

**A Boundless Space: the Amazon and the Building of the Brazilian Empire**

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### Untamed space

Anyone walking around Praça Floriano in downtown Rio de Janeiro in June 2008 would see a big protest poster saying: “A Amazônia é do povo brasileiro”. Also, a visitor –like me- to the Institute of Latin American Studies at Columbia University would easily notice a picture of car (probably in the city of Santarem, Pará) with a banner saying “Fora Greenpeace. Amazônia é dos Brasileiros”. Recently, the sale of public lands in the Amazon region has aroused public controversy. Many saw in this sale an ecological threat and even a challenge to the national sovereignty since some of the would-be buyers were foreigners. The proposal of extending upward the surface limit to the sales of public lands, from 500 to 1,500 hectares worried environmentalist activists who cared about the advance of deforestation, and it caused the split of the governmental coalition around this issue between the former Minister of Environment Marina Silva and the present holder of the office, Carlos Minc<sup>1</sup>.

This is not the first time that the Amazon region is at the root of a controversy regarding environmental or national sovereignty issues. En 1996, the Conselho Superior de Orientação Política y Social of the FIESP (the main association of industrialists in São Paulo) published an essay by Lieutenant Colonel of the Army, Senator and former Minister Jarbas Gonçalves Passarinho with the title *A Internacionalização da Amazônia*.<sup>2</sup> This essay’s main goal was to alert on the threats to the Brazilian territorial integrity and in particular on the foreign ambitions on the Amazon valley. These ambitions were reflected in the statement of President François Mitterrand who said: “the Amazon forests are a world heritage”. For Gonçalves Passarinho this sentence didn’t have any sense by itself, because Brasilia or Paris were also “world heritage”. The main concern for the Brazilian senator was the second part of Mitterrand’s declaration: “Os países que têm florestas equatoriais úmidas nesta fase do século não

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<sup>1</sup> *O Globo*, 11 de Julio de 2008, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Jarbas Gonçalves Passarinho, *A internacionalização da Amazônia*, Estudos nº 1, Conselho Superior de Orientação Política e Social da FIESP/CIESP/COPS (Federação e Centro das Indústrias de São Paulo, Instituto Roberto Simonsen, Confederação Nacional da Indústria), 1996. Gonçalves Passarinho was also Governor of the State of Pará between 1964 and 1966 and national senator.

podem pensar em soberania senão relativa”. This was the origin the threat: “Ai volta a velha história da democracia relativa (...) Isso me preocupou porque foi repetido em Haia por Michel Rocard (...) Apareceu depois Warren Christopher, que repetiu isso claramente em seu discurso na ONU”.<sup>3</sup>

The problem of environmental defense and the preservation of the wrongly considered to be the earth’s reservoir of oxygen might be actually an excuse for the violation of the Brazilian territorial sovereignty. But that was not the only source of anxiety. The public policy of lands and preservation was also worrisome:

“Mas os espaços que aparecem em branco levaram o presidente Sarney a dividi-los no que chamou de 19 ilhas (...) Interpôs entre as ilhas duas florestas tropicais, e o Parque Nacional do Pico da Neblina, já na Amazonas. Este foi o grande problema. O meu grupo de origem, preocupado com a soberania do Brasil, temia o desmembramento nacional. Não houve desmembramento”<sup>4</sup>.

Hence, the Brazilian government perceived non-occupied spaces as a threat to its control and proceeded to their administrative division and the formation of protected wood spaces, as if the line on the map could replace the effective occupation. For the representatives of the region, however, the new subdivisions meant weakness, although finally the fragmentation of the country didn’t occur.

The third source of inquietude was linked to the native population: “Alega-se que a ONU pode vir a determinar o desmembramento do nosso território, criando a nação ianomâmi, porque há proposta neste sentido apresentada na subcomissão de minorias da Comissão dos Direitos Humanos (...) a tentativa foi derrotada com os votos dos Estados Unidos, do Canadá e do México, que jamais se poriam de acordo com a iniciativa dos países escandinavos”<sup>5</sup>. Notwithstanding the unlikeness of getting this kind of measures passed by the NU, the idea of a non-assimilated group within the “national civilization” occupied a relevant place in the imaginarium of Brazilian political elites, at least since mid-nineteenth century. This is the reason why Passarinho insisted in calling the natives “populações, never nações”<sup>6</sup>.

Since colonial times, images of a bountiful, rich Paradise had accompanied the Western view on the Amazon. But other discourse, one of threat and impossible obstacles to surmount in order to control people and nature was also being elaborated

<sup>3</sup> J. G. Passarinho, *A internacionalização...*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>4</sup> J. G. Passarinho, *A internacionalização...*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> J. G. Passarinho, *A internacionalização...*, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> J. G. Passarinho, *A internacionalização...*, p. 20.

since almost the very beginning of European encounter with the region<sup>7</sup>. These images were recreated by the nation-state builders in the nineteenth century. Territorial threat, environmental issues –or “nature” in nineteenth-century language- and non-assimilated populations, were the three bases on which Brazilian elites’ perceptions lay on as far as the Amazon was concerned since the nineteenth century.

In 1967, the General Albuquerque Lima demanded the Amazon region to be occupied by the army. Contemporaneously, the historian and ex-governor of Amazonas state, Arthur César Ferreira Reis publicly denounced the threat represented by the purchase of lands in the valley by American citizens<sup>8</sup>. Seven years earlier, Ferreira Reis had written one of the most thoroughly elaborated works on the foreign relationships of Brazil since the point of view of the Amazon region with the revealing title *A Amazônia e a cobiça internacional*<sup>9</sup>. The book was a nationalistic historical account in which European powers like Britain and France, the United States and even some minor powers like Spain were presented as longing for territories and resources in the Amazon. This historical narrative had a moral message: Brazil would face tremendous perils if she neglected the Amazon valley<sup>10</sup>. Which were these dangers? First of all, the necessity of raw materials of the industrial powers had become more acute after they lost their colonies<sup>11</sup>. Secondly, and more important, there was a risk related to territory and population. In a world that seemed to have reached its Malthusian limits, in which the production of food was not enough for its growing population, the Amazon region offered a solution:

“A ocupação da terra foi feita pelo homem desordenadamente (...) Os limites da terra (...) são reais? Quais serão, porém, esses espaços abertos, isto é, que ainda não foram ocupados ou estão ocupados insatisfatoriamente, propiciando um vasto campo para os excedentes populacionais?”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This topic has been explored by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Visão do Paraíso. Os motivos edênicos no descobrimento e colonização do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro: J. Olimpia, 1959.

<sup>8</sup> *Jornal do Brasil*, (Rio de Janeiro), 23-11-1967, p. 7, quoted in Nícia Vilela Luz, *A Amazônia para os negros americanos*, Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Saga, 1968, p. 17. Ferreira Reis was the most reputed Brazilian historian on the Amazon region, author of several monographs on the topic. Between 1964 and 1966 he was appointed Governor of the State of Amazon.

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Cezar Ferreira Reis, *A Amazônia e a cobiça internacional*, São Paulo: Editora Nacional, 1960.

<sup>10</sup> At the beginning of his essay, Ferreira Reis asserted: “Não servimos a ideologias de qualquer espécie (...) Servimos ao Brasil que ainda não tomou consciência de que precisa abandonar a posição contemplativa”, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> A. C. Ferreira Reis, *A Amazônia...*, pp. 221-222.

<sup>12</sup> A. C. Ferreira Reis, *A Amazônia...*, pp. 235-237. A similar concern was expressed by Aloysio da Costa Chaves in 1966 who warned about the foreign aspirations to control the Amazon in order to feed a growing population and recalled that “É, pois, tarefa cívica da mais alta importância atribuída às nossas elites indicar ao povo brasileiro o meio certo de preservar a Amazônia contra toda e qualquer tentativa de

This territorial dimension of the foreign ambition reminded of the old imperial policies: “Ora, na Amazônia (...) o espaço físico imenso apresentase praticamente aberto aos mais decididos, aos mais ousados. O chamado imperialismo das nações fortes não é uma página de lirismo”<sup>13</sup>. Precisely in the high point of decolonization, Reis emphasized that imperial powers’ greed had not vanished, echoing –probably without noticing it- the discourse of the leaders that attending the Bandung Conference and the non-aligned countries<sup>14</sup>.

The empty space or a space not properly occupied was one reason for concern. To some extent the responsibility lay on the different national governments that had made Brazil to live “como nação atlântica e algumas vezes como nação platina. Nunca se realizou como nação amazônica”<sup>15</sup>.

As it was said, the second problem was the jeopardy caused by the existence of a non-assimilated population. This issue was related to native population, but not exclusively. During the inter-war period Japanese emigration was also a case in point. In 1927, several Japanese settlement companies (and a Polish one) received a concession of one million hectares in order to help them to settle in a period of 50 years around 50,000 thousand Japanese families in the Amazon who would devote themselves to agriculture, ranching, the building of railways and the establishment of some factories<sup>16</sup>. This was a civilizing project, inheritor of the nineteenth century Latin American tradition about emigration and the source of progress. Nonetheless, this Japanese emigration caused more uneasiness than hopes. As WWII broke out Japanese settlers were increasingly regarded as a fifth column supporting their home country imperial design. A panic spread among the media and the academia in Brazil. The main argument of those who consider the Japanese presence a threat was that the presence in

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espoliação”. See A. da Costa Chaves, “Preservação da Amazônia contra a espoliação”, *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Pará*, vol. XIV (1966-1967), p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> A. C. Ferreira Reis, *A Amazônia...*, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> In 1955, President Sukarno addressed the participants in the Conference of Bandung saying: “We are often told ‘Colonialism is dead’. Let us not be deceived or even soothed by that. I say to you, colonialism is not yet dead. How can we say it is dead, so long as vast areas of Asia and Africa are unfree. And, I beg of you do not think of colonialism only in the classic form which we of Indonesia, and our brothers in different parts of Asia and Africa, knew. Colonialism has also its modern dress, in the form of economic control, intellectual control, actual physical control by a small but alien community within a nation”, *Africa-Asia Speaks from Bandung*, Jakarta: Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1955, pp. 19-29, reproduced in Modern History Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1955sukarno-bandung.html>, Accessed on 22 August 2008.

<sup>15</sup> A. C. Ferreira Reis, *A Amazônia...*, p. 255.

<sup>16</sup> A. C. Ferreira Reis, *A Amazônia...*, p. 183.

a non-populated space Amazon, not entirely under state's control, of a homogeneous minority, non-integrated into the national culture was an obvious source of troubles<sup>17</sup>. There were, hence, important differences with the Japanese immigration in São Paulo, where this group represented a subaltern role in a firmly established society and in a perfectly occupied territory.

Therefore, this perception of threat had been in the minds of businessmen, military and politicians in Brazil since the nineteenth-century and has continued until today. When was this perception originated? Why? These are the questions this essay is dealing with. In order to advance some answers: the Amazon began to be perceived as a threatening space in the minds of Brazilian elites since mid-nineteenth century and this perception grew during the second half of the century due to the limit success –or the lumpiness- of what I call attempts at “territorializing” the valley. By “territorializing” I mean the process by which the space is transformed into territory. Harvard's historian Charles S. Maier has developed a suggestive hypothesis about Modernity noticing that the period between c.1860 and c.1960 might be an era of territoriality. Territory was thus a historical, dynamic concept. Territory is a clearly limited space, with a center and a periphery. The control of territory is a source of economic resources, political and symbolic power. Space had to be hierarchically organized even fragmented, creating new internal neat barriers, and fully occupied in order to become territories. Territories gathered both space of decision and identity space<sup>18</sup>.

If Maier is right, the Brazilian state might have begun a process of “territorializing” its space after mid-nineteenth century. This was not new in the history of the former Portuguese colony, but “territoriality” was reshaped and recreated in a new scale in the nineteenth century<sup>19</sup>. The spatial mind of Brazilian elites had inherited

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<sup>17</sup> See Vivaldo Lima, *Discursos e opiniões sobre a colonização japonesa no estado do Amazonas*, Manaus, 1936 y Antonio Vieira, *O perigo amarelo na Amazônia brasileira: discursos pronunciados, em 1936, na extinta Assembléia legislativa do Amazonas contra a concessão de terras amazonenses aos nipônicos, procedidos de um trabalho de interventor Alvaro Maia, sob o título O Povoamento do Vale Amazonico*, 1942. Ferreira Reis dealt with this issue as well, *A Amazônia...*, p. 184.

<sup>18</sup> This argument has been elaborated in different articles. See Charles S. Maier, “Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era”, *American Historical Review* (June 2000), pp. 807-831 and C. Maier, “Transformations of Territoriality 1600-2000”, in Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad, and Oliver Janz, *Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006. See also: Jean Gottmann, *The Significance of Territory*, Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1973, p. 3

<sup>19</sup> This wasn't the first time a process of territorializing was launched in the Amazon region. Marquis of Pombal's brother attempted to fix borders between the Spanish and the Portuguese empires in the valley, built a chain of fortress in order to guarantee Portuguese control over these borders and substitute *directores* for Jesuits and other religious orders in order to attempt to approach native population to the state's surveillance. Portuguese rulers tried –with limited success- to attract native population to villages

a territorial dimension from the Portuguese expansionist policies and the administrative reorganization carried out by Pombal's bureaucracy. Demétrio Magnoli and António Carlos Robert Moraes argue that the Brazilian Empire based its legitimacy in the defense of territorial unity. This territorial view –according to Magnoli- consolidated at the end of the XVIII century as a result of Portuguese geostrategic policies and the attempt to obtain further economic revenue from the colony (*valorização*). This territorializing schema designed from Lisbon was emulated by the elites of the Brazilian *capitanias* who were expanding their influence toward their frontiers, hinterlands, *sertãos*, etc<sup>20</sup>.

Growing imperial rivalry in the eighteenth century provoked a reformulation of the political conception of space and was behind this move to territoriality. Nonetheless, the features and the scale of this Post-Westphalian territorial era were different from the one developed in mid-nineteenth century. Some of the achievements of the eighteenth-century territorial move didn't last. The link between space of decision and space of identity was not the major force behind political loyalties. The Pombal's fixing of borders was rather a process without than within the political space. Occupation didn't proceed nor was the main goal of reformers.

Moreover, some hints point out the persistence of “non-territorial” views on the space among Brazilian political elites in the first half of the nineteenth century. For instance, in a report to the Emperor Pedro II, signed by a self-named Mandarin of the Chinese Empire, in truth a supporter of the conservative solution to the constitutional dilemmas of the nation. Traditionally, liberals had been associated with federalism and a greater autonomy for the provinces, whereas conservatives defended a stricter centralization from Rio de Janeiro. Between 1830 and 1840 the political definition of the nation was at the stake. In 1831, Emperor Pedro I had abdicated and left the country

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close to the forts. Also, the reformist government encouraged the agricultural exploitation of the Amazon as the way to “civilize” the region. However, both the success and the goals of this program of reforms were limited. There was no clear plan of occupation, and the attempts to make Indians to live in village and to preserve military discipline in remote forts would show elusive. In fact, mid-nineteenth century concern with the Amazonia was both a remake of eighteenth-century Pombaline reformism and a rescaling of territorial design. On Pombal-era reforms as far as the Amazon was concerned see: John Hemming, *Amazon Frontier. The Defeat of the Brazilian Indians*, London: Papermac, 1995 (first edition 1987), pp. 28-56. See also Kenneth Maxwell, *Pombal: Paradox of the Enlightenment*, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. On the idea of a rescaling of territoriality in the nineteenth century echoing a previous phase of territoriality after the Peace of Westphalia see C. Maier, “Transformations...”, pp. 41 and ff.

<sup>20</sup> Demétrio Magnoli, “O estado em busca do seu território”, in István Jancsó (org.), *Brasil: Formação do estado e da nação*, São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 2003 and António Carlos Robert Moraes, *Bases da formação territorial do Brasil*, São Paulo: Hucitec, 2000.

in the hands of three regents (being his son under age). Between 1831 and 1837, different liberal cabinets essayed the building of a system in which the nation –as Roderick Barman notices- was made equal to the *patrias*, that is, to the provinces<sup>21</sup>. In this period, the General Assembly (the Parliament) reached extraordinary power being able to appoint the three regents and control them. These were the parliamentary years of the empire. On the other hand, these were also years of provincial upheavals that put in risk the continuity of Brazil as a nation-state. In many occasions, these revolts not only sought greater political autonomy but also attempted to make real the liberal promise of equal participation for everybody<sup>22</sup>. Political turmoil and social agitation were for the conservatives the result of liberal (mis)administration.

The alleged mandarin complained about the fact that: “Que todas as revoltas, saques com destruição e mortandades que tem assolado o Imperio desde 1823 até 1836 são cauzadas por os libertos, mestiços, e gente de côr. Muito felizes serão os Subditos de V. M. I. se não houvera tanta Caridade, e philantropia”, referring to the liberal policies<sup>23</sup>.

His letter to the Emperor demanded a hardening of the policies toward subaltern groups, but this greater repression was not based upon territorial control. In fact, facing liberal federalism, this conservative proposed a sort of confederation. A good example of this is his comments on the rebellion in Pará, one of the most destructive of the decade:

“A pretendida Conquista do Pará, que não tem consumido menos de 2\$000 contos de réis inútilmente, alem de ser dificultosa ficará muito cara... pode V. M. I. estar certo: Que não tarda em apresentar nova rebellião... pois que elles tem de seguir-se do estado de hum Governo democratico puro... de face, que ostentão os Federalistas. Alem disto o Imperio do Pará pode ser invadido por as tropas do Imperio do Sul, mas ellas nunca poderão conservar-se nelle, ou conquistallo... Temeraria Expedição... Raro he o Invasor, que se tem conservado no paiz invadido. ...debe o Regente, e os Vossos Vizires, Augusto Senhor, Cazar a Sereníssima Princesa Imperial D. Januaria de Braganá... com hum Principe da Real Caza de Hanover, e aclamalla Emperatriz absoluta do Gran Pará, e Rainha do Maranhão, Pihahuy e Seará”<sup>24</sup>

The author of the letter was a citizen of Maranhão. The intensity of the racial violence exploded during the revolt led him to distrust the capacity of liberal

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<sup>21</sup> Roderick J. Barman, *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation, 1789-1852*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, p. 160.

<sup>22</sup> Barman, *The Forging of a Nation...*, pp. 161 y ss.

<sup>23</sup> *Terceira carta do Mandarim do Imperio da China, Stenkorazin, a sua Magestade o Imperador do Brasil*, Maranhão: Typografia Constitucional, 1836, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Terceira carta...*, pp. 8-9.

governments in Rio to reestablish control in one the most remote provinces of the Empire. His proposal was to reinforce authority in an absolutist fashion, but at the same time he advanced the idea of an alliance of monarchs, showing his contempt for the national and territorial sovereignty.

But after 1850, a confederation was no longer an option. The rebellions had been crushed and the Empire seemed to have finally achieved stability<sup>25</sup>. The goal was then to fully integrate –“territorialize”- the Amazonia to the nation. The creation of the province of Amazonas in 1852 or the effort to negotiate fix boundaries with neighbor countries reflected this renewed attention to the remote –from Rio’s point of view- forests. The attempts at building territoriality within the Amazonian space arose out of several phenomena: 1) the possibilities of obtaining economic resources out of space occupation derived of the monopoly of rubber held by Brazilian forests and the opportunities opened with the discovery of the process of vulcanization in 1839. Nonetheless, the economic boom led by rubber export would be fully developed only decades later and the consequences of this economic activity as far as territorializing is concerned were rather ambiguous. 2) the consequences of the *Cabanagem* rebellion, some spatial features of the Amazon region and a reorganization of the central power in mid-nineteenth century. 3) the debate regarding the opening of the navigation of the river in face of the US pressures. 4) some peculiar features in the building of the Brazilian state and 5) an international context of growing imperial competition. In this paper I will focus on points 2 and 3 and I will make some final brief remarks about points fourth and fifth.

#### Local tensions, *Cabanagem* and centralization

Local circumstances encouraged the reorganization of the Amazon space. In 1847, a group of merchants and self named *lavradores* (probably landowners) from Pará complaint to the imperial government of the depressed economic situation of the região, the lack of capital and labor (*braços*) and defended that “só a navegação por vapor no

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<sup>25</sup> The last significant “regional” rebellion, the Praieiro Revolt in Pernambuco, was suppressed in 1849. A good analysis of the process of achieving and the meanings of stability in mid-nineteenth century in Jeffrey D. Needell, *The Party of Order. The Conservatives, the State, and Slavery in the Brazilian Monarchy, 1831-1871*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2006, chapter 6.

Amazonas, e seus tributarios, poderá remover muitas destas causas”<sup>26</sup>. This local businessmen particularly regretted the “decrecimiento da população já pelo continuo e incesante recrutamento, ja pela emigração para os paizes limítrofes, pelo mesmo motivo”<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, the national army was a competing institution as far labor recruitment was concerned. The army was based on the “voluntary” service of members of popular classes. However, this workers forced into the army seemed to have no difficulties in deserting and escaping to other countries thanks to the lack of knowledge and control of the authorities over the forests and the porosity of the borders. The complain about the lack of *braços* –common to many areas of Latin America- not only reflected an actual problem of scarce population but also the availability for workers to escape labor discipline either involuntarily through the army or voluntarily through the forests. Increasing control over the jungles was appealing to both, national politicians and local economic elites. Nonetheless, whereas for the rulers of Rio de Janeiro control was about military presence and forts, for the local elites there were other alternatives: “Não havendo porem na Provincia os capitaes necesarios para a organização de companhias (...) pedem os mesmos cidadãos que sejam bem acolhidas algumas proposições, que (...) forão dirigidas ao Governo Imperial por huma Companhia de capitalistas dos Estados Unidos”. But, since the profitability of the enterprise was not obvious, the commerce had to be stimulated: “abrindo-se a navegação do Amazonas aos Estados visinhos (sic)”<sup>28</sup>.

National rulers and local elites faced the Amazonian issue from different perspectives. For Paraenses landowners and merchants the control of labor was essential and therefore the territorial control. As Barbara Weinstein has shown, local economic elites didn’t welcome a business like rubber that implied an enormous mobility of workers and significant obstacles to their fixing to a limited organized space<sup>29</sup>. The presence of foreign merchants might help to consolidate the control over workers and space. For national authorities, the control of territory and population was also a major

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<sup>26</sup> “Representação dos lavradores, proprietarios e negociantes do Pará, pedindo que o Governo conceda por 5 anos, a uma companhia de barcos a vapor dos Estados Unidos o privilégio de navegar o Rio Amazonas”, Biblioteca Nacional (BN) Rio de Janeiro, Manuscritos, Fondo Amazonas, II-32, 15, 7.

<sup>27</sup> “Representação dos labradores...”.

<sup>28</sup> “Representação dos labradores...”.

<sup>29</sup> Barbara Weinstein, *The Amazon Rubber Boom, 1850-1920*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983, p.. A 1857 report from Pará said: “Agricultura nesta Provincia achase em um estado decadente pela falta de braços e sobre tudo porque muitos que nella podião ser aproveitados achão-se empregados na extracção da gomma elástica”, Biblioteca Nacional (BN), Manuscritos, Fondo Pará, II-32,15,17, Belém do Pará, 4-3-1857.

concern, but the presence of foreigners only added confusion to what was already a porous and unmastered space.

This need for taming the space, for establishing territorial hierarchies was related to the peculiar ways of life and the past conflicts of the region. The first decades of the nineteenth century represented a rupture with the Portuguese policy for the Amazonia. The Brazilian Empire didn't inherit an occupied space and it neglected the forts and missions established in the valley during the Portuguese rule. Historian Capistrano de Abreu noticed that "em 1850, o Pará e o Amazonas eram menos povoados e menos prósperos que um século antes"<sup>30</sup>.

Travelogues, official reports, missionaries' writings, army officers and engineers traveling in the region in mid-century reinforced this idea. A 1861 report remarked "Assim o rio Negro vão em decadencia de 1833 para cá", showing the evolution of the population, the disappearance of villages and houses in the area since that date onwards<sup>31</sup>. Most of these reports of the 1850s and 1860s compared what they saw with the information available from the *Corographia Paraense*, published in 1833<sup>32</sup>. Therefore, they pointed out that date at the beginning of decadence. According to the 1861's report in the area of Rio Negro between 1833 and 1861 10 villages gathering 982 people had vanished. Between the first date and the second one, most of the villages had lost more than half of their dwellings<sup>33</sup>. Nonetheless, the "decadence" might have begun earlier, at the beginning of the century amidst the imperial crisis or even after the fall of Pombal in the eighteenth century. A report by the priest José Maria Coelho of 1823 transmitted the same feeling of decline: "Rio Negro (...) que podendo ser o mais rico do Brazil, pela sua situação, toda cheia de Cannaes, e toda navegável, he hoje o mais

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<sup>30</sup> João Capistrano de Abreu, *Capítulos da história colonial, 1500-1800*, Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 1963, vol. 1, p. 92. (First Edition, 1907).

<sup>31</sup> Joaquim de Souza Melo, "Relatorio sobre o estado das povoações do Rio Negro", Manaus 1861, BN, Manuscritos, Fundo Amazonas, II-32, 12, 22. Inspector João Aranha talked in 1855 about the decline of agriculture: "Officio do Inspector João Batista de Figueiredo Tenreiro Aranha ao Exmo. Sr. Conselheiro Sebastião do Rego Barros Presidente da Provincia do Pará", 23-2-1855, Arquivo do Instituto Histórico e Geographico Brasileiro (IHGB), Arquivo Manuel Barata, Lata 288, pasta 8. A similar image is transmitted by a report of a military engineer addressed to Colonel António Tiburcio Ferreira de Souza, director of the constructions of fortress in the Amazonian borders later on, José Ribeiro da Silva Junior, *Melhoramentos do Amasonas (sic). Esboço das principaes questões que interessão ao futuro da Provincia*, Manos: Typ. do Commercio do Amazonas, 1875, pp. 2-3 and by a later essay, Barão de Marajó, *A Amazônia. As provincias do Pará e Amazonas e o governo central do Brasil*, Lisboa: Typ. Minerva, 1883, pp. 67-68.

<sup>32</sup> Ignacio Accioly de Cerqueira e Silva, *Corographia Pareense, ou descripção physica, histórica e política da provincia do Grão-Pará*, Salvador: Typ. Do O Demócrata, 1833.

<sup>33</sup> J. Souza Melo, « Relatorio sobre o estado das povoações do Rio Negro ».

infeliz e o mais pobre de todas as possessões portuguesas”.<sup>34</sup> The image of ordeal and disarray was already present: “Ville de Moura (...) há 3 fogos (antes 1:800) (...) Cravoeiro contava algum dia 320 fogos, hoje 22 –caídos e deshabitados”<sup>35</sup>. In fact, in 1798 the system of the Directorate that had replaced the religious missions was suppressed reflecting the failure of colonial authorities to rule the villages settled by the friars. Since that moment, the process of *aldeamento* (settlement in villages) was clearly doomed and Indians were relieved from outside attempts to control until mid-nineteenth century<sup>36</sup>.

Nonetheless, these comments might be misleading. First of all, the idea of *fogo* or *casa* might make think of a permanent dwelling. But this was far from true. Most of these houses were simple huts, precarious structures built for an assumed short period<sup>37</sup>. It is revealing the telegraphic note introduced by the Padre Coelho: “Capella do Esp. St. de Tocantins 23 fev: 17 fogos (195 pessoas...) 27 fev: 35 fogos (antigamente 200)”<sup>38</sup>. This population was constantly floating, searching for different opportunities. The process of *aldeamento* led by either friars or *directores* during the colonial period attracted people to the villages as far as they can obtain some rewards or to trade with Amazonian peddlers (the so called *regatões*). After that, they returned to extractive activities or to slash-and-burn agriculture what demanded constant mobility: “Só residem na povoação trinta e tres pessoas formando cinco familias, todos os outros estão pelos sitios onde plantão mandioca, arroz, fumo e caffè e só vem ao povoado em tempo de festa ou a chamada do subdelegado”<sup>39</sup>. Moreover, after the Brazilian government reinitiated the plans for controlling space and population in mid-nineteenth century, *aldeamento* had its risks as well:

“Quando voltei só havia nesta povoação o Inspector e sua familia. Todos os outros habitantes e moradores do sitio (...) fugião (...) porque o mesmo Inspector tinha espalhado a noticia que a commissão tinha ordem do governo para recrutar e prender a todo que encontrar” e

“Os habitantes desta povoação, como a maior parte dos moradores dos sitios, fugião para o matto á nossa chegada”<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> « Duas memórias sobre a Capitania de São José do Rio Negro pelo Padre José Maria Coelho », in *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, vol. 203, abril-junho 1949, p. 113.

<sup>35</sup> « Duas memórias sobre a Capitania de São José do Rio Negro... », pp. 125-126. Most of the report is a catalogue of abandoned or semi-abandoned villages.

<sup>36</sup> David Cleary, « Lost Altogether to the Civilised World. Race and the Cabanagem in Northern Brazil, 1750 to 1850 », *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 40, no. 1 (Jan. 1998), p. 114.

<sup>37</sup> Most reports referred to these dwellings as “palhoças”.

<sup>38</sup> « Duas memórias sobre a Capitania de São José do Rio Negro... », p. 133.

<sup>39</sup> J. Souza Melo, « Relatório sobre o estado das povoações do Rio Negro ».

<sup>40</sup> J. Souza Melo, « Relatório sobre o estado das povoações do Rio Negro ».

The wilderness (*matto* or *sertão*) that surrounded most cities and plantations in Brazil were an obvious refuge for deserters of the army, as Peter Beattie remarked. Amazonian region had an even greater wilderness than the rest of the nation making the control of would-be soldiers and runaway slaves even more difficult. Beattie emphasized that the desire to escape from the military recruitment was related to the patriarchal structure of Brazilian society that made males service in the army a dishonorable duty, since it meant the man was unable to protect home and he lacked a patron to prevent him from being 'impressed'. In the Amazonia, however, I believe running away from army conscription was based on the desire to avoid a harsh duty and maintain personal freedom<sup>41</sup>.

The absence of proper village –according to Brazilian elites' ideas- meant that authorities lacked spatial references, would-be centers that helped the process of ordering and building a hierarchical territory. This was a boundless space because of this and because of the mobility and features of its population. Whites were a minority, both in the capital of Pará, Belém and in the interior villages and forests. Most of the small villages where missionaries attempted to gather evangelize Indians during the colonial period had been founded by natives themselves. In the areas near Belém (Eastern Amazonia), native people had been to some extent “detrribalized”, they spoke Portuguese and the *lingua franca* that the Jesuits had promoted in the region. However, they were far from being “assimilated” into white society<sup>42</sup>. This people had no permanent adscription to any activity. Their search for survival led them to a constant interaction with other peoples or groups, including whites. The Indians devoted themselves to different activities: trade, recollection, transport (they played the vital role of rowing the canoes in the river). They were also part of the Brazilian army. Around 1830, most of the rank and file of Belém's and interior regiments was native population. When the Cabanagem revolt broke out the army realized it had no white troops which rely on<sup>43</sup>.

Along with Indians, *mestiços*, blacks –both slaves and free- and foreigners shaped a volatile and hard to define social milieu. The main feature of this society was its mobility, the enormous opportunities to flight that the forest offered. Runaway slaves

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<sup>41</sup> Peter M. Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race and Nation in Brazil, 1864-1945*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2001, pp. 18 and 25. In any case, Beattie's assertion about a patriarchal society might be overstated.

<sup>42</sup> A complex discussion of “racial” identity is carried out by D. Cleary, “Lost Altogether...”.

<sup>43</sup> D. Cleary, “Lost Altogether...”, p. 115.

and *quilombos* seemed to be more frequent in this part of Brazil than in others. The absence of a consolidated plantation system and the opportunities provided by the forests explain this<sup>44</sup>. In addition to *quilombos*, the jungle was the ideal place to run away: “das cosas funestas e sucesivas que se tem passado là pelos lugares do Rio Madeira, e as continuadas queixas das muitas fugas de escravos para Matto-Grosso e para a Bolivia”<sup>45</sup>. Borders were porous in every direction. Not only slaves or deserters crossed them with easiness. Foreigners entered into “Brazilian territory” without obstacles. During the wars of independence of the Spanish American nations and the civil wars that followed the aftermath of the collapse of the Spanish Empire leaders and rank and files of the different sides crossed the imagined and disputed border between Venezuela or New Granada and Brazil without being noticing<sup>46</sup>. These features made the Amazonia particularly unsuitable to build a single identity associated with territory.

This porous space in which both racial and social hierarchies barely held and where most non-white population felt few physical constraints to their movements showed its potentially disruptive features during the so called *Cabanagem* revolt that devastated the province of Pará between c.1835 and c.1840. This revolt not only meant a challenge to social authorities but also jeopardized the territorial survival of the Empire. During *Cabanagem* the rebels took over provincial government and were even able to negotiate with foreign powers. As David Cleary says, this was the rebellion that more clearly threatened the territorial integrity of the American nation<sup>47</sup>.

When the imperial army was trying to crush the rebellion it intensified the forced recruitment of soldiers, many of them prisoners taken from the rebels. This led to an increase number of desertions. Many soldiers escaped into the forests or to the French Guiana. A French explorer noticed: “De 1834 à 1838, une grand guerre civile, le *cabanage*, ensanglantait les provinces du Nord (...) les esclaves fugitifs et les soldats

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<sup>44</sup> D. Cleary, “Lost Altogether...”, p. 118.

<sup>45</sup> “Relatório do 1º Presidente da Província de Amazonas, João Baptista de Figueiredo Tenreiro Aranha ao Ministro de Negócios do Império, 30 abril 1852” in J. da Silva Junio, *Melhoramentos...*, p. 49. See also José Maia Bezerra Neto, “Ousados e insubordinados: protesto e fuga de escravos na Província de Grão-Pará -1840/1860”, *Topoi*, (Rio de Janeiro), March 2001, pp. 73-112.

<sup>46</sup> As late as 1861, Souza Melo, “Relatorio sobre o estado das povoações do Rio Negro” mentioned his encounter with a “Comandante” from Venezuela who left his country for political reasons and settled down in small village -8 houses- of the Rio Negro region.

<sup>47</sup> D Cleary, « Lost Altogether...”, p. 111. On *Cabanagem* see Domingos A. Raiol, *Motins Políticos, ou História dos Principais Acontecimentos Políticos da Província do Pará desde o Ano de 1821 até 1835*, Belém: Universidade Federal do Pará, 1970 (first edition, 1865-90, 3 vols); Pasquale di Paolo, *Cabanagem: A revolução popular da Amazônia*, Belém: Edições CEJUP, 1990; Julio José Chiavenato, *Cabanagem: o povo no poder*, São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1984.

déserteurs se réfugiaient en masse dans les territoires litigieux. Il importait de ne pas laisser se masser sur la côte contestée une population aussi peu recommandable »<sup>48</sup>.

Despite these late recommendations about not allowing this kind of population to enter into French territory, the authorities of the French Guiana interacted with rebels in different ways causing new troubles for Brazilian rulers. Some French vessels engaged in cattle smuggling with rebels and a naval force was deployed in the river apparently with the excuse of establishing fisheries. On August 1836, amidst the rebellion, the Government of the French Guiana sent a letter to the President of the Province of Pará stating: "I have the honor to inform your Excy. that in conformity to orders received from my Govt. I have taken possession of the legal limits of South Guayana in virtue of the Treaty of Amiens". Thus, the French colonial authorities took advantage of the internal strife in Pará to occupy the lands of the so called 'Contestado', that is, the disputed area between both countries. Moreover, according to the President of the Province of Pará, in an island in the lake of Apá, the French installed a sort of fort and conceded lands to runaway slaves and rebels<sup>49</sup>.

After the first phase of the rebellion finished with the reoccupation of Belém by governmental forces in 1837, a second phase of guerrilla warfare continued for three more years. The disarray caused by war and rebellion, the social upheaval, and the magnitude of the threat turned Rio de Janeiro's attention to the northern forests and – without a doubt- were behind the territorial approach to the region that national rulers and local elites would take afterwards. Limits had to be built, borders had to be fixed.

Among the consequences of the Cabanagem: a greater military presence, an attempt to control mobile, "vagrant" populations, for instance, through the so called *Corpo de Trabalhadores*, and a reinforcement of the racial frontiers in the region<sup>50</sup>. Also, complaints of politicians in Pará and journalists in Rio about French attitude in the border and a diplomatic offensive in order to fix the limits with the French Guiana that ended in a –provisional- treaty in 1841<sup>51</sup>. Which the real achievements of this policy is something that have to be explore deeply. For Cleary, the *Corpo de Trabalhadores*,

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<sup>48</sup> Henry A. Coudreau, *La France Équinoxiale. Études sur les Guyanes et l'Amazonie*, Paris : Challamel Ainé Éditeur, 1886, p. 230. As Cleary stated, Cabanagem was « The bloodiest uprising in Brazilian history », "Lost Altogether...", pp. 111 and 113 and D. Cleary, "Lost Altogether...", p. 128.

<sup>49</sup> National Archives, Department of State, Group Record 59, Despatches from United States Consuls in Pará, 1831-1906, Microfilm T-478, Roll 1, Volume 1, Charles Smith, Consulate of the United States in Pará, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1835 to John Forsyth, Secretary of State, enclosing letter of President of the Province of Pará to Mr. Heskett, H. B. M's. Consul, Pará, December 1836.

<sup>50</sup> D. Cleary, "Lost Altogether...", p. 134.

<sup>51</sup> H. A. Coudreau, *La France Équinoxiale...*, pp. 230-31.

which worked from 1836 to 1855, was “the most disastrous legacy of the Cabanagem for the mass of the Amazonian population, especially the Indians of the interior”<sup>52</sup>. The autonomy and mobility of the population was seriously eroded and racial hierarchies became stricter. Suspicion and surveillance extended. Recalling 1852, Henry Walter Bates, a British traveler in the region, stated: “Life, however, was now and had been for some time quite safe throughout the country. Some few of the worst characters had been transported or imprisoned, and the remainder after being pardoned were converted once more into quite and peaceable citizens”<sup>53</sup>.

However, the impact might have been uneven –although hard on native populations- and since the very beginning –early 1850s- the process of territorializing was lumpy and contested. The *Corpo de Trabalhadores* meant less freedom for subaltern individuals in the Amazonia, but it didn’t mean necessarily a greater control of the army or the state. The Captains of Trabalhadores rendered their privileged position into a source of private profit:

“The captains of Trabalhadores are appointed by the Brazilian Government, to embody the scattered Indian labourers and canoe-men of their respective districts, to the end that they may supply passing travellers with men when required. A semi-military organisation is given to the bodies (...) The captains, however, universally abuse their authority, monopolising the service of the men for their own purposes, so that it is only by favour that the loan of a canoe-hand can be wrung from them”<sup>54</sup>.

Moreover, not all the rebels were either imprisoned or pardoned. Some of them move to different locations and recommenced their lives with a distant –although fearful- relationship with authorities. Again, Bates provides us with a glimpse into these lives:

“The circumstance of the Cafuzo coming out armed to receive visitors very much astonished my companions... But as Manoel remarked, the fellow may have been one of the unpardoned rebel leaders who had settled here after the recapture of Santarem in 1836, and lived in fear of being enquired for by the authorities of Santarem”<sup>55</sup>.

The attempts to “territorialize” the Amazonia didn’t arise only out of local tensions. A national and even international thrust toward centralization emerged in mid-nineteenth century. The intense autonomy of the provinces during the 1830s and the

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<sup>52</sup> D. Cleary, “Lost Altogether...”, p. 134.

<sup>53</sup> Henry Walter Bates, *The Naturalist on the River Amazon: A Record of Adventures, Sketches of Brazilian and Indian Life, and Aspects of Nature Under the Equator, During Eleven Years of Travel With a Memoir of the Author by Edward Clodd*, New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1892 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1862), p. 20.

<sup>54</sup> H. W. Bates, *The Naturalist on the River Amazon...*, p. 226.

<sup>55</sup> H. W. Bates, *The Naturalist on the River Amazon...*, p. 223.

rebellions of that decade and the 1840s made the rulers (mostly conservative) of Rio de Janeiro worried about systems to concentrate power and decision in the center. One of the most lasting legacies of the liberal-federal years was a perception of chaos among conservative rulers. Conservative governments of the 1840s (the so called *regresso*, return) focused on gaining control over distant parts of the empire by modifying liberal legislation and politics. Thus, the so Additional Act of the Constitution, introduced in 1834 by the liberal governments and that conceded wide autonomy to the provinces was substantially reformed. The Conservative passed the “Interpretative Act of the Additional Act” in 1840 which eroded provincial assemblies’ capacities<sup>56</sup>. The Council of State, an advisory chamber made up of some of the most prominent members of Brazilian aristocracy and in charge of personally advising the Emperor on important political matters was reinstated by the conservative governments of the 1840s. The Council was a significant instrument in the policies of centralization<sup>57</sup>.

The army, the judiciary and the bureaucracy suffered also the process of centralization. In 1850, the government reformed the National Guard, a militia created by the liberal authorities in 1831, by imposing the Minister of Justice’s surveillance on every appointment and dismissal<sup>58</sup>. The police and judicial bureaucracy were also more firmly under central control. In the 1840s, the Minister of Justice gained the faculty to appoint county judges and local justice of peace were deprived of administrative and electoral power in favor of police commissioners (*delegados de policia*)<sup>59</sup>. The trend toward centralization reached the local level. During the 1850s municipalities which used to have the right to appoint their own police and justice officers lost it in favor of the central government<sup>60</sup>. Thus, regional circumstances and national politics converged for making centralization a desirable goal for elites in the Amazon and in Rio de Janeiro. Nonetheless, the actual impact of these policies is difficult to assess without further evidence and research on issues such as the municipal governments of the Amazonian provinces, the judicial system, the army, etc.

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<sup>56</sup> Murilo de Carvalho, Barman, COMPLETE. Thomas W. Palmer, Jr., “A momentous decade in Brazilian administrative history, 1831-1840”, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 30, (1950), p. 210.

<sup>57</sup> Lydia Magalhães Nunes Gardner, “In Pursuit of Order: A Study in Brazilian Centralization: The Section of Empire of the Council of State, 1842-1889”, Ph. D. diss., John Hopkins University, 1987.

<sup>58</sup> P. Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood...*, p. 35.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Graham, *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*, Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press, 1990, p. 53.

<sup>60</sup> Judy Bieber, *Power, Patronage, and Political Violence: State Building on a Brazilian Frontier, 1822-1889*, Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999, pp. 49-50.

Since 1850s, there was also an international trend toward the rupture or recasting of several federal polities, what Robert Binkley aptly referred as a “federative crisis”<sup>61</sup>. This historian suggested that around that decade several “federations”, including the so called European concert of nations, began to crumble and states (old and new ones) based upon territorial notions of sovereignty strove to centralize their power. The processes of Italian and German “unification” were the most obvious examples, but they were not unique by any means. It was not only a European development. In the United States, the civil war led to the establishment of the basis of a truly unified state and economy and to a greater central government intervention<sup>62</sup>. In 1861, Argentina became for the first time a unified political structure and between that year and 1880 a process of affirmation of the central government unfolded<sup>63</sup>. Even in the colonial world a tendency toward centralization and territoriality became apparent. In India, the aftermath of the rebellion of 1856 brought about the substitution of Crown rule for the East India Company, “the shift from mercantile to territorial colonialism”<sup>64</sup>. This is the biggest picture in which the process of building territorial control and sovereignty over the Amazonia must be framed and fully understood. The connections between these local, national and international processes are beyond coincidence, although difficult to disclose. Let’s turn to an issue that gathered the three dimensions, regional, national and transnational, the opening of the navigation of the Amazon in order to throw some light into these connections<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> Robert Binkley, *Realism and Nationalism, 1852-1871*, New York & London: Harpers & Brothers, 1935, p. 181.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History*, New York: Hill and Wang, 2006, pp, 138-142. R. Binkley, *Realism and Nationalism...*, p. 183 said of 1863: “And this same year was the year of Gettysburg, the turning-point in the history of American federalism”. C. Maier, “Consigning the Twentieth Century...”, p. 814, emphasized the connections between American, European and even Asian developments.

<sup>63</sup> Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Una nación para el desierto argentino*, Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2005.

<sup>64</sup> Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Is mere coincidence or is there any subjacent causality? This needs to be address. Binkley posed the question, “why was the nineteenth century unable to maintain or develop, either in Europe or in America, those political systems in which the location of paramount authority is left indefinite?”, (R. Binkley, *Realism and Nationalism...*, p. 183) and follows with a very intriguing analogy: “The discrediting of federative polity was a European phenomenon as wide as the attack upon the institution of servile labor, and as difficult to explain”, p. 184. These are relevant and fascinating questions and since these were not only European issues, the Brazilian case might add some light to the puzzle.

The free navigation of the Amazon river, the international field, and the political organization of the Empire

The development of the steam navigation from mid-nineteenth century and the opportunities opened by the transformation of the rubber industry increased both Brazilian and foreign interest in the Amazon valley. Steamers seemed to promise bountiful results in a region whose main feature was a long and large river in terms of flow. (However, the knowledge about the Amazon's seasonal behavior, exact course and the structure and navigability of its tributaries was quite limited). Since an early date, the imperial authorities sent to province of Pará transmitted to the government in Rio de Janeiro the local elites' wishes about a steamers company that would allow them to exploit and control the vast Amazonian lands and waters. At the beginning of the 1850s, part of the United States press enthusiastically supported the campaign of a Navy officer, Matthew Maury who demanded the Brazilian government to open the river to the international navigation. Maury struggled to have the US government involved in his campaign lobbying the Brazilian authorities in order to obtain this opening. At the same time, he asked his government the support in the establishment of an American steamers company for the Amazon.<sup>66</sup> The reasons for this campaign and for others that even proposed the colonization of the Amazonia were varied. Economic ambitions, an expansionist-nationalist ideology and even the project of sending to the Amazon the black population from the South as a solution to the deep political crisis that slavery was causing in the United States in the years previous to the Civil War<sup>67</sup>.

Encouraged by the US campaign, Brazil neighbors opened their rivers to foreign navigation including the part of the Amazon that bathed their territories of its tributaries. In 1852 Nueva Granada allowed the entrance of steam boats from any nationality; en 1853 Ecuador and Bolivia did so. Peru declared that friend nations might

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<sup>66</sup> This story has been told several times. The most complete account is N. Luz, *A Amazonia...* See also Demétrio Magnoli, *O corpo da pátria. Imaginação geográfica e política externa no Brasil (1808-1912)*, São Paulo: UNESP-Editora Moderna, 1997, pp. 178 and ff. and Fernando Saboia de Medeiros, *A liberdade de navegação do Amazonas (Relações entre o Imperio e os Estados Unidos da América)*, São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1938. The main work of Lieutenant Maury is *The Amazon and the Atlantic Slopes of South America. A Series of Lectures Published in the National Intelligencer and Union Newspaper under the Signature of Inca*, Washington: F. Taylor, 1853. Brazilian responses can be found in Pedro de Angelis, *De la navegación del Amazonas. Respuesta a una memoria de M. Maury, oficial de la marina de los Estados Unidos*, Caracas: Reimpreso por T. Antero, 1857 y João Baptista de Castro Moraes Antas, *O Amazonas. Breve resposta á memoria do Tenente da Armada Americana-Ingleza F. Maury*, Rio de Janeiro: Typ. De M. Barreto, 1854. This topic, nonetheless, deserves further attention and it will be explored in my project.

<sup>67</sup> See N. Luz, *A Amazônia...*

navigate up to Nauta (close to the Brazilian border) if they had previously obtained Brazilian permit to go up the Amazon<sup>68</sup>. Brazilian diplomacy and historiography saw in these measures the result of American pressures and manipulation. However, Spanish American republics, without enough resources to start the enterprise by themselves, hoped that US, British or French steamers would stimulate commerce and economy.

Facing diplomatic isolation and the threat of an US ultimatum, the imperial government launched a strategy that can be defined as territorial. It sought, by any means, to effectively define the possession of the territory before allowing any foreign craft to enter into the river. In order to do that, the Brazilian authorities embarked into a hectic race to sign diplomatic agreements with neighbor countries, and with Britain and France (since they were the metropolis of British Guiana and French Guiana, bordering the Amazon valley), in order to strictly fix national borders. National authorities send military garrisons to different parts of the valley. A Brazilian company obtained the monopolistic right to navigate the Amazon in the Brazilian territory under the condition of settling farmers in the region. The policies toward native population were reformulated in order to “nationalize” Indians. To sum up, this was an attempt to redefine borders, both within and without the Amazon valley, to occupy the space, to “nationalize” it, and to exploit its economic resources. The achievements of these new policies were quite limited and this is one of the explanations for Brazilian anxiety about the region<sup>69</sup>.

This strategy of “territorializing” the Amazonia was to some extent related to Maury’s propandá but it has also other, more profound, roots related to the Brazilian perception on her place in the world and to international affairs. First of all, although Maury’s project was almost a utopia and his description of the Amazon valley as a rich and easily exploitable land a deliberate propandá exaggeration, the perception of threat had some actual bases. The occupation of Texas and other former Mexican territories had begun from the settlement of American colonist in an almost “empty” space. This caused among Latin American politicians. The discussion of the Texas case was frequent among Brazilian writers and politicians who dealt with the question of the

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<sup>68</sup> Aureliano Candido Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas. Estudo sobre a livre navegação do Amazonas. Estadística, produção, commercio. Questões fiscaes do valle do Amazonas*, Rio de Janeiro: B. L. Garnier, 1866, pp. 15-16.

<sup>69</sup> Diplomatic agreements were not easy to reach and the process of definition of borders was open at least until the end of the nineteenth-century. Military occupation and control of the region was a failure (even in the twentieth century it has not fully succeeded) and the nationalization of native population was a troublesome process. Again, these are topics that will be fully explored during the project.

free navigation and the possibility that American settlers travelled to the Amazonia, as planned by Maury and others: “Los americanos hicieron con Tejas el ensayo de un sistema que parece que ha prevalecido hoy entre ellos”<sup>70</sup>. In the Conselho de Estado (the Council of State, an advisory committee whose members were appointed for life by the Emperor among some of the most conspicuous representatives of Brazilian political elites and nobility) were common statements as the following one referring to the possible US ultimatum:

“O perigo em que está a Ilha de Cuba de ser mais cedo ou mais tarde anexada é patente (...) Anexadas assim, uma por uma, aos Estados Unidos cinco extensas províncias do México, talvez mais da metade do território dessa República (...) Qual não será então a pressão desse colosso imenso sobre o Centro-América? Ficar-nos-á visión, e fronteiro ao Amazonas, que reputa um Eldorado”<sup>71</sup>

It is not clear the support that Maury had from his government<sup>72</sup>. In 1853, the US Minister in Rio de Janeiro pressed the Brazilian government to obtain a favorable policy toward free navigation of the river by foreign steamers. His campaign didn't yield important results in Brazilian policies: “I have not been able hitherto to make an impression on this Government favorable to a liberal view and appreciation of the interest that Brazil has in such navigation”. However, he believed that it was possible to gain Brazilian minds for the cause. The Minister was fully aware of the concern that the publication of Maury's article provoked in Brazil “public opinion”: “a large part of the Brazilian population, and their Government, who believe, or affect to believe, that it is conquest not trade that the people of the United States desire”<sup>73</sup>. Since the end of 1853 and during 1854, a new American diplomat became increasingly frustrated by Brazilian rejections. The expectations –even if moderated- of his antecessor were transformed

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<sup>70</sup> P. de Angelis, *De la navegación...*, p. 96.

<sup>71</sup> Senado Federal, *Atas do Conselho de Estado Pleno*, volume IV, Terceiro Conselho de Estado, 1850-1857 (Brasília, 1978), “Ata de 1º de abril de 1854. Parecer da Seção”, p. 177.

<sup>72</sup> In 1850, the US Consul in Pará wrote to the Secretary of State in Washington: “I have received from Mr. George Manning (agent for Lt. Maury) a letter of enquiry respecting the river Amazon and the Province of Pará, and not knowing for what purpose such information is sought, I send the answer enclosed”, NA, Department of State, Group Record 59, Despatches from United States Consuls in Pará, 1831-1906, Microcopy No. T-478, vol. 1. Lorry L. Morris, US, Consulate of the United States in Pará, December 31, 1850, to Daniel Webster, Secretary of State. Therefore, the American Consul in Pará was not aware of Maury's desings. However, this does not necessarily mean that the US government paid no heed to Maury's project. The Consuls of Pará in the nineteenth century were mostly US businessmen settled in the region. The position was under paid and it was a secondary diplomatic post as far as US interests were concerned. Therefore, consuls might also lack enough information from their government in Washington.

<sup>73</sup> NA, Department of State, Group Record 59, Despatches from United States Ministers to Brazil, 1809-1906, Legation of the United States, Rio de Janeiro, October 7, 1853, Robert Schenck to the Secretary of State (Reel 22, n. 83).

into gloomy perspectives: “I have not yet received an answer from the Government of Brazil to the propositions before it, relative to a Treaty, and to the navigation of the River Amazon. It is not very difficult to imagine what the answer will be, should any ever be made”<sup>74</sup>. At the beginning of 1854, a rumor spread out over Rio de Janeiro stating that a New York company was going to navigate the Amazon even without permission. According to US sources, the Brazilian government sent two regiments of infantry to Pará in order to deter such an attempt<sup>75</sup>. In September 1854, the US representative finally received the response from the Brazilian government regarding the opening of the river. As he feared, the answer clearly established that the timing for that measure was not opportune:

“No estado em que se acha a industria do Brasil ainda pouco adiantada, o Governo Imperial crêe que as celebrações de taes Tratados não convem por ora aos interesses do paiz (...) não se acha o Amazonas (...) quando convenientemente povoado, possa dar vasto alimento ao commercio das Nações; contudo estando esse Valle quase inteiramente deserto, nem a sua navegação é indispensável”<sup>76</sup>

The US diplomat complained about the “jealousy entertained by the Government of Brazil towards the United States”<sup>77</sup>. However, this frustration was another side of a resigned attitude. The correspondence sent by the American Legation in Rio to Washington in 1854 demonstrated that the commitment to Maury’s grand idea was not beyond diplomatic pressures<sup>78</sup>. Brazil had a close relationship with Britain –even if strained in the past years on account of the reluctance of Brazilian authorities to

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<sup>74</sup> NA, Department of State, Group Record 59, Despatches from United States Ministers to Brazil, 1809-1906, Legation of the United States, Rio de Janeiro, 23<sup>rd</sup>. December 1853. Trousdale to the Secretary of State, (Reel 23, n. 3).

<sup>75</sup> NA, Department of State, Group Record 59, Despatches from United States Ministers to Brazil, 1809-1906, Legation of the United States, Rio de Janeiro, 14<sup>th</sup>. March 1854. Trousdale to the Secretary of State, (Reel 23, n. 6).

<sup>76</sup> NA, Department of State, Group Record 59, Despatches from United States Ministers to Brazil, 1809-1906, Rio de Janeiro, Ministerio dos Negocios Exrangeiros, September 13th, 1854, to Mr. Trousdale, (Reel 23, n. 19).

<sup>77</sup> NA, Department of State, Group Record 59, Despatches from United States Ministers to Brazil, 1809-1906, Legation of the United States, Rio de Janeiro, 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1854. Trousdale to the Secretary of State, (Reel 23, n. 23).

<sup>78</sup> At the beginning of 1855, the US Minister, William Trousdale, had a personal interview with the emperor, Pedro II, at Petropolis and he was said that “the time has not yet come for opening that river to the free use of other nations; but that it will be opened at some future time, when the population on its banks are sufficiently numerous to for a police, capable of protecting the interest of Brazil”. The US representative had assumed as inevitable Brazil’s reaction and his report to the Secretary of State was a resigned one. NA, Department of State, Record Group 59, Despatches from the United States Ministers to Brazil, 1809-1906, Legation of the United States, Rio de Janeiro, William Trousdale to the Secretary of State, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1855, (Reel 24, n. 32).

suppressed slave traffic<sup>79</sup> - and the United States was in no condition to pursue its plan beyond certain limits.

But of course, the story was not about US “real” intentions, but about Brazilian perceptions. In fact, the main concern for Brazilian politicians was not a possible American invasion in the period of splendor of the doctrine of the “Manifest Destiny”. An armed intervention in order to force the Brazilian government to open the navigation was a more plausible outcome. The conflict between the United States and Japan that ended with the intervention of the Commodore Matthew Perry in 1854 forcing the Asiatic Empire to open its ports to Americans was in the mind of both Brazilians and Americans. Maury and some of his supporters frequently referred to Brazilian policy regarding the Amazon as a “Japanese policy”<sup>80</sup>. The comparison was an offense for the Brazilian elites who saw themselves as belonging to both Western Civilization and the New World that the United States claimed to lead.

The ideas presented by Brazilian diplomats and polemicists in order to defend their right to control the navigation of the river were varied and in many occasions contradictory. The first type of argument was based upon international law (*dereito de gentes*). Brazil, as part of the civilized world, was affected by international law, respected the law, and has the obligation to make others respect it (this made Brazil something different from China or Japan). US demand to open the navigation of the Amazon violated the international law because river waters were under the sovereignty of the country through which the river flows<sup>81</sup>. On the other hand, the doctrine of the Congress of Vienna of 1815 seemed to oppose Brazil’s official posture. The European powers reunited in that conference agreed upon the principle of free navigation of the rivers, although in actuality the free navigation was an elusive goal to reach<sup>82</sup>. Brazil resorted to this doctrine in her intervention in the Rio de la Plata with the aim of opening the navigation of the rivers in her southern border. Despite this contradiction,

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<sup>79</sup> Richard Graham, *Britain and the Onset of Modernization in Brazil, 1850-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972 (first edition, 1968), pp. 163 and ff. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INTEREST OF THE NAVIGATION OF THE AMAZON FOR THE US NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED SINCE US VESSELS HAD ACCESS TO THE COMMERCE IN THE PORT OF BELEM. MOREOVER, THE INTERNAL POSITION OF MAURY HAS TO BE EXPLORED. SEE ALSO: GENERAL RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE (RECORD GROUP 59), RECORDS OF MISSIONS, COMMISSIONS, AND CONFERENCES, VOL. 3, 1852-1859.

<sup>80</sup> P. de Angelis, *De la navegación...*, p. 64.

<sup>81</sup> For instance, De Angelis stated: “Toda nación tiene un derecho propio y exclusivo a la soberanía, al dominio de todo el territorio que ocupa” and following Vattel: “Los ríos interiores son de propiedad incontestable de la nación cuyo territorio atraviesan”, *De la navegación...*, p. 18.

<sup>82</sup> N. Luz, *A Amazônia...*, p. 116.

De Angelis asserted that the agreements of Vienna didn't oblige Brazil since no nation from the Americas had participated in that Congress<sup>83</sup>.

Hence, Brazil was not under the law of the absolutist powers gathered in Vienna that didn't take into account the New World (although most of the nations of the New World didn't exist yet) but at the same time Brazil was part of the European civilization as her moderation and respect for the law demonstrated. This couldn't be said of the United States: "o Brasil tem muito mais a temer da ambiciosa, insaciável, e inquieta atividade dos americanos, que pautam somente pelo seu interesse as noções do direito, de que das Nações da Europa. Não há nada mais temível do que as democracias fortes e ávidas!"<sup>84</sup> The United States violated the rules of international law: "A imprensa americana já empreendeu essa tarefa, com razões repugnantes a todos os princípios de direito, e que justificam o comunismo internacional"<sup>85</sup>. Brazil didn't have a "Japanese policy", as her critics argued, but on the contrary showed to be a more "civilized" nation than the United States by respecting the law.

The most interesting aspect of the Brazilian response was how it united the absence of respect for the law in the United States with its democratic system. The United States was a prisoner of the caprices of the opinion: "Dá-se nos Estados Unidos o fenômeno que com o andar dos tempos aparece nas democracias, principalmente quando se tornam fortes e ambiciosas, o enfraquecimento das noções de direito e da justiça e a subordinação da moralidade à vontade de todos"<sup>86</sup>. That is, democracy, or at least American democracy, was not a virtuous regime. This is revealing of the different ideas that were playing in the minds of political leaders. In the nineteenth century the idea of "civilization" was strongly linked to ideas of prosperity and progress, but the old notion of "virtue" as the antidote to "decadence" had not completely vanished in Brazil or elsewhere. The idea of progress meant to some extent escape from the fatal cycle of virtue and corruption, rise and fall, elaborated by classic thinkers, but only to some extent... De Angelis clearly referred to the permanence of the old ideas: "El imperio romano pereció porque puso el derecho de las naciones en la punta de una lanza, y pisoteó los derechos de los demás pueblos con los cascos de los caballos"<sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> P. de Angeli, *De la navegación...*, p. 38.

<sup>84</sup> *Atas do Conselho...*, 1º de abril de 1854, p. 148.

<sup>85</sup> *Atas do Conselho...*, 1º de abril de 1854, p. 160.

<sup>86</sup> *Atas do Conselho...*, 1º de abril de 1854, p. 177.

<sup>87</sup> De Angelis, *De la navegación...*, p. 13.

The reflections on the American political system were not only part of an international dispute. They also transmitted the opinions of Brazilian elites on their own political order, revealing their anxiety vis-à-vis a not well defined position in the so called concert of civilized nations. Brazil was the only monarchy of the New World, what caused distrust among her neighbors. Besides, she became the only slave society in South America and, after the end of the Civil War in United States, the last slave society of the Western World (along with Cuba). Her political system, based upon liberal ideas was punctuated with conservative features such as the political role of the Emperor, the institution of the Conselho or the aristocratic titles generously conceded by the monarch to gain favor and support. Brazilians were subjects in a constitutional regime and they had an emperor who, following the French model of Louis Philippe, presented himself as the king-citizen<sup>88</sup>. These ambiguities in the definition of the nation might have contributed to the stability and the survival of unity. In 1850, both goals seemed to have been achieved, although they were not guaranteed beforehand. However, precisely when the regime consolidated the anguish about its reform emerged<sup>89</sup>.

In the diplomatic conflict surrounding the navigation of the Amazon the “isolamento politico do Imperio, desprovido das sympathias dos movemos liberaes e dos absolutistas” was apparent<sup>90</sup>. This feeling was expressed by the Brazilian diplomatic representative in Washington, Sérgio Teixeira de Macedo, in his correspondence:

“Pelos governos absolutos da Europa, ou pelos que simpatizavam com o absolutismo foi o Brasil classificado logo desde os primeiros tempos de sua existencia nacional como país de propaganda revolucionária em razão da Carta Constitucional que dêle partiu para Portugal. Pelos povos foi o Brasil classificado de país de tirania, de país inóspito, que acolhia os colonos europeus alemães, suiços, e irlandeses com a miséria, e com o cautiverio do serviço militar. Pela classe liberal ilustrada e pensante, mas moderada (...) o Brasil foi classificado entre os países que por seus excessos, por seus injustificados movimentos revolucionários desonrabam a liberdade e davam argumentos ao absolutismo contra ela”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ver: Roderick J. Barman, *Citizen Emperor. Pedro II and the Making of Brazil, 1825-91*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999 and also J. Needell, *The Party of Order...*, p..

<sup>89</sup> José Murilo de Carvalho, *A construção...*: “No Brasil, a fase de acumulação de poder durou até mais ou menos 1850, quando o problema da unidade nacional passou a segundo plano e começaram a surgir pressões no sentido de ampliar a participação”, p. 115.

<sup>90</sup> F. Saboia de Medeiros, *A liberdade de navegação...*, p. 46.

<sup>91</sup> Offício de Sérgio Teixeira de Macedo para Paulino José Soares de Souza, Washington,, 14-11-1850, in A. C. Ferreira, Reis, *A Amazonia...*, pp. 71-90. The US Minister emphasized also the issue of the monarchical regime as one of the obstacles to the development of a “liberal” policy as far as the river Amazon was concerned: “The functionaries of this Government are warmly attached to monarchy, and are exerting their energies to foster a set of principles adapted to that form of Government, and to keep at a distance all persons who would be likely to inculcate doctrines of a different order”, NA, Department of

Thus, anxiety about the political reform and the place of Brazil in the modern – that is Western- world interwove and were reflected in the Brazilian strategy as far as the opening of the Amazon to the navigation of foreign vessels was concerned.

Ultimately, despite the insistence of Brazilian nationalist historiography in the idea that the Amazonia was incorporated to the nation as a legacy of the Portuguese occupation, this situation was far from being accomplished<sup>92</sup>. Imperial resistance against American pressures shows the insecurity that Brazilian rulers felt about the borders in the region. As it was said, the process of resistance was accompanied of an active border policy. Moreover, intellectual myths were elaborated –and reformulated– that helped to legitimize the new territorial view of the state. The process of “territorializing” had also its symbolic side. The myth of Ilha-Brasil resurged in mid-nineteenth century “como ideología de legitimación nacional y territorial”<sup>93</sup>. Unlike what nationalist historiography has defended, this was also the moment when the doctrine of *uti possidetis* triumphed, that is, the idea that the sovereignty over a contested territory should be based upon the effective occupation and not on agreements on limits difficult to establish was not the official doctrine of Brazilian diplomacy before this moment. This is apparent in the case of the Amazonia, where the lack of control over the border caused distrust toward the idea of *uti possidetis*, because it could become a powerful stimulus to foreign population to occupy possible Brazilian territories. Thus, regarding a possible agreement about frontiers with Peru, the opinion of the Council of State was: “...os nossos limites, longe de ficarem melhor definidos pela cláusula do *uti possidetis*, são por ela inteiramente expostos a uma inovação das antigas convenções entre Portugal e Espanha”<sup>94</sup>. In fact, *uti possidetis* was adopted by

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State, Group Record 59, Despatches from United States Ministers to Brazil, 1809-1906, Legation of the United States, Rio de Janeiro, 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1854. Trousdale to the Secretary of State, (Reel 23, n. 23).

<sup>92</sup> D. Magnoli, *O corpo da pátria...*, p. 182.

<sup>93</sup> D. Magnoli, *O corpo da pátria...*, p. 111.

<sup>94</sup> Câmara dos Deputados. Ministério das Relações Exteriores, *Conselho de Estado 1842-1889. Consultas da Seção dos Negócios Estrangeiros*, vol. 1, 1842-1845, Brasília: Centro de Documentação e Informação. Coordenação de Publicações, 1978, Consulta de 16 de junho de 1847 “Brasil-Perú. Exame dos tratados negociados em julho de 1841 sobre comércio, limites, extradição e navegação fluvial”, p. 106. Even as late as 1858, the idea of *uti possidetis* represented a challenge for Brazilian diplomacy in some cases, for instance as far as the relationships with France were concerned: “France a possédé jadis, par droit de *primo occupanti* la moitié de cette branche et la rive gauche de l’Amazone”, M. Émile Carrey in *Moniteur* (Paris), 14 Novembre 1858, p. 423.

the Empire as official doctrine only in 1849 reflecting as well the move toward territoriality<sup>95</sup>.

### The opening of the navigation and the liberal project

On 7 December 1866, a decree opened the navigation of the Amazon. In that moment, American pressure had vanished amid a bloody civil war. Why did Brazil finally decide to open the navigation of the river? First of all, the War of Paraguay had a significant influence. Brazil had justified her intervention in the conflict on the decision of Paraguayan dictator to not allow the free navigation through the River Paraguay<sup>96</sup>. A French pamphleteer harshly criticized Brazilian decision as a demonstration of hypocrisy:

“Le décret du 7 décembre 1866 qui ouvre (...) la navigation de l’Amazone (...) est un fait considérable, qui rompt trop profondément, en apparence, avec les traditions de la politique brésilienne (...)  
le décret du 7 décembre ne prouve la volonté de Brésil de renoncer au régime colonial, en admettant sans arrière-pensée le dogme moderne de la liberté des rivières.  
(...) ce décret ne qu’une ruse de guerre destinée à tromper l’Europe sur le but poursuivi, à cette heure, par le Brésil, dans sa guerre contre le Paraguay. (...)  
l’ouverture de l’Amazone n’a été pour le Brésil qu’un engin de guerre, à l’aide duquel il espère vaincre les résistances que rencontre son établissement définitif sur l’estuaire platéen.  
L’objectif, c’était la République Orientale avec ses magnifiques pâturages et ses plaines fertiles »<sup>97</sup>.

Therefore, for this French critic, the opening of the navigation concealed, under a liberal garment, an imperialist –and absolutist- project to occupy territories in the region of the River Plate. However, the civilizing claim of Brazilian politicians must not be discarded altogether as a mere hypocrite smokescreen. In fact, aspirations to civilization and imperial designs are often reunited. Thus, the ideas about civilization shared by imperial political rulers played some role in the opening of the river to foreign vessels. These ideas were based on the European model and to some extent in the

<sup>95</sup> D. Magnoli, *O corpo...*, p. 251. Synesio Sampaio Goes Filho, *Navegantes, bandeirantes, diplomatas. Um ensaio sobre a formação das fronteiras do Brasil*, São Paulo: Martin Fontes, 2001, p. 5. This essay, a nationalist one, although it emphasizes the long Brazilian tradition of using the doctrine *uti possidetis* recognizes that the position was not fully accepted by the foreign-policy-makers of the Empire until at least 1847, mainly as far as the Amazon was concerned.

<sup>96</sup> D. Magnoli, *O corpo...*, p. 182. For the US Consul at Pará, the measure “foreshadows the opening of the Rio de la Plata at the end of the war with Paraguay, if the allies be successful”. NA, Department of State, Record Group 59, Despatches from United States Consuls in Pará, 1831-1906. Microcopy n. T-478. Volume 4, Reel 2, Pond, Consulate of the United States at Pará, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1867, to Secretary of State.

<sup>97</sup> Claude de La Poëpe, *L’ouverture de l’Amazone et ses conséquences politiques et commerciales*, Paris : E. Dentu, 1867, pp. 12, 30 and 46.

United States as well. To “civilize” Brazil meant to bring prosperity and economic progress, but also to slowly adapt Brazilian laws and habits to the laws (liberal ones) and habits of the model nations. “Civilization” to some extent was synonymous of “liberalism” although this was not the only possible meaning of such a polysemous word. And yet, this idea of civilization was accepted with a good dose of pragmatism<sup>98</sup>. The imperial rulers never fully rejected the opening of the river, but they asserted this was a desirable goal when circumstances would allow it.

The gradual, pragmatic and adaptive approach to liberalism was mainly promoted by conservative politicians. Liberals, on the other hand, demanded faster reforms, a more rapid integration of Brazil in the “concert of nations”. The most outstanding supporter of the opening of the navigation to foreigners was Aureliano Candido Tavares Bastos, one of the most conspicuous liberal politicians and publicists of the decade of 1860s. By analyzing Tavares Bastos’ ideas about the opening of the navigation of the Amazon we will have a clear idea of the connections between liberalism and territoriality and some further information to help us to interpret the decision of the Brazilian government to open the river in 1866.

Apparently, Tavares Bastos ideas were inspired by classic liberalism. The author was proud of his cosmopolitanism and didn’t conceal his admiration for the Anglo-Saxon civilization: “Costuma-se exagerar as injustiças das grandes potencias contra nós (...) as duas grandes nações maritimas cederem diante da nossa politica”<sup>99</sup>. Commerce and freedom would end any conflict, including borders-related ones. The most significant one was the dispute with Britain regarding the so called “Contestado” (disputed area) in the Guiana. Tavares Bastos, rather naïf, thought that the solution to the problem was about to come: “Aberto o Amazonas (...) revelará o governo inglez um espiritu de discordia e de chicana a proposito da linha divisoria, quando o que elle hoje menos ambiciona é adquirir territorios, e o que mais promove em todo o mundo é o triumpho da liberdade comercial?”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> This idea has been elaborated by José Murilo de Carvalho, *A construção da ordem. Teatro de sombras*, Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2006, pp. 364 and ff.

<sup>99</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, p. 18.

<sup>100</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, p. 74. Tavares Bastos was thus echoing –without knowing it?– secretary of state Lord Shelburne’s words in the 1780s referring that Britain preferred “trade to dominion”. See Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations...*, p. 89. However, if that was British position at the end of the eighteenth century it was not clear it continued to be in mid-nineteenth century. Despite the opening of the river, the conflict with Britain was not solved until the end of the century under a republic regime in Brazil. As far as the non-territorial ambitions of the British Empire, its performance in Africa and Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century seemed to contradict Tavares Bastos’ idealized image of Albion.

Tavares Bastos' main argument was that the opening to other nations would bring wealth to the Amazonia through the increase of commerce. This commercial opulence would make disappear any fear about a possible loss of territorial sovereignty: "Repito que me não parecem essenciaes tantas cautelas (...) –talking about the establishment of forts in the river- Confio mais no interesse que o commercio livre ligará ao dever de respeitar a soberania territorial"<sup>101</sup>. Montesquieu's *doux commerce* would have a civilizing impact creating bonds of interest that would lead to the respect of law. Tavares Bastos even supported the free navigation for battleships. Again, he justified this position in the beneficial effects of interest: "Porque razão prohibir-lhe a entrada? Durante a paz, podem elles perjudicar-nos? Ao contrario, si algumas canhoneiras norte-americanas, inglezas, ou francezas forem ali observar as riquezas do imenso valle, e contribuirme para a revelação das suas maravillas, não seria isso precioso para a sciencia e certamente util para o rapido desenvolvimento das nossas provincias?" Not even during war times there was much sense in banning the entrance of these ships since "Prejudicial durante a paz, essa clausula restrictiva seria pois illusoria para o caso de guerra"<sup>102</sup>.

Invisible hand would also have a positive influence on Amazonian peoples. That population was largely "semi-barbara (...) a raça dos aborígenes ainda não transformada pelo contacto com os europeos"<sup>103</sup>. Barbary was not, however, determined by genetic features. This would be an anachronistic interpretation of the word race as used by Tavares Bastos. Barbary was the result of customs, isolation, of the "solidão dos bosques", of an "errante e movediza" life<sup>104</sup>. That way of life led to moral depravation and was the sociological pillar of despotism: "Esse trastorno da vida social, essa depravação moral alimentada pelo trabalho em comum e ausencia de todas as regras da decencia, essa existencia nomada, preocupa a todos os que observam as cousas do Amazonas"<sup>105</sup>. The solution was the arrival of immigrants who, thanks to their work habits and after a process of racial mixture, would raise the moral standard of the native population. This would be a "natural" process, without state's intervention whatsoever:

"Na Australia não é o governo que tem promovido as preciosas, perseverantes, e audazes explorações através do deserto, de uma a outra extremidade do continente; é a curiosidade scientifica e a ambição dos colonos. Ali acontece o que já se viu em nosso

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<sup>101</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, p. 53.

<sup>102</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, p. 66.

<sup>103</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, p. 157.

<sup>104</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, p. 158.

<sup>105</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, p. 207.

proprio paiz com as antigas correrias dos paulistas. O mesmo acontecerá na Amazonas, si o franquearem, si o colono europeu lá aparecer com a sua sêde de ouro e a sua perseverança”<sup>106</sup>

But here it appears one of the main problems in Tavares Bastos’ grand scheme. The author supposed that the economic activity and the customs of the European immigrants would transform the “moral constitution” of Amazonia. But in order to accomplish this transformation, immigrants should devote themselves to agriculture. Extractive activities such as the rubber business were the cauldron for nomadism and, therefore, for the absence of political civilization: “Infelizmente os productos naturaes, e a borracha particularmente, enchem quase todo o quadro da producção do Amazonas. Ninguém ignora que a extracção das drogas, sendo mais e mais distantes as florestas que as contém em abundancia, determina a disseminação da população”<sup>107</sup>. Criticizing the governmental intervention in the Amazon region that had attempted to make native people to live in villages, Tavares Bastos said: “pretender que em uma região, cujas industrias extractivas determinam e provocam a disseminação dos habitantes, a população se concentre á roda dos seus raros povoados, não me parece sensato, nem medida econômica”<sup>108</sup>.

The solution was the passing of time, “o tempo, o abandono das actuaes industrias, os processos agrícolas, a moralidade que diffundirá com o progresso da civilização”<sup>109</sup>. However, the liberal politicians didn’t explain why Europeans were more willing than the local population to the farm labor -mainly if their big incentive was the “sêde de ouro”- taking into account the “natural” conditions of the region that encouraged extractive activities. Aware or not of this dilemma, Tavares Bastos found a solution not based upon the *doux commerce* but upon politics: “Que elle [the government] não esqueça que o Amazonas tem fome de justiça e de policia”<sup>110</sup>.

A similar paradox arose out of the navigation system envisioned by the author for the Amazon. After praising the civilizing work made by freedom and commerce, Tavares Bastos proposed:

“O commercio directo nos portos do Pará (onde já existe alfandega) e nos de Manaos e Santarém, os quaes devem ser alfandegados...”

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<sup>106</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, p. 325.

<sup>107</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, p. 207.

<sup>108</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, p. 356.

<sup>109</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, pp. 355-356.

<sup>110</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, p. 240.

O transporte por cabotagem entre esses portos...

A escala de Macapá para os navios que demandarem o Amazonas pela boca septentrional.

A de Santarém para os navios procedentes de Macapá, quer se destinem ao mesmo porto de Santarém, quer aos portos do Madeira, que a Manáos, quer aos portos do Perú. (...)

Taes devem ser as escalas obrigatorias, as escalas fiscaes”<sup>111</sup>.

Freedom of trade was subjected to mandatory stops that would allow the state to check the cargo. Besides, these stops were part of a transport net built from upside down. Ultimately, freedom of navigation was a mechanism to control and occupy the space. Tavares Bastos’ design didn’t leave the Invisible Hand to carry out the entire project by itself. It was also a project of territorial organization of trade and navigation. Tavares Bastos’ liberalism was not only a critic to power but also a builder of state and territory.

For the American Consul in Pará the passing of the bill allowing foreign steamers was the triumph of a long liberal struggle against the reactionary policies of the Empire<sup>112</sup>. But this interpretation is misleading, or at least it might be if we consider the Brazilian Empire as an essentially “antiliberal” polity and “liberalism” only as the ideology of freedom and elimination of boundaries. As in the project designed by the Tavares Bastos, when the Brazilian government opened the river to foreigners it believed it had firm control of the territory and it could obtain important benefits from than control. On September 7<sup>th</sup> 1867, the government of the empire officially inaugurated the opening of the river with a celebration in which foreign vessels and foreign flags were invited to attend. Before the event, the Consul in Pará asked the United States government to send part of the American fleet in Rio to pay a visit to Belém for that occasion: “it is said that the Emperor himself may be present, or in his absence the Prince Consort, and it will be a great mortification to the Brazilians if the American flag be not present at a ceremony to which they attach great importance as being the inauguration of a liberal policy for which they have long striven”<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>111</sup> A. Tavares Bastos, *O Valle do Amazonas...*, pp. 134-136.

<sup>112</sup> NA, Department of State, Group Record 59, Despatches from United States Consuls in Pará, 1831-1906. Microcopy No. T-478, Volume 4, reel 2, Pond, Consulate of the United States at Pará, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1866, to the Secretary of State.

<sup>113</sup> NA, Department of State, Group Record 59, Despatches from United States Consuls in Pará, 1831-1906. Microcopy No. T-478, Volume 4, reel 2, Pond, Acting Consul, Consulate of United States at Pará, 20th June 1867, to the Secretary of State.

Yet, the American consul didn't realize the full meaning of the celebration. By inviting foreign vessels and foreign flags to attend an event presided over by the Emperor, the Brazilian government was asking for the international recognition of the Brazilian sole sovereignty over the river.

### Concluding remarks and new openings...

“... motum Orientem nisi Germanici sapientia conponi” (“The commotions in the East could be quieted only by the wisdom of Germanicus”).

Pedro de Angelis resorted to this famous Tacitus' quotation from his *Annals* to comment over the idea of Lieutenant Maury on the United States as the only nation able to make nomads from the Amazonia progress: “Si hemos de creer a M. Maury, sólo los Estados Unidos podrían hacer progresar las poblaciones nómadas que habitan las orillas del Amazonas. Si el Oriente según expresión de Tácito, necesitaba la sabiduría de Germánico (...) el Brasil ha menester la sabiduría de los Estados Unidos”<sup>114</sup>. But the United States was not the only nation –or at least some of her citizens- where imperial projects over the Amazonia based upon an ideal of civilization developed since mid-nineteenth century. Both, Britons and French envisioned the extension of their territories in the northern part of South America incorporating the so called “contestado” (disputed area). Both claimed that Brazilians (as Portuguese in colonial times) treated Indians with cruelty and didn't contribute to remove barbarism from the jungles<sup>115</sup>.

But ultimately Brazilian project was not so different from those. In the end, state-building and state consolidation is a process that is usually accompanied of an imperial agenda: definition of the limes, assimilation of population, a civilizing discourse. In many occasions these projects arose out of elites' fears of internal or external challenges. This was the case in Brazil's attempts to “territorialize” the Amazon valley. Brazilians too were going to “civilize” the Amazonia, to incorporate it into the Western World.

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<sup>114</sup> P. de Angelis, *De la navegación...*, p. 89.

<sup>115</sup> See BN, Manuscritos, Fundo Límites do Brasil, II-31-17-36, (1843); “Estatística da Guiana Inglesa, traduzida da obra de R. H. Schomburgk, publicada em Londres em maio de 1840”, BN, Manuscritos, Fundo Límites do Brasil, II-31,18,13 for the British case. For the French project see mainly H. Coudreau, *La France É Équinoxiale*.

The framing of Brazilian attempts to “territorialize” and “nationalize” the Amazon valley within the context of global imperialism allows us to add some meanings to the process. European imperialism offered the image of an international competition in which some nations were falling behind. As José Álvarez Junco noticed, the age of empire was also the first age of “populism”, precisely in those nations that considered themselves the losers in the global race to empire<sup>116</sup>. Brazilian political structure played also an important role to explain elites’ anxiety in this context of global imperialism. Brazil is an interesting case because of the ambiguous meaning of “empire” in her constitutional definition. On the one hand, “empire” had been a mechanism to preserve the legitimacy derived from the Portuguese monarchy and figure of the Portuguese king settled in Rio. On the other hand, the definition of the new polity as an empire had a “modern” flavor in the aftermath of Napoleonic Wars. Furthermore, the very –huge- extensions of lands under the realm of Pedro I and Pedro II contained an imperial recipient in themselves<sup>117</sup>. From 1860 on, these ambiguities acquired grayish shades. The extension of Brazilian surface, the persistence of slavery and the slowness in the process of political reforms seemed to approach Brazil to the non-colonial, land empires, those who were labeled “moribund” empires, such as the Ottoman, the Chinese (and to some extent the Russian one) rather than to the modern, “progressive” overseas empires such as Britain or France. This was probably a source of anguish for Brazilian who believed they were adapting and emulating European civilization in the tropics.

At the same time, this anxiety reinforced elites’ territorial obsessions. This was also the case of Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The control of territories –even those that were considered to be worthless- in an era of growing military conflicts and rising protectionism since 1870s was perceived as a necessity<sup>118</sup>. In Brazil, the extension of telegraph lines since 1850 and railways since 1870 and the increased state intervention

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<sup>116</sup> José Álvarez Junco, “El populismo como problema”, en J. Álvarez Junco y Ricardo González Leandri (comps.), *El populismo en España y América*, Madrid: Catriel, 1994, pp. 36-38.

<sup>117</sup> Few historians noticed this second side in the definition of Brazil as an Empire. One important exception is the work of José Murilo de Carvalho who in a 1982 article stated: “The idea of transforming the former colony into a ‘great nation’, in a ‘vast empire’ was almost an obsession among many leaders of the independence movement”. Murilo showed how the Emperor’s courtiers were fond of comparing Pedro I with some Roman emperors. See José Murilo de Carvalho, “Political Elites and State Building: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Brazil”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, (Jul. 1982), p. 380. Brazilian elites were trying to build a nation and an empire at the same time and this should have influence their territorial perceptions.

<sup>118</sup> Dominic Lieven, “Dilemmas of Empire 1850-1918. Power, Territory, Identity”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, (April 1999), p. 166.

in building networks devoted to occupy and “valorize” the space even in dubious enterprises might respond to this territorial obsession.

In the case of Amazonia this obsession multiplied during the second half of the nineteenth century due to the limits of the process of territorializing itself. The obstacles to control and assimilate the population, to fix neat limits, to “civilize” and nationalize those vast spaces were behind the perception of constant threat to the national integrity. Despite this lack of assimilation, Brazilian nationalist ideas are particularly “territorial” and obsessed with the Amazon valley. From the idea of the *uti possidetis* above mentioned to the teaching of history and geography in primary schools, maps and the idea of territory played a significant role in the national identity of Brazilians. As it was said at the beginning of this paper, any possible foreign interference or presence in the Amazonia is seen as a mortal threat to the very foundations of the country. This is also the case for the Spanish American nations. Nationalists from Argentina or Chile found difficult to elaborate cultural distinctiveness based upon language, religion or even historical past and therefore the territory became an alternative pillar of nationality. Brazil had more opportunities to develop her cultural uniqueness vis-à-vis Spanish American nations. However, territory was crucial in the creation of national myths. As João Marcelo Ehlert Maia notices about the end of the nineteenth century this might be related to the necessity of enhancing national feelings from the periphery. If something distinguished Brazil from Western nations was the immensity of her lands. In that immensity was found one of the most genuine characteristics of a new, American, civilization<sup>119</sup>. This territorially-driven nationalism is also the result of the difficulties – at least during the nineteenth century- to build a nation equal to its people(s) (*volk*). Slavery and an extremely hierarchical society conspired against this possibility<sup>120</sup>. The territory, the Amazon –and the *sertões*- seemed better reservoirs of Brazilian identity than her troubling *povo*.

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<sup>119</sup> João Marcelo Ehlert Maia, *A terra como invenção: o espaço no pensamento social brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 2008. This essay compares also the significance of the space (*terra*) for Brazilians and for Russians at the end of nineteenth century. This is not the only possible comparisons. In fact, Brazilian extensions into the Amazonia and Russian imperial move toward Siberia are comparable processes of state and nation building.

<sup>120</sup> On these ideas see also Antônio Carlos Robert Moraes, *Território e História no Brasil*, São Paulo: Hucitec, 2002.