
by

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The administration of the Order of Calatrava, entrusted by Pope Innocent VIII to King Ferdinand the Catholic (1485), hints at the culmination of a process which the centralizing Castilian Monarchy attempted with ultimate success, that of bringing the Military Orders under its rule. The Orders of Alcántara and Santiago were also submitted to royal control, in 1493 and 1494 respectively. This process reflects the development by the late Middle Ages of the Military Orders in the Iberian peninsula. Born amidst the religious fervour and the advance of the twelfth century Reconquista, the Military Orders became an economic and political power which no monarch could ignore. Moreover, while favouring the ascendancy of the Military Orders, the Spanish monarchs had tried to advance their own control of the Orders by all the means at their disposal. The election of masters, with the control they exercised in both spiritual and temporal affairs of the Orders, played a crucial role in the royal centralizing policy. Indeed, before Ferdinand the Catholic received papal authorization to administrate the Military Orders, his royal ancestors had promoted the election of their protégés to the mastership. In 1409, for instance, Fernando de Antequera, at that time the regent of Castile, managed to obtain the Mastership of the Orders of

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4. Francisco de Rades y Andrada, Chroónica de las tres órdenes y cavallerías de Santiago, Calatrava y Alcántara (Toledo 1572) fols. 10r.-11r.
Alcántara and Santiago for his sons, Don Sancho and Don Enrique. Some years later, the civil wars in Castile brought about the removal of Don Enrique, and the administration of the Order of Santiago was entrusted to the powerful constable, Don Alvaro de Luna.

This article will focus on the election of Don Alonso de Aragón to the mastership of Calatrava on August 18th, 1433. An illegitimate son of King Juan of Navarre, nephew of King Juan II of Castile and King Alfonso V of Aragon, half brother of Ferdinand the Catholic, Don Alonso was related to the most prominent political figures of his time and played an important role in the internecine wars which affected both Aragon and Castile in the late fifteenth century. His nomination as Master of Calatrava reflected the growing tendency toward restraining the independence of the Military Orders vis-à-vis the centralizing Castilian monarchy. In this regard, the election of Don Alonso heralded a new balance of power between the Castilian Kings and the Order of Calatrava, with juridical aspects which deserve some consideration.

Its affiliation with the Cistercian Order endowed the Order of Calatrava with all benefits of papal exemption including the free election of the master. The procedure of the master's election was finally established by Abbot John VI of Morimond (1444): The *comendador mayor* was bound to summon all the *comendadores*, knights and chaplains to the convent of Calatrava within ten days of the death of the master. In practice, however, only the *comendadores* were summoned because of the inexpedience of leaving the frontier exposed. Once assembled, the mass of the Holy Ghost was celebrated and then the election took place. Theoretically, the election should have been unanimous, but the candidate who received the votes of the *maior* and *sanior pars* was recognized as the true master and received the magisterial standard from the *comendador mayor*.


6. Pedro Carrillo de Huete, *Crónica del Halconero de Juan II*, ed. J. de Mata Carriazo (Madrid 1946) 48, 51, 58; *Refundición de la Crónica del Halconero por el Obispo Don Lope Barrientos*, ed. Juan de Mata Carriazo (Madrid 1946) 89. Though the Castilian Kings also tried to intervene in the elections to the mastership of Calatrava, direct royal nominations had not been recorded in the history of the Order until the election of Don Alonso.

7. The main source for the biography of Don Alonso is the manuscript *Historia del In-victo Don Alonso de Aragón Maestre de la Orden de Calatrava y Conde de Ribagorza, hijo natural del inclito Rey Don Juan el segundo de Aragón y de Navarra*, Real Academia de la Historia, Colección Luis de Salazar 1-35, Sign. 9/609, n° 36203. (hereafter *Historia*). See the description of the manuscript in *Indice de la Colección de Don Luis de Salazar y Castro*, ed. Baltasar Cuartero y Huerta & Antonio de Vargas Zuñiga y Montero de Espinosa, (Madrid 1959), v. XXIII, 173.

8. See the short biographical essay on Don Alonso published by José Navarro Latorre, *Don Alonso de Aragón, la Espada o lanza de Juan II* (Zaragoza 1983).


10. The election by the *sanior pars* was already recognized by Gratian and later developed in the decretals while emphasizing the freedom of the chapter, see, C. XVIII, q.2, sp. 3-5, *Corpus Iuris Canonici (C.I.C.)*, (Friedberg 1879); Decretal. Gregor. IX, Lib.I, tit. VI, *De electione*, c.14, *C.I.C.*, p. 54.