

# **Harbinger of Progress: Portuguese illustrated journal *O Occidente* and the imagery of technology and engineering (1878-1899)**

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**Abstract:** In the second half of the nineteenth century, Portugal undertook in its mainland and colonial territories an ambitious modernising programme based on technoscientific grounds, which included the construction of railways, harbours and sundry public buildings, the acquisition of locomotives and weaponry, and the participation in international exhibitions. From the late 1870s onwards, such programme was widely advertised in *O Occidente: Revista Ilustrada de Portugal e do Estrangeiro* (The West: Illustrated Magazine of Portugal and Abroad), the most important illustrated journal of the time that published several drawings of original photographs. In this paper, I analyse the imagery of technology and engineering based on 179 pictures published in *Occidente*. I argue that by printing engravings of original photos, *Occidente* borrowed some of the alleged objectivity attributed to photography and increased its trustworthiness amongst its readers (Martin, 2006: 43-44). Contrariwise, photography was a profoundly subjective activity that concealed an opaque mechanism of representation (Mitchell, 1986: 2). In the case of drawings of photos, we must include the layers of representation added by those involved in the process: tracers, engravers, printers (DaSilva, 1976: 17). By using a methodology that combines semiotics with photojournalistic analysis (Benetti, 2007: 112-113). I claim that the drawings of photos published by *O Occidente* were crucial to create an image of Portugal as a modern, technoscientific, and imperial nation.

**Keywords:** photography, technology, engineering, representations of progress

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