

MODERNIZING THE NATION

Spain during the Reign of Alfonso XIII, 1902–1931

JAVIER MORENO-LUZÓN



"An accessible and attractive synthesis of the historiographical transformation that has taken place over the last twenty years in relation to this previously neglected – yet critically important – period. . . . A readable, vivid, and, above all, an up-to-date account of these turbulent, but transformative, years in the history of modern Spain." From the Preface by Series Editor Nigel Townson

This book is a new short history of Spain during a crucial period, the reign of Alfonso XIII (1902–1931). Traditionally, this has been seen as a time that epitomized the worst features of 'old Spain': a backward country, poor and chronically unequal, with a government dominated by a tiny oligarchy ruling over a corrupt system – an anomaly in Western Europe. However, this study, in line with the most recent historiography, offers a new insight into the period as one that was actually characterized by extensive modernization in Spanish society and politics. Spain experienced, albeit in an unbalanced way, many of the changes already in progress in other European countries, such as urbanization, industrialization, mass migration, the rise in literacy, secularization, and the emergence of mass politics. It then suffered profound conflicts associated with these changes, and a political dynamic of reform and reaction, revolution and counter-revolution.

The book is divided into four main sections, dealing, chronologically, with the beginnings of the regenerationist era, the climax of the liberal monarchy, conflicts during the crisis of liberalism, and the military dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Primarily a political history, it also touches on social, cultural and economic issues, and offers a comparative European perspective. Last but not least, there is a special interest in the problems of nation-building, a central theme of the period, and the competition between different versions of Spanish nationalism and regional nationalist movements – above all, Catalanism and Basque nationalism. Overall, the Spanish situation is presented here not as a unique case but as a variation within the difficulties that were encountered all across continental Europe in achieving the transition from classical liberalism to mass democracy.

Javier Moreno-Luzón is Professor of History at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid. A specialist in the political life of modern Spain, he has published several books and articles on political clientelism, élites, political parties, elections, the monarchy and Spanish nationalism in early 20th-century Spain.

*Cover illustration: "King Alfonso XIII in Hornachuelos (circa 1916)".
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