

# “The Pursuit of Human Perfection”: Brazil at the Vienna Universal Exhibition of 1873<sup>❶</sup>

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### **"La búsqueda de la perfección humana": Brasil en la Exposición Universal de Viena de 1873**

#### **Resumen:**

Entre 1862 y 1889, el gobierno brasileño del emperador D. Pedro II (1831-1889) concibió las exposiciones universales como una excelente oportunidad para promover y proyectar la imagen idealizada de una "nación moderna". Aunque las exposiciones, como la de Viena en 1873, tuvieran un enfoque muy fuerte en el desarrollo económico y los vastos recursos naturales de Brasil, representaciones de su población y de su cultura también desempeñaron un papel importante en la difusión de la imagen de un "nuevo Brasil" en el extranjero. Sin embargo, estas escenificaciones no estaban libres de tensiones e ilustran por lo tanto las crecientes divisiones internas del Imperio.

**Palabras clave:** *Brasil, Austria, construcción de la nación, iconografía, arte sudamericano, siglo XIX.*

### **"The Pursuit of Human Perfection": Brazil at the Vienna Universal Exhibition of 1873**

#### **Abstract:**

Between 1862 and 1889, the Brazilian government under Emperor D. Pedro II (1831-1889) perceived international exhibitions as an excellent opportunity for promoting and projecting an idealized image of the "modern nation". Although most exhibitions, such as the Vienna Universal Exhibition of 1873, focused on Brazil's economic development and its vast natural resources, representations of its population and culture also played an important role in the elites' project to disseminate the image of a "new Brazil" abroad. However, these events were not as harmonious as it would seem at first glance, a fact that illustrates the growing divisions within the Empire during this period.

**Keywords:** *Brazil, Austria, nation building, iconography, Latin American art, 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

### **"A busca da perfeição humana": o Brasil na Exposição Universal de Viena de 1873**

#### **Resumo:**

Entre 1862 e 1889, o governo brasileiro do Imperador D. Pedro II (1831-1889) concebeu as exposições universais como uma excelente oportunidade para promover e projetar a imagem idealizada de uma "nação moderna". Embora as exposições, como a de Viena em 1873, tivessem um enfoque muito forte no desenvolvimento econômico e nos vastos recursos naturais do Brasil, representações de sua população e de sua cultura também desempenharam um papel importante na difusão da imagem de um "novo Brasil" no exterior. Contudo, essas encenações não estavam livres de tensões e ilustravam, portanto, as crescentes divisões internas do Império.

**Palavras-chave:** *Brasil, Áustria, construção da nação, iconografia, arte sul-americana, século XIX.*

# “The Pursuit of Human Perfection”: Brazil at the Vienna Universal Exhibition of 1873

## Introduction

From 1861 onwards, the Brazilian government began to organize National Exhibitions staged in Rio de Janeiro, with the intention of preparing for the great World’s Fairs. In the years to follow, Brazil participated in the international exhibitions of London (1862), Paris (1867), Vienna (1873), Philadelphia (1876), and again Paris (1889). However, with the downfall of the Empire in 1889 — an event closely related to the abolition of slavery the year before — the enthusiasm to organize such huge events gradually faded. Thus, in 1900, Brazil did not even participate in the greatest and most successful fair of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *Exposition Universelle de Paris*.

Although there is an extensive body of literature on the subject of Brazilian participation in the World’s Fairs, there are still some lacunae with respect to the visual and performative dimensions of these exhibitions.<sup>1</sup> To this effect, exhibitions should be understood as international and transnational arenas that were deliberately used to define how the “modern nation” should look, who should be included or excluded, and what visual and performative strategies should be followed in order to legitimize ideals of “modernity.” For a peripheral country such as Brazil, it was of utmost importance to be recognized universally as part of the “civilized world.” Nevertheless, in the emerging era of “scientific racism,” the concept of “whitening” the population was conceived by many exhibition planners — the “wizards of progress,” as Mauricio Tenorio has called them — to be a great means of becoming more “civilized.”<sup>2</sup> Their concerns about race and nation grew more and more entangled with (visual) discourses about “civilization” and “progress.”

In Vienna, the imperial government managed to organize an exhibition which met international standards for the first time, and therefore received positive comments from the press

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1 In this respect, the most important studies are: Margarida de Souza Neves, *As vitrines do progresso* (Rio de Janeiro: PUC-Rio, 1986); José Luiz Werneck, “As arenas pacíficas do progresso,” 2 vols. (PhD dissertation in História, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 1992); Sandra Jatahy Pesavento, *Exposições universais. Espetáculos da modernidade do século XIX* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 1997); Livia Lazzaro Rezende, “The Raw and the Manufactured: Brazilian Modernity and National Identity as Projected in International Exhibitions, 1862-1922” (PhD dissertation, Royal College of Art, 2010).

2 Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, *Artifugio de la nación moderna. México en las exposiciones universales, 1880-1930* (México: FCE, 1998).

at home and abroad. In retrospect, even the *New York Times* admitted that Brazil’s presentation in Vienna was superior to that of the newspaper’s own country, although the United States had invested a lot of money and energy in its participation, in order to prepare for the great Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876.<sup>3</sup> One crucial factor in Brazil’s success in Vienna was the parallel evolution and professionalization of a series of cultural and economic institutions by the 1870s, which supported the exhibition planner’s efforts in many ways. The most relevant of these institutions proved to be the *Museu Nacional* in Rio de Janeiro, which focused on natural history, archeology and anthropology, as well as the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) and the Brazilian Institute of History and Geography (IHGB). Since most exhibitions did not place such a great emphasis on cultural and historical matters, but rather on material progress, natural resources, labor force and infrastructure, Brazilian industrial and agricultural associations such as the National Industry Support Society (SAIN), Rio de Janeiro’s Imperial Institute of Agriculture (IIFA), as well as the Emperor himself, were the main sponsors of such events.<sup>4</sup>

At first glance, it may seem peculiar that no one has studied Brazil’s participation in the Vienna Universal Exhibition in a way that goes beyond any superficial level to include the visual and performative dimensions. However, an analysis of these dimensions at that particular World’s Fair, which must necessarily include public perception as evidenced in the press, is not an easy feat, as many of the sources are only available in German. Perhaps this helps to explain why there are such a large number of studies focusing on Brazil’s participation in earlier and later fairs, all the while omitting the *Wiener Weltausstellung* of 1873.

## 1. “The Pursuit of Human Perfection”

After its presentations in London and Paris, the Empire of Brazil had slightly progressed in the ranking of “civilized nations,” which became clear through the assignment of a distinguished corner pavilion next to North and South America at the Vienna exhibition. The Brazilian press, however, was not necessarily convinced of the positive effects of yet another participation in the World’s Fairs. Thus, many commentators thought that both the space occupied by Brazil (1,090 square meters) as well as the number of items sent to Vienna would not guarantee a “dignified presence.”<sup>5</sup>

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3 “Brazil: Preparing for the American Exposition,” *New York Times*, August 12, 1874, 2.

4 José Luiz Werneck, “As arenas pacíficas,” vol. 1, 233-237.

5 José Luiz Werneck, “As arenas pacíficas,” vol. 1, 272; “Exposição em Vienna,” *Semana Ilustrada*, Rio de Janeiro, June 15, 1873, 5220-5221.

As was the case with the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867, the Vienna World's Fair architectural division was once again inspired by national and geographical criteria. By adopting the so-called "herringbone system," the Viennese organizers sought to present the individual products by nation, rather than by category. In terms of geographical arrangement, the American states were located at the western end of the main building, the European states in the middle, and the Asian countries at the east end. However, many visitors criticized the fact that one frequently saw the same goods next to each other due to the similarity of many national products, a result of the peculiar layout of the grounds.<sup>6</sup> In addition, not all countries adhered to the initial allocation of exhibition space, which led to numerous complaints. For instance, the Brazilian planners were angered by Britain's taking possession of part of their assigned exhibition space — without requesting permission.<sup>7</sup>

Although the World's Fair devoured the hitherto unimaginable sum of 19 million guilders, and outrivaled its Parisian predecessor in terms of space by five times, it ultimately fell short of expectations. Instead of the targeted 10 million visitors, only 7.2 actually attended. Overall, the financial deficit amounted to a staggering 15 million guilders.<sup>8</sup> There were various reasons for this disaster. In the first place, many foreign visitors complained that the hotel offer in Vienna was insufficient, and that the few good hotels that did exist would charge rather hefty prices. In general, the price of living in 1873 was rising almost daily. However, the economic "boom" of those years disguised the unpleasant fact that highly speculative transactions were increasingly rife on the Vienna stock market, while the government refused to intervene, instead adhering to a *laissez-faire* policy. In the months before the inauguration of the World's Fair, stock market prices had already reached astronomical levels, leading numerous domestic and foreign observers to predict a "big crash" in the near future. In fact, this long anticipated "crash" finally occurred on May 9, 1873, only a week after the opening of the exhibition. The so-called "Black Friday" not only greatly affected the Austrian monarchy in financial terms, but also marked the beginning of a worldwide recession. In this context, the Vienna Universal Exhibition became the target of constant criticism, and was increasingly described as a grandiose failure, symptomatic of the Habsburg monarchy's lack of far-sightedness.<sup>9</sup>

In June 1873, these already significant problems were finally outmatched by the outbreak of a cholera epidemic, which claimed 3,000 lives in Vienna alone, and prevented

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6 "Austria," *Diario de Pernambuco*, Recife, June 29, 1873, 1.

7 Gustav Adolf Zwanziger, "Thiere, Pflanzen und Steine auf der Wiener Weltausstellung," *Carinthia* 64 (1874): 27; W. P. Blake, *Reports on the Vienna Universal Exhibition* (Philadelphia: McLaughlin Brothers, 1873), 45.

8 Jutta Pemsel, *Die Wiener Weltausstellung von 1873* (Köln: Böhlau, 1989), 22.

9 "Die Wiener Börse-Katastrophe und die Weltausstellung," *Allgemeine Illustrirte Weltausstellungs-Zeitung*, Vienna, May 25, 1873, 27; Jutta Pemsel, *Die Wiener Weltausstellung*, 31-33, 42, 76-77.

many foreigners from visiting the exhibition. Only in September and October, once the epidemic had subsided, did the number of visitors increase in a substantial way. Although the Vienna exhibition organizers put a slightly stronger emphasis on arts, crafts and photography than their predecessors in London and Paris, the overall focus was again on technological and material progress. The Empire of Brazil, therefore, still concentrated on the display of economic and technological progress, as was the case in past exhibitions. In particular, the construction of railway lines, the use of steam-driven machinery in agriculture and the construction of telegraph poles, were frequently commented on in the international press.<sup>10</sup> Thus, journalists and fair visitors showed a special interest in the laying of a submarine telegraph cable across the Atlantic, which finally connected Brazil with Portugal in January 1874. Ironically, this was long before the Empire possessed anything similar to a telegraphic grid *within* the country. In the mind of the Brazilian elite, however, it seemed more important to demonstrate to the Europeans that the ideal of "progress" could be easily realized in Brazil. The telegraphic connection with Europe was therefore celebrated as a "connection to the civilized world."<sup>11</sup> In this sense, the laying of the cable had the same purpose as the country's presence at the World's Fairs: it was proof of Brazil's capability to "civilize" itself.

In contrast to former exhibitions, "civilization" in Vienna was not only related to machines and technology, but also associated with "good taste," a distinguished way of life and the fine arts. In his remarks about the preparatory Third National Exhibition in 1873, the historian, geographer and physician Joaquim Manuel de Macedo concluded that in the context of the Brazilian presentation in Vienna, "progress" should be measured by the level of industrial production, whereas soaps, perfumes and crafts could shed a light on the Empire's level of "civilization."<sup>12</sup> Although Macedo generally held a critical attitude towards the amateurishly executed National Exhibition, he was at least satisfied with the focus on industrial and manufactured goods. In his opinion, all of Brazil's previous exhibitions were disjointed and somewhat "museum-like," presenting mainly "unimportant curiosities." An "advanced" country like Brazil should not display such things abroad.<sup>13</sup>

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10 "The Emperor of Brazil," *The Times*, London, October 13, 1873, 10; "Brazilian Telegraphy," *The Times*, London, October 30, 1873, 4.

11 Dwayne Winseck and Robert Pike, *Communication and Empire: Media, Markets and Globalization, 1860-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 65-68.

12 Joaquim Manoel de Macedo, *Terceira Exposição Brasileira em 1873. Relatório do Secretário Geral do Juri da Exposição* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia da Reforma, 1875), 21-22.

13 Joaquim Manoel de Macedo, *Terceira Exposição Brasileira*, 13.

After its closure, the concept of the Third National Exhibition was transferred with minor modifications to Vienna. In his detailed report on Brazilian participation in the Vienna fair, the artist, art critic and AIBA-member, Manuel de Araújo Porto Alegre, gave an overview of the arrangement and the impact of Brazilian products on international visitors.<sup>14</sup> Obviously, the final presentation was still far from systematic, as Macedo had feared. Instead, industrial products, raw materials and ethnographic exhibits were once again displayed quite arbitrarily, in a chaotic and confusing style. According to Porto Alegre, an impressive and “tastefully arranged” collection of tropical woods, organized by José de Saldanha da Gama, one of the founders of Rio de Janeiro’s *Escola Politécnica* (1874), was located right at the center of Brazil’s pavilion. One of the walls inside the pavilion was adorned with a large painting by the Austrian artist Carlo Brioschi, and showed a “virgin rain forest.” However, more important than such “purely decorative elements” were the technical instruments, telegraphs and ship models, for they “really demonstrated Brazil’s pursuit of human perfection,” as Porto Alegre emphasized.<sup>15</sup>

A “work of true genius,” Porto Alegre tells us, was the building of an elaborate “Cotton Grotto” by the Bahia native, Paris-based architect Francisco de Azevedo Monteiro Caminhoá, who had been commissioned to design the Brazilian pavilion. According to Porto Alegre, this “new and unique” exhibit was especially striking, as the dust swirled up by the visitors lent the replica of a natural grotto an even more “truthful” appearance.<sup>16</sup> In addition to this exhibit, which demonstrated to the visitors the previously unimaginable applications of Brazilian cotton, there were also artificial flowers, feathers, stuffed animals, alcohol, tea, hides, textiles, photographs, medals and pottery. To emphasize Brazil’s economic interests, the exhibition planners had placed seven presentation boards at the foot of the Cotton Grotto, illustrating the exploitation of Brazilian export products such as minerals, iron ore, coal, tobacco and rubber. According to the Austrian geologist and botanist Gustav Adolf Zwanziger, these graphical illustrations were particularly “instructive” and proved that “the Brazilian exhibition was the neatest and richest among the American nations.”<sup>17</sup> Even more impressive, however, as both Porto Alegre and Zwanziger

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14 Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Relatório* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Nacional, 1874), 9-12.

15 “Carta de Francisco de Azevedo Monteiro a Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, Barão de Porto Seguro.” November 12, 1872, in Arquivo Histórico Museu Imperial (AHMI), Petrópolis-Brazil, Arquivo da Casa Imperial do Brasil (POB), *Album da Baronesa de Santo Ângelo*, 69.

16 Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Relatório*, 10.

17 Gustav Adolf Zwanziger, “Thiere, Pflanzen und Steine,” 27.

concluded, was the Brazilian coffee exhibition, which finally won a "medal of honor." In this area, "no other country was able to surpass Brazil in quality."<sup>18</sup>

Despite his apparent satisfaction with Brazil's coffee-display, the magnificent Cotton Grotto and the presentation of the technical equipment, Porto Alegre sharply criticized some exhibits for being "too exotic." Just as Macedo had, he thought that such objects denoted an "unfavorable" picture of the country, which was struggling to achieve "modernity." Thus, for example, some of the minerals in the geological section seemed "ridiculous" to him, considering the real potential of mining in Brazil, especially compared to other countries much less advanced in the field of raw material extraction. Furthermore, Porto Alegre devalued the *Museu Nacional's* exhibition of snakes and some of the "amateurish" pencil drawings as "completely incompatible" with the proposed display of "progress and civilization."<sup>19</sup> In his opinion, it would have been better if these exhibits had never found their way to Vienna.

Nevertheless, some of Brazil's more "exotic products," especially feathers and dried insects used as adornments, proved to be truly eye-catching and were extremely successful among Austrian women, as both Porto Alegre and Zwanziger pointed out. Women from Vienna's high society discovered that Brazilian feathers could be transformed into attractive embellishments for their hats, even introducing the name "brasileiros" for that particular variety of attire. Over the course of the exhibition, they gained such popularity that they were sold in the Ringstraße's most fashionable boutiques, which, according to Zwanziger, finally lead to the endangerment of the local bird fauna. Due to the obvious lack of original tropical feathers, local hatters were obliged to draw on Austrian nightingales, finches and redbreasts as a source for these adornments. In this sense, the Brazilian exhibition provoked a true, although rather short-lived, "fashion revolution."<sup>20</sup> Yet, as was the case at previous World's Fairs, the Brazilian exhibition planners avoided any reference to the conditions in which products such as coffee and cotton were actually produced. Porto Alegre celebrated instead the recent "progress" in agriculture, made possible by the "extinction of slavery," thus insinuating that the Law of the Free Womb of 1871 had put a definitive end to that institution. Neither he nor the official exhibition guides mentioned that Brazilian agriculture still relied heavily on slave labor.

Equally important for the display of technological progress were the presentations organized by the instrument maker José Maria dos Reis, the engineer Guilherme Schüch, the

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18 Gustav Adolf Zwanziger, "Thiere, Pflanzen und Steine," 22-23; Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Relatorio*, 11-15.

19 Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Relatorio*, 13.

20 Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Relatorio*, 13; Gustav Adolf Zwanziger, "Thiere, Pflanzen und Steine," 22-23.



Baron of Capanema, as well as the ship models commissioned on behalf of the Imperial Navy and arranged by Lieutenant Luiz Felipe de Saldanha. Larger machinery, however, as exhibited in Paris five years before, was not a particular feature of the Brazilian pavilion in Vienna. In addition to smaller equipment and measuring instruments, which Marc Ferrez, the Brazilian-born son of a French sculptor, photographed for advertising purposes, the so-called “azimuthal,” an astronomical observation device, proved to be very successful with the public as well as with the international jury and press.<sup>21</sup>

The idea that such instruments provided proof of Brazil’s advances in the field of technology was also recognized by the Portuguese nobleman Ricardo Augusto Guimarães Pereira, Viscount of Benalcanfor, who wrote a detailed report on his visit to the exhibition in Vienna. Nevertheless, the Portuguese aristocrat stressed that the precision instruments of Lisbon’s Commercial and Industrial Institute were still far superior to their Brazilian counterparts. According to Benalcanfor, Brazilian instruments were mostly of “reasonable quality,” whereas the Brazilian weaponry, such as bayonets, seemed outright “ridiculous” to him. In comparison to the giant guns of the German Krupp foundry displayed in the nearby industrial hall, one could be convinced of the essentially pacifist nature of the Brazilian people. In contrast to the aggressive Germans, there was no need to be afraid of them.<sup>22</sup>

## 2. In Search of “True Civilization”

Although the organizers of the Vienna exhibition generally considered the “fine arts” to be an important indicator of “civilization,” Brazil’s art exhibition was quite modest in comparison to the thousands of paintings and sculptures in the art sections of France, Austria, Italy and Germany. However, even such great producers of “high culture” as the French and Italian art academies rarely presented complete retrospectives of their most renowned members at the World’s Fairs. Thus, truly innovative art, such as the famous Manet paintings at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867, was not commonly found.

With the exception of three large-scale oil paintings, made by the new “stars” of the Brazilian art scene, Pedro Américo and Eduardo De Martino, the Empire of Brazil presented nothing significant. Nevertheless, in contrast to earlier World’s Fairs, there was at least some Brazilian art in Vienna. Since Brazil had sent only three paintings to the *Weltausstellung*, the Viennese exhibition planners denied them a place of their own in the art gallery. As they had

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21 “Exposição nacional,” *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, Rio de Janeiro, January 2, 1873, 1.

22 Visconde de Benalcanfor, *Vienna e a Exposição* (Lisboa: Typographia Progresso, 1873), 351-352.

a representative synopsis of the latest trends in arts for each country in mind, they considered Brazil's contribution to be insufficient for an independent presentation.<sup>23</sup> Since the Brazilian corner pavilion was laden with agricultural products, handicrafts and technical instruments, there was no place for the exhibition of huge paintings in this location. As a result, Pedro Américo's *A Carioca* (1865) and his *Batalha de Campo Grande* (1871) were finally displayed in the Belgian pavilion, while De Martino's naval battle scene, which showed an episode of the Paraguayan War (1865-1870), found its place in the Spanish pavilion. From existing sources, it is not possible to deduce how this assignment was justified. Pedro Américo did in fact have personal ties to Belgium, where he obtained his doctorate degree in philosophy, but the Italian-born Eduardo De Martino had no particular relation to Spain.<sup>24</sup>

Already in July 1868, when the Paraguayan War was militarily decided by the fall of the fortress of Humaitá, the Imperial Navy had contracted Eduardo De Martino and Victor Meirelles to paint the most "heroic moments" of the conflict. A year later, the young Pedro Américo, who had just returned from a longer artistic stay in Paris, decided to contribute to the artistic glorification of the war on his own account, without government sponsorship.<sup>25</sup> In contrast to Meirelles, who, eleven years his senior, was an intimate friend of D. Pedro II and generally regarded as the Empire's most prolific painter of historical themes, Pedro Américo was a relatively unknown outsider. Unlike his archrival Meirelles, who actually travelled to the battlefield to conduct meticulous studies *in situ*, Américo followed the war against Paraguay from afar. Yet, this distance did not represent an obstacle for the artist, as he was by no means planning a realistic portrayal of the events; instead, he was interested in their potential for artistic transgression. In his painting, the victory was to become "truer" than actual reality. Although Américo relied heavily on newspaper articles, which appeared in September 1869 in several Brazilian journals, and which inspired him to paint *Batalha de Campo Grande*, the result of his efforts was exceptionally dynamic, apparently inspired by photographic aesthetics.<sup>26</sup>

In this context, it is particularly noteworthy that Américo created the painting at only 28 years of age, and exhibited it quite successfully at the annual Fine Arts Exhibition in Rio de Janeiro. In fact, the audience was so enchanted by the painter's "youthful genius" that a true

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23 Rafael Cardoso, *Ressuscitando um velho cavalo de batalha: novas dimensões da pintura histórica do Segundo Reinado* (Rio de Janeiro: DArtes/UFRRJ, 2007).

24 Rafael Cardoso, *Ressuscitando um velho cavalo*.

25 Vladimir Machado, *1871: A fotografia na pintura da Batalha de Campo Grande de Pedro Américo* (Rio de Janeiro: DArtes/UFRRJ, 2007).

26 "Carta de Pedro Américo ao Sr. Dr. Rebello," Rio de Janeiro, November 8, 1869, in AHMI, POB, I, Maço 149, doc.7193.

press campaign followed, which aimed at convincing the imperial government to buy and publicly display the painting. Many journalists, who sympathized with republicanism, believed that Pedro Américo would represent Brazil abroad in a more dignified manner than the older, more traditionalist painters of the AIBA.<sup>27</sup> Although Américo had been in Europe almost continuously between 1859 and 1869, upon his return he was nonetheless able to rely on a large network of supporters in Brazil. Bursting with self-confidence, he considered himself to be the most important painter of his generation and orchestrated a clever self-marketing campaign. He also appeared in miniature in many of his paintings, which perfectly underlines his penchant for self-promotion. Thus, it is no wonder that his official autobiography written by Luís Guimarães Júnior appeared simultaneously to the premier of the painting (Image 1). In the context of the annual Fine Arts Exhibition, the government eventually bought the work and sent it to Austria.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Américo had finally caught up with his rival Victor Meirelles.

**Image 1.** Batalha de Campo Grande



**Source:** Pedro Américo, *Batalha de Campo Grande*, 1871, oil on canvas, 332 x 530 cm, Museu Imperial, Petrópolis (Brazil).

27 Vladimir Machado, *1871: A fotografia na pintura*.

28 “O Dr. Pedro Américo,” *A Vida Fluminense*, February 24, 1872, 895, 898.

In the context of the Vienna exhibition, *Batalha de Campo Grande* was expected to demonstrate to an international audience that the fight against Paraguay was in reality a struggle between "civilization" and "barbarism." As Rafael Cardoso has noted, the exhibition organizers probably had a double objective in mind when displaying this painting in Austria.<sup>29</sup> Firstly, they sought to retrospectively legitimize the defeat of the "barbarian" neighbor as a "just war". On the other hand, Américo's painting was probably meant to convince the European powers that Brazil itself was a "civilized" and to some extent "Europeanized" nation, in order to prevent possible military interventions by European forces in the future. After all, the imperialist adventure of Napoleon III in Mexico had occurred just six years before. In this light, the painting could serve to visually represent the Empire's deep bonds with European monarchies, as illustrated by its central figure: the Count of Eu, born in the Parisian suburb of Neuilly-sur-Seine, and the designated successor of D Pedro II. As a member of the Brazilian delegation, the Count was also personally present at the Vienna exhibition.<sup>30</sup>

Hence, the painting depicts an episode during the last phase of the Paraguayan campaign, when the Count of Eu took over as the commander in chief of the Brazilian troops. In contrast to during the early years of the war, when the Marquis of Caxias had won the decisive battles, the last year of the conflict was anything but heroic. After the annihilation of the organized Paraguayan units on the field, Caxias retired in January 1869 and passed command to the Count of Eu, because he believed that a continuation of the war was wrong. In the opinion of the man who soon came to be known as the "Iron Duke," continuing the war was a waste of valuable national resources and would ultimately benefit their rivals, the Argentines.<sup>31</sup> However, the imperial government saw the handover of command to the Count of Eu as a crafty maneuver which could later be exploited in order to glorify the unloved throne pretender as a "war hero," and thus to strengthen his legitimacy within the Brazilian monarchy. Nevertheless, this hope was never fulfilled. Although the Paraguayans were no longer able to mobilize troops on the field, their leader, President Francisco Solano López, had survived. The Count of Eu was now burdened with the unpleasant task of tracking down and killing the hated *caudilho* and his entourage in the vastness of the Chaco. Hence, the task of the Brazilian Army had little in common with a classic war campaign. It was rather a sort of anti-guerrilla operation, in which the civilian population was not spared. Since the Brazilian public had long since grown tired of the war and increasingly questioned its justification, the campaign to track down López was not at all popular.<sup>32</sup>

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29 Rafael Cardoso, *Ressuscitando um velho cavalo*.

30 "Austria," *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, August 12, 1873, 1.

31 Ricardo Salles, *Guerra do Paraguai: memórias & imagens* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Nacional, 2003), 69.

32 Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *As barbas do imperador. D. Pedro II, um monarca nos trópicos* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2010), 593.

After Brazilian troops finally found and killed López in March 1870, the government took on the task of polishing the battered image of the obnoxious French Count and the army in general. For this purpose, Pedro Américo chose one of the few “heroic” episodes covered extensively by the Brazilian press on September 15 and 16, 1869. The news piece described the Battle of Campo Grande, which had already taken place on August 16, 1869. During this battle, the Brazilian forces were so superior that the Paraguayans, mainly old men and adolescents, suffered heavy losses and hastily retreated.<sup>33</sup> When the Count of Eu began to pursue the enemy, the fearful Captain Almeida Castro seized the reins of his superior’s horse, holding him back. As this action impeded a full Brazilian victory over the fleeing Paraguayans, the Count became so angry that he later called for Castro to be punished.<sup>34</sup>

Fully aware that the World’s Fair was taking place in Habsburg Vienna, the Brazilian curators were particularly keen to emphasize the “heroic” role of the “European” Count, whose accomplishment of even greater feats was only impeded by the act of a single coward. However, nothing expressed Brazil’s claim to “civilization” better than the painting’s blatant racism. Thus, the Count of Eu is depicted in the center on the back of a white stallion, while the half-naked, “mixed-raced” Paraguayans are generally located in the lower half of the painting. The Brazilian soldiers all wear European-style, well-fitting uniforms and fight mostly on horseback, literally stampeding the Paraguayan ground troops. Whilst the “barbarian” Paraguayans are characterized by their dark skin and strange facial features as descendants of the Guaraní Indians, there is not a single soldier of African or Indian descent among the Brazilians. This is an especially distorted view, as mestizos, mulattos and blacks made up a substantial part of the imperial army.<sup>35</sup> It is also noteworthy to study the picture’s composition, as the Paraguayans are cowering away in the face of the mighty Brazilian cavalry, virtually disappearing into semi-darkness. The Count of Eu, however, creating a dynamic focal point in the painting, is surrounded by an aureole-like radiance, while his entourage appears in lighter shades. It therefore seems obvious in this painting that “civilization,” incarnated by the Brazilian army, can overcome whatever resistance it may face. Any attempt to prevent the “progress” of this New Worldly “civilization”, as represented by Almeida Castro’s action, would ultimately be doomed to failure.

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33 Francisco Doratioto, *Maldita guerra: nova história da Guerra do Paraguai* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002), 19, 20, 411.

34 Vladimir Machado, *1871: A fotografia na pintura*.

35 Peter Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race, and Nation in Brazil, 1864-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 53-55.

Although the *Batalha de Campo Grande*, the *Carioca* and Eduardo De Martino's maritime battle painting were "masterpieces" by Brazilians standards, this artistic contribution received only a modest response from the press. According to the art critic Joaquim José França Júnior, the three exhibits were not necessarily poor, but an exhibition consisting of only three works of art was nonetheless shameful. Only if "truly great" images, such as the works of Victor Meirelles or Chaves Pinheiro, had been exhibited in the official art gallery would Brazil have proven its true artistic talent. Furthermore, França Júnior argued that the AIBA was not yet prepared for an exhibition of this size. Thus, Brazil had to invest more resources in the study of European masters. The AIBA was to therefore purchase copies of paintings and statues in Europe, so that Brazilian artists could improve their technical and stylistic skills by using them as models. In this sense, he wrote, the Universal Exhibition of Vienna had once again proved that Brazilian art was still a long way from reaching "true civilization."<sup>36</sup>

### 3. Gobineau's Heirs

Just as had been the case at previous World's Fairs, humankind was divided into nations and "races" in Vienna. However, essentialist racial theories that attempted to explain the supposed backwardness of entire nations were still not particularly popular at the time of the exhibition. Thus, for instance, the International Medical Congress held between September 26 and October 4, 1873 on the occasion of the Vienna Universal Exhibition did not even mention the "race question." In contrast to later conventions on medicine and hygiene, whose members regarded this topic as one of the most pressing issues in the field, doctors and hygienists at the Vienna meeting discussed mainly practical measures to combat sexually transmitted diseases, the suppression and control of prostitution, the need for quarantine against cholera epidemics and the improvement of hygienic conditions in the cities.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, the division of the world into nations, colonies and "races" reflected the widespread social Darwinist belief that the "organically" constituted nations would be in a constant "struggle for existence," as if they were living beings. Although the World's Fairs were perceived as fundamentally pacifist arenas of "civilization and progress," at the same time the bristling performance of countries such as the recently created German Empire left no doubt that only the "fittest" nations would survive in the future. A classification of the different "races" in a more

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36 Joaquim José França Júnior, *Exposição Universal de Vienna. Relatório sobre a pintura e estatuaría* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Nacional, 1874), 29-31.

37 Internationaler Medicinischer Congress in Wien, *Allgemeine Illustrirte Weltausstellungs-Zeitung*, Vienna, May 15, 1873, 234-235.

culturalist and less biological sense was therefore common at the exhibitions, differentiating between stereotypical “national characteristics,” such as “the Orientals” or “the Persians.”<sup>38</sup>

In Brazil, however, the situation was quite different, as the foreseeable social consequences of the Law of the Free Womb instigated a substantial boom in racist discourses. These discourses often posed arguments from a biological point of view, but were seldom exact copies of their European counterparts. Whereas most European racial theorists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century condemned a further mixing of the “races” — even by European immigration, arguing that this would further accelerate overall “degeneration” — Brazilians did not accept such a point of view. Given that the claim of “inevitable degeneration,” as formulated by Arthur de Gobineau and others, would have destroyed any future prospect of a multi-ethnic society, they promoted European immigration as a form of “race betterment” instead.<sup>39</sup>

Debates between 1869 and 1871 over the “racial and civilizational qualities” of potential immigrants within the SAIN, the press and in Parliament demonstrated that the “racial question” was of utmost importance in the wake of the Law of the Free Womb. These debates focused mainly on the recruitment of Chinese “coolies” as a remedy for the alleged labor shortage provoked by the gradual emancipation of slaves. However, most participants in the discussion were not particularly happy with the planned recruitment of the “yellow race.” In a polemical and increasingly essentialist discussion on the consequences of Chinese immigration since 1850, both sides drew frequently upon biological reasoning. Thus, even outspoken defenders of Chinese immigration, such as the engineer and politician Inácio da Cunha Galvão, quoted essentialist and racist theories, emphasizing the “yellow race’s” great cultural achievements.<sup>40</sup> On the other side, the physician and imperial adviser Nicolau Joaquim Moreira, who was chiefly interested in agricultural development and the promotion of European immigration, attacked Galvão by arguing that allowing Asian immigration would lead to further “deterioration” of an already fragile “race.” Hence, by drafting a Migration Handbook for the Vienna exhibition, Moreira aimed to attract “fair-skinned” races, rather than the “opium addict, slavish and lazy” Chinese.<sup>41</sup>

Besides Moreira, the SAIN’s Second Commission Secretary and Vice President of the Third National Exhibition, Joaquim Antônio de Azevedo, also fiercely criticized the planned importation of Chinese workers. Likewise, the Count of Eu, who served as chair of the

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38 Jutta Pemsel, *Die Wiener Weltausstellung*, 87.

39 Célia Marinho de Azevedo, *Onda negra, medo branco: o negro no imaginário das elites, século XIX* (São Paulo: Annablume, 2004), 148-150.

40 I. C. Galvão, *Questão dos Chins* (Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Universal de Laemmert, 1870), 7, 13, 65-66.

41 Nicolau Joaquim Moreira, *Questão. Convirá ao Brasil a importação de colonos Chins?* (Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Universal de Laemmert, 1870), 16-18.

Exhibition Committee, as well as the Exhibition Commission's First Secretary, the Viscount of Bom Retiro, and, finally, the aforementioned Manuel de Araújo Porto Alegre, opted instead for a "whitening" process through European immigration.<sup>42</sup> For the majority of the Brazilian elite it was completely irrelevant that the frequent manumission of slaves since the 1860s had contributed to the availability of a huge labor force of black and mulatto workers. Despite this fact, they shared the belief that Brazil's future as a "civilized" nation was to be obtained by "de-Africanization" and by impeding "degenerate races" from entering the country. Many of them held the neo-Lamarckian opinion that "black people" in particular had somehow "inherited" vices such as laziness, stubbornness or slyness. The Law of the Free Womb and the popularity of racial theories in Europe thus contributed to the application of a "scientific" façade to already widespread racism.

The elite's fear of a degenerate "mixed-race" stemmed primarily from the influential work of Gobineau himself. The so-called "father of scientific racism" had spent the months between April 1869 and May 1870 on a diplomatic mission at the Brazilian Court, where he became a close friend of D. Pedro II. Gobineau held the highly educated and basically "European" monarch in high esteem, even integrating him into one of his novels in the form of the fictitious character "Johann Theodor."<sup>43</sup> The Emperor, however, was the only Brazilian to whom Gobineau directed any words of praise. Towards the rest of the population — including most of the nobility and state officials — he merely felt contempt. As he noted in a report to the French Foreign Ministry, the ongoing practice of miscegenation in Brazil indicated that the Brazilian "half-breed" population would probably become extinct within the next 200 years, as miscegenation would inevitably lead to sterility.<sup>44</sup>

Yet, not all Brazilians shared Gobineau's pessimistic view, and especially writers, scientists and physicians did not find such positions convincing. Although his famous *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853-1855) initially secured more readers in Brazil than in Europe, many found his theories repugnant. They were rather of the opinion that a "good mixture of races" could solve Brazil's "racial problem" in the long term, providing the nation with a solid "biological basis."<sup>45</sup> In the context of the Vienna exhibition, Gobineau disagreed sharply with such critical statements, launching another fierce attack against Brazilian miscegenation. Although

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42 Joaquim Antonio de Azevedo, *Discurso pronunciado em sessão do Conselho administrativo de 3 de Outubro de 1870* (Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Universal de Laemmert, 1870).

43 Georges Raeders, *O inimigo cordial do Brasil. O Conde de Gobineau no Brasil* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1988), 184-185.

44 Georges Raeders, *O inimigo cordial*, 78, 241.

45 Georges Raeders, *O inimigo cordial*, 11.



his original intention was to write a promotional text on European immigration to Brazil, probably by invitation of his friend D. Pedro II, the final product was devastating and not “promotional” at all. His text *L’émigration au Brésil*, which was published in the French magazine *Le Correspondant* shortly after the end of the exhibition, underlined once again his strange love-hate relationship with the South American country. The first pages described Brazil as a true “land of opportunity”, in many ways the southern counterpart of the United States, but without the unfortunate “dictatorship of the masses” in the sense of Toqueville. In this regard, the Brazilian monarchy even had a clear advantage, he wrote.<sup>46</sup> The South American Empire was also blessed with an unparalleled degree of natural resources and a very favorable climate. In short, the perfect country for immigration, if were not for the Brazilians themselves.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps, he continued, European immigration could contribute to the gradual replacement of the most “degenerate” parts of the Brazilian population.<sup>48</sup>

Fortunately — for the exhibition planners — Gobineau’s polemical essay appeared shortly after the closure of the event, so there was no major impediment to promoting immigration and presenting a positive image of the country and its people in Vienna. Thus, there were hardly any representations of “blacks” or slaves to be seen in the Brazilian pavilion. In their effort to hide “unpleasant” realities such as the presence of a large population of African descent or the high level of illiteracy and social grievances, the exhibition organizers claimed to be stating “only the truth,” as declared in the official German exhibition guide.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to the various exhibition guides, usually published in Portuguese, English, French and German, the previously mentioned Nicolau Joaquim Moreira also distributed his Migration Handbook entitled *Notícia sobre a Agricultura do Brasil*. However, this manual was only to gain major importance in its English translation and within the context of the Philadelphia World’s Fair of 1876.<sup>50</sup> As well as the exhibition guides and the official catalogs, Moreira’s book drew a very euphemistic picture of the country, which was congruent with the visualization of the Empire in Vienna. Accordingly, Brazil still possessed an open frontier and almost unlimited reserves of mineral resources. It simply lacked the population and the capital to properly exploit such enormous potential. Apart from this, it also made reference to the Law

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46 Georges Raeders, *O inimigo cordial*, 219, 246.

47 Georges Raeders, *O inimigo cordial*, 239-240.

48 Georges Raeders, *O inimigo cordial*, 228.

49 Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Das Kaiserreich Brasilien auf der Wiener Weltausstellung von 1873* (Rio de Janeiro: Buchdruckerei Laemmert, 1873), n/p.

50 Nicolau Joaquim Moreira, *Agricultural Instructions for Those Who May Emigrate to Brazil* (New York: O Novo Mundo, 1875).

of the Free Womb, which was described as "salutary, beneficial, and highly humanitarian." It was so successful, according to Moreira, that it had led to the complete extinction of slavery shortly after its implementation. This was, as Moreira wrote, no wonder, as such a hateful institution was incompatible with a "land of freedom" such as Brazil.<sup>51</sup>

In this sense, the declaration of the Law of the Free Womb served as a welcome opportunity to proclaim the definitive end of Brazilian slavery and celebrate its positive consequences before an international audience. Completely contrary to the actual conservative implementation of the law, the editors of yet another promotional brochure about the "progressive development of Brazil" also described slavery as "history," while the "numerous manumissions" supposedly expressed the "sense of philanthropy common within the Brazilian people."<sup>52</sup> The description of the living conditions of slaves in the official country guide was extremely biased too, as the emphasis was on the supposed education programs, which prepared the slaves for liberty, as well as their "mild" working conditions. According to this and other official texts, the slaves always had enough to eat, wore decent clothes, and had a short working day and therefore always enough time for leisure.<sup>53</sup> Obviously, these descriptions of an "especially human" form of Brazilian slavery contradict everything we know today about the real living conditions of slaves in the mines, at the plantations and within households. In other words, it was pure propaganda.

It is therefore no wonder that there was just one visual representation of Afro-Brazilians at the Vienna exhibition: the *Baiana Quitandeira* by the German photographer Albert Henschel. Although the official catalog does not allow any conclusions to be drawn on Henschel's photographs, on April 10, 1873 the *Diario de Pernambuco* commented on them on the occasion of the Third National Exhibition.<sup>54</sup> Thus, we know that they were selected for presentation in Vienna. In addition to the image of the emblematic black fruit vendor, maybe a *escrava de ganho*, — a form of urban slavery, which allowed the slaves to do business, but then obliged them to deliver the earnings to their masters — Henschel and his partner Francisco Benque also sent a semi-official portrait of the Imperial family to Vienna. The journal's description of the photographs, however, does not refer to the content, but only mentions their perfect technical execution, as well as their outstanding artistic quality.

51 Nicolau Joaquim Moreira, *Agricultural Instructions*, 8-9.

52 Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Das Kaiserthum Brasilien im Jahre 1873. Ein kurzgefaßter Ueberblick der vorwärtsschreitenden Entwicklung Brasiliens* (Rio de Janeiro: J. Paul Hildebrandt, 1874), 16.

53 Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Das Kaiserreich Brasilien*, 68-69.

54 "Photographia," *Diario de Pernambuco*, Recife, April 10, 1873, 3; Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Resume du catalogue de la Section Brésilienne à l'Exposition Internationale à Vienne en 1873* (Vienne: Edition de la Section brésilienne, 1873), 27.

To this day, Henschel's photograph of the fruit vendor in Rio de Janeiro is one of his best-known works (Image 2). At first glance, it may seem surprising that the image was presented in Vienna, as the exhibition planners were not interested in depicting Brazil as an "African" country. It does make sense, however, when considered as a visual addition to the discourse on the "free blacks" as described in the official catalogs, in relation to the "benefits" of the Law of a Free Womb. An international audience was probably not even aware of the existence of the *escravos de ganhos* in Brazil, and therefore would have interpreted Henschel's photograph as evidence that Brazilian blacks were now doing business in an independent and seemingly "free" manner. Henschel's pictures, which were taken between 1866 and 1872 in Recife, Salvador da Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, did indeed differ from the previously common slave portraits captured by photographers such as Auguste Stahl and Christiano Júnior. Although Henschel portrayed "blacks" and slaves in front of tropical fruit or selected "exotic" backgrounds, letting them sometimes wear fictitious "African" robes, in order to appeal to a European audience interested in "exoticism," he never reduced them to mere objects. In contrast to the common pictures of "types of Africans," which were strongly influenced by anthropometric photography, Henschel respected his models' individuality.

**Image 2.** Frucht-Verkäuferin in Rio de Janeiro



**Source:** Albert Henschel, *Frucht-Verkäuferin in Rio de Janeiro*, 1869, albumen, 13,2 x 9,6 cm, Leibniz Institut für Länderkunde, Leipzig (Germany).

The *Baiana Quitandeira* is therefore represented in a relatively "natural" pose, while smoking a pipe. This staging of everyday life and the reference to the "personality" of the subjects was a far cry from Christiano Júnior's and Auguste Stahl's infamous slave portraits, which focused on the supposed ethnic and physical characteristics of "inferior races." As Jens Andermann has pointed out, such "type-photographs" circulated as "visual collectibles," and served the rising urban bourgeoisie's purpose of establishing a visual differentiation between themselves and the lower "castes" in the wake of abolition.<sup>55</sup> Notwithstanding, the poses of the "blacks" photographed by Henschel were not so different from the ones found on contemporary *cartes de visites*, frequently ordered by wealthy families in the photographer's studio. However, such representations, which depicted the (ex) slaves as masters of their own destiny—for example as vendors or wageworkers—appeared very rarely at the exhibitions. In the context of promoting the Law of the Free Womb, it probably seemed appropriate to visualize the "gradual emancipation" of the slaves, in order to convince the international audience of Brazil's humanitarian intentions.

#### 4. The Image of the "Naked, Ferocious Man-Eaters"

In contrast to the visual exclusion of "blacks" from the exhibition, the figure of the Brazilian "savage" was almost an expected image. A great number of catalogs and brochures issued for the World's Fair in Vienna mentioned the Empire's great efforts in "proselytizing and civilizing" the Indians. Yet, there was always an implicit differentiation between "good" and "bad" Indians, as was exemplified by the German language exhibition guide: "The number of savages roaming as implacable enemies of the civilized people in the vast jungles of Brazil's interior, is estimated at 500,000."<sup>56</sup> In contrast to Africans, however, Indians were not regarded as "racially inferior," but simply as "minor children." Under the Constitution of 1824 neither the slaves nor the "savages" had any civil rights, but the latter were at least considered to be capable of reaching a certain degree of "civilization."<sup>57</sup>

This discourse of "civilization by religious education" was accompanied on the visual level by numerous ethnographic exhibits and pictures. Porto Alegre described the display of Native American artifacts, textiles and weapons, which had been organized

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55 Jens Andermann, *The Optic of the State: Visuality and Power in Argentina and Brazil* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2007), 186-187.

56 Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Das Kaiserreich Brasilien*, 268.

57 Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Das Kaiserreich Brasilien*, 271.

by Francisco Caminhoá, as “very tasteful.”<sup>58</sup> In this case, “tasteful” suggested that the exhibition organizers had seized various ethnological objects from the *Museu Nacional*’s vast collections. Afterwards, they presented them according to contemporary aesthetic criteria, without any systematic knowledge of their specific cultural context, in order to make them “consumable” for a Western audience. Thus, the artifacts were displayed behind glass and in vitrines, alongside manufactured and agricultural products, as if they were goods themselves. In combination with the exhibition guide texts and some openly displayed books on geography, economy and history, the audience was expected to realize that these were the artifacts of a disappearing, if not extinct, culture. No declarative texts were attached to the “Indian display” itself, while the official reports and catalogs vaguely described some of the “tools and weapons of the savages.”<sup>59</sup> This section was finally completed by some spectacular “photographs from the Amazon” and a “collection of ethnographic photographs” from the Rio de Janeiro-based studio of Swiss entrepreneur George Leuzinger. Some of these pictures, by the German-born photographer Albert Frisch, were also published in the quite successful *Anthropologisch-Ethnographisches Album* of the Hamburg-based photographer Carl Dammann, which was also displayed at the Vienna exhibition.<sup>60</sup>

Albert Frisch, who had come to Rio de Janeiro in 1861, went on to work for George Leuzinger from 1865. As of November 1867, he began working on a series of unique photographs of residents of the Amazon region, including both indigenous people and mestizos. These pictures came into being during an expedition to the Upper Amazon, funded by Leuzinger himself and accompanied by the German-born engineers Franz and Joseph Keller. They remain his most famous photographs to this day. Despite intensive research, we know very little about this important pioneer of Amazonian-photography.<sup>61</sup> However, through the German volcanologist and explorer Alphons Stübel, who went to South America between 1868 and 1877, where he bought about 1,600 photographs in commercial

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58 Comissão Brasileira na Exposição Universal de Vienna, *Relatório*, 9-11.

59 General-Direction der Welt-Ausstellung, *Welt-Ausstellung 1873 in Wien. Officieller General-Catalog* (Wien: Verlag der General-Direction, 1873), 28; Joaquim Antonio de Azevedo, *Documentos officiaes da 3ª. Exposição Nacional inaugurada na cidade do Rio de Janeiro em 1º. de Janeiro de 1873*, vol. 1 (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Nacional, 1875), 1, 54.

60 Joaquim Antonio de Azevedo, *Documentos officiaes*, 53; Carl Dammann, *Anthropologisch-Ethnographisches Album in Photographien von C. Dammann in Hamburg* (Berlin: Wiegandt, Hempel & Parey, 1873).

61 Frank Stephan Kohl, “Albert Frisch, die ersten Amazonasfotografien und die Völkerkunde,” *Berliner Blätter – Ethnografische und ethnologische Beiträge* 38 (2005): 65-74; Augusto Emilio Zaluar, *Exposição Nacional Brasileira de 1875* (Rio de Janeiro: Typ. do Globo, 1875), 152.

photo studios, some of Frisch's pictures found their way to the present day Leibniz Institute for Geography in Leipzig, Germany. Other parts of this collection are available in different research institutions and libraries in Brazil.<sup>62</sup>

At first glance, it seems that Frisch's photographs have little to do with the usual pictures of the "noble savage," presented many times at national and international exhibitions. In contrast to the indianist painters, who knew their "Brazilian Indians" only from libraries, he had actually traveled to the Amazon, probably taking the first photographs of the region's people, landscapes, plants and animals. There, he took a series of pictures of the Amahuas-tribe, showing them with their weapons and their typical body adornments. Other tribal members posed for him while performing their daily activities, such as fishing or hunting.

According to Pedro Karp Vasquez, Frisch supposedly showed "complete respect" in his dealings with the Indians and an almost ethnological approach to their culture. Vasquez considers him therefore a "pioneer of anthropological photography."<sup>63</sup> As Thomas Theye has pointed out, the roots of anthropological photography do indeed lie in Brazil, albeit indirectly. Thus, the French photographer E. Thiesson had already sold photographs of two Botocudo-Indians from Northeastern Brazil between 1845 and 1846 in Paris.<sup>64</sup> These Indians were commonly held to be "ferocious" and "cannibalistic," at least from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Since then, many artists and photographers have produced similar visual stereotypes, in order to provide European observers with the archetypal image of the "cannibal."<sup>65</sup> This topos, however, had already existed since the colonial period, not least due to Hans Staden's famous chronicle of the "Naked, ferocious man-eaters" (1557).<sup>66</sup>

As well as Staden's chronicle, Frisch's photographs must be considered in their specific historical context, which in turn implies that the exhibitions and their potential audience played a crucial role. Thus, Frisch's photographs were presented to an international public increasingly interested in "exotic" peoples from "mysterious" and still undiscovered parts of the world, maybe from some of the famous "white spots" on contemporary maps. In this context, it is

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62 Heinz Peter Brogiato, "Die Collection Alphons Stübel. Fotografische Quellen als europäische Repräsentation und kulturelles Erbe Südamerikas (am Beispiel Ecuadors)," in *Beschreibung, Vermessung und Visualisierung der Welt*, eds. Ingrid Kästner and Jürgen Kiefer (Aachen: Shaker, 2012), 331-352.

63 Pedro Karp Vasquez, *Dom Pedro II e a fotografia no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Roberto Marinho, 1985), 26.

64 Thomas Theye, *Der geraubte Schatten. Einführung* (München: C. J. Bucher Verlag, 1989).

65 Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida, *Os índios na história do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: FGV, 2010), 140-141; Beatrice Kümin, *Expedition Brasilien. Von der Forschungszeichnung zur ethnografischen Fotografie* (Bern: Benteli, 2007), 126-143; Frank Stephan Kohl, *Albert Frisch*, 68.

66 Eve Duffy and Alida Metcalf, *The Return of Hans Staden: A Go-between in the Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

impossible to separate Frisch's photographs from the visual discourse of indianism, even if they seem to be "anthropological" and "objective" at first sight. In this context, a commentary from Gustav Adolf Zwanziger shows that the image of the "wild Botocudos" was quite popular at the Vienna exhibition, although those Indians lived far from the Amazon and had nothing to do with Frisch's Amahuas. In his report on the Vienna exhibition, Zwanziger accused the Fair's female visitors of thoughtlessly copying all kinds of jewelry, as displayed in the departments of foreign nations. According to him, this would have had quite amusing consequences in the case of the Brazilian section, as Austrian ladies would have had to perforate their nose-septum in the style of the "savage" Botocudos on display.<sup>67</sup>

In fact, Frisch's photos of the Amazonian Indians might have merely created the illusion of a people living in harmony with nature, as it remains unclear whether the subjects were really moving and living in the lush and unspoiled nature that he depicted. This doubt stemmed essentially from his photographic technique. Due to poor lighting conditions in the rainforest, Frisch first photographed his models against a neutral background, thus achieving good results in terms of their physical characteristics and their body jewelry. He then took another picture of the supposedly "natural" surroundings, which was often staged in a "wild romantic" manner. In the last step, he connected both negative plates and passed the compound onto paper, thereby fusing them. This is why many of the Indian models appear in front of identical backgrounds. In addition, their poses strongly resemble the static and often conventional studio poses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>68</sup>

In the exhibition catalog of the National Exhibition of 1873, Frisch's images were simply referred to as "types of Indians", which illustrates the degradation of the portrayed as "types of people," as was the case with many anthropometric photographs of the time. The exoticism of the "other" was quite deliberately exploited by Frisch and his patron, George Leuzinger, who was primarily interested in selling "exotic sceneries." This also explains why Leuzinger printed the seal "Medal of Honor at the Paris Exhibition of 1867" on some of Frisch's Amazonian photos. By insinuating that these photographs had won an important prize in Paris, Leuzinger hoped to increase sales. However, as the historian of photography Frank Stephan Kohl has shown, this was clearly just a marketing strategy, as the Frisch-Keller expedition began only one month after the closing of the Paris exhibition.<sup>69</sup> Frisch's Amazonian photographs were therefore never

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67 Gustav Adolf Zwanziger, "Thiere, Pflanzen und Steine," 22.

68 Margrit Prussat, *Bilder der Sklaverei. Fotografien der afrikanischen Diaspora in Brasilien 1860-1920* (Berlin: Reimer, 2008), 68.

69 Frank Stephan Kohl, "Um jovem mestre da fotografia na Casa Leuzinger", *Instituto Moreira Salles - Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira* 3 (2006): 195-197.

exhibited in Paris, but in Vienna. In addition, and as part of Leuzinger's ingenious marketing plan, some of Frisch's photographs of the Amahuas provided brief descriptions, characterizing the tribe-members as "cannibalistic," without offering a scientific or anthropological explanation for this phenomenon.<sup>70</sup> Yet, as many reports and travel diaries of contemporary explorers show, the topic of the "savage man-eater" was fairly widespread at that time. As well as the often sensationalist European and North American travel memoirs, Frisch's photographs depicted the Amahuas as "dangerous" cannibals, equipped with poisonous arrows. At the same time, they made for picturesque "noble savages", in the midst of a mysterious jungle. In other words, they were the perfect "product" for a growing market of "exotic goods."

## Conclusion

Overall, the Brazilian exhibition organizers were quite successful in displaying and disseminating the image of a "modern nation" abroad. For a peripheral country such as Brazil it was not an easy task to combine images of "modernity," associated with technological progress and "high culture," with the dismal realities of a slaveholding monarchy, whose population was overwhelmingly poor, illiterate and "mixed-race." Thus, in 1873 Brazil's political elite focused on stressing the tropical abundance and natural wealth of the country, but only as long as it was clear that those natural resources could and should be dominated by man. The exhibition planners were also engaged in promoting various forms of Brazilian exoticism, but never without emphasizing their paternalistic "civilizing mission" and the ongoing "catechization" of the remaining "savages." In this sense, the images and texts displayed in Vienna also made it clear that the gradual emancipation of slaves had already begun and that Brazil's "peculiar institution" was not as inhumane as the international public may have thought.

In this regard, the few references to slavery, such as the *Baiana Quitandeira* or the euphemistic descriptions in the catalogs, were designed to demonstrate that the international Abolition Societies had no need to worry about Brazil. Within a short time, European immigration and the modernization of agriculture would transform the Empire into a "free society." The Brazilian monarchy was therefore presented as "enlightened" and in search of "human development," as the ethnographic photographs and exhibits were expected to prove. In this respect, indigenous cultures were already "history," destined to make way for a "modern" Brazil. However, the visual discourse of the "modernizing tropical Empire" was simply superficial, disguising growing

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70 Frank Stephan Kohl, *Albert Frisch*, 68; Margrit Prussat, *Bilder der Sklaverei*, 68.



internal tensions and the formation of a republican opposition. On some occasions, as in the case of Gobineau's commentary on Brazil or the exhibition organizers' fears of being "too exotic," these tensions even became visible within the scope of the Vienna exhibition.

At the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876 the Empire managed once more to sell the image of a "progressive and civilized" monarchy in the tropics. However, by the time of the Parisian Universal Exhibition of 1889 the aforementioned tensions had become so obvious that a substantial part of the international public increasingly doubted Brazil's viability as a nation. Although Brazil had declared the end of slavery in May 1888, it was too late. The stark contrast between the official discourse and the harsh reality of social exclusion and underdevelopment had led to unprecedented political discontent within the country. Thus, shortly after the closure of the Parisian exhibition, the Empire finally imploded.

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