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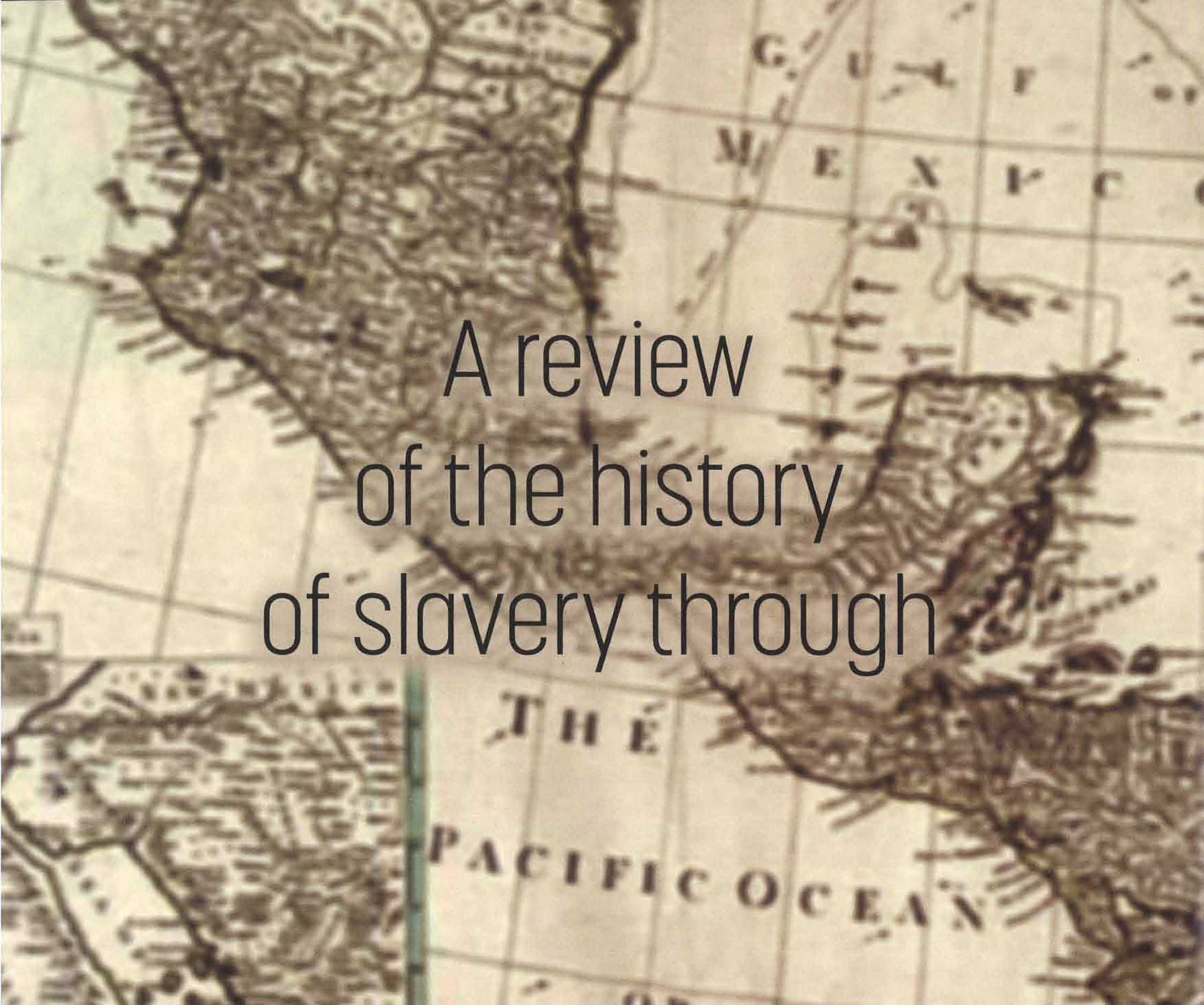
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A historical map of the Pacific Ocean region, showing the Americas on the left and Asia on the right. The text 'THE PACIFIC OCEAN' is visible in the center. The map is rendered in a sepia tone with a grid of latitude and longitude lines.

# A review of the history of slavery through

Jaime Falomir

CARIBBEAN  
DOMINATION  
FRENCH WEST INDIES  
HISTORY  
SLAVERY

This article aims to analyze and determine to what extent contemporary sociological theories allow us to understand the mechanisms of domination used during the period of slavery (17th-19th centuries) in the French Caribbean. Following the recent literature on slavery, which concentrate on a qualitative or quantitative description of the slave trade, our aim is to merge the analysis of politics and society to contribute to the debate on the functioning and organization of power relations in the context of slavery. We show that the phenomenon has edges that make it more complex to understand, so that an interdisciplinary observation is necessary.



contemporary theories  
of power in the  
French West Indies.

**T**he past is never dead. It's not even past  
(W. Faulkner, 1951)  
L'esclavage a été remplacé par l'esclavitude  
(Confiant, 1994:37)

## INTRODUCTION

The arrival of European empires (Spanish, British, French, Dutch) to the American insular territories from the 16th century onwards provoked an unprecedented transformation in multiple variables (population, demographic, territorial) that impacted all the actors involved. According to the Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro (1977: 87) the «witness» people («modern representatives of the old autonomous civilizations on which the European expansion fell») are substituted in some places by the «transplanted» peoples or descendants of Europeans (Ribeiro omits that the enslaved Africans were equally uprooted). In fact, for Ribeiro (1977: 88), the Caribbean is a territory where «new» peoples of indigenous, black and European nuances emerge. The proposal of such a renowned intellectual is at the origin of the problem since it juxtaposes a categorization of the conquerors, a skin color and a continental origin. At the same time, it leaves aside the variety and population density of the indigenous peoples of the region (Tainos, Caribs, Arawak's) as well as the impact of the different types of slavery systems in the construction of contemporary peoples.

Such orientation exemplifies the need to focus on the impact of the slave trade from a historical point of view (Eltis, 2007; Esposito, 2015) as a driver of the Western capitalist system (Williams, 2000; James, 2000; Stein, 2000; Shepherd and Beckles, 2000) and even on the necessary restitution of the damage. Likewise, recent proposals identify the impact of slavery through the study of different variables: prosperity, dependence, poverty, inequality, population growth and ethnic stratification (Esposito, 2015:7). Similarly, other researchers delve into the link between contemporary structural inequalities (racial and economic) and the slave trade (Engerman and Sokoloff, 2002; Acemoglu, García-Jimeno and Robinson, 2012; Soares, Assunção and Goulart, 2012; Bruhn and Gallego, 2012).

However, the fact that I am not a native but have been living in the French West Indies for three years, prompted me to undertake a work to understand, through my angle of specialization (political science and sociology), how such a nefarious act as slavery has endured over time.

I began with a literature review that allowed me to identify the common denominators between, on the one hand, my research on the mechanisms of domination and the power structures that some groups exercise (Aragón and Cárdenas 2020) and, on the other hand, the classic works on slavery, since both reproduce the structures of domination (Scott, 2008; Boltanski, 2009) of minorities (elites, slave masters) over majorities (native peoples, slaves). Beyond denouncing the horrible and shameful slave system, our aim is to merge the analysis of politics and society to contribute to the debate on the functioning and organization of power relations in the context of slavery. For this purpose, we focus on those territories located in the French Caribbean: Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti), Martinique and Guadeloupe.

The text is divided into three parts. The first introduces the particularities of French colonization in the Caribbean and the importance of sugar cane (structuring, regulation, social codes). The second observes the social polarization between dominant and dominated through skin color and rank occupied (differentiation, racialization, segregation). The third addresses through the use of the concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1979) the impact that the place of interaction (habitation-plantation) has on the agents involved (spatial segregation).

Our theoretical approach reveals that societies can be viewed through the lens of dominant and dominated – evident during slavery. However, few studies have applied the contemporary concept of elites to slave masters. Although Morales (2011: 106) defines them as «settler elites» she does not develop this reflection. Therefore, we

turn to the notion of «elite» as conceived by Scott: those groups that have a degree of power and exercise it. Power is defined as the capacity to produce causal effects that affect the behavior of agents (Scott, 2008:28-29; Aragón y Cárdenas, 2020:83). In other words, power consists of making someone do something that he would not have done without that incentive. Such power must, on the one hand, give the illusion that it does not belong to anyone and, on the other, be understood as an evolving process far from being immobile (Boltanski, 2009: 176 and 213). Such imposition is executed through coercive mechanisms (Held, 1989:102) and/or by internalizing that such domination is correct, valid and legitimate (Beetham, 1991:10-12). We seek to answer to what extent such theories served to understand the establishment of a lasting domination, despite the inalienable property component of slavery.

## 1. FRANCE AND SLAVERY: WHEN SUGARCANE SAVED THE COLONY

*La canne à sucre est ce qui fait la richesse du blanc créole (...) La canne à sucre est ce qui permet à la colonie de rester debout (...) La France est la France. La colonie est la colonie (Confiant, 1994 : 34 & 95).*

According to Scott domination needs to internalize values and rights in order to give orders that delimit the obligations that subalterns have (Scott, 2008:32). In tune, Boltanski (2009:217) believes that the dominant know that it is indispensable to have rules (rights, procedures, norms) since in a world ruled by uncertainty they will not be able to secure their gains. The present contribution seeks to interweave different aspects about verticality established, on the one hand, between the French ultra-maritime colonized territories and the metropolis and, on

the other hand, between masters and enslaved peoples (Bucher, 2011; Burnard and Garrigus, 2016; Heuman and Burnard, 2011; Régent, 2007).

To demonstrate the first verticality, we transcribe some statements. A seventeenth century wholesaler states that «the colonies were founded only for the utility of the metropolis» (Cavignac, 1967, In Régent, 2007: 90). Others assert that although natural conditions determined the places to be implanted, the decision was determined by the ability to generate rents to the metropolis (Soares et al., 2012: 566). Likewise, for researcher Robert Stein (2000:335) «political reason insists that the colonies are always dependent on the mother country». Among the regulations imposed was the French system of exclusivity of the metropolis, which implied a double monopoly, both commercial and manufacturing. It was forbidden to sell, buy or transport products with other countries, as well as to manufacture crops (other than the authorized) from the islands (Régent, 2007:91). In addition, it is assumed that slavery was not considered a «right» act, since it was forbidden in the Hexagon, even though it was authorized in the colonies. This demonstrates the differentiation between the metropolis and the colonies.

The second verticality in question is governed by the *Code Noir* (1685), which stipulates slaves' rights and masters' duties – despite the fact that they were rarely respected (Bélénus, 1998:59). Within these, we find the duty to Christianize slaves (baptism), incite marriage, give correct food rations and clothing and, above all, the prohibition of «excessive» use of force to punish (Boucher, 2011: 228-229). For Toumson (1998:85), the *Code Noir* serves to justify that the masters can enjoy their «white» status and that every individual of color owes them respect for their dual status: white and master. We will now see how the colony, slavery and social differentiation are established.

### Settlements: why slaves?

The first French settlements were inaugurated by Pierre Belain d'Esnambuc in 1630 on the island of St. Croix (present-day St. Kitts), from where they were expelled by the British in 1713 (Carnegie and Patterson, 1996: 75). From there, in 1635, the settlement of Martinique and Guadeloupe (and neighboring islands) began. Although the Caribs, indigenous peoples, hindered French colonization in both, the settlement was quickly completed through their extermination or expulsion (Kiple and Ornelas, 1996:54). The choice of these islands was not fortuitous, but rather circumstantial, since for the Spanish Empire they were useless lands, without minerals (Crespo and González, 2011:13). By 1670, the colonial enterprise expanded to the island that would become the most important in the empire, Saint-Domingue (Boucher, 2011). By that time, the indigenous peoples (Tainos) had been almost exterminated by two centuries of Spanish imperial presence.

After the first settlements were established, what novelist George Lamming (1960) calls «an immense human migration to the new world of the Caribbean [where] everyone found themselves in a strange land» begins. A movement initiated by poor Europeans called *engagés* (Indenture servitude) who sold their freedom for 36 months to pay the expenses of moving to the islands (Muñoz and Grafenstein, 2011: 35). Such individuals had a physical inability to adapt to climate and disease (Bélénus, 1998: 8) contrary to what other peoples accustomed to the tropics would experience (Esposito, 2015). This pragmatic reason, along with a religious one («to save the pagan souls brought to the islands for baptism» according to Louis XIII) prompted the French empire to accept slavery (Bélénus, 1998:59). For Régent (2007:40) there are two other motivations: For tradition (since African slaves had been used on plantations in the Canaries, Madeira and São Tomé since the 15th century) and for

ease (since the uprooting of the African facilitated their control). But what was the purpose of bringing in slaves?

### Sugarcane & African slave: What for?

Although in the beginning the poor whites (*engagés*) were used to exploit agricultural lands producing mainly tobacco, indigo, cotton and coffee, these primary products required scarce land and a limited labor force. However, the expulsion of the Dutch from Brazil in 1640 constrained them to resettle in both Barbados and Guadeloupe (1654), bringing along with them sugar cane and the techniques to produce sugar, which would gradually spread to all the islands. Their arrival and the decline of the tobacco cycle (it was completely extinguished by 1690) caused a total modification of labor and territorial relations since this sugar cane required capital investment to acquire land, machinery and slave labor (Muñoz and Grafenstein, 2011:54; Boucher, 2011:218-219).

As a consequence, a monoculture concentrated among fewer owners began. By 1671, an estate (habitation-plantation) averaged 50 hectares, while during the tobacco cycle it was 15 (Régent, 2007:104). In the same year, 74% and 89% of the surface of Martinique and Guadeloupe had sugarcane plantations (Régent, 2007: 94-95). According to Boucher (2011: 224), «sugar was crucial in Martinique and Guadeloupe in the 1680s, but not to the extent it would be in 1750». After 1763, Saint-Domingue overcame the Lesser Antilles with an economy of large spaces to consolidate itself as the main sugar producer in the world.

The consequence of this paradigmatic shift was a growing need for labor. This explains the disproportionate growth in the slave population: in Martinique and Saint-Domingue between 1700 and 1730, the number of slaves increased 3 and 9 times respectively (Pitchard, 2004:424). It is estimated that between 1650 and 1848, the French territories received about 1.5 million slaves – 20% of whom died during

the middle passage (Régent, 2007: 55-67). The average number of slaves arriving in French territories is considered in total 864,000 (Saint-Domingue), 366,000 (Martinique) and 291,000 (Guadeloupe) (Régent, 2007:51).

Likewise, the so-called white gold (sugar) had an impact on the economic verticality established between the colony and the metropolis –keep in mind the earlier referenced system of exclusivity. In fact, exports of products (mainly sugar) to France grew from 221 to 500 million pounds between 1735 and 1752 respectively, reaching almost 750 million pounds in 1777 (Butel, 2000:194). Such demand was, in some cases, incited by the empires (and sugar lobbyists) both within the popular (Coquery, 2017:23) and bourgeois classes who used it to sweeten other colonial products: tea, coffee and chocolate (Burac, 2011: 143).

## 2. SOCIAL POLARIZATION: BETWEEN SKIN AND RANK

*Les rapports de race et de classes, toujours aussi prégnants, divisent la société entre blancs créoles, mulâtres (rejetons des Blancs avec les femmes esclaves) et noirs : véritable «pigmentocratie» (Confiant, 1994 : 9).*

The double verticality already mentioned forces us to identify the way in which society is organized, which has from its genesis a racial inequality, a fractured social structure and a recalcitrant hierarchy. The notion «social race» is used as Wagley defines it «the way in which the members of a society tend to categorize each one according to their physical aspects» (Wagley, 1952:12). Although each nation has its own ways of classifying: in the USA the one-drop-blood system gives African origin to any individual with a drop of blood from that continent and in Brazil, a «white» drop makes that individual to be considered as

such (Bastide, 1968: 21). We will now observe the way in which this «social race» is constructed in the French Caribbean.

In fact, the color distinction («social race») and rank respond to a need for differentiation, domination and conservation of positions of superiority. We can see this through two examples. On the one hand, most Slave codes had three points in common: the status of the slave was for life; it had a racial and property component (Esposito, 2015:13). Thirdly, such a racial component was the guarantor of colonial control through the identification of superiority (rank) and color («white»). In fact, Louis XV's minister, Choiseul states in 1766: «legitimate unions of whites with colored women must be discouraged. If through these alliances, the whites ended up getting along with free blacks, the colony could easily escape the authority of the king» (In Régent, 2007: 67).

To justify domination, the dominant must possess the capacity to restrict access to other strata in more or less important proportions (Boltanski, 2009:176). Although Boltanski does not use race, skin color or slavery in his work, his theory echoes the conformation of dominant and dominated in the Caribbean. It is important to establish complicity in secrecy and benefits with some actors (generally with lighter skin) by authorizing them access to middle levels of subalterns (*Géreur*, *Économés*, *Commandeur*) as opposed to lower levels (*esclaves*). In the following, we will look at both dimensions of differentiation: «social race» and rank in the productive hierarchy.

### «Social race»: status, color and origin

From the demographic point of view, French immigration is mainly male, which means that miscegenation was logical. However, when the colonial society is firmly established, access to the white caste is restricted (Régent, 2007:60 and 64). Such miscegenation forces the dominant minority to establish mechanisms of differentiation linked to skin color in order to preserve the power

structure vis-à-vis the dominated – preventing, for example, the children of slaves from claiming social ascent.

What Confiant defines as «pigmentocracy» seems to originate from the racial caste system of the Spanish empire (which, in turn, was nourished by the socio-religious division of India). An ethno-social pyramid allows each individual to identify his or her location within the hierarchy (based on the origins and miscegenation of his or her progenitors) which is almost always descending (Carrera, 2003; Catelli, 2012). In the French Caribbean there were limits that could never be crossed by a *mestizo* (mixed race), no matter how white he was, he would be considered as a «bleached» (*mal-blanchi*) (Toumson, 1998:112). The division took place because, quantitatively, the masters were always in the minority and the only mechanism to prevent everyone from accessing other ranks was to divide by origin.

For Charles Frostin (1975), in Saint-Domingue there was a clear division between whites, freedmen and slaves – sometimes called blacks (Casimir, 2006) –, which reveals a mixture between a racial category (white/black) and legal categories (slave owner/slave master, freedman and slave). Between 1681 and 1789, Frostin (1975) shows an uneven growth in the three French territories. The freedmen grew 10-fold in quantity in a century in all the territories; the whites 4 times in Saint-Domingue and Guadeloupe and 2 times in Martinique. In contrast, the number of slaves increased 200, 20 and 5.5 times respectively (In Muñoz and Grafenstein, 2011: 27). At the dawn of the 19th century, as an obvious consequence of the Haitian revolution, the number of slaves decreased in that territory, causing a significant increase in Martinique and Guadeloupe (Schnakenbourg, 1980: 48-49).

In the French territories, a complex color categorization-distinction system is established – with a supremacy of every European and «white» individual – residing in multiple nuances, although with a will

to approach white skin color, straight hair (Speranza, 2004) or the shape of lips and nose, where even aesthetics could be transferred to intelligence (Giraud, 1995:76).

Therefore, there was a will to create an organization that would justify the «superiority» of some (Brathwaite, 2000: 880) and incite competition among others, since there were less physical positions and with better food rationing (middle). This is confirmed by multiple specialists: «Being light-skinned still confers definite social and sexual advantages in Martinique (especially) and Guadeloupe (...) there is still a high degree of correlation between class and color» (Burton, 1995: 11). For Giraud (1995:77) the supremacy of the white is the *sine qua none* of the inferiority of the black, which is the reflection of a social structure imposed by the colonizers.

Such hierarchy was organized according to skin color, but was also linked to place of birth (West Indies or Africa); knowledge of the Creole language (L'Etang, 2011) and the degree of miscegenation (Régent, 2010:10). However, for Roger Toumson, miscegenation is a myth that serves as a mechanism of domination and identification of any «non-white» individual. For this reason, there is a «delirious hierarchization of races and colors» that falls into a «paranoia of classification» that distinguishes 128 types of classifications without any biological reality (Toumson, 1998:111-115). Table #1 shows some examples of racial division in the French Caribbean. (see table 1)

Indeed, as Giraud (1995 :80) mentions «for non-whites (married to whites) it tends to be socially advantageous and a sought-after means of upward mobility, as a capital resource that has to be acquired or defended». Beyond the paranoia of classification, a third group (which also existed in Spanish territories) was established: the mulatto. These were between masters and slaves since, regularly free, they were seen as those who «rejected their black African origins and, therefore, slave» (Giraud, 1995:82) because «as soon

as a mulatto owned a horse, he denied that his mother was black» (Confiant, 1994:96). At the same time, according to Toumson (1998:115) mulatto women had a trafficked destiny: to be the master's mistresses.

### **Differentiation: Rank and skin color**

In the slave society, another type of division was established according to activity (rank) within the plantation-habitation. This hierarchy «was to organize the work process on the sugar plantation and discipline the workers» (Tomich, 2000: 428). To reinforce domination, it is necessary to be able to show that there is a factor of convergence between actors dispersed in space, exercising different activities, occupying very diverse positions in relation to the authorities, endowed with unequal powers in terms of property and capital (Boltanski, 2009: 213).

At the top of the pyramid were the slave masters or planter (white Creoles, *Békés*), who personified power on the estate. The landowners of Saint-Domingue resided in France, which was less common in Martinique and Guadeloupe. At their side, there was a group of superior and free subordinates where we can find the administrator (*gèreur*), the superintendents or inspectors (*économés*), the slave driver or slave foreman (*commandeur*), who had infinitely better conditions than the rest. Except for the *gèreur*, the latter two were generally mulattoes. The *commandeur* has been described by the novelist Confiant (1994 :73) as that actor whom: «is not made to be loved, but to be obeyed and to make the blacks walk straight». They were in charge of carrying «the whip and an iron-tipped cane» (Tomich, 2000:428-429).

Subsequently, the slave population was divided into three main groups. The medium-high subalterns within which we find the «domestic slaves» (*esclave de case*) at the service of the master's house. At the second level were the middle subordinates –called «talent slaves» (*esclave de talent*) who had a trade such as carpenters, refiners, coopers, blacksmiths, masons. At

the bottom of the hierarchy, there were the lowest subordinates, which included most of those who worked in the mill (*esclaves du moulin*) or in the fields (*nègre de jardin*). The latter were in turn divided according to gender and physical strength: the men who cut (*coupeurs*) and the women who tied the canes (*amarreuses*) although there were also the cane transporters (*muletiers* and *cabrouiettier*) (Bélénus, 1998:15; Tomich, 2000: 428; Régent, 2007:140).

This pyramid should be seen in terms of racial juxtaposition: the lighter the skin, the greater the possibility of promotion. All this division within the plantation was accepted and justified as a social process based on personal and imaginary attributes that legitimizes domination. According to Tomich (2000:415) this is how slaves were distributed among the various occupations and activities of the sugar plantation. (see table 2)

### **3. THE HABITUS: «SUGARCANE FIELDS FOREVER»**

*La nèg sé an ras ki ni modisyon,  
wi ! (...) Kann sé modisyon !  
(le nègre est une race sur laquelle  
pèse la maudition ! (...) La canne est  
maudition) (Confiant, 1994 :67-68)*

Having studied how society is divided, the next section aims to analyze the impact of the place where a community interacts. As mentioned, sugarcane transforms the Caribbean socially, but also territorially and architecturally. This is how the Plantation-Habitations (P-H) are built, structuring and dividing the life of each individual. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1979) seeks to understand the influence of the environment in which agents evolve as generators of behaviors (influenced by social experiences) by cradling the concept of habitus. Other works allude to the social conditioning and signals associated with belonging to a habitus linked to the practices of each agent (Ball et al., 2002: 51). The

**TABLE 1**  
**«PARANOIA OF CLASSIFICATION»**

Male	Female	Result
White	Negresse	Mulatto
White	Mulatresse	Quarteron
White	Métis	Mamelouc
White	Mameloucque	Quarteron
White	Quarteronnée	Sang-mêlé
White	Sang-mêlé	Sang-mêlé (close to white)

fact of imposing or accepting domination is therefore influenced by a group of dispositions inherited or learned within that habitus, which may be part of a «symbolic imposition effect» (Bourdieu, 1979: 24-25).

Although both observe the social world without enslavement, the habitus can be used for any other apparatus of control. In fact, the devices of domination that we will observe in the P-H can give the illusion that power is systemic (in the sense that it belongs to no one) and whose control partially escapes each of the actors (Boltanski, 2009: 213). Therefore, according to Bourdieu (1979:139) there is a correspondence between the structure of natural, social and property space, which symbolically binds the agents.

Needless to say, outside the P-H the slave had no value as a «good» (outside an P-H he had no «utility»). Therefore, the bond between the slave and the P-H is inalienable from the slave system of

domination. In fact, the uprooting suffered by the enslaved peoples makes the P-H act as the new ««home»»environment to which they are forced to adapt.

As for the facilities of the P-H confluence economy (harvest, refinery); residential; punitive and forbidden spaces (Burac and Bégot, 2011:1) and sometimes infirmaries (Carnegie and Petterson, 1996:102). The three sets of buildings were: 1) the master's houses (*Grand-Case*) where the domestics lived and generally close to where the superior subalterns resided; 2) away and sometimes hidden from the master's view were located the slaves' houses (*Cases Nègres*) and 3) the buildings for processing sugar (mill, boiling house, infirmaries, distilleries, artisans' workshops). There are also cultivated fields (plantation) and others without cultivation (the Savannah).

Although the master's house serves primarily shelter, for Bégot (2011:15) it

has behind it a symbolic element: to impose its power and build a binary social world between settler/slave and slave. This is the determining element that, unfortunately, Bégot does not develop: the «symbolic violence» that is applied to all the agents that interact in such an architectural and productive organization. Racial segregation is at work again, since spaces were rigorously divided and separated between white and black populations. In fact, the P-H has been described as a totalitarian institution where spaces have a double function: on the one hand, they have been built by and for sugar production, on the other hand, they exert a coercive pressure towards slaves, which benefits the French state, sugar planters and white Creoles (L'Etang, 2011:187-188).

The arrangements, boundaries and prohibitions between the different structures shape the interacting agents.



**TABLE 2**  
**HIERARCHICAL STAFF**

TOP (white)		
Planter	Top of the plantation hierarchy	He personified power on the estate
Administrator ( <i>Géreur</i> )	Responsible for the overall operation on the estate.	He lived on the plantation, either in the big house or in a separate house with his family.
MIDDLE TOP (mulatto)		
Overseers ( <i>Économés</i> )	Practical day-to-day work of the plantation. He was directly responsible for the slaves (for keeping a record of birth, death, accidents).	He was familiar with the individual's conditions of every slave. He was between the master's surplus demand and his demand for maintenance of social control
Slave Commandeers	«The soul of the plantation». He was responsible for assembling only the slaves of the field hands.	Slave themselves, they symbolized both authority and exemption from physical labor.
Domestics	They are considered the most pampered.	They are better fed, better clothed and a little better treated because they do not have a commander.
Head refiner	Most important slave on the plantation	The entire crop was in his hands
MIDDLE (black)		
Mill master	<i>Maître du moulin</i>	Great prestige
Talented slaves	Those who stood out for their knowledge of a trade.	Carpenters, coopers, smiths, masons
BOTTOM (black)		
Slaves of the mill	Their work is exhausting, dangerous and hazardous.	Many slaves have their arms crushed in the mills or are burned in the boilers.
<i>Muletier &amp; Cabrouiettier</i> (driver of mules)	Transporting the cane to the mills or refineries.	
Lashers & Cutters	Femmes qui doivent lier les cannes coupées en paquets. Hommes qui doivent couper les cannes.	

**TABLE 1.** «Paranoia of classification»  
Source: Moreau de Saint-Méry, 1787;  
Toumson, 1998:111.

**TABLE 2.** Hierarchical staff  
Source: Tomich, 2000: 418 y 428-429;  
Confiant, 1994:90.

According to Toumson (2011:230) each space implies a set of practices that are attributed to differentiate (again) individuals, but at the same time to unite them around a relationship of mutual need (producing sugar). The places of socialization common among all the agents are nonexistent, the slaves execute their labour according to their rank and when they finish they return to their huts. The organization and distinction are the result of the construction of a feeling of belonging to a rank, so that the architectural structures have as an underlying element: to reinforce the power of the master (elitism) and perpetuate the tradition (inheritance).

Such social spaces are the abstract representation that reveal for an overall picture of the set of social unions and social breakdowns in the world of slavery. Indeed, it inevitably serves as a physical barrier that maintains social

and symbolic positions (Toumson, 2011: 229; Bourdieu, 1979 :191). For this reason, habitus is the generating principle that defines and differentiates the social practices and roles of each actor. Toumson (2011: 230-231) states that the homology between plantation and habitation space is explained by two structures governed by the same principles: each space has a habitus that is respected, which allocates hierarchical differences that cross natural, social and architectural space. This is why he considers the P-H to be the reference space of the master-slave dialectic.

On the other hand, although the P-H is inscribed in other large agricultural estates systems, it differs from these because it carries out an extensive exploitation (monoculture), speculative and destined for export (Burac and Bégot, 2011:9). For a significant time, they functioned as closed fiefdoms and relatively autonomous from the rest of the villages on the

island (Bertin-Elizabeth, 2011:364) since production generally ended up in Europe. For this reason, Burac (2011:145) considers that sugar marks the beginning of a purely capitalist and foreign-dependent production cycle.

The architectural structure (of residence, work, production and forbidden zones) linked to other elements (inheritance, tradition, fortune) determines a sort of class consciousness, essential to transmit the intrinsic bases of domination. Such spatial segregation both effective and symbolic allows individuals to identify themselves and be identified by others as belonging to a group according to their task, as has been demonstrated for other contexts (Grousset, 2012: 162). In this way, socialization links are established where individuals locate their peers. In this way, as classical anthropology has analyzed, individuals establish socialization links between peers isolated from other circles and the outside world for a long period of time, leading a solitary life, whose details are explicitly and meticulously regulated (Goffman, 1979: 41). To be part of a social group it is indispensable to be able to identify oneself (rank, color, origin) and to accept the norms that these attributes imply. Therefore, the P-H are in tune with the whole system a coordination, organization and hierarchization that implied slavery was based on a strong feeling of belonging to a group or community that guaranteed the attribution to each one of them in front of current and future members.

## CONCLUSION

The present text aimed to analyze some of the mechanisms of domination which, according to political sociology, have been exposed by the specialized literature. It goes without saying that, in a context of slavery, finding common threads with «free» societies reveals the complexity of the various gears of such a system of exploitation. However, we demonstrated that domination does not impose itself all at once, as slavery would have us believe, but is an evolving, metamorphosing and changing process that always seeks to perpetuate and preserve structures (Boltanski, 2009:176).

We brought to light the principle of verticality between territories and actors, which shows how there is a market and a captive labor force. Likewise, in the first part we showed the evolution of the colonial system towards a system of sugar cane monoculture for Europe, with African slave labor. In the second, through the analysis of social polarization, we reveal how the key differentiation is introduced to guarantee domination, identification and racialization. In the last section we observed, through the lens of habitus, how domination is guaranteed in time and space. It is shown that the dual role of both masters (economic) and whites (social race) reinforce the feeling of «superiority». Nevertheless, the masters establish some horizontal links such as speaking Creole with the slaves, which allows them to use French with the metropolitans (Régent, 2007:147). Their identity is reinforced by a

high endogamy, a recalcitrant patriarchy and Catholicism (L'Etang, 2011:187).

This domination converges in the descendants of both groups, since these infants learn affinities, convergences and divergences according to the fracture of skin color and rank, which guarantees the continuity of the system.

We cannot ignore the fact that capitalism influenced the implementation of this pre-industrial system of exploitation and domination. However, the Industrial Revolution shows, on the one hand, that slavery is an obsolete production system and, on the other hand, guides the new productive horizons linked to the systematization of processes, the purchase of western machinery and the proletarianization of labor. Studies on slavery, restitution and racialization are in vogue. However, such literature is still not at the heart of the economic-political debate that reveals the burdens of some and the benefits of others. Fortunately, a couple of decades ago, a new thread of research began to show the extent to which contemporary economic performance correlates with a slaveholding past, for all the actors involved (Engerman and Sokoloff, 2002). In this way, comparative studies are carried out between and within countries to identify the impact of regions where slavery existed (Bruhn and Gallego, 2012). These scientific initiatives must continue to empirically verify the damage suffered by enslaved populations and territories in order to propose economic, political and symbolic restitution.

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