

Political, economic, social, philosophical, religious and artistic transformations in the 15th and 16th century

Political transformation: birth of the Modern State

The monarchs took all the power, became authoritarian and relied on the following elements:

The **Court** constitutes the main organ of government. It derived from the medieval Regis Curia. It was the place of contact between the elite and the Crown. Therefore, it served to control the nobility, but also to pressure the Crown.

Development of a broad **administrative apparatus** headed by members of the bourgeoisie and also of the high nobility and based on establishing a relationship of fidelity with the monarch.

Birth of **diplomacy** as an instrument of relationship between states to solve problems without getting to arms. The agreements that were adopted were reflected in treaties, although these did not always prevent wars.

Configuration of a **permanent army** to face the constant wars and result of a series of tactical and material innovations.

Extension of taxes and bodies that manage the income, the **tax office**.

Also, in these dates new political ideas that justify the power of the monarchs are going to arise. Marsilio of Padua introduces the concept of **territorial sovereignty**, according to which the king has full authority in his kingdom. In practice, this comes to deny the universality of the imperial power, because the emperor is just one more king, without powers outside his kingdom, and at the same time it causes the decline of the feudal structures, since the king now has the right to legislate and to judge in all his kingdom, therefore losing feudal rights.

All this allows the strengthening of the monarchy and the passage of the feudal monarchy in which the power of the monarch was limited by the nobility, to the authoritarian monarchy in which a monarch holds all political power without discussion or rival (has been "undone" of the feudal lords, has a theoretical justification of its power, and has the means to take hold); and of the territorial principalities supported in the feudovaslatic relations, to the Modern States supported in a series of means to which we refer briefly below.

Economic-social transformations:

Agriculture experienced a great development due to the demand for food and raw materials in the cities. The production became specialized. Farmers no longer produced just to survive, but also to sell part of the harvest in the markets. Also, new crops from America were introduced. The way of exploitation of the land also changed; contracts for free workers were frequent, and they received a salary in return for their work, as well as leases (rent) of land.

Craftsmanship continued to be important, but new forms of production emerged, such as the **home industry**. In this type of artisanal industry, the businessmen, generally bourgeois, provided the workers with the necessary raw materials, so that

they could carry out the different processes of elaboration of a product in their homes. Once the product was finished, the entrepreneur was in charge of its commercialization, with which it obtained great benefits. This type of production was also a source of complementary income for the peasant.

Trade experienced a great expansion thanks to the exchange of products with America and Asia. In these exchanges large amounts of money were handled, so they used payment techniques, such as **bills of exchange** and banks, which changed and lent money.

Most of the population remained rural, but the urban population experienced rapid growth, especially in Italy.

Society was still divided into **estates**, although there were significant changes. The nobility continued to own extensive lands and maintained their privileges, as did the clergy, but lost political power, especially in the cities. The bourgeoisie experienced a great boom thanks to trade and became the main support of the monarch. The peasants did not improve their situation.

Philosophical transformation: Humanism

Humanism was the philosophical and cultural movement that spread through Europe in the 15th and early 16th centuries.

- The medieval theocentric viewpoint was that all human activities revolved around God. Humanists still believed in God. However, they held the anthropocentric viewpoint that human intelligence was key to understanding and interpreting the universe.
- According to humanists, our use of reason and experience advanced our knowledge. Humanists observed nature and carried out experiments.
- They were inspired by the cultural inheritance of the Antiquity. After the Turks conquered Constantinople in 1453, many Greek Scholars went to live in Europe. They brought Greek and Roman texts which were of great interest to scholars.

Religious transformation: Reformation and Counter-Reformation

Reformation:

In 1517, the German monk Martin Luther published *The 95 Theses*. This document strongly criticised the Catholic Church: the luxury of the high clergy, scarce training of the clergy and the sale of indulgences.

According to Luther: people are saved by their faith and not by their works; Christians can reach God directly through prayer and can freely read and interpret the Bible; the only true sacraments are Baptism and the Eucharist; and the cult of the Virgin and the saints should be suppressed.

Luther refused to retract his accusations and was excommunicated. However, the Reformation spread quickly through central and northern Europe. In Germany, many people saw an opportunity to rebel against the domination of Emperor Carlos V. They became rich by appropriating Church property.

In Switzerland, John Calvin founded Calvinism. According to the Calvinist idea of predestination, people are destined by God to be saved or damned, irrespective of their actions. Calvinism spread through Switzerland, the Netherlands, parts of France and Scotland.

In England, King Henry VIII founded Anglicanism. Henry VIII married Catherine of Aragon, daughter of the Catholic Kings. Of this marriage only one daughter survived, and the monarch, who wished to have a male heir, asked the Pope for the annulment of their marriage. This one, pressed by the emperor Carlos V, refused to grant it. Then, Henry VIII broke with the papacy, proclaimed the independence of the Anglican Church, made the archbishop of Canterbury annul his marriage and married Anne Boleyn. Initially, Anglicanism was very similar to Catholicism, but it later received some Protestant influence.

Counter-Reformation:

The Counter-Reformation was a reform movement within the Catholic Church. It was aimed at both improving conditions in the Church and resisting Protestantism.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) adopted different solutions:

- It confirmed the authority of the Pope. It also confirmed the Church's traditional doctrine: the seven sacraments, the cult of the Virgin and the saints and the validity of good works in achieving salvation.
- It also reformed some practices. It prohibited the sale of indulgences. It created seminaries to improve the clergy's education.

Religious division in Europe:

The Reformation and Counter-Reformation led to deep divisions in Europe, which was now divided into two religious blocks: Protestants and Catholics.

Some rulers used religious differences as an excuse to attack their enemies. The most important war was the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), which devastated many parts of Europe.

Artistic transformation: Renaissance

The Renaissance was born in Italy and developed in two main stages: in the 15th century (Quattrocento) it centred in the city of Florence and in the 16th (Cinquecento) it centred in Rome.

Architecture: Renaissance architects designed both civil (such as palaces and holiday houses) and religious (such as cathedrals) buildings. They made use of classical features such as rounded arches, pediments, barrel vaulting, domes and columns.

- The Quattrocento: The most important architects were:
 - Filippo Brunelleschi: designed the dome of the cathedral of Santa Maria de las Flores and the church of Santo Spirito in Florence.
 - Leon Battista Alberti: designed the facade of the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence and San Andrés in Mantua.

Sculpture: Renaissance sculptors represented mainly the nude human body, but they also created individual portraits and equestrian statues. They performed a great anatomical study. The main materials that were used were marble and bronze.

- Quattrocento: The most important sculptors:
 - Lorenzo Ghiberti: designed the doors of the Baptistery in Florence cathedral.
 - Donatello: designed David and San Jorge statues.
 - Michelangelo Buonarroti: designed David, Moisés and La Pietá Rodanini.

Painting: Renaissance painters made some remarkable technical discoveries: their use of perspective gave depth to their paintings (linear perspective and aerial perspective) and their use of chiaroscuro (contrasts of light and dark) gave sensation of volume. They painted religious scenes, portraits, classical mythological subjects and landscapes.

- Quattrocento: The most important painters:
 - Masaccio: painted El Tributo de la Moneda.
 - Mantegna: painted Dead Christ.
 - Botticelli: painted The birth of Venus.
- The Cinquecento:

Architecture: The most important architects were:

- Bramante: designed the church of San Pietro in Montorio. It was ordered to be built by the Catholic Monarchs.
- Michelangelo Buonarroti: designed San Pedro Vatican.

Sculpture: The most important sculptor was:

- Michelangelo Buonarroti:

Painting: The most important painters were:

- Leonardo da Vinci: painted The Last Supper and La Gioconda.
- Michelangelo: painted The Sistine Chapel.
- Raphael: painted The School of Athens.
- Tiziano: painted the Equestrian Portrait of Carlos V.