

Theodor Koch-Grünberg (1872-1924): A “Field Ethnologist” and his Contacts with Brazilian Intellectuals

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ABSTRACT

The German ethnologist Theodor Koch-Grünberg (1872-1924) became one of the world's leading Americanists of his era after having successfully concluded two expeditions to Amazonia. Between 1903 and 1905 he studied indigenous peoples inhabiting the regions of the rivers Rio Negro, Vaupés, and Japurá in northwestern Brazil; between 1911 and 1913 he traveled through northern Brazil and Venezuela investigating local Amerindian communities. He contacted dozens of indigenous peoples, studied their mythology, material culture, and languages. Koch-Grünberg maintained a scientific correspondence with some of the best-informed anthropologists of his time, including Adolf Bastian, Franz Boas, Arnold van Gennep and Paul Rivet. He also exchanged letters with Brazilian colleagues such as João Capistrano de Abreu (1853-1927), Teodoro Sampaio (1855-1937), and Affonso d'Escragnolle Taunay (1876-1958). Through an analysis of primary sources – the correspondence held at the Theodor Koch-Grünberg Archive of the Philipps-Universität Marburg in Germany – this article aims at contributing both to the history of Brazilian social thought and the history of German ethnology by contextualizing these relations within the broader context of social exchanges. Therefore, the history of anthropology should be written in the same way as Koch-Grünberg imagined ethnology: as an international science, based on humanistic principles and grounded on social relations.

KEYWORDS

Affonso
d'Escragnolle Taunay,
Correspondence,
João Capistrano
de Abreu, Teodoro
Sampaio

INTRODUCTION¹

Christian Theodor Koch was born on April 9, 1872 in Grünberg (Germany). He studied classical philology at the University of Tübingen and in 1896 began to teach Latin, Greek, history, and German at a secondary school in his home state Hessen. Two years later, he interrupted his work in order to participate as a volunteer “scientific companion” during the fourth German ethnological expedition to the Xingu river basin in Brazil, led by Herrmann Meyer (Kraus, 2004a: 454-456). In 1901, he resigned from his job as a schoolteacher and became a volunteer research assistant at the Royal Museum of Ethnology in Berlin, under the direction of the most prominent Americanist of his time, Karl von den Steinen (1955-1929). In the following year he earned a doctoral degree at the University of Würzburg with a thesis on Guaicuru languages, based both on linguistic material collected by himself during his Xingu expedition and on that provided by his director, von den Steinen. Between 1903 and 1905 (Fig. 1), he undertook a very successful expedition to the rivers Negro, Içana, Aiari, Japurá, and Uaupés in northern Brazil, where he studied several indigenous peoples, particularly the Baniwa, Tukano, Cubeo, and Yahúna (Kraus, 2004b: 35). After this travel, he added the name of his hometown to his own surname (Kraus, 2004b: 35). Koch-Grünberg worked as a research assistant at the Ethnological Museum in Berlin until 1909, the same year he obtained a habilitation degree from the University of Freiburg. Between 1911 and 1913, he traveled from Mount Roraima, in Venezuela, to the river Orinoco, in northwest Brazil, researching local indigenous groups, such as the Pemon and the Yek’wana. In 1915, he took over the position as scientific director at the Linden Museum in Stuttgart and in 1924, joined the American explorer Hamilton Rice (1875-1956) on an expedition to the Orinoco river basin. At the beginning of this trip, on October 8, 1924, Koch-Grünberg died of malaria in the Brazilian town of Vista Alegre (Kraus, 2004b: 36).

Unlike Karl von den Steinen, Koch-Grünberg had neither been to

1 An earlier version of this article was presented under the title “Theodor Koch-Grünberg (1872-1924) and Brazilian Intellectuals” at the “Open Panel 010: Alternate Histories about Anthropology: Tensions between National Imperatives and Cosmopolitan Imperatives” during the 18th World Congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), held at Florianópolis (Brazil), July 16-20, 2018. I would like to thank Antonio Motta, Lorenzo Macagno and Eric Morier-Genoud for their comments. I am grateful to people who always have been supportive: Han Vermeulen, Mauro de Almeida, Michael Kraus, Peter Schröder and Siegfried Petschelis. I am also obliged to Claudio Pinheiro and to Ernst Halbmayr, Dagmar Schweizer de Palacios, and Jan Bartsch from the Philipps-University Marburg (Germany) and Ernandes Evaristo Lopes from the Museu Paulista of the University of São Paulo (Brazil). I am grateful to Ariel Rolim Oliveira for his reading and to Kaue Cardinalli for the help with the images. My special thanks goes to Hellen Bezerra for her support. The opinions, hypothesis, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this article are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the São Paulo Research Foundation’s stance (FAPESP). Grant: 2014/09332-9, São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP).

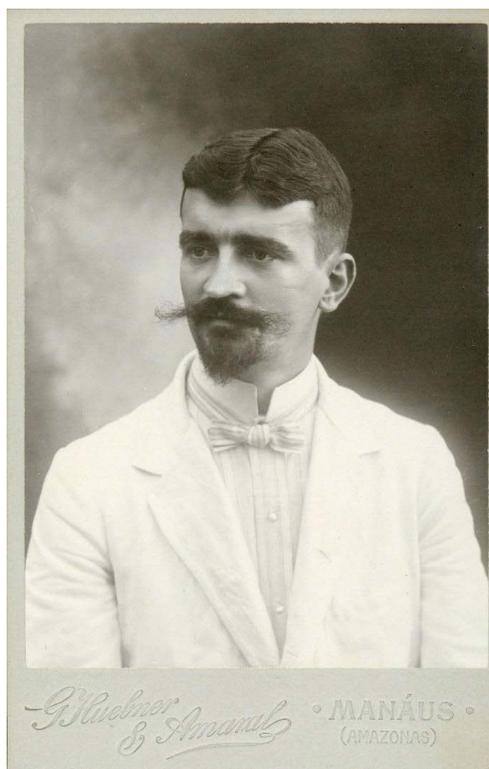


Figure 1
Theodor Koch-Grünberg in
Manaus (Brazil), 1903.

São Paulo nor Rio de Janeiro, cities home to the Brazilian intellectual elite.² Von den Steinen, who undertook pioneer expeditions to the Xingu river basin in 1884 and 1887-88, not only met with governmental authorities but also with Brazilian intellectuals, such as the historian João Capistrano de Abreu (1853-1927) (von den Steinen, 1886: VII) and the engineer, politician, and novelist, Viscount Alfredo d’Escagnolle Taunay (1843-1899) (von den Steinen, 1894: 2). On account of the fact that he only been to northern Brazil, Koch-Grünberg’s sojourns in the country had always been distant from the Brazilian *intelligentsia*.

His first contact with a Brazilian intellectual was in 1913, when Koch-Grünberg sent João Capistrano de Abreu several of his publications.³ At that time, Koch-Grünberg had already traveled to Brazil three times and maintained a regular exchange of letters with European colleagues who lived in Brazil, such as natural scientists Hermann von Ihering (1850-1930), Emilio Goeldi (1859-1917), Emilie Snethlage (1868-1929), Jacques Huber (1867-1914), and Ernst Ule (1854-1915). Nevertheless, until 1913, his correspondence with Brazilians was limited to traders or to the staff he hired for his expeditions.

The present article is essentially supported by unpublished primary sources, namely, the letters that Koch-Grünberg exchanged with some of his professional colleagues between 1913 and 1924. This correspondence is held in the *Nachlass Theodor Koch-Grünberg* [Theodor Koch-Grünberg Archive] at the Philipps-Universität Marburg (Germany). The main goal of this article is to understand the relationships of Koch-Grünberg with three Brazilian scholars, João Capistrano de Abreu (1853-1927), Teodoro Sampaio (1855-1937), and Affonso d’Escagnolle Taunay (1876-1958), situating these in the context of dramatic social changes, i.e., World War I (1914-1918) and the ensuing economic depression. As a result, two other aims will be set: on one hand, to provide material that contributes both to the history of Brazilian social thought and the history of German speaking ethnology; on the other, to contribute to the discussion of the archive as an ethnographic field by paying attention to the inference of supra-individual events on social relations (Cunha, 2004: 291).

THE NACHLASS

The Theodor Koch-Grünberg Archive is composed of his personal papers, which include thousands of pictures, field notes, diaries, manuscripts, book reviews, various kinds of drafts, and his “scientific correspondence” comprising of more than 7,500 letters. The German word for this kind of collection is *Nachlass*. There is no perfect translation in English conveying its meaning. Koch-Grünberg’s heirs donated the *Nachlass Theodor Koch-Grünberg* to the Department of Ethnology of Philipps-Universität Marburg in 1999. The ethnolo-

2 Koch-Grünberg to João Capistrano de Abreu, 6 Jan. 1920, VK Mr A.28, file C.

3 João Capistrano de Abreu to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 8 June 1913, VK Mr A.16, file C.

gist himself organized part of it. He separated the correspondence into private and professional sections, and put it in a chronological order. A project led by Mark Münzel and Michael Kraus cataloged the entire *Nachlass*⁴ and, in the end, I made an inventory of the scientific correspondence, the *Briefnachlass*, between 2016 and 2018.

The correspondence not only reveals all of Koch-Grünberg’s professional partners and the kind of relationships he had, but also many other aspects, such as ordinary life events like births, marriages, diseases, financial difficulties, travels; but also failed research projects, all types of professional tips concerning expeditions, publications, and Amerindian ethnology, and finally, an abundance of gossip, intrigues, and conflicts.

Therefore, if one takes the *Briefnachlass* as a collection, it is possible to think of it as something like a comprehensive orblike spider web. Every silk line is a social link tied to the center of the web: Koch-Grünberg’s subjectivity. The same way an orb spider web is built from its center, encompassing comprehensive circles and aiming at certain finality, the web of social relations expressed in the archive’s classificatory order is produced from a central point of view. In this sense, by comparing the *Nachlass* to a spider web, the center of which being a specific subjectivity composed by a set of relations, the analytical stance hereby proposed differs from Tim Ingold’s approach. According to Ingold, the threads of a spider web are the material extensions of its body, transforming the spider and its environment into a fluid space in which forces compose all things (Ingold, 2001). In other words, Ingold (2001) proposed an anthropological approach in which connections do not exist, there are only lines. The spider and the web share the same essence. In the present article, however, by taking the *Nachlass* as a relational web, the approach is historical and sociological: the connections do exist and are the main concern.

By thinking of the *Briefnachlass* as a web, the focus of the present analysis migrates from a single set of relations between two correspondents to a group or to patterns of relations, such as those that Koch-Grünberg established with Brazilian intellectuals. Letters are therefore the materialization of social relations seen from a personal, subjective point of view. Letters are also marked by a centripetal force, attracting symbols and expressions of the writer’s subjectivity. There are hundreds of correspondents, which necessarily constitute the *Nachlass* as a polyphonic field, but the voices should be understood according to the relation they had to Koch-Grünberg. This requires that the ethnologist or historian take a critical approach that carefully examines the discourses produced from the center of the web of relations. By taking the *Briefnachlass* as a web of relations and meanings built according to a central perspective, this article aims to contribute to approaches that

4 Available at:
https://www.uni-marburg.de/fb03/ivk/vk/forschung/vkprojekte/koch/index_html. Accessed on 15 July 2018.

consider archives as ethnographic fields.

THE ENCOUNTER

In the first letter João Capistrano de Abreu wrote to Koch-Grünberg, in 1913, he told him that two Amerindians were teaching him their language.⁵ Capistrano de Abreu was probably referring to his two informants, the Kaxinawá Indians Tuxinĩ and Borô, with the help of whom he wrote his famous book *Rã-txa hu-ni-kuĩ*, published the following year (Christino, 2006: 123).

Born in Maranguape, Ceará (Brazil), on October 23, 1853, Capistrano de Abreu studied humanities and law in Recife, but never earned a degree (Fig. 2). In 1875, he moved to Brazil’s capital Rio de Janeiro, where he began to work as a journalist and librarian at the *Biblioteca Nacional* (National Library). He dedicated his lifework to the study of colonial Brazil, based on rigorous source investigation and critical reviews of contemporary historians (Gontijo, 2010: 16-19). In the 1890s he began to study indigenous languages, a task he carried out for the rest of his life (Gontijo, 2010: 23). *Rã-txa hu-ni-kuĩ – a língua dos caxinauás do rio Ibuacu, afluente do Murú (Prefeitura de Tarauacá)* [rã-txa hu-ni-kuĩ – The Language of the Kaxinawá from the Ibuacu River, Tributary of the Murú River (Municipality of Tarauacá)] consists of an interlinear translation of sentences from this Pano language into Portuguese, as well as a grammatical and linguistic analysis. His book was highly influenced by Karl von den Steinen’s book on a Carib language, *Die Bakairi-Sprache* (The Bakairi Language) (1892). Abreu knew von den Steinen personally, read his books and even translated some of his writings. As Beatriz Christino has shown, Capistrano de Abreu was definitely part of a European Americanist network (Christino, 2006: 77).

Their next contact happened only in the following year, a few weeks before World War I began.⁶ The First World War was devastating to German science, as Koch-Grünberg’s correspondence with his colleagues reveals. In addition to the human suffering imposed by the war, science was



5 João Capistrano de Abreu to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 8 June 1913, VK Mr A. 16, file C.

Figure 2
João Capistrano de Abreu.

6 João Capistrano de Abreu to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 4 June 1914, VK Mr A. 16, file C.

severely affected by the lack of money,⁷ personnel,⁸ and even paper,⁹ as well as censorship.¹⁰

The war also interrupted communication between colleagues living in countries against which Germany was at war,¹¹ such as Paul Rivet (1876-1958) in France, but also those living overseas, such as Curt Unkel Nimuendajú (1883-1945) in Brazil, due to the interruption of transatlantic communications caused by the war.¹²

In a letter to Capistrano de Abreu, Nimuendajú, a Brazilian ethnologist of German descent requested copies of writings from his Brazilian colleagues. Nimuendajú also inquired about expeditions led by Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon (1865-1958), a well-known military officer, who was part of the *Comissão Telegráfica* (Telegraphic Commission), an expedition to the Brazilian hinterland tasked with building telegraph lines and contacting indigenous peoples.¹³ A few weeks later, the correspondence between Koch-Grünberg and Theodoro Sampaio began.

Theodoro Fernandes Sampaio was born on January 7, 1855 as the son of an enslaved woman with a local priest (Fig. 3). His father took him to Rio de Janeiro, where he studied engineering and obtained a post as draftsman at the National Museum (Costa, 2007: 38-40). He participated in two expeditions through the Brazilian hinterland (1878-1880 and 1886) and was involved in the investigation of Brazilian history and indigenous ethnography and linguistics. In his correspondence with Koch-Grünberg, Sampaio stated that he was interested in Koch-Grünberg’s studies of the indigenous languages spoken in the region of the Orinoco and Amazon rivers, since he himself was studying “Brazilian languages”.¹⁴ He made it clear that he contacted Koch-Grünberg by Abreu’s mediation. Sampaio told Koch-Grünberg that he was writing an article called *Os naturalistas viajantes dos séculos XVIII e XIX e do progresso da ethnographia indígena no Brasil* (The Traveling Naturalists of the 18th and 19th Centuries and the Progress of Indigenous Ethnography in Brazil), which Koch-Grünberg immediately requested a copy in his response. In that letter, Koch-Grünberg also praises another written work from Sampaio, *Os Kraôs do Rio Preto no Estado da Bahia* (The Krahô of the Preto River in the State of Bahia), which he had read in the *Revue de la société des Américanistes* that Rivet had sent him enclosed in one of the last letters that they exchanged during the war. Koch-Grünberg confided to his Brazilian colleague that, “the connections with my Brazilian friends and colleagues are now especially valuable to me, since this horrible war has interrupted so many of our beautiful science’s international bonds.”¹⁵ Capistrano de Abreu played a key role in Koch-Grünberg’s connections with scholars in South America.

In a letter Koch-Grünberg sent to his colleague, Walter Lehmann (1878-1939), the following statement is even clearer in this respect:

7 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Alberto Frič, 13 April 1916, VK Mr A. 20, file F.

8 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Erland Nordenskiöld, 3 Dec. 1915, VK Mr A. 19, file N.

9 Eugen Dietrichs Verlag to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 18 Dec. 1916, VK Mr A. 20, file D.

10 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Hermann Schmidt, 10 May 1917, VK Mr A23, file Sch.

11 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Erland Nordenskiöld, 8 Dec. 1919, VK Mr A. 27, file NO.

12 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Alberto Frič, 13 April 1916, VK Mr A. 20, file F.

13 João Capistrano de Abreu to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 4 June 1914, VK Mr A. 16, file C.

14 As Sampaio wrote in Portuguese: “línguas Brasileiras.” Theodoro Sampaio to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 1 Aug. 1914, VK Mr A. 17, file S.

15 In German: “Die Verbindung mit meinen brasilian. Freunden und Kollegen ist mir jetzt besonders wertvoll, da der furchtbare Krieg so viele internationale Beziehungen in unserer schönen Wissenschaft unterbrochen hat.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Theodoro Sampaio, undated, VK Mr A. 17, file S.

*I now have more connections to South American colleagues than before the war without an effort from my part. Almost every parcel from there brings me valuable books and writings and friendly letters, especially from Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Ecuador. It is different with the USA. The gentlemen there behave straightforwardly stupid.*¹⁶

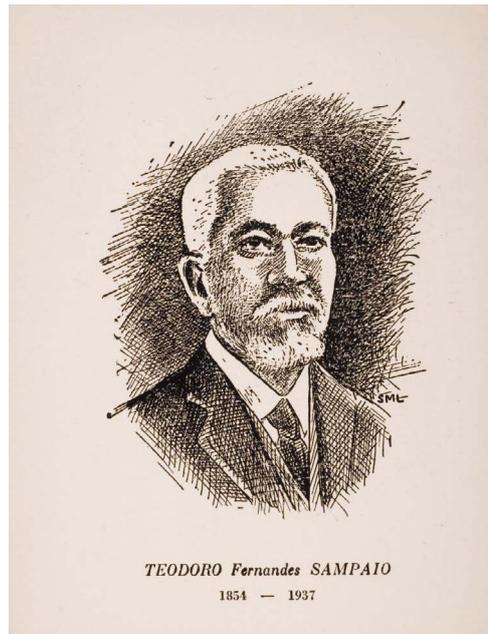


Figure 3
Teodoro Sampaio.

At the end of his first letter to Sampaio, Koch-Grünberg expressed hope in finding more intellectuals in Brazil, such as Sampaio and Capistrano de Abreu, “dedicated to the interesting study of the natives, before it is too late.”¹⁷ This sentence conveys one of Koch-Grünberg’s main concerns, namely the disappearance of indigenous peoples, either due to the massacres, diseases, or by the damaging contact with European culture. By means of genocide and through contact with Europeans and Brazilians, indigenous societies would disappear and with them, their cultural properties. Ever since Adolf Bastian (1826-1905), the physician, anthropologist, traveler, founder of the Museum of Ethnology in Berlin, and “founding father of modern ethnology in Germany” (Vermeulen, 2015: 242), German ethnologists were actively engaged in so-called “salvage ethnography.” Therefore, ethnologists sought for the most isolated native peoples possible, in order to not only to study their culture but to also form large ethnographic collections. Bastian had stated that it would be possible to deduct the *Elementargedanken* (elementary thoughts) of the people that made ethnographic objects. The main goal of Bastian’s ethnological program was the formation of an inventory of the elementary thoughts of all peoples of all times, the *Gedankenstatistik* (thought statistics) (Koepping, 1983: 84-88). Thus, contact with colleagues living in South America was not only important for supplying him with articles or books that he could not obtain in Europe during a time of war, but also for acquiring firsthand information, such as ethnographic notes and indigenous vocabularies. Koch-Grünberg’s correspondence with Curt Nimuendajú and Father Constant Tastevin (1880-1962), among many others, reveals this in detail. In this connection, the epistemological value of Abreu’s work also shows itself: its reading is complicated, but there are “magnificently original things.”¹⁸

Between 1915 and 1920, Koch-Grünberg received only two letters from Brazil-

16 “Mit den südamerikanischen Kollegen habe ich jetzt mehr Verbindung als vor dem Krieg, ohne mein Zutun. Fast jede Post bringt mir von dort wertvolle Bücher und Schrifte und freundliche Briefe, so besonders aus Brasilien, Argentinien, Paraguay, Ecuador. Anders ist es mit den USA. Die Herren dort benehmen sich direkt blödsinnig.” (Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Walter Lehmann, 7 Dec. 1920, VK Mr A. 29, file L).

17 “Möchten sich doch in Brasilien recht viele Gelehrte finden, die sich, wie Sie und Dr. J. Capistrano de Abreu, dem interessantesten Studium der Ureinwohner widmen, bevor es zu spät ist.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Teodoro Sampaio, undated, VK Mr A. 17, file S.

18 “Es sind prächtig ursprüngliche Sachen, aber man muss sich erst hineinlesen, da es fast nur Interlinearübersetzungen gibt.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Walter Lehmann, 24 March 1919, VK Mr A. 27, file L.

ian intellectuals, both written by Teodoro Sampaio. On January 16, 1915, Sampaio thanked Koch-Grünberg for the articles he had sent him and informed him that communication with European colleagues was becoming more and more difficult because of the war.¹⁹ On July 15, 1915, Sampaio thanked Koch-Grünberg for the articles about Pemon Indians’ magical speeches and expressed his desire to proceed with his studies of non-Tupi indigenous peoples, “but there are many difficulties and I cannot travel all the time to contact those savage peoples.”²⁰

During World War I, an anti-German sentiment flourished in countries within and outside Europe, including Argentina and Brazil. As historians H. Glenn Penny and Stefan Rinke note about the German Brazilians, “because of the power of that anti-German discourse, many ethnic Germans saw the professional and economic advantages they had gleaned from their ethnicity before 1914 transformed into serious disadvantages” (Penny and Rinke, 2015: 185). Koch-Grünberg received news about the anti-German hatred that his friends in Brazil were suffering even after the war. In 1915 the German ethnologist and folklorist Robert Lehmann-Nitsche residing in La Plata (Argentina) wrote to Koch-Grünberg that the “German hatred is producing wild effects here.”²¹ Curt Nimuendajú also reported the rising prejudice against Germans in Brazil²² and Mrs. Huber, Jacques Huber’s wife, suspected that English civilians set up Brazilians against Germans.²³ Hence, the anti-German sentiment that part of Brazilian society manifested became an important issue in the Brazilian-German relations.

Although opposing the war and any kind of nationalism,²⁴ Koch-Grünberg was recruited in August 1917, and served as a cartographer in Ulm.²⁵ There Koch-Grünberg suffered a severe malaria attack and was taken to a field hospital and transferred to a hospital in Stuttgart, where he stayed until November. In January 1918, Koch-Grünberg was ordered to go to Stuttgart and began to work on military maps, “a type of work that was more appealing” to him “than the spirit-killing barrack service.”²⁶ As he was 45 years old, the father of three children, suffered from chronic malaria and had an important post as scientific director at the Linden Museum in Stuttgart, Koch-Grünberg used his contacts in order to be relieved from military service. He appealed to the board of the *Württembergischer Verein für Handelsgeographie* (Württemberg Association for Trade Geography), the institution managing the museum. Through the influence of the director’s brother, Count Karl von Urach (1864-1928), head of the house of Württemberg (Claußen, 2015: 208) and highly influential in Germany – during World War I von Urach almost became Prince of Albania and King of Poland – Koch-Grünberg was dismissed from military service in May 1918 and resumed his post at the Linden Museum.²⁷

In 1920, Koch-Grünberg recommenced his correspondence with Brazilian colleagues. To his friend, Clemens Brandenburger (1879-1947), Koch-Grünberg confided:

19 Teodoro Sampaio to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 16 Jan. 1915, VK Mr A. 19, file S.

20 As it states in Portuguese: “[...] mas dificuldades são muitas, e eu nem sempre posso viajar até me por em contacto com aquella gente selvagem.” Teodoro Sampaio to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 15 July 1915, VK Mr A. 17, file S.

21 “Der Deutschenhass treibt hier tolle Blüten.” Robert Lehmann-Nitsche to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 21 April 1915, VK Mr A. 19, file L.

22 Curt Nimuendajú to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 28 Dec. 1921, VK Mr A. 33, file N.

23 Frau Huber to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 1 June 1920, VK Mr A. 33, file N

24 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Hermann Schmidt, 1 June 1920, VK Mr A. 29, file Sch.

25 Theodor Wanner to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 21 Aug 1917, VK Mr A. 23, file W.

26 “[...] einer Arbeit, die mir mehr zusagt als der geisttötende Kasernendienst.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to “Euer Excellenz,” 5 Feb. 1918, VK Mr A. 24, Akte B.

27 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Fürst Carl von Urach, 21.05.1918, VK Mr A. A12, file *Briefentwürfe an Herzog Wilhelm und Fürst Carl von Urach u.a.*

28 “Mit dem trefflichen Capistrano de Abreu stehe ich seit Jahren vor dem Krieg und neuerdings wieder in eifrigem Briefwechsel. Sein Werk über die Kaschinawa ist hervorragend und fast eigenartig für

*I have been in assiduous correspondence with the excellent Capistrano de Abreu for years before the war and lately again. His work on the Kaschinawa is outstanding and almost unique to South America.*²⁸

That same year, Koch-Grünberg and Capistrano de Abreu exchanged articles and books authored by themselves²⁹ and by other Brazilian intellectuals, like the physical anthropologist from Rio de Janeiro, Edgar Roquette Pinto (1884-1954).³⁰ They also discussed Rondon’s expedition and its results,³¹ as well as their own works.³²

In 1920, Koch-Grünberg published a book about indigenous mythology, *Indianermärchen aus Südamerika* (Fairy Tales from South America), which contains some myths from the Kaxinawá that Koch-Grünberg extracted and translated from “the excellent and extensive work by the Brazilian Capistrano de Abreu on the fairy world of the Kaschinawa, an Indian tribe in western Brazil” (Koch-Grünberg, 1920: III).³³ Koch-Grünberg sent this book³⁴ to Capistrano de Abreu with two others as a sign of his “admiration and respect.”³⁵ He recommended Abreu’s book to his colleagues,³⁶ advised research institutes to invite Abreu to collaborate,³⁷ and published a book review of Abreu’s Bakairi study in the journal *Anthropos*.³⁸ Few intellectuals were as highly estimated in Koch-Grünberg’s *Briefnachlass* as Capistrano de Abreu. Nevertheless, Abreu’s work was recognized by German ethnologists, not only because of its epistemological value (residing in the interlinear translation, the presentation of myths and tales in Kaxinawá language, and the grammatical analyses), but also because it reflected the extension of the German ethnological program in South America. Capistrano de Abreu applied Karl von den Steinen’s method in his own writings, translated articles written by von den Steinen and Ehrenreich, and acted as a promoter of German ethnology. This meant that, by praising Abreu’s work, Koch-Grünberg was acknowledging the success of German Americanist ethnology of which he was a main agent, at least after the publication of the book *Zwei Jahre unter den Indianern Nordwestbrasilens* (Two Years among the Indians of Northwest Brazil), detailing his travel experiences between 1903 and 1905.

During the war, Koch-Grünberg began to express a desire to return to Brazil. He wanted to study the mythology of the Baniwa Indians of the Rio Negro,³⁹ to travel to Rio de Janeiro, and to visit his friends.⁴⁰ The suffering imposed by the war had a very negative influence on Koch-Grünberg’s evaluation of European culture, since he was a staunch pacifist.⁴¹ He deemed the war to be an “insanity”⁴² and shared Alberto Frič’s “contempt for the haughty and in reality so cultureless white humanity.”⁴³ The ordinary German population impoverished rapidly due to the severe economic crisis and monetary inflation resulting from the war, which according to Koch-Grünberg had “demoralized them and squeezed them like a lemon.”⁴⁴

Koch-Grünberg’s salary during the 1920s corresponded to only 30% of the

Südamerika.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Clemens Brandenburger, 13 July 1920, VK Mr A. 28, file B.

29 Capistrano de Abreu to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 20 Oct. 1920, VK Mr A. 28, file C.

30 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Capistrano de Abreu, 25 Nov. 1920, VK Mr A. 28, file C.

31 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Capistrano de Abreu, 25 Nov. 1920, VK Mr A. 28, file C.

32 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Capistrano de Abreu, 13 Feb. 1920, VK Mr A. 28, file C.

33 In German: “[...] das ausgezeichnete, umfangreiche Werk des Brasilianers Capistrano de Abreu, über die Märchenwelt der Kaschinawa, eines Indianerstammes im westlichen Brasilien [...]”

34 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Capistrano de Abreu, 19 Aug. 1920, VK Mr A. 28, file C.

35 As it states in the German source: “Bewunderung und Verehrung.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Capistrano de Abreu, 06 Jan. 1920, VK Mr A. 28, file C.

36 Erland Nordenskiöld to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 11 June 1919, VK Mr A. 27, file NO.

37 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Dr. B. Schädel, 09 Nov. 1915, VK Mr A. 19, file H.

38 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Clemens Brandenburger, 13 July 1920, VK Mr A. 28, file B.

39 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Alberto Frič, 13 April 1916, VK Mr A. 20, file F.

value he had earned before the war.⁴⁵ Daily life became harder and harder, so much that at several points Koch-Grünberg needed to accept donations from friends living abroad, such as the Swedish ethnologist Erland Nordenskiöld (1877-1932)⁴⁶ and the Dutch navy officer and cartographer C.H. de Goeje (1879-1955),⁴⁷ who provided him with coffee, chocolate, cheese, butter, sugar, milk, peas, and other groceries. In a letter thanking for a package he had received from Robert Hoffert, Koch-Grünberg wrote: “Concerning this excellent coffee, you have probably thought rather of me the ‘Old Brazilian,’ who was too often deprived of this stimulating beverage during the long period of war.”⁴⁸

In order to improve his income, Koch-Grünberg undertook a series of lecture tours: in 1922 and 1923 he went to Switzerland and between March 20 and April 16, 1924, Koch-Grünberg gave 16 talks in various cities in central Germany.⁴⁹ Delivering lectures in scholarly associations was an ordinary intellectual practice, but doing it at this intensity and especially at this frequency only began after the war.

Moreover, after World War I Koch-Grünberg realized that the means obtainable in Germany were too scarce for him to organize another expedition or even to publish the last two of his five-volume monograph *Vom Roraima zum Orinoco* (From Roraima to Orinoco). Therefore, he tried to use his network of scientific contacts in order to obtain foreign funding. In addition to the Swiss lecture tour, Koch-Grünberg attempted to organize another through Sweden⁵⁰ and applied for funding from the *Emergency Society for German & Austrian Science and Art*, established by Franz Boas in the USA, in order to publish two books.⁵¹ Koch-Grünberg encouraged his friends to request funding outside Germany. When, for instance, Nimuendajú wrote to him that he was working for a Swedish museum, Koch-Grünberg advised: “Make sure that you are well paid for your affairs! The Swedes can do it with their krona.”⁵²

Therefore, one should understand the relationships with Brazilian intellectuals within this contextual paradigm shift: in less than forty years, the German Americanist ethnology saw its apogee and its decline. Especially during the 1920s, German Americanists were struggling to put in practice the research program they had established before the war. However, this program depended on abundant funds that could no longer be found anywhere in Europe and was based on theoretical problems that most anthropologists outside of Germany had already rejected.

In 1922, the Brazilian government celebrated the centenary of independence from Portugal with several events: the *Museu Paulista* in São Paulo obtained new collections concerning Brazilian history, Rio de Janeiro hosted the world exposition as well as the International Congress of Americanist, and numerous civic commemorations took place. Being aware of his leading role in the study of Brazilian Amerindians, Koch-Grünberg cherished the hope of finally returning

40 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Capistrano de Abreu, 6 Jan. 1920, VK Mr A. A28, file C.

41 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Hermann Schmidt, 1 June 1920, VK Mr A. 29, file Sch.

42 “Es ist wirklich höchste Zeit, dass dieser Wahnsinn aufhört.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Richard Karutz, 24 April 1917, VK Mr A. 23, file K.

43 In German: “Ihre Verachtung für die hochmütige und in Wahrheit doch so kulturlose weisse Menschheit kann ich vollkommen nachfühlen!” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Alberto Friç, 13 April 1916, VK Mr A. 20, file F.

44 As Koch-Grünberg wrote: “[Krieg], der das Volk entnervt, demoralisiert und ausgepresst hatte wie eine Zitrone.” Koch-Grünberg to Hermann Schmidt, 1 June 1920, VK Mr A. 29, file Sch.

45 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Alfredo Jahn, 17 Dec. 1923, VK Mr A. 35, file IJ.

46 Erland Nordenskiöld to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 20 May 1919, VK Mr A. 27, file NO.

47 C.H. de Goeje to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 28 Dec. 1920, VK Mr A. 30, file G.

48 “Bei dem ausgezeichneten Kaffee haben Sie wohl in erster Linie an mich alter Brasilianer gedacht, der diesen anregenden Trank während der langen Kriegszeit oft genug schmerzlich entbehren musste.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Robert Hoffert, undated 1919, VK Mr A. 26, file H.

to Brazil,⁵³ after receiving an official invitation and funds from the Brazilian government in order to participate in these commemorations.⁵⁴

Koch-Grünberg thought that because of the centenary festivities the Brazilian government would bring indigenous peoples to Rio de Janeiro.⁵⁵ As Christino argued that if had been the case, Koch-Grünberg could have undertaken linguistic studies even by merely sojourning in the city (Christino, 2007: 57). Subsequently, Koch-Grünberg wrote to his friend Father Adalbert Kaufmehl, who lived in Rio, about the possibilities of obtaining an official invitation from the Brazilian government.⁵⁶ Thus, Koch-Grünberg mobilized his network in Brazil to help him obtain funding. He paid for the subscription and even received the membership card (Fig. 4), still expecting financial aid from the Brazilian government.⁵⁷

As Paul Rivet stated in a letter to Koch-Grünberg that no European ethnologist had the means to travel to Rio in order to participate in the Americanist Congress,⁵⁸ therefore Brazilian funds were the only possibility for attending the event. Eight months later, Kaufmehl wrote to Koch-Grünberg that himself, Capistrano de Abreu, and Affonso d’Escragnolle Taunay (1876-1958) were seriously engaged in obtaining financing for Koch-Grünberg. “Capistrano Abreu,” reported Kaufmehl, “has personally had several meetings with ministers and other officials of the federal government; however, the answer was always: ‘there are no funds available for this.’”⁵⁹

Furthermore, neither Koch-Grünberg nor any other German ethnologist was invited to the congress.⁶⁰ Koch-Grünberg complained to his friend Clemens Brandenburger, quoting Nordenskiöld: “In Rio they don’t seem to have any idea about our existence.”⁶¹ Nordenskiöld was surprised when he learned that he had received an invitation and Koch-Grünberg had not,⁶² since, in his opinion, no one had done more for the investigation of Brazil than Koch-Grünberg.⁶³ Koch-Grünberg certainly thought that the influence of his few intellectual friends and local prominent citizens in far northern Brazil would be enough to convince the national government to pay for his trip. However, what Koch-Grünberg did not realize was that the centenary celebration intended to present a positive image of Brazil, and that a European intellectual who exposed cruelties committed against indigenous peoples, criticized regional political elites and Western civilization in general, would not be very welcome. Nimuendajú understood Koch-Grünberg’s rejection in the context of the anti-German sentiment in Brazil: “I believe that the Brazilians have



Figure 4
Koch-Grünberg’s membership card.

49 Gustav Hennig to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 1 Feb. 1924, VK Mr A. 37, file QR.

50 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Erland Nordenskiöld, 14 Aug. 1922, VK Mr A. 33, file N.

51 Franz Boas to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 09 April 1921, VK Mr A. 30, file B.

52 As it stands in the German source: “Lassen Sie sich die Sachen nur recht gut bezahlen! Die Schweden können es mit ihren Kronen.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Curt Nimuendaju, 19 Sept. 1922, VK Mr A. 33, file N.

53 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Don Germano Garrido y Otero, 27 Nov. 1920, VK Mr A. 28, file G.

54 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Paul Rivet, 27 Nov. 1920, VK Mr A. 29, file R.

55 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Paul Rivet, 27 Nov. 1920, VK Mr A. 29, file R.

56 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Adalbert Kaufmehl, 31 Aug. 1920, VK Mr A. 29, file K.

57 Mitgliedskarte. VK Mr A. 32, file A.

58 Paul Rivet to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 20 Nov. 1920, VK Mr A. 31, file R.

59 “Capistrano Abreu hat persönlich mit mehreren Ministern der Bundesregierung Rücksprache gehabt, allein aller Bescheid war immer: ‘não

no interest in the participation of German scholars in the conference.” After Germany’s defeat in the war, to which Brazilians believed they contributed to, “people have gotten used trampling on us.”⁶⁴

At about the same time, another possibility of travel to Brazil arose. In 1920, Koch-Grünberg managed to establish communication with his Brazilian colleagues and among them being Affonso d’Escragnolle Taunay (1843-1899) (Fig. 5). Taunay’s biography contrasted with that of Teodoro Sampaio and Capistrano de Abreu. Sampaio and Abreu had been free black men during the slavery regime in Brazil. Abreu was an autodidact and Sampaio had to buy the freedom of his brothers. By contrast, Taunay was the son of the Viscount Alfredo d’Escragnolle Taunay (who had met Karl von den Steinen) and a member of a wealthy French family that had migrated to Brazil in 1816. Like his father, Affonso d’Escragnolle Taunay studied engineering before turning to the humanities. Abreu was a friend and his mentor: he encouraged Taunay to study the history of São Paulo province (Oliveira Junior, 1994: 10-14).

In 1917, Taunay became director of the *Museu Paulista* and was the main intellectual in charge of transforming it from a naturalist institution into a historiographical museum. In this process, he and Koch-Grünberg exchanged materials for approximately one year, beginning in February 1920.⁶⁵ In April 1921, Taunay asked Koch-Grünberg if he would accept to undertake an expedition to the Doce River; the *Museu Paulista* would cover the expenses.⁶⁶ This territory was not entirely *terra incognita*, as German ethnologists would have preferred, but the last German expedition to this region had been in 1884, led by Paul Ehrenreich (Ehrenreich, 1887). In almost 40 years, no German ethnologist had studied the Botocudo Indians, so this trip could provide meaningful material. Koch-Grünberg joined the project with enthusiasm. Since he had to quit his job, he needed 6,000 Mark monthly in order to support his wife and children in Germany, as well as funds to buy equipment, and cover travel expenses.⁶⁷ In June 1921, Taunay answered that the Brazilian government would transfer these resources to Koch-Grünberg’s bank account in Germany and that he had reported to the Minister of the Interior about the ethnologist’s decision.⁶⁸ In September, Taunay informed him that the Minister had decided that the expedition should wait until a better financial moment⁶⁹ and in December, he wrote saying that the expedition needed to be postponed until 1923, due to the preparations for the independence celebrations.⁷⁰ Six months later the project was definitely abandoned, burying Koch-Grünberg’s hopes for traveling to Brazil in 1922.⁷¹

Koch-Grünberg’s contacts with other Brazilian intellectuals and institutions were not successful either. He tried to engage in a relationship with them by sending books, articles, and requesting their publications. He sent, for

ha verba para isso.” Adalberto Kaufmehl to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 10 April 1921, VK Mr A. 30, file K.

60 Franz Heger to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 15 Oct. 1923, VK Mr A. 35, file H.

61 “Man scheint in Rio von unserer Existenz gar keine Ahnung zu haben.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Clemens Brandenburger, 27 Dec. 1921, VK Mr A. 29, file V.

62 Erland Nordenskiöld to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 15 May 1922, VK Mr A. 33, file N.

63 Erland Nordenskiöld to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 23 May 1922, VK Mr A. 33, file N.

64 “Ich glaube es liegt den Brasilianern auch gar nichts an der Teilnahme deutscher Gelehrter am Congress.” “Jetzt hat man sich daran gewöhnt uns mit Füßen zu treten.” Curt Nimuendaju to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 28 Dec. 1921, VK Mr A. 33, file N.

65 Affonso d’Escragnolle Taunay to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 20 Feb. 1920, VK Mr A. 29, file T.

66 Affonso d’Escragnolle Taunay to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 7 April 1921, VK Mr A. 31, file S.

67 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Clemens Brandenburger, 23 May 1921, VK Mr A. 31, file S.

68 Affonso d’Escragnolle Taunay to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 25 June 1921, VK Mr A. 31, file S.

instance, some of his material to Roquette Pinto, Mariano Rondon, and the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico* (Geographical and Historical Institute); but never received an answer from them.⁷² He wondered whether they had received his parcels, so he wrote to them several times. He asked his Brazilian friends to obtain news that never came.⁷³ After realizing that the Mausean *triple obligation* he had mobilized many times in order to establish relationships with intellectuals from other nationalities and indigenous peoples was no longer working in Brazil, he felt that the authorities and institutions, as well as many scholars, were treating him unfairly, especially after he had dedicated 25 years of his life studying that country. Koch-Grünberg openly confided his frustration in a letter to his colleague Dr. O. Quelle:

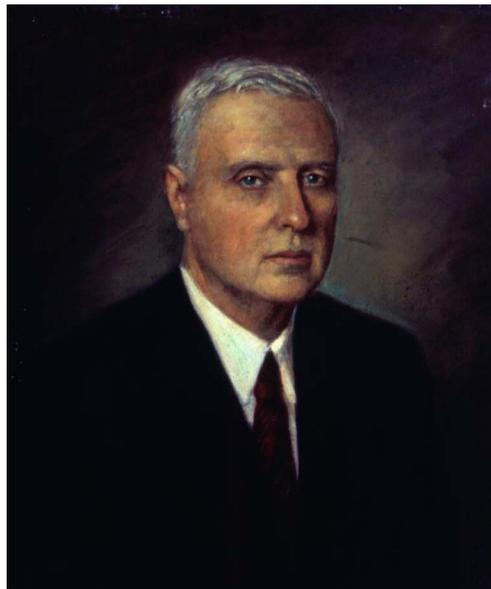


Figure 5

Affonso d'Escragnolle Taunay.

*I even own two copies of “Rondonia,” not from the author [Roquette-Pinto], to whom I wrote in vain at the time, but from my old friend Dr. João Capistrano de Abreu, a very serious Brazilian scholar, and my colleague in São Paulo, Dr. Affonso d'Escragnolle Taunay, director of the Museu Paulista. Other than that, I have been treated in a rather negligent way by the Brazilians, whom I have been working for many years.*⁷⁴

In May 1923, the north-American geographer Hamilton Rice invited Koch-Grünberg to participate in an expedition to Brazil⁷⁵; two months later, they began to plan the trip.⁷⁶ In January 1924, Koch-Grünberg was dismissed from his post as scientific director at the Linden Museum in Stuttgart due to the financial situation of the association funding the museum.⁷⁷ During this month, he tried to obtain a professorship in ethnology at Heidelberg University, where he had been giving lectures since 1915,⁷⁸ but he did not obtain this position.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Koch-Grünberg was set to land a position in Berlin, either as general director of the Museum of Ethnology or as professor at the University of Berlin or maybe even both.⁸⁰ His position would be discussed with the government after Koch-Grünberg's return from the Rice expedition.⁸¹ Sadly, at the beginning of this travel, Koch-Grünberg died of malaria in Vista Alegre, northern Brazil, on October 8, 1924 (Kraus, 2004b: 36).

69 Affonso d'Escragnolle Taunay to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 14 Sept. 1921, VK Mr A. 31, file S.

70 Affonso d'Escragnolle Taunay to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 17 Dec. 1921, VK Mr A. 31, file S.

71 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Affonso d'Escragnolle Taunay, 21 June 1922, VK Mr A. 33, file T.

72 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Capistrano de Abreu, 8 May 1920, VK Mr A. 28, file C.

73 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Capistrano de Abreu, 13 Feb. 1920, VK Mr A. 28, file C.

74 “Von der ‘Rondonia’ besitze ich sogar zwei Exemplare, nicht vom Verfasser, an den ich mich seinerzeit vergeblich wandte, sondern von meinem alten Freunde Dr. João Capistrano de Abreu, einem sehr ernstem brasilianischen Gelehrten, und von meinem Kollegen in São Paulo, Dr. Affonso d'Escragnolle Taunay, Direktor des Museu Paulista. Sonst werde ich von den Brasilianern, für die ich doch auch seit vielen Jahren arbeite, recht stiefmütterlich behandelt.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Dr. O. Quelle, 16 July 1923, VK Mr A. 35, file PQ.

75 Hamilton Rice to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 1 May 1923, VK Mr A. 35, file R.

76 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Hamilton Rice, 23 July 1923, VK Mr A. 35, file R.

77 Württembergischer Verein für Handelsgeographie to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 8 Jan. 1924, VK Mr A. 37, file W.

CONCLUSION

Koch-Grünberg witnessed the transformation of social structures, which he reported on in a subjective manner in his correspondence. He began his career during the pompous German Empire; but when he died, Germany was an impoverished republic, devastated by the First World War and ravaged by an economic crisis. Koch-Grünberg’s correspondence evinces how World War I and the economic depression shaped social relations and how European Americanists mobilized their relationship networks within this context. These events imposed social, economic, and political restrictions on social relations. Yet, within this context Americanists still exerted enough agency in order to engage in social relations, find solutions to problems that did not exist before this shift, and signify that context by interpreting reality.

From a historiographical perspective, by taking the archive as an ethnographic field, it was possible to invert the formula that imposes the impact of supra-individual events upon common people. Instead, it is possible to notice how ordinary people were trying to understand their realities, expressing worldviews and signifying the context in which they were involved. Therefore, instead of looking at the events in order to understand the changes they produced in the social structure, this article’s aim is to comprehend the understanding that ordinary people had of those events. Moreover, to understand the worldview of the Other – be they Amerindians, the Nuer, scientists or field ethnologists – is an anthropological endeavor.

Koch-Grünberg also observed acute transformations in anthropology: the procedure of field research changed from “extensive scientific expeditions towards intensive fieldwork” (Kraus, 2004a: 469), the theoretical problems changed, as well as the aspects of social life investigated by scholars. Koch-Grünberg saw Germany losing its leading role within museology and ethnology. Glenn Penny has argued that by the end of the nineteenth century, German ethnological museums, especially in Berlin, had acquired so many ethnographic objects that their directors and curators were no longer able to exhibit them in meaningful displays (Penny, 2002: 162ff.). The fast-growing collections worsened the situation so that, when World War I began, German ethnological museums had already lost some of their influence in international museology. German ethnological museums were considered exemplary in the late 1880s and 1890s, but in less than 30 years they became out of date.

Koch-Grünberg was also aware of the anthropological turn his generation was facing. He knew the classics of British anthropology –citing E. B. Tylor in his work about South American animism (Koch-Grünberg, 1900) – but like his German colleagues, opposed social evolutionism because of its lack of empiri-

78 Ministerium des Kultus und Unterrichts to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 2 Oct. 1915, VK Mr A.1, file K6-01K2.

79 Ministerium des Kultus und Unterrichts to Geheimrat Hofrat, 22 Jan. 1924, VK Mr A. 37, file H.

80 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Alfred Hettner, 30 Jan. 1924, VK Mr A. 37, file H.

81 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Alfred Hettner, 7 Jan. 1924, VK Mr A. 37, file H.

cal grounds and its deductive method. As a rigorous supporter of the inductive methodology based on empirical investigation, or as a “field ethnologist,” as he once labeled himself,⁸² Koch-Grünberg ignored French scientific literature, since at this time French social thought was more concerned with theories than with providing primary ethnographic data, as Robert Parkin (2005: 159-160) has argued. Paul Rivet’s work was an exception: it was in accordance with German epistemological premises and therefore highly esteemed by Koch-Grünberg and his compatriots. The impact of North-American ethnology on German-speaking ethnology was more profound. At the same time that German academia was passing through a major crisis due to a lack of resources and personnel as well as unemployment, the institutionalization of anthropology in the USA, led by Franz Boas and based on the four-field approach (physical and cultural anthropology, linguistics, and archaeology), developed rapidly. As Han Vermeulen (2015: 435) summarized the latter development:

The departmentalization of anthropology is generally regarded as having launched anthropology as a profession in the United States. The PhD program in anthropology set up at Columbia enabled Boas and his students to acquire major positions in American academia, which led to a higher degree of professionalization earlier than in Europe.

North-American cultural anthropology shared some of its philosophical roots with German ethnology, including the work of the philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1774-1803) and the linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835). As Matti Bunzl (1996: 71-73) pointed out, the modern concept of culture, to which Boas contributed substantially to its constitution, can be traced back to Bastian and Humboldt, “although not without a paradoxical and portentous residue of conceptual and ideological ambiguity, to the Herderian ideal of *Volksgeist*” (ethnic spirit).

Moreover, both traditions shared at least three characteristics: “the focus on language, the historical relations between peoples, and the empirical or descriptive approach to the study of human diversity” (Vermeulen, 2015: 435). This means that German ethnologists did not reject North-American cultural anthropology, as they did with French and British approaches. Koch-Grünberg knew Boas’ *Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pacifischen Küste-Americas* (1895) (Indigenous Legends from the North Pacific Coast of America)⁸³ and possessed a copy of *Kultur und Rasse* (1914) (Race and Culture) that Boas donated him,⁸⁴ which the German Africanist Leo Frobenius (1873-1938) also studied carefully.⁸⁵ Fritz Krause (1881-1963) undertook a study of the indigenous groups of California, which was mainly grounded on North-American authors, such as Franz Boas, Alfred Kroeber (1876-1960), and the German-born linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir (1884-1939) (Krause,

82 “Feldethnologue”. Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Karl Weule, 20 April 1921, VK Mr A. 31, file W.

83 Ernst Wasmuth Verlag to Elsa Koch-Grünberg, 5 Sept. 1912, VK Mr A. 13, file W.

84 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Franz Boas, 22 Sept. 1921, VK Mr A. 30, file B.

85 Leo Frobenius to Theodor Koch-Grünberg, 5 July 1923, VK Mr A. 34, file F.

1921: 95-96). Apart from the growing theoretical influence of cultural anthropology, North-American universities and museums had a huge advantage over German institutions, because of the funds at their disposal to publish books, to increase ethnographic collections by purchasing objects and pictures, as well as to send ethnographers to the field and to hire skilled personnel to guide them there.

Koch-Grünberg followed Americanist literature produced in the United States, such as the work of William Curtis Farabee (1865-1925) as well as North-American expeditions to the Amazon. He published a small article on the expedition that Hamilton Rice undertook in 1907 (Koch-Grünberg, 1908) and declined a request from the newspaper *New York World* to comment critically on the results of the scientific expedition led by Theodore Roosevelt and Mariano Cândido Rondon in 1913-14.⁸⁶ He was in touch with research centers such as the Smithsonian Institution, the Field Museum of Chicago, the University Museum of Philadelphia, as well as with scholars like Franz Boas and his former student Frank G. Speck (1881-1950). As previously mentioned, Koch-Grünberg died during the expedition led by Hamilton Rice. However, Koch-Grünberg remained reticent towards American scholars and institutions. For instance, he would have regretted if the financial situation forced his friend Nimuendajú to work for North-American museums, especially if this concerned linguistic material: “I would be sorry, if this intellectual work done by the Germans fell right into American hands.”⁸⁷

Finally, Koch-Grünberg noticed that German ethnologists could no longer concur with their North-American colleagues. In a letter to his colleague Walter Lehmann, he summarized the situation that German Americanists were facing: they were “handing over” their discipline “entirely to the Americans, with whom we can no longer compete even in South America, thanks to their tremendous resources.”⁸⁸

Hence, in Koch-Grünberg’s correspondence with his Brazilian colleagues two institutional histories converged: the rise and fall of German Americanist ethnology from the perspective of one of its leading experts and the attempt by three Brazilian scholars to forge an international network of scientists dedicated to the study of Brazil. Such an attempt took place even before the institutionalization of the social sciences in their country, which only occurred during the 1930s and 1940s (Candido, 2006: 271). A third institutional history arises indirectly from the relationships between Koch-Grünberg and his Brazilian colleagues: the professionalization of anthropology in the United States and its growing influence on other national ethnological traditions.

From a historic and ethnographic perspective, by taking the *Nachlass* as a unity, it is possible to perceive how certain patterns of social relations changed during the period. The network of relations comprises a *socioplasticity* capable of adapting to external changes, absorbing the contextual impact, and removing,

86 Theodor Koch-Grünberg to the *New York World*, 31 May 1914, VK Mr A. 17, file N.

87 “[...] es wäre mir leid, wenn diese Geistesarbeit der Deutschen gerade in amerikanische Hände fiel.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Curt Nimuendaju, 7 Dec. 1915, VK Mr A. 1, file N.

88 “[...] wir liefern sie [die Amerikanistik] ganz den Amerikanern aus, deren Konkurrenz wir, dank ihrer ungeheuren Mittel, auch in Südamerika nicht mehr begegnen können.” Theodor Koch-Grünberg to Walter Lehmann, 30 June 1921, VK Mr A. 31, file L.

remodeling, creating or recreating social relations. Lastly, by considering the *Nachlass* as a *socioplastic network*, it becomes possible to glimpse how Koch-Grünberg’s connections to Brazilian scholars were impacted by the contextual shift and remodeled by him in order to adapt to the newly created social arrangement. Yet, this always from his personal perspective, grounded on the premise that ethnology can only exist as an international science guided by humanistic ideals.

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ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

Figure 1: Theodor Koch-Grünberg in Manaus (Brazil), 1903 (VK Mr KG_H_VIII).

Figure 2: João Capistrano de Abreu (Photographic collection of the Archive of the Museu Paulista of the State University of São Paulo).

Figure 3: Teodoro Sampaio (Photographic collection of the Archive of the Museu Paulista of the State University of São Paulo).

Figure 4: Koch-Grünberg’s membership card (VK Mr A. 32, file A).

Figure 5: Affonso d’Escragnolle Taunay (Photographic collection of the Archive of the Museu Paulista of the State University of São Paulo).

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