

a different perspective and a rich, original source of material for students and teachers, the overall thesis is finally not persuasive. His work might prove interesting to American students who are used to examining history from regional perspectives. Frame notes that this examination was stimulated by recent regional nationalism and the U.K.'s closer current and future ties with Europe. The maps and dynastic charts are adequate, but most students would benefit from access to a good atlas. This is an original, learned approach that is probably a bit rich for general classroom use.

Whitman College

Donald P. King

Henry Kamen. *Spain, 1469-1714: A Society of Conflict*. London and New York: Longman, 1991. Second edition. Pp. xv, 307. paper, \$16.95.

The difficulty in teaching renaissance and early modern Spanish history is not so much the long rise of Iberia to its time of greatness covered by Professor Kamen's work, and certainly not the *post mortem* of its social and institutional collapse from the early eighteenth until the late twentieth century, but in intelligently analyzing the period in between. All major societies have these richly detailed moments, and they sometimes recur after lulls of exhaustion. Spain, unfortunately, thus far has only this 200-year period of true national greatness: world discovery, empire, the *Siglo de Oro*, and great power status all in one. Everything about Spain accelerates during this period, and woe to the disorganized teacher who fails to make the most of the Spanish sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Most of the best works of Iberian historiography naturally focus on this magnificent (and sometimes awful) moment of Spanish history: Elliott, Lynch, Domínguez Ortíz, Fernández Álvarez, Carandé, and Maravall, to name only a few. It is not an easy period about which to write, but the task is made easier since many of the earlier English-language histories are out-of-date and do not include the impressive work done of late by historians in Spain itself, now once more in possession of an unfettered historical profession with a modern mentality and methodology.

Kamen's five chapters divide the period into three royal administrations (the Catholic Kings, Charles V, and Philip II), leaving an almost equally long time in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to be summarized more abruptly in a crisis chapter and a recovery chapter. Throughout the 276 pages of his book, there is little space for in-depth analyses of the various *reyes*, which is not Kamen's specialty in any case. Economic history and administrative development in relation to social history has been his format in other works, and he uses it here to marshal a great deal of difficult material behind his chronicle of the sudden emergence of Spain as a dynamic society. One of his most useful ideas is to compile the special administrative and fiscal vocabulary of the times, which can be maddening to do in lecture. Had he paid equal attention to the development of the laws and special legalistic Spanish mind of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he would have dispatched another topic difficult to lecture on without mystifying class members.

As a possible textbook for a course on early modern Spain, however, Kamen's work offers the attractive strategy of allowing the lecturer to concentrate upon the character of the Spanish monarchy and aristocracy, and to develop such topics as the character of the *conquistadors*, the enormous intellectual growth that Spanish society enjoyed during this period, or to broaden the scope of coverage of the hopelessly complicated foreign relations during the period.

Kamen's brevity makes a complicated period understandable to the student and provides the lecturer with a choice of spectacular topics upon which to concentrate. It may be the best short book on the period in English.

University of New Mexico

Robert Kern

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