Contextualising the "American race" in the Atlantic

The case of Carl von Martius and his German and Iberian sources

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Introduction

Several European traveling naturalists described and depicted American nature in the nineteenth century. These descriptions also included the indigenous peoples, which were considered part of the natural history of the regions visited, side by side with their flora and fauna. One of these naturalists was the Bavarian Carl von Martius (1794–1868), who travelled to Brazil as a member of an Austrian expedition to South America in 1817. The notion Martius developed of the "American race" was rooted in a complex approach to natural history that brought together seemingly disparate fields of knowledge, including medicine, botany, language studies, theology and mythology. In his work, Martius made use of the notion of 'ruins'[1] as a guiding concept, which helped him make sense of the American native population. By ruins, Martius meant that the American natives in his time were not in their original state of civilisation, but represented remains or vestiges of a more ancient people with a higher understanding of nature. With this Martius broke with the Rousseauian portrait of the *bon sauvage* and was able to recognise remnants of what he called "savage knowledge" (*Wissen der Wilden*), which was nothing but a pale reflection of their remote understanding of nature.

My focus in this paper is on retracing the path that led Martius to this break. As I will argue, his approach to the 'American race' seems to be better understood as a negotiation of contingent arrangements of

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geopolitical and intellectual coordinates which afforded the conditions that made his science possible. By geopolitical coordinates, I allude to factors which contributed to create a definite configuration of political and economic influences within a definite geographical space, i.e. the Atlantic. As I will show, this space was permeated by a complex and archaic consortium of Austrian, Bavarian, Brazilian and Portuguese royal dynasties. The geopolitical structure underlying Martius' transatlantic natural history involved an intertwining of Habsburg and Brigantine influences, used to develop a network of patrons, scholars, books, plants and ethnographical information on the 'American race.'

Such a contingent configuration renders questionable a certain historiographical binary view that assumes an opposition between empire and colony, or centre and periphery, in the emergence of a transatlantic natural history.[2] As is known, the centre vs. periphery perspective has been strongly criticised, partly by advocates of a historiographical approach that emphasises local geographies of science.[3] Simultaneously, no other cluster of imperial enterprises can be compared, in terms of timing, scale, and scope, to the conquest and colonisation of the Americas from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Therefore, it is safe to assume that roughly between 1500 and 1825, the Atlantic Ocean became a powerful centre of attraction.[4] Martius and his work fit within a more broadly encompassing dynamics of Atlantic interactions. These interactions involved early modern colonial structures of domination in South America, which remained as archaisms within the nineteenth century economic and symbolic demands posed to the Portuguese court transplanted to Brazil in 1808.

There were some main sources and traditions which contributed to shape Martius' intellectual makeup.[5] Some of the German influences on Martius' thought, Alexander von Humboldt's in particular, have been previously discussed.[6] Less attention has been paid to the impacts of Romanticism and *Naturphilosophie*, especially conceptions on natural and universal history and the focus on native language as a means to reassess what was considered to be the source of national identities, as is evident in Martius' correspondence with Johann W. von Goethe. Similarly, his thorough acquaintance with Iberian—Portuguese and Spanish—sources has passed virtually unnoticed, despite the criticism Martius eventually raised against them and that helped perpetuate the so-called *Leyenda negra*, inasmuch as he argued that the history of the conquest and colonisation of South America was one of ignorance, greed and violence.

From Erlangen to the Amazon and back

Martius learned medicine and natural sciences at the University of Erlangen, in Bavaria, in the early 1810s. One of his professors was Johann C.D. von Schreber (1739–1810), a former pupil of Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), whose collections of natural history were acquired in 1812 by Franz de Paula von Schrank (1747–1835), the Jesuit director of the Botanical Garden of Munich.[7] In time, Schrank invited Martius to join the Royal Academy of Sciences in Bavaria as an apprentice. In March 1814, Martius completed his doctorate with a dissertation entitled *Plantarum horti academici Erlangensis enumeratio* and two months later, he moved to Munich as an assistant to Schrank.[8] Between Erlangen and Munich, Martius devoted himself as much to studies of plants and medicine as to the transcendental idealist philosophy of the period.[9]

In Munich, given the advanced age of Schrank, Martius was put in charge of the cataloguing and classification of Bavarian plants.[10] It is believed that some of the meetings between Martius and the king of Bavaria, Maximilian I Joseph (1756–1825) might have taken place in the Botanical Garden of Munich.[11] Maximilian had already attempted, and failed, to promote a scientific expedition to the interior of South America.[12] A new opportunity arose with a mission to Brazil, in association with the wedding of Archduchess Maria Leopoldina (1797–1826), daughter of Francis I of Austria (1768–1835), who was the last Holy Roman emperor.

Following the defeat to Napoleon in the Battle of Austerlitz in 1806, one of the goals the Austrian imperial chancellor Clemens Wenzel (1773–1859), Prince of Metternich, set to himself was to strengthen the monarchy.[13] One of his strategies was to establish a closer relationship between the imperial houses of Habsburg-Lorraine and Braganza, and within this context, to intensify the trade with Portugal and its colonies. It is worth to remember here that as one further consequence of Napoleon's invasions, the Portuguese court moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1808, resulting in the unprecedented raise of the political status of a colony to an imperial centre.[14] Not only that, but the Portuguese finally opened the Brazilian ports to foreign nations, which meant the end of their exclusive trading rights, and for what is of interest here, the transplanting of 'marriage of state' politics into the tropics. Thus, Metternich arranged the marriage of Leopoldina to Pedro, the son of Dom João VI, king of Portugal, Brazil, and the Algarves, and future Brazilian emperor Dom Pedro I. The marriage was celebrated by proxy in May 1817.[15] Soon afterwards, the Archduchess moved to Brazil, her entourage distributed across many frigates, including scholars from various parts of Europe, notably Austria and Bavaria.[16] Among them was Carl Martius, then 23 years old.

Once in Brazil, Martius and the Bavarian zoologist Johann Baptist Ritter von Spix (1781–1826) travelled from Rio de Janeiro, through the hinterlands (São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Bahia, Pernambuco, Piaui, Maranhão) to the Amazon basin. The scientific expedition, one of the first ever to Brazil, concluded in June 1820. Upon his return to Europe, Martius carried with him thousands of botanical, mineral, zoological, and ethnographic specimens, a part of which ended up at the cabinets of the Art Academy of Sciences in Munich.[17] Martius devoted the following years to systematise and make sense of the botanical and ethnographic materials he had collected in Brazil. In time, he was appointed a member of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, where he worked and taught for several years.

Part of the outcomes of Martius' endeavours were two monumental works devoted to the Brazilian flora, *Historia naturalis palmarum* (1823–1850) and *Flora Brasiliensis* (1840–1906), besides several smaller ethnographic works.[18] Along the path from his early botanical lessons with Schreber in Erlangen to the publication of his major works in the 1840s and 1860s, Martius inherited and developed a substantial network of scholars and patrons who, to a large extent, enabled his research and provided him the social context to conceptualise the American race.

Martius' travels, publications, and the institutional spaces through which he circulated were sponsored by a complex transatlantic consortium of monarchs, including the kingdom of Bavaria, the court of Habsburg-Lorraine in Austria, and the Empire of Brazil led by the Brigantine court. The three volumes of his *Reise in Brasilien* (1823–1831), for instance, were dedicated to Maximilian I Joseph of Bavaria, and other works to successive Bavarian kings,[19] Ferdinand I of Austria and the Brazilian emperor Dom Pedro II. Thanks to these political connections, Martius succeeded, for example, in sending books and plants back to Europe, requested access to Iberian libraries, as I discuss in greater detail later, his works became a conceptual reference for studies on the American race.

Germanic spaces and languages in fragments

Martius published in 1844 the epoch-making dissertation *Como se deve escrever a história do Brasil* (How to write the history of Brazil).[20] This short essay was published under the auspices of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (Instituto Histórico e Geográfico, IHGB), the oldest and most traditional Brazilian institution for research promotion and preservation of historical, geographical, cultural and social sciences. This dissertation paved the hermeneutic path for generations of interpreters of the Brazilian history and constituted a crucial building block in the

construction of the Brazilian national identity.[21] Here Martius established the *American* or *Red race*, the *European* or *Caucasian race* and the *Ethiopian* or *Black race* as categories for historical and biological analysis.[22] He also called attention to the native languages as relevant for the study of the natural history of Brazil, which he saw as part of a broader "universal history."[23]

Yet, it is ironic that a Bavarian—he called his *patria* the "Bavarian nation"[24]—would come to be praised in imperial Brazil for writing a foundational text on its national identity, while the future Germany was experiencing regional fractures and was enmeshed within the politics of building a state and a national identity of its own.[25] This was, indeed, a concern for Martius, in parallel to the significance he attributed to the interrelationship between language, race and statehood. To mention just an example, in a letter from 1866 to the butler of the Imperial House of Brazil, Paulo Barbosa da Silva (1790–1868), Martius commented on the tumultuous and ambiguous relationship between the various 'Germany(s)' in his time, mainly Prussia and Austria, influenced by republican ideas coming from the Americas. The current picture was, for him, the opposite of that of a grand and united Germany, having the Prussians led by Bismarck on one side, the "German Austrians" under the Habsburgs on the other, and Bavaria in the middle, which was then debating on which side it would be "in a war between France and Prussia."[26]

Historians describe this problem, discussed by Martius, as "German dualism."[27] Bavaria, and Martius himself, oscillated within the space circumscribed by this duality. It suffices to remind that institutional relations were the factors which enabled both the mentioned Austrian expedition to Brazil and the formation of political and economic ties with the 'New World'—notably with Brazil through the Habsburg court. Nevertheless, the geopolitical and historical proximity of Bavaria to the Habsburgs in any way meant that Martius closed himself to Prussia. In fact, the German connections of Martius, as I will show, demonstrate that this was far from being the case.[28] Here I just want to point out the fact that duality impregnated Martius' conceptualisation of the American race, which, given this context, it will come as no surprise he grounded on the notions of *unity* and *national identity*.

These are the circumstances which account for Martius' concern with language in general, and the indigenous languages in Brazil in particular. In the German world, language had become a structural factor of nationhood ever since the writings of Johann G. von Herder (1744–1803).[29] In such a vast territory as that of the older Holy Roman Empire, fractured by countless dialects, unifying language, including the scientific knowledge on it, represented a necessary condition for the unity of the people

and, hence, for the construction of a nation-state.[30] Martius applied the same framework in his approach to Brazil and advocated the study of native languages as fundamental to discover the origins of nations, as I will show later on.

Under construction: the Empire of Brazil and materials for Martius' science

The Brazilian emperors too, were building a nation in the nineteenth century,[31] and would not let any helpful opportunity pass unnoticed. Through the intermediation of Amélie of Leuchtenberg, a Bavarian and Dom Pedro I's second wife, Martius exchanged correspondence with both emperors, who supported Martius' scientific endeavours both politically and financially. As a result, from the time of his arrival in Brazil to the publication of his works, Martius remained under the patronage of this geopolitical conjunction of royal houses, and benefited much from these connection in the execution and dissemination of his work. To be sure, the alignment between Martius' scientific objectives and the monarchs' aspirations for unification and imperial aims was not insignificant.

For instance, in the draft of a letter to Dom Pedro II, from 1844, Martius mentioned the need for a "new special map of the most populated part of Brazil."[32] He had already raised this subject in a letter to Amélie of Leuchtenberg, from 1831. His argument to the monarchs was based on the intimate relationship between "thorough knowledge of [Brazil's] geography," the administration of the territory and trade and industrial interests,[33] as well as between knowledge about the American race and process of civilisation of the inhabitants of the Americas. Mapping the lands and making an inventory of the natives was part of the same imperial and civilisational project. In addition, Martius enunciated an important element in the treatment to these "miserable subjects of the noble monarch," namely the influence of the Jesuits, whom he considered the "only instrument to civilise and make useful for the State."[34]

Within the political orbit of the imperial house, Martius maintained strategic relationships with Ministers of the Interior, such as Francisco Gonçalves Martins (1807–1872) and Luis P. do Couto Ferraz (1818–1886), to name but a few of the actors within the royal network—identified in some of the letters to and from Martius—who largely contributed to the development of Martius's work after he returned to Europe in 1820. To these ministers Martius requested geographic and astronomical information on Brazil, always intent on the project of a general map of Brazil and neighbouring countries, which was finally published in *Flora Brasiliensis*.

Martius' position within this particular transatlantic geopolitical setting is also expressed in his close contact with individuals with different levels of access to the imperial court, whether to finance his works or to register and confirm the completion and delivery of his books so that they could transit across the Empire. For instance, in a letter dated 17 July 1867 and addressed to Francisco J. Fialho, notary of the imperial court, Martius presented "the work on the Ethnography of the Gentility of America and especially of Brazil."[35] He mentioned the advantage of "providing the Indians with a unity of language (through the *Lingua Geral*),"[36] which was "justified by the experiences in Paraguay."[37] Martius alluded to Jesuit missions created in the seventeenth century in Paraguay and which, for many historians, became the model for the process of civilisation of indigenous peoples.[38] The letter is dated the same day as a more extensive one Martius sent to the emperor Dom Pedro II, in which he presented "to Thine Imperial Majesty a book on the Ethnography of the Natives of America and especially of Brazil."[39]

As part of the imperial civilisational endeavours, the aforementioned Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) was founded in 1838. Through this institute, Martius was able to expand his network of natural history materials, as well as his prestige. Less than a year after its foundation, he was nominated a honorary member of IHGB by the journalist and politician Januário da Cunha Barbosa (1780–1846).[40] Members of the institute included important political and intellectual figures of the period, such as Paulo Barbosa da Silva (1790–1868). As numerous historians have argued, this environment made Martius' historical views on race, history and nation highly influential among Brazilian intellectuals throughout the nineteenth century.[41]

Another remarkable member of IHGB, a diplomat intimately linked to the Brazilian imperial court, was Francisco A. de Varnhagen (1816–1878), with whom Martius developed extensive correspondence on topics such as ethnography and natural history and exchanged books on Brazil and native languages—Varnhagen's position granted him wide access to European libraries and archives. Thus he became one of the central nodes in Martius' network, which facilitated the transit of books and ethnographical data.[42] Varnhagen further kept Martius abreast of the libraries and collections to which he had access. For instance, in 1857, Varnhagen wrote from Madrid about the bibliographical collection of the famous Jesuit biographer Pedro de Ribadeneira (1526–1611). Martius and Varnhagen often discussed the value and rarity of Iberian colonial works, such as those by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (1478–1557), José de Acosta (1540–1600), Francisco López de Gómara (1511–1566) and Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1496–1584), among others. Martius often consulted Varnhagen

on the etymology of certain Amerindian terms in languages such as Tupi.[43] Particularly fundamental was the relationship between native languages and the formation of the Brazilian nation. On this subject, Varnhagen wrote to Martius:

> I return to the subject of the Indians to show they cannot be the source of the Brazilian nationality and national glories, since we are governed by a sovereign from an European dynasty, since we speak Portuguese, since we are Christians (the religion of the European settlers), since we have European laws and codes, since it is more glorious to enthrone our civilisation on the Portuguese nation embraced with Christ's Cross than on the cannibal savagery.[44]

Martius radically disagreed with Varnhagen and, soon after, stated in a letter dated 15 July 1868, he had sent a thousand copies of the volume of the *Glossaria linguarum Brasiliensium* (1863) to the imperial government, "because I am persuaded that knowledge of the Tupi language is a basis for studies on natural history and an aid for the treatment of the Indians (who now do not take advantage as they should)."[45] As I have discussed elsewhere,[46] Martius believed that the study of native languages was fundamental to discover the origins of nations and recover their ancient knowledge. In the case of the Americas, Tupi played the role of a primordial language (*Ursprache*). One of the roots of such approach to the study of languages derived from eighteenth and nineteenth century German influences, as I discuss below.

Martius and the Romantic German network

Martius's intellectual framework and approach to nature can be assimilated to what scholars have called Romantic science and *Naturphilosophie*.[47] This is apparent not only in his direct references to sources such as Friedrich Schelling's lectures *Die Weltalter*, but also in the scientific concepts on which he based his studies of the flora, fauna and natives of Brazil. While Martius' Romantic and *Naturphilosophie* network was broader than the one I discuss here, Goethe, Schelling, the brothers Christian (1776–1858) and Theodor Nees von Esenbeck (1787–1837), Carl G. Carus (1789–1869) and Alexander von Humboldt certainly were central nodes.

Martius did not only read Goethe's works, but also exchanged letters and met him in person in 1824 and 1828. In their correspondence, they discussed subjects such as the metamorphosis of plants, the spiral tendency of growth and the notions of nature, aesthetics and morality, among others. In a previous paper, I have focused on the concepts of *Urphänomen*, *Ursprache* and *Urvolk* as determinants of Martius' general views and as

regulatory ideas in his conceptualisation of the American race.[48] Within this context, the search for primordial phenomena such as *Ursprache* and *Urvolk*—or, in Schelling's sense, primordial peoples or nations[49]—was for Martius the necessary path to put forward the monogenic hypothesis, i.e. that the whole, or the variety of humans, was reducible to a primeval unity.

The first meeting between Martius and Goethe was arranged by Christian G.D. Nees von Esenbeck. In turn, Esenbeck's youngest brother, Theodor Friedrich Ludwig, at the age of 18 had become a student of Ernst Wilhelm Martius, Carl's father and a pharmacist at the Bavarian court and professor at University of Erlangen.[50] Like Martius, also the Esenbeck brothers in time became important scholars on natural history and botany. Christian Nees was appointed to the botany chair at University of Erlangen, succeeding Schreber, Martius' former teacher. Later on he was appointed to a position in Bonn, granted by the all-powerful Prussian Minister of Education Karl vom Stein zum Altenstein (1770–1840), one of the orchestrators of the Prussian reforms (1806–1815) which sought to give sound roots to the Prussian-led unification movement.[51] Christian Nees therefore played a crucial role in Martius' network, particularly in the establishment of connections between two sides of a politically fragmented Germany, as was discussed above.

Friedrich Schelling too, oscillated between Prussia and Bavaria. After a period in Jena, where he taught Christian Nees, he held a position at the *Akademie der Bildenden Künste* in Munich for 14 years. In 1820, Schelling left the Bavarian capital for Erlangen, where he taught from 1821 to 1827. At that time, Schelling delivered a series of lectures on mythology and science, later known as *Die Weltalter*,[52] on which Martius drew for his idea of a mythical and prehistoric time characterised by a unique and intimate interweaving between humankind and the plant world.[53]

In *Die Weltalter*, Schelling defined science (*Wissenschaft*)[54] as the "development of a living and real essence (*Wesen*), which is represented in it."[55] Such "living reality" of a "higher science" could only be a primordial living reality, "the essence, which is not preceded by anything and which is therefore the oldest of all beings."[56] Thus, to Schelling, the knowledge of the natural world was conditioned by the resumption of a long course of developments in time. That is, it was conditioned by the "return to the deepest night of the past."[57] In other words, the mythical, and therefore timeless, dimension of history was as real as history itself. This conception of a science driven by the search for a deep and mythical past was one of the pillars of Martius' concept of the American race, as I have discussed elsewhere.[58]

When he returned to the Prussian orbit of Berlin, in 1841, Schelling was appointed to Georg W.F. Hegel's (1770–1831) chair and lectured to

illustrious figures of the period, such as Alexander von Humboldt,[59] who exerted strong influence on the work of several naturalists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century,[60] including Martius, through considerable correspondence.[61] Martius' network also encompassed the older Humboldt, Wilhelm (1767–1835). According to Pablo Diener, Martius developed formal contacts with Wilhelm von Humboldt between the late 1820s and the early 1830s regarding American language research.[62] The content of the correspondence was basically restricted to collections sent by Martius of words used by indigenous peoples in Brazil.[63]

To the south-west of Berlin, Göttingen was the home of Johann F. Blumenbach (1752–1840) and Maximilian A.P. zu Wied-Neuwied (1782–1867). As was pointed out by many scholars, Blumenbach had considerable influence on nineteenth-century ideas about the meaning of physical differences between human groups.[64] To be sure, Martius used Blumenbach's classification in his theory about the three founding races of Brazil, as well as to catalogue "natural history objects," such as skulls of Brazilian natives, to which he had access during his expedition with Spix.[65] Native Brazilian skulls were also added to Blumenbach's collection in Göttingen by Wied-Neuwied, one of his students, who had travelled to Brazil from 1815 to 1817. Naturally, also Wied-Neuwied became one of Martius' sources;[66] his ethnographic surveys of the Botocudo Indians became a reference for natural history scholars.[67]

Iberian sources and the place of the 'American race'

While Martius' intellectual framework was determined by eighteenth-century German thought, Iberian colonial sources provided the impressive quantity and density of information about indigenous populations present in his ethnographic works. Such colonial sources include, for example, works by Bernardino de Sahagún (1499–1590), Garcilaso de la Vega (1498–1536), Francisco de Orellana (1490–1550), Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (1478–1557), Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616), Antônio Vieira (1608–1697), André de Barros (1675–1754), Cristobal de Acuña (1597–1675), José de Acosta (1540–1600) and Simão de Vasconcelos (1597–1671), among others.

One factor that reinforces this hypothesis of an Iberian side to Martius' natural history is the *Biblioteca Americana*, i.e. Martius' personal library, which catalogue could be found at the Brazilian National Library in Rio de Janeiro. However, the books proper, marked with his *ex libris*, are at IHGB, the institute which had granted him a prize for his epoch-making dissertation. This collection had been donated to IHGB by the Emperor

Dom Pedro II, who had purchased it at a cost of 20,000 francs;[68] the reason for Martius to sell it was his interest in providing a guide to historians devoted to writing the history of Brazil.[69] It contains a substantial amount of works (copies and originals) in Spanish, as well as works by Spanish authors translated into German, French and Latin. Some examples are *Historia del Nuevo-Mundo* (1793) by Juan Muñoz, *História Natural y Moral de las Indias* (1589) by José de Acosta, *Theatro americano, descripcion general de los reynos, y provincias de la Nueva España, y sus jurisdicciones* (1746) by D. José Antonio de Villa and *Varones Illustres del Nuevo Mundo* (1639) by Fernado Pizarro y Orellana, all of which were published in Madrid.

Martius drew heavily from these sources in his construction of the American race. In *Como se deve escrever a história do Brasil*, 1844, he did not only describe the three alleged formative races of Brazil, but also methods and materials of investigation. Here I only discuss the American race, because it became the main object of Martius's investigations within the context of the 'natural history of man'. In this regard, he advised:

> the historian should undertake the task of thoroughly investigating the life and history of the development of American aborigines; and extending his investigations beyond the time of the conquest, he will research the history of the primitive inhabitants of Brazil, a history which is not divided, for the time being, into different times, does not offer visible monuments, [and] is still shrouded in obscurity, but for this very reason greatly excites our curiosity.[70]

The historicity of the Americas and the Aboriginal Americans is depicted in this text—published more than twenty years after Martius' expedition to Brazil—as a central problem. At the same time, it provides the modern historian a window that affords adequate visualisation of the Iberian sources of Martius' work. The reason is that to investigate such historicity, he looked into colonial studies on the Americas mainly produced by Spaniards and Portuguese. However, Martius' appropriation of Iberian sources did not come without strong criticism of the former colonisers. In several part of his writings, Martius perpetuated the *leyenda negra*[71] and described the Portuguese and Spaniards as "historians of America" who wrote "dominated by the prejudices and opinions that prevailed in their homeland and without the proper exemption of the anthropological and social influences of their race."[72]

In this regard, Martius commented, in a letter to Goethe, on the allegorical sense of the image (Fig. 2) which was to be published in the atlas resulting from his travel to Brazil.[73] It contains the figures of Ecuador and the "young" America and "On the other side," says Martius, "the thirst for gold of empires links with blood the history of the new territories of

Frontispiece of the Reise in Brasilien, Atlas, by Spix and Martius (München, 1828). Lithograph by Josef Päringer, based on Herman Stilke's drawing.

the planet to Europe."[74] The scene depicted in the lower right corner of the folio, with soldiers massacring natives and the historiography of colonial history leaves little doubt that Martius alluded to Spain and Portugal.

If one takes this image as Martius' interpretation of a transatlantic history—although it was produced by the Romantic painter Peter von Cornelius (1784–1867)—and analyses it jointly with the letter to Goethe, a latent motif emerges, to wit, the replacement of the Iberians, and the "gold thirsty" empire connecting Europe to the "New World",[75] by the Germans, which are depicted as promoters and builders of a new natural and universal history. By disagreeing with alleged inaccuracies and prejudice in the Iberian sources, or due to pure Pan-Germanism adorned with an enlightened rhetoric latent in Martius' letters, it is clear he did not take the Iberian sources without subjecting them to thorough criticism.

In *Como se deve escrever a história do Brasil*, Martius' critique was based on a forceful break with the older views that stressed the notion of the American race as in a "state of nature," as well as with influential views such as the one held by Cornelius de Pauw (1739–1799):

> Not long ago it was common to believe that the natives of America were men directly emanated from the Creator [. . .] However, further investigations

> proved to the unsuspecting man that this is not the primitive state of man, [...] the present Brazilian Indian is but a residual of a very old race, lost in history.[76]

Thus, the identification of such profound historicity of the American race led Martius to prescribe that every historian should compare the American race to neighbouring peoples and study their soul and intelligence based on historical documents. To which documents did Martius allude? To two fundamental types, to wit, linguistic and architectural.[77] Therefore, on the basis of linguistic and architectural documents and the comparative method, scholars, in Martius' view, should be able to investigate the mythology, theogony, and geogony of the American race.[78]

Martius himself followed such precepts, especially in works such as *Von dem Rechtzustande unter den Ureinwohnern Brasiliens* (1832) and *Die Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Amerikanischen Menschheit. Ein Vortrag. Naturforscher und Ärzte in Freiburg* (1839). In these studies, he reunited data and theories on the political and religious organisation of diverse peoples in Hispanic America. The ethnographical data derived from the Amerindian mythology and plant use practices described by authors such as the chronicler Inca Garcilaso de la Vega,[79] one of the most stalwart defenders of indigenous cultures in the Spanish language.[80] Martius also derived data from the Jesuit José de Acosta's[81] influential work *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, published in 1590. In addition to this, Acosta published in 1588/89 *De procuranda Indorum salute*—a well-read text discussed in Jesuit colleges and universities[82]—in which he presented the first proposal known of classification of Indians along two integrated lines: the broader ethnological-theological debate on the possibility of salvation of *savages*, and that related the efforts to collect and systematise ethnographic information about peoples not quite well known until the seventeenth and mid-eighteenth century.[83]

The list of Iberian sources is extensive and thus an exhaustive analysis of them is not possible in the present study. Here, I would like to stress once again the idea that the German intellectual influences represent only one side of Martius' approach to the nature of the American man. This side derives from Martius deep knowledge of the ideas of—and personal contacts with—some of the icons of the German *Naturphilosophie*, namely, Goethe and Schelling, as was discussed above. The other side arises from the familiarity of Martius with Iberian scholars, more specifically colonial sources, to which he had thorough resource in his construction of the natural history of the American man.

Final remarks

In Martius' view, the Atlantic Ocean was not only a geographic space of access to the Americas, but also a bridge between history and nature. In his words, it was "the eternal bridge over which human history develops."[84] This "eternal bridge" circumscribed the nineteenth-century geopolitical and intellectual coordinates within which Martius approached the "American race" as a research category in natural history. His natural history was made possible to a considerable extent by political, religious and scientific ties between nation-states and transatlantic empires. By this token, Martius' description of the Brazilian territory and its peoples discursively unified and essentialised their domain. Moreover, the aforementioned dynastic alliances, which translated into Martius mapping project, were clear hallmarks of a transatlantic biopolitical project.

From this perspective, everything involved in Martius' work—including not only the costs of travel and of production of his writings, but also the organisation of the botanical, zoological and ethnographic materials collected—was directly and intentionally carried out as part of imperial undertakings on both sides of the Atlantic, although symmetry in the power relations between Brazil and the German lands has not been presumed. Being two aspiring nation states under construction, there was a certain salvationist attitude or, as Martius himself put it, a "philanthropic" approach on the part of the Germans, a "sowing," or rather a people "destined to explore the New World in the spiritual interest."[85]

Upon contributing to the construction of a nineteenth-century "American race," Martius relied on what scholars have called Romantic science, which originated in an eighteenth-century German tradition. Yet, in this paper I traced the roots of Martius' notion of the 'American race' back to Iberian colonial sources. All the ethnographic works published by Martius between 1832 and 1867 show strong reliance on Iberian authors, particularly Spaniards, on whether to draw comparative conclusions regarding architectural monuments and the myths of the peoples of Hispanic America (never visited by Martius), or to criticise such sources for establishing comparisons with the civilisational regimes of classical antiquity. While Martius had resource to a substantial amount of Iberian sources upon formulating his ethnography of the Americas, he perpetuated a specific view of the Iberians, the *leyenda negra*, which, as discussed by Cañizares-Esguerra and others, for a long time prevented the development of a broader and more complex historical framework for the emergence of science in modern times.[86]

Paraphrasing John Pocock's characterisation of an European image of the Americas, at this point the people in the America became imprisoned

within Europe's limited understanding of itself.[87] More specifically, Martius projected two European-centred narratives on South America: one starring Latin or southern Europeans who "caused the wounds of America," and another starring the Germans, as representatives of northern Europe, who could either just watch the ravaging of the "new world" caused the "gold thirst of empires," or act as the "sowing" destined to explore the "new territories" in the spiritual interest, since "we Germans, even without colonies, have only one property, the field of the spirit."[88]

In fact, since these alternatives were purely rhetorical devices, the developments covered by the terms "philanthropic," "sowing" and "spiritual interest" also became a domain for the making and filing of empirically rich materials which could not be easily appropriated for nation-building or imperial domination, and the "American race" the model to confirm *a priori* ideas on the nature of nation, language and race.

Notes

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1. I discuss this side of Martius' thought in Raphael Uchôa, *A ruína dos povos: raça americana e saber selvagem na ciência de Carl F. Ph. von Martius (1794–1868)*, Ph.D. dissertation, Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (São Paulo, 2018).

2. Such categories have been called into question by several historians, e.g. Sujit Sivasundaram, "Sciences and the global: on methods, questions, and theory" in *Isis* 101:1 (2010), 146–158; Kapil Raj, *Relocating modern science: circulation and the construction of knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900* (London, 2007); Roy MacLeod (ed.), "Nature and empire: science and the colonial enterprise" in *Osiris* 15 (2000).

3. Ana M. Alfonso-Goldfarb et al, "Chemical knowledge in transit" in *Ambix*, 62:4 (2015), 305–306. See also David Livingstone, *Putting science in its place: geographies of scientific knowledge* (Chicago IL, 2003).

4. Marcelo Aranda et al, "The history of Atlantic science: collective reflections from the 2009 Harvard seminar on Atlantic history" in *Atlantic studies: literary, cultural and historical perspectives*, 7:4 (2010), 493–509. For a broader reflection on the 'oceanic turn,' see, e.g., Kate Fullagar (ed.), *The Atlantic world in the antipodes: effects and transformations since the eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 2012) and David Armitage, Alison Bashford & Sujit Sivasundaram (ed.), *Oceanic histories* (Cambridge, 2017).

5. This approach is inspired by Ana M. Alfonso-Goldfarb, "Simão Mathias centennial: documents, methods and identity of the history of science" in *Circumscribere* 4 (2008), 1–4, and Ana M. Alfonso-Goldfarb, Silvia Waisse & Márcia H.M. Ferraz, "From shelves to cyberspace: organization of knowledge and the complex identity of history of science" in *Isis* 104:3 (2013), 551–560.

6. Karen Lisboa, *A nova Atlântida de Spix e Martius: natureza e civilização na Viagem pelo Brasil (1817–1820)* (São Paulo, 1997).

7. Pablo Diener & Maria de Fátima Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil para Martius* (Rio de Janeiro, 2012), 13–14; Lisboa, *A nova Atlântida*, 54.

8. José Dutra, *Martius* (Rio de Janeiro, 1942), 21.

9. Dutra, *Martius*, 22.

10. Dutra, *Martius*, 22.

11. Dutra, *Martius*, 22.

12. Carl von Martius, *Viagem pelo Brasil: 1817–1820*, 3 vols. (São Paulo, 1981), I: 25.

13. Mark Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and its legacy: war and great power diplomacy after Napoleon* (London, 2013), 73.

14. See, e.g., Marcelo O. Basile, "Império brasileiro: panorama político" in Maria Y. Linhares (ed.), *História geral do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 2000); Boris Fausto, *História do Brasil* (São Paulo, 1994)..

15. D. Pedro I's second wife, Amelia de Leuchtenberg (1812–1873), was the granddaughter of Martius' Bavarian patron, Maximilian I Joseph of Bavaria, and was Empress Consort from 1829 to 1831; Walter Lack, *C.F.P. von Martius* (Köln, 2015), 38–39.

16. According to Martius, Wenzel received him in Vienna in February 1817, on his way to the port of Trieste, from which the crew departed. See Martius, *Viagem pelo Brasil*, I: 27. For a study of the various regions in central Europe involved in the complex formation process of the Habsburg monarchy, see, e.g. R. J.W Evans, *The making of the Habsburg monarchy, 1550–1700: an interpretation* (Oxford, 1984); R.J.W. Evans & Peter H. Wilson (ed.), *The Holy Roman Empire, 1495–1806: a European perspective* (Leiden, 2012); Volker Press, "The Habsburg court as center of the imperial government" in *The Journal of Modern History* 58 (1986), 23–45.

17. For more information on the collection, see Otto Zerries, *Unter Indianern Brasiliens: Sammlung Spix und Martius, 1817–1820* (Innsbruck, 1980); Diener & Costa, *Um Brasil para Martius*.

18. Among them, Carl von Martius, *Von dem Rechtzustande unter den Ureinwohnern Brasiliens: eine Abhandlung* (München/Leipzig, 1832); "Die Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Amerikanischen Menschheit: ein Vortrag. Naturforscher und Ärzte in Freiburg" in *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift* II (1839), 235–27; *Das Naturell, die Krankenheiten, das Ärzthum und Heilmittel der Uhrbewohner Brasiliens* (München, 1844) and *Glossaria linguarum Brasiliensium* (Erlangen, 1863).

19. See Carl Martius, *Historia naturalis palmarum*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1823–1850); Carl Martius, *Flora Brasiliensis* (München/Leipzig, 1840–1906).

20. Carl Martius, "Como se deve escrever a história do Brasil" in *Revista de História de América* 42 (1956).

21. See, e.g., Manoel L.L.S. Guimarães, "Nação e civilização nos trópicos: o Instituto Histórico Geográfico Brasileiro e o projeto de uma história nacional" in *Revista Estudos Históricos* 1:1 (1988), 5–27; Arno Wehling, *A invenção da história: estudos sobre o historicismo* (Rio de Janeiro, 1994); Lilia Schwarcz, *Os guardiões da nossa história oficial: os institutos históricos e geográficos brasileiros* (São Paulo, 1989).

22. Three of the four racial categories described by Carl Linnaeus, and three of the five suggested by Johann F. Blumenbach (1752–1840). For more detail on Martius's classification, see Uchôa, *A ruína dos povos*, chapter 2. For Linnaeus's classification of man, see Staffan Müller-Wille, "Linnaeus and the four corners of the world" in Kimberly A. Coles et al (ed.), *The cultural politics of blood, 1500–1900* (London, 2015), 191–

209; Gunnar Broberg, "Linnaeus's classification of man" in Tore Frängsmyr (ed.), *Linnaeus: the man and his work* (Berkeley CA, 1983), 156–195. For Blumenbach's classification, see Susanne Lettow (ed.), *Reproduction, race, and gender in philosophy and the early life sciences* (New York, 2014), 131–161.

23. Martius, "Como se deve escrever", 443. Although there is no direct reference to the works of Immanuel Kant, Martius was probably influenced by the concept of 'Universal History' developed by the German philosopher in "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose."

24. Martius, *Viagem pelo Brasil*, I: 15.

25. See, e.g., David Blackbourn, *The long nineteenth century: a history of Germany, 1780–1918* (New York, 1997); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge, 1992).

26. Martius [letter to Paulo Barbosa], 26 November 1866, in Américo J. Lacombe (ed.), *Cartas de Karl Friedrich Philipp Martius a Paulo Barbosa da Silva* (Rio de Janeiro, 1991), 69.

27. Jörg Ulbert, "France and German dualism, 1756–1871" in Carine Germond & Henning Türk (ed.), *A history of Franco-German relations in Europe* (New York, 2008).

28. On the unification process, see, e.g., Martin Kitchen, *A history of modern Germany 1800–2000* (Malden, 2006); Christopher Clark, *Iron kingdom: the rise and downfall of Prussia, 1600–1947* (Cambridge, 2008).

29. See Silvia Waisse, *The science of living matter and the autonomy of life: vitalism, antivitalism and neovitalism in the German long nineteenth century* (Saarbrücken, 2009), 62.

30. The concept of *Sprachnation* derived from the eighteenth-century Romantic thought and prevailed until the late nineteenth century; see. Waisse, *The science of living matter*, chap. 2; and Helmut Konrad, "Austria on the path to Western Europe: the political culture of the Second Republic" in *Austrian History Yearbook* 26 (1995), 1–15.

31. There are several references on this subject, see e.g. José M. de Carvalho, *A construção da ordem: a elite imperial* (São Paulo, 2003); Miriam Dolhnikoff, *o pacto imperial: origens do federalismo no Brasil* (São Paulo, 2005); Ilmar R. de Mattos, *O tempo Saquarema* (São Paulo, 1987).

32. Martius [letter to D. Pedro], 24 August 1844, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 263.

33. Martius [letter to D. Amélia] 6 April 1831, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 260.

34. Martius [letter to D. Pedro II] 4 October 1843, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 310. See also Karl H. Arenz, "Além das doutrinas e rotinas: índios e missionários nos aldeamentos jesuíticos da Amazônia portuguesa (séculos XVII E XVIII)" in *História e Cultura* 3:2 (2014), 66–67.

35. Martius [letter to Francisco José Fialho] 17 July 1867, Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. Loc. l-02,17,011.

36. *Lingua geral* (general or common language) was a Portuguese term used in colonial times to allude to the native language most commonly spoken in various regions. See more in Lyle Campbell, *American Indian languages: the historical linguistics of native America* (Oxford, 2000), 25.

37. Martius [letter to Francisco José Fialho] 17 July 1867, Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. Loc. l-02,17,011.

38. See, e.g. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to write the history of the new world: histories,*

epistemologies, and identities in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world (Stanford CA, 2002), 32.

39. Martius [letter to D. Pedro II] 17 July 1867, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 412. Martius alluded to his work *Beiträge zur Ethnographie und Sprachenkunde Amerika's zumal Brasiliens* (Leipzig, 1863–1867).

40. Januário da Cunha Barbosa [letter to Martius] 26 March 1839, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 301.

41. See, e.g. Pedro M. Campos, "Esboço da historiografia brasileira nos séculos XIX e XX" in *Revista de História* 22:45 (1961), 107–159; Guimarães, "Nação e civilização", 5–27.

42. Francisco A. de Varnhagen [letter to Martius] 01 October 1839, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 302.

43. Francisco A. de Varnhagen [letter to Martius] 18 June 1858, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 367.

44. Francisco A. de Varnhagen [letter to Martius] 13 May 1859, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 368.

45. Martius [letter to Varnhagen] 15 July 1868, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 420–421.

46. Uchôa, *A ruína dos povos*, chap. 4.

47. For an extensive discussion of this subject, see, e.g. Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic conception of life: science and philosophy in the age of Goethe* (Chicago IL, 2002); Nicholas Jardine, *The scenes of inquiry: on the reality of questions in the sciences* (Oxford, 2000); Noah Heringman, *Romantic science: the literary forms of natural history* (New York, 2003) and Karl Ameriks (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge, 2000).

48. See Uchôa, *A ruína dos povos*, chap. 4 and 5.

49. Friedrich W.J. Schelling, *Historical-critical introduction to the philosophy of mythology* (New York, 2008), Lect. 1, 19.

50. Dutra, *Martius*, 12; J. Proskauer, "Christian Gottfried Daniel Nees Esenbeck" in Gillispie (ed.), *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (New York, 1981), 13.

51. Proskauer, "Christian Gottfried", 11; Waisse, *The science of living matter*, chap. 2.

52. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *System der Weltalter* (München, 1998).

53. Martius, "O estado de direito entre os autóctones do Brasil" in *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de São Paulo* 11 (1907), 63.

54. Friedrich J. Schelling, *The ages of the world* (New York, 2000), 83.

55. Schelling, *The ages*, 84.

56. Schelling, *The ages*, 84.

57. Schelling, *The ages*, 84.

58. See Uchôa, *A ruína dos povos*, chap. 3 and 4.

59. Andrew Bowie, "Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University, 2016).

60. See, e.g. Lisboa, *Nova Atlântida*, 44.

61. See Lisboa, *Nova Atlântida*, chap. 1 and 2.

62. Pablo Diener, "Martius e as línguas Indígenas do Brasil" in *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Antropológica* 6:2 (2015), 364.

63. Diener, "Martius e as Línguas Indígenas", 364.

64. See, e.g. Susanne Lettow (ed.), *Reproduction, race, and gender*.

65. Martius, *Viagem pelo Brasil*, I: 52.

66. See Martius, "Estado de direito".

67. See Martius, "Estado de direito", 69.

68. Carl Martius [letter to Dom Pedro II], 18 May 1825, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 337.

69. See "Ata da Sessão do IHGB, 4 de novembro de 1870" in *Centenário da Chegada de Carlos Frederico Martius ao Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro, 1918).

70. Martius, "Como se deve escrever", 444.

71. For vast literature on the subject, see, e.g. Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to write*; José A. Vaca de Osma, *El imperio y la leyenda negra* (Madrid, 2004); William Eamon (ed.), *Más allá de la leyenda negra: España y la revolución científica* (Valencia, 2007).

72. Carl Martius, *Natureza, doenças, medicina e remédios dos índios Brasileiros* (São Paulo, 1939), 1.

73. For an analysis of the image in the original plan of the frontispiece, see Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 21–33.

74. Martius [letter to Goethe] 18 May 1825, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 250-1.

75. Martius [letter to Goethe] 18 May 1825, in Diener & Costa (ed.), *Um Brasil*, 250-1.

76. Martius, "Como se deve escrever", 444.

77. See, e.g., Martius, "A ethnographia da America, especialmente do Brasil" in *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de São Paulo* 9 (1905), 534–562.

78. Martius, "A ethnographia da America", 444–446.

79. See, e.g. Martius, "A ethnographia da America", 539.

80. Neil Safier, "Como era ardiloso o meu francês: Charles-Marie de la Condamine e a Amazônia das Luzes" in *Revista Brasileira de História* 29:57 (2009), 105.

81. See, e.g., Martius, "A ethnographia da America", 539.

82. Arenz, "Além das doutrinas."

83. Ibid., 66–67.

84. Carl Martius, *Frei Apolônio: um romance do Brasil* (São Paulo, 1992), 200.

85. Martius, "Ethnographia da America", 561.

86. See note 71.

87. John G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and religion* (Cambridge, 2005), 189.

88. Martius, "A ethnographia da America", 561.

Abstract

Contextualising the "American race" in the Atlantic: the case of Carl von Martius and his German and Iberian sources. Raphael Uchôa, PhD in History of Science, Emilio Goeldi Museum, Belém, Pará, Brazil, raphaeluchoa@museu-goeldi.br

This paper addresses the place of the Bavarian scholar Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius (1794–1868) within the complex process of development of a 'natural history of man' in the nineteenth century. Martius' understanding of natural history primarily focused on the notion of 'American race,', i.e. one of the four or five races described by J.F. Blumenbach and C. Linnaeus. In this paper, I elucidate the geopolitical and intellectual coordinates which circumscribed Martius' thought. I call the attention to the influence of the so-called German 'Romantic science,' as well as to Iberian sources which played a crucial role in Martius' construction of the notion of

the 'American man.' Martius' travel narratives created grounds for a transatlantic natural history, in which the unit of analysis is the South Atlantic Ocean and involves a complex and archaic consortium of monarchs. This geopolitical alignment was circumscribed by religious, economic, and scientific ties which connected several nation-states and empires, including Austria, Bavaria, Brazil and Portugal.

Keywords: Carl von Martius, transatlantic science, Romantic science, Iberian colonial sources, American race, nineteenth-century Brazil