The King's Descent to the People's Assembly: Monarchy and Liberalism in Spain's Nineteenth-Century State Opening of Parliament Ceremony*

Oriol Luján
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

'At half past three, twenty-one shots of a cannon, fired by the artillery section on Prince Pio's mountain, announced that the Queen was leaving the royal palace. Preceding the Queen's carriage were seven carriages pulled by magnificent horses of the royal house, in which were carried the gentlemen of the interior, weekly stewards, ladies-in-waiting and palace chiefs.

Then two men marched, and then, pulled by six chestnut horses with white and red plumes, the car that drove the *infante* Francisco de Paula, who wore the oversized uniform of a general captain: he was followed by his corresponding escort of the regiment of the Queen. Afterwards, preceded by men and followed by her escort, [was] the Queen Mother, pulled by eight beautiful horses with red plumes.

[…] Then, preceded by eight men, and pulled by eight spirited black horses with tufts and white headdresses, went the great chariot with the Queen, and at her left was the King, her august husband. The captain general of Madrid marched on horseback at the right abutment of this carriage; at the left the governor; then a large staff, and then the escort, composed of a squad of the cavalry regiment of the Queen lead by the brigadier colonel'.[1]

At first reading this report of a regal parade in 1850 resembles a royal pageant of early modern times. Indeed, it evokes the earlier Spanish State Opening of the Old Regime Assembly, such as the one in September 1789, which coincided with the oath of the Crown Prince, the future Fernando VII. First there was a royal procession led by King Charles IV in Madrid, in which the king's family and the highest officials of the court participated. According to Emilio La Parra, the ceremony was designed to demonstrate the takeover of the city by the monarch, and the crowds cheered in recognition of his power.[2]

Like the royal parades of the old regime, in the procession described above the participants were all members of the royal family or the court. And, like the early modern royal parades, participants proceeded in a hierarchical order so that the queen and her husband closed the cavalcade. It was certainly a way of representing the stratification among the members of the convoy and thus of showing the supreme position of the monarch.[3]

However, this procession was not merely an early modern royal entourage, the parade was for the inauguration of the Palace of the Congress of Deputies in 1850. Yet, it resembled the State Opening of the Old Regime Assembly, considering the prominence

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[1] *El Heraldo*, 01-11-1850: p. 1.

[2] La Parra, 2018: pp. 37-38.

[3] Sánchez, Marín Perellón, De los Reyes Leoz and Del Río Barredo, 1991.

of the monarch in the parade, as well as the fact that it processed through the most important streets of Madrid.[4] Still there was a considerable difference: in the nineteenth-century State Opening of Parliament parades, although the king also returned to his palace, the destination was the parliament which symbolised the nation incarnated in its political representatives. The monarch descended symbolically to the people's assembly, staging the loss of a divine power.

In other words, the similarities between the early modern and modern State Opening of Parliament rituals are significant, but in turn they highlight differences that must be understood from their historical context and from the transactions between the different actors involved. Thus, the Spanish monarch continued to play a central role in nineteenth-century parliamentary rituals, although unlike in early modern times it was now limited by the arrival of national sovereignty embodied by the political representatives. Thus, the State Opening of Parliament ceremonies were intended as a space opened to negotiation, which staged the different positions of power in the liberal regime of the Crown, the parliamentary institutions and the general population.

The monarchy had to undergo a process of renovation and modernisation and the State Opening of Parliament ceremonies show this evolution at a symbolic level. As Shirin M. Rai clarifies, ceremonies and rituals, through their inclusions and exclusions, tradition and modernity, reproduce the power of the institutions involved.[5] The study of the staging and evolution over time of these rituals thus allows us to approach new ways of understanding political power, its nature and its configuration.

The analysis of rituals and ceremonies is not new in the historiography and has a relevant tradition.[6] However, in recent years this field of research has been renewed in several directions. Focusing on the Spanish historiography, and thanks to the methodological contributions of cultural history and art history, there have been important advances, particularly with the monarchy as the main object of study,[7] and also considering civic and popular celebrations.[8] Analyses in relation to parliamentary institutions have been less common, although more recently significant studies have emerged from different fields of investigation that have emphasised the potential of these ceremonies to reproduce and transform the parliamentary institutional power.[9]

The analyses of the celebrations of the modern monarchy, and its links with parliamentary ceremonies, have often taken David Cannadine's reflection on the British Crown as their point of reference, although obviously there are inspiring precedents.[10] Behind the successful term 'the invention of tradition', Cannadine's contribution assumes the creation and evolution of the ritual from the adaptation of old traditions and new innovations.[11] In addition to placing the emphasis on the influence of cultural perspectives for the analysis of political history, Cannadine's important contribution is in stressing that the adaptation of old practices in new contexts and with different publicity helped to consolidate those ancient practices in modern traditions.

Nevertheless, on the one hand authors such as William M. Kuhn have criticised the concept of invention, precisely because of the lack of inventiveness in the ceremonial

[4] *El Heraldo*, 01-11-1850: p. 1.
[5] Rai, 2010.
[6] French historiography, in particular, has stood out for its interest in the historical significance of ceremonies. Among many other contributions, Vovelle, 1976, Ozouf, 1976 and Ihl, 1996.
[7] Among the most recent contributions, San Narciso Martín, 2017 and 2014 and Luengo Sánchez, 2013.
[8] Among them, Roca Vernet, 2018 and 2016 and Bussy Genevois, Guereña and Ralle, 2000.
[9] Rai and Johnson, 2014.
[10] As an example, Mayer, 1981.
[11] Cannadine, 1983.

process.[12] On the other hand, Henk te Velde has accused Cannadine of having an overly elitist perspective, in the sense that he describes the process from top to bottom, with a focus on the elites rather than the general population.[13]

Undoubtedly, the public played a significant role in the acceptance of the monarchy as a liberal institution. And it is precisely this popular dimension that forms one of the major elements of this text, as well as the performance of the monarchy and the influence of the political representatives in parliamentary rites. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the evolution of the State Opening of Parliament ceremonies in liberal Spain, as a ritual that involved relationships of authority that were negotiated and reproduced in the symbolic sphere. Considering the value of ceremonies as representations of power, this text explores how these rituals positioned the monarchy in the Spanish liberal system of the nineteenth century, or how the liberal regime was consolidated with the influence of the monarchy and that led to a certain configuration of the political system characterised by the interdependency between monarchy and liberalism.

I will begin by describing the birth of the ceremony in the early nineteenth century, which was shaped by a legislation based on national sovereignty and indeed this incarnation of the ceremony was rejected by King Fernando VII. A second phase will be analysed when the ritual was in a moment of transition, between 1830 and 1840, as evidenced by the reluctance of the regent María Cristina to participate and the challenging of the role of Baldomero Espartero as a regent who incarnated part of the performances of the Crown. Then I will consider the ritual during the reign of Isabel II (1843-68), which was by then well consolidated in terms of its key components: the parade, the reception and the speech. Finally, the alternative rituals introduced during the reign of Amadeo I (1871-73) and in the First Republic (1873-74) before the reign of Alfonso XII (1875-85) will be evaluated. Special attention will be paid throughout to the role of the monarchy and the relations with the citizens and the parliamentary institutions and, therefore, to how liberalism and monarchy were redefined through the State Opening of Parliament ceremonies.

The birth of the ceremony (1808-1837)

Despite the fact that the palace of the Congress of Deputies was not inaugurated until 1850 and there was no permanent seat of parliament until then, since the first liberal parliament in Cádiz (1810-14) it was believed that a State Opening of Parliament ceremony should be held, with a prominent role played by the monarch. However, King Fernando VII was then overthrown by Napoleon, who made his brother the Spanish king, despite not being recognised by the parliament in Cádiz. Thus, Fernando VII was absent and it was not until the Liberal Triennium (1820-23) that he publicly rejected his new role as a constitutional sovereign. With a role that was circumscribed to an opening speech of the legislature, the public staging of the king was a reaffirmation of the monarchical conception of divine origin. This separated the Crown from the liberal regime that the representatives in Cádiz had conceived from the national sovereignty.[14]

It is significant that, unlike State Openings of early modern assemblies, there was no royal parade at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This did not prevent curious crowds from gathering at the gates of the parliamentary venue to witness the opening and to cheer the monarch.[15] However, as Nicolas Mariot has pointed out, popular enthusiasm

[12] Kuhn, 1996.
[13] Te Velde, 2006.
[14] I have paid more attention to the early stage of the ceremony in the first part of the century in Luján, 2019a.
[15] *El Universal*, 02-03-1821.

at such events should not be confused with approval. In his own words, one must differentiate between the 'logique du frisson dans le dos et logique de l'adhésion', because one involves sensations and the other thoughts.[16]

It is also revealing that the press referred to 'hurrahs' from the crowds and even from the deputies inside the parliament and yet did not confirm that the cheers were directed at the king. In any case, the fact is that the bulk of the act was performed behind closed doors, inside the symbolic space of the nation's power: the hemicycle. For this reason, as David San Narciso indicates, the king had to arrive uncovered, breaking with the traditions of the early modern State Opening ceremony, since it meant a subjugation to the nation that the monarch did not wish to perform. [17] The fact that the king was placed on the throne inside the parliament was one of the few symbolic elements of supreme power that remained.

This underlying tension persisted in the 1830s. The monarchy was not in dispute as a political regime, but there was a rivalry between the dynastic lines headed by the future Isabel II – under the regency of her mother María Cristina – and Carlos María Isidro, the brother of Fernando VII. After the king's death in 1833, the conspiracy evolved into a seven-year Civil War. Given the absolutist preference on the part of Carlos María Isidro, the line of succession headed by Isabel II had to rely on the liberals to uphold its position, even though her convictions were not exactly liberal.[18] In turn, the liberal politicians had to support Isabel II to establish liberalism as a political regime. Both sides needed the other and given the circumstances the monarchy began to appear symbolically linked to the liberal system and parliamentarism and, in a more general sense, to the nation.

This was not due to the predisposition of the regent María Cristina, who was neither inclined to accept liberalism nor wished to participate in this type of State Opening of parliament: she had no interest in giving up any kind of power. The regime of the Royal Statute (1834-36) was not a Constitution based on national sovereignty, like that of 1812, but a law based on a monarchical power that graciously granted a limited representation to the nation. That is, it was no longer the monarch who was submitted to the nation, but rather the opposite. Although the monarch continued to take an oath, in this case to the Royal Statute, the political representatives had to 'take an oath of allegiance to the monarch in the act of opening the parliament', and only after could they assume their new role.[19]

Even so, María Cristina disapproved of this act and only gave in due to the pressure of politicians and diplomats. The symbolisation of power and representation for the future Isabel II demanded her presence.[20] As it has been stressed, the political circumstances, with the Carlist military threat, made this act of confluence between the Crown and the public necessary. The dynasty represented by the future Isabel II had to win the population over, or at the very least avoid animosity with the public and the parliamentary institutions. Perhaps for that reason, and taking advantage of the need for displacement, the decision was made to establish a royal parade that highlighted the connection between the Crown and the general public. However, this relationship was characterised by subjugation and the passive participation of the people. For example,

[16] Mariot, 2006: p. 175.
[17] San Narciso, in press.
[18] Burdiel, 2010.
[19] Regulation for the regime and government of the Estate of Procurators, 1834.
[20] San Narciso, in press.

locals were forced to decorate their houses with banners and were not to remove them until the royal family had returned to the royal palace.[21]

Popular support was once again revealing. This time it was shared between the regent María Cristina, incarnated as 'the mother of the people', and the political representatives: namely, the president of the government, Juan Álvarez Mendizábal, and the government in general.[22] That is, the people recognised the Crown embodied by María Cristina, but also the political power, which could suggest they did not desire an absolute concentration of power in royal hands or, at least, they also accepted a political power resulting from citizen representation.

This transactional route signified the implementation of the model of shared sovereignty and it established a monarchy that was not subjected to national sovereignty, but was in turn subjected to constitutional legislation. The Crown could not impose its will, and had to participate in State Opening of Parliament ceremonies. However, it continued to try to control these ceremonies once the model of shared sovereignty was established. This is evident, for example, in the swearing of the Constitution of 1837, in June of that year. The cavalcade of María Cristina included the following members of the royal household: high steward, captain of the guards, great equerry, sumiller de corps, first lady of the bedchamber, a lady in-waiting, gentlemen of the bedchamber, and a weekly steward, as well as the delegation that received the regent in the parliament formed by 24 gentlemen of the bedchamber, 13 weekly stewards and 5 ladies in-waiting. The participation of these different members of the Court highlights the influence that these individuals had over the Crown and, therefore, also potentially in the political arena.[23]

María Cristina was aware of the symbolic importance of such ceremonies for showing the continued relevance of the monarchical institution in the new political landscape. Indeed, she demanded more horses per carriage than those expected so that they caused more impact. She also insisted that a member of the royal household should carry the royal insignia of crown and sceptre during the ceremony.[24] Thus, these efforts of the Crown to position itself in public rituals contributed to the ascendancy of the monarchy in them, but it did not prevent the consolidation of liberalism. Political institutions also asserted their position. For instance, in the State Opening of Parliament of the Royal Statute (1834-6) a steward was the one who acted as master of ceremonies, whereas from 1837 onwards the Crown lost the ability to control the act in favour of politicians. From then on, governments decided how to begin the legislature.[25]

Despite the fact that national sovereignty was dismissed from 1837 onwards – when the Constitution relegated the concept to its preamble and, in fact, began to veer towards shared sovereignty – parliamentary power did not capitulate. The president of the government delivered the opening speech to the queen, showing that the parliament had an effective political power. This ritual can be understood as a consequence of the regime of the two sovereignties.

To a certain extent, the efforts of the dynasty that María Cristina represented at that time in the name of her daughter, the future Isabel II, can be compared with the House of Orléans in France. At that time, this new French dynasty was also building its public identity and seeking popular support through political rituals and ceremonies. Like the

[21] *Diario de Avisos de Madrid*, 16-11-1835: p. 1.
[22] *El Eco del Comercio*, 17-11-1835: p. 3.
[23] On the new relations drawn between the Court and the liberal state, Sánchez and San Narciso, 2018.
[24] 'Mayordomía mayor de S. M.', Palacio 16-06-1837. Box 8648/7, Sesión regia, year 1837, Juras Reales, Historical Section, Archivo General de Palacio, Madrid.
[25] Marcuello, 1986: p. 64.

State Opening of Parliament ceremonies in Spain, these kinds of rituals were a tool the Crown used to win public favour. The July monarchy (1830-48) also used festivities, visits, troop inspections and speeches, among other activities, to present itself as an accessible institution, and at the same time as a symbol of union, order and freedom.[26]

However, the House of Orléans could not always manage social perceptions as it wished. The authorities tried to link the monarchy with the French National Guard, by inspecting the troops in public and transmitting an image of a regime built from a pact with the middle classes. However, they also rejected any demonstrations that they did not control, such as the Campagne des banquets of 1848, which was banned. This contradicted the image transmitted through the link with the National Guard, given that it meant a refusal to mobilise the same middle classes that were supposedly integrated into the system.[27]

What both realities – Spanish and French – suggest is the importance of the public in shaping the ceremonies and the public image of the monarchy. Both dynasties wanted the approval of society as well as to legitimise the Crown by establishing solid social roots.

In Spain, a first stage of transition of the State Opening of Parliament ceremony happened in around 1843, ending a period that was characterised by the continuous replacement of different constitutional regimes that meant there was no clearly identifiable ritual. Between 1840 and 1843, for instance, Isabel II was still a minor and her mother María Cristina was in exile after the revolution of 1840 and so the regency was represented by the Spanish general and politician Baldomero Espartero, during the State Opening of Parliament. As General Espartero was only a symbolic representative of the Crown he sat in front of rather than on the throne during the ceremony to take his oath as 'regent'.[28]

This situation created confusion in the staging of power during the State Opening of Parliament rituals: while the president of the council of ministers kissed the hand of the future queen, in recognition of her royal power, the opening speech was read out by Espartero. That willingness to embody the monarchical power earned Espartero criticism from a broad ideological sphere.[29] In addition, in March of 1841 and in November of 1842, he authorised the opening of Parliament by decree, that is, without the public parade and ceremony.

The ceremonial consolidation (1843-68)

Although we can find the foundations of the future model of the State Opening of Parliament ceremony in the 1830s, it was not until the 1840s that a clearly identifiable ritual was consolidated, corresponding with the reign of Isabel II (1843-68). During her reign the ceremony occurred in a prominent place – except for when the parliament was opened by commission, when there was no celebration or participation of the monarch[30] – and there were three main components: the parade, the reception and the speech.

Firstly, the parade became the most popular aspect and was generally an exclusively royal procession, without the involvement of politicians or parliamentary representatives. It had started as a result of the practical need to transport the monarch from the Royal Palace to the Buen Retiro Palace – where the Opening of Parliament was

[26] Corbin, 1994.
[27] Robert, 2010.
[28] Shubert, 2018: pp. 248-249.
[29] San Narciso, in press.
[30] Between 1834 and 1900, about one third (20) of the openings took place by commission, and more than double through the so-called royal session (43).

held on some occasions before the establishment of the Palace of the Congress of Deputies in 1850 – and the queen would travel through the centre of Madrid in a carriage.[31] This necessary journey became a symbolic procession of the Crown's enduring significance in the new liberal regime and in doing so it continued and adapted part of the ritual that had already been identified with the early modern State Openings of assemblies.

It was at that moment, during the parade, that the role of the people became more relevant. As it has been explained, the population was to cheer as the monarch travelled through the streets of Madrid to the Congress of Deputies. The State Opening of Parliament in 1858, for example, established that the Interior Ministry would issue 'the corresponding orders so that houses of the surrounding area are adorned and the streets are embellished; and within them and in the vicinity of the Palace of Congress, the usual rules of good order are observed'.[32] In other words the public was expected to demonstrate their support by decorating their homes and applauding the queen as she passed.

Thus, the role of the public was crucial to the success of the parade. The ritual of the procession – with the carriages accompanied by military regiments and bands – demanded an audience.[33] The fact that demonstrations of support were being sought underscores the Crown's need for public legitimacy, precisely at a time when the impact of national sovereignty and of the Carlist dynasty meant that their position was being debated.

The second episode to be highlighted is the reception of the royal entourage at the parliament or senate. Whilst in the 1830s the lower house was the venue of the event, from the 1840s onwards the congress and the senate alternated as venues, despite the fact that the senate building was much closer to the royal palace and, therefore, did not allow such a magnificent parade. Two commissions were formed by a dozen deputies and a dozen senators, one commission was in charge of receiving the royal entourage at the gates of the building, together with the government, and the other was to guide the queen's companions to the corresponding stand.

On a symbolic level, the way the queen's entourage was arranged stands out for mixing monarchical power and political power derived from national sovereignty. Thus, in the procession the political representatives went first, while the ministers of the government went at the same time as the palace chiefs, accompanying the queen. Inside the parliament, the queen sat on a throne, flanked by her husband and the ministers of the government, and before the throne were the crown and sceptre, as symbols of monarchical power. Just behind the throne were the palace chiefs and other members of the royal household. In other words, among politicians only government ministers could be placed at the level of the Crown.

Although the monarchy had to adapt to the new times, the doctrinaire liberalism that prevailed in nineteenth-century Spain was characterised by a prominent position of the Crown, along with strongly-rooted Catholicism and an established social structure.[34] Accordingly, the Crown retained significant attributions of power and a position that was not subordinated to national sovereignty. The new role of the institution was consolidated in such a way that the system of national sovereignty of the Cádiz Constitution (1812)

[31] Medina, 2005: pp. 129-133.
[32] 'Ceremonial que se observará en el solemne acto de abrirse las Cortes en el día 1º de diciembre de 1858 en el palacio del Congreso', File 21, Box 36, Cuerpos colegislativos – Isabel II, Historical Section, Archivo General de Palacio, Madrid.
[33] *La España*, 1-11-1850: p. 3.
[34] Díez, 1984: p. 24.

was gradually replaced by that of shared sovereignty, implied in the Constitution of 1837 and incorporated and consolidated with the Constitutions of 1845 and 1876.

It was not only the royal parade that gave the Crown a leading role in the State Opening of Parliament ceremonies. The monarch also controlled the scene inside the parliamentary chambers. This is attested by the fact that the president of the government kissed the hand of the monarch before giving her the opening speech. The hand-kissing ritual recalled the traditions of the early modern era, as a custom reserved for the most distinguished members of society.[35] Therefore, it was not strange that the president of the government, as the highest political authority, had the distinction of kissing the hand of the monarch before offering her the opening speech.

In addition, the queen was placed in the centre of the parliament and on the throne, dominating the space and leading the other actors. The members of parliament could only sit when the queen indicated. The protocol of the State Opening of Parliament ceremony in 1858 stated:

> The entrance of guards with a mace in the room will announce the proximity of Her Majesty and all the participants will stand up.
> Her majesty the Queen will be placed on the throne, and on Her left, in an armchair designed for that purpose, Her august husband, the King; on either side of the ministers, and behind Her Majesty, heads of the palace, maids of honour, and other persons of the servants whom Her Majesty has designated.
> After Her Majesty the Queen and His Majesty the King Her august husband have taken a seat, the President and other individuals of the parliamentary chambers will also take a seat in their respective positions, likewise immediately those attending this solemn act, and only the ministers and the palace chiefs should remain standing. The President of the council of ministers, after kissing the hand of Her Majesty, will have the honour of handing her the opening speech, returning immediately to his place.[36]

As Maria Grever has emphasised in her work on the role of the British monarchy in the world exhibitions of 1851 and 1867, the fact of being at the centre of the act and thus monopolizing the attention and recognition of the other actors was a symbolic representation of the Crown to the nation,[37] in a very similar way to what was produced in Spain in the State Opening of Parliament ceremonies.

However, this was not a uniquely Spanish scenario. A similar ritual with analogous symbolism existed in the UK. The origins of the British State Opening of Parliament date back to the fourteenth century, but the current ritual was shaped in 1852, when the new Palace of Westminster was opened.[38] Like the Spanish State Opening of Parliament, the British began with a procession of the Sovereign, from Buckingham Palace to the seat of Parliament in Westminster. The king or queen traveled in a horse-drawn carriage, preceded by other carriages that carried the crown, the scepter and the imperial sword.[39] And, as with the Spanish royal parade, no politicians participated.

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[35] Bourgoin and Peyron, 1789: pp. 87-89.

[36] 'Ceremonial que se observará en el solemne acto de abrirse las Cortes en el día 1º de diciembre de 1858 en el palacio del Congreso', Convocatoria de Cortes (1858), File 21, Box 36, Historical Section, Archivo General de Palacio, Madrid.

[37] Grever, 2006: pp. 161-179.

[38] Rogers and Walters, 2006: p. 16.

[39] Arnstein, 1990.

Another similar example can be found in the Belgian case. Throughout the nineteenth century, a parade composed exclusively of members of the royal family also preceded the opening of the Parliamentary chambers.[40] This parade augmented the popularity of the young Belgian monarchy and was linked to the liberal parliamentary regime.

In both cases the opening speech was also an important aspect of the ceremony. In the United Kingdom the monarch would read a speech written by the government that contained the main guidelines and legislative proposals for the new political course,[41] while in Belgium the speech was understood as a symbolic act of renewal of the pact between monarchy and national sovereignty. In that case the monarch read the intentions of the incoming government and the political representatives then presented their response, similar to the Spanish case.[42]

In the Spanish case, the opening speech was the third and final act of the ritual. From the 1830s onward the speech of the Crown was written by the government. They were to advise on the content, considering the inviolability of the queen. For this reason, the Crown speech was progressively understood as a presentation of the government's programme, and the subsequent parliamentary debate as the opportunity of the opposition to judge its performance. An example of this comes from the editorial in *El Clamor Público* after the ceremony of 1848. The newspaper was the voice of the progressive opposition during the moderate governments of the decade. This is just a brief section from the article:

> Let us examine carefully, matter by matter, paragraph by paragraph, the petty speech that the current advisors of the Crown have put in the mouth of her majesty in the solemn act of the State Opening of Parliament of 1848.
> Written poorly and worse conceived, this document clearly announces, among other things, that the cabinet, pleased and satisfied with the result of its unjust and injurious measures, intends to continue undaunted in the same line of policy, even though it must lead the Nation to a precipice. Not a word, not a single word […] about the urgent need to put an end to the discords that afflict us. Conversely, it seems willing to demand again another vote of authorization to suspend rights, laws and individual guarantees.[43]

In other words, the opening speech was not consolidated as another element of monarchical pomp, but as an instrument of political debate that was configured as a basic element of the regime of the shared sovereignty. This is why it was especially important to begin with the speech of the Crown, because opening the legislature through a commission meant the non-appearance of the monarch and usually also the absence of the opening speech. Therefore, it may be assumed that parliamentary debate depended on the attendance of a monarch. Thus, without the opening speech, mostly recited by the queen, governments could avoid giving account of the agenda to the MPs. Opening the parliament through commission was a resource especially used by moderate conservative governments after the impact of the 1848 revolution and its drift towards authoritarianism and the limitation of parliamentary representation.[44] From the total of six openings that

[40] Deneckere, 2006.
[41] Arnstein, 1990.
[42] Deneckere, 2006.
[43] *El Clamor Público*, 17-12-1848: p. 1.
[44] Marcuello, 1986: pp. 63-64.

took place before 1854, only one was accomplished by royal session, with the performance of the ceremony described (parade, reception and speech).

Thus, the parliamentary debate concerning the opening speech, which outlined the basic intentions of the incoming government, was one of the few opportunities that the parliament had to judge the political action of the cabinets. Since these depended on the Crown, as only the queen designated ministers, according to 1845 Constitution, and they did not have to report to the parliament, they acted independently from parliaments – giving rise to what Juan Ignacio Marcuello, following Colliard,[45] called parliamentarism in negative.[46] The directorial position of the Crown in the liberal system conditioned the continuity of the governments, and with them the parliament followed the royal will.[47]

The Crown could use its prerogatives to condition parliamentary institutions, but governments also sought to do the same. In other words, an instrumentalization also took place on the part of the governments, who used the Crown to legitimise their political position, as illustrated by the opening speech of 1848. Therefore, there was a certain confusion or association between the Crown and the government, especially for Isabel II and her propensity to designate governments of moderate tendency. Between 1843 and 1868, the moderates were in power for about two thirds of the time. In 1868 a revolution took place, Isabel II was deposed and she was not replaced by another monarch until 1871.

From unsuccessful alternatives to the recovery of the ceremonial model (1869-1900)

The Crown became an essential component that gave meaning to the act of opening Parliament and therefore was also an essential part of the liberal regime. So strong was the link between the monarchy and the State Opening of Parliament that even the revolutionary parliament of 1869 adopted a similar ceremony, albeit without a king and without a throne. Instead, the provisional government was the main actor of the parade. In addition, the speech was also read by the president of the government.[48]

This reproducing of the same type of event, except for the absence of the monarch, implied a reference by omission to its leading role in these acts and, therefore, contributed to legitimise its close connection with the Spanish parliamentary system. As Graeber and Shalins point out, even when kings are deposed, the legal and political framework tends to persist.[49] Federal Republican newspapers such as *La Igualdad* censored the ceremony precisely because they understood that it did not respond to the political context, and in their opinion, it looked too much like its predecessors.[50]

However, there were not only continuities with the monarchical-parliamentary ritual and, in fact, there were spaces for renewal, beginning with a greater involvement of political institutions as a consequence of the gap left by the Crown. This was not only for the participation of the provisional government during the parade, but also for the participation of councillors of the Madrid City Council, members of the Provincial Council and the Civil Governor.

In addition, new spaces for participation in the procession were opened from a more active and less submissive position of the population. An example of this is the participation of the 'volunteers of freedom', a corps similar to the national militia that, based on a free incorporation, allowed greater politicisation. In fact, there was a march

[45] Colliard, 1978.
[46] Marcuello, 1998.
[47] Díaz Marín, 2018: p. 18.
[48] *Gaceta de Madrid*, 10-02-1869.
[49] Graeber and Sahlins, 2017: p. 1.
[50] *La Esperanza*, 11-02-1869: p- 2.

with the participation of 26 battalions of popular forces that lasted a couple of hours.[51] Likewise, the cheers of the deputies, in this case, were for the members of the government, as well as for 'freedom' and 'national sovereignty'.[52]

Perhaps less disruptive and with a similar framework to the type of ceremony inherited from the reign of Isabel II, was the State Opening of Parliament ritual in 1871, defined by the arrival of the new king after Isabel II's deposition, Amadeo I. The same elements that had characterised the ceremony until then were practically repeated, from the king's parade, to the reception and the speech. The shell did not change, but the forms and content of the speech did.

Under the Constitution of 1869, which rejected shared sovereignty and was based on national sovereignty, the monarch returned to a position of power that was below that of the nation and the political representatives that represented the people. Unlike Fernando VII, Amadeo I accepted that new role as a constitutional monarch. The opening speech he agreed to read out makes this clear:

> Deputies and senators: When stepping on Spanish territory, I formed the purpose of confusing my ideas, my feelings, and my interests with those of the Nation that has chosen me to stand in front of it, and whose haughty character will never consent to strange and illegitimate interferences. Within my constitutional sphere I will rule with Spain and for Spain, with men, with the ideas and with the tendencies that according to the legal framework inform me the public opinion represented by the majority of the Chambers, true regulator of the constitutional monarchies.[53]

According to the role of constitutional monarch, rituals with a great symbolic monarchical power disappeared, such as the hand-kissing one. From 1868 this tradition, which in some way implied the submission of political power to the Crown, was discarded. The king was cheered by the public and the deputies, but significantly the applauses were shared between the monarch, the Constituent Parliament and even Juan Prim, the president murdered a few weeks before the arrival of the king in Spain.[54] That is, the population recognised the king within the framework of freedom and a constitutional system.

The aim was to present a more modern monarchy with a more austere approach, but the reality was that the regime and the monarchy were being debated. Although some newspapers such as *La Iberia* claimed that those examples of popular enthusiasm were evidence of the roots of the revolutionary institutions and of the dynasty itself, in reality the monarchy lacked support. As an example, at the State Opening of Parliament in 1871 there were no republicans, no supporters of the *Carlist* dynasty and no supporters of the son of Isabel II, the future Alfonso XII.[55] Some sources suggest that only a few hundred MPs attended, including deputies and senators,[56] which is a low amount considering that there were some 400 deputies in total, although throughout the nineteenth century absenteeism was very high.[57]

Only in the republican legislature of 1873-74 was a ritual introduced with a manifestly alternative structure, compared to that inherited from the time of Isabel II, and

[51] *Diario Oficial de Avisos de Madrid*, 12-02-1869: p. 4.
[52] *La Correspondencia de España*, 11-02-1869: p. 3.
[53] Session's record of the Congress of Deputies, legislature of 1871: p. 2.
[54] *La Iberia*, 04-04-1871: p. 4.
[55] *La Época*, 04-04-1871: p. 4.
[56] *La Convicción*, 05-04-1871: p. 5.
[57] Luján, 2017 and 2019b.

similar to the direction of 1869. After the reading of the opening speech by the president of the government, a parade was conceived with the involvement of troops and volunteers of the republic that tried to offer the population an active role. This format was very different to the one that had existed until then, with the king at the epicenter and a passive audience.[58] But the republic did not stabilise and the new ritual disappeared with it. With the Restoration regime (1875-1923) and the Constitution of 1876 as the basis of the system, the spirit of the reign of Isabel II was recovered. The Constitution of 1876 had much to do with the structure of the moderate bases of 1845 and the model of shared sovereignty. According to that, during the reign of Alfonso XII (1875-85) and in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the State Opening of Parliament ceremony had changed little compared to those held during the reign of Isabel II. The same kind of parade continued in the streets of Madrid, and the same rituals were carried out within the parliamentary chambers, with the usual pomp and ceremony, including the displaying of the monarchical symbols such as the crown and the sceptre on gold trays.[59] The involvement of the public, meanwhile, was less prominent and at most the people could enter the stands of the Congress or Senate to hear the king's speech or to cheer while waving handkerchiefs.

Likewise, the reception continued with the monarch accompanied by a delegation of political representatives and, once inside the parliament, the king would sit on a throne flanked by the ministers. In addition, senators, deputies and attendants could not sit down until the king gave explicit permission.[60] Undoubtedly, this highlights the consolidation of the monarchy as a fundamental institution of the Spanish parliamentary liberal system, after the failure during the Democratic Sexennial (1868-74) to provide an alternative proposal.

One of the main differences between Alfonso XII and his mother Isabel II is that Alfonso did not want to revert the liberal regime and this was evident in the speeches that he agreed to read. For instance, the concept of 'representatives of the nation', or other derivations such as 'legitimate representatives', appeared in his speeches, highlighting an acceptance and a recognition of the power of politicians that had not existed before, when these concepts were used with less frequency. Many other examples can be found, despite the fact that the references to divine help or the support of divine providence also continued, such as appeals to the political system defined as a constitutional monarchy, a condition not previously underlined with such intensity. These were the words of the opening speech of the legislature of 1881-82: 'This occasion, the opening of the parliament, is always an extreme pleasure for a constitutional Monarch, because on such a solemn occasion it seems that the communion of ideas and aspirations with the national sentiment, freely expressed in the elections, is more alive, more direct and more intimate'.[61]

While this may not indicate that the previous tensions between the Crown and parliamentary institutions had disappeared, it appears that they began to decline in the reign of Alfonso XII, with a mutual recognition between the two institutions, as both recognised their interdependence, and the consolidation of a constitutional monarchy regime based on shared sovereignty.

[58] *La Esperanza*, 02-07-1873: p. 2.
[59] *La Correspondencia de España*, 16-02-1876: p. 1.
[60] Session's record of the Congress of Deputies, legislature of 1879-80: p. 2.
[61] Session's record of the Congress of Deputies, legislature of 1881-82: p. 2.

Conclusions

As Jaap van Osta argues, the late nineteenth-century royal ceremonies helped the monarchy to present itself as an inseparable element of national identity.[62] As described, this process in Spain had occurred since the mid-nineteenth century, when the Carlist threat forced the liberal regime to seek the support of the Crown. The dynasty of the future Isabel II had to rely on liberal politicians to establish its position in the liberal regime. This context facilitated a rapprochement between both institutions, albeit from opposing positions. The process was not cohesive, given the different interests at stake, as it has been shown for the State Opening of Parliament's ceremony. Thus, the circumstances and the need for interaction between the different actors shaped a certain type of ritual. The openings of Parliament, as well as other similar ceremonies, helped the Crown to increase its popularity. While it conferred a passive role to the population, it also illustrated the importance of the public approval of the monarch, legitimising the new position of the monarchy within the liberal parliamentary regime.

At this point, it may be suitable to return to Cannadine's thesis. It is evident that, concerning the nineteenth-century Spanish State Openings of Parliament a new or renovated ritual arises. Some early modern traditions are evident, and some new rituals are incorporated. However, this new ritual had been consolidated as a result of the interaction between the Crown, the liberal parliamentary institutions and the public, and in accordance with the boundaries set by the historical context and the political regime. That is, the ritual could be explained according to the historical moment and the position of power that the different actors held at that time. Therefore, while it is difficult to attribute this ritual to any of the actors involved as a deliberate creation with a univocal purpose, it can be seen as a ritual that grew from internal negotiation.

The Crown retained some meaningful power, but gradually submitted to the recognition of national sovereignty and allowed its descent to the people's assembly, with a discourse imposed and an image sometimes used deliberately by governments for political gain. The liberal political institutions were established but a prominent role was reserved for the Crown, to the extent that the parliamentary debate required the concurrence of the Crown in the State Opening's ceremony. Lastly, the population did not manage to establish the leadership and the prominent position that it was intended to grant during the Democratic Sexennial (1868-74), but its concurrence gave the ceremony legitimacy.

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[62] Van Osta, 2006.

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