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# Honor, Loyalty, and Merit

The Culture of  
the Contemporary  
Spanish Nobility

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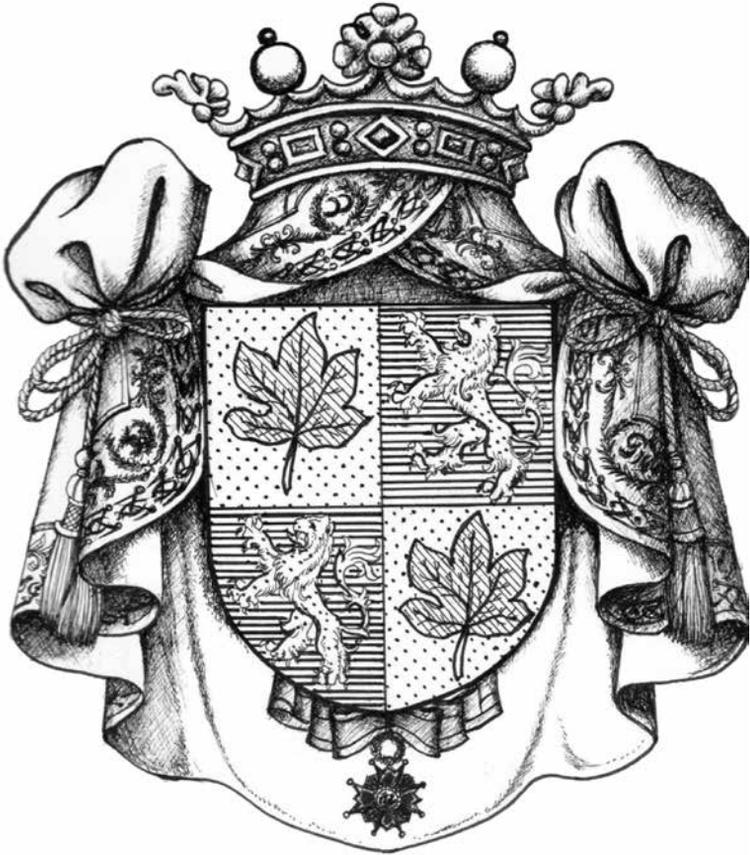
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## Abstract

The Spanish nobility continues to be influential in the early 21st century in politics, academia, and the economy. The polarized socio-cultural environment in Spain in the early decades of the millennium is paralleled by an increasingly divisive political discourse and deadlock in terms of governance. Understanding the subcultures of the most influential socio-political groups is important to be able to interpret the political developments. A vast array of studies have been conducted about the rise of the extreme left but there is a dearth of studies dealing with the impact of the traditional nobility in contemporary Spain. The present study presents an emic model of elite culture through the application of a grounded theory approach to texts released by five of the main noble associations in Spain during the last ten years. An inductive approach focuses on the identification of important themes and concepts as expressed and understood by the participants. Traditional noble associations are the focus of the study, in particular, the associations under Royal patronage. The resulting emic model aims to map the mores, norms, and values of a highly visible social group about which there are very few sociological and anthropological studies.

Frontispiece



Official Coat of Arms of Dr. Otto Federico von Feigenblatt as a Knight of the Royal Order of Isabella the Catholic.

## Author's Biographical Sketch

Professor Otto Federico von Feigenblatt, EdD, PhD, is an academician of honor of the Royal Academy of Doctors of Spain, a corresponding academician of the Royal Academy of Economics and Financial Sciences of Spain, and of the Royal Spanish Academy of the Sea, and a numbered academician of the National Academy of History and Geography of Mexico. He was knighted by King Phillip VI of Spain with the Royal Order of Isabella the Catholic for his contributions to the social sciences. Ambassador von Feigenblatt received the title of “Honorary Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo” from the President of Kosovo for his contributions to the fields of development studies and peace studies.

He holds a BSS in Asia Pacific Studies from Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (Beppu, Japan), an MA in International Development Studies from Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok, Thailand), a PhD in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, and an EdD in Higher Education Leadership from Nova Southeastern University (Florida, USA), Graduate Certificates in Social Justice and in International Relations in addition to a ALM in Anthropology and Archeology from Harvard University (Boston, USA). His research is interdisciplinary and he has received multiple honorary doctorates for his research and service. He is currently serving as Professor and Chair of the Graduate Education Department, Latin Division, Keiser University (Florida, USA) and he also serves as the Honorary Consul and Head of Post of the Republic of Namibia for the State of Georgia, USA.

## Dedication

I dedicate this book to my wife, Vannapond, and to my son, Otto Constantino, who inspire me to work harder every day and to continue to grow as a scholar.

## Acknowledgments

The present study is the result of a combination of lived experiences and interactions with fellow scholars and professors. I am grateful for the insights provided to me by the many hours of conversations with my friend, His Most Excellent Lordship Alfonso de Ceballos-Escalera y Gila, Marquis of la Floresta, who is not only an outstanding historian but also the author of several seminal works dealing with the official nobility that have been published by the Government of Spain. I am also very grateful to His Most Excellent Lordship Francisco López de B Herrera de Solé, Duke of Maqueda, for taking the time to explain to me the history and contemporary philanthropic activities of the Real, Ilustre y Primitivo Capítulo Noble de Caballeros de la Orden de la Merced. It is also necessary for me to mention the assistance provided by His Excellency Dr. Antonio Bascones Martínez, President of the Royal Academy of Doctors of Spain, in terms of understanding the nexus between academic degrees and the nobility, in particular the degree of doctor. Professor David Carrasco of Harvard's Divinity School helped me understand the complex nature of the colonial period in Latin America and inspired me to question simplistic explanations of the relationship between the Spanish Nobility, the Aztec Aristocracy, and the Spanish Crown. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Theodore MacDonald of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University for his insightful comments and recommendations on earlier drafts of the thesis that served as a starting point for the present book.



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## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

Spain suffered a very costly and painful civil war in the 1930s. The war reflected important socio-economic divisions which were then crystallized into political cleavages (Lal 2004; Roberts 1997). Many of those divisions were superficially overcome after the restoration of democracy in 1975 and the subsequent attempts at reconciliation between the different social groups and regions. Nevertheless, the political deadlock of the second decade of the millennium and the increased polarization of the population into the extremes of the political spectrum are signs that the apparent consensus of the restoration is breaking apart.

It is important to understand the culture of different socio-economic groups when attempting to tackle the broader challenge of explaining some of the factors exacerbating the political impasse in Spain. Applied anthropology has made important contributions to the study of sub-cultures and in the case of Spain, there are several studies about the culture of the extreme left. Other studies have focused on the rise and radicalization of the women's movement and its alliance with the "Podemos" socialist movement. However,

there are very few studies dealing with the culture and role of the traditional nobility in Spain. This important group was pivotal in the victory of the Nationalist side during the civil war, and it also participated in the very sensitive restoration of the Monarchy after the death of General Francisco Franco.

The present study follows a grounded theory approach to understanding how the traditional nobility fits into Spanish society. A second set of questions of interest is how do noble associations fit into the political and socio-economic landscape? What is the tacit purpose of noble associations? What is the manifest purpose of noble associations? And what are the main themes of concern from the point of view of noble associations? Answering these questions serves as a first step in the development of an inductive model of the culture of the traditional nobility of Spain.

## 1.1. Background and Significance of the Problem

The end of the Cold War resulted in the breakup of many multinational states and to the rise of nationalism and fundamentalism. Scholars such as Samuel Huntington and Deepak Lal have identified a cyclical process of rising ethno-nationalism and of a re-awakening of traditional sources of authority and leadership (Huntington 2003; Lal 2004). The early years of the 21st century in Europe have thus seen a rise in political parties fostering a more traditional view of

the nation-state and have challenged the cosmopolitanism of the European Union for example (Bardach 2009; Cakir 2009). Pressures such as increasing immigration from Africa and the Middle East as well as internal factors such as the rise of gender identity politics and of environmental activism have resulted in a highly polarized socio-political landscape in Spain, Austria, and other parts of Europe (Kibbey 2002; Pruitt and Kim 2004).

Socio-political movements are the reflection of the socio-cultural groups that support them and they foster and are fostered by the interests and shared experiences of the elites, both of the left and right of the political spectrum (Chizuko 2010; Cock 2010; Haklai 2009; Haritaworn 2007; Hsin-Huang, Hsiao, and Wan 2007; Mines 2002). Europe's conflict-ridden history still reverberates in the group memories and social consciousness of those elites (Van Duren 1995; Katz 1971; Oliveira 1992). Thus, to understand the apparent intractability of Europe's and in particular Spain's political stalemate and culture wars it is important to understand the values, mores, and norms of the different socio-cultural groups. The revanchist nature of the Law of National Memory promoted by the left of the political spectrum in Spain and the subsequent resistance from the right can only be understood in context. With a very high unemployment rate and a very slow economy, Spain has many problems and challenges which could be considered to be more pressing and of greater importance in comparison to issues of statues and street names. Nevertheless, pyrrhic battles over street names and flags are only the tip

of the iceberg in a struggle between different sub-cultures and most importantly between different socio-cultural and socio-economic elites.

The traditional nobility in Spain was pivotal in supporting General Francisco Franco during the Spanish Civil War (Roberts 1997). They supported the Nationalists with their considerable talents, many members of the nobility were academics and military officers, used their fortunes, and gave badly needed legitimacy. Franco's revolt against the Spanish Republic lacked the support of the exiled Royal House and therefore needed to find an alternative source of leadership and socio-cultural legitimacy. The protection of Spain's traditional socio-economic order and values required the support of those who were considered to be the repositories of those values and history, namely the traditional nobility (Salcedo 2008). It should be noted that the traditional nobility maintained its influence and to a certain extent its power during the early years of the Republic (Oliveira 1992). The large bureaucracy continued to be staffed by the traditional nobility, and in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remained under the control and guidance of members of the traditional nobility. Titles of nobility were formally abolished, but they continued to be used socially and in writing during the Republic (del Rosario Cayetana Stuart y Silva 2011).

The Cold War and the subsequent accommodation between Franco and the traditional nobility resulted in the very strange situation of Spain officially being a monarchy without a King (del Rosario Cayetana Stuart y Silva, 2011).

General Franco acted as regent and head of state and even bestowed titles of nobility. The traditional orders of knighthood were bestowed, and the succession of titles was recognized by the government authorities (Gila 2015, 2016; Gila and Garcia-Loygorri 2003). This period which lasted from the end of the civil war until the restoration of the monarchy in 1975, was a period of revival in terms of the socio-cultural influence of the traditional nobility. Ancient confraternities were revived, and new groupings were established (*Elenco de Ordenes de Caballeria e Instituciones Afines* 2005). The transition to democracy and the restoration of the monarchy that started in the final years of the Franco regime with the recognition of Juan Carlos of Borbon as Prince of Spain and as heir to the throne provided another important opportunity for the nobility to exert influence on the process and most importantly on the new constitution. Thus, understanding the culture of this important class which serves as a role model for the other strata is important not only for reasons of political stability but also to understand contemporary Spanish society as a whole.

## 1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to increase our understanding of the contemporary culture of the traditional nobility of Spain. As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the history of the Spanish nobility is well documented however the culture of the contemporary nobility has not

been a topic tackled in the academic literature (Berrendero 2017). Therefore, the present study aims to discover the main themes, concepts, and categories which are considered to be important by the royally endorsed noble associations and their supporters. Those concepts will then be used to develop a tentative cultural model for the Spanish nobility.

### 1.3. Definitions

The inductive nature of the proposed study pre-empts the precise definition of complex and contested terms. Nevertheless, one core term that needs to be defined a priori is “contemporary nobility.” For the purposes of the present study two main types of nobility are defined namely: the traditional nobility and the legally recognized nobility. There is considerable overlap between the two groups but there are also important differences. The traditional nobility includes both the untitled and titled nobility and their direct descendants on the male line (Salcedo 2008). This group is in turn composed of members of the immemorial nobility (those lineages with socially recognized nobility before the formal formation of the Kingdom of Spain), the *hidalgos*, and the nobility by concession. This group is broad and, according to estimates, approximates five percent of the population (Salcedo 2008). The second definition is considerably narrower, and it includes the registered titled nobles, the recipients of the orders of Charles III, Golden Fleece, and Isabella the Catholic, and the two seigniorial lineages of

Piscina and Tejada (Gila 2015, 2016; Gila and Garcia-Loygorri 2003). According to contemporary Spanish law these are the only officially recognized nobles. A third definition is the members of the Royally endorsed noble associations (*Elenco de Ordenes de Caballeria e Instituciones Afines* 2005). It is interesting, and indeed, not widely known, that each association has its own rules regarding the requirements for admission, ranging from descent from an hidalgo on the male line to stringent proofs of nobility on all four sides for at least two hundred years (Davila 2015, 2017; *Maestranza de Caballeria de Castilla* 2014).

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