

“We Must Stop the Progress of Marronnage”: Repertoires and Repression

The mutinies were put down; since then the colony had steadily gained in wealth and importance. This development failed to stamp out the spirit of insubordination at the foundation of the social system.

Anna Julia Cooper ([1925] 1988: 50–51)

Enslaved people asserted themselves in their everyday lives, navigating and responding to the shifting social and environmental conditions that shaped their existence while disrupting colonial structures through marronnage and other oppositional actions. Saint-Domingue was an economically booming colony with rapidly growing sugar- and coffee-producing sectors. Enslaved people saw little to no fruits of their labor value – in fact, despite its famed wealth, the colony often faced food shortages because of mismanagement during inter-imperial conflicts, which only bolstered discontent. The greed of the plantocracy and the demand for sugar in Europe further inflamed the slave trade and the growth of the enslaved population, inadvertently causing the colony to buckle under the pressure of its own weight during the latter years of the eighteenth century. In France, the migration of citizens from rural to urban areas caused increasing economic distress, furthering societal strain and contributing to revolutionary outcomes (Goldstone 1991); similarly, enslaved Africans’ forced migration to Saint-Domingue deepened their discontent with commodification and the dire conditions they faced in the colony. Howard Winant (2001: 52–53) argues that, “as capitalism, empire, and communication all experienced substantial growth, this growth also fueled emancipatory aspirations and potentialities.” Colonial economies

expanded due to the rise of global sugar prices, precipitating the demand for sugar plantation laborers and the rapid population growth of enslaved Africans. Influxes of enslaved people, some of whom were experienced in war either as captives or soldiers, contributed to increasingly larger and more frequent acts of marronnage and insurrection in the Americas.

European colonizers' late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century economic aspirations transformed previously unexploited lands into full-fledged plantation societies founded on enslaved African labor (Scott [1986] 2018: 1–4). Between the 1670s and 1750s, significantly larger numbers of captive Africans disembarked at Jamaica and Brazil than Saint-Domingue (Table 7.1).¹ Within the same time period, both colonies saw the rise of large-scale fugitive settlements that staged revolts against their respective colonial powers and threatened to upend local plantation economies: the Leeward and Windward Jamaican maroons and the Brazilian Palmares Kingdom. These self-liberated zones were organized settlements where runaways' patterns of interactions and social network relationships produced distinct cultural, religious, political, and militaristic expressions. The maroon communities were highly populated, armed, and their insurrections challenged colonial authorities – in some instances with such vigor that they commanded and negotiated treaties with respective colonial governments. Other runaway communities – including

TABLE 7.1. *African disembarkations to Haiti, Jamaica, and Brazil, all years*

Year Range	Haiti (Saint-Domingue and Santo Domingo)	Jamaica	Brazil
1501–1525	287	0	0
1526–1550	2,408	0	0
1551–1575	6,033	0	332
1576–1600	8,406	150	536
1601–1625	6,413	2955	1,412
1626–1650	2,046	0	32,144
1651–1675	1,107	8,806	6,680
1676–1700	2,954	56,635	72,423
1701–1725	39,459	117,172	209,571
1726–1750	120,663	170,642	370,634
1751–1775	222,850	218,848	320,921
1776–1800	310,792	289,625	417,812
1801–1825	1,048	66,835	937,518
1826–1850	0	2,557	791,045
1851–1875	0	362	7,900

numerous *quilombos* in Brazil, maroons in Suriname and Jamaica, and *palenques* in Cuba and Colombia — existed and thrived during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Price [1973] 1996; Genovese 1979; Heuman 1986; Thompson 2006; Moomou 2015).

In contrast to the rapid population growth and armed revolt in Jamaica and Brazil at the end of the seventeenth century, *Ayiti/Española/Saint-Domingue* was sparsely populated after sixteenth-century maroon resistance contributed to the fall of sugar production and the Spanish withdrew to pursue mining on mainland South America, leaving the island to be ruled by the “masterless” class of free blacks, maroons, and pirates. As Chapter 6 explained, the island had become a backwater of the Spanish empire; disputes over land, enslaved labor, and the border between the Spanish and the newly formed French territories marked the first half of the eighteenth century. The relatively slow growth of Saint-Domingue’s enslaved population between the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries meant that most fugitive communities were likely small-scale geographic nodes composed of a family or several families. These maroons were likely either Spanish colonial-era inhabitants or escaped enslaved peoples who created new “maroon landscapes” in the borderlands, hinterlands, and the more immediate shadows of plantations (Miki 2012; Diouf 2014). The most well-known and only officially recognized maroon community from Saint-Domingue was the Maniel, who established free and independent living spaces through their negotiations with the French and the Spanish. Though these maroons were considered to be agitators due to their attacks on plantations, they did not mount the same military threat as their contemporaries in other colonies.

Since seventeenth-century “masterless” emancipated blacks and maroons were the island’s population majority – including in regions that later became Saint-Domingue – when the French arrived, they expanded structures of repression against marronnage, and the black population writ large, to create a plantation regime that would enslave as many people as possible to generate wealth primarily for French colonists and owners in the metropole. Violent repression facilitated the French colonial sugar revolution, as the enslaved population exploded in the early to late eighteenth century due to political changes, warfare, and instability on the African continent. Yet, it was this population growth, combined with the window of opportunity presented by the French Revolution and the prevalence of maroon organizing tactics, that helps explain why the 1791 Saint-Domingue uprising went further than the Jamaican and Brazilian maroon rebellions in overturning slavery and colonialism. This chapter

focuses on how maroons navigated state-sponsored repression, strategically responded to local and international socio-political events, and developed the means of communicating ideas of liberation between themselves and enslaved people that helped propel the Haitian Revolution.

We can think of marronnage as a tactic within enslaved people's repertoire of contention (see also Chapter 5), a collection of distinctive combinations of organically developed resistance actions that endure, evolve, are reinvented or readopted if participants deem them feasible, legitimate, and effective (Tilly 1995; Traugott 1995; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004; Tilly 2006; Biggs 2013; della Porta 2013; Ring-Ramirez, Reynolds-Stenson and Earl 2014). Historically constituted forms of consciousness allow individuals to make sense of their circumstances and develop the tactics suitable for initiating historical transformations (Swidler 1986; Fantasia 1988; Hall 1990; Kane 2000). As Chapter 2 demonstrated, marronnage had been the core dimension of anti-colonial, anti-slavery resistance since the first black *ladinos* and African *bozales* disembarked on the island and took up rebellion with the Taíno, and their legacies of struggle influenced future generations of rebels. Established repertoire tactics, like marronnage or poisoning (Chapter 3), were then taught to subsequent generations of actors, whose awareness of changing social, economic, and political conditions allowed them to adapt their disruptive performances to effectively contest power structures. Newly arrived enslaved people and maroons who remained from the Spanish colonial period had to strategically assess the rapidly changing landscape of Saint-Domingue – growing numbers of sugar and coffee and plantations, an increasing bonded population monitored by the *maréchaussée* fugitive slave police, and a complex topography – to make careful decisions about when, how, and with whom to escape and where to hide. Repertoires, and the combinations of tactics of which they are comprised, are therefore historically specific and bound by time and space, meaning that choices about how to engage in marronnage varied depending on the period and place in which one lived, and where plantations were located in relation to urban centers or geographically desolate regions.

Repression or reaction from antagonists was one of the most significant contextual factors with which enslaved rebels had to contend. Repression constrains the number of available repertoire tactics by deterring people from taking action, incapacitating those who represent a threat to repressive agents, and utilizing forms of surveillance to gain information and disrupt action. Private agents like plantation owners

and personnel, colonial government agents like town councils and courts or members of the *maréchaussée* fugitive slave police, and royal authorities all participated in repression, albeit to varying degrees and using different tactics. Repressive actions toward the enslaved population and potential maroons at times involved “channeling” or making offers to dissuade or encourage certain types of behavior, such as financially incentivizing the capture of runaways and major maroon leaders; but repression was mostly coercive, involving acts of violence and brutality that oftentimes occurred in public (Earl 2003, 2006, 2011). French colonial authorities were particularly creative in their methods of torture. While the popularity of public execution was declining in mainland France (Foucault 1977), in the colonies it served not only to punish overt resistance but was also a symbolic deterrent to prevent others from absconding and disrupting labor productivity. Some maroons were sentenced to the breaking wheel, a gruesome torture apparatus that disemboweled its victims and simultaneously broke all of their bones. These executions also gave maroon band leaders notoriety within slave communities, elevating them to the status of local heroes whose deaths were not only mourned but would have been revered based on Africa-inspired cosmologies. Maroon leaders like Noël Barochin commanded armed bands, and at times enslaved people, who re-grouped in response to repression and to avenge their fallen comrades.

Repertoire tactics like marronnage also shifted according to economic, political, and environmental trends. These macro-level trends included transAtlantic slave trade patterns that show the growth of the enslaved population due to the influx of newly arrived Africans to labor in the expanding sugar and coffee industries; environmental factors like natural disasters, floods, and dry seasons; and political factors like inter-imperial warfare, or royal declarations that attempted to ameliorate social conditions for enslaved people. Repertoires and mobilization more broadly are particularly efficacious when regimes experience periods of economic or political crisis (Skocpol 1979; Goldstone 1991; Tilly 2006), such as, for example, Atlantic world conflicts between the French, Spanish, and English that created economic strain and food shortages in Saint-Domingue. These external factors provided moments of opportunity for maroons to flee without fear of retribution from an already weakened state. While enslaved people did not escape frequently during periods of worsened food insecurity, armed maroon band activity appears to have heightened. However, enslaved people took advantage of amelioration policies to advocate for better conditions on plantations, participating, for

example, in marronnage as a form of labor strike. As Julius Scott ([1986] 2018) has argued, enslaved people were conscious of, and helped propel forward, socio-political events within the Atlantic World that contributed to new definitions of freedom, citizenship, and liberty.

Enslaved people's awareness of the changing economic, political, environmental, and social landscape was not limited to events occurring within Saint-Domingue. Knowledge of North American, Caribbean, and South American maroon communities and rebellions would have spread to Saint-Domingue through increased inter-imperial slave trading, sailors, and the press (Scott [1986] 2018), perhaps influencing and validating the long-standing tradition of marronnage as an appropriate repertoire of contention tactic. This shared geo-political consciousness lent itself to forming effective repertoire tactics through the identity-work of social ties, such as those explored in Chapter 4, which are the organizational forms that constitute everyday life and produce collective action (Tilly 2006: 42). The exchange of knowledge, information, and ideas not only flowed between black people internationally, but we can also speculate that there was a local "common wind" of liberatory notions circulating among the enslaved and maroons through their secret interactions, practices of naming landscapes after famed maroons like Plymouth and Polydor, or even rumor and second-hand storytelling. Maroons themselves circulated across plantations when they were captured, jailed, and sold to a new owner, taking with them first-hand experiential knowledge of marronnage. The sale of rebellious bondspeople to new plantations generated a local "common wind" that helped facilitate more connections between runaways, plantation slaves and small-scale uprisings, which occurred increasingly before the Haitian Revolution began.

REPRESSION IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

By the very end of the seventeenth century, just after the formal commencement of French rule in Saint-Domingue, settlements such as the Maniel maroon community continued to form in the Baoruco mountains of the island's south-central section. Some of these maroons may have descended from, or were inspired by, the first waves of maroons who fled from and fought against the Spanish in the sixteenth century. Spain's abandonment of the island (in part a capitulation to ongoing insurrections) in search of silver elsewhere left behind a backwater colony where a growing population of free blacks – descendants of maroons and those who were emancipated – became the majority who raised cattle and

farmed. The French seized on the loosening of Spanish colonial control of the island and quickly organized the local bureaucracy to outfit the landscape for sugar, cacao, and indigo production, which meant forcibly clearing the land of maroons who either remained from the Spanish period or escaped after having disembarked from French slave trading ships. Small slave rebellions, as well as large-scale and loosely organized settlements of self-liberated women, men, and children, were a constant presence in Saint-Domingue in the early eighteenth century. These communities depended on access to food, clothing, work tools, and weaponry to survive, none of which were easily obtained. Maroons gathered in the woods and selected leaders from among themselves. While at large, they robbed travelers, found food at various plantations, and hid in the quarters of other enslaved people still on plantations.² Armed, self-liberated bands often attacked nearby towns or plantations to gather needed resources. These raids were reported as “disturbances,” to which several iterations of colonial constabularies – usually comprised of free men of color – were galvanized to respond. With the founding of the *maréchaussée* fugitive slave police, the colonial state expanded in the 1720s and 1730s in order to repress black uprisings and maintain the labor force within the rapidly growing sugar industry.

Though Saint-Domingue and other slave societies were known for their deadly material conditions, most repression research focuses on democratic or authoritarian regimes rather than colonial settings, or the ways repression functions as a tool of racial capitalism. However, portions of Jennifer Earl’s (2003) typology categorizes repressive actors and the types and nature of repressive actions and are broad enough to help clarify the current case (Table 7.2). State agents loosely connected to national political elites (Saint-Domingue’s colonial regime) or private agents (plantation personnel) generally enacted repression in two forms: as coercion, involving “shows and/or uses of force and other forms of standard police and military action . . . e.g. intimidation and direct violence,” and “channeling,” which included indirect attempts to deter protests (Earl 2003: 48). Royal authorities, colonial agents, and enslavers sanctioned and enacted repression, relying almost exclusively on highly visible acts of coercion in the form of “hunting” maroons, public executions and other acts of violence, and incarceration. Maroon leaders’ militaristic abilities, bolstered by the influx of enslaved soldiers and war captives in the wake of West and West Central African conflicts, stoked fears of potential widespread rebellion and prompted harsh punishments toward maroons and their collaborators. Such repression can have varied

TABLE 7.2. *Repression against marronnage*

Repressive actors	Coercion	Channeling
State agents tightly connected to elites: <i>royal authorities</i>	Public executions; Financing coercion by subsidizing <i>maréchaussée</i> “chases” and offering	1784 amelioration policy; restricting punishments for marronnage
State agents loosely connected to elites: <i>colonial regime</i>	monetary bounties for maroons; incarceration and forced chain gang labor	Manumitting enslaved cooperators; restricting enslaved people’s movements and activities; using print media as maroon surveillance
Private agents: <i>plantation personnel</i>	Killings, beatings, torture	

impact on collective action: repression hampers mobilization in some cases or inspires mobilization in others. However, scholarship on repression shows that insurgent actions, especially those considered more threatening, are almost always met with heightened repression (Earl 2003; Davenport 2005; Earl 2011). These insights suggest that some form of repression indeed followed threats of black insurgency, which is instructive in the absence of archival data that could reveal the inner workings of armed maroon bands who left behind no records of their own. Repressive actions against maroons, which often used public funds, tell us that these rebels indeed existed and were considered a valid threat to the social order.

Coercion

To purge lands of maroons in the south and central plain at the beginning of the eighteenth century, troops under the command of Saint-Domingue’s governor Galliffet responded to various reports of runaways. Maroons were known to have elected leaders from within their groups and collaborated with enslaved people who fed them information on how to organize plantation raids for food and other resources. In June 1700, a letter was sent to Brach d’Elbos complaining that the number of runaways that resided in the mountains was still considerable, despite efforts to hunt them – indeed, houses and crops belonging to approximately 50 maroons were found in the countryside surrounding Léogâne. Then, in August,

other complaints from Petit Goâve stated that runaways were escaping to the mountains in dyads and triads, then eventually in larger groups. A planter in Nippes claimed to have lost ten slaves and only recaptured three; five out of seven slaves slipped away from a plantation manager named Castera; and an official named Bricot lamented that six to eight people fled from his property. For the next two years, Galliffet continued to pursue runaways in the Baoruco mountains, at Jacmel, and at Cayes de Jacmel, but had little success extracting them from the caverns, caves, and tunnels. Later, in 1703, four blacks ran away from a Galliffet plantation, prompting him to report their escape. In the west, Galliffet and a crew of 15 men spent over two months in the woods – at times going for days without water – pursuing a runaway band. On the expedition, Galliffet destroyed the maroons' food resources and plantations; he killed three fugitives and captured eleven, while 30 others escaped.³

Defections from plantations and plots to overthrow enslavers further inflamed efforts to repress rebellion and to punish maroons. For example, in 1717 the Council of Le Cap issued a bounty for a runaway from Port-de-Paix named Joseph, who was accused of stealing, attempting to form a rebel band, and conspiring to kill his owners.⁴ Reports of a large assembly of nearly 1,000 gathered in Ouanaminthe and Cul-de-Sac, and 600–700 heavily armed women and men living at the Montagnes Noires northeast of Port-au-Prince, prompted the formation of the *maréchaussée* fugitive slave police force in March 1721 in order to chase maroons and other rebels.⁵ Mass desertions of enslaved people were becoming more and more common, and, in July 1721, colonists expressed their fears of financial ruin in the event of awaking to hundreds of laborers having escaped overnight.⁶ These fears may not have been unfounded, as three months later the court of Le Cap condemned twenty-one people for organizing a revolt at Saint-Louis, charging five of the conspirators with being armed. The others had taken arms with them to desert to Santo Domingo. The court identified Alexandre, César, Bozat, Jasmin, Francœur, Louis, Marion, and Thérèse as the major conspirators of the rebellion. Colonial officials executed Alexandre and César – the primary leaders – by strangulation, and then decapitated them and displayed their heads at their owner's plantation as an example to others. They also forced Bozat, Jasmin, Francœur, Louis, Marion, and Thérèse to watch Alexandre and César's execution before sending them back to the Saint-Louis prison, where, on their first day, prison officials flogged then branded them with a hot iron in the shape of the fleur-de-lys to prevent them from escaping again.⁷

Enslaved people who managed to repeatedly escape their owners were seen as particularly threatening, such as a runaway named Claude, who colonial officials imprisoned in Léogâne in September 1724 for repeated marronnage.⁸ Other maroons who remained at-large and accumulated followers became infamous in their neighboring communities, making them targets. One notable figure in this regard was Colas Jambes Coupées, who officials captured and executed in 1723 at Bois-de-Lance, between Grande Rivière and Limonade. For four to five years, Colas was known for attacking whites throughout Bois-de-Lance and Morne à Mantègre in Limonade, the home base of a known runaway settlement. The courts of Le Cap deemed him the “chief of the cabales,” or conspirators, who was

known for his marronnage to the Spanish, seducing and carrying off other slaves; leader of an armed band, highway robber in broad daylight as well as at night . . . attacking even whites; having several intelligences and secret correspondences to abolish the Colonies; instigator or accomplice in the gangs of César, Jupiter, Louis, and Chéri, all of whom were punished with extreme torture and death; accused, furthermore, of sorcery and magic for having, a number of times, escaped from irons and prisons, and having poisoned several Negroes. And since all his crimes and his life are known all over the area, and by everyone in the most minute detail . . .⁹

From the above passage, it seems possible that Colas collaborated with the same César and Louis who were part of the 1721 conspiracy and later escaped the Saint-Louis prison. Colas' capture was not without resistance, as the newly formed free colored corps refused to pursue him.¹⁰ His group is another example of a submerged network with plans to overthrow the social order of enslavement using poison and serves as an interesting predecessor to Mackandal, who is often thought of as the first runaway leader who also was a ritualist (see Chapter 3).¹¹

In response to the rash of maroon activity, the French royal government supported and institutionalized the repressive actions of enslavers and colonial officials to strengthen local efforts in the central plain and the south. The colonial state expanded by order of the king, who, in 1722, appointed Jean-Baptiste Duclos, Sorel, and Montholon as lieutenants of Petit-Goâve specifically to fight against marronnage.¹² The royal and colonial governments aligned in a coercive measure to assign chiefs to lead new branches of the *maréchaussée* to pursue maroons, especially in the south. On June 7, 1726, maroons in Grand Goâve had caused enough disorder, through killing and thievery the previous February, to warrant a request for the *maréchaussée* to disperse them.¹³ In 1728, officers at

Jacmel were sent into the Baoruco mountains, where they captured 46 runaways; then in 1730, they caught 33. Authorities sentenced this group to the chain gang. This band was particularly mobile, using horses to sack plantations in Saint-Domingue and toward the southern coasts. Along the way, they recruited other runaways by offering to give asylum to those who wanted to join.¹⁴ Areas of the Grand Anse southern peninsula, such as Nippes, had been a stronghold for marronnage since a group of runaways fled there in 1681, because it was sparsely populated and surrounded by mountains and small patches of forest.¹⁵ Plymouth was the leader of a band of runaways from Nippes who destroyed portions of Grand Anse. *Mulâtre* soldiers captured 30 of his followers, and killed several others, including Plymouth himself in 1730. After his capture, a section of Grand Anse became widely referred to as Plymouth in memory of the maroon.¹⁶ The *maréchaussée* were re-established in January 1733 to attack the runaway communities who lived in the mountains, and, in October 1733, a fugitive police force, composed of ten men under the leadership of Fayet and Duclos, captured 32 of the many runaways who had taken refuge in the southern quarter of Nippes.¹⁷

While the royal government seemingly supported the colonial regime by appointing new personnel to lead the charge against marronnage, the crown at times seemed to undermine those efforts by withholding funds to compensate for losses incurred during maroon chases. On September 30, 1726, the king cancelled a declaration of Petite-Goâve's Conseil Superieur from the previous May, which promised a reward of 300 *livres* for the head of each runaway and the freedom of any enslaved person who helped with chasing the fugitives.¹⁸ On the other hand, offering a financial bounty became a measure used to solicit the help of private actors in capturing well-known and deeply feared maroons, such as Polydor. Five white workers from the Carbon plantation, whom the Conseil du Cap later compensated with 1,000 *livres*, found Polydor and mostly destroyed his band in 1734 after he and another runaway named Joseph led several incursions in the northern Trou district. Trou, like Fort Dauphin, was a vulnerable area due to its proximity to the Spanish border.¹⁹ Polydor's capture was a challenge, and was in part facilitated by an enslaved man named Laurent *dit* Cezar, whom administrators rewarded with his freedom on June 28, 1734.²⁰ Well after his capture, authorities and the enslaved alike remembered Polydor's exploits – the death toll (presumably of whites) and robbery of plantations – by naming a savanna after him.²¹ Polydor and his considerable following were deemed such a menace to the colony that authorities at Le Cap celebrated François

Narp, a planter and militia captain of Le Cap who fought and captured Polydor, as a hero by granting his children an honor in his name some 40 years after the revolt.²² Three years after Polydor, another leader named Chocolat emerged in Limonade. He was described as more skillful and bold than Polydor, plundering white planters' lands for 12 years.²³ In February 1735, the Conseil du Cap reimbursed a group of private actors responsible for chasing, capturing, and killing three more unnamed rebel leaders.²⁴

After Polydor was captured, the colonial state financially incentivized maroon repression, adding a third layer to the colonial state's commodification of black people – first their initial capture and enslavement, second their labor value, and third their surveillance and re-capture – to preserve them as property. Racial dynamics shaped repression: free people of color were afforded an avenue for employment and status at the expense of enslaved blacks; and though the freemen were co-opted, they were simultaneously repressed in other ways. For example, a 1705 ordinance threatened to return to slavery any free person of color who helped or traded with fugitives.²⁵ The *maréchaussée* fugitive slave police were predominantly composed of free people of color, whose service provided them access to social network ties that aided socio-economic mobility; they, and plantation owners, were the primary financial beneficiaries of maroon “hunting.” In 1739, the *maréchaussée* were re-organized and paid extra for any maroon they could capture in rural places rather than cities (see Table 7.2). Remote places like Dondon, Borgne, or Plaisance demanded riskier expeditions, and thus the colonial regime paid *maréchaussée* members 48 *livres* for their work there. They paid 100 *livres* to those who engaged in challenging chases or joined brigades with training in mountain chases to capture a runaway. Officials later expanded the geographic area in which this 100-*livre* bounty applied to include the island of Tortuga, just north of the coast of Port-de-Paix.²⁶ Officials recognized that maroon chases in these areas were more dangerous because they were strongholds of runaway communities and thus rewarded private actors to scale. The institutionalization of the *maréchaussée* as a coercive deterrent to escape was accompanied by violent measures to entrench the domination of enslavement and prevent marronnage altogether. As early as March 1726, the court of Léogâne decided that the punishment for a first offense of repeated marronnage was to cut the maroon's ears off, and to brand her or him with the fleur-de-lys.²⁷ This policy expanded to other parts of the colony in March 1741, when facial branding and sentencing to chain gangs replaced the

TABLE 7.3. *Maréchaussée pay scale by location*

Jurisdiction	Parish	<i>Maréchaussée</i> pay
Cap Français jurisdiction	the city of Cap Français	6 <i>livres</i>
	in the Mornes and Balieue of Cap	12 <i>livres</i>
	Petite-Anse, Quartier Morin and Plaine du Nord	15 <i>livres</i>
	Limonade and Acul	18 <i>livres</i>
	Limbé, Grande-Rivière, the Sainte-Suzanne dependency of Limonade	21 <i>livres</i>
	Port-Margot and Dondon	30 <i>livres</i>
	Quartier Vazeux, dependence of Dondon	48 <i>livres</i>
Fort-Dauphin	the city of Fort Dauphin	6 <i>livres</i>
	the quartier Dauphin	12 <i>livres</i>
	Terrier-Rouge and Ouanaminthe	18 <i>livres</i>
	Trou	21 <i>livres</i>
	quartiers of Ouanaminthe, Trou de Jean-de-Nantes, Capotille and others	36 <i>livres</i>
Port-de-Paix	the city of Port-de-Paix	6 <i>livres</i>
	quartier of Port-de-Paix	12 <i>livres</i>
	quartier of Saint-Louis near the point of Icaque and Bas de Saint-Anne	18 <i>livres</i>
	between the point of Icaque and Borgne	48 <i>livres</i>
	Jean-Rabel and Gros-Morne	30 <i>livres</i>
	Pilatte and Plaisance	48 <i>livres</i>

death penalty as punishments for repeat runaways. The new punishment regulations reflected the needs of a growing sugar economy that could make more effective use of captured runaways than those who had been sentenced to death.²⁸

Sugar prices doubled between 1730 and 1740 and tripled by 1750, yet prices for enslaved people grew much more slowly, meaning that the actual life values of enslaved people was rapidly decreasing during this time (see Chapter 2).²⁹ But, the demands of sugar production required a labor force that was alive – rather than dead after being executed as maroons – and healthy enough to work long hours on little nourishment. Still, conditions for Saint-Domingue's enslaved population and maroons remained poor, and even worsened with the expansion of the coffee market. As coffee cultivation expanded to the mountains surrounding the urban plains of Cap Français and Port-au-Prince and the *maréchaussée's* reach grew, living in marronnage became a more difficult

endeavor. The expansion of plantations toward the colony's border zones and areas surrounding the Cul-de-Sac plain ignited several conflicts between settlers and the runaways who had staked claim to those lands. Near Dondon, in Port-Margot, the Council of Le Cap compensated a man named Ancel with 1,000 *livres* after he was crippled during a maroon chase.³⁰ The *maréchaussée* provost attacked 22 maroons in 1740 at Mirebalais, killing seven, arresting 14, and failing to capture one – all had been born in the forest, attesting to the ongoing presence of maroons possibly from before French colonial rule. The 14 who survived the attack stated that there were still 23 others who had escaped. They appeared later in 1742 at Anses-a-Pitre of Cayes de Jacmel and in 1746 in Jacmel; and 12 maroons were captured again in Jacmel in 1757.³¹ Tensions between enslaved people and cruel enslavers boiled over in 1744, when 66 bondspeople fled a Cul-de-Sac plain plantation in protest, demanding the removal of an overseer who later killed an pregnant woman. After her murder, the maroon group returned to the plantation and kidnapped and killed the overseer. Though they were condemned to death, the governor of Saint-Domingue advocated on their behalf, stating that the overseer's brutal practices justified the maroons' actions.³² A royal decree seemed to have supported the governor's decision by issuing a ban on using public monies to reimburse planters for the death of maroons or other enslaved people sentenced to execution for any reason.³³ While violent coercion was still used, the expansion of the sugar and coffee economies was accompanied by the increased use of channeling repression methods to prevent indiscriminate killings of enslaved people and maroons.

Channeling

Violent repression of maroons and other rebels was costly: the royal and colonial governments spent a significant sum of money sponsoring the *maréchaussée* and reimbursing enslavers for dead or injured runaways, and enslavers themselves lost the monetary value associated with the fugitive and their surplus value from labor. As the sugar and coffee economies expanded, colonists implemented new measures to suppress marronnage in less violent ways. Though violent, coercive repression undoubtedly continued, rather than rely singularly on brutality, Saint-Domingue introduced forms of "channeling," which "involves more indirect repression, which is meant to affect the forms of protest available, the timing of protests, and/or flows to resources of movements" (Earl 2003: 48). To prevent or restrict marronnage, limits were placed on the

types of punishments given to runaways, enslaved people who cooperated with maroon chases were offered manumission, ordinances were passed to restrict enslaved people's movements and activities, and print media were used as maroon surveillance.

The François Mackandal trial resulted in an April 1758 ruling of the Council of Cap Français that not only targeted Africa-inspired ritual practice but also attempted to limit slaves' everyday movements in order to prevent marronnage. The articles of the ruling banned enslaved people from carrying any offensive weapons except for when they participated in a maroon chase with the permission of their owners. The ruling also prohibited the enslaved from carrying iron sticks on roads in the cities or parish towns and mandated that they had to have their owner's written permission to ride horses or mules. Neither could free people of color carry swords, machetes, or sabers unless they were members of the military or the *maréchaussée*. They also risked losing their freedom for harboring runaways, and after a shoot-out between maroons and the *maréchaussée* in 1767, free people of color were prohibited from purchasing arms and gunpowder in order to prevent any possible further collaboration with the rebels.³⁴ The ordinance may have been effective at reducing runaways' ability to obtain weaponry and remain at large for longer periods of time (see Chapter 5). The king of France also gave colonial planters permission to commute death sentences for fugitives in September of 1763, offering cheek branding or perpetual chaining as alternative methods of punishment.³⁵ While the king suggested that these lesser punishments would "conserve" the enslaved workforce, planters rarely adhered to regulations from above and usually dismissed the king's suggestions. Yet, Africans may have perceived these changes as incentive to escape without fear of deadly consequences.

To further stem the flow of runaways, Saint-Domingue and slave societies throughout the Americas used newly developing print media to publish runaway slave advertisements and parish jail lists, which were among the earliest forms of surveillance technology that continue to inform racialized techniques of social control (Browne 2015). On February 8, 1764, the Intendant of Le Cap decided that *La Gazette de Saint Domingue* would begin to include lists of captive runaways by parish jail. These lists included the name, nation, brand, and age of each runaway, and their respective owners to be subsequently contacted.³⁶ The lists of runaways captured and jailed also provide some insight into the number of people in flight and their destinations. A sample of Saint-Domingue's two newspapers, *La Gazette* and *Avis divers et Affiches américaines*, shows 371 runaways from February to August 1764.

Two hundred and five were found in the jail of Le Cap, and 91 came from Fort Dauphin because of its proximity to the Spanish border. Other common destinations were the area surrounding Saint Marc, particularly the frontier behind the mountains, and Port-au-Prince.³⁷

Royal and colonial authorities aimed to repress marronnage through media and policing, and economically benefitted from criminalizing, capturing, and imprisoning maroons. If jailed runaways were not claimed by owners who could show evidence of ownership, the maroons were then sentenced to work on public chain gangs in either Le Cap, Port-au-Prince, or Cayes de Saint Louis. This created both a free source of labor for the state to complete public works projects, such as building galleys, and a means to earn extra revenue by fining negligent owners. Owners who came to reclaim runaways had to repay the jail for providing a month's worth of food. After a month, if a fugitive was still unclaimed, they would be re-sold as "damaged" in the town centers.³⁸ Later, in November 1767, the king issued an ordinance overturning a previous colonial ruling so that, rather than selling captives after one month, unclaimed runaways would be housed in jail for three months before they were sold, allowing a larger window of time for jailers to expropriate labor from the prisoners.³⁹ These measures may also have subsidized local planters, since Saint-Domingue's economy suffered during the Seven Years War. The state, rather than the planters themselves, was absorbing the costs of housing, feeding, and providing care, albeit minimal, to enslaved people so they could perform chain gang construction labor. Once the coffee industry expanded and Saint-Domingue's post-war economy rebounded, the Council of Cap officially released the control of maroon chases and costs associated with deaths of runaways to individual jurisdictions on March 20, 1773. This allowed local parishes to manage the policing of marronnage and to respond to disturbances.⁴⁰

As the policing of runaways became more pronounced at the local level, it seems that enslavers had become reliant on local jails to rid their plantations of rebels. In response, the court of Le Cap made a ruling in July 1774 that prisons would no longer incorporate enslaved people into chain gangs without confirmation from slave owners. Owners were then charged 120 *livres* for an enslaved person who was on the chain gang without their owner's authorization. In 1780, planters were sending sick bondspeople to prison, not as discipline for marronnage but to avoid healthcare-related expenditure. Courts decided in May that any new entry to the chain gang had to receive a clean bill of health and readiness for work by a medical examiner.⁴¹ While this measure aimed to keep

excessive numbers of enslaved people who were not runaways out of jails and chain gangs, it did not have any measurable impact on marronnage overall. However, the measure may have contributed to the re-cycling of captured runaways into the plantation system rather than their isolation in jail. It was common practice for fugitives to be returned to their plantation of origin, or to a new plantation, taking with them their knowledge, skills, and past experiences of forging a path to freedom. This local “common wind” will be explored further below.

MAROON INSURGENCY AGAINST REPRESSION

The 1770s and 1780s saw an increase in the coercive repression of armed maroon bands in response to what must have been an increase in their activities. While the colonial regime monetized the capture of runaway slaves, perhaps no other entity profited more from efforts to repress marronnage than those who had the most contact with fugitive rebels – and perhaps the most insight about them – such as members of the *maréchaussée*. Bernard Olivier du Bourgneuf, a planter and former provost of the *maréchaussée*, wrote a memo in 1770 to the naval department on the topic of marronnage. Du Bourgneuf boasted of his experience of regularly hunting fugitives and his ability to force runaways back to their owners within six months. Per his past experiences with robberies and incursions by maroons near Fort Dauphin, du Bourgneuf estimated that there were approximately 80,000 runaways in different parts of the colony. He assessed that the disparate *maréchaussée* troops were poorly organized, and their respective provosts had no real understanding of the complexities of the colony. As such, du Bourgneuf suggested the appointment of an inspector – presumably referring to himself – to monitor all the *maréchaussée*, who would then be better equipped to restore tranquility to the colony.⁴² While Du Bourgneuf’s estimate of 80,000 fugitives in the colony was most likely an exaggeration aimed at creating a stream of revenue for himself, there were indeed attacks on plantations by maroons at Fort Dauphin, a popular runaway destination (Table 6.1), during the 1770s and 1780s.

Writing in October 1791, Claude Milscent, a planter, former *maréchaussée* lieutenant, and later an advocate for the rights of free people of color and slavery abolitionist, described his first-hand experiences with and knowledge of the history of marronnage in Saint-Domingue.⁴³ One of his first militia expeditions was at the Montagnes Noires, outside of Port-au-Prince, where a band of nearly 100 runaways

had established a base and were stealing food from frontier plantations. Maroons had occupied this mountain since the early eighteenth century, when Père Labat claimed 700 armed runaways lived there. Milscent recounted that the rebels put up a vigorous resistance during the confrontation, but the *maréchaussée* killed their leader, Toussaint, in the conflict and injured or captured several others, who colonial officials later beheaded. After dispersing this group and returning survivors to their owners in 1774, officials sent Milscent into the rural areas surrounding Cap Français: Fort Dauphin, Ecrevisse in Trou, and Valière. Fort Dauphin and Trou were among the most popular runaway destinations; 4.37 percent and 4.03 percent of absconders were suspected of escaping to the two parishes (Table 6.1). There, Milscent was to chase three rebel bands led by Noël Barochin, Thélémaque Canga, and Bœuf. These groups operated separately, but collaborated when one of them was under attack, inciting fear of revolt in the border towns.⁴⁴ Milscent's appointment in the region was likely a response to planters' complaints, including a letter dated November 21, 1774, from the minister of Valière petitioning for an organized pursuit of runaways to "destroy the black marrons" and to "stop the progress of marronnage." The writer suggested appointing a Provost General over all the parishes who would only answer to the colony governor specifically relating to the chase, capture, and destruction of marronnage. The governor could then request that the king provide an order to put together a *maréchaussée* of free blacks and *mulâtres* to take the chase into the mountains. It was also suggested that chain gangs should be formed as public deterrents to other potential runaways.⁴⁵ These measures had already been in place for some time, but they were ineffective at keeping people from escaping plantations then returning to pillage them.

Another coercive tactic to repress rebel maroons was to offer a bounty on the heads of leaders, such as the case of Laurent *dit* Cezar, who was emancipated for helping capture the maroon Polydor.⁴⁶ In March 1775, a price was set for the capture of Noël, formerly belonging to Barochin of Terrier Rouge, who was accused of disorder and robbery in Fort Dauphin. He had assembled a considerable number of bondspople around him, including *commandeurs* from different plantation work gangs. Noël's network may have included Paul, a Spanish-speaking *commandeur* from the Narp plantation in Terrier Rouge, who fled in November 1775.⁴⁷ Noël exerted power and authority over the plantations of Fort Dauphin through the *commndeurs*, so enslaved people would have known his identity. He even managed to scare the

maréchaussée so much that they would not dare to approach him. Part of the declaration of Mr. Vincent, lieutenant of the king in Fort Dauphin, stated that he felt there was no other way to stop Noël and his band other than to offer a financial reward or freedom to enslaved laborers who would help the *maréchaussée*. Vincent insisted that danger was imminent, and that the entire parish of Fort Dauphin was afraid and in need of public safety since the procurer-general had retired. The court decided to provide funds from the colonial bank to offer 4,500 *livres* to a free person who could turn in Noël alive; 3,000 *livres* to someone who could bring his head and his brand so he could be accurately identified as belonging to Barochin; 1,000 *livres* to an enslaved person who could capture Noël alive; and 600 *livres* to a bondsperson who could bring his head and his brand. If an enslaved person captured Noël, an estimated value of the slave would be paid to the owner in compensation for their freedom.⁴⁸ The maximum reward of 4,500 *livres* was a hefty sum to pay, equivalent to price of some of the most valued enslaved men who were young, healthy, and had an artisanal trade.⁴⁹ The use of a bounty to capture maroon leaders apparently worked: Milscent recounted that a member of Noël's band betrayed him and cooperated with authorities to facilitate a *maréchaussée* soldier killing him.⁵⁰

Armed maroons in the northeastern corner of Saint-Domingue responded to repression by aligning themselves into a single unit. Milscent claimed that after Noël died, his followers merged with maroon leaders Canga and Bœuf, whose collective band grew to over 1,500 individuals. The two factions also grew more embittered and pillaged more plantations in retaliation. While some maroons were loosely organized groups of fugitives who struggled to survival in the woods, other marronnage bands relied on guerilla warfare skills inherited from African militarist cultures and long-term repertoire tactics learned over time in the colony. They armed themselves, built their camps behind fortified ditches, and worked in collaboration with enslaved people to strategically decide which plantations to attack and when.⁵¹ Under Saint-Domingue's governor, d'Ennery, several militia detachments pursued the rebels after they were reported to have plundered one plantation, but they quickly disappeared and re-appeared to plunder another.⁵² This description of maroon's offensive strategy is reminiscent of the West Central African fighting styles that befuddled French soldiers in the early days of the Haitian Revolution.⁵³ The stealth demonstrated by the rebels helped to create an illusion that they were ever-present and larger in number than they actually were. According to Milscent, whites near Fort Dauphin were

petrified of what they believed to be over 10,000 runaways in Canga and Bœuf's bands alone. While Milscent admits that this figure was exaggerated, as Bernard Bourgneuf's estimation also was, the potential scope of marronnage and black revolt was a consistent topic of conversation that invoked much fear in the colony.

In the early 1770s, marronnage was a major concern, at least according to planters and former military officials near Fort Dauphin, who were "terrorized" by bands like those headed up by Noël Barochin, Thélémaque Canga, and Bœuf. In response to these rebels, the mid- to late 1770s saw an increase of coercive and channeling repression against marronnage in the form of *maréchaussée* expansion. The *gens du couleur* and *affranchis* were increasingly viewed as key components of the ongoing struggle to rid the colony of marronnage. A 1775 ordinance was issued to stem marronnage by co-opting enslaved men who might possibly try to free themselves through their own means, and allowing planters to manumit enslaved men in exchange for service to the *maréchaussée*. One man who eventually became a supernumerary in the *maréchaussée* had been a maroon himself: Pierre escaped his owner, Jean-Baptiste Coutaux *dit* Herve – a free *mulâtre* in Port-au-Paix – in 1786, and found work in the fugitive slave police in Le Cap. When Herve tracked down Pierre, he intended to take him back to Port-au-Paix, but two free *mulâtres* in Le Cap offered to give Herve another young male slave and over 1,000 *livres* in exchange for Pierre's manumission. Pierre's experience highlights the type of social mobility that was accessible through free black military networks.⁵⁴ In cases of those who were less fortunate than Pierre, new participants in the *maréchaussée* found service to be a burden, since a condition of the provision was that a person was still technically enslaved until the end of their service.⁵⁵ For example, one freeman of color named Antoine was threatened with losing his freedom and being sent back to servitude for abandoning a maroon chase before its completion.⁵⁶ Despite some individuals viewing *maréchaussée* membership unfavorably, the expanded militarization to eradicate marronnage impacted runaways by providing more human resources to the fugitive police and by offering an alternative path to manumission for potential male rebels.⁵⁷ The expansion of the *maréchaussée* seems to have been an effective measure: data from *Les Affiches* advertisements show that the frequency of marronnage decreased from 514 runaways in 1775 to 426 in 1777, eventually reaching its lowest point of 290 runaways in 1779 (Figure 7.1).

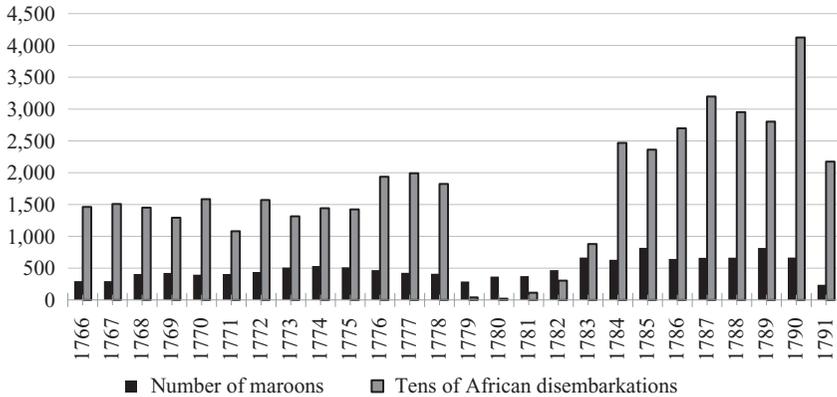


FIGURE 7.1. Frequency of runaways and tens of african disembarkations over time (N = 12,857)

Three years after former lieutenant Claude Milscent went to northeast Saint-Domingue and the *maréchaussée* killed Noël, Thélémaque Canga was finally captured. Milscent, along with 26 mixed-race and six white officers, located and confronted Canga's army of 300 rebels, whom Milscent again extolled for their brave defense. Canga's army injured three of Milscent's men during the conflict and one later died. Fatalities among the rebels were more numerous, perhaps because they fought with machetes rather than guns. Milscent's *mulâtres* killed 19 blacks, wounded and captured eight and chased away 23. Canga himself was shot in the head but somehow survived and escaped, only to be captured again. Few of the survivors made off again and Milscent returned nearly 80 to their owners.⁵⁸ On October 2, 1777, the Council of Cap Français announced that Thélémaque Canga and several survivors of his band had been captured, tried, and sentenced to death for destroying several plantations at Ecrevisses and Fond-bleus in Fort Dauphin, the same location where Noël had been active. Canga was charged with defending himself against a white man. His second in command, Isaac, was described as enslaved and accused of the same things; and the third, Pirrhus *dît* Candide, was also convicted of injuring a white person. The three were sentenced to being broken alive on the wheel until death and then having their heads placed on poles on the road from Fort Dauphin to Ecrevilles. Six other men and women were also to be hanged, flogged, and branded.⁵⁹ It is difficult to know when and from where these rebels escaped, but it is

possible that Thélémaque, as the leader, spent the longest time as a maroon. Though further evidence is needed to confirm Thélémaque's identity, *Les Affiches* advertisements may provide a hint: an advertisement appeared on August 29, 1768, announcing the escape of a Kongolese, Thélémaque, from M. Franciosi's plantation in Fort Dauphin.⁶⁰

Another request for a select few *mulâtres* and free blacks to organize a "maroon chase" was submitted in September 1778, claiming that many enslaved people from Limonade had escaped from the habitation Heritiers and were "devastating" the plantation community. There was concern that the runaways were armed with machetes and other sabres, or blunt-ended sticks, and would put up a resistance.⁶¹ In December 1778, in order to address the issue in Limonade, the *maréchaussée* were given license to arrest any enslaved person without a pass from their owner at the market, on plantations, or other public places.⁶² A response letter from the governor was sent to Limonade later in 1779, stating that at least one runaway was killed during a chase.⁶³ The maroon camp could have evaded capture again due to its proximity to mountainous cave systems. The Bois de Lance mountain chain in Limonade had been Colas Jambes Coupées' hideout for four to five years; and according to Moreau de Saint-Méry, these mountains continued to be a refuge for runaways.⁶⁴ Data from *Les Affiches* advertisements indicate that 3.36 percent of runaways whose destinations were known were headed to Limonade, which was just west of Trou. Another common runaway hiding place in the north was Grand Rivière, which harbored the third highest number of absconders after Fort Dauphin and Trou (Table 6.1).

Small-scale rebellion in the north continued, evidenced by an advertisement posted on January 18, 1780, describing a group of three escapees from the Rogery plantation of Morne Rouge: Blaise, Noelle, and Jean-François, all creoles. They met with Jean-Baptiste and Colas of the Delaye plantation and were reported to be causing disorder on several sugar plantations, and their owners requested that neighboring planters send *commandeurs* as reinforcements to help put down the rebels.⁶⁵ It is possible that Blaise, along with maroon band leaders Joseph Mabiala and Pierre, was later captured and sentenced in 1786 by the High Court of Cap Français to be broken alive and have their bodies exposed at La Fossette following the execution.⁶⁶ Fossette was a common meeting place for bondpeople to hold *calendas* and burials, so the public execution at this location would have served as a visible deterrent against rebellion.

Public executions were not the only danger to potential runaways; the *maréchaussée* often killed fugitives during a “hunt.” Planters sought compensation from the government for these deaths, since the fugitive could no longer be counted as a productive member of the enslaved workforce. For example, in February 1780 the heirs to the Butler properties filed a claim for 3,000 *livres* against the commander of the fugitive chase that killed one of their bondspeople named Achille. The case was revisited in 1782 and the family was reimbursed with 1,200 *livres*.⁶⁷ The same year, a colonist was whipped, branded, and sent to the galleys for unnecessarily slitting the throats of two runaways he had arrested.⁶⁸ The Bergondy brothers, planters at Fort Dauphin, reported several runaways from their property, for whom a chase was organized in 1781. The *maréchaussée* shot an enslaved woman named Zabeth to death during this chase, and her owners were repaid 1,200 *livres*.⁶⁹ In 1785, a *maréchaussée* officer killed a man named François, who was not running away; François’ owner demanded a repayment of 1,200 *livres* for the murder.⁷⁰

The *maréchaussée* hunts and public executions were only temporarily effective measures against marronnage, yet planters had few alternatives for eliminating rebellion. Another letter from Jacmel emerged in August 1780, suggesting it would be beneficial to work with the Spanish to eradicate marronnage.⁷¹ This request may not have been honored, since another letter later was sent to bring attention to the “ravages” being done by maroon bands at Cayes de Jacmel, Salle Trou, and Boynes in late 1781 and 1782.⁷² A hunt was organized in March 1781, but it was unsuccessful and the *maréchaussée* had to return to Anse-à-Pitre for more water. In 1781, planters resorted to hiring hunters that were not *maréchaussée*, perhaps indicating dissatisfaction with the specialized police force; they used a black man named Remy and paid him 1,200 *livres* per runaway he found.⁷³ Despite the use of cash rewards to assuage and co-opt the enslaved population, marronnage and rebellion remained an issue, though those decades also saw harsh weather conditions that either prompted or dissuaded enslaved people from committing marronnage. Over the course of the 1760s and 1770s, Saint-Domingue became an increasingly repressive society that relied on coercive violence and methods to channel insurrection in other directions. Combined with the rapidly growing enslaved population and the exploding production of sugar and coffee that exploited painstaking labor and wartime economic strain, Saint-Domingue was a powder keg awaiting ignition. Moreover, in the 1780s, policies to ameliorate the material conditions for the enslaved

and to lighten their punishments for insubordination, since they were more valuable as workers than dead, meant there was more room to rebel with less fear of retribution.

OPPORTUNITIES TO REBEL

Inter-Imperial Dynamics and the Environment

There was a flurry of activity among armed maroon bands in the mid-1770s and early 1780s, yet the frequency of marronnage reported in the advertisements declined during this same period. The cause for this seeming contradiction may not lie in repression, but with the environmental and economic difficulties the colony faced, which undoubtedly adversely impacted the enslaved population and their decisions about whether or not to escape. People adjust their repertoire tactics in response to the socio-economic, geopolitical, and environmental factors that make up their material conditions (McAdam [1982] 1999; Traugott 1995; Tilly 2006). Those who were participating in or who considered participating in marronnage as a repertoire tactic had to be aware of the conditions they faced in order to best avoid violent repression or death. Conversely, dire conditions may have incited already existing maroon bands to increase their raids on plantations for provisions. During these years, Saint-Domingue was a precarious regime (Boudreau 2005) that was vulnerable to inter-imperial conflict and natural disasters; this was opportunity ripe for maroon bands to take advantage. Moreover, the need to resort to violent repression in the face of maroon insurgency further signaled to the enslaved population the illegitimacy of white rule (Oliver 2008), which some protested by striking or opposing plantation personnel. Reports of fugitives increased between the years 1766 and 1791, though at a slower pace proportionate the growing enslaved population (Figure 7.1). The lowest frequency of marronnage occurred in the year 1779, when only 290 runaways were reported. The rate of marronnage increased most dramatically between 1779 and 1783, doubling from 290 to 666 yearly runaways. The frequency of marronnage continued to increase to its highest level of 820 and 817 runaways during the years 1785 and 1789, respectively. By 1791, only 238 runaways were reported, however this is likely due to the uprising in the north that ended the publication of *Les Affiches américaines*. The section that follows introduces social, economic, environmental, and Atlantic world political events, alongside repression at the local level, to contextualize micro-level

marronnage trends and highlight the ways in which black resistance shaped and was shaped by the geopolitics of the day.

Although some scholars have argued that hunger was a primary cause for marronnage, the number of runaways did not increase during the droughts in 1775 and 1776 that killed thousands of enslaved people.⁷⁴ Rather, the frequency of marronnage slightly decreased during those years and continued to do so in part because weakness and starvation prevented people from venturing into an even more precarious situation as a runaway (Figure 7.1). Cul-de-Sac officials issued an ordinance forcing planters to grow a certain number of bananas, manioc, or potatoes per slave to prevent further deaths. But food shortages arose when prices for provisions increased again in 1777 under the British blockade. In 1776, North American allies of France declared independence from Britain, and in February 1778, British naval ships anchored in Saint-Domingue's ports, blocking imports. When France signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, sugar prices dropped rapidly, which may have caused harsher work regimes on plantations in order to produce more and generate more revenue – even under conditions of famine and starvation.⁷⁵ Hunger and fatigue from being overworked in order to meet pre-blockade-level profits may have deterred all enslaved people from facing the uncertainty of life outside the plantation where food rations, however meager, were guaranteed. Additionally, the stark reduction of newly arrived Africans during the blockade contributed to the overall reduction of runaways. The British naval presence at Saint-Domingue's ports had a direct impact on French traders' abilities to transport more enslaved Africans to the colony, and those already in the colony would bear the weight of compensating for French losses of labor power and decreasing sugar prices. Between 1779 and 1782, less than ten French slave ships arrived at Saint-Domingue.⁷⁶ The frequency of marronnage was at its lowest in 1779 – 290 runaways reported – because continent-born Africans made up the largest proportion of runaways, as they dominated the enslaved population itself. The lack of incoming Africans forced people to forge relationships across linguistic and cultural boundaries as they sought refuge from bondage, evidenced by higher rates of heterogeneous group escapes during the blockade (Figure 4.1).

The British blockade on Saint-Domingue's ports during the North American War for Independence had a devastating impact on everyone in the colony. Food was scarce and expensive, exacerbating the malnutrition enslaved people already experienced. Extreme weather conditions, like the droughts of 1775 and 1776, also contributed to a lack of access to

locally grown foodstuffs. The dry seasons were followed by flooding four years later when the Artibonite River flooded on October 16–17, 1780, then a hurricane hit in November, sweeping away several plantations and destroying important crops.⁷⁷ Harsh living conditions in the colony kept enslaved people from venturing away from plantations, but those who had already successfully escaped faced an equally dire situation. Maroon bands increased their plantations attacks, in part as retaliation against the *maréchaussée* and to expropriate food, weapons, tools, and even women during the colony-wide, 18-month dry season and period of widespread malnutrition in 1779 and 1780.⁷⁸ Some individual maroons took the wartime strain as an opportunity to secure their own freedom through military service. In the early 1780s, several runaways attempted to join the ranks of Comte Charles d'Estaing, the former governor of Saint-Domingue and French naval officer who led the siege on Savannah, Georgia in September 1779 with troops of freemen of color including Henry Christophe and Andre Rigaud.⁷⁹ In late July 1781, Jean-Pierre, an 18-year-old creole man, was suspected of having taken refuge in the French king's ships at harbor after already having attempted to join d'Estaing's squadron in August 1779. Similarly, Silvain, a 19-year-old Kongolese man, and Michel, a 45-year-old captive from a Dutch colony, escaped their owner on July 25, 1781 wearing iron neck collars, and attempted to embark on the ships of Comte d'Estaing at Le Cap.⁸⁰ Finally, two *mulâtre* brothers, Jean and Jean-Baptiste Lefevre, escaped Port-au-Prince in July 1783 under the false pretense of having been freed by Comte d'Estaing after serving in the campaign in Savannah.⁸¹

After the North American War of Independence ended, African wars intensified – likely in part because French slave trading resumed to full swing by 1783. Between the years 1781–1785 and 1786–1790, the number of captives shipped to Saint-Domingue nearly tripled (Table 1.2). Conflicts between the Dahomey Kingdom and its neighbors persisted in the 1770s and 1780s, funneling losers on both sides into the slave trade. On the West Central African coasts, former soldiers in the Kingdom of Kongo civil wars of the 1780s also fed the French slave trade thousands of captives. These captives, as well as Africans from other regions, were transported to Saint-Domingue in record numbers, bringing with them cultural, religious, economic, and militaristic knowledge and skills.⁸² As the enslaved population swelled, the frequency of marronnage increased, reaching the highest rates in 1785 and 1789, 820 and 817 respectively (Figure 7.1). Runaways sought out life beyond plantation properties, forming organized settlements, and taking up arms to defend

those communities. Additionally, a French royal ordinance of 1784 may have further inspired maroon communities to take on characteristics that indicated organized tactical planning of independent living zones and revised labor practices.

Maroon plunder during wartime had some effect on royal policies. Rebellion, in addition to the food shortages, dry seasons, and flooding, prompted the king of France to impart an ordinance in December 1784 to improve the quality of enslavement in the French colonies. Part of the ordinance also aimed to sever ties between enslaved people and maroons who hid on plantations and joined “fêtes, assemblies, and dances,” implying that maroon agency had some effectiveness in altering the structural ordering of enslavement. Though enslavers largely ignored its requirements, the 1784 ordinance prevented planters from forcing slaves to work on Sundays and during fêtes, or Catholic holidays; it restricted punishments; and it provided enslaved people with the ability to legally denounce abuse by owners. Pregnant women and wet nurses were supposed to receive a midday break from work, and additional clothing was demanded for each enslaved person. Another provision aimed to prevent malnutrition and starvation, and to deter marronnage by urging owners to provide enslaved people with land plots for cultivation.⁸³

But these revised conditions of enslavement not only failed to prevent marronnage, they incentivized demands for better conditions and escape without fear of excessively harsh punishment. Enslaved people at the Foäche merchant house in Le Cap, and on other northern plantations, used marronnage to reclaim their time and labor to protest plantation personnel who were too harsh or whom they did not like. “All of the slaves of the Lombard plantation have marooned, claiming the decree allowed them to choose their manager,” bemoaned the wealthy Galliffet sugar plantation owner. Galliffet’s notes from 1785 and 1789 described several acts of insolence, insubordination, complaints, and marronnage on northern plantations such as the Chastenoy, Montaigne, Choiseuil, and Galliffet’s own La Gossette, as he railed: “the 1784 decree is fatal to discipline and causes insurrections in part of our province.”⁸⁴ The frequency of marronnage reached its peak in 1785 after the ordinance was issued, with 820 runaways reported in *Les Affiches américaines* (Figure 7.1). Runaways could appropriate food in their newly emerging gardens to trade and sell, and steal weapons and work tools to cultivate production on their isolated plots of land. As Chapter 8 will explain, self-contained maroon settlements emerged in the south, where established

maroon settlements pillaged neighboring plantations and outfitted abandoned plantations for crop production.

Still, other maroons did not wait for the 1784 ordinance before striking out on their own; and maroons remained active in the colony's central regions. In 1784, another proposal was put forward to eradicate maroons in and around Mirebalais, Port-au-Prince, Grand Bois, and Jacmel. This plan included the recruitment of 800 *gens du couleur* to be divided into 16 units.⁸⁵ Grand Bois was a section of Mirebalais formed by a series of bluffs, rivers, and hills, making it difficult to access from Saint-Domingue but easier to reach from Santo Domingo.⁸⁶ Additionally, there was proximity to runaways in the rural or mountainous areas in the south, such as the Montagnes Noires outside of Port-au-Prince. In the north in 1785, colonists reported that the maroons' audaciousness was increasing by the day, and they requested reinforcements to chase several maroons that were gathered at Limbé. Though the new governor claimed in September 1786 and August 1787 that marronnage overall was decreasing, rebel activities in Port Margot were reported at the end of 1786 and the number of maroons listed in *Les Affiches* remained relatively high in the latter years of the 1780s in comparison to the previous decade (Figure 7.1).⁸⁷ As late as 1789, there was a maroon group operating outside Le Cap led by François, who Lieutenant Milscent described as very intelligent and capable of the greatest feats. Milscent, who commanded forces against Noël Barochin and Thélémaque Canga, claimed to have captured 50 rebels and killed 20, including the leader François, after the maroons had killed several French and Spanish planters and plundered their dwellings.⁸⁸

A Local and International “Common Wind”

Political and environmental opportunities were not the only times enslaved people developed consciousness about the possibilities of employing marronnage as a repertoire tactic to seize and define freedom on their own terms. Julius Scott ([1986] 2018) has provided a framework for understanding the international “common wind” of circulating ideas, knowledge, information, and rumors; however, there also was a local common wind of stories, rumors, or even lore upon which enslaved people and maroons relied. These deeply cultural insights, social networks, and daily interactions constitute the field of action from which repertoires tactics develop (Tilly 2006). Runaway communities did not completely disappear due to encroaching deforestation for sugar and

coffee plantations, but became more creative in locating hiding spots. For example, Morne Bleu, a hill located east of Cavaillon, contained several caves where the maroon Pompey hid until he was arrested in 1747. The cave also held evidence of Taíno presence, noted by their ritual artifacts, supporting Rachel Beauvoir-Dominique's findings that cave systems provided shelter for Africans and Taínos to collaborate spiritually and in revolt.⁸⁹ An account from a December 1761 expedition exemplifies the creativity maroons used to protect their settlements, and simultaneously shows the nature of ongoing antagonism between them and the *maréchaussée*. When the *maréchaussée* encountered the maroons during the search, they were probably perplexed and irritated when the fugitives began to dance as a means of taunting their enemies. When the *maréchaussée* launched to attack, however, many of them fell into a large ditch that had been dug and filled with pine wood stakes and liana plants. As I argued in Chapter 6, familiarity with the landscape was a key component of enslaved people's cultural knowledge, and maroons were adept at using their surroundings and flora and fauna to protect their chosen living spaces. Fourteen of the *maréchaussée* were left maimed after falling into the ditch; however, the maroons were not without casualties and many of them were also killed.⁹⁰

Newly arrived Africans may have encountered these well-hidden maroons and remaining indigenous peoples, or heard stories of them from those who were more knowledgeable about the landscape and the history of maroon presence in the mountains. For example, after François Mackandal was brought to Saint-Domingue in the 1730s where he lived as a fugitive for 18 years, he would have learned about Colas Jambes Coupée, Polydor, Chocolat, and other rebels in the north through word of mouth. Additionally, some locations bore the name of fugitive communities, such as Piton des Nègres, Piton des Flambeaux, Piton des Tenebres, Crete a Congo, Fond des Nègres, and the area named after Polydor. Moreau de Saint-Méry also confirmed that there were free blacks living in Acul de Samedi in Valière.⁹¹ Some of these remote locations appear in *Les Affiches* advertisements as runaway's locations of escape or their suspected destinations. Therefore, collective memory of maroon rebels was part of enslaved people's consciousness, and likely influenced their own desires for freedom and inspired the continuation of marronnage as a repertoire tactic.

It is logical to surmise that enslaved people were just as preoccupied with marronnage as their owners; in fact, they were probably *more* knowledgeable about maroon leaders and their exploits (Scott [1986] 2018).

Rather than retreat to the mountains, some fugitives camped out at nearby plantations where friends, family members, or lovers protected them. From *Les Affiches* advertisements, 153 runaways sought out familiar plantations, allowing them to be in marronnage for an average of 15.68 weeks (Tables 4.10 and 5.6). Alternatively, former members of rebel bands were returned to their respective plantations.⁹² Additionally, captured and jailed runaways sometimes did not know or divulge the names of their owners, therefore they remained in jail unclaimed. In such cases, they were advertised in newspapers like *Gazette de Saint Domingue*, *Les Affiches américaines*, and the *Courrier Nationale de Saint Domingue* as “damaged” or abandoned, then re-sold to planters in the city centers – a convenient way for local jailers to generate revenue, since slave prices increased in the 1760s.⁹³ Fugitives who were captured and re-located to new plantations likely shared their experiences with bondspople, introducing them to successful and unsuccessful tactics for escape. This internal trade of rebellious enslaved people would have been just as important in raising collective consciousness about marronnage as the rumors about the armed conflicts occurring in the colony’s northeast corner. While individual members of the enslaved population at times took advantage of financial rewards offered to capture rebels, further research on the internal trade of rebels might suggest that mutual support and collusion among Africans and African descendants, enslaved and maroon, was more common than previously understood.

While planters seemed to have had no problem incorporating captured runaways into their workforces, they did worry about the negative influence of factors external to Saint-Domingue. A letter surfaced in 1775 framing marronnage as a pervasive problem that had the capacity to undo the colony. The letter identified several factors that contributed to the unchecked rule of maroons: (1) the Spanish, who provided a safe harbor for Saint-Domingue’s runaways and potentially politicized them against the French; (2) the dense, nearly impenetrable mountains into which the *maréchaussée* and other hunters attempted and often failed to pursue fugitives; (3) runaways’ propensity to reproduce while at large; and (4) their constant attacks on plantation. These issues exasperated planters who – judging by the number and tone of their letters – were desperate for reinforcements. The combination of these factors also led this writer to compare the problem to those of Jamaica and Surinam, suggesting imminent revolt if marronnage was not contained and eradicated.⁹⁴ Even in Martinique, a priest named Charles-François de Coutances cited the 80,000 maroons in Surinam, troubles in Jamaica,

and the “greatest danger” in Saint-Domingue six years earlier – during the Mackandal poisoning scare – as presenting a threat to the Lesser Antilles island.⁹⁵

It is telling that these writers cited two major Caribbean uprisings as legitimation for their fear of marronnage in Saint-Domingue, implying that runaways were inherently ripe for rebellious uprising especially during periods of international conflict like the Seven Years War. In Surinam, failed treaties with the Ndjukas, Saramakas, Matawais, and Boni maroons marked the beginning of a series of wars between them and the Dutch colonists.⁹⁶ Additionally, in 1763, there was a revolution in Berbice (present-day Guyana), directly neighboring Surinam, where Governor Coffij and Captain Accarra led a seven-month hostile takeover of the government by other Gold Coast and Kongolese Africans. Word spread about the Berbice uprising, perhaps from disaffected French mercenaries based in Surinam who fought with the Berbice rebels. Information circulating throughout the Caribbean via sailors, military men, and traders carried the news of rebellions in the Guianas and Jamaica to Saint-Domingue. Edward Long’s *History of Jamaica*, published in 1774, described the 1760 revolt in Jamaica as an island-wide attempt of Gold Coast Coromantee Africans to overthrow the colonial government.⁹⁷ Long’s account provided awareness of, and insight to, the Jamaican revolt, to which both colonial Europeans and Africans would have paid attention.⁹⁸

Knowledge of these events would not have been isolated to Saint-Domingue’s white planter population; in fact, bondspeople may have learned of the rebellions before their owners. Captives from English-, Spanish-, Portuguese-, and Dutch-speaking colonies were routinely brought to Saint-Domingue through legal and illicit intra-American trade (Tables 4.7 and 4.8; Scott [1986] 2018). For example, in 1781 a ship carrying 390 captives sailed from St. Thomas to Le Cap. One of the bondspeople on that ship was a 14-year-old boy known as Télémaque, sometimes called Denmark, who upon being sold in Saint-Domingue began feigning epileptic fits until his previous owner, Captain Joseph Vesey, was forced to take the boy back with him to Charleston, South Carolina. Forty-one years later, Denmark Vesey was a free man who was executed for organizing one of the largest slave conspiracies in North American history, which aimed to return to the free state of Haiti.⁹⁹ Just as Saint-Domingue and the Haitian Revolution directly influenced other Atlantic world rebellions, it follows that during the pre-revolution period, Dutch-speaking maroons in Saint-Domingue perhaps would have been

familiar with the Berbice and Surinam rebellions of the 1760s; African-Jamaicans and other English speakers probably knew about Queen Nanny's Maroon Wars, Tacky's Revolt, and the black Carib Wars on Saint Vincent island; and before the Haitian Revolution, African-Martiniquans probably knew of the 1789 revolt on the tiny French island. Conversations during Sunday markets, clandestine night-time gatherings in living quarters, and marronnage networks would have informed the local populace about goings on in nearby colonies, heightening their awareness of and strivings for liberation.¹⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

Despite, or perhaps because of, eighteenth-century capitalist development through the expansion of Saint-Domingue's sugar and coffee industries, maroon rebellion erupted at various levels of scale and intensity and persisted well into the revolutionary era. Some planters may have exaggerated the nature and scope of the presence of maroons; the extent of the damage from maroon raids on plantations remains unclear. Planters commonly requested compensation from the state for enslaved people whom the *maréchaussée* unjustifiably killed, but it does not appear that any planter asked to be reimbursed for damage to their property. Still, planters' fear of maroon attacks prompted increased militarization via the *maréchaussée*. There were no more than 300 *maréchaussée* soldiers throughout the colony, a seriously limited number compared to the enslaved population – and the maroon bands led by Noël Barochin, Thélémaque Canga, and Bœuf – meaning the *maréchaussée* were outnumbered.¹⁰¹ Therefore, the *maréchaussée* continually received funds to conduct “hunts” that at times resulted in casualties on both sides. The need for land – especially in previously unexploited areas where maroons resided – and for enslaved labor, required planters, the colonial state, and the royal government to rein in the “masterless” using various methods of repression. Repression was a critical factor that attempted, albeit at times unsuccessfully, to respond to the seemingly constant threat of marronnage and aimed to constrain its spread. The *maréchaussée* and other militias hunted maroons, and torturous public executions of prominent rebels temporarily deterred others from escaping. The 1770s and 1780s was a time of heightened aggression from maroon bands in Saint-Domingue's northeastern corner and the especially in the south. In the case of the Fort Dauphin maroons, repression inspired solidarity and further rebellion when the death of Noël Barochin at the hands of

Milscent's troops united Thélémaque Canga and Bœuf's bands. The militarized fugitive slave police had to contend with a massively growing African population whose survival and fighting skills were rooted in their continental experiences.

Rebels adapted to repression and their social, political, and environmental conditions, developed collective consciousness through their geopolitical awareness, and persisted in their attacks on plantations. *Longue durée* analysis of marronnage from the sixteenth century shows that rebels had a keen sense of geopolitics and adapted to or took advantage of political and economic cleavages. Marronnage can be considered a consistent repertoire tactic that, at the macro-level, was characterized by the exploitation of economic difficulties caused by international warfare, and the population growth of enslaved people in Saint-Domingue. Though African wars increased the numbers of captives to Saint-Domingue, European conflicts like Seven Years War and the North American War of Independence halted the slave trade and fostered political strife and the breaking down of Saint-Domingue's societal inner workings, which armed maroon bands exploited for their benefit with aggressive attacks on plantations. Conversely, enslaved people adapted to environmental circumstances like drought and food shortages by staying on plantations until blockades withdrew and everyday material conditions improved. They also forged inter-ethnic relationships in order to escape in heterogeneous maroon groups when their countrywomen and men were not accessible.

At the micro-level, social ties between maroons and the enslaved also played a significant role in cultivating consciousness. Examples such as Noël heading a network of *commandeurs* demonstrate that runaways used marronnage strategically to communicate with and recruit enslaved people, giving insight to the dynamics of leadership in the relationship between maroon bands and enslaved people. To that end, more research is also needed to track the circulation of "damaged" runaways from within the colony and those who were re-captured from Spanish Santo Domingo, who were sold to new plantations and who took with them their knowledge, experiences, and leadership skills as maroons.¹⁰² Enslaved people gained knowledge about successful and unsuccessful strategies for rebellion and marronnage from several sources: their African experiences; rumors of revolt in other Caribbean colonies; the legacies of well-known maroon leaders; and runaways who were captured and returned to plantations. This knowledge accumulated over time and proved to be particularly effective when rebels took advantage of

strain and breakdowns in social, economic, and political spheres. As the *gens du couleur* agitated for their liberties in the late eighteenth century, Africans increasingly took advantage of social, economic, and political crises to assert freedom on their own terms. Enslaved people's interrelationships and the spread of consciousness between urban and rural plantations was in part based on the increased forced migration and "urbanizing" of the slave population, which some scholars have observed are factors that can produce actors – such as the early revolutionists – who can organize contentious political action and gain access to legitimated channels of power (James [1938] 1989; Scott [1986] 2018; Goldstone 1991; Tilly 2006). For example, accounts of marronnage on the outskirts of Cap Français in 1790 provide evidence of some secret meetings that occurred before the Haitian Revolution began. The possible relationship between the revolutionaries Jean-François Papillon and Pierre Loulou could be a compelling revelation that sheds new light on the types of allegiances and relationships that were forged in the colonial period.