

Human Zoos in Switzerland

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'Freak shows' occurred frequently in Switzerland from 1880 to 1939, held for the most part in caravans, on town squares, at pubs, cafés or at refreshment stands and restaurants, and occasionally in parks or gardens near such establishments. These shows, which local newspapers announced and advertised, were professionally promoted events. For example, the 1890 visit to La Chaux-de-Fonds of Kobelkoff, the Human Torso, a Russian exhibiting himself all over the world, led to three articles being published in *La Sentinelle* (Pajot 2003: 34–36). Typically, the exhibition tent would be set up on the square in front of the railway station. These shows now and again stirred criticism, but to no effect.

From 1875 to 1939 in French-speaking Switzerland there were no fewer than thirty-nine shows and anatomical museums.¹ However, it was not considered acceptable to exhibit individuals from the same milieu as that of the spectators. This illustrates just how important it was to show the Other as different and exotic. 'Freaks' were exhibited individually or collectively. Where the person was sufficiently deformed or sensational, he or she sufficed to ensure the success of the show. To cite just one example, *l'homme poileux [sic]* (the hairy man), Rham-A-Sama, was exhibited in Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg before his death in a hospital in Paris.² Some double acts enjoyed particularly enduring popular success, such as that of the giant Van Albert and the dwarf Seppettoni, whose shows lasted for more than 20 years in French-speaking Switzerland (Minder 2005: 172).³ Although the Lilliputian's dances and the giant's charming conversation were appreciated, other double acts were of a more dubious nature.⁴ The exhibition of two disabled people in a travelling menagerie of rare wild animals aroused some very critical reactions, yet such shows were never banned.

Science and Exhibitions

The idea of associating science and exhibition was of major importance and the impact it had should not be underestimated. Among the general public at the end of the nineteenth century, belief in positivism and determinism were common. Raciology, which had its roots in physical anthropology, used such paradigms to elaborate reasoned hierarchical systems, empirically supported by anthropometric measures. Whenever a scientist was called upon to give an expert opinion on a 'freak' exhibited in a show, the frontier between fiction and reality became so blurred that even the most sceptical minds were troubled. How could one not believe the 1931 announcement concerning 'a young girl whose body is completely covered in crocodile skin several centimetres thick', who had become a 'famous scientific phenomenon'? Why doubt her rarity and her undeniable scientific interest? Publicity would go so far as to specify that 'Doctors are particularly welcome.'⁵

Africans were introduced as showcase items into these tumultuous low-life entertainment practices of the Western world. In 1887, Galibi, 'the negro contortionist from the Congo', was presented to the public as the Snake Man.⁶ Even more interesting is the case of 'two negro prisoners of the Dahomeyan war' exhibited at the Schweizerhalle in Fribourg in December 1896. In the days following the show, the two men were to be found serving as waiters in the establishment, and the publican announced their presence as 'another curiosity' for his regular customers to come and see. Might this proprietor have extended by his own initiative the Africans' employment to two additional days, thus illustrating the flimsy nature of their work contracts? A preference for exhibiting Africans in groups or tribes, accompanied by women and children, meant that there were few men on individual display.

Unlike other people or groups of people with deformities, the Africans were exhibited in circuses or 'ethnological exhibitions', as were, for example, the 'Compagnie de la Nouvelle-Guinée', and Indian fakirs. Swiss town parks, sufficiently large restaurants and zoological gardens served as a backdrop for the exhibited. Swiss French daily newspapers and illustrated weeklies from 1879 to 1939 suggest a figure of seven 'African villages'.⁷ Some of the groups are listed in the detailed tables established for the zoological garden of Basel and for the city of Zürich. This cross-referencing clearly shows that the troupes travelled across Europe and all over Switzerland, with the managers seeking to obtain the best return on the shows they had organized. An estimation of the total number of exhibitions of humans in Switzerland gives a figure of

well over 100 presentations.

The interruption of 1914–18 barely affected the fashion for exhibitions. Although troupes of Laplanders, Inuits and Sinhalese were also programmed, they remained a minority, which means that a further observation can be made: if groups performing in circuses are excluded from the figures, African villages occupy an even more important place in the statistics. So the question is: what exactly was the Swiss public shown and why were the African villages so fascinating? The best-documented exhibitions took place in Geneva in 1896 and in Lausanne in 1925. Unlike other exhibitions, these villages were set up and associated with festivities that ranged across the whole of Switzerland and were designed to attract the entire population, whatever their language or their religion.

It is supposed that the impresarios of the African troupes shown throughout Europe amassed large amounts of money and made their fortunes by enthusiastically indulging in this practice. The archives leave no doubt as to the real profitability of these shows. But why were African villages a feature of important national events?

The African Village of 1896 in Geneva

The Geneva village was part of an ensemble called the Parc de Plaisance, and was proposed by a member of the committee who cited as references the 1893 Chicago and 1896 Berlin exhibitions.⁸ The central committee received other propositions for the construction of villages or exhibitions. All were refused, because a monopoly had been granted to the project that had economic and pedagogical dimensions.

The African village was situated on the fringes of the park, on a plot measuring approximately 3,200 square metres (3,840 square yards), rented for 35,000 francs.⁹ This location was not a random choice. As the village was not totally integrated into the exhibition site, the village administrators were able to charge a supplementary fee over the official entrance ticket to it. The settlement was composed of adobe huts with a mosque that attracted everyone's attention. A small lake completed the ensemble. The visitors moved freely around the village and mixed with its inhabitants. The only restriction imposed was that they were not to enter the huts. Although clearly on display, the inhabitants of the village were not treated as animals in cages, since there were no bars separating the spectators and the indigenous people.

Three tribal chiefs led the troupe of Africans from Senegal. The arrival of the inhabitants was celebrated on 27 April 1896 by a huge

procession: the municipal band opened the march and was followed by a four-horse landau carrying the organizers; and then, depending on the contemporary source, came between forty-two and fifty carriages, open and garlanded, completed by four donkeys, monkeys, parrots and everything necessary for cooking and making music. Funds were collected along the route for 'l'Hospice général, les Cuisines populaires de Plainpalais et les Cuisines scolaires'. A short film of the procession walking inside the enclosure of the Parc de Plaisance still exists.¹⁰

The indigenous characters were welcomed with a large bonfire. The festivities began on Friday 8 May 1896 with the celebration of the baptism of a girl born during the crossing from Dakar to Marseille. The baptism was conducted according to Muslim rites and served as a pretext to attract a large audience. It also necessitated the sacrificial offering of a sheep. This aspect of the ceremony aroused negative reactions to the celebration of a pagan rite, but did not in any way affect its success. On this occasion, the organizers sold a special entrance ticket priced at 2 francs. The event also caused alarm at the idea of a 'black invasion', with the accompanying fears of miscegenation and mixing of cultures that would threaten Swiss identity.

Other religious ceremonies attracted the public, including the Tabaski ceremony,¹¹ during which the throats of sheep were cut. However, after the intervention of the Animal Protection Society, this procedure was no longer carried out in public. The final celebrations were those that marked the start of the Muslim New Year, accompanied by music, dancing, singing, torchlight processions, crossbow-shooting, races, equestrian extravaganzas and wrestling, all of which aroused great curiosity.

Unfortunately, a death occurred during the exhibition. A young African man, who had managed to dodge the obligatory check-up before departure, finally received much-needed medical attention upon his arrival. This intervention was, however, too late. During his illness his countrymen visited him regularly; and on his death, they performed their traditional laying-out of the corpse. The funeral procession, which took place on 25 August 1896 at the Cimetière de Saint-Georges in Geneva, consisted of a hearse followed by five closed carriages carrying the marabouts and about twenty people. The deceased was buried in an individual tomb with a small tumulus, from which each African removed a handful of earth to take back to the dead man's sister. His uncle ordered a gravestone,¹² and a meal was offered to the children of the African village in memory of the young man.

Daily Life in the Village

The general state of health of the Africans from the moment of their embarkation was a concern for the organizers and apparently continued to be so after their arrival. The troupe received visits from doctors three times a day. Bad weather plagued the exhibition from May to October 1896. Suffering from the cold temperatures, the Africans were issued with military blankets, and on the day of their departure it even snowed. These meteorological conditions aroused the public's sympathy for them.

Wrestling matches were organized in the village, notably against three Turkish champions from the Imperial Palace of Constantinople. The keenest interest was shown in the question of whether the white champions would get the better of the 'coloured champions', who were supposed to be vested with an almost animal strength that had to be controlled. On two occasions a magic show was organized within the village enclosure. With their own stereotypical vision of Africa, the organizers apparently thought that they could impress the indigenous people on display.

It was imperative that the exhibition should be profitable. People could have their photographs taken, surrounded by members of the troupe, for the not very modest sum of 3 francs. This idea, entrusted to the talent and expertise of the official photographer, was a great success. Sources are rare regarding the activities of the troupe outside those typically reserved for the exhibitions and the African villages. A young African man refused to drink the alcohol offered by some merrymaking visitors, but he was happy to drink water with them. People in Neuchâtel tried the same thing, also unsuccessfully, with a child whom they estimated to be three or four years old. On another occasion, a mother, suspecting the presence of alcohol in a mint sweet given to her child by a female spectator, snatched it away, tasted it and spat it out contemptuously. Although considered inferior, the Africans surprised the Swiss with their moderation. Moreover, despite all that was sanctioned as exotic strangeness, morality was not something to be trifled with, and according to the press the Africans never contravened the norms. In the words of a witness: 'It is a lesson for Christians!'¹³

Although the members of the troupe could leave the enclosure, there were certain restrictions. They were to avoid creating too much contact with Europeans. It was feared that they would refuse to go back home or that they would become 'civilized' beings after all, in which case their 'authenticity' would be lost, thereby destroying the basis on which the

success of the exhibition rested. For publicity reasons, the members of the troupe were occasionally allowed to leave the exhibition enclosure. The Africans became living advertising hoardings. It is known that on at least two occasions members of the Plainpalais tribe went to the theatre.

The most commonly criticized 'vice' of the Africans was their supposedly constant begging. Some press articles mention how the white people made their contribution in an original way, that is to say by throwing the small coins into the water to see the young black men dive and bring them to the surface in their mouths. Swiss-German dailies openly complained of this begging, which pushed the village management to take action, though unsuccessfully. This begging continued to be commented upon even after the festivities had ended.

At the end of the exhibition, the moment of departure led to wild speculation. Rumours were rife as to the possibility of romances having blossomed during the event. This was, of course, the ultimate taboo. A white man could not marry a black woman and the idea of a white woman seducing an African man broke all codes. According to some newspapers, black men had hurriedly proposed marriage to young women.¹⁴ Worse still, they refused to leave Switzerland. Nothing could be further from the truth, however, as historical sources contradict these rumours.¹⁵

The life of the African village in Geneva was particularly disturbed on two occasions: once when the director, Alexandre, sued by the central committee, ran away; and once when the tribal chief was sent home and the troupe went on strike – an exceptional event in the history of ethnological exhibitions.¹⁶ Though there were sometimes fights between spectators and indigenous people, or among the indigenous people themselves,¹⁷ cases of managers abandoning the troupes or running away were, unfortunately, more frequent.¹⁸ It is difficult to find any traces in the Geneva archives of this incident, which was conveniently forgotten without any official report being made, but contemporary newspaper reports suggest that the head of the troupe was suddenly sent home with his family, just a few days after the official opening. The organizers did not give the rest of the troupe any explanation. After a two-hour wait without any news, fearing for the life of their leader, the inhabitants of the village packed their bags, whereupon, in order to prevent them leaving, the exhibition police arrived to explain the situation.

What is surprising about this particular event is the enormous impact in the press of an affair which was of relatively minor importance. When looked at from a Western perspective, in terms of the relationship

between colonizers and colonized, it becomes easier to understand. The indigenous people were reputed to be rebellious, and 'pacification' had not yet been completed. If the Africans sought to leave, it was because they were untameable, savage and dangerous, reflecting what was said about their nature and manners. The managers were shaken as the village emptied and bags were packed. Contemporaries did not understand that the attitude of the Africans though the whole incident hinged on a misunderstanding: in the eyes of the organizers, the stupidity of the inhabitants of the village indicated that they really did not understand the issue at all. It is the most revealing indicator of the nature of the relationship between the Africans and the Swiss visitors to the Geneva Exposition of 1896.

A lecture given by Emile Yung, an anthropologist in Geneva, was based on the study of the inhabitants of the African village. The approach of Yung, purportedly a scientific one, shows to what extent the Swiss scientific world of the period was fascinated by the exhibition of non-European people, to the point of losing all critical distance. At the end of the Exposition, 80 objects from the village were deposited with the Geneva Museum of Ethnography. It would be interesting today to make a detailed study of the labelling of each of these objects, whose origins remained dubious and vague, and to measure the scientific weight that would now be given to the inventory of the collection.¹⁹

Pompously announced in the newspapers as 'Anthropological Characteristics of the "Nigritic" Race Studied Using some of its Representatives from Western Sudan – Kinship of this Race with Other African negroes, its Geographical Distribution' [trans.], Yung's lecture attracted a full house. The professor was welcomed with 'prolonged bravos'. At the foot of the rostrum were located 'fifteen negroes, men, women and children, chosen by the speaker from the various tribes of the African village'. There followed a series of considerations of a scientific nature: first the skin – the palm of an individual was compared, 'jokingly', to that of a workman; then the head and the cranial volume – using the skull of a Genevan and the skull of a black African, Yung reminded the audience of the theories of the Frenchman Paul Broca, and told of his meeting with Quatrefages; then the foot – the 'rolling walk' of the African is caused by the weight being placed on the outside part and not the inside part of the sole of the foot; and, finally, analysis of the nose and the hair – 'frizzy, smooth or bushy'.

There is no doubting the seriousness of such a scientific inquiry. At the time, however, it met only with approval and praise from the audience. It should also be noted that the lecture ended with 'the presentation

of different types, some very accommodating, others somewhat bored and intimidated – a marabout, a zebu shepherd, an old man of 82, a suckling child and various types taken from all walks of life'.²⁰

A more accurate assessment can be made of what could be described as a *union sacrée* between the world of science and the system of stereotypes in effect at the time: colonial scientism, the fusion and confusion of Western scientific thought and the stereotyped perception of the Other. The general public accepted a scientific discourse for which it lacked the critical means and the tools with which to question. Moreover, we can see to what extent the message of the anthropologists and ethnologists was based on a series of clichés. The 'human zoo' satisfied the curiosity of ordinary people and also of scientists. All the strength and power of the stereotype relating to the African were expressed here.

The African Village of 1925 in Lausanne

This event owed its success to just one man, Henri Muret, a trained engineer, founder in 1919 of the Bureau industriel suisse, then Vice-President and President (1939–45) of the Office suisse d'expansion commerciale (OSEC). Muret was the first director of the Swiss Fair in 1919 and founder of the First International Fair of Colonial Products – often called the First Colonial Fair – in Lausanne. He was obsessed by the idea of how best to develop Swiss business abroad. In his opinion, Switzerland was a victim of crisis: it had chronic unemployment and its fearful attitude regarding the future was pushing it towards an inexorably fatal isolation and towards a loss of national identity through the uncontrolled exodus of its citizens. But Henri Muret remained convinced that salvation was to be found in the use of propaganda and through the contribution of Swiss expatriates, the true intermediaries of the Swiss federal state, which, in his opinion, was too weak to boost the economy on its own.

Given the circumstances linked to the organization of the fair, Muret proposed prolonging the event and avoiding a deficit by 'killing two birds with one stone', thus recouping as much as possible at the financial level and promoting the strategy of commercial development. So an African village was created with a very clear objective, as indicated in the prospectus:

The village display will thus not only be attractive and informative, but will also serve as commercial propaganda, for it will allow our commerce and our industry to create needs among the peoples of Africa so as to incite them to be more productive. (Verschave and Guillerme 1925: 19)

Seventy Africans, Foulas from Guinea and Senegal, arrived on 25 June 1925 via Vallorbe. They were transferred from the station to the site of the fair in two buses, arousing the curiosity of bystanders. The troupe moved into the village, which was given the very symbolic Latin name of 'Tibidabo', i.e. 'I will give you'. The village measured 1,500 square metres (1,800 square yards), and precise plans still exist indicating the functions of the dwellings. These plans remain rare in the history of African villages, much documentation having systematically disappeared from the archives. The managers of the fair took care of construction, housing and maintenance. A contract was signed for a period of three months. The Africans settled in and the village opened at the same time as the exhibition halls. It remained open to the public for four days after the end of the event, which had been set for 26 July 1925. The site was positioned beside the hall of exotic products in Beaulieu, a location that was not without significance: unprocessed colonial commodities were displayed next to the inhabitants of the countries which had supplied them, the implication being that only those in the West were capable of transforming these materials because of their high level of civilization and their mastery of technology.

The organizers of the fair managed the admissions. To access the village, people had to walk alongside a thatched fence to reach a square where there was a small lake. The whole site was dominated by a mosque. Mr Fleury Tournier, a war veteran wounded in the First World War, recruited the Africans for the village. The contracts of engagement specified the smallest financial detail, including the expenses to be paid by the organizers. However, the wages of the Africans did not appear in any budget or in any account: they were included in the sum attributed to the French promoter.

Given the length of the stay, there are few details regarding what happened in the village. There were dances and the Tabaski ceremony on the tenth day of the month. A member of the Lausanne police force was responsible for law and order, and a few workmen passed through from time to time to maintain and check the security of the site. Judging from the rare photographs that have survived, the public were permitted to mingle with the inhabitants. The departure of the Africans aroused little curiosity and nothing appears to have been reported in the press – with just one exception: another romance, if the duty policeman is to be believed.

The troupe was then expected in Berne, in Basel at the zoological garden, and in Zürich. Basel was already occupied by a troupe of Sinhalese;²¹ Berne and the Committee of the Agricultural Exhibition

declined to host them, as did the town of Zürich because of the refusal of its police force to authorize the opening of a site. Finally, it was the Zürich commune of Alstetten that played host to the Senegalese until 25 September 1925.

Two Different Models: 1896/1925

While the African village of 1896 was presented in the early stages of what would become a phenomenon throughout the Western world, the 1925 village was held at the end of this trend. The aims of the two events also differed: whereas the first village was intended primarily to entertain, the second was intended to inform and propagandize. The event and the venue determined the size of the troupe and the duration of the exhibition. This also explains why the sources differ in abundance, diversity and quality from one village to the other.

In the eyes of contemporaries, the Exposition Nationale of 1896 differed greatly from the Colonial Fair of 1925. The context had also changed: the First World War constituted an important break in the history of human zoos in Switzerland. Soldiers from all over Africa had fought in Europe. The phases of conquest and 'pacification' had occurred before 1914. The European powers, with their territories now united into empires, were consolidating their acquisitions. Propaganda was used to establish definitively the union of the colonizer and of the colonized. Switzerland only followed events indirectly. Its resources were limited to the domain where it did not need to take political risks, i.e. the economy, the only place for the articulation of any of the colonial ambitions the country might have had. Since the Swiss state was unable to organize a colonial exhibition on the European model, the circuses and the zoological gardens were the next best thing (Razac 2002: 82–89).

Stereotypical attitudes towards the Africans persisted during the entire period with surprising consistency, mainly because of the similarities between the people organizing these events: the 1896 Exposition Nationale organizers wanted to unite the nation in one place, ensuring national salvation by projecting the greatness of the country. The managers of the 1925 Colonial Fair were, first and foremost, industrialists and businessmen. For them, what mattered most was to trigger something in the mind of the spectator, who would then become a more active consumer. Any means would serve to achieve this conversion.

The structure of the African village barely changed. Its construction was ephemeral and artificial, but supposedly as authentic as possible. It

was intended that the visitor would believe he was seeing 'real Africans', not 'actors of a troupe of indigenous people'. The fusion of fact and fiction occurred because people could enter into the decor and participate in the performance. Moreover, through such artifice the show was contrived to portray the everyday life of individuals from somewhere else. Africans existed; they were different, and that fact was sufficient reason for their being exhibited. The popular success of these shows in Switzerland was based purely on the existence of these exotic beings.

Was the human zoo merely an object of popular curiosity, or an instrument of colonial propaganda? A spontaneous answer would be 'both'. But in fact, this *mise en scène* was the result of colonial strategies. The construction of the Other around stereotypes, set in cardboard scenery with potted palm trees, was nothing but a show, but it was thought to resemble reality to such an extent that reality yielded to the illusion. Scientific authority carried enormous weight in the elaboration of this artifice, for scientists were those who set the standards by which it was judged.

Paradoxically, few traces remain today of these exhibitions, which had been so popular. Some posters, a few rare photographs and a small collection of artefacts deposited in the Geneva Museum of Ethnography are reminders of these episodes from the past. The African village remains a façade for economic propaganda with a colonial touch. As Swiss politicians did not show any inclination for expansion, the creation of colonies became an old-fashioned idea. The desire to colonize populations was relinquished and replaced by a feeling of missed opportunity; the idea of conquest had come to an end. Switzerland emerged too late in a world that was already fully engaged in making colonial empires profitable. However, it did not refrain from maintaining the illusion of power through its human zoos.²²

Notes

- 1 This figure is a minimum as it is based on a systematic consultation of *La Sentinelle* and *La Liberté*, two regional newspapers having a relatively modest influence in French-speaking Switzerland. For the period 1887 to 1904, *Le National Suisse* and the *Feuille d'avis de Neuchâtel* were consulted by Valérie Sierro, of the Neuchâtel Museum of Ethnography, who very kindly shared her notes with me.
- 2 On Rham-A-Sama, see the anthropological description by Professor Eugène Pittard of Geneva and intended for the general public in *La Patrie Suisse* 142 (1899), pp. 58–59; see also *La Liberté*, 38 (17 February 1899), pp. 2–3, 58 (12 March 1899), p. 3, and announcement p. 4, and *La Liberté*, 59 (Tuesday 14 March

- 1899), p. 4. On his death, see the paragraph in *La Liberté*, 18 (Wednesday 24 January 1900), p. 3.
- 3 See *La Sentinelle*, 144 (Saturday 23 June 1917), p. 6 (Brasserie du Jura in St-Imier), and Issue 38 (Thursday 15 February 1923), pp. 3–4 (La Chaux-de-Fonds); *La Liberté*, 77 (Saturday 2 April 1932), p. 8, Issue 82 (Friday 8 April 1932), pp. 5–6 (Hôtel de la Croix-Blanche in Fribourg), and Issue 94 (Friday 24 April 1937), pp. 4, 11 (Hôtel de la Croix-Blanche in Fribourg).
- 4 The Mexican couple, Maximo and Bartola, were exhibited in Berlin in 1900 (see Brändle 1995: 80, 83).
- 5 *La Liberté*, 12 (Friday 16 January 1931), p. 5.
- 6 According to the *National Suisse*, 18–21 June 1887, Galibi performed at the Brasserie Hauert situated at 12, rue de la Serre, La Chaux-de-Fonds. He apparently performed again in Neuchâtel at the Place du Port at the central Grand Théâtre. See *Feuille d'avis de Neuchâtel*, Tuesday 21 June 1887, p. 3.
- 7 For French-speaking Switzerland, this includes the African Village of the 1896 Swiss National Exhibition in Geneva, the Togomandingos troupe visiting Fribourg in 1903 after having been to Geneva, Lausanne, Vevey, Payerne and Zürich, a Senegalese village in Fribourg in 1909, the African Village of the Luna-Park in Geneva in 1911, the village at the Swiss Fair in Lausanne in 1925 which then went to Zürich, an African village in Geneva in 1927 and an African village in Lausanne, which then visited Fribourg, La Chaux-de-Fonds and Zürich in 1930. These troupes may well have performed in other places in Switzerland and Europe.
- 8 The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, is known for having made a big profit. This probably did not escape the notice of the central committee, as the plans and prospectuses for the Exhibition of Anvers of 1894 and the 'Prospectus of the Cotton States and International Exhibition to be held at Atlanta, September 18th to December 31st, 1895' can be found in the State of Geneva Archives, Exposition nationale, box 54, dossier 976, Rapport final VIII Le Parc de Plaisance.
- 9 State of Geneva Archives, Jur Civ AAa 239 dossier no. 3574, 'Location du terrain du parc de plaisance. Prix minimal.' The rental price of land generally varied from 25 to 50 francs per square metre. The land for the African Village was rented at approximately 10.95 francs per square metre. The situation at the edge of the site and the size of the surface rented explains this lower-than-average price.
- 10 Entitled *Ces quatre dernières vues*, and dated 7 May 1896, this very short film shows the 'Arab procession' [no. 310 to 313] 'filing past the film theatre of Lumière's cinematograph during the exhibition.' The cameraman was Alexandre Promio. The inventory indicates that this film was first shown on 12 June 1896 in Madrid at a private projection for the Queen Regent of Spain. The first public projection was in Lyon on 14 June 1896. CNC Film Archives at Bois d'Arcy, in Paris. However, there is no doubt that the footage was filmed on 27 April 1896. The film was shown in the documentary *Zoos humains* by Pascal Blanchard and Eric Deroo, 2002.
- 11 *Tribune de Genève*, 118 (22 May); *Le Genevois*, 119 (Monday 25 May), p. 3; and *Le Nouvelliste vaudois*, 122 (26 May 1896). On the Tabaski ceremony or Aid-el-Kebir in Senegal, from where the inhabitants of the African Village of Geneva

- came, see Armelle Chatelier <http://www.senegalonline.com/francais/histoire/religions/tabaski.htm> (07.09.06). On the calendar and determining the date of the ceremony, see Loïc-Michel Perrin, *Le lexique du système calendaire-chronométrique wolof*, annexe 1, pp. 654–74, www.linguistique-wolof.com (07.09.06).
- 12 In *La Liberté*, 276 (Thursday 26 November 1896), p. 2 it is specified that the inscription on the small monument 'is not in Arabic, but in the Wolof dialect'.
 - 13 *Le Courrier de Genève*, 148 (Friday 26 June), p. 3. This phrase is not reprinted by *Le Nouvelliste vaudois*.
 - 14 *Le Nouvelliste vaudois*, 210 (Saturday 5 September 1896), p. 2. The newspaper mentions three young Swiss girls, whose parents did not seem to approve of their choice of husbands, and 'One of the couples is thinking of opening a café called The Black Continent. Another is talking about a business, a farm, etc.'
 - 15 This is denied by the *Geschäftsblatt* of Thun, 76 (Saturday 19 September 1896), p. 2. A review of the marriage register of the commune of Petit-Saconnex and those of 45 Genevan communes for 1896 and 1897 confirms that this was untrue, State of Geneva Archives.
 - 16 Gérard Lévy, a French expert in the history of photography, confirms the exceptional case of the revolt that he calls a 'strike'. However, he is mistaken about the date ('1915 approximately') and indicates a single cause for the event (the fact that the wages were not paid). Film *Zoos humains* Pascal Blanchard and Eric Deroo, Arte 2002, first broadcast 29 December 2002.
 - 17 On a fight between Africans and Europeans at the Nubian Village of the Milan Exhibition, see *La Liberté*, 146 (Friday 29 June 1906), p. 2.
 - 18 On Dahomeans abandoned in Marseille see *La Liberté*, 242 (Wednesday 18 October 1893), p. 3.
 - 19 *Le Temps*, Friday 15 September 2006, p. 37, reprints an interview with the newly appointed curator of the Geneva Museum of Ethnography (MEG), Jacques Hainard. Since the beginning of 2007 an exhibition is devoted to Alfred Bertrand, donor of objects collected during his numerous expeditions. See also Issue 46 of the review *Totem*, edited by MEG.
 - 20 *Le Genevois*, 136 (Saturday 13 June 1896), pp. 2–3, and *La Tribune de Genève*, 137 (Saturday 13 June 1896), p. 2. All of the elements mentioned in this paragraph appear in these two accounts, which seem to be relatively true to reality, but with a few differences: *La Tribune de Genève* mentions 23–25 specimens instead of 15, for example. The age of the old man might also be questioned. This conference was given in a revised form by Yung on 7 October 1896 to the *Société suisse des professeurs de gymnase*, meeting at a congress in Fribourg. See *La Liberté*, 243 (Sunday 18 October 1896), p. 2.
 - 21 The troupe of John Hagenbeck, composed of 38 Ceylonese and three elephants, performed there from 27 May to 10 June 1925. See Staehelin, 1993: 92–93, 158.
 - 22 Translated by Margaret Lainsbury, Fribourg. Many thanks to Martha Ritchie for her help and advice.