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Denying Sovereignties: Empires, Maps, and Runaway Indigenous People and Maroons in Amazonian Borderlands (1777-1800)

By

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Thesis

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Denying Sovereignties:
Empires, Maps, and Runaway Indigenous People and Maroons in Amazonian Borderlands (1777-1800)

Manoel Rendeiro Neto

In 1798, the Portuguese empire put into motion a project known as *o grande deserto* (the great desert) project in the Lands of North Cape. Targeting the neotropical thicket of the northeastern Amazon basin, the plan signaled the culmination of an imperial politics of erasure. Portuguese governor Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho advocated for the transformation of the North Cape landscape into an eighty mile-long stretch of empty land.[1] However, this land never was–and never became–a desert. Instead, myriad runaways maintained their own communities throughout the North Cape, opting for autarky as they transformed imperial presence into a fragile formality.

Located on the Atlantic coast of the Amazon's northernmost reaches, the North Cape was a remote but resource-rich region in halfway between the French colonial outpost of Cayenne and the Portuguese port city of Belém. In between these imperial jurisdictions, Indigenous groups and maroons' communities flourished with independent productivity and mobility, demonstrating the limits of empires' oversight.[2] Most scholarship on French-Portuguese disputes over Amazonian territories has centered on how statesmen and high-ranking figures defined these borderlands through diplomatic accords. Yet inter-imperial contexts and cartographical discourses they generated wholly depended on the geographical knowledge of captured runaways. Indeed, Portuguese officials were routinely thrown into confusing by these autonomous communities they depended on for knowing the region. Ultimately, Portuguese officials promoted the displacement of the North Cape's inhabitants, since imperial authorities feared to lose these communities to French Guiana's lures.

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[1] "Ofício do Capitão General do Grão-Pará D. Francisco de Souza Coutinho ao Ministro do Ultramar D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho," 20 April 1798, Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty (AHI), Arquivo Particular Duarte da Ponte Ribeiro, cod. 277–2–10.

[2] In this paper, I will avoid generic colonial terms like "Índios," Portuguese for "Indians," unless citing directly from primary documentation. Instead, I will give preference to Indigenous peoples and Native peoples interchangeably when I cannot refer to a person/people's specific ethnic group. According to by Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* (Brush Educaion Press, 2018), there is no definite consensus on which term is the best as each comes with its own problematic baggage.

This paper explores the tenuous relationship between imperial cartographic knowledge and runaway communities of Indigenous people and maroons. In fleeing colonial expectations, runaways fueled the Portuguese empire's drive to map North Cape. This inter-imperial contest over sovereignty reinforced the necessity on extraction of geographical knowledge from captured runaways. Runaways led the way, Portuguese cartography followed it. Moreover, by looking into Portuguese endeavors, a discussion on the North Cape's runaways offers an alternative reading about their autonomies. European colonizers consolidated their interests by negotiating with and exploiting Native inhabitants. In doing so, they defined imperial authority as "fragmented and shared among numerous groups, including the nobility and the clergy." But crucially itinerant groups that had no type of imperial loyalty were also part of this equation.[3] In the Americas, European empires had to account for the composite nature of their political regime, which gathered great wealth by exploiting the labor of their diverse subjects.[4] Empires developed as multilayered political entities, their power distributed asymmetrically across metropoles, colonies, outposts, and borderlands. The existence of European empires overseas continuously relied on a politics of compromise with Indigenous peoples and their authority over large swaths of the Americas. Similarly, imperial authorities had to reckon with runaway slaves' communities that constantly foiled imperial designs.

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[3] Gabriel Paquette, *The European Seaborne Empires: From the Thirty Years' War to the Age of Revolutions* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2019), 39.

[4] J. H. Elliott, "A Europe of Composite Monarchies", *Past and Present*, nº 137, (Nov. 1992): 5. J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 319.

Portuguese dependency on enslaved Africans and Indigenous wage laborers were a constant that dictated the pace or the fortune of imperial enterprise. With the decision of escaping, these individuals challenged colonial authority and mobile broke their bonds with European empires. But actually, they could be just as valuable as runaways. When captured, runways became essential providers of geographical information that offered familiarity with the landscape to Portuguese officials. Runaways' experiences and practical knowledge did not leave behind their own archival traces, but their landscape expertise allowed them to question and deny Portuguese sovereignty. In the late eighteenth-century, Portuguese officials in the Amazon basin started to pay close attention to the North Cape's inhabitants with great suspicion. Their close geographical location to French Guiana already raised questions about a possible affiliation with French forces in Cayenne. In 1782, Leonardo José Ferreira, a Portuguese flag bearer and *prático na língua* (translator), went on a mission in the North Cape, where he captured an Indigenous woman named Arcângela Rufina. As a runaway, Arcângela provided a wide range of information to the Ferreira about North Cape. However, even with Arcangela's knowledge, Ferreira had a hard time to put things on the map, doubting whether "if this settlement is on our lands, or in the French domains, because there are no instructions, titles, or maps in this government to denote the Portuguese limits for this area."[5] Arcângela's story already hinted the limits of Portuguese use of runways' knowledge to project imperial sovereignty, later on transformed in cartographic erasure and physical displacement in Souza Coutinho's "great desert."

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[5] "Relação do que em substância respondeu a Índia Arcângel Rufina," 28 Sept. 1782, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU)_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 89, D 7244, Pará.

Laboring the Amazon for Empire

Caught between two imperial powers, Indigenous groups and maroon communities fought for a space away from the dictates of colonial institutions such as the *Diretório dos Índios* (Indian Directorate). In the second half of the eighteenth-century, Portuguese Crown promoted a series of changes, known as the Pombaline reforms, in the administration of their Amazonian territory. The Directorate was a hallmark of these reforms led by Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, who as King José I's top minister, was letter ennobled as *Marquês de Pombal*.[6] Under the direction of Pombal's half-brother and governor of Grão-Pará State, Francisco Xavier Mendonça Furtado, enacted the Directorate in 1757, which imposed a new set of colonizing policies compromised with the "occidentalization" of the Amazonian region. In other words, Portugal aimed to transform Indigenous groups' economic production and settlement organization into an idealized peninsular pattern, where non-elite Indigenous people had to become a labor force dedicated to agricultural production, seasonal collecting of *drogas do sertão* (jungle products),[7] or to be drafted into estate service. Besides labor obligations, the Directorate also obliged Natives to adopt norms on dressing (prohibition of nudity), language (teaching of Portuguese language), and religion (Catholicism).[8]

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[6] Kenneth Maxwell, *Pombal, Paradox of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 58-60.

[7] Jungle products were a variety of plants, herbs, roots, fruits and spices from the Amazon region. They were the main products exported from Grão-Pará to European markets during the 18th century. Examples of jungle products would be cocoa, vanilla, sarsaparilla, urucum, cloves, andiroba (Guyana crabwood), musk, amber, ginger, and piassava.

[8] Ângela Domingues, *Quando os Índios Eram Vassalos. Colonização e Relações de Poder no Norte do Brasil na Segunda Metade do Século XVIII* (Lisbon: Commissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2000), 66.

With lasting impacts until the end of eighteenth-century, the Pombaline reforms enacted a series of anticlerical measures, export-oriented economy organization, and growth of statecraft at the Portuguese Amazonia. Such agenda addressed a way to repair Portugal's economic and political weakness in Europe, particularly considering the decline of domains in South Asian spice trade.[9] To have access to the main labor force in Grão-Pará, the Portuguese Crown declared the abolition of Indigenous slavery and disenfranchised missionary power over Native population, even by expelling the Company of Jesus from Portuguese territories. The Pombaline Reforms sought to substitute Indigenous slavery with a free-wage Indigenous labor regime managed by local secular authorities known as *directores* (directors). With the help of directors, Portuguese authorities desired to reclaim Portugal's might by transforming Indigenous Amazon population into a settled agrarian society subordinated to the demands of metropolitan market for valuable commodities. Therefore, settlement expansion into the North Cape could transform "unoccupied" lands in the Amazon basin into a productive zone.

These changes, decades later, still impacted the livelihood of the Native populations. Even if imposed, Indigenous groups circumscribed the Directorate's power to infringe social transformations in the Amazonian landscape. The "runaway Indian woman" Arcângela Rufina reinforced such view when she was interrogated by Ferreira in 1782. Arcângela's testimony detailed a story of fleeting terrains and peoples who had escaped from colonial authorities. Escaping with thirteen others from the Portuguese village of Salvaterra in 1777, Arcângela had managed to elude capture for five years by moving constantly from place to place. From a settlement on the Cunani river, she lived for a year in another by a lake called Sauana before moving to Huanani settlement, by lake Araguari. In her description, Arcângela explained a place made up of different groups of refugee Indigenous people, deserted Portuguese soldiers, and runaway enslaved Africans, to a Jesuit priest working for the French. Besides her personal story, Arcângela also mentioned the Arequena people who escaped from Portel, another Portuguese settlement, led by the leader Barílio, also known as Canellas. But the "Arequena refugees" did not join the Huanani settlement due to their opposition to priest João, since "they did not want to leave the 'gentility' which they again live in." [10]

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[9] According to Rafael Chambouleyron, Portuguese empire experience in South Asia had great impact in the colonization of Amazonia. Portugal saw, since the beginning of the conquest, the potential of spices in the Amazonian landscape. Rafael Chambouleyron, "Cacao, Bark-Clove and Agriculture in the Portuguese Amazon Region in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Century," Luso-Brazilian Review *51, n. 1 (*June 2014): 5.

The mobility of free Indigenous laborers puzzled Portuguese authorities because they challenged an imposed notion of settlement and labor productivity. With the emancipation of Indigenous slaves, Directorate's policy sought to guarantee reliable free *índio aldeado* laborers for Grão-Pará state projects. However, by the 1770s and 1780s, different governors struggled with labor shortages for a variety of colonial projects including borderlands surveillance, agricultural production, and extractivist expeditions. The noted lack of the promised workforce exposed the inefficiency of Directorate system in meeting a chronic need for laborers. Without enough *aldeado* Indians willing to work under brutal conditions, Grão-Pará governors started to look into the non-*aldeado* populations, which they referred to as "dispersed Indians," forcing them to relocate into *aldeado*s' villages. The vagueness of the term "dispersed Indians" encompassed drifters, as much as homesteaders, domestic servants, and ranch-hands who were also labeled as vagrants and "rounded up and placed in the village's labor rotation."[11]

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[10] "Relação do que em substância respondeu a Índia Arcângel Rufina," 28 Sept. 1782, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 89, D 7244, Pará.

[11] Heather Roller, *Amazonian Routes: Indigenous Mobility and Colonial Communities in Northern Brazil* (Stanford University Press, 2014), 166.

The Pombaline reforms also brought the systematic importation of enslaved Africans into Grão-Pará. Portuguese authorities sought the maximum productivity on agriculture and extractivist export-oriented economy that relied on wage Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans' labor. With the creation of the General Commercial Company of Grão-Pará (1757-1777), the Portuguese state assumed control over the arrival of enslaved African workforce and the departure of profitable Amazonian commodities, especially cacao.[12] For twenty years, the Grão-Pará Company had the monopoly over transatlantic slave trade deals, which led to the introduction of about 12,587 African slaves in the Grão-Pará alone.[13] Even with the dissolution of Grão-Pará Company in 1777, the Amazonian region continued to systematically engage with the transatlantic slave trade. Between 1777 and 1800, Portuguese vessels performed fifty voyages from the ports of Benguela, Bissau, Cacheu, Costa da Mina, Loango, and Luanda that disembarked 13,220 Africans as slaves in Belém, which made for an average of 271 Africans per year.[14] The African slaves worked throughout the scattered settlements and fields in different rivers and waterways of the Amazon basin. Besides the labor on cotton, coffee, rice and cattle fields, the enslaved Africans worked alongside the Indigenous population in the gathering of drugs of the wilderness, operating canoes, and the building of military fortifications across the Grão-Pará territory. Enslaved Africans also appeared in Arcângela's interrogation, since she recently spotted five Black runways around the North Cape.[15]

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[12] Chambouleyron, "Cacao, Bark-Clove and Agriculture in the Portuguese Amazon Region in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Century," 7.

[13] Vicente Salles, *O negro no Pará sob o regime da escravidão* (Belém: FGV, 1971), 32.

[14] David Eltis; David Richardson; Stephen Berhens; Manolo Florentino, The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, available on: https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database

[15] "Relação do que em substância respondeu a Índia Arcângel Rufina," 28 Sept. 1782, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 89, D 7244, Pará.

The investment on the agriculture and extractivist development of the Amazonian landscape based on Indigenous and enslaved Africans labor marked Portuguese policies throughout the second half of the eighteenth-century. Even after Pombal's removal from power during the *Viradeira* in 1777, the emphasis on agrarian endorsement continued to reinforce the Amazonian colony as the provider of profitable commodities for the Portuguese empire.[16] However, the brutal work conditions in equatorial lands not only generated wealth for Portuguese colonizers, but also engendered frequent escapes of enslaved Africans and Indigenous peoples. In this sense, the decline of missionary influence, the increasing introduction of African slaves and the end of Indigenous enslavement in Grão-Pará contributed for an undesired reality for Portuguese eyes: the growing of runaway communities in Amazonian borderlands.

Runaway incidents directly frustrated Portuguese project for a productivity agrarian society in the Amazon, both economically and geopolitically. The Portuguese officials' plan relied on a controlled population of enslaved Africans and Indigenous laborers. But Portuguese control was not absolute. Throughout the 1780s and early 1790s, Portuguese authorities in Macapá and Belém continuously received, from both soldiers and captured runaways, reports, news, and rumors about the French missionary, military, and commercial movements in the North Cape. On 12 Oct. 1789 the rumors about the construction of a French fortress reached João Vasco Manoel de Braun, the governor of Macapá fort. Such news brought one more menace to the table, the erection of French settlements on Macari and Araguari river with considerable populations of runaways from Macapá, Chaves, and other Portuguese villages.[17] The North Cape became a recurring space for runaway slaves and Indigenous peoples. The continuous drainage of exploited workers jeopardized the colonial economic development and, at the same time, started to put Portuguese sovereignty at risk. The growth of French presence in the region and the news of collaborations between runaway communities and Cayenne alarmed Portuguese officials in the following years.[18]

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[16] Gabirel Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the Age of Atlantic Revolutions: The Luso-Brazilian World, c. 1770–1850* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 36.

[17] "Notícias vindas dos lagos, rios, e povoações no Cabo Norte, especialmente sobre os franceses de Caiena," 10 Dec. 1789, AHI, Arquivo Particular Duarte da Ponte Ribeiro, cod. 277–1–12.

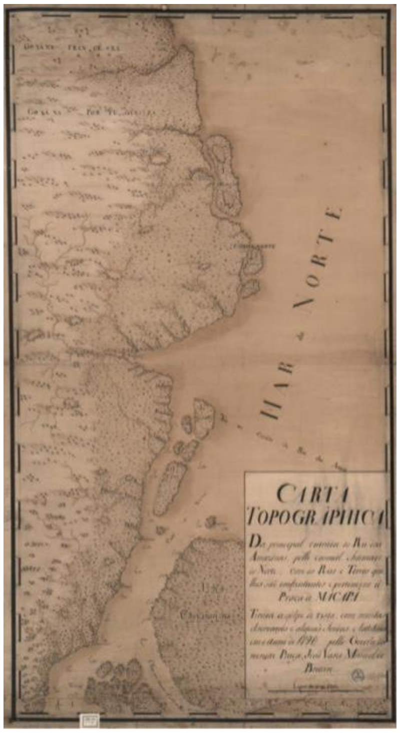

Figure 1 - This manuscript topographic map shows the main outlet of the Amazon River into the Atlantic Ocean. The map is the work of João Vasco Manuel de Braun, a Brazilian of English descent who served as governor of Macapá, the equatorial region in which the mouth of the Amazon is located (1790). Acervo digital da Biblioteca Nacional – Rio de Janeiro. IN: *http://acervo.bn.gov.br/sophia_web/acervo/detalhe/962098?guid=4aeabb275b647f67fcba&returnUrl=%2fsophia_web%2fresultado%2flistar%3fguid%3d4aeabb275b647f67fcba%26quantidadePaginas%3d1%26codigoRegistro%3d962098%23962098&i=1*

Alongside letters and reports, Portuguese authorities started to engage with cartography in order to address French presence on the North Cape landscape, but without depicting runaways' communities in their maps. The imperial tensions and lack of previous regional cartographic production propelled governor Braun to craft a topographic map of the main outlet of the Amazon river into the Atlantic Ocean in 1790. In his map, Braun identified a specific borderline, the utmost north Vicente de Pizón river in the chart, and he also emphasized through naming the existence of two different Guianas: a “Goyana Portugueza” and a “Goyana Franceza.” The dotted line reinforced the divide between the two imperial claims, which denied France any right over the lands of the North Cape. The map was a tool to invalidate and delegitimize the present French activities over the region. Although Braun clearly depicted the existence of a borderline that separated this landscape between the French and the Portuguese, he also mapped the illegitimate French settlements into Portuguese lands.[19] Braun located two locations under French control in Portuguese territory, one was a settlement in a lake’s shore and the other one was a fortification by seacoast. The transgressive French menace gained a materialized form in Portuguese maps, alongside the erasure of runaways’ settlements. Portuguese cartographic reality only acknowledged the threat of other imperial presence, the North Cape’s map disqualified the necessity to recognize runaway presence at the same level as other European power.

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[18] For recent monographically works on Portuguese Amazonian borderlands check: Carlos Augusto de Castro Bastos, "No limiar dos Impérios: projetos, circulações e experiências na fronteira entre a Capitania do Rio Negro e a Província de Maynas, c.1780- c.1820" (PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2013). Adilson Júnior Ishihara Brito. "Insubordinados sertões: o Império português entre guerras e fronteiras no norte da América do Sul – Estado do Grão-Pará, 1750-1820" (PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2016).

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[19] Braun’s map followed the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) and its articles 8º and 12º, which conceded the Cape North to Portugal, prohibited the commerce between the two European colonies, and considered the borderline between Cape North and Cayenne in the mouth of the Oiapoque/Vicente Pizon river. In the Tratado de paz concluído em Utrecht aos 11 de abril de 1713 entre d. João V, rei de Portugal e dos Algarves, e Luís XIV, rei de França e de Navarra.

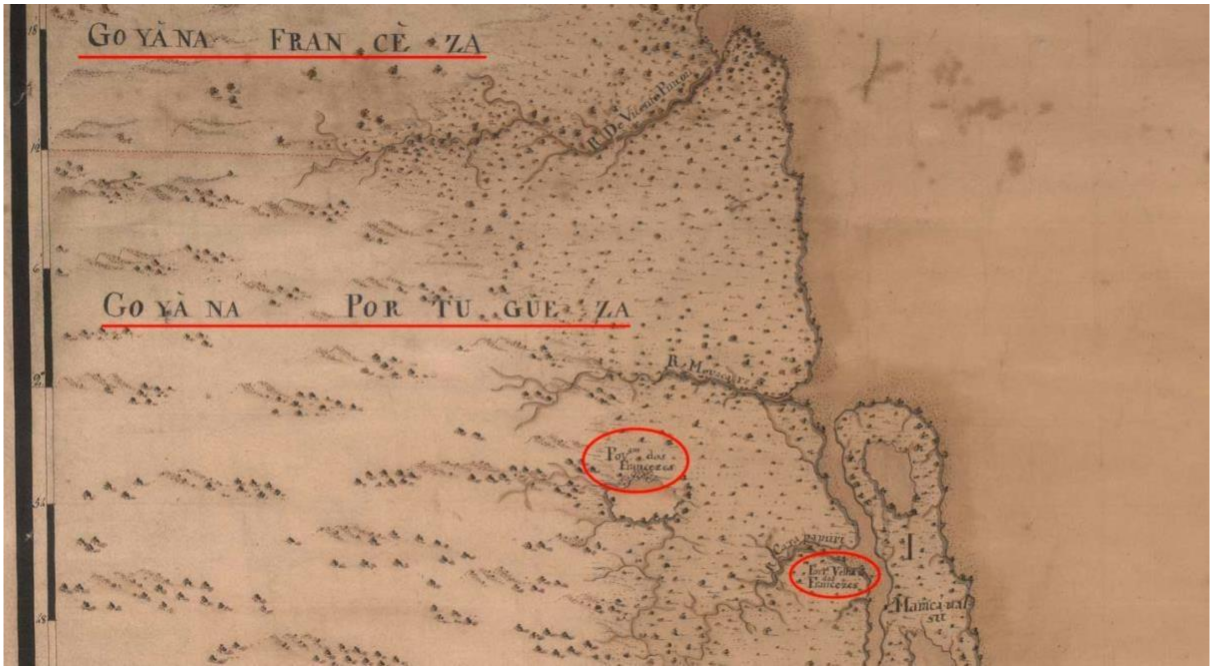
GO YÃ NA FRAN CÉ ZA
R. de Vicente Pinson
GO YÃ NA POR TU GUE ZA
R. Mayacare
Pov.am dos Francezes
Fort. Velho dos Francezes
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Figure 2 - The underlined terms depict the jurisdiction of the territory between French and Portuguese Guiana. The borderline is the Vicente de Pizon's river. The red circles are highlighting the French presence in the Portuguese Guiana territory, both in shape of settlement and a fort.

As detailed in reports and letters, Portugal struggled to project sovereignty over the North Cape, but maps offered a blank canvas that could be used to back up Portuguese attempts to control the region. Harley proposes the understanding of cartography as a discourse of power that can transform reality. Cartographic practices have the power to select what to dispose in a map, but also its "voids:" unspoken contents.[20] By highlighting the illegitimate presence of France and the omission of runaways, the map was an imperial device that recognized a single sovereignty: Portugal. With Braun's map, the Portuguese made a claim over the North Cape that denied runaways' presence in the region, but cartography was still at the mercy of geographical knowledge taken from them. The map's topographic content used captured runaways to fill the geographical gaps. This is noticeable in the detailed hydrography painted across the map, where a diversity of rivers was named and located alongside lakes. Recalling Arcângela's story, all settlements she lived during her five years in the North Cape had lakes and waterways as recognizable traces. Despite the absence of names, Braun depicted a total of seventeen lakes dispersed in the region. By comparing the map with the previous reports and letters, Braun recognized physical geography, but hid the human geography. However, we still can read the presence of runaway blacks in the map's physical geography. For example, Braun painted a *"rio dos Pretos"* (river of the Blacks) nearby the Araguari region, a location known by the frequent runaway practices of enslaved Africans and maroons in this area.

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[20] The exercise of cartography in colonial times Americas – and we could say until the present days – perpetuated the disqualification and erasure of Indigenous societies, as well in other continents and people marked by colonialism. John Brian Harley, "Deconstructing the map". *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*. 26, no. 2 (1989): 1–20. https://doi.org/10.3138/E635-7827-1757-9T53. *Also* check Robert A. Rundstrom, "GIS, indigenous peoples, and epistemological diversity". *Cartography and geographic information systems* 22, no. 1 (1995): 45–57.

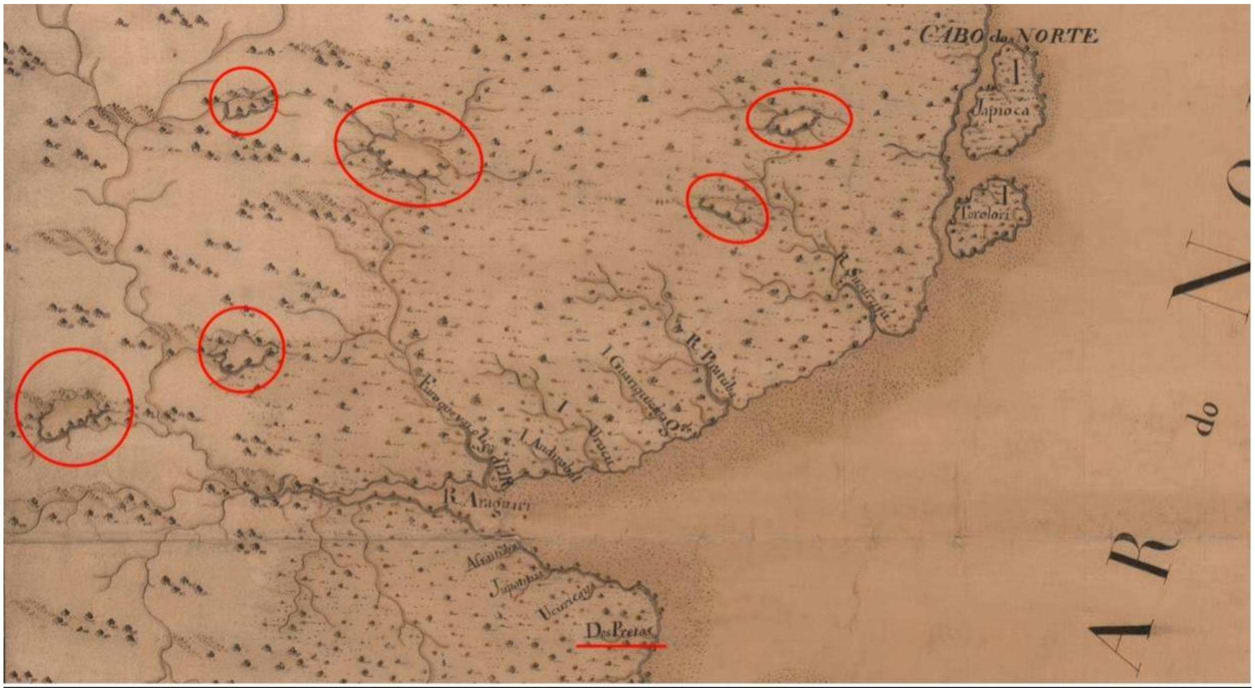

Figure 3– The red circles are highlighting the lakes depicted in the topographic chart of 1790. The underlined term "Rio Dos Pretos," meaning river of the Blacks.

Besides Braun's cartographic authorship, the commander of Macapá fort also wrote a *Chorographic Description of Grão-Pará State* in 1789. In his chorography, Braun described different locations (settlements, villages, parishes) on geographical, demographic, bureaucratic, and/or ethnographic information. He did not mention any kind of settlement in the North Cape; however, Braun provided a populational profile for two Portuguese settlements in the proximities of the North Cape. In this sense, a demographic snapshot of Macapá and Mazagão in Braun's writing reveals where a large part of the North Cape's runaways came from. Macapá with 2750 inhabitants, while Mazagão had 1800s subjects, both locations concentrated a larger population than the average of Portuguese settlements with a populace range of 100 to 400 residents. Besides raw numbers, Braun described this populational amount as "whites and their slaves." In Macapá, Braun had enough information to identify the inhabitants as 2,000 whites and 750 slaves, although he also remarked on an "unclear number of wage Indians" not included in the count. [21]

With some precise numbers for Macapá and Mazagão's population, Braun struggled to gather information about independent communities of runaway enslaved Africans known as *mocambos* in the North Cape. The term Mocambo was appropriated from a Mbundu word for "hideout," and the maroons from the North Cape made sure to maintain their location unattainable from the colonizers' gaze.[22] These societies were not exclusive to the North Cape, they proliferated across the Atlantic World. In Spanish domains, such groups were called as *cimarrones*, *palenques*, *maniples*, or *cumbes*. The British and Dutch colonizers feared the existence of masterful *maroons* who controlled vast areas of Jamaica and Dutch Guiana. African and Black slaves also haunted the French empire with the practices of *marronage* that could empty plantations temporarily or permanently, promote breakouts, or even stir-up colony-wide rebellions. In Portuguese America, these communities were also known as *quilombos*, although, *mocambo* was the most consistent category used by Portuguese colonial authorities when speaking of black communities in the outskirts of slave societies.

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[21] "Corografia descritiva do Estado do Grão-Pará por João Vasco Manoel de Braun," 1789, AHI, Arquivo Particular Duarte da Ponte Ribeiro, Doc. n. 9, cod. 277–1–9.

[22] Gabina La Rosa Corzo, *Runaway Slave Settlements in Cuba: Resistance and Repression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Barbara Klamon Kopytoff, "The Early Political Development of Jamaican Maroon Societies," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 35.2 (April 1978): 287–307. Richard Price, *Alabi's World* (Johns Hopkins Studies in Atlantic History and Culture. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). Bernard Moitt, "Sugar, Slavery, and *Marronnage* in the French Caribbean: The Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries." In *Sugar, Slavery, and Society: Perspectives on the Caribbean, India, the Mascarenes, and the United States*, ed. Bernard Moitt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 51–71. Manolo Florentino, and Márcia Amantino, "Uma morfologia dos quilombos nas Américas, séculos XVI-XIX," *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos*, v.19 (2012): 270.

To deal with the North Cape's mocambos, Macapá's colonial authorities used enslaved people as spies to track down maroons' location. In 1791, a slave named Miguel confessed to colonial authorities that another slave known as José had invited him "to see and talk to blacks who had run away." Going to the meeting, there the maroons started the conversation by requesting to know "how they [slaves] were doing around here [Macapá]." Right after, Miguel asked, "how they were doing over there." From this interaction, Portuguese authorities used Miguel's knowledge to address a concerning point already present in Braun's map: French presence in the North Cape, but now entangled with runaway communities. Miguel's question led Portuguese authorities to frame "there" as the material life of the *mocambos* in the Araguari river on the borderlands with the French territory.[23]

The maroons' description highlighted their well-being and success in developing agriculture, handcraft, and trade with the French. maroons created a stable economic based on salted meat, dyed clothes, planted crops, herd cattle, and produced bricks across the claimed French-Portuguese borderland.[24] When depicting the land around their community, the maroons praised the productivity of the fields since "they sold their produce to the French because they traded with them." Miguel's interrogation revealed a wider range of labor activities that mocambo inhabitants engaged in far away from their homes. Some "had gone to salt meat for the priest and, earlier, others had finished making bricks for the French to build a fortress." Similar to Braun's map, here again the Portuguese denied the possibility of maroons having their own political and economic agenda, since the runaways had to be subordinated to a competing imperial force.

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[23] "Auto de perguntas ao preto Miguel, escravo de Antônio de Miranda," 5 Sept. 1791, Arquivo Público do Estado do Pará (APEP), cod. 259.

[24] Flávio dos Santos Gome, "A 'Safe Haven': Runaway Slaves, Mocambos, and Borders in Colonial Amazonia, Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (Aug. 2002): 485.

Despite the commercial ties with the French, the North Cape's maroons had close ties with Portuguese towns and settlements. Macapá was a recurring location in the maroons' geography, as Miguel commented their recurrent visits to Macapá for the "Christmas feast." In this time period, maroons would briefly return to Macapá to socialize with friends and family among the slave and freed population. This recurring event led Miguel to learn about the runaways' pathways into Macapá. The close attention to escape routes in Miguel's interrogation indicated another specificity about the North Cape's maroons, as he described "their way to get there [*mocambo*] was the Araguari [river], but all the escaped slaves were from here [Macapá]." In this way, the mocambo's population was exclusively composed by runaway slaves from the Portuguese side, with no mention of enslaved people coming from the French territory. Miguel's comments also revealed another peculiarity about these maroons who "crossed the salt-water river to go [to French lands] and went in the morning and returned at night" and "when they came back, they left half their supplies on the way for when they returned." Differently from their economic relationship with the French, the North Cape's maroons used Macapá as a returning point for celebrations, kinship ties, gathering of information, and a place of recruitment to any slave interested.[25] If the

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[25] Commercial articulations with the Frenchmen of Cayenne were frequent to Grão-Pará population, not only in the borderlands, but in port cities. Siméia de Nazaré Lopes, "As Rotas do Comércio do Grão-Pará: Negociantes e Relações Mercantis, 1790-1830" (PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2013), 345.

French could be used for the expansion of material income, Portuguese locations offered maroons a point of social engagement and community growth.[26]

The North Cape's maroons did not have a political agenda based on the demise of the European empires; their goal sought to exist simultaneously with the imperial forces in their surroundings.[27] Black runaways had a greater compromise with the construction of freedom and autonomy on the margins of slavery, instead of the complete dismantling of the transatlantic slave trade or the destruction of the plantation system. The North Cape's maroons primarily sought survival and continuity of their communities, which could be read as autarkies, since self-sufficiency and economic independence enabled their development. In other words, the defiance of imperial sovereignties was a consequence of the maroons' commitment to the collective strengthening of mocambos as the construction of autarkic refuges. Their strategies indeed challenged Portuguese dominance over the region, more as a symbol of defiance than as a military force. Marronage provided a beacon of hope for a life away from the brutal reality of slavery.

To counter runaways' advantages, Portuguese sovereignty was contingent on captured runaways' knowledge that, later on, would be transformed into an imperial cartography, as Braun's map or the extraction of knowledge from Miguel's interrogation. Runaways gathered an exquisite amount of geographical knowledge that granted them control and mobility over an unfamiliar environment to Portuguese men. However, the Portuguese administration acquired information about the North Cape through the coercion and captivity of captured runaways.

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[26] "Auto de perguntas ao preto Miguel, escravo de Antônio de Miranda," 5 Sept. 1791, APEP, cod. 259.

[27] According to Flávio Gomes, Maroon communities in colonial Brazil sought to keep their autonomy at all costs through alliances with pirates, Indigenous groups, merchants, farmers, slave quarters, and even colonial authorities, which does not mean lack of internal conflict among maroons themselves. Flávio dos Santos Gomes, *A Hidra e os Pântanos: Mocambos, Quilombos e Comunidades de Fugitivos no Brasil, séculos XVII-XIX* (São Paulo: Polis: UNESP, 2005), 25.

A "Great Desert" in a Sea of Rivers and Runaways

In the 1790s fearful reverberations of the ongoing slave rebellions and revolution in Saint Domingue alarmed the Portuguese across Grão-Pará. Portuguese empire grew alarmed of escaped slaves' destructive powers in disrupting colonizers' peace, and prosperity.[28] In addition to the runways, French Guiana also became a great danger to Portuguese claims over the North Cape. Dom Francisco de Souza Coutinho, governor and general captain of the Grão-Pará State (1790-1803), became the leading voice of concern regarding Cayenne's actions in the North Cape. On 14th March of 1793, Marcos José Monteiro de Carvalho Veiga Coelho, field's master of the Pará's city garrison regiment, informed Souza Coutinho that the "American France"[29] had no capacity to expand its boundary lines to the Amazon river's mouth or was it in any position "to take advantage the interspace from the Oyapock river until the Vicente Pinzon riverside.". Veiga Coelho backed his view by emphasizing French Guiana as a space with a pauper economy and few inhabitants able to pick up firearms, since Cayenne "lacked an organized political corpus with a circulation of advantageous wealth to sustain considerable troops."[30] Veiga Coelho's perspective ratified the peripherical space Cayenne occupied in French empire's economy and politics, it was a secondary port if compared to the extremely profitable Caribbean islands of Saint Domingue, Martinique, and Guadeloupe.[31] However, the reality of a French assault persisted, since Souza Coutinho ignored Veiga Coelho's recent account on the weak status of French Guiana.

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[28] João José Reis, and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, "Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in Brazil, 1791-1850," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, eds. David Geggus, and Norman Fiering (Indiana University Press, 2009), 290. [29] "Correspondência do Capitão General do Pará com o da Capitania do Maranhão sobre um possível ataque dos franceses," 14 March 1793, AHI, Arquivo Particular Duarte da Ponte Ribeiro, Doc. n. 1, cod. 277–2–1.

[30] Ibid.

Souza Coutinho had his fears of French expansionism confirmed in 1795, when José Lopes dos Santos, a Portuguese pilot, accepted the task of leading a reconnaissance mission to the North Cape. In his task, Lopes dos Santos had to collect a variety of geographical data for the production of a "Guyana Coast's map." The cartographic chart would be the final object of the expedition but was lost in a shipwreck on the return to Pará. But only Lopes dos Santos' written report survived and provides an entry point to a world of rivers, islands, lakes, and settlements from the Amazon to the Oyapock river farther north. Lopes dos Santos revealed a dreadful picture for Portuguese colonial administration: a continuous demographic drainage of its own subjects, especially its labor force of Indigenous workers and enslaved Africans to the blurred space with the French Guiana, and consequently the strengthening of the French colony's economy and military power. [32]

In his arrival to the North Cape, the Portuguese pilot encountered Araguari river's inhabitants who favored France's territorial claim in exchange of a promised land in the area. José Lopes dos Santos arrived at the mouth of Araguary river and went upriver until the site of a lake where a settlement of twenty-seven houses had been sighted. From start, the Portuguese pilot asserted that "this lake is not cultivated by us [Portuguese]." Going further with his account, Lopes dos Santos indicated the presence of local Indigenous groups, Frenchmen, Indigenous refugees from Portuguese villages, Portuguese soldiers who had deserted, and a priest from Cayenne who died recently there. From those people, Lopes dos Santos emphasized their defiance attitude that "the Portuguese are not our master or of these lands where they [settlement's inhabitants] could cultivate and widened to our [Portuguese] Araguari lake, doing their fisheries that supplied Cayenne serving them of great utility." In exchange, the French from Cayenne gifted the Indigenous suppliers by "rewarding them with degrees of nobility." [33]

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[31] In the words of Ciro Cardoso, Cayenne was "a microscopic society, a despicable economy in the frame of the French colonial world, […] a colony defended by its own poverty." Ciro Flamarion Cardoso, *La Guyane française (1715-1817): Aspects économiques et sociaux* (Petit-Bourg: Ibis Rouge, 1999), 23. Marie Polderman, *La Guyane française, 1676-1763: mise en place et évolution de la société coloniale, tensions et métissages* (Guyane: Ibis Rouge, 2004), 453.

[32] "Descrição geográficas and relatório de exploração do Cabo Norte," 1795, AHI, Arquivo Particular Duarte da Ponte Ribeiro, Doc. n. 6, cod. 267–1–6.

The fragile, almost failed, Portuguese imperial sovereignty in the North Cape now relied on individuals that refused to be part of Portuguese control. For Lopes dos Santos, what had been occurring in the North Cape was an act of betrayal from France, since "with the confidence in the peace which we enjoyed, we [Portuguese] neglected that they [French] went in shadow of our patience and with increasing boldness, luckily following their traces that I observed, they tried to steal from us His Majesty's domains." Besides the sneaky act from France, Lopes dos Santos identified the problematic Portuguese negligence in fostering their claim in the North Cape, which resulted in their absence, which refugees, runaways, and deserters from Portuguese settlements duly noticed. The Portuguese pilot desperately tried to change the reality in the use of linguistic/grammatical choices by calling the areas as "our Araguari," "our lake," "our domains," and "our refugees." Lopes dos Santos twisted refugees' choice of escaping colonial control from Portugal. With his wordplay, the Portuguese pilot reclaimed a past affiliation of refugees in order to reinforce Portuguese claim in the North Cape.[34]

The "our Araguari" claim put these runaway individuals in the spotlight, which allows the glimpse into these diverse subjects. Beyond the scope of deserted soldiers, Lopes dos Santos laid emphasis on two other categories: "pretos amocanbados" (maroons) and "índios refugiados"

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

(Indians refugees). When commenting about the maroons by the hills of the Araguari river, Lopes dos Santos ratified the success of a recent capture expedition in returning "some huddled blacks owned by Macapá and Mazagão's residents." Even if returned to Portuguese settlements, the ungovernable mobility of these individuals appeared in the colonial administration's terminology as refugees, maroons, runaways, or deserters scattered far beyond centers of Portuguese influence or even the assumed "French" Lake Araguary. Moving away from the Lake Araguary and in the direction of the Oyapock river, Lopes do Santos continued to identify the dispersed living of ruined villages or wretched settlements in different waterways in the area (Guananí, Coenne, Casipure, and Majacaré). According to him, these locations are only noticeable due to "the *roças* (small subsistence plots) which were quite plentiful due to the terrain" along the riverbank. But at the same time, Lopes dos Santos envisioned the "dispersed" situation of the subjects in relation to the "lack of support from the French." Then, Lopes do Santos recognized these scattered subjects, without specifying any kind of racial or ethnic categories, as Portuguese. "All these people established there," he stated, "are ours," and as such needed to be forced back to Portuguese settlements. [35]

The information compiled by Lopes dos Santos provided great insight to Portuguese authorities about the variety of settlements of maroons and Indigenous peoples in the North Cape's borderland. It also engendered a fear toward Cayenne's might and influence over Grão-Pará that only increased in the next years, as can be seen by political measures taken by D. Francisco de Souza Coutinho in 1798. In a letter on 20th April of 1798, Souza Coutinho depicted "the state in which the captaincy (Grão-Pará) was, threatened by the French neighbors," but he also proposed a drastic solution in how to deal with the frontier dilemma and the scope of Portuguese subjects.

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[35] Ibid.

Souza Coutinho's proposition rested on two pillars: acquiring unprecedented geographical and naval knowledge about the Guiana Coast, from the Amazon river's mouth to the Oyapock river, through map-making expeditions, and imposing a "great desert" of eighty leagues (240 miles, or 386 kilometers) between the Grão-Pará and the French Guiana.[36]

Grão-Pará governor's call for precision remarked that the Portuguese Crown did not have enough knowledge "to attend this important, and yet scorned navigation,"[37] but he also reminded the "lack of sufficient information" to impose an uncontestable claim. This cartographic activity was also related to a more urgent uneasiness of fleeing individuals running into the French side. Souza Coutinho framed the problematic mobility as the "if not the greatest danger, but definitely the easiest and most feasible one," since it affected the main source for economic productivity in the Grão-Pará: the coerced labor of waged Indians and enslaved Africans. According to Souza Coutinho, the Portuguese territory would be already without "no more slaves, but also no more Indians," if it wasn't for his work in shutting down and preventing any form of communication between the two colonies. Through the "cleaning" of all the North Cape's territory, Souza Coutinho dared to create an artificial landscape of human emptiness of eighty leagues from Macapá until the Orange Cape. In this way, "the great desert" would function as a void of human presence or settlements which would make any type of crossing difficult, since Souza Coutinho also recommended a stronger and key pointed surveillance at the seashores. The "desert strategy" was not only a response for the French from Cayenne's desire in accessing the Amazon river, but a reaction to the end of monarchical ruling in France and the abolition of slavery in the French colonies. This can be clearly read in Souza Coutinho's words about how the French were not only stealing land, but they also "proceed to subvert all the governments, and with their ruins the French would rule over, not only by military force, additionally you [D. Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho][38] have to consider their infamous machinations."[39]

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[36] "Ofício do Capitão General do Grão-Pará D. Francisco de Souza Coutinho, ao Ministro D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho," 20 April 1798, AHI, Arquivo Particular Duarte da Ponte Ribeiro, Doc. n. 1, cod. 277–2–10.

[37] Ibid.

Souza Coutinho's plan clearly backfired when the displaced Indigenous people escaped during the 310-mile journey to the Guiana Coast. Apparently, Souza Coutinho received detailed news about how the escape plan succeeded, since he narrated "their audacity in occultly leaving the settlement (Bragança)" by stolen horses. After that, the refugees went down the Caeté river for "twenty or more leagues," around 75 miles or 120 kilometers, until hitting the river's mouth in the Atlantic Ocean. The next step in the journey was the high sea crossing of "seventy or more leagues," around 210 miles or 337 kilometers, to the lands of the North Cape, which caused great casualties where "almost all of them died of thirst and hunger." Despite the fatalities, Souza Coutinho mentioned that a few of them reached Cape North, or even passed to the Cayenne. The escape episode was not an isolated event, since Souza Coutinho placed it in dialogue within a narrative of successful apprehensions of fleeing individuals or unfortunate escaping results that led to the death of the refugees. Therefore, Souza Coutinho admitted the persistence and the non-stop mobility of Portuguese subjects trying the crossing to the North Cape or the French colony in a greater number since 1797. Once again, Portuguese authorities faced their impotence in interfering in runaway communities in the North Cape. The attempts of Portuguese imperial sovereignty fired back into a vibrant community building around runaway experiences, and Frenchmen were not the ones to blame.[40]

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[38] Grão-Pará governor's half-brother, D. Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho had a higher rank position in the Portuguese empire. He was in charge of the Secretary of State of the Navy and the Royal Treasury, between 1796 and 1803. During his term, D. Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho mobilized authorities in the Portuguese America to collect precise information about their domains. Kenneth Maxwell, *Chocolate, piratas e outros malandros* (Ensaios tropicais. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1999), 157-207.

[39] "Ofício do Capitão General do Grão-Pará D. Francisco de Souza Coutinho ao Ministro D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho," 20 April 1798, AHI, Arquivo Particular Duarte da Ponte Ribeiro, Doc. n. 1, cod. 277–2–10.

By considering Souza Coutinho's perspective over the North Cape's situation, the Portuguese empire struggled to acknowledge the runaway communities as autonomous spaces that had no interest in being incorporated to imperial sovereignties. While Souza Coutinho failed to recognize runaways' power in the making of the North Cape borderlands, he mistakenly subordinated their actions under the realm of French Guiana's interest. Despite the mentioned passivity from Cayenne, the Frenchmen casted a haunting presence into the Portuguese colonial administration due to the official abolition of slavery by the French republic in their colonies in 1792-3. In Souza Coutinho's words, "now because the blacks are free" the French emissaries did not even need to work in spreading news about emancipation in the Americas, since he directly accused the enslaved and Indigenous population of being supporters of the "new ideology." Souza Coutinho grounded his argument in the fact that many "blacks and Indians in the Portuguese side have relatives in Cayenne." Here, the role of relatives reinforced how refugee communities had been increasing trough time. The mentioned existence of black and Indigenous relatives between French-Portuguese territories brought up the importance of kinship ties, common language, and geographical expertise that facilitated the mobility of runaways across the North Cape. Even Souza Coutinho admitted the ingenious success of the runaways, since "they are without doubt better emissaries than the most educated French." The recognition of runaway slaves' ability to escape Portuguese control also made Souza Coutinho to question slavery as the Grão-Pará's "great remedy." The history of escapes started to transform the use of enslaved African labor for

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[40] Ibid.

Portuguese colonization into a menace, because Souza Coutinho framed slaves as “a great body of ‘ours’ armed against us.”[41]

The story of the flight of Indigenous people in 1797 or the increasing runaway slaves marked Souza Coutinho’s memory and resonated in his colonial politics over the North Cape territory in 1798, especially the failure to create a “great desert” project that denied borderland residence in the North Cape on behalf of an empty landscape. In order to settle this matter, Souza Coutinho in the same letter notified the existence of a map under production led by different colonial-military officials of the Grão-Pará State. In the next two following years, two maps concerning the specific area of the Macapá’s bay and Amazon river’s mouth, and the up-north Guiana’s coast were crafted under Souza Coutinho’s direct order. Out of reality, the cartography production ordered by Souza Coutinho followed his delusional “great desert” idea and depicted the North Cape and surroundings as eighty miles long stretch of empty land. If in the ground Portuguese had almost no power over the North Cape’s refugee inhabitants, lastly Souza Coutinho proposed an alternative reality based on maps that only highlighted Portuguese claim against French enemies in the region.

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[41] Ibid.

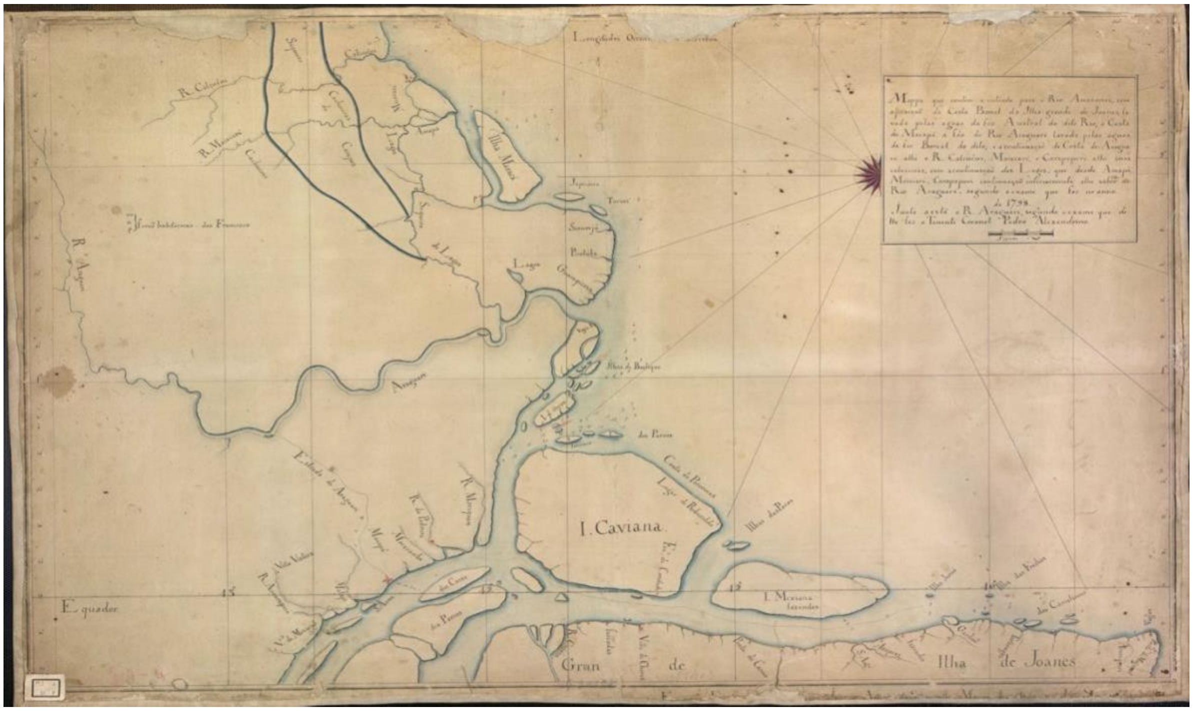

Figure 4 - Map of the Amazon river's entry, the Joannes island's north coast, the Macapá's coast bathed by the Amazon river until the Araguary river's mouth, and then the continuation of the Guiana's coast by José Simões de Carvalho (1798-99). *Acervo digital da Biblioteca Nacional – Rio de Janeiro. IN:* http://bndigital.bn.gov.br/acervodigital

Already in 1798, José Simões de Carvalho produced the first map. This Portuguese cartographer highlighted the extensive coastline from the Amazon river's entry, the Joannes island's north coast, the Macapá's coast and then the continuation of the North Cape. These areas were filled with detailed information and naming of settlements, rivers, roads, and sea routes that catalogued geographic, hydrographic and navigation content. His cartographic work relied on the observations of the lieutenant colonel Pedro Alexandrino who had recently exanimated the Araguary river and its surroundings. However, this map counted with data and geographical relations from other colonial subjects and authorities due to the range of its visual representation that encompassed. Simões de Carvalho indicated the Portuguese presence through red spot signs for settlements and dashed lines for recognizable pathways which connected theses different locations. Besides the Portuguese, Simões de Carvalho indicated spots of French settlement in the map. He made sure to differentiate them from the Portuguese spots by providing a legend for those three locations which did not exist anymore, since they “were dwellings of the French.”[42] Simões de Carvalho also did not name these French settlements, but he only labeled with the letters “m,” “n,” and “p.” His acknowledgement of the French presence worked as a narrative downplaying French influence over the region. In this sense, Simões de Carvalho’s map showcased a large environmental landscape crossed by water and bipolarized between a majority of Portuguese settlement, only until the Araguary river, and the ghost of French dwellings succumbed to the “great desert” project. Therefore, Simões de Carvalho’s map can be read as a material representation of Souza Coutinho’s goal that emphasized the necessity of an empty landscape. Simões de Carvalho’s alignment with the Grão-Pará governor silenced the presence of refugee communities. His dismissive action painted a false picture of emptiness that reinforced the achievement of the desired desert as a buffer zone between the French Guiana and Grão-Pará.

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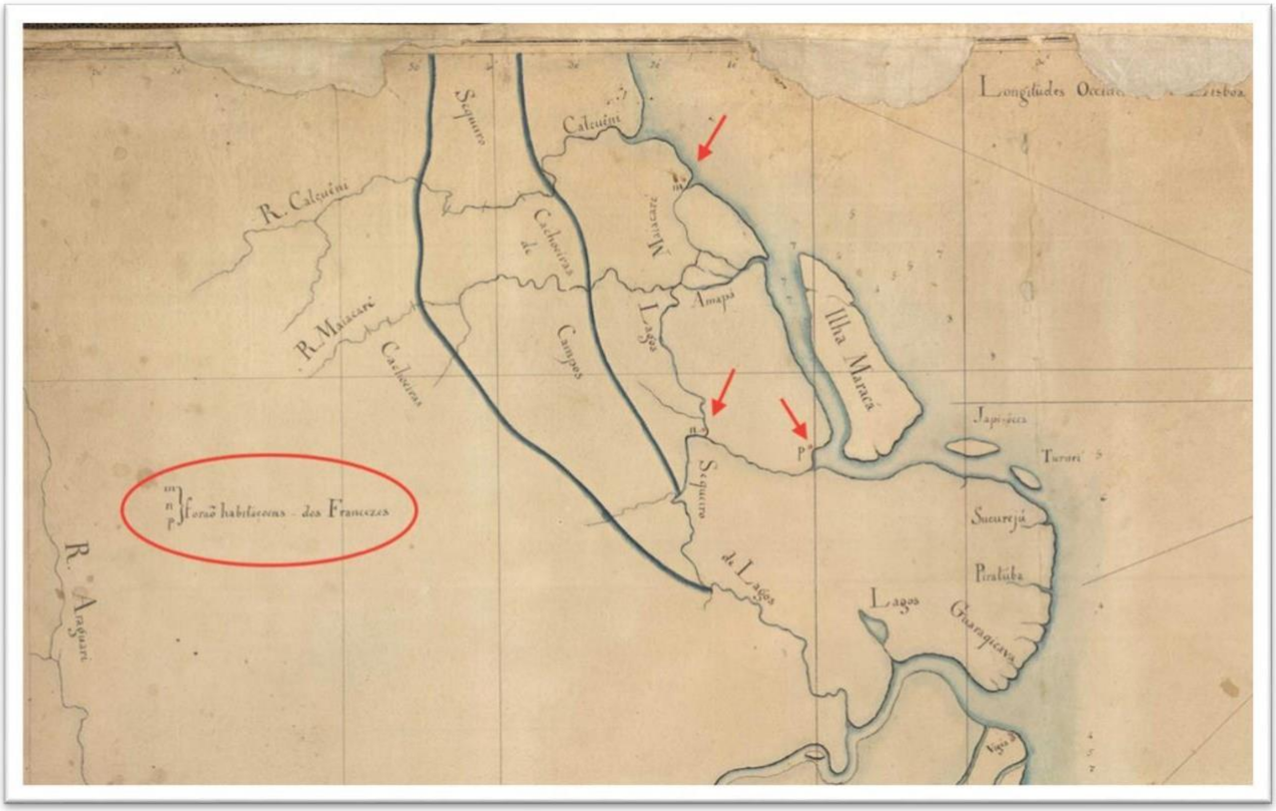
[42] Map of the Amazon river's entry, the Joannes island's north coast, the Macapá's coast bathed by the Amazon river until the Araguary river's mouth, and then the continuation of the Guiana's coast by José Simões de Carvalho (1798-99). *Biblioteca Nacional – Rio de Janeiro. IN:* http://bndigital.bn.gov.br/acervodigital


Longitudes Occid... Lisboa
Sequaro
Calcuini
R. Calcuini
Cachoeiras de Campos
Mazacaré
Amapá
Lagos
Ilha Maracá
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m
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m
n
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forão habitaçoens dos Francezes
Japiocas
Tururi
Sucurejú
Piratuba
Sequiro de Lagos
Lagos
R. Araguari

Figure 5 - Inside the red circle is the legend indicating that "m," "n," and "p" were "dwellings of the French. The red arrows point out the location of the French dwellings in the map.

The total absence of runaway settlements, Indigenous villages, or maroon communities in Simões de Carvalho's map clashed against Souza Coutinho's letters of constant concern and complaint over the undesirable mobility of these individuals across the North Cape. Despite the great amount of geographical knowledge acquired in the past years of expeditions and raids in this borderland, Simões de Carvalho left out any relevant information about runaway trails or their resilience to keep their chosen homelands. For example, in Souza Coutinho's letter of 1798, he mentioned his awareness about a "runaway trail" that passed by the subsequent places: Araguary river, the "fields," and "the maze of Amazonian islands." None of these pathways appear explicitly in Simões de Carvalho's map. Although his cartography emphasized the Portuguese presence in the Amazon river's mouth, there are no indication of other forms of land occupation. Even if almost vanished, the French still had their presence depicted. The French presence in the North Cape was put into the past, these locations ceased to exist and what was left only appeared as a fade depiction in the map. Completely ignored and erased, the refugee's communities of the North Cape disappeared for empty areas on the canvas.[43]

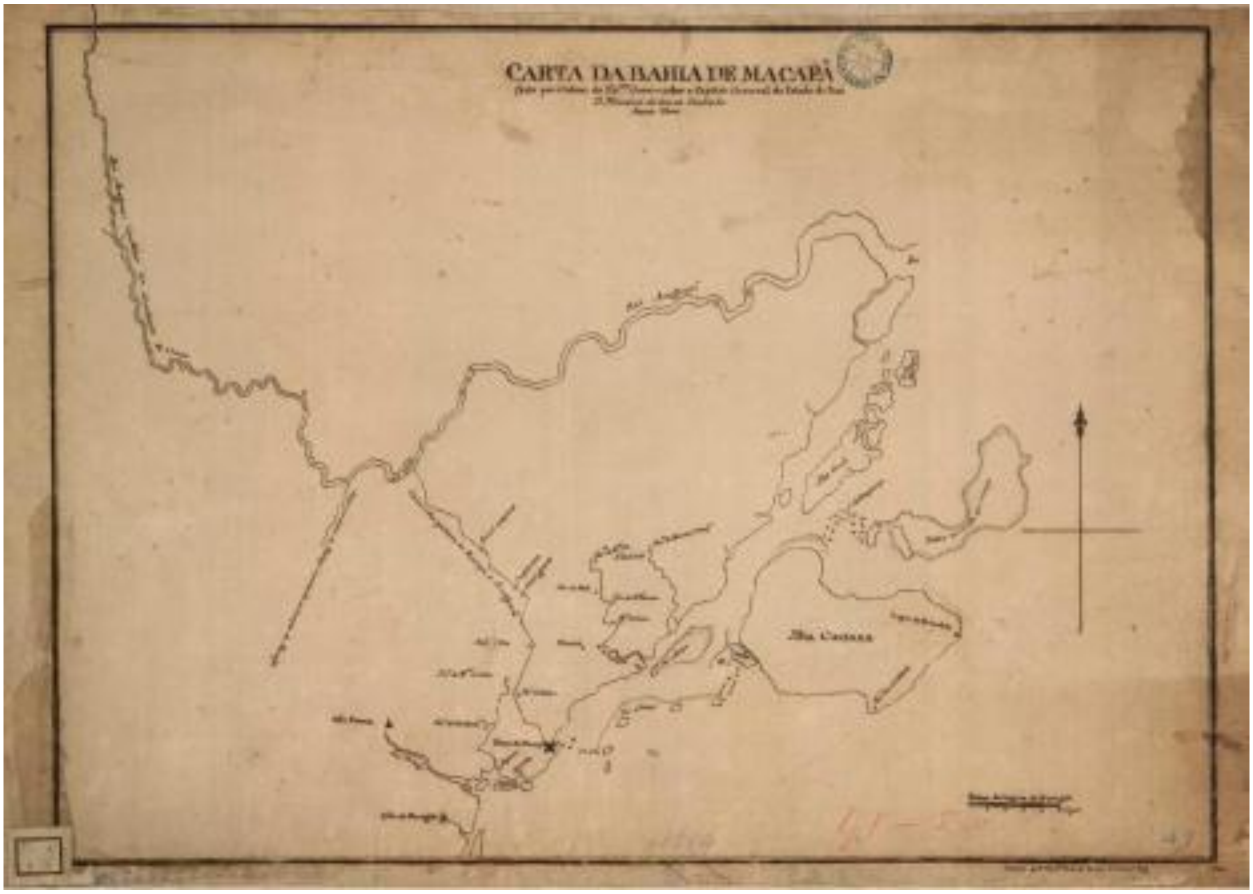

Figure 6 - Map of the Macapá's bay made by order of the General Captain of the Grão-Pará State D. Francisco de Souza Coutinho (1800). Acervo digital da Biblioteca Nacional – Rio de Janeiro. IN: http://objdigital.bn.br/acervo_digital/div_cartografia/cart5

In 1800, the second map produced under Souza Coutinho's order offered a detailed view on Portuguese use of land for different plantations from Macapá's bay to the Araguari river in the North Cape. This time the cartographer Simões de Carvalho was not involved in this mapmaking process. Differently from the previous map, which in its title indicated the collaboration between two colonial officials, Pedro Alexandrino had the solo authorship. Instead of showcasing the large territory of the Guiana Coast, the chart did not go beyond the course of the Araguary river. Here, the cartography prioritized the depiction of the plantation economy that surrounded Macapá. Pedro Alexandrino showcased eleven units of agricultural production, two *engenhos* (mills) and nine *fazendas* (plantations), alongside rivers and pathways that facilitated the transportation of commodities like cotton, coffee, rice, and cattle. Despite the emphasis on plantations, no further information was provided about these places but their belonging to their specific owner. In the end, Pedro Alexandrino found a way to depict Macapá's plantation economy without mentioning the major role of slavery in sustaining this landscape. He placed these agricultural units in an environment of rivers, but he only indicated the economic production that came from this relationship. Here again, the Portuguese cartographical production reinforced a vision of territorial emptiness, especially in the lands beyond the Araguary river. Pedro Alexandrino decided to exclude others forms of relationship between these plantations, powered by enslaved labor, and the rivers. He omitted from his map the fact of these waterways as escape routes explored by the enslaved population that fled to the North Cape. Runaway routes were sensitive matters for colonial authorities, thus omitting those from Pedro Alexandrino's map created an artificial landscape of the "great desert" that only existed in the cartographical universe.

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[43] "Ofício do Capitão General do Grão-Pará D. Francisco de Souza Coutinho, ao Ministro D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho," 20 April 1798, AHI, Arquivo Particular Duarte da Ponte Ribeiro, Doc. n. 1, cod. 277–2–10.

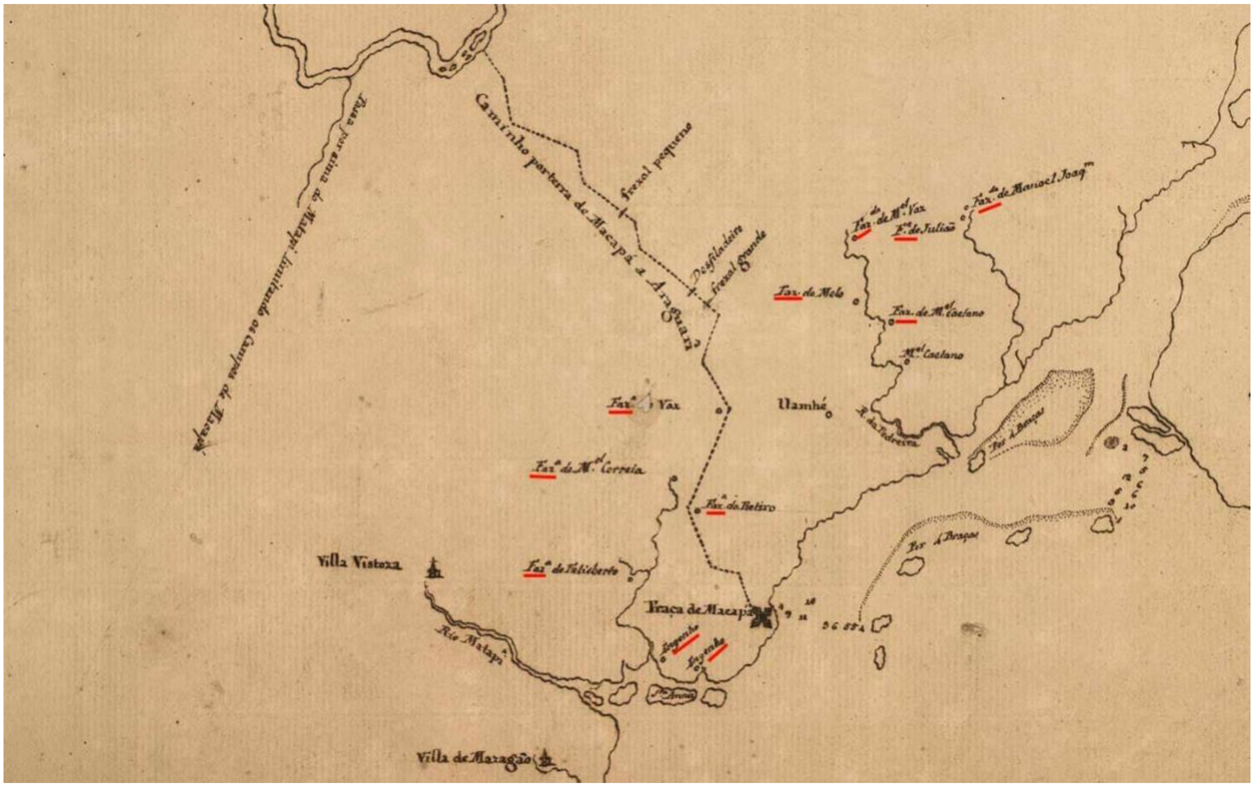
Caminho por terra de Macapá a Araguari
frezal pequeno
Desfiladeiro
frezal grande
Faz. de Melo
Faz. de M. Caetano
Uamhé
Villa Vistoza
Faz. de Retiro
Praça de Macapá
Rio Matapi
Villa de Mazagão

Figure 7 -The underlined terms depict the plantations and mills around the Macapá's bay area. Some of the indicated plantations had their owners' name right beside it. Here, the landscape is marked by the plantation economy which relied on the exploitation of the enslaved workforce of Africans and blacks.

In attempts to crystallize a legitimacy of their sovereignty over the Amazon basin, Portuguese officials resorted to strategies of diplomatic negotiations, militarized surveillance, and forcible displacement.[44] Besides the systematic use of coercive violence, the Portuguese empire varied its efforts to impose order thorough "recurring proofs, including mapping, description, the founding of political communities, ceremonies recognizing new vassals, and administrative acts designed to support claims to discovery and possession."[45] The Portuguese colonial administration pushed forward the material production of geographical knowledge in maps, charts, and choreographies about the North Cape. This cartographical endeavor aimed to deny the presence of the French empire and runaway communities in these borderlands, thus producing a fictitious reality dominated by one imperial claim. The Portuguese empire unsettled borderland peoples and denied their autonomous sovereignties both discursively and physically. The Portuguese authorities violently raided the North Cape and displaced its inhabitants to different locations across the Grão-Pará state. Additionally, Portuguese officials made sure to erase runaway communities' existence from maps.

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[44] Arthur Cézar Ferreira Reis, *A Amazônia e a integridade do Brasil* (Manaus, Governo do Estado, 1966), 150-151.

[45] Paquette, *The European Seaborne Empires*, 46.

Maps for Empires, But Not the Lands

Before the expansion of imperial claims over the North Cape, this region already sheltered a diversity of Indigenous groups who controlled politics and trading systems over the landscape. In recent work, Espelt-Bombin describes the North Cape not as a frontier zone of fading European powers, but an epicenter of indigenous politics and trading systems. Between 1600 and 1730, the Aruã, Maraon, Arikaré, Palikur and Galibi all upheld their autonomy through inter/intra-ethnic networks by means of special forest routes spanning across the region.[46] The story of French-Portuguese conflict over the North Cape has excluded Indigenous' political maneuvers and their motives as a central force. In this way, Espelt-Bombin highlights how "it is necessary to integrate all of the actors living in a specific geographical space in any discussion of the settling or establishment of international frontiers."[47] However, the North Cape's reality changed in the late eighteenth century, especially due to the arrival of new groups escaping colonial bounds, which transformed this land into a runaway homeland. Understanding Portuguese raids, map-making, and other attempts to violently displace borderlands inhabitants, it is possible to trace the trajectories of runaway communities that never vanished from the North Cape.

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[46] Silvia Espelt-Bombin, "Makers and Keepers of Networks: Amerindian Spaces, Migrations, and Exchanges in the Brazilian Amazon and French Guiana, 1600–1730," *Ethnohistory* 65, no. 4 (Oct. 2018): 618.

[47] Silvia Espelt-Bombin, "Frontier Politics: French, Portuguese and Amerindian Alliances between the Amazon and Cayenne, 1680–1697," In *Locating Guyane*, eds. Catriona MacLeod, and Sarah Wood (Liverpool University Press, 2018), 85.

Souza Coutinho's desired "empty land" solely existed on paper, or more specifically, in cartographic charts. In reports and letters, deserters, refugees, and runaways popped up to disrupt the project of Grão-Pará's governor in the North Cape. In reading such letters, we followed runaway Indigenous people and maroons who had vibrant communities with their own trading systems, politics, and a degree of autonomy that may have pre-figured a form of sovereignty. Runaways' survival and growth shocked the Portuguese governor who described this situation as "the very sad truth" of many enslaved Africans and Indigenous people who denied Portuguese imperial sovereignty by creating their own.[48] In this sense, Portuguese maps of the North Cape in the lasting years of the eighteenth century proposed a lie, or at least, an alternative interpretation of the land occupation in the region. The empty spaces in these maps were vibrant lands of runaways. The growth of mapping expeditions revealed the increasing concern of the colonial administration to control the labor and mobility of its own subjects, especially enslaved Africans and Indigenous laborers. In essence, these maps became one of the many ways in which the Portuguese made claims to the North Cape. Ironically, these claims were contingent on the knowledge of the refugees, deserters, and runaways the Portuguese empire sought and failed to control. Hence Souza Coutinho's "great desert" had a history of failed Portuguese attempts in denying other sovereignties.

When addressing the history of refugee communities, the inclusion of maroons and Indigenous groups in the historical narrative faces serious challenges due to the colonial nature of archives. In simple terms, all consulted documentation here came to life through the hands and eyes of colonizers and their institutions. The colonial gaze produced empire-centered documents that only partially depicted borderland inhabitants. Throughout this paper, refugees when acknowledged in the archive, usually appeared as victims and criminals of empire-building projects. However, even the colonial records that aimed to silence refugee communities or to justify imperial violence against them still have the potential for alternative narratives. A historical narrative that sought to understand the making and representations of landscapes where European empires were not victorious in imposing their univocal sovereignty.

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[48] Ibid.

Runaway Indigenous groups and maroon communities existed as de facto central autarkic players who defied notions of sovereignty over borderlands regions. They both embodied experiences of violent displacement and forced incorporation to colonial sites, escaped the brutality of slavery and labor exploitation, searched for spaces of autonomy in the margins of empires, and were living proofs of imperial struggle.[49] This perspective calls into question a larger history of European empires' expansion that discounts the trajectories of marginalized and autonomous individuals as exemplifying the failures of imperial expansion. Even if seen as failures, runaways directly produced the failing of colonizers' projects. Runaways shaped borderlands and in doing so politically contested the scope of imperial forces.[50] This view speaks to renewed scholarly interests on the politics and polities of borderland communities in the Atlantic

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[49] I would like to stress the relevance of understanding the diversity of the runaways who inhabited the North Cape, but at the same time their common traits. In a similar note with Linenbaugh and Rediker when addressing the motley crew of sailors in the Atlantic: "Although we write about and emphasize the inter-racial character of the motley crew, we wish that readers would keep these other meanings—the subversion of power and the poverty in appearance — in mind." Peter Linebaugh, and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 38.

[50] When talking about runaway slaves, Paulo da Costa highlights how subaltern subjects changed colonizers' politics or even contained them. However, he did not explore what they could have created for themselves in these acts of defiance or escape. Paulo M. Cambraia Costa, "Em verdes labirintos: a construção social da fronteira franco-portuguesa (1760 – 1803)," (PhD diss., Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2018), 21.

World that go beyond national or imperial definitions.[51] Runaway communities reveal a differentiated historical process of land occupation in the Amazon, as they engaged with environmental and economic activities in the pursuit of livelihoods that averted the demands of colonial export-oriented commerce.

The acknowledgment of refugee inhabitants deconstructs the ahistorical narratives of the Amazon as an uninhabited region. In this sense, this paper disrupts traditional histories of diplomatic battles over artificial borderlines imposed by European empires by privileging a critical mass of autonomous refugees, Indigenous peoples, and maroons over the peripheral presence of imperial forces. In actuality, the inhabitants of the North Cape maintained their own sovereignties through geographical knowledge, superior mobility through riverways, agricultural development, the exchange of vital resources, and, finally, the desire to resist other sovereignties that denied their autonomy over land and their labor. Known today as the Brazilian state of Amapá, the North Cape still carries its history as a refugee terrain connected to communities that imagined themselves beyond an imperial or modern state. To this day, 70% of Amapá territory is protected as environmental reserves, where 30 Maroon communities and 8 Indigenous territories are federally recognized.[52]

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[51] The growth of Borderlands History prompted essential critics about the biases on this field, especially its roots with nationalistic or Eurocentric narratives. In the last decades, two historiographic rich articles tackled down the matter in the anglophone academia. Jeremy Adelman, and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 814-815. Pekka Hämäläinen, and Samuel Truett, “On Borderlands,” *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (Sept. 2011): 338-361.

[52] About Maroons communities, Indigenous territories, and environmental reserves in present-day Amapá: https://www.institutoiepe.org.br/area-de-atuacao/povos-indigenas/; https://www.portal.ap.gov.br/noticia/2205/amapa-possui-95-dos-seus-ecossistemas-naturais-preservados ; Eliane Superti, and Gutemberg de Vilhena Silva, “Comunidades Quilombolas na Amazônia: construção histórico-geográfica, características socioeconômicas e patrimônio cultural no Estado do Amapá,” *Confins*, 23 (2015), 3. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/confins/10021