

Hispanic Monarchy

At the end of the Middle Ages, some European monarchs created authoritarian monarchies by reducing the power of the nobility and strengthening their power with some elements such as the army or diplomacy. Some of them were the Catholic Monarchs.

In the first half of the 15th century, the Iberian Peninsula was divided into five large territories: the Crown of Castilla, the Crown of Aragón, the Kingdom of Navarra, the Kingdom of Portugal and the Islamic Kingdom of Granada.

In 1469, Isabel, sister of the King of Castilla, and Fernando, son of the King of Aragón, got married. In 1474 King Henry IV died and it triggered a civil war between the king's daughter, Juana "la Beltraneja" and the king's sister, Isabel. Juana, was supported by Portugal as she was married to the King of Portugal. Isabel, was supported by the Crown of Aragon as she had married prince Fernando de Aragón. Finally, Isabel was proclaimed Queen of Castilla. In 1479 Fernando inherited the Crown of Aragón. Then they got dynastic union but each kingdom maintained its own laws and institutions.

The Catholic Monarchs took some measures to reinforce their authority:

- They founded the Holy Brotherhood (*Santa Hermandad*), which defended peasants from the abuses of the nobility.
- They created a permanent professional army with soldiers trained for war. Objective: not to need the nobility's armies anymore.
- They created the *chancillerías*, supreme judicial bodies to impart justice on the territories. Objective: to get rid of the nobles and clergy's influence on justice.
- They controlled the municipalities through *corregidores*, who were officials from the administration that represented the monarchs in the cities.
- They created the Royal Council to give advice to the monarchs formed by nobles, clergy and jurists.
- They reorganised the Royal Treasury (*Hacienda*) to collect, organize and increase taxes. Objective: to pay the institutions, not to need the nobility and the clergy's support anymore.

They also acquired new territories. In 1492, the Catholic Monarchs conquered the Kingdom of Granada, the last Muslim territory in the Peninsula. Also, in 1492, they financed Christopher Columbus' expedition, leading to the acquisition of territory in America. In addition, they conquered the Canary Islands in 1496. A few years later, in North Africa, they conquered Melilla (1497) and Oran (1509). These territories were added to the Crown of Castilla. At the same time, they acquired the Kingdom of Naples in 1504. And Fernando conquered the Kingdom of Navarra. These territories were added to the Crown of Aragón.

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In the 15th century, three religions were practised on the Iberian Peninsula: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. But the Catholic Monarchs imposed religious unity:

- In 1478, they established the Inquisition, a church tribunal which maintained Christian orthodoxy. Those arrested by the inquisition were considered guilty before being tried. The function of the inquisitors was to get them to confess. The condemned were dressed in a *sambenito* and were put a capirote on their heads. The penalty for serious crimes was death.
- In 1492, the Jews were expelled if they did not convert to Christianity.
- In 1502, Muslims were also expelled if they did not convert to Christianity. This broke an agreement signed after the fall of Islamic Granada, which established tolerance.

Queen Isabel I died in 1504. As her only male heir, Juan, had died as well as her eldest daughter, Isabel, the Crown of Castilla was going to be inherited by Juana. Juana was living in the Netherlands with her husband Philip the Handsome. Isabel's will established that Juana would inherit the Crown and, only if she was absent from the country or could not or did not want to reign, Fernando would act as a regent until his grandson, Carlos (son of Juana) reached the age of majority. Waiting for the Queen to come to Castilla, the Courts named Fernando regent. Fernando, tried to convince the Courts to declare Juana not capable of governing, but the Courts did not want to accept that. The Courts soon realized that Juana was not capable of ruling, so they proclaimed that Carlos would be King with his mother.

Carlos V's empire

Carlos V, Juana la Loca and Felipe el Hermoso's son, inherited a vast empire that made him the most powerful ruler of his time:

- He inherited from maternal grandmother, Isabel of Castilla, the Crown of Castilla and territories outside the Peninsula such as the Canary Islands, American and African territories.
- He inherited from maternal grandfather, Fernando of Aragón, the Crown of Aragón and territories in Italy such as Naples and Sicily.

As King of Spain, he was known as Carlos I.

- He inherited from paternal grandmother, Mary of Burgundy, the Netherlands, Burgundy, Franche-Comte, Artois and Charolais.
- He inherited from paternal grandfather, Maximilian of Habsburg, States of House of Austria and the right to get the title of Holy Roman Emperor.

As Emperor, he was known as Carlos V.

Carlos was born in Flanders. He appointed Flemish advisers, which angered the Castillian nobility. In addition, he spent large amounts of Castillian money on becoming

emperor. As a consequence, the nobility, bourgeoisie and peasants of Castilla carried out the Revolt of Comuneros in 1520-1521. They protested against increased taxes and called for greater participation in government. The rebels had some early successes, but they were defeated in 1521 when the Castillian nobility decided to support the monarch.

At the same time, artisans rebelled against the nobility in the Revolt of the Germanías in 1519-1523 in Valencia and Mallorca. But Carlos V supported the nobility, and the rebels were defeated.

In response to this unrest, Carlos V adapted his approach to the government in Spain. He spent more time in Castilla and he appointed Castillian nobility to the highest post.

The Hispanic Monarchy of Felipe II

Carlos I and V abdicated in 1556. His brother Ferdinand received the title of Emperor and inherited his Austrian territories. His son Felipe II inherited all his other territories. Felipe's empire was the largest in the world. It consisted of Spain, the Netherlands, most of Italy, territories in Central Europe, some possessions in North Africa and in the Far East, and Castillian territories in America. In addition, in 1580, when the King of Portugal died, Felipe II claimed the throne, because he was the son of a Portuguese princess. He got it and it included possessions in Africa, Asia and America.

The monarch governed from Madrid, and he established his court there. So, he considered Spain to be the centre of his empire, which became known as the Hispanic Monarchy.

Felipe II was the great defender of Catholicism against Islam. In fact, the *Moriscos* were Muslims who had converted to Christianity. Following the defeat of an uprising in Granada in 1568, many Moriscos were dispersed through the Kingdom.

Spanish foreign policy with Carlos V and Felipe II

The main problems of the Spanish Empire were with: France, the Turkish Empire, the Protestants and Flanders and England:

- Rivalry with France:
 - Carlos V fought Francis I of France for the control of Italy after the French King had occupied Milan. The Spanish *tercios* defeated the French at the Battle of Pavia (1525). Finally, in 1538, Carlos V incorporated the Duchy of Milan into the Hispanic Monarchy.
 - Felipe II defeated the French at the Battle of Saint-Quentin (1557). In this year, both signed the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis treaty that ensured Spain's domination for several decades.
- The Turkish Empire threatened Carlos V's Empire in Europe and the Mediterranean:

- In Europe, the Turks attacked Vienna in 1529, but failed to take it.
- In the Mediterranean, the Turks conquered Tunisia and Cyprus in 1570, which belonged to Spain. Next year, Spain, Venice and the Pope defeated the Turks at the naval Battle of Lepanto (1571).
 - The defence of Catholicism:
- Within the Holy Roman Empire, many German princes supported the Protestant Reformation. Carlos V won a military victory against the princes at the Battle of Mühlberg (1547). Some years later, the Peace of Augsburg-treaty in 1555 allowed each principality to decide between Catholicism and Protestantism.
- Calvinism spread throughout the Netherlands. Resistance to Felipe II's anti-protestant policy and to high taxation, led to the Revolt in 1568. The northern provinces, led by William of Orange, declared their Independence under the name of United Provinces. This was the beginning of a very long war. The independence of these territories was recognised by Spain in 1648.
 - England:
- In 1588, Felipe II sent his fleet to invade England. He wanted to punish Elizabeth and the English for their support of the rebels in the United Provinces and the attacks of English pirates in America. The English ships and bad weather pushed the Armada into the English Channel, making invasion impossible.

The economy

In about 1500, the Spanish economy was mainly based on agriculture thanks to crop rotation and livestock thanks to transhumance (the seasonal movement of sheep across the Peninsula). Craftsmanship grew in importance thanks to iron, steel and especially wool. Trade became extremely important thanks to the trade monopoly with the colonial empire and the arrival of precious metals from America. All American trade went through Seville which became one of the most important cities in Europe.

The arrival of precious metals from America meant that there was too much money in circulation. Consequently, prices rose greatly. This situation has been called the price revolution.

However, the Spanish economy was affected by the costs of imperial policy. The wealth of Castilla was used to pay for wars. The monarchs requested loans from bankers. But on several occasions, the monarchy could not repay its loans and declared bankruptcy.