

Date: 1523, December 27. Pamplona, Spain

Theme: News about additional uprisings by black slaves in La Española less than two years after the 1521 rebellion.

Source: PARES, Portal de Archivos Españoles—Archivo General de Indias, PATRONATO,20,N.2,R.2 - 1-

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In this letter to the members of the *Audiencia* and La Española's royal treasurer, king Charles V of Spain acknowledges having received correspondence from them of September 12-15 of that year informing him that "besides the blacks that in days past had escaped from the service to their masters, now again another squad of them have begun to get upset."

This constitutes the first documented mention that we know of, in a primary source of the times, of acts of resistance by enslaved blacks in La Española since the uprising of December 1521 across the south-central coastal plains of the colony that were first reflected in the ordinances on blacks of January, 1522, and much later in the well known chronicle by Fernández de Oviedo.

The king approved of the measures that the colonial authorities of Santo Domingo had reportedly taken against the black rebels, and insisted on the overall danger of the situation and on the need to punish and crush "with much rigor" the uprising, "until with much care it is subdued and pacified as you say you will do." In the face of the situation, he also ruled allowing the colonial authorities of La Española to impose whatever momentary tax (*sisá*) they deemed necessary to fund the military response to the marooning.

Charles V also expressed in this letter great concern for what was conceived to be a great number of blacks in La Española ("muchos negros en esa dicha ysla española") and the fact that as a consequence "some inconvenience could occur because [they] are many more than the [*page torn*] the Spaniards," adding that these blacks "have against the said Christians great daring and shamelessness" and that "they could cause them to rebel or do some senselessness that would be cause of much damage to the Christians." To prevent this the Crown ordered that "no Christian who had blacks could have them without having in his home as many Christians as one third of the blacks he had, persons capable of taking up arms when it were obviously necessary and that these be warned and aware of it."