Document #1728-07-08-03 – Biron Goes *Marron*

<u>K4BL Abstract</u>: In 1726, Biron of the Bambara nation arrived in Louisiana from Senegambia on the ship Aurora. For the next two years, he frequently resisted his enslavement. When he ran away in 1728, he was pursued by his enslaver, Jean Soubaigne, who almost killed him while trying to recapture him.

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Year 1728

July 8

LHC Abstract: Declaration of Sieur Soubaigne against Biron, his fugitive slave, relating the manner of his flight and capture.

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Names: Black - (Soubaigne), Biron; Biron of the Bambara nation; "des autres nègres"; "un nègre"

Names: White - Soubaigne, M.; Soubaigne, Jean

Names: Native - n/a

Keywords - fugitivity, la traversée, marronage, Middle Passage, resistance, seizure, violence

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[feuille 1 recto] [digital 2] [Marginalia:] [Marginal note:] 8 Juillet 1728 Declaration et Plainte par Le S.' Soubaigne Contre Biron negre [Corps:] [Body:] No. 327 Est Comparu au greffe du Conseil Superieur de la province de la Louisianne S.' Jean Soubaigne hab. [manij dem. [sumnij: a Chantilly lequel nous a dis et declaré qu'il a un negre nommé Biron provenant de la cargraison du V. [misse]mi L'aurore, i lequel a fait plusieurs fais le maron et entre autre hyer a midy Il Sabsenta, et le declarant ayant eté avertis par Ses autres negres decet abSence, Il courut apres et la'yant rincontré presque a moitié chemin de cette rille assis dans les Cannes, et l'ayant appellé plusieurs fois n'ayant pas Voulu renir aluy il luy tira a coupper dû un coupde fussil [page #1] [digital 2] [Marginal note:] July 8, 1728 Declaration and Complaint by The Sieur Soubaigne Against Biron, nègre [Body:] Having appeared before the notary of the Superior Council of the Province of Louisiana, Sieur Jean Soubaigne, habitant living at Gentilly, ii said and declared to us that he has a nègre named Biron, obtained from the cargo of the ship, the Aurora, who has often gone maroon, among them yesterday at midday. He [Biron] was absent, and the declarant, being warned by his other nègres of this absence, he ran after [him], and having met him almost halfway to this city sitting in the canefield, and after seeing him, he [Biron] fled deep into the woods, and after calling him several times, [and him] not wanting to	Transcription (French, diplomatic)	Translation (English, modern)
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et la'yant ríncontré presque a moitié chemin de cette rille assis dans les Cannes, et l'ayant apercus jl Sen fuit dans la profondeur dubois, et layant appellé plusieurs fois n'ayant pas Voulu renir aluy il luy tira a coupper dû un coupde fussil his other <i>nègres</i> of this absence, he ran after [him], and having met him almost halfway to this city sitting in the canefield, and after seeing him, he [Biron] fled deep into the woods, and after calling him several times, [and him] not wanting to	Sabsenta, et le declarant ayant eté avertis par	He [Biron]
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jl Sen fuit dans la profondeur dubois, et layant appellé plusieurs fois n'ayant pas Voulu renir aluy il luy tira a coupper dû un coupde fussil this city sitting in the canefield, and after seeing him, he [Biron] fled deep into the woods, and after calling him several times, [and him] not wanting to	et la'yant ríncontré presque a moitié chemin de	his other <i>nègres</i> of this absence, he ran after [him],
appellé plusieurs fois n'ayant pas Voulu renir him, he [Biron] fled deep into the woods, and after aluy il luy tira a coupper dû un coupde fussil calling him several times, [and him] not wanting to	cette rille assis dans les Cannes, et l'ayant apercus	and having met him almost halfway to
aluy il luy tira a coupper dû un coupde fussil calling him several times, [and him] not wanting to	jl Sen fuit dans la profondeur dubois, et layant	this city sitting in the canefield, and after seeing
aluy il luy tira a coupper dû un coupde fussil calling him several times, [and him] not wanting to	appellé plusieurs fois n'ayant pas Voulu renir	him, he [Biron] fled deep into the woods, and after
		Î Î
pour letonner Seulement et lo´bliger a S`rendr come [return]	pour létonner Seulement et lo'bliger a Se rendre	come [return]

ce quil ne Voulu faire, au contraire jl courut____ encore plus fort, le declarant ayant fait un___ circuit dans le bois le trouva par terre et lorsqu'il lapercut jl Sesauva encore et encourant jl___ trouva une Canne qui le fis tomber par terre, le declarant pour le'mpescher de Serelever le Coucha enjoüe et luy dis ques'jl remuoit qu'il estoit mort cela obligea le^{d[it]} Negre de Se Rendre avec luy a la maison, et y'etant le declarant appella un Negre pour metre lemaron aux fers jl Sauta sur son fuss'il___ Du que Il Se Rendit le maitre, le declarant

just to shock him and force him to surrender, which he did not want to do. On the contrary, he [Biron] ran again even faster. The declarant, after having made a lap around the woods, found him on the ground, and when he [Biron]

to him, he [Soubaigne] fired a shot at him [Biron],

saw him, he ran away again, and while running he found a reed [with his foot] that made him fall to the ground [again].

The declarant, to prevent him from getting up, took aim at him and told him that if he moved again he was dead. That obliged the said *nègre* to return with him to the house, and while there the declarant called a[nother] *nègre* to put the maroon in irons. He [Biron] moved quickly at his [Soubaigne's] gun [grabbing it] at which [time] he [Biron] made himself [his] master. The declarant,

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[f. 1 verso] [dig.3]

[p. #2] [dig.3]

tenant Saisir Son fusjl et le negre, en attendant le Secour de Ses autres negres jl luy osta de crainte qu'il ne tira Sur luy dont et de quoy Il fait la presente declaration fait a La N^{[ouve]]le} orleans le huitieme Juillet mil Sept Cent Vingt huit, et a Signé

holding his gun at the *nègre*, while waiting for help from his other *nègres*, left from him lest he shoot him [Biron], of whom and of what he [Soubaigne] makes the present declaration. [It was] done at

New Orleans [on] July 8th, one-thousand seven-hundred twenty-eight, and signed,

[Signé:] Soubaigne

[Signed:] [Jean] Soubaigne

Please note that what appear to be typos (missing spaces, abbreviations, misspellings, strikeouts, superscript) appear in the original manuscript, but are corrected in the more modernized translation. For more on our editorial practices see [insert xxx link here].

- i. According to historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, two slave ships called *l'Aurore* arrived in French-controlled Louisiana prior to 1728. The first acquired captives at Ouidah, in the Bight of Benin, during the fall of 1718. When that ship reached Louisiana in June of 1719, it became the first transatlantic slave voyage to arrive in the colony. The second *l'Aurore* voyage reached Louisiana in March of 1726, with captives from the Senegambia region of West Africa. Both ships stopped in Grenada to restock supplies en route to Louisiana. In the documents, Biron was identified as Bambara and unable to speak any French. These details make it likely that Biron arrived on the second *l'Aurore* voyage in 1726, two years prior to the creation of these records. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 381-397.
- ii. Chantilly is the present-day neighborhood of Gentilly nearest to Bayou St. John (St. Jean). Before European intrusion, Bayou St. John was called Bayou Choupik, the Choctaw word for catfish. In modern Louisiana Creole and in Cajun French, the word is retained as *choupique*, meaning mudfish.