

The Coat Of Arms of The Kingdom of Spain in Spanish Philately

by John Micallef

The story behind the royal coat of arms of the Kingdom of Spain later to be known also as state arms is quite interesting. It clearly shows the old kingdoms of Spain and the constitutional monarchy throughout the ages. It revolves around the various political periods which engrave the history of Spain. Spanish philately depicts these stages in the various issues of its stamps thus enabling the enthusiast to quench his thirst while unfolding the pages of Spanish postal history.

The philatelic issues of the Coat of arms of Spain can be divided in three periods namely: The early period, the Francoist period and the reign of Juan Carlos I.

In the early days there was no such as a heraldic Coat of Arms for Spain since Spain has been a “United Kingdom” made up of historical kingdoms. In the early days, as far as the Catholic Monarchs, Spain carried the Coat of Arms of its monarch. This was used as the official arms until the first Spanish Republic.

The first stamp depicting the Coat of arms of Spain was issued on 1st January 1854 under the reign of Isabel II, only four years after the first Spanish stamp saw light.

In the year 1854 three issues were printed by the Spanish Postal Authorities.

On 1st January four values were printed without perforations 6 cu (Carmine), 2r (Red), 5r (Green) 6r (Blue).



On 1st July another four values were printed without perforation to be used officially 1/2 o (Black on yellow) 1 (Black on Rose) 4o (Black on Green) 1 i (Black u Blue).

On 1st November, two types of stamps were issued having three values each. Both types of stamps had no perforation and had the same values and colour but one type had thin paper while the other type, the stamp bore thicker paper with a bluish colour. 2 cu (Green) 4 cu (Carmine) 1 r (Dark Blue)

All issues depicted a shield like drawing parted and holding a Castle and a Lion (The Kingdoms of Castille and Leon) beneath the Royal Crown.

On 1st January 1855, the fourth series was issued. Once again for official use. The lion and the castle were again used yet within



an oval shape diagram beneath the royal crown. Four values were issued namely: II o (Black on Yellow), 1 o (Black on Rose), 4 o (Black on Green), 1 I (Black on Blue). All these stamps were issued under the reign of Isabell II.

In the years 1874 and 1875 , three issues were printed having a different coat of arms beneath the royal crown. All three of them carried the lion, (Kingdom of Leon), the tower (Kingdom of Castille), nine stripes (Kingdom of Aragon) and gold chains with an emerald in the centre of the news between its eight arms of links (Kingdom of Navarra). Two of them were issued on 1st January 1874 and 1st January 1875 . These were drawn within an oval escutcheon and were used as War Tax. They had two values each: 5c (Black) 10 c (Blues). A perforated and a non perforated type were used. The same can be said for the 1875 issue yet the colours were different: 5 c (Green), 10 c (Violet).

On 1st October 1874 the same shape was printed perforated and non perforated. It bore one colour (Brown) having a 10 c value with a type ii and type iii.. All these stamps were issued during the I Republica.



During the reign of Alfonso XII, on 25th September 1875 a new stamp bearing the Coat of Arms of Spain took a new shape. While the symbols of the kingdoms of Aragon, Castille ,Leon and Navarra were retained, the symbol of the house of Bourbon (three fleur-de-lys) was included in the middle, the crown was substituted for the Spanish Royal crown, the Pillars of Hercules one on each side of the scudo bearing a golden fleece with the words Plus

Ultra (Far beyond – recognizing the Spanish colonies) were introduced. The words in circular form had * Correos * Devolución de correspondencia sobrante (Undelivered returned mail). This stamp had no value.

On 24th April 1896-1898 a new stamp depicting the coat of arms of Spain was issued in two different colours (rose and blue) . The rose stamp included a non perforated one.

A different crown on the royal escutcheon having the four quarterings bearing the symbols of Castile, Leon, Aragon and Navarra was used . This stamp had no value and was used officially while a legend surrounding the escutcheon in a horseshoe style included the words Congreso de los diputados (House of Parliament).

The Spanish Civil War officially ended on 1st April 1939. The Republican regime had been defeated and Francisco Franco became the undisputed leader of Spain. In September 1936, the Nationalist senior generals elected Francisco Franco as leader of the Nationalists with the rank as Generalísimo. He was originally supposed to be only commander-in-chief , but after some discussions became head of state as well with nearly unlimited and absolute powers until his death.



In that same year, on 17th August 1936, a stamp depicting the coat of arms of Spain in blue print carrying the value of 30c was issued in Granada (Emisión de Granada).

In 1938 Franco adopted a variant of the Coat of Arms reinstating some elements originally used by the House of Trastámara such as Saint John's eagle and the yoke and bundle.

This stamp was depicted quarterly, 1 and 4, quarterly Castile and Leon, 2 and 3. per pale Aragon and Navarra, enté en point of Granada. The arms are crowned with an open royal crown, placed on eagle displayed sable, surrounded with the Pillars of Hercules and the yoke and the bundle of arrows of the Catholic Monarchs.

In 1962 a series of stamps manifesting the coat of arms of the 56 Spanish Provinces were issued one on each month. On the 19th September 1966 this series of stamps came to an end with the Coat of Arms of Spain, the one adopted by Franco described above. Its value was 10 pesetas.

On the 20th November 1975 El Caudilo, Francisco Franco died in Madrid at the age of 83. A new era for Spain was in sight and the Monarchy was reinstated.

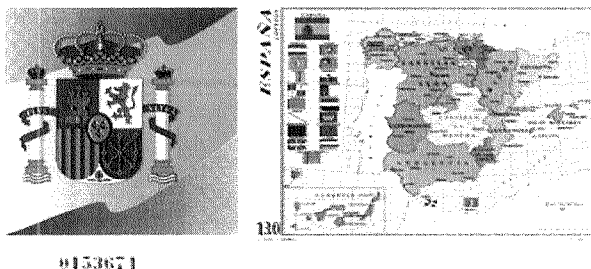
A new constitution was established in 1978 and the autonomous communities were created for which the Spanish Postal authorities in the space of ten years issued 19 stamps depicting the coat of arms for each community. Spanish postal history recognizes this period as el reinado de Juan Carlos. On 9th February 1983

a new stamp showing the new Spanish coat of arms was issued with a value of 14 pesetas. A radical change has been made. This is the current coat of arms which was approved by law and adopted on 5th October 1981 when it replaced the interim version which in turn, replaced the official Francoist Spain. The present Spanish Coat of arms symbolizes in the shield the old kingdoms of Spain i.e Quarterly: (Kingdom of Castile) Gules, a three towered castle or, masoned sable and ajouré azure, argent, (Kingdom of Leon) a crowned lion rampant purpure, langued and armed gules, (Crown of Aragon) four pallets gules, (Kingdom of Navarra) Gules, a cross, saltire and orle of chains linked together. (House of Bourbon) A centre point: Azure bordure gule with three fleurs-de-lys, (Kingdom of Granada) Argent, a pomegranate proper seeded gules, supported, sculpted and leaved in two leaves vert. The shield is flanked by the pillars of Hercules with the motto: Plus Ultra. Above all lies the Spanish crown bearing precious stones, with eight rosettes, and eight pearls interspersed, closed at the top by eight diamonds also adorned with pearls and surmounted by a cross on a globe.

On 5th December 1996, the Spanish postal authorities issued a miniature sheet on the left showing the Spanish coat of arms super imposed on the Spanish colours



Mapa Oficial del Estado Autonómico



composing the Spanish flag – red, yellow, red. On the right hand side the map of Spain incorporating the new autonomous communities, their flags and their territorial boundaries. Value of miniature sheet showed €1.30

The Spanish coat of arms was again reproduced in a stamp issued on 23rd November 2006 with a value of €0.29 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary from the new format. Within the stamp, under the coat of arms, printed in blue lies the words 25 Anniv^o de la implantación del escudo de España.

The last stamp specifically designed to show the Spanish Coat of Arms was issued in 2009.

The Spanish coat of arms is depicted on other stamps which were not printed specifically to commemorate the Spanish coat of arms yet they were printed on various other occasions such as the one issued on 29th December 1978 showing the Spanish flag with the Francoist coat of arms commemorating the Spanish Constitution. In 1985 two stamps were issued commemorating the second century of the Spanish flag. These stamps incorporated the old – 1785 coat of arms on one stamp and the new coat of arms on the other stamp. Both stamps had the value of 17 pesetas.

In various years the coat of arms of Spain appeared with the portrait of Francisco Franco: In 1939 a 10cts stamp was issued – Pro Tuberculosis. During the same year 11 stamps having various values with the effigy of El Caudillo and the coat of arms of Spain were issued. Between 1940 and 1945 17 stamps with the effigy of Francisco Franco next to the coat of arms of Spain were once again issued while another 13 similar stamps were issued in 1948. All with different values.

On 6th May 1974 on the occasion of El día Mundial del Sello, a cancelled stamp which appeared in 1864 was printed on a stamp with the value of 2 pesetas.

On 12th June 1998 on the occasion of the 100 anniversary of the independence of the Philippines, the coat of arms can be seen on the Spanish flag in a stamp with the value of 70c.

On 3rd January 2000, on the occasion of the 150 anniversary from the first Spanish stamp a sheet containing 12 stamps with the effigy of King Juan Carlos



1 and the coat of arms of Spain used in 1854 and the actual one was issued. Value of each stamp 35 pesetas.

In 2003 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Spanish constitution a set of 10 miniature sheets with different topics were issued. All of them included the coat of arms of Spain. The ten titles were as follows: De los derechos y deberes fundamentales, De la Corona,, De las Cortes Generales, Del Gobierno y la Administración, De las relaciones entre el Gobierno y las Cortes Generales, Del Poder Judicial, Economía y Hacienda, De la organización territorial de Estado, Del Tribunal Constitucional, De la reforma constitucional.

Various other stamps of Spain have been issued featuring monarchs, including the current king, besides their royal coat of arms. This is a very interesting subject which requires researching on its own.

The continuous philatelic issues by the Spanish postal authorities have contributed to build a historical picture of the evolution of the Spanish coat of arms.