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THE COMUNERO UPRISING IN CASTILE, 1520-1521:
A CASE STUDY FOR EARLY MODERN REVOLUTION

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of History Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

David Kristian Dyer
December 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must offer a special thanks to my advisor, Dr. Bast, for his assistance throughout the thesis creation process. Additional thanks go to Dr. Burman and Dr. Bohstedt for serving on my M.A. committee. I must also thank all of the graduate students, professors, friends, and random acquaintances who have listened patiently for the last two years while I rambled on about Comuneros, pirates, the 82nd Airborne Division, and the virtues of revolution. Finally, I thank my wife Linda for all of the above and God for everything.

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that scholars have ignored the Comunero rebellion's importance as an instance of early modern revolution and that this uprising anticipates the revolutionary movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The *Leyenda Negra* or Black Legend is primarily responsible for this oversight, as Protestant Europe has portrayed Spain as anachronistic and reactionary since the reign of Phillip II. This depiction has skewed both the Spanish and the European historical representations of Spain and pushed Spain onto the periphery of European history. This thesis uses the Comunero rebellion to identify these historiographical problems and suggests a way of viewing and using this movement to advance our understanding of early modern history.

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GLOSSARY

Alcalde: an administrative official who held judicial powers and served directly under the corregidor in municipalities where these officials presided.

Alguacil: an urban constable responsible for arresting people in the name of the corregidor.

Arbitristas: Spanish economic and political reformers of the seventeenth century.

Auto de fe: literally, “act of faith” the pronouncement handed down, usually publicly, regarding the findings of the Inquisition in individual cases.

Baldío: crown lands, primarily uncultivated, and open for common-use.

Caballero: the middle tier of the Castilian nobility made up the majority of town council members and royal officials.

Comuneros: literally commoners or members of a commune, the name taken by the members of the Cortes cities that rebelled against Charles V.

Comunidades: literally community or a group of communes, the name applied to the group of Cortes cities that rebelled against Charles V.

Conversos: name given to Muslims and Jews who converted to Christianity especially applied to former Jews.

Corregidor: royal official chosen to supervise town councils and matters of law within the major cities of Castile.

Cortes: the parliamentary bodies Castile, Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia.

Décima: a tenth of clerical income paid to the Castilian monarchy originally to support the war against Grenada.

Encabezamiento: total amount of money required from a particular taxpaying group to meet the group's portion of a tax or special levy.

Grandee: an appellation for the greater aristocracy adopted under Charles V.

Hernandades: brotherhoods formed by and loyal to various municipalities in Castile.

These groups served as militia/police forces.

Hidalgo: the lowest tier of the Castilian nobility generally urban-based and having no practical rank.

Junta: an assembly of delegates especially when meeting extra-legally or in opposition to the recognized government.

La Reconquista: the Reconquest of the Muslim portions of Spain began after AD 711.

Letrados: university or college trained lawyers that served in the fledgling bureaucracy of the Isabel and Fernando as well as holding administrative posts within the Spanish Church.

Leyenda Negra: the Black Legend.

Monarquía: the loose confederation of Castile and Aragon under the rule of Isabel and Fernando specifically referring to the lack of unity between the kingdoms' legislative and judicial bodies.

Procurador: a representative of a town or other body, especially a representative sent to the Cortes.

Servicio: a grant of money issued to the crown by the Cortes.

INTRODUCTION

A number of misconceptions and prejudices drove the historical treatment of Spain from the reign of Phillip II in the late sixteenth century through the end of the nineteenth century. Consequently, scholars of the early modern era have overlooked the rebellion of the Comuneros or Comunidades as a pivotal event in both Spanish and European history. Masked behind propaganda and overlooked because of its failure, this early sixteenth-century rebellion possesses the qualities of the revolutionary movements that increased in frequency and significance throughout Eurasia over the next two hundred and seventy years. Before launching into a direct examination of the Comunero episode, we must first discuss the *Leyenda Negra* the chief culprit responsible for the sublimation of the rebellion. Then we will define Comuneros and Comunidades, provide a chapter breakdown, and discuss the source base for the uprising.

The Leyenda Negra

The *Leyenda Negra* or Black Legend found its roots in the English anti-Spanish propaganda preceding the Armada in 1588, the slanderous writings of Phillip II's secretary Antonio Perez published in 1594, and the accounts of Spain's practices in its New World colonies by Friar Alonso de Castrillo. The Legend stems directly from the characterization of Phillip II in the late sixteenth century as "a gloomy tyrant, and a religious fanatic ever thirsting for fresh victims to torture and destroy." Whether predicated upon jealousy over Spanish wealth wrested from the New World, the strong Counter-Reformation policies of Phillip II, or the atrocities associated with the colonization of the Americas, the Black Legend has darkened and molded European

conceptions of Phillip and fostered national hatred toward Spain.¹ A hatred further inflamed by Spain's domination of the Italian peninsula, intolerance in the Low Countries, and wrangling with France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²

Besides warping the historical portrayal of Phillip II for three-hundred-plus years, the *Leyenda Negra* had the additional effect of relegating pre-Phillip sixteenth-century Spain to a supporting role in the larger European historiographical tradition that continues into the present.³ Historians have tended to view Spain as a peripheral member of the European community and have overlooked Iberia particularly when discussing the early modern era. Scholars of this period tend to use Spain as a monolithic foil against which they define Protestant Europe. Under the dictums of the Black Legend, Spain has represented the last bastion of unwavering Catholicism against a Europe that progressively chipped away at Catholic power. However, this vision of Spain and the Spanish Church does not accurately reflect the record. Clerical reforms instituted by Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries predated and predicted many of the concerns regarding morality and education that would characterize the criticisms leveled at the Catholic clergy by Erasmus and Luther as well as other reformers during the sixteenth century. For example, Jiménez promoted and the Catholic Kings enacted edicts to end the keeping of concubines by Spanish clerics and to

¹ Davies, R. Trevor. *The Golden Century of Spain 1501-1621*. New York: Harper and Row, 1961, 118-119; Marañón, Gregorio. *Antonio Pérez, "Spanish Traitor."* Translated by Charles David Ley. New York: Roy Publishers, 1955, v-iii; Castrillo, Alonso de. *Tractado De Republica*. Madrid: Institutos de Estudios Políticos, 1958.

² Kamen, Henry. *Spain 1469-1714: A Society of Conflict*. New York: Longman Inc., 1983, 194.

³ Blockmans, Wim. *Emperor Charles V, 1500-1558*. Translated by Isola van den Hoven-Vardon. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002, 1-2. Blockmans cites page limitations for his non-treatment of the Spanish historiography concerning Charles V and his omission of colonial issues.

reestablish Christian charity as a guiding principle of the Spanish clergy.⁴ The Polyglot Bible overseen by Jiménez and published in 1522 represented the best scholarly and theologically sound edition of the Bible to date and far outstripped Erasmus's New Testament in terms of accuracy and linguistic sophistication.⁵ The existence and proliferation of Christian Humanism within Spain prior to and concurrent with similar movements in Northern and Western Europe flies in the face of popular history and strongly suggests that the Black Legend has veiled and altered the historical legacy of Spain especially during the era of the Reformation.⁶

Parliamentary Tradition

Traditionally portrayed as anachronistic and backward, the Spanish parliamentary traditions of the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon only began to receive serious consideration in the 1970s and 1980s.⁷ The formation of these proto-representative bodies was not unique to the Iberian kingdoms but mirrored the larger parliamentary practice that swept over Europe in the late medieval period. While not the first region to form parliaments, the Spanish *Cortes* did include delegates from prominent townships as early as 1188 roughly two hundred years before their inclusion in England. The Spanish

⁴ Davies, R. Trevor. *The Golden Century of Spain 1501-1621*. New York: Harper and Row, 1961, 10.

⁵ Lynch, John. *Spain 1516-1598: From Nation State to World Empire*. Edited by John Lynch. 1991 ed, *A History of Spain*. Padstow, Cornwall: T.J. Press Ltd., 1991, 85-87.

⁶ Hornza, Lu Ann. "Erasmus as Hero, or Heretic? Spanish Humanism and the Valladolid Assembly of 1527." *Renaissance Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (1997): 78-118.

⁷ Jago, Charles. "Habsburg Absolutism and the *Cortes* of Castile." *The American Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (1981): 307-26; O'Callaghan, Joseph F. *The Cortes of Castile-León 1188-1350*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.

parliaments were also one of the first to include members from all three estates in a model very similar to the French one. However, the separate *Cortes* continued to act independently and did not necessarily meet in their entirety.⁸ These *Cortes* received little acknowledgement as definitive institutions of the medieval and early modern period until the late twentieth century and the release of O'Callaghan's monographic treatment of the subject *The Cortes of Castile-León, 1188-1350*. Despite the new interest sparked by O'Callaghan's work, the *Cortes* and their records have remained primarily a source of information for other projects instead of an area for independent study. They remain under-appreciated and under-represented in the historical literature with the most notable gap being the early decades of the sixteenth century.⁹ The *Leyenda Negra* rejected the idea of even a minimally democratic Spain and therefore the parliamentary apparatus of medieval and early modern Spain has suffered from lack of exposure.

The Decline of Spain

The general theory of "the decline of Spain" represents another component of Spanish historiography tied tightly to the Black Legend. In 1961, noted historian J.H. Elliot addressed the issue of Spain's decline and linked the reduction in Spanish power during the early years of the seventeenth century directly to economic mismanagement and "Castile's increasing technological backwardness" beginning in the latter part of the sixteenth century. To this end, he cited the writings of seventeenth century *arbitristas*

⁸ O'Callaghan, Joseph F. *The Cortes of Castile-León 1188-1350*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, 1-3.

⁹ Hendricks, Charles David. "Charles V and the 'Cortes' of Castile: Politics in Renaissance Spain." Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell, 1976. Hendricks' dissertation is an exception though his focus is not on the *Cortes* as an institution but rather as a political arena for Charles V.

who blamed the economic ills of their time on the lapse of bourgeois values and the increased importance of Spanish religious orthodoxy throughout the sixteenth century and reaching its apex during the reign of Phillip II.¹⁰ Ultimately, Spain could no longer effectively administer its territories, exploit its colonial possessions, or defend its empire against internal and external threats. Elliot argued that the decline, rooted in economics and Castilian separatism, manifested between 1590 and 1620 and culminated with the growing difficulties facing the Habsburg monarchy by 1640 and the continuing pressures of the Thirty Years War.¹¹ Elliot ably defined the economic down turn in Spain without bringing Spanish orthodoxy into the picture.

Henry Kamen stated in 1978 that Spain never rose to become a great economic power and that any “decline was nothing less than the operation and persistence over an extended period of basic weakness in the Spanish economy.”¹² He further developed his argument by stating that three periods of economic dependency dominated Spain’s economy and hampered its development. During the reigns of Isabel and Fernando and Charles V, the emphasis on the export of raw wool to European markets locked Spain into the rudiments of a colonial market. Additionally, despite the influx of enormous amounts of gold and silver bullion from the Americas Spain continued to hold a peripheral relationship with the rest of Europe and merely passed on its riches by purchasing European finished goods. Finally, Spain allowed European investors to

¹⁰ Elliot, J.H. “The Decline of Spain.” *Past and Present* 0, no. 20 (1961): 52-75, 66-68.

¹¹ Elliot, 72-73.

¹² Kamen, Henry. “The Decline of Spain: A Historical Myth?” *Past and Present* 0, no. 81 (1978): 24-50, 25.

dominate trade with the New World and became more deeply dependent on these foreign interests.¹³ According to Kamen, foreign prejudice against Spain and domestic longing for a Golden Age combined to create a myth of a period of Spanish prosperity and power that actually concealed the empire's innate weakness. Thankfully, Kamen too moved beyond the Black Legend to find quantifiable causes for the so-called decline of Spain.

These aspects of Spain's history have fallen between the cracks of the floorboards of European history. Misconceptions, preconceptions, and propaganda espoused by Europeans and Spaniards alike have circumscribed Spanish historiography since the late sixteenth century. The movement of the Comuneros has encountered a similar fate: masked beneath the Black Legend and overlooked because of its failure, this sixteenth-century rebellion signifies a nascent form of the revolutionary movements that increased in frequency and significance throughout Europe over the next two hundred and seventy years. The Comunero or Comunidades uprising deserves reconsideration and reexamination as a pivotal moment in both Spanish and European history.

Comuneros and Comunidades

Two elements of the Comunero uprising that are important for understanding the episode are the meanings of the words comunero and comunidad. We will briefly examine each term and define them for our discussion. Común is a Spanish cognate to the English word common and as such, both words derive from the Latin communis that means common, general, or of /for the community. This close connection between the

¹³ Kamen, Henry. "The Decline of Spain: A Historical Myth?" *Past and Present* 0, no. 81 (1978): 24-50, 41-44.

Spanish común and the English common has led to the misinterpretation of comunero as commoner. As we will see, the Comuneros included individuals from all strata of Castile's urban society. Landed aristocrats such as Pedro Girón nephew of the Constable of Castile, clergy like Dominican friar Alonso de Medina of Valladolid, urban elites like Juan de Padilla and Juan Bravo influential members of Toledan and Segovian society respectively, as well as wealthy merchants, urban artisans, professional lawyers, minor tradesmen, and textile workers made up the Comunero membership.¹⁴ Once we understand the composition of the Comuneros, it becomes troublesome to define the movement as a class struggle originating from the lower orders of society. However, this failure by many scholars to identify the comuneros with their community rather than commoners has led to a misunderstanding of the rebellion. The Comunero uprising centered upon and sought the ascendancy of the community or in Spanish the comunidad. Comunidad has no direct cognate in English but best translates as community. Because these words stem from the same Latin root, communis, it is easy to confuse and combine meanings. Comuneros in the context of the 1520 unrest were members of the individual comunidades or communities that resisted Charles V and his Regency government. For our purposes, comunero has no class-value but signifies all members of the fourteen Cortes cities aligned against Charles. With this precise definition in mind, we can readily delineate the actors in the rebellion from the larger populace of Castile.

¹⁴ Pérez, Joseph. *La revolución de las Comunidades de Castilla (1520-1521)*. 6th ed, *Historia de los movimientos sociales*. Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno de España, 1977, 475-488. Pérez analyzes the composition of the Comuneros by examining the 293 persons refused pardon by Charles V in 1522.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter One will discuss the origin and nature of Isabel and Fernando's joint reign paying special attention to the institutions and techniques used by the couple to forge a state out of their separate Iberian kingdoms. As we will see, despite the monarchs' best efforts Spain remained a much more decentralized political entity and a much less effective administrative unit than generally portrayed. The strong autonomous traditions among the three estates of Castile proved too difficult for the centralizing efforts of Isabel and Fernando and led to a powerful yet fragile composite monarchy. This new state was strong enough to threaten the traditional power structures of Castile but at the same time did not possess the strength to bend those structures completely to its will. Because of their successes, the joint monarchs faced growing resentment from an increasingly difficult to control aristocratic, urban, and rural constituency. This combination of elements set the stage for the political upheaval experienced during the reign of Charles V.

Chapter Two will provide an abbreviated narrative of the Comunero uprising beginning with Castile's disappointment over its new monarch, Charles V. Charles quickly alienated his newly gained subjects through manipulation of their legislative institutions and the distribution of Castilian offices to his Flemish followers. His election as Holy Roman Emperor exacerbated the already hostile atmosphere in Castile and brought many of its cities into open rebellion. The Comunero movement sprang from the perfect mixture of previous complaints against the policies of Isabel and Fernando mixed with the present disaffection for Charles' violation of Castilian tradition. Although the uprising lasted only a year and failed militarily, the grievances and demands proffered by

the Comuneros look forward to the successful revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries solidifying the episode's importance in Spanish as well as European historiography. The actions and plans of the Comunidades represented a combination of medieval ideas of communal authority and local sovereignty with modern notions of representative government and limited monarchy.

Chapter Three will examine the historiographical interpretations of the Comunero movement from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Spanish political activists and traditional historians created the body of literature that encapsulated the nineteenth-century interest in the Comuneros. We will examine how these Spaniards used the Comunero rebellion as an ideological battlefield and how this influenced their perceptions of the uprising. In the twentieth century, academics outside of Spain became interested in the Comuneros. This flood of new scholarship expanded the number of analytical tools used to mine the sources on the rebellion particularly Marxist theory in the 1960s and Structural-Functional theory in the 1980s. After an initial reticence, scholars broke from the progressive/conservative paradigm of the uprising's nineteenth-century expositors and made real headway towards a more nuanced understanding of the rebellion.

Chapter Four will identify the episode of the Comunidades as a revolutionary movement. For this purpose, we will make clear the crucial differences that separate revolts from revolutions. Typically, scholars use *revolt* and *revolution* interchangeably however this practice complicates the investigation of early modern incidences of state upheaval by muddling all forms of violent action into one amorphous mixture. The tendency to use *revolution* only for instances where successful regime change or

complete social reordering occurred has relegated the programs and aspirations of unsuccessful revolutionaries to the less appropriate status of *revolt*. Rather than further confuse the issue by choosing and defining a new system for labeling the phenomenon we will continue to use *revolt* and *revolution*, though strictly defined. Next we will apply Jack Goldstone's theory on early modern state breakdown to the Comunero uprising and use his apparatus to further flesh out the event as a key case study for revolution within the sixteenth century.

A Note on Sources

The sources stand as the clear unifying factor for scholars of the Comunero movement. Historical interpretations of the episode have all originated from an examination of a well-defined and accepted body of source material. The Simancas archive at Valladolid contains approximately four thousand pieces in its collection which form the core of extant documentary and literary evidence regarding the Comunero uprising. These documents consist primarily of correspondence between Charles V and his regency government in Castile, letters issued by Toledo and other prominent Comunero towns, communications between the Comunero government and rebel cities, and communiqués from the Junta to Charles and his Regent. In addition to these governmental missives there are documents originating from the clergy that illuminate the importance of the Comunero uprising as a social phenomenon. Danvila published the bulk of these documents in the late 1890s and these texts form the basic framework necessary for piecing the Comunero narrative together. However, to obtain a more rounded vision of the rebellion there are additional sources to consult.

Two letter collections have figured prominently in the study of the Comunero crisis: the epistles of Antonio de Guevara and Pietro Martire d' Anghiera. Inconsistencies in the dates present in Guevara's *Epístolas Familiares* when compared to the documentary evidence have marginalized his contribution to the history of the Comuneros. The letters of Pietro Martire d' Anghiera contained in *Opus Epistolarum* are the more important and reliable of the two. An Italian and noted humanist trained at Rome, Martire served the Catholic Kings and the nobility of Castile until his death in 1526. Despite his royal leanings and close association with both the clergy and aristocracy of Spain, Martire's letters provide a surprisingly balanced view of the Comunero uprising and offer insight into the contemporary visualization of the rebellion by non-participants. The handful of letters most beneficial to the study of the Comuneros appear in an appendix to Antonio Ferrer del Rio's 1850 book *Decadencia de Espana*.

Friar Prudencio de Sandoval's *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V* published in 1634 chronicles Charles' life with a strong emphasis upon the early years of his reign. Sandoval lived from circa 1550 to 1620 and thus wrote his history of Charles after the monarch's death in 1558. This fact may account for Sandoval's inclusion of Comunero documents within his chronicle. Because Sandoval included transcriptions of many of the more important letters dealing with the Comunero episode, we have used his work as our main source of primary documents, most notably the Comunero letter of 20 October 1520 that outlined their plans for Castile. Reprinted in 1955 as volume 80 and 81 of the *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, Sandoval's collection is much easier to access and examine than Danvila's later work.

Other significant records reside in the individual archives of the Comunero cities such as Burgos, Cuenca, Toledo, Salamanca, Segovia, Avila, and Leon. The Archivo Histórico Nacional and the Real Academia Española, both in Madrid, also contain many resources related to the Comunidades. While many historians have relied heavily on the Danvila collection, a thorough investigation of the aforementioned archives is necessary for a new, full, and complete treatment of the Comunero rebellion.

CHAPTER ONE

ISABEL AND FERNANDO: THE ORGANIZATION OF A STATE

As a matter of course, studies of early modern Spain begin with the 1469 marriage of Isabel of Castile and Fernando of Aragon. Besides being a convenient date for historians to work with, the acceptance of this date stands as a testament to the prominence these monarchs hold in the collective memory of the Spanish people. The age of the joint monarchy still stands as the hallmark of the great Golden Age of Spain even for those who do not believe an actual “Golden Age” ever existed.¹⁵ Because of Isabel and Fernando’s close-kinship, cousins of the third degree, their nuptials did not receive papal approval until 1471. Upon approval, their union foreshadowed the fusion of Castile and Aragon and laid the foundation for what would later become a global, Catholic, Spanish empire. However, the internal violence that wracked both kingdoms obscured this glorious future behind a shroud of rebellion.

In 1474, Isabel inherited the crown of Castile upon the death of her half brother Enrique IV. Her succession did not progress smoothly as many powerful Castilian nobles sought to place Enrique’s young daughter, Juana *la Beltraneja*, on the throne. Ironically, during Enrique’s reign, his opponents labeled him impotent and this brought into question Juana’s parentage. The king’s critics suspected Beltrán de la Cueva as the child’s father and further denigrated the sovereign with her questioned paternity.¹⁶ Despite these rumors and their general loathing of Enrique IV, much of the nobility

¹⁵ Kamen, Henry. “The Decline of Spain: A Historical Myth?” *Past and Present* 0, no. 81 (1978): 24-50. Kamen disputes the notion that Spain experienced a definable Golden Age.

¹⁶ Miller, Townsend. *Henry IV of Castile, 1425-1474*. Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972, 122-125.

preferred Juana to Isabel and sought to continue the frail monarchy of Enrique by bringing his daughter to the throne. The rebellion of the aristocracy against Isabel continued fifteen years of civil war that had weakened Castile and fractured the kingdom's nobility. Enrique proved a weak monarch who elicited the animosity of the Castilian aristocracy and their dislike for him spilled over into the early years of Isabel's tenure as monarch. During this period, Isabel came to rely upon and openly courted the favor of the Castilian cities in an effort to increase her tenuous power base and strengthen her grip on the throne. In 1480 after considerable difficulty, Isabel, through adept politicking and careful coercion, finally secured the monarchy by bringing the dissenting nobles to her side, thus ending any serious threat Juana and her proponents posed.¹⁷ Fernando faced an equally difficult situation upon taking the throne of Aragon.

The smaller kingdom of Aragon included three separate realms: Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia. Only loosely joined these areas remained functionally independent. The separate constitutional structures of these distinctive regions caused continual difficulties between the monarchy and the sub-kingdoms. William Robertson quotes the traditional investiture ceremony attributed to the nobles of Aragon: "We, who are each of us as good, and altogether more powerful than you, promise obedience to your government if you maintain our rights and liberties; but if not, not."¹⁸ Considering this sentiment it is not surprising that Fernando's father, Juan II, faced a decade of civil war from 1462-1472. Juan actively supported the marriage of his son to Isabel of Castile,

¹⁷ Kamen, Henry. *Spain 1469-1714: A Society of Conflict*. New York: Longman Inc., 1983, 1-3.

¹⁸ Robertson, William. *The History of the Reign of Charles the Fifth by William Robertson, D.D.; with an Account of the Emperor's Life after His Abdication by William H. Prescott*. Edited by John Foster Kirk. Vol. I. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1884, 162.

in the hope of securing aid for his beleaguered state from its powerful western neighbor.

After successfully subduing his rebellious provinces, Juan II died in 1479 and left a divided, destitute, and decidedly individualistic kingdom to his son. Fernando's accession to the throne of Aragon, a decade after his marriage to Isabel, completed the union of Castile and Aragon and formed the basis of the future Spanish Empire.¹⁹

However, the two kingdoms did not adopt a uniform legislative model nor did they share a common law code. Additionally, though each of the monarchs exercised power in both realms this power rested solely upon their marriage. In other words no agreement existed that officially united the kingdoms of Castile and Argon.

Cementing the Joint Monarchy in Castile

After Fernando's accession to Aragon's throne, it became necessary for Isabel and Fernando to consolidate their joint authority over Castile. One of the means they used to secure their power revolved around encouraging the training of professional lawyers, *letrados*, who would take administrative positions throughout Castile on their behalf. The number of university and college trained bachelors rose steadily beginning in the mid-fifteenth and throughout the sixteenth century in no small part because of the emphasis placed on an educated administrative bureaucracy by the Catholic Kings.²⁰ Enrique IV attempted to implement a similar system but failed because of municipal resistance to his policies. The increased demand for lawyers led to the creation of eighteen new universities and an even larger number of smaller and cheaper institutions

¹⁹ Lynch, John. *Spain 1516-1598: From Nation State to World Empire*. Edited by John Lynch. *A History of Spain*. Padstow, Cornwall: T.J. Press Ltd., 1991, 1-5.

²⁰ Lynch, 2. Pope Alexander VI conferred this honorific upon Isabel and Fernando.

for less well-off students.²¹ These officials, known as *corregidores*, served the crown as an important counterpoise to the influential landed aristocrats and urban elites that dominated the political climate of Castilian towns and resented the extension of monarchical power, much as they had resented Enrique IV's earlier efforts at reigning in municipal power. Despite the dramatic increase in the number of institutions of higher learning and a royal requirement for *corregidores* to have lawyer training, it is important to note that the majority of these officials were never in fact *letrados*.²²

In addition to the *corregidores*, the Catholic Kings began the militarization of their newly secured domains based around the *Santa Hermandades* or Holy Brotherhoods. *Hermandades* had existed as institutions in Castile from the beginning of the thirteenth century, particularly in the north where they represented an urban-based militia/police force. Generally, these fellowships functioned at the municipal level but in times of great trouble larger unions comprising *hermandades* from several cities operated jointly. In 1386, the *Cortes* of Segovia unified the structuring of *hermandades* within Castile and charged them with the kingdom's peacekeeping duties. However, though codified as the police forces of the entire kingdom, the brotherhoods retained their local responsibilities to safe guard the interests of their individual municipalities. Indeed, during the aristocrat-backed rebellion of Alfonso against his half-brother Enrique IV in 1465, *hermandades* fought on both sides of the conflict while yet other brotherhoods

²¹ Kagan, Richard L. "Universities in Castile 1500-1700." *Past and Present* 0, no. 49 (1970): 44-71, 49. These numbers only represent the growth of higher education in Castile; a similar increase also occurred in Aragon.

²² Lunenfeld, Marvin. *Keepers of the City: The Corregidores of Isabella I of Castile, 1474-1504*. Edited by P.E. Russell, *Cambridge Iberian and Latin American Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 16-17.

remained wholly neutral.²³ In 1473, the new bylaws of the “New General Brotherhood of Castile and Leon” reaffirmed defense of the Castilian crown as the primary obligation of the *hermandades*.²⁴ Upon Isabel’s accession, she and Fernando adroitly co-opted these forces and used them to expand and pacify Castile. The *hermandades* served the new monarchs well during their troubled succession by supporting them in their confrontations with resistant nobility and strongly influencing towns that had not already pledged themselves to Isabel. Without the direct support of the *hermandades* and the towns they represented it is doubtful that the monarchs could have succeeded or even survived the early years of their reign.

Upon the resolution of the succession crisis, new *hermandades* formed throughout Castile and came under the authority of the *Council of the Santa Hermandad* a statewide organization that unified the various brotherhoods under the rubric of the Catholic Kings. These forces kept order throughout the kingdom and waited in anticipation of war against Muslim Granada. Indeed, the growing power and effectiveness of the *hermandades* allowed Isabel and Fernando to bypass the fractious nobility and receive widespread though begrudging support directly from Castile’s towns allowing for an accelerated invasion of Grenada. What support the crown did receive from the aristocracy came in return for large land grants in Castile proper and promises of land in Andalusia and Grenada after its defeat.²⁵ In 1481, the final war of *La Reconquista* commenced pitting the new Spanish *monarquía* against the Nasrid dynasty of Grenada. Here it is important

²³ Lunenfeld, Marvin. *The Council of the Santa Hermandad: A Study of the Pacification Forces of Ferdinand and Isabella*. Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1970, 19-21.

²⁴ Lunenfeld, 22-23.

²⁵ Lunenfeld, 43-44.

to note the implications of *monarquía*. Kamen defines *monarquía* as a collection of “realms associating together on a basis of autonomy and equality.”²⁶ Using *monarquía* rather than empire emphasizes the patchwork nature of the Spanish kingdoms and suggests an internal independence that is integral to understanding the political nature of Spain from the fifteenth century onward.

The Spanish Inquisition also served as an effective tool through which the Catholic Kings consolidated their power. Founded and legitimated by papal bull in 1478, the Inquisition began as a surprisingly lenient method of controlling the *converso* population of southern Castile. Castilians identified Jewish and Muslim converts to Christianity and their descendants as *conversos* though the term applied primarily to former Jews. By 1480, the Inquisition expanded its number of inquisitors and stepped up its activities against the New Christians resulting in its inaugural *auto de fe* in 1481. Though Isabel and Fernando’s underlying reasons for instituting the Inquisition remain hotly debated it appears that reducing the power of New Christian nobles and urban elites within Andalusia, particularly around Seville and Cordoba which had resisted Isabel’s affirmation to the throne, was the primary political objective of the Inquisition. By ensuring religious orthodoxy in southern Castile, the Catholic Kings effectively subdued their opposition and strengthened their hold upon the realm.²⁷ The monarchs adeptly employed the office of the Inquisition to create and intensify religious intolerance for solidifying their political position.

²⁶ Kamen, Henry. “The Habsburg Lands: Iberia.” In *Handbook of European History 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*, edited by Heiko A. Oberman Thomas A. Brady, James D. Tracy. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994, 470-471.

²⁷ Kamen, Henry. *The Spanish Inquisition: An Historical Revision*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997, 46-47.

The Cement Chips

In January of 1492, after ten years of warfare, Granada succumbed to the forces of Isabel and Fernando removing the last Muslim kingdom from Iberia. Later in the year, the Catholic Kings ordered the Spanish Jews expelled from the peninsula and funded the first expedition of Christopher Columbus to the New World.²⁸ By the end of the year, Isabel and Fernando had set the stage for Spain to become the dominant world empire of the sixteenth century but the monarchs still had internal divisions to deal with, divisions that would jeopardize their monumental achievements.

As the incumbency of the Catholic Kings wore on, cracks appeared within the reestablished *corregidor* system. Local nobles wrangled for and eventually secured the power of appointment for these royal officials. This led members of the town oligarchies to distrust and suspect their *corregidores* of favoritism and corruption through their relationship with the local nobility. Resentment increased steadily on all sides and would eventually erupt in after the death of Isabel.²⁹

In 1497, Isabel and Fernando dissolved the council of the *Santa Hermandad* and thereby removed one of the primary methods used by local elites to advance in the state-level political arena. While dismantling the kingdom-wide apparatus for employing the *hermandades*, the Catholic Kings allowed for the reestablishment of the militia in their home cities and these formations remained key extensions of civic power, unchecked by royal authority, until near the end of Charles V's reign. Individual brotherhoods

²⁸ Kamen, Henry. "The Mediterranean and the Expulsion of Spanish Jews in 1492." *Past and Present* 0, no. 119 (1988): 30-55.

²⁹ Lunenfeld, Marvin. *Keepers of the City: The Corregidores of Isabella I of Castile, 1474-1504*. Edited by P.E. Russell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 166-168.

continued to serve as constable, judge, and executioner of criminals within their territories. The population of Castile loathed and feared the brotherhoods. Punishments ranged from mutilation to death and the *hermandades* carried these out with zeal and vigor. By comparison, even the feared Inquisition appeared merciful.³⁰

Additionally, the monarchs appeared unconcerned by the continuing encroachment of the Castilian nobility upon royal lands. The concept of royal territory in sixteenth-century Castile requires some explanation. Under the tenure system in place in Castile, municipal lands fell under the direct authority of the monarchy as a side effect of the distribution of lands recaptured during *La Reconquista*. The complex and varied terminology used in structuring and describing this form of land usage made legal recourse against infringing nobles difficult at best and when combined with a potentially corrupt *corregidor* virtually impossible. David E. Vassberg related the complex nature of the Castilian system of land tenure with his explication of what areas constituted royal land.

The word *baldío* had several meanings in sixteenth-century Castile. Crown lands were called *baldíos* not only when they were not officially granted and unused, but also when they had been appropriated for private use without a specific royal grant, even if that appropriation had taken place generations before, and the land was currently being treated as private property. In other words, *baldíos* remained crown lands, but they could also be crown lands that had been usurped into the private domain.³¹

The ambiguous nature of royal parcels coupled with the crown's propensity for granting municipal hinterlands to the aristocracy in an effort to garner their support for the

³⁰ Lunenfeld, Marvin. *The Council of the Santa Hermandad: A Study of the Pacification Forces of Ferdinand and Isabella*. Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1970, 93-98.

³¹ Vassberg, David E. *Land and Society in Golden Age Castile*. Edited by P.E. Russell, *Cambridge Iberian and Latin American Studies*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 8.

Granada campaign, severely tried the power of the monarchy, and infuriated civic elites who saw this practice as a direct challenge to municipal authority. While it is possible that Isabel and Fernando offered land tracts in Grenada to the Castilian nobility in an effort to alleviate aristocratic infringement on public/royal lands this is highly unlikely. Though the outright sale of *baldíos* did not occur until the reign of Phillip II, land became one of the means by which the Catholic Kings gained the support of the nobility at the cost of the municipal loyalty that had served them so well throughout the succession crisis and their war with Grenada.³²

The Departure of Isabel

Isabel died in 1504, throwing Castile once again into a crisis of succession. Because of the premature death of Isabel and Fernando's son Juan in 1497, the crown of Castile passed to the couple's eldest daughter Juana *la Loca*. As her name implies, Juana suffered from bouts of mental instability and therefore appeared unfit to take the throne. Isabel made concession for this in her will by naming Fernando as her regent. Trouble ensued when the Flemish prince, Phillip the Fair, Juana's husband, decided to force the issue of his wife's claim to the throne. The *Cortes* of Castile accepted Juana as queen and in 1505, her husband Phillip became the de facto ruler of Castile. However, Phillip promptly died in 1506 and once again, the succession hung in doubt. Fernando received the call to serve as regent for his mad daughter, and Charles of Ghent, Juana and Phillip's

³² Vassberg, David E. *Land and Society in Golden Age Castile*. Edited by P.E. Russell, *Cambridge Iberian and Latin American Studies*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 172-175.

eldest son, became heir apparent. Juana's claim to the throne would resurface during the Comunero crisis but for the time being had subsided.³³

Over the next nine years, Fernando ruled well and increased the size of Spain by seizing Navarre and parts of Italy via Spain's participation in the League of Cambrai. Fernando successfully governed by keeping Spanish interests focused abroad rather than on the internal matters that had forced the bloody succession crisis upon Enrique IV's death. His daughter Juana sank deeper into madness and resided in seclusion at Tordesillas in the constant company of her husband's corpse. Thankfully, Castile and Aragon remained at peace internally and prospered against their external enemies through the expert guidance of Fernando and Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros who served ably as his co-regent.³⁴

Despite the best efforts of Isabel and Fernando and later of Fernando and Jiménez to foster centralization and unification of the Spanish realms, the *monarquía* remained a loose amalgamation of separate kingdoms thinly united and highly independent. The interests of the monarchy butted against the interests of the aristocracy, which in turn butted against the interests of the municipalities. Prone to periodic rebellion and striving for greater unity this emerging state would face the first true test of its tenuous confederation upon Fernando's death in 1516 when Juana *la Loca* and her son, Charles, inherited the crowns of Castile and Aragon and officially united the realms of Spain.

³³ Lynch, John. *Spain 1516-1598: From Nation State to World Empire*. Edited by John Lynch. 1991 ed, *A History of Spain*. Padstow, Cornwall: T.J. Press Ltd., 1991, 44-45.

³⁴ Lynch, 38-48. It is worthy to note that during this period Jiménez oversaw the completion of the Polyglot Bible.

CHAPTER II

THE COMUNIDADES: A SHORT-LIVED REBELLION

The nobles and urban oligarchs of Spain, Castile in particular, did not find the prospect of another Flemish ruler to their liking. The year that Phillip the Fair guided the state had soured the Castilians and strengthened their dislike for foreign intervention in their government and society. The majority of nobles preferred the idea of raising Juana *la Loca*'s younger son, Fernando, who had spent a great deal of his youth in Castile, to the throne rather than Charles. Ostensibly, the *grandees* believed that Charles should not receive the throne because he had never visited Spain and therefore would represent only alien interests. Open rebellion may have ensued if not for the skillful campaigning of Cardinal Jiménez. The aging clergyman served as regent during Charles' absence and eagerly anticipated the coming of his new liege to allay the fears of Castile's anxious populous. However, by the time of Charles' arrival in November 1517, Jiménez lay on his deathbed and no one stood between the seventeen-year-old king and his unhappy nobles and subjects. Jiménez had governed Castile in an indelicate manner frequently quashing urban uprisings with military force and intimidating the nobility into obedience. However, Regent Jiménez's attempt to implement a compulsory military draft throughout Castile proved the final straw and alienated town and nobility alike. Castile had become combative with Jiménez and the king would fare no better.³⁵

³⁵ Seaver, Henry Latimer. *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966, 31.

A Prelude to Hostility

Charles set about securing his claim to the thrones of Castile and Aragon and, more pointedly, issued multiple requests for funding from his new lands. Despite their contrary wishes, the *Cortes* of Castile and its mirror institutions in the three provinces of Aragon ordered the payment of generous subsidies to Charles over the next three years. Charles also distributed many Castilian titles and offices to his Flemish favorites. This reordering of Castilian positions included replacing the ailing and soon-dead Jiménez as Regent with Charles' personal tutor, Cardinal Adrian of Utrecht, much to the dislike of the Castilians.³⁶ The new king also made unpopular decisions when assigning the offices of the Constable and Admiral of Castile the two most prestigious state positions after Regent. Charles spent two years introducing himself to the legislative bodies of Spain and collecting their promises of monetary support when, in 1519, he learned of his election as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Charles' election required expensive bribes and subsidies that left the new emperor deeply in debt to European banking houses, the Fuggers in particular. This new development caused Charles to break protocol and immediately make further requests for monies from the bewildered Spanish legislatures. The bulk of these newly requested proceeds would go to pay Charles' imperial debts an issue that deeply troubled the Castilians. Sandoval records how these

³⁶ Seaver, Henry Latimer. *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966, 78-80.

abuses by the new king further alienated his new subjects particularly in the key city of Toledo.³⁷

Toledo's increasing unhappiness with Charles' policies during April 1520 presaged the storm that eventually swept Castile's most important municipalities into open rebellion against the crown. Toledo long and vociferously protested many of the new king's policies beginning with its July 1519 demand that Charles reinstate Castile's current tax system, the *encabezamiento*. This method of levying taxes was Spain's tax farming system. Adopted in 1494, local nobles would contract for the tax collection responsibilities for each region of Castile. Fernando codified the last *encabezamiento* agreement in 1512 and the practice was set to cease shortly after Charles took the throne. Despite Toledo's urgings, Charles did not officially reestablish this type of tax scheme until 1535, though he did grant a six-year extension of the practice. In a letter dated 7 November 1519, Toledo requested that the king reside in Castile, keep the kingdom's treasury intact, and prevent foreigners from holding Castilian offices. Additionally, the Toledans requested the popular election of *procuradores* to the Castilian *Cortes* as a means of increasing local control over state politics.³⁸ These early pleadings of Toledo went unheeded and would reappear in the fall of 1520. In addition, by the early days of 1520, Charles had firmly ensconced the nineteen-year-old Guillaume de Croy, one of his Flemish favorites, as the Archbishop of Toledo in violation of Castilian tradition. This

³⁷ "Libro Tercero XLIV." Sandoval, Prudencio de. *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V.* Edited by Carlos Seco Sarrano. Vol. 80, *Biblioteca de autores españoles*. Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1955, 153-154.

³⁸ "Carta que escribe Toledo." in Sandoval, Prudencio de. *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V.* Edited by Carlos Seco Sarrano. Vol. 80, *Biblioteca de autores españoles*. Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1955, 194.

was particularly egregious to the Toledans as the See of Toledo represented the wealthiest and most influential church office in Christendom save the Papacy itself. However, the denizens of Toledo were not the only Castilians dismayed by the influx of Flemings.

The question of how prevalent and problematic the investiture and gifting of Castilian positions proved is well documented by Pietro Martire d' Anghiera. Martire held an influential position as a respected and highly sought after Humanist among the clerical and secular elite of Castile. Born and trained in Italy, Martire made his career in Castile through his service to the monarchy of Isabel and Fernando. Because of his lofty connections, one would expect Martire's comments regarding the state of affairs in Castile to provide a strongly royalist perspective. However, in a letter dated 4 March 1520 Martire wrote to Mercurino Gatinara and expressed his sorrow that Charles V faced an increasing number of enemies within Castile itself. Martire forecasted the growing discontent of Castile and mentioned specifically the king's failure at the *Cortes* of Santiago.³⁹ In another letter written to one Bishop Marliano on 29 November 1520, Martire writes, "Charles is not to blame" for the troubles in Castile but rather the "arrogant servants" he sent to Spain.⁴⁰ Martire's carefully phrased indictment of Charles' Flemish faction during the height of the uprising suggests that though staunchly royalist

³⁹ "Epístola 663." in: Ferrer del Rió, Antonio. *Decadencia de España: Primera parte: Historia del Levantamiento de las Comunidades de Castilla, 1520-1521*. Madrid: Establecimiento Tipografico de Mellado, 1850, 350-351.

⁴⁰ "Epístola 703." in Ferrer del Rió, Antonio. *Decadencia de España: Primera parte: Historia del Levantamiento de las Comunidades de Castilla, 1520-1521*. Madrid: Establecimiento Tipografico de Mellado, 1850, 351.

Martire understood the anguish caused by this influx of foreigners and that the same anguish existed among the loyalists.

Segovia Leads the Way

The first notable outbreak of anti-royal violence occurred in the city of Segovia located in east-central Castile in response to the results of the *Cortes* of Santiago-Coruña. This *Cortes* uses a dual designation because it represents separate meetings in two different towns. During the gathering at Santiago, the *Cortes* refused to promise additional monies to Charles so he convened another meeting at Coruña prior to his departure for Germany to accept the crown of the Holy Roman Empire. At this second *Cortes*, the delegates acquiesced to Charles' demands in exchange for the apportionment of monies and royal postings for many of the *procuradores*. On 29 May after receiving the particulars regarding the nature and sums of the latest *servicio* granted to the king, disaffected members of Segovia's populace captured and hanged two assistants to the city's *alguacil* as a testament to the mounting frustration and disagreement between the new monarch and the cities of Castile. The next day the mob continued its violent endeavors and brutally hanged Rodrigo de Tordesillas, one of the city's *procuradores* to the *Cortes*. After the murder of Tordesillas, other members of the royal government fled the city under duress and a tripartite assembly comprised of clergy, city council members, and community leaders took over the administration of Segovia.⁴¹ In response to this violent usurpation of royal authority by Segovia's new municipal council, Cardinal

⁴¹ Seaver, Henry Latimer. *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966, 80-81; 90-91. Haliczer, Stephen. *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981, 3.

Adrian called for the meager military forces at his disposal to move on the rebellious town and restore the regency's control. However, the royal troops were unable to subdue the city and settled into an ineffectual siege.

In a letter issued to the other seventeen member cities of the Castilian *Cortes*, Toledo suggested the formation of a General Junta to resist the policies of Charles V and the Regency government. The authors justified their position by likening the *Cortes* communes to a contemporary collective Brutus defending their *patria* against a tyrannical Caesarean regime. However, Toledo's characterization of its monarch overstated the situation. The letter only convinced three other *Cortes* cities to send representatives to the Junta council at Ávila in spite of the events at Segovia. The only date to appear in this document is the year 1520 so it is unclear when Toledo sent this call for resistance though the authors' allusion to the events of May 1520 in Segovia suggests a date of late May or early July.⁴²

The Junta of Ávila and Medina del Campo

While Salamanca, Segovia, Toledo, and Toro formed the fledgling Comunero Junta in Ávila, Cardinal Adrian dispatched Antonio de Fonseca to secure the artillery park at Medina del Campo and from there move on to subdue the defiant Segovia. Besides being a repository for the royal artillery, Medina del Campo was also the center for Castile's annual international fairs. On 21 August, Fonseca and approximately two thousand soldiers put Medina del Campo to the torch after the town refused to relinquish

⁴² "Carta de Toledo a las demás ciudades invitándolas a reunirse en junta." in Ferrer del Rió, Antonio. *Decadencia de España: Primera parte: Historia del Levantamiento de las Comunidades de Castilla, 1520-1521*. Madrid: Establecimiento Tipografico de Mellado, 1850, 359-361.

the artillery. After the conflagration, hastily organized Junta forces caused Fonseca to withdraw from the area leaving behind a town martyred for the Comunero cause. A letter from Segovia to Medina del Campo sent on 23 August 1520 recounted the price the town paid for refusing Fonseca's demands, credited Medina with saving Segovia from destruction, and pledged monetary aid to the town.⁴³

After the debacle at Medina del Campo Adrian tried desperately to rein in the junta by offering to preside over an official meeting of the *Cortes* at Tordesillas. By 29 August, the point became moot as Juan de Padilla and the Comunero forces under his control with the aid of the royal artillery from Medina del Campo secured Tordesillas and received Queen Juana's blessing to restore order to Castile. Cardinal Adrian related the importance Juana held for the Comunero cause in a letter to Charles V dated 4 September 1520:

For already they [the Comuneros leadership] say she can do as much as Your Highness, except sign her name, (which they have not yet managed to have her do), since all that Your Majesty has done or does is through the hand of others, simply agreeing to and signing what they have decided; and this the Queen will be able to do.⁴⁴

By 28 September, the Comunero Junta had the upper hand having taken Valladolid the seat of the Regency government. Adrian managed to escape the city on 15 October and relocated to Medina de Rioseco where he sought to reestablish his control over Castile. In early October, the Comunero government made another bid to strengthen and legitimize their position by proclaiming a Captain-General over all Comunero forces.

⁴³ "Carta de Segovia a Medina del Campo." in Ferrer del Rió, Antonio. *Decadencia de España: Primera parte: Historia del Levantamiento de las Comunidades de Castilla, 1520-1521*. Madrid: Establecimiento Tipografico de Mellado, 1850, 356-358.

⁴⁴ Seaver, Henry Latimer. *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966, 142. Seaver quotes from a document found in Danvila.

The Comunidades council chose Pedro Girón, a nephew of the Constable of Castile and popular *grandee* in his own right, to fill this important position. The Junta chose Girón over the more popular Padilla because of the nobleman's lofty lineage and influential friends among the aristocracy.⁴⁵ Girón's appointment, while unwanted by many rank-and-file Comuneros, was an attempt by the Junta to garner the direct support of the Castilian aristocracy. As October drew to a close the Comunero uprising had reached its high water mark. Here we will break from our narrative and examine the program laid out by the Comunidades to Charles V.

The Comunero Demands

The governing council of the Comunidades enumerated their grievances and outlined their demands in a letter sent to Charles V dated 20 October 1520. This document followed hard upon the heels of the capture of Valladolid by Comunero forces and the resulting flight of the Regency government to Medina del Rioseco. With the Comuneros at the height of their power, the Junta leaders formally declared their intentions for the Castilian state. An examination of this document beginning with its introductory section that lays out the Comunero grievances will clarify the Comunero position and reveal the revolutionary nature of the movement. However, rather than inspect this lengthy dispatch line by line we will divide the provisions of the document into three categories. The first contains the *capítulos* or parts that dealt primarily with the return of the Castilian monarchy to a more traditional form. The second includes

⁴⁵ Seaver, Henry Latimer. *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966, 168-169.

demands that sought to take royal prerogatives and grant them to the *Cortes*. The third contains those stipulations that directly limited the governing power of the monarchy and its officials while granting these same powers to the *Cortes*. This tripartite division will facilitate our analysis while maintaining the integrity of the Junta's demands.

The 20 October document opens with a lengthy recounting of the chaotic events that took place within Castile after Charles V's departure for Germany to secure his election as Holy Roman Emperor on 20 May 1520. This preamble focuses on the uproar caused by the additional *servicios* approved at Santiago-Coruña and the siege of Segovia and destruction of Medina del Campo by Antonio de Fonseca. The Comunero leadership used the military actions of the Regency via Fonseca to justify the formation of an alternate government in accordance with Castilian tradition.⁴⁶ Charles' flouting of Castilian tradition, the heavy-handed measures employed by Regent Adrian, and the nominal support of Queen Juana gave the Junta legitimacy in its own eyes.

The *capítulos* aimed at bringing Charles' monarchy into line with Castilian tradition makeup a majority of the early demands set forth by the Junta. Foremost among these demands was a plea for the presence of their sovereign within Castile itself. The authors argued that "Because it is not the custom of Castile to be without its king" the kingdom could not operate in a manner "convenient" for the collection of Charles' *servicios*. Here the Comuneros bolster their displeasure at Charles' leave taking with a promise that his continued absence will lead to a loss of royal revenue though cloaking

⁴⁶ "Junta to Charles V" in Sandoval, Prudencio de. *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V*. Edited by Carlos Seco Sarrano. Vol. 80, *Biblioteca de autores españoles*. Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1955, 294-317, 294-300.

the threat behind tradition.⁴⁷ Along with the royal presence, the letter also called for Charles to take an Iberian bride, limit royal gifts, forbid the transfer of royal property to grandees, remove foreigners from Castilian offices, and forbid the use of foreign troops on Castilian soil. While these requests appear straightforward and even reasonable on the surface, the formalized phrase that ends many of these requests changes their tone: “Y que Su Alteza y sus herederos y sucesores en estos sus reinos, lo guarden y cumplan así perpetuamente.”⁴⁸ This passage calls for Charles, his heirs, or legal successors to implement and protect these changes perpetually moving them from suggestions for a smooth-running Castile to royally empowered definitions of monarchical tradition that places the burden of compliance firmly upon the monarchy. At once, these demands outline royal responsibility to the Castilian people and imply that failure to comply on the part of the monarch is a breach of trust.

The provisions aimed at reducing royal prerogatives appear throughout the document and deal with four areas: the appointing of royal advisors, the management of military orders, the approval of Papal bulls, and the calling of crusades. We will briefly cover each of these sections as these segue nicely between our first and second groupings. The limitations sought for royal advisors echoes the same sentiments expressed for Castilian offices holder: no foreign advisors. Not only must royal advisors be native Spaniards they must also possess good reputations and ultimately are subject to approval by the Castilian *Cortes*. In addition, under the Comunero schema oversight of the financial remuneration of advisors comes under the power of the *Cortes*. These same

⁴⁷ “Junta to Charles V,” 300.

⁴⁸ “Junta to Charles V,” 300-301.

limitations would apply to the raising of Grand Marshals to the powerful military orders that existed within Castile like the Order of Santiago.⁴⁹ By demanding these controls on royal appointments, the Comuneros sought to attack the royal ability to distribute funds and honors to curry favor without the inclusion of the Castilian *Cortes* ultimately leading to a weakening of the monarchy as a rival to the *Cortes*. Similarly, the Junta demanded that all Church Bulls and crusades must receive *Cortes* authorization. This proviso sought primarily to reduce the taxes implemented by the crown. We must remember that the *décima* granted Charles V by Pope Leo X represented a tax on clergy for the defense of Christendom; however, in practice it became a means for Charles to access the coffers of the Spanish Church for his political machinations in Europe rather than to resist Suleiman the Magnificent.⁵⁰ If enacted this demand would also prevent the calling of crusades for similar fund raising efforts like the war against Grenada launched by Isabel and Fernando without *Cortes* assent. By limiting royal prerogatives, the Junta expected to increase its control over the internal politics of Spain as well as Spain's political interaction with Europe and the rest of the world.

Our final grouping of demands struck directly at royal power and formed the more radical and revolutionary framework of the Comunidades' program. Chief among these items was the desire that control of *procurador* election belong to the cities sending these representatives. Since Isabel and Fernando's implementation of the expanded *corregidor* system *procuradores* had to meet with royal approval via the resident

⁴⁹ "Junta to Charles V." in Sandoval, Prudencio de. *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V.* Edited by Carlos Seco Sarrano. Vol. 80, *Biblioteca de autores españoles*. Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1955, 294-317, 309.

⁵⁰ Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1520-1566 and was considered the chief outside threat to Christendom during Charles V's reign.

corregidor before attending meetings of the *Cortes*. Naturally, this requirement ensured that all *procuradores* sent to the meeting were predisposed to grant whatever the monarchy desired.⁵¹ However, the Junta not only demanded that *Cortes* cities gain the right to select *procuradores* but that these cities also maintain the authority to override their representatives decisions, receive timely updates regarding *Cortes* debates, and hold responsibility for monetary remuneration of their delegates. On top of these already prodigious changes the authors purposed that the *Cortes* meet every three years whether called by the monarch or not. With these changes in place, the *Cortes* would become the more powerful force in any monarchy/*Cortes* deliberations. According to the authors, “with their new freedoms . . . the *procuradores* . . . will ably serve God, King, and the public good of their cities.”⁵² Despite their assertions, it is abundantly clear that the *Cortes* cities would make significant gains under this program while the monarchy would suffer serious set backs. Additionally, the Junta asked for a revision of the Castilian court system or *audiencias*. Under the then extant system, district judges did not have to reside within their area of jurisdiction and could serve unlimited terms. This arrangement caused the back logging of caseloads and fraud particularly in cases where the judge maintained ties to the landed nobility in their region. The near perpetual nature of these judgeships led to corruption and prevented the non-noble from receiving fair adjudication of the law. This situation was the primary reason why the Castilian system of land tenure remained in chaos throughout the reign of the Catholic Monarchs and relates directly to

⁵¹ The *Cortes* of Santiago-Coruña was the most recent example of this method of choosing *procuradores*.

⁵² “Junta to Charles V” in Sandoval, Prudencio de. *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V*. Edited by Carlos Seco Sarrano. Vol. 80, *Biblioteca de autores españoles*. Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1955, 294-317, 304-305.

other capítulos demanding the return of usurped royal lands into the patrimony.⁵³ The authors called for oversight committees to monitor and punish abuses of the *audiencias* as well as demanding that judges have requisite training as lawyers before assuming office.⁵⁴ As the Cortes and local assemblies would assume the oversight powers suggested this was another direct assault on royal power and the monarchy's means of controlling its subjects through manipulation of the Castilian legal system. The Junta targeted the monarchy's power over both the legislative and juridical apparatus of Castile as a means of converting the government from an aspiring absolutist institution into a de facto constitutional monarchy.

The Comuneros disguised their bid for a revolutionary form of government by ably combining requests for a traditional-style Castilian monarchy with their open demands for a shift in power away from the king and towards the *Cortes*. This cunningly crafted document at once evokes Castile's storied past while it reaches towards a bold new future, a future that would happen in England during the English Civil War. Indeed, in his 1652 translation of Sandoval's history regarding the Comuneros John Wright avers "that had not tho[s]e in Ca[s]tilla had the privilege of many years before us, wee[sic] might have been [s]aid to have been their pattern, although the [s]uce[ss]es are

⁵³ See discussion in Chapter One.

⁵⁴ "Junta to Charles V" in Sandoval, Prudencio de. *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V*. Edited by Carlos Seco Sarrano. Vol. 80, *Biblioteca de autores españoles*. Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1955, 294-317, 307-308.

different.”⁵⁵ With the pattern in place, the future appeared at hand but in September 1520, the Comunero cause would begin its decline.

Risings in the Countryside and the Loss of Tordesillas

On 1 September the residents of Dueñas, a small village approximately thirty miles north of Valladolid rose against their seigneurial lord. The return of Dueñas to the royal domain was the main demand put forward by the peasants. The township had become a de facto part of the count of Buendía’s estates under the reign of Enrique IV, as had many other villages. This practice continued during the reign of Isabel and Fernando with the effected hamlets pleas for relief falling on the deaf ears of the corrupted *audiencias*. The residents of Dueñas after replacing the seigneurial officials with an elected village council went on to foment rebellion throughout Buendía’s holdings. With similar risings throughout Castile, the nobility feared that their power base was under attack. The Comunidades Junta further exacerbated the nobility’s growing concerns by refusing to assist in the suppression of these rural revolts. Ultimately, the fear of losing their seigneurial holdings drove the *grandees* to support the Regency government. Despite strong ties to the aristocracy, the agitation and violence of the rural population undermined the Comunero position. By late November, the Comuneros began actively supporting some antiseigneurial operations with Junta troops and the rift between the

⁵⁵ Wright, John. *The Civil Wars of Spain, in the Reign of Charls [Sic] the Fifth, Emperour of Germanie, and King of That Nation. Wherein Our Late Unhappie Differences Are Paralel'd in Many Particulars. Written by Prudentio De Sandoval, Doctor of Divinitie, Historiographer Roial to Philip the Third Now Faithfully Translated into English by Major John Wright* [Primary Source Database]. Early English Books Online, 1652 [cited 15 March 2004].

aristocracy and municipalities widened too far.⁵⁶ The Comuneros reluctance to act decisively concerning these rural uprisings like the one at Dueñas damaged the movement's credibility with the aristocracy and ultimately sounded the death knell for the rebellion.

On 5 December, the first great defeat of the Comunero forces occurred with the loss of Tordesillas and access to Queen Juana. Through a military mistake or possibly outright treachery by Girón, royalist forces took the city in a relatively brief and bloodless engagement.⁵⁷ The loss of Juana devastated the Junta by removing their best claim to legitimacy and shattering their faith in their Captain-General. This set back coupled with Royalist victories in other areas of Castile shook the Comuneros who had experienced only success throughout the fall of 1520.⁵⁸ A pall fell over the Comuneros after the events surrounding Tordesillas and their ultimate defeat appeared certain.

Juan de Padilla and the Last Gambit of the Comunidades

New life entered the Comuneros with the arrival of 1521 and the raising of Juan de Padilla, the hero of Tordesillas and one of the more charismatic leaders of the Toledan faction, to Captain-General. Padilla's appointment profoundly bolstered the morale and effectiveness of the Comunero troops and instilled a renewed vigor among Comunero sympathizers among the population at large. A contemporary account by Alonso de

⁵⁶ Haliczzer, Stephen. *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981, 185-189.

⁵⁷ The veracity of Girón's treachery remains unproven but his loss of Tordesillas and the queen led to his split with the Comuneros.

⁵⁸ Seaver, Henry Latimer. *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966, 201-211.

Santa Cruz of Padilla's entrance into Valladolid relates the elation brought on by his promotion and arrival:

So extreme was the love and repute in which Juan de Padilla was generally held in all the towns that what I can here write is very little compared with what I myself then saw. For clerics would quit their churches to follow him, women and girls go from village to village to see him, peasants would go with their carts and mules to serve him without pay, soldiers and squires would fight without wage under his banner, villages where he passed supplied food to him and his troops liberally; when he went through the streets everybody stationed themselves at doors and windows showering on him a thousand blessings; in the churches public prayers were rendered that God should guide him; and he accounted himself fortunate who had most seen and served him.⁵⁹

Regardless of any hyperbole by Santa Cruz, Padilla evoked new enthusiasm for the flagging cause of the Comunidades and removed the taint of the nobility represented by Girón from the Comunero military forces.⁶⁰ Now Padilla needed successes to counteract the set backs of December.

An anonymous and undated letter written by a cleric of Burgos appears in Sandoval and calls for the uniting of the "Universidad" or Comunidad against the depredations of Charles V and for the defense of the *patria*.⁶¹ The emphatic language used in this plea suggests that the author wrote the letter in response to Burgos' decision to leave the Comunidades after the set backs of the winter of 1520. This letter hints at the grim situation Padilla faced as he took command.

⁵⁹ Seaver, Henry Latimer. *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966, 222. Seaver quotes from Santa Cruz's unfinished biography of Charles V.

⁶⁰ Haliczzer, Stephen. *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981, 199.

⁶¹ "Carta de un religioso." in Sandoval, Prudencio de. *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V*. Edited by Carlos Seco Sarrano. Vol. 80, *Biblioteca de autores españoles*. Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1955, 229-230.

Throughout January, February, and March of 1521 Padilla gained several military victories particularly at Ampudia and Torrelobatón that disheartened the Royalists and enhanced Padilla's reputation as a magnificent warrior and tactician.⁶² However, while Padilla secured his position at Torrelobatón Royalist forces closed in on him and forced the Comunero leader to meet them in battle near Villalar on 23 April. The battle turned quickly into a rout as Royalist cavalry dispersed and shattered the Comunero forces taking Padilla and Juan Bravo, Segovia's famed commander, captive. On 24 April, the Royalist forces executed the Comunero captains and the uprising effectively ended though several enclaves continued to resist including Toledo which held out until February of 1522 under the leadership of Padilla's wife. Count Haro, leader of the Royalist forces recounted the action at Villalar in a letter to Charles V dated 24 May 1521. Haro details the execution of the primary Comunero officers and the disposition of Castile after the battle.⁶³

The accession of Charles of Ghent and his mad mother Juana to the throne of Castile presented a unique opportunity to the disaffected members of the landed aristocracy, urban oligarchy, and rural peasantry to test the bounds of the new monarchy's power. The memory of Charles' father and the incursion of Flemish courtiers inflamed *grandees* and town elites against the young king and brought about a semi-unified front combining these two powerful portions of Castilian society. The peasantry, with dreams of breaking away from seigneurial domination and regaining

⁶² Seaver, Henry Latimer. *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966, 224; 246-252.

⁶³ "Parte de la jornada de Villalar." Reprinted in: Ferrer del Rió, Antonio. *Decadencia de España: Primera parte: Historia del Levantamiento de las Comunidades de Castilla, 1520-1521*. Madrid: Establecimiento Tipografico de Mellado, 1850, 378-380.

lands usurped by the aristocracy, attempted to align themselves with the Comunero cause to their ultimate undoing by dividing the Junta government and driving the aristocracy firmly into the Royalist camp. Miscues by Comunero leaders and the crushing defeat and beheading of Padilla signaled the demise of the movement though not the legacy of the Comunero episode. No longer could the emperor relegate Castile to the back burner of the imperial decision making process. Castile represented a much needed revenue machine and labor pool for the emperor to repay his Fugger loans, resist the Reformation, defeat French advances, control the Italian peninsula, and make war against the Muslim kingdoms of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. While the Comuneros did not succeed in revolutionizing the Castilian political system, they did begin the ultimately successful process of the Hispanization of Charles V and undoubtedly influenced Charles' decision to dissolve the Holy Roman Empire upon his abdication in 1555.

CHAPTER III

HISTORIOGRAPHY: HISTORIANS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The Comunero or Comunidades movement took place in Castile from May of 1520 through April of 1521, and has posed an interesting conundrum for historians of both Spain and the early modern period alike. Scholars have been unable to form an acceptable consensus on the nature or meaning of this episode of widespread and organized political, military, and social unrest. Initially addressed by Spaniards, the Comunero crisis became of increasingly more interest to the larger scholarly community in the turbulent days leading up to the Spanish Civil War. This chapter will recount and review the major works covering the Comuneros during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and point out the shortcomings of these treatments.

The Nineteenth Century

Nineteenth-century interpretations of the Comunero uprising came largely from the Spanish intelligentsia and diverged along liberal and conservative paths. The famed Spanish liberal Manuel Quintana viewed the failure of the Comunidades as the critical point when Spain aborted its movement towards a constitutional monarchy and failed to clothe itself in the trappings of the modern state.⁶⁴ Likewise, Canga Argüelles and Julián Negrete, writing in the early nineteenth century portrayed the Comunero movement as the “political lesson” and “glorious history” which patriotic Spaniards should venerate.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Haliczer, Stephen. *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981, 7.

⁶⁵ Gutiérrez Nieto, Juan Ignacio. *Las Comunidades Como Movimiento Antiseñorial: La Formación Del Bando Realista En La Guerra Civil Castellana De 1520-1521*. Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1973, 57-58.

In his 1850 monograph *Decadencia de España: Primera parte: Historia del Levantamiento de las Comunidades de Castilla 1520-1521*, Antonio Ferrer del Río suggested that the collapse of the Comunero Junta perverted the Spanish political system by “shackl[ing] the town[s], [and] depress[ing] the nobility” thereby subjecting Spain to the depredations of Charles V and his coterie of Flemish followers.⁶⁶

Liberal activists and historians alike recognized the crisis of the comunidades as a key event in Spanish national history and linked the deterioration of Spain as both an empire and a state directly to the defeat of the Comunero cause.⁶⁷ Comunero leaders, particularly Juan de Padilla of Toledo and Juan Bravo of Segovia, figured prominently in liberal writings and represented their ideal of the progressive Spanish patriot.⁶⁸ This remained the dominant Spanish interpretation of the Comuneros until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. However, this liberal interpretation emphasized the radical elements of the Comunero agenda without accounting for the conservative aims of the Comunidades.

The Comunero Junta’s ambivalent reaction to the Dueñas uprising in the fall of 1520 and the subsequent appointment of the aristocrat Girón as Captain-General suggest the traditional aims of the movement. The Comuneros sought distinct and wide-ranging reforms to Castile’s political system but did not espouse a fundamental readjustment of

⁶⁶ Ferrer del Río, Antonio. *Decadencia de España: Primera parte: Historia del Levantamiento de las Comunidades de Castilla, 1520-1521*. Madrid: Establecimiento Tipografico de Mellado, 1850, 341-342.

⁶⁷ Elliot, J.H. “The Decline of Spain.” *Past and Present* 0, no. 20 (1961): 52-75. Elliot outlines the standard theory on Spanish decline in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in this article. His thesis remained relatively unchallenged until Henry Kamen reexamined the issue. Kamen, Henry. “The Decline of Spain: A Historical Myth?” *Past and Present* 0, no. 81 (1978): 24-50

⁶⁸ Marañón, Gregorio. *Antonio Pérez, “Spanish Traitor.”* Translated by Charles David Ley. New York: Roy Publishers, 1955, 63. J.N. Hillgarth also writes about this tendency among Spanish Liberals. Hillgarth, J.N. “Spanish Historiography and Iberian Reality.” *History and Theory* 24, no. 1 (1985): 23-43.

the societal structure.⁶⁹ Representative election of *procuradores* to the Castilian *Cortes* served as the lynchpin of Comunero demands but did not signify an intrinsic desire to expand membership to the *Cortes* or incorporate the peasantry into the structure of government. One must remember that only eighteen cities participated in the Castilian *Cortes* and that their delegates served only their municipalities and the monarch. The Junta's demand for a more representative *Cortes* would still leave the majority of the Castilian population politically powerless. While a move toward a constitutional monarchy is implicit in the Comunero reforms, no real attempt at changing the mode of governance appears beyond increasing the power of the *Cortes* to resist the royal will.

After the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1875, Spanish historians began to question the interpretation of the Comunero uprising put forward by liberals earlier in the century.⁷⁰ Manuel Danvila y Collado, a minister under the Restoration regime and member of Spain's Royal Academy of History made the most important contribution to the study of the Comunero episode in the last decade of the nineteenth century with his ambitious *Historia Crítica y Documentada de las Comunidades de Castilla*. Published from 1897 to 1900 as a six-volume addition to the *Memorial Histórico Español*, Danvila gathered together all of the extant primary documents pertaining to the rising of the Comunidades and supplemented them with a small amount of cursory analysis.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Haliczer, Stephen. *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981, 176-179.

⁷⁰ Carr, Raymond. *Modern Spain 1875-1980*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, 1-15. Carr provides a succinct overview of Spain's *Glorious Revolution* of 1868 and the formation of the constitutional monarchy under Alfonso XII in 1875. The Restoration looms as the most important event in Spanish politics during the nineteenth century.

⁷¹ Seaver, Henry Latimer. *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., Reprint 1966, 375-377.

Contrary to the earlier depictions of the Comuneros as revolutionary agents, Danvila framed the movement as a restricted phenomenon centered on a small group of discontented local elites rather than a sweeping response of the Castilian population to the policies of Charles V and their dissatisfaction with the socio-political status quo.⁷² Conservative defenders of the new regime resoundingly and vociferously denounced the Comuneros in an effort to discredit liberal arguments against the Bourbon monarchy. However, to complete the recounting of the conservative historiographical tradition it is necessary to move into the twentieth century and investigate the writings of Gregorio Marañón.

The post-Restoration conservatives regarded the Comunero movement as local and medieval rather than composite and modern and downplayed the episode's significance to Spanish history. Nevertheless, in the 1950s Gregorio Marañón redefined the liberal and conservative understandings of the Comuneros in more certain yet controversial terms. Expounding upon the Restoration-inspired explications of the rebellion, Marañón categorized the Comunero leaders as the embodiment of "the conservative and traditional spirit" of Spain mired in particularism and xenophobia and juxtaposed them with the Royalists who represented a progressive-minded monarchy filled with a "liberal and reforming spirit" open to international politics and the changing religious doctrines of sixteenth-century Europe.⁷³ If we accept Marañón's argument at face value, it is necessary to abandon the established representations of Charles V as a

⁷² Haliczer, Stephen. *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981, 7.

⁷³ Marañón, Gregorio. *Antonio Pérez, "Spanish Traitor."* Translated by Charles David Ley. New York: Roy Publishers, 1955, 63.

devout and dedicated knight of the Church and replace them with a vision of Charles as a reformer.⁷⁴

Marañón suggested that in addition to fighting to preserve their traditional rights and privileges the Comuneros also “defended . . . the strictness of their Catholicism” against the “winds of Europe and a spirit of criticism that did not spare the Church herself.”⁷⁵ Since the early years of Isabel and Fernando’s reign, the Spanish Church operated relatively autonomously. The Catholic Kings controlled the appointment of ecclesiastical offices, implemented clerical reforms not seen elsewhere in Europe, and commanded the right to nullify papal bulls.⁷⁶ Marañón must refer to the Castilian aversion to foreign appointments in the Spanish Church and the *décima* granted by Pope Leo X to Charles. Because Flemings received important church offices and the clergy were required to pay taxes to the crown, many of Castile’s clerics quickly sided with the Comunero cause.⁷⁷ However, there is no indication that Charles or his courtiers attempted to reform the Spanish Church along dogmatic or doctrinal lines that would threaten “the strictness of [Spanish] Catholicism.”⁷⁸ Charles only challenged the Spanish

⁷⁴ Blockmans, Wim. *Emperor Charles V, 1500-1558*. Translated by Isola van den Hoven-Vardon. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002, 7, 80-82; 169-170. Charles considered himself the protector of Christianity from his confirmation as co-monarch of Castile upon the death of Fernando and even assumed the title of the Catholic Kings with his mother.

⁷⁵ Marañón, Gregorio. *Antonio Pérez, "Spanish Traitor."* Translated by Charles David Ley. New York: Roy Publishers, 1955, 63.

⁷⁶ Davies, R. Trevor. *The Golden Century of Spain 1501-1621*. New York: Harper and Row, 1961, 10.

⁷⁷ Haliczzer, Stephen. *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981, 123.

⁷⁸ Lynch, John. *Spain 1516-1598: From Nation State to World Empire*. Edited by John Lynch. 1991 ed, *A History of Spain*. Padstow, Cornwall: T.J. Press Ltd., 1991, 87-88. Lynch suggests that royal control of the Inquisition was more important to Charles than reform.

Church's autonomy not its Catholicism. Marañón linked the Comuneros strongly to Catholicism to paint the movement as traditionalist, reactionary, and backward for the same reasons that Danvila insisted upon the localized nature of the uprising.

The polarized political atmosphere of pre and post-Restoration Spain generated a commensurate reaction within the historical interpretations promulgated during the nineteenth century. The crisis of the Comunidades served as an allegorical frame within which Spanish liberals and conservatives sought to illustrate and enumerate the ills of their time. In addition to serving as an intellectual battlefield, both sides used the Comunero discourse in an attempt to establish the root of Spain's failure to embrace the ideals of the modern nation-state and to link themselves to a visionary though failed past. Ultimately, both the liberal and conservative positions proclaimed the revolutionary nature of their respective protagonists: the Comunidades for the liberals and the Royalists for the conservatives. Marañón's explication of the liberal and conservative arguments brings the problems inherent in nineteenth-century historiography into high relief and illustrates that one must use caution when making use of these exegeses.

The Twentieth Century

The twentieth century brought with it a renewed interest in the Comunero uprising. This increase in scholarly attention spread beyond Spain and moved away from the internal political machinations that plagued previous examinations of the episode. Henry Latimer Seaver's 1936 monograph *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521* represented the first attempt by a non-Spanish

historian to consolidate, collate, and comment on the work of Danvila.⁷⁹ His labor provided a much-needed full-length English language account of the rebellion and remains the only effort at a critical examination of Danvila's collection. Seaver condensed Danvila's haphazardly arranged sextet of volumes into roughly four-hundred pages of narrative covering the uprising from its inception to its immediate aftermath. Additionally, Seaver did not address the philosophical disagreements of the previous century and limited himself solely to the encapsulation and criticism of Danvila's opus. Seaver's examination of Danvila remained the only English account of the Comunero crisis until the 1980s.

José Antonio Maravall's 1963 monograph *Las Comunidades de Castilla: Una Primera Revolución Moderna* was the next major attempt at an interpretative examination of the Comunero rebellion. Maravall argued that the uprising's eventual collapse predicated upon the fracturing of the fragile Comunero coalition stemming from "a semi-unconscious betrayal of the bourgeoisie" of their own class values in an attempt to gain the good will of the monarchy and the great landed aristocracy. His evaluation of the Comuneros relied upon a Marxist historical perspective established upon Braudel's characterization of the socio-political nature of the countries of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean basin.⁸⁰ Maravall imagined the Comunero movement as a struggle of progressive ideologues against a medieval-minded greater nobility and monarchy. He maintained that while the Comuneros held many differing viewpoints ultimately their

⁷⁹ Seaver, Henry Latimer. *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., Reprint 1966, 377.

⁸⁰ Maravall, José Antonio. *Las Comunidades De Castilla: Una Primera Revolución Moderna*. Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1963, 245.

purpose centered on continuing the modernizing political programs begun by Isabel and Fernando and bringing a true constitutional and limited monarchy to Castile and thereby to Spain.⁸¹ Interestingly, Maravall elaborated on the nature of the Castilian communes and firmly linked them in both form and function, via Braudel, to the city-states of northern Italy.

In 1970, Joseph Pérez published *La révolution des "Comunidades" de Castille (1520-1521)* the first post-Danvila narrative of the Comunero uprising based upon an examination of the primary documents instead of utilizing only Danvila's work.⁸² Pérez suggested that the rebellion of the Comunidades emblemized a reaction of the Castilian bourgeoisie against the economic and social domination they experienced at the hands of the noble and merchant classes. Clearly, Pérez saw the Comunero movement as a purely bourgeois revolution. His exposition follows Marx's model and focuses on class conflict based upon the intrinsic injustices he envisioned within sixteenth-century Castilian society. Under Pérez's formula, the death of Isabel reinvigorated the underlying animosity between the classes and allowed latent economic rivalries to overpower politically expedient relationships formerly in place and continued by Fernando and subsequently by Charles V.⁸³

⁸¹ Maravall, José Antonio. *Las Comunidades De Castilla: Una Primera Revolución Moderna*. Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1963, 18-20.

⁸² Pérez, Joseph. *La révolution des "Comunidades" de Castille (1520-1521)*. Bordeaux, 1970. This is the original publication. For this work, I have examined a reprinted Spanish edition: Pérez, Joseph. *La Revolución De Las Comunidades De Castilla (1520-1521)*. 6th ed, *Historia De Los Movimientos Sociales*. Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno de Espana, 1977.

⁸³ Haliczzer, Stephen. *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981, 8.

Maravall and Pérez each relied heavily on Marx's theories to examine the Comunero movement and defined the enterprise in terms of class conflict along political and economic lines. However, their methodology falls short in its explication of the uprising and suffers from an acute case of historical upstreaming. In anthropology, upstreaming refers to the use of current ethnographical studies, particularly with regard to Native Americans, for interpolating past life ways. As a result, anthropologists arrive at faulty conclusions because of this conscious or unconscious application of current conceptions upon their subjects.⁸⁴ In the milieu of historical writing, the upstreaming phenomenon occurs when historians project contemporary ideology or ideas of success onto past events. This is particularly problematic when the ideology applied arises well after the event examined. J.H. Elliot addresses this issue at length and specifically questions the application of modern valuations and definitions of revolution to pre-eighteenth-century civil unrest and the attribution of modern ideology to historical dissidents.⁸⁵ As we discussed in the Introduction, the Comuneros included members of the entire social pyramid of Castile. This fact weakens arguments that suggest that class conflict drove the rebellion. Additionally, under the present conception of democratic institutions, the Castilian *Cortes* appears rather stunted but in a sixteenth-century context, the *Cortes* emerges as highly democratic. Both Maravall and Pérez characterized the rebellion of the Comunidades in terminology better suited to the late nineteenth century rather than the early sixteenth century. Their analysis assumed that a clearly defined

⁸⁴ Fenton, William N. "The Training of Historical Ethnologists in America." *American Anthropologist* 54, no. 3 (1952): 328-39. Fenton was the first anthropologist to identify upstreaming and warn of the pitfalls inherent with it.

⁸⁵ J.H. Elliot "Revolution and Continuity in Early Modern Europe," *Past and Present* (1969): 35-56.

class system existed in Castile wherein a fully developed bourgeoisie worked and represented the driving force for fundamental societal change against an oppressive landed aristocracy. However, their arguments failed to explain the collaboration of urban *hidalgos* and landed aristocrats in the Comunero Junta nor do they account for the absence of an exploited urban proletariat within Castilian society. The Comuneros aimed their reform demands squarely at the monarchy in a bid to achieve greater political input and control over the emerging Spanish state not to rectify class inequalities.

Juan Ignacio Gutiérrez Nieto's 1973 monograph *Las comunidades como movimiento antiseñorial: La formación del bando realista en la guerra civil Castellana de 1520-1521* characterized the Comunero movement as an example of class conflict along the same lines as Maravall and Pérez. Gutiérrez Nieto held that moderate and ultra-moderate members of the Comunero leadership undermined the Junta's efforts to firmly gain control over the rural areas of Castile and that this weakened the movement and strengthened the Royalist cause by alienating the rural populace.⁸⁶ By moderate and ultra-moderate Nieto refers to those members of the Comunero hierarchy that opposed the overthrow of seigneurial holdings. However, his argument does not address the depredations practiced by the Comunero military against rural communities, particularly the looting and pillaging, which cut off a countryside that had initially sympathized with the Comunidades nor does it sensibly account for the Junta's sloth in dealing with the

⁸⁶ Gutiérrez Nieto, Juan Ignacio. *Las Comunidades Como Movimiento Antiseñorial: La Formación Del Bando Realista En La Guerra Civil Castellana De 1520-1521*, *De Historia Y Humanidades*. Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1973, 285-286.

growing rural unrest.⁸⁷ Since the Comuneros main aim from the inception of the rebellion was to gain the favor of all of the aristocracy, it appears counter intuitive for the Junta to support the rural uprisings. Control of the countryside did not figure into Comunero plans until they had lost the interest of the *grandees*. Nieto's argument approaches this issue in a backwards manner.

In his 1981 treatment, *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521* Stephen Haliczer addressed the Comuneros with special care towards avoiding the political and ideological preconceptions that had plagued previous works. The sociological precepts of structural-functional theory served as Haliczer's model for investigating the long-term factors that led to the Comunero movement. This schema provided a flexible frame that was better able to incorporate diverse information than the traditional and Marxist views of the Comunidades.⁸⁸ By using this methodology, Haliczer avoided the upstreaming pitfall by seeking the root cause of the Comunero rebellion without working backwards from the present or incorporating a strongly ideological argument. Haliczer maintained that the Comunidades movement coalesced out of years of growing social disturbance and political discontent that dated from before the accession of Isabel and Fernando and increased steadily throughout their reign. He

⁸⁷ Haliczer, Stephen. *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981, 195-197.

⁸⁸ Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim were early proponents of structural-functional theory, which holds that a society contains two components: social structure and social function. Ideally, social structure represents stability in social behavior and social function represents the positive results of social behavior on societal operation. In the twentieth century, Robert Merton added manifest (intended) and latent (unintended) functions to this model. In addition, he suggested the use of social dysfunctions, which represent the detrimental consequences of manifest and latent functions upon society; thereby, permitting the use of structural-functional theory for the analysis of adverse as well as positive societal influences. Merton, Robert K. *On Social Structure and Science*. Edited by Piotr Sztompka. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 65-112.

further averred that the idealized vision of the joint monarchs traditionally held by historians of Spain had masked the undercurrents of defiance that existed during their tenure.⁸⁹ Under Haliczzer's formula, Charles reaped a bitter harvest sown by his esteemed grand parents.

Haliczer's approach lends itself admirably to the examination of the contributory factors leading to and culminating in the Comunero uprising. However, his methodology disregards individual, human will. Haliczzer's main supposition is that events unfold as the result of on-going processes and that these processes are highly resistant to the manipulations of singular personalities. However, the unifying and uplifting effect Juan de Padilla had upon the Comunero cause after assuming the position of Captain-General of the Comunero army suggests that individual character can and did play a pivotal role in prolonging the otherwise defeated Comunero rebellion.⁹⁰ Haliczzer did an admirable job tracing the underlying issues of the Comunidades crisis to the precedents extant under the Catholic Kings but his model did not allow for the contributions of individuals or spontaneous reactions of the rural populace to Comunero successes.

To date scholars have presented the Comunero uprising as a short chapter in Spanish history that has served alternately as a battle ground for political opponents during the nineteenth century and an ideological soap box for scholars in the twentieth. The fascination held by historians for sociological models and theory during the 1970s

⁸⁹ Haliczzer, Stephen. *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981, 10.

⁹⁰ Seaver, Henry Latimer. *The Great Revolt in Castile: A Study of the Comunero Movement of 1520-1521*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., Reprint 1966, 223. Seaver quotes a letter by Pietro Martire d' Anghiera where he describes the poor state of the Comuneros and links their continuing resistance directly to Padilla's service as Captain-General.

and 1980s spilled over to the Comunero debate and inspired Haliczzer's work, which resisted a polemical approach and centered upon causal analysis. Though problems exist within all of these interpretations, they do provide exquisite narratives of the Castilian crisis and provide critical insights into this multifaceted conflict. However, none of these earlier expositors of the Comuneros, save Maravall, has linked the rebellion in any meaningful way to the larger historiographical tradition of Europe or civil conflict more generally.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMUNIDADES: A CASE FOR REVOLUTION

One of the chief problems inherent within the historiographical tradition of the Comunero movement is the lack of consensus concerning the classification of the episode. Scholars have alternately referred to the rising of the Comunidades as either a revolt or revolution depending on their interpretation of the evidence. The choice of terminology is important. Rather than view these terms as synonymous, it is essential to characterize each to decide which better applies to the Comuneros.

Revolt and Revolution: The Definitions

Throughout this paper, we have carefully avoided identifying the upheaval in Castile as either the Comunero *revolt* or the Comunero *revolution*. Besides providing a fresh opportunity to hone our skills with a thesaurus, the choice to limit our use of language at once identifies the problems inherent with using these terms and suggests that their usage is not an integral part of the examination of the Comunidades. The historian and sociologist's penchant for using *revolt* and *revolution* as synonymous expressions has rendered each term nearly meaningless when used to discuss social unrest, violence, and change. Thus, it is necessary to arrive at an effective designation of these terms to continue our analysis.

The term revolt denotes an abandonment of commitment, loyalty, or obedience to leaders or rulers by their subordinates. To this basic definition, we can add that individuals and groups revolt for the accomplishment of immediate and specific goals and that upon achieving their objective or objectives, the rebellious party disbands and

the revolt ends. This definition suggests that participants in revolts seek to influence and change policy rather than overthrow and replace the policy makers themselves. Several instances of revolt occurred within the larger framework of the Comunero uprising. The riots in Segovia in May of 1520 and the rising of the village of Dueñas in September 1520 are two notable examples.

As we discussed in Chapter Two upon hearing of the additional monies granted to Charles at Santiago-Coruña the city of Segovia erupted. On 29 May 1520, Mob violence led to several murders and the expulsion of all representatives of the royal government in attempt to alleviate this new tax burden. The initial reaction of Segovia represents the traditional sequence of revolts: participant anger over a specific policy leading to participant action to change this policy. Similarly, the actions of the residents of the village of Dueñas also follow this pattern. Dueñas had long sought its separation from the seigneurial holdings of Count Buendía. The hamlet chose 1 September 1520 to take the matter into its own hands. The villagers attacked and expelled seigneurial officials and occupied the Count's holdings in and around Dueñas with the goal of returning the town to the royal holdings as a free village.⁹¹ In each of these instances we see the principle of revolt in action, specific grievances, swift action, and local nature; however, events would continue to progress beyond this level in both Segovia and Dueñas.

In the sub-title to his 1963 monograph, Maravall dubbed the Comunero movement “una primera revolución moderna:” an important modern revolution. Before we can view the Comunidades rising as a revolution, we must first establish the meaning of revolution. Revolution in a socio-political sense entails the overthrow of a government

⁹¹ See Chapter Two

within a state or kingdom and suggests the installation of a new form of government or ruler. Here we may note that rather than influence policymaking, revolutions seek to remove the policy makers themselves as a means of effecting change in governmental policy. We can see from this definition that revolutions necessarily imply revolts though revolts do not imply revolutions. Again, we can view this progression by examining Segovia and Dueñas.

After expelling members of the royal government from the city, the Segovians set about creating a new democratically elected city council and declared themselves an independent commune. This move by Segovia severed the city's ties to the monarchy of Castile. By the end of July 1520, Segovia joined with Toledo, Toro, and Salamanca, who had broken their affiliation with the king, and formed a new governing council for Castile. This is the fundamental point at which the uprising moved from revolt to revolution. Once Dueñas had relieved itself of seigneurial power, its members elected a new village council that declared the hamlet free from Buendía. However, the town then sent men throughout the Count's holdings to spread rebellion and overthrow Buendía's control even in areas the nobleman held legally. Here we see the transition of this rural uprising from an instance of revolt into an episode of revolution.⁹²

Now that we have defined revolt and revolution and identified examples of both within the Comunero episode, we still must address the following question: What made the Comunidades movement change in character from a series of revolts to an incident of revolution? To accomplish this task we will apply Goldstone's model for the comparative study of early modern revolutions to the Comuneros.

⁹² See Chapter Two

The Comunidades and Theory

As work on historical and sociological theory regarding revolts and revolutions has become more refined over the last thirty years, it is difficult to believe that scholars have largely neglected the Comunero episode. This neglect is especially troublesome considering the strong links between Spain and the Holy Roman Empire and Spain's position as a burgeoning world empire during the sixteenth century. Besides suffering from a general prejudice against Spain as an object of historical discourse owing to the Black Legend and the legacy of the Inquisition, the uprising of the Comunidades has also suffered from the periodization of the sixteenth century as the era of the Protestant Reformation. In particular, the years 1517-1521 represent the nativity of the Reformation and as such, events in Castile take a back seat to both Wittenberg and Worms. Because of the strong identification of the sixteenth century with the Reformation, the work on early modern revolutions has remained thoroughly grounded in the 1640s and beyond. This is especially evident when dealing with Spain as historians have focused on the rebellions of Catalan, Sicily, and Naples during the 1640s though these events represented insurrection on the periphery of Spain's European holdings and as such do not hold the same cache as the Comunidades crisis.⁹³ After our application of Goldstone to the Comuneros, we will see that the Castilian rebellion deserves recognition and incorporation into the field of early modern revolutions.

In his 1991 monograph, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* Jack Goldstone suggested an analytical model for the examination of the worldwide

⁹³ Zagorin, Perez. *Rebels and Rulers, 1500-1660*. Volume One London: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 108-110.

proliferation of state break down within the seventeenth century. Written as a reply to the then heated and still contested theories of the “seventeenth century crisis,” Goldstone sought to overcome the Eurocentric bias of most treatments of this “crisis” and devise a flexible framework adequate for the conduct of comparative studies across Eurasia.⁹⁴ To this end, Goldstone identified five attributes that an early modern society must possess to qualify for analysis:

1. An agrarian economic base
2. A hereditary ruler and officials who administered a territorial state, but who remained in some tension with semi autonomous local, regional, and religious and cultural authorities
3. A literate elite extending beyond the circle of officialdom who followed a variety of pursuits, and who remained in some tension with the state over the adequacy of state performance and the level of state resource extraction
4. Urban and rural popular groups who were subject to cross-cutting allegiances and resource extraction from both elites and the state
5. Reasonably well functioning internal markets wherein prices affected the access to goods for a wide variety of social actors⁹⁵

As we will see, Castile experienced all of the preconditions necessary for revolution under Goldstone’s schema.

First, Castile possessed an agrarian based economy. Though not as robust agriculturally as France, during good years Castile was able to export cereal crops to other parts of Spain and generally provide for its sustenance before the crushing inflation of the 1650s. For the majority of Castilians local markets or the markets of large metropolitan centers like Burgos, Seville, Medina del Campo, and Valladolid provided both food and luxury items for consumption. In addition, Castile was a great producer of Merino wool that fed both the kingdoms internal markets as well as the textile

⁹⁴ Goldstone, Jack A. *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1991, 2-3.

⁹⁵ Goldstone, 7.

manufacturing centers in Flanders. When we add to this the production of silks in Andalusia and metal mining in the Basque territories, we get a picture of a healthy though not particularly notable sixteenth century economy.⁹⁶

Second, Castile possessed a hereditary monarch whose officials were in constant tension with local elites. Here we can reference the difficulties faced by Enrique IV and the Catholic Kings in their quest to place royal officials, the *corregidores*, as administrators of the royal will within the *Cortes* cities of Castile. Primarily, the cities resisted the *corregidores* in an attempt to keep complete local control over city affairs. On the other hand, the monarchy needed to exercise control over the selection of *procuradores* to the *Cortes* to ensure that the royal will carried these legislative meetings. Secondarily, after the successful installation of *corregidores* under Isabel and Fernando corruption of these officials entered into the equation. By the time of Charles V's accession, the cities of Castile viewed the *corregidores* as pawns of the aristocracy interested in diminishing city power and protecting the *grandees* and monarchy through the subversion of the Castilian judicial system.⁹⁷

Third, Castile possessed literate elite that struggled against the monarchy for both power and wealth. The powerful aristocrats of Castile had resisted the Castilian monarch noticeably since the fifteenth century. Several aristocrat-led rebellions occurred during the reign of Enrique IV more than one of which nearly succeeded in dethroning the

⁹⁶ Reitzer, Ladislav. "Some Observations on Castilian Commerce and Finance in the Sixteenth Century." *The Journal of Modern History* 32, no. 3 (1960): 213-223. Phillips, Carla Rahn. "The Spanish Wool Trade, 1500-1780. *The Journal of Economic History* 42, no. 4 (1982): 775-795.

⁹⁷ See Chapter One and Chapter Two pay particular attention to the violence against and expulsion of *corregidores* as the touchstones of the Comunero uprising.

beleaguered monarch.⁹⁸ The early portion of Isabel and Fernando's reign similarly felt aristocratic animosity and only through strengthening their ties to the cities of Castile, directing the nobility towards war in Grenada, and the formation of the *Council of the Santa Hermandad* did the new monarchs stave off their noble opponents. Naturally, the troubled series of successions after Isabel's death increased the tension between the government and the *grandees* while dissolving the bonds of loyalty cemented by the Queen. After Charles gained the throne of Castile the kingdom's nobility remained distant from the new monarch and reticent to support him. The new king's youth, unfamiliarity with Spain, and reliance on Flemish advisors brought Castile to the brink of rebellion and the nobility chose to remain neutral until circumstances favored their intervention.⁹⁹

Fourth, Castile contained urban and rural groups that shared divided loyalties and financial obligations to both the kingdom and local elites alike. As we discussed earlier in this chapter, both the *corregidores* and local aristocrats played powerful roles in the political drama of the municipalities of Castile. Both the monarchy and nobility played out their political aspirations on the municipal stage and sought to enhance their financial positions at the expense of the towns. The monarchy accomplished this directly by coercing city representatives to the *Cortes* to vote for taxes desired by the crown. The nobility collected power and money at the expense of the cities through corruption of

⁹⁸ Miller, Townsend. *Henry IV of Castile, 1425-1474*. Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972.

⁹⁹ See Chapter One and Chapter Two

royal officials and the usurpation of municipal hinterlands.¹⁰⁰ The same situation existed in the countryside as we see in the case of the village of Dueñas. The absorption of Dueñas into the seigneurial holdings of the Count of Buendía provides a perfect case study of conflicting loyalties in rural Castile. While Dueñas actually belonged to the royal domain and therefore paid taxes directly to the crown, Buendía still managed to exact feudal dues and obligations from the hamlet.¹⁰¹ Divided loyalties and complex tax schemes plagued all of Castile.

Fifth, Castile maintained well functioning internal markets in which price fluctuations occurred and controlled access to goods. We discussed the existence of a market driven economy in Castile while establishing the agrarian based economy of the kingdom. Here we can only add that from the mid fifteenth to the late sixteenth century Castile grew demographically as well as economically at a similar rate to the other countries of Western Europe. However, the influx of American silver and gold into the port of Seville began the inflationary cycle that would destroy the Spanish economy over the next century. This combined with the exorbitant loans procured by Charles V to guarantee his election as Holy Roman Emperor and dominance of Italians, Germans, and Flemings of the lucrative trade to the New World would further depress the internal economy of Castile and wreck Spain as a whole.¹⁰² At the beginning of Charles' reign, these factors began to affect the Castilian economy and influence the political atmosphere of the kingdom.

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter One

¹⁰¹ See Chapter Two

¹⁰² Kamen, Henry. "The Decline of Spain: A Historical Myth?" *Past and Present* 0, no. 81 (1978): 24-50.

Ultimately, increasing strain and internal tension in each of these five areas resulted in the virtual collapse of the fledgling centralized government of Castile. Because of this collapse Charles V, his Regent, and his officials were unable to hold all of the disaffected members of Castilian society together and maintain the precarious social stability achieved by previous regimes. Coincidentally, the measures employed by Enrique IV and especially by Isabel and Fernando to weld Castile into a nascent early modern nation state accentuated the undercurrents of rebellion already extant in the kingdom. Enrique's weakness inspired placation of his disloyal nobility, increased *grandee* contempt for the monarchy, and led to the slow encroachment of aristocracy into the royal patrimony. This usurpation of royal lands continued under the Catholic Kings and drove wedges between the monarchy and its urban and rural constituents alike. By Charles V's reign satiating the nobles, municipalities, and peasantry without infringing on at least one of the groups became impossible. As a result, the fragile political fabric of Castile unraveled and the kingdom erupted into rebellion and eventually revolution.

Goldstone's model for identifying instances of state breakdown in the early modern era well fits the Comunero uprising. By applying his criteria, we have seen that in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries Castile experienced all of the preconditions necessary for revolution to occur. However, this does suggest an interesting question worthy of further research. The goal of Goldstone's was to explain what historians and sociologists have termed the "seventeenth century crisis." Under his schema state breakdown led to the revolts and revolutions that plagued Eurasia during this "crisis" period. If Castile exhibited the same prerequisites that Goldstone identifies as emblematic of states during the "seventeenth century crisis," does this suggest that the

“crisis” actually began in the sixteenth century? Alternatively, does the crisis in Castile represent a larger and longer historical trend? While beyond the scope of our present thesis, this query strengthens our argument that the Comunero rebellion deserves reconsideration as a case study of early modern revolution.

CONCLUSION

The Comunero rebellion began as a series of localized revolts and quickly changed into an episode of statewide revolution. Throughout this piece, we have discussed the circumstances that came together in Castile during the early years of Charles V's reign to form an ideal climate for rebellion. Now we will recap our argument and tie together our evidence.

In Chapter One, we charted Isabel and Fernando's attempts to form Castile into a strong centralized state. We also discussed how their bid for centralization divided the kingdom and exacerbated tensions that had carried over from Enrique IV's reign. Only by force of personality and the constant diversions of external wars were the Catholic Kings able to hold their infant state together. After the death of Fernando Castile began to unravel, coming completely apart after Charles V took the throne.

In Chapter Two, we recounted the major events of the Comunero uprising from its inception at Segovia to its demise at Villalar. We saw the Comuneros drive out the Regency from Tordesillas replace the lawful government with a Comunero Junta representing fourteen of the kingdom's eighteen cities that comprised Castile's legislative body, the *Cortes*. At this point, with a new governing body in place the Comuneros entered the revolutionary phase of the movement. However, the Comunidades inability to draw large numbers of Castile's nobility to their cause led to their failure.

In Chapter Three, we examined the literature dealing with the Comuneros from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Here we established the primary historiographical interpretations of the crisis and noted their deficiencies. The earlier treatments split among liberals and conservatives who saw the episode as revolution and revolt

respectively. Later authors continually moved away from the older paradigm and eventually settled on causal rather than ideologically driven analysis. Consequently, detailed narratives of the uprising appeared but without any strong interpretation.

In Chapter Four, we identified the Comunero rebellion as an incident of revolution. First, we set our definitions of *revolt* and *revolution* and gave examples of each from the uprising itself using the city of Segovia and the village of Dueñas. Then we traced the preconditions that led to the rebellion using Goldstone's criteria for state breakdown in the early modern world. Castile exhibited all of Goldstone's trigger factors placing the Comunidades squarely in the mold of other early modern revolutions.

The Comunero uprising seems a perfect fit for inclusion into the larger historiography of revolutions. Occurring on the threshold of the modern era the rebellion contained the backward and forward-looking elements that typify this period. In the Comunero demands of October 1520, we saw appeals to Castilian tradition joined with demands for a bold new future. Notably, the Comuneros did not seek to abolish the monarchy but rather to impose constitutional-style restraints on Charles V. The Comuneros tried unsuccessfully to blend the communal traditions of the medieval period, via the *comunidad*, with the legislative revolution budding in the early modern period, limited monarchy. Ultimately, the very nature of Castilian society that allowed the uprising to form led to its eventual collapse. Castile's resistance to the centralizing programs of the Catholic Kings kept the monarchy and its governing agents relatively weak while allowing the aristocracy to remain strong. Thus, when the *grandees* joined their powerful private armies with the Regency the Comunidades quickly fell. With this final irony, we leave the Comuneros but maybe we have pulled them from under the

shadow of the *Leyenda Negra* to take their place, to paraphrase Maravall, as important modern revolutionaries.

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