

---

**J.J. Ruiz Ibáñez**, *Hispanofilia. Los tiempos de la hegemonía española*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Madrid, 2022, 2 vols., pp. 614+398.

The book entitled *Hispanofilia. Los tiempos de la hegemonía Española* is a detailed, innovative, and necessary study on why and how the Hispanic Monarchy achieved its moment of greatest outreach. This mature work is the result of its author's long research and methodological career spanning on more than three decades and connects with his research

results of more than twenty-five years.

Using the tools of a theoretical and empirical historian, José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez attempts to explain magnificently the possible motives of the political opportunities allowing the King of Spain and the Spanish Monarchy to reach their pinnacle. When “his troops fought, his ambassadors conspired, and his chests emptied outside his borders”. According to *Hispanofilia*, this was possible because many people allied with the King of Spain to accomplish their personal goals.

Wanting to unravel this complex network of affinities, the author analyzed the political, economic, and social history of a Monarchy that interacted with the rest of the world, placing it at the center of his analysis as an object and historical subject, with an existence, a meaning and an evolution of its own. To do so, the author incorporated the most recent research on the Iberian worlds into his study as well as historiographical studies on Japan, Greece, France, Italy, Ireland, Ceylon, England, the Netherlands, central Mexico, southern Chile, or the north of Africa.

The author contextualizes his analysis, verifying that the Catholic king's allies had a decisive role in the Hispanic hegemony, a fact that could be proven only by studying a large part of the world related to the Spanish Empire. From this analytical vantage point, the author reviews the concept of “repudiation” of the Hispanic Monarchy, also known as the image of the “Spanish tyranny”. This image of a tyrannic monarchy had multiple origins, as it arose from the powers and political groups frustrated by the Iberian success in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The book also responds to the theories developed by nationalist historiographies of the nineteenth century, according to which Spanish agents corrupted and generated disorder within supposedly harmonious communities. These theories were and still are the explanatory guideline of the justifying narratives of the nation-states. Based on the propaganda arguments of the protagonists of only one side of the conflict, they interpreted the interventions of the Hispanic Monarchy as an external aggression and a devious attempt to dissolve a supposed national spirit. In the officialized storylines, the allies of the King of Spain became invisible. The author of *Hispanofilia* made them visible after analyzing and verifying multiple layers of facts.

José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez focused on examining the processes of reconciliation that arose between the Monarchy and the “others” – the unthinkable allies. He noticed that these affinities coincided with periods of weakness of the Monarchy's neighbors, thus further increasing the image of Hispanic power. This fact and the militant adherence to Catholicism reinforced the universalist notion of power that emanated from the Hispanic Monarchy. Religious solidarity, cultural identification,

or the simple desire of survival forged alliances that seemed impossible but did exist. We refer in particular to the intervention in France in favor of the Catholic League, to that of Ireland in support of the island's Catholics as well as to the agreements with the kings installed in North Africa, the protectorate exercised in Ceylon, and the negotiations in America with the Chichimec's.

It is not a question, however, of making a scholarly account of the weight and significance of the various allies of the Catholic King, which is very useful because no single work has yet synthesized it jointly. The author examines these cases to understand the structural meaning of the Hispanic expansion policy, locating its decision centers and identifying the agents in territories not dominated by the Spanish sovereign to detect threats and opportunities. This approach allows him to recognize similar elements and dynamics in all the territories he studies and where the Monarchy intervened. The reiterated pattern played an essential role in the evolution of local societies at the same time as in the Monarchy.

If something emerges from this book, it is that assumptions considered as exclusive to the Hispanic Monarchy, such as intolerance, control, violence, or manipulation, were not exclusive at all, but instead were developed with similar enthusiasm, although in the opposite direction. The territories considered exclusive examples of intrinsic modernity were traditionally identified as the territories of the Protestant Reformation. And contrarily, the claim for the right to resist, freedom of conscience for co-religionists, or popular legitimacy was not exclusive to the enemies of the Catholic king.

The book is divided into six chapters in which the chronology and themes match the structure the information conveyed. The author analyzes the ways and means through which the Monarchy was perceived from the outside, addresses the tensions experienced by its neighbors, as well as the development and resources involved in the interventions in those territories, the exiles, and the protagonists that found shelter under the protection of the Catholic king and finally, studied the discourses delivered to attract the help of the king of Spain.

Seen from so many different and complementary angles, the image that Ruiz Ibáñez offers of the Monarchy is complex and complete. The maps made *ex novo* by the author to make these realities visible are a particularly unique educational resource. Of all of them, number 6 (p. 138, vol. II), in which the author visualizes the proposals of incorporation into the Hispanic Monarchy of various territories, or number 7 (p. 274, vol. II), which shows the opportunities of establishing its hegemony in Asia, are especially graphic and eloquent.

The author also suggests a chronology of the hegemony that does not

offer a rigid model for all the temporalities analyzed in the book. Instead, it identifies the main elements of the evolution and a global framework on which these were fused, interrelated, or mutated. The different timelines handled in the book, be they personal, institutional, or relational, allows us to understand that at the time of Spanish hegemony, multiple subjective historical times interacted, requiring the construction of a framework of analysis that integrates them into their singularity and their combination.

It is what the author defines as the “temporary knot” that is the starting point to describe and understand the hegemony. In this way, the period between 1480-1530/1540 is classified as a period of expansion and conquest sustained in a voluntaristic way by the private initiative, whereas the end of the reign of Carlos V and the beginning of that of Felipe II, it detects the claim of changing the intervention procedure to deal with the disorder that characterizes the years of constitution of the Monarchy. The author states that during the second half of the 16th century, this process of adhesion to the Iberian power was carried out through a more present and identifiable government.

What is evident in this book is that between 1570 and 1610, local governments and rebels from multiple areas of the four continents asked the King of Spain -the title usually used by the people outside of the Monarchy- to intervene in their territories. During these interventions, the monarch mobilized a large part of the resources for territorial expansion, exhausting them.

Another substantial contribution of this book is that it brings to the fore the subjects which made the hegemony possible. For its maturation, the Monarchy counted on a ruling elite that exhibited a providential, patrimonial, – in short, imperial – conviction of its actions. Specific people who valued their accumulated experience, and their ability to identify the propitious occasions to unleash alliances, were able to mobilize real alleged resources, which gave them political and economic credit. In the processes of hispanophilia, elites and the common people from the Iberian Peninsula and the numerous places examined in this book had a significant role.

Usually, we assume that a proposal for the analysis of historical subjects is mainly a political one that focuses on the personal practice of ordinary people. In the work, we find micro biographies that are useful for the construction of the historical narrative, set in their context, and supported by documentary sources – especially memorials sent to the Council of State – that allow us to listen to a polyphony of different voices that were the ones that built and sustained the Monarchy and turned it into what it was.

From Greek soldiers to Turkish sailors, from the son of an African king

who studied and had fun at a Portuguese university to Albanian or Ragusa soldiers who, being vassals of the Turks, put their ships at the service of Felipe II; from horse captains or simple arquebusiers, to clerics, and widows who claimed their place in the Monarchy by exposing in memorials what they were interested in remembering. Some documents that, subject to criticism like any other source, locate events, recall alliances, and mark sequences of events that allow us to appreciate “the shadow, depth, operability or dissimulation that *hispanophilia* contained when it became explicit”.

In short, *Hispanofilia* is a complex book in which the author bravely faces the difficulty presented by a combined view of the different dimensions here discussed. In several parts of the work, the author alludes to the insecurity produced by being sure of the enormous complexity that the Iberian intervention entailed in each involved territory and the fact that an investigation into a single case of *hispanophilia*, implies an enormous effort that should be translated into monographs that do not yet exist. That is why it is also a pioneering book that, in almost a thousand pages, doesn't reach a final conclusion but rather paves the way to further research leading to the publication of more volumes and individual monographs on specific cases.

**Carmen Sanz Ayán**

*Real Academia de Historia*

*Universidad Complutense de Madrid*

---