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French Travelers in the Atlantic World in the Nineteenth Century – in Brazil and in Africa

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The expeditions approached by this essay allow us to see how French travelers were present in the Atlantic world in the 19th century and how they react to the profound historical changes of the time.

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In the period 1770-1830 most European colonies in the American continent underwent profound transformations marking decolonization and the period of political independence. At the same time a large part of Africa was in a pre-colonial phase. A phase in which the presence of Europeans - above all Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English in continual disputes and rivalries - was expressed in entrepôts, located on the Atlantic coasts, where goods were traded, as well as enslaved men, women, and children. Brought by force as labor to the Americas, it was through this human traffic that a strong transcultural connection was structured between the West, East, and Central African space and the Americas. While on the American side of the Atlantic, after the political independence phase, a process of constructing and forming modern states and American nations was observed, in this part of Africa, 'colonization' by European nations crystalized from the 1860s onwards, intensifying in the 1880s with the imperialist race for Africa.

While both continents, the Americas and Africa, experienced political trajectories marked by differences and specificities, it can be speculated that the impact of the Enlightenment on them had similarities. The Enlightenment - a cultural, scientific, social and political movement which spread through the European continent - was materialized in France, for example, in the Encyclopédie, the foundation of scientific societies, and in the professionalization of academies of science, which contributed to the organization of voyages of exploration. These included those of Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1729-1811) and Jean François de La Pérouse (1741-1788), who similarly to the English explorer James Cook (1728-1779), sailed around the world with an enormous team of scientists on ships that were laboratories and itinerant research cabinets in various areas of knowledge. These voyages of circumnavigation were essential in the sense of mapping the continents and discovering corners still unknown by Europeans. But these expeditions prioritized the coastlines and only in rare cases went inland, such as the expedition of the mathematician Charles Marie de La Condamine (1701-1774) into the Amazonian basin.

Until then, apart from the coastal regions where the Europeans had had entrepôts since the fifteenth century and which they had also passed on the circumnavigation voyages, the interior of Africa was a land ignored by Europeans. With the foundation of the African Association in 1788 in Great Britain, 'the

opening of Africa' took its first steps. The Scot Mungo Park would be one of the pioneering figures in this movement, anchored on the science of the Enlightenment, becoming a reference for later explorers, including French ones, with the intention of penetrating the African continent.

In the Americas, political independence and the end of colonial monopolies implied the opening of borders, allowing the entrance of many foreigners, including numerous explorers motivated by scientific and commercial reasons. In the case of Joanino Brazil (1808-1821), the French were only able to enjoy this 'opening' after the fall of Napoleon and the reestablishment of peace on the European continent. It is at this moment that there occurred a new 'French discovery' of Brazil and renewed interest in the country.

French travelers in Brazil

In 1816 the French ambassador in Portugal, the Count of Luxembourg (1774-1861), organized a political and scientific mission to reestablish diplomatic relations between the two crowns. That year artists, scientists, technicians and writers arrived in Brazil. These would leave reports, images, letters, buildings, and photographs documenting the new relations between Portuguese America and France. They also documented the new relations they established with the Empire of Brazil in the process of constructing the Brazilian national state. Better known in Brazil than in France they included Auguste de Saint-Hilaire (1779-1853), a naturalist from Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris, Jean Baptiste Debret (1768-1848), a historic painter, Nicolas-Antoine Taunay (1755-1830), a painter, Auguste Henri Victor Grandjean de Montigny (1776-1850), an architect, Auguste Marie Taunay (1768-1824), a sculptor and brother of Nicolas-Antoine, Félix-Émile Taunay (1795-1881), father of the Brazilian writer Alfredo d'Escragnolle Taunay, Viscount Taunay, and Aimé-Adrien Taunay (1803-1828), painters and sons of Nicolas-Antoine, Marc Ferrez (1788-1850), sculptor, his brother Zéphyrin Ferrez (1797-1851), sculptor and engraver, father of the well-known Franco-Brazilian photographer Marc Ferrez (1843-1923) and the designer and one of the inventors of photography Hercule Florence (1804-1879). As well as the quality of their records in narratives, images, photographs, buildings, many of these would stay in Brazil, such as Grandjean de Montigny, Félix Taunay, Zéphyrin Ferrez or Hercule Florence.

With this 'rediscovery,' the travelers gained access to the wealth of South American nature, resulting in the emergence of a new character on the horizon of French travelers: a narrator/writer who increasingly incorporated the subjective and poetic in the description of the exotic worlds. This literary traveler introduced the complicator of literature and the fictional, or if we want to call it something else, interiority as an instrument of the production of knowledge in the world, even when dealing with scientists or bureaucrats, who came to incorporate fictional elements to increase the interest in scientific facts which they intended to explore and explain. As Carolina Depetris states, "the poetic function of discourse does not displace them, but rather imposes itself on the referential function. [1]" The novelty of the practically unknown territory which was Brazil became a literary *trope*, as well as a scientific and also political one, to the extent that the Empire of Brazil was a laboratory where a Slaveocrat monarchy existed in the American tropics in the middle of republican revolutions which surrounded the Luso-Brazilian giant, and which was connected to an Atlantic system through the African slave trade.

From the many French who visited, worked, and came to live in Brazil in the nineteenth century we can highlight three characters: the naturalist Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, the painter Jean-Baptiste Debret, and the teacher, merchant, and writer Jean-Charles-Marie Expilly (1814-1886). These three authors have in common the fact that they spent long periods in Brazil, exercising their professions there, and published various narratives of their Brazilian experiences. Moreover, they are important authors for having left a

mark in Brazilian historiography, for which they are a significant source of information about history and daily life in monarchical Brazil, both in their reports and in the case of Debret his paintings and engravings.

Augustin François César Prouvençal de Saint-Hilaire was a renowned scientist and participated in the Count of Luxembourg's diplomatic mission to normalize relations between France and the United Kingdom of Portugal and Brazil. His travels through Brazil occurred between 1816 and 1822, during which time he visited the provinces of Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande. His travel narratives, entitled *Voyages dans l'intérieur du Brésil* were published between 1830 and 1851, part of them posthumously. In addition to the travel narratives he published various botanical works. From the eighteenth century onwards, enlightened scientific journeys became increasingly more important in a context that was not only scientific, but also political for European states, which sponsored various research missions with the aim of transforming nature into a scientific object. [2] Saint-Hilaire was marked by the feeling of philanthropy, which ordered the scientific and political practices at that time, in the name of progress and the good of humanity.



Augustin François César Prouvençal de Saint-Hilaire (1799-1853)

Source: Wikimedia

In his travel books Saint-Hilaire does not deal directly with scientific themes, they are books publicizing a territory that is little known and his experience as a traveler describing a society in construction. His scientific profile is visible in his declaration of intentions, when he warns his readers that they will not find his personal opinions but an exact description of what he had seen: "Je me permettrai peu de réflexions; je dirai ce que j'ai vu; je tâcherai de présenter les faits sur leur véritable aspect, et le plus souvent je laisserai au lecteur en tirer des conséquences. [3] " He added afterwards that, for this reason, he would be less

interested in making his style "plus correct qu'à peindre fidèlement ce que j'avais observé. [4]" In addition to the particularities of the landscape and nature, Saint-Hilaire is interested in the functioning of Brazilian society and its institutions. He highlights the role of the Church, the state, and science in the maintenance and defense of civilizing values and the progress of the country. Science, practically non-existent in Brazil for him, is represented by the philanthropic presence of European naturalists who described and analyzed their natural wealth. The state and the Church were at a moment of precarious development, needing reforms and regeneration.

In the province of Minas Gerais, Saint-Hilaire sees as correlated phenomenon the venality of authorities of justice and simony among ecclesiastics. He says that he met a priest from a small village, which seemed to him "éclairé et appliqué et attaché à ses devoirs", and who told him that he was of an advanced age, needing rest, and wanted to leave his parish for a canonate. On a second visit, talking about Rio de Janeiro, Saint-Hilaire declared that he knew someone of importance in the capital. Immediately the priest asked him to intercede with this person for his canonate, stating that if it were necessary to give money, he would. "Mais c'est une simonie ce que vous me proposez monsieur le curé!", Saint-Hilaire exclaimed with surprise and indignation; the answer was that he knew it was simony, but it was common there and without it "nous ne pourrions plus rien faire", declared the priest. [5]



Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, 1953 Brazil stamp

Source: Wikimedia

Both church and state hindered the slow march of civilization in Brazil. For Saint-Hilaire there were too many churches. He said that they built "des temples sans nécessité, on fait des folles dépenses pour célébrer des fêtes patronales par des céremonies presque payennes", however, no one ever dreamed of "à former des établissements de charité, à fonder de hôpitaux, des écoles gratuites, etc., etc. C'est ne pas même une pieté mal entendue qu'il faut accuser toujours des semblables abus; le plus souvent la vanité en

est l'origine" [6]. The great evil was a detachment from the institutions of the Church, from its ceremonies, from the true substance of religion, "indifférent sur les devoirs le plus essentiels"; this "apatia", which Saint-Hilaire often credits to an indigenous inheritance meant that religion in Brazil "est restée sans morale, et l'on n'a conservé d'elle que les pratiques extérieures" [7].

In his correspondence, Saint-Hilaire discusses the work of the traveling naturalist, justifying his requests for a government pension for the services he rendered. First, he discusses the novelty of his work by stating that he was exploring for the king the vegetal riches of Brazil, which were unknown by naturalists, as well as the impressive distances he covered, travelling through almost all the country. Apart from the novelty of this new type of work, there was danger and all sorts of privations to be faced in more than six years of an extremely painful journey, whose result was a collection of more or less six thousand plant species. Saint-Hilaire notes that he was not only a traveling collector; the plants and their organs were analyzed where they were found and not in a herbarium; although he was a botanist, he also collected animal species, such as insects, birds, and quadrupeds. [8] The novelty of Brazil promised not only to increase the knowledge of botany as a utility for the arts and commerce, due to the production there was in the country of plants suitable for dyeing and the facility of acclimatizing European plants in its southern lands [9]; although still little known to naturalists, Brazil promised in his research an abundant harvest. [?] Saint-Hilaire highlighted the unprecedented nature of his work of unveiling a little known territory and the production of new knowledge useful to humanity, which at the same time was patriotic, since it also served to enhance the French monarchy and science. He recognized the central role of the traveling naturalist while he disseminated this scientific work through picturesque narratives and social analysis. Science and literature are united in Saint-Hilaire's work as elements of scientific, philanthropic, and diplomatic work.

The painter Jean-Baptiste Debret was a cousin of Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825), who was his teacher in the Fine Arts School of Paris. He lived in Rio de Janeiro between 1816 and 1831 as a court painter and teacher of historic painting in the Imperial Academy of the Fine Arts. In Paris he published his *Voyage Pittoresque au Brésil* in three volumes between 1834 and 1839. This was a work with 153 colored plates and explanatory texts. When it was published it was not successful and is still little known in France. However, the Portuguese translation, made in 1940 by Sérgio Milliet, achieved great fortune in Brazilian historiography, especially due to the documentary nature of its scenes of daily life in Rio de Janeiro and the historic paintings which documented the process of the construction of the Brazilian national state.



Jean-Baptiste Debret, "Overseers punishing slaves on a rural estate", 1828, watercolor painting, 15 x 19,8 cm.

Source: Júlio Bandeira & Pedro Correia Lago, Debret e o Brasil: obra completa. T. 2., Rio de Janeiro: Capivara, 2008, p. 186.

Debret's work can be interpreted as a testimonial account and based on a desire to be a historical source about the country. [11] Moreover, the narrative character of his three volumes can be recovered, demonstrating how the author anticipated an important topic in the interpretation of Brazil: the contribution of the three formative races of the country on the road of its civilization. While the first volume deals with the indigenous people and the first stage of progress, when the 'instinctive tendencies' of natives 'were domesticated' by the adoption of the habits of Portuguese colonists, [12] the second centers on the work of Africans, "whose slavery is necessary although inhumane." [13] Finally, the third volume presents the obstacles to this civilizational process: the 'exaggeration' and 'grotesque' of a religiosity without content, a corrupt administration inherited from the Portuguese, responsible for "archaic practices which always aim to prevent the development of Brazil." [14] One of the distinctive marks of his work is the documentation of the African presence in Rio de Janeiro, illustrating an Atlantic space which connected Brazil to West Africa through the slave trade and the slave system and which was one of Brazil's identity image for most travelers.

While the appearance of the city of Rio de Janeiro did not disappoint him, this was due to the civilizing action of the Court, the reign of Pedro I, at the moment of separating from Portugal, and the affluence of the French responsible for the trade and services in the capital, such as hairdressers, surgeons-dentists, bakers, artists etc. The pleasures of the table were already common, brought by English and Germans, as well as travelers who arrived in a large number. A Frenchman had been responsible for the introduction of flour into the city, allowing bakeries to progress, favored by the increase in the consumption "produit par

la prodigieuse affluence de ses compatriotes *mangeurs de pain*. [15] " Like the Greeks before the barbarians, the *French bread eaters*, in Debret's vision, brought the light of civilization to the uncultured and beautiful lands of the Americas.

Debret believed that the constitutional monarchy and the civilizing nature of the European and especially French presence, would result in the development of the Brazilian state and the creation of a civilized nation in the Tropics. For this a transformation in the relations of labor was necessary: the abandonment of slavery, which was a wound in Brazilian society, and the help of European professionals, whose mission would be pedagogical, teaching Brazilians not only arts and technology, but the true ethics of work and responsibility. Moreover, this civilizing process also implied the abandonment of links with Portuguese society and culture. The Portuguese had left to the Brazilian society the laziness, the rejection of the arts and science, the slavery and an Emperor who was incapable of abandoning this Portuguese sin and constructing a stable constitutional monarchy. His report presents the particularities of a *mixed-race* society, of a young nation in construction and an unprecedented experience of a European type monarchy in the Americas and a philanthropic and cultural civilizing project in which the French were to play a central role.

Charles Expilly was a French teacher émigré in Brazil who ended up making matches in Rio de Janeiro, the city in which he lived between 1852 and 1862. He published two accounts of his Brazilian journey, *le Brésil tel qu'il est* (1862), *les Femmes et les mœurs du Brésil* (1864), as well as four novels. He is the only traveler to have published an account dedicated entirely to Brazilian women, in which he deals to some extent with the question of women, but above all defines a type of theory of beauty in an exotic world, as well as a violent criticism of slavery. His account is dedicated to his young daughter Marthe, born in Brazil and who was nursed by a black slave. The ingrained ignorance of the Portuguese has resulted in slavery and a 'sentimental education' of white women which corrupts local society. Dominated by an excessive imagination, Brazilian women very much like, he says, "les roses éclatantes et orgueilleuses pour s'en tenir à la nuance pâle et timide du sentiment." The red roses function as a metaphor of the burning passions of women in the Tropics, incapable of containing their passions in a pure a civilized sentiment such as European romantic love; the lack of formal education of women contributed to this. [16]



Jean Charles Marie Expilly - Largo do Paço fountain

Source: Wikimedia

After dealing with the female condition in Brazil, Expilly presents an autobiographic anecdote of his meeting with a French friend, Justin Fruchot, a musician who ended up as a ruined merchant in Brazil. But the real character is Manoela, his black lover, a 'duchesse bronzée,' daughter of the burning sun, the most severe and grandiose beauty ever seen, says Fruchot to his friend. [17] His aim is to criticize the prejudices which prevent the identification of black skin with female beauty, that which cannot be seen among white women in Brazil.

His thesis is that the beauty and nobility of love of black women are superior to the prejudice which Brazilian society has in relation to this color. In this way Expilly defines his ideal of female beauty in the Americas: it is not the white women, who in the 'splendid setting' of the 'ardent sun' of the tropics lose the advantages which they enjoy in Europe, since their "beauté delicate est noyée dans des flots de lumière" becomes petty, small, miserable, anguished, as the tropical sun causes devastation to their delicate skin. Nor is it the *mulata*, who owes her success to a daring affection. Pure beauty is found in the 'filles d'Afrique,' due to the "couleur franche de sa peau", of absolute black, as the Mina women usually are, recalling the black marble of Portor, with veins of fire. Her beauty is also in the amplitude of her torso and the abundant breast which attests "un moule parfait, une force vitale en harmonie avec la puissante végétation de l'équateur, et qui fait songer à l'amour insatiable des immortels" [18] .

It is a work that lies between the narrative of a journey and literature, in which the experience of travel to Brazil serves to construct a political attack on slavery, Luso-Brazilian civilization, and the place occupied by women in this society, as well as an aesthetic theory of female beauty in the tropics. A geographic theory, in which each continent is responsible for a type of beauty with a corresponding skin color, and each model of female beauty corresponds to chastity and the purity of sentiments. Whites in Europe,

blacks in the Americas and *mulatas* nowhere, since they represent a stain on racial purity. In his territorial aesthetic of beauty, Brazil is connected to Africa through the body of a black woman, which gives meaning to American nature, a hybrid and mixed territory, in which the Brazilian landscape is composed of its tropical nature and for the plastic and moral purity of women of an African origin.

French travelers in Africa

Among the European travelers in Africa in the Post-Napoleonic period were numerous French, [19] especially after 1860 with the advance of colonialism. They were soldiers, missionaries, naturalists, colonial agents, hunters, or adventurers, who studied certain regions with or without support and official funding. Amongst these it is worth mentioning some names - important due to their 'pioneering' role and their scientific contributions, left in publications aimed at the European public: the d'Abbadie brothers who travelled to Ethiopia between 1860 and 1863; Leopold Panet, a *mestiço* from Gorée in Senegal, who was one of the pioneers in the crossing of the Sahara in the middle of the nineteenth century; Henri Duveyrier, a renowned geographer who explored North Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century; the famous Louis Gustave Binger, a type of 'model' traveler who investigated West Africa in the 1880s; and Pierre Brazza, who studied the region of the Congo and West African in the 1870s and 1880s. To these names those of Gaspard Mollien, René Caillé, and Jean-Baptiste Douville can be added, equally considered 'pioneers' for having entered deep into the African continent in the pre-colonial phase. The first two ventured deep into the reaches of Senegambia while the latter crossed Angola, Congo, and adjacent regions inhabited by 'independent peoples.' We will highlight these not because of their 'pioneering' role, but rather because of two aspects related to Atlantic transculturation: they explored regions that were connected with the American world due to the slave trade; and the biography of these men reveals that they circulated in the transatlantic space on both the American and African sides.

René Caillé (1799-1838) became known for being the first European to return from the 'mysterious' city of Timbuktu, in the interior of West Africa (in the actual Mali) in 1828. Caillé's success perhaps rested on the fact that he had lived for at least a decade in West Africa and the Caribbean. In 1816 he moved to Senegal as a domestic servant of an official and began to dream of Timbuctu after reading Mungo Park. After a period in Guadalupe, he returned to Africa and in 1818-19 participated in the expedition of the British officer Major Gray. Following this, he made his living traveling to the Antilles at the service of an emporium from Bordeaux. In 1824, he returned to Senegal, when he spent time among the Brakna Moors, learning Arabic and plunging into their daily lives, observing their customs and religious practices, later recorded in his travel account.

He decided to organize an expedition to Timbuktu after hearing that the Geographical Society in Paris would give an award to whoever returned from the mysterious city. In April 1827 he left Kakondy, on the Nunes River, crossed Futa Djalom (now Guinea), reaching the Upper Niger in the region of Kouroussa. Via Kankan and Tengrela, he reached Djenné, very sick. By boat he went to Kabara, and then to the gates of Timbuktu where he arrived in April 1828. However, Caillé's European perspective revealed his disappointment with what he saw in that city, known from the medieval narratives of Leo Africanus and which was a wonderous place in European fantasy. After staying there for a month, always using Arab clothing, Caillé left the important city - the commercial and religious center which linked Egypt to Ghana - with an enormous caravan and crossed the Western Sahar, (Figures 5 and 6). After another three months, in September 1828 they arrived in Tangiers, the final stop in a long journey across Africa, which at certain moments had threatened his survival and that of his companions.



Caillé meditating on the Koran and making notes during the expedition

Source: Illustrations de Voyage à Temboctou et à Jenné, dans l'Afrique Centrale, précédé d'observations faites chez les Maures Braknas, les Nalous et d'autres peuples, pendant les années 1824, 1825, 1826, 1827, 1828, Couché fils, grav.; M. Jomard, René Caillié, aut. du texte. 1830. (Plate 3, no page.)

It is possible to examine Caillé's transatlantic perspective at the beginning of his travel account: a prolonged period in French establishments and in the colonies in Senegal, and also "my own experience" (perhaps he was thinking of his activities in Guadalupe and the Antilles), taught him, according to Caillé, how much trade had to develop and advance into the continent. To put together these commercial relations and "impose on distant populations the tribute of our industry," it was necessary to make new 'discoveries' and obtain new geographic knowledge, to motivate the government in the colonizing venture. Caillé's mission in Western Africa, made without official support and with few resources, was finally recognized and capitalized on the French government in its future imperial ventures. Caillé received a pension from Charles X and the award from the Geography Society, which equally ensures the publication of his travel account. [20] It is an important contribution which gave the French public descriptions of the Brakna, Mandingo, Fula, Tuareg, and Bambara Moor societies, discussing their culture, daily lives, religious practices, etc. Equally it provided information about the commercial networks, forms of work, (including various types of slavery), as well as geography, flora, and fauna.



House Caillé lived in in Timbuktu. Postcard from Edmond Fortier (1905/1906).

Source: Wikipedia

Along with Caillé, Gaspard Mollien (1796-1872), arrived in Senegal in 1816. This young man of 20 was an aide in the naval administration of Senegal and was part of the expedition aimed at retaking French establishments in Senegambia. In 1814-15 Post-Napoleonic France regained Senegal, a place of dispute between the French and English, which sold slaves, gum, and other products. France had established itself in the middle of the seventeenth century in upper Senegal, in St. Louis, being active in the slave trade and building various commercial entrepôts.

In 1817, Mollien returned to France to present the government with an alternative route to that of Mungo Park. Instead of penetrating the continent following the parallels he suggested accompanying the meridian until Futa-Jalom, dominated by the Fula (Peúle) Muslims. This was a new trail with the aim of interiorizing expeditions on the continent. However, the government, concerned with recovering from the Napoleonic wars and involved with the restoration of the monarchy, did not support the project. The young man did not abandon his objective and returned to Senegal, where he won the support of the interim French governor, M. de Fleuriau. It is interesting to highlight that neither Mollien's nor Caillé's explorations were not carried out under the direct auspices of the metropolitan government. In Mollien's case, it was the local governor who supported to it and contributed to it financially.

His task was the 'discovery' of the sources of the Senegal, Gambia, and Niger rivers and continuing to the delta of the Niger river. In addition, he was to look for fertile land and how far it was from the rivers. The governor also provided him with a guide and interpreter, who spoke Arabic, Fula, Wolof, but not French. The common language among both was Wolof, which Mollien had learned. In the journey which took more than a year (Feb. 1818 to Jan. 1819) Mollien and his men were successful. They left St. Louis in February 1818, going inland to the region of Bandu and continued in the Southern direction. Dressed as a Moor, the Frenchman advanced until Futa-Jalom, where the sources of the Gambia and Grande rivers are located.

However, lacking funds, he gave up on going on to the Niger and returned via Bissau and Gorée to St. Louis in January 1819. Outside the objects collected, he brought numerous minerals, which were studied and classified by specialist colleagues in France. Like other travelers in the period, whose aim was to make discoveries of interest to the Europeans as well as to verify the economic potential of the region, he made broad observations of the local population, their customs, history, and habits. While on the one hand, Mollien focused on local contexts to try to understand the complexity of African Muslims and the 'pagans,' he did not lose his global and imperial perspective. Let us look at a brief passage which indicates to us how for him the transatlantic contexts were connected: he stated that, in accordance with the instruction of the governor, on his expedition he had to find a very fertile region with the "aim of calming the regrets caused to France by the loss of Saint-Domingue." [21] The colony of Saint-Domingue was the country's most prosperous one and gave the French metropolitan government the most profit and revenue.



Diai Boukari, Mollien's guide and interpreter

Source: Mollien, Gaspard. Voyage dans l'Intérieur de l'Afrique, aux Sources du Sénégal et de la Gambie, Fait en 1818, par Ordre du Gouvernement Français. Paris: 1822. Tome I, no page.

After going through the Podor region, on the banks of the Senegal River, and examining its natural and cultural situation, he drew his conclusions: Mollien was persuaded of the advantages of the colonization of Senegambia. Once cotton, indigo, and various cereals were cultivated, though without moving too far from the river, since the periodic flooding contributed to the fertilization of the soil. Mollien also pointed to the challenges that colonization signified to the Europeans. Both the climate and the inhabitants incessantly concerned the colonists who wanted to settle in the Fula's country. "These Muslim blacks are too enlightened not to fear us, excessively fanatical not to hate us, and because they are strong they did not need to fight long against French military forces weakened by disease." Faced with these challenges,

Mollien proposed the following: he had the idea of uniting a population of black pagans oppressed by the Moors, dressing them as whites, curing them, and leading them with institutions in harmony with their 'intelligence,' hiding from them the hand that protected them, and making as their leaders men of the same color, taken from "our colonies in the Americas." In this sense, Mollien projects in the still 'non-colonized' Senegambia a transcultural colonization connecting what had been learnt in the Europeanization of the Americas and the Creolization of Africans as a form of facing the power of Muslims in the region. [22]

Mollien can be seen as a typical imperial agent motivated by scientific interests and by the desire for adventure, based on his enlightened education. Among the French explorer/travelers who were in West Africa, he is one of the figures who stands out due to his circulation in the Atlantic world. After travelling twice to Senegal, he went to Latin America. He visited Columbia (in 1823 he traveled through the young republic and published a travel report), afterwards Haiti, as consul in 1828, where he helped to judicially rule the newly independent state. [23] His time in the former French colony inspired him to publish a history of the country. Afterwards he was transferred to Havana, Cuba, where he represented the French government for fifteen years. Later he visited the United States of America. In 1856 he also traveled to India and China, also leaving writings about these travels. His biography reveals him to be a man who transcended cultures and frontiers and was inspired by the "planetary conscience," [24] though without moving away from Eurocentrism or the French imperial project.

While one of Mollien's concerns was to transfer Creolized Africans from French colonies in the Americas to Senegal with the purpose of 'colonizing them,' another Frenchman, Jean-Baptiste Douville (1797?- 1837?), found himself in Rio de Janeiro in the 1820s - from where he sailed to Portuguese Africa - bringing with him free 'mulattos' and two enslaved black Africans, who were to serve as interpreters and aides on his planned scientific expedition to Angola and Congo. What is remarkable about Douville's trajectory is that the inspiration for an African expedition emerged in Rio de Janeiro - and not in Europe, unlike the majority of cases. Douville, who since 1826 had been a member of Geographical Society in Paris, was passing through the then capital of the young Kingdom of Brazil on the way to India and China, which he intended to explore. However, in Rio he met numerous merchants who had lived in Portuguese possessions in Western Africa south of the Equator, and who told him singular details about those regions - details confirmed by Africans in Rio - and which piqued his curiosity, dissuading him from his original plans. After all, relations between Rio de Janeiro and Angola were close due to the intensity of the black slave trade. From 1825 to 1830, 44% of enslaved Africans sent to Rio de Janeiro came from the ports of Luanda and Benguela, beside Cabinda and Ambriz. [25] However, as Douville argued in the introduction to his travel account, apart from slave traffickers and slave hunters, the African population of these regions was little known to the Europeans and to European science in general.

These traders also warned him that not only did the Portuguese - so fearful and jealous - not tolerate the presence of other Europeans in their dominions, but also the independent Africans - those not under the Portuguese yoke or those of other Europeans - were capable of exercising great cruelty against whites. Traveling in Africa was associated with many challenges and dangers, so he was told. Making the preparations for the journey in Rio de Janeiro was probably more efficient than if it had been in Paris.

Douville tells us that he found valuable information from a doctor who had lived for many years in Luanda. Thanks to his experience, he was able to assemble a good pharmacy for the long voyage. Afterwards, he bought the suitable and useful goods to "open the doors of the black nations" (alongside aguardiente, taffia, and other goods, he acquired instruments such as barometers, companies, etc.).

Furthermore, he looked for slaves from the regions he wanted to investigate and who had not forgotten their language and also spoke Portuguese, so they could serve as interpreters. He also had 'mulattos' charged with working as secretaries and helping in the observation work. The merchants in Rio de Janeiro 'gave him' numerous recommendation letters for traders in Angola, so that he could correspond with Brazil and Europe, as well as obtain relevant local information and obtain aid if necessary.

On 15 October 1827 he sailed in the company of his wife, the two slaves, and a 'mulatto' domestic servant for Benguela (another two 'mulattos' would follow later in another ship). [26] Due to setbacks, detours, and storms they arrived in São Felipe de Benguela on 18 December, where a long two year pilgrimage began. In 1830, from Luanda he returned to Rio de Janeiro. Afterwards he returned to Paris, where he was awarded the gold medal of the Geographical Society. He later published his travel account in volumes and an atlas with illustrations, which had reasonable success.



A black soldier in a Portuguese dominion in Africa leading a slave.

Source: Douville, J.-B. Voyage au Congo et dans l'Afrique Équinoxiale, Fait dans les Années 1828, 1829, 1830. Jules Renouard, 1832, Atlas, Prancha 4, s.p.

If everything he did was true, he was the first European, apart from traffickers of enslaved persons, to penetrate deep into the Congo with scientific intentions. However, there were numerous doubts - and many accusations from within the scientific world, questioning the veracity of the trajectory and part of the account of the journey. [27] Perhaps Douville had collected the information about the 'independent' areas from the reports of traders involved in human traffic, the so-called *pombeiros*. He may even have been linked to the slave trade, since there is no evidence about how he funded the expedition. [28] Nor the reasons for his temporary imprisonment in Rio de Janeiro before embarking for Angola.

After some time in France, he returned to Brazil in 1833 to collect plants and animals, as well as to carry out naturalist and ethnological studies. His collections remained in Brazil and formed one of the first collections of what would later become the Museum of National History of Bahia. Even his death was never clarified; there is some evidence that he was murdered in 1837 on the banks of the São Francisco River. Despite these ambiguities, his travel account, plus the volume with the plates, is a valuable contribution, since it contains rich ethnographic observations about societies in Angola, Benguela, Quisana, and Lebolo, limited though by his prejudice against the blacks. Also valuable are his descriptions of the slave markets, such as Banza in Bié or Cassange, one of the largest in the region.

In these travel experiences we can see the French presence in the nineteenth century Atlantic world and how they sought to adapt to the great historic changes in this period. In the Americas they were witnesses of the construction of national states and sought to participate in this moment with civilizing projects and participation in science and commerce. Also involved was the diplomatic action of the recognition of the new nations which resulted from the disintegration of the Iberian empires, as well as the individual actions of professionals from various areas who saw an open opportunity for enrichment and a new life, becoming the agents of exchanges (unequal in part) of cultures, objects, and knowledge between Europe and the Americas. Africa, in turn, was at a distinct historic moment; while the Americas were overcoming a colonial experience of three centuries, the African continent was at a pre-colonial period, ready to be divided by the European powers. These travelers had a more adventurous character and depended much on good connections with the locals, guides, and interpreters, to be able to survive in an unknown and hostile environment. Despite the historic disparities of the two continents, they were united by a complementary economic system through the traffic of slaves and by the influx of Africans into the Americas which lasted four centuries and constituted an Atlantic space of diverse exchanges and circulations. Nevertheless, on both sides of the Atlantic the French were opening frontiers in a space of opportunities and documenting the complementarity on the two sides of the Atlantic.

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NOTES

1. Carolina Depetris, *La Escritura de los Viajes* (Mérida: UNAM, 2007), 93.
2. Lorelai Kury, *Histoire Naturelle et Voyages Scientifiques (1780-1830)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 140.
3. Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, *Voyages dans l'intérieur du Brésil. Première partie. Voyage dans les Provinces de Rio de Janeiro et de Minas Geraes* (Paris: Grimbert et Dorez, 1830) v. 1, 9.
4. *Ibid*., 10.
5. *Ibid*., *Voyages dans l'intérieur du Brésil. Première partie. Voyage dans les Provinces de Rio de Janeiro et de Minas Geraes* (Paris: Grimbert et Dorez, 1830) v. 1, 174-175.
6. *Ibid*., 175.
7. *Ibid*., 179.
8. Archives Nationales (Paris). Ms. F17-3977.
9. Archives Nationales (Paris). Ms. F17-1543.
10. *J. B. Debret, Historiador e Pintor. A Viagem Pitoresca e Histórica ao Brasil (1816-1839)* (Campinas: Unicamp, 2007), 140.
11. Valéria Piccoli Gabriel da Silva. *"A pátria de minhas saudades": o Brasil na Viagem pitoresca e histórica de Debret*. Dissertação (Mestrado em Arquitetura). São Paulo: FAU-USP, 2001, p. 69.
12. *Ibid*., 84.
13. *Ibid*., 103-104.
14. Jean Baptiste Debret, *Voyage Pittoresque et Historique au Brésil, ou Séjour d'un Artiste Français au Brésil, depuis 1816 jusqu'en 1831 inclusivement, Époques de l'avénement et de l'abdication de S.M.D. Pedro 1er., fondateur de l'empire brésilien* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1834-1839) v. 2, 41.
15. Charles Expilly. *Les Femmes et les Moeurs du Brésil* (Paris: Charlieu et Huillery, 1863) 32-33.
16. *Ibid*., 58.
17. *Ibid*., 113-114.
18. Numa Broc, *Diccionnaire Illustré des Explorateurs et Grands Voyageurs Français du XIXe siècle.* Afrique (Paris: Editions du C.T. H. S, 1988). Numa Broc lists at least another 500 French 'explorers' in Africa between 1815-1914. In this list Broc only includes explorers who published something about the journey.
19. René Caillé, *Journal d´un Voyage à Tombouctou et à Jenné, dans l'Afrique Centrale* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1830).
20. Gaspard Mollien, *Voyage dans l´intérieur de l´Afrique, aux Sources du Sénégal et de la Gambie, fait en 1818, par odre du gouvernement français* (Paris: 1822) 2 vols. V. I, 28.

21 *Ibid*., V. I, 52-54.

22 Hubert Deschamp, *L´Europe Découvre l´Afrique*. Afrique Occidental (1794-1900) (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1967), 70.

23 Mary Louise Pratt. *Os olhos do Império. Relatos de viagem e transculturação* (Bauru: Edusc, 1992), cap. 2.

24 Herbert Klein & Stanley Engermann *apud* Jaime Rodrigues, *De Costa a Costa: Escravos, marinheiros e intermediários do tráfico negreiro de Angola ao Rio de Janeiro (1780-1860)* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2005).

25 J.B. Douville, *Voyage au Congo et dans l´Afrique Équinoxiale Fait dans les Années 1828, 1829, 1830* (Jules Renouard, 1832), V. I, 1-6.

26 A. Stamme developed an accurate study proving that most part of the itinerary described by Douville was indeed accomplished by him and his caravan.

27 Jaime Rodrigues, *O Infame Comércio: Propostas e experiências no final do tráfico de africanos para o Brasil (1800-1850)* (Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2000), 97-100. British recognition of the political independence of Brazil depended on the guarantee that the transatlantic black slave trade be abolished. In 1825 recognition occurred and in 1826 the Anglo-Brazilian treaty was signed stipulating the end of the slave trade within three years. In 1827 it was ratified by the English Crown, which signified that it could be legally practiced in the South Atlantic until 13 March 1830. In 1831, Brazil passed a law abolishing the traffic in slaves, but it was not implemented, and the trade continued, now illegal in the two hemispheres. Only in 1850, with the Eusébio de Queirós Law was the trade abolished.