelphia, the Portuguese scholar Manuel Joaquim Pinheiro Chagas strongly recommended its technical reproduction and massive dissemination as an "urgent national task."³⁹ Though of Portuguese nationality and a member of Lisbon's Royal Academy of Sciences, Chagas stressed Portugal's and Brazil's common historical heritage and thus pointed out the great art-historical significance of Meirelles' work, which so masterfully illustrated how the Brazilian nation had emerged from the descendants of "noble indigenous races" and members of the "glorious Portuguese seafaring nation."⁴⁰ According to Chagas, the scene depicted by Meirelles would also clarify the difference between the "peaceful" Portuguese expansion in Brazil and the brutal conquest of the rest of America by the ruthless Spaniards. While the Spaniards had encountered fierce indigenous resistance in Peru and Mexico, the Brazilian "encounter of civilizations" was supposedly characterized by "peace and love."⁴¹ As a matter of course,

³⁵ Coli, *Como estudar a arte*, 30.

³⁶ Coli, *Como estudar a arte*, 30.

³⁷ Coli, *Como estudar a arte*, 25.

³⁸ Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, "Como se deve escrever a história do Brasil: dissertação, oferecida ao Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Brasil, pelo Carlos Frederico Ph. de Martius, acompanhada de uma biblioteca brasileira, ou lista das obras pertencentes à história do Brasil," in: *Revista de História de América* (México), 42, 1956 [1843], 433-441.

³⁹ M. Pinheiro Chagas, *A Primeira Missa no Brasil*, Lisboa 1878, 28-29.

⁴⁰ Chagas, *A Primeira Missa*, 20-21.

⁴¹ Chagas, *A Primeira Missa*, 20-21.

the annihilation of a large proportion of the indigenous inhabitants of present-day Brazil by conquest, colonization and hitherto unknown diseases, was politely concealed.

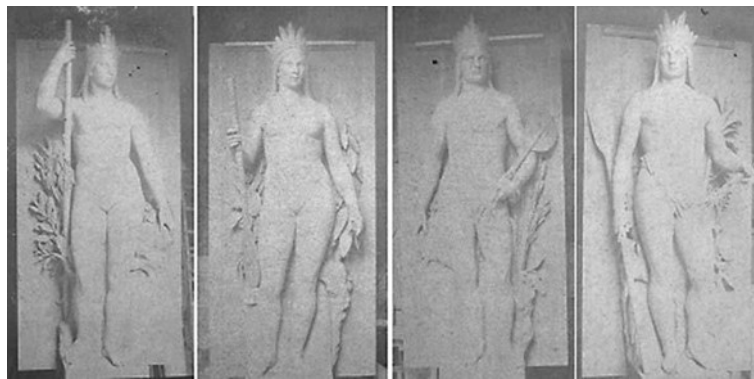
[21] Interestingly, the exhibition of Meirelles' painting in Philadelphia was indeed the result of a Luso-Brazilian cooperation, as is revealed by a letter from the Vice President of the Brazilian Exhibition Committee, Felipe Lopes, to the Imperial Minister Tomás José Coelho de Almeida.⁴² In this document, the Brazilian exhibition planners expressed their gratefulness to the President of the Portuguese Commission, Manuel Alves Guerra, for his support in Philadelphia. Accordingly, the painting could not have been shown without Portugal voluntarily clearing an important portion of its own exhibition space, since the hall assigned to Brazil apparently proved to have insufficient space for such a monumental canvas. This act of generosity would have been decisive for the painting's popular success, even securing Brazil an important prize in Philadelphia.

[22] Two other visual representations of Indianism at the Centennial Exhibition were contributed by the Mexican-born sculptor of Italian descent Rodolfo Bernardelli, who worked and lived in Brazil. However, his two statues inspired by romantic Indianism did not capture much attention, as they had been unfavorably positioned in a corner of the Brazilian pavilion, according to the *Jornal do Commercio*.⁴³ As with other Indianist sculptors, Bernardelli clearly drew his inspiration from classical Greco-Roman models, as was to be expected from an artist who had received part of his training in Italy. Thus, his sculptures *À espreita* and *Saudades da tribo* showed a great deal of empathy for classical antiquity and evoked the frequently emulated topos of the "ancient warrior hero."

[23] However, the most significant display of Brazilian Indianism at a world's fair was the façade of its monumental national pavilion in 1889. The pavilion – built right beside the nineteenth century's new symbol of universal progress, the Eiffel tower – was designed by the French architect Louis Dauvergne and combined various styles. With an area of 400 square meters and a height of 40 meters, the three-story building was beyond anything Brazil had mounted at previous world's fairs. Although some commentators identified the façade as dominated by "Luso-American" elements, the building was rather characterized by an eclectic fusion of classicist, orientalist, Spanish, but especially Indianist elements (Fig. 3). The latter in the form of six huge "Indio-statues" made of plaster, representing the most important Brazilian rivers (Paraná, Amazonas, São Francisco, Paraíba, Tietê, Tocantins).

⁴² Felipe Lopes Netto to Tomás José Coelho de Almeida, 9 October 1876, in: IBPC/Museu Imperial, ed., *D. Pedro II na Exposição de Filadélfia*, Petrópolis 1993, 58-61.

⁴³ "Exposição de Philadelphia," in: *Jornal do Commercio* (Rio de Janeiro), 29 June 1876, 3.



3 Unknown photographer, *Índios representando rios brasileiros*, 1889, albumen. Museu Histórico Nacional, Rio de Janeiro

[24] As in previous exhibitions, the statues from the workshop of the French sculptor François Ambroise Gilbert resembled Greco-Roman models and had not much in common with Brazil's actual indigenous population. However, Gilbert's allegorical display of the main navigable rivers by no means intended to reflect reality. Besides the obvious function as a national allegory, there was also an important economic aspect to the statues. Thus, the European exhibition visitor could learn that the lack of roads and railway lines in much of Brazil's interior could easily be compensated by navigable waterways. Furthermore, it was no coincidence that the "Indio-statues" represented pairs of young men and women, which could be understood as an allusion to the fertility and vitality of the country.⁴⁴ The vegetation surrounding the figures, however, was anything but "natural," as it mainly consisted of agricultural products for export, such as sugar cane, coffee, rubber and mate.⁴⁵

Forging a "Brazilian Antiquity"

[25] Besides Indianism, the more scientific contributions of Rio de Janeiro's National Museum were at least equally important for the construction of a "Brazilian Antiquity" at the world's fairs. After the aforementioned ethnographic displays in London, Paris and Vienna, which received more or less harsh critiques from both the organizers and the press, the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 would eventually turn the tide. Under the leadership of the botanist and ethnologist Ladislau Netto, who had taken over as director of the museum in the year of the Philadelphia fair, the institution would soon become one of the most advanced places for the study of Natural History, Ethnology and Anthropology in South America.⁴⁶ The National Museum's display consisted of various

⁴⁴ Capturing the message, the *Boston Globe* commented: "The principal facade is divided by four square sculptured pilasters, at the front of each of which is the colossal statue of an Indian, symbolical of one of the principal streams to which the wondrous fertility of Brazil is chiefly due." On this: "White and Dazzling," in: *Boston Globe*, 29 July 1889, 6.

⁴⁵ "Exposição de Pariz," in: *A Provincia de São Paulo*, 1 June 1889, 1.

⁴⁶ Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças. Cientistas, instituições e questão racial no Brasil*, São Paulo, 70-83.

ceramics from the fluvial island of Marajó, as well as bones, weapons, jewelry and crafts, which had been made by supposedly "civilized" Indians.⁴⁷

[26] However, it is not clear if all exhibits from the preparatory National Exhibition of 1875, such as the "skull of a brave cacique," were also on display in Philadelphia, since the official reports and catalogs provide no details on the matter.⁴⁸ At the very least, the archeological findings from Marajó, as well as the so-called *sambaquis* were presented both in Rio and in Philadelphia. In relation to the *sambaquis*, it is nevertheless unclear whether these prehistoric mounds of limestone, which had probably served as burial sites, were presented in graphic or model-like form.⁴⁹ Especially interesting in this regard are the interpretations of the Brazilian Commission members José de Saldanha da Gama, Augusto Emílio Zaluar and the journalist Rozendo Moniz Barreto, who insisted that these mounds were the remains of a "highly civilized" pre-Columbian culture, linking the Marajó-artefacts to similar remnants from the Aztecs and Incas. By attempting to enhance the "civilized" status of the extinct Marajó-culture through possible pre-Columbian contacts with unquestionable "high cultures" and thereby constructing a "Brazilian antiquity," Gama, Zaluar and Barreto were moving largely in the realm of speculation. In addition, all three asserted that the indigenous tribes living today in and around the Marajó-island in a "state of savagery" could by no means be the descendants of this once great culture.⁵⁰ In this context, Gama's final remarks on the periodization of the Marajó-culture were almost amusing, as he stated that their origins lay probably before the time of biblical creation. However, he expressively wished not to delve into such a "delicate" debate that could point to the correctness of Darwin's theories.⁵¹

[27] Nevertheless, according to Zaluar, the *sambaquis* as well as the ceramics found in Marajó hinted at pre-Columbian connections between the Marajó-Indians, the Incas and Aztecs, a fact which he claimed Ladislau Netto's research also confirmed.⁵² In Zaluar's view, the island of Marajó – located at the mouth of the Amazon – could have been a kind of stopover for "civilized races" on their way from the Gulf of Mexico to the Amazon. As other contemporary Brazilian archeologists, he believed that the remains of an old culture would someday be found "deep in the interior of Brazil, in the Amazon basin."⁵³

⁴⁷ Benjamin Franklin Ramiz Galvão, ed., *Catalogo da Exposição Nacional em 1875*, exh. cat., Rio de Janeiro 1875, 617-620.

⁴⁸ Committee Representing the Empire of Brazil at the Philadelphia International Exhibition, ed., *Catalogue of the Brazilian Section*, exh. cat., Philadelphia 1876, 195; Galvão, *Catalogo da Exposição*, 620.

⁴⁹ Galvão, *Catalogo da Exposição*, 620.

⁵⁰ José de Saldanha da Gama, *Estudos sobre a quarta Exposição de 1875*, Rio de Janeiro 1875, 27-30; Zaluar, *Exposição Nacional Brasileira*, 75-78; Rozendo Moniz Barreto, *Notas e observações, Exposição Nacional de 1875*, Rio de Janeiro 1876, 210-211.

⁵¹ Gama, *Estudos sobre a quarta Exposição*, 29.

⁵² Zaluar, *Exposição Nacional Brasileira*, 265.

⁵³ Zaluar, *Exposição Nacional Brasileira*, 265.

However, he was also quite sure that the currently existing Indians were not the direct descendants of this imagined "ancient high culture".

[28] In this spirit, the journalist Barreto describes one of João Martins da Silva Coutinho's expeditions to the Amazon, from which many of the displayed artefacts stemmed from.⁵⁴ According to Barreto, some of the most precious ceramics shown at the exhibition were found on the bottom of a "sacred lake." When the engineer, naturalist and adventurer Coutinho – one of the National Museum's most fearless collectors – fished the ceramics out of the lake, this "sacrilege" provoked a heavy dispute with the local natives, especially over one precious dish.⁵⁵ According to Barreto, the natives told Coutinho that the "divine mother of the lake and mistress of the dish" would grant them no more fish in the future, if Coutinho took the ceramic. However, the "crafty" Coutinho convinced the "superstitious and eccentric" Indians that he had made a pact with the "goddess of the lake."⁵⁶ By manoeuvres of this kind, the precious pieces found their way into the collections of the National Museum. According to Barreto, the episode also demonstrated the huge difference between today's "savages" and the supposedly "more cultured" Indians of ancient times. Thus, the artefacts of the pre-Columbian Marajó-civilization would attest to the existence of advanced work techniques greatly superior to those of the "primitive inhabitants of present-day Brazil."⁵⁷

[29] Ironically, the emperor himself was little impressed by such speculations. As he wrote in his diary on the occasion of his visit to the Philadelphia exhibition, the ethnographic display of the Smithsonian Institution, specializing in the archeological sites of North American indigenous cultures, seemed far more interesting to him. Not just their dwellings, but also their "idols" showed an artistic and cultural superiority in comparison to the Brazilian Indians, in his opinion.⁵⁸ The emperor did, however, admit that Brazil's ethnographic exhibit in Philadelphia was far more professional than the presentations in 1862, 1867 and 1873, but it still seemed rather unsystematic to him, as some articles in the press stated as well.⁵⁹ However, this would definitely change at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1889, when the National Museum eventually overcame the usual organizational obstacles.

[30] Although the Empire of Brazil wanted to be perceived as part of the "civilized" world, thus taking pride in its monumental pavilion besides the Eiffel tower, its technical

⁵⁴ Barreto, *Notas e observações*, 209.

⁵⁵ Marina Jardim e Silva, Antônio Carlos Sequeira Fernandes and Vera Maria Medina da Fonseca, "Silva Coutinho: uma trajetória profissional e sua contribuição às coleções geológicas do Museu Nacional," in: *História, Ciência, Saúde – Manguinhos* (Rio de Janeiro), 20/2 (2013), 469-475.

⁵⁶ Barreto, *Notas e observações*, 209.

⁵⁷ Barreto, *Notas e observações*, 210.

⁵⁸ See Pedro's travelogue on the Philadelphia exhibition, s. d., in: IBPC/Museu Imperial, *D. Pedro II na Exposição*, 34.

⁵⁹ "Estados Unidos," *A Província de São Paulo*, 13 June 1876, 1-2.

equipment and machinery, as well as the visualization of its "Europeanized" population in the photographic gallery, it would be Ladislau Netto's ethnographic exhibition in the so-called *Casa Inca* that stole the show from the rest of the Brazilian display in 1889. The section opened on June 20 and was immediately praised by the press.⁶⁰ As usual, Netto tried to downplay the relevance of contemporary indigenous cultures in Brazil, and thus focused on the "prehistoric Indian." Drawing on the experience of the highly successful Anthropological Exposition of 1882 in Rio de Janeiro, the display in Paris presented a very similar array, including some anthropometrical photographs of "types of Indians" by Alfredo Ducasble, as well as various "type-portraits" by the positivist painter Décio Vilares. Together with some newly acquired exhibits, all Brazilian ethnographic objects were exhibited in the peculiar "Inca dwelling," which was part of the comprehensive *habitation humaine* exhibition (Fig. 4 and 5).

[31] As well as Mexico's monumental Aztec Temple or Ecuador's equally impressive Inca palace, the *Casa Inca* was a brainchild of Charles Garnier, the famous architect of the Paris Opera and the man responsible for the general outlay of *habitation humaine*.⁶¹ The *Casa Inca* indeed resembled a European house and was by no means modeled after archaeological findings in Peru or Bolivia, though the adornments looked somewhat pre-Columbian. However, all of these buildings were not just the sole products of Garnier's inventiveness. In fact, when designing *habitation humaine*, he worked closely together with the Mexican, Peruvian, Ecuadorian and Brazilian commissioners, who sought to visualize the existence of a "Latin American Antiquity" by emphasizing the supposed progressiveness of America's original inhabitants. As a result of his negotiation with the Latin American exhibition planners, Garnier wanted to create the impression that the Incas and Aztecs had possessed "dwelling houses," similar to those in Europe.⁶² In reality, the stylized Inca- and Aztec-buildings of *habitation humaine* were pure phantasy, as only the elites or priests had access to the temples and buildings we know today from archeological sites in Mexico and Peru. By displaying such buildings and by celebrating the "glorious indigenous past" – always neatly separated from the "uncivilized" present-day indigenous cultures – the "wizards of progress" sought to nationalize the pre-Columbian past by transforming it into the key element of a powerful myth of origin. However, from the available sources it is not entirely clear why the National Museum's indigenous weapons, ceramics and artefacts ended up in the *Casa Inca*. Indeed, the objects from Marajó and other archeological sites were displayed beside Inca and Aztec

⁶⁰ "O Brazil na Exposição," in: *Gazeta de Notícias*, 22 June 1889, 1; "A habitação humana," in: *Gazeta de Notícias*, 5 July 1889, 1.

⁶¹ Heloisa Barbuy, "O Brasil vai a Paris em 1889: Um lugar na Exposição Universal," in: *Anais do Museu Paulista* (Nova Série, São Paulo), 4 (1996), 211-241; Commissariat général de l'Empire du Brésil, ed., *Exposition Universelle de Paris 1889. Empire du Brésil. Catalogue Officiel*, exh. cat., Paris 1889, 12.

⁶² "A habitação humana," in: *Gazeta de Notícias*, 5 July 1889, 1.

artefacts, i.e. completely separated from their original historical and geographical context.⁶³



4 Unknown photographer, *Pavillon Amazone. Vue de face; Interieur du Pavillon Amazone*, 1889, albumen, 17 x 21 cm. Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro



5 Unknown photographer, *Pavillon Amazone. Vue de face; Interieur du Pavillon Amazone*, 1889, albumen, 21 x 17 cm. Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro

[32] It is also striking that no member of the Brazilian Exhibition Commission nor any Brazilian journalist, ever mentioned the *Casa Inca* by its official name. In Brazilian publications and letters the building was only referred to as the Amazonian Pavilion.⁶⁴ A possible reason for this semantic twist could be that the Brazilian planners wanted to avoid a direct comparison with the "higher developed" cultures of the Incas, or Netto simply tried to stress the National Museum's importance by underlining that his

⁶³ "O Brazil na Exposição," in: *Gazeta de Noticias*, 22 June 1889, 1.

⁶⁴ "O Brazil na Exposição," in: *Gazeta de Noticias*, 22 June 1889, 1.

institution was of course capable of mounting its own pavilion. After all, it could have been simply a case of corruption, since the province of Amazonas had paid 150.000 francs for the construction of a special ethnographic section at the world's fair beforehand. Nevertheless, this national Amazonian Pavilion, which had actually been planned since the 1878 Universal Exhibition in Paris, which Brazil could not attend due to financial problems, was never built.⁶⁵ Instead, Netto had to content himself with a rather modest space in the *Casa Inca*, probably costing a fraction of the funds provided by the government of Amazonas.

[33] In any case, Netto was very pleased with Garnier's spatial outline for *habitation humaine*, the logic of which followed contemporary theories on "human development" by assuming evolutionary stages from "prehistoric," to "historic" and finally to "isolated civilizations."⁶⁶ Thus, Brazil's indigenous cultures on display could be classified both as "prehistoric" as well as "isolated." As a consequence, any reference to the extermination and forced assimilation of contemporary indigenous groups could be avoided. When asked where the Brazilian section should be located, Netto had to choose between the dwellings of the North American "redskins" and those of the Aztecs and Incas. Garnier, by the way, was unwilling to distinguish between the Aztecs and Incas.⁶⁷

[34] Though accompanied by academic descriptions, most of the exhibits were once again organized in a rather arbitrary way; a motley conglomeration of ceramics, urns, weapons, jewelry, ritual objects, a shrunken head of the Jívaro-culture, various photographs and anthropometric "type-portraits." As noted in the influential industrialist journal *O Auxiliador da Industria Nacional*, the Brazilian Commission had once again been "encouraged" by the French exhibition organizers "to present their natives" in Paris.⁶⁸ In this context, the journal mentions a telegram from Paris, in which the French organizers specifically requested a representation of the "natives, their work, their customs and traditions."⁶⁹ According to the physician and anthropologist João Batista de Lacerda, who would be Netto's successor as director of the National Museum from 1895 onwards, Vilares' aforementioned "type-portraits" depicted Botocudos and Cherentes from the provinces of Espírito Santo and Goiás, who were presented *in vivo* at the 1882 Anthropological Exposition.⁷⁰ As one visitor of the event stated, its aim was to demonstrate the Indians' "benevolent nature" to the interested Brazilian audience in

⁶⁵ *Le Moniteur de l'Exposition*, no. 129, 19 June 1887, 677; *O Auxiliador da Industria Nacional*, vol. LXII, no. 2, February 1889, 28-30. On the plans to build an "Amazonian Pavilion" at the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1878, see David Cizeron, *Les représentations du Brésil lors des expositions universelles*, Paris 2009, 105.

⁶⁶ *L'Exposition de Paris*, no. 1, 1889, 178.

⁶⁷ *L'Exposition de Paris*, no. 1, 1889, 178.

⁶⁸ *O Auxiliador da Industria Nacional*, LXII, no. 2, February 1889, 30.

⁶⁹ *O Auxiliador da Industria Nacional*, LXII, no. 2, February 1889, 30.

⁷⁰ João Batista de Lacerda, *Fastos do Museu Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, Rio de Janeiro 1905, 46-47.

order to avoid their elimination by settlers.⁷¹ On this occasion, Lacerda also measured the Botocudos with anthropometric instruments and had some life-sized plaster figures of their bodies made.⁷² As it seems, the organizers of the Anthropological Exposition were quite sure that the disappearance of these indigenous groups was an inevitable fact, despite the conservationist rhetoric.

[35] Unlike the more folkloric ethnographic sections in Vienna or Philadelphia, however, the National Museum's display at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1889 had an explicitly scientific claim, which is why the artefacts and "Indian types" were no longer on display next to agricultural products or machinery. Since the 1870s, Netto had thoroughly reformed and modernized the National Museum, gradually transforming it into a true research institution. Being an internationally respected authority on Natural History and Ethnology, he presented his knowledge of the ancient Marajó-culture at the Congress of Americanists held in Berlin in 1888, claiming as usual the "high degree of civilization" of the ancient Amazonian Indians. He also speculated on the existence of a pre-historical "gynocracy on the Amazon River."⁷³ At the end of the congress, the participants thanked him for his comments, which would have supported the conclusion that the legend of the Amazons may indeed have a kernel of truth. However, the German participants were especially grateful for the archeological objects, which Netto had donated to Berlin's ethnological museum.⁷⁴

[36] At the 1889 world's fair, he once again delivered the same speeches as in Berlin, but this time at the International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archeology, held on the occasion of the exhibition.⁷⁵ In addition to Netto, the German-born zoologist and physician Hermann von Ihering, the aforementioned João Batista de Lacerda, the anthropologist José Rodrigues Peixoto, as well as the writer Jose Veríssimo de Matto had come from Brazil to attend the conference. During a debate over Brazil's "ancient foundations," Veríssimo, who was actually born in the Amazonian province of Pará, also defended Netto's thesis that the Marajó culture must have been "highly developed" and that there was no relation to the present-day "barbaric" Indians. According to Veríssimo, this could easily be proven by evidence found through linguistic studies. He therefore stated that the "Sambaqui-man" had probably arrived from the Mesoamerican cultural area, which could again be deduced by the very similar jade artefacts found in both

⁷¹ João Zeferino Rangel de S. Paio, "Questões Científicas. Exposição Anthropologica," in: *Gazeta de Noticias*, 28 August 1882, 2.

⁷² Lacerda, *Fastos do Museu Nacional*, 46-47.

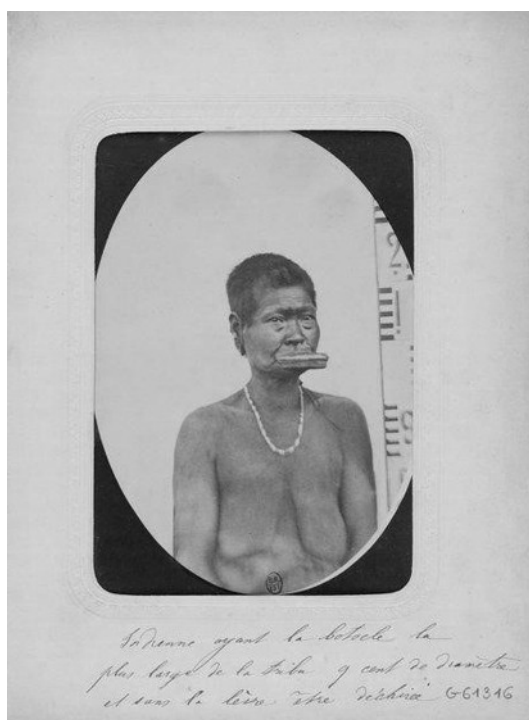
⁷³ G. Hellmann, ed., *Congrès international des Américanistes. Compte-rendu de la septième session*, Berlin 1888, 201-206.

⁷⁴ Hellmann, *Congrès international des Américanistes*, 206.

⁷⁵ Ministère du Commerce, de l'Industrie et des Colonies, ed., *Congrès International d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie Préhistoriques. Dixième session*, Paris 1890, 39.

regions.⁷⁶ Netto emphatically supported this hypothesis, but pointed out that a satisfactory explanation was still missing.⁷⁷

[37] After Veríssimo's final remarks, Netto showed his audience a photograph of a Botocudo-woman to support his thesis of pre-Columbian connections between the different cultural areas of the Americas (Fig. 6). Accordingly, the plate-shaped disc in the woman's lower lip, a so-called *botoque*, was one more element to underpin his theory of contacts between two "high cultures." According to him, exactly the same body adornments could be found within numerous indigenous peoples in South and Central America, though the final proof for the supposed cultural exchange was still lacking.⁷⁸ Very likely, the photograph presented by Netto was one of a series of anthropometric pictures that Marc Ferrez had taken during a scientific expedition led by Canadian geologist Charles Frederick Hartt in the provinces of Bahia and Pernambuco in 1876.⁷⁹



6 Marc Ferrez, *Indiens Botocudos de la province de Bahia*, 1876, albumen. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département Estampes et Photographie, Paris

[38] The speculative nature of the entire congress was finally taken to extremes by the French anthropologist Paul Topinard, who was also responsible for the organization of the event. Taking advantage of the fact that William Frederick Cody, alias "Buffalo Bill," was present at the Paris fair, Topinard "rented" a troop of Native Americans from his infamous

⁷⁶ Ministère du Commerce, *Congrès International d'Anthropologie*, 39.

⁷⁷ Ministère du Commerce, *Congrès International d'Anthropologie*, 40.

⁷⁸ Ministère du Commerce, *Congrès International d'Anthropologie*, 40.

⁷⁹ Charles Frederick Hartt, *Relatorio preliminar de trabalhos da Comissão geologica na provincia de Pernambuco*, Rio de Janeiro 1875, 8; Freitas, *Charles Frederick Hartt*, 211-212.

Wild West-show, with the intention of acquainting the congress attendees with "real Indians."⁸⁰ Thus, the astonished audience had the "privilege" of studying a group of North American Ogallallas and Cheyenne, learning about their gesture and speech while also given the possibility to carry out anthropometric measurements on them. Finally, the abstruse but nonetheless scientific spectacle concluded with a "comparative analysis of the Indians' physiognomy, their body paintings and their weapons."⁸¹

[39] As Thomas Wilson, a US-anthropologist and adherer to craniometry, stated in his report on the ethnographic exhibitions and anthropological lectures at the 1889 exhibition and in comparison to the French fairs of 1867 and 1878, this was indeed the first time that anthropology was presented in a strictly scientific way.⁸² Wilson found the stereoscopic photographs of the various "races" of the world especially noteworthy. In his opinion, it was shameful that North American anthropologists were showing an increasingly hostile position toward anthropometry and especially craniometry. Of course, he insisted, such methods were far from exact, but had they not led to important scientific findings by such renowned scholars as Rudolf Virchow and Francis Galton? According to Wilson, even relatively "backward" countries like Brazil showed more respect for this line of research than the United States.⁸³ Given the enthusiasm that especially Lacerda harbored for craniometry, it is hardly surprising that Wilson considered the Brazilian section in Paris to be the best this country had ever organized at a world's fair.⁸⁴ In particular, he liked the prehistoric skulls that affiliates of Rio's National Museum had wrested from indigenous burial sites during their numerous raids with the intention to measure and compare them.⁸⁵

[40] Among other things, the science of craniometry was applied in order to differentiate between distinct "racial families." At least, this is what many followers of polygenism – the contemporary theory that mankind had different origins and thus could be hierarchized by establishing racial lineages and taxonomies – firmly believed. Whereas Netto adhered to the older monogenist thinking, which assumed a common descent of the human race – and thus focused on ethnologist analysis, i.e. the study of cultures, myths and languages, which also went in line with his zeal to uncover the supposedly ancient foundations of the Brazilian nation, his colleague Lacerda was decidedly more "modern." Thus, he embraced the new science of Physical Anthropology and defended polygenism as formulated by Georges Cuvier, Paul Broca, Samuel Morton and other

⁸⁰ Ministère du Commerce, *Congrès International d'Anthropologie*, 47.

⁸¹ Ministère du Commerce, *Congrès International d'Anthropologie*, 47.

⁸² Thomas Wilson, *Anthropology at the Paris Exposition in 1889*, Washington, D.C. 1891, 641-642.

⁸³ Wilson, *Anthropology at the Paris Exposition*, 644.

⁸⁴ Wilson, *Anthropology at the Paris Exposition*, 648.

⁸⁵ Wilson, *Anthropology at the Paris Exposition*, 648.

founding fathers of scientific racism.⁸⁶ Many Brazilian polygenists, such as Lacerda, would try to establish a hierarchy of the different "racial families" with the intention of showing why certain indigenous groups, like the "savage" Botocudos, were simply not capable of being "civilized."⁸⁷

[41] Netto's inquiries, on the contrary, held the intention of proving that the Marajó-residents were members of a relatively developed "ancient civilization." In addition to this line of research, the aim of which was to confirm pre-Columbian contacts between Marajó and Mesoamerica, Netto also recurred on enigmatic symbols that were found in 1872 on a rock in northeastern Brazil. However, his suggestion that these "glyphs" were most likely Phoenician characters, thus extending his cultural contact theory to the Mediterranean, would damage his scientific reputation irreparably.⁸⁸ In fact, the alleged "Phoenician" symbols were very probably a case of fraud, which Netto himself frankly admitted in an 1875 newspaper-article. According to this version, his enemies had deliberately falsified and forwarded him the scriptures in order to destroy his credibility.⁸⁹

Conclusion

[42] Neither in the context of the Empire's participation in the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1889, nor at earlier world's fairs, was the idea of an "ancient civilization" on Brazilian soil or at least the existence of pre-Columbian "noble savages," as supported by ethnography and Indianism, hardly ever questioned. Eventually, this topos even found entrance into the prestigious *Grande Encyclopédie* in 1889. Thus, in their article on the "Anthropology of Brazil," the baron of Rio Branco and the French anthropologist Sigismund Zaborowski-Moindron confirmed the accuracy of Netto's theories and commented with detail on the skulls, ceramics and other artefacts available in Brazilian institutions such as the National Museum.⁹⁰

[43] However, one powerful critical voice against the Brazilian ethnographic display at the 1889 world's fair came from the painter Pedro Américo, Victor Meirelles' declared archrival and a crypto-republican in the eyes of many.⁹¹ As a participant of the International Conference on the Preservation and Promotion of Art, which also took place in the context of the exhibition as one of 69 scientific congresses, he openly ridiculed Netto's theses and concluded that there was no such thing as a "Brazilian Antiquity."⁹²

⁸⁶ Johnni Langer and Luiz Fernando Rankel, "Cultura material e civilização: a exposição antropológica de 1882," in: *Cadernos do CEOM* (Chapecó), 19/24 (2006), 20.

⁸⁷ Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida, *Os índios na história do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro 2010, 140-141.

⁸⁸ Lacerda, *Fastos do Museu Nacional*, 46-47.

⁸⁹ Freitas, *Charles Frederick Hartt*, 204-207.

⁹⁰ Pierre Émile Levasseur, *Le Brésil (Extrait de la Grande Encyclopédie)*, Paris 1889, 20.

⁹¹ Guimaraens, *A reinvenção da tradição*, 134-35.

⁹² Pedro Américo, "Relatorio apresentado ao Governo Imperial pelo Representante do Brasil no Congresso Internacional para a protecção dos Monumentos e Obras d'Arte", Paris, 30 July 1889, in: Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, manuscritos, doc. I-07,09,038.

Instead of exploring the supposed "scripture" of the "primitive natives," the government should better invest in the preservation of the Portuguese heritage and in the fields of art and architecture. For him, indigenous artefacts were no cultural heritage at all. Nation-building should focus on reality instead.⁹³

[44] This was exactly the stance the new republican government would take after the downfall of the monarchy. The republicans had to create their own political iconography in order to distance themselves from the Empire and to symbolically underpin their claim for legitimacy by "popular will." In fact, as the result of a coup d'état, Brazil's First Republic (1889-1930) not only lacked legitimacy, but proved to be even more exclusive than D. Pedro's II Empire ever was, although the use of republican symbols derived from classical Antiquity were intended to signalize a new beginning.⁹⁴ Despite the formal confirmation of citizenship for all Brazilians and the adoption of a US-inspired federal system, the oligarchical elite failed to create a strong iconography equal to that of the monarchy. In particular, the figure of the "heroic Indian warrior" – official allegory of Pedro's collapsed Empire – could not be replaced so easily, as decades of centralized cultural policy had left behind powerful images. In the end, many of the proposed republican allegories, such as the French-inspired feminine figure of the Republic, would not take hold, whereas the idealized Indian prevailed for years to come as a symbol of Brazilianness. Thus, the façade of republican Brazil's national pavilion at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago was once again adorned with huge "Indio-statues."⁹⁵

[45] The Indianist discourse, however, remained as ambivalent as before. The elimination of those classified as "not capable of being civilized" would go on well into the twentieth century, while the "glorious indigenous past" was celebrated at national and international exhibitions, as was the case at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exhibition in St. Louis and at the 1908 National Exposition in Rio de Janeiro. For instance, Hermann von Ihering, who had attended the 1889 Anthropological Congress in Paris, used the stage of the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition to make a definitive point on the "Indian question." By then the director of the National Museum's new rival, the São Paulo-based *Museu Paulista*, Ihering took the already ambivalent approach towards Brazil's indigenous cultures to extremes. Thus, his essay *The Anthropology of the State of S. Paulo*, written for the occasion of the world's fair, comprised the whole contradiction of contemporary Brazilian anthropology. After demonstrating great knowledge of the different indigenous groups in the state of São Paulo, their culture, their languages and their costumes, he concluded:

⁹³ Américo, "Relatório apresentado ao Governo Imperial."

⁹⁴ José Murilo de Carvalho, *A formação das almas. O imaginário da República no Brasil*, São Paulo 1990, 141-142; Schwarcz, *As barbas do imperador*, 478.

⁹⁵ Rezende, *The Raw and the Manufactured*, 241-245.

The Indians currently in the State of São Paulo do not represent an element of progress. Given that, as in other states of Brazil, we cannot expect serious and continuous work even from the civilized Indians and given that groups like the savage Caingangans are an impediment to the colonization of the regions of the interior (*sertão*) that they inhabit, it seems that we have no alternative at our disposal aside from their extermination.⁹⁶

[46] It was only during the 1920s that a nuanced and sympathetic grasp of Brazil's indigenous cultures became more and more common within the scope of national and international exhibitions. Thus, in the context of the first big international fair on Brazilian soil, the Centennial Exposition of 1922, many of the exhibition planners rejected the hitherto common popular ideologies of scientific racism, and embraced instead Franz Boas' new cultural anthropology.⁹⁷ At that time, however, conflicts between the ever growing number of European colonists and the indigenous populations in the Brazilian hinterland had intensified to such a degree that most of the tribes were on the edge of extinction. Of the once over 5 million indigenous inhabitants of Brazil, only around 400,000 persisted at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁹⁸

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⁹⁶ Hermann von Ihering, *The Anthropology of the State of S. Paulo, Brazil*. Written on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition of S. Luiz, São Paulo 1904, 20.

⁹⁷ Sven Schuster, "História, nação e raça no contexto da Exposição do Centenário em 1922," in: *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos* (Rio de Janeiro), 21/1 (2014), 131.

⁹⁸ Mércio Pereira Gomes, *The Indians and Brazil*, Gainesville 2000, 70-75.