

The Canary Museum: from transnational trade of human remains to the visual representations of race (1879-1900)

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ABSTRACT: “El Museo Canario” (Canary Museum) was founded in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in 1879. It holds an impressive collection of the pre-Hispanic past of the Canaries. El Museo Canario built an important transnational network of exchange. This was facilitated by the widespread interest in the human remains of the pre-Hispanic inhabitants of the Canaries. His founder Gregorio Chil, and the Museum Board, were interested in building a regional race to represent the trans-historical essence of the archipelago’s population. This was scientifically grounded on different racial classification projects with colonial connotations. Speculation on the possible links between the archipelago’s extinct race, the Amazigh (Berbers), and hypothetical primitive European populations became popular. These debates had a material side: racial similarities and differences were exhibited, visualized, illustrated, and thus demonstrated. Lithographs of human remains circulated in Europe and beyond. These supposedly objective representations of race were published in authoritative books and scientific articles. In addition, individuals were drawn and photographed, often with the idea of showing the continuity between the aboriginal population and the current inhabitants of the archipelago. Visual representations of the dead (skulls, mummies) entered a sort of dialectic relationship with representations of the living.

KEYWORDS: Museums; Race; Human remains; Exhibition; Representation; Nation-building; Colonialism; Canary Islands.

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RESUMEN: *El Museo Canario: del comercio transnacional de restos humanos a las representaciones visuales de la raza (1879-1900).*— En 1879 fue fundado el Museo Canario en Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Actualmente, alberga una importante colección del pasado prehispánico de las Islas Canarias. El Museo construyó una importante red transnacional de intercambios. Esto fue facilitado por el generalizado interés en los restos humanos de los habitantes aborígenes de las Islas. Su fundador, Gregorio Chil (1831-1901), y la Junta Directiva, estaban interesados en construir una raza regional, que representaría la esencia transhistórica de la población del Archipiélago. Esto encontró su sustrato científico en diferentes procesos de clasificación racial con connotaciones coloniales. Especulaciones sobre las conexiones de la raza extinguida del Archipiélago, los Amazigh (Bereberes), e hipotéticas poblaciones europeas primitivas se hicieron populares. Estos debates tenían una dimensión material: las similitudes raciales, y las diferencias, eran exhibidas, visualizadas, ilustradas, y así demostradas. Litografías de restos humanos circularon en Europa y más allá. Estas representaciones supuestamente objetivas de la raza se integraron en libros y artículos científicos de referencia. Además, individuos concretos eran dibujados y fotografiados, con frecuencia con la idea de mostrar la continuidad de la población aborígen con la población actual de las Islas. La representación visual de los muertos (cráneos, momias) entró en una suerte de relación dialéctica con la representación de los vivos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Museos; Raza; Restos humanos; Exhibición; Representación; Construcción nacional; Colonialismo, Islas Canarias.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Museo Canario* was founded in 1879, largely on the initiative of Doctor Gregorio Chil y Naranjo (1831-1901), known for his part in controversies around Darwinism (Glick, 2010; Betancor Gómez, 2019) and a prominent member of the regional cultural and scientific elite. Currently, the Museum is a private institution that holds an impressive collection of items from the pre-Hispanic past of the Canaries. The *Museo Canario* was not the only institution interested in the pre-Hispanic past of the archipelago (Fariña, and Tejera, 1998; Ortiz 2005). However, its rich collection (Herrera, 1990) and the general approach that it originally adopted, in line with Paul Broca's (1824-1880) *raciologist* school, made it a peculiar institution in the region from the moment of its foundation.

Although at first, the Museum hosted a natural history collection, which Chil believed to have much room for improvement (Chil y Naranjo, 1899, p. 23), its main object was, and is, to study the origin of the population of the Islands before the Castilian conquest in the 15th century. It is a museum, but also an important library and archive. Archaeological items – leather, ceramics, millstones, etc. – were important, but it can generally be argued that biology was given priority over culture. From the start, the Museum focused on human remains and physical anthropology (Padilla, 1881, p. 333).

Strictly speaking, the Museo Canario was not a *local* institution. The role played by Broca's *École de Anthropologie* in its foundation is well known. Although some have suggested that its relationship with France was nothing short of *colonial* (Farrujia de la Rosa, 2013), Museum members were able to weave an exchange network that went far beyond this bilateral relationship with Paris. In this regard, the human remains of pre-Hispanic aborigines, which were highly coveted for their rarity, were one of the Museum's main assets. This allowed the Museum to draw surprising links, which in turn contributed to increasing its international prestige.

This interest in pre-Hispanic human remains, especially skulls, reflected the mysterious origin of these human groups, and is at the same time related to two not incompatible processes: first, the construction in Europe of political-scientific discourses that sought national roots in ancestral and biological phenomena; *national* discourses which, paradoxically, had to be slotted into wider, transnational frameworks of racial classification (McMahon, 2019a, p. 12; Reynaud-Paligot, 2011 pp. 65-72); and second, the colonial expansion of Europeans, especially the French in the Maghreb, which was dressed with a legitimising discourse: the *mission civilisatrice*. As we shall

see, some of the most prominent French anthropologists argued for a sort of racial link between primitive European populations, the Amazigh, and Canarian aborigines. A third factor also needs to be taken into consideration: the explicit attempt by some members of the Museo Canario to build a *regional*, if not *national* race. These Canarian scholars adopted the raciological framework to build a narrative of origin *different* from that of other Spaniards, and to link this biological past with that of *superior races*.

This article focuses on the material dimension of these processes. Skulls and mummies were not only exchanged but also displayed in the Museo Canario in a way that *demonstrated* the position of Canarian aborigines on the top tiers of the racial scale. Although much remains to be investigated about the effect of these items on different audiences, there is evidence that they had some effect in *shaping* views. Skulls arranged in a certain way helped to see human diversity through a *racialised* lens; Canarian skulls were represented in racial atlases to support the thesis of the racial filiation of pre-Hispanic Canarians with European *fossil roots*. Moreover, the Museum's activity was not limited to its displays, but also sponsored expeditions in the Islands, not only to find archaeological objects, but *living specimens* of the *Canarian type*. Ethnographic drawing became a privileged vehicle for its representation. However, there is no evidence that the Museum used ethnographic photography at this moment. This notwithstanding, a photographer with close links with the institution, Luis Ojeda Pérez (1874-1914), played a relevant role in fixating the *visual* expression of the *Canarian type*.

REMOTE ISLANDS, CENTRES, AND PERIPHERIES. FROM PRIVATE COLLECTION TO GLOBAL MUSEUM

One of the most outstanding features of the Museo Canario was its ability to enter transnational networks. Some factors helped. Las Palmas has an excellent harbour, which makes for easy sea routes to Europe, Africa, and America, and sea traffic increased substantially in the final decades of the 19th century.¹ Despite this, the history of the Museum is marked by its lack of *national links*. Although the institution was in contact with naturalists and anthropologists in the Iberian Peninsula (Naranjo Santana, 2019a, pp. 122-125), and Pedro González de Velasco even donated eight “Basque” skulls to the Museum (Martínez de Escobar, 1881, p. 208), the fact is that the relationship between the Museo Canario and institutions in the Iberian Peninsula was always lukewarm. This is unsurprising, as harbours act as relatively autonomous trade hubs (Jorgensen, 2017, p. 556). In fact, most of the doctors that led the way in the Museum had studied in France, as their families preferred to send them there than to the Iberian

Peninsula (Betancor Gómez, 2001, pp. 62-63). According to Fernando Estévez, this is explained by the dependence of the Canarian economy on European centres (Estévez, 1987, pp. 137-138) Is this enough to refer to a *colonial* relationship concerning the Museo Canario? Should we return to centre-periphery arguments? Recently, Richard McMahon, argued in favour of this, at least when referring to *racial classifications*. According to him, the core or publication on *racial sciences* was in northwest Europe, and racial taxonomists in peripheral regions resisted their marginal position. They were simply treated as suppliers of data and raw materials (McMahon, 2019b, pp. 40-42). The truth is that the set of Paris-based institutions that Paul Broca grouped together under the name of Paris Anthropological Institute (Conklin, 2013, p. 28), played a crucial role for the Museo Canario. This could support the idea that the Museum was a colonial station, a mere supplier of information and objects.

However, the academic work undertaken by the founder of the Museum, Gregorio Chil, does not exactly fit this model. Chil was cited with respect in anthropology journals, often attended international conferences (Chil y Naranjo, 1880, pp. 235-236; Betancor Gómez, 2019, pp. 84-85), and, especially, was co-opted by Broca's group. He was not simply seen as a source of data and *raw* items. On the other hand, the Museo Canario exchanged items, human remains, and all sorts of information with the Parisian institutions. The relationship may have been unequal, but it ran both ways. In addition, the Museo Canario drew productive links with American institutions, which to an extent escaped the control of major European scientific societies and museums. And it was not all about connections. One of the Museum's foundational aims was to preserve an archaeological heritage that had been plundered of old. The Museum's first regulations (1879) reflect its aim to preserve objects that embody the "history of the people that inhabited this land, which is today dispersed in strange hands and foreign museums." It was imperative to "keep what little we have left" (*Reglamento...* 1879, p. 4). The threat was real, and any traveller could witness acts of plunder. In 1884, John Harris Stone decried that tombs situated a few kilometres from Las Palmas were being broken into because of the "great demand for Guancho skulls."²

In fact, the human remains of pre-Hispanic Canarians were a common sight in European cabinets of curiosities. The mysterious origins of these people only made them more interesting. At first, mummies were the main target of collectors (Ortiz, 2016) but from the mid-19th century skulls became a sought-after commercial commodity. Most French anthropologists were convinced that the physical features, especially in the skull, were key for the taxonomic division of human races (Dias, 2012, p. 333). Anthropology must cease being a speculative discipline and fully embrace the principles of anatomy, and the importance of having a large number of observations with wide samples was emphasised, spurring global competition among collectors and museums. The colonial expansion of European countries (Roque, 2010) and of emerg-

ing nations like the United States (Redman, 2016) filled museum halls. Human remains became an object of trade globally (Roque, 2014), and the Museo Canario actively participated in this. It had privileged access to a valuable asset: human remains from a probably extinct population of unknown origin.

It is advisable not to take this ideal of the hegemony of major metropolitan institutions to extremes. The central role played by the Paris-based hub of French anthropologists (Reynaud-Paligot, 2006, p. 133) does not mean that other local museums elsewhere in Europe did not also play their part. In Germany, for instance, regional museums were a key factor in the development of anthropology (Bunzl and Penny, 2003, p. 15). Distinctions between global and local must, in any case, be handled with caution. The geographical division of racial taxonomists established by McMahon rests on an implicit assumption: that science happened at the local level, and only then was made to circulate globally. This causes a problem when we abandon a rigid distinction between local and global. A city of science like Paris was, among other things, the product of the French Empire, which included regions in Africa, America, and the Pacific. James Poskett's notion that local contexts are from the start global (Poskett, 2019, p. 252) is particularly suitable to places like Las Palmas, which had been extraordinarily well connected since the First Globalisation. This said, challenging the centre-periphery narrative does not imply neglecting the uneven relations in the equation. Gregorio Chil and his associates had to deal with regional, national, and colonial dynamics in which they were often the weakest link.

All these dynamics are present in the transition from private collection to local museum with global ambitions. The private collection that the doctor Gregorio Chil began amassing in the early 1860s was the original core of the Museo Canario. Although also interested in natural history, from the start Chil gave priority to archaeological and anthropological material related to the earliest inhabitants of the Islands. Chil attributed this to Paul Broca's advice. Their personal relationship probably began in 1848, when Chil travelled to Paris, where Broca taught at the university,³ to study medicine. Broca's letters to Chil express personal affection and intellectual respect (a respect *greased* by all sorts of transactions). They show that Chil was part of his close circle.⁴ Chil was not the only Spaniard on good terms with Broca, as other Spanish anthropologists, such as Pedro González de Velasco, also kept a productive relationship with him (Sánchez Gómez, 2020, pp. 94-99), but the truth is that Chil and Broca were old friends, and that this relationship only became stronger over the years.

Gregorio Chil displayed part of his private collection in the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878, in which the Spain delegation held a prominent position (Sánchez Gómez, 2006, p. 258). Chil's collection did not go unnoticed to European museum collectors.⁵ Significantly, Chil's already solid position in Broca's network caused some friction with the *Sociedad Española de Antropología*, especially Francisco María Tubino (1833-1888).⁶ One of the reasons for this was a bitter discussion about the owner-

ship of the skulls displayed by Chil in the Exhibition,⁷ and the other the fact that Chil felt more at home among French than Spanish anthropologists. But this careful work of public relations brought Chil rich returns; Paul Broca not only helped Chil to focus his miscellaneous collection on the origin of pre-Hispanic Canarians but also encouraged the foundation of a museum. Chil himself credited Broca with the existence of the Museo Canario:

My headquarters were, shall we say, the School of Anthropology; creation enough to make Dr. Broca's name immortal, and the Museo Canario also owes him its life; because as a lover of anthropology and keen for the advancement of universal knowledge, he contributed with his advice and wise direction to create this institution, which is today not only the pride of the Gran-Canaria and its Province, but the whole nation (Chil y Naranjo, 1882, p. 328).

Problems soon emerged, however. Not all Parisian partners were as trustworthy. Although the Museum's relations with Broca and his circle were good, this was not the case with the Laboratoire d'Anthropologie of the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, especially concerning René Verneau (1852-1938), a disciple of Armand de Quatrefages. The first curator of the Museo Canario, Victor Grau-Bassas (1847-1918), was suspicious that Verneau was plundering Canarian archaeological items (Betancor, 2018, pp. 203-204), and the tensions reached Paris when Verneau claimed a Canarian skeleton that Chil had given Broca as a gift. In this case, Chil's and Broca's interest were totally aligned,⁸ which clearly reveals Chil's alliances and underlying conflict between different Parisian institutions. Unfortunately for the Museo Canario, their main Parisian ally, Paul Broca, died in 1880; worse, his main disciple, Paul Topinard (1830-1911), fell in disgrace at the Paris Anthropometric School in 1886. It was an event closely connected with the crisis that anthropometry was undergoing at the time. Topinard was expelled for good in 1889 (Conklin, 2013, p. 48; Blanckaert, 2001, p. 126; Topinard, 1890, p. 1).

All of this likely encouraged the Museo Canario to seek new partners. This was made easier by the large British community in Gran Canaria, as well as by the increasing presence of British tourists there (González Lumus, 2007). All sorts of British travellers visited the Museo Canario. Many of them wanted to meet Gregorio Chil personally. Some wished to inspect or even acquire human remains, sometimes with success (Thompson, 1887-1888, pp. 125-126). Some of these acted on behalf of known academic institutions, such as Sir Henry Wentworth Dyke Acland (1815-1900),⁹ a physician with connections with the University of Oxford.

However, the museum's relations with America were especially close, notably with the Museo de La Plata (Argentina). Its director, Francisco Moreno (1852-1919), expressed his wish to make exchanges with the Museo Canario, mostly concerning human remains. This interest betrays Moreno's eagerness to prove his belief in the connection between ancient *European* races, Canarians, and

some Amerindian groups.¹⁰ The relationship became even closer when some scientific personnel relocated from Gran Canaria to La Plata (Betancor Gómez, 2017, pp. 142-153; Farro, 2016, pp. 126-127; Naranjo, 2019b, pp. 99-118).

The Museum's new links also reached North America. In early January 1883, the Smithsonian Institution contacted Chil through Professor Mason, probably Otis Tufton Mason (1838-1908), Curator at the Smithsonian Institution, who was interested in Chil's work on the Guanches. This interest was not limited to the literature, as he also expressed interest in possessing skulls and *specimens* of ancient Canarian aborigines.¹¹ However, Canadians appeared to be even more interested,¹² as the Peter Redpath Museum, McGill University (Montreal), held an important collection of pre-Hispanic Canarians (Dawson, n.d.). Again, they were trying to demonstrate the similarity between Canarian and American aboriginal skulls.

THE CANARY ISLANDS: DEEP PAST, COLONIAL AMBITIONS, IDENTITY, AND RACE

From the start, identity and *raciological* theories were intertwined. Chil and the Museum committee were interested in the construction of a *regional*, if not *national*, race, which allegedly represented the transhistorical essence of the archipelago's population (Estevez, 2001; Ortiz, 2006). This needs to be framed within a wider context. As pointed out by Gil Hernández, the *racialization* of the archipelago's aborigines, and of their modern population, was a direct appeal to Canarian identity self-reflection, as expressed in the political and literary works of the period. This included mentions to the "imaginary of the race" to exalt "national awareness" and support anticolonialism (Gil Hernández, 2020, p. 6). It is risky, however, to slot the Museum's activity into a single political script. Regional identity based on race is compatible with praise for the internal diversity of the Spanish people, and very different from using race to legitimise the construction of a new nation-state. It seems difficult to link Gregorio Chil, an apparatchik of the Spanish Liberal Party, with the latter view.

These debates occurred against a much wider background: the construction of political-scientific discourses that sought the roots of the nation in ancestral and biological phenomena. In the new racial map, pre-Hispanic Canarians and Basques were often described as missing links in Europe's deep past. On the other hand, the island on which the Museo Canario was situated was not far from the African coast, where national and colonial spheres had been interacting for a long time. This is not without implications. Richard McMahon has challenged the fundamentally *colonial* nature of late 19th-century anthropology. According to him, the focus was on European races and anthropometric research outside Europe was limited in scope (McMahon, 2016, p. 23). However, the case posed by the Canaries betrays the artificial character of the separation between colony and nation. There were reasons beyond scientific curiosity, such as the European expansion in the Maghreb and its justifications. Speculation about the possible relationship of Amazighs and hy-

pothetic primitive Europeans openly sought to legitimise the *civilising* mission of colonial powers (Effros, 2017).

The idea that pre-Hispanic Canarians could be related to the Amazigh had been doing the rounds for some time and it is the most widely accepted hypothesis today (Farujia de la Rosa, 2014). The issue was extensively and intensively researched by a Tenerife-based French naturalist, Sabin Berthelot (1794-1880) (Le Brun, 2016, pp. 253-263 y 524-534), who thought that *blond* Canarians were related to that Berber group, which also presents this feature. Towards the end of his life, he ended up assuming a thesis that was becoming increasingly popular in French academia: the relation of ancestral Canarians with the Cro-Magnon race. He admitted the influence of successive waves of races and the racial heterogeneity of the Canaries but thought that this quaternary race still marked the Islands' modern inhabitants. He used a metaphor: different invasive races sat on a "primordial core," as the rocky shells of the secondary age sat on the granite of the Atlas.¹³

Berthelot was only assuming ideas endorsed by the Paris Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, following a research avenue opened by Ernest Hamy (1842-1908) (Blanckaert, 2022, p. 95) and followed by Jean Louis Armand de Quatrefages (1810-1892). According to Quatrefages, the skeletal remains found in the rocky shelter of Cro-Magnon were deposited at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, where they were subject to different analyses. Some of the most remarkable were Ernest Hamy's, who pointed out "l'extrême ressemblance existant entre la tête osseuse de cette race quaternaire et celle des rares spécimens de Guanches existant alors a Paris (1871-1873)." Hamy also found the same human type in other populations, including in the Kabilia (Quatrefages, 1887, pp. 559-560). The dissemination of this *fossil race* from southern Europe to North Africa, and from there to the Canaries, was possible because of the glaciations. Like some mammals migrated, so did humans. This explained its presence, "erratique et par atavisme en Europe, son existence plus fréquente, plus franchement accusée dans le nord-ouest de l'Afrique et dans les îles où s'est trouvé à l'abri du métissage" (Quatrefages and Hamy, 1874, pp. 265-266). Travellers such as Arthur Jean-Philibert Grasset began seeing the inhabitants of the Canaries under this light. According to him, the inhabitants of Güimar (Tenerife), presented "dans les traits et la conformation du crâne, des ressemblances très marquées avec la race dite de Cro-Magnon, don't les Guanches semblent parents" (Grasset, 2021, p. 319).

The Canarians saw the issue through the lens of their own interests, looking at compared human remains from a set point of view, focusing on the *physical* aspect of pre-Hispanic Canarians, and establishing their racial filiation, preferably by seeking their *European* roots. In this regard, one of the main debates was whether there was *racial unity* among all the pre-Hispanic peoples of the archipelago. This was the source of one of the rare disagreements between Gregorio Chil and Paul Broca:

Believing in the diversity of race in these islands, for this or that physical difference, has led to disagreements between

anthropologists, and at the same time to obscure the solution to the problem of origin. Personally, and against the opinion of some authorised sages, I see no difference to justify such racial difference, and find Professor Broca's opinion even shocking, as he seems to ignore certain features that point to unity to find others that suggest difference. It does not seem that the study seeks truth, but evidence to support a preconceived idea (Chil y Naranjo, 1880, p. 279).

The issue was hotly debated. Nobody defended the plurality of races in the archipelago prior to the Castilian conquest more than René Verneau. He began pushing this argument in 1878, soon after he began the exploration of the Islands. For Verneau, the Guanches, who were linked to the alleged European fossil race, were limited to Tenerife, while in Gran Canaria the "Semitic" element was significant (Verneau, 1878, pp. 430-432). In the years that followed, Verneau openly sought to create controversy with this. He made modern authors responsible for the ongoing confusion in Canarian anthropology, for applying the term Guanches to all the inhabitants of the archipelago.

His aim, really, was to question Chil's scientific credentials. Verneau not only disagreed with Chil about the *blond element* that dominated the Islands before the arrival of Castilians, but also mocked his ideas about the "de belle prestance, de physionomie agreable" of ancient Guanches, arguing that he had not found in his work (referring to *Estudios históricos*) a single measure to support such a statement. When he came to analyse the skulls, his conclusion was blunt: "Nous ne discuterons pas les asser-tions, à notre sens erronées, que l'on rencontre à chaque page de son livre" (Verneau, 1887, pp. 579, 584 and 588-589). In any case, independently from Verneau's low intellectual opinion of Chil, the latter's visceral rejection of the plurality of races went beyond a personal component. Racial diversity undermined his idea of a single ethnic element structuring the deep past of the Canaries, which was the cornerstone of his vision of Canarian identity.

This was not the only debate on the table. The other great issue was whether there were still physical and moral features of the old population to be found in the archipelago. On the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Sociedad El Museo Canario, Chil expressed his opinion openly. For him, miscegenation had a very relative value. Real aborigines belonged to the Cro-Magnon race, adding that osteology "the only reliable document of historical fact of race" proves it. What is more, the ancestral race had survived in such a way that the modern population was "almost entirely" constituted by the aboriginal element. Their customs also survived, as "it is impossible to eliminate the vestiges of the primitive element that belongs to race" (Chil and Naranjo, 1900a, pp. 111-113).

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM: THE ABORIGINAL RACE, DISPLAYED AND REPRESENTED

Although the core of the anthropological collection was the remains of ancient Canarians, the Museum tried

to collect skulls from the remotest corners of the globe, including New Zealand.¹⁴ This was complemented by reproductions, 30 ethnic busts representing “fifteen or twenty different races,” supplied by Diego Ripoche (Ortiz, 2019, p. 118). Human remains were problematic, and not only because displaying human remains in museums was a transgression of the order of the living and the death in societies exposed to colonial exploitation, but also because storing and displaying human remains in museums was a symbolic violation of deep-set western funerary beliefs (Roque, 2016, p. 268). Exhibiting them in display cases implies a desacralisation of the human body that is hard to reconcile with religious orthodoxy. Nélia Dias claims that French anthropological collections not only had to do with the declared aim of illustrating racial differences objectively but revealed the rejection of cultural conventions concerning human remains (Dias, 2012, p. 346). It is thus important to examine how the Museo Canario handled this issue. It must be recalled that skulls and mummies were displayed in the top floor of the Council House,¹⁵ barely a few metres from the Cathedral, and that the Museum’s committee sought to include an even number of progressives and conservatives, trying to avoid conflict with the religious authorities.

What reasons compelled them to take this sort of risk? The first was the wish to have a world-leading collection. The Museum secretary, Amaranto Martínez de Escobar, said in 1882 that he was “sure that soon, if it is not already, our anthropological museum will be the best in the Spanish nation” (Martínez de Escobar, 1882, p. 204). Also, having skulls from other regions of the world was not an inconsiderable feat. It was no longer a matter of determining the geographical origin of the Islands’ ancient inhabitants, or even of doing so based on material facts, going beyond what Chil regarded as “historical and philosophical speculation” that “ignores biological studies” (Chil, 1880, p. 238). It was about clarifying the ethnic parentage of ancient Canarians and finding their place on the racial scale. Based on this, in the 1884 annual report, Amaranto emphasised the crucial role played by local museums “in which, like in ours, valuable treasures are being gathered for study” so that “comparisons can be made and the relationship between different races can be established” (Martínez de Escobar, 1899, p. 106).

These debates were held with more than words. The alleged racial similarities and differences were displayed, visualised, illustrated, and, therefore, *demonstrated* (Dias, 1998, p. 45). It was not only a matter of displaying the *European* parentage of ancient Canarians in the display cases, but also of emphasising the chasm that separated them from other, supposedly *inferior*, human groups. When Chil described the collection, he pointed to the “display cases where we have set up long bones and the casts of Cro-magnon with the skulls found in this island, in Guayadeque, which makes their relation obvious and the gradual difference with the Basque, the Parisian, and the African” (Chil, 1900b, p. 245).

We may wonder if this display of kinship and racial hierarchy was, in a way, inspired by evolutionism, which

would be in line with the arguments presented by Chil’s *Estudios históricos* (1876). From the 1860s, as European colonial empires expanded, evolutionism gave a new life to racial hierarchies, which had remained static since the early 19th century, assuming a progression from anthropoid ancestors to *savage tribes* and from there to western *civilised man*. Although Chil’s evolutionist beliefs cannot be doubted, and although the Museum’s journal defended Darwinism openly, albeit cautiously (Millares, 1881), some elements call for caution. First, the publication of *Estudios* in 1876 had triggered a fairly violent response from the Church. The Museum was not keen to add fuel to the fire, and Amaranto Martínez de Escobar even said that anthropology did not oppose “beliefs, dogma, or religion” (Martínez de Escobar, 1899, p. 106). Second, Chil, like his mentor Broca, defended evolutionism but found some of its basic premises hard to digest. This was because transformism undermined their belief in the fixity of races. The Darwinist tenet of the *common descent*, in addition, ran against their polygenist view of races as separate humanities (McMahon, 2016, p. 116; Staum, 2011, p. 48; Blanckaert, 2009, pp. 319-357; Betancor, 2019, p. 91). The display of parentage and racial hierarchy did not necessarily mean accepting Darwinian evolutionism.

Showing that Canarian aborigines belonged to the top tiers of racial hierarchy was important. But human remains were also displayed for other purposes. The Museum was trying to recover some sense of sacrality. The Museum secretary saw the institution as an identity *artefact*, a space of memory:

Not only the wish to know, the incentive of science; also love for the motherland (...) has brought to this small world of the Canaries the idea of opening a museum, where we keep the venerated remains of the primitive race, to study them (...) in relation to the same places that they inhabited and which were witness to their personal and social life, their truly patriarchal political regime, and also their feasts, their joy, their tears, their sighs, and the infamous days of their destruction. For this reason, our museum must be a monument, a reminder of the hecatomb, acting as a necropolis for the ancient inhabitants of these islands, a laboratory for today’s scholars, and a place of recreation for the traveller (Martínez de Escobar, 1899, pp. 104-107).

Be it as a mausoleum or as an expositive display that presented the racial parentage of Canarian aborigines, there is some evidence that the collection was arranged to *train* the eye of their visitors. Seeing the remains of the dead invited a different gaze on the living within and outside the Islands. A letter sent from Rabat by Doctor Víctor Pérez González (1827-1892),¹⁶ a friend and collaborator of Chil’s, to the Museo Canario journal, expresses this graphically. In the letter, Pérez declared to be under the spell of the ideas inspired by the “rich collection of skulls” in the Museum. Not only because this collection allowed him to “penetrate” the true knowledge of the history of “our Guanches” and “the modern inhabitants of the islands,” but also because they allowed comparisons

to be made. Specifically, referring to the Moroccan coast, he admitted that he could not “dispense” with observing, on arrival to the different harbours, “the variable shape of the heads of this people, and compare them with those of our Guanches and even modern Canarians.” This was grounded on blind faith in the method and the material evidence provided by human remains. He thought that there was much that could be “glimpsed in the past and the present, comparing the types held by a museum such as ours and those that surround us in modern society.” For him, neither “history nor any other discipline” had such “a palpable and demonstrative value” (Pérez, 1881, pp. 330-331).

The remains of ancient Canarians were not only displayed but also represented in allegedly objective lithographs and photographs. They often featured in racial atlases inspired, directly or indirectly, by George Morton’s famous *Crania Americana* de (1839) (Poskett, 2015). These racial atlases were part of a wider genre, that of scientific atlases, which, as argued by Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, were veritable dictionaries for the eyes. Their images, in fact, educated the “disciplinary eye,” they were the visual foundation on which many observational disciplines rested. They also contributed to the public dissemination of otherwise inaccessible information (Danston and Galison, 2007, pp. 22, 48 and 63). Ethnic atlases, in addition to training the eye with racial lenses, were an essential complement to the circulation of human remains. It was not easy to have direct access to a display case with a Guanche skull inside, let alone compare it with others.

One of the most ambitious racial atlases was *Crania ethnica* (1882), carried out by Armand de Quatrefages and Ernest-Théodore Hamy, whose plates were etched from the “original” by H. Formant. They contain lithographs of some pre-Hispanic skulls in French collections. These drawings were not innocent representations, but the graphic illustration of the geographical spread of the *fossil* race that linked Europe, the Maghreb, and the Canaries. In this way, Hamy and Quatrefages, certified that the similarities “affinités vaguement établies autrefois” by ethnologists between the “Basques d’Espagne et les habitants du nord de l’Afrique,” had been “confirmées par les études anatomiques détaillées.” In this context, the pre-Hispanic inhabitants of the Canaries were particularly valuable, because “c’est parmi les Guanches des Canaries que s’est conservé le mieux le type ethnique de Cro-Magnon.” The plates were not chosen at random. The frontal and profile representation of subject 9 from Barranco Hondo (Tenerife), came from a set collected by Bounglival in this funerary cave (Fig. 1). Quatrefages and Hamy thought that this assemblage was especially “curieuse” because of the “ressemblances étroites que présentent les sujets qui la composent avec les Troglodytes de Cro-Magnon, Langerie, Menton, etc.” (Quatrefages and Hamy, 1882, pp. 95-97 y 511).

The *European* connection of ancient Canarians was not the only matter of debate. As noted, the racial unity or plurality of pre-Hispanic Canarians was another hot topic.

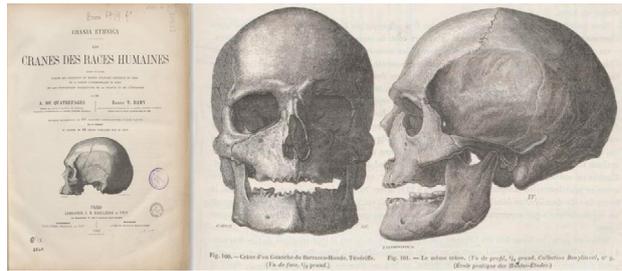


FIGURE 1. Cover of racial atlas *Crania ethnica* and front and profile engraving of the skull from Barranco Hondo (Tenerife) published in the book, which claimed great similarity with other Cro-Magnon skulls. Quatrefages and Hamy, 1882, p. 509.

In this controversy, René Verneau made use of a powerful visual apparatus to defend racial diversity. His “Rapport sur une mission scientifique dans l’Archipel Canarien” (1887) includes several lithographs, with their corresponding captions, that illustrate the distinctive features of the different Islands (Tenerife, Gran Canaria, and La Palma) with frontal views and profiles. Verneau was trying to demonstrate visually that the closest skulls to the Cro-Magnon were, essentially, limited to Tenerife, while the remaining Islands were dominated by *mixed* types (Fig. 2) that could hardly be assimilated to pure types of the *fossil* race (Verneau, 1887, pp. 813-817).



FIGURE 2. Figures 3 and 4 of Plate III in René Verneau’s “Rapports”. Frontal and profile representation of a skull from a cave in San Lorenzo (Gran Canaria), in Diego Ripoché’s collection. The caption indicates mixed features “parmi lesquels les traits guanches sont loin de prédominer”. Verneau, 1887, p. 816.

Another important issue in terms of *identity* was whether the aborigines had been totally exterminated. Were there physical, mental, and moral features of ancient pre-Hispanic populations still present in late 19th-century Canarians? As previously noted, Gregorio Chil argued that the modern Canarian population was virtually entirely made up of the aboriginal element, and therefore of a type that could be fully assimilated to the Cro-Magnon race. For his part, Víctor Grau-Bassas, curator of the Mu-

seum in the mid-1880s and one of the institution's most outstanding figures, agreed with Verneau in this issue. In his opinion, the island of Gran Canaria housed four races: Semitic, Berber, Canarian, and a "small-skulled one" yet to be identified. However, despite the repeated influx of racial waves, it was still possible to find vestiges of the true ancestral race, the *Canarian type*, in remote corners of the Island:

In the little time I could share with my friend Dr. Verneau, we have spoken a fair bit about reconstructing the Canarian type in the belief that some specimens, although mixed to an extent, can still be found: I think that members of a purer Canarian race can only be found in less communicated parts of the island, like the SW; in this belief, I spent the past expedition gathering some of them (...). The Canarian type can be visually identified by a low and broad face and pronounced features (...) blue eyes or similar, blond hair or brown, never jet black, and tan skin (...) and this colour is important, because it is not that dirty colour displayed by children of negros and whites.¹⁷

Put differently, there was a possibility to pass from an abstract discussion about the survival of the ancestral race to documenting its existence. The opportunity to *reconstruct* the Canarian type sprung from a serious personal problem. Owing to some legal issues, Grau decided in 1884 to hide in remote parts of the Island, where he made the most of his time while keeping his lines of communication with the Museum open. During his escape, between 1884 and 1889, he undertook several archaeological expeditions, which he documented in several manuscript notebooks, including many drawings, as prescribed in article 4 of *Reglamento conforme al cual habrán de llevarse a efecto las exploraciones y rebuscas* (1886), inspired by Grau himself. Significantly, ethnographic observations were prescribed to play a central role. Explorers must keep notes in which "the most exact observations of the items, find a spot, and provenance must be made, with as much geographical information as possible," as well as "making drawings of the locals" (Alzola, 1980, p. 59).

In Grau's case, the result was a series of profusely illustrated albums, including maps, croquis, drawings of archaeological sites, and, as the *Reglamento* prescribed, drawings of people. These notebooks and the "artistic drawings" within them were, in Gregorio Chil's opinion, one of the Museum's treasures (Chil and Naranjo, 1899, p. 23). It must be recalled that Grau, who had studied drawing with Silvestre Bello as a child, was a well-known artist and teacher (Alzola, 1980, pp. 14-15). Grau combined the scientific authority of the physician and Museum curator and the technical skill of the drawer. This made his drawings more *plausible* to expert eyes.¹⁸ In any case, it is hard to say if Grau fully bought into the scientific ideal that nature must be left to speak for itself, which is arguably in contradiction with the artistic quality of his drawings (praised by Chil). *Mechanical objectivity*, in fact, pulled in the opposite direction, that of avoiding the scientist imposing their own projections upon nature,

subjectivity, and "aesthetic temptations" (Danston and Galison, 2007, pp. 131 and 150).

The fact is that René Verneau wanted Grau's drawings, which caused an acrimonious dispute down the line. The Museum steering committee authorised Verneau to buy some of Grau's material, on condition that, should he publish it, the author, and the album itself must be credited (AJD, 15 June 1886). Everything suggests that Verneau did not keep his word. These drawings were important ways to disseminate information, especially because they represented remains only found in extremely remote areas, and often were the base of the plates used in published works. It is unsurprising, therefore, that in 1877, while preparing his *Antiquités canariennes* (1879), the old Sabin Berthelot made use of croquis and drawings provided by Agustín Millares Torres,¹⁹ later to become one of the Museo Canario's most prominent members. As such, these drawings did not always circulate freely, and this explains René Verneau's zeal to protect *his own* intellectual property. When Berthelot asked him to see one of his drawings, he refused, with the pretext that all his papers were already packed up.²⁰

Grau's drawings were not only archaeological. Ethnography played an important role. He did not operate in a vacuum. As noted by Carmen Ascanio, the earliest representation of indigenous Canarians are some drawings attributed to the engineer Leonardo Torriani (late 16th century), but it was later, with the scientific and exploration voyages of the 18th and 19th centuries, that depictions of the Canaries became more frequent. Grau's contribution was part of a wider process of "self-representation," which began in the late 19th century (Ascanio Sánchez, 2008, pp. 1931-1932). Grau's manuscript notebook *Usos y costumbres de la población campesina de Gran Canaria (1885/1888)*, published in 1981, contains 41 drawings of clothing, agricultural tools, games, etc. The notebook inaugurated ethnographic drawing in the Canaries (Ascanio, Naranjo and Santana, 1992-1994).

But Grau did not limit himself to ethnographic drawing in the sense of documenting customs, practices, and material culture. He was interested in using his drawings to generate graphic information about the physical characteristics of a *species* on the road to extinction: the *Canarian type*, and for this reason he sought the *best specimens*, that is, the least mixed.²¹ This is reflected in *Carpeta de dibujos. Libro 4*, which, for Chil and Naranjo, was one of the Museo Canario's greatest treasures. The first problem for Grau was to find sufficiently representative specimens, according to predefined criteria, those who were the closest to the *ideal* type defined above. This was not easy, and Grau expressed his frustration. Only a woman, María Rodríguez, from the village of Tasarte, was "fully" satisfactory: "low face, short and broad nose, long and straight mouth, notable greater diameters, blue eyes, brown hair, and toasted skin colour." Another woman, "María," from the hamlet of San Nicolás, was also close to the *ideal*, "having many features of the Canarian type"²² (Fig. 3). The Museum curator was trying to strike a very fine balance: aiming to represent the selected in-

dividuals as faithfully as possible, while openly seeking them to fit an abstract archetype, which had been *convincingly* proven by racial atlases to be racially connected with southern Europe through the Cro-Magnon.



FIGURE 3. Víctor Grau Bassas's drawings of María Rodríguez, from Tasarte, and María, La Aldea de San Nicolás (Gran Canaria). Víctor Grau-Bassas. *Carpeta de dibujos*. Libro 4, pp. 18 and 25. AMC, Fondo Grau-Bassas.

There were many ways to draw the *Canarian type*, but Grau's eye was well trained, owing to his work as a curator, and the assimilation of Broca's group's racial theories. This is again the dialectic of the dead and the living. In 1880, Grau published an article about Canarian-Guanche skulls in the journal of the Museo Canario. In addition to presenting a series of measurements taken from the Museum's skull collection, in the style of his Parisian mentors, he argued that "the main features of a race can be safely inferred from a skull collection" (Grau-Bassas, 1880, p. 283).

This veritable obsession with cranial features also presided over his examination of living persons in the west of Gran Canaria. Rather than ethnographic drawing, we may speak of *anthropometric drawing*. It is thus not surprising that the head received special attention, and that other parts of the body were often neglected. Although the individuals examined did not fit the *pure* Canarian type, Grau observed that all of them presented one of the *fossil race's* most outstanding features: the parietal depression. The drawings were accompanied by observations on pigmentation and hair colour, as well as head measurements (bizygomatic, bimalar, and biorbitary diameters, as well as face height). But this reduction to comparable measurements faced methodological limitations since the true frame of reference for race were the skulls. Grau was thus forced to warn that "the figures representing the diameters must not be regarded as the true measurement of the skulls, because the thickness of soft tissues must be factored in."²³ All the faces were *exactly* represented frontally and in profile, like the skulls in facial atlases and following Broca's instructions concerning the representation of nude heads (Broca, 1879, p. 8). Grau's eye was well *disciplined*.

Grau's ethnographic drawings were very different. Individuals were often drawn in full, and special attention went to representing their clothing and their activities. But even in this, the *racial lens* was important. There was the idea that some human types were associated with different trades, in which vestiges of old aborigines were present. For instance, the drawing of a shepherd from Mogán who, in Grau's opinion "may have some Canar-

ian in him, at least that is what I think." Regardless of whether this shepherd was a *relic* or not, it is interesting that this individual, represented with a "knife in his waist" and a "spear," soon became a sort of emblematic figure of the typical Canarian Islander, and the model of a series of later engravings, commercial photographs, and postcards. An engraving published in one of René Verneau's books, signed by the known illustrator Paul Merwart (Castillo, 2022, pp. 14-15), is suspiciously similar to Grau's original drawing (Fig. 4).



FIGURE 4. Drawing and figure of a shepherd from Mogán. The one on the left is in a folder of drawings made *in situ* by the curator of Museo Canario, Víctor Grau-Bassas (Víctor Grau-Bassas, *Carpeta de dibujos*. Libro 1, p. 53. AMC, Fondo Víctor Grau-Bassas). The second features in a book by René Verneau (1891, p. 215).

What was the relationship of the Museo Canario with photography during this period? The impact of photography in science is well known, and the technique arrived in the Canaries at an early date (Ascanio, 2008, p. 1932). The interior of the Museo Canario was an early subject of the photographic lens, as a way to document the collection, make it *transportable* and accessible to other scientists and audiences. The earliest photographs date to 1882. Diego Ripoche, René Verneau's right-hand man in Gran Canaria, photographed the "most notable objects" in the museum for Paris (Mauricio, 1882, p. 287). This needs to be seen in context; from the 1860s, there was an explosion in the global circulation of anthropological photography (Edwards, 2001, p. 29).

As pointed out by Mari Carmen Naranjo, the Museum was greatly interested in *transporting the collection photographically*. The Museum participated with photographs of its collection in the International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology held in Paris in 1900. Years earlier, in 1889, Chil mentioned to the committee the need to appoint an official photographer to disseminate the valuable objects in the collection and create a Museum's album. The Museum appointed Luís Ojeda Pérez, the most active Canarian photographer during this period, known for his portraits of the archipelago's oligarchy (Naranjo Santana, 2014, pp. 547-550; Betancor Quintana, 2020, pp. 45-49). Although no such album has been found in the Museum's archives, we have a photograph of a visit by the Dukes of Mecklenburg. Unsurpris-

ingly, the photograph was taken in the Anthropology Hall, the Museum's jewel of the crown (Fig. 5).



FIGURE 5. Photograph taken by Luís Ojeda Pérez during a visit by the Dukes of Mecklenburg to the El Museo Canario, when it was still located in the old Council House of Las Palmas (1895-1901). Fondo Fotográfico Luis Ojeda Pérez, Archivo de El Museo Canario, ES 35001 AMC-FFLO-000094.

Is there any evidence that the Museum was involved in ethnographic photography at that time? It must be recalled that the period's photography manuals recommended ethnographers to take photographs before drawing, to avoid European conventions distorting *non-European* bodies (Danston and Galison, p. 135). This sort of concerns was behind attempts to discipline ethnographic photography, making it measurable and comparable, as reflected in Thomas Huxley's famous project to document the peoples of the British Empire photographically (Prodger, 2009, pp. 71-75; Edwards, 2001, pp. 131-155). Significantly, Paul Broca shared this concern to *normalise* photographs, as succinctly but clearly prescribed in his *Instructions générales pour les recherches anthropologiques à faire sur le vivant* (Broca, 1879, p. 8).

Considering this general preference for photography over drawing, we may wonder why Grau-Bassas did not make use of it in his expeditions. It is likely that technical limitations, exposure times, and difficulties related to transporting costly equipment through inaccessible ground made photography not a practical option, especially since he was running away from justice. Also, photography, in Broca's words, was "un art spécial qui exige une éducation spéciale." Grau was in no position to hire a photographer, although Broca said that all scientific expeditions must have one (Broca, 1879, p. 61). On the other hand, even if the technique of photoengraving made it cheap and fast to reproduce photographs in large quantities, scientific drawing was still very important in the late 19th century. Also, we are not in this case dealing with a foreign traveller, like Olivia Stone, who was fascinated by

the archipelago's "white dolichol-cephalic" race (Stone, 1889, p. 182), but of a Canarian who aimed to represent his own *people*. Perhaps, this proximity ruled out the possible distortions in drawings. Ethnographic photographs, however, reveal that this *proximity* was more imagined than real.

Luís Ojeda presents a good example of this. In the late 19th century, whether on his own initiative or on the Museum's orders it is unclear, he began taking photographs of individuals and groups in which the *ethnic element* is obvious. It seems, therefore, that Ojeda played a significant role in *fixing* the Canarian type visually. This was typical of the 19th century when numerous albums were made in Europe to represent ethnic and racial *types*. For many, these images were a scientific tool, the *real representation* of a group (Calvo, 1998, p. 125; 2001, p. 10). Broca thought that picturesque photographs of "aborigines" made by local photographers did not have the same value as those taken according to his precise instructions, but still recommended travellers to acquire them, because they were "documents ethnographiques intéressants" (Broca, 1879, p. 8).

It is fairly clear that Ojeda's photographs, far from seeking mechanical objectivity, represented carefully choreographed scenes, to which he added some artistic touches. For instance, an individual from Gáldar photographed between 1885 and 1890, whom Ojeda identifies as "peasant type." He carries a club and wears a *cachorro* (hat) and a Canarian knife (Fig. 6). He is not very different from the shepherd from Mogán drawn years earlier by Grau-Bassas. The preparation of the scene is also obvious in the almost pictorial portrait of a group of peasants (men, women, and children) with the mountain of Gáldar in the background. This mountain was one of the emblems of the Islands' aboriginal past (Fig. 7). All these *types* circulated widely outside the archipelago in the form of postcards.

Ojeda was also the photographer of the spectacular urban growth of Las Palmas after the construction of the new harbour in 1883. As pointed out by Gabriel Betancor, the emergence of albumin copies coincided with the expansion of the capitalist economy. These photographs not only covered the city, but also the surrounding countryside. A specific spot, La Atalaya (Santa Brígida) "captured the imagination of foreigners seeking 'exotic' views that they did not find in Europe." (Betancor Quintana, 2020, p. 54), and thus became one of the most photographed places in the Canaries. The *loceras* of La Atalaya, specifically, were not only easy to *present exotically*, but were a good fit for the Islands' alleged ancestral customs. The so-called *talayeras* lived in caves, like their supposed ancestors, and made a crude form of hand-formed pottery (Fig. 8). Ojeda was one of the photographers that represented them more often (Ascanio, 2008, p. 1933).

A significant number of these photographs were reproduced in illustrated magazines sold all over the country. One of the publications that featured Ojeda's photographs most often was *La Ilustración Artística* (Barcelona). Photographs of *talayeras* appeared in the cover in 1901, under



FIGURE 6. Portrait of peasant, with Canarian knife at the waist, *cachorro* (hat) and club. Taken by Luís Ojeda Pérez between 1885 and 1890. Fondo Fotográfico Luis Ojeda Pérez, Archivo de El Museo Canario, ES 35001 AMC-FFLO-000016.



FIGURE 7. Group portrait of peasants with the mountain of Gáldar, one of the emblems of the aboriginal past of Gran Canaria, in the background. Biblioteca Virtual del Patrimonio Bibliográfico. Digital copy. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte. Subdirección General de Coordinación Bibliotecaria, 2015.

the significant title “Gran Canaria –La Atalaya– A primitive industry”²⁴ (Fig. 9). Similarly interesting was the article published with the photographs, “Las *talayeras*,” writ-

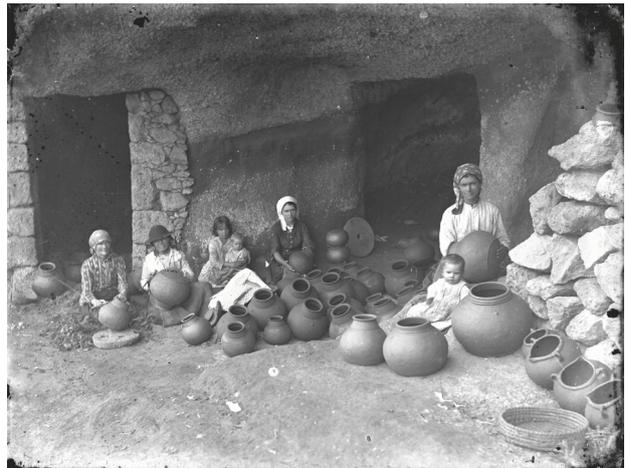


FIGURE 8. Portrait of a group of potters working outside their cave-homes in La Atalaya (Santa Brígida), taken by Luís Ojeda between 1890 and 1895. Fondo Fotográfico Luis Ojeda Pérez, Archivo de El Museo Canario, ES 35001 AMC-FFLO-000217.

ten by the poet and journalist Francisco González Díaz (1866-1945). The article reflects how far the *exoticisation* of the rural population had gone. According to González Díaz, the potters from La Atalaya were a sort of symbol. These women, who lived in rooms resembling “primitive caverns,” were an “indomitable race” that rejected culture. They made primitive pottery using tools whose names were full of “Guanche reminiscences.” They were a peasant group “lost in the endless motherly bosom of nature.” They, therefore, harboured an “instinctive hatred for progress.” González thought that the *talayeras* were a human group in which nature could be observed directly, without the accoutrements of history and culture.²⁵ He also perceived a hidden meaning. The *talayera* was a symbol of the rebellion of the mountain against the city: “the city has not been able to conquer the mountain.”²⁶

The *exotism* of the so-called *talayeras* was also an object of touristic exploitation. The popular interest for the *primitive* other was in full swing, facilitated by advances in communication (Conklin, 2013, p. 34). The potential of the *talayeras* did not go unnoticed by the authorities. An exhibit called *Fiesta de las Flores* (Flower Festival), which aimed to present the Island’s products and crafts, was held in Las Palmas in 1892. The Museo Canario played a prominent role in this event, and its secretary, Amaranto Martínez de Escobar, presided the steering committee (Naranjo, 2016, pp. 450-453). Luis Ojeda took many photographs of the event, focusing especially on the “Furnaces of La Atalaya.” Interestingly, the event was openly performative, and Ojeda’s photographs are strongly reminiscent of the ethnographic *performances* in fashion at the time (Zimmerman, 2001, pp. 20-37). Kilns were installed in the centre of Las Palmas and craftswomen from La Atalaya were brought in to ply their trade. The main event was not a curious local craft, but the *native* women acting as supposed primitive aborigines for the tourists (Fig. 10):

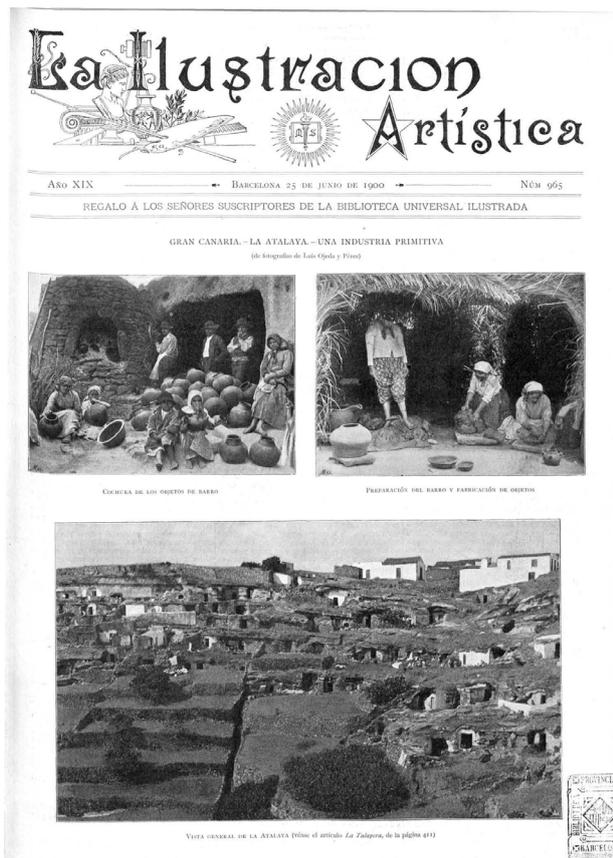


FIGURE 9. Cover of *La Ilustración Artística* with several photographs of La Atalaya potters, including their primitive homes and crafts (“Gran Canaria —La Atalaya una industria primitiva— de fotografías de Luís Ojeda Pérez”, *La Ilustración Artística* [LIA] 25 June 1900, p. 409).

Several caves to represent those in La Atalaya (Santa Brigida), where there is a large troglodyte population, were made with timber and branches (...) During the exhibit, men and women worked all day long (...) The different operations could be witnessed (...) and this without a wheel or instrument other than the hands and small pebbles to polish the vases. Foreigners were especially interested in this section (...) which was the most original and typical in the Exhibit (Morales, 1892, p. 43).

Although this is not the purpose of this paper, it is interesting to examine what happened after Chil’s death 1901. In 1926, the photographer Teodoro Maisch portrayed Dr. Verneau as he reorganised and classified the skulls in the anthropological section. Maisch was systematically representing the rooms of a museum in which human remains, especially skulls, played a central role. By then, this was to an extent obsolete. The studies of Franz Boas in 1907 and 1910 had made Americans and Europeans challenge the stability of skull features, one of the axioms of physical anthropology (Reynaud-Paligot, 2006, p. 284), and a more cultural approach to anthropology was gaining ground rapidly. However, the Museo Canario, and



FIGURE 10. Luís Ojeda Pérez’s photographs of women from La Atalaya during the “Festival de Las Flores” (Flower Festival). Ethnographic performance becomes a touristic attraction. This copy was purchased in London. Biblioteca Virtual del Patrimonio Bibliográfico. Digital copy. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte. Subdirección General de Coordinación Bibliotecaria, 2015.

it was not alone in this, still maintained a perspective in which race, in the most physical expression of the term, was still prominent.

CONCLUSION

The history of the Museo Canario during this period is relevant because it challenges simplistic separations between *national* and *colonial*. The construction in Europe of political-scientific discourses that sought the roots of the nation in biology was not an isolated process, especially because it demanded connections and comparisons to be made with *racial* elements all over the world. The idea that the Cro-Magnon race somehow linked southern Europe, northwest Africa, and the Canarian archipelago had an obvious colonial dimension, legitimising France’s *mission civilisatrice*, but also a regional/colonial side. It allowed Canarians to demand a history different from that of other Spaniards, one more closely linked with Europe’s deep racial past.

All of this had a material dimension. We have seen that the Museo Canario not only accumulated skulls of Canarian aborigines, but also strived to acquire specimens from elsewhere in the world. Supposedly, they helped to determine the geographical origin of pre-Hispanic Canarians, but the main aim was to *demonstrate* the position of Canarians on the top levels of the racial scale. This accumulation of remains made the Museum part of several transnational networks. Despite the initial contacts with Paul Broca’s circle, the geographical scope of the Museum’s contacts suggests that the Museo Canario was not

merely a node in a *colonial* network woven around Paris. The human remains that travelled these networks changed in meaning as they moved and were appropriated. While for Canarians the skulls expressed beyond doubt the European filiation of pre-Hispanic Canarians, for Canadians in Montreal and Argentinians in La Plata they were food for speculation about alleged contacts between Europe and America.

The analysis of how Canarians were represented reveals the blurred nature of the line that divides the national and colonial gazes. Racial atlases, which in theory represented skulls in European and American collections *objectively*, were also permeated by narratives. Concerning Canarian aborigines, engravings visually expressed the kinship of Canarians with Cro-Magnon troglodytes. When one of the Museo Canario's most prominent members, Víctor Grau-Bassas, explored remote areas of the Island, his purpose went beyond ethnography. He aimed to graphically document the last *unmixed* specimens of the race, that is, the last living Cro-Magnon.

Ethnographic photography expresses something similar. Photographers with close links with the Museum contributed to visually fixing the *Canarian type*, using for this the inhabitants of rural areas. This representation, however, had a dark side beyond *identity* matters. Photography contributed to *exoticize* the peasantry, especially women. These images not only represented the survival of a primitive race, but also the chasm opening between urban and rural populations. The Canarian oligarchy saw unassimilable inhabitants of the Islands with *colonial* eyes. For a long time, the colonial gaze had not only been applied to remote territories, but also to Europe (Blanckaert, 1988, p. 41).

The survival in the Museo Canario of a display approach in which race played a prominent role, even after Chil's death and well into the 20th century, is unsurprising. This was no local eccentricity. *Raciology* survived the crisis of anthropometry, adopting new scientific claddings: serology, genetics, etc. (Reynaud-Paligot, 2011, p. 224). Manuals and popular books held onto a *racialised* view of diversity for a long time. And, although this may sound contradictory, after the crisis of anthropometry skulls continued being exhibited in museums as reliable indicators of racial divisions. Scientific inertia proved too strong. As pointed out by Alice L. Conklin in her study about the Museum of Man, in Paris, "after a century of naturalization in authoritative collections, race typology had become part of a modern way of seeing (racial) differences, and proof of its existence." This developed *visual regime* made it very difficult to challenge the biological truth of race in the interwar period (Conklin, 2013, p. 147), and the Museo Canario could hardly be an exception.

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NOTES

- 1 The number of steamers entering Las Palmas went from 149 in 1878, to 236 in 1883 and 1180 in 1889 (Martín, 1984, p. 193).
- 2 Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette [BCWG], "The Guanches, Canary Islands," 10 January 1884, p. 3.
- 3 Chil y Naranjo, Gregorio. *Estudios Históricos, Climatológicos y Patológicos de las Islas Canarias*, Archivo del Museo Canario, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-0008, pp. 1509-1510.
- 4 Paul Broca to Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, letter, 30 December 1874, AMC, Fondo Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-0149.
- 5 Fedor Jagor to Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, letter, 20 September 1878, AMC, Fondo Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-0321.
- 6 Paul Broca to Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, letter 8 April 1880, AMC, Fondo Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-0365.
- 7 Pedro González de Velasco to Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, letter, 28 January 1879, AMC, Fondo Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-0330.
- 8 Paul Topinard to Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, letter, 21 December 1881, AMC, Fondo Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-0397.
- 9 Henry Wentworth Dyke Acland to Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, letter, unknown date, AMC, Fondo Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-0689.
- 10 Francisco Pascasio Moreno a Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, letter, 15 October 1887, AMC, Fondo Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-0565.
- 11 Spencer Beart to Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, letter, 5 January 1883, AMC, Fondo Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-0437.
- 12 Haucton to Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, letter, 24 July 1882, AMC, Fondo Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-0423; M. Dawson to Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, 23 May 1892, AMC, Fondo Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-1393.
- 13 Sabin Berthelot to Agustín Millares Torres, letter, 31 August 1878, AMC, Cartas de Sabino Berthelot a Agustín Millares Torres, I-E-18.
- 14 The traffic in human remains faced logistic challenges and murky legal issues. There were obvious caveats to this circulation, including police enquiries. "The doctor of the *Nautilus* left me with a crate with three skulls for you: one of them of Mori-ori, an extinct race from New Zealand; our doctor believed that given that I live in San Fernando it would be easy for me to send you this crate, but I have encountered serious difficulties. They do not want to regard them as archaeological remains, but human remains, and make me follow all the protocol, civil government, health authorities (...), that you are aware of, and which makes this a veritable pilgrimage..." José Miranda to Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, letter, unknown date, AMC, Fondo Gregorio Chil y Naranjo, ES 35001 AMC/GCh-1012.
- 15 Libro primero de Actas de la Junta Directiva de El Museo Canario, Session of September 2, 1879, n° 1, p. 23, AMC, ES35001 AMC/AMC-4914.
- 16 Víctor Pérez González, born in the island of La Palma, studied medicine in Paris at the same time as Chil y Naranjo. There they became lifelong friends (Betancor Gómez, 2001, pp. 62-63). He was appointed correspondent partner of Museo Canario on 2 May 1881.
- 17 Víctor Grau-Bassas, Carpeta de dibujos, Libro 4, pp. 20-24, AMC, Fondo Víctor Grau-Bassas.
- 18 Scientific authority and artistic skill were regarded as fundamental variables for the credibility of a drawing (Prodger, 2009, p. XXII).

- 19 Sabin Berthelot to Agustín Millares Torres, letter, 23 September 1877, AMC, Cartas de Sabino Berthelot a Agustín Millares Torres, I-E-18.
- 20 Sabin Berthelot to Agustín Millares Torres, letter, 12 September 1878, AMC, Cartas de Sabino Berthelot a Agustín Millares Torres, I-E-18.
- 21 The combination of different human groups and cultures in the years that followed the conquest led to a population that saw itself as mixed. However, for reasons that are debated, no categories were created to classify the people racially, as was done in America (Estévez Hernández, 2021).
- 22 Víctor Grau-Bassas, Carpeta de dibujos, Libro 4, p. 25, AMC, Fondo Víctor Grau-Bassas.
- 23 Víctor Grau-Bassas, Carpeta de dibujos, Libro 4, p. 28, AMC, Fondo Víctor Grau-Bassas.
- 24 *La Ilustración Artística* [LIA], “Gran Canaria-La Atalaya una industria primitiva- de fotografías de Luis Ojeda Pérez,” 25 June 1900, p. 409.
- 25 A line not very different from that of German anthropologists who distinguished between *natural peoples* (Naturvölker) and *cultural peoples* (Kulturvölker) (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 21). The *talayeras*, described by González as mountain animals belonged to the former.
- 26 *La Ilustración Artística* [LIA] “Las talayeras,” 25 June 1900, p. 411.

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