

# Covert 19th Century Political Intrigues of Tenerife Nobility Revealed by Cryptanalyzing an Encrypted Letter

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**Abstract** This article presents a cryptanalysis of a 19th-century encrypted manuscript discovered in the archives of Conde de Siete Fuentes in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain. The manuscript, preserved by the heirs of the 6th Count of Valle de Salazar, utilizes a polyalphabetic substitution cipher. The cryptanalysis was performed by applying statistical frequency analysis and developing a Python script for decryption, resulting in the authors successfully deciphering the message. The decrypted letter reveals political communications discussing the strategic positioning of Tenerife as the capital, the dissolution of local councils, and the influence of key political figures. The analysis compares the cipher with historical encryption techniques, and identifies the unique characteristics of the manuscript's encryption method. The study highlights the political dynamics and alliances within Tenerife's nobility and their interactions with the central Spanish government, providing significant insights into, both, the cryptographic practices and political maneuvers of the time.

**Keywords** polyalphabetic encryption · cryptanalysis · historical cryptography · classical ciphers

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## 1 Introduction

“During the year 69 there was not a day without conspiracy, and I was one of the most constant in stirring up opinion, preparing or contributing to the preparation of a republican insurrection throughout the Peninsula, including Portugal. At that time I wrote more clandestine sheets and more coded letters than before September 1868”

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*Nicolás Estévez, Memorias.*

As quoted above, in his *Memoirs*, written in French exile, Nicolás Estévez, a politician from the Canary Islands and former minister of the brief First Spanish Republic (1873-1874), nostalgically recalled the times of the Glorious Revolution of 1868, when the Spanish monarchy fell. In his soliloquy, he acknowledged the frequent use of coded correspondence with other conspirators, as part of a communicative strategy that also involved agitation with articles published in the press under a pseudonym, distribution of pamphlets, clandestine meetings and other actions aimed at “stirring up [public] opinion”.

However, the use of this type of coded letters was not exclusive to the late 19th century, as it was already a common practice among diplomats and officials of modern monarchies, despite the fact that relatively few have been preserved. Finding these letters in Tenerife, institutional archives is quite unusual, but they are relatively more abundant in the family and personal archives of the politicians and diplomats of the time.

The letter analyzed in this article is one of them. It was found by chance during the tasks of archival description of the Conde de Siete Fuentes fonds, a family archive of more than 27,000 documents that contains the documentation generated and preserved by several families of the nobility of Tenerife, Spain from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Specifically, the letter was in a bundle of correspondence received by the VI Count of Valle de Salazar, Don Cristóbal Salazar y Porlier (1789-1866). It is currently available for consultation as document AHDSCLL/FCSF/Caja 175/Leg. 175/doc. 6.

Obviously, for the history of Spain and the Canary Islands, the letter is quite a significant contribution. Therefore, the motivation for performing the cryptanalysis is obvious. The letter reveals some new findings about the political relationships of the time, while its analysis reveals the advances in encryption methods available in the Canary Islands (situated on the route between Europe and America) at the time.

The article is organized as follows; The introduction provides a contextualization of the encrypted letter. The second section explores related works

concerning similar ciphers, including polyalphabetic ciphers, and the historical cryptography landscape in Spain and the Canary Islands. The third section is dedicated to the cryptanalysis of the letter. Finally, the fourth section offers a critical analysis of the letter, which is composed in key political terms, providing valuable insights into its implications.

## 2 Technical Background: The Historical state of the art

The cipher employed in the letter, as expanded upon in subsequent sections, is a reversible polyalphabetic substitution cipher. It consists of 16 tables that divide the alphabet into two parts: the first half of the alphabet is between [a-m] and is at the top of each table, while the rest is between [n-z] and can be located at the bottom (Fig.1). It is an encryption system in which a letter belonging to one of the halves of the alphabet cannot be replaced by another located in the same half. In this sense, we have found several ciphers that could correspond to the technique used, but none of them a hundred percent corresponds to the one used in this manuscript. This is because it was a common practice for people to create their own ciphers from existing ones.

In chronological order, the first cipher that maintains a certain relationship with the one exposed in this work is the biblical Atbash (Jeremiah 25:26). It is a substitution cipher also called mirror cipher, and was used between 600 and 500 B.C. by the Hebrews. This cipher is monoalphabetic, so it does not correspond exactly to the cipher used in the document that is analyzed here. However, it is a mirrored method, like the encryption in this work, which replaces the first letter of the alphabet with the last one, the second with the penultimate, and so on.

Another of the ciphers that follow this operation is Giovan Battista Bellaso's [Bellaso(1553)] cipher. He published his first work in 1553, consisting of a cipher which is mirror and bidirectional, but also polyalphabetic since it originally used 11 different alphabets. This system keeps the first half of the alphabet stable, while the second half is shifted, a seemingly random number of places from the top half. This encryption can be made a bit more complicated by placing the vowels first and then the consonants.

Encryption is carried out by using an agreed phrase, placed over the plain text. Each letter in this agreed phrase would indicate the table to be used, substituting the letter in plain text with the letter above or below it in the alphabet identified by the capital letter of the key.

This cipher is the one that best agrees with the cipher presented in this work, however, the key in our case must be numeric. In 1555 Bellaso presented a second proposal, similar to the previous one but in which the index letters are mixed through a mnemonic key phrase, which may be different in each correspondent. Bellaso published his third book in 1564, introducing new tables with various variations that could be employed with or without keywords. Additionally, for correspondence between parties lacking a shared key, Bellaso proposed employing the initials of each word as the encryption key.

In 1563, the renowned Italian scholar Giambattista della Porta developed the Della Porta reciprocity table. [Della Porta(1563)] However, this encryption is nothing more than a replica of the previous encryption. In Spain, there is

1.	l	j	i	h	g	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll
2.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
3.	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll	j	i	h	g	z
4.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
5.	j	i	h	g	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll	l
6.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
7.	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	l	ll	m
8.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
9.	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll	j	i	h	g	z
10.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
11.	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	l	ll	m
12.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
13.	e	d	c	b	a	j	i	h	g	f	m	ll	l
14.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
15.	b	m	a	ll	c	d	l	e	j	f	g	i	h
16.	z	y	x	v	u	t	s	r	q	p	o	ñ	n
17.	e	d	c	b	a	j	i	h	g	f	m	ll	l
18.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
19.	g	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll	j	i	h	z
20.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
21.	h	g	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll	j	i	z
22.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
23.	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	l	ll	m
24.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
25.	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	l	ll	m
26.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
27.	c	a	b	f	e	d	i	h	g	ll	l	j	m
28.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
29.	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	l	ll	m
30.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
31.	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll	j	i	h	g	z
32.	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z

Fig. 1 Table of substitution cipher used by Conde de Siete Fuentes

evidence of the use of this cipher, in [Fuensanta and Espiau(2016)] having found a version of the Della Porta table dating from 1591.

Finally, another cipher has been found that is also closely related to the one used in the letter. This is ROT13 [Google(2021)]. The cipher employs a table to substitute each letter with the one thirteen positions ahead in the alphabet; later the sequence is reversed. Although it is the easiest cipher to find, and its use is similar to that of the letter, it has been discarded ipso facto, since its origin is dated to 1980.

Regarding the cryptography used in 19th century Spain, several works exist. For instance, Professor Francisco Paula Martí's 1808 booklet, "Polygraphy or the Art of Writing in Ciphers" [de Paula Martí(1808)], offers an early example. While historically significant, its cryptographic security is limited.

cryptographic methods including substitution, transposition, and those developed by Alberti, Vigenère, and Hill are covered in depth by [Klima and Sigmon(2018)]. Moving to the late 18th century, [Strasser(2012)] examines the cipher system refined by Count Vergennes for French diplomatic communications.

The impact of the Franco-Prussian War on cryptography is explored in [Lasry(2022)]. The paper highlights the French army's development of new, resistant codes, one of which was later recovered and analyzed by Major H. J. Josse.

Later discoveries have shed further light on 19th century cryptography. Geraud-Steward and Naccache unveiled the novel Josse cipher in [Géraud-Stewart and Naccache(2021)], subsequently deciphered by Lasry using hill climbing techniques [Lasry(2023)].

Research into historical ciphertxts has also yielded significant results. The authors of [Lasry et al.(2021)Lasry, Megyesi, and Kopal] detail their work in recovering papal ciphertxts from the Vatican archives and deciphering them using advanced cryptanalysis techniques and the open source e-learning platform CrypTool.

Collaborative efforts to study historical cryptography have produced valuable resources. The DECRYPT project, described in [Megyesi et al.(2020)Megyesi, Esslinger, Fornés, Kopal, Láng, Lasry, de Leeuw, and et al], aims to gather data, share methodologies, and develop tools for transcribing, decrypting, and contextualizing historical encrypted manuscripts. The DECODE database, presented in [Megyesi et al.(2019)Megyesi, Blomqvist, and Pettersson], complements these efforts by providing a centralized repository of ciphers and keys.

Modern techniques are also being applied to historical cryptanalysis. The paper [Grosek and Zajac(2009)] explores the potential of artificial intelligence in deciphering classical ciphers.

Finally, we note that the recognition of handwritten encrypted manuscripts is more complex due to the huge variety of alphabets, symbols, and language used in the epoch. The authors in [Chen et al.(2022)Chen, Souibgui, Fornés, and Megyesi] present a web-based tool aimed at (semi)-automatically transcribing the encrypted sources.

Existing research on 19th-century cryptography primarily focuses on classical methods. The common conclusion of these works is that while various forms of polyalphabetic ciphers, including those developed by Alberti and Vigenère, were known and utilized, they were not widely prevalent or uniformly advanced across Europe in the 19th century. Instead, cryptographic practices varied significantly, with some regions and contexts favoring simpler methods, and only a few advanced techniques emerging in specific applications and historical contexts.

In Spain, during this period, evidence exists of cryptography's utilization in the Spanish War of Independence (1808-1814). Specifically, a Spanish individual, Juan Van Halen, successfully deciphered Suchet's cipher and employed it to facilitate the seizure of Mequinenza and Lérida [Soler Fuensanta(2021)]. In the Carlist wars, little is known about the use of cryptography, and the only available information is on the use of lemon juice to hide messages by Captain General Zumalacárregui. Don Carlos Luis de Borbón also used a code in which the terms were replaced by combinations of up to three digits and up to two letters [Soler Fuensanta(2021)].

The close relationship of the Canary Islands with Spanish-America and its relationship with some personalities named in the manuscript could give us a clue about the Count of Valle de Salazar's political strategies.

This manuscript uses an encryption system that was known to be used by the Spanish royalist army and governments during the Spanish-American Wars of Independence (1808-1833). This suggests that the manuscript may have been written by someone with access to these institutions.

One of the personalities revealed in the encrypted manuscript is that of General Ricafort. Mariano Ricafort Palacín y Abarca (1776-1846) was a Spanish military, politician, and colonial governor, successively Captain General of the Philippines, Cuba, Galicia, Canaries, Andalusia, and Aragon.

As we shall see, the letter alludes to making use of a cipher known as General Ricafort's first and second key [Bakula(1949), Galende(2000)]. Although the general's first key has been found, it does not match the type of encryption used in this letter; no information has yet been found regarding the second key/ encryption.

It is noteworthy that after meticulously examining the more than 27,000 documents preserved, it is concluded that the letter in question is the only example of a cipher present in the collection. However, in this period, there is evidence of the use of ciphers in the Canary Islands. Specifically, they have been found in personal documents, for example, in the diary written by councilman José de Anchieta y Alarcón, in the 1730s and 1730s, where he used encryption to record information about his sexual practices [Rodríguez(2013)]. We also know that within the León Castillo Collection, curated by El Museo Canario (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria), there exists a set of telegrams sent to Fernando León y Castillo between 1888 and 1890, i.e., after his tenure as Minister of Governance during the regency of María Cristina de Habsburgo-Lorena (1886-1887). Additionally, within the same archive, in the collection of Antonino Pestana Rodríguez, there is a brief document titled "Noticias y curiosidades

de Santa Cruz de La Palma recogidas por Severiano González Guerra,” dated between 1851 and 1856, containing encrypted information. Thus, it is inferred that the practice of encrypting messages was known in the islands, applied both for sending sensitive messages to others (typically in the context of political activities) and even for information that could be considered “sensitive” or censorable within the mindset of the era, regardless of whether it was intended for a third party. This is exemplified in the case of “egodocuments,” or so-called “writings of the self,” as seen in the diary of Anchieta Alarcón.

### 3 Cryptanalysis

The encrypted letter was discovered during the archival cataloging process conducted at the Conde de Siete Fuentes archives in San Cristóbal de La Laguna, Tenerife. This manuscript has been safeguarded by the descendants of the 6th Count of Valle de Salazar, who originally received it during the 19th century. Currently, it is housed within the diocesan archives. The transcription of the letter is provided in Appendix 5.1, while the English translation of the ciphered plaintext can be found in Appendix 5.3.

The handwritten manuscript consists of three pages, Figure 2,3,4, each containing an estimated 200 words. In addition, a supplementary page contains a tabular representation of 16 cipher lines, as shown in Figure 1. The presence of these tables led us to postulate the use of a polyalphabetic cipher, in which the selection of a particular table depends on a pre-assigned key.

The number of characters of the alphabet used in this cipher is 26, and its characteristics correspond to the language used in the nineteenth century since there is no letter  $k$ . Due to its similarity to the Della Porta cipher [Della Porta(1563)], it may give us a hint as to how to make use of the tables that are provided.

In order to illustrate the functioning of the cipher used, a simple example has been created. Suppose that the following five tables (Figure 5) and the following ciphertext are provided *Uvwv rb oznfmryjo*.

In addition, it is indicated that the key *41325* is used for encrypting the text. With this information, the corresponding tables to decrypt the message would be the indicated ones in the following table 1.

**Table 1** Original encryption table.

Cipher text:	U	v	w	v	r	b	o	z	n	f	m	r	y	j	o
Table to use:	4	1	3	2	4	1	4	1	3	2	5	4	1	3	2

This simple example shows that the plaintext corresponds to the sentence *Life is beautiful*. The moving from a table row to another table row along the same word is managed by the key which indexes the row and is repeated if the word is longer than the key.

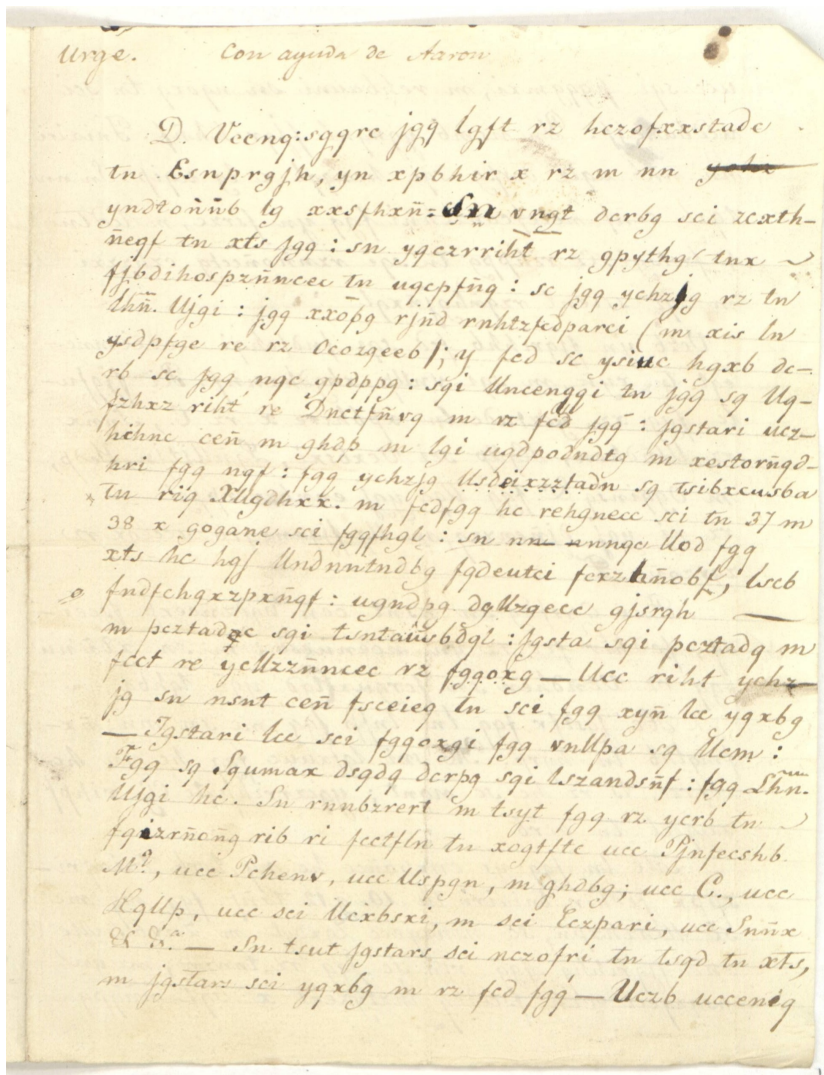
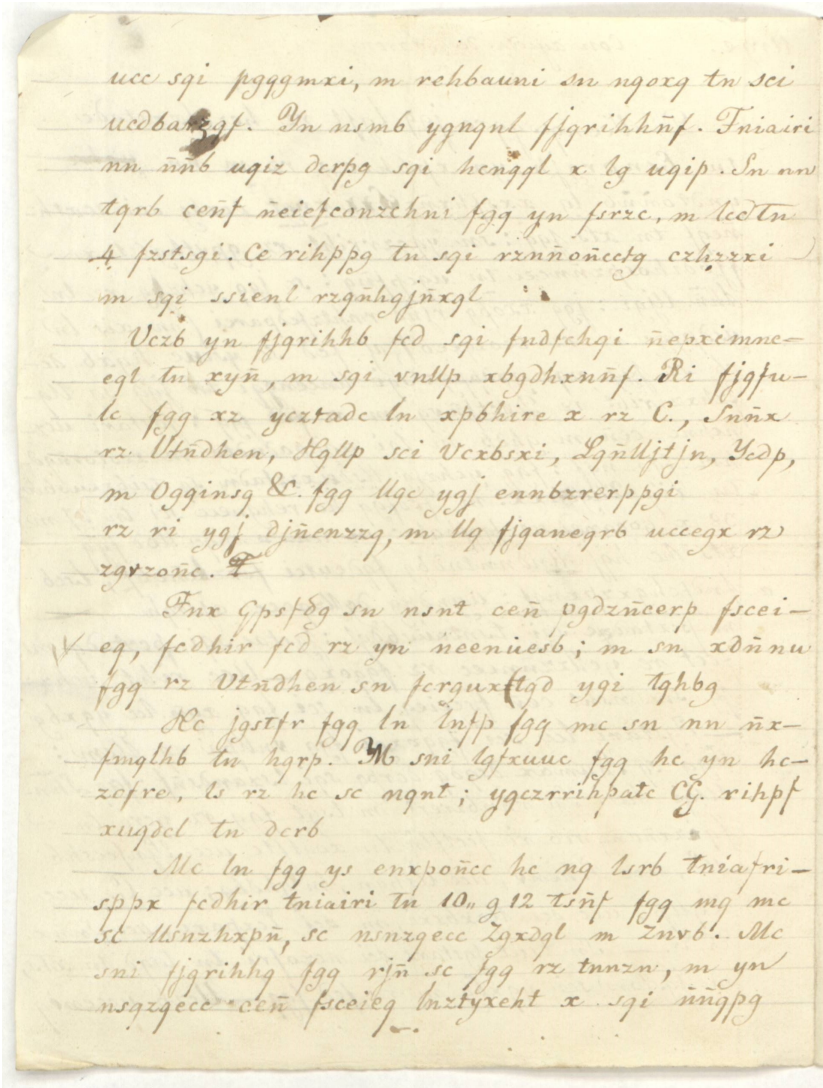


Fig. 2 First page of handwritten encrypted manuscript, received by Count de Siete Fuentes

Having successfully demonstrated the decryption process, our attention turns to the ciphertext requiring cryptanalysis. The first step was to examine the manuscript text for discernible patterns, such as repeated words or syntactic structures conveying coherence. Furthermore, it was reasonable to hypothesize that the original text was in Spanish, which allowed the derivation of assumptions regarding the most probable letters, digrams, and trigrams. This endeavor proved relatively simple, particularly given that the manuscript concluded with what appeared to resemble a date.



These observations, including the presence of spaces between words, the use of capital letters, the inclusion of numeric characters, and other anomalies, represent errors made by the sender during the encryption process. Even in an era without the computational capabilities available today, a potential interceptor would likely have attempted to exploit such clues to decrypt the message. These circumstances are indicative of the prevailing lack of cryptographic education at that time. In [encrypted sentence\(1\)](#), we present the



**Fig. 3** Second page of handwritten encrypted manuscript, received by Count de Siete Fuentes

syntactic structure that marks the end of the manuscript, including the encrypted initials and the signature of the sender.

Yqrgut 21 tn tsc (1)

The possible options that are part of a date in Spanish are: *de*, *en* and *el*, which would correspond to the encrypted text "tn"

- Option *en* is discarded, since n cannot be encrypted (no letter can be encoded as itself).

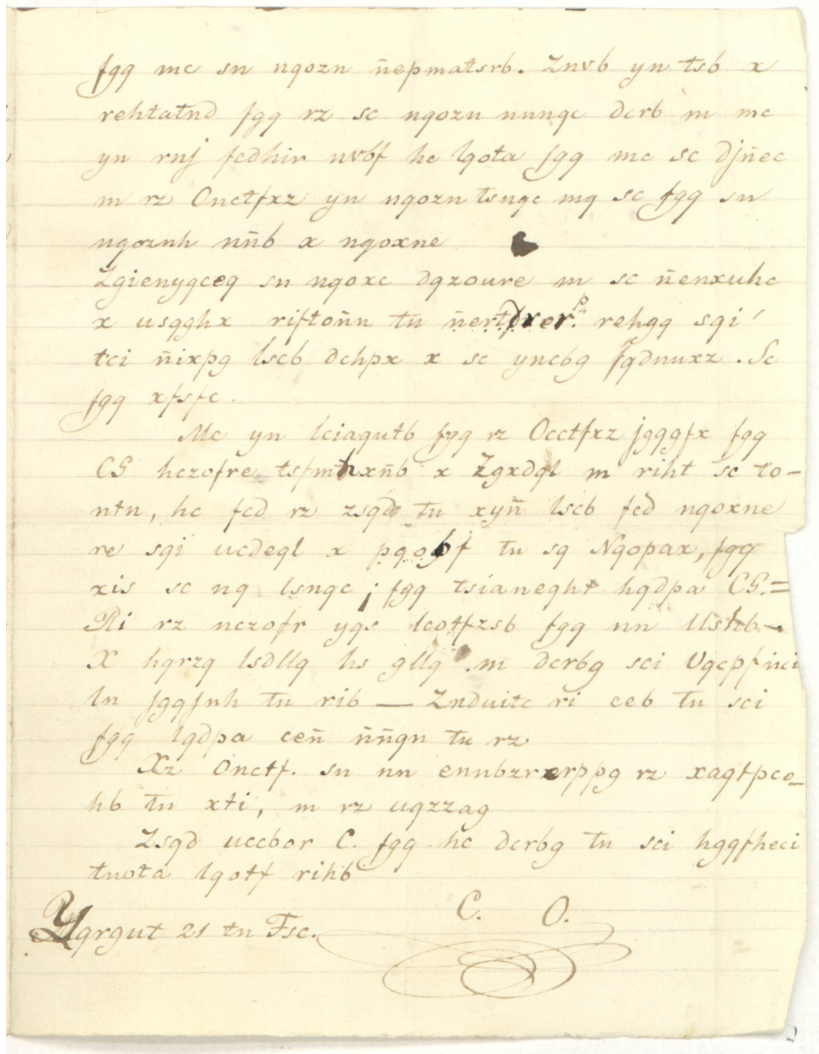


Fig. 4 Third page of handwritten encrypted manuscript, received by Count de Siete Fuentes

- Option *el* is discarded as there is no connection  $e \rightarrow t$  in the tables to encrypt/decrypt.
- The decrypted option *tn* is *de* in the following configurations: 1,7 1,9, 8,7, 8,9, that is, those 4 configurations are the same using Table 1 or 8 for the first letter, for the second letter, table 7 or 9 gives the result of the option selected.

As can be seen in Figure 1, tables (rows) 7 and 9 are identical, so to decipher the second letter, the problem is reduced to a single row, leaving only two possibilities 1 or 8 for the first letter. If the encryption method is analyzed, the number of tables is reduced to 9, (see Table 3), since the remaining seven are a copy of one of the previous 9. Therefore, it is possible to think that these and only these were the tables used for the encryption and decryption of the manuscript. Consequently, it can be concluded that the rest of the tables have been added to the cipher tables to confuse a possible, non-legitimate recipient of the cipher tables.

In order to continue the decryption, it was required to perform a frequency analysis, where employing repetitions of small words known as: *a, y, de, el, la, que, uno...*, at least all three first tables could be inferred. **The following figures present the most repeated bigrams (Figure 6) and trigrams (Figure 7) from a section of the analyzed text, along with the most frequent ones in Spanish. These word combinations are not necessarily monosyllabic.**

In the graphs which correspond to the most repeated bigrams in the text (in red– top part), we look for those that correspond to monosyllables in the ciphertext. The first corresponds to *tn*, which compared to the two-letter monosyllable, more repeated in Spanish (in blue– bottom part), corresponds to *de*.

It can be seen that the trigrams that are repeated the most are *jqj and fed* (in red– top part), which also match with the monosyllables in the manuscript. If we look at the statistics of the Spanish language, the three-letter monosyllables more frequently repeated are: *del* and *que* (in blue– bottom part). Returning to the tables that we proposed as initials and knowing the second one, we look for valid combinations. The results are  $\tilde{n}u \rightarrow jq$  and  $ro \rightarrow fc$  with

1	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
	r	s	t	u	z	y	x	w	v	q	p	o	n
2	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
	z	y	x	w	v	u	t	s	r	q	p	o	n
3	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
	n	o	r	s	v	w	z	y	x	u	t	q	p
4	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
	n	o	p	q	w	x	y	z	r	s	t	u	w
5	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
	w	x	y	z	n	o	p	q	r	s	u	v	t

Fig. 5 Example tables

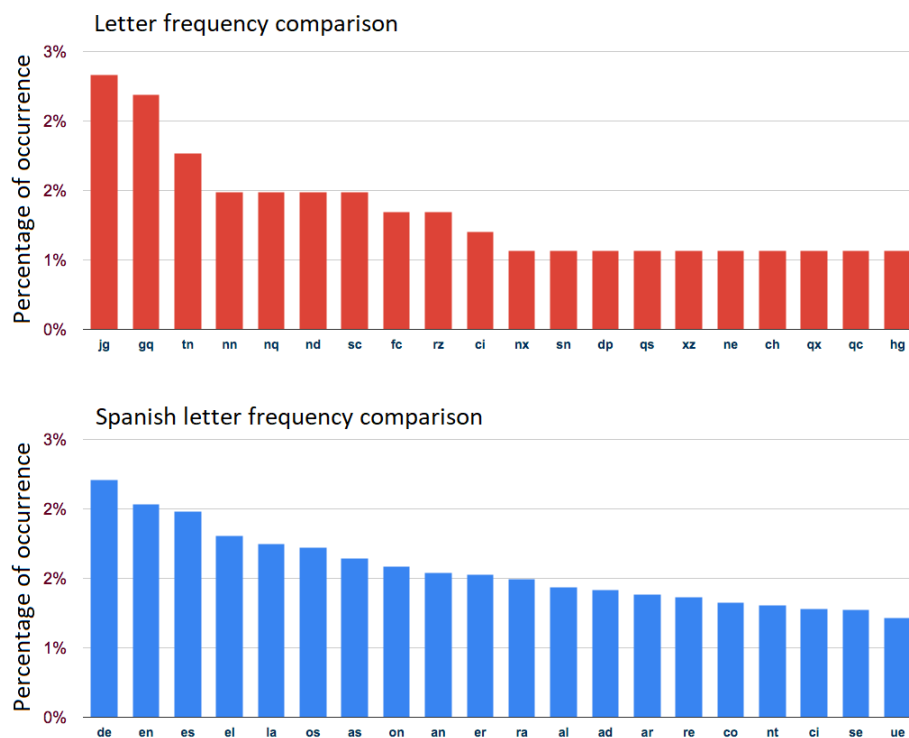
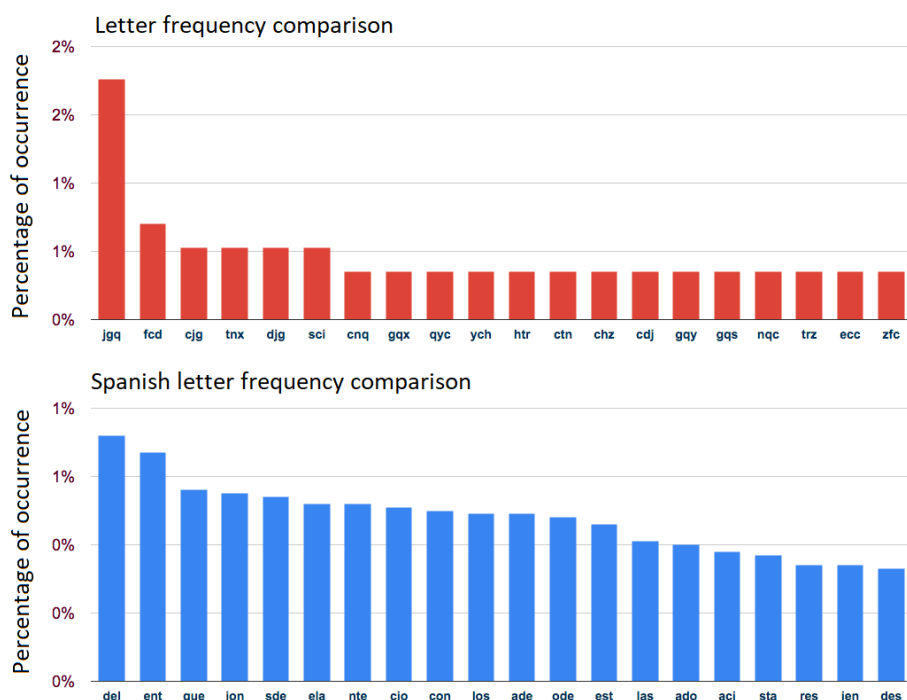


Fig. 6 Bigram frequency.

tables 1-7 and  $qu \rightarrow jg$  and  $po \rightarrow fc$  with tables 8-7. Therefore, from these monosyllables, it can be deduced that the first table is 8 and we have two new proposals, *que* and *por* to find a third table. With this information, the process is easy, a table that meets the following substitutions  $q \rightarrow e$  and  $d \rightarrow r$  must be found. There is only one possibility that corresponds to this in Table 14. During this phase, errors in the encryption of the letter were identified. For example, during decoding, the Spanish word "pue" appeared throughout the letter. It was deduced that this could be an error that persisted throughout the entire letter since the correct word that would convey coherence is "que". It is likely that the sender accidentally mistranscribed this monosyllable and then repeated it throughout the manuscript.

As seen in the previous paragraphs, the order of the initial tables is 8, 7 or 9, and 14. At this point, obtaining the fourth table would be trivial. Table 2 shows some examples of encrypted 4-letter words and their decryption using the tables obtained. It allows us to deduce which would be the letter that occupies the fourth position. Once again, we apply the same procedure as described above, looking for a table that corresponds to the letters obtained. However, upon examination of the data presented in the tables, no single one can accommodate all words. At this point, the manual cryptanalysis was



**Fig. 7** Trigrams frequency.

finished, and it was decided to design and implement a code written in Python for the decryption of the whole manuscript.

After automating the decryption process with the newly established combinations, it was practically possible to decipher the words of up to 8 letters almost completely. However, the results were not as expected, since there is a table order that works correctly for some words, but not for others. In figure 8 we can see the results obtained by the Python code with different options. Furthermore, a manual investigation revealed that none of the existing tables exactly matched the fourth position, which prompted a more detailed analysis of the encryption process, as discussed in the following section.

An unresolved matter was the decryption of the fourth character because finding a suitable table for the character in that position in the encryption

**Table 2** Cipher table missing.

lhñ Ujgi	Sta Cruz
tqh <b>b</b>	dato
ln lnfp	se sepa
hc sc nqt	no lo hace
10 g 12 tsñf	10 o 12 días
fed rz zsq <b>d</b>	por el bien

o	c	o	z	g	e	e	b	g	o	g	a	n	e
g	o	b	i	e	r	n	o	o	c	u			r
8	9	14	11	xxx	3/8	7/9	14	8	9	14	xx	xx	8

f	g	q	f	h	g	l	f	c	d	f	g	q
p	u	e	r	t	o	s	p	o	r			o
8	9	14	xx	xx	8	8	8	9	14	xx	xx	8

f	g	q	o	x	g	y	q	r	g	u	T
p	u	e	b	l	o	m	a	d	r	i	d
8	9	14	14	xxx	8	8	9	14	¿?	xxx	8

Fig. 8 Combination of probable subtables.

proved to be impossible. None of the nine available tables matched or were effective in decrypting the manuscript. Although attempting different tables for this specific position was considered, it would have been a laborious task for both encrypting and decrypting the text, and it would not align with the concept of using a keyword. Considering the potential predictability of characters in the fourth position, a decision was made to manually construct a table containing the encryption for this specific position. The outcome can be seen in Table 5. Upon implementation in the code, it was determined that this table is sufficient and functions accurately for all corresponding words.

Notably, it does not correspond to any of the tables previously included in the manuscript. Therefore, the table had to be deduced from the key itself, or it is a table previously shared by the sender and the receiver, or said encryption-table was never sent. Another hypothesis is that it was an error when encrypting the manuscript, but it was discarded because the new table

Table 3 Encryption subtables.

1	l	j	i	h	g	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll
	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
2,5,16	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll	l	j	i	h	g
	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
3	j	i	h	g	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll	l
	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
4,6,12	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	l	ll	m
13,15	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
7,9	e	d	c	b	a	j	i	h	g	f	m	ll	l
	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
8	l	j	i	h	g	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll
	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
10	g	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll	l	j	i	h
	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
11	h	g	f	e	d	c	b	a	m	ll	l	j	i
	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z
14	c	a	b	f	e	d	i	h	g	ll	l	j	m
	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z

**Table 4** Subtables that do not follow an offset pattern.

n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z	Table
h	i	g	f	j	e	l	d	c	ll	a	m	b	8
e	d	c	b	a	j	i	h	g	f	m	ll	l	7 or 9
c	a	b	f	e	d	i	h	g	ll	l	j	m	14
d	c	b	a	h	g	f	e	m	ll	l	j	i	X
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	l	ll	m	4

works perfectly throughout the manuscript. Furthermore, we had no evidence at this point that the recipient had **been** able to decipher the contents of the manuscript (we will see later that they did). Another hypothesis could be that there is another missing page that contains additional tables or the table in question.

Once the first 4 tables were obtained and worked correctly throughout the manuscript, we proceeded to try to find out the size of the key. Analyzing the tables carefully, the first half of the alphabet between [a-m] is modified, apparently by a displacement, keeping the second half stable [n-z]. The tables numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 11 and their corresponding copies show a shift of 10, 5, 9, 0, 6, and 7 positions to the right respectively. However, the remaining tables, 8, 7, 14, and the new Table X, present a different pattern, as can be seen in Table 4.

In the analysis of the ciphertext, one might initially conjecture that the key size corresponds to the length of the repeated cyclic order observed within each word of the text. This assumption aligns with one of the renowned techniques for determining key size in polyalphabetic ciphers, namely the Kasiski method [W.(1863)]. Returning to the pattern of tables used up to now for the decryption of the first 4 characters, a clear correspondence can be observed between these tables, which do not follow the displacement pattern, and the tables that were used in the code implemented for the decryption. It is these tables that have worked to decipher most of the message. Furthermore, as we can see in Table 4, the fifth position would be occupied by the subtable 4 or any of its replicas. With this new conjecture, it is assumed that this is the key and we proceed to use it in the code throughout the decryption and in the established order 8, 7, 14, Table 5 and 4. The result was as expected; the decryption key was identified.

**Table 5** Encryption subtable missing

17	d	c	b	a	h	g	f	e	m	ll	l	j	i
	n	ñ	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	x	y	z

At the end of this investigation and the subsequent determination of its contents, a return visit was made to the diocesan archives. Nestled among a collection of letters from both Ulpiano and the Count, a letter was discovered that appeared to be a transcription of the encrypted letter. Before this

discovery, the correspondence between the two documents remained unknown due to their disparate locations; however, upon content analysis, any doubts regarding their correlation were dispelled. Analyzing both texts, it can be concluded that there are no relevant textual differences between the reconstructed text and the preserved plain text. The transcribed version of the letter can be found in Appendix 5.4, Figures 9 and 10. It can be inferred that the recipient successfully deciphered the message, leading to the conclusion that it was of minimal relevance to him. This conclusion is supported by the presence of a crossed-out phrase in the footer of the letter:

Eratque in terris maxima expetatio  
At ille murem peperit

This phrase is taken from the fable "The Mountain in Labour". The story became proverbial in Classical times, referring to speech acts that promise much but deliver little, especially in literary and political contexts.

#### 4 A letter in "key" political terms

The letter is partially dated as the year is not recorded. However, the events reported in it and the reference to the designation of Mariano Ricafort Palacín as General Commander of the Canary Islands (which took place on November 30, 1840), allow us to date it on December 21, 1840. The translated version of the deciphered plaintext is accessible in Appendix 5.2.

At that time, the political situation in Spain was convulsive. The First Carlist War (1833-1840) had just ended, consolidating the reign of the young Queen Isabel II, supported by the Liberals, against her uncle Carlos María Isidro de Borbón, backed by the Traditionalists. However, the Liberals were divided between Moderates and Progressives, with equal support. This balance of power led to a more prominent role for the Army and its so-called Great Swords, the only ones capable of tipping the balance. One of the areas of struggle was municipalism. The Moderates, after their electoral victory in 1840, attempted to modify the political system by two actions: a municipal reform that limited control of the local and provincial administration and the reduction of the power of the National Militia, in which the Progressives were in the majority [Pérez-Núñez(1996)].

The Progressive sector reacted and, in the summer of 1840, led a popular mobilization against these legislative projects by creating revolutionary Juntas. Starting in Madrid, the insurrection spread to several Spanish cities. In this context, General Baldomero Espartero tipped the balance, supported by the Progressive insurrectionists. The Queen Regent María Cristina de Borbón refused to share the regency, resigned, and went into exile. General Espartero took power and on October 11 the Courts were dissolved; on November 25 he ordered the dissolution of the Juntas.

In the Canary Islands, in addition to the struggle between Moderates and Progressives, the political discussion focused on establishing the capital city



of the new province. Previously, each of the seven islands was its own municipality, directly dependent on the central government. Thus, in this reconfiguration of power, some elites would lose power in favor of those of the island that hosted the unified capital city. Since 1833, that capital city was Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Dissatisfied with this decision, by 1840 the bourgeoisie of Gran Canaria no longer aspired to host the capital city of the province, but proposed the creation of a separate province composed of the eastern islands with the capital city in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. When they knew about the creation of Juntas in several peninsular provinces, on October 23, 1840 Progressives from Gran Canaria created a sovereign Provisional Junta, dependent on Madrid and led by high-ranking members of the National Militia; its objective was to defend the progressive Constitution of 1838 and to separate itself from the dominion of Tenerife. Juntas were also created in La Palma and Lanzarote. Meanwhile, in Tenerife the rejection of the creation of the Junta in Gran Canaria was generalized, being described by the Interim Political Chief and Intendant as “useless, extemporaneous and essentially contrary to the interests of the country” [Vega Alba(2016)]:149. Despite being moderate, the bourgeoisie of Santa Cruz de Tenerife joined the revolutionary change and established a Junta Gubernativa Provincial which claimed obedience from Gran Canaria [Dugour(1876)]. But it had declared itself an independent province. No communication was possible between the two islands, and even the possibility of a military invasion was raised [Millares Cantero(2007)]. The space for political negotiations was moved to Madrid [Vega Alba(2016)]:150-151. Thus, it was essential to obtain the support of the new General Commander of the Canary Islands, named by the central government.

In this context, the strategies of the letter’s addressee become apparent. The “Sr. Conde” (Mr. Count) was Don Cristóbal Salazar de Frías, VI Count of the Valle de Salazar. He was one of the leaders of the ultraconservative sector of the Tenerife nobility. Despite the advance of liberalism in Tenerife, the nobles continued to monopolize positions and offices during the alternation of liberal and absolutist stages [Arbelo-García(1995)].

They defended the privileges of La Laguna as the historic capital of Tenerife and wanted it to be the capital city of the whole province of the Canary Islands. These ideas had a difficult fit into the political context of the mid-19th century, marked by the rise of the bourgeoisie in the port cities of Santa Cruz de Tenerife and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and by the decline of La Laguna. However, this letter demonstrates how the nobility tried to retain a part of the political relevance and prominence of yesteryear. They wanted to obtain the support of the General Commander by appealing to military power, which they controlled as Colonels. One of them was the Count of Valle de Salazar, the addressee of the letter.

The sender of the letter was Ulpiano González, a lawyer possibly hired as an agent in Madrid. Although he did not belong to the oligarchy of La Laguna, he defended its interests. This form of negotiation was usual, as the

old council of Tenerife negotiated its position political position in the Court through experienced lawyers [Núñez Pestano(2001)].

In the letter, the lawyer tells how he tried to persuade the new General Commander to see "the advantages of the capital being in Tenerife", making it clear to him that "La Laguna has all the sympathies that Santa Cruz does not". He explained to him the position of the nobility of La Laguna, which rejected the Juntas as "extemporaneous", in line with the qualification previously given by the Moderate Government. The lawyer additionally asserts that he counseled the General Commander to de-escalate the political climate. Mr. González explained to him the particularities of the political panorama of the Canary Islands, in which "there are no real political parties, but personalities" and clarified which of these personalities were "the bad guys" and which were "the good men". He also informed him about the identity of "the influencers", recommending persons who were part of the Conservative group: "U." (You) that is, the Count of Valle de Salazar; "Leal", who is undoubtedly Antonio Leal, a wealthy landowner of Cuban origin settled in Tenerife; the "Chantre" of the cathedral; "Nava", probably Don Alonso de Nava Grimón, Marquis of Villanueva del Prado, a former absolutist who continued to be a cultural leader within the elite; "The Cólogos", a wealthy family of merchants with shared interests with the aristocracy since they were the heirs of the marquises of El Sauzal and La Candia; "Saavedra" almost certainly refers to Colonel Esteban Saavedra; "Mora" probably is the lawyer and war auditor Domingo Mora and "Guezala" perhaps was Fernando Guezala, Lieutenant Colonel of Santa Cruz, or his brother José Guezala, Lieutenant Colonel of La Laguna.

However, other groups also tried to influence the new General Commander. Mr. González informed the Count that the Junta of Las Palmas had sent Don Antonio Ruiz de Bustamante to persuade the commander of his position, towards "a certain kind of independence between the two islands, if not total then at least partial". So it becomes clear that the bourgeoisie of Gran Canaria was also mobilizing its influence in Madrid to achieve its political objective: the provincial division. Two envoys from the Santa Cruz bourgeoisie had also visited the commandant general: Bulnes and Bello. Mr. González was suspicious of how much Bulnes had pleased the Commandant General, but he warned his allies that Bulnes' attempts to be appointed deputy for the province had nothing to do with the island dispute, but rather sought to benefit Cuban "sugar aristocracy" since many Canarian fortunes would have large investments in Cuba. Because of this, the lawyer rejects Bulnes' intentions, describing them as "nonsense", and advises against his nomination for being "the most arrogant man I have ever seen; he is of no use to anyone and all the Canary Islanders complain about it".

Finally, two recommendations for the new General Commander to visit are worth mentioning: the "aqueduct" that supplied water to Santa Cruz de Tenerife and "the path", possibly the so-called "Camino de las Mercedes", which had been the object of an ambitious embellishment project, with the creation of a grove of three tree-lined walkways and the paving of the pathway to allow horseback riding [Calero Martín(2018)]:149-152. The failure of the

project in a city lacking dynamism, losing population annually, and without a commercial bourgeoisie is a metaphor for the political failure of its elite in the offices of the Court.

Although the content of the letter, almost 200 years later, may seem irrelevant, it emphasizes the need to encrypt messages whose information could be sensitive in the wrong hands. Ulpiano González was clear: no one should know about his conversations with the General Commander, because he "does not want it to be known that I have imposed anything on him". So he asked his correspondents to pretend to know nothing about the recommendations he had made about them to the Commander: "I beg you not to name me if he does not do so; you will show that you are unaware of everything". So secret must the information have been that he warned the Count "that not all of our people must know this".

This type of letter reflects the importance of political intrigue in the turbulent 19th century in Spain, where each political group - not always formed into political parties - tried to extend its influence in Madrid, the true epicenter of State power. Encrypting the messages was essential to develop the intrigue. The information was so confidential that it could not be kept anywhere. That is why it was found in the Count's archive, that is, in the strictest privacy.

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## 5 Appendix

### 5.1 Transcription of the manuscript

Note: Every time a *k* appears it corresponds to the *ll*. It has been indicated this way to be able to replace this letter correctly in the code.

*D. Cccnq sgqrc jgq lgft rz hezofxxstadc tn Esnprgjh yn xpbhir x rz m nn yndtoññb lg xxsfxñ: Sn vngt dcrbg sci zcathñeqf tn xts jgq:sn yqezrriht rz gpythg tnx fjbdihospzñncec tn uqcpfñq: sc jgq ychzjg rz tn lhñ Ujgi: jgq xropg rjñd rnhzfcdparci ( m xis ln ysdpfgc re rz Ocozqeeb); y fcd sc ysiuc hgxb dcrb sc jgq nqc gpdppg:sqi kncenqci tn jgq sq uqfzhxz riht re dnctfñvq m rz fcd jgq: gstari uczhchnc ceñ m ghdp m lgi uqdpodndtg m xestorñqdhri jgq nqj: jgq ychzjg ksdeixzttadn sq tsibxocosba tn riq Xkgdhxx. m fcd jgq hc rehgncc sci tn 37 m 38 x gogane sci fgqfghi---- m pcztdac sqi tsntcimsbdqt: jgsta sqi pcztdaq m fect re yckzññncec rz fgqoxg----ucc riht ychzjg sn nsnt ceñ fsceieq tn sci fgq xyñ lcc yqzbg ----Jgstari lcc sci fgqoxgi fgq vnkpa sq kem: Jgq sq Squmax dsqdq dcrpg sqi lszandsñf: jgq Lhn UJgi hc. Sn rnnbzrert m tsyt jgq rz ycrb tn fqizrññoñg rib ri fectfñ tn xogftc ucc Pfnfecshb U?, ucc Pchenv, ucc Uspgn, m ghdbg: ucc C., ucc Hqkp ucc sci Kcabsxi, m sci Ecxpari, ucc Snñx &sup>g.---- Sn tsut jgstars sci nczofri tn tsqd tn xts, m jgstars sci yqzbg m rz fcd fgq---- Uczb ucceneg ucc sqi pgqgmxi, m rehbauni sn nqoxq tn sci ucdbarzg. Yn nsmb ygnqnl fjqrhhñf. Fniairi nn ññb uqiz dcrpg sqi hcnqql x lg uqip. Sn nn tqrb ceñf ñeiefconzchni fgq yn fsrzc m lcd Tn 4 fzstsg. Ce rihppg tn sqi rznñoñcctg czhzzxi m sqi ssienl rzqñhgjñxql*

*Uczb yn fjqrhhb fcd sqi fndfchqi ñepximneql tn xyñ, m sqi vnkp xbgdhxññf. Ri fjgfulc jgq xz yctadc ln xpbhirc x rz C., Snñx rz Utñdhen, Hqkp sci Ucabsxi, Lqñkjtjn, Ycdp m Ogqinsq &sup>g jgq kgj ennbzrerpigi rz ri ygj djñenzzq, m kq fjqaneqrb ucecgx rz zgvzoñc.*

*Fnx gpsfdg sn nsnt ceñ pgdzñcerp fsceieq, fcdhir fcd rz yn neenuesb; m sn xdnñu jgq rz Utñdhen sn fergux (tqd yqi tqhbg*

*Hc jgstfr jgq ln lnfp jgq mc sn nn ñxfmqhnb tn hqrp. M sni lgfxuuc jgq hc yn hezcfre, ls rz hc sc nqnt; yqezrrihputc CG. rihpf xuqdel tn dcrb*

*Mc ln jgq ys enxpoñcc tniafrisppx fcdhir tniairi tn 10 g 12 tsñf jgq mq mc sc ksnzhxpñ sc nsnzqecc Zgxdql m Znub. Mc sni fjqrhhq jgq rjñ sc jgq rz tnnzn, m yn nsqzgecc ceñ fsceieq lnztyxeht x sqi ññqpg jgq mc sn nqozn ñepmatsrb. Znub yn tsb x rehtatnd jgq rz sc nqozn nnnqc dcrb m mc yn rnj fcdhir robf hc lqota jgq mc sc djñec m rz Onctfxz yn nqozn tsnqc mq sc jgq sn nqoznh nñb x nqoxne*

*Zgienyqceq sn nqoxc dqzoure m sc ñenxuhc x usqghx riftoñn tn ñertdrer rehgg sqi tci ñixpg lscb dchpx x sc yncbg fqdnñxz. Sc jgq xfsfc*

*Mc yn lciaqutb jgq rz Occtfxz jggqfx jgq CG hezofre tsfmhxñb x Zgxdql m riht sc tontn, hc fcd rz zsqd tn xyñ lscb fcd nqoxne re sqi ucdeql x pqobf tn sq Nqopax, jgq xis sc nq tsnqc; jgq tsianeqht hqdpax CG= Ri rz nczofr yqs lcofzsb fgq nn kshb. X hqrzq lsdq hs gkq m dcrbg sci Uqcpfñci ln jgqynh tn rib----Znduitc ri ceb tn sci jgq lqdpax ceñ ññqn tn rz*

*Xz Onctf. sn nn ennbzrrppg rz xatpcohb tn xti, m rz uqzazg*

*Zsqd uccbor C. jgg hc dcrbg tn sci hggfheci tnota lqotf rihb*  
*Yqrgut 21 tn Tsc*  
*C.O.*

## 5.2 Resulting plaintext obtained via cryptanalysis

Conde: luego que supe el nombramto de Ricafort, me aboqué a el y he merecido su amistad: le llevé todos los boletines de ahí que: le manifesté el objeto del pronunciamiento de Canaria: lo que motivó el de Sta. Cruz: que ambas eran eetemporáneos (y así se miraron en el Gobierno); y por lo mismo nulo todo lo que han obrado: las ventajas de que la capital esté en Tenerife y el por qué: quienes componen una y otra y sus caracteres y antecedentes que hay: qué motivó virtualmente la disolugion de ese ayuntamien. Y por qué no entraron los de 37 y 38 a ocupar los puestos: le he hecho ver que ahí no hai verdaderos partidos políticos, sino personalidades: cuando tuvieron origen y fomento las disensiones: quien las fomenta y pone en movimiento el pueblo. Con este motivo le hice una pintura de los que allá son malos. Quienes son los pueblos que llevan la voz: Que La Laguna tiene todas las simpatías: que Sta. Cruz no. Le encomendé y dije que el modo de pacificar eso es ponerse de acuerdo con Frasquito M a, con Forstall, con Cifra y otros con V, con Nava, con los Cólogán, y los Romanes, con Leal, etc., etc. Le dige quienes los hombres de bien de ahí y quienes son malos y el por qué; como contará con las fuerzas y entonces le hablé de los coroneles. Me hizo muchas preguntas. Después he ido casi todas las noches a su casa. Le he dado unas instrucciones que me pidió y sobre? a 4 pliegos. Un estado de las eclecciones últimas y las listas electorales.

Como me preguntó por las personas influyentes de ahy y las lleva apuntadas es presios que al momento se aboguen a el V., Leal, el Chantre, Nava, los Cólogán, Saavedra, Mora y Guezala, etc. que van muy recomendados él es muy tratable y va preparado contra el bullicio. Del Obizpo le hice furibunda pintura porque por el me requirió y le añadí que el chantre le podrá dar más datos. No quiere que se sepa que yo no me puesto de nada y les suplico que no me nombren si él no lo hace; manifestando V.V. estar agenos de todo. Yo sé que mi relación no ha sido despresiada porque después d 10 o 12 días que ya yo lo vicitaba, lo hicieron Bulnes y Bello. Yo le pregunté que era lo que él decía y me hicieron una pintura semejante a las ideas que yo le había infundido. Bello me dio a entender que él lo había hecho todo y yo me rey porque ngo sabe que yo ya lo traté y el general me había dicho ya lo que le habían ido a hablarle. Bustamante le habló también y total a lo menos parcial. Lo que avisto. Yo me sospecho que desea, no por el bien de allá sino por hablar en las Cortes a favor La Habana, que así lo ha dicho; que disparate harán Vd. **Es el hombre mas soberbio que he visto; a nadie sirve ni oye** y todos los canarios se quejan de eso. **Bermudó es uno de los que saran una idea de el.** Al general le he recomendado el acueducto de ahí y el camino. Bien conoce Vd. que no todos los nuestros deben saber esto.

Madrid 21 Diciembre

### 5.3 English translation of the deciphered plaintext

Count: After I learned of Ricafort's appointment, I approached him and I have deserved his friendship: I brought him all the bulletins from there: I demonstrated him the object of the pronouncement of Canaria: what motivated the Santa Cruz one: that both were inappropriate and that is how they should consider it at the government and for this reason it is null everything they have done: the advantages of being Tenerife the capital and why: who make up one and the other and their characters and backgrounds: what virtually motivated the dissolution of that town council and why did not those of 37 and 38 enter to occupy the positions: I have made him see that there are no real political parties there, but personalities: when the dissensions originated and fostered: who encourages them and sets the people in movement. That is why I made him a picture of those who are the bad ones and who are the ones who have the voice: That La Laguna has all the sympathies: that Santa Cruz does not. I entrusted him and I said that the way to pacify that is to agree with Frasquito M, with Forstall, with Cifra and others, with V, with Nava, with the Cologan, and the Romanes, with Leal, etc., etc. I told him who were the good men there and who the bad ones and why: how he can count on the forces and then I told him about the colonels He asked me many questions. Afterwards I have gone almost every night to his house. I have given him some instructions that he asked me in 4 sheets. A state of the last elections and the electoral lists.

He has asked me about the influential people there and he has them written down, it is necessary that at the moment you, Leal, the Chantre, Nava, the Cologan, Saavedra, Mora and Guezala, etc., head for him. He is fairly easy to get on with and is prepared against gossip. I made a furious painting of the Bishop because he asked me for it and I added that the chantre will give him more information. He does not want it to be known that I did tell anything and I beg you not to name me if he does not do it; stating unaware of everything. I know that my relationship has not been despised because after 10 or 12 days that I already visited him, others did. I know that my relationship has not been looked down because after 10 or 12 days that I already visited him, Bulnes and Bello did it. I asked him what he was saying and they made me a painting similar to the ideas that I had instilled in him. Bello has hint he had done everything and I laughed because he does not know that I already treated him and the general had already told me what they was going to talk to him about. Bustamante also spoke to him and inclined him to a kind of independence between the two islands, if not total at least partial what I warn you. I suspect that the general wants you appoint Bulnes as deputy and he wishes it, not for the good there but to speak in the Cortes in favor of Havana so he has said; What nonsense, he is the most proud man I have ever seen, he does not serve or hears anyone and all canaries complain about that. Bermudo is one of those who will get an idea of him. I have recommended the aqueduct and the path to the general.

You know well that not all of our people should know this.

Madrid 21 December

#### 5.4 Spanish plaintext

Conde: luego que supí el nombram.<sup>to</sup> de Aisafra, me aboque  
 á él y le mercedo de amistad: le lleve todos los boletines  
 de ahí que: le manifiere el objeto del pronunciamiento de Caia  
 us: lo que motivo el Sr. Caus: que ambos exa<sup>m</sup> extempora  
 neos (y así se miraron en el Gobierno); y por lo mismo  
 sabo todo lo que han obrado: las ventajas de que la Ca  
 pital este en tenues y el por que: quienes componen  
 una y otra y sus caracteres y antecedentes que hay:  
 que motivo siempre la disolución de se truncam y porque  
 no entraron los de 37 y 38 á ocupar los puestos: se he hecho ver que  
 ahí no hai verdaderos partidos políticos, sino per  
 sonalidades: cuando tuvieron origen y fomento las  
 disensiones: quien las fomenta y pone en movi  
 miento el pueblo — Con este motivo le hice una  
 pintura de los que allá son malos — Quienes son  
 los pueblos que llevan la voz: que la Laguna tiene  
 todas las simpatias: que Sr. Caus no. Le recomende  
 y dije que el modo de pacificar eso es ponerse de  
 acuerdo con Masquita M.<sup>a</sup>, con Estall, con Vifra y otros  
 con V. con Nava, con los Cologari, y los Romanos, con Leal  
 & S. — Le dije quienes los hombres de bien de ahí, y quienes son  
 malos y el por que — como contara con las fuerzas, y entonces  
 le hablé de los coronales. Me hizo muchas preguntas. Despues  
 ha ido cada todas las noches á su casa. Le he dado unas  
 instrucciones que me pidió, y sobre el pliego. Un estado de las  
 elecciones ultimas y las listas electorales.  
 Como me preguntó por las personas influyentes de Ahij  
 y las lleva apuntadas. es preciso que al momento se aboquen  
 á el V. Leal, el Chante, Nava, los Cologari, Salceda, Mora  
 y Gueraldo B.<sup>a</sup> que van muy recomendados el es muy tratable

Fig. 9 Spanish plaintext



y va preparado contra el buleus — Del Obispo le hizo  
fuerbunda pintura, porque por el me le habia dicho, y le añadi  
que el Chante le podía dar más datos. — No quisiera  
que se sepa que yo no me ~~habia~~ <sup>habia</sup> puesto de nada. y  
le suplico que no me nombren si el no hace; manifestan-  
do ~~esto~~ estas agenas de todo. No se que mi relacion  
no ha sido despreciada porque despues de 10 dias que ya yo lo  
visitaba, lo hicieron Bulnes y Bello. Yo le pregunté que era lo  
que el decia, y me hicieron una pintura semejante a las  
ideas que yo le habia explicado. Bello me dio a entender  
que el lo habia hecho todo y yo me voy porque yo no  
saben que yo lo traje y el general me habia dicho que lo  
le habian ido a hablar. — Bustamente le habla tambien y  
lo inclino a cierta especie de independencia entre las dos islas sino  
total a lo menos parcial. lo que avisto. — Yo me sospecho q.  
el general guerra que me nombren diputado a Bulnes y este lo  
deca, no por el bien de alla sino por hablar de las costas  
a favor de la habana, que así lo ha dicho, que difavale harán.  
Es el hombre mas soberbio que he visto. A nadie sirve ni oye  
y todos los caharcos se quejan de eso. Bermudo el uno de  
los que saben una idea de el. — Al general le he mencionado  
el acuerdo de las y el camino. — Bien ~~se~~ conoce B. que  
no todos de los nuestros deben saber esto. —

N. N.

M. D. C. 21 ~~de~~ ~~esta~~ ~~que~~ ~~en~~ ~~una~~ ~~manera~~ ~~expresada~~  
~~Al~~ ~~señor~~ ~~general~~ ~~de~~ ~~la~~ ~~habana~~

Fig. 10 Spanish plaintext