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Ceremonies of Civilization: A Study on the Aesthetics of Progress in the Age of Comparisons

**Ceremoniali civilizacije: raziskava o estetiki napredka
v dobi primerjav**

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93

ABSTRACT

This article shows how post-Enlightenment philosophies of history were aesthetically embodied in certain events, institutions, and individuals that disseminated the linear and imperialist temporality of progress. As a case study, the article examines the 1876–1877 journey abroad of Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil, in the context of civilizational comparisons. The emperor’s practice of visiting institutions that materialized and displayed progress (museums, universities, factories, etc.) attracted the attention of the international press, which contributed to the fashioning and dissemination of that image. Moreover, his personal aversion to pompous ceremonies led to the adoption of novel political rituals that took place within progressive institutions and events, such as the International Exhibition in Philadelphia and the Caxton Celebration in London. Fashioned as “ceremonies of civilization,” these events – like the progressive emperor of a country socially and economically based on slave labor – reveal temporal ambivalences in the “age of comparisons.”

Keywords

history of monarchies, progress, civilization, political aesthetics

IZVLEČEK

Članek preučuje, kako so se postrazsvetljenske filozofije zgodovine utelešale v določenih politično-estetskih dogodkih, institucijah in osebah, ki so širili linearno in imperialistično časovnost napredka. Kot študijo primera je predstavljeno potovanje brazilskega cesarja Dom Pedra II. v letih 1876–1877 v kontekstu primerjave civilizacij. Cesarjeva praksa obiskovanja institucij, ki so materializirale in prikazovale napredek (muzeji, univerze, tovarne itd.), je pritegnila pozornost mednarodnega tiska, ki je prispeval k oblikovanju in širjenju te podobe. Poleg tega je cesarjevo osebno zavračanje pompoznih ceremonij prispevalo k uvedbi novih političnih ritualov, ki so potekali v okviru naprednih institucij in dogodkov, kot sta Mednarodna razstava v Philadelphii ter Caxtonova proslava v Londonu. V skladu s podobo naprednega vladarja države, katere družbeni in gospodarski temelj je bilo suženjsko delo, te dogodke lahko razumemo kot »ceremoniale civilizacije«, ki razkrivajo časovne ambivalentnosti v »dobi primerjav«.

Ključne besede

zgodovina monarhij, napredek, civilizacija, politična estetika

INTRODUCTION

Our contemporary understanding of historical time and the political cosmologies emerging from it was, wrote Reinhart Koselleck, shaped by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, forming “*the foundation for history in general as well as for progress.*”¹ The concept of progress, like that of history, refers to the same existential mechanism: the disjunction between future expectations and past experiences. These are integral to the philosophies of history that emerged during the 18th and 19th centuries, frameworks in which historical time was, in Koselleck’s words, “*subject to constant renewal.*”²

Koselleck characterized progress as a distinctly modern concept of movement, inherently tied to acceleration. Simultaneously, historical experience – conceived as a collective singular – enabled the world to be structured by hierarchies of civilizational maturity. This hierarchy was based on prevailing political constitutions and levels of scientific, technical, and economic development, all of which were cast as globally universal benchmarks.³

Within this framework of universal history, the world was set into a picture of itself. It was envisioned as a unified narrative in which nation-states, empires, science, technology, and capital converged toward a singular trajectory of progress. This trajectory ultimately pointed toward one (or a few) dominant ideals of progress, most notably industrialized and nationalized Western civilization. Under these conditions, peripheral nations, deemed lagging in the universal march toward civilization, were compelled to accelerate their development processes to gain recognition within the global community of nations.

1 Koselleck, Reinhart. *Future Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Trans. Keith Tribe. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, 269.

2 *Ibid.*, 196.

3 *Ibid.*, 236–248.

In this article, I will demonstrate how the experience of 19th-century peripheral monarch Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil (1825–1891), aesthetically represented the process of “enframing” (*Gestell*) of the 19th-century world picture (*das Weltbild*), with its magnetic center being the idea of progress.⁴ The scenarios in which Dom Pedro participated – the International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures, and Products of the Soil and Mine in Philadelphia, the Caxton Celebration in London (commemorating the 400th anniversary of the first printed book in England), the opening of the Bayreuth Festival in Bavaria, and the Third International Congress of Orientalists in Saint Petersburg – were material expressions of the world-picture described above.⁵ This case offers a new perspective on the aesthetic entanglement of science, technology, and politics under the broader conceptual framework of progress. Through this view, we can identify philosophies of history that are aesthetically embodied in specific events, institutions, and individuals, contributing to a linear, empty, and imperialist temporality at the heart of so-called modernity.

To this end, the article will first contextualize the emergence of these historical philosophies. It will proceed by introducing the case study of Dom Pedro II of Brazil in order to explore how monarchy was positioned within the broader march of progress and how this reveals what I term the “aesthetics of progress.” Finally, it will examine the “ceremonies of civilization,” public spectacles that visually and ritually enacted a new form of power aesthe-

4 Martin Heidegger, in *The Age of the World Picture* (1938), describes modern history as the epoch in which the world is, in a fundamental sense, taken over as a “picture” – meaning that the world’s representation comes to stand with greater authority than the world itself. The world seen as an object was enframed in such a way that it starts to reveal itself to us only through representation. Heidegger, Martin. “The Age of the World Picture.” In: *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, 115–154. New York: HarperCollins, 1993. Timothy Mitchell expands this idea to study the 19th-century colonial context and poses the subject that stands before the picture of the world as an imperial one. Mitchell posits that the modern citizen becomes an observer and the world – mainly the colonized one – becomes its object of knowledge. This subject/object relationship that composes the picture of the world is shamelessly disclosed in events such as World Exhibitions, Orientalist Congresses, etc. Therefore, it is a useful category to understand Dom Pedro’s part of the structures of power in the globe that were aesthetically reproduced as an image of the world. Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

5 For a general discussion of Dom Pedro’s travels, see: Petter, Augusto. “The Imperial Meteor: Time and Velocity in Pedro II’s Journey of 1876–7.” *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 130 (2024), 55–73.

tics, a form that promoted the abandonment of royal pomp to the advantage of “republican” fashion. My case study, I conclude, demonstrates how such ceremonies materialized the notion of absolute progress, and may have served as tools for certain monarchs – and perhaps rulers in general – to join the nation-centered civilized world. Those ceremonies, together with Dom Pedro’s appearance, will appear simultaneously, disrupting the idea of what a king should look like. It also represents the status quo of a century increasingly turning itself toward change and movement. The development of both the ceremonies and costumes will rely on using the concept of “aesthetics.” Therefore, my examples will emphasize the sensory and material elements – sound, sight, movement, dress, and technological display – through which progress was experienced and legitimized in the second half of the 19th century.⁶

THE AGE OF COMPARISONS

Such an age gets its meaning because in it the various world views, customs, and cultures are compared and experienced next to one another, which was not possible earlier, when there was always a localized rule for each culture, just as all artistic styles were bound to place and time. Now, man’s increased aesthetic feeling will decide definitively from among the many forms which offer themselves for comparison. [...] This is the age of comparisons! That is its pride, but also by rights its sorrow. Let us not be afraid of this sorrow! Instead, we will conceive the task that this age sets us to be as great as possible.⁷

(Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 1878).

6 The idea of an aesthetics of progress resonates with the studies on the relationship between aesthetics and sovereignty collected in: Ben-Dor Benite, Zvi, Stefanos Geroulanos, and Nicole Jerr, eds. *The Scaffolding of Sovereignty: Global and Aesthetic Perspectives on the History of a Concept*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

7 Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. Trans. Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Section 1, “Of First and Last Things,” Aphorism 23.

Johann Gottfried Herder, while often positioned as a critic of the Enlightenment's universalist assumptions, was still in line with the period's progressive philosophy of history while reimagining historical development through the organic unfolding of national cultures. His emphasis on *Volksgeist*, or the singular spirit of each people, shifted attention from abstract reason to historically and culturally embedded communities. This idea offered plurality and exceptionality, while still remaining a teleological model of historical development. Herder's studies of nations' kernels laid the groundwork for global comparative structures in which the history of each people could be understood as a stage in a broader civilizational arc. "Each nationality," he wrote, "has its center of happiness within itself, as every sphere has its center of gravity."⁸ In this view, history is not simply composed of a singular Enlightenment march, but instead a landscape of diverse nations advancing at different rhythms, all contributing to the full realization of humanity. Yet Herder's relativism remained tethered to the Enlightenment ideal of improvement: each nation, in cultivating its own genius, moved toward fuller expression and mutual recognition within an interconnected world. Herder stated that all the questions concerning the progress of our species are answerable with a single word: humanity (*Menschheit*).⁹ Thus, his work both complicated and reinforced the progressive temporality of Enlightenment historicism, replacing abstract universality with a comparative historicism of national becoming.

It was under these conditions that the dialectical movement between Enlightenment and Romanticism in the second half of the 19th century culminated in what Friedrich Nietzsche referred to as "the age of comparisons." The decades that separate Nietzsche and Herder's reflections witnessed the outcomes of the First Industrial Revolution, and the start of the second. The world was significantly more interconnected than at the beginning of the century, and national revolts and revolutions came to fruition all over the globe. Europe started to fill in the blanks on the map that

8 Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024, 437.

9 Koselleck, Reinhart. *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Trans. Todd Samuel Presner. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, 170–207.

Conrad's Charles Marlow had dreamed of exploring as a child, and that, as an adult, he was sent to colonize.¹⁰ The world had been touched by the pantheon of progress – as selected by Koselleck – Turgot, Condorcet, Iselin, Wieland, and Kant, and in the 19th century, Engels, Haeckel, von Hartmann, and, of course, Hegel.¹¹

This development happened not only in the world of ideas, as progress was also seen materially. *"One need only bring to mind the change from the stagecoach to the railway and from the automobile to the jet airplane: through acceleration, the spatial pregivens in nature have been completely reconfigured anew within the span of one and a half centuries."*¹² The age of comparisons was seasoned by the Kantian idea of infinite progress. The present witnessed changes whose accelerating speed distanced our expectations of the future from us. When referring to the concept, rather than to the idea of progress, Koselleck talks about the understanding of a universalizing movement.¹³ A movement towards converging progress into a collective singular. Before, one could simply speak of progress in technology, progress in morals, progress in this or that. Now progress, like history, became an entity in itself; it had its own reason, and its own endings. This is what Tyson Retz described as "Absolute Progress."¹⁴

The concept of universal history enabled Europeans to travel the world perceiving other societies as existing at earlier stages of their own historical development. This concept was one of the foundational grounds of the 19th century's evolutionist perspectives, which justified imperialism, colonization, and subjugation of others considered inferior to bring progress to the "non-civilized" world. On the other hand, Retz speaks of relative progress, which can be presented as the problem of the measurability of progress. In

10 Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness and Other Tales*. Ed. Owen Knowles. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 108–109.

11 Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History*, 227.

12 *Ibid.*, 220.

13 *Ibid.*, 5.

14 Retz, Tyson. *Progress and the Scale of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

the Darwinian world of conflict and competition, the weighing scale tilted toward progress for some meant decline for others.

To illustrate how these ideas were enacted in practice, it is worth turning to a historical event that embodied this worldview: the Brussels Geographical Conference of 1876, a ceremony of progress that reflected the imperial ambitions of the Belgian monarchy.¹⁵ The nations invited and present were those who explored the African continent with imperial intentions: Italy, Russia, Germany, Great Britain, France, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Belgium (the host). The King of Belgium was the President of the Conference, which was composed mainly of specialists in geography and wealthy capitalists. Under the royal leadership of Leopold II, the event was transformed, by his opening speech, into a ceremony of progress. The location was not a university, but his own palace. The justification for having Belgium as the host country, said the king, was its position as a “*central and neutral state*.”¹⁶ Therefore, for the king, the conference would have as its primary goal “[t]o open up to civilization the only part of our globe which it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the darkness in which entire populations are enveloped.” It was “*a crusade worthy of this age of progress*.”¹⁷ Such events would lead to repercussions that later influenced the Congress of Berlin and the Scramble for Africa. The absent states and other entities and subjects – including the Emperor of Brazil – would receive the congress’s annals only later on.

Comparisons on a global scale finally became possible. And more than that, they became a constitutive part of the enframing of the world-as-picture. Stories in their individual format were shown simultaneously in one history, and the experience of national histories appeared as part of a world or universal history. The consolidation of a universal history as a global framework of comparisons offered new coordinates for thinking about national trajectories. For Brazil, a peripheral country aspiring to enter the

15 For a general account of this event, see: Banning, Émile. *Africa and the Brussels Geographical Conference*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1877.

16 *Ibid.*, 153.

17 *Ibid.*, 152.

hall of civilized nations, this meant positioning its history within debates about progress and civilization that circulated among nation builders and intellectuals all over the globe. These debates had Western Europe and the US as the leading locations of the world's progression.

The influence of this broader historical and intellectual context on Dom Pedro's worldview is evident in his correspondence with other members of the political and scholarly elite. Of particular relevance here is the cultivation of a friendship between the monarch and Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, the French minister in Brazil from 1869 to 1870. Gobineau's writings on race and civilization made him a representative commentator on the notions of progress and decline that haunted the ultra-reactionary political perspectives of the century's eve and beyond. The Emperor Dom Pedro II and his friend the Count of Gobineau, now also his travel companion, were masters in making comparisons. When not travelling together, they still corresponded on matters like *"the moral progress of each nation," "progress in sciences,"* and, from Gobineau's side, specifically *"the spiritual decay of the current world we live in,"* in comparison with his beloved Early Middle Ages.¹⁸ For Gobineau, civilization means a *"state of relative stability, where the mass of men try to satisfy their wants by peaceful means, and are refined in their conduct and intelligence,"* which is strictly conditioned by race.¹⁹ Human instincts and the striving for life with intelligence and creativity are thus the source of mental improvement and material progress.

Gobineau's example is crucial not only because he is Dom Pedro's contemporary, friend, and travel companion, but also because his perspective on progress as decadence shows that it still does not escape from the modern temporal conception of time and history: the collective singular to which all humanity belongs.

The idea of an infinite progress is very seductive to many modern philosophers, and they support it by declaring that our civilization has many merits and

18 Gobineau, Joseph Arthur de. "Letter to Dom Pedro II," 8 February 1882. In: Wilhelm Rauers, *Dom Pedro II e o conde de Gobineau*, 613. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1938.

19 *Ibid.*

advantages which our differently trained ancestors did not possess. [...] We are told that our scientific opinions are truer than they were; that our manners are, as a rule, kindly, and our morals better than those of the Greeks and Romans. Especially with regard to political liberty, they say, have we ideas and feelings, beliefs and tolerances, that prove our superiority. [...] A little more serious consideration of history will show what truth there is in these high claims.²⁰

Disagreeing on several topics with Gobineau, Dom Pedro was more optimistic about progress. During a journey through Egypt in 1871 – engaged in personal studies on the progress of the world – the emperor reflected on the modern state of the country while contemplating the legacy of Ancient Egypt. For him, “*Egypt crawls along the civilizational road.*”²¹ However, he also remarks that there were suitable locations for spectacles of progress: theatres and the French opera. “*The civilized could find much fun in there.*”²²

Such forms of progress are only conceivable if all social and cultural elements are understood to be contemporaneous, i.e., belonging to the same calendar, to the same time. They depend on a narrative expressing a temporality that runs irreversibly like an arrow from the past to the future.²³ Both Gobineau and Pedro II of Brazil belong to this context.

DOM PEDRO'S JOURNEY OF 1876–1877 AND THE AESTHETICS OF PROGRESS

Dom Pedro II, Brazil's second and last emperor, had travelled several times within his empire before journeying abroad in the 1870s. In the first decades of his reign, he journeyed from the southern to northern provinces.

20 De Gobineau, Arthur. *The Inequality of Human Races*. London: William Heinemann, 1915, 155.

21 Dom Pedro II. “Entry of 7 November 1871.” In: *Diário do Imperador (1840–1891)*, ed. Begonha Bediaga. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, 1999.

22 Dom Pedro II. “Entry of 10 November 1871.” In: *Diário do Imperador (1840–1891)*, ed. Begonha Bediaga. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, 1999.

23 Latour, Bruno. *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes: Essai d'anthropologie symétrique*. Paris: La Découverte, 2006.

The monarch's being-everywhere was undoubtedly in service of the imperial political intention to maintain the newly formed Brazilian nation-state's symbolic unity. These trips also aimed to investigate the civilizational level of the empire's peripheries. When abroad, the countries he visited were treated as comparative case studies, and his presence acted as cultural diplomacy – projecting progress and civilization.²⁴

In 1871, Dom Pedro visited key cities in Europe and North Africa. By 1876, having already built strong ties with European ruling houses and intellectual circles, he added the United States, the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and Scandinavia to his itinerary.²⁵ Well-known by the foreign press, newspapers closely tracked his new journey, especially in the US, where *The New York Herald* gave him notable attention. The American media portrayed Dom Pedro as both scholar and sovereign, “a good chemist and a good engineer,” noting that he possessed Brazil's finest library and read in several languages, including English.²⁶ He toured incognito, not for pomp but to observe and study. These accounts forged a global image: a modern monarch disdaining ceremony, fluent in modern media, intellectually agile, and relentlessly mobile.

In Brazil, a parliamentary debate questioned the utility of the emperor's foreign tours. *O Mosquito* satirized public expectations: “With his return, we all expected to see the inauguration of a new era.”²⁷ Yet his travels failed to industrially or socially transform Brazil, which remained stagnant. In other words, despite the emperor's image as a liberal individual, his country remained a slaveholding society with its economy heavily dependent on slavery-based structures. There were, indeed, several small steps taken by the crown during the mid-18th century to reduce the presence of that shameful institution in the country, and the emperor himself did eventu-

24 Petter, “The Imperial Meteor,” 55–73.

25 *Ibid.*, 56.

26 *The Daily Argus*, 19 April 1876.

27 *O Mosquito*, 25 March 1876.

ally publicly express abolitionist and other liberal ideals.²⁸ However, even the court city of Rio de Janeiro, in the 1870s, was still sustained by slave labor, including its commerce, transport system, and domestic domains. Dom Pedro's reformist deeds – or lack thereof – and his attitude of regularly compromising with the landowner elites obviously slowed rather than accelerated the process of abolition. The project of Brazilian civilization not only paradoxically included slavery, but was financed by it.²⁹ Thus, under those conditions, the gap between the emperor's ceremonial activities abroad and the social reality of the empire at home is evident.³⁰

Besides being the citizen emperor, or the American emperor, Dom Pedro was recognized by the international press as someone "*familiar with several languages, he is especially fond of reading the English and American poets and essayists.*"³¹ The same reports described him as "*rather actuated by a desire to observe and study our character and institutions as a people, than by the ambition to receive the homage and lionizing which are regarded as the due of royal guests.*"³² Taking travel notes along the way, he would be able to assess each nation's progress. Such press reports assisted in forging and spreading the globally famed monarchic persona and his progressive characteristics: his aversion to ceremonies; interest in the international media; intellectual skills; mastery of time management; and ability to move fast from one place to another.

Dom Pedro was depicted as an intelligent observer, a king with the eyes of a scholar. He was a gentleman and a ruler who used every travel experience and every sight seen along the way to improve his character and intellect. The idea behind his travelling around the world was that this would grant him cultural and intellectual enrichment that he would later

28 Barman, Roderick J. *Citizen Emperor: Pedro II and the Making of Brazil, 1825–1891*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, 391.

29 Chalhoub, Sidney. *Visões da Liberdade: Uma história das últimas décadas da escravidão na Corte*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1990.

30 Schwarcz, Lília Moritz. *As Barbas do Imperador: D. Pedro II, um monarca nos trópicos*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998, 493–494.

31 *The Daily Argus*, 19 April 1876.

32 *Ibid.*

apply to the *aperfeiçoamento* of his nation's institutions.³³ While abroad, promoting technological innovations, worshipping progress, he was a "knight of modernity" riding the swan of Baudelaire, transforming the unease in exile of the big-city wanderer into a heightened awareness of the world.³⁴ The *flâneur*, just like Dom Pedro, was a creature able to "store time as a battery stores energy."³⁵ To Dom Pedro, and to the *flâneur*, the metropolis (more specifically Paris and any other civilized city) is no longer his native place, but instead it "represents for him a theatrical display, an arena."³⁶

Dom Pedro was the epitome of Baudelaire's passionate observer. As already noted, he was often described by reporters and travel companions as watching, inspecting, gazing, and analyzing everything at every stage of his itinerary. Thus, being anonymous and placing oneself inside of (as a citizen) and – at the same time – apart from (as a monarch) the world made him the ideal imperial observer, being both judging and scientific. Precisely due to these characteristics, this kind of observer was seen metaphorically by Baudelaire as a prince. Dom Pedro, then, had an advantage over the ordinary spectator: he was literally the king; and in the very etiquette of the monarchy, together with the laws and traditions regulating it, what mattered the most was the king's sight, what he actually saw. Like the *flâneur*, Dom Pedro engaged in an incognito performance in which he sought to feel himself "everywhere at home; to view the world, to be at the

33 The ideas of *aperfeiçoamento* ("perfectioning") and *melhoramento* ("betterment") are worth mentioning here, because they belong to the lexicon of progress in 19th-century Brazil. They imply the idea of the perfectibility of its institutions. Cribelli, Tereza. *Industrial Forests and Mechanical Marvels: Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 40–43.

34 Baudelaire's swan is taken as an allegory of exile. During the 19th century, it frequently appeared as a creature at home on the water, yet displaced by a changing, man-made urban environment. While in Paris, Dom Pedro seemed to wish to embody this French symbol of "modernity." However, he was less depicted as the Baudelairean man than as a monarch who had adopted Yankee ideas about productivity and work. See: Babuts, Nicolae. "Baudelaire in the Circle of Exiles: A Study of 'Le Cygne'." *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 22/1 (1993), 123–138; Petter, "The Imperial Meteor," 55–73.

35 Benjamin, Walter. *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, 107.

36 *Ibid.*

heart of the world, and yet hidden from the world."³⁷ However, unlike the common *flâneur*, Dom Pedro seemed happily exiled, showed himself free from the burdens of his crown, and paradoxically, simultaneously embodied the urge and rush of progress to see everything as a learner, as well as the rising figure of the globetrotter as a tourist.³⁸ He did not carry the freedom of the *flâneur* as much as he carried the fashion of one.

Dom Pedro, for the Americans, with his seemingly liberal behavior, was pushing Brazil toward the civilized world, both in terms of social and material development. By embodying the fashion of a progressive ruler, the emperor acted or performed in specific places and events that represented the apogee of progress in universal history. He merged the *flâneur* with the image of the Yankee emperor, a true American gentleman, strolling incognito through the metropolises seeking art and culture, but also industrious and efficient.³⁹ Dom Pedro combined the republican *flâneur* with the

37 Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. Trans. Jonathan Mayne. London and New York: Phaidon Press, 1965, 12.

38 After his first visit to Europe in 1871–72, Dom Pedro expressed resentment for having to sit on the throne and being unable to deal with exercises of the spirit [*ocupações do espírito*]. His correspondence with Gobineau is quite revealing in this respect. While in Petropolis, he wrote: "*I work a lot now, but there is so much to read and to study that I have nothing left but just a little time for the occupations that you remind me about and that are so dear to us.*" And regarding his lack of time for such pursuits, Dom Pedro complained that: "*I cannot afford it, I do not have but very little time for myself...*" [Trans. Augusto Petter.] See: Dom Pedro II. "D. Pedro II to Gobineau." 14 October 1873; "D. Pedro II to Gobineau." 15 January 1874. In: George Raeders, *Dom Pedro II e o conde de Gobineau*. São Paulo: Ed. Nacional, 1938, 137–155.

39 Travelling incognito was not an invention of Dom Pedro. Other monarchs and celebrities in modern history did follow the same practice, which paradoxically often attracted the attention of the press. The most telling of these is the case of Tsar Piotr I of Russia, who travelled in western Europe as a seaman to learn from lived experience and later applied what he had learned at home. In the summer of 1876, while in the Russian Empire, the incognito nature of Dom Pedro's travels was widely noted by Russians newspapers, and spawned comparisons between the travel styles of the monarchs. On the phenomenon of travelling incognito, see: Barth, Volker. *Inkognito: Geschichte eines Zeremoniells*. Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2013.

disciplined, reformist monarch. His aesthetic turn thus echoes Max Weber's idea of a bourgeois ethos replacing aristocratic pomp in modern history.⁴⁰



Figure 1: An illustration commonly identified as depicting Dom Pedro II departing New York aboard a Cunard Line steamer in July 1876, shown raising his hat in farewell as a crowd gathers on the pier below.⁴¹

These depictions both raise and answer the following question: if “old” royal fashions were no longer seen as progressive, then why focus on the travels of a monarch to arrive at an “aesthetics of progress”? The first

40 Max Weber's idea of an ethos of the bourgeoisie appears in his analysis of the development of the spirit of capitalism. Weber, Max. *Die protestantische Ethik und der "Geist" des Kapitalismus*. Leipzig: Reclam, 2017. Additionally, for a study on the attempt of the bourgeoisie to pursue aristocratic fashion, see: Perrot, Philippe. *Les dessus et les dessous de la bourgeoisie: Une histoire du vêtement au XIXe siècle*. Paris: Fayard, 1981.

41 "Scenes in His Life." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Available at: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/8f52cce0-c597-012f-44ea-58d385a7bc34> (access: November 2025).

answer is that, as a monarch of a peripheral country, the emperor sought inclusion in the civilized world through the study of civilization and through performing as a progressive ruler. Second, because studies of modern monarchies offer rich reflections on performance, theatricality, and the representation of imperial politics.⁴² Additionally, European monarchies provide several examples of the use of soft power in political encounters, royal pomp and diplomacy, and the fashioning of scenarios of power.⁴³ The self-fashioning of nationalizing and imperial monarchies throughout modern history is one of image and representation – a politico-aesthetic project. This does not imply that other political forms of government do not have their own aesthetics of power, but rather that, due to their reliance on symbolic authority, monarchies provide the most visible and codified displays of such aesthetic depictions.

I am talking here about aesthetics and its relation to society and politics in a broad anthropological sense. It appears through the study of sensations and experiences of power related to the legitimation of political and international systems of sovereignty by "*ritual, symbolism, custom, religious negotiation and conviction, and exchange – all of which contribute to the scaffolding – to the ways that the exercise of sovereignty relies on a theatrical, representational, and artistic dimension and plays a normative role in the social and cultural establishment of the beautiful.*"⁴⁴ I argue that monarchies offer exemplary case studies of these dimensions. Royal pomp is an evident example of such phenomena, but by the late 19th century even monarchs began to adopt new, non-royal forms of pomp to sustain symbolic sovereignty. Forms of public display, as noted by Zvi Ben-Dor Benite and co-authors, are not merely characterizations of styles of rule;

42 See, for example: Giloi, Eva, Martin Kohlrausch, Heikki Lempa, Heidi Mehrkens, Philipp Nilsen, Kevin Rogan, eds. *Staging Authority: Presentation and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe. A Handbook*. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022.

43 Paulmann, Johannes. *Pomp und Politik. Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Régime und Erstem Weltkrieg*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000; Wortman, Richard S. *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006; Müller, Frank Lorenz, and Heidi Mehrkens, eds. *Royal Heirs and Uses of Soft Power in the Nineteenth-Century Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

44 Ben-Dor Benite, Geroulanos, and Jerr, *The Scaffolding of Sovereignty*, 17.

they also account for forms of power regimes and the potential of their force. Therefore, one may infer that “[e]ven the democratic pretense to an absence of theater and the rejection of ornate regalia enforce new kinds of revolutionary theatricality, oftentimes at the most basic levels – theatricality in new claims on sovereignty, in competitions over it, in appeals to it, in dreams played out through it.”⁴⁵ I argue that the revolutionary aspects of theatricality, when coming from instances of imperial power, often dress up as disruptive but in fact serve the maintenance of the status quo.⁴⁶

One could argue that, regarding the phenomenology of royal power, the visual aspects of monarchic sovereignty emerged earlier than its transformation into theatricality. The symbolism of the crown’s rule started on the level of the sacred, with the monarch embodying power itself through a politico-theologico origin.⁴⁷ Clifford Geertz calls such symbolic elaborations of rule, charged with the aesthetics of authority, “royal progresses.” Drawing examples from Elizabethan England, Java, and Morocco, Geertz illustrates how monarchs embodied sacred centrality. In the Moroccan case, as in *Dom Pedro’s*, the king’s image as a mobile, well-travelled man was “a central element in his power; the realm was unified – to the very partial degree that it was unified and was a realm – by restless searching-out of contact, mostly agnostic, with literally hundreds of lesser centers of power within it.”⁴⁸

From Sylvain Maréchal’s *The Last Judgement of Kings* (1793),⁴⁹ where monarchs perish in a revolutionary volcano, through Fascist, Nazi, and Soviet visions of global transformation, monarchies often figure as the

45 *Ibid.*, 20.

46 It is even more evident when we look at the instances of capitalist aesthetics. See: Weiss, Peter. *The Aesthetics of Resistance*. Vol. 1. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005, 286–290.

47 Kantorowicz, Ernst. *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.

48 Geertz, Clifford. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, 2000, 138.

49 Perovic, Sanja. “Death by Volcano: Revolutionary Theatre and Marie-Antoinette.” *French Studies*, 67/1 (2013), 15–29.

antithesis of futurist temporalities.⁵⁰ It is thus not intuitive to see an emperor as embodying progress in the wake of revolutionary upheavals. Yet the 1870s – at the height of the Second Industrial Revolution – were still marked by monarchical rule across much of Europe. Science was institutionalizing globally, in a world described as urbanized, globalized, or modernized – terms I avoid, since “progress” is already strongly associated with teleology.

Recent works on European monarchies argue that, in many ways, traditional arrangements concerning sovereignty, aesthetics, labor, and culture were still present during the 19th century. Part of this persistence is related to the symbolic nature of monarchic rule, where both the monarchy and the royals acted with resilience by wearing new clothes.⁵¹ I interpret these new clothes – and Dom Pedro’s activities and performances abroad – as new methods of presenting and representing monarchy and its sovereignty related to his belonging to the American continent.

From 1876 on, Dom Pedro adopted the unique characteristic of being an American, in the continental sense of the word. The Americans were thought to have a leading role in the future of world history and, accordingly, were expected to be civilized. In this context, Dom Pedro epitomized a singular form of monarchic style: he often set aside the pomp and ceremony of royalty in favor of a more civilian appearance, one that might be described as following a republican fashion.

He was distinguished by his scholarly tastes and achievements, which were described as “*a great deal, especially in a century which has had so many princes who were high and privileged vagabonds.*”⁵²

50 Hartog, François. *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

51 I refer here to the works of Palgrave Studies in Modern Monarchies collection, edited by Axel Körner, Heather Jones, Heidi Mehrkens, and Frank Lorenz Müller. See: Müller and Mehrkens, *Royal Heirs and the Uses of Soft Power in the Nineteenth-Century Europe*; Müller, Frank Lorenz. *Royal Heirs: Succession and the Future of Monarchy in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023; Glencross, Matthew, and Judith Rowbotham. *Monarchies and the Great War*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018; Hein-Kircher, Hanka, and Frank F. Sterkenburgh, eds. *Modernizing Europe's Imperial Monarchies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025.

52 “The Coming Emperor.” *The New York Herald*, 7 April 1876.



Figure 2: An illustration portraying Dom Pedro II, Pope Pius IX, and King Vittorio Emanuele II in their respective ceremonial fashions. Published on the day of King Vittorio Emanuele II's address inaugurating the second legislative session of the Italian Kingdom, the image contrasts the visual idioms of papal ritual, national unification, and the "American monarchy" associated with Dom Pedro II.⁵³

Dom Pedro was not alone in this enterprise. Here we could mention the travels of other monarchs of the period, such as King Kalākaua of Hawaii, who traveled abroad in 1881, and Naser al-Din Shah of Persia, who did so in 1873, among others.⁵⁴ *O Commercio*, a Rio de Janeiro newspaper, celebrated the *bom gosto* ("tasteful fashion") of the Emperor Meiji of Japan, who abandoned rigid courtly formality for the European bourgeois style.⁵⁵ Dom Pedro similarly chose a civilian aesthetic style, a republican fashion, without abandoning monarchy altogether. Monarchs – and not only peripheral

53 "I Tre Sovrani presenti in Roma." *Don Pirloncino*, 53, 27 November 1871.

54 Sohrabi, Naghmeh. *Taken for Wonder: Nineteenth-Century Travel Accounts from Iran to Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 73; Motadel, David. "Global Monarchy: Royal Encounters in the Age of Empire." *The Historical Journal*, 67/3 (2024), 716.

55 *O Commercio*, 6 February 1872.

ones – who sought to leave behind what was considered outdated pomp and fashion for new forms of ceremony represented a notable trend. The ceremonies Dom Pedro chose to attend or invent were not only sites where progress was symbolized, they were performances of sovereignty aligned with a linear, processual, and future-oriented historical consciousness defined by movement, rupture, and change.

CEREMONIES OF CIVILIZATION AND THE KING'S NEW CLOTHES

The emperor's practice of visiting institutions that materialized and displayed progress (museums, universities, factories, etc.) attracted the attention of the international press, which took part in the fashioning and disseminating of his image. Moreover, his personal aversion to pompous royal ceremonies led him to adopt novel political rituals which would take place in institutions of progress and at events such as the International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures, and Products of the Soil and Mine in Philadelphia, the Caxton Celebration in London, the opening of the Bayreuth Festival in Bavaria, and the Third International Congress of Orientalists in Saint Petersburg.⁵⁶ All these events carried their own ambivalences and temporalities, just like the progressive emperor of a country that was still socially and economically based on enslaved people's labor.

Dom Pedro's itinerary, centered on institutions, reflected his desire to observe firsthand the operation of schools, prisons, hospitals, factories, and telegraph centers. The US, where progress had ostensibly taken root in the Americas, was his first stop. Reporting on his intentions, *The New York Herald* wrote he would "be permitted to see people and a land where such unprecedented strides in the science of government and in national progress had been made."⁵⁷

56 Petter, "The Imperial Meteor," 55–73.

57 "Dom Pedro II." *The New York Herald*, 15 May 1872.

According to Dom Pedro, the man who travelled the world was Dom Pedro de Alcântara, as the emperor had stayed in Brazil, along with the burdens of protocol. By avoiding being hosted in palaces, being the official guest of state receptions, and engaging in royal ceremonialism, he embraced alternative forms of grandeur embedded in progressive aesthetics. He stayed in hotels, visited poets like Longfellow and Victor Hugo, and toured with artists and intellectuals. Yet he could not bypass the most symbolically charged event: the Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia. This grand event embodied the republican ideals of the US, which presented itself as a friendly competition among nations. Dom Pedro's active participation in it illustrates that he did more than reject traditional rituals: he inserted himself into emerging public ceremonials that, while not monarchic, performed the aesthetics of progress.⁵⁸

Upon the Centennial's opening ceremony on 10 May 1876, Dom Pedro and Empress Tereza Cristina sat in a grandstand before the Memorial Hall. There, the emperor was not sitting incognito among the Brazilian commissioners, as he had previously required. Sitting right next to the president and his wife, the Brazilian royal couple were protagonists in that spectacle.⁵⁹ The opening *Centennial March*, written by Richard Wagner, was followed by John Greenleaf Whittier's *Centennial Anthem*, both figures dear to Dom Pedro II. Yet, the "*hundred thousand people*" reported by newspapers eager to hear the music made crowd control nearly impossible.⁶⁰ The police struggled, and the emperor, despite his privileged position, could barely hear the orchestra, both impressed and irritated by the chaos.

Following the music, President Ulysses S. Grant, accompanied by the royal couple, led a ceremonial procession from Memorial to Machinery Hall. As they passed through the Main Building, they were flanked by the Philadelphia City Troops, in black-feathered helmets evoking a modern Roman cavalry, protecting them from the pressing crowds. Reporting for

58 For a general account of this event, see: McCabe, James D. *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition*. Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1876.

59 *Ibid.*, 286.

60 *Harper's Weekly*, 27 May 1876.

The New York Herald, James J. O'Kelly described how Dom Grant (as he ironically called the president) escorted the empress, while Dom Pedro led Mrs. Grant. In Machinery Hall, "*the President of the United States and the Emperor of Brazil ascended to the platform of the great Corliss.*" George Henry Corliss, the inventor and Rhode Island commissioner, "*welcomed them and demonstrated how to activate the machine.*"⁶¹ The Corliss engine, a key innovation in US engineering, already three decades old, would power the entire fair. Its activation was chosen to symbolize the fair's commencement. "*The vast engine,*" wrote O'Kelly, "*the largest in the world [...] an embodiment of the strength and character of the Saxon race, was revered not just for scale, but as a civilizational symbol.*"⁶²

The spectacle offered the ideal opportunity for both rulers to play their roles. Dom Grant – as *The Herald* mocked the supposed despotism of President Grant in contrast to the progressive monarch – and his "brother the Emperor," as he called Dom Pedro in the opening speech, ascended to their positions at the platform that would give them access to the machinery.⁶³ Mr. Corliss placed President Grant at the left throttle and the Emperor of Brazil at the right. "*It does not often happen in a man's life,*" he said, "*to station two rulers of such nations at their posts to await his command.*" Surrounded by their wives and dignitaries, they stood before the mechanical colossus. Mr. Corliss asked, "*Are you both ready?*"⁶⁴ The emperor turned his handle first – steam surged, and the engine stirred. Then Grant followed, and the hall erupted with mechanical motion. At twenty minutes past one, the entire Machinery Hall came alive, as the opening ceremony concluded with the noise of the machinery. After the ceremony's temporal suspension, the homogeneous, empty time of progress was now put into motion for all participating nations, while electrical energy spread from the American ruler's hands to the various exhibition halls.⁶⁵

61 McCabe, *The Illustrated History*, 304.

62 *The New York Herald*, 10 May 1876, 3.

63 *Orleans County Monitor*, 27 May 1876.

64 McCabe, *The Illustrated History*, 305.

65 *Ibid.*



Figure 3:
Illustration showing President Ulysses S. Grant and Emperor Dom Pedro II activating the Corliss steam engine at the opening of the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Based on a sketch by the artist Theo. R. Davis, the image captures the ceremonial moment that inaugurated the machinery hall and signaled the start of the international exposition.⁶⁶

Another illustrative “spectacle of civilization” was the Caxton Celebration, commemorating the 400th anniversary of England’s first printed book, *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*, translated by Anthony Woodville, the Second Earl Rivers, and printed by William Caxton in 1477. Held as part of the Western International Exhibition at South Kensington, London, it featured books, newspapers, portraits, printing presses,

and other artifacts tracing the history of the press.⁶⁷ Over the course of three months, it drew more than 23,000 visitors. Among the highlights was a Bible printed live by Oxford University: the first copy gifted to Queen Victoria, the second to William Ewart Gladstone, the former British Prime Minister, and one of the earliest to Dom Pedro II.⁶⁸

The Caxton Celebration was more than a commemorative birthday; it celebrated a milestone in technological progress that had reshaped England. Gutenberg’s 15th-century press transformed social, cultural, and religious life by making knowledge more widely accessible, primarily

66 “Our Centennial – President Grant and Dom Pedro Starting the Corliss Engine.” *Harper’s Weekly*, 27 May 1876. Library of Congress. Available at: <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/89706312/> (access: September 2025).

67 *The Illustrated London News*, 7 July 1877, 18.

68 “The Caxton Celebration.” *The Times*, 2 July 1877.

through vernacular publications. This accessibility bolstered the spread of Protestantism across Europe, positioning the printed Bible as both a religious and technological force. Yet, the initial revolution of the press was above all technological, centered on speed and mass reproduction.⁶⁹ For late 19th-century intellectuals, noble or bourgeois, such celebrations reflected their belief in uninterrupted national progress and the civilizing power of technology. More than 500 guests were reported to have visited the collection of rare books and antiquities. The universities of Cambridge, Ghent, Göttingen, and Oxford had sent their dignitaries. *"Among the most diligent,"* a paper noted, *"was the Emperor of Brazil, who allowed nothing of importance to escape his notice."*⁷⁰ Dom Pedro moved among the intellectual elite as both peer and observer, carefully analyzing the exhibits. His gestures of close observation can be understood as aesthetic acts, contrasting the monarch's watchful gaze with the surrounding accumulation of artifacts, turning attention to detail into a performance of progress.

This was the symbol Dom Pedro embodied: a foreign monarch representing the speed of progress.⁷¹ The printing of the Caxton Memorial Bible, commemorating the anniversary of England's first printed book and symbolically recalling the origins of printing, was a feat of acceleration. Only 16 hours before the opening of the event, neither the book nor its materials existed yet. Its production began at midnight, and by the morning, Oxford University had delivered several copies, one of which was gifted to the emperor. *"That shows,"* the organizers declared, *"the state to which this great art is now happily arrived."*⁷² Practices of time discipline were, therefore, themselves aestheticized. Dom Pedro's deeds signified the beauty of punctuality and labor, qualities that replaced the splendor of costume as markers of the ruler's virtue.

69 Chartier, Roger. *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.

70 "The Caxton Celebration."

71 *Ibid.*

72 "The Caxton Quatercentenary." *The Graphic*, 24 February 1877, 174.

The emperor, as pointed out by the press, had no time to lose. By the time of the formal toast, Dom Pedro had already left. The remaining luminary was Mr. Gladstone, received by Sir Charles Reed, a politician and member of the Society of Antiquaries. The crowd moved ritualistically to the Caxton Room, where Archbishop William Thomson of York, who was also a member of the Royal Geographical Society, delivered a celebratory prayer. After Gladstone formally opened the exhibition with “may it prosper,” a series of modest toasts followed, accompanied by a performance from The Blues, the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards.⁷³ The first toast honored Queen Victoria, the Prince of Wales, Prince Leopold, and the royal family for their patronage. Breaking decorum, Gladstone asked to toast the absent emperor: “*He is a man of whom I may say in his absence more freely than if he were here, that he is a model to the Sovereigns of the world in his anxiety for the faithful and effective discharge of his duties.*”⁷⁴ This report, published in *The Times*, echoed the emperor’s image in British media, including satirical accounts, as a monarch defined by diligence and restless dedication to his travel duties.

In its coverage of the event, *The Illustrated London News* published an image of spectators watching the Caxton press demonstration, echoing a historic moment from the reign of King Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth Woodville. In place of Edward now stood Gladstone, British political figures, and the ubiquitous Emperor of Brazil.

73 *The Illustrated London News*, 18.

74 “The Caxton Celebration.”



Figure 4: Illustration of William Caxton presenting examples of his early printed work to King Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth Woodville, published in connection with the Caxton Celebration honoring the origins of English printing.⁷⁵

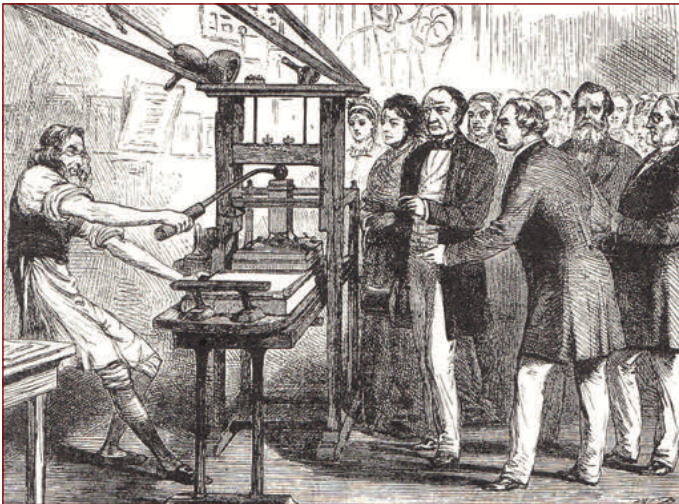


Figure 5: Illustration showing William Ewart Gladstone visiting the Caxton Memorial Exhibition at South Kensington in July 1877. The scene presents Gladstone among the displays commemorating William Caxton and the early history of English printing.⁷⁶

75 "William Caxton, The First English Printer, Showing Printed Proofs to Edward IV." *Harper's Weekly*, 21 July 1877.

76 "Mr. Gladstone at the Caxton Memorial Exhibition, South Kensington." *Supplement to the Illustrated London News*, 17 July 1877.

The Times later published the exhibition's opening speech, in which Gladstone referred to Dom Pedro as a distinguished man:

If I am to descend to lower, but still remarkable peculiarities, for Herculean perseverance and strength in the performance of labor, beginning, I believe, at about 4 o'clock in the morning, and ending very hard upon midnight. But that would be a small matter of praise to give if we did not consider the manner in which he consumes the 18 or 20 hours which form his ordinary day, and they are consumed in a succession of efforts to glean and gather through-out the world, from time to time, knowledge of [e]very kind which he may make useful on his return to his own country in promoting the health and happiness on his people. That is what I call, ladies and gentlemen, a great and good Sovereign, and a man who, by his conduct, enables [...] to make the station which he holds a pattern and blessing to his race.⁷⁷

Gladstone, who had met the emperor before and whose policies and Homeric studies intrigued Dom Pedro, would later engage in a long and fascinating conversation with him in the late 1880s.⁷⁸ In his speech, Gladstone's remarks on the emperor's use of time echoed the exaggerated tone of the London press, but he also seized the moment to politicize Dom Pedro's distinctive timekeeping. The emperor's rigorous scholarship and disregard for ceremonial pomp were framed as expressions of a deeper aim: the advancement of his people. For Gladstone, the arts of knowledge and governance were mutually reinforcing, and Dom Pedro embodied this union.

The events presented above worked aesthetically by appealing to elements of sensory experience – sight, sound, material display, and symbolic gestures – that were allegorically associated with past practices and royal-centered traditions. At the same time, however, they were permeated by

77 Gladstone's speech, published by *The Times*, was transcribed by Heitor Lyra in the original English in an endnote. Lyra, Heitor. *História de Dom Pedro II do Brasil: 1825–1891*. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1940–1942, 411.

78 Pedro II. "Entry of 6 February 1888." In: *Diário do Imperador (1840–1891)*, ed. Begonha Bediaga. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, 1999.

the idea of a rupture with the past, with advancement and civic fashion that substituted for royal pomp, thereby integrating modern monarchic sovereignty into the aesthetics of progress.

CONCLUSION

Dom Pedro also participated in other spectacles of progress during his journey of 1876–1877. They included major events such as the opening of the Bayreuth Festival in Bavaria and the Third International Congress of Orientalists in Saint Petersburg, as well as world fairs and scholarly congresses, which reflected the cultural logic of national progress and the perfecting process of universal history.⁷⁹ A full list is beyond the scope of this discussion, but his presence at these events corroborates the two cases discussed above. The emperor's mode of performing sovereignty was not about discarding ceremony but reconfiguring it. He integrated the monarchic image into new public rituals due to the growing dependence on public approval of one's rule.⁸⁰

79 Petter, "The Imperial Meteor," 55–73.

80 It is crucial to point out that my claim is not that Dom Pedro acted alone or carefully considered each step, following the Machiavellian idea attached to the concept of performance as something "inauthentic," where each action stems from the monarch's individual genius and serves solely to enhance power. Instead, my understanding of performance considers the implications of the context in which he participates and how it would affect one's decisions, and how theatricality is particularly bound to monarchic sovereignty. Notwithstanding this, by studying the world tours of monarchs such as the Emperor of Brazil, one cannot deny how the steps and itineraries were thoughtfully and accurately calculated to serve specific purposes, and the great majority of them were clearly – intentionally, or not – related to the display of political power. I do not deny that the emperor, as it is readily apparent in his letters and diaries, had his own genuine interest in progress and personal reasons for adding specific steps to his itinerary, which did not necessarily have a causal relation to monarchic sovereignty. This is not to suggest that performance has an inherent negative connotation or that it is solely related to political power. For examples of other works following the same line, see: Skwirblies, Lisa. "Colonial Theatricality." In: Shirin M. Rai et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Politics and Performance*, 27–42. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021; Kear, Adrian. "Authenticity and Theatricality: World Spectatorship and the Drama of the Image." In: Shirin M. Rai et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Politics and Performance*, 57–72. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021; Daloz, Jean-Pascal. "Representation." In: Shirin M. Rai et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Politics and Performance*, 117–130. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

In the second half of the 19th century, therefore, the theatricality of monarchy extended beyond palaces to exhibitions, museums, theatres, and scientific congresses. To acquire international relevance, Dom Pedro embodied the ideal of a cosmopolitan citizen-emperor, journeying across the globe to observe, and to be observed; to compare, and to be the object of comparison; and to partake in the rituals of civilization. This transformation was not solely a matter of personal foresight, but reflected the specific cultural and political tensions of the age and how they were enframed as part of the world-picture. Monarchy was not a relic due to its seemingly outdated ceremonial character, but a dynamic institution that both shaped and was shaped by the century's transformations. Dom Pedro, informed by a teleological understanding that democracy and republicanism would take the place of the remaining monarchies in the Americas, exemplifies this process.

The new way Dom Pedro performed public monarchy was not to de-ceremonialize it, but rather to integrate it, through his own physical participation, into novel rituals. These occasions were marked by the absence of traditional royal pomp and ceremony. Still, they had their own formalities, which were linked to knowledge and the elevation of progress in the eyes of the public. They both depended upon and were the sponsors of the idea of universal history. The ceremonies of progress were thus occasions for the materialization of politics in the age of comparisons. Crucially, despite these displays of cosmopolitanism and ceremonial innovation, Brazil remained fundamentally a slaveholding society until the late 1880s, which reminds us that the performance of progress is not antithetical to entrenched social inequalities.

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POVZETEK

Članek preučuje, kako so se postrazsvetljenske filozofije zgodovine – obeležene s prevladujočimi linearnimi predstavami o napredku – estetsko utelešale v določenih dogodkih, institucijah in osebnostih poznega 19. stoletja. Na primeru potovanja Doma Pedra II., drugega in zadnjega brazilskega cesarja, v letih 1876–1877, članek pokaže, kako je bila monarhija na novo umeščena v globalne naracije napredka ter kako ta proces razkriva »estetiko napredka«.

Dom Pedrovo potovanje v tujino, osredotočeno na obiske muzejev, univerz, tovarn in svetovnih razstav, ga je postavilo tako v vlogo opazovalca kot v vlogo predmeta civilizacijskih primerjav tistega časa. Njegovo zavračanje vladarske pompoznosti v prid republikanski ali meščansko oblikovani podobi se je ujemalo z njegovim utelešenjem ideala učenega in kozmopolitskega vladarja. Ti estetski premiki so odražali širše spremembe v samopodobi monarhij, saj so vladarji po vsem svetu poskušali posnemati zahodne moderne družbe z novimi oblikami ritualov, ki niso več potekali v palačah ali drugih prostorih monarhij.

Skozi dogodke, kot so stoletna mednarodna razstava v Philadelphii, Caxtonova proslava v Londonu in otvoritev Wagnerjeve gledališke hiše v Bayreuthu, je Dom Pedro sodeloval pri »ceremonijah civilizacije« – ritualih, ki so uprizarjali časovno logiko absolutnega napredka in opredeljevali suverenost skozi nove kulturne pojavnosti. To pa ni pomenilo zatona monarhije, temveč njeno estetsko preoblikovanje v okvirih prevladujoče zakoreninjene svetovne podobe poznega 19. stoletja. Brazilski primer – primer države, ki jo je zaznamovala uporaba suženjskega dela – razkriva globoko ambivalentnost, ki je spremljala uprizarjanje, v katerem so ideali napredka sobivali z vztrajanjem družbenih neenakosti.