

Date: 1518, January 22. Santo Domingo, La Española

Theme: An early colonial official in La Española stressed the importance of enslaved Blacks as labor force and proposed a triangular trans-Atlantic open trade to supply them to the colony

Source: PARES, Portal de Archivos Españoles, Archivo General de Indias, PATRONATO, 174, R. 8

[fo. 40r.]

Illustrious and very /
Magnificent lord /

Because even in these so remote and aloof regions it is very notorious /
the dear zeal and loyalty that your lordship invests in the service of his highness and the good /
of these islands and infinite land, I wanted to write to your lordship as my lord, giving /
you a primary report of the things from here, and also so that your lordship may know me, /
and may know that you have in these regions a very sure servant in everything /
you may want to order me, and so that your lordship informs his highness, aside from what /
I am writing to his majesty as to everything concerning the protection of these /
regions that are in great need. Because the wellbeing of all these /
kingdoms so extensive and spacious lies in their being populated by Indians, /
and the latter missing, everything lacks; lack the revenues of his highness, since /
there will be nobody to dig out the gold; lacks the population of these regions, and /
their businesses. And finally, from being lands so abundant and most fertile, /
they will become a dwelling for brute animals, and will stay /
unattended and barren with no usefulness nor yield that may /
[...]

[fo.46v.]

[...]

r It is necessary as well that black slaves come in, as I /
have written to his highness, and because your lordship will see that chapter of the letter to his highness /
I do not want to repeat it here except to let you know that it is a very necessary thing /

[fo.47r.]

r for them [the slaves] to be brought in, so that from this island the vessels depart to Seville, where /
items that may be necessary for battering may be bought, as well as cloths of different /
colors and other things for batter to be used in Cape Verde, from where they are to /
be brought with license from the King of Portugal, and so that for the ships go there fo the said barter /
and bring along all the Black men and women that they may get, *bozales* /
of fifteen and eighteen or twenty years of age, and they should adapt in this island to our customs /
and be placed in towns where they will be married to their women. /
The work of the Indians should be alleviated, infinite gold should be extracted. This land is /
the best in the world for Blacks, for the women, for the old men, /
which may be seen as a great wonder when one of this type dies. There is a need /
as well that city council memberships should not be perpetual but temporary /
that they are to be elected every year and that the elected one be married so that he feels love /
for the land, because all those that there are now, or two out of every three, are single /
without wives so they have no attachment, and with this and with the said council posts /
being perpetual, they are so forgetful that they do not remember themselves, /

the land receives great damage, and there is nobody that comes back to it. /

And it is very necessary as well, very illustrious lord, that from all the regions of your highness' /
kingdoms and lordships vessels may come freely to this island, /
with all the merchandises they may want to carry, without stopping at Seville, because /
it is a total destruction for these regions, they being so large, to be restricted /
so that no ships whatsoever may come except from only one port, /
that of Seville. With this, items are very expensive, those who are here cannot support /
themselves adequately, and what they earn all of it is taken away by /
merchants, of which his highness is much harmed, because if there were ships from all places, /
all things would cost a fair price due to the abundance of the /
commodities and provisions, and this your lordship must order to be decided upon, since it is /
something very necessary. And supposing that Seville complains as in other occasions, /
these regions are more than twenty times Seville, and to solve one thing /
another more important should not be broken, especially with so much /
damage to these regions./

[...]

[fo. 48r.]

[...]

- r and your lordship should ask his highness for a grant of the goods that in these regions /
may be confiscated, which I think will be a great thing, according to what I have /
seen and the information there is. With it I think your lordship will be very /
benefitted and served. And for me to better do this, it is necessary, /
as I have said, that your lordship orders that a confirmation /
of my powers is sent to me, as I have said, which should come free, because /
so it is convenient for the service of his highness and the good of these regions. And I hope in God /

[fo.48v.]

to serve your lordship so much that you give me grants. May your magnificent and very illustrious state /

prosper and preserve our lord with much greater [] as your lordship wishes./

From this city of Santo Domingo, on 22 of January of five hundred and eighteen years.

[] servant of your lordship who kisses your hands /

[*Rubric*] [...] Zuazo ... [*Rubric*]

[*Rúbrica*] [...] çuaço [*Rúbrica*]