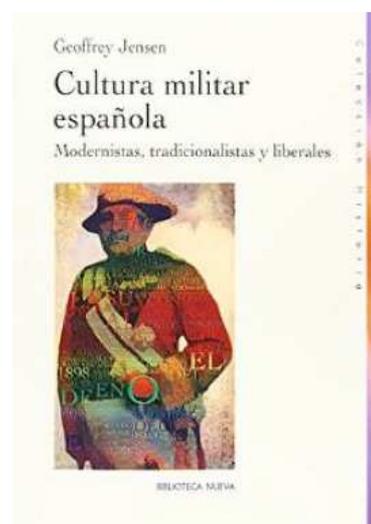


**Geoffrey JENSEN: *Cultura militar española: Modernistas, tradicionalistas y liberales*. Translated by Jaime Blasco, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2014. 286 pp.**

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### **The shift in Spanish military culture from liberalism to traditionalism and nationalism.**

Geoffrey Jensen takes two observations as his starting points in *Cultura militar española*, a translation and expansion of his *Irrational Triumph: Cultural Despair, Military Nationalism and the Ideological Origins of Franco's Spain*.<sup>1</sup> First, that liberalism dominated the thinking of the Spanish army's officer corps in the nineteenth century. Second, that less than a hundred years later under the Franco dictatorship, the reigning ideology was Catholic traditionalism, both in the army and the country as a whole. How did the Spanish army do such an about-face? Jensen seeks to answer this question by examining the military culture of its officer corps during the Restoration Period. He defines *military culture* as «los valores y atributos fundamentales, derivados de una experiencia práctica, política e intelectual común, que contribuyen a que los oficiales del ejército desarrollen una visión común de la guerra, de su profesión y del entorno más amplio en el que viven y trabajan, incluida su relación con la sociedad civil» (p. 14), but adds that perhaps *military cultures* is a better term to use in regards to the Spanish officer corps because of the wide variety of beliefs that competed with each other for hegemony within the army at that time. He selects four military thinkers that exemplify these varying trends. His biographical approach allows him to study each trend through an in-depth analysis of a particular officer, rather than through generalizations, and he maintains the complexity of their thinking, allowing contradictions in their arguments to support his own point on the diversity of military thought, rather than trying to force each one to become an ideal type. First, he devotes three chapters to a detailed examination of General Ricardo Burguete, an influential and eclectic intellectual who fought against liberalism, rationality and modernity as he argued for a Nietzschean revitalization of Spanish society. Second, Jensen shows how Colonel Antonio García Pérez, through his abundant writings and years teaching at the Infantry Academy of Toledo, helped to bring tradition-



<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey JENSEN: *Irrational Triumph: Cultural Despair, Military Nationalism and the Ideological Origins of Franco's Spain*, Reno, University of Nevada Press, 2002.

alism out of the exclusive domain of the Carlists and into the mainstream of Spanish military culture. Third, General Enrique Ruiz-Fornells serves as an example of the survival of liberal and rationalist thinking within the army well into the twentieth century. After all, Ruiz-Fornells became an influential advisor on military reform to Manuel Azaña. Fourth, Jensen presents General José Millán-Astray as synthesizing the Catholic traditionalist and anti-rational trends in his mystical cult of death. This anti-intellectual vision would turn out to be the one that most influenced the formation of the Franco regime's National Catholic ideology.

Jensen concentrates on two themes that all four authors consider, rationalism and nationalism, to determine how this National Catholic hegemony emerged out of all these disparate trends within Spanish military culture. His overall argument is that, despite the fact that the diversity of Spanish military thought lasted into the twentieth century, ultimately, the appeal of nationalism and unavoidability of elements of irrationality in the military thinking of the day paved the way for the eventual triumph of National Catholicism. Three of the authors, Burguete, García Pérez and Millán-Astray, reject rationalism outright. García Pérez's perspective is straightforward: Spain's historical destiny as a nation crusading for Catholicism, rather than rationalism, should be the soldier's guide. As for Burguete, his reasons for rejecting rationalism could not have been further from those of García Pérez. Burguete, a fervent Nietzschean, blended the seemingly contradictory ideas of anarchism and authoritarianism, reaction and modernism, to advocate a regeneration of society guided by strength rather than reason. While a bitter enemy of Franco, Burguete's emphasis on such irrational ideals as vitality and sacrifice became critical components of National Catholicism. It was Millán-Astray who made this possible by removing the intellectual components of Burguete's thinking altogether, leaving only a crude warrior spirituality, which he then fused with García Pérez's Catholic traditionalism. Even Ruiz-Fornells, who was a firm believer in rationalism, also had a sense of that military spirituality which transcended rational thought and provided the opening through which others could undermine liberalism's dominance in the Spanish army.

With his consideration of nationalism in the works of his four authors, Jensen enters into the vigorous historiographical debate on the formation and nature Spanish national identity. Influenced by José Álvarez Junco, he subscribes to the idea that there is a nationalism of Spain as a whole despite strong regional identities, and he provides convincing evidence for a Spanish national identity emerging within the officer corps in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> In fact, all four of his authors express nationalist sentiments. For Ruiz-Fornells, the fit is most awkward since nationalism necessarily contains an element of irrationality, even though its origins in Spain lie in the liberal movement that emerged from the War of Independence. The other authors were able to take advantage of this contradiction by embracing nationalism as a way to undermine liberalism. Again, it was Millán-Astray who fused Burguete's call for national regeneration with García Pérez's image of Spain as a fun-

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<sup>2</sup> José ÁLVAREZ JUNCO: *Mater Dolorosa: la idea de España en el siglo XIX*, Madrid, Taurus, 2001.

damentally Catholic nation into the idea of the national crusade: a mixture of religious fervor and national identity that demanded blind sacrifice for the good of the nation.

Seen as a whole, the greatest strength of Jensen's work is that it lies at the intersection of so many different fields, making it of wide interest and importance despite its focus on several lesser-known Spanish officers. Jensen achieves this broader relevance by speaking to audiences in military, cultural and intellectual history. He manages to merge the military and cultural components by turning to the idea of military culture, situating himself as part of the movement to restore a place for military history in mainstream academia. His mentors Michael Howard and Geoffrey Parker successfully merged military and social history as the latter came to dominate academia in the 1960s and 70s. Now, Jensen is following in their footsteps by helping to make military history relevant to the current generation of cultural historians. A key to his take on military culture is that it includes not only army officers' understandings of their own insular world but also of the wider world of civil society. Ultimately, the truly important question at stake here is the origins of the National Catholic ideology that the Franco regime imposed not only on the military but on Spanish society as a whole. What Jensen's work reveals is the importance of studying the internal culture of the military to find the origins of this ideology, an investigative path that few have yet followed.

When Jensen uses the word *culture*, he uses it in almost the traditional sense of the word, that is, the body of creative output consumed by elites. Indeed, he is only concerned with officers here. As such, his book constitutes a work of intellectual as well as cultural history, and he reveals the level of engagement between the Spanish military thinkers he studies and the greatest intellectual lights of the day throughout Europe and the world. The reader learns that Burguete in particular was influenced by such diverse figures as Nietzsche, Proudhon and Le Bon, to name a few. Far from portraying Spain as an isolated intellectual backwater, Jensen shows even its notoriously insular officer corps to be firmly engaged with European intellectual currents, which saw liberal rationalism being challenged at the turn-of-the-century by anarchism, socialism and futurism, with Nietzsche perhaps making the most direct assault. All these intellectual trends served as a theoretical grounding for the anti-liberal forces of communism and fascism, which made impressive political gains in Europe in the wake of the First World War. In Spain, the intellectual origins of the Franco regime are usually traced to the civilian regenerationists of the "Generation of '98," but Jensen makes a convincing case that officers like Burguete were also part of that movement (the general was even praised by Unamuno), and they were the ones who most directly influenced the thinking of the military men who put the Franco regime in motion.

Jensen bridges the gap between military and intellectual history by linking his argument to the history of military strategy. While military strategy in the nineteenth century was dominated by rationalist thinking and an emphasis on technical expertise, the end of the century saw the rise of an irrationalist attitude that celebrated the fighting spirit as the most important factor in war, and this argument found backing in a selective reading of

Clausewitz. Burguete took up this view with gusto, seeing it as a Nietzschean approach to military thinking. But there are echoes of it in the writings of García Pérez and even Ruiz-Fornells as well, and these authors had a strong influence on the cadets of the Infantry Academy of Toledo through their teaching and textbooks. For this reason, Jensen pays careful attention to the education future officers received at the Academy, considering their experiences there as crucial for the formation of military culture. In particular, he demonstrates the importance of the historicist vision of history that these authors passed down to their students, one which solidified the idea of a Spanish nation by portraying history as a narrative of national destiny. In this sense, Jensen's book builds on Carolyn Boyd's work on the evolution of history education in modern Spain by adding the element of military education and showing how it shaped the schooling that would dominate the entire country during the Franco dictatorship.<sup>3</sup>

Jensen's story of the shift in Spanish military thinking away from liberal rationalism was already available to an English-speaking audience in his *Irrational Triumph*, but the fact that *Irrational Triumph* is now available in a Spanish translation as *Cultura militar española* is crucial because the new possibilities for research in intellectual and military history that Jensen suggests are most likely to be taken up by Spanish historians. In addition, *Cultura militar española* also offers the expanded arguments discussed above on the importance of military culture, the expanding influence of nationalism and the move away from rationalism in military doctrine that will be of interest to non-Spaniards as well. No matter what language they speak, certainly historians of regenerationism or the ideological origins of the Franco regime must now consider the role of the military in those developments, and historians of Restoration military culture can no longer portray the officer corps as one monolithic ideological block.

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<sup>3</sup> Carolyn BOYD: *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain 1875-1975*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997.