



The Emperor's Beard: Dom Pedro II and His Tropical Monarchy in Brazil

By Lilia Moritz Schwarcz



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How Brazil created a European-style monarchy in the New World--and why its influence has endured

In the early nineteenth century, when the rest of Latin America was in a tumult of revolutions that established republics throughout the continent. Brazilians celebrated Dom Pedro II as their emperor and rightful leader. Paradoxically, this quasi-European royal figure--son of the king who had sought refuge in Rio de Janeiro from the Napoleonic armies conquering Portugal--came to symbolize much of what was modern and specifically Brazilian about his people. And when in 1889 Pedro fled into exile and Brazil, too, became a republic, many of the symbols of his royal power were incorporated into new structures of meaning in the new Brazil. Why was this so?

Lilia Moritz Schwarcz's innovative, exciting work blends politics, anthropology, cultural studies, and art history to show how this strange amalgam of European monarchy and New World innovation was invented and sustained. *The Emperor's Beard* explores the world of Dom Pedro's court--its rituals, icons, racial features, art, and politics--and delineates for us the means and processes whereby the Brazilian empire took shape. Indeed, as Schwarcz shows, the social and political meaning of Dom Pedro's court continues to affect the Brazilian imagination today. This is a scintillating, surprising work of real historical and cultural importance.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The reign of Brazil's last monarch aptly illustrates Machiavelli's admonitions against philosopher kings. A bookish, reluctant emperor, Dom Pedro II nevertheless led Brazil—bloodlessly—through the abolition of slavery and conversion from a monarchy to a republic. (In the United States, the same reforms required two great wrenching wars.) The Brazilian monarchy began in 1808 when the Portuguese royal family, fleeing Napoleon, settled in the Americas to control their empire from Rio de Janeiro. Dom Pedro, born in 1825, was to be the final flower of royalty in Brazil. He was exiled in 1889 and died in Paris, impoverished and heartbroken, in 1891. Schwarcz relates this history, and a few decades following it, colorfully and unconventionally. She devotes chapters to "How to Be Brazilian Nobility," "Dom Pedro's Residences" and "The Daguerreotype Revolution in Brazil." The result is a fascinating study of Brazil's peculiar amalgam of European nobility, African tribal culture and indigenous Indian tradition. Unlike other colonists, white Brazilians romanticized and adopted aspects of the African and Indian cultures with which they coexisted, rather than eradicating or dominating them. Dom Pedro himself became conversant in the indigenous Tupi and Guarani languages. Schwarcz suggests that Dom Pedro's disinterest in politics (allowing his palaces and processions to become shabby so he could divert imperial funds to education) may have led to the fall of the monarchy. Unfortunately, his virtues were recognized only after his death, when, as a ghost, he finally became a popular hero: "The Martyr of Brazil."

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Review

"A balanced mixture, in which a historical essay is blended with a biography of the ruler and a pinch of the very French *histoire des mentalites*, to reveal the interior workings and purposes of Brazil's imperial government from its consolidation to its apogee and fall . . . Schwarcz's approach is both original and revealing." --Mario Pereira, *Diario Catarinense*

"A biography that turns the tables . . . Superb . . . Schwarcz writes with a journalist's verve, to which she adds a scholar's thoroughness and a picture researcher's flair for assembling an array of paintings and photographs of the Emperor, never previously published." --Jose Carlos Fernandes, *Gazeta de Povo*

"A very welcome addition to the bookshelf . . . Schwarcz reconstructs the monarchy of [Pedro II] with a wealth of detail [about] the architecture of the imperial palaces, the mix of European ritual with Brazilian custom, the festivities, [and] the part the emperor played in the life of the newly independent country." --Grace Perpetuo, *Jornal de Brasilia*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Carrie Wakefield:

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Christian Robbins:

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Herman Jenkins:

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