
A Comparison of the Different Views of Kingship in Europe During the Middle Ages

During the Medieval Ages, there were many different views or types of kingship in Europe. Spain itself had varying kingships even within each of its own Peninsular Kingdoms. Castile-Leon, for example, was the one of most powerful kingdoms in Spain and possessed a view kingship that rivaled even England and France's.

Within Castile-Leon were many individual states: Galicia, Asturias, Zaragoza, Castile, and Leona. Eventually these states united as a kingdom while maintaining their own individuality and local customs. In 1217, when Alfonso IX claimed the throne, he tried to change the customs of succession and enforce new laws. However, the people were angered at these attempts and refused to accept him as king; instead, they supported his son, Sancho. Realizing that his position was at stake, Alfonso conceded to the people's demands. This is an example of the type of kingship that Castile-Leon possessed. While the king was indeed the ruling sovereign of his kingdom, if he ever strayed into the realm of tyranny, the people would unite to check his power. The English and French kingships, in retrospect, followed similar tactics. The English kingship, like Castile-Leon, was kept in check by their democratic-like government, or use of parliament, which protected the rights of the people while tempering the king's power. The French kingship, on the other hand, followed absolutism. In this way, Castile-Leon kingship is most like the French's. This is because, while Castile-Leon had its Cortes, or parliament, they were mere figure-heads without any power to stop the king. The kings of Castile-Leon ruled as monarchs who were only removed when they abused their power. That is why its kingship is most like France's kingship.

At this time, the development of feudalism in Spain was unique and the constant war against the Muslims aided the authority of the king. To illustrate this, one must look at the how feudalism quickly increased in influence and then was brought to a standstill in Spain. This system of vassal-ship, in which a vassal offers his service to the king in return for protection and land, modified the authority of king. Indeed, in order to become king, a certain number of vassals needed to pledge their alliance first. But while feudalism had these beneficial assets, it never truly developed in Spain. It was brought to a standstill and didn't destabilize the structure of the state. The kingship remained as strong as ever. And the main cause for this was the constant war against Muslims. Spain needed visible and stable leadership in its struggle against the growing threat of Muslim dominance. Because of this, the king gained enormous profit from plunder, obtained more land, and was able to reward his vassals with greater amounts of money instead of giving them land or position in public office. Hence, the authority of king was thus

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aided.

Considering the above arguments, I would expect Castile-Leon's future kings to be a mixture of both parliamentary kings and absolute monarchs. The people's influence is too strong for there to be an absolute monarchy, as previously illustrated by the reign of Alfoso IX. But at the same time, the power of the king is also too great for the will of people to override the king's. Thus, it is most likely for the future kingship of Castile-Leon to be a mixture of both.

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