



« *L'Exclusif* » in Theory and Practice: French Guiana and the Eighteenth Century Atlantic Economy

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Abstract

This paper documents the importance of French Guiana within the Modern World and the influence of this colony, considered as marginal, on the Atlantic trading networks of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To reconstruct French Guiana's commercial network, a material culture analysis of six archaeological collections and records of the boats reaching Cayenne annually during the *Ancien Régime* were juxtaposed. Through the lens of microhistory, this method led to a revisitation of the Eurocentric economic theories of the *Ancien Régime*, notably the protectionist policy of *l'Exclusif*, to better appreciate how the decisions of French Guiana authorities outmaneuvered the imperial power and had a tangible impact on the Atlantic economy by operating outside of the economic precepts of mercantilism.

Key word French Guiana · Atlantic Economy · Ancien Régime · Microhistory · Material Culture · French Colonies

William Blake's allegorical engraving, *Europe supported by Africa and America* (1796), encapsulates the idea that a colony is a territory settled and maintained by a metropolis for the sole purpose of exploiting its resources. Blake represented the continents as women, Africa and America being subordinate to the central figure of Europe. This depiction resonates with the definition of mercantilism in which colonies were not supposed to be independent, but to provide for Europe. The economic theory of mercantilism relied on the idea that the main purpose of colonies, and by extension their inhabitants, was to create wealth and surpluses to support the metropolis. By extension, the European powers were supposed to be the sole outlet for colonial production, and colonies were kept in a status of dependency relying on the metropolis to acquire manufactured goods and supplies. Moreover, there is a strongly conveyed

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idea that imperial governments were dictating the policies and decisions regarding colonies, preventing local actors from being involved in the decision-making process.

This Eurocentric economic theory does not take into account the fact that colonies were located an ocean away from their metropolis and were therefore isolated. In this context, it is naive to think that all local decisions were made in consultation with the imperial government or that specific mercantilist policies, such as *l'Exclusif* in France or the Navigation Acts in Britain regulating trade between the colonies and the metropolis, were fully respected. *L'Exclusif* is a commercial policy designating France as the sole trading partner for its colonies and forbidding foreign merchant ships into colonial port cities (Haudrère 1997: 87). Presuming that *l'Exclusif* was enforced at all times expresses little confidence in the people settled in the colonies and undermines the fact that decisions needed to be made on a daily basis, in the heat of the moment.

Few archaeological researches challenge the economic policy of *l'Exclusif* in order to offer “alternative and fresh interpretations of the colonial contexts in the past” (van Dommelen 2011: 1). This paper is an attempt to do so. Two examples can be cited to demonstrate that local or individual initiatives operating outside of *l'Exclusif* principles can be documented through historical archaeology methods and data. First, Mark Hauser (2011) tracked down the economic networks of Jamaica and Dominica through an analysis of locally produced ceramics. He demonstrates that Caribbean intercolonial trade transgressing imperial economic prescriptions allowed people from Dominica (under English governance) to provision themselves with *canari* (a type of cooking pot) made in Martinique (French governance).

The second example is Amanda Crompton's (2017) study of Henri Brunet, a merchant active in trading with the colony of Plaisance (Placentia, Newfoundland) during the second half of the seventeenth century. The research demonstrates that his commercial network was anchored in the American Northeast, transcending the geopolitics of the time. The immediate goal of Crompton was not to denounce the simplistic view imposed by mercantilism and *l'Exclusif* on scholarly work regarding the colonial economy, but the fact that Brunet, a native of La Rochelle, was based in Boston in the later years of his life (in the 1680s) supports this idea. Brunet, while maintaining commercial connections with France, was provisioning the French migratory fishery in Newfoundland from outside of the official commercial routes overseen by the metropolis as he was involved in the trade network revolving around New England (Crompton 2017: 112).

Taking these two examples as an inspiration, my goal is to look at the Atlantic commercial network following the perspective of the people living in the colonies and local government. With an example from French Guiana, I document how broadly the mercantilist policy of *l'Exclusif* was challenged by colonial actors in order to reach a more nuanced and complete understanding of the economic history of the Atlantic World during the *Ancien Régime* (pre-revolutionary France) in which colonies considered as marginal were playing an important role.

The premise of this research is based on the observation of a discrepancy between the historical narrative regarding French Guiana during the *Ancien Régime* and the composition of archaeological collections dating from the same period. On the one hand, the historical narrative characterizes the colony as an economically weak territory located on the margin of the colonial commercial network playing a minor role in the Atlantic World, but, on the other hand, the archaeological collections are rich and diverse and they do not suggest the constant shortage underlined in the

historiography. This contradiction itself merits our attention, but it also gives the occasion to deploy archaeological data in order to bring a new perspective to the field of economic history.

As the archaeological collections are intimately linked to the vicinity of the colony, they offer a different point of view and add another scale of analysis when operationalized with the help a microhistorical framework. By exposing local networks, that are sometimes difficult to reach in the archival record associated to the grand historical narrative, the scale of analysis offered by archaeological data provides an occasion to understand why the archaeological record tells a different story than the historical sources, thus allowing one to revisit the decision-making process associated with colonial territories in the context of European expansion.

A Microhistorical Perspective on Imperial Prescriptions

The economic theory of mercantilism and the commercial policy of “*l’Exclusif*” convey the impression that France was exerting total control over each colony’s economy during the *Ancien Régime*. In theory, colonial production was destined to benefit the metropolis and the colonies were a commercial outlet for goods produced in Europe. This perspective, with Europe at the center of the system, had a tremendous influence on the historiography. Inhabitants of the colonies (Indigenous people, Afrodescendants, and people of European descent) were considered to be under the trusteeship of the colonial power. Consequently, well-known historical analyses describing economic mechanisms between France and its colonies adopt an imperialistic (if not Eurocentric) point of view in which the metropole imposes its hegemony on overseas territories (Abernethy 2000; Davis 1973; Meyer 1990). As a result, research looking into transatlantic commerce is numerous (Butel 1990; Pétré-Grenouilleau 1997; Tarrade 1972), while intercolonial trade and networks taking place outside of the imperial umbrella have been overlooked (Crompton 2017; Hauser 2011; Mathieu 1981).

We have to keep in mind that policies or colonization projects were not the same on the drawing board of the *ministre des colonies* (minister of colonies), then when implemented in territories located across the Atlantic where the agency of the colonial population was put into play (Cobb and Sapp 2014: 215-216; Crompton 2017; Delle 2014: 344; Hauser 2011: 431). Accommodation or infringement on imperial policies was a common practice as the distance prevented a metropolis from exerting total control over the colonies (Jordan 2014: 112). In addition, insufficient or inadequate supplies from the metropole, interruption of trade routes during wars and other aspects of trade making colonial provisioning inconsistent were prompting colonial actors to disregard the metropole and use alternative networks to provision themselves.

Colonial commercial networks are thus more complex than what mercantilism and *l’Exclusif* suggest. Illicit trade is perhaps the most famous type of alternative commercial activity taking place outside the control of the metropolis and evidence of smuggling has been successfully studied by archaeologists, as material culture studies allow one to detect evidence of illicit trade (Carvino 2017; Deagan 2007; Mrozowski and Schmidt 1993; Skowronek 1992; Skowronek and Ewen 2007; Willis 2009). Other types of alternative commerce such as authorized intercolonial trade has been less research by historians (Mathieu 1981) and archaeologists alike (Crompton 2017; Curet

and Hauser 2011; Hauser 2011; Kelly et al. 2008; Steen 1999). This paper is specifically looking at legal or interlop “accommodations” to colonial commerce policies and by extension to the mercantilist theory.

It is not an easy task to go beyond the direct meaning of some official historical records, like the ones written directly by the government or for the government. By adopting a view from the colonies (as opposed to a view from the metropole), this research demonstrates that colonies were playing an important role in the development and maintenance of the modern world, even when it comes to territories traditionally considered as marginal like French Guiana. In order to grasp its impact on the global scene, I embrace a microhistorical approach as this methodology makes it possible to build a nuanced and sophisticated narrative encompassing multiple scales of analysis (*cf.* Ginzburg 1980).

Microhistory as a methodology focuses on individuals and local history for the purpose of gaining insights on global phenomena. This theoretical framework is well suited to archaeology, which by definition excavates discrete places associated with specific activities and individuals; it is therefore not a surprise to see that research adopting a microhistorical perspective gained in popularity in the past decade (Beaudry 2008; Janowitz and Dallal 2013; Magnússon 2016; Mímisson 2016; Mímisson and Magnússon 2014; Orser 2008). Supported by a multiscale framework (Gilchrist 2005; Orser 2014, 2016), microhistory seeks to link the various levels of the colonial spectrum. It stipulates that everyday activities and individuals are connected to the global context and it recognizes the necessity of analyzing the microcosm in order to offer a new and more nuanced vision of the grand historical narrative (Ginzburg 1980; Orser 2008; Peltonen 2001).

Embracing a microhistorical perspective also means adopting a view from the colonies which will make it possible to bridge local colonial contexts with the global international trade. Very few attempts claim to apply a microhistorical approach to the study of imperial relationships (commerce and provisioning routes) that are at the very foundation of the modern world (Hauser 2011; van Dommelen 2011: 1), but this way of interpreting historical data has the potential to help us understand the reasons why the archaeological record sometimes tells a different story than that the historical sources.

The general historic narrative of Atlantic commerce during the *Ancien Régime*, French Guiana’s trade networks, and French Guianese archaeological collections are the data sets analyzed for this project. Combined, they are perfectly suited to a microhistorical approach as I engage historical and archaeological data in order to document: (1) how a discrete event or location (French Guiana) makes sense on its own; (2) how locality is impacted by macro phenomena (French Guiana colonial economy); and (3) how, in turn, the microcosm impacts on macro and/or distant phenomena (the impact of French Guiana on the Atlantic World). This agenda calls for a multiscale framework contextualized in a *longue durée* perspective (Braudel 1979) in which different dimensions of the colonial system are documented in isolation, and then, in interrelation within a specific timeframe.

French Guiana on the Margin of the Atlantic Economy?

Before moving further into methods and interpretation, the discrepancy between the historical narrative and the composition of archaeological collections at the core of this

research should be detailed as it is also an efficient way to introduce the historical context and the historiography associated with colonial French Guiana. European explorers initially visited French Guiana at the end of the sixteenth century in order to trade with Indigenous groups settled on the coast of the Guyana Plateau (Hurault 1972: 65–70). The first serious attempt at colonization took place in 1604 when Mocquet de La Ravardière claimed the territory in the name of Henri IV, king of France. However, this project was short-lived, and French Guiana experienced political instability as expressed by change in governance between France, Netherlands, and England during the seventeenth century (Van den Bel and Collomb 2014).

The permanent installation of French colonists in the territory began in 1664 with the expedition of Francois de Lefebvre de la Barre (1666). Although the goal of the French colonists settling in French Guiana was to establish *habitations* (plantations) in order to produce exotic agricultural goods (sugar, cotton, tobacco, coffee, roucou, indigo, etc.) to export to Europe, the intention of the government was also to occupy a strategic territory in order to prevent Spain and Portugal from dominating South America. The idea was to have a foothold in the region in the event of the discovery of the mythical *El Dorado* (Pritchard 2004: 43). The Dutch crown following a similar strategy took control over Surinam (1667) and so did the British with Guyana (they gained control over the territory at the end of the eighteenth century, but Guyana was officially established as a colony in 1831).

It is uncertain if this political strategy influenced the economy, but one thing is sure, French Guiana never became a prosperous colony, especially in comparison with the success of Surinam or the French Antilles. During his three year-sojourn in French Guiana undertaken in 1722, Pierre Barrère identified several economic deficiencies impacting the colony's prosperity. He also made suggestions on how to improve the situation. For Barrère (1743: 117–119), the first thing was to change the composition of the cargos to better fit the needs of Cayenne's colonists. He also suggested increasing the demography of enslaved workers in the colony in order to intensify *habitations* production, and he describes the fantastic productivity of Surinam plantations based on polders and recommended to French *habitants* (planters) to adopt this agricultural technique, which they did eventually during the nineteenth century.

This example demonstrates that *Ancien Régime* actors were aware of the limited success of French Guiana. The colonial administration was also mindful of French Guiana's economical context as it is mentioned several times in the chronicles of authorities travelling to the colony and in the official administrative accounts of the *Correspondance à l'arrivée en provenance de la Guyane Française* (sous-série C14, archives housed at the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence, from now on ANOM, C14 in the text). In fact, documents regarding French Guiana's weak economy are so common in eighteenth-century archives that it is not a surprise to find similar interpretations in the historiography.

In 1971, Brazilian historian Ciro Flamarion Cardoso highlighted for the first time in a contemporary scientific publication the “Guyanese colonial failure,” in his own words *l'échec colonial guyanais*. He said, “French Guiana should be considered as a limite case and an atypical colony. The demography was extremely low and French Guiana's economy – even during its brightest moments during the 18th century – never became important. The colony was occupying a marginal place in relationship with the triangular trade and its economical marginality led the Metropolitan government to

grant trade liberties to French Guiana” (translated from French, Cardoso 1999 [1971]: 107). With this expression and his analysis, Cardoso sets the parameters with which French Guiana’s economy has been characterized thereafter.

Indeed, we can find similar analyses in the work of historians interested in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French Guiana, such as Serge Mam-Lam-Fouck (1982: 46–47, 1996: 112), Pierre Pluchon (1991: 443), Marie Polderman (2004: 39), James Pritchard (2004: 44) and Serge Mam-Lam-Fouck and Appolinaire Anakesa (2013: 40–42). Archaeologist Yannick Le Roux (1994: 122–125) who has worked on *Ancien Régime habitation* sites since the 1980s also addresses the precarious economy of French Guiana. Thus, eighteenth-century chroniclers as well as contemporary historians agree on the fact that French Guiana never became a wealthy colony and underline its economic stagnation. However, this is from a metropole and a mercantilist point of view. The reasons stressed by Cardoso point exclusively to the fact that French Guiana was not participating fully in the transatlantic French trade enhancing the metropolis wealth (which is the literal definition of mercantilism), but nothing is mentioned regarding regional or intercolonial trade and economy.

If data from archives and historiography are consistent, it is a totally different story when looking at the archaeological data. The archaeological collections studied for this research are plentiful and their composition does not reflect the weak and defective commercial network described above. It is difficult to offer a quantitative comparison with similar sites, excavated in a comparable fashion, in the Caribbean or elsewhere. But when I saw French Guiana collections for the first time, I was surprised by the abundance of artifacts and their diversity, equating with sites in Québec or Montréal located in the center of those towns were provisioning was not an issue. This archaeological paradox guided the reanalysis of the historical data associated with the commercial network of French Guiana during the *Ancien Régime* (Losier 2015, 2016). In this paper, I want to push the research further in order to understand the place of French Guiana in the Atlantic economy, as the complexity and fluctuation of its commercial network is not consistent with a colony located on the fringe of the Atlantic economy. But most importantly, I want to transcend the binary and asymmetric analysis of colonialism to understand how the colony’s inhabitants were negotiating daily life outside of (or accommodating) the economic precepts dictated by the European Metropolis.

A Multiscale Analysis Bridging Local Colonial Contexts to Atlantic Trade Networks

Three data sets contribute to this analysis and they relate to the three levels of analysis needed to bridge local colonial contexts with the global economy. The first is the general historic narrative regarding the great west-east Atlantic trade (Butel 1997; Davis 1973; Meyer 1990; Pétré-Grenouilleau 1997; Tarrade 1972) and European expansion (Abernethy 2000; Marks 2002). This set of data allows for an understanding of the historical events and the political context in which colonies were created and maintained in the *longue durée*. The second set of data is the *Archives de la correspondance à l’arrivée* (ANOM) which gives direct information on French Guiana political economy, provisioning, and commercial networks. The third set of data is

composed of six archaeological collections coming from *habitations* located nearby the port city of Cayenne. The artifacts comprising these collections allow one to document the daily life of French Guiana inhabitants and they give direct access to what was happening in the colony, without the filter (or propaganda) of the government authority.

In addition to summarizing the analysis of these three data sets, Fig. 1 reveals the methodology that has been followed for the examination of the data. According to the *Ancien Régime* historiography, the irregularity of provisioning was the first obstacle to the prosperity of French Guiana. In order to measure this drawback, a census of the number of ships registered in Cayenne’s harbor have been realized by registering the occurrence of boats between 1688 and 1794 in the archives C14, *Correspondance à l’arrivée en provenance de la Guyane Française* (ANOM). The count of the number of boats reaching Cayenne each year (presented as a bar graph in Fig. 1) demonstrate that provisioning was at best erratic and always insufficient during the first half of the eighteenth century; but records also indicate that the economic rhythm was changing after 1750. Indeed, not only did the number of ships registered in the port of Cayenne increase drastically, but there were important variations; the number of ships arriving was far from being constant.

This information leads to two observations. First, the commercial network of French Guiana was more dynamic than what the historiography suggests. Second, the account

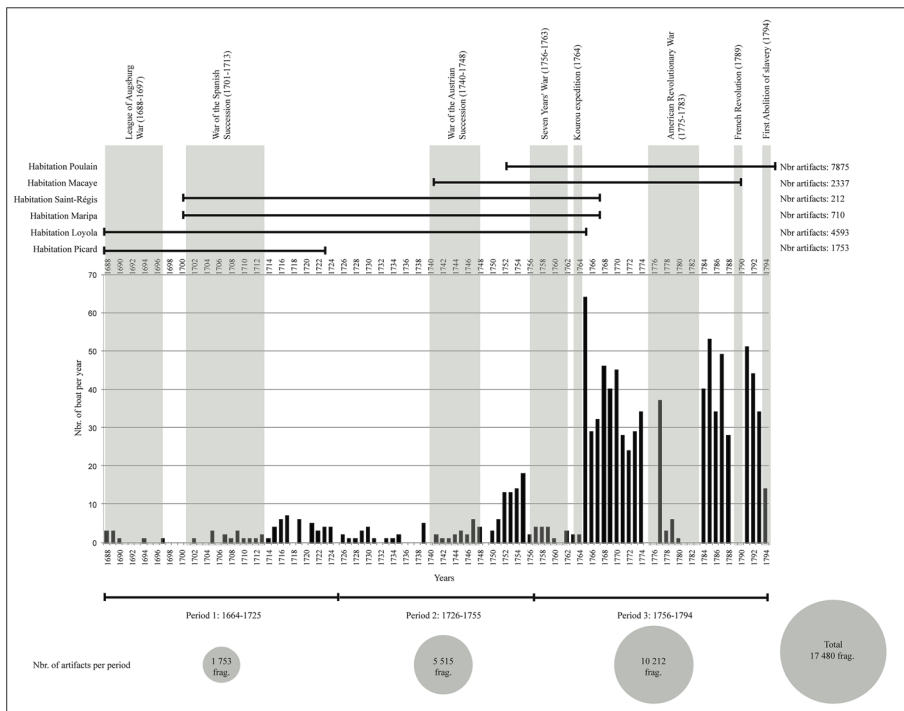


Fig. 1 Count per year of the number of boats recorded in the port of Cayenne between 1688 and 1794. War periods and other historical events are also shown on the chart as well as the period of occupation of the sites and the number of artifacts associated with the three analytical periods: period 1 (1664–1725), period 2 (1725–50), period 3 (1750–94)

of ships indicates that provisioning was heavily influenced by historical events during the eighteenth century. The time laps of the major historical events taking place from 1688 to 1794 are highlighted in grey in Fig. 1. If their impact on the Atlantic network is not a surprise, it is interesting to see the accuracy of the method and the volatility of the market induced by events taking place on the global scale. For example, the periods of wars are characterized by an economic slowdown which is followed by a rebound one or two years after the end of the conflict. This result underlies the reliability of a study which “emphasize the historical context and content rather than general representations” (Cobb and Sapp 2014: 213) as it was the tendency observed in the historiography.

In contrast with the account of ships reaching Cayenne each year, especially during the first half of the eighteenth century, the composition of archaeological collections housed in the *Dépôt du Service d'Archéologie de la Guyane* are far from testifying to an insoluble provisioning problem, the archaeological assemblages are astonishingly rich; the abundance and the variety of objects being inconsistent with an under-provisioned territory located on the margin of the Atlantic commercial network (see Fig. 1 for the number of ceramics and glass artifacts per site). To solve this paradox, historical and archaeological data are combined in order to reconstruct French Guiana's commercial network in its entirety with a synchronic (count of the ships and characterization of the different commercial links during a period) and a diachronic approach (the contrast between the different periods and according to the different historical events). But before presenting the interpretation of data it is necessary to delve a little bit more into the rationale that led to the selection of archaeological assemblages and the methodology that guided the material culture analysis.

From Material Culture to Commercial Networks

The material culture study is based on the collection of imported ceramic and glass artifacts from six habitations (for a complete description of the archaeological sites and collections please refer to Losier 2016). *Habitation* Picard (Mestre 2005) occupied at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries; the *habitations* Loyola (Le Roux et al. 2009), Saint-Régis (Barone Visigalli et al. 2010) and Maripa (Barone Visigalli et al. 2010) occupied between 1725 and 1764 and the *habitations* Poulain (Le Roux 1986) and Macaye (Le Roux 1990) mostly occupied during the second half of the eighteenth century provided the material culture utilized in this research (Fig. 2).

Local ceramic was not considered in this research because the production of domestic ceramic in French Guiana is extremely rare in comparison with ceramics made for sugar production. For example, at *poterie* Bergrave, a ceramic workshop located close to *habitation* Picard, less than 2% of the 10,639 sherds excavated were associated with domestic use (bowls, pitchers, containers, strainers, for example), all other sherds were either industrial ceramic (sugar cones and molasses jars) or, in a smaller proportion, architectural ceramics (roof tiles) (Losier and Coutet 2013). Therefore, local ceramics were never a substitute to European domestic ceramics and never became important like was the case in other French colonies, such as Martinique (England 1994; Kelly et al. 2008; Kelly and Wallman 2014). This is the reason why

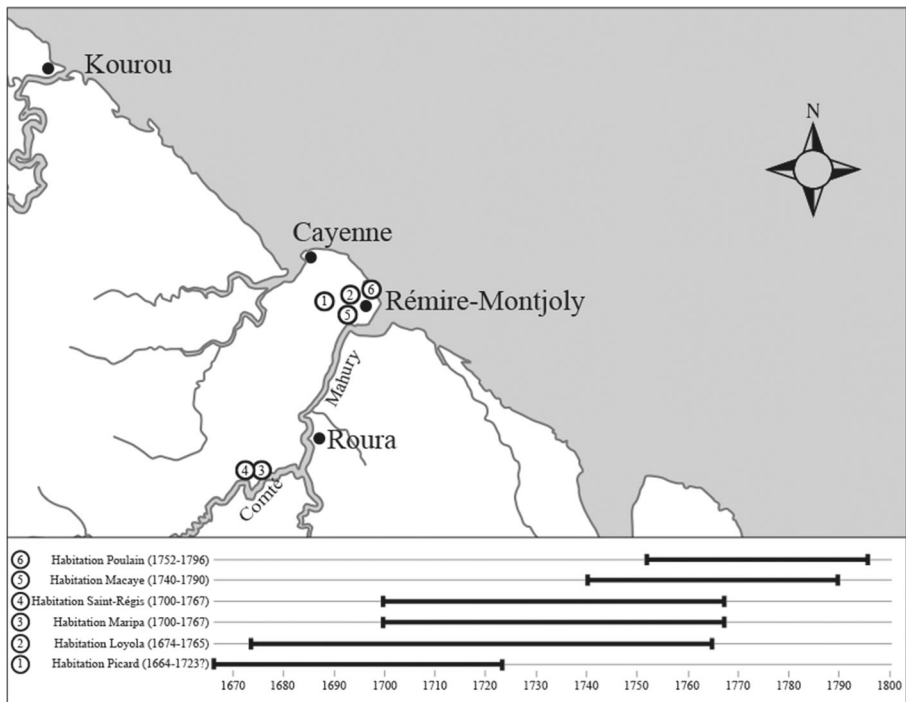


Fig. 2 Location and occupation period of the six *habitations*

local production was not included in the analysis as it does not inform on the commercial network of French Guiana or on the daily life of the population.

Ceramic and glass artifacts were chosen because it is relatively easy to determine their origin with a macroscopic study of the paste and overall style of the objects without using chemical analysis. Therefore, the material culture analysis consisted of a typological analysis in which the identification of the type of ware or glass, the function of the object, its morphology, decoration, and dating lead to the recognition of the time period and place of production of the artifacts (see Losier 2016: 79-147 for a complete version of the material culture analysis). With this typochronology in hand, it was then possible to identify the port cities and hydrographic basins involved in the provisioning of French Guiana from the end of the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth century.

This method, following a microhistorical perspective in which local data inform on global phenomenon, allows us to connect the data from French Guiana archaeological sites to the Atlantic commercial network. Indeed, the objective of the material culture study was to identify the place of manufacture of ceramic and glass artifacts, in order to reconstruct the exchange network in which they were a part. According to Charles Dagneau (2009: 427), the majority of a ship's cargo was gathered in the port city and in the hinterland where the boat was outfitted. Consequently, Dagneau demonstrated in his dissertation that the identification of production workshops where an object is made is an excellent proxy to identify port cities involved in a commercial network.

If the results of my research also support this assumption, two aspects nuancing this direct causality must be discussed as they need to be considered and understood for the interpretation of data. First, it needs to be said that ship cargoes were not exclusively

coming from the hinterland of a port city. Trade taking place in Europe impacted the diversity of items shipped to the colonies (Deagan 2007: 101). Certain goods for which the demand was generalized were exchanged in Europe reaching most port cities before being shipped elsewhere. This is the case for Westerwald stoneware found in many sites throughout the Americas regardless of the political affiliation of the colonies (Straube 2016: 287–290). In addition, luxury items, like Chinese porcelain, have a tendency to travel more than other objects as there was a great demand for fashionable products. Associated with this argument, we should acknowledge that some household items could have been brought from France directly by French Guiana inhabitants or through personal importation, thus increasing the diversity of the assemblages in the same way as other luxury objects.

This is the reason why utilitarian objects, made in coarse earthenware, are more likely to be representative of a network. They indicate the involvement of a port city or a region in a commercial network as they are less likely to take part in the European market prior to being shipped to the colonies. An example of this is the correlation between the increase of ships outfitted in the Mediterranean basin reaching Cayenne and the rise in the occurrence of Vallauris cooking pots and Huveaune productions (two types of coarse earthenware made, respectively, near Nice and Marseille) in French Guiana collections from the second half of the eighteenth century (Losier 2016: 176).

The second important aspect to take into account is that I considered the archaeological collections to be representative of what was reaching French Guiana in terms of ceramic and glass while recognizing I have access to only a fraction of the shipments due to the incomplete nature of the archaeological record and the fact that the *habitations* were not directly located in Cayenne or associated with merchants (like a warehouse or the *magasin du Roi*). Two arguments support this hypothesis. To begin, there is a chronological consistency in the provenance of artifacts from site to site that leads me to speculate that, while not representing the entirety of the objects available in the ship cargoes or *magasin du Roi*, the assemblages of glass and ceramics are generally representative of the trade network.

The other argument is based on the discovery of the inventory of the objects donated to monsieur Macaye (the owner of the *habitation* Macaye) by monsieur Morisse in 1765 (Losier 2016: 179–181). The inventory is extremely precise, sometimes even naming the production place of objects; to name only a few examples: 144 Dutch plates, 86 Rouen tin-glazed plates of various sizes, 96 porcelain plates, 3 tin-glaze pitcher, 500 wine bottles (Losier 2016: 179). Most of the ceramic and glass objects listed in this inventory are found in the archaeological collections from the second half of the eighteenth century, reinforcing the idea that they are generally representative of the goods available in French Guiana at that time.

To conclude, it is necessary to note that it is the combination of the three sets of data: (1) the material culture analysis which produces a typo-chronology, (2) the study of archival documents leading to the count of ships reaching Cayenne each year and the identification of the goods traded in French Guiana, and (3) the general historical and economic context of the *Ancien Régime* that led to a renewed understanding of the network of French Guiana. Adopting a microhistorical perspective rooted in the analysis of artifacts and the commercial network associated with Cayenne allows for a reconsideration of how daily life in the colony led to the infringement or accommodation to the economic precepts dictated by France.

French Guiana's Economy in the *longue durée*

For a better understanding of the data and to allow a sharp diachronic analysis, the *Ancien Régime* has been divided in three chronological periods. The first one is the pioneer period (ca. 1664–1725) and is characterized by an almost complete isolation of French Guiana. The pioneer period is followed by a period of economic inertia (1725–55) during which French colonies of the Antilles and North America were experiencing a strong economic growth. It was not the case for French Guiana. Indeed, not only were few boats coming to Cayenne each year, but the demographic stagnation was limiting the economic prosperity of the colony (Losier 2016: 158). The last period covers the second half of the eighteenth century, just before the outset of the Seven Years' War to the first slavery abolition (ca. 1750–94). During this period French Guiana experienced an economic growth due to the implementation of several colonization endeavors put together by the *ministre des colonies* (Le Roux et al. 2009: 28–29). However, the results of these projects on the colonial economy were not anticipated nor did they fall under the control of the imperial power, as is the case for the Kourou expedition discussed below.

Isolation of Pioneers (1664–1725)

Following the first colonization project led by Moquet de la Ravardière in 1604 and a brief period of occupation by the Netherlands (between 1654 and 1663), France definitively took possession of French Guiana in 1664 (Le Roux et al. 2009: 22–23; Van den Bel and Collomb 2014; Van den Bel and Hulsman 2019). Afterward, the colony's development and the interest toward French Antilles grew as European interest in exotic agricultural production (indigo, tobacco, cotton, roucou, and sugar) increased during the seventeenth and at the beginning of the eighteenth century (Mintz 1985: 35–36). During this period in French Guiana, we can speak of a settlement of pioneers and the development of the embryo of the Guianese commercial network.

Data regarding the provisioning of the colony suggest that the colonists were particularly isolated during this period (Cardoso 1999 [1971]: 104–105; Devèze 1977: 311). Indeed, archives show that an average of only two ships were registered in the harbor of Cayenne each year between 1688 and 1725 and that colonists were constantly lacking supplies (see Fig. 1). A passage from the journal of Père Labat (1993 [1722]: 24) illustrates this situation: he reports that of the 38 boats composing the fleet which was bringing him to Martinique, two ships were on route to Cayenne and almost all the rest were heading directly to the French Antilles (Guadeloupe and Martinique).

The state of trade presents a snapshot of French Guiana importation for 1721 (ANOM, C14, reg. 12, f° 201, 1721). Beside recording the seven boats that reached Cayenne between July 1, 1720 and July 1, 1721; the archive also lists the merchandise imported to the colony that year. This inventory is a good way to contextualize archaeological data as it indicates that objects of ceramic or glass, on which the material culture study relies, are limited in comparison with food supplies that were essential to the well-being of colonists, slaves, and Indigenous people (Table 1). Therefore, only eight casks of glass and tin-glazed objects were sold in the colony that year and no account is made of the coarse earthenware containers, cooking pots, or other ceramic or glass objects. This informs on the importance of food in relation to other commodities, and has to be taken into account for the interpretation of the archaeological data.

Table 1 Cargo of merchant boats trading in Cayenne from July 1720 to July 1721 (ANOM, C14, Reg. 12, f° 201, 1721)

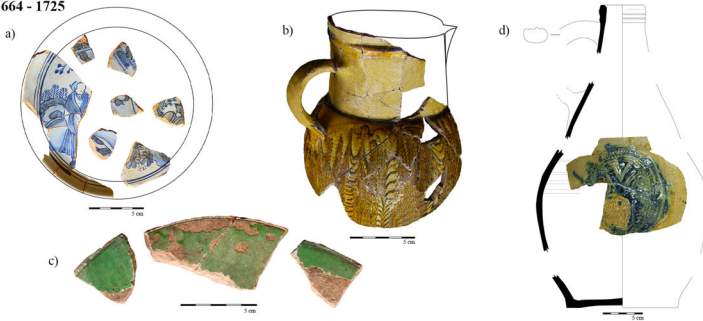
Quantity	Product
366 barrels	Flour
456 casks	Wine
505 barrels	Cured meat
149 barrels and jars	Butter
53 jars and casks	Oil
7 crates	Soap
148 crates	Candles
39 bundles	Canvas
14 barrels	Dry goods
10 barrels	Iron items
334 barrels	Iron cookpots
6 barrels	Nails
64 casks	Salt
325 pounds	Gun Powder
2300 pounds	Lead
8 casks	Glass and tin-glazed objects
24 crates	Cheese

Artifacts found at the Habitation Picard, occupied between 1664 and 1720, indicate that the ports of France's Atlantic Coast were particularly active in the provisioning of Cayenne during the pioneer period (Fig. 3). Indeed, 60% (the percentage refers to the minimum number of vessels – MNV) of all the objects found at Picard were manufactured in France especially in locations associated with hydrographic basins associated with Atlantic port cities. Most of the identified objects at the Habitation Picard are from Saintonge (Fig. 3c) or are associated with the green-glazed coarse earthenware from the French Atlantic coast (Monette et al. 2010: 77–102). The provenance of the majority of French objects is the Atlantic Coast (75.7%), the other objects were made in the Mediterranean basin (6.6%) and 17.7% are known to be French from an undetermined origin (Losier 2016: 89–90).

This analysis confirms the information from the archives. Indeed, ports from the center, and the south of the Atlantic façade, are more regularly recorded in the maritime register of French Guiana during the pioneer period. Ten of the ships registered in the port of Cayenne during that period were outfitted in Nantes, eight in La Rochelle, three in Bordeaux, and four in Saint-Malo. The merchants settled in Mediterranean basin ports were not contributing much to the provisioning of Cayenne during that period. Only five ships outfitted in the Mediterranean Sea came to French Guiana before 1725. One ship from Boston entered the port of Cayenne; this is the only foreign boat recorded in the official record. This might be the beginning of a privileged trading relationship that developed between French Guiana and the thirteen colonies before the outbreak of the Seven Years' War and which intensified during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Forty percent of the objects in the Picard collection were not made in France (Table 2, also see Figs. 3a, b, d). Most are luxury goods, like delftware plates, a Staffordshire pitcher or a Westerwald stoneware jug. It is not surprising to find these

Period 1: 1664 - 1725



Period 2: 1725 - 1750



Period 3: 1750 - 1794

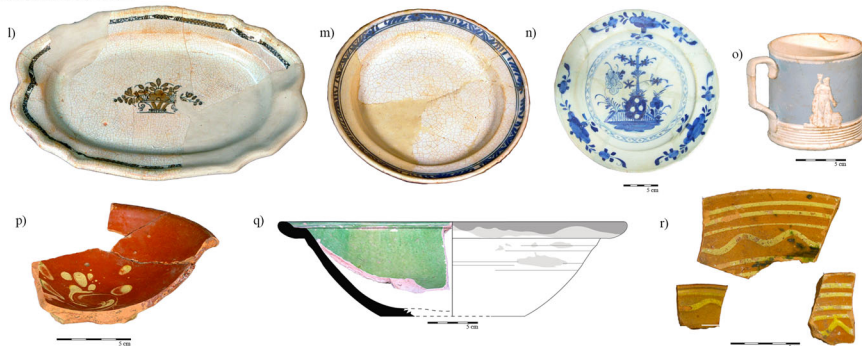


Fig. 3 Artifacts representatives of the three analytical periods. **Period 1:** **a)** Nevers tin-glazed plate (France), Habitation Picard; **b)** Staffordshire pitcher (England), Habitation Picard; **c)** Saintonge bowl (France), Habitation Picard; **d)** Westerwald jug (Germany), Habitation Picard. **Period 2:** **e)** Rouen tin-glazed plate (France), Habitation Loyola; **f)** Bérain decor tin-glazed plate (France), Habitation Loyola; **g)** Albisola plate (Italy), Habitation Saint-Régis; **h)** Vallauris cooking pot (France), Habitation Maripa; **i)** Huveaune chamber pot (France), Habitation Loyola; **j)** Flowerpot shape wine bottle (France), Habitation Maripa; **k)** Blue-green glass bottle (France), Habitation Loyola. **Period 3:** **l)** Rouen tin-glazed plate (France), Habitation Poulain; **m)** Tin-glazed plate (France), Habitation Poulain; **n)** Tin-glazed plate (Dutch), Habitation Poulain; **o)** Jasper ware mug (England), Habitation Poulain; **p)** Huveaune bowl (France), habitation Poulain; **q)** Saintonge bowl (France), Habitation Poulain; **r)** Earthenware Philadelphia region bowl (USA), habitation Maripa

Table 2 Provenance (by country) of artefacts found at the six *habitations* sites (MNV : Minimal Number of Vessel; No. Sherds: Total number of sherds)

	Provenance	MNV	MNV (%)	No. Sherds	No. Sherds (%)
Picard	France	18	60.0	550	66.3
	Netherlands	4	13.3	41	4.9
	Britain	7	23.3	162	19.5
	Germany	1	3.3	77	9.3
	Total	30	100.0	550	100.0
Loyola	France	150	80.2	3136	93.4
	Netherlands	8	4.3	46	1.4
	Britain	13	7.0	97	2.9
	Germany	4	2.1	10	0.3
	Italia	4	2.1	23	0.7
	Spain	1	0.5	1	0.0
	China	7	3.7	44	1.3
Total	187	100.0	3357	100.0	
Saint-Régis	France	22	88.0	166	95.4
	Britain	2	8.0	2	1.1
	Italia	1	4.0	6	3.4
Total	25	100.0	174	100.0	
Maripa	France	19	82.6	550	97.7
	Britain	1	4.3	1	0.2
	Germany	2	8.7	10	1.8
	Italia	1	4.3	2	0.4
Total	23	100.0	563	100.0	
Poulain	France	316	75.1	4124	82.1
	Netherlands	16	3.8	284	5.7
	Britain	33	7.8	219	4.4
	Germany	3	0.7	21	0.4
	Italia	14	3.3	211	4.2
	Spain	35	8.3	159	3.2
	China	4	1.0	8	0.2
Total	421	100.0	5026	100.0	
Macaye	France	83	76.9	1332	77.9
	Netherlands	8	7.4	298	17.4
	Britain	4	3.7	9	0.5
	Germany	2	1.9	28	1.6
	Italia	2	1.9	19	1.1
	Spain	5	4.6	11	0.6
	China	1	0.9	14	0.8
	American East Coast	3	2.8	3	0.2
Total	108	100.0	1,714	100.0	

objects in French shipments or to be directly brought to French Guiana by colonists as their popularity ensured high demand and their large-scale distribution. Also, English glass bottles are dominant in the Picard collection. Their overwhelming presence is easily explained by the fact that the large-scale production of French alcohol containers starts around 1723, therefore after the abandonment of the Habitation Picard which took place in approximately 1717 (Losier 2012: 151–179). Before 1725, France was regularly buying bottles from England who were producing dark green glass bottles on an industrial scale since the beginning of the seventeenth century (Losier 2012: 154). Consequently, these objects were probably not introduced in French Guiana by illicit or authorized trade with foreign countries, but through the French network.

The delft tin-glazed objects (MNV 4) could have been brought to French Guiana through exchange with Surinam merchants or they could have arrived directly from Europe (Netherlands or France), archaeologically the distinction is impossible to make. However, this observation highlights the fact that in general the commercial network between French Guiana and Surinam is also difficult to characterize from the archives. It seems that the pirogues or other types of ships arriving to Cayenne from Surinam or leaving from the Netherland colony were not recorded by the port authorities, so they do not translate in the account of the “*correspondance officielle*.” However, archives indicate that agreements were established between France and the Netherlands allowing French Guiana *habitants* to travel to Surinam in order to purchase enslaved people. The first agreement was signed in 1711 (Table 3).

Requests originating from the French Guiana government to obtain punctual authorization of commerce with foreign territories (this includes Surinam, England, and other

Table 3 Trade with foreign nations granted by the Metropolis

Year	Liberty of Trade with Foreign Nations	Reference
1707	Liberty of trade with Surinam	ANOM, C14, reg. 5, f° 70
1711	Liberty of trade with Surinam	ANOM, C14, reg. 6, f° 101
1717	Agreement to trade horses with English merchants	ANOM, C14, reg. 10, f° 20
1717	Agreement to trade horses with English merchants	ANOM, C14, reg. 10, f° 205
1721	Occasional trading activities with foreign merchants	ANOM, C14, reg. 12, f° 202
1726	Slave trade with foreign merchants	ANOM, C14, reg. 14, f° 247
1727	Slave trade with foreign merchants	ANOM, C14, reg. 14, f° 45
1731	Liberty of trade with English merchants	ANOM, C14, reg. 15, f° 12
1748	Commerce freedom with all nations	ANOM, C14, reg. 20, f° 92
1749	Commerce freedom with all nations	ANOM, C14, reg. 20, f° 113
1749	Commerce freedom with all nations	ANOM, C14, reg. 20, f° 115
1753	Slave trade with foreign merchants	ANOM, C14, reg. 22, f° 96
1758	Commerce freedom with all nations	ANOM, C14, reg. 24, f° 106
1761	Commerce freedom with all nations	ANOM, C14, reg. 25, f° 171
1766	Commerce freedom with all nations	ANOM, C14, reg. 32, f° 85
1766	Commerce freedom with all nations	ANOM, C14, reg. 32, f° 260
1767	Commerce freedom with all nations	ANOM, C14, reg. 34, f° 297
1768	Commerce freedom with all nations (<i>Exclusif mitigé</i>)	ANOM, C14, reg. 36, f° 93

Atlantic territories) were recorded five times during the pioneer period (see Table 3). In a sense, commercial freedoms granted by France for the benefit of French Guiana indicate that the metropolis was probably recognizing the colony as a marginal territory requiring outside assistance. But this also means that French Guiana merchants were beginning to weave a network outside of the official economic system, thus outmanoeuvring imperial economic policies and serving their own interests instead of that of the French crown. This is interesting in the perspective of the *Ancien Régime's* political economy as this is not consistent with the protectionism implied by the dual economic politics of mercantilism and *l'Exclusif* supposedly firmly implemented during the first half of the eighteenth century. Therefore, from the outset, *l'Exclusif* was not a monolithic force coercing French colonial commercial networks into a mold. On the contrary, it seems that through demands from local authorities, the impossibility of adequately provisioning a colony and variations in geopolitics, *l'Exclusif* was more or less strict, varying through time.

No artifacts from Portugal or Brazil have been identified in the Picard collection, and this is true for all the other archaeological collections analyzed during this research. If this situation resonates with the fact that the Treaty of Utrecht signed in 1713 prohibited any commercial partnership with Pará (the Brazilian region contiguous to French Guiana) (Cardoso 1999 [1971]: 280–281), it does not mean that trade was not taking place. Indeed, from time to time Brazilian pirogues involved in trade were officially welcomed in Cayenne (ANOM, C14, reg. 4, f° 124, 1703; reg. 11, f° 106, 1718). In 1718, a pirogue bringing tobacco, rope, cacao, sarsaparilla, and hammocks was registered in the archives (ANOM, C14, reg. 11, f° 106, 1718). The description of the cargo suggests that the type of goods traded with Pará does not preserve well and therefore are not showing in the archaeological record. This may explain why legal or illegal trade with Brazil is not documented through material culture analysis. Also, it is worth mentioning that no evidence of trade with Brazil was found in the archives after 1718. The only subsequent references are associated with French Guiana's unsuccessful attempts to initiate trade with Pará; they were all dismissed by Brazilian authorities (ANOM, C14, reg. 36, f° 24, 1768; reg. 45, f° 102, 1777). Therefore, an elusive commercial relationship with Pará can be documented during the pioneer period, but from the perspective of the datasets it is difficult to state that a regular illicit or legal trade route to and from Pará was reaching Cayenne. This could be different in the Approuague or the Oyapock regions which are closer to the frontier with Brazil and more easily connected.

Archaeological collections, archives, and historiography associated with the pioneer period all indicate that French Guiana was producing a negligible quantity of export goods (sugar, indigo, roucou, coffee) in comparison with the French Antilles. This can be explained by French Guiana low demography. *Habitants* did not have the necessary financial resources to attract merchants involved in slave or general trade in order to increase the workforce that the colony needed to grow its production (of course, this is according to the logic of the time, free salaried employees could have provided the same workforce in monoagricultural complexes). Consequently, the workforce necessary to sustain a heavy local production was not available and as a result, merchants had trouble finding enough cargo to outfit their ships for the trip back to Europe or to other Atlantic ports. Therefore, most of the merchants were avoiding Cayenne because of the

marginal possibility of undertaking a lucrative commercial journey (Devèze 1977: 312) and this caused French Guiana's economy to stagnate.

Data presented above shows that between the end of the seventeenth century to 1725, the international commercial network of French Guiana was deficient. Reported on a map (Fig. 4), it is evident that the vast majority of transactions originated from France. Moreover, during that period most ships were outfitted by the government in order to provide supplies to the colonial authorities and army. In consequence, French Guiana inhabitants often faced shortages during this period. The most important thing to note is that by adopting an analytical perspective on French Guiana, it is possible to tease out the embryonic stage of a regional trade network with Surinam, operating outside of France's vigilance, that will persist in the *longue durée*.

It is not impossible that the colonists were smuggling in order to provision themselves with essential commodities such as food. However, the artifact collection of Picard habitation does not bear witness to any form of contraband, as most of the objects are typical of a trade regulated by France. The same observation can be made by looking at the archives: there is no proof that smuggling was a problem. If illegal trade was allowing the colony to endure, it may have been “ignored” by colonial authorities. This observation is valid for the duration of the *Ancien Régime*. We can then say that regarding the place and duty of the colonies as defined by the French government, French Guiana was not fitting in the mold as it was not contributing much to the mercantile economy of France. But for the government, the colony was serving its political purpose as it was located in a strategic position in South

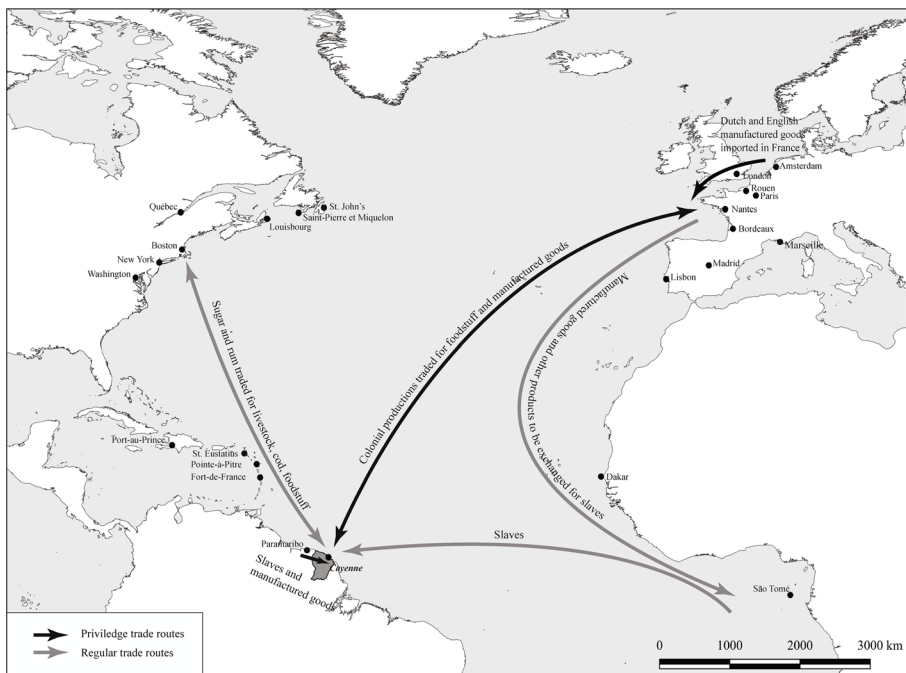


Fig. 4 Map of the commercial network of French Guiana, 1664–1725

America. On a daily basis, we can begin to understand that local authorities were accommodating *l'Exclusif* so it was not rigidly enforced.

French Guiana Economic Stagnation (1725–50)

While the period between 1725 and 1750 coincides with the intensification of commercial trade in the Circumcaribbean area and in the Atlantic World in general (Butel 2007: 115–16), the commercial activity of French Guiana stagnated. The population of the colony almost doubled, increasing from 3735 people in 1723 to 6218 people in 1749 (ANOM, C14, reg. 13, f° 277–296; reg. 20, f° 329; Losier 2016: 158) but, as it was the case during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, an average of only two ships per year was reaching Cayenne. This situation led to several food shortages, as reported in the archives for 11 years: 1726, 1729, 1734, 1738, 1745, 1747, 1748, 1750, 1751, 1754, 1755 (ANOM, C14). Therefore, commerce stagnated, and I believe that French Guiana's negative reputation regarding its economy has its roots in this period. Even punctual liberty of trade with foreign nations was not enough to end the crisis (see Table 3).

The commercial network changed little during this 25-year interval, most of the provisioning was still coming from the French Atlantic coast. Only two boats outfitted in Mediterranean ports were registered in Cayenne between 1725 and 1750. Foreign trade was still marginal; the archives demonstrate that only one boat from the East Coast of America in 1726 and two boats from England, one in 1748 and another in 1750, reached Cayenne (Losier 2016, Annexe I). According to Jean Mettas (1978: 1) and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, while 22 slave ships were outfitted for Guadeloupe, 67 for Martinique, 134 for Saint-Domingue between 1725 and 1750 only 11 departed Nantes for French Guiana. This example from Nantes indicates that French Guiana's economy was lethargic in comparison with the French Antilles. In the context of mercantilism and from a metropolis point of view, this economic deadlock was extremely detrimental to the growth of the French Guiana colonial project.

The archaeological collections of *habitations* occupied during this period, Loyola, Saint-Régis, and Maripa, do not reflect the shortages recorded in the archives. Excavations were not extensive on the sites of Saint-Régis and Maripa, this is the reason why the number of artifacts is low in those collections (see Table 2). However, they show the same tendency as what is suggested by the important collection of Loyola habitation regarding the production place of objects, mostly coming from France, as stated above. The important quantity of objects and the luxury exhibited by the ceramic assemblages and *habitations* associated with the Jesuits might be generated by their social status. Indeed, the Jesuits were some of the most prosperous inhabitants of French Guiana and luxurious objects found in their *habitations* are a testimony to this situation (Le Roux et al. 2009: 71).

The composition of archaeological collections supports information arising from the historical documents. The vast majority of objects (80%) were made in France, which is consistent with a network based in the metropolis, while the proportion of foreign ceramics is low, around 20%, in the collection of the *habitations* Loyola, Saint-Régis, and Maripa (see Table 2). During this period, glass, tin-glazed, and various other French ceramic factories were producing in a quasi-industrial pace for the metropole and for international consumption. Such is the case for Rouen tin-glazed (see Fig. 3e),

Vallauris cooking pots (see Fig. 3h) or the flowerpot-shaped wine bottles (see Fig. 3j), to name a few examples. Therefore, it was not necessary for French merchants to provision themselves in foreign countries as might have been the case during the seventeenth century and the first quarter of the eighteenth century. It is worth noting that locally made objects begin to show in the archaeological collections of this period as local industry, pottery workshops, and blacksmiths were established in the colony (Chouinard 2001; Coutet and Losier 2014; Le Roux et al. 2009). However, the vast majority of ceramic and glass was still coming from Europe, as locally produced ceramics were mostly used for sugar production.

From 1725 to the eve of the Seven Years’ War, French Guiana’s commercial network was deficient and did not really differ from the pioneer period (Fig. 5). In the absence of an efficient provisioning system, the colonists were not able to produce export goods (sugar, indigo, etc.) in sufficient quantity to feed the market and attract merchants to the colony. Again, French Guiana was not contributing much to the formal mercantile economy of France and took the little advantage given by the liberty of commerce with foreign nations to supply the inadequate provisioning from France especially for food and enslaved people.

In light of data regarding the Jesuits *habitations*, it suggests inequality between French Guiana inhabitants as they were not all able (like the Jesuits) to acquire the goods and slaves necessary to make their *habitations* flourish. It seems that the general “rules” of mercantilism and *l’Exclusif* were respected during the period from 1725 to 1750. However, the respect of these economic policies was detrimental to French Guiana. As the territory was not fully integrated into the Atlantic network, the

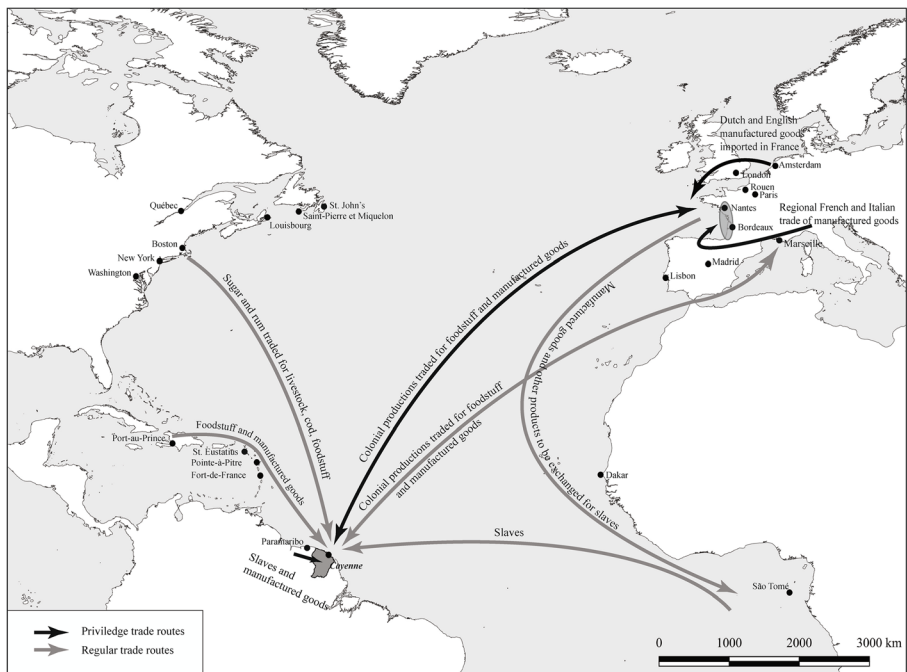


Fig. 5 Map of the commercial network of French Guiana, 1725–50

population suffered one food shortage after another. Therefore, it is possible that the actions of local authorities during the second half of the eighteenth century, circumventing mercantile policies and challenging *l'Exclusif*, are direct consequences to what happened between 1725 and 1750, and a way to ensure that French Guiana was not to stay on the periphery of Atlantic trade, this impacting negatively its population.

The Surprising Consequences of the Kourou Expedition (1750–94)

The second half of the eighteenth century was eventful as five major historical events affected French Guiana: the Seven Years' War, the Kourou expedition, the American Revolutionary War, the French Revolution, and the first abolition of slavery. The count of ships visiting Cayenne each year illustrates how each of these international events had an impact on French Guiana's commercial network, increasing or decreasing the number of commercial ventures to the colony (see Fig. 1). In addition to these events, *l'Exclusif mitigé* granted liberty of commerce with all nations to French Guiana in 1768, disrupting mercantilist rules (see Table 3).

Commercial growth and diversification of trading partners are noticeable at the eve of the Seven Years' War; this is true for all French colonies (Losier 2016: 161; Pétré-Grenouilleau 1997: 137). In French Guiana, this growth is associated with a request for trading freedom with foreign merchants in 1749, resulting in the burgeoning of new trading networks. Consequently, between 1749 and 1755, the contribution of French Antilles and American east coast ships to the provisioning of Cayenne exceed, in number of ships, the provisioning from the metropole (Losier 2015: 129). However, the beginning of the Seven Years' War suddenly interrupted this short beneficial period. After 1756, the number of ships visiting Cayenne's harbor was dramatically reduced until 1764, coinciding with the beginning of the Kourou expedition.

The signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763 deprived France of all its American colonies, with the exception of the French Antilles, French Guiana, and Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, which was granted back after being under British control for 50 years. Therefore, in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, France was in need of a serious reorganization of its imperial project, and had to rethink the role of its colonies regarding the production of goods. In a sense, France made a very clear choice in 1763, sugar was to become the flagship product of the French colonies, and Saint-Pierre et Miquelon along with French Guiana were to play a key role in supporting the sugar colonies of the French Antilles with dry-salted cod and the production of other foodstuffs (Mintz 1985: 37–48). Contrasting to what is generally stated, historian Jonathan R. Dull (2005) underlines that the Treaty of Paris was not as disastrous for France as what is traditionally conveyed in the historiography. On the contrary, in the “sugar era” France maintained the territories crucial to the organization of an imperial project revolving around sugar production.

As French Guiana sugar production was neither fruitful nor profitable, the *ministre de la marine* Étienne-François duc de Choiseul initiated a colonization project, the Kourou expedition, with the goal of producing foodstuffs in order to supply the French navy and the sugar colonies of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Saint-Domingue. This colonization project was based on an exclusively European and colonial workforce, Acadian and Canadian refugees (even families from the newly recovered colony of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon) and numerous candidates from the east of France (Alsace and

Loraine) took part in this expedition (Larin 2006: 65–80). Therefore, in addition to the dry-salted cod from the North Atlantic, the fresh produces (vegetable, fruits, and meat) and the wood produced in French Guiana would allow sugar plantations to become truly mono industries, thus enhancing their productivity (Godfroy 2011: 48–49; Haudrère 1997: 346–347). Moreover, the plan to set up a militia in Cayenne in order to protect the French territory of the circumcaribbean area was on the mind of Choiseul (Artur 2002 [1736–71]: 711). Therefore, as soon as 1764, with the launch of this project, the number of ships visiting French Guiana increased significantly (see Fig. 1).

If the objectives of the so-called Kourou expedition were commendable, the project was poorly prepared: the settlement was not ready upon the arrival of the colonists, the very marshy Kourou region was unhealthy, and the provisioning from France was arriving periodically (see Fig. 2 for the location of Kourou). These shortfalls lead to a tragedy. According to Godfroy (2011: 150, 180), 11,000 colonists travelled from France to Kourou in 1764 and 1765, of those, 6000 died within months after their arrival and 5000 went back to Europe as soon as it was possible. Due to the nature of the communications at the time, even if the project was not viable, colonists and provisioning ships were continuing their route to French Guiana. In fact, the ships transporting goods to Kourou were the same as those bringing colonists back to France.

In the absence of consumers, huge surpluses were building up in the colony's warehouses, so much that a redistribution system had to be organized. The failure of the Kourou project led to an unexpected outcome: French Guiana entered the intercolonial commercial network of the Americas, trading with colonies of diverse metropolises. A particular passage in the archives encapsulates the situation in the aftermath of the Kourou attempt:

Le renvoi des gens qui repassoient en France et bien plus encore la mortalité qui avoit précédé avoit tellement réduit le nombre des consommateurs que nous nous trouvions horriblement surchargés de vivre (c'est à dire de vivres envoyés de France dont la surabondance ne supplée nullement à l'atroce disette où nous estions de viande et légumes frais). [...] À l'égard de Sir Gradis, nous avons décidé que l'on renverrais les navires avec leur cargaisons aux Iles du Vent ou à Saint-Domingue pour être mises dans les magasins du roi de ces colonies (ANOM, C14, reg. 28, f° 69, 1765).

An intense trade network originating from French Guiana reached not only the French Antilles but also the North American colonies. The purpose of these commercial exchanges was to sell the merchandise stored in the *magasin du Roi* (King's warehouse). It was especially urgent to redistribute the food (flour and salted meat) which was degrading rapidly in the harsh climate of French Guiana. Archives indicate that they were sent to Martinique, Guadeloupe and Saint-Domingue in order of priority (ANOM, C14, reg. 28, f° 95, 1765). The impressive number of boats recorded in Cayenne's harbor in 1765 is a testimony to the organization of the redistribution network. In 1765, 63 ships are listed in the archives and only one-third were outfitted in France, and the majority of them were part of the convoy bringing colonists and provisions for the Kourou expedition (Losier 2016, Annexe I).

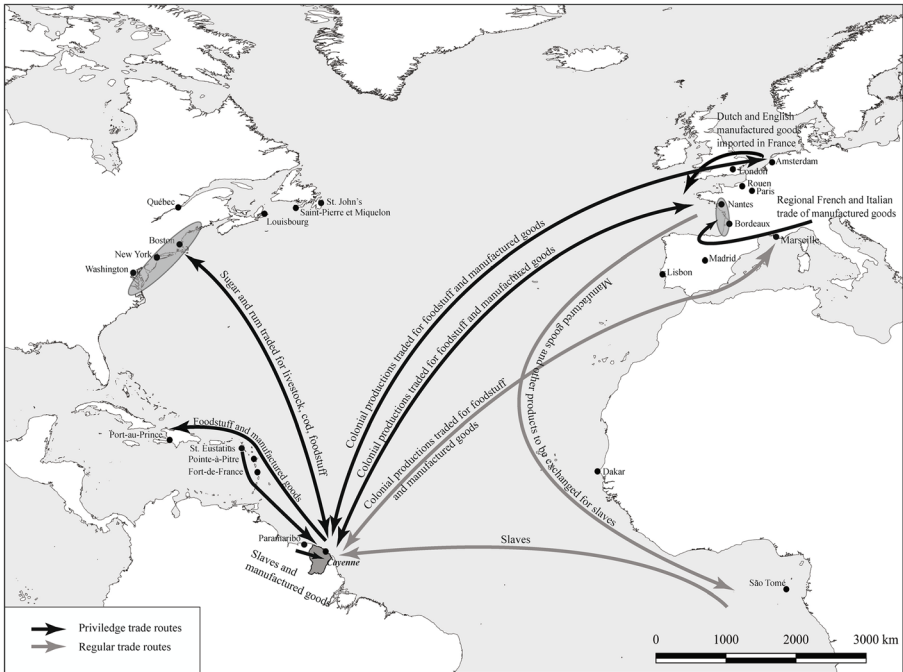


Fig. 6 Map of the commercial network of French Guiana, 1750–94

For the first time, the colony was attracting merchants and therefore became a significant player within the Atlantic exchange sphere but outside of the precepts of mercantile theory. It is obvious that French Guiana's commercial network during the second half of the eighteenth century was not anchored in the traditional transatlantic west-east colonial provisioning scheme, but the South American territory was connected to colonies, thus, enhancing the intercolonial trade (Fig. 6). Therefore, the economic emergence of French Guiana during this period resulted from the necessity of redistributing the Kourou expedition goods and took place in a typically American network from which continental France was kept on the fringe.

The Thirteen Colonies' merchants saw in French Guiana an ideal partner for their provisioning in sugar cane syrup, sugar, and rum (at a lower price than in English sugar islands) and this network triggered by the Kourou expedition tragedy persisted throughout the eighteenth century. In return for the products, the American east coast merchants were exporting to French Guiana and in the French Antilles wood, flour, dry-salted fish, and whale oil (Braudel 1979: 351–354). The C14 archives also indicate that livestock was shipped to French Guiana (ANOM, C14, reg. 33, f° 153). This partnership was important to French Guiana as it allowed merchants from Cayenne to be integrated in the intercolonial exchange network and to counteract the state of dependence in which France was maintaining the colony thus positioning the colony outside of France's mercantile economy.

Between 1763 and 1794, almost 19% of the ships recorded in Cayenne were outfitted in port cities located on the American East Coast (ANOM, C14, reg. 26 to 72; Losier 2016, Annexe I). With the exception of one boat coming from Carolina, all the boats for which the port of origin is known (47 of a total of 145 ships) were

outfitted in cities located north of Philadelphia: Portsmouth, Salem, Boston and Falmouth, Rhode Island, New London, New York, and Philadelphia. This situation is not surprising when the nature of the merchandise traded in French Guiana is taken into account, as this region, New England, was producing foodstuff (vegetables, flour, dry-salted cod) lacking in South America, while south of the east coast production was based on monoagricultural domains like the ones of French Guiana that produced goods like cotton or tobacco destined to be exported to the European market.

After the Kourou expedition, other colonization projects (*compagnie de Guyane ou de Ouanary* in 1768, or *Nouvelle compagnie de Guyane* in 1776–88) contributed to maintain the intercolonial commercial network of French Guiana. But most importantly, the implementation of *l'Exclusif mitigé* in 1768, which was the relaxation of the metropolitan economic protectionism, allowed French Guiana to enhance its commercial freedom. This relative autonomy led to the development of commercial links with merchants from European or American foreign territories, notably with the Thirteen Colonies. Therefore, it can be said that in general, the transatlantic, but more so the intercolonial, trade associated with French Guiana flourished during this period.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, Cayenne's harbor was busy, as demonstrated by the archives which suggests that in 1768 an important quantity of goods was still waiting to be exchanged in the *magasin du Roi* in Cayenne. Indeed, a document written by Maillard-Dumesle gives the list of the unnecessary goods stored in the warehouse (ANOM, C14, reg. 37, f° 63; Losier 2016: 72–74). The need to get rid of that material might have motivated the government's decision to grant to the colony its commercial freedom in 1768 and again in 1780.

The archaeological collections of the *habitations* Poulain and Macaye are associated with the second half of the eighteenth century, and they are significant, reflecting the abundance of goods available in Cayenne's warehouses (see Table 2). A variety of ceramic and glass objects suggests that it was possible for French Guiana inhabitants to easily provision themselves with a vast array of goods (see Fig. 3, period 3). It is also worth stating that several objects listed in the Maillard-Dumesle document have been identified in the archaeological collections of the *Habitations Poulain* and *Macaye*: among others, brown or white tin-glazed plates and serving dishes, bottles, glassware, smoking pipes, or marble mortars, for example (excerpt from Maillard-Dumesle letter, ANOM, C14, reg. 37, f° 63–64, 1768). Although the majority of the objects came from France, which is consistent with the Kourou expedition provisioning, a little more than 20% of the objects from the Poulain and Macaye collection were products of foreign countries and they echo the data from the archives regarding the diversification of French Guiana's commercial network from 1763 onwards (see Fig. 3).

In the archives, the mentions of food shortage dropped considerably in comparison with the two earlier periods, only four food shortage episodes after the Kourou expedition (post 1764), in comparison with 22 episodes before. However, we must keep in mind that even if the commercial network was thriving in the aftermath of the Kourou expedition, archival documents reveal that flour and salted meat were often requested by French Guiana authorities. It is necessary to mention one more time the fact that the foodstuffs shipped in the context of the Kourou colonization project were rapidly sent to the French Antilles or to other American colonies before it started to

spoil. Therefore, even if a redistribution network was organized after the failure of the Kourou expedition, food shortage was still a reality in French Guiana.

In 1777 and 1778, during the American Revolutionary War, Benjamin Franklin's visit to France in order to convince Louis XVI to become the ally of future Americans led to the signing of the Treaty of Alliance (1778) (O'Shaughnessy 2000). One of the terms of this treaty was the commitment on behalf of France to open the ports of French Antilles, French Guiana and Saint-Pierre et Miquelon and some French ports, like Marseille, to American ships (Haudrère 1997: 361). Traffic recorded in the port of Marseille testify to this situation: between 1710 and 1781 (71-year period), 103 ships outfitted in the Thirteen Colonies arrived in Marseille; a further 109 are recorded in the decade between 1782 and 1792 (Pétre-Grenouilleau 1997 137). Another way French Guiana could have been connected with the east coast of America is through Martinique, who was "a major conduit of supplies to the Continental army" (O'Shaughnessy 2000: 214), acting as redistribution hub for goods from French Guiana, and other French colonial territories. Archaeologically, trade with the East Coast of North America is attested by the presence of coarse earthenware produced in the Philadelphia region (Steen 1999: 63) (see Fig. 3).

During the second half of the eighteenth century, French Guiana's commercial network expanded considerably (see Fig. 6). Archives and archaeological collections analysis show that after the Treaty of Paris (1763), French Guiana was in a state of economic growth, which was initiated shortly before the Seven Years' War, but was interrupted by the same event. However, it is paradoxical to think that the failure of the Kourou expedition, which caused the death of thousands of people, lead to the economic prosperity of French Guiana. The commercial network developed in the aftermath of the colonization project and consolidated during the American Revolutionary War remained until the first abolition of slavery in 1794. The most important characteristic of this network is that it was operating almost completely outside of France's control as it was anchored in an intercolonial network.

Failure of a Metropolitan Project and the Influence of Marginal Colonies on the Construction of the Modern World

What is most striking about French Guiana's economic historiography is that the colony was seen as an economic failure. But this is when adopting a point of view from the French government and French merchants. However, when examined from a colony's standpoint, it is possible to notice that French Guiana was not a completely marginal and failed colony but one that operated outside of the economic precept of mercantilism. With the help of a microhistorical framework focusing on a discrete location (using the archaeological collections and the accounts of ships reaching Cayenne) and expanding toward phenomenon taking place on the regional or global scale, it was possible to witness how French Guiana was embedded into intercolonial networks in which colonies were supporting each other outside of the metropolitan precepts. The embryo of those networks was rooted in the pioneer period (1664–1725) and thrives in the *longue durée*.

Networks expended so much that French Guiana became a significant player within intercolonial trade, especially during the second half of the eighteenth century, when

France reorganized its colonial project in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War and supported American patriots on the eve of the American Revolutionary War. The way colonists and French Guiana policy makers circumvented legally (with the help of *l'Exclusif mitigé*) or illicitly imperial economic policies to set up original commercial networks, notably with the American east coast, are underlined by the archaeological collections and the origin of ships recorded in Cayenne's harbor. Yet, we must recognize that the unexpected outcomes of the Kourou expedition are particularly important in economic terms.

When the Kourou expedition was planned on the drawing board of Choiseul in Paris, the objective was to enhance the production of sugar in the French Antilles and in Saint-Domingue to the benefit of the metropolis. Kourou colonists will have been responsible for the production of the foodstuffs necessary to provision the Caribbean *habitations* and their free and enslaved populations; the idea was that no other crops than sugar cane would have to be grown in these monoagricultural domains. When implemented, this good idea became a human tragedy, because of its poor organization. As demonstrated, the unforeseen consequence of the failure of this colonization project was the development of a redistribution network anchored in Cayenne that grew over the years to become a small but beneficial intercolonial network reaching not only French colonies but also the Thirteen Colonies, soon to be the United States of America. This partnership was profitable as merchants from the American east coast were going to Cayenne with foodstuff and livestock to trade for sugar, syrup, and rum. The premise of this partnership is visible in the chronicle of Pierre Barrère (1743: 95) who stated that ships from Boston or New York were going to Cayenne to buy sugar and syrup, and that they were distilling it in order to make the *eau-de-vie* necessary for life in cold territories.

Therefore, we must acknowledge that mercantilism and the protectionist policy of *l'Exclusif*, subjecting a colony to a metropolis, are not sufficient to truly understand with finesse the commercial networks of American territories nor is it adequate to grasp the role played by a colony within the Atlantic economy. The case of French Guiana demonstrates that an analysis, rooted in a microhistorical perspective in which the agency and empowerment of colonial inhabitants are recognized, leads to a more complete and nuanced understanding of a phenomenon taking place on the global scale, in this case the intercontinental Atlantic trade. The analysis of the different dimensions of Cayenne's economy documented in isolation, and then, in interrelation following a microhistorical approach has proved to be an efficient way to transcend the binary and asymmetric opposite constituting the traditional Eurocentric discourse on colonial economies and to reach narratives revealing more subtleties in colonial projects, as well as their local and international effects (Lydon and Rizvi 2010: 21).

Interestingly, French Guiana's commercial network was located outside of the political boundaries of the French empire and organized by the local government. If it has been demonstrated that slaves, merchants, and planters were organizing regional commercial networks located outside of the precepts of the states in the Caribbean (Hauser 2011), the historiography tends to suggest that commerce transgressing imperial decrees was less commonly organized by colony leaders. But was it truly? The archives of French Guiana are full of citations such as: "A boat from Boston sailed into the harbour and we trade only what was absolutely necessary to the survival of the colony: livestock, bad fish (the mention of the grade of the salt-fish is interesting), lamp

oil and vegetable. These are items that our merchants do not ship to Cayenne, therefore it is not detrimental to our benefit (translated from French)” (for example, ANOM, C14, reg. 12, ^o 243, 1721; ANOM, C14, reg. 13, 1723). Of course, it is impossible to verify if only authorized merchandise was bought on this (these) occasion(s), but it is probably fair to express doubt. Therefore, we can suggest that local authorities were transgressing metropolitan rules more often than not, to their individual benefit or for the common good of the colony.

The identification of the French Guiana archaeological paradox prompts me to reanalyze the commercial network of the colony during the *Ancien Régime* in order to answer one question: Why do the historiography and the archaeological data seem to tell such different stories? While answering this question, I began to challenge the imperial economical prescriptions of mercantilism as well as to transcend the traditional monochrome chronicle of the colonization process. Archaeological data have the power to bring new perspectives to the field of historical economy as they lead to the production of narratives celebrating the diversity, resourcefulness, expediency, and impact of colonial populations (in this case French Guiana people) on the global scene (in this case the Atlantic economy). In the current context of decolonizing humanities and social sciences, there is a necessity to take a new look into European imperial projects and try to understand how they were executed and experienced in colonial settings located an ocean apart (or more) from the place they were imagined.

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