Spatial Appropriations in Modern Empires, 1820-1960

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Beyond Dispossession

Edited by

Didier Guignard and Iris Seri-Hersch

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Cover image *Pierre Bourdieu, Untitled, R 1.* Archive Pierre Bourdieu, Images d'Algérie, 1958-1961.

The picture was taken by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) between 1958 and 1961, probably in Algiers. While the veiled driver is difficult to identify, the image conveys a broad range of actors and ways of appropriating space, after a century of French colonization in Algeria and amid a brutal independence war. Hence, spatial appropriations in colonial and imperial contexts cannot be reduced to material dispossession and political control by European actors. From her body language to the motorcycle, from the most intimate sphere to the public space and up to the boundaries of her (and our) imaginary, this young indigenous woman captures the viewer's attention as she seems to occupy a place that is at once unexpected, dynamic and hybrid. For her, was this act only an ephemeral and interstitial conquest in a masculine world full of political and racial violence? This is the kind of scholarly inquiry that this book tackles.

IN MEMORIAM: JEAN-MARIE BOURON († 2018)

The chapter "Planting the Church on Colonial Land: Missionary Territorialization in the Northern Gold Coast, 1906-1957" published in this volume is one of the last texts written by Jean-Marie Bouron, a promising young researcher who died at the age of 32 in 2018.

In 2013, he defended an outstanding doctoral dissertation entitled *Évangélisation parallèle et configurations croisées. Histoire comparative de la christianisation du centre Volta et du Nord Ghana, 1945-1960* including two volumes and 827 pages. His dissertation was a co-supervision project between the University of Nantes (directed by Bernard Salvaing) and Ouaga 1 University Joseph Ki Zerbo (directed by Magloire Somé). He also authored numerous articles, among which "Dominées ou dominantes? Les Soeurs Blanches dans l'ambivalence des logiques d'autorité (Haute Volta et Gold Coast, 1912-1960)" published in *Histoire, monde et cultures religieuses* 2, no. 30 (2014): 51-73. In 2016, this work was awarded a prize by the French Association of Contemporary Historians in Higher Education and Research (AHCESR).

In the article published here, the reader will catch a glimpse of the brilliance of Jean-Marie Bouron's research on missionary history: his attention to the detail of regional and local variations, carefully attending to all actors at all levels; the ability to render intelligible the diversity of nuances within a larger, synthetic framework; the desire to uncover reciprocal influences between missionaries and evangelized societies; a commitment to treating the missionary fact as "a total social fact", i.e. an element in a complex web of interactions, much as Georges Balandier envisioned colonial societies in his famous 1951 article.

It will be understood that for him, the study of missions was also an *opening* to a broader understanding of society and its historical moments, in an approach that was both anthropological and historical. This was possible only through an exceptionally long presence in the field, combined with a scholarly knowledge of the archives. Jean-Marie Bouron thus succeeded in developing an innovative personal approach, while taking into account major historiographical trends, including the most recent ones.

Bernard Salvaing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Our biggest thanks go to all the contributors to this volume, who have constantly enriched our discussions. We had the pleasure of getting acquainted, exploring a common theme despite the geographical, linguistic and cultural distance between various research areas and academic traditions. With the help and evidence of everyone, we are now convinced that we work on a same and stimulating object, which calls for further international partnerships.

Didier Guignard and Iris Seri-Hersch
Aix-en-Provence, May 2019

INTRODUCTION

RELOCATING HISTORIES OF EMPIRES, 19TH-20TH CENTURIES

DIDIER GUIGNARD AND IRIS SERI-HERSCH

This book proposes (re)examining colonial and imperial histories through the lenses of spatial appropriation. Borrowed from geography and anthropology, the concept of appropriation allows scholars to avoid the meaning limitations carried out by other notions such as property, a very Eurocentric and law-oriented term (Hann 1998; Testart 2003; Ripoll and Veschambre 2005; Le Roy 2011). Underlying this book is the idea that appropriation encompasses the many ways in which social actors consider a specific space as their own and/or make this space theirs. The appropriated space may be physical or immaterial, public or intimate, lived or imagined. Perceptions and actions meant to ensure real or symbolic control over space range from projections to concrete takeovers. Spatial appropriation may appear as an ongoing process, incomplete possession or temporary control. In the plural form, the concept of appropriations allows academics to grasp a wide array of situations involving diverging experiences, simultaneous dynamics or successive stages that accommodate or interfere one with another. Space is not a homogenous and fixed category either. As has been argued by Henri Lefebvre several decades ago, space is not a preexisting "void" or "scene", but rather the complex product of social interactions and power relations. His distinction between spatial discourses, spatial practices and spaces of representation continues to inspire and illuminate academic works across the social sciences (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]).[1]

Appropriation in Colonial and Imperial Studies

Spatial appropriations are obviously not a new object of enquiry for scholars of colonial and imperial history. Whether studying oversea

[1] On the evolution of spatial history from the 1950s to the 2010s, see Campbell 2018.

colonies, continuous multinational entities or informal empires based on "free trade and friendship" treaties, historians have often insisted on territorial annexations and the exploitation of economic resources (Gallagher and Robinson 1953; Howard 1961; Brown 2008; Stuchtey 2011). Starting in the 16th century, the European appropriation of resources across the world witnessed a phase of acceleration and generalization in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Considered together, the chapters of this book cover the whole extent of this "new imperial age". The latter differs not only from pre-19th century forms of imperial domination, but also from the imperialism that emerged after the Second World War (Duara 2006). Hence, the failure of imperial conceptions developed by a Genoese high official in Crimea in the 1820s heralded a large-scale Russian military expansion in the following decades (Heloisa Rojas Gomez). At the other end of the chronological span (1930s to 1950s), Odile Hoffmann and Lydia Hadj-Ahmed examine the conditions in which British imperialism was replaced with US domination over the forest industry in Belize or the fault lines of French military operations during the Algerian War of Independence. Between these two historical moments, the partition of Africa, the subordination of large parts of Asia and the appropriation of Pacific islands unfolded due to a combination of several factors: the growing industrial need for raw materials, the transport revolution, the development of new weapons, the increasing flow of capitals and migrants, as well as the diffusion of liberal, nationalist, and racist ideas.[2]

This global process began to draw the attention of historians as early as its inception (Platania 2011). Yet themes such as the quantification of imperial territories, colonial fiscality, and labor practices became research priorities only in the mid-20th century. Marxist scholars and economists brought to the fore land, water and mineral resources that had been seized from indigenous populations for the benefit of private individuals, companies and foreign governments. Between 1830 and 1938, European and Japanese oversea possessions had indeed been multiplied by 7, reaching almost half of the world land surface by the late 1930s. Colonized populations in theses empires represented then one third of the world's total population (Etemad 2000, 172, 302-313). These figures do not include the United States, Latin America, and the Russian, Ottoman and Chinese empires, where financial imperialism and the colonial nature of land appropriations were masked by formal independence or the continental continuity of territorial expansion. Historians have studied the modes and pace of such appropriations, first on a regional basis, then from a

[2] For a stimulating and synthetic study, see Bairoch 1997, 509-979.

comparative or connected perspective.[3] Mapping has become an important tool, allowing them to visualize and analyze historical processes at various scales.[4] Great emphasis has been laid not only on the human and social impact of spatial appropriations, but also on their cultural and environmental dimensions.[5] Other scholars have discussed the long-term economic profitability of empire for metropolitan actors (Marseille 1984; Offer 1993; Etemad 2005).

A different research trend was initiated in the 1970s by historians from formerly colonized societies or dominated territories such as India and Palestine. They called for an internal perspective, reversing the conventional center-periphery relation and recognizing the reality of indigenous or subaltern agency (Guha 1983; Chakrabarty 2000). This approach entails accessing alternative sources or deconstructing the discourse of institutional archives. Indeed, the identification of existing ideological biases and censorship is required in order to see traces left by dominated groups in the official documentation (Said 1978; Spivak 1988; Stoler 2009). Emerging first among scholars that were also activists, this qualitative approach was further developed to integrate historical aspects beyond autochthonous forms of resistance. Researchers growingly admitted that dominated societies, far from being homogeneous, reacted in various ways to forms of imperial and colonial appropriation whose nature and intensity could widely vary. For instance, the Slavic colonization of the northern Kazakh steppe did not radically transform nomadic ways of life until the second half of the 19th century. Conflicts on the ground erupted between pastoral clans that sought to preserve their interests and culture by relying either on customs (*adat*) or on new Russian laws (Martin 2001). Historical dynamics seem quite the opposite in the Canadian North-West, where the Red River Colony had lost much of its otherness in Amerindian eyes in 1870. By that time, most of the Colony's 15,000 habitants, who included both Catholics and Protestants, English-speaking and French-speaking people, were Métis individuals with "hybrid identities" (Fitzgerald 2007). According to seasonal change, hunting and fishing were preferred over agricultural and pastoral activities. The Hudson's Bay Company had facilitated the creation of the Colony sixty years earlier as an important basis for its fur trading business. New waves of European immigration and the territory's

[3] See for instance Duly 1968; McKenzie 1988; Adelman 1994; Weaver 2003; Frémeaux 2010.

[4] Good examples can be found in Bergh and Visagie 1985; Gentilcore 1993; Klein, Singaravélou and de Suremain 2012.

[5] Here are some representative works: Ageron 1968; Crosby 1986; Weeks 1996; Sivaramakrishnan 1999; Anderson 2014; Fischer 2015.

integration into the Dominion of Canada (1869) led to a tighter control of the Colony and the revision of land attribution. Threatened with expulsion, the first settlers decided to revolt against the authorities (1869-1870, 1885), which only fastened their *manu militari* eviction (Bumsted 1996; Stonechild and Waiser 1997).

Understanding these phenomena requires the detailed examination of instruments and techniques used to physically, legally and/or symbolically appropriate space: steamships and railways; rifles and machine guns; treaties, maps and surveys; agricultural machines and vaccination; language, the Bible, archaeological excavations, and/or law (Headrick 1981; de Moor and Rothermund 1994; Benvenisti 2002; Akerman 2009; Bhattacharya 2012; Prasad 2015). These tools both produced actions and disseminated knowledge or imaginaries that encountered local realities and practices. The latter may have contradicted imperial practices, but also catalyzed them in some cases (Blais, Deprest and Singaravélou 2011; Surun 2014). Indeed, imperial and colonial appropriations involved foreign and indigenous actors in constant interaction. Although recurring and central in many instances, violent confrontation was not the sole possible expression of spatial appropriation. To the contrary, European or Japanese actors were sometimes reluctant to use violence. A good example is the case of Piet Retief (1780-1838), a main figure in the Afrikaner nationalist pantheon. The ways in which he planned and conducted the Great Trek (*Groot Trek*) after 1835 reveal that he was sharply aware of the Boers' inability to impose themselves by the force of arms. This explains why after the abolition of slavery he negotiated with the British authorities to get compensation for his farmer fellowmen. His attempt's failure did not lead him into advocating rebellion against the government. Instead, he encouraged his countrymen to move away, relying on the Bible to justify this "new Exodus" towards a "better world". As this world was not empty to the East of the Orange River, Retief tried through diplomatic means to obtain from the powerful Zulu king Dingane (1828-1840) permission for a few dozen families to settle in Natal. Pretending to agree, the Zulu leader murdered him and his suite. The massacre was immediately avenged thanks to the superiority of European weaponry. But the Boers' initial weakness was gradually erected into a collective myth, which crystallized in the picture of carts arranged in a circle (*laager*), protecting a few "elected" individuals against much more numerous enemies. Paradoxically, the Boer's initial avoidance strategy resulted in a new form of violence when the balance of power became more favorable to them in the early 20th century. Afrikaners started claiming a life and a space that would be completely separated from the life of "others", be them Africans, British or Asians (*apartheid*). This representation of a

besieged people was reinforced by sites of memory, economic arguments, as well as religious and racist justifications. It became the official policy of a segregationist state from 1948 onwards (O'Meara 1983; Sparks 1990).

Hence, the political and social effects of appropriation vary according to the place, time and human groups under study. This book argues that historical scholarship—in a fruitful dialogue with anthropology—should consider locality both as a scale of observation and as the result of social interactions (Appadurai 1996; Torre 2008) in order to better grasp processes of spatial appropriation. Scholars need to identify not only the multifarious forms of resistance that were deployed against material or symbolical dispossession, but also the possible ways in which autochthonous people circumvented, or contributed (voluntarily or not, consciously or not) to such processes. In the independent Kingdom of Hawaii, Kamehameha III and his court implemented a reform of land law between 1845 and 1855. Known as "Division" (*Māhele*), the reform was modelled upon European contemporary land ownership rules. Through this measure, Hawaiian elites were "preparing to be colonized" by the United States, Britain or France, hoping to preserve what could be preserved in such circumstances (Banner 2005). The choice of a historically trading city such as Tianjin as the siege of several international concessions in 1860 was also an act of anticipation by the Chinese authorities, who wished to keep foreigners away from their capital. This policy benefitted the harbour of Tianjin, which became an important diplomatic center and the window of urban "modernity". New infrastructures and services such as hospitals, water pipes, latrines and public cemeteries were designed to meet Western needs. Yet they were also promoted by local notables (*shendong*) before and after the Boxer Rebellion (1905), even if many Chinese residents continued to reject such innovations (Singaravélou 2017). India offers a startling contrast to that situation. Repeated strikes involving several hundreds of thousands of textile workers were needed in order for British administrators and Indian elites to plan the building of social housing in Bombay at the turn of the 20th century. Although the resulting constructions were modest, Indian trade unions knew how to use official paternalistic discourses to their own ends. Similarly, renters diverted the functions that had been ascribed to their housing interior by investing the space in quite different ways (Caru 2013).

In some instances, the coveted space—territories, resources, bodies or minds—retained an immaterial shape. It could be a "land that was promised but not seized" (Guignard 2017), a dream about wealth and greatness, or a sexual phantasm. Even if such representations are not to be mistaken for those held by indigenous people, the former sometimes transgressed and transformed the latter, or only drew inspiration from them. Thus, the cultural

dimension of appropriation cannot be dissociated from its political or economic meaning. At times, cultural representations could precede political undertakings. In the Algerian Aures Mountains, Islamic reformism was in part a response to the colonial threat, which in the 1930s remained quite distant in spite of French military conquest and taxation policies. The endogenous nature of reformism strengthened the social and religious cohesion of Algerian mountain-dwellers. This movement was led by landowning families that managed to keep their wealth until independence in 1962 (Colonna 1995). The threat was more direct for Japan when four American warships appeared in Edo Bay in 1853. The signing of unequal treaties with the United States and with European powers in subsequent years led the Shōgun to abdicate and allow young prince Mutsuhito to become the Emperor of Japan (1868-1912). The new regime chose to follow Western models in the technical, legal and military fields so as to regain real independence. However, such a paradoxical and successful reappropriation of national sovereignty owed much to the use of local and Chinese knowledge, the existence of mass literacy within Japanese society, and an industrialization process that had started as early as the beginning of the 19th century (Hiroshi 2006; Hiroshi 2012; Souyri 2016).

Adopting a long-term perspective, we argue that forms of spatial appropriation should not be limited to practices associated with foreign occupation and exploitation, how much complex and interactive these were on the ground. One needs also to take into account older forms of spatial appropriation, as well as those which survived the colonial era. Their dynamics may have been perturbed by the newcomers, but they sometimes owed nothing to them and pursued a separate evolution. In other instances, precolonial appropriations were amplified by colonial and imperial ventures. The former could also deeply affect the latter. From the 1700s until the mid-19th century, territories stretching from northern Mexico to the Mississippi basin were dominated by a Comanche hegemony. This political entity reflects the ability to adapt to the Great Plains ecosystem, borrow foreign technologies (rifles), and coordinate numerous nomadic camps (*rancherías*) to the detriment of other autochthonous peoples and Spanish and North American colonizers. The power of the Comanche "Empire" expressed itself in the alternation between armed raids, diplomatic agreements and trade relations (Hämäläinen 2008). In India, powerful trading networks had developed ramifications from East Africa to the Strait of Malacca and Central Asia long before the coming of the British. This family capitalism benefitted from certain innovations brought by English law—such as the use of joint-stock companies—without necessarily complying with the new banking system. This historical configuration

explains how a number of "traditional" crafts were able to resist to foreign competitors; Indian textile, steel, cement and sugar modern factories bloomed at the turn of the 20th century (Markovitz 2008).

What about populations that totally stayed out of reach of state administrators, while being subjected to the nominal sovereignty of this or that imperial power? On the map, the eastern highlands of Papua New Guinea were divided between a German and a British protectorate in 1883-1884. The area was integrated into the Dominion of Australia in the early 20th century. Nevertheless, difficulties of access prevented any foreign intrusion until 1960. The anthropologist Maurice Godelier needed to work fast in order to collect specific forms of Baruya spatial appropriation before they would disappear or be considerably altered. He was indeed able to witness the strict organization of the village and domestic space, which materialized male domination over women. Moreover, Godelier's fieldwork uncovered historical developments that had preceded the arrival of Australian missionaries and officials: Baruya foundational narratives hint at a gradual takeover of the Marawaka and Wonenara valleys from the 18th century, which continued despite bad harvests, plagues and attacks from neighbouring tribes. The Baruya people made themselves known to the outside world and learnt from it so as to consolidate their local power: in the 1940s and 1950s, Baruya salt was reputed far beyond their territory. Trading relations allowed them to adopt more efficient tools, such as steel axes instead of stone adzes (Godelier 1986).

Writing an "All-Terrain" History of Spatial Appropriations

Current studies of spatial appropriations bring to the fore a picture that is less overlooking and uniform than in the past. Scholars are interested in the interactions that this global process generated at various levels. Since the colonial or imperial factor is always enmeshed with other historical dynamics, it is necessary to try and assess the role played by each one of the factors and actors involved. Different modes of spatial appropriation may have been juxtaposed, associated or opposed, as the chapters of this book clearly show. The contributors, who first met in 2017 at an international conference in Aix-en-Provence, France, produced articles that offer ample evidence for a stimulating scholarly conversation on the same historical object from Russia to China, from the United States to South America, from the Mediterranean to Africa. The chapters cut across historiographies that too often continue to reproduce imperial boundaries for archival, linguistic and historical reasons.

While some authors engage in local ethnographies of rural spaces (Lydia Hadj-Ahmed, Didier Inowlocki), others look at continental-wide colonial imaginaries (Hinnerk Onken). But all of them combine scales and contexts of observation in order to analyze historical processes. How could we otherwise understand what is at stake in a Crimean botanical garden (Heloisa Rojas Gomez), naturalist gatherings in Gabon (Agnès Lainé), conflicting maps of the East African coast (Clélia Coret), the writing of the history of conquest in Kansas (Emmanuel Falguières) or the sale of a big company in Belize (Odile Hoffmann)? Here, scholars unpack appropriation processes by revealing the multiple sites in which spatial relationships were enacted. Thus, the celebration of Bastille Day in the French Concession of Shanghai (1881-1940) leads Qieyi Liu to scrutinize the sociology and geography of spaces that were more broadly linked with political developments in China, France and Japan. Similarly, the White Fathers' missionary expansion into the Gold Coast (1906-1957) was shaped not only by diplomatic ties between the Vatican, London and Paris, but also by the reality of an understaffed administration in the Northern Gold Coast and varied local reactions to evangelization (Jean-Marie Bouron).

Appropriations through the Archival Knot

Using diverse source materials allows historians to grasp a wide range of spatial appropriations. Documents were the tools or the outcome of such processes; they bring to light specific moments of interaction. Most interestingly, the frequent archival hegemony of ruling elites and institutions does not prevent scholars from discerning alternative regimes of historicity and spatiality, as well as discourses of appropriation that sometimes failed to translate into real practice.

For instance, the making of a map was often underlain by very specific motivations and circumstances. In the eyes of White Fathers that settled in the Gold Coast in the first half of the 20th century, a map would above all serve to represent a "missionary field". They were reluctant to "map the unknown" in a view to spare their own future (Jean-Marie Bouron). Conversely, in the context of the late-19th century Scramble for Africa, European powers often indulged in wishful thinking as they considered their desire for boundaries as on-the-ground realities. Even so, the archives of boundary commissions reflect hesitations and sometimes frontal opposition between various European actors *and* between different "autochthonous" groups. These reports also provide with clues about local lifestyles and ways of appropriating space (Clélia Coret). The writing of history was later monopolized by the winners, who systematically renamed and reordered a

territory on paper while deleting all traces of previous occupations. Yet it was still possible for a settler to depart from the rule and locate the site of a massacre of Cheyenne Indians that had taken place twenty years earlier (Emmanuel Falguières).

Even though the archival overlooking perspective inevitably implies a selection of events, filtering how we see spatial appropriations, historians can learn a great deal from the context in which the documents were produced. A good case in point is the voluminous file that emerged out of the sale of forest land by the Belize Estate Company (BEC) in the 1930s. These documents reflect Britain's attempts to maintain her sovereignty and preserve the profits she had drawn from wood exploitation for decades. They also reveal the competing agendas of local entrepreneurs, North American companies and foreign governments (Guatemala, Mexico, the United States) within the same space. Quite unsurprisingly, workers employed by the BEC could not make their voice heard; they were a priori excluded from such correspondence, reports, accounting books and notarial acts. But the "magnifying glass effect" of the transaction incited the seller to try and solve as many conflicts as possible *before* the effective sale. When this was not possible, the BEC informed potential buyers of their existence. This configuration explains why present-day historians see popping from the archives various modes of land rights recognition (dating back to the middle of the 19th century), including Maya modes, which BEC directors wanted to "regularize" as quickly as possible many decades later. In the 1930s, a serious buyer could not altogether ignore the struggle of Creole, Chinese, and Indian workers, who protested against the delayed payment of their salaries and the seasonal nature of their work—thus contributing to let us know about it (Odile Hoffmann).

Political domination and its documentary translation find their limits. Both often accommodate with imperfect relays and a few false notes. Let us consider the case of a "local"—yet foreign, most probably British—irrigation officer that was physically harassed in the Egyptian countryside in 1902, at a time when Egypt was under British occupation but still officially an Ottoman province. The historian gets to know about the incident through an English report by the officer's superior and an Arabic report prepared by the Egyptian provincial governorate. Seemingly astonishing in this case is the victim's failure to obtain medical refund from his own administration. A careful analysis of the various sources sheds some light on this historical puzzle: the Egyptian rural space was being brought under increased administrative control, a reality that soon became unbearable to village dwellers. At the same time, the injured irrigation

officer was blamed for not keeping with the social norms that were tacitly expected from a British official in semi-colonial Egypt (Didier Inowlocki).

Patrimonial sources are the basis for other types of original research. As argued by Agnès Lainé, "objects [that were collected in Equatorial Africa and deposited in European museums in the second half of the 19th century] meant inventories of resources and knowledge (scientific, economic, technical or artistic), means of winning over or dominating local authorities, investing spaces as much for collection and opening new ways of commercial and political penetration, as for more direct exploitation of territories". In Northern Ghana, the Catholic presence has left a visible and audible patrimony besides religious buildings. A whole signage is periodically reactivated through processions that include bell ringing, music and singing. However, in the colonial era missionaries had to accommodate with well-rooted beliefs and practices, such as "scraping the earth" before any new spiritual installation (Jean-Marie Bouron). Under such circumstances only oblivion testifies to the ultimate success of one form of appropriation over another. It is also the case with Raffaele Scassi's imperial project in Crimea, which was notably reflected in his deep interest for archeological artifacts and vegetal species. Two centuries of Russification and Sovietization have largely obliterated the memory of this man and his venture: nowadays one can find only a fountain named after him in the outskirts of Kerch (Heloisa Rojas Gomez).

Images certainly have a strong and long-lasting evocative power because of their ability to sustain a colonial imaginary beyond physical or political bonds to a territory. In the years 1890-1930, postcards and photographs adorning travelers' accounts and travel guides brought German society closer to South America. "Created in real time, visual representations gave the impression of objectivity, reality, facticity, authenticity, and immediacy", argues Hinnerk Onken in his chapter, although their reception was not uniform. But what did these postcards and photographs vehicle in the early 20th century? They featured modern cities that would attract emigrants and businessmen thanks to their infrastructures and means of communication; great landscapes plenty of wild natural scenes or portraits of naked women, suggesting a world of infinite experiences. Such projections may have fulfilled a compensatory function in a puritan Germany that had been amputated from her colonial empire at a very early date (1918). Maps and lithographs representing Crimea at the turn of the 19th century were not as widely diffused. Yet they similarly entertained a "desire for the South" in Western Europe and Russia (Heloisa Rojas Gomez). Pictures that were taken a century later at Bastille Day in Shanghai served totally different ends. They were reproduced in the French and Chinese-speaking press to

give an impression of normality and peaceful relations at the very moment when international domination over China seemed more and more fragile and contested—or at least increasingly difficult to justify (Qieyi Liu).

Oral interviews offer a valuable complimentary tool for more recent periods. The terseness of French military reports (*journaux de marches et opérations*) in wartime Algeria (1954-1962) is not surprising. Indeed, the army was engaged in a process of rationalizing space in order to better control it. The progress of "pacification" was correlated to the number of "outlaws" that were eliminated, accomplices that were arrested, weapons caches that were discovered. This growing control over space can be followed by looking at French military maps. By contrast, oral accounts allow historians to grasp how Algerian villagers experienced the transformation of their daily routine through the imposition of a French time, the restriction of population movement, and traumatic moments that later became sites of memory. These two opposite geographies do not easily adjust one to the other; yet when combined, they help understanding the paroxysm of a long-term colonial situation (Lydia Hadj-Ahmed). Interviews with elderly people from Kenya's Wajir District, near the Somalia border, bring to light strong elements of continuity. A transborder sense of belonging has persisted to this day even though a boundary was drawn by Italy and Britain as long as a century ago. These feelings of belonging have also survived forced displacement, the transformation of pastoral and trade activities, the redefinition of assigned identities, and successive wars throughout the 20th century. In this case, oral testimonies corroborate a scholarly intuition which written archives produced on each side of the border would rather tend to minimize (Anna Bruzzone).

Contested Objects, Local Practices and the Power of Imagination

Through various case studies, the following chapters investigate important transversal concepts such as historical agency, the spatial technologies of imperial and colonial states, and vernacular spatialities. The organization of the book in three parts brings out comparative insights on more specific issues.

Part One explores some of the main objects of spatial appropriation in colonial and imperial contexts, namely the exploitation of natural resources, the process of territory-making and the achievement of political sovereignty. Even though the studies by Agnès Lainé and Odile Hoffmann are located at the opposite end of the colonial period, they do tackle a number of common issues. What was the relationship between access to

"natural" resources and property over them, both in the thinking of local actors and in real practice? Whereas European naturalists tried to dissociate property and access in order to claim hunting rights in mid-19th century Gabon, the BEC argued that the continuous exploitation of forests in British Honduras (later Belize) granted it property rights over lands that the company sought to sell in the 1930s. The second issue is connected, but different, from the first: how far was the control over natural resources—through gathering, hunting, agriculture, and then exploitation for commercial, scientific or industrial ends—instrumental in asserting political sovereignty over a specific space? Conversely, to what extent did political sovereignty confer rights over resources? Relevant for both precolonial Gabon and British Honduras, this double question raises the issue of institutions. Indeed, what institutions were able to recognize and guarantee rights over the land and its fauna and flora in each case? This question may fruitfully lead scholars to re-examine the couple legality/legitimacy, two notions that colonial administrations nowhere managed to make coincide despite great efforts to that effect.[6]

Odile Hoffmann not only points at the transformation of individual, limited, appropriation of resources into wide-scale colonial policies of forest and mine exploitation in the span of three generations. She also demonstrates, as do Clélia Coret and Anna Bruzzone, the central role played by borders—as lines (boundary) or zones (frontier)—in historical processes of spatial appropriation. In instances when the border was disputed, as between British Honduras and Guatemala in the 1930s and 1940s, the selling to North American businessmen of tracks of land located near the border zone entailed political risks for Britain, who feared losing her sovereignty in the region. On the East African coast at the time of the Scramble for Africa, European and local actors rather sought to set up boundaries—those of the Zanzibar State—as a means to assert territorial claims on behalf of Germany, Britain, the Zanzibar Sultanate or the Witu Sultanate (Clélia Coret). Still, borders endorsed a different meaning at the margins of British Kenya and Italian Somaliland, where they contributed to the territorialization of Somali nomad groups and the reshaping of local political loyalties (Anna Bruzzone).

Territorial ambitions, property claims and resource exploitation by state and non-state actors entailed negotiations that took place at various scales, from the local colonial space up to the international arena through the metropole. Negotiations would sometimes last a few weeks, sometimes several decades. They were often accompanied by a considerable amount of mapping activities. Mapping was at once a material outcome of onsite

[6] See for instance Nuzzo 2012.

fieldwork and a tool for claiming sovereignty (Clélia Coret) or property rights (Odile Hoffmann). Furthermore, the chapters in Part One help us understanding how imperial dynamics affected not only the local management of territory and population, but also the ways in which local people practiced space (Odile Hoffmann, Anna Bruzzone). While forest workers protested against their working conditions in British Honduras, Somali nomads did not hesitate to question "intertribal boundaries" assigned to them by the British administration in Kenya. The primarily European and colonial documentation on which these studies are based does not preclude historians from discerning territorial claims by indigenous/local actors before (Agnès Lainé), during (Clélia Coret) or at the twilight of the colonial moment (Anna Bruzzone).

Local conceptions and practices of space lie at the heart of Part Two. Endorsing a long-term perspective, the chapters by Jean-Marie Bouron and Qieyi Liu respectively analyze the process of Catholic missionary territorialization in the Gold Coast and the meanings of Bastille Day in the French Concession of Shanghai. At the start of the 20th century, Shanghai experienced a kind of semi-colonial rule that formally preserved imperial—namely Chinese—sovereignty. This was also the case of Egypt, which remained a nominal province of the Ottoman Empire until 1914 even though the country had lived under British military occupation since 1882. However, contrarily to Shanghai, Egypt is here apprehended through a historical ethnography based on the detailed observation of social and administrative practices at the micro level (Didier Inowlocki). This small scale has also been retained to study the use of space in rural Algeria at the time of the War of Independence (Lydia Hadj-Ahmed).

The chapters show how the physical, and sometimes sonorous, marking of space fashioned particular landscapes and human itineraries. Catholic churches, cemeteries, and statues in the Northern Gold Coast are good cases in point. July 14th decorations in Shanghai, dams, canals and cotton fields around the Egyptian Nile, or barbed wire set up around Algerian villages also reflect spatial transformation that had far-reaching social, economic and ideological effects. Liturgical bells and singing, melodies of a military orchestra and the ringing of the time for water supply, all were sounds that punctuated the day or the year of subordinated peoples. A number of devices, such as Catholic processions (Jean-Marie Bouron) and July 14th parades (Qieyi Liu), allowed missionary and colonial institutions to simultaneously strengthen their visibility and audibility in the local environment. This raises questions about the impact of missionary, political, administrative or military investment of space on the living experience of subordinate people within colonial and semi-colonial systems. How can

historians access the experience of actors that very often did not author sources or whose writings have not been preserved and made accessible?

Cutting across all the chapters, the issue of the social experience of space leads scholarly thinking onto various paths. In the Gold Coast, African converts to Catholicism appropriated missionary space by taking part in religious ceremonies, attending schools and resorting to medical treatments provided by the White Fathers. After the independence of Ghana (1957), they reinvested Christian monuments with local meanings by painting Kasena artistic motives on the church walls. It seems that for them the Church has truly functioned as a "geosymbol" (Bonnemaison 1981, quoted by Jean-Marie Bouron): Catholic territorialization was successful to the point that it provided parishioners with a sense of owing space and belonging to a community.

In the French Concession of Shanghai, the July 14th corteges and illuminations that were regularly organized from the 1880s until the 1940s constituted an urban spectacle whose meaning, participants and effects were assessed in different ways by contemporary witnesses and journalists. Scrutinizing a discursive space at the junction of French, Chinese and English-speaking Shanghai newspapers brings to light contradictory experiences and interpretations of Bastille Day. The attitude of Chinese "spectators", who themselves became a spectacle for commentators, crystallized heated debates in which France appeared alternately as a pioneer of human rights and democracy in the world or as an oppressive colonial power that needed to be pushed out of China (Qieyi Liu).

In Egypt, the British "veiled protectorate" (1882-1914, see Carman 1921) and the development of irrigation techniques ushered in spatial constraints affecting the countryside. Land expropriation in the name of public interest, the moving of cemeteries away from villages and the imposition of restrictions on the movement of peasants provoked some violent incidents, as occurred in Mazura in 1902 (Didier Inowlocki). Half a century later, the war fought by the French army against Algerian nationalists significantly impinged upon the mobility of Ait-Bouadda and Moknéa inhabitants. The erection of physical obstacles (roadblocks, barriers), the implementation of strict but changing—thus unpredictable—rules over the movement of goods and people, the military intrusion into the villagers' daily life through inspection, food rationing and time discipline, all concurred to restrict Algerian movements, incite individuals and families to circumvent the new rules or sometimes negotiate with the colonial authorities. Although mobility was often restricted, it was also constrained by French soldiers who emptied and destroyed villages considered to be "on the rebellious side". Displaced people would reappropriate their village

space through poetry or by taking the risk to go back to places that had been categorized as "forbidden" or "insecure" zones by the French military (Lydia Hadj-Ahmed).

The case studies bring to light competing, conflicting or entwined regimes of spatiality. These three modes were present in the Northern Gold Coast. Catholic, Protestant and Muslim proselytes competed in the spatial and sonorous realms. Delimiting jurisdictions was a recurrent motive of conflict between the British colonial administration and the White Fathers mission. Lastly, Catholic and Kasena spatialities coexisted for decades before the introduction of the European notion of land property shook such an entwinement. Protests against the delocalization of cemeteries in rural Egypt and struggles over human movement in war-torn Algeria reveal conflicting spatialities. The inclusion of French symbols (RF inscription, tricolour flag) in the July 14th celebrations in Shanghai rather hints at entwined spatialities, although the mere definition of the spectacle and its audience was subject to dissonant interpretations.

Part Three examines symbolical, memorial and visual modes of appropriation. In the early 20th century, the rewriting of Kansas history offered a crucial ideological complement to military conquest and land settlement (Emmanuel Falguières). By contrast, contemporary German bonds to South America (Hinnerk Onken), or the imperial conceptions of a Genoese high official in Crimea a century earlier (Heloisa Rojas Gomez), remained unfulfilled projections. The mobilizing power of such forms of appropriation is not necessarily linked with the ability to physically take hold of a territory and its resources. Indeed, the memorial appropriation of Kansas unfolded quite a long time after the material conquest; and if Russia did expand into Asia throughout the 19th century, Russian imperial expansion did not rely on civilizational and peaceful means as advocated by Raffaele Scassi. As for the German interest in South America, it did not ensue from expansionist policies: such a curiosity was entertained by travelers, photographers, writers and economic lobbies that primarily addressed an audience that was ready to invest or fulfil dreams on a far-away continent. Hence, cognitive appropriation could very well operate "downstream", elsewhere or differently from physical takeover.

The gap between material and immaterial appropriation also expressed itself in a different relation to time. Symbolical appropriation was often meant to satisfy present needs whose connection with the past was chosen, reshaped, or silenced. For Christian Orthodox Russians, claiming a Greek heritage served at legitimizing the "reoccupation" of Black Sea regions, the "rediscovery" of ancient agricultural techniques, and the "reopening" of maritime routes to the Mediterranean Sea (Heloisa Rojas Gomez). Unable

to evoke such a kind of filiation, local history associations in the United States ended up modelling their discourse on the "frontier" national myth that had been popularized by the university historian Frederick Jackson Turner since 1893. This discourse praised the action of European pioneers while suppressing all reference to an "Indian" past (Emmanuel Falguières). In the Weimar Republic (1918-1933), there was rather a need to cure German patriots from a recent traumatic past. Both imperial nostalgia and a quest for personal satisfaction could be fulfilled by being transported, through books and images, to Brazil, Chile or Argentina (Hinnerk Onken). Biased by a "pain/evil to see" (*Le mal de voir* 1976), those parallel space-times created coherence between past and present, answering pressing needs for political legitimacy and/or for the fulfillment of private aspirations.

These individual and collective appropriations were powerful even though they were not always inserted in the lived experience of a colonial or imperial situation. Their promoters did not spare efforts to convince people around them. In Kerch, a botanical garden and a museum of antiquities stirred the imagination of prestigious visitors that could influence the future of the Russian Empire in the 1820s (Heloisa Rojas Gomez). The diffusion of texts, maps and photographs was much more massive a century later in the United States and Germany. Relying on fast-developing networks of scientific societies, libraries, and schools, those media reached a broad literate audience that had access to the printed materials of the industrial era (Emmanuel Falguières, Hinnerk Onken). This is not to say that truncated narratives, promotional writings and delusive close-ups completely succeeded in convincing targeted audiences. But the motives underlying such activities and the evocative power of the materials were sufficient to generate collective passions: a real "desire for the South" among Russian elites, the fostering of a colonial culture in a country (Germany) that was deprived of colonies, and a peculiar intolerance towards critical history in the United States.

In the process, mediators often distorted scales. By drawing public attention to a small exemplary place, they suggested another space, which was much larger but still within reach. Hence, a landscape featuring a modern city, a locomotive on a suspension bridge or an erotic portrait stirred German imagination to encompass a vast continent that welcomed all daring ventures (Hinnerk Onken). Similarly, Raffaele Scassi's plentiful garden, as well as his romance with a Caucasian "princess", served as metaphors for advocating shared interests and a peaceful coexistence between all the peoples of imperial Russia (Heloisa Rojas Gomez). Every child's drawing, as every pioneer's testimony in Kansas, was to be integrated into the American national grid map, which featured a revisited toponymy. Such

local productions were inserted in a history of the conquest of the Great Plains that was devoid of any false note (Emmanuel Falguières).

Despites its powerful impact on the real world, the veil of symbolical appropriation got torn in the shorter or longer run. In fact, Raffaele Scassi did not manage to change the ways and thinking of Russian generals and settlers in the 19th century. In the long run, Native American memories never stopped challenging the United States' national narrative. Feedbacks by overseas German emigrants sometimes dampened the motivation of potential emigrants to leave the metropole. Indeed, as in the case of physical seizure of natural resources or territories, symbolical, memorial and visual appropriations were the locus of debates or conflicts that were never totally extinct. In Germany, the search for a "vital space" became the motto of a totalitarian state that began to project itself onto the Slavic world in the 1930s. Yet the persistence of a South American imaginary may have oriented the flight of Nazi war criminals after 1945, as it shaped the cinematographic works of Werner Herzog (born in 1942).[7] Even if both Russian and American imperialisms strengthened after the Second World War, the leaders of the new world powers could not show complete indifference vis-à-vis mid-20th century decolonization movements, which they officially encouraged. In this context, it became possible for autochthonous peoples, who were at the same time Soviet or American second-class citizens, to openly claim compensation in the 1960s. They were supported by a growing international concern for "indigenous rights" and new mediators not all of whom came from within their ranks: dissidents, lawyers, artists, anthropologists, and historians (Miller 2004; Goujon 2006).

This book contributes to a long-term historiographical debate by putting into sharper relief the geographical, anthropological and cultural dimensions of spatial appropriation. In colonial and imperial contexts, these phenomena can neither be reduced to a material and violent dispossession policy orchestrated by European and Japanese invaders, nor to an ongoing and unquestioned resistance by subaltern peoples. They were rather sites of complex and dynamic interactions, in which the respective part of each actor owed as much to the colonial configuration as to other historical factors. Appropriation processes can be grasped through archival knots all around the globe. Beyond the great diversity of local and regional situations, which scholars need to reconstruct as finely as possible, we argue that a common interpretative framework allows bringing out the declination and conjugation of various forms of spatial appropriation.

[7] See Steinacher 2006; Aubron and Burdeau 2017.

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