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4 Oct 1770

Tovar to Viceroy

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My Lord, in the short three years that I have been in charge of this Presidio and its terrains I have procured, meticulously, to personally look after them, so that, at any given time, I can give prompt account of the territories, and given the difficulty of trying to save any of the ships that sink around this coast, which are innumerable; it seems I have to notify Your Majesty of the following: On the side of the Guadalupe River, to the Orient of this Presidio is the coast named [isla del] Sombrero; from this area one can see a vast amount of shallow islands, some of these big, some of them small, some are known to have names like [isla del] Puerto, [isla de] La Culebra, [isla del] Bergantín, which lays to the Northeast of this Presidio, [isla de] Los Copanes, further down; another where the Cuxanes Indians seem to avoid; they are so many to the point of confusion, and one cannot distinguish them well from land. On the first aforementioned island dwell the Carancahuas with no stability, though they have here a Mision, all or most of them go around like fugitives, for they cannot settle down as they should. These apostate Indians are the ones who most damage my work, because they steal horses and cattle; and although I have not been able to catch them because, while taking refuge in this impassable area, they throw themselves to the sea to swim toward this islands, (continues page 451) effectively outsmarting the troops. In order to avoid this situation, I have thought of the following: through a good pilot and a good cartographer, sent to the area from my command, be able to do an exact surveying of all islands, cays and so on, an act that can be carried out at no cost to the Royal Treasury other than that of the two men, the following can be diligently inquired: Every Mision of the Presidio of San Antonio de Bexar shall give three Indians, armed, each of the others three, twenty four soldiers from the Presidio de Bexar; sixteen from here, myself included, and a subaltern, and once everyone gets together, we will go to the mouths of the Guadalupe and San Antonio; we will build six or eight sturdy canoes, or at the mouth of the Colorado, or wherever it is more fitting, for this I will bring the necessary tools: once there is enough people to get started and the islands get surveyed: the idolatrous Indians will be pursued as far as their own dwellings, and I have no doubt that some pieces of the sunken ships may serve of some utility; I could not help but notice that when some of these Indians have been restituted to their Mision, they have brought with them pieces of Sorazas, cloths of various colors, and rifles, though very few. This scrutiny can take place, if Your Majesty so wishes, during the months of April, May and June, it could even be done in less time. It is of common knowledge, and notorious that the area of most danger to the ships is around the aforementioned islands, many people have sought refuge in them, particularly at [isla del] Puerto, and the Carancahuas, with their trickery, have killed them; and if it is of convenience to Your Majesty, to build in some of (continues page 452) this islands a fort, in order to protect these coasts, and if war were to break out, vessels harassed by enemy pirates or to temporal accidents could seek refuge here: it seems to me that this also ensures the avoidance of other nations trying to populate any part of this area, for, if this were to occur, they would overtake the Mexican Gulf, and also, with ease, the mainland, for it is sparsely populated and desolate, and the command of this Presidio would find itself powerless, if the first formation of the attack were to take place on the beach; it is unknown to me the reason why they decided to take it to El Rollo, from here, a little further up, was placed on the shores of the Guadalupe River on the other side; the ships, and what they needed, would come in by water, from

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there sailed a sloop from Veracruz, it would go all the way down to Isla del Puerto, the Presidiales had their boat, with which they would unload the goods: what I have been able to acquire, because it was the first relocation on this side if the beach, given how skimpy it is, without a tree for lumber, and this is true, for I have witnessed it: having removed it from El Rollo and other regions they say for how little good health they enjoyed, and that children would die soon after birth, up to four years for the ones in the wilderness: everything that I have thought is of advantage to present to the consideration of Your Excellency, so that you may determine what is of most convenience.

Aside from what I have notified Your Excellency do not forget to take into consideration that at other times of the year these terrains are impassable, for they are too shallow and soft, that one cannot even traverse them on foot, as it happened to me, walking with loincloth, dragging my horse straight, in order to escape from such (continues page 453) quagmire; the streams gather too much water at this time, cays too, and their entrances and exits become very dangerous, in order to overcome this, I spent three days with my crew, and we were in danger: the rivers look like oceans; I persuade myself of not omitting these details, in case one of these days something urgent were to happen. Your Excellency shall excuse my lack of voices in this my presentation, for my intent is to foresee and to serve both Majesties, without mayor expenses to the Royal Treasury. And once concluded this maneuver, if Your Excellency considers its application useful, it was advisable that the captured Indians from this endeavor were sent to the arsenals of Habana, because nonetheless the Cuxanes, some in functions of Vela, in which they have found themselves with me, and how they have behaved with my Company, I recognize their speed, and their reticence towards the faith, or their Mision, and in order to have a good conscience I must say that here the royal ideals and orders are not being followed: Everything would be quieter and more tranquil, and more populated, if this sheltering Mision were not to be here, and there is no greater pain for any honorable subject than to not live by the Castilian truths, for he who declares them clearly to the world lacks no phrases, nor adulation to mask them with glory pretending to fit the size of their mouths, but for I wish no more than to scarify my life in service of both Majesties, without expecting any prize other than the bounty that I acquire through my merit, so I trust, and so I hope to be worthy, I notify to You to have it in high consideration of Your excellency that you will determine what is most convenient.