

LÓPEZ DÍAZ, María, y SAAVEDRA VÁZQUEZ, M. Carmen (eds.) (2023). *Gobernar Reformando. Los Primeros Borbones en la España del Siglo XVIII*. Granada: Comares, 366 pp. ISBN: 978-84-1369-469-6.

Recent decades have witnessed a remarkable surge in new research on early Bourbon Spain, the Spain above all of Philip V, whose reign (or rather two reigns, either side of that of Philip's son by his first marriage, Luis I) embraced most of the first half of the eighteenth century. The present collection of essays is testimony to the excellent work being done and is the fruit of a conference which took place in Orense in October 2021; it is also the product of one of the many projects which are the essence of how research in Spain is done — funded — now such that Spain today is as much a country of *projectismo* as was the Spain of the first Bourbons. The collection is prefaced by an Introduction in which the joint editors explain that the essays — all usefully summarised — are grouped into two distinctive sections, although — as is so often the case — an essay assigned to one section might very easily have found a niche in the other. The first bloc, «Justice and Government», comprises six contributions. In the first piece, 'La Cortes Catalanas del Primer Borbón y del primer Carlos III', an interesting essay in critical self-reflection, Jon Arrieta Alberdi, builds on his own earlier efforts to contrast the two Catalan Cortes of 1702 and

1706, defending the former against a powerful Catalan historiographical tradition critical of the regime of Philip V, Arrieta arguing that it refurbished Catalonia's parliamentary institutions and culture. Thereafter Manuel Artaza, in 'La Diputación General de Galicia en la Corte durante el reinado de Felipe V, historia de un fracaso', charts the failure to establish a permanent representative of Galicia in Madrid between c.1690 and c. 1750, attributing the lack of success to the divisions between the seven cities which were the Junta del Reino. María López Díaz's essay stays in Galicia. In 'Bien Común vs Privilegio: La Intendencia Gallega y algunos Conflictos sobre la «Causa Pública» y Exención Fiscal (1719-22)', one of the most ambitious essays in the collection, López Díaz explores the role of the first intendentes (militares), García Ramírez de Arelano and Rodrigo Caballero Illanes in monitoring the municipal finances of La Coruña, helping the ayuntamiento to overcome the resistance of privileged groups in the community — notably the military — to contribute to the local arbitrios which paid the millones; she sets these different relationships within the broader ideological and political framework, i.e. the tension between on the one hand respect for established privilege (tax exemption) and on the other hand the notion of the common good, rather than of a simplistic clash between tradition and modernity/modernisation. Eduardo Cebreiros Álvarez picks up where López Díaz ends, chronologically,

in ‘Actuación de la intendencia borbónica en la esfera municipal a partir de 1720: el caso coruñés’, arguing that the 1720s were a period of consolidation of the intendancy in Galicia, with better relations between an intendente, Caballero Illanes, emphasising his efforts to promote the economic development of his intendancy, and the ayuntamiento, although relations with the captain general of the reino were more difficult. Leaving Galicia, Marta Frieria Álvarez, in ‘El Impacto de la Real Audiencia de Asturias: entre la Justicia Real y el Gobierno Local’, studies the local impact - on how justice was administered and magistrates recruited, and in triggering opposition to a perceived infringement of the principality’s institutions and of its distinctive position within the Spanish polity - of the establishment at last in 1718 of a real audiencia in Asturias. In the final contribution in this section, ‘El Reformismo borbónico ante el régimen señorial y la incorporación (anotaciones a Moxó y al fondo salvado de incorporación)’, an essay which says rather more about reform in the reign of Philip V’s son, Charles III, Javier Guillamón sets the attempt at incorporation of the senorios and other alienations by the crown in the context of the different mindsets or approaches to reform of individual ministers - Francisco Carrasco, Campomanes, and Floridablanca; he emphasises the need to avoid simplistic labelling in respect of the approach in particular of the latter.

The second bloc of essays, «War and Finance», opens with Maria Baudot’s ‘La Marina de Felipe V de la pérdida del control del mar a la recuperación del poder naval’, in which the author provides an invaluable account of the revival of Spanish navy c. 1713-46 and of the reforms which accompanied and underpinned it. For her part Maria Dolores Herrero Fernandez-Quesada, in ‘Racionalización y ordenancismo en la organización de la artillería de Felipe V. Prioridades técnicas y criterios’, explores the impact of the ground-breaking artillery ordinance of 1718, and its contribution to the greater centralisation, rationalisation and state direction of the Spanish artillery, emphasising the importance of the experience of the war of succession and demonstrating an interesting nuanced approach to French influence. (But how did the reformed artillery perform in operations in Italy and Africa in the 1730s and 1740s?) Maria del Carmen Saavedra Vázquez, in ‘De los tercios de gallegos al regimiento de Galicia: un ejemplo práctico de reformismo militar (1715-1718)’, urges the importance of going beyond formal orders and norms in her analysis of the creation of the new regiment of Galicia (1715), which comprised two battalions, one of men of the former Army of Flanders the other of men of local units raised in Galicia during the succession conflict; she analyses the new personnel records — the hojas de servicios — of officers in the regiment to suggest a high proportion

were from Galicia; more broadly, she suggests the need to be more nuanced in approaching the reform of the Bourbon army, to pay more attention, *inter alia*, to post-war demobilisation after 1713, and also argues for some element of Habsburg-Bourbon continuity. Julio Muñoz Rodríguez's gaze shifts east in 'Combatir la peste de la desafección y la disidencia. El Uso de la justicia extraordinaria en la frontera murciana durante la guerra de sucesión', a study of Bourbon repression of supporters of «Charles III» in Murcia (and Castile more generally) in the war of succession, paying particular attention to the use of special commissions, the inquisition, and an *ad hoc* agency responsible for confiscations. Pegerto Saavedra Fernández, in 'La lucha contra las exenciones de quintas y fiscales mediante el control de los padrones de hidalguía. El ejemplo de la provincia de Lugo', explores the failure of Bourbon efforts to ensure the production of more rigorous padrones de hidalgos in Galicia, with special reference to Lugo, where the number and proportion of those securing exemptions — from *sorteos* de quintas rather than from taxation — on the basis of supposed nobility was especially high, reflecting the persistence of community founded recognition of claims to noble status. Finally, Joaquim Albareda Salvadó, in 'Contra el Catastro: movilización y protestas en Cataluña a lo largo del siglo XVIII', the only essay in book to deal with the «reformed» government of the Crown of Aragon after the war of succession (hitherto

the most celebrated or infamous aspect of early Bourbon reform, one which has tended to monopolise the attention of historians of this period of Spain's history); he dismisses the claims of many contemporaries and later historians that the «reformed» fiscal system of Catalonia post 1714 was more «modern» and equitable; in part due to corruption it was in fact quite unfair, prompting frequent and widespread — but generally unsuccessful — complaints

In their Conclusions, the joint editors make telling points on the basis of the preceding essays, some of which reprise earlier work by their authors, for the most part building on and advancing beyond that earlier work. The editors note the difficulty of equating reform — or what they call reformism — seems with modernisation, whatever the latter means. They also query any idea of the linear, uninterrupted progression of reform, which was instead often halting and spasmodic, advancing in isolated phases, pragmatic and accommodating in the face of local responses. Related to this, they also highlight the role of local, subordinate actors, the men who without being responsible for ordering reform were those charged with its execution in Asturias, Catalonia, Galicia, Murcia and elsewhere, one aspect of their emphasis on reform from below rather than from above. Another element of that distinctive approach comes with their emphasis on the territoriality of reform, focusing not only on the periphery rather than a directing centre but

also noting that reform had a different character in different territories, echoes here of Dominguez Ortiz's Spanish «mosaic». In effect, there was no single reform process. The editors conclude, justifiably, with a call for more work on Bourbon reform and reformism, making use of new sources, and applying new approaches and methods.

These concluding observations are well taken, but the volume would have been enhanced by a more substantial Introduction which as well as summarising the arguments of the various contributions also discussed the historiography and framed problems and questions with which the reader might approach the following essays. The meaning of reform — a very loaded, positive term, especially in our own day — is a case in point; it is addressed by some contributors but not by all and only briefly in the Conclusion. So too is the French influence, so often taken for granted in the past, but often now downplayed, although some contributors here acknowledge it. Some wider contextualisation might also have been useful. Was there, as in the wave of so-called Enlightened Despotism in Europe in the generation or so before the French Revolution, an atmosphere or mood favouring reform across much of Europe? Reform in Spain after 1713 had echoes in the Savoyard state, in the Habsburg dominions of «Charles III» (the Emperor Charles VI), and in France in the last years of Louis XIV and during the regency of the duke of Orleans, and elsewhere. And just what drove such

widespread reform? Many of the reforms in these states were clearly influenced, if not driven by their recent experience of participation in the war of the Spanish succession, the «Great War» of the first half of the eighteenth century (or by the Great Northern War in and around the Baltic). Some of the contributors to this collection stress the role of the succession conflict in shaping post-war innovation in Spain, but again not all. This is just one facet of the important differences of emphasis and interpretation between the contributors, the collection constituting a debate of sorts, not necessarily a bad thing. Many further pertinent influences are identified by the various authors, but there were others. Interesting in this respect is Philip V's creation of the Almirantazgo in 1737. That new institution certainly had important consequences in the formal government of the Spanish marine but it was arguable that it was at least as important as a means in the essentially dynastic early Bourbon state to provide a niche (and an income) for one of the many children of Philip V and his second consort, Isabel Farnese, the Infante Philip. It is significant that the Almirantazgo proved short-lived, being abolished by Ferdinand VI in 1748 when the Infante Philip was settled in Italy (the duchy of Parma) at the end of the war of the Austrian succession. Was that abolition also a reform, correcting a now outdated solution to an earlier challenge? Or do we need to conceptualise it — and some other early Bourbon reforms — differently, as counter-reform? The

collection's focus on geographically peripheral territories raises the question of the reform — or lack of it — in the interior; perhaps a further collection beckons on unreformed eighteenth-century Spain? Similarly, while some aspects of reform are dealt with, others — the militia, for example — are not, or not to the same degree. More might also have been said about the broader social forces, including those in favour of and who gained by reform, not least because much of the historiographical current

— reflected here — has for some decades been about resistance to reform and the weakness of what used to be thought of as the absolute state. These comments reflect the wealth of suggestive insights of this thoughtful and thought-provoking collection, one which will surely inspire further work on reform in early Bourbon Spain. There is no bibliography and no index.

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