

**MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER  
NOMINATION FORM**

**Brazil - The Emperor's collection: Brazilian and foreign photography in the  
nineteenth century**

**PART A: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION**

**1. SUMMARY**

This is a unique collection of nineteenth-century photographs, assembled by one individual throughout his lifetime and deposited in a national library where it is kept and every effort is being made to preserve it. It is the largest collection of photographs in Latin America: an accurate portrait of the nineteenth century, reflecting customs, intellectual and industrial developments at the time it was put together. The collection has remained intact throughout its existence. It is the Thereza Christina Maria photograph collection: 21,742 photos left to the National Library of Brazil by Emperor Pedro II in 1891.

The collection is made up of photographs of different types and formats, which are described below.

It took some 50 years to build and represents a genuine contribution to the study of nineteenth-century customs and life in several parts of the world. With regard to the history of photography it must be added that the collection includes works by the first photographers in the world. In this respect, its originality is priceless.

The collection is housed in the National Library of Brazil and forms part of the history of the Brazilian people, whose changing circumstances throughout the nineteenth century it reflects.

Its unique historical value has been recognized through the major exhibitions of photographs from the collection held in Lisbon, Porto and Buenos Aires. These exhibitions have had a tremendous effect; other countries including France and the United States have already expressed their interest in the collection and, in particular, the prospect of hosting it. We are indeed in the midst of talks with museums in the countries in question. The comments of foreign experts demonstrate the importance of the collection and the international impact of its content.

**2. DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR**

**2.1 Name:**

Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil

**2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated:**

Owner

**2.3 Contact person(s):**

Celia Ribeiro Zaher (Vice-Chairperson of the International Advisory Committee of the “Memory of the World Programme” – IAC);

Joaquim Marçal Ferreira de Andrade (Curator of the Iconography Division)

## **2.4 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email):**

Fundação Biblioteca Nacional  
Avenida Rio Branco, 219-239  
Rio de Janeiro – RJ – Brazil CEP: 20040-008  
Tel./Fax: 55 21 2544-8596, email: [czaher@bn.br](mailto:czaher@bn.br)

## **3. IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE**

### **3.1 Name and identification of the items being nominated:**

Thereza Christina Maria collection – Nineteenth-century photographs belonging to the Emperor of Brazil Pedro II, who left them to the National Library of Brazil.

### **3.2 Description**

The 21,742 photographs were part of the private collection of Emperor Dom Pedro II (1825-1891), who donated them, and most of the documents in his library, to the National Library after the proclamation of the Republic. Everything donated by the Emperor is part of a collection bearing the name of the Empress Thereza Christina Maria. It is the largest and most important collection of nineteenth-century Brazilian and foreign photographs in a public institution in Brazil.

In 1839, when the Emperor was only 14 years old, the invention of the daguerreotype was announced. The news reached the Brazilian court via the *Jornal do Commercio*. In August of that year, the official announcement of the invention was made in a joint session of the Academies of Sciences and of Fine Arts in Paris. In December, the Frenchman Hercule Florence, living in São Paulo province, published a paper in the *Jornal do Commercio* about his experiments which had led him to discover the photographic process independently in 1833. In January 1840, the daguerreotype process was demonstrated to the young Emperor by Abbé Louis Comte, the chaplain of a French training ship that had arrived in Rio a few weeks previously.

The impact of all these events within the space of a year led to the immediate acquisition of daguerreotype equipment which made Dom Pedro the first Brazilian to make a photograph, and indeed the first monarch in the whole world to do so. He was even more of a pioneer in the collection of photographs. We also know from the accounts of the Imperial Household that the Emperor spent a great deal of money on photographic services.

The Emperor invested considerably in building up his private library, although he also showed great interest on several occasions in the Library of the Brazilian Institute of History and Geography and the National Library. He followed closely the publication of books in the publishing market and the sale of books and other documents at auction. He bought whatever interested him, including photographs, using the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an intermediary.

The biography published by Father Joaquim Pinto de Campos states that “the Emperor’s private library is voluminous and every item has been selected carefully. It is added to every day since His Majesty has special agents in Paris and Lisbon who have instructions to send to him all works of importance as soon as they appear, no matter what the language of publication”.

Another way of adding to his collections was through travel, his first trip being in 1845 to the provinces of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. In 1859 and 1860 he travelled in the northern provinces, from Espírito Santo to Paraíba. He also made journeys to other provinces in his vast empire.

The Emperor made three trips abroad. During the first, in 1871, which lasted ten months, he visited Portugal, Spain, Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Palestine and Asia Minor. In 1876 and 1877, he went first to the United States to attend the opening of the Great Exhibition commemorating the first centenary of American independence in Philadelphia. After travelling throughout the United States, he went to Canada and from there to the Old World, where he visited Great Britain, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Russia, Turkey, Greece, the Holy Land, Egypt, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and Portugal.

The third and final trip lasted just over a year, in 1887 and 1888. The Emperor was seeking treatment for serious health problems. He went to Portugal, Spain, France, Germany, France again, Italy, and back to France where he convalesced at Aix-les-Bains.

During these travels, the Emperor acquired or bought photographs. The dedications are frequent and we sometimes see annotations in his hand, which makes them valuable material for the study of the collection and its historical period.

The above made him a patron of Brazilian photography. It should also be noted that the Emperor awarded the title “Photographer of the Imperial Household” to more than ten photographers between 1851 and 1889.

#### **4. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

##### **4.1**

The collection of photographs is made up of authentic documents. It has already been examined by several historians and by curators from Brazil, Latin America, Europe and the United States.

##### **4.2**

The photograph collection is unique and irreplaceable. As the Emperor travelled widely in his vast empire and abroad, he managed to constitute this immense collection of photographs. He followed closely the publication of books in the publishing market and the sale of books and other documents at auction. He bought whatever interested him, including photographs, using the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the diplomatic services of other nations as an intermediary. As well as being a genuine patron of Brazilian and foreign researchers, the Emperor was in the habit of establishing personal contact with scientists, writers and artists. He maintained a correspondence with them, which was a way of adding to his collections. We know that other monarchs of the time established photograph collections. Queen Victoria is an example, but what characterizes the Thereza Christina Maria collection is the diversity of the subjects. They are not only photographs of family members, courtiers and everyday events, but, given the wide-ranging interests of the Emperor, the collection includes photographs recording every aspect of nineteenth-century life. The photographs in the Thereza Christina Maria collection were bought or received as gifts.

[A very small part of the collection, relating to Brazil only, has already been included on the international Memory of the World Register](#) by means of the [CD-ROM “Photography in Latin America and the Caribbean in the nineteenth and early twentieth century”](#). The Fundação Biblioteca Nacional of Brazil now proposes that the entire Thereza Christina Maria photograph collection be included in the international “Memory of the World” Register because of its wealth of themes and subjects covered. This could ensure the safeguarding of this precious, unique collection for future generations.

Recently, the collection has been enriched by the discovery of 600 new photographs which had been kept in an old metal chest for 103 years ([see photographs of the recovery operation](#)) and which,

thanks to a benefactor, underwent a process of humidification and opening, as they had been rolled up. The procedure made use of restoration and humidification equipment. The photographs were microfilmed, catalogued and digitized. This last discovery is a real historic event, especially in view of the perfect condition of the photographs after so many years.

### **4.3**

#### *Time*

The time in which the collection was formed was the nineteenth century, and it is the largest photographic collection constituted by a head of government in that century, in the period immediately following the discovery of photography. There are examples in the collection of the different uses and functions which were developing in this new means of documentation, representation and expression. In this sense, the collection also reflects and testifies to the great diversity of interests of Emperor Dom Pedro II, a man closely linked to the avant-garde of his time in the arts and sciences.

#### *Place*

The collection was put together in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro, but it is made up of photographs received as gifts or purchased by the Emperor during his travels in his vast Empire and in Europe, North Africa, Asia Minor and North America.

The collection is of international interest since it covers Brazil, Europe, Africa and North America.

#### *Subject and theme*

The photographic archives left by the Emperor to the National Library are now the largest and most comprehensive collection of nineteenth-century Brazilian and foreign photographic documents in a public institution in Brazil. They contain 21,742 items on all the main subjects of the nineteenth century: agriculture, archaeology, architecture and town planning, the performing arts, the visual arts, astronomy, biology, botany, education, engineering, war, immigration, medicine and public health, ethnography, the European nobility of the time, and so on. The catalogue of the exhibition which took place in Portugal demonstrates the diversity of subjects.

#### *Form and style*

There are 21,742 photographs of the collection, recorded and indexed, in the National Library, both negatives and positives in a wide range of techniques and formats. There is even more variety among the prints. Although most are silver on gelatine, some are coloured with sulphur and/or selenium (sepia), copper (red) and iron (blue/green), and examples of print-out paper have also been found. The formats vary between 5 x 7 and 8 x 10.

The National Library already held a number of photographs before Dom Pedro's donation, although the Brazilian law on legal deposit has never made reference to this type of documentation, hence the lack of a twentieth-century photographic archive.

### **4.4**

#### **Rarity**

The photographs in the Thereza Christina Maria collection are unique and have never been reproduced in their entirety. They are photographs made by the world's first photographers and

were either purchased by the Emperor or given to him. As the Emperor was a scholar and philosopher who was interested in all the subjects of his time, the collection holds photographs on a variety of themes such as astronomy, archaeology and physiology by some of the world's most celebrated photographers, such as August Frisch, August Riedel, Augusto Stahl, Albert Richard Dietze, Antonio Beato, Benjamin R. Mulock, E. and H.T. Anthony, Felix Bonfils, Filipe Augusto Fidanza, Francis Frith, F. Fridrich, Eadweard Muybridge, the Alinari brothers, Guilherme Liebenau, Joaquim Insley Pacheco, João Ferreira Vilela, J. Laurent, Louis Niemeyer, Marc Ferrez, Paul Nadar, Pascal Sebah, Roger Fenton, Revert Henrique Klumb and Wenceslau Cifka.

### **Integrity**

The collection has been preserved intact although some photographs have suffered from a certain fading of the image and others have been attacked by insects. Nevertheless, there are no problems that cannot be remedied and the conservation services are in the process of repairing what can be repaired.

### **Threat**

The region where the collection is kept is not prone to natural disasters. The building in which it is housed, in perfect storage conditions, is protected by a fire detection system and is also serviced round-the-clock by a specialist team. The Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, the owner of the collection, has the resources to ensure its safety.

## **5. LEGAL INFORMATION**

### **5.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details):**

Biblioteca Nacional  
Avenida Rio Branco, 219-239  
Rio de Janeiro – RJ – Brazil CEP: 20008-040  
Tel./Fax: 55 21 2544-8596, email: [czaher@bn.br](mailto:czaher@bn.br)

### **5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner):**

The custodian is the owner.

### **5.3 Legal status:**

#### **(a) Category of ownership:**

The collection was assigned to the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional by its author.

#### **(b) Accessibility:**

The photographs of the collection are accessible to readers of the National Library. A database, Micro-Isis, holds 7,000 photographs. Information on 8,000 more photographs is available in the records catalogue. There are 243 albums with photographs. In addition, there are already 350 digitized photographs in a database which will be expanded as soon as the financial resources are available.

**(c) Copyright status:**

Copyright belongs to the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional to which the Emperor left the collection in the year of his death, 1891.

**(d) Responsible administration:**

The administration in charge of the collection is the Iconography Division of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional.

**(e) Other factors**

**6. MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**6.1 Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage? YES/NO**

Yes.

**If yes, attach a summary of the plan. If no, please attach further details about current storage and custody of the materials.**

The photographic archives have required for more than a century the necessary care for their identification, cataloguing and conditioning. Nevertheless, standards, systems and procedures have been developed. A team has been formed to identify, catalogue and index, reproduce, conserve and condition all the photographic archives of the National Library, and as a priority the Thereza Christina Maria Collection. The know-how for the treatment of the photographic collections has been fully developed, introduced and tested.

A handbook has been prepared and published. Part of the archives, hitherto unknown, has been bought and another part, previously processed, has been entirely reviewed.

**7. CONSULTATION**

**7.1**

The owner of the heritage is the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional itself, the institution which is also the custodian of the collection. A national *Memory of the World* committee has not yet been established in Brazil. A copy of the lodgement will be sent to the representative of the regional committee for Latin America, in Nicaragua.

**PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION**

**8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK**

**8.1**

Brazil is not prone to natural disaster but fires and other disasters may occur. For such contingencies, there is a fire detection system and a disaster plan for the whole of the collection to prevent and repair possible damage caused by water and insects. There is also a controlled central air-conditioning system which is problematic in that it does not function round the clock, being shut down at night and during weekends and holidays. Nevertheless, the storage is under surveillance for damp, insects and rodents.

**9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION**

**9.1**

Although part of the archives have suffered, and despite deterioration in the past – in particular the fading of some images and some damage caused by insects – the conditions today are wholly satisfactory. The archives have been stablized. It should be noted that there are a great many examples of images in a perfect state of preservation.

**PART C - LODGEMENT**

This nomination is lodged by:

EDUARDO PORTELLA

President of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional

(Signature)..... (Date) 20 December 2002