

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-10971-1 - A Concise History of Spain  
William D. Phillips, Jr. and Carla Rahn Phillips  
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## A CONCISE HISTORY OF SPAIN

The rich cultural and political life of Spain has emerged from its complex history, from the diversity of its peoples, and from continual contact with outside influences. This updated edition traces that history from prehistoric times to the present, focusing particularly on culture, society, politics, and personalities. Written in an engaging style, it introduces readers to key themes that have shaped Spain's history and culture. These include its varied landscapes and climates; the impact of waves of diverse human migrations; the importance of its location as a bridge between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean and Europe and Africa; and religion, particularly militant Catholic Christianity and its centuries of conflict with Islam and Protestantism, as well as debates over the place of the church in modern Spain. Illustrations, maps, and a guide to further reading, major cultural figures, and places to see make the history of this fascinating country come alive.

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SPAIN

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AND

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## PREFACE

In modern times, Spain has often been perceived as different from other countries in Europe, with a pejorative connotation to that difference. In part, at least, that perception stems from a lack of knowledge about the history of Spain. Yet, in a certain sense Spain is different from the rest of Europe, in the diversity of its population and in its close contacts with civilizations outside Europe, in historical times and into the present as well. In writing this book, we have aimed to survey the long and complex history of Spain and its regions in a form accessible to an interested readership from various backgrounds. Whether those readers are serious students of Spain or casual travelers, we hope this book will provide a useful introduction to the complex history of a fascinating country. To best accomplish this, we pay due attention to all of the periods of the Spanish past, rather than concentrating on the more recent centuries. We also try to pay due attention to the many voices contending over the Spanish past.

As we planned and produced the book, we identified a series of themes that we could follow through the millennia. Among the themes we chose were the diverse populations mentioned above and the difficult and varied ecology of the Iberian Peninsula. The location of Spain between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean – and, by extension, between Europe and Africa – placed it in

## Preface

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continual contact and potential conflict with other countries and other civilizations, from prehistoric times through the medieval centuries. In the early chapters, we discuss how waves of in- and out-migration by a diversity of peoples shaped not only the demographic character of Spain but also its political and social character. For example, medieval Spain had a unique history in the coexistence of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities. At the same time, however, centuries of conflict between Christian and Islamic political power eventually forged religious militancy on both sides. In the Christian kingdom that emerged victorious at the end of the medieval period, religious identity permeated every aspect of Spanish life. The implications of that religious identity – and opposition to it – persist even into the present day, and one cannot understand Spanish history without taking it into account.

Another theme we follow is the challenge of power. During the early modern period, roughly from 1500 to 1800, the Habsburg dynasty and its Bourbon successors presided over the world's first global empire. In the process of administering that empire, the Spanish bureaucracy had to deal with issues emanating from all corners of the earth – a precursor to the modern challenges of globalization. By 1650, Spain had lost dominance in Europe to its rivals, but the Spanish Empire persisted until the early nineteenth century, and a few remnants lasted even longer. The legacy of Spain's history as a global power continues to color Spanish political life into the present, not least in its role as an intermediary between Europe and the Islamic world, and Europe and Latin America.

## Preface

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The rich cultural life of Spain emerged from the diversity of peoples who inhabited the land and from continual contact with outside influences as well. In a concise history, we cannot do justice to such diversity. As an attempt to remedy that lack, in the Guide to Further Information we mention major cultural figures and sites where interested readers can supplement the brief mentions in the text.

This book reflects our decades-long interest in Spain and its people over time. We have been studying, visiting, and teaching about Spain throughout our academic careers and have published both separately and together on a wide range of topics. In addition to learning from our own research and teaching, we have benefited from scholarship in related fields. In particular, we have learned from participation in the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies (SSPHS) (now the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies [ASPHS]), an international organization based in the United States that celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 2009. Throughout its existence, the SSPHS/ASPHS has provided an important venue for lively debate and intellectual exchange among established scholars and those starting out in their careers. In that organization, as well as in professional meetings and while doing research and writing, we have learned from so many scholars, archivists, librarians, and editors, that it is impossible to thank them individually. We are also grateful to the editorial team at Cambridge University Press, particularly Helen Waterhouse and Marigold Acland for inviting us to undertake this project, and to Leigh Mueller and the anonymous readers who helped us immeasurably in strengthening the text. This is a small

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book on a vast topic. We take full responsibility for choosing what to emphasize, what to leave out, and how to interpret the overall trajectory of Spanish history. We also take full responsibility for any errors that remain, despite our best efforts.

The Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain's Ministry of Culture and United States universities provided partial support for the first edition of this publication.

In memory of David A. Vassberg (1936–2014), Carolyn P. Boyd (1944–2015), and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara (1966–2015): valued friends, colleagues, and traveling companions on the journey toward understanding the Spanish past.

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## NOTE ON THE SECOND EDITION

We have taken the opportunity of this second edition to change the final chapter to reflect changes through the early autumn of 2014, particularly the abdication of King Juan Carlos I and the accession of Felipe VI. We have also corrected some minor errors that we and others noted in the first edition. We wish to express our appreciation to Liz Friend-Smith for her continuing support for the project.