

Date: 1522, November 13. Valladolid, Spain.

Theme: Royal order to the *Audiencia* of Santo Domingo saying that many ship captains and sailors are taking slaves to La Española without licenses. It also mandates that an inventory is made of the slaves arrived in L.E. in those circumstances.

Source: PARES, Portal de Archivos Españoles—Archivo General de Indias, INDIFERENTE,420,L.9 - 107 – Imagen Núm: 101 / 484 -- Imagen Núm: 103 / 484

In late November of 1522 the Spanish King (Charles V) declared, in a letter to the *oidores* or judges of the Audiencia and other colonial government officials of Santo Domingo, that the Crown had been informed that

[...] “many captains of merchants’ vessels, sailors and other persons that pass to these parts against what we have banned and prohibited have passed and pass many male and female slaves without our license, and that you the said officials have not put into it the care that is convenient, from which we have been and are harmed and our revenues defrauded” [...]

The king ordered the Audiencia to conduct and submit to him an inquiry about the slaves arrived in La Española without a royal license at the time

[...] “and who and which persons have carried them and on which vessels they went and when and at which time and whether they registered by the officials that reside in Seville at the Casa de la Contratacion de las Indias and whether there was a license from us or from another person that has it from us, and from whom and to whom they were the said slaves sold and whether they are alive and in whose control” [...]

After promising punishment for this illegality, the king insisted in his communication on mandating that the colonial royal bureaucrats of La Española should confiscate any “male or female slaves” carried to the colony without a royal license and without being registered with the royal officials of the *Contratación* and that they prosecute the individuals engaged in the transport of the slaves. The king also mandated that this order must be disseminated throughout the colony by town criers. This prohibition, the king clarified in his order, does not affect “the four thousand slaves for which I have issued license to my *mayordomo* and governor of Bresa of my Counsel.”

This royal order, therefore, confirms that by late 1522 the king had indeed given a concession for 4,000 to his court associated governor of Bresa, and also that there was enough of a smuggling of slaves of both sexes into La Española practiced on the ships traveling to the colony as to merit the king ordering, in a somewhat harsh language, an inquiry on the matter.