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The Political Imaginings of Slave Conspirators: Atlantic Contexts of the 1710 Slave Conspiracy in Martinique

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The Political Imaginings of Slave Conspirators: 
Atlantic Contexts of the 1710 Slave Conspiracy in Martinique

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ABSTRACT PAGE

Historians have understudied one of the most significant aspects of slave conspiracy: the social, political, and economic information slaves used to formulate their plans for rebellion. This thesis analyzes the Superior Council of Martinique's official inquiry into the slave conspiracy of 1710. By interrogating the island's slave population, colonial officials discovered the depth of the conspiracy and the breadth of slaves' socio-political knowledge. Because of the close association between slaves and their masters, slaves overheard, processed, and utilized complex domestic and geo-strategic information. This knowledge fueled slaves' dreams for freedom and led to the careful planning of a strategic attack against slavery.

Following the discovery of the 1710 conspiracy, the governing elites of Martinique were shocked and horrified at the political and military sophistication of their slaves and quickly instituted draconian measures to regulate slaves' movements and their access to information. However, slaves' desire for freedom and knowledge could not be easily suppressed. A careful study of slave conspiracies throughout the Atlantic World reveals that despite masters' best efforts slaves continued to be well-informed. To further illustrate this point, this thesis compares the slave-conspirators of 1710 Martinique to the rebel-slaves of Guadeloupe and Richmond. After comparing these three groups of rebel slaves (who transcend time and space), it becomes clear that slaves throughout the Atlantic World used the most relevant political information of the day to strategize for rebellion and to formulate plans for a future without slavery.
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MAPS:

18th Century Map of the Atlantic World:
Modern Map of Martinique:

Eighteenth Century Map of Martinique:
Map of Guadeloupe:

Map of Nineteenth Century Richmond:
Politics, Piracy, and Perceptive Slaves

- "I saw no prospect that my condition would ever be changed. Yet I used to plan in my mind from day to day, and from night to night, how I might be free."\textsuperscript{1}
- "In spite of floggings, there were hopes and dreams."\textsuperscript{2}
- "From my earliest recollection freedom had been the object of my ambition, a constant motive to exertion, an ever-present stimulus."\textsuperscript{3}
- "What happened was that a certain group of slaves heard of fighting between groups of white people and learned about political and ideological differences between the antagonists that seemed to them very much pertinent to their own situations as slaves."\textsuperscript{4}

In 1710 the slaves of Martinique strategized, organized, and attempted to execute a coup d’état. Their detailed and well-informed plan was deterred only by the treacherous actions of a fellow conspirator. Had their plan succeeded, Martinican slaves intended to murder their masters and radically reorganize society. The 1710 Martinican conspiracy is one of the earliest examples of a politically knowledgeable and active slave-class. As the eighteenth century progressed, more and more slaves used their political knowledge to organize rebellions against their oppressors. After comparing several slave rebellions, it becomes clear that slaves across time and space used their awareness of local and international politics to launch offensive strikes against the institution of slavery. This thesis will primarily focus on the 1710 slave conspiracy in Martinique, but will also consider two other prominent examples of slave rebellion: 1783 Guadeloupe and 1800 Richmond.

\textsuperscript{1} John Blassingame, \textit{The Slave Community} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 192.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 193.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 193.
The study of slavery and rebellion revolves around one central question: were conspiracies the result of authentic servile discontent or were they the product of planters’ paranoid imaginings? Methodological disagreements about how documentary evidence should be analyzed have led historians to understudy the most exciting and rewarding component of conspiracy: the thoughts and actions of slaves themselves. Vital questions such as what slaves desired, how they went about achieving their goals, and what they envisioned for their future have been left under-analyzed. This thesis begins to remedy this problem by studying slaves’ political knowledge and the outward expression of their disgruntlement.

Throughout the Atlantic World the relationship between freemen and bondsmen created volatile political situations. People of color (“negres” and “creoles”) and whites from every level of society intermingled daily. These interactions created complex relationships that were highly personal and often fluid. These relationships often involved whites unintentionally sharing political and social information with slaves. Slaves appropriated and utilized this information for their own purposes including fueling their hopes and dreams of freedom. Historian John Blassingame asserts that “Anything might fan the fires of freedom higher. The overseer’s lash, a heated political campaign, a painful reminder of the invidious distinctions between blacks and whites, or a sermon might cause the slaves to dream about freedom.”5 Although slaves constantly imagined a future world without slavery, these imaginings infrequently materialized into collective movements seeking emancipation and basic human rights. However, occasionally slaves translated social and political discord within the white community into plans to end slavery and reorganize society. These courageous slaves formed groups, jockeyed for

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power, and orchestrated highly developed militaristic plans. They fled their plantations, formed maroon communities, supported their activities with subsistence agriculture, and openly recruited fleeing Africans, disaffected whites, and indigenous Americans to their nascent communities of belonging. Finally slave-conspirators often articulated well-defined plans for their futures in anticipation of their successful rebellions. For all of these reasons slaves were unquestionably political beings.

Methodological Concerns

Everywhere slaves fought oppression through private and collective action. Organized plots for open rebellion and violence demonstrate the political aptitude of slaves throughout French and British America. Yet, increasingly historians have questioned the veracity and authenticity of slave conspiracies. Scholars such as Michael Johnson, David Gaspar, Eric Foner, Richard Wade, and Jason Sharples have challenged what they consider to be scholars’ unfounded faith in the trustworthiness of the evidence surrounding conspiracies. Many more scholars join them in questioning not only the motives of the whites who “uncovered” these conspiracies, but also the reliability of slave testimony. Because slave conspiracies were discovered before they could materialize into full scale revolts, many historians believe that evidence of conspiracy is exaggerated and many times fabricated. To these skeptical historians, the court records, official investigations, and newspaper articles pronouncing conspiracy are not evidence of slaves’ rebelliousness, but rather the rampant paranoia of a frightened ruling class.

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Michael Johnson, “Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 58 No. 4 (October 2001).
The history of slave conspiracies is plagued by many methodological problems. However, this does not mean that we must abandon the study of slave conspiracy altogether. Certainly evidence created by fear of rebellion must be read critically. Nevertheless these rich sources still must be read and read with an open mind. Laurent Dubois, a noted Atlanticist, writes that: “The revolutionaries of the Caribbean, both free and enslaved, left many traces of their intellectual and political visions in the archives. They, are however, often fragmentary and hidden.” The documentary sources where slaves’ voices can be heard and their visions can be deduced are worth the challenge. Documents like the slave trials in 1710 Martinique help us to better understand slaves’ political imaginings.

Like the Martinique sources at the center of this thesis, primary documents throughout the Atlantic World can demonstrate the political aptitude of slaves. When carefully analyzed these sources reveal that slaves were certainly not Sambos as characterized by Stanley Elkins; but were instead strategic, foresighted, savvy, and, most of all, patient. Slaves’ desire for freedom was constant and they calculated and re-calculated their opportunities for liberty daily. Slaves were not reckless and they did not attack out of rage or anger. Instead, slaves waited for visible signs of dissension or weakness within the white community to launch their long planned attacks against chattel slavery. Clearly though, slaves did not always correctly analyze their political environment and many times over-estimated their advantage. Despite these miscalculations, which often led to the defeat of slave rebellions, sometimes before they

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even began, slaves were using the political, economic, and social information they received to organize tactical strikes against slavery. These plans, shared through slave testimony, grant us access into the discontented minds of enslaved Africans.

These valuable primary sources must be used to understand not only the political imaginings of slaves, but also the societies in which they lived. In many ways, the social worlds in which slaves negotiated their daily existences defined their perceptions of what was possible. Therefore this thesis will place slave conspiracy plots within the context of their quotidian lives, which will further prove their political adeptness. Throughout the Atlantic world slaves, freedmen, and maroons conspired not only for their personal gain but for the radical reorganization of the entire society and political economy. This thesis will provide three such examples of slaves processing political information and translating it into well-defined plans for rebellion: 1710 Martinique, 1793 Guadeloupe, and 1800 Richmond.

Note on Sources:

This thesis is both a documentary edition and a work of comparison and synthesis. The primary focus of this thesis is a set of documents produced by the Superior Council of Martinique between 1709 and 1712. These documents chronicle the Superior Council’s efforts to understand the origins and breadth of the Martinican Slave Conspiracy of 1710.

In 1784, Louis XVI granted Mederic Louis Moreau de Saint Mery a royal commission to study France’s colonial history. Saint Mery, a prominent lawyer, politician, and historian who was born in Martinique, collected documents from all of

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France’s colonies and founded what would become the Archives nationales d’outre-mer. Saint Mery dedicated his illustrious career to promoting a greater understanding between France’s colonies and the metropole. Because of his efforts a significant collection of French imperial documents are preserved at the Archives nationales in Aix-En-Provence. Saint Mery’s archive, which was begun nearly three hundred years ago, still houses the records of the Superior Council of Martinique. This thesis’s primary sources are housed within Saint Mery’s collection of Martinican documents.

These Martinican sources, treated properly, can provide great insight into the complex political, cultural, and economic mechanisms of empire. However, since these documents have never been studied before, they must be carefully analyzed within their individual context. Only after careful inquiry into their contextual meaning can these sources be used to articulate a broader historical argument. Therefore this thesis will consider the time, place, and unique culture which produced these documents before engaging broader historical questions. Only after these sources are analyzed within their specific context will this thesis venture to compare and extrapolate.

In his book Raw, Medium, Well-Done: A Critical Review of Editorial and Quasi-editorial Work on pre-1885 European Sources for Sub-Saharan Africa, 1960-1986, Adam Jones discusses the difficulty of documentary interpretation and analysis: “Raw food is simple to serve; and ‘raw’ historical material can be manipulated to supported sweeping, half-baked explanations.” Jones argues that “Most historians see their prime task as being to reorganize, summarize, and ‘interpret’ the material readily available, rather than wasting time assessing the quality of the evidence which each source can

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offer.” Jones asserts that documents have inherent value and meaning and should be more carefully analyzed. He urges historians to analyze documents for their individual value and to avoid hasty manipulation of sources to fit within current historical trends.

This thesis, mindful of Jones’s advice, begins with an in depth study of the trial documents produced after the 1710 Martinique Conspiracy. This particular slave uprising requires special attention because prior to now it has gone undocumented in the annals of history. The official report includes testimony from a wide-ranging group of Martinicans including slaves, maroons, masters, and government officials. These documents provide unique and valuable insights into the social, political, and economic realities of early eighteenth-century Martinique. Although these court records were produced by Martinican officials with undeniable biases, they still elucidate the mindset of planter, slave, and everyone else along the social spectrum.

The trial records demonstrate local elites’ fervent desire to understand the depths of the intended rebellion. Slave “hunters” scoured the island for runaway slaves and rebel leaders and officials arrested and interrogated anyone suspected of colluding with the slaves.11 Government interrogators asked their frightened witnesses leading questions hoping to elicit responses that matched their pre-conceived notions about slaves and rebellion. Nevertheless, these witnesses provided important historical information through their indirect responses to the interrogators specific questions. Using this invaluable information gleaned from the testimony of both free and unfree persons, it is possible to reconstruct the contours of early Martinican society and the narrative outline of this very real slave plot.

Section II: Martinique, Maroonage, and Conspiracy

Historical Background:

The Martinican slave-conspirators of 1710 constantly surveyed the social landscape and understood the precarious nature of their masters’ control over the island. Every problem that plagued France and its colonial officials provided slaves hope that one day they could seize control of the island and declare their freedom. Slaves clearly recognized the vulnerability of the colonial government’s control over Martinique. During a time of intense imperial rivalry, slaves working on the docks of St. Pierre received information about changes in international alliances, important military battles, and internal troubles facing the metropole. Slaves interpreted news of Spanish, Dutch, or English victories over the French as a sign of weakening French power. Slaves perceived any bad news for France and its colonies as placing them one step closer to rebellion and freedom.

The volatility created by imperial competition and piracy was one of the primary concerns of Martinique’s governing body, the Superior Council, because it destabilized the economy and encouraged slaves to test their masters’ power. Slaves, as perceptive political actors, were unquestionably aware of the threats posed to their masters by these external forces. The minutes of the Council demonstrate that Martinique’s military and civilian authorities constantly contemplated ways to protect the island’s coastline and its commercial interests from attack. One such plan was articulated by the governor of Martinique on August 12, 1710, just a few months before the discovery of the slave conspiracy: “Having proposed to several inhabitants and merchants of this island to

contribute to the arming of a corsair to guard the coast to secure commerce which would only be meant to go around this island and fend off enemy corsairs that are continually here.” The governor specifically mentions attacking “English or Dutch corsairs” and outlines methods of recompense for the services local French merchants would provide for the King’s government in Martinique. The account of the Superior Council also mentions a specific altercation between French and English forces that was still fresh on the minds of most Martinicans including the island’s slaves: “Armed with 120 men and 13 boys... Deshayes [the local commandant of the French fleet] attacked two English corsairs which had eight canons, twenty-four men, and the other with six canons and seventy men against which he fought for two and a half hours.” Because of previous skirmishes with imperial rivals and attacks from marauding pirates, the people of Martinique felt constantly threatened by enemy attack. Slaves sensed these fears and tensions within the ruling class and understood that a weakened colonial state represented a higher probability of success for any future rebellion.

Sensing their masters’ fear of pirates, Martinican slaves recognized a potential alliance. During the early stages of the planning for the rebellion of 1710, the slave-conspirators made close contact with pirates. Claude, a conspirator, disclosed the slaves’ relationships with pirates during his trial before the Superior Council. In his testimony, Claude stated that a slave named Colin had brought a “pirate into the hut” and that they had shared their plan to rebel with him. It also appears that Michau, one of the chief conspirators, had agreed to join the pirates in exchange for “weapons, powder, and

This alliance between slaves and pirates represents slaves’ clear understanding of the most relevant geo-strategic and political information of the day. Pirates were indisputable enemies of the planter and merchant elite. This made pirates natural allies for the slave-conspirators as they contemplated rebelling against their French masters.

External instabilities like imperial rivalries and piracy existed alongside more local factors of weakness; like the antagonistic relations between Martinican planters, which slaves readily witnessed on the plantations they worked. The obvious disunity between planters provided the most important opportunity for rebellion. The disputes between large-scale and small-scale planters were unmistakable and slaves recognized the distrust and contention between these two groups. The large-scale sugar planters used their considerable resources to purchase the best land and slaves to the exclusion of their poorer neighbors. Through monopolistic economic practices the great planters drove small-scale planters out of the sugar market relegating them to the mountainous regions of Martinique. In order to survive, Martinique’s small planters grew cocoa illegally and for the most part unsuccessfully. Many of these poorer cocoa planters could not afford to care for their families or their slaves. Therefore these poorer planters “allowed their slaves to live in their own huts surrounded by their own gardens.” Slaves of the small planters took advantage of these greater liberties.

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 779-781.
18 Ibid., 342.
19 Ibid., 343.
Because of their financial struggles, small planters granted their slaves greater freedom of movement and association which undermined wealthier planters’ control over their own, larger slave populations. In some instances smaller planters even called upon their slaves to attack other local masters and their property. In times of desperation the cocoa planters directed their slaves to steal from wealthier planters in order to survive. Obviously the wealthy planters reviled their poorer neighbors for these attacks on their property and personhood. But more importantly the great planters resented the small planters for undermining the strict system of slavery they had constructed around the plantation complex. The slaves of the cocoa planters frequented the slave quarters of the sugar plantations injecting notions of autonomy and freedom into this strict and regimented environment. These meetings between cocoa and sugar slaves provided a safe forum to express their discontent and form a more cohesive community centered on ideas of freedom.

Because the slaves of small planters were freer to move, they became the natural organizers and leaders of the rebellion. The slaves of the cocoa planters coordinated the rebellion between slaves on the sugar plantations, slaves in the cities, and the maroons who lived in the hills of Martinique. The sugar slaves, who were more closely watched and regulated, planned to serve as the foot soldiers in rebellion. At the appointed time the sugar and urban slaves would murder their masters and join the maroons and cocoa slaves in the hills. It is clear that every level slave-society was involved in the conspiracy and that different slaves played distinct roles.

The trial of Lauba v. du Parquet in 1710 provides a vivid example of intense rivalry between planters which certainly encouraged the slaves of Martinique that

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rebellion could succeed against the riven planter-class. Just a few months before the
discovery of the slave conspiracy, the governor of Martinique sued a lesser planter in
court for a violent altercation between the two men and their slaves.\textsuperscript{21} This trial embodied
the social tension between classes and likely garnered much attention throughout the
island. Great and small planters alike awaited an outcome that would support their
distinct social positions. However, the planters did not anticipate that the trial between
Monseiur Lauba and Monseiur du Parquet would be used by the leaders of a slave
conspiracy to recruit foot soldiers. This open display of conflict between planters was
likely one of the primary catalysts that encouraged slave leaders that their rebellion could
succeed.

Incidents like the violence between Monseiur Lauba, a struggling cocoa planter,
and Monseiur Du Parquet, governor of the island of Martinique, vividly exposed the
divisions within the master class to the slaves of the island. During the late days of
November 1710, Du Parquet brought civil and criminal charges again Lauba and his
“seditious slaves.”\textsuperscript{22} The Superior Council of Martinique, which performed both
executive and judicial functions, tried the case. The Council gathered evidence and
concluded that it was “sufficiently justified in the trial that for a long time, Lauba’s
blacks, feeling themselves supported by him, have perpetrated quarrels and beatings,
having gathered together [seeking] a fight with those of M. Du Parquet. There have even
been some disputes between them about which Lauba knew.”\textsuperscript{23} The Council went on to
explain that the slaves of Lauba not only attacked and murdered several of Du Parquet’s
slaves, but they did so in order to steal provisions from the governor’s plantation. The

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 783.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 784.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 783.
The court believed that Lauba encouraged this violent act of theft and murder in order to sustain his family and slaves through the use of the stolen goods. The Council, comprised mostly of great planters and French bureaucrats, harshly punished Lauba. The Council’s ruling sent a clear message to other disgruntled small-planter to respect and obey their social superiors. At the conclusion of the trial the Superior Council ordered Lauba to “pay two thousand livres in damages and court fees to M. Du Parquet, as much for the delay of his blacks as for his house and loss of his supplies and all the costs [including] the doctor’s report, bandages and medicine for the blacks of M. Du Parquet.” Two thousand livres was a debilitating financial penalty equaling the cost of two adult male slaves. This verdict likely ruined Lauba, who was already financially insolvent. In order to pay his fine, Lauba most likely surrendered two of his own slaves, dramatically decreasing his small workforce. In addition to this harsh financial penalty, the Council also forbade “Lauba and his blacks, the most repetitious offenders, under pain of corporal punishment for [Lauba] and death for his slaves,” from engaging in any further violent acts against Du Parquet and his property. This verdict not only punished Lauba individually, but was a clear warning to the lesser planters that they must accept their social positions and obey the laws that were designed to keep them there.

This episode between Du Parquet and Lauba vividly demonstrates the divisions within the Martinique’s master-class. However, this trial was not the only sign of division within the planter-class leading up to the 1710 slave conspiracy. Slaves had

24 Ibid., 784
25 Ibid., 785
26 Ibid.
27 As discussed in Robert Harms, The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds of the Slave Trade
many other illustrations of discord within colonial society that reassured them that rebellion could be successful. For example, many poorer whites would shelter the runaway slaves of their more prosperous neighbors and use them as temporary, cheap labor for their own farms and domestic handiwork. In April of 1710 the Superior Council firmly addressed these additional class tensions:

Several inhabitants of the isolated places of this island have in their homes black men and women who have gone there, whether they are runaways by their masters’ and mistresses’ manner of treatment or, being new to this island, [they] neither know nor remember the name of those to whom they belong. [These inhabitants] are happy to...keep them in their homes, making them work for their profit, which causes resentment from those to whom they [the runaway slaves] belong. In the future we order that all the inhabitants and others who have in their homes black men and women who do not belong to them to bring them into the prison of Fort St. Ruiz eight days after the publication of this order under pain of a fifty-livre fine for each black man or woman that they conceal and keep. We forbid all the inhabitant of whatever status and condition to keep any black men or women who do not belong to them, but on the contrary, we order them to bring them in as is right under the rigors of these regulations.28

With this new law the elites of Martinique were not only reasserting their control over their slaves but also their authority over the island’s lesser whites. This assertion of power did little, though, to halt the constant flow of slaves off of the plantations and into the undeveloped forests of Martinique. Furthermore, poorer whites continued to interact with slaves in an intimate and mutually beneficial way despite threats of legal action from Martinique’s governing elites. Martinique’s white population was clearly still divided after the April 1710 edict ordering the return of runaway slaves. The slave-conspirators were undoubtedly aware of these divisions.

The political, economic, social, and military problems facing Martinique and its ruling class presented an unsteady world to the island’s slave population. Despite

28 Ibid., 784.
planters' constant attempts to assert authority over their slaves, many internal and external forces led slaves to believe that their masters' control was more tenuous than they believed. These weaknesses, apparent to politically perceptive slaves, provided them with the strategic justifications necessary to risk rebellion. In 1710, the slaves of Martinique had witnessed enough infighting to make them believe that their uprising could succeed.

The 1710 Slave Conspiracy:

As early as 1693 Jean Baptiste Labat, a journeying priest, observed that the slave population in Martinique was "always ready to revolt...to risk everything and commit the most horrible crimes to obtain their liberty." Labat correctly surmised slaves' readiness to revolt and like many other elites of the time period, believed that slaves were naturally disposed to violence and impulsiveness. European colonists, fueled by racism, assumed that any slave revolt would likely result in a disorganized show of force that could be easily squashed. But Labat and local planters alike, believing only in the possibility of haphazard rebellion, were intellectually ill-prepared for a local slave population that plotted for freedom in the most political and strategic of ways. Unfortunately for the ruling class of Martinique, they would encounter such a conspiracy beginning in 1710.

When local masters and government officials uncovered the breadth and intricacy of the 1710 slave conspiracy, they were shaken to their core. The earliest mention of the conspiracy in the official record comes from the confession of a slave informant, Claude, on July 26, 1710. Claude, at the time of his interrogation, was twenty-two years old and

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had been baptized in the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{30} He belonged to the governor of Martinique and it is clear from his testimony that he toiled in the dangerous and back-breaking production of sugar.\textsuperscript{31} When questioned by the Superior Council as to why he had run away from his master’s plantation, Claude answered that “the overseer of his master’s plantation wanted to beat him for not having produced enough cane at the mill.”\textsuperscript{32} The brutality of the sugar regime is well-documented by historians and Claude’s story of mistreatment is certainly not unusual. However, what is unique about this moment in history is that Claude and his fellow conspirators utilized the information and resources they had to improve their condition through rebellion. From his testimony and the testimony of his fellow co-conspirators we learn how the slaves of Martinique acquired and analyzed information and then formulated a concrete plan for rebellion.

Although slaves desired immediate emancipation, they knew that the success of a potential rebellion depended upon their patience. Therefore most slaves labored in the fields by day and plotted by night, preparing for the right moment to attack their masters and emancipate themselves. However, some Martinican slaves refused to wait and fled their plantations in order to establish maroon communities. It is clear that Claude and his fellow maroons relied heavily upon their own ingenuity to survive in their partial state of freedom. These former slaves raised vegetable gardens—a activity which required unclaimed land, time, and a relative feeling of security.\textsuperscript{33} They also established semi-permanent camps near their fields indicating that the maroons of Martinique were not

\textsuperscript{30} Aix-En-Provence, ANOM, “Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 1710,” 386.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 387.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Aix-En-Provence, ANOM, “Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 1710,” 387.
actively pursued by official slave patrols. For the most part, these discontented runaway slaves were left alone by their former masters.

Several large-scale maroon communities developed throughout the isolated portions of the island which increased the conspirators’ capabilities to plan and execute a rebellion. Maroons (or runaway slaves) constructed small villages and dedicated time to extensive agricultural pursuits. Maroons did not completely isolate themselves from their former lives, however. Maroons were intimately connected to those slaves still living within the confines of the plantation complex. Maroons ate cabbage from other slaves’ gardens and borrowed flour that their former masters had provided for those still enslaved. Claude testified that the maroons felt comfortable returning to their former masters’ plantations to borrow provisions and intermingle with their enslaved brethren. These visits by the marooned conspirators to the slave quarters provided important opportunities to discuss freedom, organize a wide-spread rebellion, and recruit foot-soldiers.

Claude’s testimony revealed important evidence about the composition of the slave community and the leadership of the conspiracy. During Claude’s trial, M. Houdin, the honorary councilor for the Superior Council of Martinique, asked him about his fellow conspirators. From his responses we can infer that the main leaders of the conspiracy were male. However, many women were heavily involved with the plot and performed important logistical, ritualistic, and militaristic roles. It appears that these female slaves were more politically active than their free, European counterparts. Claude

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36 Ibid., 387-392.
specifically identified the following female conspirators: "Laurence, Barbiche, Anne, Samba, Agatte, Marthe, Manon, Magdelan, Dorthee, Jeannton, Jaqueline, and Fanechon." These women, who mostly belonged to the local convent, "furnished flour" for the maroon conspirators and made the necklaces which identified the slave conspirators as official members of the plot. Furthermore, these women shared information they overheard in the homes of their masters with the leadership of the conspiracy. Female house slaves were one of the most vital sources of intelligence for the slave community because of their close access to their owners' conversations. Without the information that women provided to the rebel leadership, the conspirators would have lacked relevant political and strategic information that was crucial to their plans for rebellion.

The diversity of the slave community provided different perspectives and knowledge that the conspirators relied upon in order to execute their plans for rebellion. The conspiracy of 1710 was not only inclusive to women, but also involved a diverse set of people embodying different cultural traditions. From Claude's testimony it is evident that the conspirators represented a wide-range of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and geographic backgrounds. Claude specifically named "the English slave of M. Manniere who is red-skinned," and "a little English slave whose name he did not know who belonged to M. Martineau." He also mentioned a "new slave that does not speak French." Claude's observations demonstrate that the slave population of Martinique was ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and geographically diverse. The reality of the

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37 Ibid., 395
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 388.
40 Ibid.
slave trade was that slaves from all over the world entered the ports of Martinique increasing the slave community’s geo-political knowledge. For instance, the “red-skinned slave” who Claude mentioned could easily have been deported from the North American colonies because of rebelliousness. The importation of seasoned, creolized slaves from throughout the world provided the slave community of Martinique with an international political perspective. By placing experienced and worldly slaves within Martinique’s already discontented slave community, the Atlantic’s slave traders provided the match for the tinderbox of rebellion.

The 1710 conspiracy’s leadership was comprised largely of maroon slaves and they were undoubtedly the ideological driving force behind the conspiracy. However, the testimony of the rebel slaves demonstrates that the conspiracy spread much further than a small group of discontented maroons. The conspiracy infiltrated all levels of slave society: “All the runaway slaves in the time of the new moon would rise up and give the slaves of the town a sign….and they would charge against them [the whites] together…they would begin by burning down the house of M. Gabaret, called the ‘Hateau Gaillard,’ and then come set fire to the town and [strike against] the whites if they could. If not they would retreat if they were not the strongest.”41 The slave-conspirators rightly understood that the success of their rebellion depended upon the full cooperation of a large proportion of the slave population. Therefore the leaders of the conspiracy recruited slaves throughout the island hoping to coordinate an organized and simultaneous attack against the better-armed planters. The conspiracy’s leadership would prove to be strong recruiters and tacticians, but they could not have counted on their plans being spoiled by a traitor.

41 Ibid., 389 & 399.
Claude, who provides us with the greatest source of information about the conspiracy of 1710, also confessed the information to white officials which effectively ended the hopes of the Martinican rebels. In his testimony before the Superior Council of Martinique, Claude unveiled the hierarchy of the slave conspiracy which included the following individuals and positions: “Francois Pichon the general of the Gaulolets, Jacob the captain, Manuel the major; Francisque the master of provisions; Pierrot the corporal, Samon a solider; Samson Linche ensign; Joseph Cabaur, Iam, and Baptiste soldiers; Michau also a captain; Coffy and Roland also soldiers.” With his confession Claude unraveled the 1710 slave conspiracy in Martinique and began the year long manhunt for the marooned conspirators.

Knowing the names and masters of the leaders of the Martinique conspiracy reveals a great deal about the political origins of the rebellion. The conspiracy’s top leadership belonged to politically and economically powerful men. This was likely due to the longstanding policy that “government officials get the first pick of the slaves before any sale was opened to the general public.” The most influential Martinicans including the governor and the intendant usually selected young, able-bodied male slaves. Therefore, there is close association between the most powerful and well-informed men of the island and the sub-set of the slave population that was most likely to rebel: young-adult males. Most notably Michau, who was at the core of the slaves’ leadership structure, was the slave of Monseiur Demassiers who was the Intendant of Martinique. Furthermore, a rebel-slave named Mamon belonged to the lieutenant governor of Martinique, Monseiur Descasseaux. These aforementioned slaves, and countless others,

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42 Ibid., 391.
43 Robert Harms, The Diligent, 334.
44 Ibid., 335.
were exposed to the most relevant political, military, and economic information of the
day. Serving the most senior government officials in Martinique provided slaves like
Michau and Mamon with important strategic information that they could then share with
their fellow malcontented slaves. It is likely that these educated and well-positioned
slaves were the origin of conspiratorial thought.

Having learned about the hierarchy of the conspiracy, Martinique’s officials were
interested in how these illustrious slaves recruited their foot-soldiers. Claude, the slave-
informant for the Superior Council, revealed the ways in which the rebel leaders enlisted
their fellow slaves: “When someone wanted to join their company, Jacob would make
him pay eighteen sols into the pouch and determined whether he would be an officer or a
soldier, according to his age.”45 Normally, the leaders of the conspiracy would encounter
willing participants. Occasionally, however, the maroon leadership would encounter
slaves unwilling to participate in the rebellion. In order to maintain secrecy, the slave-
conspirators murdered those slaves who had been informed of the plot and refused to
join. Claude testified that, “Francois Pichon [the supreme leader of the rebellion] had
contacted several slave women in the town of Saint Pierre and that he had poisoned those
who did not want to enter into his plot.”46 More often than not, though, slaves accepted
the call to seize their freedom because their surrounding circumstances led them to
believe that the rebellion could be successful.

Unfortunately for the slaves who joined conspiracy, their plan to rebel was
detected before they could launch their coordinated attack against the whites of
Martinique. After the discovery of the plot, the implicated slaves understood that their

45 “Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 1710,” 392.
46 Ibid., 394.
lives depended upon avoiding capture. On July 27th 1710 the Superior Council of Martinique ordered the capture and interrogation the following slaves:

Jacob, slave of the Ursuline nuns, Francois belonging to the widow Pichon, Manuel and Francisque belonging to M. Hauterive, Simon the free mulatto, Mereure belonging to M. L’Estang, Sapion belonging to M. Linche, Samson to the widow Feroy, Spadrille to M. Corailles, Lam and Baptiste to the widow Kearudrin, Pierrot to M. Gaschet, Sapion and Jeannot...Michau of the late M. Manniere, Coffy belonging to the widow Daubaignon, Samon belonging to M. Linch, Roland belonging to Pintau, Jean Creu belonging to M. de la Grand Riviere, Colin belonging to the nuns, and Simon, and the slave women Laurence, Cathault, and Magdelan belonging to the nuns, Babiche, Anne, and Jeanne Samba belonging to Mme Vassor, Marthe and Manon to the widow Landais, Magdelan and Dorothee to the Dugas, Jaentton to M. Beque and Fanchon to Sautroun.

The conspirators who learned of the plot’s discovery warned their other comrades to stay out of Martinican officials’ reach. The primary leaders of the conspiracy entrenched themselves in the remote forests of Martinique causing a seemingly endless standoff between the marooned conspirators and French officials.

Nearly a year after Claude’s testimony was gathered and the Superior Council ordered the seizure of all rebellious slaves, many of the conspirators still remained at-large and threatened the stability of the slave regime. It is clear that by the summer of 1711 government officials and other elites were growing impatient with the constant danger posed by these conspiratorial maroons. On September 17, 1711 Monseur Le Degue, the new governor-general of Martinique, issued the order to “hunt down the black maroons, on the plot that they had made a long time ago.” A detachment of “slave-chasers” was commissioned including a slave-informant named Jeannot and twenty or so royal soldiers. Using this new slave patrol, the superintendent of the militia planned to ambush the maroons using information provided to them by Jeannot and other slave-
informants. Throughout late September and early October of 1711, the slave patrol scoured the countryside searching for the treacherous rebel-slaves.

The slave conspiracy of 1710 notified Martinique’s governing elites of their weaknesses. The political, military, and economic leaders of Martinique scrambled throughout the year 1711 to re-establish control over the island and to present a unified front to the slaves. These officials authorized the use of coercion and other brutal tactics to uncover the full extent of the rebellion and to capture all of the slaves who were implicated. One such violent encounter is chronicled in the minutes of the Superior Council. On September 15, 1711, militiamen acted upon the information of a slave-informant and surrounded the “ajoupa” (or hut) of several maroons. The militiamen attempted to seize the few runaway slaves who were inside, but this military maneuver ended in bloodshed:

We walked to the base of the ajoupa, and M. Hache detached six men to go surprise them at the said ajoupa, and positioned the other detachment at the bottom of the river so that he would be sure that the slaves would not escape from that place. As soon as the six men reached them, they surprised Gerosine and three black women, one of whom was injured by three gunshots, on her arm and on the right side of her chest....and the other escaped and threw herself to the bottom of the cliff. One of the others took four shots with a musket....after which M. Hache interrogated the black woman who declared that there was an ajoupa up above upon which M. Hache decided to go there to surprise them, but they did not find anyone because the gunshots that they had taken had scared them away.49

After this violent encounter, the militia continued searching for more rebel camps throughout the hills of Martinique. After finding the next maroon camp abandoned, the militia unit was ordered “to go see the gardens that the slaves had made, where they found a square of a hundred paces inhabited by and planted with Caribbean cabbage that had come up, yams, cucumbers, bananas, sorrel, parsley, and other vegetables for their

49 Ibid., 396.
food.” Monsieur Hache then ordered that the gardens “be pulled up and thrown on the ground.”\textsuperscript{50} Clearly Hache, commander of the ‘slave patrol’, was employing slash-and-burn tactics in order to cripple the maroon community’s ability to independently support itself. This represented a significant escalation in governmental tactics against the marooned slaves. By destroying their gardens and camps, Hache forced the maroons to become more desperate.

This desperation caused these previously careful and strategic conspirators to make a series of mistakes which would ultimately lead to their capture. Two days after the first attack on the maroon camp on September 17\textsuperscript{th} a group of frightened runaway slaves came into town and approached a slave woman named Chereze who was owned by Hache. They asked Chereze “where [the] slave-chaser was, if he was going on the hunt, that they would very much like to speak with him before going to the Capesterre….and they asked where [the militia] was. She [Chereze] responded that Jeannot had his gun for going on the hunt and that they [the militia] were at the house.”\textsuperscript{51} Chereze reported her encounter with the maroons to her mistress, Madame Hache, who immediately informed her husband of the incident. Inspired by this new intelligence, the militia continued its hunt for all of the remaining maroons.

Hache describes the sense of urgency he felt while pursuing the maroons because he feared that “the said black Michau would escape from us and that he [Michau] would uncover our plan that we had had for a long time to seize him.”\textsuperscript{52} Hache further explains the details and execution of his plan to capture Michau stating that:

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 397.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 398.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 398.
We made a plot...and Michau, trusting our word, entered our kitchen and was seized that instant by us. We had him tied up and put him in irons. And on the intelligence that our Jeannot had given us that the slave Jeannot belonging to M. Mesnier was wandering around for the last two days at our slaves’ huts, we detached that instant all of our said slaves and those of M. Desmassiers, to surprise him, which succeeded, and we immediately put him in irons...and that day the twentieth of the aforesaid month [September] at daybreak, we saw a black woman who was wandering near our house to see what was happening. We dispatched some black men who took and bound her, the black woman being she who had escaped when we took the other two black women belonging to M. Audache.53

Following the capture of Michau, Jeannot, and Laurence, Hache led the slave-conspirators to prison in Capes Terre. The next day the Superior Council of Martinique ordered that “the said slave men and women be interrogated as a result of these declarations, done this twenty-first of September, 1711.”54 The Council, hoping to extract the whereabouts of all of the remaining maroon forces and to better understand the extent of the conspiracy, proceeded to question each newly acquired prisoner. This information gathering would last for another several months and would result in devastating consequences for the maroon community of Martinique. The intelligence acquired from the testimony of Laurence, Michau, and Jeannot allowed Louis XIV’s government in Martinique to hunt down, capture, and execute all of the remaining slave-conspirators.

The Interrogations of the Conspirators

Monseur Hache immediately appreciated the importance of capturing Laurence in the process of trapping Michau. Not only did the government now possess Michau and Jeannot, two of the primary leaders of the conspiracy, but they also had Laurence, the ‘mistress’ of Hierosme. Hoping to capture Hierosme, the rebel general, the Superior Council intensely went about questioning Laurence. In spite of threats of death, Laurence

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53 Ibid., 399.
54 Ibid., 400.
revealed little information about the conspiracy or about the whereabouts of her rebellious lover. Instead she provided important biographical information about herself and the other conspirators with whom she had come into contact.

When asked her, “name, surname, age, birth, station, and religion,” Laurence answered that she was, “Aged twenty-five years or thereabouts, was a creole of this island, [and] was a baptized slave of M. Gallet, inhabitant of the Capesterre quarter of this island.”\(^55\) Like many of the other conspirators, Laurence was clearly creolized. She spoke French, was acquainted with Catholicism, and was familiar with the political apparatus that governed the island of Martinique. She was immediately able to identify the governor and several other elites including Delore and Hache (who she knew to be slave hunters). When specifically questioned about her time as a maroon Laurence responded that, “it had been about a year [since she had run away] and that it was because her master had burned her hut.”\(^56\) Like many other maroons, Laurence ran away from her master due to an irrational act of cruelty. She also followed the traditional trajectory of maroons by stealing or borrowing food until she could plant and raise her own garden.\(^57\) Ultimately Laurence would join a large and well-established maroon community where she would meet Hierosme, Michau, and Jeannot. When Laurence ran away from her master in the early months of 1709, she probably did not believe that she would be at the center of a slave conspiracy just a year later. But it is clear that she passionately and loyally joined the conspirators and helped to plan the attack against the planters of Martinique.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 400.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., 402.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., 402.
Because of Laurence’s intimate connection with one of the ‘generals’ of the conspiracy the interviewers hoped to extort important information about the rebellion from this slave woman. The interrogators began by questioning Laurence about the maroons’ ownership of weapons to which she responded that Jeannot, Hierosme, and Colas each possessed guns. After this the interrogators pressed for more information asking: “What purpose she was to serve when Hierosme, Francois, Michau, Mamour, and the others were going to attack the whites.” Laurence cleverly answered that, “She had heard nothing at all about slaves revolting against the whites.” Ultimately this answer would save her life, but it only further frustrated the investigators efforts to piece together the details of the conspiracy. In an attempt to intimidate Laurence into revealing more information the interrogators asked her if, “Jeannot Aubriot [had] told them of all the executions of mutinous slaves and that he himself had a fleur-de-lys on his forehead.” She responded with a simple and uninformative, “Yes.” Clearly the fugitive maroons were aware of the punishments that were awaiting them if they were captured by colonial forces. However, Laurence did not allow fear of those punishments to overwhelm her sensibilities. She bravely preserved the secrets of the conspiracy. Out of frustration the interrogators ceased interviewing Laurence and turned to other slaves that would prove to be more responsive.

Following the interrogation of the slave-woman Laurence, Monseiur Houdin interviewed both Michau and Jeannot. However, these two men’s testimonies revealed little about the extent of the slave conspiracy. It was the interview of Monseiur Deloré

58 Ibid., 404-405.  
59 Ibid., 405.  
60 Ibid., 406.  
61 Ibid., 405.  
62 Ibid.
that revealed the most about the state of fear that swept over Martinique’s white population following the discovery of the conspiracy. Deloré’s interrogation also demonstrates the suspicions of elite planters’ that the poorer planters had conspired with the slaves in the hope of re-distributing the island’s wealth. Deloré, a thirty-year old native of Tours, militiaman, and small planter in Martinique became the central focus these suspicions.

The Superior Council became convinced that Deloré actively supported the slave conspiracy and aided and abetted the slave leaders. The Council aggressively pursued information from Laurence, Michau, Jeannot, and Lucas about their knowledge of Deloré’s apparently traitorous behavior with the slave-conspirators. Laurence testified that Deloré had violated the law by harboring one of the primary leaders of the conspiracy: “Michau had worked for eight months for M. Deloré... Hierosme had told her that he saw Michau at M. Deloré’s when he went there to find food, and that Michau had come a few times to their ajoupa where he had told the respondent [Laurence] that he was working for M. Deloré and that he regretted having to kill him [in the pending slave uprising].”

If Laurence is telling the truth (and her story is collaborated by the testimony of Michau and Jeannot) at best M. Deloré was in direct violation of an edict issued earlier in the year prohibiting planters from harboring runaway slaves. At worst, he was knowingly supporting fugitive, rebel slaves in their attempts to evade capture by the proper authorities.

According to Michau’s testimony, not only did Deloré employ him, but he and his wife also supplied him with clothes and other supplies. Michau’s account of his

63 Ibid., 403.
64 Ibid., 416.
relationship with the Delorés only further implicates these middling planters of aiding the slave-conspirators. However, in his own interrogation, Deloré bitterly denied employing or aiding Michau in any way. Instead Deloré argued that he constructed an elaborate plan to trick Michau into showing him where the rebel leader Hierosme was hiding. He testified before the Council that after Michau had revealed the rebel slaves' encampments he had planned on capturing both Michau and Hierosme and handing them over to the proper authorities.\textsuperscript{65} When asked by the interrogators, “Why if he had this good will to seize Hierosme by means of Michau, had he not informed M. the General or M. the Intendant, and that moreover he knew that Michau had a price on his head in the same way that Hierosme did, by order of the Council?”\textsuperscript{66} Deloré responded that his actions, “Were out of lack of thought, and that if he had known his deed would have such consequences, he would not have done it, not wanting to create such a terrible business for himself.”\textsuperscript{67} Clearly M. Deloré’s testimony convinced the Council that he had Martinique’s best intentions at heart. Ultimately the Council ordered him to pay a fine of one hundred livres as punishment for not having immediately captured Michau and they allowed him to return to his family and small farm unscathed.\textsuperscript{68} Had the Council found that Deloré was actively colluding with the rebel slaves his punishment would certainly have been more severe.

This episode involving the Delorés and Michau proves that the justice system in Martinique, like other justice systems throughout the Atlantic World, credited the word of white men against the corroborating testimony of slaves. However, the fact that

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 427.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 429.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 430.
Martinique's governing elite intensely accused and interrogated a member of their own race demonstrates that the island had been swept away by fear. Interrogations of poorer and middling planters likely continued for several months as the ruling class of Martinique attempted to uncover the full extent of the slave conspiracy.

Elite fears of rebellious slaves and collusion with poorer whites probably led to an over-exaggeration of the size and extent of the 1710 conspiracy. This conspiracy-mania cost many slaves (some likely innocent) their lives. Despite promises of lenience by top Martinique officials, all of the captured conspirators (and maroons) were met with gruesome punishments following their interrogations. On the thirtieth of October, 1711 the governor of Martinique handed down his sentence for the primary leaders of the slave rebellion which read:

I [M. Le Moyne, Governor of Martinique] require on behalf of the king that the said Michau be declared fully convicted of having been one of the leaders of the sedition and uprising planned last year against the whites and inhabitants of this island and of having persisted in his maroonage, notwithstanding the exemplary punishments given to slaves convicted in their plot and the outstanding arrest warrant for him, which he knew about. I require that the said Jeannot [be declared fully convicted of] having returned to maroonage and of having rejoined the said Hierosme and Michau, notwithstanding the punishment he had already undergone and the restrictions on him for the same offense. I require that said Laurence, Magdelaine, and Margueritte [be declared fully convicted] of being maroons and of having followed, in their libertinism the said slaves, knowing that they were being pursued and the punishments with which they were threatened. For reparation, [I order that] the said Michau be beaten with eight rods and then exposed on a wheel with his face towards the sky to die. The said Jeannot is to be hanged and strangled until dead, and the said Marguerite, Magdelaine, and Laurence are to attend the punishments of the slaves with a cord around their necks and then beaten on their bare backs, thirty lashes each, and branded with a fleur-de-lys on the middle of their foreheads, and taken back to their masters. Everything is to be done in a public place in the town to prohibit recidivists in maroonage.69

69 Ibid., 430.
These grisly sentences, as the governor explicitly states, were to scare the enslaved population into obedience. This is one of the first and certainly one of the most violent displays of white dominance and power in the Atlantic World. However, the ingenuity of slaves and their never-ending desire to be free would continue to plague slave-owners throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In fact, Martinique would experience a similar wide-spread slave conspiracy just seventeen years later.\textsuperscript{70}

The interrogations of the slave-conspirators of Martinique revealed a great deal about Martinican society (an area of French Atlantic history that is vastly understudied). White planters were violently divided and had not yet developed a comprehensive policing system to capture and return runaway slaves. Furthermore, slaves were exposed to vast amounts of domestic and international political information which they used to strategize for rebellion. The Superior Council's interrogations of 1710-1711 demonstrate the cosmopolitan nature of Martinique's slave community. The political adeptness of the slaves and the many problems facing Martinique's ruling class combined to threaten slaveholders' ability to maintain control over their human property. Because of the level of education and political awareness that many slaves possessed, they were able to process complicated and sometimes conflicting information and calculate the risks and rewards of rebellion. These slave leaders, using all of the evidence available to them, wagered that rebellion could be successful in the year 1710.

Many of these slaves were closely positioned to men of great power and influence, which further informed the slave community about the most pressing political and social issues of the day. In fact, several of the primary conspirators belonged to the governor, the Intendant, and the commander of the militia forces. It is highly probable

\textsuperscript{70} Robert Harms, \textit{The Diligent}, 342. See the Martinique Slave Conspiracy of 1727.
that it is from these influential men that the slaves learned the extent of Martinique’s problems with piracy, imperial rivalry, and infighting within the white community. The information that slaves attained from their masters translated into what the slaves believed to be the perfect opportunity for rebellion. Unfortunately for the slave-conspirators, the governing elites of Martinique possessed a much firmer grip on the reins of power than the slaves believed. After the discovery of the conspiracy, white officials, frightened by the year’s developments, would pass legislation to heighten their control over the slave regime.

White paranoia over slave rebellions was not a phenomenon isolated to Martinique. Instead, knowledge of slave conspiracies and rebellions spread rapidly throughout the Atlantic World, influencing policy decisions over broad geographic areas. During the early eighteenth century, local officials throughout the Caribbean and mainland colonies in North America took developments in places like Martinique extremely seriously. A series of new laws governing the behavior of bondsmen were passed throughout the Atlantic World. These strict, new measures were largely successful at policing the slave community and preventing large-scale rebellions. Even with these concerted efforts to control the slave population, however, planter-elites could not prevent their slaves from recognizing and responding to moments of social and political upheaval. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries volatile social, political, and economic situations would again inspire slaves to believe that they could successfully overthrow their oppressors.

**Section III: Revolutionary Guadeloupe: Conspiracy in Comparison**

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The Guadeloupian Revolution (1793-1794):

Like the slaves-conspirators in 1710 Martinique, the slaves of Guadeloupe received and processed complex information and decided to rebel against their masters during a period of political and social turmoil. At the height of the Reign of Terror, slave leaders throughout Guadeloupe understood that circumstances offered them a viable opportunity to defeat their weakened enemies and radically reorganize society. So these slave-conspirators took to arms and changed history. The success of the slaves’ revolution in Guadeloupe (1783-1784) fulfilled the dreams of countless slaves that came before them. The victories of the Guadeloupian rebels achieved precisely what the slave-conspirators of Martinique had imagined seventy-three years earlier: general emancipation for all slaves and the conferral of basic human rights. It is important to study Guadeloupe in comparison to Martinique, because the success of the Guadeloupian Revolution allows us to hypothesize about what may have happened in Martinique had the rebels been successful.

Laurent Dubois, in his masterful work *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean*, chronicles the Trois-Rivières revolt which set in motion the Guadeloupian slave revolution. On Saturday, April 20, 1793, hundreds of enslaved blacks revolted in the area surrounding the village of Trois-Rivières, Guadeloupe.72 These slaves murdered twenty-two whites and ransacked a series of plantations.73 The slaves of Guadeloupe, like the slave-conspirators in 1710 Martinique, did not rise up against chattel slavery impetuously. Instead they waited for the perfect political moment to launch a calculated attack against the slaveholding elites that greedily

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72 Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 23
73 Ibid.
held their freedom captive. This salutary moment presented itself following the
successful slave uprising in St. Domingue and the continued chaos that plagued the
metropole.

Like slaves in Martinique and other parts of the Atlantic World, the slaves of
Guadeloupe used their political knowledge and patiently awaited the proper moment to
rebel, which for Guadeloupians came in 1793. Seizing the moment slaves forcefully
demanded sweeping changes including emancipation, re-distribution of wealth, and the
conferral of basic rights. “The demands they made and the strategies they used in making
them,” according to Dubois, “sprang from a long tradition of resistance firmly rooted in
these plantation societies.”

The slaves of Guadeloupe understood the blueprint of rebellion, which had been
conferred upon them by generations of trial and error. Many slaves before them
attempted rebellion during moments of social upheaval, including, of course, the rebel
slaves of Martinique. However, never before had so perfect an opportunity presented
itself as the French Revolution. Dubois argues that “the French Revolution set in motion
political, military, and juridical changes that created an opening for demands by free
people of color and slaves in [France’s] Caribbean colonies.” Guadeloupe’s slaves were
clearly political beings because they adeptly sensed and took advantage of this rare
opening. The slaves of Guadeloupe, Dubois demonstrates, understood the implications of
the French Revolution, Enlightenment philosophy, and the language of human rights. They
utilized each of these political, social, and cultural movements to strategically
negotiate for their freedom.

74 Ibid., 27-28.
75 Ibid., 27.
Dubois illuminates the amount of knowledge slaves possessed and used to seek not only freedom, but also citizenship: “If the Trois-Rivières revolt--- and the larger process of slave insurrection that shook the edifice of slavery in the Americas during the 1790s—is to be understood, it must be through an exploration of how enslaved insurgents heard, spoke, and ultimately transformed an evolving Republican language of rights,” he explains. The rebel slaves of Guadeloupe knew that the chaos created by the French Revolution divided the white population of the island into two distinct camps: Jacobins and Royalists (just like the Martinican slave understood the class divide between small and large planters). Guadeloupian slaves also understood that in order to successfully exploit this division, they must also employ the language of rights and revolution in order to justify their rebellion. Like the Martinican rebels who capitalized on a strategic alliance with pirates, the rebel slaves of Trois-Rivières were fully aware that their best hope of achieving their goal was to ally with the French revolutionaries against the royalist forces. As Dubois explains:

The [French] soldiers prepared to fight, but the rebels [slaves] were quiet, orderly, and unaggressive as they approached. When they [the slaves] were finally within firing range, a soldier shouted, “Who goes there?” The blacks responded, “Citizens and friends!” Six soldiers moved toward the insurgents, holding their bayonets in front of them. As one witness reported: ‘One of the slaves began to speak and asked if we were citizens, patriots; the response came that yes, we were; in that case, he said, we are friends, we have come to save you, and hate only those aristocrats who want to kill you. We have no bad intentions; we want to fight for the Republic, the law, the nation, order.’

Following this encounter, the Regiment of the Republic asked the rebel slaves if they would return to Basse Terre to undergo interrogation. The slaves agreed and were briefly imprisoned in a fort within island’s capitol. The rebel-slaves gambled that the white

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78 Ibid., 23.
revolutionaries would recognize the benefit of allying with the island’s slave population against the royalists. Ultimately this risk would pay off.

During the interrogations by republican officials the rebel leaders, “explained that their royalist masters had armed them as part of an anti-Republican plot. Rather than act against the republic toward which they felt loyalty, they rose up against their masters and killed them.”79 This explanation satisfied the Comité de sûreté générale to the dismay of the governor of Guadeloupe, Victor Collot. The governor wanted the slaves to be held in isolation until they could be tried and executed for their crimes. Instead, the Comité, “proposed to form them into a legion.”80 Clearly the slaves’ strategy to ally with white republicans against the royalist elites was insightful and effective. Within the year the slaves of Guadeloupe were guaranteed their freedom by the National Convention in France. 81

The Radical Reformation of Guadeloupian Society

In the summer of 1794 the National Convention issued the following edict freeing France’s Caribbean slaves and outlining the world it envisioned for a new biracial society:

CITIZENS,
A Republican government accepts neither chains nor slavery, and therefore the National Convention has just solemnly proclaimed the liberty of the negroes….CITIZENS of all colors, your happiness depends on this law…but the white citizen must kindly offer, in fraternity, and with reasonable wages, work to their black and colored brothers; and the latter must also learn and never forget that those who have no property must provide, through their work, for their own subsistence and that of their family, as well as to the support of their nation.

80 Dubois, A Colony of Citizens, 25.
81 Ibid.
CITIZENS, you have become equal in order to enjoy happiness and to share it with all other; the person who oppresses his co-citizen is a monster who must be banished from the social world.82

What the National Council proposed for the future of the newly freed slaves was decidedly different from the future slaves envisioned for themselves. “The proclamation presented an idealized picture of how ex-masters and ex-slaves would relate to one another in the new order, but,” according to Dubois, “it did so by granting little, and demanding much, of the new citizens [the newly freed slaves]. As freedom was declared through Grande-Terre and ex-slaves celebrated their freedom, their actions suggested they had a different vision of the rewards that were to come from liberty.” The former slaves of Guadeloupe quickly demonstrated through their actions that they desired concrete changes in the way the island’s society was structured. The ex-slaves demanded fair pay for their labor, the right to acquire property, the right to feed their families, the ability to move freely, and the official recognition of their newly won citizenship in the form of bureaucratic paperwork. Each of these reasonable demands met resistance from the white elites still governing Guadeloupe. However, despite these racist efforts to control the extent of freedom, ex-slaves were able to use their political knowledge to attain some measure of economic independence and social recognition.

Following emancipation, life for both whites and blacks rapidly changed. Within this new world slaves seized opportunities despite their former masters’ resistance. The changes ex-slaves experienced manifested themselves in numerous ways including migration to the towns, the acquisition of property, and the assertion of citizenship through marriage:

82 Ibid., 24.
During the era of freedom, while many ex-slaves migrated from the plantations to the cities, another form of migration occurred: that of new citizens into the état civil registers, which were kept by the local administration to keep track of births, deaths, and marriages in the community. The creation of état civil and notary records became a terrain where previous forms of social silencing and racial identification were contested and negotiated. 

However, the most important privilege sought by the newly freed slaves of Guadeloupe was the right to rent and own property. Ex-slaves viewed everything they did to legitimize their citizenship as a means to protect their newly acquired assets: “With the upheavals of the 1790s and the emigration or death of a substantial number of landowners, more land became available to the new citizens. . . . [Ex-slaves] saw that being legally married and declaring and legitimizing one’s children could help solidify a family’s new, and fragile, hold on property. Registering births and marriages was also a way of asserting another fragile right: the right to liberty itself.” Politically savvy former-slaves used formal systems of power to cement their newly attained citizenship. Unfortunately for the ex-slaves of Guadeloupe, the political situation in the metropole was rapidly changing which empowered local, white elites to obstruct blacks’ assertions of freedom.

Local officials quickly began to restrict former slaves’ movements as well as demanding free labor from ex-slaves as payment for their right to citizenship. Beginning as early as 1796, the whites of Guadeloupe were already taking small steps towards re-enslavement. By 1802 white dreams of re-enslavement were realized and ex-slaves’ greatest fear came true. The world slaves had spent so much time dreaming of and

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83 Ibid., 27.
84 Ibid., 33.
working towards collapsed around them and their hard-earned rewards of freedom were
stripped away in an instant.

The slave community of Guadeloupe is unique because they briefly experienced
the freedom that many slaves spent their entire lives hoping for. Unlike the slaves of
Martinique or Virginia, the revolutionary slaves of Guadeloupe temporarily realized the
ultimate goal of rebellion: emancipation. The historical importance of this moment
cannot be overemphasized. Because the ex-slaves of Guadeloupe were successful in
demanding their freedom and citizenship, we know what the transition from slavery to
freedom looks like. Had Francois, Michau, and Hierosme been successful in Martinique
or Gabriel victorious in Richmond, they may have constructed new, slave-less societies
similar to post-emancipation Guadeloupe.

Section IV: Gabriel’s Rebellion—Conspiracy in Comparison

Politics, Partisanship, and Rebellion:

Perhaps nowhere in history did politics, philosophy, slavery, and rebellion
intersect more perfectly than in Federal Virginia. Like in 1710 Martinique and 1793
Guadeloupe, Richmond’s white community in 1800 appeared to be violently at odds over
political and economic differences. Farmers and merchants, Jeffersonians and Federalists
clashed in the streets, courthouses, workplaces, and taverns. To anyone observing the
election of 1800, it appeared as if the Union would be pulled asunder by the fierceness of
political rivalries.85 Slaves, like anyone else living in Richmond and its surrounding
counties, would have noticed these divisions. Gabriel Prosser, the masterminds of one of
the most famous slave conspiracies, was no different. According to historian David

85 Douglas Egerton, Gabriel’s Rebellion: The Slave Conspiracies of 1800 & 1802 (Chapel Hill: UNC Press,
1993), 34-35.
Egerton, “The opportunity Gabriel sought lay in the divisive political climate of Virginia. From start to finish, the shadow of politics hung over the affair. Spending many of his days in Richmond laboring beside politicized artisans, Gabriel could hardly fail to notice that white elites were badly split along partisan lines.”86 This split within Richmond’s white community was not entirely unlike the economic divide between small and large planters in 1710 Martinique or the political division between revolutionary and royalist in 1793 Guadeloupe. And like the slave-conspirators of Martinique and Guadeloupe, these economic and political fissures within the white community led Gabriel and his comrades to believe that the moment had come for rebellion.

Along with this knowledge of divided political circumstances, Gabriel had the courage and foresight to strike a powerful blow against the institution of slavery during what appeared to be its weakest moment in recent history. Egerton concludes that Gabriel and his fellow conspirators possessed “The desire to breathe free [which] had never been absent. The Revolution he explains, “had fired the slaves with a sense of their natural rights. The divisive election of 1800 provided slaves with an opportunity that had been lacking since Dunmore’s decree87: a split among white elites.” “In the midst of these rhetorical rumblings of civil war,” Edgerton continues, “Gabriel apparently came to believe that if the slaves could ever revolt successfully, the time had arrived.” Gabriel, sensing the urgency of the times, used the political information he gathered working and living in Richmond’s industrial sector to develop a plan to end slavery in Virginia. The first critical aspect of his plot was to pit lower and upper class whites against one another. Gabriel and his supporters knew that he could not defeat a unified white community. He

86 Ibid., 35.
also understood that he could not effectively fight against white elites without a large army of slaves, free blacks, and poor whites. He planned to use this racially and socially diverse force to attack the capitol in Richmond and hold the government hostage until freedom was secured for slaves. Gabriel was clearly a master tactician, but his infamy as a leader derives from his capacity to analyze and understand complex political information.

Gabriel, like all Virginians, was aware of the external difficulties the United States faced during the early Federal period. The fledgling young nation had enemies surrounding her with few ways to defend her people and their interests. Virginians felt as embattled and helpless in 1800 as the Martinicans had felt ninety years earlier. Shortly before Gabriel’s Rebellion in 1800 David Meade, a contemporary Virginian, wrote: “The unrighteous, impolitic & distracting war [with France] we here think will prove fatal to the Union and must bring evils upon the three or four Southern States, more terrific than Volcano’s or Earthquakes.” It is clear from the documentary record that Virginians (and southerners in general) were frightened that the quasi-war with France would embolden the slave population and cause violent insurrection. The series of international disturbances with France, England, and Spain added to the already tense domestic political atmosphere spawning from the elections of 1800. All of these factors combined in a manner that encouraged Gabriel and his followers that their freedom could

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88 Note: It is possible that the slave-conspirators of Martinique also considered allying themselves with poorer whites against the powerful planter class. See the relationship between Monseur Delore and the slave-conspirators. But ultimately, it appears that the Martinicans planned to eradicate the island’s white population. The racial undertone of the Martinican rebellion is markedly different than Gabriel’s emphasis on class warfare and wealth redistribution.

89 Ibid., 41.

90 Ibid., 41.

91 Note: See comparison to 1710 Martinique where the island was under constant threat from imperial rivals (Spain, England, Netherlands) and pirates.
be won. Gabriel, a natural born leader and political analyst, would not allow such an opportunity to pass.

The political rhetoric coming out of the gubernatorial election of 1800 also convinced Virginia's slaves that their freedom could be seized. The new governor, James Monroe, appeared to be sympathetic to slaves' demands for freedom, only further emboldening Gabriel and his followers. Egerton writes, "Judging from the rancorous election rhetoric Monroe appeared to be a man who supported French ideals, and for the slaves, that was all to the good."92 Monroe, a Francophile, spoke in the language of the Enlightenment; but in reality the new governor's ideological beliefs squarely allied him with the slave-holding population of Virginia. Taking Monroe's rhetoric at face value, Gabriel and his co-conspirators calculated that the new governor would support their strike against human bondage. They could not have known from the election of 1800 that Monroe would brutally suppress their rebellion and hang all of the conspirators on Richmond Hill. Gabriel's misinterpretation of Governor Monroe's intentions was only one of several fatal flaws in his plan to end slavery. Unfortunately for him and his followers, Gabriel would largely overestimate the slaves' likelihood for success due to the inflated rhetoric surrounding the election of 1800. The political knowledge that the election offered, then, was a double-edged sword, providing evidence of very real political division but an exaggerated picture of white disunity.

Douglas Egerton provides a perfectly logical explanation for why Gabriel misconstrued the political language upon which he based his plan for rebellion: "From Gabriel's urban vista, it was simplicity itself to choose between the two sides in the impending struggle. But the cities masked what was in fact a very complex political

92 Ibid., 42.
picture." Gabriel, and slaves like him throughout Richmond, had a plethora of information provided to them through conversation and print. Unfortunately for the conspirators their isolated position in Richmond did not allow them to fully comprehend the scope of the political landscape outside of the capital. This led Gabriel and his followers to overestimate the depth of division within the white community which ultimately led the conspirators to miscalculate their strength. Egerton writes that, “The failure of Gabriel was not one of logic; it was one of information.” Had Gabriel been privileged with a better understanding the commonwealth’s and then nation’s political environment, he likely would not have led a rebellion against the white elites of Richmond. Nevertheless, Gabriel and his fellow conspirators should still be credited as compelling examples of slaves analyzing complex political information and translating their knowledge into a highly strategic plan to end slavery. These men and women wanted their freedom, but they were not foolhardy. Although they were ultimately unsuccessful, the conspirators of Gabriel’s rebellion cannot be accused of a lack of political acumen. Instead they can only be faulted for lacking a fuller perspective.

**Gabriel’s Plans for a Post-Emancipation World (1800 Richmond):**

Although Gabriel did not have the chance to live out his vision as his brethren in Guadeloupe were privileged to, he nonetheless articulated a clear and detailed plan for the aftermath of his rebellion. Gabriel and his followers exhibited that slaves’ political knowledge extended beyond reading the circumstances to exact change. These slave-conspirators had radical visions for post-emancipation which included racial mixing and class reorganization

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93 Ibid., 38.
94 Ibid., 40.
When the slaves rose in demand of their rights, Gabriel told Ben, another of Prosser’s slaves, ‘he expected the poor white people’ and ‘most redoubtable democrats’ in the city to rise with them. Their revolt need not be the prelude to a race war; the black and white insurgents he expected to recruit would spark a class struggle that had a recognized purpose and might force specific concessions from the state authorities. ‘Quakers, the Methodists, and all Frenchmen…were to be spared,’ Gabriel insisted also to spare the poor white women who had no slaves.’

Egerton insists in his study of Gabriel’s rebellion that the slave conspirators saw class as the dominant political issue to address, and imagined a world where working classes could unite to demand justice for their grievances against the wealthy merchants and planters. Gabriel did not intend for his rebellion to take on the flavor of a race war. Unlike Claude, Michau, and Laurence’s rebellion in Martinique, which had proposed eradicating the white population, Gabriel’s plan envisioned a united interracial working class that would govern the state of Virginia and distribute the benefits of labor equitably. In this way, Gabriel’s vision of Richmond after his rebellion more closely resembled the future that the slaves of Guadeloupe demanded for themselves during the revolutionary years of 1793-1794.

Much of the historical record produced by Gabriel’s Rebellion hides the true intention of Gabriel and his fellow conspirators. Frightened planters throughout the South painted the doomed rebellion as a race war that had aimed solely to annihilate whites. Egerton discusses the planter mindset following the discovery of Gabriel’s rebellion and how white elites could not accept the true tenets of Gabriel’s preachings: “It would require too much for the planter class to understand that what Gabriel demanded was freedom and a rightful share of the benefits of society; it was more natural for troubled consciences to believe that the bondsmen wanted not justice but retribution.”95 In reality, 

95 Ibid, 78.
it was political, economic, and social justice for African Americans and working class whites that Gabriel envisioned. Adhering to a vision of freedom shared with their brothers and sisters in Guadeloupe, Gabriel and his followers hoped to become loyal citizens in a country that would recognize their value and human equality. He did not want to destroy whites because of the color of their skin, but because of their enslavement and mistreatment of African Americans. Gabriel aimed to topple the balance of power and redistribute wealth and influence among working class blacks and whites. Gabriel’s vision for Virginia following his rebellion was utopian to say the least, a philosophy that was prominent in some of the alternative political discourse of the day. Unfortunately for Gabriel and all African Americans living in Virginia, it would take another one hundred and fifty four years for the government to recognize blacks’ inherent equality and the need to redress centuries’ worth of grievances. Despite Gabriel’s failures, he was a great articulator of freedom and social equality. By rebelling in 1800, Gabriel joined a long list of courageous slaves who risked their lives to reorder a society defined by racism and oppression. He, like the rebel-slaves of Martinique and Guadeloupe, used political know-how and an understanding of society to seize a moment in history and, in the process, change it forever.

Section IV: Conclusion

The historical impression remains that rebellions were the reckless, isolated reactions of slaves to the overseer’s lash or the brutal rape of a loved one. Many scholars and laypeople alike believe that angry slaves responded to violence with violence. For centuries white elites nurtured this vision of slaves as impetuous, ignorant, and aggressive. They were afraid to admit that slaves were thoughtful, strategic, and well-

96 See Brown vs. Board
informed because this acknowledgment undermined white philosophies of superiority. In contrast to the myth crafted by white elites for public consumption, slaves did not simply rebel seeking revenge for individual cruelties. Instead, slaves rebelled to permanently destroy the cruel and intolerable regime of slavery. In order to achieve this lofty goal, slaves carefully received, interpreted, and translated political and social information into well-formulated plans for revolution. This thesis forever dispels the myth that slaves were Sambos, replacing it with the reality that slaves were politicos.

In 1710 Martinique, 1793 Guadeloupe, and 1800 Virginia, rebel-slaves processed complex domestic and international information and used it to assess the time and the means for action. The slave-conspirators in 1710 Martinique understood that threats of imperial warfare and piracy weakened the master-class. The slaves of Guadeloupe knew that the French Revolution has loosened the colonial government’s grip on the reins of power. In Richmond, Gabriel and his followers recognized that the threat of war with France de-stabilized the security of the fledgling United States. Each of these slave conspirators, across time and space, carefully considered international relations and the affect of global warfare and competition on their individual communities before deciding to rebel.

In addition to the importance of international information for the decision-making process of rebel slaves, slaves primarily relied upon their knowledge of domestic relations when formulating their plans for rebellion. The rebel-slaves of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Richmond witnessed and relied upon the instability of the white community, believing that the enemy, divided, could be conquered. The slaves of Martinique witnessed the daily clashes between the small cocoa planters and the great
sugar planters. The revolutionary slaves of Guadeloupe saw the violent fissures between revolutionaries and royalists. And the slave-conspirators of Richmond watched violent displays of political partisanship between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans in a contentious election. Each group of slave-conspirators observed divisions within the white community and realized that this disunity offered the best opportunity to seize freedom. Despite these careful calculations, the majority of these slave conspiracies ultimately failed. However, these nascent rebellions did not fail because their architects were unintelligent or inherently violent and irrational aggressors. These conspiracies failed because slaves underestimated the power of racism and greed. Slaves did not fully understand that the white community would set aside their bitter differences in order to maintain their regime of racial oppression.

Most slave rebellions did not realize their goal of emancipation and general equality. However, despite their ultimate failures, these uprisings demonstrate that slaves dreamed of freedom and labored carefully and constantly for emancipation. It is clear that slaves were not passionate or foolhardy. They were master tacticians who cautiously and optimistically waited for the perfect moment to rise up against their oppressors in hope of creating a radically new world. The documents of the Supreme Council of 1710 are invaluable in further substantiating this important observation on the nature and purpose of slave rebellions. The slave-conspirators of Martinique and Richmond believed that such a moment had come in 1710 and 1800, respectively. To their dismay, their perfect moments came and went with no substantive change. However, for the few rebel-slaves like the Guadeloupians and Haitians who won their freedom, the risk of rebellion was certainly worth the reward of freedom.
Note on Translations:

This thesis involves the translation of eighteenth-century French documents into modern English. This alone is a demanding task. Whenever a scholar transfers meaning between two different languages context is inevitably lost. However, these challenges are made even more difficult when cultural contexts differ and multiple inter-lingual translations are required. This thesis must take into account not only the translation of eighteenth-century French court records into English, but also a translation that occurred three hundred years ago. The court interrogators of Martinique engaged in translation, interpretation, and assignment of meaning during their questioning of slaves following the 1710 Conspiracy. The interrogators took the words spoken by slaves and translated them into “official French.” During this process the original meaning of the slaves’ words was certainly lost. Most slaves in 1710 Martinique spoke creole and many slaves still thought and spoke in their native African languages. Therefore the answers slaves gave while under interrogation lost contextual (and cultural) meaning when they were translated into French by the French-speaking Martinican officials. So before the translation from French to English ever occurred, some of the slaves’ original meaning and intent was lost when the interrogators translated from creole to French.

Having already admitted that an unknown amount of original meaning was lost when the interrogators translated from creole to French, I attempted to preserve the most meaning possible when translating from French to English. To accomplish this purpose, I distributed the interrogation records to a native French speaker and two native English speakers (who are students of French). With their help, the documents were translated by committee. Each translator studied the documents individually in their entirety. We then
compared the differences between our individual translations and discussed the meaning behind the words we disagreed upon. When there were disputes we looked to contemporaneous historical sources (ex. eighteenth century dictionary) to determine the best meaning. Even with these efforts and precautions, many words simply did not translate. For example, the word “ajoupa” appears to be either a creole or African word for hut. But no contemporary dictionary confirms this definition. This example confirms the difficulty of conveying meaning between three distinct languages.

Furthermore, in order to fill in words that were either illegible or unknown, we relied on grammatical structure and historical context to fill in the blanks. Although efforts were made to obtain the most accurate translation possible, this work, like any other translation, encountered admitted difficulties and should be read with the understanding that much of the original meaning conveyed by the slaves in 1710 has been lost. This being said, these documents are still rare and valuable sources for future scholarly endeavor.

Appendix:

Documents and Interrogations relating to the 1710 Slave Conspiracy in Martinique:

Note: The page numbers cited in this appendix are the folio numbers written directly on the documents themselves. Some folio pages contain two written numbers (the purpose for which I cannot explain).

“Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 1 April 1710,” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, 779.

Extract from the registers of the Superior Council of this island, Martinique:

WANTED by the Council: The criminal process extraordinarily pursued at the request of Jean Dryel, Sir/Mr. Du Parquet, knight of the military order of Saint Louis, lieutenant for the king in the government of this island of Martinique, commandant of La Trinité and other districts [?], plaintiff and complainant (literally: asker/seeker and complainer)
against Guillaume Lauba, inhabitant of the district of La Trinité. Paul, Pierrotin, Leuillé, Colin, and other black slaves of Lauba and the named [Tam?], also a black slave of Sir/Mr. Duc of the island of Grenada, and others accused of having mistreated and provoked with sword and club blows the blacks of Mr. Du Parquet going back to his home loaded with [?] and necessary provisions, and [of having] broken and pillaged part of their loads and [of having] forced them to flee (literally: “every man for himself”).

The request presented to my Sir/Mr. Intendant by Mr. Du Parquet, the communication to the substitute for the procurer general of the king, his indictment of the 24th of November and the ruling of Mr. Intendant of the 25th, who will be informed of the contents of the request by Mr. Bernard [Dehauterive?] [???] for the Commissioner to this effect, to transport himself to the places and, with the information, pursue the necessary procedures to reach a definitive judgment (literally: “until a definitive judgment”) exclusively for those people brought back to the Council

and ordered [that he will belong?—meaning unclear here]. Then the ruling of Dehauterive, Commissioner, of the 26th that the witnesses will be produced Monday, December 2, and following, [in] Greffe’s chamber at La Trinité, together [with?] the report of the doctors who bandaged Du Parquet’s wounded blacks. Consequently, the inquiry begun the second day of December continues with the witnesses produced, the report of the surgeons from the 3rd, the ruling of the 4th on the conclusions of the substitute for the procurer general of the king in the district of La Trinité [and?] describes the arrest [literally: “prise de corps,” seizure of the bodies] of the said André and Paul, black slaves of Lauba, [Tam?] of Le Duc, and Pierrot of the named [Beurieur?], and [the proceedings continue] with a personal adjournment against Lauba, the named Le Nantois, and a former teacher for the children of Mr. [Brians?] to be heard interrogated and to respond orally in the case of refusing the indictment. Interrogations [were?] undergone separately by the said André, Paul, and Felix belonging to Lauba on the fifth of December on the same day [as] the interrogations of the other six [in front of?] the named Des [Chameaux?], the teacher of the children of Brians, and [has taken?] the black of Mr. Beurieur. The second report on the state of the blacks mistreated by [Jo. B.?], the request presented to Mr. Commissioner by Mr. Du Parquet, saying that his house was lively and visited by known arbitrators to make a report on the state of [Jielle?] to [assess damages?] and swearing the custody of the said wounded blacks. The ruling and report of the arbitrators, another request from Mr. Du Parquet asking

for new information as a consequence of the ruling of Mr. Commissioner at the end for previous quarrels, insults, and conflicts. The cross-examinations of Gabriel Bellemont, those of André and Paul of the 10th containing their responses, confessions, and denials, other cross-examinations done for Paul, André called “Lucky” [literally: “heureux”], Bessé, Cezarion, Isabelle and Simone, all slaves of Mr. Du Parquet containing separately their responses, confessions, and denials of the 11th. The Declaration of the day by Paul [Beuvrier? Probably the same as Beurieur above], another cross-examination done
separately on the 12th for Lauba’s wife [in front of?] the named Dual, schoolmaster, and [??] and Pierrrotin, again the blacks. Another cross-examination done the same day for Jean Baptiste Lauba, son. The ruling for recapture and for the conflicts of the witnesses heard and the inquiries into the accused of the 13th of the month, the request presented by Mr. Du Parquet saying [that he] visited the black and the blacks nursing women. The ruling of the 14th below, and the report as a consequence of the visit to the slaves of Corviaud and Chesnelong, the doctors, of the 16th. The request presented to Mr. Commissioner by Mr. Nicholas Le Merle, inhabitant, saying that the named Gilles, one of his blacks who was “mistreated” by those of Lauba [was wanted?] and visited by the doctors for their report to be attached [and his right?]. The ruling of the communication [for] commandeering and rulings, the report in consequence of Chesnelong and Corviaud of the 16th, the recalling of

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the witnesses and their confrontation with the accused. Other confrontations between the accused and on the part of the blacks of Mr. Du Parquet [against all of those?] accused from the 16th and 17th of the month of December. The next ruling of the Commissioner against [Tham?], another request presented by Lauba to have the release of his blacks Colin, Leuillé, and Pierrrotin for the reasons defined. The order for their release under agreement to bring them back (literally: “represent,” but I think it’s more in the sense of re-present) and place them in the royal fort at the meeting of the Council [under pain of punishment?]. Next, Lauba’s submission of the 18th, the ruling of Mr. Intendant of the 23rd that all will be communicated to the substitute for the procurer general of the king. The definitive conclusions of the substitute for the procurer general of the king dated the 28th. Finally signed Le Moyne, brought [secretly? Reads: “cacheptée”] to the office with the suit. Also wanted, a certificate from R.S. Courchetet of the order of Saint Dominique [designating?] the priest of the district of La Trinité dated the 20th of the month of December, offers that Lauba had begged him to make on his part to Mr. Du Parquet, [illegible] to the suit, the Council’s ruling today after the consideration of the suit during the morning session, having heard so much [from?] Mr. Du Parquet and Lauba, and in front of the black man named Jacques and the black woman Besse who, after Mr. Du Parquet had withdrawn, supported Lauba like they did in their confrontations before the Commissioner. The said ruling ordered before judging definitively

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the cross-examinations of André and Paul [above?] prisoners separately in the Council’s chamber today in the morning, their cross-examinations undergone as a consequence today separately “in the hot seat,” together [with] the writs of notification and summons, verbal proceedings and other parts of the trial. The whole thing [thoroughly?] examined and heard [by] Mr. Dehauterive, the Commissioner, in his report. The Council has declared that it is sufficiently justified in the trial that for a long time, Lauba’s blacks, feeling themselves supported by him, have perpetrated quarrels and beatings, having gathered [together] and even having carried a [??] that they [Lauba’s
slaves] sought a fight with those of Mr. Du Parquet. There has even been some [??] between them about which Lauba knew. In this way the last undertaking of the blacks against the same ones they waited for along the main road and who seemed to have been killed by them in passing to go to their master’s house laden with [??] [was done] without Lauba [even] giving the order, although it is acknowledged that he had stayed at his house that day deliberately, but, to the contrary, he had supported the end result, he himself having struck. This is the result of the proceedings and the steps [of the process], and he has been made to make offers of reparation and to provide satisfaction in everything.

For reparation in such cases and other results, the Council has condemned and condemns the black André, Lauba’s slave, as the leader of the uprising, to

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be hung and strangled until death by the executioner of the high justice [high court, maybe?] in the public square of the town of La Trinité; [the Council also has] condemned Paul, another of Lauba’s slaves, to receive one hundred lashes by the switch and marked with two fleurs-de-lys on the shoulders; and Pierrotin, Leuillé, and Colin, some of Lauba’s other slaves, [are condemned] each to receive twenty lashes with a switch by the hands of the executioner. All of them, before undergoing the punishments, will attend the André’s execution, with each of them [wearing] a sign where will be written “Seditious Black and Mutineer” from a stick hung from their necks. [They are] then to be returned to their master. Ordered that, to this effect, they will all be taken from the prisons and brought securely to the town of La Trinité. Turning over the execution to officers of justice of the district. And with regard to Lauba, the Council has sentenced and sentences him to forfeit the price of his slave André, given his complicity, and [to pay] 500 livres [upon demand?], half to the king, and the other half to the church of the district of La Trinité. Moreover, [he is to pay] two thousand livres in damages and [court fees?] to Mr. Du Parquet, as much for the delay for his blacks as for his house and the loss of his [utensils? Supplies?] and all the costs, the doctors’ report, bandages and medicine for the blacks of Mr. Du Parquet and of the named Gilles, black slave of Mr. Le Merle the son, and for all the expenses of the trial done deliberately. It is forbidden that Lauba and his blacks,

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the most repetitious offenders, under pain of corporal punishment for him [Lauba] and death for his slaves. [The Council] orders that the description of the arrest of the black [Tham?] belonging to Mr. Le Duc will be pursued with diligence by the procurer of the king or by his substitute in the place of La Trinité, and to avoid such accidents in the future and the misfortunes that could arise from the rebellion of the blacks on this island, the Council orders the diligence of the procurer general of the king or of his substitutes, the prohibitions against blacks carrying knives or clubs and against gathering together are reiterated and published in all the districts of this island, of which [action] the Council will receive certification within two months. [The Council] enjoins the officers and

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inhabitants to maintain the rules and in similar cases to [take the resulting action?]. The ruling given in the Council the 15th of January, 1710, Signed Devasle Greffier.

Sent to the court with my letter of the first of April, 1710

“Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 1 August 1710,” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, 867.

Regulation against those who persist as black maroons or unknowns.

Nicolas Gabaret, knight of the military order of St. Louis, Intendant for the king in the general government of the French islands and the continent of American, [governor?] in particular for Martinique and commander-in-chief of the island.

Nicolas Francois Arnoul, knight, lord of [Vaucresson?], Councilor of the king in his councils, Intendant for justice, police, finance, and the navy of the French islands and of the continent of America.

On the recommendation that we read that

several inhabitants of the isolated places of this island have in their homes black men and women who have gone there, whether they are runaways by their masters’ and mistresses’ manner of treatment or, being new to this island, [they] neither know nor remember the name of those to whom they belong, are happy to give them [names?] by the notes that they had attached to the doors of the parish church [not entirely sure what this sentence is supposed to mean] of their neighborhood and then to keep them in their homes, [?] making them work for their profit, which causes resentment to those to whom they belong. [Beginning of sentence unclear] in the future that they [?] the abuses. [We] order all the inhabitants and others who have in their homes black men and women who

[do not belong to them to bring them [?] in the prisons of Fort St. Ruiz eight days after the publication [of the order?] under pain of a fifty-livre fine for each black man or woman that they conceal and keep, and following the extension of the places from which they will be sent, there will be paid [a reward?] to those who bring them [in], in proportion.

[We] forbid all the inhabitants and others of whatever status and condition who can [be?] to keep any black men or women who do not belong to them, but, on the contrary, [we order them] to bring them [in] as is right under the rigors of the regulations [imposed upon?] the subject.

[We] enjoin the subjects to [?]
[very hard to understand] the touch and [??] in the middle of publishing the decree on the door of the church of each parish [of Martinique?] of their [?] the Sunday of the month of August next, not to attach a copy [of it where someone might not find out?]

Given on Martinique under the seals of our arms and conventions of our secretaries, the first of August, 1710.

“Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 3 September 1710,” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, 879.

Having told of Martinique that forbids against selling [?] to slaves. 12 August 1710.

We, Nicolas Gabaret, knight of the military order of St. Louis, Intendant for the king in the general government of the French islands and continent of America, governor in particular of Martinique, and commander-in-chief of said islands.

Nicolas Francois Arnoul, knight lord of Vaucresson, Councilor of the king in his councils, Intendant for justice, police, finance, and the navy for said islands.

Having proposed to several inhabitants and merchants of this island to contribute to the arming of a corsaire [to] guard the coast to secure commerce [make commerce secure], which corsaire would only be meant to go around this island and fend off enemy corsairs that are continually [here] and frequently seize barques [small boats] and other ships forced to sail in different ports without which commerce would be interrupted and even the seizures perpetrated by French corsairs on enemies in the ocean, several of the inhabitants and merchants of the best intentions submit even in writing to the propositions that we have made to them. This gives us room to hope that their courts will also subscribe in large part to our said propositions, above all having taken care like we have done to communicate them to the inhabitants of this said island. We would be surprised not to be able to succeed in our designs that were only commendable and advantageous to the said colony. And desiring, however, to assure the said commerce as much as it will be possible for us to do, we order that all captains who had arrived on this island, before setting out, to outfit their ships in the following manner: they will submit a muster to the office of the clerk of the court, [they will] do a tour around the island and give chase to enemy corsairs if they find any
for three or four days, and to this effect, they will be obliged to pass by the cul-de-sac of
La Trinité to take their orders there and a certificate from Monsieur Du Parquet who
commands there or whoever else is there in his absence who will be in command from
whom we will know that they have carried out the order above and then [where?] they
will go in this town to take their commissions. And as it may be that the said French
corsairs will fight the other English or Dutch corsairs and may have some maimed [on
them], they will be paid as we order by way of certificate from Mr. de la Martiniere, the
doctor of the king in accordance with their wounds in the [?] part made by the captains
with the pirates.

It is forbidden to all captains of corsairs to leave this island without executing what is
written above under pain of prison

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and not to be able to command another ship in the future.

Given on Martinique under the seal of our arms and the singular stories of our secretaries
the third of September, 1710. Signed, Gabaret, Arnoul de Vaucresson. And lower,
signed by Monsieur Moreau, Par Monsieur Marm.

I certify that by virtue of the regulation made by Monsieur the Intendant and me the third
day of September, 1710, so that the corsairs of this island that will attack the English
corsairs to chase them from our coasts and that the pirates who will be wounded or
maimed will receive recompense in the manner accustomed for pirates who will be paid
by the colony as well as the damage done to the boats. I have given the order to the
Captain Deshayes, commander [illegible]

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the tenth day of December, 1710, to set out in a few days towards the cul-de-sac marm
and St. Alousie to give chase there and to take, if it’s possible, the English corsairs we
know must be there, which he has duly executed, having been informed that he has done
this and chased another that he would have taken if he had not been in danger of losing a
mast from three hits from a canon that he had received in his mast. I have granted the
present certificate to serve as in this way as proof, done at Fort St. Pierre, the twentieth of
April, 1711, signed Gabaret.

And lower is written, [?] the present certificate that has been produced by the shipowners
of Atalante today, the chamber occupied for the proceedings, at St. Pierre this twenty-first
of April, 1711, signed de Vaucresson.

“Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 21 December 1710,” Collection
Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive
d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, 900.
Dear sirs:

We, de Gabaret, knight of the order of St. Louis, Intendant for the king in the general government of the French islands and the continent of America, governor in particular of this island, Martinique, commander-in-chief of the said country.

Nicolas Francois Arnoult, knight lord of Vaucresson, Councilor to the king in his councils, Intendant for justice, police, finance, and the navy of the said islands.

[It] is very humbly beseeched and desired to meet Jean Baptiste Montuy, merchant of this island as much for him as for the others interested in the barque Latalante, outfitted with ten canons, armed for battle under the command of Jean Deshayes, bearer of the commission of his

Very Serene Highness Monsieur the Count of Toulouse, peer and admiral of France, that follows [?] the order of the third of September last to all corsairs of this island that before setting out, they must make the muster for their ships and crew that they will return to the office of the clerk of the court [?] of the said island and give chase to enemy corsairs if any are to be found at least during three or four days to then follow their route. The said Deshayes had appeared [?], armed with 120 men and 13 boys according to the list joined here, and according to the order of [Mondir?] M. de Gabaret of this month, he had stayed in the passage between this island and St. Alousie where last Thursday he had attacked two English corsairs of which had eight canons, twenty-four men, and the other with six canons and seventy men against which he fought for two and a half hours and [seized?] the one with eight canons and very much harmed the other. [He] was not able to follow, his main mast and bowsprit being out of service, his shrouds [torn?] and [shredded?] into pieces by the hits from the canon and [other] weapons that he had received from the two said barques during the said battle, in which Deshayes had five men killed and forty-five wounded and maimed, including himself and his lieutenant. As a consequence, the whole thing [ship and crew] was out of commission. And what is more displeasing for the said shipowners, is that there is no mast to be found on this island strong enough for the said barque Latalante, which [mast] is seventy-two feet long, twenty-two inches in diameter. And since in this way this ship that is the most advantageous of the corsairs of the corsairs of this island as much as for its sailing power as for its strength, having already taken another English corsaire eight to nine months ago before the [illegible] pointed that was chasing the merchant ships. And on the point of being setting out for the coast, the interested [men] not being able to bear the realized loss, so considerable as much for the said ship as for the wounded and maimed men if they were not supplied by you, sirs.
This considered opinion [against?] the order of the third of September of which the expedition is a part, the muster of the said ship’s crew it pleases you to order that the recompenses that are due to the said wounded or maimed will be paid by the merchants and inhabitants of this island for the two masts andgravings that will be necessary for the said barque and that for this effect, it will please you to grant them one of the masts of the king which are at the Fort Royal, the only way to be able to send the corsair out again. The mast will be paid by the said inhabitants and merchants, and this [payment] will be a benefit for the whole colony, that this barque is not abandoned, being the most feared by the enemies will otherwise be daily around this island, and [you] will be well. Signed, Montay. To be

communicated to [?] of the submission made by the merchants of this island to respond to it in writing. Given [?] on Martinique this twenty-first day of December 1710. Signed de Vaucresson.

The year 1711, the fifteenth of January by the request of M. Montay to the said name. I, Jean Durand Huissier, the undersigned have delivered the news (literally: “present”) to M. Daniel Gascher, merchant in this town, in speaking to him personally, so that he would know, and here [we are?] to furnish and to satisfy him as to the contents. The order of M. the Intendant below, making a response incessantly in writing to the said request [? Unable to understand], signed Durand.

“Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, April 1711,” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, 905.

To Monseigneur:

M. Arnoul, knight lord of Vaucresson, Council of the king in his Councils, Intendant of justice, police, finance, and the navy

of the French islands and the continent of America.

Pierre Danjou, Gabriel Gaffé, Claude La Roche, Jean Arnaudin, Jacques Breton, Jacques Arnaud, and Yves Bloquet, maimed on the barque Latalante, armed for war under the command of M. Deshayes, bearer of the commission of his Very Serene Highness Monsieur the Count of Toulouse, peer and admiral of France, very humbly beseech [you], saying that they have given you before the request holding that their recompense be paid to them according to the reports of M. Marc Desveause de la Martinieire, doctor employed on this island Martinique by his Majesty. And of the [?] part past, between the
shipowners and the crew of the said barque for whom it was by you ordered, Monsieur, and as the said recompense owed to them be paid by the principal merchants and inhabitants of

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this island in proportion to their means, considering that the supplicants were wounded in a battle against two English corsairs in crossing the island following the instructions that were given on this subject in order to chase the enemy corsairs to promote commerce and for the good of the said inhabitants. The said supplicants, to be sure [?] have recourse to you, Monsieurs, for what it pleases you to allow them to make the owners of the said barque be summoned and two of the principal merchants who have underwritten the remonstrances made on this subject and on which [remonstrances] the said ruling was given before us of the chamber of the navy on the first day that will be [ruled?] by you to proceed and [see justice done?] on the ends and conclusions of the said Request, so that it will be [yours?] and you will do Justice. Signed, Th. Crasson for the supplicants.

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We name the gentleman Houdin [commissary?] in this part to advance the necessary proceedings and on his report at the first chamber of the navy be ordered that it is [his responsibility?], on Martinique, the fourteenth of April, 1711, Signed de Vaucresson.

The Rennoy [don’t know what this is] desires that the supplicants above be able to have the owners of the said barque Latalante summoned and two merchants to the ends of their request, next Tuesday at nine o’clock in the morning on the day given by Monsieur the Intendant for the Chamber of Marine [Department of the Navy?], given the fifteenth of April, 1711, Signed Houdin.

The year 1711, the sixteenth day of the month of April after noon, at the Request of the named Pierre Danjou, Gabriel Gaffé, Claude la Roche, Jean Arnaudine, Jacques Breton, Jacques Arnaud, et Yves Bloquet,

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[pirates? (That’s what the word “flibustiers” means, but I don’t know if it might have had other older meanings)] maimed on the barque Latalante staying in this town St. Pierre. I, Jacques Damien Huissier, the undersigned resident of the said town, brought myself to the home of M. Gase, seizing for M. Cousin, townsman [owner?] of the barque Latalante that they are making in this said town, or being and speaking to him personally at his house of M. Montuy owner of the said barque staying in town in speaking to him personally (appears to be redundant, a mistake). Of M. Robert Haillet, merchant in this town, in speaking to his wife at his house, and of M. Damil Gaschet, also a merchant staying in this town, in speaking to him personally, I have duly notified them and delivered a copy of the present requests and order above and the other parts of what they did not know. Which documents, consequently, I have subpoenaed next Tuesday at nine
o’clock in the morning at the Hotel of the Intendant [probably like the city hall], on which day the [department of the navy] will appear before us of the said Chamber to respond and proceed on the ends and conclusions of the said Request, and see justice done on [the island?] so that it will [belong? Doesn’t make sense here] without expense. A copy given to each of the said gentlemen present. Signed Damien.

“Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 31 October 1711,” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, 911.

Extract from the minutes of the office of the clerk of the civil and criminal court of the island of Martinique.

Desired by us, Claude Honoré Houdin, honorary Councilor to the Superior Council of the Island of Martinique and Royal Civil Judge [?] of police, commerce, and navigation of the said island. The proceedings extraordinarily pursued at the Request and diligence of the procurer of the king, plaintiff and complainant against the black man Michel, called Micheau [???] one of the leaders of the rebellion and uprising of the black maroons of this island, such that he was [?] by the proceedings made in the month of August of last year against the seditious blacks, in which is [?] a stopping of the Superior Council [which puts the rest of Micheau at price? Doesn’t make sense], and [?] against the black man Jean belonging to [Lareus?] Aubriot, and the black women Laurence, Magdelaine, and Marguerite belonging to M. Galier, Audache, and Germont, all defendants and accused of being runaways [literally: “marounage”], and of having followed the black man Hierosus of M. Courtois [of whom the rest was also set a price by the stop?—probably means a price was set on his body as he and Micheau were probably still missing]; the declarations of the seventeenth and twentieth of September last of M. Delore and Haile, military officers, on the subject of the search for and capture of the said black men and women accused [in] the indictment of the procurer of the king of the twenty-first, then our order of the same day, and even so we paid a visit to the prisons where the accused were led to be interrogated. The interrogations were done by us the same day, to the said Laurence, Magdelaine, and Marguerite, and to the said Jeannot and Micheau. Our order then, however, will be communicated to the procurer of the king. His indictment of the twenty-fifth and also our order of the same day, however, the named Jeannot, the slave of M. Deloré, will be heard interrogated on the circumstances and dependences, interrogations done of him the seventh of the month. Our order then [should be?] communicated to the procurer of the king. His indictment of the eighteenth, and also our order of the same day, [on the condition that?] M. Deloré be summoned to be heard on the subject, an interrogation of him done the twenty-ninth. Our order then to be communicated to the procurer of the king, his indictment and also our
order that the said Micheau be interrogated again on what resulted against him in the
verbal proceedings of questions to which the black man [illegible] to be applied the
twenty-seventh of this month, the second interrogation of Micheau. Our order then that
the [illegible] be to him to the Intendant [about?] the confrontation [and?] that of
Micheau and our

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order then bearing that the said confrontation be communicated to the procurer of the
king and the other parts of the proceedings, his definitive conclusions of yesterday and
everything that has been done in the said proceedings diligently examined and the
resulting case [?].

We have declared the said Micheau duly reached [in knowing the persons made?] one of
leaders of the planned rebellion and uprising last year by several seditious blacks of this
island against the inhabitants of this said island, and the persons obstinate in being
maroons, notwithstanding that it is necessary that the rest have been set at price [put on
sale, I think?] by order (literally, “arrest,” but I think this must mean “command” or
“order”) of the Council, and the exemplary punishments that have been done to one part
of the seditious blacks with which I have been acquainted. [We have declared guilty?] the
said black man Jeannot belonging to [?] Aubriot of committing a second offense in
being a maroon, and of having been armed with a gun and joining the said Hierosus and
Micheau, notwithstanding the punishment undergone by him as an accomplice of the said
Revolt. And [we have declared] the said Laurence, Magdelaine, and Marguerite of
having been maroons

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and of having [followed the summer pastures?], the said above-named blacks having
knowledge of the pursuits that one does [illegible], and the punishments with which they
were threatened. For reparation, we sentence the said accused [to know? It’s in the text,
but doesn’t make sense] the said Micheau to have his arms, legs, thighs, and [?] broken
raw on the scaffold, which, for this reason, will be put up in the public square of this
town, Saint Pierre, and then put on [illegible] [with?] his face turned to the sky to finish
his days there. This done, his dead body, carried by the executioners of the high justice
on the main road of the [illegible] to [illegible]. The said Jeannot [is sentenced] to be
strangled until dead, to ensue on the gallows that has been placed in the said place, and
his dead body, after having stayed there twenty-four hours, to be thrown in the road; and
the said Laurence, Magdelaine, and Marguerite [are sentenced] to watch the torture of the
said men, the elbow to the neck and knees, and to be then [beaten] on the bare back,
[illegible], and branded on the forehead with a hot iron, marked with a fleur de lis. This
done, [they should be] put back

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with their masters. We forbid them to run away again under pain of [the punishments contained in] the ordinance. Given by us, Councillor and Royal Judge on Martinique, the thirty-first of October, 1711, signed Houdin.

It has been pronounced, by me, [Connais?] the clerk of court undersigned, the sentence above and elsewhere to the said Micheau, Jeannot, Laurence, Magdelaine, and Marguerite, the accused in the prisons [illegible], which, after having been heard, have said that they are appealing before us of the Superior Council of this island for the reasons that are given [?] and place of which we have [heard? Received word? No verb here] today the thirty-first of October, 1711, in the morning, and they have declared that they do not know how to sign [with the liquid following the domain? Doesn’t really make sense], signed Bertrand [Cermis?], clerk of court.

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Extract of [Larrer?] of the Superior Council of Martinique, pronounced against the black man Michau, slave of M. [Demanas?], duly reach and known to have been one of the leaders of the sedition and insurrection planned last year by several of the blacks of this island.

And it has been pronounced the result of the proceedings against M. Deloré. The said Council has sentenced him [to pay] 100 livres [? “tournois demande” does not make sense] [illegible] so that [?? Illegible] the claims in the recompense promised for the price of Micheau, [the sentence carried out against him?] purposely to prevent recidivism on the part of those with whom he belonged. Made by the Council, the third of November, 1711.

“L’Interrogation de Claude dans Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 27 July 1710.” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence,

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Extract of the minutes of the clerk of court, civil and criminal, of the island Martinique. The twenty-sixth of July, 1710, in the morning in the clerk’s office.

Interrogation done by us, Claude Honoré Houdin, honorary councilor to the Superior Council for the island of Martinique, and royal judge of the island. The slave belonging to M. De Beque, the king’s lieutenant in this island, appeared before us in consequence of our ruling from today, and then the reprimand we received from the king’s prosecutor, plaintiff, and [??] against certain slaves, defendants, and also [because of] an uprising against the whites of this island. Pierre Bertrand attended the interrogation as clerk.

First, after having received the oath of the said slave to tell the truth, we asked him his name, surname, age, birth, quality, residence, and religion.
He responded that his name was Claude, was aged about twenty-two years, and was baptized, was a black slave belonging to M. De Beque, lieutenant of the king in this island.

We asked him why he was brought to the prison here.

He responded that he was taken the night before as a maroon, questioned by those who took him, and how he was taken to the [??] of the habitation of a man of the high court by soldiers of the town garrison.

We asked him how long he had been a fugitive and what reasons he had for being one.

He responded that he had been a maroon since a little before Corpus Christi last (ie late spring/early summer) because the overseer of his master’s plantation wanted to beat him for not having produced enough sugar cane at the mill.

We asked him where he fled during his maroonage and what his intentions had been.

He responded that he hid for some days in the huts of his master’s slaves, some days in the habitation of the man from the high court, and others by the sea, that he ate Caribbean cabbage from the slaves’ gardens and toads that he had trapped, and flour from some of his master’s slaves and from the high court sometimes.

We asked him what company he was in [what company he kept].

He responded [??] the slave of M. La Fontaine Coraille, and [??] Hugues, [??] Jean Blanc, Noel Tous Saints, Marie, and Marion, all slaves of M. De Beque his master.

We asked him where all the slaves he mentioned had run away to.

He responded at the [?] habitation of their master, on the heights where they had their gardens.

We asked him if he had not known several other bands of runaway slaves.

He responded that there were some from Mme Dangennes’s plantation, at the head of whom he had seen one Philippe Creol and that the others were named Jean Gras, [Couacou?] Barbade, Jassemin, Seignor, and a new slave that does not speak French.
and that there was also another band of slaves named Gerosine and François who are slaves belonging to M. Courtois de la Basse Pointe, Mamon, to M. Casseaux, the English slave of M. Maniere who is red-skinned [lit. “of a red color”], a young slave named Jamais Soul (?) belonging to the widow Monnel, and they [Claude and his band] also saw a slave woman named Marguerite whose master he didn’t know and didn’t know what his name was [the master], and that she was the concubine of the said François. There was also M. Demassier’s Micheau, M. Benoit’s Charlot, and Augustin, the slave of M. Ray who had been a runaway since before the death of his master, a young slave named Lucas belonging to M. Marcé, and a little English slave whose name he didn’t know who belonged to M. Martineau. He had heard said that there was another band of runaways of twenty slaves on the heights of M. Descours’s plantation, before the peaks of the [hill?].

We asked him if he had not also known that there were several bands of slaves by Fort Royal and Capesterre (a town).

He responded no.

We asked him if it was not true that all the runaway slaves had formed a plot with some of the slaves of this town against the whites of the town.

He responded that all the runaway slaves named above [??] to come [??] in the time that the moon should die (ie at the new moon?). And then [there were?] to rise up, the slaves of this town who gave the [“gavolet” or “gauolet”—maybe some kind of sign?] to the slaves of the nuns so that they could charge against them together.

We asked him what he meant by this word “gauolet/gavolet.”

He responded that it had been three or four months since the slave Jacob, the nuns’ slave, had brought into his very large hut several slaves to dance a [??] that they called the “gauolet,” which is to fall, get back up, to bump chests with one another, after which they engaged in debauchery [“Ils font la debauche.”]

We asked him what slaves were with Jacob in the debauchery he described and what time they would come to him.

He responded that there was once a Sunday after noon, and that there was a French slave of the widow Pichon, Manuel, [??] Simon, a mulatto who stayed with M. Barbottin, Mereure of
M. D'Estang, Sapion of M. Linche, Spadrille of M. Coraille, Pinot of M. Gasoliet, Joseph belonging to the nuns, [Jam?] and Baptiste of the widow Alexandrin, Micheau of M. Manniere, Coffy of the widow Daubaignon, Samson of the widow Ferry, and a young [??, can’t read the word, but he appears to have been a cooper], whom he believed to be named Roland.

We asked him if there were any slave women who were with the men in these activities and what their names were.

He responded that there were two slave women belonging to the nuns, one of whom was named Laurence, the concubine of Sapion Linche, and the other was named [Calhauers?], Jacob’s wife. There was also a third whose name he didn’t know, but who came from the land of Ibo and was the wife of Camion. There was also Babiche, her sister, and Jeanne Samba, creole slave women of Mme. La Vasse, Agatte the slave woman of the widow Bertrand, Marthe and Manon, slaves to the widow Landaise, Magdelon and [???] and her sister named Dorothée who belonged to Dugas, Jeannetan creole slave of M. De Beque, Jacqueline, slave of Mme de la Chassagne, Fanchon slave of

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Lautoron. [Claude] had forgotten to name among the slave men a young man named Lucas who belonged to M. Marcé.

We asked him if the slaves in their assembly at the house of the said Jacob had come together to name officers to rise up against the whites.

He responded that Francois Pichon is the general of the Gauolets; Jacob the captain, Manuel the major; Francisqué (?) the master of the [? Hostal?]; Pierrot the corporal, Samon a soldier, Samson Linche ensign; Joseph Cambaur, Iam, Baptiste soldiers; Michau also a captain; Coffy and Roland also soldiers. He said that Gerosine, mentioned above, belonged to M. Courtois de la Basse Pointe and the general of the maroons (probably a mistake for captain) Michau to M. Desmassiers, intendant. Mamon belonged to M. Descasseaux, the governor. And he heard Francois Pinchot say that soon they would not serve the whites and that it was from him also that he heard that the runaway slaves of the woods were going to return to find them when the moon was dead so that they could all strike together against the whites in the town of Saint Pierre.

We asked him if Jacob had recruited

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slaves and how.

He responded that when someone wanted to join their company, the said Jacob would make a pocket/pouch of [???] and would make him pay eighteen sols and determined whether he would be an officer or a soldier, according to his age.
We asked him if, when a slave man or woman enters in the huts of the nuns' slaves, he has a particular [?? Mat?] or distinguishing mark so that he can enter.

He responded that when a slave wants to enter, he asks Jacob, that if Jacob agrees, he tells him to make himself as tidy as he is able, to buy a coral necklace and to have it put on him by a slave woman of the Gauolet, after which, wearing this necklace, he presents himself to the sergeant who guards the entry. Then we make a pocket like he has above, and Jacob himself attaches the necklace to the neck of the new arrival.

We asked him the name of the sergeant who manned the entry.

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He responded that it had been about a month and a half since he had been there. There was the slave Soliman, belonging to the widow Costé, who was acting as sergeant, and he [Soliman] gave the respondent his baton to stand guard, saying that he had to go carry some plants to his mistress's house, and that Jacob, [having found out?], gave the said Soliman three or four [hits?] and removed him [from his place], saying that he wanted nothing more to do with him. The respondent doesn’t know who guarded the entry after that.

We asked him if the slaves Sapion and Jeannot belonging to M. Mesnier were also in the Gauolet.

He responded that he had not seen them.

We asked him if La Caillerie's slave Jeannot was not also involved in the plot against the whites, and what position he had been given.

He said it had been three Sundays since, being at the [??], he had heard from a young slave woman of M. Le Quoy (?) whose name he didn’t know and who ordinarily was in the pastures, that the said Jeannot must be a sergeant.

We asked him if the said François Pichon did not engage in witchcraft in Jacob’s hut when they were assembled for their

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Gauolet.

He responded that he [Francois] made cords that he gave out [to the slaves] to return to their masters’ [plantations] when they were runaways, saying that they would not be beaten, also that they could [eat? Looks like “gourmer/gourmander”] without being hurt

97 Unclear, but it appears that Jacob beat the sergeant.
and also they would be stronger than those whom they were fighting. He gave for each cordon a new [??].

We asked him what position Simon the mulatto had and if he had a kind of square hat completely decorated with coral.

He responded that he had only been recruited first as a soldier, that later he rose higher. He [Claude] didn’t know that there was a hat; he had had a necklace of [??] under the collar of his shirt, and that as soon as he had heard that [the plot] was discovered, the had cut it off.

We asked him if it was not true that François Pichon had kept several slave women in the town of Saint Pierre and that he had poisoned those who did not want to enter into his plot [literally, “into bad commerce”] with him.

He responded yes, and that he had heard this from several slaves of the town.

We asked him which one of the nuns’ slave women was one of the mistresses of François.

He responded that it was the slave woman Laurence.

We asked him if this Laurence was not involved in the plot with the other slaves.

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He responded that she made the canaries (??) for the slaves who assembled together, that she the officers among them; but he didn’t know whether she knew that it [the gathering] was for marching against the whites and that when they were making a lot of noise, she told the slaves to be quiet, [that he had seen her several times] with the Gauolets.

He responded that it had been four times.

We asked him what purpose the women served in the Gauolets, Jacob’s wife Cathault, Cominan’s wife Magdelan, who belonged to the nuns.

He responded that they put on the necklaces that gave entrance into the Gauolets.

We asked him if they took any money for these services and how much.

He said that they took ten sols for every necklace.

We asked him what was the role of the slave women Barbiche, Anne, Samba creole, Agatte, Marthe, and Manon, Magdelan, Dorothée, Jeanneton, Jacqueline, and Fanechon.
He responded that Barbiche furnished flour to Pierrot Maniere and that she and all the others put on/made the necklaces for the Gauolet. There were very many times that Jeanneton made a fuss with Sapion, whose concubine she was, regarding Jacqueline, whom he was also seeing, and Jeanneton gave up her Gauolet necklace, which was in Sapion’s coffer.

We asked him if the said Jean, slave of the [??—image is blurry], was not also part of the plot of the Gauolet.

He responded no, but he had seen him fighting in the nuns’ fields [along with?] the slaves of the Gauolet, at the head of whom was Jacob; he did not know why.

We asked him if it was not [May?] that the said Coffy left the Gauolet, when, and why.

He responded that it had been three Saturdays he had [spent? Word unclear here.] with Sapion Linche and that he had given him a big hit with his fist; after that he had not returned to the slaves of the Gauolet, but he had said that he would not break for that to see Jacob.98

We asked him if he had not seen some of the runaway slaves he had named to us earlier at the Gauolet.

He responded no, that however, sometimes Manon had been in the hut of Polon, also a slave of the nuns, to drink water there.

We asked him if the said Colin had entered there ordinarily.

He responded that he had sold [raffia? Taffia? I can’t read the word, but it appeared earlier as well] to the slaves for two sols to mark the [masse? Perhaps nutmeg, which appears later?] when they put in the nutmeg, and what they prepare this way they call water of the [??].99

We asked him if Colin did not also attract whites in the hut.

He responded that he ordinarily brought in a sailor/pirate [literally, a “flibustier”—a freebooter, swindler] who is presently out at sea whose name the respondent didn’t know;

98 The meaning of the last phrase is somewhat unclear: “Il ne casseroit pas pour cela voir Jacob.”
99 Interestingly, nutmeg can have some kind of psychological effect and can even be toxic in large enough doses. Perhaps the slaves were preparing some kind of drug with the nutmeg.
[he also responded] that the sailor would stay when he came to Colin’s hut, in view of the command of the nuns’ slaves and the other slaves.

We asked him what position Colin had in the Gauolet.

He responded that he had heard it said that he didn’t want to enter [into the Gauolet], and that he wasn’t black in comparison with that rascal.

We asked him if the said Colin sold eau-de-vie prepared with nutmegs that he [Claude] knew of the plot.

He responded that he sold them the eau-de-vie for marked sols.

We asked him if the commander of the nuns’ slaves ever received any gifts from the slaves of the Gauolet to permit their assembly.

He responded that he didn’t know, but that he thought that sometimes they gave him sols so that he didn’t bother them inside.

We asked him if he knew any particulars of the slaves of the Gauolet, with the maroon slaves against the whites.

He responded that he had heard from a young slave of M. Marcé named Lucas that

the pear trees close to the lady’s house [?? “fraise?”], that the maroon slaves would come find one another at the time when the moon was dead. And then they would raise up the slaves of the Gauolet to strike against the whites, and they would also be joined by the maroons, who were next to the Pilotte [pilot?] hut and to Fort Royal. [Claude] said that it had been three weeks or thereabouts since, walking behind François Pichon—whom he could not see, being above the house of Mme Coullet—replied to him to go bathe in the river, and François at Jacob’s house. He heard François speaking alone, saying Jesus Maria, the whites are really nasty (“mechants”), to take care against them, that one day blacks would not have to fight [? Phrase unclear, but image was cut off on the side.].

We asked him if the slaves were those of the Gauolet, or if the maroons had firearms like the others.

He responded that he only knew that Gerosine, François his brother, [and] Michau Desmassier, had each one a cutlass, and that Mamon had a large knife; and that Michau Manniere had promised Mamon that when he returned from pirating he would bring back weapons, powder, and musket balls, which he would steal if he took a prize.

We asked him if the said Samuel, slave of M. la Vallée, who had belonged previously to M. Roy du Prescheur, was not also involved in the plot.
He responded that he did not think so, but

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that he knew him for a very rebellious slave and that, in the time that M. Beque was staying at Fort Royal, Samuel came one day onto his plantation to dance with his slaves, whom he beat, and made so much noise that M. Debionné, the bursar, was obliged to strike him with a saber on the arm, and then Samuel fled.

We asked him if he knew where the slaves had decided to begin their revolt.

He responded that he had heard from Lucas that he must start by burning the house of M. Gabaret, called the "Hauteau Gaillard," and then come set fire to the town and [strike against?] the whites if they could, if not they would retreat if they were not the strongest.

At this point we ceased to question him. We read to him the interrogation and his responses, and he said his responses were all true, and he declared that he did not know how to sign. Signed, Houdin.

And the next day, the 27th of July 1710, continuing by us, councilor and judge royal, on the interrogation above, aided by the clerk of court, in the morning in the high court:

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We asked him if on the night he was taken there were not several maroons around the house of M. de la Grande Cour.

He responded that he had not seen any, and that he had only had in his company Fanchon, the slave woman belonging to Sauturon.

We asked him if it was not true that there was a great number of armed slaves around the house of M. the Intendant au Lamasse who threatened the gardeners with burning the house.

He responded that he had not seen any, and he had not heard it spoken of.

We asked him if there were not several maroons who had this design.

He responded that he didn’t know anything about a band of maroons close to M. Beque and that it had been ten days since he had left them because their head, Capont, had picked a fight with him, the respondent.

At this point we ceased to question him, and we read him the transcript of the interrogation and his responses, and he said that his responses contained the truth, and
declared that he did not know how to sign. Signed Houdin and Bertrand, clerk of court, that the present interrogation may be sent to the

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prosecutor, this 27th day of July 1710.

Ordered, in the name of the king [literally, “Je requiers pour le Roy”], that the above-mentioned Jacob, slave of the Ursuline nuns, François belonging to the widow Pichon, Manuel and Francisque belonging to M. Haurerive, Simon the free mulatto, Mereure belonging to M. L’Estang, Sapion belonging to M. Linche, Samson to the widow Feroy, Spadrille to M. Corailles, Lam and Baptiste to the widow Keraudrin, Pierrot to M. Gaschet, Sapion and Jeannot to M. [?], who were brought to prison by the order of M. de Gabaret as accomplices in the assemblies in the nuns’ slaves’ huts under the name of “Gauolet,” to be [phrase unclear, but basically means brought in for interrogation] to be interrogated on the circumstances imposed on/attributed to them; [further ordered] that the slave Michau of the late M. Manniere, Coffy belonging to the widow Daubaignon, Samon belonging to M. Linch, Roland belonging to [Pinteu?], Jean Creu belonging to M. de la Grande Riviere, Colin belonging to the nuns, and Simon to M. [??], and the slave women Laurencie, Cathault, and Magdelan belonging to the nuns, Babiche, Anne, and Jeanne Samba belonging to Mme Vassor, Marthe and Manon to the widow Landais, Magdelan and Dorothee to the Dugas, Jeanneton to M. Beque and Fanchon to Sauturon to be taken and apprehended to be

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questioned on the circumstances imposed on them, this 27th of July 1710, signed Le Moyne.

This was done in conformity to the regulations above and in other parts, given to Martinique, 27 July 1710, Signed Houdin.


Extract from the minutes of the clerk for civil and criminal court of the island of Martinique.

20 September 1711, the clerks’ office.

Interrogation done by us, Claude Honoré Houdin...[titles]...of the slave woman Laurence, belonging to M. Gallet, detained in the prison here for this summons and brought before us pursuant to today’s order in the trial undertaken at the request and diligence of the king’s prosecutor, plaintiff and accuser, against the said slave woman and
others accused of maroonage, at the interrogation of which slave woman we recessed, assisted by Pierre Bertrand, clerk of court.

First, after having had the said slave woman raise her hand and having given to her and received the oath to tell the truth, we asked her her name, surname, age, birth, station, and religion.

She responded that her name was Laurence, was aged twenty-five years or thereabouts, was a creole of this island, was a baptized slave of

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M. Gallet, inhabitant of the Cabesterre quarter of this island.

We asked her who put her in her current state, who hurt her.

She responded that she was injured in the woods by Mme. Sainte Marthe’s by François Ganga, a free black.

We asked her if the said free black was hunting runaway slaves, following Messieurs Deloré and Hache.

She responded yes.

We asked her what she was doing in the woods with the people in whose company she was.

She responded that she was with Gerosine, slave of M. Courtois, Jeannot, slave of the widow Aubriot, Gabriel, slave of Lauba Charpentier residing at the Capesterre, Colas, slave of M. Germont, a slave woman of the said M. Germont who is in the prisons here, and a slave woman of Lamentin whose master she didn’t know and who is also in the prisons here who is named Françoise; [she said] also that the day that Messieurs Deloré and Hache were hunting them, Michau, the slave of M. Desmassiers, had come to find them.

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We asked her when she became a maroon and for what reason.

She responded that it had been about a year and that it was because her master had burned her hut.

We asked her if she was not the [masseuse? The word looks like “masseur,” but I don’t know that it makes sense.] of the said Hierosme, and if she had not been with him from the time she became a maroon until she was taken.
She responded yes.

We asked her how they lived during their maroonage.

She responded that they stole bananas and figs until they were able to make a garden in the woods and that they had made one on the land of Mme Sainte Marthe.

We asked her with what slaves of this town they had negotiated with for vegetables for their garden.

She responded that they didn’t know where the slaves went when they went out because they didn’t want to tell them upon their return, and that the two other slave women and the respondent never left their [“adjoupa”—their home probably?]..

We asked her how long the slave Michau of

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M. Desmassiers was with them.

She responded that the day that Michau became a maroon he went in search of Hierosme, the respondent, and the others of their band, that he was with them for a very long time, and that after that he had worked for eight months for M. Deloré, and that the day that the said M. Deloré and M. Hache came in search of Hierosme and went the respondent was injured, Michau came in search of them early in the morning at the “joupa.” Having asked what news there was, he told them that M. Decresol was looking for them and that Hierosme having asked him if M. Deloré was also searching for them, Michau responded no. However, a little after this, Michau, who had apparently been followed by M. Deloré, having come high up [the hill] underneath the ajoupa, M. Deloré followed with M. Hache, whom it was necessary to [??] because M. Deloré knew very well that Michau was working at their home. The respondent added that

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François Ganga had told her that it was precisely for this that M. Deloré wished to kill her.

We asked her how, since she was a maroon in the woods, she could know that Michau was working for M. Deloré.

She responded that Hierosme had told her that he saw Michau at M. Deloré’s when he went there to find food, and that Michau had come a few times to their ajoupa where he had told the respondent that he was working for M. Deloré and that he regretted having to kill him and that he was cutting wood with the others.

We asked her if it was not Michau who found the adjoupa.
She responded yes, and that he had showed the way to Jeannot, the other slave of M. Deloré.

We asked her if the slave Jeannot of the widow Aubriot had brought a gun when he ran away with Hierosme.

She responded yes.

We asked her what weapons Hierosme and the others had at their adjoupa.

She responded Hierosme and Colas

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each had a bad/shoddy cutlass.

We asked her if Jeannot Aubriot had told them of all the executions of mutinous slaves and that he himself had a fleur-de-lys on his forehead (from the branding).

She responded yes.

We asked her why then she had not gone back with Hierosme to give herself up to her master, for she surely wanted to avoid death if taken with him.

She responded that the wood was big and that she could not get out of it, and that Hierosme had threatened her that if she left he would kill her along the way.

We asked her what purpose she was to serve when Hierosme, Petit François his [illegible], Michau, Mamour, and the others were going to attack the whites.

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She responded that she had heard nothing at all about the slaves revolting against the whites.

At this point we ceased to interrogate her.

Having read the testimony to her and she having said that everything was true and that she did not know how to sign this inquiry according to the law, thus signed Houdin and Bertrand.

Extract from the minutes of the clerk of civil and criminal court.

Today, the 17th of September, 1711, we, the superintendent of militia of this island of Martinique, having been warned by M. Le Degue, Knight of the Military Order of Saint Louis, and Lieutenant of the King on this island Martinique, that we must hunt down the black maroons, on the plot that we had made a long time ago with my slave hunter named Jeannot, and twenty ?? that we would have offered him if he could have engaged the slave named Michau to show him the ajoupa where he ?? Gerosine and five or six other ??s; and having promised us and M. Hache, who had promised him forty francs in addition to what we had promised him, and, what is more, a pardon for Michau to ?? to succeed in a better way, we would have left to M. Hache six men of his detachment, three blacks belonging to M. Desmassiers newly armed with sabers, and our slave Jeannot [who had had lunch that day at the ajoupa with the ?? black maroons]. And we had him arrive at five o’clock in the evening, near the same [potato plant? Doesn’t make sense, but word definitely appears to be “patate”] which is above the sources of the river Cloche. [The word “qui” appears at the end of this page and at the beginning of the next page, but doesn’t seem to make sense.]

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After having arrived, M. Hache untied our slave Jeannot, Francois Codrigton [??? Next few words illegible] the slave belonging to M. Desmassiers [sent] to observe the situation at the ajoupa and in what way they could surprise them. And after having reported to us how it [the ajoupa] was constructed, we walked to the base of the ajoupa, and M. Hache detached six men to go surprise them at the said ajoupa, and the [??] at the bottom of the river [so that?] he would be sure to escape from that place; as soon as the six men reached them, they surprised Gerosine and three black women, one of whom was injured by three gunshots, on her arm and on the right side of her chest, [which caused] her to stay put, and the other taken by the black men Philip and Gerosine escaped and threw herself to the bottom of the cliff; [one of the others] took four shots with a musket...[??? Next phrase makes no sense to me]...after which, the men that M. Hache had placed below by the river joined us at the ajoupa where the said M. Hache interrogated the black woman

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who declared that there was an ajoupa up above made the same day...[very difficult to read]...the black maroons, on which M. Hache...[illegible]...to go there to surprise them, but they did not find anyone because the gunshots that they had taken had scared them away [literally, “had moved them away”; “eloigner”]. Night having fallen, the said detachment, M. Hache, and us, we slept at the ajoupa where two of Gerosine’s dogs had come to give themselves up to us[?? –word looks like “chiens,” but may not be, given the following phrase], who were killed immediately. The next day in the morning, we went to go see the gardens that the slaves had made, which were three hundred and fifty paces from their ajoupa, where we found a square of a hundred paces inhabited by and planted with Caribbean cabbage [that had] come up, yams, cucumbers, bananas, sorrel, parsley,
and other vegetables for their food that the said M. Hache caused to be pulled up and thrown on the ground, after which we [reunited?]. We declare further that it is by the promises that M. Hache and ourselves made to the slave Jeannot that Michau gave back to him the gun that was their ajoupa the day before we undertook

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the expedition, [the gun] had belonged to a black man named Jeannot belonging to M. Mesniers. On the faith of which we have signed the present [text], with M. Hache, M. Jean Moreau and us, the given day and year mentioned above. Signed in this way in the minutes, Hache, Moreau, and Deloré.

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Extract from the minutes of the clerk of civil and criminal court.

We, the superintendant of the militia of this island Martinique, declare that in arriving from the house of M. Le Beque—knight of the order of Saint Louis, lieutenant of the king, commander at Saint Pierre, where we had been to make our report about the maroon black women that we had taken the sixteenth of this month in the ajoupa of the black man named Gerosine—my wife warned us that the eighteenth of the month, the slaves named Jerome and the one belonging to M. Germont, had been encountered by our slave woman Chereze, who was going in search of water at six in the morning a hundred paces from our house and that they had asked where our slave-chaser was, if he was going on the hunt, that they would very much like to speak with him before going to the Capesterre [and they asked] where we were. She responded that Jeannot had his gun for going on the hunt and that we were at the house upon her arrival from the river. She acquainted my wife with the encounter she had had with the said black men and with what they had said. [My wife] immediately her brother and Messieurs Hache and Moreau, who arrived with five armed slaves belonging to M. Desmassiers, and with all the diligence

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possible for searching for Jerome and the other blacks, but they did not find them. The fear that we had that the said black Michau would escape from us and that he would uncover our plan that we had had for a long time to seize him, we made a plot with our brother-in-law Desmassiers, after having taken all the measures necessary to this effect, and had him informed through our slave Jeannot that he shouldn’t fear anything from the slaves we brought with us. To attempt to take Jerome at ten o’clock at night last Saturday, the nineteenth of the said month, Michau, trusting our word, entered our kitchen and was seized that instant by us—our brother-in-law, the black men we had posted—without making any resistance, and then we had him tied up and put him in irons. And on the intelligence that our Jeannot had given us that the slave Jeannot belonging to M. Mesnier was wandering around for the last two days at our slaves’ huts, we detached that instant all of our said slaves and those
of M. Desmassiers, to surprise him, which succeeded, and we immediately put him in irons. After this, we wrote to M. Desmassiers to send us his commander with other blacks for a guard, which we did. And that day [today?] the twentieth of the aforesaid month at daybreak, we saw a black woman who was wandering near our house to see what was happening. We dispatched some black men who took and bound her, the black woman being she who had escaped when we took the other two black women belonging to M. Audache. After this we led Messieurs Desmassiers, father and son, Francoeur the commander, nine of them and four of us, the said slaves in prison, which is all we declared in order to [??] and merit reason, and we have signed with our brother-in-law and we thus sign, at Saint Pierre, the twentieth of September, 1711, Deloré and Desmassiers, by his son.

I require that the said slave men and women be interrogated as a result of these declarations, done this twenty-first of September, 1711. Signed, LeMoyne.

To be done according to the information of the king’s prosecutor; to this effect we will transport ourselves to the said prisons where the said slaves are [??], done this twenty-first of September, signed [??].


The twenty-first of September, 1711, in the morning in the court chamber.

Interrogation done by us...etc...of the black man Jeannot, belonging to the widow Aubriot, held in the prisons here for this summons and brought before us as a consequence of our ruling of today given pursuant to the indictment given by the king’s prosecutor, plaintiff and accuser of the slave Michau of M. Desmassiers and other respondents and other persons accused of sedition and revolt, at the interrogation of which Jeannot we have been in recess, assisted by Pierre Bertrand...etc...

First, after having administered the oath...etc...

He responded that he was named Jean, known as Jeannot, appeared to be about thirty years old, was a creole, was baptized, and was the black slave of the widow Aubriot.

We asked him if he was not taken as a maroon, what day, by whom, and where.

He responded yes, that he was taken last Saturday evening in the hut of one of the slaves named [Lavirnette?].
We asked him how he had been a maroon and why.

He responded that he thought it had been six weeks and that it was because having been hunting for two days in the woods without killing anything, he was afraid of being beaten upon his return.

We asked him if he had not gone to the ajoupa where Hierosme, the slave of M. Courtois, was.

He responded that he had found him in the woods on the land of M. Deloré, that he had stayed there for three weeks with him, and that next, he was with the said Michau at M. Deloré’s house.

We asked him if he, the respondent, was not punished

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by the justice for the affair of the Gauolet, and if he had not been branded with a fleur-de-lys on his forehead.

He responded yes.

We asked him if he had not known that the Council had promised a lot of money to those who captured Hierosme and Michau, dead or alive.

He responded that he had heard in the time that he, the respondent, was in the prisons here for the affair of the Gauolet.

We asked him why he was so bold as to give himself up with his master’s gun near Hierosme.

He responded that he had stayed with him because he had an ajoupa.

We asked him where he first met Michau since he, the respondent, became a maroon.

He responded that he met him in the woods with Colas, [who belonged] to Alexandre Germond, and [with] Hierosme, [who belonged] to M. Courtois, and that there were also three black women with them, one of whom was named Laurence, mistress of the said Hierosme, and another named Maude, the sister of the said Michau, and a third named Marguerite, Colas’s mistress.

We asked him if the said Michau had always been a maroon with them.

He responded that it had been about a month since they had left Hierosme, and that he, the respondent, and Michau hid in the [??house] of M. Deloré.
We asked him [what happened?] to the gun [??] when he became a maroon.

He responded that Wednesday of last week, the slave Michau belonging to M. Desmassiers came to find him, the respondent, among the maroons of M. Deloré and that and told him that the said M. Deloré was going to go hunting for Hierosme, that the respondent should not warn him about it, that he, Michau, was leading the slave-hunter for M. Deloré named Jeannot on the trail that led to Hierosme’s ajoupa, and that the said M. Deloré had made him understand that he would seek a pardon for him. On this, the respondent told that he could tell the slave-hunter Jeannot to give the gun into the hands of M. Deloré, the gun which he, the respondent, had left in the hunter Jeannot’s hut the Sunday before. And he did that.

We asked him where Michau talked to M. Deloré.

He responded behind the huts of

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M. Deloré’s slaves, that he had seen M. Deloré talking to Michau there one evening, and that the same day he saw M. Deloré’s wife talking to Michau in the same place.

We asked him if the said Michau had not worked on M. Deloré’s plantation with the other slaves for a while.

He responded that it had been about three or four months, and before he, the respondent, was a maroon, he had seen Michau, while passing in front of M. Deloré’s house, leaving the house of the said M. Deloré with another slave with whom he was not careful [lit. “Il ne pris pas garde”]. A crate in which there was cocoa to be dried in the sun at eight or nine in the morning, at that time the respondent went out hunting for his mistress, that when the respondent was passing, Michau was behind the kitchen where they said hello to one another as when they were discovered. He didn’t babble for a long time with the respondent and the respondent continued on his way. [The respondent further said that] he had knowledge that last Saturday Michau had given to a black servant woman from the house of M. Deloré named Fanchon six cabbage palms that the respondent and Michau had cut that day in the woods for Fanchon to bring to M. Deloré to eat for dinner having [??] M. Desmassiers, his brother-in-law, and M. Hache. [He said that] before going to cut the palm cabbages, Michau came to find the respondent to tell him to help cut the cabbages, [and] that M. Deloré sent his slave Jeannot to ask him [Michau] for dinner. And he further said that while M. Deloré had had Jeannot ask him [rest of clause does not make sense]...since the respondent had made [him?] give up his gun, he hardly [served?] at all, and that he, M. Deloré would bring back all the documents to his master, which [caused him...? Phrase is very unclear—does not seem to make sense grammatically/syntactically], having a great desire to do it after all since he had given up his gun.
On this we ceased to interrogate him.

Having read the transcript to him...etc...

“L’Interrogation de Magdelaine dans Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 21 September 1710,” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, 410.

The twenty-first of September, 1711...

Interrogation done by us...etc...to the slave woman summoned, held in the prisons here for this summons and brought before us by the jailer pursuant to our ruling given today, then the indictment of the king’s prosecutor, plaintiff and accuser of the said black woman and others accused of maroonage...etc...

First, after having given the oath...etc...

She responded that her name was Magdelaine, called Maude, appeared to be aged fifty-five years, was a creole, was baptized, was a black slave of the said Audache, inhabitant of Lamentin.

We asked her who had brought her to the prisons here and why.

She responded that she had been brought there by M. Deloré when she passed by his door [as she was going] to defend herself in the town and give herself up to M. LeMoyne.

We asked her how long she had been a maroon and for what reason.

She responded that she had left her master’s house at the last Pentecost because her mistress wanted to beat her without reason.

We asked her if she had not joined her brother Colas, who was a maroon with Hierosme, the slave of M. Courtois.

She responded yes, but that when she was taken, it had only been two weeks since she was [with him], and that before that, she had driven [herself] all over the place, having eaten rocks in the river and water for all her nourishment.

We asked her who were the other slaves in the company of Hierosme and Colas.

She responded that there were only the said slaves and the slave Jeannot of the widow Aubriot, with

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Laurence, the slave woman of M. Gallet and M. Samson Germont’s Marguerite, and that the day that the two slave women and she, the respondent, were taken, M. Desmassiers’s Michau came to their ajoupa.

We asked her what Michau said to them.

She responded that he came to give himself up because people wanted to seize him, and he brought with him a little sack of flour, and a piece of salted raw beef, [and] that the said Hierosme having told [Michau], “This is how you go and give yourself up and it has already been a long time since you were gone,” Michau replied, “They want to seize me.”

We asked her if she knew what the said Michau had been doing before that.

She responded no.

On this we ceased to interrogate her...

“L’Interrogation de Jean et Michau dans Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 7 October 1711,” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, 418.

The seventh of October, 1711...

Interrogation of Jean, called Jeannot...

First, after having administered the oath...

He responded that he was named Jean, called Jeannot, was aged around twenty-eight years, from the coast of Africa, baptized, the black slave of M. Deloré, militia officer and inhabitant of this island.

We asked him if he had not had knowledge of the place where Michau, M. Desmassier’s slave, had hidden himself since he became a maroon.

He responded that about two months ago, when he had been hunting for his master, that he had met Michau near the river Capot, that he was drunk that time, that he had met him since at the river Cloche with Jeannot, the slave of the widow Aubriot.

We asked him if Jeannot [was looking for?—word is hard to read] a gun.

He responded yes, but that Michau, with whom Jeannot wanted to go, [not wanting to suffer because Jeannot had a gun?], and that the said Michau had told the respondent that he would bring him the gun to give to M. Deloré, who would return it to the widow Aubriot.

We asked him if Michau was not in the company of Hierosme, belonging to M. Courtois.
He responded not to his knowledge, but that he, the respondent, had met the said Hierosme several times in the woods with two or three black women.

We asked him if Michau had not worked several times during his last maroonage [419] for M. Desmassiers or for M. Deloré.

He responded not to his knowledge.

We asked him, therefore, how Michau was so easily taken.

He responded that he, the respondent, having told M. Deloré that he had met Michau in the woods, M. Deloré told him that he needed to engage Michau to help seize Hierosme, and that if the thing succeeded, he would ask for a pardon for Michau; that, on that, Michau showed him the path that led to the ajoupa that Hierosme had made in the woods, [and] that having missed Hierosme, who was only wounded, M. Deloré told the respondent that it was absolutely necessary that he seize Michau [before?] he would take him at his place [plantation?]; on this, the respondent engaged Michau to come to M. Deloré’s kitchen, where he was seized.

We asked him if the day before, Michau had not cut cabbage palms for M. Deloré.

He responded that he had no knowledge of this.

We asked him why he responded to us in this way since it was he, the respondent, who had told him [Michau] to cut the cabbage palms on behalf of the wife of M. Deloré.

He responded that that was not true and that he had told this to Michau.

We asked him what had become of Hierosme since he had gone missing.

He responded that a black woman named [Cherese?], a house servant of M. Deloré, told him that in going down by the water, she had met the said Hierosme by the side of the [Facoyere?], that she had seen that he was hurt on the neck and on the thigh, and that he had told her to write to the respondent that he wanted to talk to him, who having gone with M. Desmassiers Senior and with two of his slaves named Etienne and Philip, [but] they did not find the said Hierosme.

We asked him if it was not true that before he was on the hunt for Hierosme, M. Deloré had spoken to Michau in the woods.

He responded that he had no knowledge of this.
On this we ceased to interrogate him. To be communicated to the prosecutor…etc…

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Extract of the minutes…etc…

Interrogation done by us…of Michau.

First, after having administered the oath…etc…

He responded that his name was Michel, called Michau, was aged about twenty-five years, was a baptized creole, the black slave of M. Desmassiers, former militia captain and inhabitant of this island.

We asked him if it was not true that in the time he was a maroon with Hierosme, the slave of M. Courtois, Hierosme, the respondent, and other slaves were part of a plot to break into the prisons to save their accomplices held there since August.

He responded that that was false, that that had never been said.

We asked him if Hierosme was not the first captain among the rebels, and he the respondent was the second.

He responded that that was a falsey.

We asked him if M. Maniere’s slave Michau had not given them weapons from his master’s store.

He responded no, that since he had become a maroon he had not seen the said Michau.

We asked him if they had not collected their food in a hole at the bottom of a cliff on the plantation where the young lady [Fraize?] had stayed before.

He responded no, that he did not know what that meant.

**There appear to be pages missing from this interrogation**


Extract of the minutes of the office of the civil and criminal Clerk of the Court of the Island Martinique.
Confrontation (examination, encounter) done by us Honoré Houdin, honorary counselor to the Superior Council of Martinique, civil and criminal royal judge, commerce and navigation of the island in consequence of our decision given today in the proceedings undertaken at the request and diligence of the king’s prosecutor, plaintiff and against Michau of Mr. Demassier (?) and other slaves accused of revolt and sedition, at which examination we were present.

On the 29th of October 1711...in the chamber of the courts.

We have summoned and caused to appear through the jailer the said Michau, and Lucas as well, the which said Lucas we have presented and confronted with the said Michau, and the inquiry after will be...in the case required to tell the truth, we have asked them to declare whether they know each other.

They have said that they know each other well, Lucas who said of Michau [that] “I have heard spoken of in the examinations done of him.”

Then we ordered the reading of the first of the interrogations of Lucas containing his name, surname, and of Micheau, [interpreted?] to declare if he had some reproach to furnish against Lucas; furthermore, that he will be [illegible] after the reading has been done of the interrogations undergone by the said Lucas and his responses following the ruling we have given him...

More of the same, this time on Lucas’s reproaches against Micheau.

[Micheau?] said that what Lucas had said against him contain so many falsities, and as Lucas was bold against Michau face-to-face, which Michau said to him, Hierosme belonging to M. Courtois, [??] belonging to the brothers Duval, and Pierrot [??] were to drink [tasse? Tassia? Word is unclear, but looks like “tassia”] at M. Desmassiers’s house on the twentieth, [“desort?” seems to mean decide] among them who would dash to the prison, tie up [looks like “amarer,” which is probably “amarrer,” to tie] the soldiers who were guarding them, and save their comrades.100 And on another occasion, before their comrades were seized, Michau

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wanted to be the leader of the slaves who wanted to destroy the whites, Francois, Pichau, and Michau belonging to M. Manniere wanted to [gormer? Gourmer? Can’t read the word] with him in front of M. [Piardeau?]’s small house near the river. [Then] Michau presently received a hit with a baton on the arm, and in the end, they allowed him to be their second captain.

And Michau had said that Sapion belonging to M. Linch [who was to Francois Pichon? That phrase does not seem to fit], and Michau Manniere, and other slaves [gave very well

100 The meaning of this whole section is unclear. There are several words that are smudged or missing and the sentence structure itself does not allow for extrapolation.
to Michau who talked of the hit with the baton—this part does not make any sense either], but [he said] that he didn’t know why, and that in this [case?] he was not a maroon and that he was living on his master’s plantation.

The present interrogation having been read back to them, they persisted in [what they said], and declared that they did not know how to sign. Signed, Houdin and Bertrand, clerk of court.

Let this confrontation be communicated to the king’s prosecutor and to [???, this twenty-ninth of October, 1711.

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Minutes signed, Houdin.101

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Margin reads: Interrogation of Deloré.

Extract of the minutes for civil and criminal court of the island of Martinique.

The twenty-ninth of October, 1711, morning, in the clerk’s office.

Interrogation by us, Claude Honoré Houdin...[titles]...of M. Deloré pursuant to our ruling of the eighteenth of this month given in the claim pursued at the request and diligence of the king’s prosecutor, plaintiff and accuser against the slave Michau belonging to M. Desmassiers and others accused of revolt and sedition. At the interrogation of this Deloré, we have been in recess, assisted by Pierre Bertrand, clerk of court.

First, after having asked M. Deloré to raise his hand102 and having received his oath to tell the truth, we asked him his name, surname, age, birth, quality, habitation, and religion.

He responded that he was named Ambroise Milot Deloré, aged about thirty years, a native of Tours, of the Roman Catholic Apostolic religion, and

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was commissioner of the militia [word appears to be “milicien,” which means militiaman] on this island.

101 This entire section starting at 424 was very difficult to make out. Many of the words are illegible.
102 The exact phrase here is "donner leur lamain au Sieur Deloré" which I believe must mean that they made him raise his hand.
We asked him if he knew where Michau, the slave belonging to M. Desmassiers had gone off to since he became a maroon.

He responded no.

We asked him if, since a price had been set on Michau’s head by order of the Council, he [the respondent] had known that [Michau] was prowling around his house.

He responded that about five or six weeks before Michau was seized, he [the respondent] heard from his slaves that he [Michau] was wandering in the woods. He formed a plan to have him seized, first, and then realizing that this [plan] would not work, he told his slave Jeannot that he would go ordinarily on the hunt and to tell Michau that if he wanted to come find the respondent, he would not do him any harm; on the contrary, he would make sure that he received a pardon, provided that Michau help him capture the slave Hierosme belonging to M. Courtois, whom the respondent had found out was with him [Michau], and that

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on that note Michau came to find the respondent, whom he promised to lead to the place where the said Hierosme had his ajoupa, which he actually did three weeks later, bringing back with him a gun belonging to the widow Aubriot’s slave Jeannot, which had been in the ajoupa of the said Hierosme and which they used to go hunting for feral pigs.

We asked him if, since the first time that he had spoken to Michau, he had not employed him on several occasions.

He responded no, and that if Michau had told us so it was out of vengeance because he [the respondent] had put him into the hands of justice.

We asked him if it was not true that he had put Michau to work in his woods for eight months.

He responded no, but that he may have done something out of goodwill with his own slaves, and that he protested that he had read that anywhere, and that if that was not the [friend? Looks like “ami”] that he [the respondent] had had to seize, Hierosme, by means of Michau,

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he would have arrested Michau the first time he encountered him.

We asked him if he or his wife had not sent the said Michau into the woods to cut the cabbage palms for their house and if Michau had not helped them at their house [???] Cacao.
He responded no to what we knew, and that if he had cut the cabbage palms he himself had wanted to [he had done it of his own free will]; the respondent had had no other desire than to help him get a pardon, provided that he help capture Hierosme.

We asked him why, if he had this good will to seize Hierosme by means of Michau, he [the respondent] had not informed M. the General or M. the Intendant, and that moreover, he knew that Michau had a price on his head in the same way that Hierosme did, by order of the Council.

He responded that it was a lack of thought, and that if he had known that [his deed] would have such a consequence, he wouldn’t have done it, not wanting to create such a business for himself.

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However, he given M. de Beque notice eight or ten days before going in search of Hierosme of the intelligence that he had had from the said Michau. And M. Hache had spoken to M. de Beque about it before.

At this point we stopped interrogating him. Having read him his responses, he said his responses contained the truth, and he signed. Signed Houdin, Deloré, and Bertrand

To be communicated to the king’s prosecutor, this twenty-ninth of October, 1711, signed Houdin.

[In light of] the interrogation above, I require that Michau be interrogated again, according to my information, and then the oral examination, and Lucas,

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slave, and, if there is found a need, [for him] to confront the said Michau. This twenty-ninth of October, 1711. Signed Le Moyne.

Let it be done according to the requirement of the king’s prosecutor, this twenty-ninth day of October, 1711. Signed Houdin.

“L’Interrogation de Michau dans Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 3 November 1711,” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, 411.

Extract from the minutes of the Superior Council for Martinique.

3 November 1711.

Interrogation by the Superior Council of Martinique of the slave Michel, called Michau, black slave of M. Desmassiers.
We asked him his name, surname, age, religion.

We asked him if he was not taken as a maroon, the [amount of] time he was a maroon, with whom, and where.

He responded that he had been a maroon for the space of a month, that he was there [out of a spirit of ?? illegible], that he had stayed a long time with Hierosme, that he had [stayed?] about eight months, he left after a while, he mostly wandered around on the plantation where he had stayed for the last month [where M. Deloré? Very difficult to read, but would make sense] made him a promise that he would give him a pardon, provided he helped to take [Hierosme—the page is ripped here, but it would make sense].

He responded that he didn’t know, and he continued further that he had known very well that he had a price on his head, but that he was afraid and did not dare give himself up.

We asked him if it was not true that he was the second leader of the rebellion and if he had not been part of the plot with the other black maroons to attack the whites the next year.

He responded that that was not true, that he had never heard of this plot. We showed him that he was hiding the truth and that this [the fact that he was lying] had been upheld by the interrogation of the slave Lucas.

He responded that he was not hiding the truth and that we could make Lucas appear.

We asked him from where he had taken the pants he presently had on that looked new, who had given him the size [perhaps means who had made them for him/taken his measurements? Literally: “qui lui a donné la taille”], and who had made them.

He responded that it had been three months since Mme Deloré had [fitted him for the pants? “donner la taille”] and that they had been made by a black woman named Fanchon, who belonged to the mistress of the house.

We asked him if the said M. Deloré and his wife had not taken them off him out of fear that he would be taken.

He responded no.

We asked him if the black man Jeannot of the widow Aubriot was not with him.

He responded that he was for a while.

We asked him if he had been a maroon so many times, he not have a fleur-de-lys, or his ears or knees cut off.
He responded yes

“L’ Interrogation de Michau dans Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, November 1711,” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, 412.

Interrogation done by us...etc...of the slave Michau, belonging to M. Demassiers, detained in the prisons here...etc...

First, after having administered the oath...etc...

He responded that his name was Michel, [that he was] called Michau, was aged about twenty-five years, was a creole, was baptized, and was the black slave of M. Desmassiers.

We asked him if he was not taken as a maroon, why, and by whom.

He responded yes, that he was taken before last night by M. Deloré and some of his slaves.

We asked him in what place he was taken.

He responded in the kitchen of M. Deloré.

We asked him what he was doing there.

He responded that M. Deloré having sent word to him to come tell him where Hierosme was hiding, as soon as the respondent entered the kitchen, he was seized.

We asked him how long it had been since he had become a maroon and for what reason.

He responded that he had gone away about a year-and-a-half before due to his dissolution [literally, “libertinage”].

We asked him with whom he had hidden during this time.

He responded that he was with Hierosme, the slave of M. Courtois, and that having had a falling out, he left him [Hierosme], and that it had been about a month since he had joined with the slave Jeannot, belonging to the widow Aubriot, who had come to find the respondent.

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We asked him if during his time as a maroon he had not learned from several slaves, and later from Jeannot belonging to the widow Aubriot, that there were several slaves executed for having plotted against the whites.
He responded yes.

We asked him if he had not also learned that the Council had promised a great deal of money to those who seized him [the respondent], the said Hierosme, Francois his brother, and [??] belonging to M. [??], dead or alive.

He responded yes.

We asked him why he did not give himself up early to his master.

He responded that he wanted to give himself up, but from what people had told him, he was afraid to give himself up.

We showed him that he had therefore wanted to run the risk of being killed by gunshot or of being condemned to death by the law, and that he had held fast in his maroonage and in his rebellion.

He responded that [??] the fear he had had that was the cause of all of this.

We asked him what position he had held among the slaves during the time he was plotting against the whites more than a year ago.

He responded that he did not know, and that that said [rest of sentence is blanked out.

We asked him if Hierosme was not the general and he, the respondent, was not the Intendant.

He responded that he had never heard that.

We asked him if he, Hierosme [??], and the other runaway slaves of the woods were not going to join the slaves of the Gauolet when it was the end of the time of the moon to strike against the whites of this town of Saint Pierre.

He responded that that was not true.

We asked him, if he was innocent as he wished to make us understand, why he did not pull away from Hierosme as soon as he heard that he was at the head of the slaves who were going to rise up.

He responded that he did leave him when he heard about the uprising, and that he even had a falling out with Hierosme as he told us earlier.

We asked him how long it had been since he had left Hierosme.

He responded that it had been more than eight months.
We showed him that he had thus been following his own [??—plan, maybe?], at least [??] with Hierosme,

since the execution of the slaves of the Gauolet and other slaves [??] since they were executed about thirteen months ago.

He responded that it was true that he was with him at that time, but that he did not know what had happened, and that when he found out he left him.

We asked him where he hid himself after he left Hierosme.

He responded that he was in the woods all alone.

We asked him if he never saw Hierosme again.

He responded he had seen him in the woods.

We asked him what he had worked on in those eight months since he had left Hierosme.

He responded that he had helped put out some cases of cocoa to dry outside M. Deloré’s house.

We asked him on whose orders he did this.

He responded that when he passed by there, the slaves asked him to help.

We asked him if it was not true that he had worked on things for M. Deloré with the slaves of M. Deloré.

He responded yes.

We asked him on whose orders.

He responded on the orders of M. Deloré, who had told him that he would ask for a pardon for him.

We asked him if he had not also worked on the plantation of his master, M. Desmassiers, or in his vinegar-making operation.

He responded no, that that was assuredly not true, that he had been to see the slaves of his master, but that his master had not known.

We asked him why he had worked for M. Deloré rather than for his own master.
He responded that the slaves of M. Deloré called to him in passing, and that the said M. Deloré had told him that if he helped capture Hierosme, he would pardon him.

We asked him if he believed that M. Deloré could get him a pardon, and why he had not had Hierosme seized.

He responded that he had taken him [Deloré] to him [Hierosme] and other people, at the ajoupa of the said Hierosme.

But that he had missed them, and that before yesterday, he had heard a black gardener woman named Sameton, [who belonged] to M. Deloré, tell her master that she had met Hierosme in their cacao walking with a baton and that he was hurt on the neck and back.

We asked him what weapons Hierosme had and who were the slave men and women of the company.

He responded that Hierosme had a cutlass as long as one’s arm, and that he had in his company the black man Colas, who belonged to M. Alexandre Germont and also had a small cutlass, Gabriel [who belonged] to Dauba [and] who only had a knife, and three black women named Laurence, Maude, and Marguerite.

We asked him if Jeannot belonging to the widow Aubriot did not surrender himself with a gun near Hierosme.

He responded yes, but that having told the said Jeannot that he was seeking misfortune with his weapon, he [Jeannot] consented that the respondent should bring it to Jeannot, the slave hunter belonging to M. Deloré, who took it back to his master.

We showed him that what he was telling us presently was true, but that the weapon was not also surrendered until they knew that we were going to hunt them.

He responded that it was true, that they were afraid of being taken with a gun.

We asked him if it was not true that last Saturday, he had cut cabbage palms for M. Deloré.

He responded yes.

We asked him on whose orders he did it.

He responded that Jeannot belonging to M. Deloré had come to tell him that his mistress desired the respondent to cut cabbage palms for dinner.
We asked him, then, M. Deloré had him taken and put in the prisons.

He responded that he did not know.

We asked him how long he had worked on M. Deloré’s plantation since he had left Hierosme, and what he had done.

He responded that it was not more than a month that he had helped M. Deloré’s slaves to make [??] in the woods, that as soon as the respondent saw him coming he would flee, but that the work slaves [field hands?] having called him back, he returned. And then M. Deloré told him to work with his people and that he was going to ask for a pardon.

We asked him if he had not had his ears cut, the fleur-de-lys, and another time another fleur-de-lys, and the [??] cut as a sentence of justice for his being a maroon.

He responded yes.

On this we ceased to interrogate him…etc…

To be communicated to the king’s prosecutor…etc…

“L’Interrogation de Marguerite dans Les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 21 November 1711,” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence,

On the morning of the twenty-first at the court chamber.

Interrogation done by us, Claude Honoré Houdin…etc…to the slave woman Marguerite, belonging to M. [?] Germond, held in the prisons here for the summons and announcement before us as a consequence of our ruling of today given in the legal process pursued at the request and diligence of the king’s prosecutor, plaintiff and accuser, against the black woman accused of maroonage; at the interrogation of the said black woman, we have been in recess, assisted by Pierre Bertrand…

First….having administered the oath, received the oath to tell the truth, etc

She responded that her name was Marguerite, called Margot, [that she was] aged about forty years, [illegible—ink from other side has bled through]…baptized, slave woman of M. Samson [?] Germond.

We asked her [why she was in the prisons here?]—hard to read

She responded that she was taken as a maroon in the woods last Thursday by M. Deloré.

We asked her in whose company she was a maroon, how long, and why she became a maroon.
She responded that she was there with Hierosme, Colas belonging to [??:]—of which Colas she responded that was the [??:], Jeannot belonging to the widow Aubriot, which...[??:]...the slave Michau, belonging to M. Desmassiers, brought from M. Magnon's farm, and that he had met a black woman Laurence, who was the [masseuse? Word appears to mean masseuse, but maybe means mistress?] of Hierosme, and Maude [sister?] of Colas. [She told us] that she was only a maroon for four months and [said that this was?] because her master didn’t want to cure her, and she was sick.

We asked her [??] the gun the slaves had with them.

She responded that Jeannot had a gun that he had taken from the home of M. Deloré. Hierosme had a

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cutlass, and Colas [had] part of a sword.

We asked her if Michau was ordinarily with them.

She responded that he lived there sometimes, but that he worked usually at M. Deloré’s home.

We asked her how she knew.

She responded that she had heard it from Laurence.

We asked her what they lived on in the ajoupa.

She responded that they [grew?] potatoes, bananas, figs, and Caribbean cabbage.

Here we ceased to interrogate her.

...official language closing the interrogation...

“La Conclusion du Procureur et les Punitions dans les Minutes de la Council Superior de Martinique, 30 October 1711,” Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry 1492-ca. 1818, COL F3 1 à F3 297, Le Centre des Archive d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, 430.

Extract of the minutes of the clerk of civil and criminal court for the island of Martinique.

The proceedings extraordinarily pursued against the black man Michel, known as Michau, slave of M. Desmassiers, one of the leaders of the rebellion and sedition of the maroon blacks of this island; in this way he was acknowledged by the proceedings of last
August, 1710, against the said blacks of the sedition, through which it appears that a price was set on Michau's head by a ruling of the Superior Council of this island. And again, [the proceedings] against the black man Jean, belonging to the widow Aubriot, and the black women Laurence belonging to M. Gallet, Magdelaine belonging to M. Audache, and Marguerite belonging to M. Germon, all accused of maroonage and of having followed the black man Hierosme, belonging to M. Courtois, upon whose head was also set a price by the ruling of the Council. The declarations of the seventeenth and twentieth of September last; the petitions of M. Deloré and M. Hache, militia officers, about the search and seize of the said accused black men and women; the interrogations done separately of each accused contain their personal responses, confessions, and

There is a blank spot at the top of the next page where something either was not added or was taken out.

...of the twentieth (?) of last September, the indictment and order and compliance that the slave Jeannot of M. Deloré should be heard on the subject. The interrogation of the said Jeannot completed on the seventh of this month. The order that the said M. Deloré on the intelligence he received on the matter was heard on the eighteenth of October, the interrogations of the said M. Deloré completed on the twenty-ninth of October, the ruling on my indictment [put forth] the same day, the new interrogation of Michau completed the same day, and the confrontation between Lucas, another accused black man, with Michau. This ruling was communicated, and everything having been communicated to me and having considered and diligently examined [it], the following [decision] has resulted.

I require on behalf of the king that the said Michau be declared fully convicted of having been one of the leaders of the sedition and uprising planned last year against the whites and inhabitants of this island and of having persisted in his maroonage, notwithstanding the exemplary punishments given to slaves convicted in their plot and the outstanding arrest [warrant] for him, which he knew about.

[I require that] the said Jeannot [be declared fully convicted of] having returned to

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maroonage and of having rejoined the said Hierosme and Michau, notwithstanding the punishment he had already undergone and the restrictions on him for the same offense.

[I require that] the said Laurence, Magdelaine, and Margueritte [be declared fully convicted] of being maroons and of having followed, in their libertinism the said slaves, knowing that they were being pursued and the punishments with which they were threatened.

For reparation, [I order that] the said Michau be beaten with eight iron rods and then exposed on a wheel with his face towards the sky to die.
The said Jeannot is to hanged and strangled until dead, and the said Marguerite, Magdelaine, and Laurence are to attend the punishments of the slaves with a cord around their necks and then beaten on their bare backs, thirty lashes each, and branded with a fleur-de-lys on the middle of their foreheads, and taken back to their masters. Everything is to be done in a public place in the town to prohibit recidivists in maroonage under the threat of the ruling on Martinique the thirtieth of October, 1711. Signed, Le Moyne.

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