The Italian states that had passed under Spanish rule already had developed over the centuries their own perfectly functional institutional systems of administration and government. The formerly independent Kingdom of Sicily, Kingdom of Naples, and Duchy of Milan were placed under the authority of the Council of Italy when it was created in the mid-sixteenth century, while the Kingdom of Sardinia continued to be a dependency of the Council of Aragon, and thus, from a strictly institutional point of view, was not a part of the corpus considered here. Sicily, Naples, and Milan became a part of the Spanish holdings in quite different ways, which influenced the relations that they succeeded in establishing with the monarchy.

Sicilians liked to recall that they had given themselves voluntarily to the king of Aragon at the time of the Sicilian Vespers in 1282, freely choosing their new sovereign. In the name of the liberty that the Sicilians had enjoyed for several centuries, the Spanish limited their interference on the administrative level. They willingly recognized that special circumstances conditioned the forms and the rules of their presence, which is why they accepted the notion that offices in Sicily would be systematically reserved to native Sicilians.

After a number of dynastic vicissitudes, Ferdinand the Catholic used military conquest to defeat Angevin claims to the Kingdom of Naples in 1503. In administrative terms, this conquest translated into

* Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane.

**Abbreviations**

AGS Archivo General de Simancas
ASN Archivio di Stato di Napoli
BNM Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid
BSNSP Biblioteca della Società Napoletana di Storia Patria

1 For all bibliographical and archival references, see my study, Mireille Peytavin, *Visite et gouvernment dans le Royaume de Naples, XVI-XVIIe siècles* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2003).
a much larger Spanish intervention than was true in Sicily. Throughout
the early modern period, the Neapolitans remained highly aware of
how they became subjected to the Spanish crown. For example,
Spanish personnel and Neapolitans shared the right to hold the var-
ious offices of the Kingdom; the division was regulated by prag-
matics established by the viceroys, and these offices were the object
of bitter competition.

Finally, the Duchy of Milan joined the Italian territories under
Spanish possession by feudal devolution. Given the duchy’s impor-
tance, Emperor Charles V decided to govern it directly and invested
his son Philip with Milan in 1545.

The quite different conditions at different times in which Sicily,
Naples, and Milan came into the Spanish monarchy meant that the
connections between those territories and the monarchy—and the
ways in which the monarchy dealt with each of them—differed
enormously as well. It is important to avoid forcing them into a
common framework. Differentiating these three unique histories,
relationships, and jurisdictions is absolutely necessary; still, the fact
that Sicily, Naples, and Milan comprised the Council of Italy autho-
rizes a certain number of insights that can prove highly useful in
treating them together as an ensemble. This is all the more true
because, despite the existence of the Council of Italy, the histories
of the three realms have usually been treated separately. There is
no doubt, however, that persons existed—in Madrid, Palermo, Naples,
Milan, and probably elsewhere—who conceived of administrative
and management reforms on the scale of all three of these territo-
ries (and I attempt to throw light on their acts below), even as they
were mindful of the importance and the historical origins of the sin-
gularities of each realm.

Generally speaking, the new rulers retained the existing institutional
systems. Undeniably, the complexity and sophistication of those sys-
tems had nothing to envy their Aragonese or Castilian counterparts,
despite the evident modernity of the structures recast by the Catholic
kings. The ancient date and the solidity of the administrations of the
respective kingdoms spoke in favor of their functionality, while the
series of major reforms imposed in the Duchy of Milan by its most
recent possessors guaranteed their adaptation to later changes.
Moreover, one would have to know these various systems thoroughly
in order to compare them and draw up proposals for restructuring
them. The foreign dynasties (the kings of Aragon, then the Habsburgs)
always used common sense and pragmatism in their dealings with