Introduction

Italy has not felt the oppression [of Spanish rule] that was feared, rather for many years now she has been enjoying even greater happiness than ever before.

Scipione Ammirato, Discourses on Tacitus, 1594

It is not convenient to separate members which God has united into a single body. According to reason, we shall serve all of the nations of our realms while maintaining their laws and customs.¹

Charles V to the Cortes of Valladolid, 1525

“Religion is the soul of politics”.²

Tomaso Campanella, Antiveneti, 1606

In 1506, King Ferdinand of Aragón (the Catholic monarch of Spain) made his solemn entry into Naples with his new wife, Germaine de Foix. A controversy arose preceding the perambulation of the royal cortège when the representatives of the city districts (seggi), the nobility, and the common people disagreed over who should hold the baldachin’s banners.³ These difficulties were resolved with the mooring of the sovereigns’ vessel. The city’s ships and castles fired canons as a salutation for the royal couple. In order to provide social balance, the population


² Tommaso Campanella, Antiveneti (Florence: Luigi Firpo, 1606), 74.

decided that the members of the popular district would hold the balda-chin’s banners while the nobles would hold the royal horse’s straps. Viceroy Don Gonzalvo de Córdoba (r. 1504–1507) greeted the king, followed by the dignitaries of the kingdom. Ferdinand swore to uphold the kingdom’s privileges and headed a perambulation that took him to the principal arteries of the city. Important Roman dignitaries of the Colonna family held the royal standard, followed by the Neapolitan barons, the diplomatic corpus, Cardinals Luigi Borgia and Francesco Remolines, and the Archbishop of Sorrento. Ritual precedence was of utmost significance, and for the sake of the city’s welfare and its subjects’ representation, the viceroy enabled the common people to occupy a significant role in the city procession. The Spanish kings, first Aragonese and then Habsburgs, gained the acceptance of the people not only by granting them protection, but also by demonstrating a respect for local customs. The offering of peace, justice, security, and harmony was a type of political conduct defined as buon governo or good government, the main theme of this book.

Church and State in Spanish Italy examines the relation between imperialism and religion, arguing that Spanish rulers practiced good government over two centuries. In the process, it analyzes important questions about the role of viceroy rule in southern Italy in the Spanish imperial praxis of early modern times. For instance, it answers a number of questions by exploring the way Spaniards inserted themselves into southern Italy for 300 years. How did religious wars against Islam and Protestantism affect southern Italy? How did the Spaniards maintain their political legitimacy over the kingdom? What was the role of the viceroys in ruling southern Italy? And how did the Kingdom of Naples differ from the other domains under Spanish hegemony? Also, what was the role of religion in Mediterranean and European politics? And finally, what can religious rituals tell us about the political underpinnings achieved by the Spaniards in Italy?

The aim of this book is to link this range of political and cultural dynamics into a coherent narrative by arguing that the Spanish viceroys ruled in Renaissance southern Italy through the principle of good government, a maxim referring to matters of peace, justice, and protection, but also revenue growth. However, the viceroys used prudence, clemency, and intelligence, but above all diplomacy, compromise, and pragmatism.
in order to legitimize Spanish rule in the face of the religious threats of Islam and Lutheranism, and of the dynastic threats from the French claimants to the kingdom and the local Italian feudal aristocracy. Most scholars have been critical of Spanish rule, and good government has not been discussed. I make two points of contention vis-à-vis Spanish rule: one about means (or methods), and one about ends (or benefit). The viceroys ruled through religious morality, expedient leadership, and social toleration; a governing style that emanated from Spain’s search for political hegemony. The viceroys’ good government also included alliance-building with alternate social groups (Jewish financiers, Neapolitan guild members, and professional bureaucrats) in order to strengthen Spanish rule. This contractual ruling style enabled the Castilian-Aragonese dynasty to keep a strong hold of southern Italy from the mid-fifteenth to the

the coasts. “Quattro cosas son las principales en que consiste el buen gobierno deste Reyno en la Buena administracion que vulgarmente llaman la grasa que se puede particularmente en esta ciudad, en la observanza de la justicia y pramaticas, en el beneficio conservacion y aumento del Patrimonio Real, y en la Buena disciplina y orden de la milicia y fuerças que su Magestad sustenga y mantiene en este Reyno.” See Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, ms. 2417, ff. 195–200, “Advertimientos para el Conde de Olivares dados a esto 1595 Noviembre 4 por Nápoles.” The king sent instructions each time he appointed a new viceroy. These were clear and included the respect of public peace, the moral character of faith and integrity, to govern and defend subjects with valor and prudence, be fearful of God, and in the case of Italy never to forget the regal preeminence so as not to let papal jurisdiction hinder the imperial one. See for instance the second instructions sent to Viceroy Lemos in AGSim, Consejo de Italia, Secretarías de Nápoles, libro 634, legajo 933, f. 135, “Intrucciones to the Count of Lemos, from the King, Valencia, April 20, 1599.”


In 1559, Philip II instructed the viceroy to “work for the community which is in your charge, so that it may live and rest in full security, peace, justice, and quiet.” See Henry Kamen, Spain, 1469–1714: A Society of Conflict, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 151. In 1579, the king nominated Cardinal Granvelle as head of the Council of State of Italy, praising his officer for his “prudence, intelligence, and experience.” See AGSim, Secretarías Provinciales, Consejo de Italia, Secretarías de Nápoles, libro 634, legajo 933, f. 2, “San Lorenzo, October 10, 1579.” In his instructions to Viceroy Ossuna in 1581, Philip said, “Kings and princes are created to govern and to provide justice for their subjects, whom they must defend against their enemies” [my translation]. The original reads, “Los Reyes y Príncipes son principalmente instituydos para que gobernien y administren justicia a sus subditos y los defendan de sus enemigos.” See AGSim, Secretarías Provinciales, Consejo de Italia, Secretarías de Nápoles, libro 634, legajo 933, f. 24, “Instrucciones al Duque de Ossuna,” From King Philip II, Lisbon, December 22, 1581.
There was a causal relationship between the Spanish imperial context and a culture of social innovation. The viceroy’s ruling style was shaped by local occurrences and imperatives. In the Mediterranean, maintaining peace was paramount so the viceroy practiced pragmatism, offering protection against foreign invasions, military assaults, and pirates’ raids. The Spanish pledge to its empire in Italy led the viceroy to invest time and money to protect all the Crown’s subjects. In this moral imperial system, the viceroy sought to win their subjects’ favor. Not only did they offer martial defense to the city, they also gave to charities, sheltered religious minorities, protected heterodox communities, and upheld the common subjects’ interests. While the viceroy has been studied primarily in political and financial terms, this book concentrates on the viceroy’s rule by example through religious benevolence and sociopolitical compromise. Securing subjects through protection and negotiation enabled the viceroy to consolidate Spanish leadership without major disruption of the social order.

The viceroy engaged in contractual governance, gaining in return faithful subjects for the Crown. “Reason of state” taught early modern rulers that in order to prevent rebellions and maintain their state, they ought to preserve the welfare of the body politic. Just as princes and kings needed to keep this body in security and good health, so did the viceroy. In contrast to aristocratic custom, peace supported by state laws

7 Stuart Schwartz talks about three fundamental sources for the rising attitude of tolerance in early modern Spain: practical necessity, self-interest tending to promote religious accommodation, and philosophical conviction. See All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 5.
9 Aurelio Musi has proposed understanding the Italian states in the early modern period through the concept of integration, either through centralization and resistance or through compromise. See “Integration and Resistance in Spanish Italy, 1500–1800,” in Resistance, Representation, and Community, ed. Peter Blicke (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 305–319.
was the outstanding value in early modern times. The viceroys reinforced their political position through beneficence, social representation, and uniform justice and, in return, there were mutual benefits. Italian subjects expressed faithfulness toward Spain both spiritually and financially. The local subjects helped the viceroys maintain order and provide the subsidies the Crown needed in exchange for peace and protection from foreign threats. This contractual governance centralized viceregal rule and turned the struggles against the Crown into a source of benefits for Spanish rule, using the threat of wars and Islam to stress the population’s need for the protection the Spanish could offer.

Good government was undergirded by religion to facilitate Spanish rule. Military and spiritual threats reinforced the principle of good government which aimed at furthering the idea of Spanish rule as beneficial. By participating in the main celebrations of Catholicism, such as Easter, Corpus Domini, and St. John the Baptist, and by bequeathing to charities and protecting religious minorities, the viceroys publicly conveyed good government. In this way, they reinforced the sense of mutual support in the struggle against the many enemies of the Kingdom of Naples: the French dynasty, the local aristocracy, Muslims and Lutherans. Using religion as a political tool, the Spaniards advertised the benefits of their rule. The viceroys used the main Catholic celebrations and moral tenets to present themselves as protectors against political and spiritual aggressors. Religious rituals became a tool of propaganda, not as mere demonstrations of power but to reinforce social ties with the population. The analysis of the liturgy transformed by the viceroys reveals that there was

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11 Where peace and justice (pax et iustitia) prevailed, there was a state of tranquility (tranquillitas). Tranquility also meant spiritual welfare as, according to Aristotle, tranquility engendered by peace enabled the citizens to lead virtuous lives. According to Christian teachings, peace led to the salvation of the soul. For a good essay on peace and justice see Eberhard Isenmann, “Norms and Values in the European City, 1300–1800,” in Resistance, Representation, and Community, ed. Peter Blicke (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 185–215.

12 Rosario Villari has proposed that by examining the concept of faithfulness, the rapport between the Spanish monarchy and its Neapolitan subjects gave birth to the creation of the modern state. See Per il re o per la patria: la fedeltà politica nel Seicento (Bari: Laterza, 1994), 5.

13 Marino argues that the traditional agrarian and astrological calendar coincided with the rising star of Spanish government and the viceroys’ secular rule in Naples. He advances that three feasts (San Gennaro, Corpus Christi, and St. John the Baptist) restored the disrupted order after the French invasions of 1494. See John A. Marino, Becoming Neapolitan: Citizen Culture in Baroque Naples (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 92.
an interplay between Catholic rituals and Spanish imperial strategy in the Mediterranean. The viceroys used religious ceremonies, charitable giving, and minorities’ rights in order to secure a new political order.14

The Spanish viceroys’ atypical cultural adeptness in Naples contrasts greatly with the rest of the Spanish empire in Europe. In Milan, for instance, Spanish rule functioned insofar as it delegated power to the local elites who expected a share in the prestigious offices.15 In Catalonia, it only functioned because the local ruling class assumed a double role: to help the Spanish Crown maintain order and to preserve its privileges.16 In the Netherlands, it did not function because Spanish governors unsuccessfully balanced economic and religious exigencies by applying terror and shifting political power.17 In Portugal, it functioned temporarily because Spanish viceroys and governors ruled from Lisbon while Spanish grandees eventually replaced the Portuguese nobles who occupied government posts.18 Hence, the dynamic between the viceroys, the Spanish kings, and the local community of Naples offers a fresh outlook on sovereignty through the prism of religious rituals during which the viceroy demonstrated his ability to ensure a greater measure of law and order. Viceregal display and rituals served to reinforce hierarchy and authority. But the Spanish political context was deeply entwined with the viceregal culture of reforms.19 In fact, other scholars have neglected the themes of polity cohesion and protective governance in their history of premodern empires. The viceroys conquered from within via spiritual exercises, resolving the tension between Christian ideals and Spanish imperialism.

14 Quentin Skinner has explored the relationship between professed principles and actual practices of political life, arguing that in premodern times there was a clear relation between ideology and complex courses of political action. See “Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action,” in Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics, ed. James Tully (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 97–118.
15 Stefano D’Amico, Spanish Milan: A City within the Empire, 1535–1706 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012): regents, governors, and senators were all Lombards. The patriciate controlled all major offices, serving the king while assuring the continuity of local traditions.
19 Nicholas Terpstra, Cultures of Charity: Women, Politics, and the Reform of Poor Relief in Renaissance Italy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), proposed similar conclusions looking at one confraternal institution in Bologna.
by building religious ties with the local community, which the current historiography overlooks.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

In 1442 Alfonso the Magnanimous of Aragón conquered the Kingdom of Naples from the French Angevin house, placing southern Italy under the suzerainty of the Crown of Aragón. He reformed the institutions of government so as to create a machine largely independent of the local nobility. His bureaucracy was staffed by professionals, most of them not Italian. Fostering a state interest this bureaucracy greatly contrasted with the interests of the feudal nobility, the so-called barons. For security purposes, Alfonso appointed agents called viceroys in the kingdom’s frontier regions (Calabria, Terra di Lavoro, Abruzzi, and Puglia). Unlike the authorities in other parts of the Catalan-Spanish empire such as Milan, North Africa, the Americas, or Navarre, and even Aragón, Alfonso ruled directly, as did his son after him. In 1469, Castile and Aragón consolidated their crowns. In 1503, Ferdinand of Aragón appointed viceroys to Naples, a gesture that provided Spain hegemony over southern Italy until 1713. Upon Ferdinand’s death in 1516, his grandson Charles V of Habsburg was proclaimed as joint ruler, with his mother, of Castile and Aragón. From that moment, the Kingdom of Naples fell under Habsburg authority. Under the Habsburgs the role of the viceroys changed: Charles promulgated the Ordinances of 1529, appointing the viceroys for a period of three years, and under Philip II initiated a process of “virreinalización” whereby the viceroys were no longer close associates of the royal family.

In this period, the viceroys obtained juridical and legislative powers to govern the kingdom, the *merum et mixtum imperium*. They had to recognize not only their connection to the organs of central government but also their connection to the Kingdom of Naples’ own laws, privileges, and institutions. In fact, they maintained good government by

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22 According to Giulio Cesare Capaccio the most important function of the viceroy was as captain general of the kingdom. See *Il Forastiero: Dialoghi*, vol. 2 (Naples: Concagliolo, 1614), 276.
23 For Michael Levin, Spanish imperial power in Italy was always limited by the necessity of dealing with local traditions and institutions. See “Italy and the Limits of the Spanish
encouraging regional particularism and traditional privileges within the framework of law in order. Moreover, since in the Italian reinos the Spanish monarchy favored the development of local institutions and native administrative personnel, the Consiglio Collaterale, an organ with legislative, administrative, and judicial powers, was created. Staffed with Spanish administrators, it thrived when Charles V encouraged the rise to the rank of “Collateral” non-noble Neapolitan officials, generally lawyers, who were not born into offices but proved themselves worthy of them. Moreover, the Regia Camera della Sommaria, the kingdom’s fiscal court, was managed by Spanish administrators and headed by the viceroys.

Naples enjoyed a decentralized political organization. The city government was called the Tribunal of San Lorenzo and consisted of five Eletti, elected by the representative nobles (divided into noble districts, called seggi or piazze, or “seats”) and one elected representative of the people (called Eletto del Popolo). The noble districts, or seggi, derived their names from their neighborhood and formed the city council. They were named Nido, Capuana, Montagna, Porto, and Portanova, corresponding to a specific neighborhood, while the popular district was called Popolo, centered in Piazza Selleria. Being part of a seggio meant having a voice in the city’s governance and therefore most people sought to belong to one. Every six months, each seggio elected its own representative, who sat in the Tribunal of San Lorenzo. The nobility of the seggio was at the heart of the city’s social and political life.

The seggi emerged at the end of the fifteenth century and are comparable to the Roman rioni or the Genoese alberghi. The seggi were signifiers of nobility, of political affiliation, and of a city’s neighborhood. The word piazza was used to refer to the juridical territory, while the word seggio referred to the place where the elected people met. In the Neapolitan government, there was a distinction between nobles and commoners,


The popular seggio of Selleria earned its representative role in 1456 when it was sanctioned by a joust. It was the first ceremonial spectacle of the kind to be mounted within the walls of Naples. Similarly, the central civil and criminal court, the Gran Corte della Vicaria, was moved to stand in between the two seggi of Nido and Selleria. See Anna Giannetti, “Urban Design and Public Spaces,” in *Naples*, eds. Marcia Hall and Thomas Willette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 46–100.
and among the nobility between those who were aggregated to the seggi and those who were not. The city government was effectively in the hands of 150 noble families. The institution of the seggi worked to marginalize the seggio del popolo while ostensibly representing it. By the mid-seventeenth century, Naples’ population was reckoned to be near 450,000 but the noble seggi outnumbered the seggio del popolo, and thus governed the city.

The popular seggio became the greatest source of viceregal support. From 1548, the people’s representative (representative of the seggio del popolo) was directly selected by the viceroy from three names chosen by the city procurators. Thus, Spanish monopolistic interests were served by the least likely constituency. The people’s representative of Selleria spoke for the popolo, or the “people” of Naples, who were mainly professionals, merchants, and artisans, but also for the togati (“the robed ones”) or “men of law,” who served in tribunals, and the ceto civile or “civic class,” the urban intelligentsia.27 Though these “people” were not nobles, neither did they belong to the plebe. The popular seggio was often in stark opposition to the noble seggi, as can be imagined.28

The viceroys played a vital role in the Spanish pluricentral empire. Pierre Chaunu was the first to refer to the Spanish empire as a multiple monarchy or “dynastic grand alliance of seventeen crowns.”29 Recently, it has been referred to as a “monarchy of nations,” though the word “empire” is still used because it refers to the real source of power.30 John H. Elliott showed how the union of provinces together, aequa principaliiter, fit the needs of the time.31 The very looseness of its association was its strength. It allowed continuity of government when monarchs could

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28 For a survey of Spanish attempt at constitutional reforms see, Pier Luigi Rovito, Il viceregno spagnolo di Napoli: ordinamento, istituzioni, cultura di governo (Naples: Arte Tipografica, 2004), 144–145.


30 B. J. García García and A. Alvarez Osorio, eds., La Monarquía de las naciones: Patria, nación y naturaleza en la Monarquía de España (Madrid: Fundación Carlos de Amberes, 2004).

not bring outlying regions under tight control while guaranteeing the provincial elite continuation of privileges. A more recent body of scholarship proposes a new concept, “polycentric monarchies,” consisting of grand multinational organizations of the various territories that fell under the sovereignty of the Spanish monarchy. Each center had its institutional complexity, juridical status, and local power group. Hence, these different political entities existed among many interlinked centers, interacting not only with the king but with each other, thereby actively participating in forging the polity.32

In 1503, Ferdinand appointed viceroys, considered alter egos of the monarch, to govern the Kingdom of Naples.33 In order to ensure continuity in governance, in 1516 Charles V renewed the tenure of Viceroy Ramón de Cardona (r. 1509–1522), selected by his grandfather in Naples. The viceroys represented the sovereign in three areas: sacred and symbolic; legal and institutional; familial and “clientele-based.”34 Therefore the viceroys governed, administered the province, and made the sovereign visible.35 Generally hailing from Spain, deriving from the high nobility, but also sometimes coming from the armed forces or the clergy, the viceroys tended to the interests of both the empire and the regions they governed.36

Acquiring vital administrative skills, they


33 Carlos José Hernando Sánchez, El reino de Nápoles en el imperio de Carlos V: la consolidación de la conquista (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 2001), 103. Helmut Koenigsberger talked about a federative organization of the Spanish empire, in which, starting with the reign of Charles V the monarchy was an aggregate because it consisted of various states. See The Practice of Empire (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969).


36 The viceroys were selected by the king after ratification of the Council of State and/or the Council of Castile. J. Arrieta Alberdi (for Iberia) and John Elliott (for the New World) talk about the circulation of viceregal elite forming dynasties within the imperial the Spanish system. See Arrieta Alberdi, “La dimensión institucional y jurídica”; and John