

UNIT 2

THE 18TH CENTURY IN SPAIN



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HISTORY

THE 18TH CENTURY IN SPAIN: THE BOURBONS

Political developments in 18th-century Spain were the result of dynastic change, as the Hapsburgs were replaced by the Bourbons. Under the Bourbons government in Spain became more centralized.

Carlos II was the last Spanish king of the Hapsburg line. He died without heirs, creating a serious conflict over the succession. This conflict became the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714).

Carlos II had named Philip of Anjou as his successor to the Spanish throne. He was from the Bourbon dynasty and was a grandson of Louis XIV. Philip was supported by the Crown of Castilla.

Austria and Great Britain gave military support to Archduke Charles of Austria, who was a Hapsburg. He was supported by the Crown of Aragón, which feared that a Bourbon king would limit the *fueros*.

The war ended with the Treaties of Utrecht and Rastatt (1713–1714). As a result of these agreements:

Austria gained lands from Spain, including Milan and the Spanish Netherlands, while Great Britain gained Gibraltar and Menorca.

Philip of Anjou became Felipe V, King of Spain. This was the start of the Bourbon dynasty in Spain.

BOURBON FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 18TH CENTURY

During the 18th century, Spanish monarchs tried to recover the lands they had lost in the Treaties of Utrecht and Rastatt by participating in international conflicts, such as the Seven Years' War. Spain invariably allied with France against Great Britain, because these two powers were struggling for control of the seas. These alliances are known the Family Compacts, as both countries were ruled by Bourbons.

ECONOMIC REFORMS IN SPAIN

The Spanish economy experienced growth in the 18th century as a result of reforms introduced by Felipe V, Fernando VI and Carlos III. The sociedades económicas de amigos del país also played an important role, carrying out scientific, economic and technical studies, and then publishing the results.

Some of the most important reforms were in:

- **agriculture** – canals were built to facilitate irrigation (the Canal de Castilla) and uninhabited areas were colonised (the Sierra Morena).
- **craft production** – royal manufacturers were established for silk, porcelain and other luxury goods. Textile production in Cataluña was also protected from foreign competition.
- **trade** – internal customs duties were abolished. Cádiz lost its monopoly on transatlantic trade, allowing free trade with America.

Enlightened despots, like absolute monarchs, supported the establishment of luxury-goods manufacturers. Royal palaces were decorated with objects made in the royal factories, including lamps, clocks, tapestries, rugs and porcelain. The nobility and wealthy bourgeois families also acquired the products that were made by the royal manufacturers.

SCIENCE AND ART IN THE 18TH CENTURY

Two factors brought about great scientific and cultural advances during the 18th century:

The influence of the Enlightenment on education and technological progress. Many centres of study were created, which allowed knowledge to be spread to a greater number of people.

The scientific legacy of the 17th century. It would be impossible to understand the progress of the 18th century without considering the contribution of the 17th century. The application of the scientific method to all fields of knowledge, such as chemistry and medicine, was fundamental.

The result was great scientific and technological developments which led to significant improvements in people's wellbeing.

Medicine

In 1796 Edward Jenner discovered a vaccine for smallpox by obtaining liquid from a wound of a person suffering from the disease.

In 1747 it was discovered that eating lemons prevented scurvy. Scurvy was a disease that sailors suffered from due to a lack of vitamin C. This meant that longer voyages could be made.

In 1733 Stephen Hales measured blood pressure in animals.

Physics and geology

In 1788 James Hutton established geology as a science, based on the constant changes he observed in the formation of the Earth.

In 1750 Benjamin Franklin invented the lightning rod. This attracted lightning and conducted it to Earth.

In 1714 Gabriel Fahrenheit improved the mercury thermometer by adding a temperature scale in degrees. In 1742 Anders Celsius invented the 100-degree temperature scale.

18TH-CENTURY SOCIETY

During the 18th century, the population of Europe increased steadily. This was due to improved nutrition and hygiene, a reduction in the number of epidemics and scientific advances. All these factors reduced mortality.

In Spain, this period saw the beginning of a demographic trend that continues today: higher population density in the periphery of the Iberian Peninsula and lower population density in the interior – with the exception of Madrid.

European society continued to be based on the estates system, but Enlightenment thinkers wanted to introduce reforms.

The nobility and the clergy were opposed to any changes that would reduce their dominance. Enlightened despots criticised the economic power of these groups and introduced measures to limit it, particularly in the case of the clergy. They confiscated some church property and reduced the number of convents.

The wealthy bourgeoisie was inspired by Enlightenment ideas, such as the value of work and individual effort. They complained about the privileges enjoyed by the nobility and clergy.

Peasants' living conditions did not improve, in spite of agricultural reforms. Some peasants had to supplement their income by working in the domestic system.

SOCIAL REFORMS IN SPAIN

The Bourbon kings implemented social reforms, such as the law passed by Carlos III that eliminated the legal dishonour of labour. This meant that the nobility could now work for a living.

People did not always accept reforms because they wanted to protect their traditions. In some cases, there were popular protests, such as the Esquilache Riots. Esquilache was one of Carlos III's ministers. He wanted to prohibit traditional long capes and wide-brimmed hats. In the end Carlos III had to accept the rioters' demands.

The Bourbons also adopted measures relating to other social groups. In 1767 the Jesuits were expelled from Spain to eliminate their influence over education. Other measures aimed to control marginalised social groups, such as the Roma and the homeless.