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Other Black Atlantic borders: escape routes, ýmocambosý, and fears of sedition in Brazil and French Guiana (eighteenth to nineteenth centuries)

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The slave, plantation, and racialized societies of the colonial Atlantic world were a laboratory of experiences, part of a movement that gave rise to ideas and their “agency”; a process of geopolitical and geocultural reinvention.1 Arguing on the basis of black music and political thought, Paul Gilroy (1993) stresses that cultural historians could view the Atlantic world as a unit of complex analysis from transnational and intercultural perspectives. To do so it would be necessary to rearticulate translocal solidarity, as well as the trans- and intercultural processes and heterocultural contacts that formed and reproduced black cultures in the diaspora. These processes and contacts could be found in several places at the same time, sharing and constructing differences and similarities. Historic narratives – which have always been fragmented – could be connected.

Although Gilroy’s approach is largely centered on the English-speaking world, we can transplant his categories and use them to analyze colonial border areas, particularly those that were apparently on the economic periphery, in light of Portuguese and French colonial policies regarding the Americas. In these areas and specific contexts we can analyze cultural exchanges and the formation of identities on the basis of experiences of flight and perceptions surrounding freedom.

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In this paper, I will identify forms of micropolitical agency and perceptions that changed as a result of these experiences. The objective of this study is to attempt to steer a course through an agitated sea of interpretations. I will analyze the experiences of the mocambos, Maroon societies established on the borders of colonial Brazil and French Guiana, and the fears, ideas, and connections surrounding them, which I will present as indications of these transatlantic experiences and some local significations.

**MOCAMBOS ON THE BORDERS**

The colonial occupation of the Amazon region went slowly. Only toward the end of the seventeenth century would the Portuguese metropole begin introducing African slaves into the region more systematically through the Companhia de Comércio do Maranhão. However, there were signs of an African presence throughout the region since the middle of the seventeenth century (Salles 1971:13). The first blacks to arrive in the Amazon were taken there by the British, who attempted to seize control of the extreme north of Brazil at the beginning of the seventeenth century (Reis 1971:17). Through trading posts established between the coast of Macapá and the Amazon delta zone, the British attempted to set up a large colonial farming enterprise, planting sugarcane to produce sugar and rum. The decision to use African labor on the farms arose because adventurers planned to win the Amerindians’ support to help establish their conquest (Reis 1971:13-17; Farage 1991:4-39).

António Ladislau Monteiro Baena (1846), who was writing in the early nineteenth century, stressed that disputes between the Portuguese and French in the eastern Guianas gradually worsened in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. In 1678, the French began exploring the land in the region of the Oyapock River, which had belonged to Portugal since 1636. French settlers pushed as far as the source of the Amazon River and began penetrating nearby areas. In 1685, the governor of Cayenne complained that the French were going to Cabo Norte to buy Amerindians. That region would soon become the setting of complex colonial (and later postcolonial) experiences and spaces for the redefinition of ethnic identities (Baena 1846). With the help of traders and indigenous groups, black slaves also migrated in search of freedom from both the Portuguese and French sides of the border. In 1732 the two Crowns signed an international treaty by which each would send back the other’s fugitives. In practice, however, territorial disputes made it impossible to control the border area effectively. France and Portugal mistrusted each other as far as their colonial territories there were concerned. Seeking, however, to carry
out the terms of the agreement as far as possible, French and Portuguese authorities engaged in reciprocal exchanges of captured fugitives on several occasions. There were constant complaints from settlers and authorities, Portuguese and French alike, regarding the growing number of escapes, and even when international agreements such as the Treaty of Utrecht were in place, returning captured fugitives was a complicated process. Once, the governor of Pará complained that he had received “harshly” worded letters from French slaveholders, and even from the governor of Cayenne, regarding delays in the return of fugitives. However, the governor of Pará pointed out that the French did not always fulfill the Treaty of Utrecht. Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries also complained that their slaves (or Amerindians living in missionary villages under their protection) were fleeing to Cayenne. The Portuguese authorities stressed that the return of runaway slaves had to work both ways. When they handed over recaptured slaves in 1733, the Pará authorities demanded that the French do the same. In 1739, the French Crown ordered the punishment of anyone who helped slaves escape across the border.  

The Macapá region played a doubly important role in Portugal’s colonial policy because it helped defend the mother country’s dominions due to its strategic position on the Amazon delta. At the same time, owning the region made it possible to produce products that were in great demand in the commercial capital. Generally speaking, the African presence in the Macapá region is associated with the construction of Fort São José de Macapá, which began in around 1764 and was completed in 1773. The association came about because settlers were required to send their slaves to work on the construction of the fort, much to the chagrin of the masters, who frequently complained.

Considerably more black slaves arrived in the Amazon region after the creation of the Companhia Geral de Comércio do Grão-Pará e Maranhão in 1755. During its twenty-two-year existence, the company introduced about 12,587 African slaves into Grão-Pará alone, although some were sent on to Mato Grosso (Salles 1971:32). When the company was liquidated in 1778, private enterprise, smugglers, and the domestic market kept up the supply of slaves. The internal trade in African slaves, called ladinos, for example, went on in a number of regions,

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particularly Pernambuco, and became a reality for Grão-Pará in the early nineteenth century. In addition to doing farm work and building military installations, African slaves in the Amazon worked on urban construction projects and at shipyards, and were musicians and household servants. As in the case of Macapá, local residents ceded large numbers of slaves to build public works for the government (Vergolino-Henry & Figueiredo 1990:56).

Mocambos and the constant movement of fugitives evolved and grew in several parts of the colonial Amazon. Escapes by slaves from colonial dominions in particular were an important cause for concern in the border regions. These borders were not fixed because they were the subject of constant disputes, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Amapá region – which bordered on French Guiana – was the greatest source of apprehension. With the help of settlers, merchants, and indigenous groups, black slaves from the Portuguese and French sides of the border were continually migrating and establishing mocambos.

French and Portuguese authorities mutually exchanged escaped slaves on several occasions. We know that twelve blacks owned by a Frenchman named Dit Limozin escaped from Cayenne’s prison fortress in 1732, and Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries complained that their slaves had fled to Cayenne. In 1733, when handing twenty-five slaves over to Messrs. Fossard and Simosen, the Grão-Pará authorities asked the French to do likewise. The following year, King John I of Portugal wrote to the captain general of the state of Maranhão to clarify his instructions regarding the return of slaves who had escaped from Cayenne and sought refuge in Portuguese territory. And in 1739, the Portuguese Crown ordered the punishment of anyone who helped slaves to flee across the border (Gomes 1999:239).

In the second half of the eighteenth century, escapes were not only a regular occurrence, but slaves also began fleeing en masse. In 1752, the governor of Cayenne requested the return of nineteen blacks. Years later, accusations were made regarding the presence of French emissaries who had infiltrated the border regions to spy on and capture fugitives. In 1760, there were complaints about the arrival of Monseigneur Galvete in Grão-Pará to collect some slaves. Later, two canoes sailed down the Oyapock carrying French officers hunting fugitives. The return of escaped slaves – and the escapes themselves – would become a problem for the French

3. IHGB, Conselho Ultramarino, Évora, tomo V, arq. 1.2.24, fl. 149 v. and tomo VII, arq. 1.2.26, fl. 180 v. and Códice Arq. 1, 2, 26, Conselho Ultramarino, Évora, volume VII, ffs. 193v and 194. For further commentary in this regard, see note 2.
and Portuguese authorities alike. There were complaints about French raids that were supposedly intended to capture fugitives.4

The problem was more complex than escapes in that border region, where an improvised stage was being set for colonial disputes. The colonizers’ main focus was the constant push to occupy more and more territory. More than just looking for fugitives, the Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch, and, most of all, French crossed the borders to trade with the Amerindians and expand their dominions. In 1724, Portuguese authorities based in Pará captured a ship from French Guiana at the orders of the Overseas Council (Conselho Ultramarino). They discovered that its crew had intended to engage in trade in that border region. Every move on both sides caused suspicion and redoubled vigilance.5

Amid these disputes and fears, slaves continually escaped from Cayenne. In 1763, three black people were captured at the mouth of the Camarupi River, near the town of Monforte. Although the forest was vast and therefore a guaranteed refuge, escape routes were dangerous. When fleeing from Cayenne to Pará or vice versa, fugitives generally preferred to travel by sea or on the rivers that flowed through the region. Entering the steeply sloping forests was out of the question. There, they would easily starve or fall prey to wild animals, fevers, and the tracking dogs of the French. They built canoes and rafts to venture onto the waterways.

In 1765, word came from Amapá that some fugitives had crossed the Matapi River on that could be found in the grasslands beside the Uanará-Pecú River and by the lakes formed by the Arapécú River, where sure signs that the fugitives had been there were also discovered. The escapees’ boats


Map of Brazil showing region of slave escapes.
often sank, however. When sailing off of Cabo Norte, Manoel Antônio de Oliveira Pantoja learned that some "fugitive blacks" from Cayenne had been there, and he found the remnants of foundered boats. It was even said that, plagued by hunger and despair, some gave themselves up voluntarily. In fact, an Amerindian hunting at the source of a stream found four escaped slaves who were weakened by spending several days eating nothing but hearts of palm.

As the years went by, colonial disputes were far from resolved, and slave escapes continued. They were still accompanied by complaints from the French and the establishment of *mocambos* on the borders. It was not unusual for canoes from Cayenne to arrive in Grão-Pará, intent on capturing fugitives. The authorities also learned that blacks from Cayenne were to be found in the Maguari-Caviana point region. (It should be observed that the escape routes ran both ways. Although the French complained more loudly and continuously, the flow of escaped slaves from Grão-Pará to Cayenne was just as steady.) In 1752, a French escort ship that docked in Belém put the local authorities on high alert. They did not want any contraband whatsoever, although many soldiers were bartering goods to obtain "some thick kerchiefs and pieces of striped cloth they could hide in their fort." In 1759, they charged that French emissaries had entered the region. In 1773, they identified escaped slaves from Grão-Pará who were now in Cayenne. According to the Jesuit priest Laillet (1893), "a little over two years ago, seven blacks arrived here in Cayenne, after several battles and deaths, but they were poorly received," which meant here punished and imprisoned. The following year, slaves who had fled into French territory were returned to Macapá.

The entire region was involved in conflicts caused by colonial disputes. Slave escapes and the establishment of *mocambos* made the occupation drive more complex. In the search for support, alliances, and solidarity in that region there were no boundaries. This was also true for *quilombolas* (Maroons) and fugitives in the eastern regions of the Guianas, particularly colonial Grão-Pará. They looked to the other side of the border and saw

6. APEP, Anais II, documento 9, official communication dated 14/11/1752; Códice 7, official communication dated 26/04/1763; Códice 63, official communication dated 06/02/1793; Códice 61, official communication dated 11/10/1765; Códice 65, official communication dated 28/08/1765 and Códice 255, official communication dated 04/02/1789.

7. See also APEP, Códice 671, Letter from the viceroy to the governor, 20/01/1768; Códice 65, official communication dated 26/08/1765 and Códice 593, official communication dated 14/11/1773 and Códice 148, official communication dated 03/03/1774.
French settlers and peasants and Amerindian settlements and other groups of fugitives and deserters who, although not good friends, became occasional trading partners. In 1789, it was even feared that blacks might enter "the Maroni village that the French of Cayenne have established by force."\(^8\) Contacts between the quilombolas and the French and other social groups were a fact that severely frightened the colonial authorities of Grão-Pará.

Investigations unearthed the details of these colonial experiences. An interrogation conducted in Macapá in 1791 revealed how blacks on both sides of the border communicated with each other. Miguel, a slave owned by Antônio de Miranda, provided this information. According to his statement, when he was on his way back from "his master’s field" he came across José, the slave of the late João Pereira de Limos, who asked Miguel if he "wanted to see and talk to blacks who had run away." José took Miguel to a corral, where they found Joaquim, the slave of Manoel do Nascimento. Miguel was then told that "their [the quilombolas'] signal is to suck in their lips," as if whistling. They met several quilombolas who were suspicious because they did not know Miguel and threatened to "attack him with bows and arrows." The first contacts began, and the quilombolas wanted to know "how they [black slaves] were doing around here," meaning the town of Macapá. Miguel also asked "how they were doing over there" in the mocambos in the Araguari region, as well as the borderlands and French territory. According to the quilombolas, "they were doing very well," and had "large fields and they sold their produce to the French because they traded with them." In the mocambo where they lived there was also a Jesuit priest sent by the French, and it was he who "governed them and they were very fortunate." Some of the mocambo’s inhabitants were away at the time, because they "had gone to salt meat for the priest and others had shortly before finished making bricks for the French to build a fortress." Also according to Miguel, the quilombolas "always went about armed with short swords" and their clothes were "dyed with Caapiranga."

Because they were already fearful and suspicious, this detailed information struck terror in the authorities of Grão-Pará. The problem seemed to be not only how to contain the continual escapes, but also to keep a close watch on French spies and put up with their insults and slaveholders’ complaints. Mocambos near the border traded with French settlers on a regular basis. They also had their own economic base – salting meat, dying clothes, planting crops, herding cattle, and making the bricks used to build French forts.

These quilombolas also visited the town of Macapá during the “Christmas feast.” They came and established contacts with several slaves, but "they did not come to force the blacks" to escape; these "would only go of their own

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8. APEP, Códice 609, official communication dated 20/06/1780.
free will." They revealed “that the path they take to the town was no longer along the canebrake” but “down where Manoel Antônio de Miranda has the corral for love of the whites who went after them.” Furthermore, they had a “small canoe on the Araguari River,” because when they “came and went” they crossed the river “in it from one side to the other.” As for contacts with French settlers: “their assistance to get there was the Araguari, but all the escaped slaves were from here.” In other words, they were well aware that their settlements on the banks of the Araguari were in Portuguese territory but “to work in French lands they crossed the saltwater river to go there and they went in the morning and came back at night” and “when they came back they left half of their supplies on the way for when they went back.” This mocambo was inhabited by “all the blacks who have fled from this town.”

The details in this information are revealing. They point to escape strategies and routes, and even to the possibility that these quilombolas might seek autonomy and protection. The quilombolas lived near the Portuguese border, but traded, worked, and had a variety of relationships with the French on the other side. The success of this strategy was assured by their crossing the border on a daily basis, which appears to have been a difficult task. The quilombolas traveled across rivers and through forests, carrying enough provisions for long journeys, among other things. These quilombolas were actually on the border of freedom, and they knew it. The authorities were alarmed.

Two years later, the judge of the Macapá Council went so far as to propose that if these quilombolas were captured, they should not be released and returned to their masters immediately. He suggested that they be sent directly from jail to “their owners [so that they can] sell them, which they must do in different countries whence they will never again appear in these parts because on the contrary they will pose the threat of another great disaster, for each of these slaves is a guide to these continents.”

It is worth mentioning the experiences of other Maroon societies on colonial borders in the Caribbean. Those of Le Maniel in Saint Domingue, which struggled for nearly a century against French and Spanish settlers in the 1800s, benefited from their location for several reasons. On numerous occasions, the Spanish authorities paid little heed to the comings and goings of fugitives, most of whom were slaves from the French side of the island. The hunt for these Maroon groups involved countless interests, including those of the settlers and the Spanish and French authorities in that border region. Farm workers and plantation owners on the Spanish side traded with

9. APEP, Códice 259, record of the interrogation of “preto Miguel,” a slave of Antônio de Miranda, 05/09/1791.
10. APEP, Códice 259, official communication from the city council of Macapá, 21/02/1793.
escaped slaves and informed them of the movements of French troops sent to find them (see Debbash 1979:144-45).

Of the many mocambos established near the border with French Guiana, those in the Araguari area were without a doubt the most populous and stable. These mocambos were quite old, because by 1762 it was already said that there was a “large sum” of fugitives there, both from the nearby settlements and outlying areas, and it was also warned that they were “well supplied with arms.” In 1785, the governor of Grão-Pará declared that military expeditions were needed to capture or disperse escaped slaves and mocambos in several areas along the Araguari River. In 1788, there was another warning about the mocambos in that region. Later, information would arrive that, at the headwaters of that river, mocambos enjoyed a “safe asylum,” and that with great “effrontery,” groups of fugitives actually approached the town of Macapá with a view to “inciting the slaves of residents to follow them.”

More detailed descriptions of the mocambos on the Araguari appear in investigations undertaken in 1792. It all began with the usual complaints about escaped slaves. The residents of Macapá were so nervous about the frequency of these escapes that they did not punish slaves “for their customary rebellions” for fear that they would flee en masse. At the beginning of that year, three blacks were captured in the Baixa Grande area, not far from the town of Macapá, and one of them had escaped before. They were brought in by residents and their slaves. The captured fugitives confessed that they had intended to join several other slaves who had escaped from Macapá and go “to the mocambo of their relatives.” They were getting ready to set out, hiding in nearby farms where they intended to “make all the [manioc] flour they judged would be sufficient for their journey.”

Arrests and interrogations such as these helped expand investigations of the mocambos on the Araguari. The strategies adopted included trying to simulate a slave’s escape in order to gather more detailed information about the mocambos’ whereabouts. The military commander, Manoel Joaquim de Abreu, contrived this idea. To carry it out, Manoel, the black slave of a resident named Pedro Corrêa, was contacted so that he “could question the slave of Antônio Trez Orta, by the name of João, about all the circumstances of the mocambo and its distances [from the town].” The authorities were well aware of the communications network among the slaves and quilombolas in that region, although they were unable to destroy it. Whereas Manoel was considered in Macapá to be one of the few slaves “worthy of trust and friendly to whites and good Portuguese,” João was an important link, “being the only one who escaped from said mocambo over two years ago, but

11. APEP, Códice 25, official communication dated 13/03/1762 and Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty (hereafter AHI), Documentação Rio Branco, Códice 340-1-3, official communication dated 08/07/1782.
always [being] in contact with the fugitives” when they returned to the town to trade, attack, and kidnap.\textsuperscript{12}

So as not to cause any misgivings, the commander reminded Manoel that he should tell João that he was planning his own escape and therefore wanted to “get information for the best success” of his flight. This strategy was partially successful. In addition to providing an escape route for Manoel, João gave a thorough socioeconomic description of an Araguari mocambo. To start with, he revealed that the distance between the town of Macapá and the Araguari River could be traveled in four days “of good walking.” After crossing the river, it would be another two-day journey to the mocambo. The mocambeiros were unaware of “any path by sea,” as “they never exposed themselves to this because it was very far and the land routes facilitated the brevity of the journey” from the Araguari to Macapá.

The mocambo was well protected. First, there was a topographic barrier, an area surrounded by rivers and waterfalls that obstructed the approach of punitive expeditions and facilitated sudden retreats. It was located at the ford on the Araguari River “above the fourth waterfall” at the confluence of two brooks. That is where the artificial and natural defense systems came together. Although they did not build stockades or trenches – commonly found in many colonial Brazilian quilombos – they did dig pits and place “thorns about their dwellings” to prevent military expeditions of re-enslavers from approaching. They also had weapons: bows, arrows, knives and “some long jardineiras [sic] shaped like short swords.”\textsuperscript{13}

With regard to the demographic structure of that mocambo, João told Manoel that it was probably made up of about one hundred people at the time, including men, women and children, because when “he came away or escaped here from those companions, there would have been nearly forty persons.” As for the houses, they were made from straw. In economic terms, the farms “only” produced manioc flour, maize, and rice, “being that some of these in distance were over a league and others next to their dwelling.” They used “this method so that they could move far away as soon as they were attacked by whites, using this precaution to have what they [can] turn to.”

Protective and defensive strategies were combined with socioeconomic strategies. The community was constantly on the alert for anti-mocambo troops. By working several farms located near and far from the mocambo, the quilombolas sought to have enough food so that they could hide out in the forest for long periods if there was an attack. They knew that they authorities were cruel and intolerant about their economies. But the quilombolas did not isolate themselves. Instead, some traveled to settlements and even the

\textsuperscript{12} APEP, Códice 457, official communication dated 27/02/1792.
\textsuperscript{13} APEP, Códice 457, official communication dated 27/02/1792.
town of Macabá, making contacts and engaging in trade. There was an entire social structure surrounding the contacts outside the mocambo. Also according to João, the older mocambeiros did not allow fugitives who had recently joined the Araguari mocambo to return to the town of Macapá. They could only do so after spending a year at the mocambo and only then with the permission of the “overseer” and in “the company of his trustees.” Mocambeiros wanted to ensure that these escapees, more recent residents, were not being used as “courriers” to discover the location of the mocambos or camps. All indications are that despite all Manoel’s talk about his supposed escape plans, João warned him “I advise you not to flee, because they will soon kill you for they know you are friendly with the whites and you are of their nation.” And Manoel, must have answered in a “fictitious statement” that “I always run away. If I do well, I stay, when I do not, I return and tell my [master] I was lost since the day I went hunting.”

Considering this information, we can analyze the political strategies adopted to prevent temporary residents of mocambos from giving away their location to the authorities when captured. The mocambo’s overseer only allowed people who had lived there for over a year to frequent the town of Macapá. Temporary residents – those who lived in the mocambos for a time and then chose to leave those communities and even return to their masters – were viewed with mistrust. They could become allies with and establish contacts for the more permanent quilombolas, but not infrequently they turned into traitors and enemies, as they could serve as guides for anti-mocambo troops. In this settlement on the Araguari, we can see the leadership powers of the overseer, who banned and persecuted anyone who fell under suspicion. João, who was supplying all this information to the authorities, was well aware of the power of that leader and his persecutions. During the time he lived in the mocambo, he saw that “the work of hunting and [farming] fields is ordered by the overseer, and as soon as they return from the hunt or the effects of the fields they take it to the same, who shares the [results] with everyone.” In his “revelations,” João also stated that he felt “a very great anger” toward the mocambeiros of Araguari, because “they also wanted to kill him.” Furthermore, when they went to the town of Macapá, the mocambeiros invited him to return to the mocambo, but he realized that the invitation was a trap and the “overseer’s recommendation to catch him here.” For that reason, he agreed that if he led an expedition against the mocambo, all its inhabitants would be captured, because he knew the locations of their dwellings well, even if the mocambeiros had moved them.

14. APEP, Códice 457, official communication dated 27/02/1792.
15. APEP, Códice 457, official communication dated 27/02/1792.
There was probably more than one quilombo on the Araguari. A number of Maroon groups must have spread out and established countless small mocambos. One of them – possibly the community where João lived for a time – was considerably large, with dozens of residents. But size was not the only difference between these mocambos. There could also be ethnic differences, some being older and others more recent, some where only Africans lived, and even these in specific ethnic groups, which was the case with the aforementioned mocamo, which was referred to as being of the “Benguela nation,” while there was another “small mocamo de mendigar” of those who had “absented themselves from the said Benguelas for many years.”

The Araguari mocambos continued to worry the authorities in Amapá. In the last decades of the seventeenth century, the Portuguese officials received numerous complaints: between the headwaters of the Araguari River and on many other rivers in that border region, “there were settlements of our blacks who escaped over twenty years ago.” They were eventually attacked by soldiers but managed to escape because the French warned them of the attack. There was also a large number of escaped Amerindians and military deserters, many of whom were in constant touch with the quilombolas. It was said that there were “settlements” of escaped Amerindians, such as the one on the Anani and Casipure rivers that had been there for twenty or thirty years or even longer. And on the Uranary River there were “scattered Indians and blacks [who were] former slaves in several thatched huts and ranches.”

Near the turn of the nineteenth century, the matter of mocambos and the movements of escaped slaves had become so serious that it was suggested that groups of Amerindians might be used against the quilombolas. The idea was to “attract a body of six hundred to seven hundred Indians of the Mundurukus nation,” considered the “most warlike” in the Grão-Pará captaincy, with whom – after many wars – the Portuguese colonial authorities had recently managed to “conquer peace.” In terms of strategies and resources, it was understood that “they would be the most appropriate people to make war with the blacks in the forests and marshes.”

A fundamental question brought forward when analyzing such narratives about the quilombos – usually colonial reports about punitive expeditions or preparations for them – is how the quilombolas themselves forged their own views of life, their experiences and established their communities. These documents can help reconstruct “events” on the basis of specific “memories”

16. APEP, Códice 457, official communication dated 27/02/1792.
17. Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro (hereafter BNRS), Códice 5, 1, 2 n. 2 (1791).
18. Primeira Comissão Demarcadora de Limites (hereafter PCDL), Códice A-44, correspondence between the governors and Portugal (Regency of John VI, 1797-99), official communication dated 29/03/1798.
with their own itineraries and intentions. But how did the quilombolas view their own communities? How did they define time, change, and alliances – including the small quilombos that were in constant touch with other social sectors? The above narratives do little to disclose "multivocal" sources and methods for gathering information about the quilombos for the purposes of ethnographic history. Furthermore, the border region, the logistics of occupation, and, essentially, local significations, redefined the quilombos in those areas.

In an updated interpretation of postemancipation slavery and its legacy in Brazilian historiography, the subject of quilombos (particularly former Maroon communities) has emerged as an important instrument for struggle, as well as a political tool. There has also been an attempt to build up the symbols of an ethnic identity around analyses of these quilombos (Gomes 1994). More recent studies of slavery carried out in various parts of the Americas have sought to reexamine slave resistance from different perspectives on the basis of extensive empirical studies, as well as engaging in dialogue with other theoretical and methodological inputs. The subject of Maroon societies has always attracted interest. It now seems to have been revived by countless new studies. Particularly in Brazil, the most recent original studies of the subject include ethnohistorical analyses of former quilombos – begun long ago for other countries – which are now taking an interesting shape.

Among the main perspectives analyzed in these new studies, there are those that view quilombola groups through their interactions with the worlds of slavery. Through the quilombolas' complex experiences, we can see beyond their resistance struggle and the various aspects of their social, economic, and cultural lives to the transformations taking place in master-slave relations. Rather than being isolated, the worlds the quilombolas created affected and altered the world of those who were still enslaved and of the entire surrounding society. Recent analyses have brought to light multifarious aspects of black resistance during slavery. On several occasions, slaves managed to escape, established quilombos, organized mocambos, staged uprisings, protests, and mutinies, and in this sense lived through the multiple experiences of day-to-day resistance. More than that,

21. There are numerous studies of former quilombos in Brazil, particularly in the Amazon. See Acevedo Marin & Castro 1991; Funes 1995; O’Dwyer 1995; Almeida 1996. For recent critical commentary and studies of former quilombos in Brazil, see Price 2000. I also discuss the "political" uses of the concept of quilombos by historiography and social movements in Gomes 1996.
whenever possible they re-elaborated, reorganized, and transformed the world in which they lived.

In the course of these historic processes, they experienced extreme situations involving struggles, conflicts, accommodations, clashes, and confrontations. This was the quotidian of slavery, which enable us to perceive how the significations of freedom were continuously recreated. More than just “reacting” to slavery, slaves were the agents of *quilombos* and many other forms of slave protest – explicit and otherwise (Gomes & Reis 1996; 2002:16-19).

**TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS**

Borderlands – plantations – can be viewed as transnational spaces. If this is true for structure (and only economic structures are usually emphasized), it should also be valid for human agency (Mintz 1988:117-33). On colonial borders in the latter decades of the eighteenth century – more precisely in the Guianas (the borderlands of Grão-Pará Captaincy, Portuguese America, and French Guiana), the focus of vying Portuguese and French colonial interests – rumors, the circulation of ideas and fears, took on a different magnitude. These regions were increasingly teeming with *mocambos* and fugitives.\(^{22}\) There was also great concern among the colonial authorities because as these were border regions, the authorities feared that the slaves could escape from Portuguese territory. In 1795, Governor Souza Coutinho admitted that fugitives were easily traveling to the grasslands of Macapá and that it was “essential to prevent” such “communications.” He deliberated the need to have boats available and keep a close watch on border posts, as the number of escapes was on the rise, all the more so “now that in Cayenne [the escaped slaves] will obtain freedom.”\(^{23}\)

In the late eighteenth century, the colonial authorities were extremely nervous. They feared that slaves – particularly those in Portuguese territory – would come into contact with “dangerous ideas” about revolution arriving from Europe and the Caribbean through Cayenne. The main examples of such “contagion” were the French and Haitian revolutions and the Maroon wars in Jamaica and the Guianas. The Portuguese colonial authorities were mainly concerned about the borderlands because this is where slaves would first hear about and be nearest news of abolition in the French colonies, and

\(^{22}\) Salles (1971) continues to be the classic study on black slavery in the Amazon region. See also Vergolino-Henry 1990.

\(^{23}\) APEP, Códice 272, oficial communication dated 20/11/1795 and Instituto Histórico Geográfico Brasileiro, Coleção Manoel Barata, official communication dated 10/01/1795.
later Venezuela, which came about as a result of the independence struggles in Spanish America. Portuguese officials said that they were apprehensive about what “the French have done on their islands with regard to slaves.” Two years later, the governor of Grão-Pará gave the viceroy a detailed account of the panic that reigned in the borderlands. Even so, he gave little credence to fears of a French invasion of Portuguese territory. In his assessment, the slave insurrections in the neighboring colony were a factor in their favor. As a precaution, however, he kept a close watch on ships from Cayenne and navigation on the Casipure River.

How did the settlers, soldiers, Amerindians, blacks, slaves, and freedmen and -women view this state of affairs? They reconstructed episodes, contexts, and fears with their own line of reasoning and expectations. Day-to-day affairs and their interpretations were essentially politicized. Amid colonial disputes between Britain and the Netherlands in the Guianas, it was said, for example, that some Amerindians were “influenced by mulattos from Demerara,” seemingly “happy to obey the present British government in the colony.” Trans- and inter-Atlantic contacts and ideas that circulated in that context were shared by blacks and Amerindians. For example, entire indigenous communities traveled across Spanish territory in search of refuge: On several occasions, foreign ships – particularly French vessels – sailed into Portuguese territory to hunt and recapture fugitives. Portuguese authorities and plantation owners also charged that their slaves found refuge in Cayenne, where French merchants and authorities gave them protection. In 1798, the arrival of two ships from Cayenne in the city of Belém in Grão-Pará that had the aim of “recruiting” blacks who had fled there was accompanied by tremendous tension. The tension was caused by the possibility of revolutionary propaganda and rumors of insurrection. It was also said that there were suspicions of a French presence near the Oyapock. It was feared that, like others passing through the region, the French could incite unrest among slaves in Portuguese territory. Investigations were immediately ordered by the authorities to determine whether “they brought books, manuscripts or pamphlets” (Gomes 1996:258). The governor of Grão-Pará received secret orders expressly recommending “great vigilance of all those individuals who through word or conciliaubula and especially through demonstrations [spread] the false and disastrous principles that have infested all of Europe” (Baena 1969:232).

25. IHGB, Códice Arq. 1, 1, 4, Conselho Ultramarino, volume 4, fl. 184, 184v e 185, official communication dated 03/04/1796.
At that time, it was believed that escapes, although constant and becoming collective, and mocambos on international borders could be controlled. It would be worse to have uprisings led by foreign emissaries involving Amerindians and even poor whites. The state of alert had reached its height. In 1791, when the Portuguese authorities observed the establishment of a small fort with some artillery and signs that another was being built, they recalled that the French objective was to establish "communications" on several rivers that reached as far as the Amazon and connecting trade routes with French Guiana. The worry for the Portuguese authorities was not only disputes about "royal dominions," control over trade, and the elimination of contraband, but also the borderlands which "were a comfortable haven for deserters and the safest mocambo in which the slaves could hide" and the danger that "could also be introduced in that region by the malignant, vertiginous spirit that has unfortunately consumed the [French]." 26 In that context, fugitives, mocambos, and the possibility of the circulation of ideas at international borders were viewed as an explosive mixture. One basic concern was determining "whether in effect there had been introduced or anyone had introduced in any way pernicious maxims and abominable doctrines that might have [dire] consequences, that had to be stopped in time." There was less concern about a possible attack by the Maroons and more that "more opportune and effective measures [be taken] to safeguard [against] and prevent any and all communications between these inhabitants and those of that unquiet nation." 27

This was a surprise that the colonial authorities, slaveholders, military, and sparse population of settlers were keen to avoid. Events that might have gone unnoticed could become a source of widespread hysteria. In March 1795, attentions focused on a "gathering" of slaves and freedmen in the heart of Grão-Pará Captaincy. The meeting place was the home of a black freedman in Belém. Although the investigations produced little information, it was a reminder that this was serious business, as "slaves did not hear with indifference [news] of what was occurring in the French colonies," and therefore "several of their own voices went out to incite unrest." One of the most important facts about that "gathering" was that its members included freedmen and slaves who were "many of the best known in the city for their cleverness" (Gomes 1995-96:40-55).

Fugitives fled through brushlands, waterfalls, and rainforests, over mountains, rivers, and streams. They tried to escape their pursuers by

26. AHI, Documentação Rio Branco, Códice 340-1-3, official communication dated 01/03/1791.
27. AHI, Documentação, Rio Branco, Códice 340-1-3, official communication dated 01/03/1791.
fleeing into other colonies or establishing *mocambos* near the border. They relied on the help of plantation slaves, innkeepers, Amerindians, herdsmen, merchants, peasants, black slaves, and others. In this context, in these parts of the colonial Guianas, whether they were escaped slaves, freedmen or free, blacks (in addition to Amerindians and other social sectors) created a space of contact and cooperation. With varying expectations, they established a setting of transnational experiences. Their inhabitants were a mixture of fugitives, plantation slaves, and deserting soldiers from both sides of the border – French Guiana and Grão-Pará Captaincy. They bore ideas that included perceptions that redefined or reinvented several different significations about the ideas of freedom. They were not indifferent to or dumbfounded by political decisions that could be beneficial to them or the movements of occupation/colonization; nor were they isolated in the vast Amazon forest. Through this constant flux and reflux, they achieved their own protection and independence.

The waters on this Atlantic border were definitely turbulent. Underestimating the perceptions slaves might have of this situation (and others) was yet another option for the version of history written by settlers and colonizers. At the same time that they said slaves might be “infected” by “ideas of liberty” from Europe through contacts with foreign colonies, the authorities feared that they might organize a widespread revolt. The military commander of Araguari, near Macapá, argued this in 1794: “In regard to the manumission of slaves in Cayenne, I have already spread the word that the French are not doing the same for the blacks.” Thus, “to prevent [slaves] from fleeing and having them in this manner more secure for work in the fields, or any other tasks for which they might be used, and in this manner, or with this irony, I keep [them in] doubt about said liberty” (quoted in Vergolino-Henry 1990:109-10). Herein lie possibilities for focusing not only on how the authorities perceived contacts and the circulation of ideas between slaves from different colonies, but also the political use of those ideas, although in an inverted manner. We can reflect on how slaves, fugitives, and deserters simultaneously perceived the new ideas, spread them, and acted as political agents of the slaveholders’ and authorities’ fears of these events in several different contexts. It is a fact that slaves did not necessarily need a set of so-called revolutionary ideas from Europe or the proclamations of foreign abolitionists to undertake their own protest strategies. On the contrary, they were capable of perceiving, assessing, and reconfiguring these times with their own significations.

In the last few years of the eighteenth century, the colonial Portuguese authorities judged that the movement of escapes to the borders – precisely as a result of the provisional abolition of slavery in the colonies and the possibility of connections with libertarian propaganda from Haiti – had taken on different meanings. Several assessments were made in a lengthy...
official communication written in 1798. First, “the danger, if not the greatest at least the easier and more readily realized, is this Captaincy finding itself in a short time without slaves, and also without Indians, as they successively pass into the lands of Cayenne.” A detailed evaluation would be made of the reasons for slave escapes from Portuguese to French territory and the possibilities of effecting changes.\(^{28}\)

Escape movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are described as follows:

in the time when blacks suffered in Cayenne and in the other French colonies slavery was incomparably harsher, and more inhumane than generally [practiced by] the Portuguese; in the time when those who fled from this colony to that were sent to the galleys there or given to private parties who exploited their labor until they were asked for or delivered; in the time when the French, in view of the fact that they have always wanted to extend their dominions at the cost of Your Majesty’s [slaves] did not have what they presently have and constantly proceed to subvert all governments and following their ruin establish their own, not only by force of arms but also through infernal machinations. In this same time without their cooperation, at least not officially, so many slaves fled from us that we lost those of whom only a small number could be taken, when attacking the mocambos where they dwell. During this time many Indians fled from us and formed settlements that were destroyed but only a few were taken also, not only because many fled on that occasion, but because to gain more security they had entered the lands of Cayenne.\(^{29}\)

In the latter decades of the eighteenth century, escape movements sparked fears of slave rebellions:

Now that the blacks are free in that colony and live there more or less as freely as in the lands where they were born. Now that the cooperation of the French cannot fail to be as or more active than it has been in all parts where they have entered willy-nilly, and they could count on blacks and Indians entering into such easy, constant communication, it is inevitable ... and one cannot find a slave who runs away from his master and seeks out a mocambo to live there in peace. All those who seek that life of freedom do not subsist on ought but theft, and take their effrontery to the point of entering not only the farms and settlements but even this city [Macapá] and lure companions [to join them] and take them by force when they do not find them willing, especially women.\(^{30}\)

\(^{28}\) PCDL, Códice A-45, correspondence between governors and Portugal/Regência de D. João VI – 1797-99, official communication dated 03/02/1798.

\(^{29}\) PCDL, Códice A-45, correspondence between governors and Portugal/Regência de D. João VI – 1797-99, official communication dated 03/02/1798.

\(^{30}\) PCDL, Códice A-45, correspondence between governors and Portugal/Regência de D. João VI – 1797-99, official communication dated 03/02/1798.
Even when considering the “intense internal war such people can wage against us,” quilombos and mocambos in the borderlands were now viewed as a lesser evil – or at least one that could be more effectively controlled – compared with the possibility of sedition and the spread of “revolutionary” propaganda among slaves in Belém.

Whether coincidentally or not, escapes, the movement of fugitives and the establishment of mocambos in the late eighteenth century grew in the eastern borderlands of the Amazon, more than in any other region during the colonial period. The region had other serious problems as well, including militarization and fears of armed foreign intervention (Acevedo Marin 1992). In 1798, a time of great tension in the Amazon on the border with French Guiana, the Grão-Pará authorities advised residents to arm “their slaves and defend themselves from enemy invasions of their fazendas, and even on the rivers, incorporating the armed force that exists in them for the same purpose.” The idea was to “persuade” slaves to “collaborate in the defense of their property and the State with efficacy, zeal and courage, just as they have collaborated in other parts of Brazil to drive out the Dutch and French.” As for French settlers, every precaution should be taken “because you know that the maxims they have used have only served to disperse their strengths, make easy conquests and steal all they wish, for even the slaves that they deceive with the idea of liberty, the same [settlers] now have them in their fazendas under bayonets and a tyrannical regime” (quoted in Vergolino-Henry 1990:228).

Furthermore, an international analysis permits us to discuss the transnational movements of experiences in colonial and postcolonial slave societies. Certainly, the authorities were terrified and, fearing a foreign invasion, sought allies among their own slaves. It was necessary to transform “internal enemies” into friends in order to fight “external enemies.” However, they were unaware or gave little consideration to the political meanings that slaves could give to their actions at that time. For the Portuguese authorities, black slaves’ participation and collaboration with foreign invaders were the result of “seduction” and contact with “dangerous ideas.” For the slaves, however, it might have been different. They could choose to fight alongside their masters, bargaining for some compensation for their loyalty while continuing to be slaves. Another option was escaping and joining the ranks of the enemy forces. They could fight with or against their former masters. However, they would continue to be slaves, despite some false promises. For some slaves, escaping en masse and establishing quilombos would guarantee their independence – at least temporarily. Weakened by constant warfare, colonial armies could do little against Maroon societies hidden deep in the forest.

Slaves in several colonial areas probably had other options. They could closely and expectantly watch the outcomes of conflicts, arguments, debates,
etc., in the mother countries to see whether they would benefit them or not. In international borderlands, these expectations intensified. The decision to escape to this or that place or to join – or not to join – a colonial army, might offer a shortcut to freedom.

What the authorities viewed as “seduction” could be a management of identities (not necessarily racial) involving blacks, both freedmen and slaves. In the late eighteenth century, the black population in several slave regions was substantial. And it should also be observed that in some regions, slaveholders were freedmen and pardos (brown-skinned). On both sides of the borders, in the heart of the forest in Portuguese and French territory, quilombolas, persistent fugitives, slaves housed in senzalas (slave-quarters) and working on plantations, as well as Amerindians and military deserters could be making their own different political evaluations and possibly – but not necessarily – including news of the international scene in their considerations. In French Guiana, where slavery was briefly abolished, the slaves became restive. There was also the issue of marronage and rebellions. Baena (1846:228) stresses that “some Frenchmen owning good rural establishments” in French Guiana sought refuge in Grão-Pará and asked permission to emigrate there, because they were “fearful of the slaves, who declared themselves equal to whites.”

Emissaries and spies who sent reports to the Portuguese authorities stressed that, “after being freed the blacks threaten Indians with slavery.” Furthermore, “In the streets of Cayenne one hears nothing but ‘Convexion [sic], Nation, Citayan [sic] et Egalité,’ and this is from the mouths of these same blacks, who are very boastful, although there is no sign that any black has been made an Officer.”

By the latter years of the eighteenth century, Cayenne had lost control of its slave population. News arrived that farmers and authorities hoped for “help from the troops to conquer the blacks once and for all and put them to the work that they more or less continued to reject.” It was recalled that “they raised in São Domingos [Saint Domingue] the bloody voice of Liberty for the slaves, a voice that decided amidst the most horrific torments, the fate of almost all the white inhabitants who resided on that island.” A Portuguese priest in Belém soon caused fears and generated a great deal of correspondence among the police authorities in 1814. Why? He had recently arrived from Barbados and had been to Haiti and England. And it

31. Regarding the local importance of the French and Haitian revolutions in French Guyana, see Bénot 1997. Regarding the economic structure of slave societies, marronage and slave resistance in French Guyana, see Cardoso 1999:398-412.
32. AHI, ministry documents before 1822, Pasta 9, Lata 172 and maço 2.
33. PCDL, Códice A-44, 31/01/1798 and Códice A-45, 03/02/1799.
34. BNRJ, Códice I-32,18, 3 (1809).
was discovered that “in conversation with some blacks who served him, he
greatly deplored their fate, saying that all are children of God and there was
no reason for them to be the slaves of whites, showing them the example of
São Domingos.”

The winds of fear that blew in all directions had brought
the boomerangs of Haiti to Grão-Pará.

There was tremendous anxiety about contacts in the borderlands. Ears
were attuned to Europe and eyes focused on the Americas. Regarding such
fear, as the governors of Grão-Pará reported to the Crown,

It should not be measured by that which has been seen in several European
countries, because in these [parts] many and varied circumstances are
added that make it much greater. First, in Europe, it was necessary for
the government of France to send out its emissaries, these had to learn the
language of the peoples whose spirits they should prepare and even alienate
from subjection – [from] the laws of their supreme rulers and always
exposed to the great risk of being recognized and taken by surprise.

In their view, the problem resided in how such ideas were perceived in that
geopolitical context. Amerindians and Africans with different expectations
were continually crossing the borders:

Here, on the other hand, blacks from different nations that we have as
slaves are the parents, children and siblings of those who live free in the
neighboring colony. The Indians in our settlements, although of different
nations, almost all have relatives in Cayenne, almost all of them speak
the general language that is also spoken not only by those who fled from
them but those who have always lived there. Some are without a doubt
better emissaries than the best-instructed Frenchmen, and as many of our
fugitives know all communications, being that many facilitate escapes on
the many rivers, brooks and islands in this country, and the settlements are
very remote, and scattered, and the same fazendas, when we least expect
it we can have in our house a large body of our [slaves] armed against us,
and when we await a great remedy the great evil of seeing ourselves free of
slaves and Indians, we can [instead] find ourselves in combat with them.

Amid all the panic and hysteria that predominated in the authorities’
discourse, we can make out transnational ethnic scenarios in the borderlands
involving indigenous groups, mocambos, and other social groups.

35. Arquivo Nacional do Rio de Janeiro (hereafter ANRJ), Coleção Caiena, Código
1192 (1792-1816).
36. PCDL, Cópice A-45, correspondence between governors and Portugal/Regência
de D. João VI – 1797-99, official communication dated 03/02/1798.
37. PCDL, Cópice A-45, correspondence between governors and Portugal/Regência
de D. João VI – 1797-99, official communication dated 03/02/1798.
Communities and "nations" and their connections were reinvented. The borders had been obliterated.\(^{38}\)

Regarding the contexts of the circulation of ideas, connections, and experiences in the borderlands, particularly on the French Guianese border, it is interesting to note that the chronology of the Haitian Revolution, the declaration of the independent state of Haiti, and the spate of uprisings, political debates, and other slave rebellions in the Americas could have specific repercussions in different colonial regions. We can imagine the "African-American boomerangs" proposed by Peter Linebaugh (Linebaugh & Marcus 1990), and Julius Scott's "common winds" converging in the borderlands of part of the colonial Amazon, and crossing other borders in the Atlantic world.\(^{39}\) In this case, we could follow the paths of ideas, fears, and these agents' historical connections and experiences. Other questions could be posed, particularly in a border region where transnational spaces were formed, as was the case with the colonial Amazon. Escaped slaves - some of whom established _mocambos_ - could have taken ideas and expectations about the Haitian Revolution and its impacts to the Amazon via French Guiana, giving them new dimensions.

As a result of the European wars fought by France, Britain, Portugal, and Spain at the turn of the century, Portugal eventually invaded and occupied Cayenne in 1809. Although their routes and itineraries changed, the fears in that region would still persist. When Cayenne fell in June 1809, one of the orders its new rulers received was: "to ensure that all rebels leave the colony whose future conduct might give rise to concerns about future vicissitudes to which the establishment might be subjected." With regard to the maintenance of Cayenne's economic system, the Portuguese authorities stated, "the freedom of blacks was highly prejudicial to Cayenne." As for controlling the black population, they alerted, "above all you shall zealously [establish] the Police system, which you must establish in the Colony, not only to ensure its internal tranquility and the subordination of the blacks but most essentially to prevent all correspondence between the inhabitants and the French government."\(^{40}\)

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38. In regard to Benedict Anderson and other authors, please note the reflections suggested in Matory 1999. See also Mintz 1988.

39. See also Linebaugh and a critical response from Sweeney (1988:205-19; 221-31) and Scott (1986:118-19).

40. BNRJ, Códice 7, 4, 82, official communications from the governors of the Pará and Rio Negro captaincies... conquest of Cayenne... 1805-19, official communications dated 24/03/1806 and 10/06/1809 and Códice I - 28, 28, 15, "Cópia da resposta do Bispo do Pará sobre a divisão dos bens da Conquista de Caíena de que deve servir de prova incontestável de asserção referida na Pastoral" 19/08/1811.
It is interesting to note that both the French and the Portuguese used blacks as soldiers. In fact, the French even used blacks to put down slave rebellions, which also took place in other parts of Brazil. The idea of “arming black against black slaves” also heightened the fears of the Portuguese and French for different reasons. While the Portuguese were afraid of setting a “bad example” for their slaves, the French feared the outcome of such a measure: that these “armed blacks” would return to their status as slaves. Being constantly informed – by their spies – of events in Cayenne, the Portuguese authorities in 1795 learned that “battalions of blacks” were being formed in French Guiana to “put blacks into subjection,” which they found “difficult to believe, given that it goes against reason to arm blacks to subjugate blacks.”

In the struggles to occupy Cayenne in 1809, the French sent black slaves to the front lines, while the Portuguese armed Amerindians from their aldeamentos. It is also known that some French slaves deserted and fought alongside the Portuguese. Once the city had been occupied, the authorities disarmed the blacks and Amerindians. They redoubled their vigilance over the slave population, as well as freedmen and -women and mulattos. The document officializing Cayenne’s surrender, signed in January 1809, contains orders that “all black slaves from one side and the other” should be “disarmed and sent back to their homes.” As for the “French blacks” admitted “into service during the war” or freed by the Portuguese government, they should be “ordered out of the colony so that they cannot in the future be an object of disturbance and discord.”

Several memoirists and historians who discuss the conflicts involving border disputes with France have stressed that fears of invasions and slave rebellions permeated the entire historic process from the early eighteenth century to the first decades of the nineteenth century. Despite the silence of diplomatic history, beyond the fears and rumors of insurrection, blacks and Amerindians, whether escaping, migrating, or forming mocambos, laid the groundwork for establishing those borders. Ideas and experiences circulated there. Fears were the vectors for the development, occupation,
and colonization of those Amazonian borderlands. Costa e Sá (1895) put it this way: “It would be greater if the insurrection of black slaves spurred by the example of the Island of S. Domingos did not occasionally prevent the Governor of Cayenne from using his troops to invade Pará, obliging some of their masters to seek refuge there, and if reinforcements to be sent there from France had not been delayed.” In regard to the spread of ideas and connections, he recalled the “excitement” in Suriname, “the same blacks being disposed by previous insurrections, there being no time limit or foreign tongue that could impede a similar act for such instigations were totally unnecessary.” As for the situation in Cayenne, “in the United States, reports were printed in 1798, on the advice of farmers from those States, which have appeared translated into Portuguese,” and that “the French in the year 1802 on the occasion of their communications to execute the Peace Treaty the previous year” had “sought to instigate the spirit of revolt thus among the blacks and Indians of Pará” (see Lisboa 1895; Sá 1895:6, 34).

According to a study by Acevedo Marin, “revolutionary contagion” from France was viewed with equal dread in the Amazon. Such fears even led to the rapid militarization of border areas, in light of territorial disputes with French Guiana (Acevedo Marin 1992). Different readers could have interpreted these “ideas of liberty” in different ways. Slaves, whether Creole or African, free men, soldiers, officers from the mother country, Europeans, sailors, mulattos, Amerindians, or others could each have reinterpreted them differently. They were not unaware of all of these interests, nor of their ability to survive in the regions in which they had chosen to settle. Furthermore, the routes these ideas took could also vary. On the eastern borders of Grão-Pará, the quilombolas and fugitives may have been responsible for spreading them.

In Belém, there appeared Franciscan friar Luiz Zagallo in 1815, “an apostate and freemason, fanatic of the French Revolution, instructed in the city of Cayenne.” Before being driven out two years later, he was accused of “revolutionary and absolutely troublesome preaching,” which stirred up the slaves of Belém and Cametá, saying that “in the age of freedom” there was no reason for “men to be subjugated by others.” Slave uprisings and fears of rebellion would forcefully return in the 1820s with the ferment of debates about political emancipation. It was a subject frequently discussed in the local press. More than being mobilized, it was believed – at least the accusations were veering in this direction – that some political leaders, such as Felipe Patroni and later Father Batista Campos, were manipulating the slave and freed black population.44

44. Regarding Friar Zagallo, Patroni, and Batista Campos, see Salles (1971:240). Regarding the role of political propaganda, the press, confrontation, and radicalization vis-à-vis the military government of Grão-Pará in the early 1920s, see an excellent study by Coelho 1993, particularly page 177 and thereafter.
In the first decades of the nineteenth century, during the popular uprising called the Cabanagem revolt, the borderlands presented an even greater danger because slaves had crossed over to the “Peruvian Republic.” Previously, in 1815, the Marquis de Aguiar of Grão-Pará wrote a letter expressing his concerns about “the rebellious state in which the Spanish provinces bordering on this Captaincy still found themselves.” The movements of Spaniards across the borders should be viewed tolerantly but with “caution.” On the borders with what were initially Dutch possessions, particularly in the Rio Branco area, there was concern about the “articulation” of settlers and the British authorities and the “beginnings of philanthropy in the defense of the independent tribes” of Brazilian Indians. In 1846, it was feared that Venezuela might stir up Brazilian slaves with abolitionist ideas. In some contexts, slave uprisings in the Americas from the late eighteenth century were linked to revolutionary propaganda from Europe, slave rebellions in the Caribbean – particularly the Haitian Revolution – and the independence movements underway in Spanish America. In Grão-Pará, references to Haiti reappeared in police records in 1848, precisely during the period when slavery was permanently abolished in the French colonies. Slaves who escaped from Grão-Pará increasingly fled to Cayenne following that abolition. In the beginning of 1849, an official letter from the Imperial Legation in Paris warned the Grão-Pará authorities about the activities of “a mulatto born in São Domingos [Saint Domingue].” This mulatto identified himself as an Englishman who was an “emissary of the societies that are working to free the slaves” and “joining with other agents from the same associations set off with them to England and from there went on to Guyana with the intention of penetrating into Brazil.” The Imperial Legation spoke of the need of preventing and the means that should be taken to “prevent contagion with the innovations [with which] the French Revolution has affrighted that nation which does so much to remove it from the Empire.” For Grão-Pará, because the “consequences of such wiles” were well known, they stated in the strongest terms that every precaution should be taken when “some foreign agent should appear” wanting to “seduce slaves and move them to proceed [with] ... any means to attain their liberty,” as well as the entry of freedmen and -women into the province. In those fearful times, the focus continued to be on the borders and the possible connections they afforded. Slaves left the province and foreign emissaries could enter. It was necessary to take “effective measures of prevention” on the border of Rio

45. ANRJ, Caixa 747, official communication dated 06/03/1815.
46. APEPA, Caixa 79, official communication dated 01/10/1841.
Branco and Demerara (British Guiana) in 1849 as well, due to an “uprising of blacks and mulattos”.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the movement of fugitives continued to increase and the mocambos multiplied, both in the outskirts of Belém and on the borders with French Guiana and Suriname. And in 1854, fear of insurrections launched a wave of repression against the quilombos in several parts of Grão-Pará. From Óbidos in the Lower Amazon, the local deputy demanded that measures be taken on that occasion, pointing to the weakness and inefficacy of the provincial police and predicting that so many escapes and fugitives could result in “the same thing that happened in Haiti.”

We know very little about what the slaves and even quilombolas really thought. Our views of them generally emerge from reports from planters and colonial officials who were trying to control and eliminate them. Rather than just seeking a view of the quilombolas’ world – particularly of those who moved about in the permeable borderlands – we should look to the multivocal sources for perceptions of flight and the constructed social space in the area disputed by colonial powers. Although we cannot know how slaves, fugitives, and quilombolas interpreted the world they created and the ideas that surrounded them, the authorities’ fears (and details and arguments) can show us how the fugitives assessed the most favorable junctures for escape, including foreign invasions and revolutions. They feared the “contagion of ideas” in social groups that were never isolated, meaning quilombos in the heart of the forest. Although we cannot be certain, and we lack systematic proof, the authorities’ correspondence reveals that the fugitives were well aware of what was going on in the borderlands, and in the case of the late eighteenth century, perceptions of events in Saint Domingue and the French Revolution were also significant. We could raise questions about possibilities. Different perceptions and varied expectations arose. The images and impact of Haiti were subjected to various interpretations in slave societies, and represented more than just a major slave revolt. In many cases, they were the agents of symbols of secret societies of freedpersons and literate black men. In several regions these images took on other significations in an immediately postcolonial context (see Gomes 2002). The impacts of and rumors about several Caribbean

47. APEPA, Caixa 79, official communications regarding the border question (1841-49), dated 21/02/1849.
island revolts could have reached the continent's borderlands. What was at stake were changing the perceptions, expectations, and policies of slaves and quilombolas, as well as those of the colonial sectors.\(^{49}\) In any event, the emphasis of images on Haiti and the associated fears expressed in the authorities' correspondence — whether in borderlands or not — also points to the need to assess their significance for the formulation of policies on the control of slaves from a transatlantic perspective.

As for the fears and Atlantic connections in slaveholding Brazil, we must take care not to transform transient winds and breezes into gales of freedom.\(^{50}\) But we must also avoid running the risk of shutting the theoretical windows too quickly and seeing nothing at all. For cultural (and other) contexts, it is essential to retrieve the idea of "internationalism" when dealing with Atlantic dimensions and forms of exchange and the reciprocal nature of possible interactions. Fragmented narratives on the material means of this or that form of transmission and interconnection should not become obstacles. It is a good thing that historians are beginning to identify subjective forms of cooperation in which experiences and knowledge cross borders — not just oceans and forests — that are thereby altered and enriched. Antislavery and libertarian ideologies, including racism and antiracism, were born in the agitated waters of the Atlantic. In the preface to the Brazilian edition of *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Gilroy himself suggests: "International trade apart, the resistance to slavery also had significant translocal dimensions that historians cannot easily describe. As the song says, 'Haiti is here,' and we should recall that this marked the construction of Euro-modernity much more deeply than was previously recognized."\(^{51}\)

More recently, several historians have investigated the size and impact of the Haitian Revolution, the formation of Haiti and the Revolution's impact on slave societies and the modern world as a whole.\(^{52}\) One great challenge has been to arrive at an articulated explanation of the directions and significations of "internal" and "external" influences. One of the most noteworthy studies produced in recent years is by Michel-Rolph Trouillot

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49. For the context of Demerara in the Guyanas, see Viotti da Costa 1994.
52. Regarding more recent studies of Haiti, including reflections on historiography, see Fick 1990; critiques of historiography of the slave revolution in Haiti can be found in Geggus 1993. For a recent overview of Haiti's impact on slave and colonial societies, see Geggus 2001.
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(1995). He criticizes the idea that the Haitian Revolution was merely an offshoot of its French counterpart and suggests and points to new directions for analysis that take into account the intellectual output and the logic of its agents. He brilliantly argues how the idea that the Haitian episode was a "nonevent" was formed through power relationships, the silencing of the past, and the production of history in the West (Trouillot 1995:70-107).

Haitian propaganda spread throughout the Americas in the latter part of the eighteenth century and firmly advanced in the nineteenth century. The Haitian Revolution and the one in France had an impact on French colonies and neighboring regions. Ships arriving from Haiti with all-black Haitian crews caused apprehensions. As the experience of sedition made the rounds, authorities and farmers made a fearful evaluation of the possibility of an articulation of that experience and subversion in the context of the end of the eighteenth century (see Jancsó 1997:387-438). Local meanings would be redefined. News of the abolition of slavery in the British Caribbean (1832) and principally in the French colonies (1848) was published in the press, alarming Brazilian authorities. There were multiracial popular uprisings that encompassed several regions and contexts. Complex experiences (with a black and a white face that changed in a historic movement) were not only perceived and articulated but were transformed in terms of political significations.53 New studies should consider undertaking an in-depth analysis of the communities and cultures involved and the internal and external contexts that gave rise to slave protests.54

Quilombolas in the Amazon and other parts of Brazil and the Guianas were not unaware of all these interests or of their chances of survival in the areas in which they chose to live. By reconstituting the historic process involving some people and the political directions inherent to the quilombolas' actions and analyzing the forms of repression, agency, and conflicts involving some groups of escaped slaves, it is possible to take stock of their day-to-day ideas and actions. In contacts between groups of fugitives and the worlds of slavery, the former must not be seen as mere tools that could be used at the whim of authorities and farmers with commercial interests. On the contrary, Richard Price (1988-89) suggests that in several parts of the Americas where slavery still existed, numerous examples illustrate how some groups of fugitives expanded their strategies for struggle by forming "alliances of convenience" with plantation slaves, pirates, Amerindians, merchants, and white farm workers, and even established truces and peace treaties with farmers and colonial officials.

53. See Linebaugh 1983-84.
Thus, tensions and conflicts between the mother countries and their colonies, the weakening of colonial authority as a result of internal and external struggles, parliamentary debates about emancipation and other circumstances, even within the plantations, were perceived by slaves as favorable opportunities for open revolt or for forcing their masters to concede greater freedom within the bonds of slavery. And even escaped slaves who formed Maroon societies tried to force colonial armies to call a truce. Of course, in a correlation of forces, which were mostly unequal, the authorities and slaveholders not infrequently responded to the slaves’ attempts with violent repression (see Price 1979, 1988-89).

On the borders of the colonial Amazon, Maroon societies – supported by other figures from the worlds of slavery – were already “many-headed hydras” when they came into contact with ideas and what were essentially different historic experiences (Gomes 2001, 2002a; Gomes & Queiroz 2002b). Reflections on these quilombolas and their interactions with the rest of slave society – Amerindians and blacks – might take us in different directions. It is possible to discover more profoundly, among other things, that the worlds of the quilombos may not have been as distant from the slave quarters as they seem, even from those in other countries. More than that, by following these paths we can also piece together the traditions of freedom. It is a good thing that these pieces are not found exclusively among the dust, silverfish, and yellowing pages of official manuscripts stored in the archives. Part of this tradition may be stored to this day in the memories of indigenous and black ethnic groups in the Guianas. Furthermore, the histories of these communities – like many others – could be reconstructed on the basis of tales and images of the “early days” of flight, struggle, and resistance (see Price 1983, 1990).

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