

# UNDERSTANDING SPANISH SPEAKERS



## THE ORIGINS

Today, the Iberian Peninsula is home to two EU countries: Spain and Portugal. However, many centuries ago it was only a province in the Roman Empire. The Romans had come in the 3rd century BC and had swept all the local languages away, except for the Basque, that remained ignored in the Biscay gulf area. Long after that, in 701 AC, north African Muslims conquered the peninsula, and the isolated Christian kingdoms that were established on the north coast shortly after that developed different dialects of Latin.

Namely the Spanish language was born as a pidgin when the Basques tried to do business with their Latin-speaking neighbors in the Christian Kingdom of Castile. Today the four official languages of Spain in order of importance are Spanish, Catalan, Basque and Galician (which shares an origin with Portuguese). Spanish is official across the country whereas the rest are *also* official in their own territories. Except for the Basque, these languages originated thus in the different medieval Christian kingdoms in north Spain and are related to each other, but Spanish also has a phonetical similarity with Basque. This is best seen in the fact Spanish has only five vowels and all five are short: *a, e, i, o* and *u*.

Since the Spanish language was born in the Kingdom of Castile (stemming from the word *castillo* or "castle"), the language is known either as *español* or *castellano*. Although they are synonyms, the word in *español* is preferred in most of Spain while *castellano* is clearly the choice in the territories with a local co-official language. In Latin America, it depends on the country. In medieval "Spain", Castile conquered the most as the Christian kingdoms were expanding towards the south, and so their language became the leading one in the rising new state.

It's interesting to notice the northern Christian kingdoms are considered the seed of the Spanish nation even though it was only the project of expanding noble families. Some kings are considered Spanish though born elsewhere while the Muslims are not considered such,

even if their civilization spent almost eight centuries in the Iberian Peninsula. The myth of the tomb of St. James the Apostle (Santiago) that was “found” in Northwest Spain during the Middle Ages helped considerably to turn the expansion of royal families’ might into a crusade of Christendom to “recover their land”.

## LAND AND POWER IN SPAIN

The expansion of the Northern Iberian Christian Kingdoms was officially called *Reconquista*, (reconquest) to support this whole Christendom-recovering-their-land propaganda construct. Both the families in power and the Catholic Church held most of the land though.

Throughout Europe all the “national” elites were founding modern states both to escape the power of the Pope and to put up a transnational commercial infrastructure. They built both professional armies and police forces, approved some commerce laws and stabilized their monetary systems, but did not provide any sort of schooling system or health care. These states were the result of an alliance between the kings and the rising bourgeoisie, but Spain took a different path. In Spain this alliance took place between the crown and the Church since the clergy had built a strong legitimacy on their own crusade against Muslims. That’s why the Spanish Inquisition was established by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century as the first administrative authority of the State.

The Spanish state was born in 1469 with the wedding of Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon. The Pope’s didn’t approve since he wanted to hamper the rise of any strong European state, and the groom and the bride were also cousins, but the couple had the Papal approval forged and got married anyway. The Catholic Monarchs of Spain as they came to be known fostered the Spanish expansion and are therefore considered a symbol of Spanish *grandeur*. Under their rule, the Spanish armies conquered the last Muslim Kingdom in the Iberian Peninsula, exterminated the native population in the Canary Islands and set for new lands in the Americas.

In 1505 the Catholic Monarchs approved the *mayorazgo*, a law allowing the nobility to make their estate non-severable for life. This strengthened the high nobility by preventing the fragmentation of real estate property but forced the younger children to look for a position in the Church or the army as they didn’t inherit anything, and wage labor was not considered an option either. Since the nobility in southern Spain had not had much time to divide their land before the law, the land concentration remained particularly high in that part of the country. And, if someone died without any children, their property would most often be transferred to the Church<sup>1</sup>.

Approximately in the first half on the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the nobility managed to have the state expropriate the Catholic Church’s lands and hand it over to them almost for free, as it was better for business. The Church was compensated with the financing of the first Spanish school system, which was small but important for indoctrination, and the nobility started

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<sup>1</sup> According to Thomas Piketty they accounted for roughly 12 % of the population. See his book *Capital and Ideology* for more information.

concentrating a disproportionate amount of power. In 1936 a recently founded Second Spanish Republic was preparing to expropriate some of this land and the so-called Spanish Civil War was unleashed. The result was a roughly 40-year-long dictatorship which practiced social engineering with the help of the Catholic Church.

The Francoist dictatorship carried out the dam-building plans of the Second Republic partly with the forced labor of political prisoners<sup>2</sup>. The new dams multiplied manifold the value of the lands and boosted the position of an already powerful elite. In exchange the nobles who profited from this were required to set apart 10 % of their lands (usually the worst lots) for poor peasants. This created a source of cheap labor for the most affluent landowners (namely the jobless children of the small new proprietors) and helped to pay back the cost of the building projects with overpriced irrigation water bills<sup>3</sup>.

The Francoist regime used these dams for its propaganda as the Spanish agricultural sector was booming. Also, in 1946 Franco allowed the Catholic Church to register as their own every real estate property not specifically owned by anyone. This privileged lasted until 2015 and has allowed a foreign state (the Vatican) to appropriate thousands of properties including some valuable monuments or World Heritage sites. Last, in 1956 Franco passed a “Law of Land” that made municipalities first declare the land “developable” and then expropriate it *after* it had revalued. This made the landowners extremely rich. When Spain forfeited its monetary sovereignty to the European Central Bank in 1998, the interest rates felled sharply, and the whole building sector went crazy.

All this helps to understand why there was a huge credit crisis in Spain in 2008 and why the speculative value of land is still a big chunk of the price of housing. Spain had joined the EU in 1986 and the agriculture sector was flooded with aid money. The combination of good climate, modern fertilizers, and abundant water (both from dams and desalination plants) created a strong sector of agricultural exports. However, the European aid has always been allocated proportionally to the amount either of land or production, so in practice the European taxpayer’s money finances the big landowners in Spain. The difference nowadays is that land is not only owned by the old noble families, but by the international investment funds as well.

Meanwhile, the vast majority of the Spanish society hasn’t developed an awareness of the “Freedom to Roam” (jokamiehenoikeus). This pre-eminence of private property of the land is a global widespread phenomenon except for the Nordic countries, but the lack of an empowering founding myth of the nation in Spain narrows down the possibilities for change quite considerably.

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<sup>2</sup> This is well documented in Antonio Maestre’s *Franquismo S.A.*

<sup>3</sup> See the essay *Extremadura saqueada* for more on this: [http://www.elrincondenaredo.org/Biblio-1978-Extremadura\\_saqueada.pdf](http://www.elrincondenaredo.org/Biblio-1978-Extremadura_saqueada.pdf).

## WHAT HAVE THE NAMES TO DO WITH THE LAND?

The Spanish-speaking people have one first name and two surnames. Traditionally, the first surname comes from the father, and the second comes from the mother. Nevertheless Spain (2017) and Chile (2022) have approved a law allowing the parents to choose their order. People do not usually change their surnames when getting married, but in some Latin American countries, women can choose to replace their mother's surname with her husband's surname, preceded by the preposition "de". This means many Latin American women who marry a wealthy man often sport both their father's and their husband's surnames with no trace of the maternal line.

This contrasts with the Portuguese-speaking countries: in Portugal, parents can decide whether they give their children one or two surnames, while in Brazil they always give both, the mother's being the first. In these countries, the last surname is considered to be the most important.

Interestingly, the structure of people's names in these countries is tightly connected to the ownership of land. In medieval Spain, the nobles always tried to use as many surnames as possible, since each surname was supposed to have come with a real estate property, and hence, power. Even the landless rabble started using several surnames too in an attempt to improve their social position. In 1870, Spain approved a law defining everybody would have "only" two surnames, although a few "compound surnames with a strong tradition" were allowed. Nowadays, compound surnames are rare<sup>4</sup> and thought to be a sign of noble origin, so some politicians use this in order to address "The regular folk, with no compound surnames."

Regarding the first names, the Spanish-speaking people usually have one. Two-part first names are considered compound names and are pronounced as such although they are not usually hyphenated. For instance, José María is a boy's name, and it is pronounced "Josemaría". María José is in turn a girl's name, and it is pronounced "Mariajosé". Many first names run in families as a tradition. Since the variety of names is not that large, many names are considered timeless, and do not end up being identified with one particular generation as it happens in Finland or used as an insult.

The habit of giving children their parent's or their grandparent's names in some families can also be considered a sign of how important family, and also "passing something on" to their children is for the Spanish-speaking people. This role of parents as providers for their children has some political consequences, as many Spaniards are very hostile to having an inheritance tax, and therefore many region have a close-to-zero rate.

Last, it is worth noting that the most usual first-names have a biblical origin (without prejudice to the local names in regions with other languages), but lately some foreign names have also been popularized by the media. Usually wealthy people prefer traditional names

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<sup>4</sup> A compound surname is made up of several words, and sometimes they are a combination of two hyphenated surnames. Nowadays a compound first surname can be found in less than 1 % of the Spanish population. <https://www.genealogiahispana.com/apellidos/los-apellidos-compuestos-espanoles-origenes-clases-y-algunos-mitos/>

(for instance María or Carmen for women and Francisco or José for men) while poor people go for such names as Jennifer or Jonathan.

### **THE SPANISH MONARCHY: FROM THE CATHOLIC MONARCHS TO THE BOURBONS**

As previously stated, the Spanish state was born in 1469 with the wedding of Isabella I of Castille and Ferdinand II of Aragon. The Catholic Monarchs of Spain, as they were known, conquered the Emirate of Granada, which was the last Muslim “kingdom” in the Iberian peninsula, conquered the Canary Islands, and financed the trips of Cristopher Columbus, so they are considered the cornerstone of both the Spanish state and the Spanish empire. They created the empire’s currency unit, known as *peso*, founded the Spanish inquisition<sup>5</sup>, and established both the first state army and the first state police force.

The first police force’s uniform included a yellow jerkin (a sort of shirt with no sleeves) on top of a green shirt. Although very effective in the beginning, this police force earned a bad reputation over the years as the empire entered a series of economic crisis and crime skyrocketed. People started saying *¡A buenas hora mangas verdes!* (“It is rather mustard after dinner” or, more literally, “About time green sleeves!”) whenever the solution to a problem came too late as it often happened with the police, and that idiom has made it to the present time, usually shortened as *¡A buenas horas!*

It is interesting to note Isabella also inspired a fundamental change in modern chess. While the old chess included a piece that represented “the advisor” of the king and could only move one square diagonally, the new chess included a far-reaching queen. The Jews spread this upgraded chess across Europe after they were expelled from Spain in 1492, and that is nowadays the standard chess world-wide. Although these Catholic Monarchs had six children, both death and political intrigue caused the crown to be finally inherited at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Charles of Habsburg, a Flemish prince who would give his last name to four subsequent Spanish kings.

The Habsburgs, as they were called, enlarged the Spanish empire, but also plunged it into a series of catastrophic economic crisis. They were avid art collectors too, but they had the habit of marrying within their family for the purpose of building up their own fortune and power, and they finally died out in 1700, unable to have an offspring. After that, the European powers tried to influence the succession process in order secure access to the Spanish markets in the Americas. A 14-year long *War of the Spanish Succession* broke out mainly between France on one side and the UK, the Austrian Empire, Holland, and Portugal on the other. Eventually, France’s victory brought a new dynasty, the Bourbons, to power.

Since the old kingdom of Aragon had supported the loser candidate, the Bourbons stripped this “traitor” region of its institutions, its laws, and the power to collect taxes, while the

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<sup>5</sup> See the chapter *Land and Power in Spain* for more information about the Spanish inquisition and its connection to land-based power.

loyal regions of the Basque Country and Navarra got to keep all that. After the current “democratic” Spain was born in 1978, Catalonia got most of its self-government rights back as a small-sized heir to the old Kingdom of Aragon, but it could never fully recover the tax-collection rights both the Basque Country and Navarra enjoy to this day. For this reason, the Bourbons are very unpopular in Catalonia and are booed loudly whenever they dare to set foot in Barcelona.

But back to the Spanish Succession, the war had other consequences. The British crown got both Gibraltar and the Balearic island of Menorca as a compensation for its defeat. Spain would eventually get Menorca back, but it never managed to conquer Gibraltar, which basically was a big rock on the Andalusian coast. During the Spanish civil war, Gibraltarians even seized the occasion to grab an extra chunk of Spanish land to build their airport. Today, Gibraltar remains as a British territory to the chagrin of many Spaniards, particularly conservative ones. The Spanish land blockade has left Gibraltar with only a few options to develop economically beyond tourism and bunkering, and the place has also become a tax haven, and a smuggling hub.

With regard to Menorca, its sovereignty shifted among the UK, France, and Spain until the latter got it permanently in 1802. During the seven-year long French rule, the French people discovered there a thick sauce made of olive oil, eggs, and garlic. The sauce’s name was *mahonesa* after Menorca’s capital Mahón, but the French made a garlicless version and called it *mayonnaise*. Today, this sauce is world-wide known. In Spanish it is known as either *mahonesa* or, more commonly, *mayonesa*, since it became popular in mainland Spain through the French. Also, the traditional version with garlic is very popular in Spain, and it is known as *alioli* after the Catalan words for oil and garlic.

## **A MONARCHY OR A REPUBLIC? RATHER A DICTATORSHIP**

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the French dictator Napoleon Bonaparte sent an army to occupy Spain and replaced the king Ferdinand VII with his own brother Joseph Bonaparte. According to an anecdote<sup>6</sup>, one of the many laws Joseph Bonaparte signed required sailors to shave their hair for hygiene, but many protested since —so the argument went— they always risked falling to the water, and their long hair made it easier for rescuers to spot and grab any drowning man. The law was withdrawn, but the saying *Salvarse por los pelos* (literally “To be saved by your hair”) has been used ever since whenever someone is saved *by the skin of their teeth*. People also say simply *¡Por los pelos!* when something happens by the narrowest of margins.

Napoleon’s army had entered Spain under an agreement with the Spanish authorities to invade Portugal, but this army also occupied Spain and abused the locals at will, so a four-year long war broke out. The Spanish rabble, who had nothing to lose, fought alongside

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ui1.es/blog-ui1/del-dicho-al-hecho-historico-de-donde-viene-la-expresion-salvarse-por-los-pelos>

British troops that were sent in an attempt to weaken Napoleon. Despite the fact the French controlled most of the country, many representatives of different Spanish regions managed to gather in the southern city of Cádiz to make the first Spanish Constitution in 1812. It was the first time the word *liberal* was ever used in history before spreading to other languages. However, when the French were finally expelled, the Spanish king returned and imprisoned all the liberals that had fought for him.

On a separate note, it must also be noted the word *liberal* can nowadays mean very different things. Although the term first labelled those in favor of individual liberties and equal rights, at length it became clear such equality of rights was not possible under dramatic income (and hence power) differences. For this reason, the left-wing revolutionaries made equal access to capital their top priority, while the old liberals opposed this and understood both individual liberties and equal rights as defined by a market economy<sup>7</sup>. However, in the US the abundance of land muffled these rivalries greatly, and the liberals were not portrayed as opposites to the left-wing revolutionaries. This is why currently *liberal* labels the “free-market supporters” in Europe while it is used as a synonym for “leftist” in the US.

In Spain, king Ferdinand's come back and subsequent crackdown on liberals marks the beginning of the republican sentiment. The liberals championed the rule of law, but Ferdinand VII wanted *to be the law*. Because the Spanish army was full of liberals who had fought the French alongside the regular folk, they usually won. However, given other European monarchies always threaten to send troops (as the French did in 1823) if a republic was proclaimed, the liberals were usually led to accept the king on the condition he would acknowledge a liberal Constitution. Predictably, the king accepted this with great reluctance and then conspired against the liberals as much as he could.

With Ferdinand VII, and after him his daughter Isabella II, corruption became rampant. The conservative elites usually complained the army was full of liberals and tried to promote monarchic officials to the top positions, while plundering the public finances and stifling any protest. It was common to say *Se le ve el plumero* (His feather duster is showing) when accusing someone of being a liberal since the soldier uniforms included a cap with a feather. For this reason, today you can say *Se te ve el plumero* (Your feather duster is showing) whenever you want to make clear you know what someone is up to. This idiom has hence lost its original political meaning.

In 1873, the Spaniards got rid of queen Isabella II, and a short-lived republic was proclaimed. Nevertheless, the poor people revolted in many regions against a regime that, in their view, would simply replace the king and the nobles with a new rising bourgeoisie. The republic thus sank under the combined attacks of the starving poor and the wealthy conservatives, and the Bourbons were finally able to make their come back<sup>8</sup>. The role of the parliament

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<sup>7</sup> The implication being working people would voluntarily cater for other people's needs in exchange for a financial compensation. For the left-wing revolutionaries though, you could not say “voluntarily” when people were starving, so both views moved further apart.

<sup>8</sup> See the chapter *The Role of Urbanism in Class Conflict* for some insight into the traces of these political events in the Spanish cities.

strengthened, but the system was corrupt, and the big parties simply took turns in the Government regardless the result of the elections just as the poor people had feared.

When the European powers divided Africa 1884, Spain was granted some land (North Morocco, Western Sahara, and Equatorial Guinea in addition to the Canary Islands). The successive Spanish governments used their military occupation of the colonies to promote the most conservative officials to top positions in the army. Then in 1923, a catastrophic defeat of the Spanish army led to a scandal where the contempt of the Spanish authorities—including the king Alfonso XIII—for their soldiers was exposed. A captain named Miguel Primo de Rivera staged a coup to save these authorities from a parliamentary inquiry, much in the spirit of Mussolini's takeover in Italy. The king did not realize at the time, but by joining forces with a dictator, he linked his future to the dictatorship's popularity.

In 1931, the dictatorship was completely discredited, so the king had to go into exile, and a second republic was proclaimed. Women's suffrage was granted, but income inequality was dramatic. According to historian Manuel Tuñón de Lara, 2 % of the population owned half of the agricultural land<sup>9</sup>. After two unstable governments, a left-wing government was elected in 1936 and got set for an agrarian reform, but the army in Africa revolted with the aid of the rich and some conservative regions in northern Spain. After a 3-year long civil war, the dictator Francisco Franco ruled for several decades. When "democracy" returned in 1978, Spain was back to square one in the dilemma between a monarchy and a republic.

### **NEW RETURN OF THE BOURBONS**

During Franco's dictatorship, the Bourbons were in exile around Europe. The dictator did not want to share his power with a king, but he accepted the little grandson of Alfonso XIII could be raised in Spain under his supervision in order to become his successor one day. After Franco died, this grandson became the king Juan Carlos I and confirmed the return of the monarchy. The new king had Franco's dummy parliament approve a law to move towards a democratic system. Elections were held, and the new parliament drafted a Constitution. This Constitution stated Spain was a monarchy, but also granted many social rights and individual liberties. The people were given a choice between either accepting or rejecting the whole package.

Many years later, an old interview with the Spanish prime minister of the time was found to include some off-the-record declarations where he admitted the government never organized a separate referendum on the monarchy because their surveys said the republic was most people's favorite option<sup>10</sup>. According to another survey carried out in 1970<sup>11</sup>—that is, in the intimidating atmosphere of Franco's dictatorship—, roughly 20 % of the Spaniards preferred a monarchy, 30 % preferred the existing dictatorship, and 50 % would

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<sup>9</sup> See his essay *La España del siglo XIX (1808-1914)*.

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5huzjdBJU4&ab\\_channel=Esparroqui](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5huzjdBJU4&ab_channel=Esparroqui)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.publico.es/politica/estudio-1970-muestra-20-espanoles.html>



opt for a republic. The young people were more in favor of the republic than anyone, so the authorities had every reason to be worried.

The Spanish elites wanted to get Spain into the NATO and the EU, so they decided to tolerate democracy as long as it would not work against their interest. They used their media power to have a conservative government elected, but this first government needed to be somehow sensitive to public opinion, so it legalized the communist party, which had been the main pro-democracy clandestine force under Franco's regime and showed some reluctance to join NATO. As a result, a group of far-right military officers staged a coup in 1981.

Having learned from the mistakes of his grandfather, king Juan Carlos I invalidated the coup in a tv broadcast. The failure of the coup made Juan Carlos's popularity skyrocket, as he was "the savior of democracy", but today we know he was very much aware of the coup, and he just made up his mind about it when he was sure most of the officers did not support it<sup>12</sup>. At heart, Juan Carlos I was very conservative, but he was shrewd enough to find an understanding with the social democratic party PSOE (who won a landslide victory after the failed coup) and become somehow a king for the whole country.

The king also developed a double life. In public, he was a respected symbol of consensus, an experienced sailor, and a facilitator of multimillion contracts for the Spanish construction firms. However, behind the curtain he was an unfaithful husband who made a fortune through arms trafficking, collection of fees and tax evasion. Insulting the king (calling him arms trafficker for instance) was punishable by law, but most media did not need a law to praise him continuously. Juan Carlos I became the beacon of a democratic Spain in which the Francoist elites had automatically found new top positions in the administration or the State-owned enterprises.

Given the Spanish Constitution demanded a completely new text should be drafted should the monarchy come to an end, these elites had every reason to protect the king in order to make sure nothing ever changes. The media presented Juan Carlos I as a hero. It was the same media that had killed the first disobedient conservative government and had boosted the PSOE who quickly became pro-Nato. The Spanish parliamentary system became stable again with a social democratic party and a conservative party (PP) that shifted naturally with the electoral results but agreed on all the key questions such as the monarchy, the economic policy, or the foreign affairs.

However, in 2012 a news bomb was leaked to the press: the king had broken his hip in elephant-hunting safari in Botswana, and there even was a picture. Amidst one of the worst economic crisis in recent history, the king not only appeared living a luxury life paid with public money, but also posing by a dead elephant, a member of a protected species he had just shot. The safari only added to a couple of corruptions scandals affecting some of the royal family members. As the public resentment grew, a left-wing, pro-republic political party called Podemos came third in the elections to the European parliament in 2014. The

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.elnacional.cat/es/politica/golpe-estado-23f-rey-juan-carlos-sombras\\_584673\\_102.html](https://www.elnacional.cat/es/politica/golpe-estado-23f-rey-juan-carlos-sombras_584673_102.html)

elites interpreted this as a serious threat, so the king abdicated in favor of his male son Felipe, who was not as tainted by corruption, and had the two big parties (PSOE and PP) approve hastily an immunity law for himself.

Despite the support of all the Spanish establishment, this immunity did not cover crimes committed after the king's abdication, so the public prosecutor was forced at least to pretend he opened an investigation when new information about tax evasion leaked. Given Juan Carlos I's relationship to his wife had long been non-existent, he exiled to Abu Dhabi in order to avoid the attention of the media, and in 2023 sought to change his tax residence permanently to the United Arab Emirates. So much for the king as a "symbol of the nation". Many of the media that had enthusiastically supported Juan Carlos now turned their backs on him and focused on showing how Felipe VI was a much better king than his father. But was he?

## THE MONARCHY NOW

When Felipe VI became king in 2014, the monarchy was at an all-time low. The Spanish Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) showed how Juan Carlos's popularity had dropped from 7,48 out of 10 to 3,72 between 1995 and 2013<sup>13</sup>. Felipe VI was a fresh face, but only could raise the crown's popularity 4,34<sup>14</sup> in 2015. After that, the CIS stopped conducting surveys about the monarchy, officially because it was not any longer a "matter of concern" for the people. Despite this, 16 independent media joined forces to conduct their own wide-range survey in 2021<sup>15</sup>. The results were 39,4 % of the people would vote for a republic in a referendum while 31 % would vote to keep the monarchy.

As a king, Felipe VI also differs from his father in one essential way: he is clearly identified as a right-wing king. This became evident in 2017, when Catalonia held an unauthorized independence referendum heeding an overwhelming popular call of the local population. Thousands of policemen were sent to close the polling stations and beat pro-independence demonstrators, unleashing a bitter controversy across the country. Later that night, Felipe VI appeared on tv condemning both the demonstrations and the referendum itself and speaking about the prevalence of a united Spain. Since that moment, only the right-wing and far-right political parties defend the king publicly.

In 2022, Felipe VI attended the assumption of the President of Colombia Gustavo Petro. A highlight of the ceremony was the arrival of Simon Bolívar's sword, a highly respected symbol that made almost all the attendants stand up. Felipe remained seated<sup>16</sup>, showing

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<sup>13</sup> [https://elpais.com/politica/2014/06/02/actualidad/1401704469\\_632570.html](https://elpais.com/politica/2014/06/02/actualidad/1401704469_632570.html)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/2452974/0/valoracion-rey/felipe-vi/mitad-espanoles/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.elsaltodiario.com/encuesta-monarquia/39-por-ciento-votaria-republica-31-monarquia-referendum>

<sup>16</sup> <https://elpais.com/america-colombia/2022-08-08/polemica-por-la-decision-de-felipe-vi-de-no-levantarse-ante-la-espada-de-bolivar.html>

maybe a similar contempt to the one his father had showed in 2007 when he told Hugo Chávez to shut up in a summit. Felipe VI has tied his destiny to the political right much in the fashion his great-grandfather Alfonso XIII tied his to the dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera<sup>17</sup>. This is not a problem as long as that political option remains popular. However, should the ideological tide ever head clearly in the opposite direction in the Spanish society, a third republic would surely be on the table again.

## **THE CAPITAL OF SPAIN**

Before the beginning of parliamentarism, there was not such a thing as “capital of the state”. Countries were run by kings, and these kings could choose where to live with their court. During the Middle Ages, the Spanish court was mostly in Toledo, a beautiful city of medieval architecture in the center of Spain. The headquarters of the Spanish inquisition were there too. However, the monarchs could sometimes decide to spend a season with their court elsewhere, as when they went to Seville to enjoy its mild winters and maybe put some pressure on raising the local taxes. In 1563 though, the king decided to move the court more or less permanently to Madrid, a little village in the middle of nowhere.

While other European capitals have been established in historically, strategically, or commercially important cities, Madrid was chosen because it was a quiet place with good hunting grounds. The king did not want to be continuously bothered with nobles or bishops who asked for his favors, so he fled to the countryside in order to better spot these favor-seekers as they moved closer to the royal palace. The king had several palaces built in the area. However, the first Bourbon to rule Spain did not like the main palace in downtown Madrid and, allegedly, set it on fire<sup>18</sup>. The current Royal Palace doubles de size of those in Buckingham or Versailles and was built on the ruins of the old one.

Despite the palaces though, it was not until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that Madrid became a true capital by the European standards, with several large avenues, a sewage system, and some scientific institutions.

## **THE LEGACY OF DIFFERENT CULTURES IN ARCHITECTURE**

Both the romans and the Muslims left some important buildings and infrastructure in Spain. The romans built for instance A Coruña’s Tower of Hercules, which is the world’s oldest existent lighthouse, or the Aqueduct of Segovia with its characteristic roman arches. The Muslims had their most important buildings in Granada, Seville, Córdoba, and Zaragoza.

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<sup>17</sup> See the chapter *A Monarchy or a Republic? Rather a Dictatorship* for more information on this.

<sup>18</sup> There is no proof the palace burnt by order of the king. However, we do know the king was mentally instable to a high degree and also disliked the palace, since it apparently was too humble for his Versailles taste. A mysterious fire burnt the palace down on Christmas Day 1734.

Córdoba's case is unique since the Christians decided to build a cathedral on top of the great mosque after they conquered the city in 1236. The site is nowadays a one-of-a-kind combination on mosque and cathedral, but it doesn't officially belong to the Spanish state since the Catholic Church registered as its own in 2006 for 30 euros<sup>19</sup>.

The Muslims took their famous horseshoe-shaped arch from the medieval architecture of the Iberian Peninsula. They built palaces and mosques which were richly decorated inside but scarcely decorated outside. Their decoration included some sentences from the Quran and geometrical figures. This decoration can be interpreted as a token of the development of geometry in the Muslim civilizations as well as a consequence of the ban on portraits of the living beings. The Muslims also paid great attention to gardening and the use of water, and the outside of some buildings give evidence of this.

Meanwhile, the Christians started building humble churches in North Spain, but developed their architecture as they were moving south. This is why the Spanish churches are larger and more impressive the closer we get to Andalusia in spite some important exceptions in Burgos or Barcelona. The world's largest gothic cathedral is in Seville, and that is also the resting place of Christopher Columbus' remnants. The building process took several centuries, and the successive crisis of the Spanish economy forced its makers to draw on remarkable handcraft skills to have everyday stones or plaster look like the finest marble, wood, and gold.

Throughout the centuries, Spain adapted to the European architectural trends. There are outstanding examples of the Romanesque, the Gothic (especially Burgos), the Renaissance, the Baroque (Santiago de Compostela or, in a more ascetic version, Madrid among others), and the Neoclassical art. During the first two centuries of the Spanish empire, a richly decorated kind of Renaissance style called plateresque developed in Spain. This is best seen in Salamanca, but the style was replicated in other parts of the country and the Northern half of the empire. However, by the end of the Renaissance, the Reformation and the economic crisis forced both the crown and Catholic church to seek a purer, more stripped-down style.

This was the Herrerian style, which is best seen in the monastery-palace of El Escorial. El Escorial is a village close to Madrid, where this building officially known as the Royal Site of San Lorenzo de El Escorial is located. Its grill shape commemorates a Spanish military victory against France occurred in Saint Lawrence's day, because this martyr had been grilled to death. The Herrerian style and this building in particular conveys order through its predominance of horizontal shapes, authority through its gigantic proportions, and austerity through its lack of ornament. All the Spanish kings and queens are buried in its underground mausoleum, and it is interesting to note that the decorations recover some predominance as we approach this area.

The ideology behind this transition from plateresque to Herrerian was this earthly life was meant to cause strain, suffering, and submission, while spiritual world symbolized by the El

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<sup>19</sup> [https://cordopolis.eldiario.es/cordoba-hoy/sociedad/mezquita-cordoba-fuera-bienes-inmatriculados-iglesia-abre-devolver\\_1\\_8683172.html](https://cordopolis.eldiario.es/cordoba-hoy/sociedad/mezquita-cordoba-fuera-bienes-inmatriculados-iglesia-abre-devolver_1_8683172.html)

Escorial's library gallery and its royal mausoleum is the place where all the awards are granted. But this is only an example of how architecture has been used as a propaganda tool through history. The romans used their infrastructure and monuments to extend their power just as much as the Spanish royalty did. The Herrerian style was obviously useful to have people accept their harsh reality, but the fact is more symbols would be needed after that whenever the mobs threaten an established authority.

In Latin America, the Incas, the Aztecs, and the Maya people built palaces, fortresses, and temples that dwarfed everything else in the continent. The Aztecan and Mayan pyramids in such places like Teotihuacán or Tikal respectively are very famous while the Incan architecture stood out for building solid walls made out of tight chunks of sculpted stone that imitated corn on the cob. Again, their massive buildings were symbols of authority in some of the most hierarchical societies the Americas had. The Spanish in turn either abandoned or destroyed this buildings and built their own symbols of authority: palaces, cathedrals, and so on.

In 1740 the Spanish king ordered that all cargo ships carrying silver and other goods for Spain would leave at the same time once a year from Havana in Cuba, heavily guarded by warships to prevent piracy. Havana thus monopolized the American<sup>20</sup> trade with the mother country and filled with palaces, churches, and fortresses. Today, it has some of the finest examples of colonial architecture along with other cities such as Bogotá or Santo Domingo.

### **THE ROLE OF URBANISM IN CLASS CONFLICT**

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Paris and many other European cities underwent a remarkable transformation by turning many of their former narrow medieval streets into great bombastic boulevards. The aim was to make room for traffic, but also a propaganda strategy designed to advertise industrialism's modernity, as well as a means of social control. The elites realized the old narrow streets were too easy for the growing urban proletariat to barricade, so they planned some big avenues where the key governmental buildings could be best protected. Should the people riot, the newest cannons were very well suited for dispersing any mob threatening this centers of power.

Spain followed suit after Paris. In Madrid, a distinction is made between the Habsburg's Madrid prior to 1714 and the Bourbon's Madrid, with its boulevards and its grandiose royal palace. In Barcelona, the architect Ildefons Cerdà created the concept of *urbanism*, and he managed to have his enlargement plans approved partly because they included wider streets for the police cavalry.

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<sup>20</sup> I use the word "American" as referring to the Americas. From a Spanish-speaking point of view, the fact that one country could be entitled to monopolize the use of this adjective is hardly arguable.

Regarding the symbols, the king's supporters filled the country with monuments to imperialism after a brief republican experiment in Spain in 1974-1974 (e. g. Barcelona's statue of Christopher Columbus or Madrid's statue of Alfonso XII at the Retiro Park). They wanted to advertise their idea of Spain as a timeless reality standing above its people's circumstantial will.

Many Spanish traditional symbols at that time either opposed the ordinary folk's right to political power or glorified some symbols of an imperial, authoritarian past. Many buildings were made in Neo-Mudéjar art, imitating —ironic as it is— those Muslims who lived in the Iberian old Christian kingdoms and produced beautiful abstract ornamentations with a set of humble materials such as brick, wood, and tiles. Madrid's bullfighting arena, Barcelona's triumphal arch or Seville's railway station are outstanding examples. The aim was not to showcase the skills of the working poor, but to draw an uninterrupted umbilical cord between "present" Spain and the medieval symbols of power.

In Catalonia, revivalist architecture was nevertheless most effective when drawing on local elements. The Catalan elite financed the construction/refurbishment of several buildings in a Gothic-like style, since the Middle Ages were considered the time Catalonia was at the height of its political power. These rich people also supported the modernist architecture since it was fashionable then, and they wanted to present themselves as the key to European modernity. It was a style that resorted to some simple, organic, solid structures with an abundance of nature-like ornamentation. Its chief masterpiece is Antoni Gaudí's Sagrada Família in Barcelona. It is Europe's most visited church after Saint Peter in the Vatican, and it will be the world's highest when it is finished.

During the Francoist dictatorship, some National Catholic buildings were made, particularly in Madrid. They can be recognized by their overwhelming, hostile proportions. Their use of red brick walls in stone frames represented the chaotic mobs submitting to the authority of the "eternal Spain". Quite often, they would use pointed shale rooftops in reference both to the Habsburgs and to some imaginary Germanic origins. In such a sunny, dry country as Spain, pointed rooftops have a clear ideological component, but not as ideological as the Valley of the Fallen, a gargantuan mausoleum close to Madrid where the remnants of general Franco remained buried until 2019.

## **HOUSING AND IDEOLOGY**

Since Franco's approval of the Law of Land in 1956, Spanish landowners got enormous capital gains every time a municipality declared a real estate property fit for construction. This system obviously created powerful incentives for corruption at the local level, and it is in place still today. As a result, the real estate properties are unnaturally expensive, and a high building density is needed to make housing construction profitable. Many apartments built during the dictatorship are thus small with three tiny bedrooms connected through a

corridor, and with a number of windows facing an inner courtyard. After gentrification, many apartments were refurbished into lofts, which are better suited for tourism.

The three-tiny-bedroom apartment was thought to be fit for any family. One was for the married couple<sup>21</sup>, while the others were distributed according to sex. Naturally the high birth rate during the dictatorship usually meant these bedrooms were stuffed with bunk beds, but the priority was to cultivate a good reputation. The “public space” of the house was made of a small living room and a larger showcase dining room for social life. This meant many people spent most of their time in the least comfortable areas of their home, particularly women. The kitchens for instance were so narrow that the refrigerators often had to be placed in the dining room (also as a sign of status) when they hit the market in the 60’s.

Franco managed to make his regime accepted by other countries despite its fascist origins. In the 60’s, the Spanish economy boomed based on three pillars: tourism, foreign investment, and developmentalism. This meant many coastland areas were filled with tall touristic buildings, and also, that the young generations fled the countryside to the big cities and the coast. New districts appeared overnight. In 1978, a law was passed to allow for self-sufficient housing developments and many people started living in areas that were poorly connected to the city, had no common areas, and only got their basic social needs (e. g. outpatients clinics or schools) covered many years after they had settled in.

Over the years this influenced the ideological structure of society. The inhabitants of housing developments didn’t come into contact with other strata of society since each development targeted a specific income group. This people paid taxes but didn’t receive any public services in return, so they became hostile to the very idea of politics. The most appreciated buildings were designed as closed communities with a swimming pool for their use only. People could use an elevator to get directly from an underground parking lot to their apartments without seeing other neighbors<sup>22</sup>. Many people didn’t know who lived next door, so maybe the only thing that united them was cheering at football games and the use of flags and other nationalistic symbols<sup>23</sup>.

After Franco’s death, Spain put up a parliamentary system and then joined the EU in 1986. In 1992, both the Barcelona Olympic Games and the Seville Expo ’92 were the calling card of the “new modern Spain”. Amid a new golden age for tourism, Bilbao reached a tremendous economical and propagandistic success with the opening of its architecturally impressive Guggenheim Museum. After that, many regions joined in a populist, landmark-building race encouraged by European cheap financing. For instance, Valencia’s City of Arts and

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<sup>21</sup> Ideology can often be traced through the language. For instance, a double bed is called a *cama de matrimonio* (marriage bed) in Spanish.

<sup>22</sup> According to Credit Suisse, Spain has the highest density of elevators per inhabitant in the world. This is a consequence of the need to build tall buildings in order to make the inflated price of land profitable: [https://research-doc.credit-suisse.com/docView?language=ENG&format=PDF&document\\_id=807337830&source\\_id=emcsplus&serialid=icODwZh0skdq6x9yYrGbqUT0Ueqtn%2f0XDvHG5%2bjUSD0%3d](https://research-doc.credit-suisse.com/docView?language=ENG&format=PDF&document_id=807337830&source_id=emcsplus&serialid=icODwZh0skdq6x9yYrGbqUT0Ueqtn%2f0XDvHG5%2bjUSD0%3d)

<sup>23</sup> This is particularly well explained in Jorge Dioni López’s *La España de las piscinas*.

Sciences was a futuristic cultural complex that turned into a money drain, and Spain built the best high-speed train network in Europe, but half of the seats were empty.

In 2008, the credit crunch showed Spain had been pouring money into roads, high speed trains, and spaceship-like buildings while forgetting the regular suburban train network or the social services. The roundabouts had conquered the cities as the country had adapted to drivers, not citizens. The ensuing social and political unrest was mostly buffered by the media and only in Barcelona there has been a long-lasting transformation project. In 2016 Barcelona started the *Superilles*<sup>24</sup> project, which has turned some streets and squares formerly open to road traffic into parks and green areas. Today, Barcelona builds more subsidized housing than Catalonia and the Madrid region combined.

## THE SPANISH CUISINE

The romans brought the techniques of both cheese and wine making. That's one of the reasons why some former areas of the Roman Empire have nowadays a strong cheese and wine tradition. The romans also made extensive use of wheat products, and you can see that today in the fact that most Spaniards usually eat holding a fork and a piece of bread instead of a knife. And they also brought olives and olive oil, which became the basis for so many dishes. The mayonnaise, for instance, was born in the Balearic Islands. It is a heavy mixture of olive oil and eggs, but people just love it. Today, Spain produces roughly a third of all the olive oil made in the World<sup>25</sup>.

The Muslims on their part brought the rice, the legumes, the dried fruits, and the citric fruits. For instance, there are many different rice paellas, meat stews come usually with legumes, and the typical Spanish bakery uses more lemon and dried fruits than in other western European countries. Also, since the Muslims or the Jews didn't eat pork, it became a proof of Christianity to eat it. The old Christian kingdoms specialized in its production, and today *jamón serrano* is a well-known kind of ham. This ham had to be buried in salt for a few days and then hung to dry for 1-3 years in a cool, dry place. Because this ham had to be made in the cool top of mountains, it was called *serrano*, which means "from the mountains".

White pigs are the ones used for serrano ham and other meat products such as chorizo, which is a pork sausage with paprika. However, the more appreciated dark Iberian pig is used for top quality hams such as *jamón de pata negra* (black leg ham) or *jamón de bellota* (acorn ham), which is considered by many the world's finest and it is made with Iberian pigs that roamed freely eating nothing but acorns for four months before the slaughter. Cured hams have only unsaturated fat, so you are not supposed to withdraw the tasty white fat that is intertwined with the meat. On the other hand, the Finnish *uunikinkku* (*jamón asado*)

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<sup>24</sup> That's Catalan for "Superblocks".

<sup>25</sup> <https://aceites.top/productores-aceite-oliva/>



is not very known in Spain. You can find the basic boiled ham (*jamón de York*), but it is not nearly as appreciated.

After Columbus' journey, the Americas became the third basis for Spanish cuisine along with the Roman and the Muslim tradition. In the Middle Ages, most people used honey to sweeten their bakery, but after the first sugar canes were brought from Asia to the South American colonies a very profitable import frenzy was unleashed in Europe. The Spaniards brought cocoa among other things, added some sugar, and made hot chocolate their national drink for centuries, although nowadays, this traditional, thick chocolate drink is mainly used to dip *churros*. The *conquistadores* also brought tomatoes, and gazpacho became a popular cold soup in hot Southern Spain.

The most important American ingredient, however, was the potato. It produced as much as two to four times the amount of food a cereal crop would<sup>26</sup>. The Spaniards used them along with beans —Another import from the Americas— in their meat stews and invented the Spanish omelet, which has become a national symbol ever since. It is interesting to note that Spaniards rarely use the oven, and many local specialties are stews where the meat, the fat and even the bones of an animal are supposed to flavor the rest of the ingredients including potatoes. The fact that in Finland the diners are supposed to peel their own potatoes might be related to a more egalitarian conception of the cooking chores.

Being a mountainous country, Spain developed a varied cuisine. It had three common roots (Roman, Muslim, and American), but many local differences. For instance, many different cheeses in north Spain are mild flavored, but we find much stronger varieties in the dryer inland areas. The Atlantic coast offers excellent seafood in the Cantabrian area and small fried fish in the Andalusian West coast, but the Spanish Mediterranean coast is not that fruitful. Andalusian vegetables allow for delicious gazpacho and salads with olive oil, salt, and vinegar while Valencia is clearly more specialized in rice meals, and inland Spain likes meats, beans, and heavy dishes.

On the minus side, Spain produces way more meat than it needs<sup>27</sup>. That means stuffing animals in macro-farms. The animals need a high dose of antibiotics in order to prevent diseases and consume a large amount of soy. Some of this soy is imported from Brazil and partially explains the pressure to burn some patches of the Amazon rainforest every year to grow more soy. Spain's patisserie is very varied in turn, but not nearly as good as the Portuguese. Portuguese coffee, as well as Italian, is also better. And Spaniards are not especially good with pasta or ice-cream as Italians are for instance, but every region has many specialties that are shockingly delicious.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://cipotato.org/potato/potato-facts-and-figures/>

<sup>27</sup> Spain is the 5<sup>th</sup> top meat exporter world-wide, and it is heavily specialized in pork: <https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/4936972/0/espana-nacion-jamon-es-el-quinto-exportador-mundial-de-carne-y-el-pais-que-mas-cerdo-vende-en-el-extranjero/>

## LATIN AMERICAN CUISINE

Every Latin American country has its own specialties based both on their local *ingredients* and on the *role* they played as colonies. For instance, corn has been grown in Mexico for thousands of years. The Spaniards didn't want any competitors in wheat production, so they made Mexico stick to corn and a whole cuisine around corn-based dough, beans, chicken, and local vegetables developed. The closer the colonies were to Spain, the more they had to adapt to the market necessities of the mother country. That's why many Latin American countries are not known for their wine (the Spanish producers did not want any competitors), but Argentina and Chile could become large producer thanks to being peripheral.

In South America, we see a clear distinction between the South-Atlantic and the Pacific coast countries. The Atlantic colonies had the best grazing lands, so they specialized heavily on beef production. Argentina is for instance one of the world's top four per capita consumers of meat<sup>28</sup>. On the Pacific coast, the Andes made it more difficult for a competitive cattle industry, so people relied heavily on fishing. The delicious Peruvian ceviche is a good example of this. Peru has, for its part, the most admired cuisine in the Pacific area not only because it was the heartland of the Inca Empire, but because it enjoys three different ecosystems: the coastlands, the mountains, and the rain forest.

The Southern Cone is also known for *mate*, a caffeine-rich infused drink that is much more popular than coffee or tea. And maybe it is also best known for *dulce de leche*, a caramelized milk that is used in countless desserts. It is interesting to note that Spanish language is quite homogeneous even in areas as far apart as Argentina and Spain, but there are some local differences. For instance, although *papa* is the default word for "potato", Spaniards are used to saying *patata* since early conquistadores mistook some potato varieties for sweet potatoes (which in turn are *batata* in Spanish). Another example is the word *limón*: Latin Americans use it for "lime", but Spaniards use it for "lemon".

## THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF FOOD

Consideration is a defining trait of the Finnish social gatherings as shown in the popular sentence *Ei minua varten tarvii keittää*. When inviting people over, it often happens the host does not promise any food in order to avoid any pressure, but they still will want to have something to offer out of consideration. Since the guests do not usually want to cause any trouble either, they also make sure they are not too hungry at the visit. In some cases, this can even lead to guests being offered a full-fledged meal when they have already eaten and having to eat again out of courtesy. In the Spanish-speaking countries such misunderstandings would be very difficult though. People usually set their dates around

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-47119001>. Other countries in the top four are the US, Australia, and New Zealand.

meals, saying for instance “Let’s get together for dinner” or “We’ll meet after lunch”. And, when they are not eating, they often talk about what the best foods are.

The Spanish-speakers as a whole do not usually thank after their meals since that is what a recipient of charity would be required to do<sup>29</sup>. You do thank however when you are offered something, so if you are offered a coffee, you should probably say *Sí, gracias* or *No, gracias*. If you said *Sí, por favor* as in English (Yes please), you would sound again as *begging* some charity. Instead of thanking for charity and begging for food, politeness requires you *compliment* the food. If you don’t actually like what you are eating, you can say it’s good (“*Está bueno*”) without any particular enthusiasm, and nobody will take it literally (especially if you don’t have a second helping!). Last, when you enter a room where someone is having a meal and make eye contact with them, you are supposed to say *Que aproveche* (“Enjoy!”) to make clear you do not mean to disturb.

People usually have only a small breakfast at home before leaving for work, then they stop around 10.00 a. m. to have another breakfast in a bar. In Spain, there are many bars that offer a variety of affordable breakfasts, and some people think it actually is a matter of national pride and identity to have a bar in every corner, but in practice the abundance of such places is partly due to the lack of cuisines and cantinas in many workplaces. In physically demanding jobs, people might stop around 12.00 p.m. to have a sandwich and a beer, but proper lunch comes at 14.30 p.m. or so. Those who can, go home to have lunch with their families after returning the workplace, but the long distances in large cities make it very difficult for many people. Children might have an afternoon snack, but adults usually wait for dinner, that takes place around 22.00 p.m.

Many people think the Spanish people a split shift workday because they want to take a *siesta* or “nap”, but the truth is more complex. Just as many other countries, Spain achieved the 8-hour workday at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely in 1919. However, as general Franco conquered the country in 1936-1939 inflation crushed salaries and forced men (women were not allowed to work outside their homes under Franco’s rule) to look for some extra sources of income. Franco’s “solution” was to place Spain in Nazi Germany’s time zone in 1942. Most people used to have lunch at 1 p. m., as they still do in most of Latin America, but all of a sudden it was 2 p. m. so early-rising men could do their 8-hour shift, then go home for lunch and a power nap, and then hit the streets again to get more money.

The split shift workday is not then the result of laziness, but of the need to work more. Spain is still today in the wrong time zone, and most workers have split shifts. That often means toiling for a longer time than the official 8-hour day for a salary below the European average<sup>30</sup>. Many people watch the main news broadcasts starting at 3 p. m., but usually only retired people have the time to take a *siesta* (nap).

While some people find “lively” that Latino cities as a whole seem active till late, it is a fact that parents with bad working conditions can hardly see their children during the week.

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<sup>29</sup> See the chapter *Being a Hidalgo* a few pages below to understand this.

<sup>30</sup> <https://gdempresa.gesdocument.com/noticias/salario-bruto-medio-europa>

Despite the help of grandparents, the lack of family time often weighs heavily on both their school performance and their tendency to become addicted to screen time. When the Spanish women massively joined the workforce in the 80's after general Franco's death, men did not automatically take their share in the household chores, particularly in the first two decades, so the families' nutrition started to depend more on fried stuff and pre-cooked food. Spaniards do take much pride in their local gastronomic specialties, but in a hectic, everyday life such treats can be more of a symbol than a reality.

Another trait that is worth noticing is that the Spanish-speaking people resort to bars and public places more often than people in many Western countries. Finns are often disappointed when they realize they are seldomly invited to other people's houses and might feel they are failing in their integration, but this happens for a reason. In stratified societies, people are not comfortable letting others know how they live. They don't want to be automatically categorized according to income, and the pressure to give a good impression might be high. During the Francoist dictatorship, the bars were men-only spaces, but now they are open to everybody, having a showcase dining room is not that important, and public spaces make it possible to meet others on a more egalitarian basis<sup>31</sup>.

A good share of Spaniards takes the abundance of bars as a sign of their ability to enjoy life, although it is usually more connected to social inequality. Many people (mostly men) put up their own bar to make up for the lack of decent job opportunities, so the fierce competition in this sector does not usually allow for high profits. The positive side naturally is that customers have many affordable bars to pick from. This is a bliss both for young people and tourists alike. Under Franco's regime, divorce was not permitted, and bars were the hiding place of many unhappy husbands. Today, youngsters find it difficult to leave their parent's home given the sky-high housing prices, but this does not cause much of a problem since the bars still offer them an easy way to conduct their social life outside the house.

And, as regards to the famous Spanish *tapas*, many Andalusian bars offer these little snacks for free with the drinks in order to attract customers, but this does not happen that much elsewhere. The word *tapa* (cover) was probably chosen because the first tapas were little dishes that "topped" wine glasses and protected them from any annoying little fly. A *tapa* is always free of charge if not ordered, but most bars offer at least a list of paying *tapas*. And, if you want to share a larger dish, you can also order a *ración* (portion). Also, in the Basque country, there are *pintxos* instead of tapas. These are pieces of bread topped with some delicious food and held together with a stick. They are displayed on the bar top, and they can be a bit pricey. In traditional bars you can pick them at will and pay at once for all the sticks you have collected before leaving, but nowadays it is becoming more normal to order the *pintxos* and pay on the spot.

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<sup>31</sup> See the chapter *Housing and Ideology* for more information on this.

## THE LACK OF AN ORAL CULTURE OF POPULAR ORIGIN IN SPAIN

Salamanca is a beautiful Spanish Renaissance city north-west of Madrid. It is home to the First Spanish-speaking university ever. The Universidad de Salamanca was founded in 1218 as Europe's fourth after Bologna, Oxford, and Cambridge, and today its wide offer of Spanish courses makes the city a top destination for people looking to improve their language skills. The first students in the University were of course boys of noble origin though. Some of them, called *tunos*, usually gave public concerts for food and money, and their songs were as conservative as could be expected since they usually portrayed love stories from the point of view of male aristocracy.

A century after the birth of this university, a Castilian king nicknamed *the Wise* was seeking to develop a cultural hub in Toledo that was not subject to the Catholic church. He had many fundamental Greek literary works translated from Arab or Hebrew to Latin and Spanish. In 1348 he approved the first Castilian book of laws (*Las siete partidas*, as the book is known today in Spanish), a legal code dealing mainly with the obligations of kings, subjects to the crown, people buying or selling land or married couples. In its last part, though, this legal code already forbade street musicians under the pretext it was "a degrading show".

As a matter of fact, the "wise king" never actually intended to spread culture, but to *control* it in his fierce competition with the Catholic church. The Castilian book of laws allowed musicians to play "for their lords", but not in public places since that would have had an enormous propagandistic potential. This meant the songs had to please only an aristocratic audience as the *tunos'* songs did. The written ban of street musicians was only another milestone in a censorship system that has worked throughout history in the Spanish-speaking countries. That is why only some conservative cultural phenomena have been allowed to thrive.

Today, *la tuna* is a constellation of men-only clubs for university students in Spain, Portugal, and some Latin American countries. They dress in Middle-Age student clothes and play their traditional songs in weddings and local festivities. They have some public funding to support their travels, but opinions about them are very divided. This is the beginning of the *tunos'* most famous song:

### CLAVELITOS

Mocita, dame el clavel.  
Dame el clavel de tu boca,  
que pa' eso no hay que tener  
mucha vergüenza ni poca.  
Yo daré el cascabel,  
te lo prometo, mocita,

### LITTLE CARNATIONS

Young girl, give me the carnation.  
Give me the carnation in your mouth,  
Since that doesn't require  
much nor little insolence.  
I will give you the bell,  
That is a promise young girl,

si tú me das esa miel  
que llevas en la boquita.

ESTRIBILLO

Clavelitos, clavelitos,  
clavelitos de mi corazón.  
Yo te traigo clavelitos  
colorados igual que un fresón.  
Si algún día clavelitos  
no lograra poderte traer,  
no te creas que ya no te quiero.  
Es que no te los pude coger.

if you give me that honey  
you carry in your little mouth.

CHORUS

Little carnations, little carnations,  
little carnations of my heart.  
I bring you little carnations,  
and they are red like a big strawberry.  
If someday the little carnations  
I couldn't manage to bring,  
don't you think I don't love you anymore.  
It's just a couldn't pick 'em.

The Finnish language has a well-developed oral tradition. This is due to a number of factors, such as the geographic spread of the population in a harsh land, the fact of being a latecomer in written production or the pursuit of national unity before Finland's independence. On the other hand, the Spanish popular culture has traditionally been suppressed, and for instance there are not many children's songs. A telling example of how most of the cultural production has usually sprung from either the gentry or the church is Christmas songs, since all of them are centered around the birth of baby Jesus. Here is a small sample of what you might expect:

#### LOS PECES EN EL RÍO

La virgen se está peinando  
entre cortina y cortina.  
Los cabellos son de oro.  
El peine, de plata fina.  
Estrillo  
Pero mira como beben los peces en el río.  
Pero mira como beben por ver a Dios nacido.  
Beben y beben y vuelven a beber  
los peces en el río por ver a Dios nacer.

#### THE FISH IN THE RIVER

The Virgin is combing her hair  
between a curtain and the other.  
Her hair is made of gold.  
Her comb is of silver.  
Chorus  
Just look at how the fish in the river drink.  
Just look at how they drink in order to see the  
newborn God.  
They drink, and drink, and drink time and again.  
The fish in the river in order to see how God is born.

Today, the Spanish people's relation to their own cultural heritage runs pretty much along political lines. If you are a conservative catholic Spaniard, you will most probably love the *tunos*, the local Christmas songs, and other traditional symbols. If you are a progressive secular Spaniard, you are somehow bound to either ignore them or outright to despise them all. There still are some neutral children's songs of course, but the numbers are nowhere close to those you would find in some other cultures.

### **WHAT DO THE STATES AND NATIONS HAVE TO DO WITH THE POPULAR CULTURE?**

The history of mankind is usually divided in four time periods: the Classical Age, the Middle Ages, the Early Modern era, and the Late Modern era. In the Middle Ages, the nobility used to control politics throughout Europe and kings were forced to request their help before declaring a war. However, in the Early Modern era, new modern states were born in Europe as the kings allied with a rising bourgeoisie. Their aim was to set up a commercial infrastructure that would allow them to trade among them, and in the longer run with China. That is why these modern states were defined by a legal system, a number of infrastructures (harbors, roads, and so on), and a centralized army that protected their commercial interests.

In Spain this alliance did not happen between the king and the too feeble bourgeoisie, but between the king and the Catholic church. This is why the Spanish inquisition became the first state-wide administrative authority. And along with this, came the first state-wide police force and the first state-funded regular army. The commercial development this allowed caused vast social inequalities to be sure, but it worked for the European states while they could offer jobs to the poor, or they could send their population surplus to their colonies. However, in the Late modern era everything changed.

Prior to the time of both the independence of the 13 colonies in North America and the French revolution, the starving, working poor developed a strong class consciousness. They all shared the same problems and therefore started feeling part of "a people". When these working poor partially seized power, for instance in the US and France, they started granting themselves many rights on the basis of being a sovereign people. In other words, a nation. This means that although the creation of modern states was the project of a commercial elite, the concept of nation was developed long after that by the poor people who joined forces in a struggle for collective rights.

At first, the European kings usually tried to get rid of the very concept of nation. However, their bourgeoisie, and in Spain the Catholic church, understood soon enough they should rather try to *reshape* this concept. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many monuments were erected<sup>32</sup> and a frantic quest for each country's national essence and symbols started. Both the poor people and the elites tried to impose their own version of every nation's history

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<sup>32</sup> See the chapter *The role of urbanism in class conflict* about this.

through the first-born newspapers,<sup>33</sup> since controlling the past was the key to shape current policy. Since then, the current identity of every nation could be considered nothing but the outcome of a class struggle that took place mainly in the media.

For the working class, Spain was the home of a *sovereign people* trying to conquer their rights after centuries of oppression, silencing, and violent indoctrination. For the elites, Spain was a *timeless reality* whose identity was to be found in the Catholic legacy, the deeds of some historical figures (kings, saints, conquistadors, and the like), and the symbols of authority. The ensuing boom in the inauguration of monuments stressed quite openly that Spain was the product of a long tradition, not that of the rabble's circumstantial whims at a given time. However, this implied a dreadful assumption: if Spain was a timeless reality not subject to the people's will, it meant it was an ideal that had to be defended *against Spaniards* at any cost.

In this struggle, it was key to define the people's true reference symbols, so the ruling authorities in Spain and some Latin American countries such as Mexico or Colombia, shaped and promoted bullfighting as we know it today. In their view, the national spirit was supposed to be represented in a defiant, brave, cold-blooded man who would skillfully use a red cape to repeatedly drive a raging bull away without giving up one inch of soil. The closer he would let the bull get, the more other men would admire his bravery, and the final blood bath represented superiority of a fearless man over the beast. As old hidalgos<sup>34</sup> did, the bullfighter was supposed to constantly project a proud image of dignity and was admired for it, but today most people find the whole show cruel and ridiculous.

Another cultural phenomenon the Spanish authorities tried to use with a nationalistic agenda was flamenco, an Andalusian music and dance style that was inspired in old Muslim music. Flamenco was a cultural phenomenon of the rabble indeed, but the elites knew that by shaping it to their own taste it could become a symbol of everybody, not just the lowlifes. It would become a symbol of the whole "nation", rich and poor alike, as opposed to, say, the French or the British. For about two centuries, both varieties of flamenco (the one played for the rich and the one the poor played for themselves) have coexisted, but none have really been very popular outside Andalusia, so this art remains largely a cliché for tourists eager to find a typical cultural expression when visiting Spain.

Flamenco's popularity has probably been always hampered by its Andalusian and gypsy origins. A sign pointing in that direction could be the huge success the Spanish singer Rosalía achieved in 2018 with a mixture of flamenco and urban pop. Her secret? Probably one of the reasons was the fact she was not a gypsy herself, which reminded vividly of how Elvis, long before her, became a rock legend partly for being a "white boy with a black voice".

Last, the fact the Spanish elites have usually managed to impose a vision of Spain relying both on the symbols of authority and heroism (palaces and monuments to start with) as well as on some authorized cultural phenomena such as bullfighting or flamenco raises a few doubts now about what being Spanish really means. In other words, in a context where

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<sup>33</sup> This is well explained in Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined Communities*.

<sup>34</sup> See the chapter *Being a Hidalgo*.



these symbols and cultural phenomena are not widely accepted any longer, what does it mean to be Spanish? Maybe the answers to that question could help explain why some people seem to be looking for a trace of a national identity in such things as gastronomy, a tendency to party, and the ever-present abundance of bars and restaurants.

### THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN LATIN AMERICA

When considering the independence process in Latin America, it is important to bear in mind that the local elites were the actual drive behind it. Independence was not the project of “a people”, but of a set of local establishments who challenged the power of the Spanish ruling class. As the different areas became independent, these establishments saw the need to create a non-Spanish national identity from scratch in order to consolidate their own power, so they had to resort to their only original material available: the rabble’s cultural phenomena. This is why the 19<sup>th</sup> century gave birth to different low-class music styles that eventually spread to the whole population. Some examples are merengue in the Dominican Republic, samba in Brazil, cumbia and vallenato in Colombia, or tango in Argentina.

Interesting enough, Argentina had a massive influx of male immigrants at the time, so tango was danced *between men* who mourned the lands and families they had left behind. In Brazil, slavery had been abolished in 1888, and the old slaves did not have to hide in order to practice capoeira any longer. Capoeira was a dance-like martial art that slaves had brought with them from the African area of current Angola. While Angolan capoeira focusses on the fighting technique, the Brazilian capoeira stressed the dance because slaves had to hide they were training in fighting techniques. This martial art is a good example because, in spite of being initially despised as “slave-like”, the president-turned-dictator Getúlio Vargas’ used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it to build a cross-class national symbol.

In Mexico, an old popular song genre called corrido became very popular during the national revolution in the 1910’s. The corridos use simple, repetitive rhythms that allow singers to easily improvise part of their lyrics. During the revolution, these songs were constantly used for propaganda, also in a positive sense. The best known corrido probably is *La cucaracha*, a satirical song that criticizes the dictator Victoriano Huerta calling him *cockroach*. Although there are many versions of this song, this is the most famous verse.

La cucaracha, la cucaracha  
ya no puede caminar  
porque no tiene, porque le falta  
marihuana que fumar.

The cockroach, the cockroach  
can’t walk any more  
because it doesn’t have, because it’s lacking  
marijuana to smoke

After that, a few other music styles have appeared. For instance, the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the birth of salsa in the Caribbean and reggaeton (*reguetón* in Spanish) in Panamá, while Latin trap (*trap latino* in Spanish) is a creation of this century. Nowadays three large corporations control nearly all the music we listen to<sup>35</sup>. These companies have made Spanish the most popular language of songs worldwide after English. Miami in the US is home to a powerful music industry that decides not only what artists should be publicized, but also what values. For instance, reggaeton always portraits women who are empowered exclusively through their sexuality while Latin trap spreads a set of outright male chauvinistic, materialistic behaviors.

### THE AMERICAS ENTER THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

A widely accepted assumption is that money was born millennia ago when people exchanging goods and services looked for a much simpler way to carry out their deals. This idea is completely wrong<sup>36</sup>. Money was born as a means of ensuring supplies for an army: If everybody was required to pay taxes in money and soldiers were given a salary, there would always be people willing to feed the armies and provide them with the necessary supplies in return for some coins. The imperial armies in turn were created in order loot neighboring territories while getting rid of the jobless, landless, and indebted workers who could threaten the social order. It follows from this, money was a tool for sending problems far away, and it can be added the current economic system works along the same lines.

In the empires of antiquity, money was also a way to store wealth as well as a tool for propaganda since the coins usually displayed the face of a king or some imperial symbol<sup>37</sup>. However, the role of money in the Middle Ages was very limited. Peasants exchanged good and services mostly on credit (They would often try settle their debts of gratitude on a yearly basis), and the nobles could take whatever they wanted from their servants without paying for it. It was 1497 when Spain created the peso in order to have its brand-new state army catered for. The peso became the first global currency, and today, eight countries still use that name for theirs<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> These companies are Universal, Sony and Warner I'm drawing here on Jon E. Illescas' books *La dictadura del videoclip. Industria musical y sueños prefabricados* and *Educación tóxica. El imperio de las pantallas y la música dominante en niños y adolescentes*.

<sup>36</sup> I emphatically recommend you read David Graeber's books if you want to know more about this topic. Namely *Debt: The First 5000 Years* and *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. Also, *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory* is highly recommended although not strictly related.

<sup>37</sup> Another interesting book to look at about this topic is *Propagandan historia*, written by Silja Pitkänen and Ville-Juhani Sutinen.

<sup>38</sup> The countries are Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, and the Philippines.

[https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peso\\_\(moneda\)#:~:text=La%20unidad%20de%20peso%20era,una%20libra%20de%20oro%20fino.](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peso_(moneda)#:~:text=La%20unidad%20de%20peso%20era,una%20libra%20de%20oro%20fino.)

Europe as a whole was shifting from feudalism to capitalism. The key concept under the new economic system was *capital*, which was the wealth whose main purpose was to reproduce itself. In other words, capital was NOT the land you lived in or the money you spent, but the land you *lived off* and the money you *invested*. Capitalism only worked if some people did not own any capital, because that way they could be forced to work for a meager salary. For this reason, the common lands were privatized in Europe before the industrialization. For this reason, Europe resorted to slavery in its colonies from the very beginning since the only alternative to that would have been to have all the Americas privatized in order to prevent people to fetch their own food from the nearest rainforest<sup>39</sup>.

The American colonies developed their economies around the needs of the ruling class in the mother country. Mexico could not grow wheat for instance, since the Spanish landowners did not want any competitors, but the farther the colony was the less tight the mother country's grip on its economy was. Buenos Aires, for instance was quite isolated until it was allowed to open its harbor to trade in 1778. That is why the Southern Cone could produce its own wine without bothering the mother country. Today, both Argentina and Chile are among the top global wine producers along with Spain, but other latino countries find serious difficulties to build a reputation in this sector.

As the center of global trade shifted from the Muslim-dominated Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean, a triangular trade route began to take shape<sup>40</sup>. The Europeans bought kidnapped people from the African trade posts in the Gulf of Guinea. Then these people were brought to the Americas and used as slaves along with the Indians to extract the continent's natural resources. Finally, these resources were carried to Europe to be transformed into manufactured goods (weapons, liqueurs, or different fabrics among others), and then the goods were carried back to the Gulf of Guinea where they could be traded for new slaves. This means the economic development of Europe relied either on the blood or the natural wealth of other continents.

As regards the Americas, many American colonies suffered the effects of *developmentalism*, an economic doctrine according to which a country devotes all its resources to the extraction of one single natural resource should it be silver, oil, sugar, or anything with a low aggregated value. This caused several problems such as the exclusion of large segments of the population that had no access to the land and had to run away either to the big cities or abroad. The birth of slums and many social problems related to poverty is closely connected to this process.

Another downside of developmentalism was that it creates a double dependence. A country devoting all its resources (natural, financial, human...) to the production of one single commodity is forced to import everything else, thus creating a dependence. And if that country's economy depends entirely on the price of that one commodity, it becomes even

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<sup>39</sup> The best approach to this topic is still in Marx's and Engel's *Das Kapital*. A few decades ago, this work was a compulsory read for the economics students in the former Helsinki School of Economics (nowadays a part of Aalto University).

<sup>40</sup> This comes from Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. This is probably the best book ever written to understand Latin America.

more dependent and vulnerable. Also, when a country imports all its value-added products and pays for them with a cheap commodity, the asymmetry causes that no amount of that commodity is ever enough to pay for the imports. The supply of cheap commodities has traditionally been the role of many “developing” nations where, just as in the antiquity, problems are exported through the use of a monetary system.

According to some estimations, there were about 70 million people when Columbus arrived at the Americas<sup>41</sup>. A century and a half after that, there was only about 5 % of them. The diseases, the wars and slavery had perpetrated the greatest genocide in history. The Americas entered thus the global trade not as partners, but as an “empty” land that existed only to provide the industrial countries with cheap commodities. It is so much so, that still today many Latin American countries face accusations of forced sterilization of the poor<sup>42</sup> even if the Continent is full of natural resources and has a much lower population density than Europe<sup>43</sup>. The best documented case is Perú, where about 200.000 indigenous women were sterilized against their will in the 90’s<sup>44</sup>.

When the Americas got their independence from Spain and Portugal, the new territories figured out their borders under the pressure of rich countries and large corporations (mainly British and American). These powers incited several separatist movements in order to create a set of tiny feeble countries they could control more easily, and new nations such as Uruguay and the Central American countries were born. Brazil was harder to split because most of the population lived in the southern coast, and other parts were too “empty” to have them turn against each other, but the foreign powers got to influence the big countries as well.

Maybe the best example of border formation was the Chaco war in 1932 – 1935. Officially it was a border dispute between Paraguay and Bolivia, but it also was a clash between Standard Oil and Shell. Each company financed one side to get hold of the region’s oil. When Standard Oil —I mean Paraguay— won, a cease-fire and, according to Eduardo Galeano, soldiers of both sides ran to hug each other in a place called Puesto Merino. It was not their war.

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<sup>41</sup> <https://www.telesurtv.net/news/El-descubrimiento-de-America-o-el-inicio-del-mayor-genocidio-de-la-historia-20161011-0049.html>. Also, David Graeber gives the same estimations in *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*.

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.esglobal.org/esterilizaciones-forzadas-una-practica-aberrante-aun-vigente/>

<sup>43</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/most-densely-populated-countries#:~:text=Globally%20the%20average%20population%20density,%2C%20Hong%20Kong%2C%20and%20Gibraltar.>

<sup>44</sup> This report by Amnesty International is definitely telling. <https://www.amnesty.org/es/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/amr460022014en.pdf>

## THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE

It is no coincidence the poorest countries on average in the Americas are those that once were affluent, commodity-rich colonies. The United States were founded on less profitable land and its soil was not fit for high-demand export crops such as coffee, sugar, tobacco, cocoa, or bananas. For this reason, the British empire used this land to get rid of their poorest subjects and did not invest that much in the administration of the 13 colonies. Something similar happened to the South Cone, where there were no precious metals nor an especially rich arable land. These colonies could develop more independently than other Latin American areas since not everything revolved around the export of one single product.

In the regions with no precious metal or natural resources, some land was allocated to poor farmers. These farmers acted as a buffer class between the rich landowners and the landless poor<sup>45</sup>, and gained enough purchasing power to boost the national demand. After the Homestead Act was passed in the US in 1862, people who had tilled the land in some low-quality areas of the wild west could claim ownership of 160 acres. Likewise, the “Conquest of the Desert” carried out in Argentina between 1870 and 1864 led to selling some vast Indian territories to the rich and distributing the remnants among some poor soldiers and middle-sized businessmen from Buenos Aires<sup>46</sup>.

However, in other parts of Latin America, both the profitability of the land and the closeness to the mother country (Spain or Portugal mainly) led to a tighter control on land ownership<sup>47</sup>. This did not allow for a land-owning middle class to be born. This was not only a drag on the economic development of the whole region, but an injustice that caused some dramatic income inequalities and, in the long run, the emergence of many revolutionary guerrillas. A telling example of this are the US themselves: the warm south was more suited for growing corn and cotton, and this made big landowners earn a lot of money while real industrial and economic development took place in the north of the country.

Usually, the appearance of a middle class with purchasing power could have destabilized the trade balance through an import increase in the colonies, but this did not happen in the U.S. because they protected their industry. In 1789, George Washington approved the Tariff Act<sup>48</sup> as first president of the nation. This was the second law ever to be signed by a U.S. president, and it proves the importance of the issue.

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<sup>45</sup> I'm drawing here on Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, a highly recommendable essay on the origins of the US wealth and its political evolution.

<sup>46</sup> [https://books.google.fi/books?id=b-DBTAYRYOMC&pg=PA47&lpg=PA47&dq=%22Apropiaci%3%B3n+de+la+tierra+a+los+abor%3%ADgenes+y+gencidios+en+el+R%3%ADo+de+la+Plata%22,+Fernando+Del+Corro%27&source=bl&ots=HBie3b2QS7&sig=ACfU3U16I\\_wMITP9VfIGVehTRXaxMr5yAg&hl=es&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj-p57Y5Mv8AhUuiYsKHUOHAHYQ6AF6BAGIEAM#v=onepage&q=%22Apropiaci%3%B3n%20de%20la%20tierra%20a%20los%20abor%3%ADgenes%20y%20genocidios%20en%20el%20R%3%ADo%20de%20la%20Plata%22%2C%20Fernando%20Del%20Corro'&f=false](https://books.google.fi/books?id=b-DBTAYRYOMC&pg=PA47&lpg=PA47&dq=%22Apropiaci%3%B3n+de+la+tierra+a+los+abor%3%ADgenes+y+gencidios+en+el+R%3%ADo+de+la+Plata%22,+Fernando+Del+Corro%27&source=bl&ots=HBie3b2QS7&sig=ACfU3U16I_wMITP9VfIGVehTRXaxMr5yAg&hl=es&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj-p57Y5Mv8AhUuiYsKHUOHAHYQ6AF6BAGIEAM#v=onepage&q=%22Apropiaci%3%B3n%20de%20la%20tierra%20a%20los%20abor%3%ADgenes%20y%20genocidios%20en%20el%20R%3%ADo%20de%20la%20Plata%22%2C%20Fernando%20Del%20Corro'&f=false)

<sup>47</sup> Note Uruguay or Argentina were *de facto* farther away from Spain than, say, Peru or Bolivia. This is because prior to the opening of the Buenos Aires harbor in 1778, all the South Cone goods had to go through Peru, Panama and Cuba before reaching Spain.

<sup>48</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protectionism\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protectionism_in_the_United_States)

In Latin America, foreign banks and powers managed to use both sovereign debt and diplomatic pressure to force the whole region to keep their borders open to imports, so it could hardly design a customs policy of their own. This policy caused some trade deficits but found a very receptive establishment in Latin America. There was a farming oligarchy that profited from exports under a free trade agreement and also a port city oligarchy that profited from trade itself<sup>49</sup>. Both got richer at the cost of killing the industrial development of their nations, and big port cities such as Buenos Aires, Montevideo, or Sao Paulo (Puerto de Santos) grew at the expense of their respective countryside areas.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, foreign investment turned some big cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Santiago de Chile, Bogotá, or Mexico City into large industrial hubs, but Latin America as a whole was short on an industry of its own. The birth of this industry was continuously hampered both by the foreign powers and the national establishments, and the region was left with not only an economy dependent on low-paying jobs, but also huge income differences and a fierce rivalry between the big port cities or the industrial hubs on the one hand and the countryside on the other.

In a nutshell, the US managed to develop thanks both to the emergence of a land-owning middle class with some purchasing power and a protectionist policy that gave some room to the development of a national industry. When that industry was strong enough, the US started forcing free trade agreements on other countries by means of what was called *gunboat diplomacy*. On the other extreme though, Latin America only saw the emergence of a tiny middle class in the South Cone and could not protect their own industry in any case, making the whole region a big provider of raw materials with no added value<sup>50</sup>. Over the years, many attempts have been made to change this in the Latin American countries to be sure, but the pressure of foreign powers to prevent change has been at least as fierce<sup>51</sup>.

## THE CURSE OF SILVER IN SPAIN

Weird as it sounds, the influx of precious materials had a catastrophic effect on the Spanish economy. Already during his first trip, Christopher Columbus found the Indians on Hispaniola island wore golden earrings, so the Spaniards started looking for any precious metals they could find, and they found mostly silver over the years. In Spain, money is called *dinero*, which comes from the Latin word *denarius* (Also the South-Mediterranean *dinar* comes from it), but in Latin America the most common word for it is *plata*, which means silver.

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<sup>49</sup> Read Eduardo Galeano for this.

<sup>50</sup> See the previous chapter “The Americas Enter the Global Economy” to have a clear picture of the kind problems this generates.

<sup>51</sup> Meaning putsches, dictatorships, social engineering, propaganda war, lawfare, intimidation and blackmail techniques used both by the rich countries and the big banks as well as by some supranational organizations such as the IMF or the World Bank.

Coincidentally, China started basing its monetary system on silver<sup>52</sup>, so the global demand of silver increased dramatically.

This only meant huge gains for a selected few. The rest of the population only saw a long hyperinflation cycle called *the Spanish price revolution* that crushed both the salaries and the empire's manufacturing capacity. Everything was extremely expensive both in Spain and in the Americas, but imports were enough to solve the problems of those with access to silver. Even if in the section *The Americas Enter the Global Economy* it was claimed that the European economic developed at the expense of other continents, this was not true for Spain. The unhinged food prices led to general starvation and forced the poor to either join the imperial army if men or to engage in prostitution if women<sup>53</sup>.

Another factor of underdevelopment was the arrival of the Habsburgs, a new ruling dynasty, to Spain at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The first "Spanish" Habsburg was Charles V, who had inherited large portions of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands or Switzerland as well. Such vast territories meant many enemies, so he was often at war with both other European countries and the Ottoman empire. Being a foreigner who arrived at Spain at the age of 19 with no previous notion of the Spanish language and a taste for high taxation, the Castilians met him with great hostility and rebelled. This is important because, by crushing this rebellion, the king won the power to make Castille go as much into debt as he wanted.

Regarding debt, it should be noted the Catholic Church did not allow any Christian to lend money with an interest. The reason was the Church was a great donee of real estate and did not want risk losing any future donations to creditors if people started mortgaging their lands. That is why the wealthy Christians usually lent their money through a Jewish family. In 1492 the Jews were expelled from Spain and had their properties confiscated. The motivation was mainly economic, as proven by the fact that Muslims, who were much poorer on average, were not expelled until 1609-1613. As a result, Spain had to resort to foreign lenders<sup>54</sup> in order to get its financing and had no power over its own debt.

But back to the Habsburgs, even if they raised taxes (unjust taxes based on the import and consumption of basic necessities, not income) everywhere across their empire, they only got authorization to go into limitless debt in post-rebellion Castille. This was particularly harmful since the financing of state debt was a much more profitable business than the financing of productive investment. As a result, the more the Habsburgs went into debt the more they drained money form the productive economy, causing the already inflation-ridden businesses to go into bankruptcy. It was a perfect storm of hyperinflation, skyrocketing taxation, and finance-guzzling sovereign debt that lasted for centuries.

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<sup>52</sup> This happened because the Ming dynasty's stifling taxation led the desperate poor to dig for silver, and silver started being increasingly used as currency. See David Graeber's *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* for more.

<sup>53</sup> According to Eduardo Galeano, Seville had 16.000 weaving looms when Filip II became king and only 400 when he died. By the year 1700, Spain's population was half what it had been a bit over two centuries back.

<sup>54</sup> Mostly Italian, Dutch, and Hanseatic at the time.

Spain did plunder the American<sup>55</sup> natural resources, but only a small minority profited from it. On the whole, the American silver brought nothing but serious economic turmoil to Spain, as proven by the fact the state went bankrupt seven times between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>56</sup> (and seven times more, though only partially, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century). This never-ending economic crisis hit Castille the hardest, because the old kingdom of Aragon had not rebelled against the king and was exempted from limitless debt and some taxes. Southern Castille (current Andalusia) was particularly hard-hit since the American silver came directly to Seville and that was the area with the highest inflation.

The arrival of the American silver is the turning point of the historical stagnation of Southern Spain. On the other hand, the Catalanian coastland in the old Kingdom of Aragon was relatively safe from the Habsburgs hyperinflation and overtaxation, and therefore could take off even before the Barcelona harbor was open to the American trade in 1778. The Castilian soldiers had made a vast empire and had then forced their colonies to buy the products shipped from Barcelona. Meanwhile, Andalusia started a low decline. Although the topic obviously is more complex, the fact remains that present day's Seville is a showcase example of inequality: the old city is extremely beautiful and vibrant, but the outskirts have 11 of the 15 poorest neighborhoods in Spain<sup>57</sup>.

## **ETHNICITY AND LANGUAGES**

History can explain a lot of the current ethnic composition in Latin America. American Indians are a large portion of society in all the areas where the Mayans, the Aztecs and the Incas lived, particularly in Guatemala, Ecuador, Perú, and above all Bolivia. The Indigenous people in these areas speak a wide variety of languages (420 different indigenous languages in Latin America according to UNICEF<sup>58</sup>), but sometimes this is hard to estimate since some people might feel embarrassed to acknowledge what their mother tongue actually is.

It is commonly believed the Spaniards imposed their language on the Indians, but this is not true. The Spaniards had no interest in having the Indians learn a language they could use to make their demands. Hence, the conquerors imposed slavery and Christianity, but not their language. The Catholic Church was in turn very happy to learn the most important Indian languages since it allowed the priests to be the unavoidable interpreter and articulator in every aspect of people's lives. After the American colonies became independent, the new oligarchic governments forced everybody to learn Spanish, because the local elites wanted their backward Indian folk to adapt to "modernity".

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<sup>55</sup> I use the word "American" as referring to the Americas. From a Spanish-speaking point of view, the fact that one country could be entitled to monopolize the use of this adjective is hardly arguable.

<sup>56</sup> [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quiebras\\_de\\_la\\_Monarqu%C3%ADa\\_Hisp%C3%A1nica](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quiebras_de_la_Monarqu%C3%ADa_Hisp%C3%A1nica)

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.publico.es/politica/andalucia-11-15-barrios-pobres-espana.html>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.unicef.es/prensa/unicef-presenta-el-atlas-sociolinguiistico-de-pueblos-indigenas-en-america-latina#:~:text=En%20Am%C3%A9rica%20Latina%20hay%20522,en%20dos%20o%20m%C3%A1s%20pa%C3%A>  
[Dses.](https://www.unicef.es/prensa/unicef-presenta-el-atlas-sociolinguiistico-de-pueblos-indigenas-en-america-latina#:~:text=En%20Am%C3%A9rica%20Latina%20hay%20522,en%20dos%20o%20m%C3%A1s%20pa%C3%A)



In Argentina, the local post-independence government fostered the conquest of the Southern lands between 1878 and 1885. It was called the “Conquest of the Desert”, but these lands were actually inhabited, and thousands of Indians were, killed, enslaved, or imprisoned<sup>59</sup>. Also, similar processes took place in Chile and Uruguay. Since the new lands drew lots of European immigrants (especially from Sicily), white Europeans form a majority in the Southern Cone. This is interesting if we compare it with the case of the Philippines. Although the archipelago belonged to Spain between 1565 and 1898, the local oligarchy did not need the Spanish language after the conquerors left, so they kept their own.

During the empire, the most profitable farmlands were in Northern Brazil and the Caribbean region. These were the areas where kidnapped Africans were taken to make up for the decreasing Indian population, while the Indians were in turn being dragged to the dreadful silver mines in Peru and Southern Mexico. Nowadays it is only logical African Americans are a majority in Northern Brazil (the poorest half of the country) and a large minority in the Caribbean countries.

On the whole, Latin America is an obvious melting pot where many people cannot be that easily placed in the racial continuum. Mexico is a good example of that since over half of the population are considered mestizos<sup>60</sup>. However, it is interesting to note that maybe the Latin American people we might run into in Europe are not that representative of that Latin American continuum. On average, people who travel abroad are above average in wealth, educational level, “skin lightness”, and conservatism. This is why if you ask Latinos living in Europe about, say, Nicolás Maduro, they will probably say he is a dictator. However, if you ask poorer people living Latin America the same, the answer might be quite different.

## THE AZTECS AND MAYANS

The Aztec and Mayan civilizations flourished in the current areas of South Mexico and the northern half of Central America. Both were, to name a few things, skillful pyramid-builders, sculptors, and artisans, and both had their own writing system. However, while Mayans were in decay probably due to exhaustion of soil fertility<sup>61</sup>, the Aztecs were a thriving, cruel empire that offered human sacrifices to a sun god.

According to their own legends, the Aztecs founded their main city Mexico-Tenochtitlan around the year 1325 following the instructions given by the sun god of war Huitzilopochtli. The instructions were to build a city on a little island in a lake. They would recognize the island, because they would see an eagle eating a snake on top of a prickly pear (a local cactus). The current Mexico City is located on the place that lake apparently was, although it

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<sup>59</sup> [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conquista\\_del\\_Desierto](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conquista_del_Desierto)

<sup>60</sup> <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/581497/porcentaje-de-poblacion-perteneiente-a-los-diferentes-grupos-etnicos-mexico/>

<sup>61</sup> Jared Diamond studied this both in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. and in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*.

has completely dried out, and also the Mexican flag portrays an eagle eating a snake on a cactus as a reminder of this legend.

A group of 600 Spaniards managed to conquer the Aztecs due to many factors. Some factors have to do with the material advantages the Aztecs did not enjoy, namely horses, iron, and powder. Horses had become extinct in the Americas thousands of years before the invasion, so there was no need to invent the wheel, and this in turn limited the expansion of existing empires since goods could not be easily carried in large amounts. Also, the lack of iron made their weaponry weaker and, adding to the lack of horses, prevented them from inventing the plough as well. Without the plough, the Aztecs got smaller harvests, and this limited their imperialistic agenda by hindering the concentration process of wealth and power<sup>62</sup>.

However, there were other non-tangible yet crucially important factors. The first was the spreading of some European diseases, particularly smallpox, that killed millions of Indians. The second was the fact the Aztec misunderstood the arrival of the Spanish troops with that of a vengeful god, and they were consequently very submissive. The third was that the Spaniards managed to make an alliance with people who resented the Aztecs. They did this with the aid of two interpreters: one was a Spanish monk who had been captive with the Mayans for 8 years and the other a Mayan girl, Malinche, who could also speak the Aztec's Nahuatl in addition to her mother tongue.

Malinche had already been a slave under the Aztecs and was given to the Spaniards after a battle. It turned out the Spanish head of the expedition Hernán Cortés married her, and she gave birth to one of the first mestizos in history. She has then become the symbolic mother of Mexico, but also a symbol of betrayal.

### **THE VICEROYALTY OF NEW SPAIN: RACISM AND SEXISM**

The conquistador of Tenochtitlan Hernán Cortés, called the new land "New Spain". This name extended to all the conquered American land until 1542, when roughly everything south of Costa Rica (except for the Venezuelan coastland) was made the Viceroyalty of Peru. The conquistadores saw all this land as a way to escape their own servitude by enslaving others, so their initial patronizing attitude towards the Indians<sup>63</sup> turned into outright contempt as soon as they found some resistance to their enslavement plans. According to the Catholic moral, suffering was the best way to purify the soul, and the Indians were lazy sinners in need of the white man's discipline.

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<sup>62</sup> The theory of *plough vs. hoe* comes from the Danish economist Ester Boserup. You can find a detailed explanation in the following study: <https://cep.lse.ac.uk/seminarpapers/07-12-12-NN.pdf>. Also, this theory adds up to a wealth of interesting considerations about the gender roles in society in Caroline Criado Pérez's *The Invisible Woman*.

<sup>63</sup> In their first few letters to the Spanish monarchs, Christopher Columbus repeatedly projects an air of superiority towards the Indians based on the fact they were no Christians, they were always naked, and they had some weird habits such as that of eating some "disgusting things".

While the conquistadores were interested in the precious metals, the Church was much more interested in extending its own influence. Because the Church needed to admit Indians in fact “had a soul” in order to have them baptized, the religious authorities have the king approve a law theoretically protecting Indians, but did the emerging global economic system have a soul? The Church and the market economy were theoretical enemies<sup>64</sup>, but it was only after the rise of Protestantism, that a new reformist religious order called “the Jesuits” managed to form self-sufficient Indians communities where the locals were treated as human beings and were also given an education despite the interest of big landowners. Unfortunately for this Indians, the Jesuits were banned from the empire in 1767, and they never were the same when they finally got back.

Given the contempt towards the Indians has been more or less of a constant in the American societies since then, it is now surprise horses became a symbol of status. The fact initially all horses had to be imported caused that only wealthy Spaniards, or occasionally elite mestizos, could afford them. Predictably, the horse owners —particularly mestizos— tried to mark their status with their showy rider clothing, and our stereotypical picture of Mexicans with traditional clothes and large sombreros come from that fact. Soon a cowboy-like culture under the name of *charro* developed in New Spain. The charros made some horse-riding stunt performances and drew large crowds to their competitions.

Also, mariachi music was born at this time, and men with charro-like clothing entertained the public. The fact the Texas cowboys’ clothes were not so showy might be due to the fact settlers did not mix with the Indians and thus had no need to differentiate themselves through clothing. As the Spanish empire extended, the South Cone developed its own rider culture under the name of *gaucho* during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Horses were not such a privilege by then, so many gauchos got to flee low-paying ranch jobs to live in the wild with their horses. In time they would become a national symbol of individualistic freedom in Argentina, but they dressed like vagabonds as theirs was not a quest for status.

Interestingly, both Mexico and Argentina managed to develop its own folkloric outfits while Andean Indians were forced to dress like Spanish peasant by order of the king Charles III in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The colorful Indian clothes, say, Peruvian Indians display today actually imitate the traditional dresses several southern Spanish regions use in their folklore nowadays.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, New Spain managed to avoid the formal enslavement of Indians resorting to *encomienda*, a system in which slaves were “paid” with food, clothing, and regular lectures on Christianity. Indians could not refuse this deal even if they were much better off looking for their own food or felt uncomfortable in European clothes, so different blended Christianity emerged in the Caribbean adding element of the local religions. Following the ideal of purification through suffering, the Church was not supposed to

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<sup>64</sup> It is said in the Bible Jesus expelled the merchants from the temple, and also that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. However, the Catholic Church has historically transitioned from hostility to capital in the Middle Ages (hence their war on usury and Jewish moneylenders) to cooperation in both Modern Eras and full submission after the appointment of Pope John Paul II in 1978.

question why there was poverty or enslavement as the much resented Jesuits or as the friar Bartolomé de las Casas<sup>65</sup> did, but rather to provide relief to the needy, *so they could better endure their exploitation*.

In their pursuit of evangelization tools, the Catholic Church of New Spain invented the piñata, taking some ideas from an old Chinese tradition that had traveled first with the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>-century sailor Marco Polo to Italy and then to Spain. Some signs suggest there might have been a related Aztec tradition the Catholic Church wanted to erase, but whatever the case piñata only took its final form when some friars started using it to teach Christianity to the Indians. They used a clay vessel filled with candy and beautifully decorated to symbolize the devil. That is why a traditional piñata had seven pointed tips, after the seven deadly sins, and people had to break it with a stick in order to get the prize.

Nevertheless, the idea of piñata went beyond suggesting that people's covered eyes symbolized blind faith, the stick symbolized god's might, or the candy symbolized salvation. The devil piñata was portrayed as a cunning moving object with seductive skills. It was beautifully decorated because delicate, attractive things were considered sinful, and life was supposed to be a journey of suffering, submission, and self-denial. In this light, softness, persuasion skills, and everything traditionally attributed to women—even women themselves— were considered to be very dangerous, and men learned to “protect themselves” from this through violence.

Despite some initiatives, the overall influence of the Catholic Church eventually led not only to perpetuate different forms of enslavement (even today), but also to wage a war as much against women as against femininity as a whole. Today, piñatas take multiple non-religious shapes and are widely used in children's parties (particularly in birthday parties) in the Spanish-speaking countries and beyond. However, it is interesting to note a difference. While in Finland a pre-determined assortment of candy is packed into individual bags in order to ensure everybody has exactly the same, Latinos just throw all the candy in and just have the children compete for it when the piñata breaks. When the lucky collectors share part of their spoils with the less fortunate, Christian charity<sup>66</sup> is practiced.

## THE INCA EMPIRE

The lack of horses, wheels, or wagons limited the geographical spread of every civilization in the Americas except for the Incas. This empire stretched across the Andes mountains covering an area of about 2,5 million square kilometers. They managed to do this through both a comprehensive pathway network and a clever relay system in which a chain of

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<sup>65</sup> This friar and bishop published *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* in 1552 a renowned detailed description on the Spanish atrocities in the Americas.

<sup>66</sup> Remember *charity* is practiced from top to bottom while *solidarity* is practiced among equals. The Catholic Church has always defended the former and has a long history of policies devised to keep the poor both subdued and dependent as a means to ensure its own indispensability. This is very well explained in Ángel Munárriz's *Iglesia S.A.: Dinero y poder de la multinacional vaticana en España*.

messengers covered different segments of every route and had a number of designated shelters where they could rest and find some food. No evidence has been found the Incas had a written language, but they used bundles of colored ropes with knots called *quipu* for accounting and at least they were able to carry information within their borders.

The Inca Empire relied on a sort of “group feudalism”, where every *ayllu* (extended family), but not subjects individually, had the obligation of paying tribute to the emperor. Since they used no money, payments were made in worktime and were organized at the *ayllu* level. The everyday tasks within an *ayllu* were called *ayni*, and people were motivated to do it either by prestige or by the will to help their family. Larger projects such as pathway making, or house building required the cooperation of several *ayllus* though. This was called *minka*, and it has produced a strong cooperative culture among the Andean Indians much in the fashion of the Finnish *talkoot*. This cooperative work is currently called *minga* in Andean Spanish, but you should not use this word in Spain since it means “weenie” there.

The Spaniards, though, were much more interested in the *mita*, the system under which every *ayllu* was obliged to send their adult males to work for the Inca a number of days a year. The conquistadores were lucky to find the Incas at the same time a civil war was being waged in it, so they managed to conquer the capital Cusco in 1533. As it happened to other words in the *Quichua* language, there has been some spelling-related fluctuations regarding s, c, and z. Nowadays the official name of Peru’s capital is Cusco, although many countries—especially Spain—hold on to the traditional spelling Cuzco. You might find similar fluctuations in words such as ceviche/seviche (the delicious Peruvian lime-marinated fish) or Nazca/Nasca (home to a famous set of geoglyphs).

Anyway, the Incas were skilled goldsmith and weavers, although not many examples of their art have made it to this day<sup>67</sup>. They were also pragmatic farmers who made stairway-shaped patches of land on the mountain hills in order to grow each vegetable at the appropriate temperature (the higher the colder), and they showed potatoes to the colonists, changing the basis of the different Western diets. However, the original Quichua word for this tuber, which is *papa*, was only adopted by the Latin-American Spanish. The Spaniards had previously learned about *batata*, which is Spanish for yam or sweet potato, in the Caribbean, so when they discovered potatoes they mixed them both<sup>68</sup>. That is why this tuber is *patata* in Spain’s Spanish and *potato* in English.

The Spanish authorities enlarged the *mita* tribute considerably, making all Indian adult males to work intensively in the silver mines for ten months in a row roughly every six years. After the silver mine of Potosí was discovered in 1545, the *mita* replaced the *encomienda*<sup>69</sup>. The *encomienda* had made possible to duck the ban on slavery by offering the Indians a compulsory deal of food, clothes, and Christianization in exchange of labor. Now the *mita*

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<sup>67</sup> Obviously all the gold and silver were molten and shipped to Spain.

<sup>68</sup> No wonder why the Spaniards had trouble telling the difference between similar roots if we think that about 7.000 varieties of potato have been documented to this day.  
[https://elpais.com/elpais/2020/01/16/buenavida/1579199833\\_108344.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2020/01/16/buenavida/1579199833_108344.html)

<sup>69</sup> See the previous chapter about the Viceroyalty of New Spain for more information about the *encomienda* system.

was a similar arrangement that took advantage of a pre-existing social organization in order to extract the local mineral resources.

Potosí killed around eight million Indians in three centuries<sup>70</sup>. They died either in work-related accidents, diseases, and poisoning<sup>71</sup> or afflicted by starvation and cold, but the Spaniards learnt that sucking coca leaves made people more resistant to hunger and fatigue, so the former limitations imposed by the Inca ruling class were lifted, and the leaves started being widely distributed. Today, the habit of *acullicar* (chewing coca leaves) is very popular in the Andes —particularly among the Indians— and it is very useful against *soroche* (the altitude sickness). It is not a drug, but the US war on drugs has sometimes led to an attempt to eradicate the plant cocaine is based on with considerable environmental damage.

Current Peru has a wide ranging gastronomy based on the Inca tradition as well as on the fact the country has three completely different ecosystems: the coastland, the mountains, and the rainforest. The country still has some important archeological remains such as the old city of Machu Picchu or many buildings with tightly stacked stones that are believed to imitate corn on a cob. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a US explorer named Hiram Bingham popularized Machu Picchu and brought home some 50.000 objects he found there for “temporary” examination. However, Peru only got this objects back in 2018, making Machu Picchu a good example of the pillaging of works of art perpetrated by some rich countries.

The Nazca lines also deserve a separate mention. These are group of big geoglyphs that are best seen from the air. They imitate several animals and strange figures, but we do not know much about them since they were made roughly a thousand years before the Spanish conquest by an already extinct civilization. They have been preserved remarkably well because of the area’s dryness.

## BEING A HIDALGO

The rise of the Spanish empire only caused economic crisis, depopulation, and authoritarianism in Spain. Amidst this general decline, the *hidalgos*, which were the lowest level of the Spanish nobility, were particularly terrified to become a part of the rabble. They were somehow similar to the Finnish *talonpoika*, but they had a fear-boosted fanatical contempt towards those below them. Since they were very proud people, the idiom *Herra ja hidalgo* is still used in Finnish when someone acts like a lord, but they were no lords. *Hidalgos* actually feared very much being overtaken by others, so they were relatively active in reporting their economically successful Jewish and bourgeois neighbors to the Spanish inquisition.

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<sup>70</sup> *The Open Veins of Latin America.*

<sup>71</sup> For instance, the use of mercury in the amalgamation of silver was extremely toxic.

The word *hidalgo* meant *hijo de algo* (somebody's child). This meant they were supposed to come from an old Christian family —meaning a family without any Muslim or Jewish parents or grandparents— and own some land. These people developed a set of behavioral traits in order to mark their theoretical distinctiveness from the rabble. They carefully cultivated their own reputation with a display of pride, courage, and respectability. They especially avoided to be seen as needy and expressed a fanatical contempt for the weak, the landless, and the non-Christian. This had its effect for instance in the battlefields since the soldiers were too embarrassed to leave before everybody's eyes.

Today people do not behave like the old *hidalgos*, but bullfighters might be considered as fossilized *hidalgos* instead since they are supposed to show contempt for death and are expected to receive the public's cheering with dignity and dispassion, as if they never needed it anyway. Nowadays most people deem the bullfighter's style ridiculous, and maybe that is one of the reasons, along with a growing concern for animal well-being, why bullfighting has lost so much popularity in the last few years. However, we can still see some remnants of the old *hidalgo* attitude in other situations we might encounter every day.

For instance, Spanish-speaking people say "thanks" instead of "please" when offered something. Saying "Yes, please" to a cookie would show too much need. In addition, Spanish speakers have a low threshold for asking for favors, but they often try not to sound in desperate need. Therefore, if we say no, they will most likely try to make clear there is no problem, and that they will most certainly find another way to solve it. And regarding the phone calls, you do not answer the phone by saying your own name because you do not introduce yourself when you are not asking for anything. Instead, if you do not know who is calling, you should want to say *hello* (*diga* in Spain, *bueno* in Mexico, and *aló* elsewhere), and let them who need something state their business.

## **CORRUPTION**

Most Spanish-speaking countries are known to be highly corrupt by the European standards. However, the topic is too complex to give a straight answer to the question of how much of a problem the level of corruption is. First, we could differentiate between three different types of corruption.

### **1. At the State Level**

Generally speaking, the less democratic a country the more corrupt it is. Democracy is preserved through the separation of powers and transparency while dictatorships usually rely on corruption and opacity (propaganda is used to mask that opacity) to secure the loyalty of people without the constant resort to violence.

Considering that virtually all the Spanish-speaking countries have suffered at least a dictatorship or putsch in the last hundred years, it is no surprise some of the state structures

are very corrupt in many cases. For instance, the Spanish people has never been given the choice between a monarchy and a republic after the dictator Francisco Franco's death, and that has led the state to be an accomplice in arms trafficking and multi-million tax avoidance schemes in the last few years.

Also, some Latin American countries such as Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, or Brazil have approved a number of different harsh laws against corruption, but in places where judges themselves are corrupt such laws only make it easier for the powerful people to harass political rivals with some made-up charges. This has nothing to do with the culture, but a good deal to do with level of democratization a country has been able to attain.

## **2. At the Community Level**

In the Catholic cultures people are supposed to help their own family and close friends. This might often mean securing a job to your children and some of your nephews if you are in a managing position or allowing someone to skip the line in some overcrowded public services such as the healthcare system. This kind of corruption does have to do with the culture, but it usually is only visible in small places where personal favors have a more important role in getting by.

## **3. At the Everyday Life**

In some places you might have to discreetly offer some money to a policeman or a civil servant in order to work things out. For instance, Mexico is well known for the role of *mordidas* just as much as Argentina is for its *coimas*, both being local Spanish words for *soborno* or bribe. However, although this habit is well alive in many Latin American countries, it does definitely not apply to Spain. The reason is the *hidalgo* culture<sup>72</sup> make most people too proud to sell their dignity for a little money. Perhaps many would be willing to accept big cash but trying to get out of a mere traffic ticket with a mere bribe might get you into real trouble with an offended policeman. It is not about honesty but about pride.

## **REFORMATION AND THE RISE OF CAPITALISM**

At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the German priest Martin Luther led to a rebellion against the corruption of the Catholic Church and some of its dogmas. Many areas in Europe had already shown some signs of discontent over the sale of indulgencies that were being used to finance the building of the grandiose St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, and the rising European bourgeoisie saw Luther's teachings as an opportunity to escape the Catholic Church's grip over business.

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<sup>72</sup> See the previous chapter about "Being a Hidalgo".



Depriving the Catholic Church of the role of sole authorized clarifier on the word of God required people to learn reading, so they could read the Bible under the guidance of the Lutheran priests. The weakened role of the Church was in turn compensated by the strengthening of God's might, so in Lutheranism people's salvation did not depend as much on their own deeds or on the absolution administered by the Church's, as on God's unobjectionable will. Repentance was not that important in Protestantism, and people could only hope to timidly further a bit God's benevolence by their hard work of to have their success in life be a proof of God's already decided support<sup>73</sup>.

The new doctrines (Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism...) were very helpful to boost the development of capitalism in Europe, as they promoted the lending activity<sup>74</sup>, hard work, and individualism. The common lands were being privatized in the Protestant countries as the feeding of a growing population offered great business opportunities, so people could no longer resort to the forest for food, clothing, and wood<sup>75</sup>. Suddenly people were forced to earn a salary in order to buy all those things, and they crowded the cities in search of a job. The rising manufacturing sector got all the cheap labor it could ever dream of while the regular folk had to adapt to workdays of 16 hours.

In the modern world of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, most people lived worse than in the Middle Ages (exceptions being made for some war periods as well as the bubonic plague that took place in the 14<sup>th</sup> century) and definitely worse than the Indians in the pre-Columbian Americas. People barely made the money to survive, lived in unsanitary slums, and suffered frequent work accidents. The overcrowding of rooms led to a general increase in the birth rates, and many women were led to even lower paying jobs or directly to prostitution.

Many men did not want to face women's and children's competition in the labor market since they made the same work for even less money. Likewise, both wage-earning men and elder people needed to be taken care of in the absence of a health care system or a policy of old-age or invalidity pensions, and women did all this for free. The rich people were for their part happy to support the idea that women should stay home, as this drew attention away from them, so the ideal of self-sacrificing, secluded woman was created. Women lost their monopoly on the assistance during childbirth, and wandering female healers who knew the secrets of contraception started looking suspicious as the Church spread the rumor they were arranging some meetings with the devil.

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<sup>73</sup> I am especially drawing here on Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*. Lutherans believed the good deeds and hard work could maybe make it a bit easier for God to decide saving someone, while Calvinists did not believe any human influence on God was possible at all, and that people could only hope to have their success in earthly life show how God had already decided to favor them.

<sup>74</sup> Luther himself was against lending, but this was quickly overcome by the bourgeoisie's influence on the new ideas. The Catholic authorities were very much against usury, since they coveted the same real estate properties moneylenders were holding as loan security, so the bourgeoisie had every reason to support a religious revolution that would benefit them.

<sup>75</sup> In the case of Great Britain, this process is particularly well described in Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*, volume 1.

A witch-hunt unleashed in central Europe from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>76</sup>. Many people believe “witches” were burnt in the Middle Ages, but this historical phenomenon actually took place afterwards during the rise of capitalism and particularly in the places where the new economic system was more developed<sup>77</sup>. Although not all the witches were women, maybe 80 % of them were<sup>78</sup>. The Witch-hunt targeted poor people as a whole, focusing a good deal on women, and particularly unmarried women who could taught the others the techniques of birth control. The new economic system needed a constant and unrestricted supply of cheap labor, and women were essential in the reproduction of that work force.

The Protestant societies thus modernized on the shoulders of women, children, poor people, and also the Indigenous peoples of other continents. Men were given a privileged status to be sure, but they also became *equally responsible under God* without the all-pervasive supervision of a religious authority. And while this had a positive impact on the average reading skills of the population, it also caused that, if everybody was its own judge, the cumulative social pressure of a large crowd of “judges” was a lot heavier than that of a single distant authority<sup>79</sup>. People became very aware about public opinion and focused more on the belief that a success in earthly life was a sign of God’s future favorable judgement in the afterlife.

The Spanish hidalgo culture had thus made weakness or need shameful, but the fact that the moral issues were decided by an external authority (the Church or the ruling class) made the Spanish-speaking people less concerned with their neighbor’s opinions. After all, although everybody was required to behave proudly, showing too much concern for other people’s opinion could also be interpreted as a sign of weakness! The Protestants in turn felt more strongly the judging opinion of their neighbors, and it became for them very important to behave properly, be hard-working, and not seeming stupid. Many Finns feel that being shy is part of their nature. However, maybe we should rather speak of being aware of your reputation in an environment where everyone’s opinion counts.

The Protestant societies evolved to be individualistic then, and along with the above mentioned awareness of the public opinion, the emphasis on individual responsibility also led to a remarkable degree of trust among the individuals. Nowadays people in the Nordic countries easily trust each other as long as everybody shares the same cultural background. This allows for a relaxed interaction between the individuals, but such interaction comes with an increased responsibility to behave “properly”. For instance, it seems cursing is more natural in hierarchical societies (e. g. the Catholic countries or the U.S.A.) provided the

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<sup>76</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witch-hunt>

<sup>77</sup> This is superbly explained in Silvia Federici’s *Caliban and the Witch*.

<sup>78</sup> This figure comes from a study carried out by Julian Goodare a few years ago, although he acknowledges the numbers might vary greatly from one country to another. Goodare published his conclusions in a book called *The European Witch Hunt* in 2016.

[https://books.google.fi/books?id=eM4mDAAAQBAJ&pg=PA268&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.fi/books?id=eM4mDAAAQBAJ&pg=PA268&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>79</sup> I got this from Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s *The Spiral of Silence*. The author namely mentions how Tocqueville was impressed by the strict morality of North American Protestants during his trip in the U.S. In a land where everyone was the supreme ruler in their own private property (That property was not still as concentrated as it is today), you neighbor’s opinion was as good as that of any authority. And when you pile up a large amount of these neighboring opinions, you are bound to be under an enormous pressure.

interaction takes place among equals, but in Finland, cursing would be considered inappropriate in more situations and with a stricter threshold.

## THE COUNTER-REFORMATION

Predictably, the Catholic authorities reacted to the Reformation, on the one hand, by strengthening their control over the Southern European societies, and, on the other, by trying to correct some of the Church's worst flaws. The control refers to such facts as standardizing the masses and making them compulsory, approving a list of censored books, or crushing any attempt to spread the Protestant ideas within its area of influence. Correcting the flaws in turn meant such things as forbidding the sale of indulgences, improvising both the Church's internal organization and the priests' education, and the advertisement of a more spiritual, honest relation with the doctrine.

In this context, the Jesuits were the most active advertisers of moral purity among the Catholics and consequently tried to protect the Indians against the landowners' earthly interest until the *Society of Jesus*, as it was known, was banned from the Spanish empire in 1767. During the Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Church wanted to reassert its authority in contrast to what was happening in the Protestant countries, so it placed a great emphasis on the sacraments (there are seven in the Catholic Church compared to two in the Lutheran) as well as in its saints and martyrs. That is why often the Catholics do not pray directly to God, but to a saint who is thought to be well-placed near God and can therefore sneak in a few words in our favor whenever there is an appropriate moment.

This emphasis on saints and martyrs also led to an exaggerate importance of the role of Virgin Mary, to whom many prayers and requests are often addressed. The myth of Saint Mary as the purest human being ever was the Catholic answer to the Protestant ideal of self-denying, secluded woman, as both concepts were used to control women. In the case of Virgin Mary, it suited very well the idea favors are to be asked from women while the lords are to be left undisturbed in their comfortable position. Nowadays, you might find a good deal of Virgin Mary-based merchandising in the important Catholic worship centers, and also many Holy Week processions where Virgin Mary has a leading role.

It should be noted, though, witch-hunts were very rare in the Catholic areas. At the time, the poorer economic performance of Southern Europe softened the ongoing social changes to a large extent, so the Spanish authorities used the American silver to remain comfortably in the Middle Ages and made do with isolating the empire from the "dangerous" influence of Protestants, Muslims, and Jews. Spain still imported European manufactured products in exchange for silver and raw wool indeed, but it forbade the study trips to Europe and the import of books from any European country. It was a cultural "splendid isolation" that stood in sharp contrast with the Protestant policy of developing the population's reading skills and caused both cultural areas to evolve along different lines in the subsequent centuries.

## THE EMPHASIS ON HIERARCHY

While the Protestants emphasized individual responsibility as shown in the assumption everybody should be able to understand the Bible without help, the Catholic Church asserted the validity of hierarchy. Therefore there are no elections in the Catholic Church, except for the fact the Pope is always elected among the cardinals, and holding elections on, say, a bishopric would seem as foolish as electing a God. The traditional Catholic education dictates the young must obey the elder, the employees must obey their employers, and women must obey men. This, however, only holds to some extent in the conservative Catholic areas.

This emphasis on hierarchy had different side effects:

### 1. Lack of individual responsibility

The less you can participate in a decision-making process, the less you are likely to care about the decision.

### 2. Lack of trust

The less you care about a decision, the less you can be trusted.

Where are these consequences evident?

- Work and education: work is considered to be necessarily unpleasant. It is just natural that people hope to duck it out of laziness, but the immediate authority is responsible to make sure things get done and also to promote some discipline<sup>80</sup>. In this view, a good teacher necessarily is the kind that demands students to work, not the kind that appeals to their willingness to voluntarily do the stuff. After all, he or she is the ultimate responsible for the progress being made.
- *Presencialismo*: In some conservative workplaces, it is the obligation to be stuck behind your desk even if there is nothing to do. The goal of this system is not to be productive but to mark a hierarchy (you are not supposed to go home before the boss does) and also to help the boss micromanage unreliable subordinates. If you are dealing with such a company or institution, you may find things get done a lot faster when you copy someone's boss when sending an email. However, if it is not that can of place, copying the boss can be offensive.
- Hotels and restaurants: In the Spanish-speaking countries, the receptionist of any hotel will require your passport in order to fill in your personal data, but in a Finnish hotel you are usually handed out a short form *you* are supposed to fill. Also, in the former waiters place the cutlery on the table before the customer and may use pliers to hand them the bread, while in the latter the cutlery is already available on one side of the table.

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<sup>80</sup> For an enlightening account on the conservative moral principles of work, please check George Lakoff's *Moral Politics*.

### 3. Herding instinct

A strong hierarchy prevents people from building *collectively* a common cultural background of their own. Instead, moral standards are usually set externally either by a superior moral authority or by a chain of command. That means people will not be interested, for instance, in what the socially acceptable amount of work is, but instead in how much their immediate boss is likely to expect from them. In the absence of a common background of their own, people are very dependent on their families and their close social circle.

Where is this consequence evident?

- South-European exchange students are usually more likely to fly back home during Christmas and other holidays than their North European counterparts are.

### THE SPANISH GOLDEN AGE: PAINTING

The Spanish arts and literature flourished during a time period called the Siglo de Oro (Golden Age). This time period started in 1492, when Columbus arrived at the Americas and the first grammar of the Spanish language was published, and ended in 1659 or 1681, depending on whether you place the end at the day of Spain's military defeat against France or at the day of the death of the last great writer at the time. Paradoxically this happened at a time when Spain isolated itself culturally from other European countries and it also plunged into a series of severe economic crisis, so the term *golden* in no way refers to the American gold, which anyway was silver actually for that matter.

The most important painter at the time was Diego Velázquez, a baroque artist who became the master of light and space. Velázquez painted from nature, which was quite unusual at the time, and used paint strokes to compose a picture that only became real from a distance. At the age of 60, he was admitted to the Order of Santiago, but given that only nobles could be members, he had had to prove two things. First, he had to be an *old Christian* —that is he could not have any Jewish or Muslim parents or grandparents—, so he needed the king's support as some doubts were cast on one of his grandfathers. Second, he could not be a worker. Velázquez argued he was not a worker but an artist, and he had never sold a picture since he had an allowance as member of the royal court.

Velázquez's struggle to dignify painting gives us a hint about the value scale at his time, but he hardly was the only great painter around. The Spanish royals were the world's top art collectors, and many European painters sought to work for them. For this reason, Spain has numerous master pieces by such painters as the Bosch, Rubens, or El Greco. Many of their works are shown today in Madrid's Prado Museum.

### LITERATURE IN THE GOLDEN AGE

The Golden Age marks the beginning of Spanish baroque writing. Poets vied with each other to uphold the respectability of either *conceptismo* or *culteranismo*, the two leading styles at the time. Conceptismo was about conveying the largest amount of meaning in the fewest possible words, and therefore made extensive use of double meanings, elision of unnecessary terms, and creativity in the word order, but culteranismo was the opposite. It expressed even the simplest idea in the most complex, wordy yet beautiful way possible, so it usually resorted to witty although somehow far-fetched metaphors. Although not limited to poetry, the most famous rivalry took place between the *conceptist* poet Francisco de Quevedo and his *culteran* poetic counterpart Luis de Góngora.

In general, books started to be widespread during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the villages, people gathered to listen to stories read by those who could, and these stories were often quite simple. In this context, *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* was published in 1605. The story was about a hidalgo who went crazy after reading many chivalric novels and decided to become a knight himself. Don Quixote (spelled *Don Quijote* in modern Spanish) convinces a redneck neighbor called Sancho to come with him as his squire, and both leap on to the world trying to defend gentlemanliness and justice in what actually was quite a backward society. The result was hilarious for readers at the time, and the novel was translated to many languages across Europe.

This is considered by many the first modern novel in history. First, because it openly challenges every chivalric novel that had been written before by turning them all into a parody. Second, because it is the first great novel where the narrator himself becomes a character in the story. And third because it offers several examples of literature within literature. At one point, for instance, the characters read a short novel that is included as one of the chapters, and in this short novel there are some characters who in turn author different poems! The book became such an enormous success across Europe that an inauthentic sequel was published in 1614.

The real author Miguel de Cervantes did not like at all the publishing of an unofficial sequel, so he published his own sequel in 1615, which had don Quixote do exactly the opposite things he supposedly did in the fake novel. In *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha, part II*, don Quixote and Sancho leave again for more adventures, but they run into a noble family who know them by having read the first part (which breaks again the fourth wall). The nobles prepare all sorts of pranks and deceptions to make fools of them, which raises the question of who is actually a fool: our idealistic protagonists or an unjust world where those in power make a mockery of everything that is noble?

As the story goes on, the relationship between the protagonists evolves to a true friendship. The hardships of their journey slowly make don Quixote much more down-to-earth, just like Sancho, but Sancho in turn becomes more idealistic as he learns how to dream. In the end, don Quixote becomes so sensible we realize he never really was insane, for he was just an individual unable to accept the world as it is. He has clearly been defeated by a cruel world, but Sancho wants to carry on because of both his appreciation for don Quixote and a new-found idealism. For years, this two-part novel was thought to be only humoristic, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century critics declared don Quixote a true romantic character.

Don Quixote's importance is so remarkable it has even permeated many languages. We call someone Don Quixotesque (*quijotesco* in Spanish) if they are foolishly idealistic. If someone imagines evils, we say they are *fighting windmills*, after a famous passage in which don Quixote fights a typical Castilian windmill he has taken for an evil giant, and after he clashes he is too much in denial to admit it was only a windmill after all. Another name for Spanish is *la lengua de Cervantes* (Cervantes' language), and even the Spanish institution charged with teaching and certifying the Spanish language —It has 87 venues around the world— is called Instituto Cervantes.

In 2002, this novel came first in a survey carried out by the Nobel Institute, in which 100 writers in 54 countries were asked to pick the best fiction work in history<sup>81</sup>. But despite its continuous success, during the Golden Age the literacy rate in Spain was rather low<sup>82</sup> and there was not such a thing as author's rights, so Cervantes died quite poor. On the contrary the most successful genre was drama without a doubt. This is the time the character of Don Juan first appears in a drama play of uncertain origin. The character was an amoral playboy who hits on a nun, so nowadays *don Juan* is used as a synonym for "seducer." Since in the play there is also a dead man who gets invited to a dinner, nowadays the term *convidado de piedra* (stone guest<sup>83</sup>) refers to someone who has not had the chance to speak in a meeting.

Among the many playwrights Lope de Vega was by far the most successful. He wrote hundreds of plays, and his portrait was on a wall in many noble houses. Cervantes was jealous of him, but today the World Book Day is always celebrated on April 23<sup>rd</sup> since that is the day both Cervantes and Shakespeare died<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> [https://www.clarin.com/sociedad/eligen-quijote-mejor-libro-tiempos\\_0\\_BkhexmSxOFI.html](https://www.clarin.com/sociedad/eligen-quijote-mejor-libro-tiempos_0_BkhexmSxOFI.html)

<sup>82</sup> According to this study, something between a quarter and a third of the old Christians who were not related to the Church could read in the city of Ávila at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/39212039\\_La\\_alfabetizacion\\_de\\_la\\_poblacion\\_urbana\\_castellana\\_en\\_el\\_siglo\\_de\\_oro/fulltext/57aa806708ae42ba52ac5f66/La-alfabetizacion-de-la-poblacion-urbana-castellana-en-el-siglo-de-oro.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/39212039_La_alfabetizacion_de_la_poblacion_urbana_castellana_en_el_siglo_de_oro/fulltext/57aa806708ae42ba52ac5f66/La-alfabetizacion-de-la-poblacion-urbana-castellana-en-el-siglo-de-oro.pdf)

<sup>83</sup> In some versions of the story, the dead man is a ghost. In others, he is either a skeleton or a grave's stone statue. The idea of a dead guest is not unique to don Juan, and the dead man is not even in all the versions of the myth either. It was quite common to borrow whatever elements the author would like in another play since the concept of author's rights did not exist. Actually, don Juan only became famous across Europe after Molière's French version.

<sup>84</sup> To be honest, Cervantes died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> but was buried the day after. And also, Shakespeare died actually on May the 3<sup>rd</sup>, but in the prevailing British calendar at the time it was April the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The fact is the Spanish authorities considered the proximity of both days was a good excuse to hold open-air book fairs under the mild sun of the Spanish spring. Hence the yearly celebration of the Spanish Book Day started in 1926, and UNESCO made it the World Book Day in 1989.

## CULTURE QUIZ

Answer the following questions on the basis of the document “Understanding the Spanish Speakers”

1. Are Spanish and Basque languages related? Why?
2. What political penchant can you work out from a Spaniard who prefers the use of either *español* or *castellano* as opposed to someone who doesn't care that much? Why?
3. How is the term *Reconquista* ideologically charged?
4. How was the birth of the Spanish state different from that of other European states?
5. How have the sources of the Spanish Catholic Church's power changed over time?
6. Who was to be credited for the Spanish agricultural sector's boom in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
7. What stimulus for corruption can be deduced from the current land development system in Spain?
8. Why do you think the structure of people's names differs slightly in some Spanish-speaking countries?
9. Do you think that, in your own country, the prevailing attitude to taxing inherited wealth is similar to what is described in the text? Why?
10. A friend offers to help you out with an exam, but the exam has already taken place. What would you say in Spanish?
11. How did modern chess originate?
12. Why has there been two royal dynasties in Spain after the Catholic Monarchs?
13. What is the reputation of Bourbons like in Catalonia? Why?
14. What do you think the Spanish people's opinion about Gibraltar is? Why?
15. Just how French is the mayonnaise?
16. You just happen to pass a course you thought you were bound to fail. How would you describe your passing in Spanish?
17. How has the meaning of *liberal* changed over time?
18. Think of a situation where you could say *Se te ve el plumero*.
19. Did poor people want a republic in Spain in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? How Monarchic were they?
20. How important was Africa in the Spanish politics about a century ago? Why?
21. How did the Bourbons managed to crawl their way back to power after Alfonso XIII's exile? How did they consolidate their power?
22. Why does most of the Spanish media support the monarchy?
23. What are the two key differences between the current king Felipe VI and his predecessor Juan Carlos I?
24. What is the main current threat to the Spanish monarchy?
25. Why was Toledo an important city in medieval Spain?
26. How are the churches different in northern and southern Spain? Why? What was the most modest aspect of the Muslim architecture?



27. How was the Herrerian architecture style both a reflection of and justification on the social reality?
28. What kind of relationship with the past was being advertised with the adoption of Neo-Mudéjar art?
29. Why does Barcelona have Gothic district and numerous art-nouveau buildings?
30. What does the size of a kitchen have to do with ideology?
31. What kind of political ideologies do you think were fostered by the Spanish estate development policy in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Why?
32. What factors encouraged the building of costly impressive buildings at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
33. Why did Spain specialize in pork meat and Argentina in beef?
34. What is the traditional Spanish cocoa drink like? How important was it?
35. Where would you use *papas fritas* and where would you use *patatas fritas* for French fries? Why?
36. Spanish speakers usually look either puzzled or pleasantly surprised if a Finnish guest thanks for a meal. How can that be explained? In your view, what might tip the reaction one way or the other?
37. How important is the habit of taking a siesta- nap in the middle of the day in Spain? Has this importance always been the same?
38. According to a Spanish saying, “There are more bars in Antón Martín alone (a district in Madrid) than in all of Norway”. What attitudes can you infer from such a claim? Where might these attitudes stem from?
39. How widespread tapas are in Spain?
40. People of foreign origin who have children in Finland are often surprised at the vast amount of Finnish songs their children learn at the daycare center. Sometimes, when these parents try to find some alternative songs to support their own language, they end up resorting to the theme songs found in some cartoons. What reasons can you find to explain this?
41. Which were major factors that helped prevent social unrest in the European colonial empires?
42. How are a nation and a state different?
43. How much are bullfighting and flamenco representative of the Spanish culture? Why?
44. How did the Spanish elites manage to argue that both the dead people of past times and the unborn people of the future should have a bigger say defining Spain than their fellow nationals at the time?
45. What was one of the reasons the lower class music styles became that important in Latin America as opposed to Spain? Can you provide some examples?
46. A famous theory about the origin of money is explained Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*. According to this theory, money was a tool people agreed on in order to facilitate their commercial exchanges. Nevertheless, all the anthropological evidence gathered so far overwhelmingly points to another direction. What direction? Why do you think Smith’s theory is so popular even nowadays?
47. Why do you think the Spanish peso became the first international currency?

48. The market economy system emerged in Europe during the 15<sup>th</sup> century while Latin America still relied on slavery. Why?
49. What was the Americas' role in the triangle-shaped trade route?
50. Can you list the problems associated to extractivism? Can you think of any example?
51. The European empires have usually used their new-found land to get rid of the excess poor population. What has been the strategy of the Latin American countries? Was there any alternative?
52. How were the borders of the Latin American countries decided? What factors intervened?
53. How can you explain the paradox that many countries that are rich in natural resources are poor as measured by per capita income?
54. Why are people living in the big Latin American cities resented in the countryside sometimes?
55. Why have the Latin American countries not managed to get rid of the causes of their underdevelopment?
56. Why did Spain not develop its own manufacturing capacity with the aid of the American silver?
57. Why was usury considered a sin?
58. Which part of the Spanish empire did suffer the worst consequences of all the economic crisis after Columbus's arrival to the American continent? Why?
59. When did north Spain and south Spain start to evolve differently in terms of economic growth and social development? Why?
60. What was the linguistic policy like in the Spanish empire? Why?
61. What is Latin America's ethnic composition like? How representative are the Latinos we might run into while living in Europe? Why?
62. Which material factors did limit the reach of the Aztec empire?
63. Which factors did make the Spaniards lucky against the Aztecs?
64. What purpose did the slander of Indians serve?
65. How can the different traditional outfits' style in Latin American countries be explained?
66. How has the meaning of piñatas changed over time?
67. Why do the Andean Indians have a strong tradition of community work?
68. Where does the English word *potato* come from?
69. What issues can be raised against the ban on the coca plant? In your view, what alternatives are there to fight cocaine?
70. Where does the stereotype of "proud Spaniards" come from?
71. The Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht paid millions of dollars to some presidents and high-ranking officials in 12 countries (10 Latin American countries plus Angola and the U.S.A.) in order to some get multi-million public contracts during the first few years of this century. How much are culture differences to blame for this corruption scandal? Why? What can be done to prevent such corruption?
72. In *Los Serrano* TV show, a man (Santiago Serrano) offers a policeman a 5-euro bill in order to avoid a traffic ticket, but the policeman laughs at him. This scene was

mainly considered quite funny by the Spanish audience. Can you explain the cultural assumptions this scene was playing with?

73. Why did people live worse, in general terms, in the Early Modern Era than in the Middle Ages? What was the drive behind the European witch hunts if not religious?
74. What were the social consequences of the rise of capitalism in Protestant societies?
75. What were the cultural consequences of the Reformation in the Protestant countries?
76. Why is Virgin Mary so important for Catholics?
77. If a company has a closed-circuit television system for the surveillance of employees, are Lutheran and Catholic employees likely to take it the same way? Why?
78. The Spanish-speaking young adults usually try to have lunch with their parents once a week even after they have emancipated. What does this look like from a Protestant point of view? Why?
79. Why do you think the Spanish painters did not paint from nature before Velázquez?
80. Why would it have been dishonorable for Velázquez to sell his paintings despite the fact that selling a painting was quite a normal thing?
81. Is *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* a comedy or a tragedy? Why?
82. Why do you think Don Quixote is considered a true romantic character?
83. Why do you think drama plays were more successful than written fiction? Do you see any similarity with the current preferences of our society?