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"Aqui começa o Brasil": penal colonization, territorialization and border construction of the Oyapock river. 1853-1927

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"Aqui começa o Brasil": penal colonization, territorialization and border construction of the Oyapock river. 1853-1927

Abstract: The Oyapock River has been the border between France and Brazil since the Treaty of Bern came to resolve a centuries-old dispute between the two states. Only populated by indigenous communities and a few adventurers, the two banks of the river are untouched by any lasting colonial and national settlement before the second half of the 19th century. Penal colonization is the formula adopted by the two states to fill the "void" of a border to be formalized. The criminal models circulate and are reinterpreted by participating with great intensity in the making of the territory.

Key words: Oyapock; Penal Colonies; Frontiers; Territorialization; Modernity.

"Aqui começa o Brasil": colonización penal, territorialización y fronterización del río Oyapock. 1853-1927

Resumen: El río Oyapock ha sido la frontera entre Francia y Brasil desde que el Tratado de Berna resolvió una disputa centenaria entre los dos estados. Solo pobladas por comunidades indígenas y algunos aventureros, las dos orillas de lo río no han sido tocadas por ningún asentamiento colonial y nacional duradero antes de la segunda mitad del siglo XIX. La colonización penal es la fórmula adoptada por los dos estados para llenar el "vacío" de una frontera que se formalizará. Los modelos criminales circulan y son reinterpretados participando con gran intensidad en la construcción del territorio.

Palabras clave: Oyapock; Colonias Penales; Fronteras; Territorialización; Modernidad.

"Aqui começa o Brasil": colonização penal, territorialização e fronteirização do rio Oiapoque. 1853-1927

Resumo: O rio Oiapoque é a fronteira entre a França e o Brasil desde que o Tratado de Berna resolveu uma disputa secular entre os dois estados. Povoada apenas por comunidades indígenas e alguns aventureiros, as duas margens do rio não são tocadas por nenhum assentamento colonial e nacional duradouro antes da segunda metade do século XIX. A colonização penal é a fórmula adotada pelos dois estados para preencher o "vazio" de uma fronteira a ser formalizada. Os modelos criminosos circulam e são reinterpretados, participando com grande intensidade na construção do território.

Palavras-chave: Oyapock; Colônias Penais; Fronteiras; Territorialização; Modernidade.

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Brazil has settled all its border incidents with its neighbours through amicable agreements and appeals to international arbitration tribunals. Its pride and heroes were not generals, but statesmen like Rio Branco, who had managed to avoid war through their common sense and conciliatory spirit. Brazil, turned in on itself, its territorial border, has no desire for conquest, no imperialist tendencies. (ZWEIG, 1941, p.26)

Naive lover of Brazil, which he travelled for a long time during a six-month pilgrimage, Stefan Zweig is nonetheless a precise and documented observer. Coming from Europe, plagued at these times by nationalist tensions, he is a cheerful spectator of a country-continent whose only foreign policy doctrine is peace and sovereignty. The Austrian man is not mistaken when he portrays the Baron of Rio Branco, the mastermind of the "conquest of the North", the most famous resident of the palace of Itamaraty. The Amazonian margins, after the fixing of the *platinian*¹ borders, concentrate the Brazilian diplomatic efforts within the framework of an extension of its internal borders. The Treaty of Berne (1900) settled the dispute between France and Brazil over the territory between Lake Amapá and the Oyapock River. It also fixed the French Brazilian border on the latter, settling for good a conflict inaugurated by the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). The statue of Marco Zero can proudly claim, in front of the Oyapock: *aqui começa o Brasil*.

However, the legal construction of the border is only a necessary prerequisite to set a territorial limit. A state must deploy its sovereignty so that the border-line becomes the embodied marker of a living territory. Its assertion is a preliminary condition for the security and the integrity of the Nation, in its organic dimension. The Portuguese have thus introduced the military element into the Amazonian confines, and have done so for a long time: Fort São José de Macapá is the most successful example of a large-scale defensive strategy, inscribed both strategically and symbolically through the construction of this authentic stone manifesto. In the most remote areas, military posts and *presídios*² provide a wide border network, which nevertheless remains a challenge in a forest area largely untouched by permanent sedentary settlements. The question of Brazil's northern borders then became one of the major geopolitical issues of the young Brazilian Republic. In 1890, the Chamber of Deputies was concerned by "the urgent need to populate our borders, especially the Amazon, which was still largely disputed by European governments, and is, until today, totally defenceless".³

It is not only a question of setting boundaries, but of transforming space into territory. As a portion of the earth's surface in its geographical definition, the notion of space refers in international law to the concept of terra nullius, which has been familiar to Iberian populations since the papal

¹ Brazil's southern borders with Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina.

² Semi-open spaces of relegation and exile of the *degradados* of the Crown.

³ Chambre des Députés, 1890, cited by C. Romani in *Conflitos, fronteiras e territorialidades em tes diferentes projetos de colonização na Amazonia*, Tempos Históricos, Volume 18, 2o Semestre de 2014, p. 164-190, p. 174.

bull Inter Caetera (1493) gave legal legitimacy to the colonization of America by the Spanish and Portuguese. Enriched during the second colonization, the notion of *terra nullius* is used in the Torrens system (1858) to designate any undeveloped land that is considered vacant. The States declare themselves, under the Domain, owners of an "unoccupied land" according to Western agricultural standards. The disputed territory, populated by gold and *pau-rosa* adventurers and a few hundred Amerindians, falls within this definition, while the Oiapoque district had barely a thousand inhabitants in the 1920s. The experience of the ephemeral and utopian Republic of Cunani initiated by French adventurer Jules Gros in 1886 testifies the lack of effective sovereignty and strong competition from the French neighbour, present in French Guiana since the 17th century. It is therefore a question of territorializing the border area by creating the conditions for its legal appropriation, but also economic - through agricultural development - and symbolic - understood as a feeling of belonging and connivance.⁴ In a territory where French Guyanese Creole is the main language, where the town of Martinica⁵ is the main point of settlement for the population and where the parish of Saint-Georges welcomes the only officiant and the only civil registry in the region, *brasilianity* can only result from powerful sovereign action.

This dynamic is to be put in parallel with the colonial development of the French bank from the 1850s and the creation of the town of Saint-Georges-de-l'Oyapock (1853). The colonial government decided to set up a penitentiary site at the eastern end of French Guiana to occupy an uncolonized territory. This project was based on the decrees of 1852 and 1853 organising the transportation of criminals convicted of forced labour in French Guiana. The early years of colonial French Guiana concentrated the camps in the east of the colony. On the banks of the Oyapock river, the penitentiaries were founded: Montagne d'Argent, on the ruins of a coffee-growing dwelling, and Saint-Georges de l'Oyapock, a few kilometres downstream from the town of Martinica. The history of the penal colonisation of the Oyapock is both parallel and diachronic: the French sites were quickly closed, faced with an unsustainable mortality rate - 63% of convicts perished during the yellow fever epidemic of 1856⁶ - and the unproductiveness of the coffee and sugar crops: Saint-Georges in 1863, Montagne d'Argent in 1867. The brevity of these settlements should not hide their strong spatial impact - the French colony's long-lasting and continuous settlement on the French and Brazilian border - and the moral impact - the prison is now perceived as a "death camp", a "dry guillotine". On the Brazilian side of the river, the federal government founded an "agricultural

⁴ Definition given by the Géoconfluences site (ENS de Lyon): [<http://geoconfluences.ens-lyon.fr/glossaire/territoires-territorialisation-territorialite>]

⁵ Name given because of its largely West Indian population.

⁶ LAMAISSON, Denis. "Le bagne de la mort". *Culture du café et situation sanitaire au pénitencier agricole de la Montagne d'Argent (Guyane française) de 1852 à 1910. Outre-Mers Revue d'Histoire*, Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 2016, 104 (390-391), pp.311-340.

nucleus" in 1922 at the instigation of Pará Senator Justo Chermont, a member of an influential family of large landowners very well established in the future State of Amapá.⁷ The current village of Clevelândia do Norte, a few kilometres south of Martinica, was chosen to welcome free families. The first project was indeed to promote the settlement of settlers in this virgin-considered portion of the national territory. The political goal was then to carry the sovereignty of the Nation up to its northern borders, in the continuation of the policy initiated by Rio Branco. Due to a lack of volunteers, and following the 1924⁸ *tenentist* officers' revolution, the nucleus of free settlers was reinforced with a penal colony. Until 1927, several hundred prisoners were sent to these confines, away from any rule of law. A group of opponents of the Bernardes regime were deported - not only *tenentists*, but also anarchists and trade unionists. From 1853 to 1927, the French - Brazilian border was invested with a penitentiary function that connected each side to the imperial project of their respective nations. By becoming prisons and cemeteries, the two territories under study were attached to vast political blocs of which they had been abstract and putative margins until then.

Colonial modernity, penal modernity: introductory reflections

These two national trajectories with strong common features indeed refer to the same political project, backed by the triumph of political and socio-economic modernity as defined by the anthropologist Charles Piot: "those cultural, political and economic forms associated with the rise of industrial capitalism in Europe during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries and disseminated throughout the world as a result of European imperial expansion: forms which, however, have no essence and whose content is unstable and changing".⁹ This definition allows us to link modernity and capitalism from the outset: we retain the dynamics of capital concentration and dispossession of the tool of labour as the main driving force of the political, social and economic history of the so-called contemporary period. In terms of population control and penal policies, modernity is based on new knowledge - criminological science - and power in the Foucauldian sense - an economy of bodies assumed by a government that is now bureaucratised and rationalised. The founding works of the Italian man Cesare Lombroso¹⁰ identify a "criminal embarrassment" that should be removed

⁷ The territory of Amapá kept belonging to the State of Pará until 1943.

⁸ A modernising and nationalist revolution of the "Young Turk" type initiated by a group of non-commissioned officers after the capture of the Copacabana fort in 1922. The São Paulo revolt of 1924 ended in failure and the capture of many mutineers, opposed to the conservative regime of the *mineiros* owners represented by President Artur Bernardes.

⁹ Cited in COOPER, Frederic. *Colonialism in Question, Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley et Los Angeles : University of California Press, 2005.

¹⁰ LOMBROSO, Cesare, *L'homme criminel: criminel-né, fou moral, épileptique: étude anthropologique et médico-légale*. Translated from the Italian by Albert Bournet et G. Regnier, Paris : Félix Alcan, 1887.

from the social body as a prophylactic measure. This pseudo-science gives substance to a bundle of ancient representations, dialectically separating the good subject from the "born criminal", as many social categories gathered under the term "underworld" or "bas-fonds" in all Western societies (KALIFA, 2013). It is indeed long-term historical representations and dynamics that allow to qualify 19th century penal policies, much more than an immanence constituting a predefined and labelled political project.

This moving aspiration to modernity underlies the creation of the modern prison, the pivot of a penal order renewed by two requirements: keeping away the incorrigible, rehabilitating the new "dangerous classes" born from the torments of an industrial revolution that crushed men. Misery, laziness and urban corruption form the "breeding ground"¹¹ in which small offences and major crimes flourish: the prison thus becomes a place of work, if possible in the open air¹², in line with the triumphant hygienism of French and Brazilian republicans alike. The installation of the sewer system in big cities and the construction of the colonial penal colonies are the result of the same policy. Engineer Mille, a champion of sewerage networks during the Second Empire, described his policy on garbage in the following terms: "clean it up in the water, lose it to the sewer and return it to agriculture"¹³. The same applies to urban underclasses: French Guiana and the Oiapoque district are prime locations for achieving asepsis of the social body. Political opponents, reluctant to this total project and often promoters of a counter-society threatening the consensus of the republics of order, are logically included in the cohorts of criminal exile.

The penal and prison versions of modernity are thus the bearers of a dynamic of consensus-building and serialization of social practices. As Anthony Giddens¹⁴ points out, this construction of the social body by nation-states and their promoters must be situated in their spatiality: "modernity is the homogenization of space and time that transforms the rich diversity of people's self-perceptions in their personal contexts into impersonal interchangeability. " Sovereignty should not only be asserted but also staged in the creation of a properly national space: although marginal, the studied border spaces are the peripheral organs of a nation and its unifying project. In liberal and modern regimes, the colonial space - into which Brazilian Guiana can be inserted during the period under study - constitutes a ground of struggle, where the guiding principles of liberalism and

¹¹ LACASSAGNE, Alexandre. *Les transformations du droit pénal et les progrès de la médecine légale, de 1810 à 1912*. Archives d'anthropologie criminelle, 1913, p. 364.

¹² This is the Auburnian model, triumphant everywhere in the West, and privileging collective and silent work in workshops. These are as many prison reinterpretations of the industrial organization and of the social and economic structures of the XIXth century societies.

¹³ STRAUSS, P. « L'égout-modèle du Second Empire : "Un second Paris souterrain" ». In BONZON et alii. *Idées de villes, villes idéales*. Les cahiers de Fontenay n° 69-70, E.N.S. Fontenay/Saint-Cloud, mars 1993, page 136.

¹⁴ Cited in Frederick Cooper, op. cit.

modernity are in apparent contradiction. The rule of law, the founder of social order, coexists, in the same chronology but in a fragmented geography, with the state of exception. In order to carry out their dual global project of positivist progress and population control, the two regimes studied here relegate not only men but entire territories outside the constitutional corpus. Making the history of penal colonisation necessarily holds two dimensions: penal, through the *disciplinisation* of men, and colonial, through *the disciplinisation* of territories. Brazilian "green hell"¹⁵, "the last country where one can live"¹⁶ for the French, Guyanas are privileged areas of legal, social and spatial segregation.

One might be tempted to consider this penal history in its ephemeral dimension: simple parentheses, appendices of the central power and confined within a very brief chronological framework. It is, moreover, the hallmark of modernity to see another modernity succeed it. Baudelaire, poet of modernity if ever there was one, developed a science of the moment: "modernity is the transitory, the fleeting, the contingent"¹⁷. Without seeing any contradiction, we will try to demonstrate the founding character of prison colonization in the construction of a territory. They constitute the prerequisites for the affirmation of a collective identity and the integration of border areas into modernity through their border setting. This penitentiary moment then permanently inscribes these territories in the national project. Fugacity of the institution but permanence of its legacies: the penitentiary colonisations constitute the soft layers of a historical sedimentation over time. Transposed to the history of the penitentiary colonies, on the Oyapock as in other territories, in a global history approach that we make our own, Baudelaire's theory refers to a prison past and present that is still stretching over time. The comparative, connected and global approach commits us to identify prison colonisation as a fundamental milestone in the construction of modern states: the exploitation of man by man through forced or salaried labour and the formation of colonial and post-colonial societies.

As the seminal work of Clare Anderson (2019, p. 18) points out, "the convicts were agents of imperial occupation and expansion, pioneers of labour. They were used by all the global powers to establish and push back national and imperial boundaries and limits. To an unprecedented degree, the convicts allowed the occupation of lands distant from the national and imperial centres, both across land and sea. Their presence has left important legacies in the contemporary world".

¹⁵ To quote the title of Alberto Rangel's book.

¹⁶ LAMARCHE. *La Guyane Française*. Bulletin de l'Agence Générale des Colonies, 1922, p. 216

¹⁷ BAUDELAIRE, Charles. *Le peintre de la vie moderne*. In *Œuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire*. t. III, Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1885.

"These men who are being wiped off the humanity"¹⁸: penal and criminal policies of the industrial age.

The shared historical dynamics between Brazil and France at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries call for a comparative approach that confirms the initial postulate of a strong kinship between the social, economic, political and penal models at work in both States, successively imperial and republican. Taking into account the necessary semantic precautions and taking care to circumscribe modernity in the definitions proposed above, we can use the latter notion to designate the historical context that has crossed Western countries since the 1830s, undergoing significant economic and social changes. Indeed the industrialization of all Western societies and by extension the formation of second colonial empires comes as the direct consequence, and underlies a new criminal and penal policy. The chronology of this movement stretches over a century: initiated in the 1780s in Great Britain, the Industrial Revolution reached France from the 1830s and reached Brazil from the 1890s, at least in the southern metropolises. By taking millions of rural people out of the agricultural exploitation regime – *latifundias* as well as small property - industrialization and the development of the capitalist regime are founding factors of an urban proletariat. These new classes are sources of real social tensions as well as highly depreciative representations. The social question thus crosses the 19th century. In Europe, the dangers of work and the miserable living conditions led to fear the emergence of a dual and antagonistic society that nourished the work of many social reformers. In post-abolitionist Brazil, structured by a large property regime never amended by agrarian reform, *Paulista* and *Mineira* industrialization reinforced already yawning social and geographical divides. In both countries, centuries-old social structures are being disrupted and the traditional social order is under threat. Saint-Marc Girardin then expressed himself in these terms: "the barbarians who threaten society are not in the Caucasus or in the steppes of Tartary, but in the suburbs of our manufacturing cities"¹⁹.

This well-known dialectic distinguishing between good and bad subjects and associating working and dangerous classes has its roots in ancient representations reinvested and reinforced by the process of capital concentration on a global scale. The industrial society is a society of powers that are as many alienations: power of the bourgeois classes over the popular classes, power of Europe over its colonies, metropolitan centres over their national margins. Societies are crossed by fault lines that are reinforced by an ideology of the "underworld" (KALIFA, 2013) understood as "a

¹⁸Title of the article published by Albert Camus on the 1st of December 1938, when he was covering the departure of the last convoy of convicts from Algiers to French Guiana for the newspaper *Alger républicain*.

¹⁹ *Le Journal des Débats*, 8th of December 1831.

confused heap of residual elements of all species and all origins"²⁰. They constitute the hollow portrait of a good society and its dominant values, reinforced in its power by a permanent state of siege. The societies face the more or less fantasized dangers of these criminals who populate the suburbs of the industrial city. In this urban and working-class context, the conditions for the emergence of an atavistically criminal counter-society are met. Marxian theory is no exception to this ontology of evil that resonates as a true axiom of social grammar. In Marxian terms, good and bad poor become proletariat and *lumpenproletariat*, the latter social class constituting the auxiliary force of the bourgeoisie by refusing all class consciousness. This logic of social simplification is often the steppingstone to a racial division of the social body. From the early Middle Ages, the "gypsies" were the tutelary face of the underworld. In the mixed-blood societies of Iberian America, the "half-blood" is associated with body and soul corruption, depravity and witchcraft. The same Engels who forged the category of *lumpenproletariat* immediately identified it with the Irish working class population, considered in his writings of 1842 as a "surplus" and "superfluous"²¹. In a postcolonial and post-abolitionist Brazil, the racial referent is even more powerful: "a mixed race nation is a nation invaded by criminals," says Laurindo Leão, a law professor at the Faculty of Recife at the beginning of the 20th century. These racial references are also present in French criminal policy at the imperial level: the *Indigenat* regime, the confinement of North African and Indochinese political opponents in French Guiana or New Caledonia, the deprivation of prisoners of their fundamental rights in the penal colonies. Social grammar and racial grammar serve a social order based on the concentration of power and wealth in a few hands.

The persistence or even the development of such a range of representations may appear to be contradictory with the use of the notion of social and economic modernity, associated with political liberalism. As Frederick Cooper points out, modernity is neither a political programme, nor an ideology, nor a univocal and measurable social reality: 'in other words, the construction of an anthropology of modernity is not a good research strategy. The discovery of a discourse of modernity could be a revealing demonstration' (COOPER, 2005 p.177). Modernity is therefore more a diffuse discourse, part of the mobilization of populations and whose coherence appears in the juxtaposition of speeches, political decisions and a *technè* organizing the social and moral order of a political regime whose common denominator is fragility. As Arnaud Houte points out (2013): the republican regime is living in a state of siege during this transitional period between the upheavals of 1870 and the First World War. It is easy to establish a kinship with the old Brazilian

²⁰ VEYGA (de), Francisco. *Los Lunfardos. Estudios clinicos sobre esta clase de ladrones profesionales*. 1903, cited in KALIFA Dominique. *Les Bas-Fonds*. Paris: Seuil, 2013.

²¹ Cited in Dominique Kalifa, op. cit.

Republic, born out of the post-slavery divisions in 1889. Moral order is on the agenda for both regimes, as it is the best guarantee for regimes seeking legitimacy. Gambetta expressed himself in these terms at the Annecy banquet of 1872: "in a republican regime, order is the very essence of things". In Brazil, the authoritarian Republic of the early 20th century was based on the following quadriptych: work, people, race and nation. Regime crises further accentuated the coercive and conservative nature of these young republics. In order to reinforce school and political reforms in the early 1880s and to stifle the tensions that arose, the Relegation law of 1885 led to the conviction of repeat offenders for forced labour in French Guiana. In practice, this was tantamount to the criminalisation of petty crimes of poverty: automatically, repeated theft and larceny led to a life sentence in prison. The Boulangist crisis of 1888-1890 in France reinforced political repression and the anti-Semitic temptation, culminating in the Dreyfus case. Characteristically, the protagonist was also sent to serve his sentence in a fortified enclosure on Devil's Island, off the coast of Kourou. In Brazil, the crisis of the ruling *Mineira* and *Paulista* oligarchy led to the development of the prison system and in particular to the colonisation of prisons. The Pessoa and Bernardes presidencies embodied the exhaustion of the oligarchic regime and the *café com leite*²² formula. In the name of the assumed positivism of the Brazilian regime²³, the Brazilian governments of the 1920s were inspired by European authoritarian models, particularly Mussolini's Italy and Salazar's Portugal. The large diasporas of the two respective states played a decisive role in these ideological transfers. In his work on the penal colony of Anchieta Island²⁴, Dirceu Franco Ferreira goes so far as to evoke "a tropicalization of fascist methods" (FRANCO FERREIRA, 2018).

The legal texts produced at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries testify to this cohabitation between liberalism - the Third Republic is based on the exercise of universal male suffrage, compulsory, secular and free schooling and freedom of the press - and social order. In Brazil, the 1890 Penal Code is unquestionably of liberal inspiration. It is based on conviction and rehabilitation through work of the criminal. For the first time, prison was the preferred method of punishment, in line with the movement towards the bureaucratization of justice highlighted by Foucault (1975). As a local variation of this judicial policy, the 1907 Code of Criminal Procedure of the State of São Paulo literally refers to the "dangerous classes". This offensive rhetoric is also present in Third Republic France, which develops in the imagination as well as in the legal framework an arsenal against what Dominique Kalifa gathers under the term "lowlands", targeting populations considered "incorrigible". This is the spirit of the law of relegation of 1885, which aims

²² Refers to the sharing of power under the Old Republic (1889-1930) between the oligarchs of the State of São Paulo, a major coffee producer, and Minas Gerais, a major milk producer.

²³ The motto "Ordem e progresso" is an inheritance in direct line with the philosophy of Auguste Comte.

²⁴ Prison of the State of São Paulo.

to remove from the national territory individuals whose criminal inclination is considered to be atavistic. These texts respond in their own national chronology to the context of socio-economic changes linked to the emergence of industrial societies. In Brazil, this is spatially translated by movements initiated with the 1889 Revolution: forced-march urbanization of the South-East, fed by the migratory contribution of European working-class - Italians, Portuguese, Germans - and *Nordestinos*, in a post-abolitionist context. Confronted with these upheavals, Brazilian society had to guard against a double pitfall, social as well as racial. This racial frame of reference is also operative in Third Republic France, which was at the height of its imperial project. The parliamentary year 1885 was marked not only by the passing of the Relegation law but also by debates on the Tonkin expedition, which marked the victory of the colonial party. Ferry, president of the Council and father of the school laws, was its main voice. The Positivist Republic relies on the criminology of Cesare Lombroso and Alexandre Lacassagne to justify a "criminal embarrassment; it also adopts the racial anthropology of Paul Broca to justify inequality between races, the foundation of the colonial order. Ferry then asserted in the House: "there is a right for the superior races because there is a duty, that of civilizing the lower classes"²⁵. However, this penetration of racial science needs to be qualified in the facts: this project is not globalized nor translated into clear regulatory guidelines. The colonial state proceeds above all from pragmatic accommodations, which aim everywhere to establish its power or rather its powers. In short, at the social, racial and political levels, the legal variations of this "republican colonization" establish the negation of equality as a regime of legality.

Colonial and penal unanimity crosses the West through a dense network of circulation of ideas and techniques. It is thus easy to trace the transfer of criminological theory from France to Brazil at the beginning of the Old Republic. The Senator of the State of São Paulo, Paulo Egydio, is one of its main vectors. He thus convened a French mission in 1906 to help reform the local police force. Egydio was both a politician and a theorist. As a fervent supporter of Lombroso's theses, he stated in his *Studies in Criminal Sociology* that "all moral forces, all new scientific knowledge" must be mobilized by society against crime. In this context, penal colonies fulfil the political and penal objectives set by the political centres: they produce territories in a colonial situation, as demanded by many parliamentarians such as Justo Chermont, mentioned above, and also make it possible to isolate the criminal germ. The circulation of models corresponds to the sharing of a penal science and technique whose contours were fixed at the end of the 19th century. In Brazil, as elsewhere in the West, the so-called Auburnian model triumphed. Supported in particular by

²⁵ Chambre des députés, speech of July 30, 1885, Journal Officiel de la République Française.

Tocqueville on his return from his American trip where he saw it put into practice, demanded by the Haussonville commission on prisons in 1873, it is based on the collective and silent work of prisoners under the regime of individual imprisonment. In 1830, at the same time as the work of Tocqueville, the Criminal Code of the Empire in Brazil provided for the creation of reformatories for the rehabilitation of convicts through collective work. Much discussed, the Mettray model, a children's prison in central France, attracted the attention of Brazilian criminalists, who took up its main variations: semi-open detention space, open-air agricultural work, attention paid to the education of prisoners. These are all constituent elements of a prison society, which we will study briefly in the following section.

Modernity then gave birth in France and Brazil to a society of disciplines. To take up the Foucauldian corpus, which has been widely verified in the selected national cases, a technique that is becoming more refined and complex is placed at the service of a total project, of which the total institutions - asylums, prisons, hospitals, prisons, and prisons - studied by Erving Goffman (1968) are the preferred tools as spaces of intense authority and concentration of disciplinary technical means. As Theodor Adorno points out, "technique is the coercive tool of alienating society". This science of punishment and control of bodies is based on theoretical models as well as empirical variations. Modernity - always as a discourse - allows its social acceptability by inserting it into a positivist ideology of progress, which could be summarized in this diptych: order in prosperity. The total disciplinarization of societies is translated into territorial hold: everywhere it is necessary to "civilize", to make the flag of the Nation fly, in other words to fill "the empty space". It is therefore in the certainty of generous and elevated sentiments that *modern, liberal and democratic* man can "wipe men off the face of humanity". (Camus, 1938).

Life and death of the prison communities of the Oyapock

This political and penal corpus then commanded the establishment of modern prison sites in their design, architecture and disciplinary regime. The aim was to make a history of these sites from the bottom up, by comparing models, projects and prison praxis. It is indeed an attempt at the social anthropology of the prison, the lines of which should be drawn by proposing an analysis of what Donald Clemmer called *prison communities* (1958). This term is particularly appropriate for a micro-social study of the relationships structuring human groups, which, through penal or administrative coercion, are forced to cohabit in their daily life or even their intimacy. This relational diptych becomes triptych in the penal colonies. The forced labour penalty takes the convict outside the penitentiary. The face-to-face relationship between prisoner and guard is then

increased by a relationship outside, in its broadest sense. In spite of the imperial discourse of empty territories, prison colonies were built in previously populated areas, albeit without state and government organization. This encounter between the penal population, the administration and the local population is the basis for hybrid territories. This will be the subject of the last point of our study. The numerical contribution of the penal colonies is indeed considerable enough to modify the social, demographic, economic and political structures of the border area. In 1859, there were 600 prisoners at Montagne d'Argent camp, surrounded by "sixty-eight non-commissioned officers and soldiers, a marshal of the gendarmerie lodgings and three gendarmes"²⁶. In Saint-Georges, at the same time, there were about 200 convicts in the prison. In Clevelândia do Norte, the nucleus of free settlers built in 1922 has 200 inhabitants, including about 70 civil servants. In its prison period, it has an estimated population of between 1,000 and 1,700 inhabitants²⁷. Each time, the intensity of administrative authority is high and the demographic impact of the penal colonization is decisive: when it was closed in 1927, the nucleus of Clevelândia concentrated almost two thirds of the penal population of the district. However, the penitentiary settlements did not emerge from the land without first taking advantage of pre-existing structures adapted to the new penal vocation of the area. Thus, the buildings on Montagne d'Argent are built on the ruins of an abandoned dwelling and follow the architectural but also regulatory scheme of the slavery settlement. As developed above, penal colonisation is also based on an ideological legitimisation deeply rooted in political modernity. In the reality of prison practices, it is based much more on the agency of the three families of identified actors. The impetus given by the political centre is in fact largely devitalized by obvious effects of distance. It is indeed the *metis* of the agents that founds a negotiated and accommodated colonial and penal order. Following the model of Frederick Cooper (2005; p.191), it will be necessary to question the strategies of "practical knowledge, rooted in the local, a mixture of ideals of change and acceptance of the disorder of life, a more personal sense of human relationships. »

Consequently, for the historian of penal colonization, the surrounding populations are not the backdrop of a penal lockup. This is what distinguishes his object of study from the prison studied by Michel Foucault (1975). For the latter, it is a space enclosed by four walls, where movement, circulation and relationships are strictly delimited. As such, it is one of those totalizing institutions evoked by Erving Goffman (1968). Largely ignoring the issue of the penal colony in his

²⁶ Letter from Lieutenant Roux-Duremère to his mother, written around December 1859, cited in LAMAISON, Denis. *Le bagne de la mort. Culture du café et situation sanitaire au pénitencier agricole de la Montagne d'Argent (Guyane française) de 1852 à 1910*.

²⁷ ROMANI, Carlo. *Clevelândia, Oiapoque: cartografias e heterotopias na década de 1920*. Bol. Mus. Para. Emílio Goeldi. Cienc. Hum., Belém, v. 6, n. 3, p. 501-524, set.-dez. 20

work - probably because it was closed at the time of writing - Foucault nevertheless gives an enlightening and distinctive definition of the conventional prison model: "prison in the open air". In its extension, we propose to define the prison as a semi-open space, or to use Miranda Spieler's expression, a "prison without walls" (2012). This singular spatial organization is at the basis of a mode of detention that allows circulation and relational networks that are impossible in the traditional prison, a confined and almost hermetic environment. As production centres, the penal colonies base their organisation on the proper functioning of their productive apparatus. It implies a circulation of the penal population, including outside the penitentiary, and a confusion of the space of detention, the administrative space, the private space of the agents and the surrounding populations. The prison is not a prison but a penal city where all urban functions are concentrated under the command of an all-powerful Penitentiary Administration. On a daily basis, convicts, guards, staff and civilian populations rub shoulders in a confusion that is nevertheless vigorously proscribed by the penal theory of modern reformers. The intuitions developed by F. Cooper about colonial society - "a more personal feeling of human relations" - resonate with the words of Marcel Mauss who specifies in his *Essay on the Gift* (1925) that it is not only usefulness that circulates. Working outside, with no real possibility of escape in a context of strong isolation, the convicts thus constitute a penal population "outside the walls" within a prison space that is not separated from its environment by the usual "no man's land" (COMBESSIE, 1992). In this context of extreme isolation, or even of an *îlélite*²⁸ -islandness- shared by both the prisoner and the warden, the prisoner becomes another "myself" (ROUSTAING, 1998). The work can even be done without supervision, in the context of a true *ex-carceration*²⁹: "everyone is free to chop wood wherever they want. Besides, on reflection, where could he go with his axe alone?" (BELBENOIT, 1938). The similarity between the French and Brazilian models is total: if the chronology of prison colonisation is diachronic, limiting the view to the Oyapock region, in the 1920s French Guiana was still a vast prison archipelago. By colonising its northern margins in this way, Bernardes' Brazil confronts the threatening French presence with a sinister game of mirrors.

Forming a complete micro-society, bringing together all social functions, largely reinterpreting the traditional dialectic of "outside and inside" (BACHELARD, 1957), the

²⁸ Notion developed by the geographer Joël Bonnemaïson and which designates the way of life of the inhabitants of certain isolated island spaces, whose whole social, material as well as intimate and moral life, is defined by the island identity and its constraints. It is interesting to note in both public and literary discourse a close kinship between insularity and prison space. Michel Tournier stated in the magazine *Silex* in 1973: "the island is a prison, it's Cayenne, the Devil's Island". More recently, in 2017, President Macron referred to "the island of Guyana". See BONNEMAISON Joël. *Vivre dans l'île, une approche de l'îlélite océanique*. L'espace géographique, t. XIX-XX, n°2, 1990-1991, pp.119-125.

²⁹ DE VITO, LICHTENSTEIN. *Writing a Global History of Convict Labour*. In : *The Global histories of Work*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 2016, p.65.

penitentiary colony is a spatially indistinct prison object. It blurs morphological boundaries, while at the same time reinforcing social boundaries from the outside world. The strategies for labelling³⁰ prisoners are one of the pillars of the socio-penal order: the power of the administration is based on strategies of classification, evaluation, material and symbolic gratifications that draw a moving and arbitrary boundary between the affiliates of the administrative authority and *outsiders*. Placed outside the social field by the exercise of a sentence that is meant to be infamous, the prisoner must invest social resources in the framework of a real career plan based on a narrow system of grading organized by the supervisory staff. The division of work tasks thus corresponds in the French case to the division of prisoners into three classes: "*grande peine*" and the most arduous and murderous work for the lowest graded, maintenance and handling work for the intermediate class, and domestic and administrative tasks for the highest graded and most qualified. In practice, the distribution of tasks corresponds to a constant game of negotiation between staff and the prison population, which is the main daily power mechanism of the Administration. The latter thus responds to two pragmatic imperatives in isolated penitentiary sites: limiting the use of force to what is necessary, and optimizing the use of labour force. The remuneration of the prisoner is not only limited to the nature of the work performed but also to his material living conditions. *Garçons de famille* -family lads-, servants in the service of people, administrative and local elites, do not even return to the penitentiary at night and sleep at the home of their employers, from whom they are rented. Some, like the cook of the *Iles du Salut* camp commander, even have personal accommodation at their disposal. These examples are no exception. In 1905 at the Cayenne penitentiary, 431 of the 474 inmates were employed in domestic service (for the town) and private service. As Albert Londres pointed out in his famous survey, "the prison is not a prison administration, but a hotel school" (1923).

However, the administration cannot act as a demiurge: unequal in the society of free men, all the agents - in the sociological sense - continue to be unequal in a prison context. Class relations play a major role: the 3rd class warden and his family share more with the penal population than with the prison administration's executives. The prisoner/supervisor relationship then proceeds from the meeting between two proletariats and two exiles. In Ignatieff's words, the prison is a "small relay in the immense system of social reproduction"³¹, not only from the perspective of the prisoners but also of its agents. In Clevêlândia, Carlo Romani's study (2003) refers to the same fault line, where social categorization transcends the freeman/prisoner dialectic. Thus, he highlights the

³⁰ Voir BECKER, Howard. *Outsiders. Etudes de sociologie de la déviance*. Paris : Metailié, 1985.

³¹ IGNATIEFF, Michel. *Historiographie critique du système pénitentiaire*. In Petit, Jacques-Guy, (dir). *La Prison, le bagne et l'histoire*, Paris/Genève : Librairie des Méridiens, Médecine et Hygiène, 1984, p. 9-17.

strong relationships between *tenentist* officers and local elites, illustrating that social status largely prevails over the penal situation in the establishment of social relationships, including in this singular social context. On the contrary, the warders embody a figure of profound otherness: the officer from the educated middle classes, or the anarchist who harbours a hatred against the state and its active hands, despise and flee the company of a body of law-class warders. In the classification established by the same historian (Romani, 2011), four groups make up the social ladder in the penal colony of Clevelândia. Although they were considered "traitors to the fatherland", the group of rebel officers and anarchist prisoners is the second highest in the camp hierarchy, occupies private homes and is not subjected to forced labour. Like Louise Michel in New Caledonia, Professor José Nascimento founded a school that taught literacy to the surrounding rural populations, earning their respect and favour. On the other hand, legal detainees and "vagrants", who populated the prisons of the industrial era, are assigned to the most arduous tasks. They occupy the fourth and last class of the typology. In French Guiana, the treatment reserved for the transported - criminals convicted during the High Court - is often more favourable than the fate of the relegated - repeat offenders convicted of repeating minor offences. Jean-Lucien Sanchez (2013) underlines the weight of depreciative representations weighing on the relegated in the civilian population, in the staff and in the criminal population.

Characteristically, the first place in the typology established by Carlo Romani is occupied by a very heterogeneous group: rebels who have made an act of allegiance to the government of the Republic rub shoulders with real bandits protected from the authorities. Their power is based on the pressure exerted on the other detainees and the practice of multiple trafficking that exploits the triptych relationship between agents/detainees/civilians. As psychoanalyst Roland Gori (2013) points out, the figure of the impostor is dominant in any modern society as the individual who embodies it knows how best to mobilise all the social resources available to him. This first class of prisoner concentrating the most loyal and most deviant elements of the prison model sheds light on the dual nature of the socio-penal order in the penitentiary colony: the prisoner's *cursus honorum* through obedience to both colonial regulations and arbitrary rules, accommodations and trafficking to ensure the affiliation of a penal population that is necessarily reluctant to respect authority. The prison is the ideal place to experiment with this mode of prison government by going beyond the rule, which only becomes a tool of last resort. It makes it possible to not only ensure order among the penal population but also among the officers – some of the most poorly paid public servants – and among the surrounding population by maintaining rents built on the exploitation of the misery and deprivation of prisoners. Yet, as in other prisons, the possession of money is forbidden to convicts. In the case of French Guiana, article 13 of the decree of the 18th September 1925 specifies

that "the convicts may not hold any money or value whatsoever". ». Nevertheless, as soon as they boarded at Saint-Martin-de-Ré, the convicts obtained a *plan*, a small metal suppository in which they could hide their loot, the tools necessary for escape and even small makeshift weapons. Money played a central role in this disciplinary system of accommodation and negotiation. For the convict, it conditioned both a daily life that was less dull than the ordinary administrative one, and the possibilities of escape. As Oliver Davis points out, it also contains a strong symbolic content as the main vehicle for "(de)sublimated anality"³² and, for the staff, it is the means of maintaining order at a lower cost while improving their condition. Money thus makes it possible to reach a point of equilibrium within the framework of a joint regulation of the relational space. It is also a tool at the service of a total institutional project. The power constantly retained by the administration to return to this network of illegalisms is a fundamental weapon. The study of the prison economy in the French Guianese context also makes it possible to propose a definition of the *colonial situation* as understood by G. Ballandier (1951). At the top of the "global society", the officials of the prison administration organise, tolerate, negotiate and manage the terms of trade, inside and outside the prison. A network of forbidden solidarities then emerges. The prisoner is no longer just a pariah but another self, a comrade of misfortune with whom one converses, exchanges and deals with. It refers to all the modes of expression of sociability established by E. Goffman in 1968: coercion, negotiation, giving and receiving. This relational network goes beyond the prison setting and spreads throughout the surrounding territory: the prison is integrated into a local and colonial market, from the micro scale, the city, to the macro scale, the Empire. The fugitive from the Clevelândia prison thus uses the services of the fishermen of Saint-Georges, creating a large-scale illegal activity on a binational scale.

Thus, in spite of the prescriptions of the penal reformers, of their characteristic pointillism, the penal project gives birth in its colonial counterpart to a pragmatic institution, without utopian and redemptive dimension, of which "cheap government" is the commanding principle. The "struggle for financial self-sufficiency" becomes the convict's daily reality (SHERMAN, 2009). In this context of deprivation, numerous epidemics and deadly work, mortality reaches new heights. While this reality is common to the entire *Guianese prison archipelago*, the sites of Saint-Georges-de-l'Oyapock and Montagne d'Argent remain in the memories and representations as the most resounding failures of prison colonization - if, however, the notion of success in this regard can be considered valid. The year 1856, marked by an epidemic of yellow fever in the Amazon basin, saw 63% of the prison population succumb. The 12.5% mortality rate among free staff was striking

³² DAVIS, Oliver. *The 'plan': bureaucracy, cleanliness and (de)sublimated anality in the Guiana penal colony*. Communication à la conférence Internationale *Framing the penal colony*, Nottingham, 22-23th of 2019.

because it aroused strong reticence within the corps of military warders who saw this assignment as a punishment. Nevertheless, the large difference in the recorded rates between the prison population and the personnel allows to correlate working and living conditions towards mortality. Hunger, forced labour in bare feet and poor hygiene conditions are far more likely to kill mostly young men than fevers. Medicine, marked by the influence of racial anthropology and phrenology, associates this excessive mortality with the maladjustment of the white race to the equatorial environment. These presuppositions would justify the closure, from 1867 to 1885, of the Guianese penal colonies to prisoners from metropolitan France. On the other hand, in the comfort of scientific certainties, many colonial prisoners, especially "Arabs"³³, who were obviously more familiar with the torrential rains of the Amazon basin, continued to be sent to a certain death. This macabre statistic nevertheless provoked a late reaction from the Penitentiary Administration: the closure of the colonies of Saint-Georges (1863) and Montagne d'Argent (1867) was finally decided. Although it started half a century later, the Brazilian penal project remains just as murderous. Out of the 1 200 convicts sent to the banks of the Oyapock, about half of them perished there³⁴. The rare survivors who were lucky enough to return to the south of the country were reduced to haggard and anaemic figures: "bent, skinny, yellowish, without courage and vitality", they showed the marks of the ordeals in "their scalded and waxed faces", in which "only the eyes stood out ... they looked more like mummies" (DIAS, 1926 quoted by ROMANI, 2011). The kinship of these experiments demonstrates a parliamentary, political and scientific discourse with a dogmatic value: the confrontation with the failures of foreign experiences will never question the construction of national penal colonies. France opened its penal colonies at the same time as the British Parliament initiated the closure of Australian penitentiaries. The penal colony of Clevelândia opened one year after Albert Londres published his indictment against the prison (1923). This opens up questions, shared by contemporaries, external actors as well as former inmates and civil servants. In 1902, Eugène Degrave wondered whether the transportation was not organised to make as many convicts as possible disappear: "we send them there to die and not to colonise. The more are eliminated, the better"³⁵. The empirical testimony resonates with an implacable public speech. In 1890, the member of Parliament Jules Delafosse justifies the mass death recorded in the *bagne* in these terms: "many will die there, I do not ignore it; but, gentlemen, the chances of them dying are part of the

³³ Generic term for the entire criminal population from the North African colonies.

³⁴ DIAS, Everardo. *Bastilhas modernas*. São Paulo: Editora de Obras Sociaes e Literárias, 1926, p. 237. Cited par ROMANI Carlo, . *Antecipando a era Vargas: a Revolução Paulista de 1924 e a efetivação das práticas de controle político e social*. Topoi, v. 12, n. 23, jul.-dez. 2011, p. 161-178.

³⁵ DEGRAVE, Eugène. *Le bagne, affaire Rorique*. Paris : Stock, 1902, cited in LAMAISON, Denis. "Le bagne de la mort". *Culture du café et situation sanitaire au pénitencier agricole de la Montagne d'Argent (Guyane française) de 1852 à 1910*. *Outre-Mers Revue d'Histoire*, Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 2016, 104 (390-391), pp.311-340.

atonement that they undergo. ... Well, I think that if some of them die in the course of their work, they will only have done a little more than repair the harm they have caused society"³⁶.

In very unequal societies where misery rages, in liberal but not social Republics, punishment must respond to this iron law: any condemned person can only live better than the poorest of free citizens. Very quickly, the utopian impulses of the legislator give way to a man-crushing prison apparatus, a "dry guillotine"³⁷ that leaves its mark not only on the men and the prison communities but also on the territories that welcome it.

"The map is not the territory."³⁸

The temporal inscription of these prison communities was brief. They were nevertheless the origin of a territorial fabric based on two pillars: a national political project strongly structuring the political regimes of both the French Second Empire and the *Old Republic* of Brazil, and the creation of penitentiary territories inscribing public authority in space with an uncommon suddenness and intensity. These colonial experiences thus have the value of turning points in the histories of the respective states, not only through the extension of sovereignty to marginal areas, but also through the concentration of the coercive technology specific to the modern state. Carlo Romani highlights this for the Brazilian case: "the use of prison camps in Brazilian forests, widely used at the beginning of the Republic, was elevated in December 1924 to the rank of state policy with the transformation of the agricultural colony of Clevelândia do Norte, on the border with French Guiana, into a penal colony" (ROMANI, 2011, p.162). In the French case, the scale of the penitentiary colonisation of French Guiana - a century of existence, around forty sites, more than 70,000 detainees - places it in an eminent position, both in the judicial system and in the national imagination. Albert Londres thus relies on this terrible reputation to introduce his investigation: "for half a century, unruly children have been told: 'if you keep going this way, you'll be breaking rocks on the roads of French Guiana'." (LONDRES, 1923). Indeed, the making of a territory is based as much on integration into a national space and the link to its political centre as on the creation of a "lived" space, a vector of representations and identities. "The map is not the territory" (HOUTÉ,

³⁶ Chambre des députés, sitting of November 28, 1890, Journal Officiel de la République française, 29 November 1890. Cited in Denis Lemaçon, op. cit.

³⁷ Title of René Belbenoit's famous testimony., René. *Guillotine sèche*. Paris : Manufacture des livres, 2012.

³⁸ HOUTÉ, Arnaud-Dominique. *Le triomphe de la République, 1871-1914*. Paris : Points, 2014, p.143.

2014): a messianic project, prison colonization fails in the metempsychosis of the convicted, where it reaches the palingenesis of prison territories.³⁹

In this prison metaphysics, in the beginning was the convict. He is chosen as a pioneer figure of the national project, sent to its confines to widen its scope. It is then characteristic that the French Guyanese archipelago is concentrated on the borders: first on the Oyapock and then on the Maroni. The foundation of Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni in 1858 was in response to a visit by the director of the Penitentiary Administration Laurent Mélinon to the Dutch colony of Albina, opposite the site he had chosen. For Brazil, the choice of the Clevêlandia site was also dictated by geopolitical pressure on the disputed border with French Guiana. The penetrations of French adventurers into the disputed territory were numerous, and maintained by the relative proximity of the colonial capital Cayenne, less than 200km away from the Oyapock, when it takes more than 600km to reach Macapá, the nearest Brazilian State capital. Not a very isolated case in Brazil, which is still mostly deserted; the development of the Oyapock was truly a colonial project. The *Boletim da Sociedade Central de Imigração* assumed the use of this terminology in 1890 by calling for "the founding of national colonies". The modality of penitentiary colonisation was the modality of territorialisation of this marginal space chosen by the two States, as they were "cursed" territories: in three centuries of colonisation, French Guiana had only around 25,000 inhabitants and a European population of around 300 individuals outside the Penitentiary Administration. Apart from the gold and balata fevers, which attracted people without the sustainability of permanent population centres, both territories have stagnant or even negative demographics. They acted as foil for a long time long time. As Élisée Reclus pointed out in his monumental *New Universal Geography*, Portuguese colonization was sustained even in the Amazonian confines and despite a very small national population by a messianic mobilizing project: it was not only a question of extracting and enslaving, but also of bringing elements of Christian civilization to the conquered spaces and their inhabitants. Secular, the French republican project is also part of a civilizing mission, where the colonist is the proselyte of the secular religion of the Enlightenment. In the absence of volunteers, in the absence of commercial outlets in a region far removed from commercial circuits⁴⁰, and in the absence of an exploited indigenous population, the prisoner-colonist becomes the only recourse for the two states engaged in an imperialist confrontation at their borders. "Transportation was a means of

³⁹These are two twin notions in the sense of ancient Greek philosophy: metempsychosis consists in the transmigration of souls. In penal matters, this refers to the utopia of the prisoner's redemption through work. Starting from the presupposition of the criminal gene, it is therefore an almost magical translation from the atavism of evil to the man of good. Palingenesis, or "new birth", refers to the idea of spatial "emptiness" and a new beginning under the flag of the Nation in its organic dimension.

⁴⁰ This explains the low penetration of other modes of forced labour, such as the widely used indenture regime in Dutch Guiana and Dutch Guyana or the status of seringueiro, dominant in the Brazilian Amazon.

punishment, deterrence, population management and, through the expropriation of the convicts' labour, to occupy and regulate distant borders. "(ANDERSON, 2019, p1).

In these spaces of frontiers, "seen not yet as a line in permanent movement, but as an incomplete space of conquest" (ROMANI, 2014), territories are reconfigured by the spatial hold, understood as a relationship of domination and exclusivity. The Promethean nature of colonial action is to be placed among the most powerful and sustainable enforcement tools available to the colonial state. Imperialism is truly an "act of geographical violence"⁴¹. In order to manufacture this national territory, the authorities methodically proceed in the manner of the theoreticians of the Nation who, throughout Europe in the 19th century, founded a national *sentiment ex nihilo*, according to a method described by Anne-Marie Thiesse⁴². In a way, the settlers of the Oyapock assembled the pieces of this nation in kit form. From the Roman settlers to the agents of the Penitentiary Administration, the layout of the road network is the first step in the making of the territory. The Rio Branco Boulevard, the main artery of the core of Clevelândia do Norte, marks the patronage of the main craftsman of the colonization of the North of Brazil by the Republic. As Hélène Blais points out, "delimiting and naming are two geographical activities that take on special significance in an imperial context. They refer, in fact, to the invention of territories partly reconfigured according to the standards of the colonizers" (BLAIS, p.171). The second stage of this territorial reconfiguration lies in the construction of a profoundly heterotopic urban environment in the sense of Michel Foucault: an "other" space, a privileged place of utopia⁴³. It is a need to build an architectural ensemble that meets the standards of modernity and hygienism, especially in the cases of prisons. These works were not only pragmatic and utilitarian, but also carry a strong symbolic dominance. As C. Romani (2013), the construction of such buildings is a totally new contribution from the Brazilian side. It allows at the same time to send back to the French the image of a so-civilized country, and to relegate the nomadic and state-free lifestyle previously in progress in the district of Oiapoque as the sign of a lower level of civilization. The town of Martinica is thus relegated to the status of a counter-model. The penal colonies were then true brick monuments to modernity, an all-encompassing and transnational project. It is also striking to observe the twin buildings of the core of Clevelândia do Norte and the Transportation camp in Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni, although they are 500km apart. Once this framework is established, the colonist's territorial hold can extend to his environment by disrupting economic relations - we have seen how much

⁴¹ SAID, Edward W. *L'Orientalisme. L'Orient créé par l'Occident*. Paris : le Seuil, 1980.

⁴² THIESSE, Anne-Marie. *La création des identités nationales. Europe, XVIIIè-XIXè siècle*. Paris : Seuil, L'Univers historique, 1999.

⁴³ FOUCAULT, Michel. « *Des espaces autres.* » Conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales, 14 mars 1967, In : *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, no 5 (1984): 46-49.

neighbouring populations were involved in trafficking but also in supplying prisoners and cross-border commuters - by restricting or, on the contrary, creating traffic. "The colonial city drawn with a line, artificial borders, forced agricultural reconversions and the upheavals in the relationship between town and country are all symbols of the spatial hold of the colonial fact." (BLAIS, p169). With this framework in place, the history of the two spaces can begin: for each government, what precedes the pioneering installation of the convicts constitutes a protohistory excluded from the national narrative. Colonization is certainly promethean: colonization is one of the *pyromènes*⁴⁴ of the modern state, bringing a creative and vital impulse to the ashes of occulted human life forms.

Through this process of territorialization and integration into the national space, the colonizing powers fabricate a border. Henceforth, through the material and symbolic presence of the state, the Oyapock became a frontier line from the 1920s onwards, both a consequence and an objective of prison colonisation. The settling of populations in population centres, the francization and *brasilianization* of the territories, and the control of the flow of men and goods were the counterpart of this territorial policy. The aim was to push back the limes of the barbaric world, transforming cartographic abstraction into a lived experience for border populations. The projection towards the margins of the Nation is a centripetal force that feeds the State project: "the drawing of borders allows the establishment of maps, which directly participate in the invention of States". (BLAIS, 2013, p.172). As Ernest Renan puts it in his canonical definition of "everyday plebiscite", the Nation is an empirical construction. It refers in an imperialist conception shared by Brazil and France to a centripetal imperial dynamic, where the legitimacy of political authority rests on a constant expansionist dynamic.⁴⁵ Without contradicting Stefan Zweig, who emphasized its ontological pacifism, Brazil nourishes its national narrative and its messianic aspiration through the colonization of its immense interior space. As a continent, it is pursuing a very long-term project related to the conquest of the West by the United States at the same time. As such, penal colonization is part of this mobilizing project, which, in the Brazilian case, is not yet complete and continues to structure the public voice and the national project. It is part of a dialectic centre/periphery that creates both margins and centralities. By attaching the border territory to the national space, the two states effectively marginalize them. It becomes a space of confines, labelled as such, the last milestone of the national space and dedicated to welcoming the "pathogenic" portions of the social body. On the other hand, the borderline and territorialization of these spaces connect them intensely to the centers of power, without intermediaries. By being placed in an

⁴⁴Manifestation of the fire element in the terminology developed by Gaston Bachelard in *Psychanalyse du feu*. Paris : Gallimard, 1949.

⁴⁵ COOPER, F., BURBANK, J. *Empires. De la Chine ancienne à nos jours*. Paris : Payot, 2011.

exceptional legal regime, these territories are devoted to the action of the State in its most sovereign functions: monitoring and punishing, controlling populations. In French Guiana, the most notorious criminals, political prisoners of national importance and prisoners from all over the Empire are gathered together. In Oiapoque, it is political prisoners from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo who populate the penitentiary. As pointed out by C. Romani (2013), Clevelândia becomes one of the densest places of political and intellectual concentration in the country. Moreover, through prison activity, the territories of the Oyapock were connected to their political centre by regular maritime transport. It used to be possible to travel from Clevelândia do Norte to Rio de Janeiro on the same steamer, while today it is necessary to take a long runway and then make several airport connections throughout the country. The prison colonies were undoubtedly nodal points on a national and imperial scale, between deep and lasting marginalization and close connection to the central power.

On these foundations, specific identities were established, the borders of which should be delimited: was it a question of nationalisation of populations and territories or, on the contrary, the *ad hoc* creation of a cross-border territory? There is no doubt that it is advisable to guard against any desire for labelling and essentialization, but on the contrary to trace the superimposition of identities in these polymorphous and shifting territories. To this end, the notion of hybrid frontier developed by the philosopher Amadeo Lopez is enlightening. He defines it as "a place of separation and union, the border has the characteristic of introducing between the Same and the Other this ambiguous zone - border zone - and at the same time inside and outside the relationships with the other and with oneself"⁴⁶. By asking the question of the national, and therefore of nationality, not only in its bureaucratic but also in its identity dimension, the setting of borders imposes a new dialectic, familiar/foreign, linked to the construction of a space split between the *here* and the *there*. "We want to fix the being" (BACHELARD, 1957, p.192) and thus make the national penetrate the personal ontology of individuals. Penitentiary colonization thus participates in the fabrication of French and Brazilian people. It is a linguistic vector, through the power of the administrative form but also through the construction of schools for the staff. It is a cultural vector through the contribution of customs and practices from the metropolises. It is a social and anthropological vector, by installing as a hegemonic model the sedentary life, the Christian religious practice, the reading of the newspaper. On this last point, the question of clothing is quite enlightening. A French colonial style, neither metropolitan nor conforming to local canons, was becoming widespread in the Guianese colony, in defiance of climatic imperatives that would impose lighter clothing. But it

⁴⁶ LOPEZ, Amadeo. *Présentation. La notion de frontière. In : América. Cahiers du CRICCAL, Année 1993, 13*, pp. 7-20. Cited par Romani, 2014, op. cit.

is indeed a question of creating a new humanity. As the Cameroonian intellectual Achille Mbembé points out, "like Islam and Christianity, colonization is a universalizing project. Its ultimate goal is to inscribe the colonized in the space of modernity"⁴⁷. From this forced march of modernization was born, as in the whole colonial space, a negotiated and moving identity. Colonization, whether penitentiary or more conventional, is above all a vast globalizing movement, connecting spaces and multiplying contacts. In this sense, prison colonization must be seen in the context of a history of migration. In essence, transportation consists of the forced displacement and contact of populations. Staff and the prison population share the same function as smugglers. Thus, by runoff, the creation of the nucleus of Clevelândia creates the conditions for the development of the town of Martinica, future Oiapoque. "People with a more advanced mentality, with other habits than just Guianese, had arrived. In this way, like the archipelago of the Bay of Marajó (...) they began to form part of what we would nowadays call "the new community""⁴⁸. The ideology of the frontier-line does not resist to the agency of the border populations. It is indeed a new territory that is emerging, superimposing traditional and modern, stratifying local and external uses, stacking national identities under construction and persistent and renewed cross-border identity. Musical practices are illustrative of a certain Oyapockese syncretism. For a long time the *kaseco* was danced on the Brazilian side, an Western Indian dance very much practised by the French Guianese Creoles. Today, *zouk* and *reggae* in Brazil and *carimbó paraense* in French Guiana testify to the persistence of interpenetration.

Prison colonization, an Amazonian story. Concluding remarks

"Many metaphysics would ask for cartographies" (BACHELARD, 1957, p.192). In the two spaces that concentrated our study, cartography precedes territory. By founding mixed and moving identities, the imperial powers have an action on spaces as well as on individuals. Oyapock's prison projects were totalizing and drew intimate cartographies by spatializing both individual and collective metaphysics. In this sense, the penitentiary colonies were deeply situated institutions, the foundation of a sensitive experience that mixed prison and environmental experience. In this sense, the history of the penal colonies is a history of representations that is part of an Amazonian history. As Genet pointed out in a recorded interview at the end of his life (1983), what remains of an existence is "a history and a geography".

⁴⁷ MBEMBE, Achille. *On the power of the false*. Public Culture, 14, 2002, p634. Cited in Frederick Cooper, 2005, p.192

⁴⁸ Testimony of Mr. Rocque, Archives of the State of Pará, Martinica folder. Cited in Carlo Romani, 2010.

The history of the Oyapock does not begin with the installation of the first French prison in 1853 and the first Brazilian one in 1924. However, it only became French and Brazilian, national and imperial, at those dates. It is then necessary to link the history of this river to a general history of the Amazon basin. The great march towards the West, initiated in the 17th century by the Portuguese colonizer, reached these shores at the beginning of the 20th century. For French Guiana, it is the umpteenth isolated attempt at a dispersed colonization, to be placed in a colonial history in the long term. It is each time the history of a settlement by marks or even by dotted lines. In this sense, the territorialization of both the Oyapock and the Amazon is deeply archipelagic. The green immensity replaces the maritime infinity: the Amazon experience is fundamentally insular. The individual was first confronted with relegation and loneliness. We then find a dialectical kinship between forest and maritime space. Ladislau's work *Terra Immatura*⁴⁹ (1924) synthesizes this discursive heritage with ancient roots. He describes a "place of illusion of splendour and where a civilization would remain hidden in the midst of the immensity of its forest" (p.30). In this absolute isolation live "men who are strangers to their own land". The Amazonian identity then developed paradoxes: paradise as hell, indigenous land and uprooted people, land of freedom and imprisonment, land of fortune and destitution, it was in the national imagination the "Brazilian Canaan", which structures dreams and anxieties, greatness and misery of the Nation.

Ladislau is turning this promised land into a political project. "The Amazon needs to be invaded by successive and massive human waves, of a race different from ours, because it has no capacity for initiative. "This statement concentrates the two pillars of imperial politics in the Amazon: filling the "void", dispossessing Amazonians of their Amazon. Taken up by President Vargas in his speeches, Ladislau's rhetoric leads to draw a dividing gap between the adventurous, lazy, easy-going Amazonian man to the action of the state and enterprising actors, helping the Amazonian man to take possession of his own territory. It is characteristic that more credit is given to criminals and enemies of the State from the metropolises than to the local population for developing the territories of French and Brazilian Guiana. Vargas takes up the fables of La Fontaine in an exemplary manner, pitting the Amazonian Cicada against the Metropolitan Ant. Man must therefore be fixed in a nucleus of population, a metonym of the modern, sedentary and disciplined state. In line with these socio-spatial and racial segregations, prison colonisation appears, by imposing forced labour and importing Western workers as the ideal remedy for the laziness of the Indian. Transportation then gave rise to two relegations: that of criminal deportees and that of free men in their own territory.

⁴⁹ LADISLAU, Alfredo. *Terra Imatura*. Manaus : Editora Valer, 2008,

Vargas' project is summed up in a speech with the evocative title, "The Brazilian destiny of the Amazon", delivered on 31 January 1940 in Belém: "The facts and conquests of technology prove [...] that with our own example, how it is possible, on the banks of the great river, to implant a unique and singular civilization, rich in vital elements and capable of growing and prospering. "However, a necessarily critical viewpoint imposes a single conclusion: the territorialization of the Amazon has contributed to its barbarization. If it is central to the national imagination, whose territory stretches from Oiapoque to Xuí, the French-Brazilian border is associated with the tenacious image of the "green hell". In France, the evocative power of the *bagne* makes the term synonymous with French Guiana. The prison experience does not only found a shameful territorial identity, based on the experience of suffering, but also of a state practice that has never become completely normalized. The interior of French Guiana remained under the direct administration of the central authority, without political and civic rights for the population, until 1969 under the colonial toponym of "territory of the Inini". At the same time, it is an under-administered state, which does not meet the needs of the communities. The historian then questions modernity: "why in such and such a time did the "moderns" try to make everyone modern, and why in such and such a different time they did not? "(COOPER, 2005, p.190). In short, the Amazon still appears to be a rubbish-territory. As illustrations, the establishment of a space centre in French Guiana in 1967 through the expropriation of dozens of families, and titanic hydroelectric power station projects in the Tumuc Humac mountain range in Brazil, where led despite the environmental issues at stake and the presence of indigenous peoples. Starting off on the wrong foot with the installation of carceral institutions, the presence of the state extends to infinity the reign of arbitrariness in its Amazonian margins.

Today, the Oyapock is the scene of increasingly intense exchanges - as evidenced by the construction of a binational bridge in 2008 - at the same time as new reasons for withdrawal and closure. The migration issue is added to the economic and identity difficulties already encountered by the local populations, making it a space under pressure. The memory of the prison, which is hidden because it is not very visible and not very long-termed, must be reinvested in a territory that is still perceived as a place of exile: populations from all over Brazil are now concentrated there, as a result of administrative changes and economic migration. On the French bank, the penal genesis of the territorialisation of the Oyapock refers to the question of the political and social project in territories that are now deserted. The researcher must strive to go beyond the national borders of analysis in order to trace lines of strong convergences, as much as the diversity of Amazonian societies. Based on a spatial and environmental historical analysis, a Pan-Amazonian history opens up, opening rich perspectives. Because, like the poet, he participates in "pulling the eternal out of

the transitory"⁵⁰, the historian reveals chronologies and cartographies from the jumble of incomplete memories and hazardous reconstructions. He helps to make the territory intelligible to its inhabitants. It is surely a key for the affirmation of Amazonians by themselves, beyond national histories that place them in *a de facto* foreign situation. For them, as for the prisoners, and all the "fragile lives"⁵¹, the historian and his material, the archive, "deliver the unsaid"⁵². By formulating it differently, they give a voice to the voiceless.

*Na negrao solidao deste degrade infinido,
Neste recanto agreste onde a malaria impera,
Numa angustia ferina e atroz que desespera
A vida a pouco e pouco se vai, alem sumindo.*

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⁵⁰ Baudelaire, Charles. Op. cit.

⁵¹ In reference to Arlette Farge's book, *La vie fragile : Violence, pouvoirs et solidarités à Paris au XVIIIè siècle*. Paris : Hachette, 1986.

⁵² Quote from the indispensable work of the same Arlette Farge, *Le goût de l'archive*. Paris : Seuil, 1989.

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