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► To cite this version:

Emmanuel Blanchard. French Colonial Police. G. Bruinsma, D. Weisburd. Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 8, Springer, pp.1836 - 1846, 2014, 10.1007/978-1-4614-5690-2_465 . hal-01091964

HAL Id: hal-01091964

<https://hal.science/hal-01091964>

Submitted on 8 Dec 2014

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Pré-publication, non éditée et non corrigée, version finale parue in G. Bruinsma, D. Weisburd, Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice, New York, Springer, vol. 8, 2014, p. 1836-1846

French Colonial Police

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OVERVIEW

The question of policing is consubstantial to that of colonization, and was raised at a very early stage, not just in diplomatic or military terms, but also with respect to the various manners of civility, regulation, and discipline that were to be expected from a good policing service. The notion of colonial policing, however, can hardly account for the many policing practices encountered in the various territories, with their diverse judicial and political statuses. It tends to foster a uniform vision of policing organization and practices, even though none of this was ever centralized, or even standardized, in this vast empire. Most importantly, it tends to conceal the fact that policing tasks were handled by multiple organizations and agents, many of whom were not, technically, actual police. Still, the very existence and usage of this phrase—colonial policing—suggests that, regardless of place and time, colonial authorities had their own set of policing practices and violent behaviors, which were partly distinct from what was prevalent in metropolitan France.

From a chronological point of view, the legacy of slavery and plantation power as well as the continued domination over various territories (e.g. some West Indies or Indian Ocean islands) must be considered: the hiatus between the first French colonial empire (built under the *Ancien régime*, during the 17th century in particular) and the second (refounded on the rubble of Napoleon's defeats, starting with the conquest of Algeria in 1830) should not be overstressed. Only in the late 19th century, however, considering the developments and reforms happening in the home country, did colonial policing issues gradually and partially gain autonomous status, distinct from wider concerns about the frailty of colonial domination. Indeed, colonial domination only exceptionally reached the “pacification” stage, even though this goal was continually re-asserted by civilian authorities, closely associated to their military counterparts.

STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

Colbert complained as early as 1667 that “very little concern has been shown so far in New France for the policing and civil life of Algonquians and Huron”. He considered this “long-standing neglect” a mistake that ought to be remedied promptly (Havard 2009). The word “police” was at the time highly polysemic in French. Indeed, the indeterminate nature of the term speaks volumes, insofar as police forces, under the *Ancien Régime* already, were associated to a civilizing mission with a particular focus on extending the reach of law. On its own, however, the “law and order” diptych cannot fully account for 19-20th century colonial policing in the French empire – the period studied here.

The issue of policing organization and practices in the colonial context had to wait until the 19th century to be raised in concrete fashion. In the early days, the task of pacifying newly-conquered territories was largely entrusted to the military. Only in areas specifically designed to receive European settlements was the creation of policing bodies seriously considered. A police commissioner (*commissaire de police*), for instance, was appointed in the immediate aftermath of the capitulation of the Dey of Algiers, on 5 July 1830. As evidenced by available documents, his meager staff spent many years focusing exclusively on managing and disciplining the “populace” and the “unwanted” freshly disembarked from Europe. Until the late 19th century, archives make scant mention of the “natives” (“*indigènes*”), who seldom appeared as a problem to be tackled by policing agents. The “gendarmerie of Africa”, which was also created in the wake of the landing in Alger regency (June 1830) and was primarily conceived as a provost body for the supervision of locally-stationed troops, occasionally took part in combats for the extension of colonized territories. Only under the Third Republic was it endowed with law and order enforcement responsibilities with regard to indigenous populations not governed by military administration.

Whenever it was felt that the action of armed forces should be supplemented by the creation of police units, the dominant method consisted in importing or adapting models or institutions that were prevalent in metropolitan France, two of which – the gendarmerie and the Paris prefecture of police – were frequent sources of inspiration. These flows of policing practices and frameworks from the home country to the colonies should not, however, lead us to underestimate other legacies that also contributed to the shaping of colonial policing: the settlers themselves, but also privately-owned companies, the Army, indigenous troops, country policemen and rangers, colonial officials whose prerogatives could be extended with respect to the remoteness of their post (such as the *gardes-cercle*) have all been endowed with policing and penal capacities right until the decolonization era. Most importantly, in remote countryside areas, colonial authorities have endeavored to build upon local hierarchies and

authorities, thus sparing themselves the task of having to establish specific policing bodies. While state order reigned supreme in “islands of domination” (in cities and along railways mainly), it was replaced in many places (plantations, concessions) by private authorities or by traditional social control mechanisms, so that the policing and judicial systems of settlers were only called upon as a last resort option, or instrumentalized to pressure the promoters of local order.

Given this proliferation of policing agents and organizations, trying to distinguish between the “civilian” and the “military” makes little sense (Blanchard, Deluermoz, Glasman 2011). The ongoing concern was cost-effective, non-staff-intensive law and order maintenance. This perspective, however, left little room for insights going beyond the hackneyed remarks about natives being receptive only to the language of force. Hence, troubles were systematically interpreted as potential rebellions that might upset the entire edifice of colonial domination: despite many natives having been enrolled and various segments of the population having voluntarily rallied, while others had pursued arrangements and interests that they would be keen to stand for, colonial power remained exogenous. It was never able to take root in true cultural hegemony or in any political legitimacy reaching beyond the small circle of direct beneficiaries of this mode of government. A major indicator of the frailty of colonial power at the time is the way policing agents, administrative elites, and even the community of ordinary settlers tended to construe dreaded but simple attacks on private property as suggesting a general dissent against the balance of power—if not threats on their own existence.

Characteristics such as a lack of specialization of policing functions (which were closely linked to tax levying and statute labor) and a limited interest for crime repression, although not peculiar to the colonial setting, nevertheless do point to the principles of cheap government and under-management. The pattern has been well described by George Orwell with respect to Burma (Orwell 1998), but it also applied to most territories comprising the French empire. In an even more fundamental way, this pertained to some of the inner contradictions of the political project regarding settlements: enticed by separatism and rejecting any increase of tax pressure—which they felt should exclusively burden indigenous populations, settlers tended to impede the development of a specialized, professional policing apparatus. Thus it is that in the years 1898-1900, their representatives in the *départements* of Algeria kept complaining of growing insecurity, while simultaneously pressuring the authorities to obtain the withdrawal of the gendarmerie, which they considered too costly and too formal in its enforcement style.

The only positive aspects in their eyes were the reinforcement of the action of armed forces and of emergency powers (in particular the 1881 “*Code de l’indigénat*”, a set of specific criminal rules for natives, which in fact legalized long-standing practices). Such tensions with civil authorities and police organizations could be found in many other places until the decolonization era. A case in point is the Kingdom of Cambodia under French protectorate, where the colonial administration, far from deferring to financiers and settlers, actually tended to moderate their excesses, providing a legal and practical framework that prevented extreme prejudice toward the natives, which might otherwise have triggered an uprising (Guérin 2008). The buffering role played by police forces in such circumstances should, however, not be overstated. Colonial policing did embrace the whole array of founding violence (land expropriation, physical constraint, attacks against local cultural and religious practices...) traditionally associated to “despotic” colonial administrations that, as was the case, placed themselves under the auspices of the “sword” (Orwell 2009).

The judicial inflation that can be observed in a colonial situation –“the empire of law” described by Emmanuelle Saada (Saada 2002) – was accompanied by the deployment of “coercive networks” (Sherman 2009), of which police forces were a mere segment. This removes a lot of interest from any attempts at reporting on policing institutions in a colonial setting from a historical perspective, since the coercive practices experienced by the colonized could hardly be accounted for. In the case of the French empire, the task is even made almost impossible by the fact that no centralized agency was ever put in charge of designing and evaluating such policies – i.e. there was no equivalent of the British *Colonial Police Service*. Nor was any formal, shared employment scheme ever deployed throughout the colonies. While some officers did circulate across colonies, they made up a tiny minority of the numerous police deployed in the empire. Furthermore, ambitious and thorough historical research focusing on the local variations and characteristics of an empire encompassing a great many different institutional frameworks is made impossible by the sheer scarcity of available studies: no overview, no synthesis, no comparative research have been published so far, which is why the French case cannot be considered on par with the UK (Sinclair 2006) or the Netherlands models (Bloembergen 2011). Indeed, the most recent synthetic works published on French police forces have almost nothing to say on the imperial dimension of policing, focusing instead on metropolitan France (Anderson 2011), even though the latter can hardly be said to have been estranged from the overseas at the time.

CURRENT RESEARCH

Recent or current research by young scholars, as well as the abundance of studies on the gendarmerie (Luc 2010), do however allow us to outline what the mechanisms of policing have been in certain territories. On a general level, Florence Bernault's insights on colonial prisons, which were often administered by policing bodies, are a good starting point: “the colonial prison did not apprehend delinquents according to a single judicial register (...) it sought to maintain the racial and juridical hierarchies upon which colonial rule was founded, thus reproducing a violent, personalized, and circumscribed power (...) As the vanguard of these confining tactics, colonial prisons thus illuminate how European regimes in Africa survived as enterprises of unending conquest” (Bernault 2003).

Florence Bernault rightly insists that the conquest endeavor was an ongoing one. “Pacification” was never taken for granted, but remained a violent, uninterrupted process, which however varied in intensity according to place and time. But it is no less true that initial periods of military domination were generally followed by deliberate attempts at establishing civilian authorities, epitomized, among other symbols, by their police forces. In many territories gendarmes remained for a long time (sometimes as late as Word War II) the only actual, however furtive, colonial presence identified by the locals.

Using a—necessarily reductive—process approach, the timeline highlighted by John McCracken regarding the British empire, and more precisely Malawi (McCracken 1992), can be adapted to the French empire: an “era of coercion” encompassing the first decades of domination, followed by an “era of control”, then one of “collaboration” (the interwar period), and finally a “crisis of authority” after World War II. Clearly, this pattern is not set in stone, and periods may overlap. Most importantly, it must be inscribed in singular colonial trajectories, which depend heavily on when the conquest was made as well as on the frequency and punch of violent actions of resistance to colonial order.

The gendarmerie has been the main colonial police force: its military police dimension (both as a provost body and because of the military status of gendarmes) made it a privileged tool in the conquest phase and during the “era of coercion”. For instance, on 16 May 1843, about 30 gendarmes were involved in the battle of Taguin, or more precisely in a raid against the *smala* of Abd El-Kader (Jaulin 2009), which resulted in the taking of more than 3,000 prisoners and major spoils (a “feat” that still adorns the flag of the French national gendarmerie). In Madagascar the gendarmerie's contribution to *pax gallica*, as imposed by Gen. Gallieni, was rather short-lived (1901-1904, although a gendarmerie detachment was re-established in 1931). But in the whole empire, the colonial gendarmerie did take part in numerous battles, regardless of the precise dates of territorial annexations. In 1918, it supported the French

Army after France was granted a mandate on the Levant from the League of Nations. Incidentally, the Lebanon gendarmerie was on the front line – and targeted – during the 1925 Druze insurgency (Faisant de Champchesnel 2010). From this moment on and until the accession to independence of most French colonies, however, locals gendarmes tended to side with insurgents, and the resulting struggles, pitting gendarmes vs. gendarmes, highlighted the limits of the French policy of fueling ethnic and religious divides. Even where the colonization process was initiated in the diplomatic framework of trans-imperial competition instead of bringing about a war of conquest, the phrase “era of coercion” refers to those moments when French authorities were trying to tighten their grip. The kingdom of Cambodia, where a protectorate treaty had been signed between king Norodom and France in 1863, is a case in point: certainly, the 1885 uprising was stifled by military interventions, but it was used as an opportunity to reinforce the militiamen of the indigenous guard, who also acted as a police force. In particular, they were in charge of supervising tax collection and organizing statute labor days, up to and including the Highlands, an area where dissent toward central authority, whether Khmer or French, was at its highest (Guérin 2008).

The “era of control” should be understood both as: a) the moment when military head count decreases and powers are transferred to civilians (for instance in 1871 in main districts of Algeria) and b) the period when new policing methods are being developed to control people, following technological innovations from metropolitan France. In Madagascar at the turn of the century, General Gallieni extensively resorted to photography for the census and racial classification of the population. Generally speaking, although colonial police forces tended to be understaffed and underfunded, they were at the cutting-edge of anthropometric and identification techniques. These intellectual, technological and human investments were markedly associated to specific representations of crime as pertaining to entire populations, which in many areas of the empire translated into collective fines and punishments.

From a technical and organizational point of view, the protectorate of Tunisia was a precursor, equipped, as early as 1890, with a judicial identification service similar to that created only a few years before at the Prefecture of police. Indeed, in the early 1890s, Alphonse Bertillon himself played a key part in the establishment of the Algiers judicial identification service. Similar bureaus were subsequently opened in the AOF (French West Africa), the AEF (French Equatorial Africa), Madagascar and Indochina. But the most accomplished version of this anthropometric form of control – the best-researched at least, thanks to the works of Ilsen About (About 2011) – occurred in Saigon. The anthropometric identification bureau was institutionalized in 1897, as part of the immigration services.

Carding (forcing people to have an ID), fingerprints and anthropometry were made instrumental in a vast census and registration project encompassing all natives and foreign Asians. Even though opposition from multiple sources (congregations, consular representatives, part of indigenous elites...) eventually caused the shelving of this ambitious project, by 1917 the bureau had managed to gather some 700,000 records, complete with fingerprints. Indochina in this domain acted as a laboratory, ahead of the home country.

The emphasis on identification as a trait of colonial policing is further enhanced if one integrates metropolitan France into the global picture of the colonial empire (Rosenberg 2006). In Paris, after an identity card for foreigners had been established in 1917, French nationals of colonial origin were the next target (Blanchard 2011). A North African brigade was thus created at the Paris Prefecture of police in 1925, with multiple prerogatives (administrative and social in particular) aiming to feed a database that would list all colonized people originating from North Africa (90% of whom were Algerian Muslims enjoying French citizenship, meaning that they needed no specific documents whatsoever to settle in metropolitan France). Yet these panoptic aspirations were never entirely fulfilled: given the rules governing the political representation of certain segments of the colonial world, from the 1930s onwards (especially after World War II), the colonized were sometimes able to oppose such designs, which in any case appeared to be limited by the sheer scope of their technical and financial requirements. Still, from the interwar period onwards, in metropolitan France as in the empire, political surveillance of the colonized became a policing priority. In 1922 in Dakar, the creation of a Central Service for the Policing and Safety of French Western Africa (*Service central de police et de sûreté de l'AOF*), whose structure was replicated in each of the component colonies (*Service central de police et de sûreté du Sénégal, Service central de police et de sûreté du Dahomey...*) epitomized this concern. The general objective of controlling mobility and preserving disciplined, segregated urban spaces for the benefit of European minorities came on top of a hidden agenda: thwarting the ability of the better-educated colonized (the “evolved”) to travel and act (Brunet-La Ruche 2012). These people were suspected – sometimes quite rightly so – of anti-colonialist or nationalist activism. As a matter of fact, during the interwar period, and especially in the AOF, this channeling of policing means and services into political surveillance contributed to relocating the fears and representations of insecurity from rural areas to the cities, where criminality was on the rise but did not seem to be eliciting any tailored policing response (Fourchard 2006).

The weight of political defiance toward indigenous elites partly explains why the notion of an “era of collaboration” does not apply to the French empire quite as it does to the British

empire. No movement of indigenization proper has ever taken place in the higher ranks of the policing hierarchy. To a certain extent, policing management in the French empire was more reminiscent of the Belgian approach than the British method. In Belgian Congo for instance, the *Force publique* created in 1885 never entrusted any natives with leadership positions (Lauro 2011). The same applied to most of the French Empire: with the exception of a handful of commissioners, “Africanization”, and more generally indigenous access to managing positions, was only engaged in the very last years of colonization. Moreover, such developments were seldom considered as preparing a transition toward independence. In some cases, the requirements (educational, legal, etc.) were raised to such a level and the will to confront political and violent protests was so strong that any increase of staffing levels was matched by a corresponding growth in the ratio of European-born recruits (such was the case for instance for the gendarmerie in Algeria). None of the French police bodies ever surmounted the quandary of importing mainland operational methods and gradually implementing a shared legal framework without making it increasingly difficult to gather intelligence from the locals (Thomas 2008). Indeed, the chasm from local circles was such that intelligence services often had to resort to broad, hackneyed ideological patterns (the Communist threat, pan Arabism, the influence of foreign nations...) which actually stood in the way of taking the full measure of protests or local separatist movements. In defense of these services, it should be said that nationalist, religious, and communist movements and motivations were so enmeshed – during rural uprisings in Vietnam (1930-1931) for instance – that deciphering the redistribution of anti-colonialism was an extremely difficult task.

Anti-colonialism was in fact eventually recognized from an institutional perspective – the African Democratic Rally (RDA), founded in 1946, is a prime example – and was sometimes able to weigh in on policy and policing developments. Political surveillance, which had been considerably reinforced all along the 1940s, was thus gradually loosened as the recognition of African states made progress: in 1958, both the Intelligence and the Judicial Identity services of the AOF were even officially disbanded, but the gendarmerie managed to grab some of their files and prerogatives (Papa Dramé 2010). Most importantly, in the wake of World War II, recruitment processes became more bureaucratic. The written word as well as legal proceedings took greater importance, both in daily tasks and in terms of career development: French-speaking, higher-educated colonized people massively took over the intermediate echelons of the hierarchy. Joël Glasman has convincingly shown how, in the case of Togo, such developments were both a) inscribed in how part of the population adjusted to the

colonizers standards and b) loaded with contradictions and oppositions, not only within policing bodies but also among the local elites (Glasman, 2010).

This standardization process, however, should not be overestimated: even in the *départements* of Algeria, where metropolitan rules and frameworks had supposedly been best integrated, the creation of the first constabulary academy was only decided in 1949, one year prior to that of the AOF in Dakar. Indeed, colonial police forces were never known to put a strong emphasis on disciplining and educating their personnel. Thus, restraining the use of force was never considered a priority, or even a reality. In the mid-1950s, Albert Memmi could write of the colonizer, with good reason, that “a machine-gun burst into a crowd of colonized causes him merely to shrug his shoulders” (Memmi, 1965). Even during allegedly quiet periods – in terms of violent unrest against colonial domination –, marked by a relative professionalization of policing by civil bodies instead of military ones, this reliance on shootings and killings was noticeable: in Tunisia in 1937-1938, both in the mining area of Gafsa (March 1937) and in Tunis (9 April 1938), union (CGT) and political (Néo-Destour) rallies and demonstrations triggered bloody repression. Massive use of gunfire by policemen, gendarmes, and colonial troops killed dozens.

During the so-called “crisis of authority” period, these shootings grew in both magnitude and frequency. In May 1945, for instance, in Sétif and Guelma (Algeria), vigilante European settlers sided with the police forces, who in turn had received support from the Army (Peyroulou, 2009). They coordinated not just to suppress Algerian unrests, but also to arrest, intern and quite often kill or dispose of anyone suspected of belonging to the separatist movement. Part of the casualties, which numbered in the thousands, were actually caused by shelling, both from sea and air. Ever since the interwar period, in the Maghreb and Middle East in particular, air policing had been used not only for land surveying, but also to subdue outbreaks by the colonized: firepower was supposed to make up for scant police and military staffing on the field (Omissi, 1990). Inspired by the Italian conquest of Libya (the 1912 bombings) as well as the action of the Royal Air Force in Afghanistan and Iraq in particular (1919-1920), the French also resorted to this ploy. After a few experiments in Morocco (the Rif War), they made the most of air domination to suppress the Druze rebellion of 1925-1926. The city of Damascus was massively shelled, and the residents of Druze and Muslim neighborhoods subjected to what can only be dubbed a terrorization policy. This particularly lethal use of air policing was designed to match the movements of Army troops and police forces, the gendarmerie in particular. The idea was to make up for their notorious and accepted understaffing.

Still, the “crisis of authority” period saw a rapid increase of police staffing: notwithstanding the decolonization wars (Indochina, Cameroon, Nigeria), the growing intensity and attendance of protest demonstrations, as well as the ever-increasing burden of the standards and regulations in metropolitan France left no other option. To develop but one example, the head count of the AOF gendarmerie (including Togo) rose from less than 300 in 1946 to almost 1,200 in 1957 (all of them “white”, bar two). Auxiliary gendarmes (black Africans) numbered 700 in 1946 and more than 2,625 in 1957. In Togo alone, from the 1930s to the 1950s, police staffing levels doubled, but – more importantly maybe – remained quite low at less than 1,000 men at the end of the colonial era (Glasman, 2011). Hence, even though the relative weight of uniformed service personnel (vigilantes, guards, gendarmes, constables...) was particularly significant in the colonial State (from 1/3 to 1/2 of the entire personnel in Togo; a lower proportion whenever more Europeans were present), the overseas police-to-population ratio remained lower than in the home country. While in the 1950s, France had on average one police per 250 citizen (a ratio that was only matched in the most watched cities in Africa, such as Abidjan), the figure could drop down to less than one per 1,500 in certain cities in AOF (such as Kayes in French Sudan).

This lack of personnel is sometimes put forward as an explanation to the disproportionate use of force by policing authorities: gunfire in this case is interpreted as a means of compensating the powerlessness of outnumbered police doing their best to keep the crowd at a distance. Much like its British counterpart (e.g. with the 1919 Amritsar massacre), the French empire was marked by the permanence of this logic consisting of slaughtering protesting crowds of colonized people, as evidenced by the now well-documented case of the December 1952 repression of the Casablanca riot. These casualties, however, which numbered in the hundreds each time, can hardly be attributed to any panic on the part of supposedly outnumbered, and therefore overwhelmed, personnel: not only was the police receiving support from colonial troops and vigilante settlers, but the same logic of massive, lethal gunfire against demonstrating colonized was also at work in metropolitan France at the same period (Blanchard 2011). While the Paris police had stopped using firearms to disperse demonstrations (even unauthorized ones) as early as the 1930s, gatherings of colonized people were treated differently. On 14 July 1953, for instance, six Algerian demonstrators were killed by police fire on the *place de la Nation*. In 1961, dozens of Algerians succumbed to the blows and bullets of the Paris police, who on 17 October conducted what has got to be considered a pogrom (House, MacMaster, 2006). More than the format of policing or the actual behavior of demonstrators (police response hardly varied, irrespective of the

peacefulness of demonstrations), it is the racial-political condition of the colonized that determined both the nature and degree of the policing techniques employed.

The last years of the colonization era had very little to do with a transition period. What entire segments of the police forces offered instead was a violent toughening of their stance. In Algeria, the police and gendarmes were largely involved in the massive use of torture during the war of independence. The collusion between a majority of policemen and the most extreme supporters of French Algeria (the *OAS*, Secret Army Organization, in particular) both contributed to destabilizing legal authorities (in May 1958 and April 1961) and to protracting the fights beyond the cease-fire signed in March 1962. Aside from this well-known example, parts of Africa were also plagued by counterrevolutionary warfare, especially Cameroon, where the struggle against the partisans and maquis of the Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (UPC), sparked amidst extreme violence in the late 1940s, lasted a further decade after the independence had been proclaimed in 1960 (Mbembe, 1996).

POSTCOLONIAL LEGACIES

The “racial coloration” of the colonial situation pointed out by Georges Balandier is undoubtedly one of the major characteristics of colonial policing (Balandier 1970). “Racial segregation” might actually be more to the point, insofar as local police were never able to impose the legitimacy of their prerogatives on European settlers: Amandine Lauro’s remark about Belgian Congo – black police were not even allowed to pick up drunk white people in the gutter – also applied in the French part of that colony (Lauro 2011). Conversely, and more tragically, Europeans never gave up their individual right to punish the colonized: whenever police action was considered not to be harsh enough, it would be complemented by punitive raids and the creation of vigilante militias. Beyond such paroxysmic circumstances, urban police forces were the main tool for managing populations, and their primary task was to safeguard the feeling of close-knit community, the hygiene, and the tranquility of the “European city”. They were, however, never granted the wish to restrict indigenous access to European residential spaces to the sole servants. It is true that – as opposed to what was the case in Ghana or British Nigeria – no official segregationist policy (creating separate neighborhoods for Europeans, migrants or minorities) was ever enforced in the cities of the French empire. Still, policing authorities – through vice squads in particular – did restrict and keep under surveillance the least movement across racial and colonial borders.

The question of prestige was so pressing for Europeans that many of them were actually not welcome in the colonies. Those who were allowed to settle there had to conform to a set of

rules that worked as just as many markers of the superiority of French civilization. Close attention was paid to gender relations and roles: civil servants in particular were briefed on the subject, and deprecatory discourses on the sexuality or virility/femininity of the colonized abounded. Police forces, in their surveillance reports for instance, contributed to spreading these stereotypes. More importantly, they played a direct part in the regulation of the sex trade. Studies by Christelle Taraud on North Africa (Taraud 2003) and Isabelle Tracol-Huynh on Vietnam have shown that prostitution regulationism in the colonies cannot be measured by the yardstick of hygienism, the primacy of the patriarchal family model, and the extension of police prerogatives, as was the case in metropolitan France. There was of course no lack of such dimensions, but the primary issue was the drawing of clear gender and racial lines in the government of the people.

In Vietnam, where marriages between colonizers and colonized were more frequent than in North Africa, and mixed-blood children more numerous, indigenous concubines of “Europeans” were even considered prostitutes (Tracol-Huynh 2010). Prostitutes, in turn, were *de facto* organized into a regulatory and penal hierarchy based on racial criteria. Other trade categories, loosely defined but highly visible, such as dancers or singers, were also under tight surveillance, which varied, however, depending on the means available to the police, the proportion of settlers in the overall population, and how the majority population responded to such regulatory and policing intrusions. In the Shanghai French concession for instance, eradicating or even regulating the massive prostitution – which predated colonial domination – was never really considered (Henriot 2001). Still, the fact that healthcare protective measures, however scarce, only catered for European clients clearly indicates that, even in this highly specific colony, the seeds of a racialized population policy had been sown.

This policy also reached metropolitan France, especially through the police or military institution consisting of organizing prostitution spaces (such as the military brothels a.k.a “*bordels militaires de campagne*”) dedicated to immigrants or North African troops. This was one among many aspects of the distinctive brand of policing applied to the colonized, whose condition was deeply affected – especially during the Algerian war of independence – by recurrent identity checks, frequent roundups, and administrative detention. They were also targeted by positive policies such as welfare (access to healthcare, job search support...) and collective housing (accommodation facilities for migrant workers that were built starting in the 1930s, with a second wave launched in the late 1950s). While sometimes improving their living conditions and facilitating their understanding of mainland rules and bureaucracy, which differed significantly from what they had known overseas, these programs nevertheless

followed a logic of control that did not vanish after the independences. To assess the weight of colonial legacies, one only has to look at the careers of former colonial administrators or officers, who started out managing agencies in charge of supervising the colonized (especially during the Algerian revolution) before heading immigrant support services. Such careers also epitomize the hybridization of policing repertoires, which became a blend of population control, political surveillance, and welfare.

Controversies on the colonial matrix governing the police control of immigrant or racialized populations did not, however, cease with the retirement of the last personnel to have started out at the time of the colonies or in the ranks of these particular agencies. Today, the colonial “difference principle” no longer is a founding principle of specific measures and programs. Sociological studies, however, unanimously demonstrate the existence of racialized gradations in terms of the ability to stand up for one's rights against policing authorities, police influence, and the use of force—especially lethal force. In France today, the best-known aspects of the racialization of policing practices are police “blunders” (often a euphemism for “killings”) and the repeated, often illegal identity checks performed on young, non-white males: depending on their clothing habits, black or Arab-looking young men are 2 to 15 times more likely to have their identity checked than other categories of the population (Jobard, Lévy, 2009). While certainly not all targeted persons can be linked to the former French colonial empire (or even its current remains, notably in the West Indies and Indian Ocean – the Mayotte and Réunion islands), it cannot be denied that the control of the colonized was one of the historical operators in the process of policing racialization. The weight of colonial policing's legacy has thus become a controversial issue, fiercely debated both in academic circles and in the media of contemporary France.

Colonial continuities are no monopoly of the former home country: many a policing institution has been passed on, almost “as is”, to newly independent states. The few local police have often contributed to the training of younger generations, with the support of the French cooperation services (after the independences, as before, many police commissioners from West African states attended Saint-Cyr au Mont d'Or police academy, in the Lyon area). The most striking and symbolic legacy has got to be the flock of national gendarmeries in former French colonies: 150 years after Napoleon's conquests, the decolonization era acted as a second age for the spreading of the gendarmic model. From Ivory Coast or Mali to Syria and Lebanon, through Tunisia or Algeria in particular, the forces that stemmed from the French legions of colonial gendarmerie have played their part in several of the episodes of repression and political transition that are currently at the heart of geopolitical news. Beyond

the racialized management of populations and the religious minorities policy that so deeply affected the Levant, for instance, only time and an intensification of research will tell whether these policing and gendarmic legacies (in their linguistic, symbolic, material, and organizational dimensions) have produced other continuities.

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