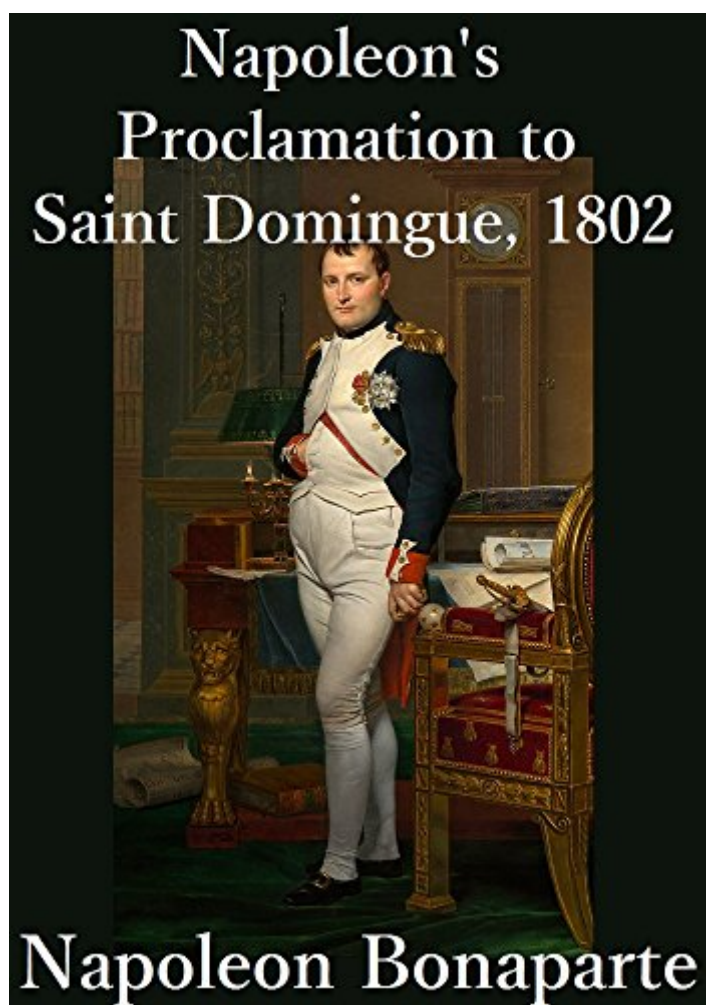


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Napoleon Bonaparte's Proclamation To Saint-Domingue, 1802



Synopsis

“Napoleon Bonaparte’s Proclamation to Saint-Domingue, 1802” was issued with a military expedition sent by Bonaparte to the colony of Saint-Domingue. The French Revolution began in 1789. The Haitian Revolution began in 1791 with a slave revolt on Saint-Domingue’s northern plain. Unable to suppress the rebellion, the revolutionary French administration abolished slavery in order to win the support of the colony’s black population against its enemies. After emancipation some leading black commanders, notably Toussaint Louverture joined the French Republicans, fighting against Spain, Britain, and the French Royalists. By 1800 Louverture had defeated all of his enemies in the colony. Louverture proceeded to establish a semi-independent regime in Saint-Domingue with himself as governor-for-life. Meanwhile Napoleon Bonaparte, a French general, had overthrown the corrupt government in France, and made himself First Consul. Bonaparte was determined to destroy the black military elite that had grown out of the revolutionary wars of the 1790s. He seems to have also wished to restore slavery in the French colonies. In order to achieve these goals, he dispatched a large military expedition led by his brother-in-law Charles Leclerc in 1802. Bonaparte issued a proclamation with this invasion force, promising that he would never re-enslave the colony’s inhabitants. Ultimately these promises proved to be false- Bonaparte would restore slavery across the French Empire. In Saint-Domingue Leclerc had Louverture arrested and deported to France, where the once-powerful black general died in a mountain dungeon. Many black Saint-Dominguans, however, never accepted Bonaparte’s promises that he would never restore slavery. They fought against Leclerc’s expedition. Finally, in November 1803, the local people prevailed. The French army withdrew and Saint-Domingue declared its independence from France, as the nation of Haiti, in 1804.

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