




# Diálogos

ISSN 2177-2940



## History and international relations in the Guyana Region

 <https://doi.org/10.4025/dialogos.v24i2.54766>

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Among the various regions that make up the subcontinent of South America, the Guyanas is the least studied in the composition of the Transnational Amazon and the American continent in general. Thus, this set of articles is an important piece of research to better understand a place inhabited by great biodiversity, cultures, peoples, languages, flows of people and a rich history.

The region is located inside the “Transnational Amazon” and represents five from nine of the countries that share an Amazonian space. Native peoples, colonization, establishment of borders, migrant flows are some of the elements that makes a potential to be explored in the study of history and international relations in the region.

The delimitation of the Amazon can establish different criteria and this form will present different compositions. It is common the reference in texts on the “Transnational Amazon”. It is a general definition that includes physical, environmental and political-administrative criteria in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, French Guyana, France, Suriname and Venezuela.

The institutional youth present in the territories that make up Guyana explains a little of the low volume of studies on the region. The Cooperative Republic of Guyana and Suriname are the youngest countries in South America, independent in 1966 and 1975 respectively. The Brazilian states Roraima and Amapá only rose to the status of state of the Federation of Brazil in 1988. French Guyana, on the other hand, is not an independent country and responds directly to mainland France. This meant that research institutions in the region were generally structured only in recent decades and often in a precarious way.

The *Université de Guyane* in Cayenne did not have university status until 2015. Until then, its link was as an educational pole linked to the Antilles (Martinique and Guadalupe). Since its new

moment, the hiring of scholars and establishments for research and teaching projects have brought greater focus to studies on the territory itself and its geographical surroundings.

In the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and Suriname, the only two universities present, “Anton de Kom” and “University Of Guyana”, respectively, face low investments and a drain of specialized labor to other countries. However, some initiatives have been taken place in the search to bring regional studies closer.

At the Federal University of Roraima (UFRR) in the 2000s it was sought to approach the Guyanas as an object of history and international relations. Reginaldo Gomes de Oliveira is one of the pioneering academics in these studies and he pointed out the idea of a “Caribbean Amazon” as a differential in looking at the region. Among his works, we highlight “*Amazônia Caribenha: a regionalização, os caminhos históricos e culturais*” where it is located historically the concept of the “Caribbean Amazon”. Gomes says that the concept is “linked to the relative character of the Caribbean territory as a cultural region, marked by a different ethno-historical process from the other regions of South America, which is clearly defined as a singular Iberian cultural process (Portuguese and Spanish)”<sup>1</sup>. More recently, postgraduate programs at this institution were established and among the various themes Guyana region was one of the interest.

In Amapá, the Federal University of Amapá (UNIFAP) also had individual academic inroads in Guyanas, more specifically in the relationship between the state of Amapá and French Guyana, since the 2000s. The Brazilian expansion process of higher education between mid 2000s to 2016 provided a substantial number of researchers at institutions such as UNIFAP. In this process, individual initiatives gained strenght to build up post graduated programs.

In this wake of scientific construction in Amapá, the Postgraduate Program in Borders Studies (PPGEF) has been establishing the Guyana region and the Caribbean as a geographic research area since 2017. Projects and exchanges have been institutionally strengthened with the region and made possible a systematic Brazilian academic production over North South America.

We call “The Guyanas or the Guyana Region” the location of the extreme south American composed of Brazil, France, Suriname, The Cooperative Republic of Guyana and Venezuela. From Brazil the states of Amapá, Roraima, parts of Pará and Amazonas are in the Region. The European territory in the Amazon is represented by the Territorial Collectivity of French Guyana.

<sup>1</sup> **OLIVEIRA, Reginaldo G.** Amazônia Caribenha: a regionalização, os caminhos históricos e culturais. In: Reginaldo Gomes de Oliveira; Andrea Idelga Jubithana-Fernand. (Org.). Dos Caminhos Históricos aos Processos Culturais entre Brasil e Suriname. 1ªed.Boa Vista-RR: Editora da Universidade Federal de Roraima - EdUFRR, 2014, v. 1, p. 13-33.

Map of The Guyana Region



By: Brenda Farias da Silva

In this territory, we find the history of Amazonian ethnic groups and the struggle for the survival of their cultures. It is also here that the languages of the ancient colonizers - Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch and English - are surrounded by Spanish speakers. The colonial period brought European, African, Indian, Javanese, Chinese people into this region; a recent past, in turn, promoted an intense migratory flow from Brazil and the Caribbean in the composition of the Guyanese societies.

We are pleased to present the Dossier “History and international relations in the Guyana Region”: the result of a collective effort and a long process of work that culminates in the launch of this edition, comprising a total of eight articles and an interview that brings considerable contributions on the Guyana region studies. The region's plurality and historical complexity are, in this Dossier, addressed by academics of History, Anthropology, Political Science, Literature and

Geography.

Our Dossier begins with an interview with one of the greatest writers in Suriname, Cynthia McLeod. Her biography is intertwined with the history of Suriname, the youngest independent country in South America (1975). Her work is representative of the importance of building Surinamese identity, as her historical novels are made from the perspective of women, usually blacks born in colony or brought in through forced immigration that characterized the trafficking of enslaved people. Her characters are opposed to the white, colonizing and hegemonic narrative that prevailed in the history of colonized countries.

The work **“Threads of memory: the historical novel in Suriname as a writing of resistance”** follows the path pointed out in the interview by Cynthia McLeod in seeking to give the floor to historically silenced voices. Natali F. Costa e Silva analyzes the historical novel *“The free negress Elisabeth: prisoner of color”* (2004) written by McLeod contributing to the debate on racial and gender inequality that underlies the colonial societies that characterize the region in focus .

Then, the work of Samuel Tracol and Arnaud-Dominique Houte **“*Aqui começa o Brasi: penal colonization, territorialization and border construction of the Oyapock river. 1853-1927*”** focuses on the border region between Brazil and France (French Guyana) and their settlement process based on penal colonization as a mechanism for occupying the region.

Yet on the border region between Brazil and France looking at Amapá and French Guyana, the article by Carmentilla das Chagas Martins and Iuri Cavlak **“The dilemma of local participation in the Brazil-France cross-border cooperation (1990-2015)”** discusses the approximation, from the 1990s, between Brazil and France with agreements signed and the systematic meetings of the Joint Cross-Border Commission - CTM. The research questions the lack of local participation and the development of cooperation.

Rosuel Lima Pereira's research brings reflections about the territory called the outermost part of the European Union and which is present in the Guyana region. The article entitled **“French Guyana, an outermost region of the European Union: Issues and challenges in the 21st century”** seeks to outline an analysis of French Guyana from a legal and economic perspective, in addition to problematizing issues of national security and the integration of the French territory into the region.

The article by Paulo Gustavo Pellegrino Correa and Miguel Patrice Philippe Dhenin analyzes the construction of the Binational Bridge that connects Brazil and France, in addition to reflecting on the social representation of local groups. Entitled **“Cross-border integration and social representation: the binational bridge and the boatmen on the Franco-Brazilian border”**, the research had as object of study the *“catraieiros”*, who are boatmen responsible for

river logistics, to demonstrate how the Subject-Representation-Object relationship built a negative representation and threatening impact of an integrative project between the two countries by the Community.

As mentioned above, the migratory flow in the Guyanas region is intense and differs in some aspects from the migratory processes present in some other areas of South America. Handerson Joseph's work has as object the Caribbean migratory trajectories, more specifically Haitian, and the Guyana as part of that system. In **"The Haitian migratory system in the Guyanas: beyond the borders"** we can better understand the practices and trajectories of migrants that cross national borders in the Guyanas region, as well as see an analysis of the migratory system, its documents and papers and the problems that different Haitian migratory generations arise in space and time.

The low population density that characterizes the Transnational Amazon, more intensely in the Guyana region did not mean the absence of a rich history of different peoples who live there. On the contrary, as we can see in the approaches of this set of works, cultural diversity characterizes the Guyanas. In **"Amerindian Perspectivism in the Mitified Discourses of Popular Catholicism in the Amazon"**, the authors Marcos Vinicius F. Reis and Marcus Paulo T. Pereira approach, from a post-colonial perspective, the colonizing project of the Catholic Church in relation to the expressions of Catholicism of the Amapaense Amazon. The article points out the strategies of Afro-American communities in resisting Eurocentric and Jewish Christian hegemony in the face of the expressions of local peoples.

Finally, we highlight an important theme when addressing the Amazon region: political ecology. In **"Political Ecology at the frontiers of knowledge and power in traditionally occupied territory: the know-how of the so-called coconut breakers in the Amazon"**, Jodival Maurício da Costa and Joaquim Shiraishi Neto raise a debate on the role of political ecology in the decoloniality of knowledge and power in the Amazon region. Biodiversity, natural wealth, modernity and traditions make up a scenario where the worldviews of local groups, especially with regard to the views of nature and its representations, are opposed to market interests.

This set of works is launched at a time of a global pandemic that the historian Lilia Schwarcz points out to be the mark of the 20th century. A turbulent moment in which perspectives on societies, technologies, consumption, rights and history are being revised. We hope articles that address a region that has not been studied much in history and in international relations can contribute to the expansion of knowledge in such a multiple region as the Guynas.

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Organizador