The Saint Domingue press provides an extraordinarily rich and varied documentation of the history of one of the most important French colonies. More than any contemporary witness of the era, the journals provide a wealth of information to reexamine the daily life of Saint Domingue during the revolutionary period. Their abundant and varied references touch upon every aspect of colonial affairs: the theater, literary and scientific life, the wealth of landed estates, the flow of merchandise and commodities, ship movements, and slave ship arrivals. Politics, legislation, education, meteorological observations, important commercial and population statistics, arrivals and departures of colonists, rumors from the Atlantic world, food, recreation, the progress of plantations and manufactures were all reflected in the press. Of particular importance are the slave and marronage. The colonial newspaper of Saint Domingue, Les Affiches Américaines, offers first-rate descriptions of such slaves through two types of source: advertisements for those afore mentioned missing slaves and lists of fugitives captured and jailed who failed in their attempt at marronage.

1 (Fouchard, 3)
Marronage (the act of becoming a fugitive) was a conspicuous and essential part of the slave system in the French Caribbean and throughout the Atlantic world during the eighteenth century. It was practiced by every kind of slave: young and old, male and female; Africans, creoles, and Indians; mulattoes, griffes, and quadroons; fieldworkers, artisans, and domestics; the well nourished and the hungry, the weak as well as the strong, those with cruel masters, and those with good ones.\(^2\) Slaves were pushed toward their decision to run away by the hard conditions of their lives, the master’s cruelty, the abuse of a manager or driver, an injustice they refused to accept, or other incidental causes.\(^3\) Marronage can be divided into two categories, petit and grand marronage. Petit marronage refers to short-term absences from the plantation, when maroons traveled to visit friends or family, or hid on the fringes of their plantation or in the hut of another slave nearby to avoid punishment or to satisfy other personal purposes. Grand marronage on the other hand was flight from the plantation with no intention of ever returning.\(^4\)

Different historians have interpreted marronage in different ways. Some depict it as a safety-value within the slave system that merely released tension in allowing indignant slaves to “rebel.” Others believe this type of unchecked behavior might have helped stimulate larger, organized rebellions, particularly the one in Saint Domingue in 1791. Whether maroons were essentially apolitical or proto-revolutionaries, it is important to get a sense of the dimensions and makeup of the maroon population.

This paper examines data drawn from Les Affiches Americaines and its supplement during the years; 1770, 1771, and 1772 as well as, 1781, 1783, and 1785. The principal publication was in Port-au-Prince and it provides data for the South and

\(^2\) (Fouchard , 282)  
\(^3\) (Fouchard , 252)  
\(^4\) (Debien, 107-111)
West Provinces of the colony. The supplement was published in Cap Francais (Le Cap) and provides data for the North Province. The newspapers provide two categories of data. The first is advertisements for runaways paid for by individual slave owners. The second, a much larger category consists of lists of captured slaves in the colony’s prisons. At best, the data can be very detailed, providing the slave’s name and that of his/her owner, age, sex, ethnic identity, perceived personality traits, height, and other distinguishing physical characteristics.

The purpose of this paper is not only to expose the general contours of the slave population of Saint Domingue, but also to gain a true sense of the maroon population during the years approaching the Haitian Revolution. It is obvious that Les Affiches Americaines is a very rich source. It sheds light on not only the phenomenon of marronage but on a number of other facets of Saint Domingue slave society as well, including but not limited to, nutrition, (using height and age data) sex ratios and relations, linguistics, scarification, master/slave relations, and the differences between the experiences of Africans and Creoles. These data help to clarify the picture of ethnic, sexual, and regional variations among Saint Domingue’s fugitive slave population. With further study of the data from these six years, seasonal variations in marronage will also be addressed.

This paper’s original aim is to help reveal the nature of marronage in Saint Domingue in the early 1770’s and 1780’s. In effect, quantitative analysis of the data available in Les Affiches will help to focus the marronage picture in Saint Domingue. A

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5 On occasion repeat entries for both types of data appeared; in such an event the entry was managed accordingly so not to misrepresent the actual data.
6 Runaways in the lists from ’70, ’71, and ’72 were jailed at Jeremie, Saint Louis, Les Cayes, Petit Goave, Jacmel, Leogane, Port-au-Prince, Saint Marc, Fort Dauphin, Le Cap, and Port-de-Paix.
7 (Geggus, 113-114)
series of tables will be presented to better evaluate the data from the newspaper. From these tables and charts critical commentary will be added to explain the figures and their impact on the present historiography of Saint Domingue slave society.

Some historians argue that, the practice of marronage in which these fugitives participated provided the foundation for the slave revolt in 1791. However, only with further scrutiny on the 1770’s and the 1780’s will a better perspective emerge regarding a “fugitive movement” toward revolution. There is no doubt that the total slave population increased in Saint Domingue, from more than 200,000 in the 1770’s to about 500,000 two decades later in 1790. The most important question however-- was the fugitive slave population increasing faster than or proportionally with the total population? If this question can be answered then a more accurate assessment of a possible “fugitive movement” may be achieved.

In the early 1770’s the slave population was at least 200,000. In 1770, 866 runaways were jailed and 402 were advertised as missing. In 1771, 857 runaway were jailed and 406 were advertised as missing. In 1772, 855 runaways were jailed and 450 were advertised as missing. However, the reported data for 1770 and 1771 had to be adjusted as a result of missing issues of the weekly newspaper. (Numbers from the 1780’s are a work in progress) Table 1 addresses the general contours of the data drawn from *Les Affiches Américaines*. In examining the data, it is important to remember, the number of fugitives advertised or jailed bears no certain relation to the total number who fled or were caught, still less the total number at large.\(^8\) As the number of jailed is twice as great as the number advertised as missing, it is clear only a minority of runaways were the subject of advertisements. The propensity for a planter to advertise

\(^8\) (Geggus,114)
for runaway slaves most likely depended on the slave’s value, the agricultural cycle, and the plantation’s proximity to Cap Français or Port-au-Prince.\(^9\)

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Missing (Adjusted)</th>
<th>Jailed (Adjusted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1770:</td>
<td>260 (296)</td>
<td>565 (651)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South/</td>
<td>234 (242)</td>
<td>397 (413)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>690 (734)</td>
<td>1283 (1385)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Missing (Adjusted)</th>
<th>Jailed (Adjusted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1781:</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South/</td>
<td>?????</td>
<td>?????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>?????</td>
<td>?????</td>
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<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Missing (Adjusted)</th>
<th>Jailed (Adjusted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1770:</td>
<td>162 (277)</td>
<td>301 (515)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>172 (218)</td>
<td>460 (595)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1772:</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>590 (751)</td>
<td>1304 (1653)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^9\) (Geggus, 114-116)

\(^{10}\) In 1770, *Affiches Américaines*, editions 23-29 are missing. In 1770, *Supplément aux Affiches Américaines*, editions 30-52 are missing. In 1771, *Affiches Américaines* editions 32-33 are missing. In 1771, *Supplément aux Affiches Américaines*, editions 1-11 are missing. The year, 1772 is complete for both the main publication and the supplement. Also, numbers in the 1770 regarding the West may have also been skewed as a result of an earthquake.
Another factor worth attention was the time period shortly after a slave’s escape that the planter allowed for his return; in this case there would be no need for advertisement.

There is an obvious group of fugitives that did not get recognized in either “jailed” or “missing advertisements.” Again, the numbers of those who were jailed does not necessarily accurately represent the actual number of fugitives. Many other factors contributed to this as well, including, those slaves who were returned directly to their master, those who died after being recaptured, and the honesty of the maréchausse, the mainly free colored rural police force, who were known to seize slaves on the roads and tear up their travel passes. This was in an effort to collect rewards for returning fugitives. Another important fact to remember is that out of the 3,845 (in the 1770’s totals) total fugitives listed, 549 or 14.3% were unidentified. *(This number will be modified with the completion of the 1780’s data)* Despite the possibility for these fugitives to be either Creole or African, it is probable that the majority of them were African. This is illustrated by the fact that most of those who were unidentified did not give their or their master’s name. True, a Creole could have simply refused to speak as well, but more than likely they would have provided information, whether true or false. Both African and
Creole groups are relatively important because a slave’s origin dictated his/her position in Saint Domingue slave society and particularly this dataset.

Despite the problems associated with these numbers, the “jailed” population offers the greatest insight into the fugitive slave world, because the “jailed” total is closer to the total fled than the obviously selective “missing” total, although how close is debatable. The slaves “entrés à la Geôle” were of all types and thus offer a broader spectrum of the slave population “missing.” It is true that not every slave that ran away was arrested and in turn it is impossible to recreate an exact picture of the fugitive population. Consequently, these data cannot tell us much about the full dimensions of the maroon population, but they do suggest that with around 1,000 fugitives jailed each year, that at the very least around 1 in 200 slaves ran away each year.\footnote{When compared with the estimated total of 200,000 slaves in Saint Domingue at the beginning of the 1770’s.}

\textbf{(Here I have included a number of the beginnings of other sections to give the reader a feel for the direction of the rest of the paper)}

\textit{(Jailed/Fled Ratios)}…Table 2, whose rationale is something much more specific, and contestible, addresses the question of success in marronage. Table 2 presents “jailed: fled” ratios for different groups at the colony level. These probably provide a rough guide to the failure rates as runaways in broad groupings. Were a woman’s chances of escape significantly better in the South or West? Did a foreign Creole fare better than a local Creole? Perhaps, the “jailed: fled ratio might be a reliable measure to address these questions. It is true, that this table might favor more valuable slaves while neglecting
those from the coffee plantations in the north, in the fled category for reasons mentioned earlier. Consequently, it is hard to conclude with any certainty who was more prone to recapture. Yet, again, it does reveal the broader differences in marronage among the different groups.

(Sex Ratio)… Marronage in Saint Domingue was heavily dominated by males. Female advertisements accounted for 12% in the 1770 sample, and 16% in both 1771 and 1772. Similarly, females accounted for 12% of those jailed in 1770, 11% in 1771 and 15% in 1772. (The numbers from the 1780’s should be similar?) The percentages remain relatively constant in the two geographical zones. Family ties, biology, and gender role socialization account for most of the differential in the general population, however, another explanation for the imbalance between male and female fugitives is that, marronage in the colony was directed toward the frontier rather than towns. While ethnic differences may have also caused the contrast among those advertised and those jailed, it is also important to remember that indeed, the North provided fewer towns of “refuge” than the South, as the North contained by far the largest city. This is important because a female’s best chance for escape came in town where she had the opportunity to assimilate into the urban free-colored population, which was in majority female. It is obvious that women were few in number in Saint Domingue and in turn valuable. Table 3, addresses the annual and regional sex ratios.

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12 The propensity for a planter to advertise for runaway slaves most likely depended on the slave’s value, the agricultural cycle, and the plantation’s proximity to Cap Français or Port-au-Prince.
(Creole Composition Foreign and Domestic)... While women held a unique position within this fugitive slave population, so, too, did Creoles, those born locally or within the Caribbean. Creoles often possessed qualities that could facilitate their lives as fugitives. Local Creoles might know not only know Creole, but French as well, while foreign creoles might have spoken, Spanish, Dutch, or English as well. The ability to speak a variety of languages allowed for broader opportunity in marronage. Foreign Creoles also had knowledge of the outside world and of the opportunities ports offered throughout the Caribbean. These factors might have made it easier to assume different identities. Furthermore, their status as newcomers, probably made them less easily recognized than local Creoles.\textsuperscript{13} Foreign and local Creoles alike were often “skilled workers,” trained in such areas as, masonry, carpentry, and seamanship as well as other artisan positions. Mixed racial descent, particularly skin color enhanced a Creole’s ability to assimilate into the free colored population. A Creole woman of mixed descent had the greatest ability to successfully remain undetected. Table 4 addresses the general contours of the Creole maroon population.

(African Composition)... However, the story of the African slave was much different, as Africans were the most prone to appear in both advertisements and jail lists. Table 5 addresses the African composition of the maroon slave population during 1770, 1771, and 1772 as well as 1781, 1783, and 1785.

(Commentary of Congo population precedes this section)... However, just because the Congo account for the majority of the advertisements and those captured, this does not relate directly to their ability to escape or their propensity for recapture. Despite their

\textsuperscript{13} (Geggus, 119)
large numbers there is no evidence to suggest that their numbers benefited or hampered them in marronage. As Geggus points out in similar analyses of 1790, “the paradoxical reputation [of the Congo] as runaways was probably based simply on their numerical prominence in the colony.” A considerable number of other African nations accounted for the remainder of the fugitive population; none of them accounted for more than 10% of either advertisements or those jailed. After the Congo, Mondongue Africans accounted for the next highest percentage of Africans. They almost exclusively held the number two position of those jailed in both the North and South. Other “nations” that appear in the top three, in those jailed include those from Nago, Bambara, Arada and the Ibo. Africans advertised as missing offer a mosaic of “nations” including, Mondongue, Quissy, Côte d’ Or, Nago, Arada, Sénégalais and Bambara. A better picture of the make-up of the fugitive African population is expressed in the appendix of regional analysis. Among these Africans, a number of slaves were termed “nouveau.” This label was applied to slaves unable to speak the Creole language, who probably had been in the colony for less than a year. Of the total Africans advertised in all three years, “nouveaux” accounted for 10%. It is not clear if planters would be more, or less, likely to advertise for newcomers, who could be only vaguely described. As for those “nouveaux” jailed; the picture is a little more complex. Over the three year period, “nouveaux” accounted for 20% of all Africans jailed. However, the range reveals a pattern; it shows a decline in new arrivals in 1772. Ultimately, the prominence of “nouveaux” Africans as fugitives is directly related to the rate of importation. (The %’s and numbers will change as the data for the 1780’s is completed…most importantly

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14 (Geggus, 113)
15 The “Total Africans” mentioned here includes those entries of unspecified origins.
because domestic French War saw the “seizure” of the slave trade in 1781.) The decrease in the number of “nouveaux” might be compared to Jean Fouchard’s rough estimates of slave imports during these years. A number of different Africans made up the “nouveaux” population including, predominately Congo, but Mondongue and Arada appear frequently as well.

(Age)... Along with the origin and the sex of the fugitive, age was another factor to take into consideration. However, the data regarding age in very incomplete. An average age of fugitives would do little to explain the impact of age on the propensity to run away. The only conclusion regarding age suggested by the advertisements of 1770, 1771 and 1772 was that everyone from the 65-year-old Creole, to the enfant “nouveau” carried off by his or her mother, participated in marronage. No particular age fared better as a fugitive in 1772 or in 1790. The majority of runaways fell in the 18-30 range, but many fugitives were older. Yet, young fugitives accounted for the smallest percentage. Only a few cases appeared in each sample of a fugitive under 15 years old. However, they do further illustrate the broad spectrum of runaways. Obtaining a complete picture of “age” in Saint Domingue slave society is difficult due to the incomplete age data regarding those fugitives who entered the jail and those considered nouveaux. However, in quite a number of both the jailed and missing advertisements the slave’s height is included along with his/her age. These together could provide data for one to compare nutrition across temporal, geographical, and social lines.
Interesting Individuals)... The advertisements for fugitive slaves were written to help return the displaced property of white slave owners. However, in printing these articles the publishers of *Les Affiches Américaines* offer insight into the individual lives of these fugitives. Often the publisher/slave owner wrote colorful advertisements describing the slave and his characteristics. Almost all slaves documented in the six years had some type of brand or markings; some were legible others were illegible. However, many Creoles seemed to have been spared in the practice of branding. A slave’s scars, hair color, and facial characteristics helped identify him or her. Sometimes slaves were missing appendages; this was also noted. A few interesting characters appear in the advertisements throughout this three-year period. L’Eveillé a 16 or 17 year-old Creole reported missing in November 1772, had two brands on both sides of his chest, was very black, had pox marks and a scar on his left cheek three inches long. Another interesting fugitive was a Congo nouveau, Sévère. He was 22 or 24, a strong black, with large eyes and a little long and pretty face. His chest had the markings of his country, and he carried around his neck, a small white cross of metal strung on a cord, perhaps a Congo Christian. Probably not as interesting as L’Eveillé, however, Sévère illustrates that any and everything that might identify a slave could be used in these advertisements. A Dutch Creole from Curacao, Domargue spoke French and Spanish; however he was missing his two front teeth and was carrying a rosary. Finally, another Creole this time from Saint Domingue, Almazor, was a wigmaker and could speak good French; he had long hair and a strong voice, he could read and write, he was on a fine ‘English’ horse with purple velvet braid. He escaped with Etienne, another Creole who could speak Spanish and Danish; he was on a bright-chestnut horse. These examples barely begin to
expose the detail in which these slaves are described. Their appearance, personality, who they associated with, and what they took with them all could help to identify slaves in marronage.

(Concluisons: I guess we will all have to wait and see, including myself !)

Bibliography

