

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

K4BL Abstract: 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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LHC Abstract: Declaration of Sieur Soubaigne against Biron, his fugitive slave, relating the manner of his flight and capture.

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

Names: Native - n/a

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<p>[feuille 1 recto] [digital 2]</p> <p>[Marginalia:]</p> <p>8 Juillet 1728 Declaration et Plainte par Le S.^r Soubaigne Contre Biron negre</p> <p>[Corps:]</p> <p style="text-align: right;">N.^o 327</p> <p>Est Comparu au greffe du Conseil Superieur de la province de la Louisianne S.^r Jean Soubaigne hab.^{[itan]t} dem.^{[euran]t} a Chantilly le quel nous a dis et declaré qu'il a un negre nommé Biron provenant de la cargraison du V.^{[aisse]au} L'aurore,ⁱ le quel a fait plusieurs fois le maron et entre autre hyer a midy Il ___ Sabsenta, et le declarant ayant été 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 apercus jl Sen fuit dans la profondeur dubois, et layant appellé plusieurs fois n'ayant pas Voulu renir aluy il luy tira a couper dû un coupde fusil pour létonner Seulement et lo'bliger a S^e rendre</p>	<p>[page #1] [digital 2]</p> <p>[Marginal note:]</p> <p>July 8, 1728 Declaration and Complaint by The <i>Sieur</i> Soubaigne Against Biron, <i>nègre</i></p> <p>[Body:]</p> <p style="text-align: right;">No. 327</p> <p>Having appeared before the notary of the Superior Council of the Province of Louisiana, <i>Sieur</i> Jean Soubaigne, <i>habitant</i> living at Gentilly,ⁱⁱ said and declared to us that he has a <i>nègre</i> 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 <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 come [return]</p>

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[iti]} 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
~

[f. 1 verso] [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]lle orleans le huitieme Juillet mil
Sept Cent Vingt huit, et a Signé

[Signé:] Soubaigne

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

[p. #2] [dig.3]

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,

[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 <https://docs.k4bl.org/bestpractices>.

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.