

## **From “Convivencia” to the Inquisition: The Historic Formation of Spain**

Muslim troops arrived on the coasts of Spain and entered through Algeciras in 711 CE to participate in the civil war that was raging between the Visigoths. After the decisive battles of Guadalete and Covadonga, they signed peace treaties with the Hispano-Romans and quickly consolidated their power base. The importance of the Muslim presence is fundamental to Spain's national development because it benefited greatly from the contact between East and West. The influence of Hispano-Arabic culture was felt by the Renaissance and survives to this day in North Africa.

### **The “Reconquest”**

Small groups of Christian Spaniards living in the mountainous regions of northern Spain maintained their independence from the Muslim presence mostly located in the south of the Peninsula. Each group developed its own system of monarchy, its own capital city and, more importantly, its own institutions, languages and cultures. These many factors defined their independence from each other and eventually would contribute to Spanish nationalism as a whole. Much of the current political organization in modern Spain, based on Autonomous Communities, is a reflection of the separations which occurred over a thousand years ago.

The remnants of the Visigoth royalty who survived the initial contact with the Muslims fled to Asturias, the most northern region, where they set up their capital city in Oviedo and reproduced a courtly, palace life like that they had left behind. The ideal of the Reconquest which inspired them to reconquer the lost lands only surfaced around the ninth century. The cult of the apostle Santiago (St. James) also began at this time and served as a unifying force among the different Christian forces from different parts of Spain and Europe. The pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia brought many Spaniards and other Europeans to the area where they shared their cultures. Like Rome and Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela attracted many pilgrims.

By the beginning of the tenth century, the Asturians had extended their frontiers to the banks of the Duero river and they moved their capital to León. The reconquered lands had to be repopulated and free peasants were encouraged to take up small parcels of land centred around a village, a church and a market. The newly established villages and towns were governed in a democratic fashion by groups of elected men who established municipal bylaws, called *fueros*, that reflected local needs or habits. When necessary, the inhabitants also formed military groups for the defence of the village or town or, when required, to fight by the king's side in his wars. These municipally based organizations are unique to Spain and differ greatly from other European countries where feudalism, based on a rigid social hierarchy, governed how people lived.

In 961, the County of Castile, under the leadership of Fernán González, reconstituted itself as a kingdom, independent of León. The Kingdom of Castile became a leading force in the Reconquest.

The modern region of Cataluña was born of the Marca Hispana that had been under Frankish rule since the beginning of the ninth century. Because of its origins, its social struc-

ture was more like that of feudal France. Its rulers did not have as much power as the kings of other regions because they depended on their own feudal lords. Over time, however, Cataluña became more like the rest of Spain.

Aragón and Navarre freed themselves from their Muslim occupiers at the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth centuries respectively. Aragón joined Cataluña in 1164 CE. In the thirteenth century, the new Kingdom of Aragón became an economic powerhouse based on Mediterranean commerce thanks to the growing commercial middle class.

Portugal was established in 1097 when King Alfonso VI of Castile gave the land as a bridal dowry to his daughter Teresa.

## **Al-Andaluz**

Hispano-Arabic Spain, called Al-Andaluz, initially was a province of the Caliphate of Damascus. This dependence ceased in 756 when it became an independent emirate. In 929 CE, Abderraman II crowned himself as a caliph and prince of the believers, thereby bringing political as well as religious independence.

During the period of the caliphate, Al-Andaluz reached the peak of its glory with Córdoba as its capital city. Córdoba, with some 200,000 houses, 900 public baths, 600 mosques, running water and lit streets was the largest and most developed city in Europe at this time when no other city exceeded 30,000 people. Outside the city is the royal palace of Medina-al Zahra which has only recently been restored. Córdoba became the centre of a symbiosis of Eastern and Western, or classical, culture. The joining of the two cultures can be seen in the poetic form called *muwashaha* that allows for the combining of refrains, called a *jarcha*, written in one of the Romance languages (languages based on Latin), or *aljamiado*, a mixture of Romance and Arabic, with the body of the text composed in classical Arabic (the *zejel*). These poems allow us to understand a bilingual and bicultural society.

The caliphate disappeared at the beginning of the eleventh century when the united kingdom self-destructed because of rivalries into many kingdoms, called *taifas*. These small kingdoms were too weak and too divided to resist the ever more powerful Christian kingdoms as they spread southward. These kingdoms twice sought help from the Almoravids (meaning men of religion) in the early twelfth century and the Almohads (meaning men of unity) in the early thirteenth century, their co-religionaries in north Africa but to no avail. Their intolerance gave impetus to the Christians to reconquer the lost lands.

The kingdom of Granada was the last of the *taifa* kingdoms to survive Christian expansionism. Until 1492, culture, science and literature flourished in the Alhambra palace.

Life in Al-Andaluz was regulated by the *Quran* and revolved around daily prayers at the mosque and economic needs in the *suq*, or market. Agricultural and industrial development was rigidly controlled by the *muhtasib* who enforced municipal by-laws that protected all citizens. Muslims, Christians and Jews lived side by side but independently of each other, ruled by their own laws and beliefs. Religious intolerance, on the whole, was not a problem until the early twelfth century.



The Museum of the Armed Forces in Madrid houses among its most valued possessions this beautiful sword which once belonged to Boabdil, the last king of Granada. The ornamentation of its hilt and scabbard is an example of fifteenth-century art.

## Andalusian Philosophy and Science

Hispano-Arabic philosophers contributed to Muslim thought. Ibn Bayya (known as Avempace), a neoplatonist, sought the union of the soul with God through intellectual effort. Ibn Tufayl (Abentofail) agreed that the soul could understand the physical world, just as the intellect can understand human reasoning. Perhaps the most important philosopher was Ibn Rusd (Averroes) who was born in Córdoba in 1126. Like Aristotle, whose commentator he became, he defended the experimental method. The basis of his system of thought was that the world, as well as human intelligence, had been created by God. Averroes and the teachings of other Arabic philosophers continued to be taught in European universities for many centuries.

## Andalusian Literature

The eleventh century was the great period of lyric poetry in Andalusia. The poets of the *taifas* kingdoms were especially interested in aspects of nature and themes related to love, eroticism and women.

The *Collar de la Paloma* (*The Dove's Neck Ring*) is one of the best known poems by Ibn Hazm, a philosopher, historian and poet. This poem relates the messages exchanged by two separated lovers who communicate by carrier pigeon, the dove whose neck ring carries the messages. In his poems, Al Mutamid, who had been the king of Seville, was captured and held prisoner in North Africa, where he fondly remembers his earlier life. Ibn Zaydun dedicated his poetry to his beloved but also to his native city of Córdoba:

The garden paths smile at me with their silver waterways  
that seem like necklaces hanging from their throats.  
Thus were the wonderful days that were  
when, escaping from Destiny, we stole pleasure ...  
(Ibn Zaydun)

The Almohads, who were more cultured than the Almoravids, fostered the poetry and fine arts they found in Andalusia. A twelfth-century example of a *zejel* by Ibn Quzman allows readers better to understand this poetic form:

He who says that this *zejel* is ingenious is right.  
I discovered it while improvising in the style of a panegyric.  
He who reads it will say: This is truly interesting!  
If my tongue could not say interesting things, I'd tear it out.  
(Ibn Quzman)

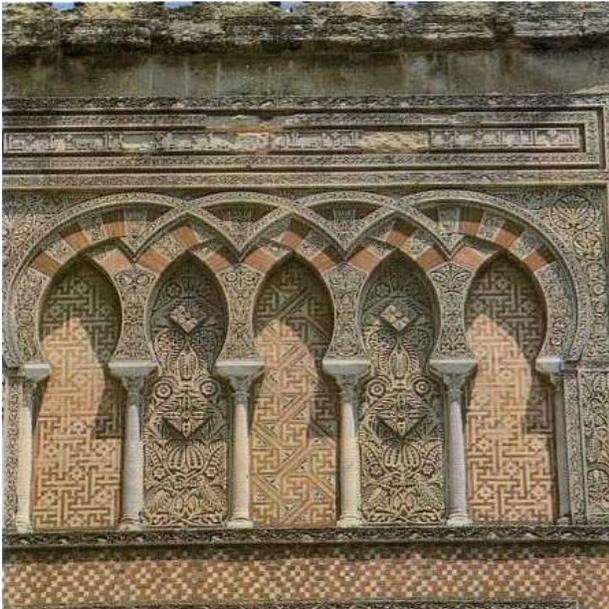
Later, the poetry of Ibn Zamrak, written in the beautiful Arabic calligraphy, will be used to decorate the walls of the Alhambra palace in Granada.

Prose was also cultivated in Andalusia, especially for the writing of history and geography. The *makamat*, a prose form used to describe the adventures of young rogues, closely resemble the picaresque life later described in the sixteenth-century Spanish novel, *El Lazarillo de Tormes*.

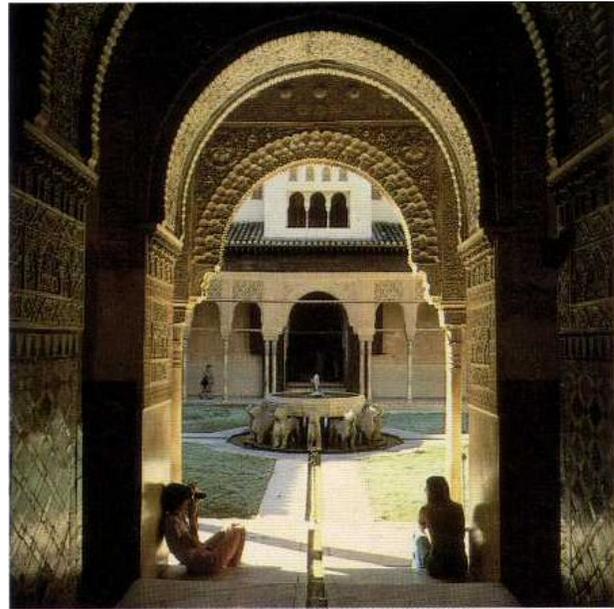
## Andalusian Art

Andalusian art encompasses both Eastern and Western influences and it will, in turn, exercise its own influence over Spanish - *mudejar* - and European art. Some aspects of this art will cross the Atlantic with the Spaniards.

In the early period of the caliphate, architecture was paramount. Hispano-Arabic architecture is distinguished by its use of the horseshoe arch (also called the keyhole arch), the arched vault, cupolas or domes. Because Islamic law forbids the depiction of human or animal forms, the decoration of door frames and the ornamentation of flat surfaces is usually accomplished with calligraphy or depictions of plants, flowers, snowflakes and stars. The most important monument of this period is the great Mosque of Córdoba (22,000 square metres in size) which was built over some 4 centuries by four rulers whose architects left their personal style on the building. Built where the church of San Vicente originally stood, after the Reconquest, another church, the very ugly Capilla Villaviciosa, was built in the centre of the mosque. The



The decoration of the exterior of the Mosque of Córdoba combines the horseshoe arch, the use of red and white mosaics and elements drawn from nature.



The Patio of the Lions takes its name from the nine lions which surround the fountain.

double arches in red and white stone are reminiscent of the aqueduct in Segovia while the capitals of the columns might be compared to the palm trees of Arabia. The vaults, cupolas and the entrance to the *mihrab* are decorated with mosaics, plaster bas-reliefs and calligraphy.

The Giralda and the Tower of Gold built in the twelfth century in Seville are examples of the art of the *taifa* period in which decoration predominated. These decorative elements will reappear later in *mudéjar* art.

The last period of Hispano-Arabic art - the *nazri* period - is distinctive because of its baroque elements, its delicacy and near transparency. The outstanding monument to this period is the Alhambra palace and Generalife gardens in Granada, started in the ninth century but mostly built between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Crouched on the hills of the city, resting below the Sierra Nevada mountains, the palace, that once housed some 20,000 people, is a graceful combination of architecture and nature. The Alhambra (meaning red palace) has been compared to an egg: hard and plain on the outside but delicate and translucent inside. Its decoration, honeycombs made of white stucco, aromatic wood paneling, ceramic mosaics and inscriptions, includes trompe-oeil.

### **The Christian Kingdoms**

The conflict between the Christian and Hispano-Arabic kingdoms was exacerbated by the eleventh century as one power base grew and eventually unified while the other was weakened and divided by civil war.

The Christian kingdoms had contact with Europe, thanks in large measure to the pilgrimage route of Santiago de Compostela. Along with the idea of crusading against the "infidels," European pilgrims also brought the aesthetic of Romanesque art and architecture to the Peninsula.

Although the Christian kingdoms shared many ideals and goals, their histories during the Early Middle Ages were quite separate. The spread southward - the Reconquest - began in the late ninth century but it would not be until the eleventh century under Fernando I and his son Alfonso VI and in the thirteenth century under Fernando III that reconquered land was permanently in the hands of the Christian forces. The battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 was a decisive marker in Christian victories. The impetus for retaking the lost lands was marred by internal divisions such as the rivalries of Fernán González and the rulers of León and Navarre and the fratricidal wars in the mid-eleventh century between Sancho II, Alfonso VI and their sisters Elvira and Urraca over who would rule Castile. Later they would confront various social crises such as that brought on, especially in the fourteenth century, by the plague which killed hundreds of thousands of people. In the fourteenth century the country was divided by civil war caused by the Trastamara family. In the fifteenth century, the country was divided over who would be King Enrique IV's heir: his sister, Isabel, as a woman, was rejected by many nobles.

The deepest crisis was caused by religious intolerance as scapegoats for social ills were sought among the Judeo-Spanish population. Conversions - real and forced - to Christianity were common but did not resolve the problem because the converts (*conversos*) were still suspect and persecuted by the *cristianos viejos* (old Christians: people whose ancestors were known to be Christians for many generations). Eventually the accusations against *falsos cristianos*, converts (both from Judaism and Islam) who were thought to still practice their faith in private, reached the Inquisition.

Aragón-Cataluña and Castile-León were separated by their different histories, political structures, languages and cultures. In the former, due to the influence of trade and commerce and the presence of the middle class, government was more consensual whereas in the latter the

original sense of democracy, by which the people were ruled by the *Cortes* or Parliament, had given way to increased power held by the monarch and the courtly nobility. Political unity and the concentration of power were attractive goals for many monarchs throughout Europe as the Renaissance approached. In Spain it would become a reality when Isabel of Castile married Fernando of Aragón. As the *Reyes Católicos*, the Catholic Monarchs, they unified the nation politically by finally conquering the last Muslim kingdom of Granada, religiously by expelling the Jewish population and linguistically by sponsoring the first grammar of the Castilian language written by Nebrija. Nearly all of the Peninsula was in their hands. Navarre was annexed in 1512 and Portugal maintained its independence.

### **Medieval Society.**

The system of democracy or representative government that had existed in Visigoth times and persisted in Asturias, Castile and León gave way to feudalism along the lines of medieval Europe because small landowners often sought the physical protection of stronger, richer lords by ceding their lands and agreeing to an annual payment of rent in return for permission to cultivate the property they once owned. This fostered the concentration of large tracts of land - like the Roman *latifundios* - and power in the hands of fewer elite families.

In Aragón and Cataluña, on the contrary, feudalism encouraged a balance of powers between the upper classes and the bourgeoisie of this mercantile nation.

### **The Nobility:**

Medieval rulers did not have large national standing armies but relied on the nobility, military orders and religious orders to provide military services when required. They could also forcibly conscript men. The fighters were often compensated with land in the newly reconquered territories. The nobles usually had jurisdiction over those who lived on their lands but, where the need to repopulate was great, this system was liberalised so as to encourage free men who were not nobles to acquire land by moving to the marginal, and more dangerous, lands on the frontiers—the no man's lands.

Some medieval institutions were responsible for the political systems and poverty that affected Spanish society well into the twentieth century. The ever increasing power of the nobility could lead to abusive behaviour. The system of large tracts of land (*latifundios*) - usually in the hands of the nobility or the church - meant that many agricultural workers could never have their own land and were condemned to ever increasing rents. The inheritance of land and other goods fell to the first-born son (*mayorazgo*) and meant that property could not be subdivided or sold. This deprived other sons of an income and forced them to find other ways of earning their livings by either entering the church, going to sea, or fighting in the king's wars with the hope of acquiring some land. Thus the Spanish saying: *Iglesia o mar o casa real*.

### **The Middle Class:**

New social ideas entered the Peninsula via the pilgrimage route of Santiago where commercial travellers and international trade flourished side by side with religious ideals. The middle class - or bourgeoisie - were essentially freemen and town dwellers, that is to say they did

not necessarily own land beyond, perhaps, that on which their home, shop or factory stood, and who were entrepreneurs. They were often protected by the monarchs because of the taxes and tolls they paid to the royal treasury as well as other services they provided. Their ships formed the first Spanish merchant fleet.

Trades and crafts in the growing cities were organized as guilds or brotherhoods who supervised the quality of the goods produced, fixed prices, saw to the training of apprentices, cared for widows and orphans and buried their dead. In some medieval towns, each guild had its own street or neighbourhood in which they maintained health and safety or beautified them. Guilds often built guild halls or sponsored the construction of churches or cathedrals consecrated to their patron saint. Urbanization and the establishment of “factories” that were separate from the family dwelling meant that women and children were no longer integral parts of the manufacturing process and the family’s economy as apprentices were trained and journeyman were hired. An economy based on coinage rather than exchange made a great difference to how society and the market place functioned.

In Spain, with the exception of Cataluña, the middle class never reached the full development seen in other European countries because it was not fully recognised as a vital part of society. Often middle-class business was exercised by Jews and Muslims and was, therefore, shunned by Christians. Spaniards continued to seek social status in the nobility. This lack of a viable middle class meant that there was a constant imbalance between the people and the nobility.

### **Class Conflict:**

From the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, in Castile there was constant conflict between the owners of land and the owners of livestock. The latter would be victorious over time because of the taxes and tolls they paid to public officials as they moved the animals across the fallow lands and when they sold and traded the wool at international markets.

Cattle and sheep, in theory, moved freely along traditional routes, called *cañadas*, that were maintained by associations of livestock owners (*mesta*). The owners of animals regularly came into conflict with landowners when fences were ignored or crops destroyed.

### **Popular Representation: Councils and Parliaments:**

In Asturias, Castile and León, neighbours in the villages gathered in public councils to organize together the governmental needs of the community. In theory, all contributed if funding was required. In practise, however, men who owned weapons and horses - usually the large landowners - were exempt from the payment of taxes but were charged with the physical defence of the community. Churchmen also did not pay taxes, as their responsibility was to see to the spiritual needs of the people. Thus the payment of taxes fell to the small landowners and the working peasants.

As time progressed and the needs of the communities became more complicated, written documents, called *fueros*, recorded these traditional municipal laws. As the Reconquest advanced, in newly established cities, the *fueros* (charters) of other places were copied and adapted to the new environment. In larger communities the neighbours conducted elections of *onmes buenos* (good men) who represented the population in the councils (*consejos*). At the end of the thirteenth century, King Alfonso X, known as *el sabio* (the wise), tried to establish a national law code, the *Siete Partidas* (a seven-part code), that incorporated existing Roman and Visigoth law as well as the best aspects of many of the municipal charters but it was never promulgated because of the opposition of the nobility. This early form of democracy did not survive beyond the thirteenth century because the marked economic differences between neighbours meant that the wealthy were able to buy positions in their municipal councils that allowed them to make important decisions and brought them prestige. The once public form of governance ceased being open to all citizens. Abuses eventually led to the elimination of municipal autonomy and the imposition of royal, national decrees.

A form of national parliamentary rule, called *Cortes* (Court), first appeared in León but quickly spread to the other kingdoms of the Peninsula. It consisted of a gathering of the nobility, important Church officials and municipal representatives around the monarch, ostensibly to act as his advisors. The approval of the *Cortes* was required for certain decisions, such as taxation. A king did not have to call a *Cortes*. Conversely, the representatives could meet without the king but their decisions were not binding.

In Cataluña, a different form of local government was created that was more reflective of the mercantile needs of the community. One example is the *Consulat de mar* (Consul of the sea) that was both a professional association and a maritime tribunal. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Barcelona was a powerful municipality that was administratively autonomous, minted its own coins, maintained its own navy and defended its interests in Spain and abroad. The *Cortes* of Barcelona refused to approve any royal decrees unless the king had agreed to all their demands. This autonomy of the Catalan provinces was an important factor in the Spanish Civil War and survives today in the Parliament of Spain where there is a separate Catalan Party.

### **The Law in Medieval Spain:**

In Visigoth times, there were three legal systems in Spain: Hebraic law, Germanic law and Roman law which were obeyed by the respective communities. When the *Liber Iudiciorum* or *Fuero Juzgo* (Book of Laws) was imposed in the seventh century, Roman law as such ceased but it had already greatly influenced and had been incorporated into the Visigoth system.

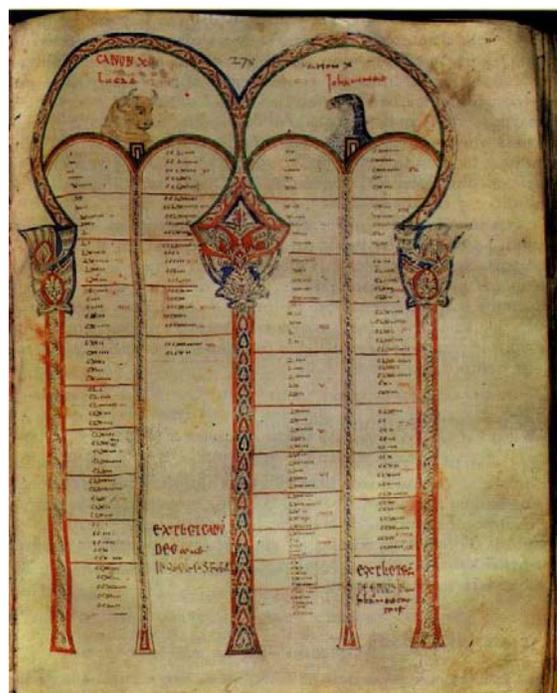
The invasion of the Muslims in 711 brought another legal system into the Peninsula that coexisted with Christian and Hebraic laws for many centuries. Each legal system applied to the people who followed its religion. Legal diversity was, therefore, very common in medieval Spain. A unified system of laws and government would not even begin to appear until the end of the fifteenth century and even then in a very piecemeal fashion until the eighteenth century. Laws regarding inheritance which are based on the medieval *fueros* still apply in some instances today. The spreading branches of the oak tree in Guernica, where these councils were traditionally held, was a symbol of these laws until it was bombed in the Spanish Civil War.

## The Church in Medieval Spain:

The monarch, the nobles and the church were the forces of power in the Middle Ages. The church played important economic, cultural and spiritual roles. While it legitimated established social and political organizations, it also maintained its independence from other groups.

Thanks to the pilgrimage route of Santiago de Compostela, the monasteries and religious orders in medieval Spain were reformed along the lines already seen in the rest of Europe and especially in France. Monasteries became important centres of culture and science and also provided many social services such as hospitals, leprosarium, prisons, orphanages. Military orders - such as the Order of Santiago - also sprung up after the thirteenth century. These groups of armed men, usually knights, fought against the Muslims and protected the pilgrims. The orders were sources of great pride to those who belonged to them.

In 1232 the Inquisition came to Aragón as an ecclesiastic tribunal whose goal was to punish religious heresy among Christians. Between 1478 and 1834 it included all of Spain and was used to persecute Catholics who were thought to be false converts from Judaism and Islam. Later the Inquisition sought out Protestants and witches in Spain. The Inquisition was guilty of much abuse of its power to arrest, interrogate, jail and convict the innocent as well as the guilty without witnesses or concrete evidence.



The tolerance of *convivencia* can be seen in this manuscript folio of the *Biblia Hispalense*, a Bible written in Spain in Hebrew. The manuscript decoration is reminiscent of the double arches and columns of the Great Mosque in Córdoba.

## **Culture in Medieval Spain.**

The coexistence in Spain of both Western and Eastern cultures made possible a symbiosis of both and had great influence in the beginnings of the Renaissance. Pilgrims and other travellers from Europe returned with ideas acquired in Spain. The best examples of this cross-cultural fertilization are the Schools of Translators in Córdoba and later in Toledo where Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Latin texts were translated into other European languages. In this way mathematical, astrological and especially medical science was made known to the rest of the world. Thanks to these studies, the science of cartography and navigation advanced and eventually permitted the Atlantic voyages of Columbus and others.

Another important source of interdisciplinary study and the extension of knowledge can be attributed to the universities that began to appear in medieval Spain. The first was the University of Palencia that was created in 1212 CE. Usually centred around a monastery or cathedral, the universities were at first seen as places of instruction for future clerics but very soon they became important for the instruction of secular men as well.

## **Medieval Spanish Literature.**

Epic poetry, such as the *Cantar de Mio Cid* (*The Song of the Cid*), grew out of two literary currents: the *mester de juglaría* and the *mester de clerecía*. The *mester de juglaría* (craft of the juggler) was produced by street performers who either composed or simply recited poems to popular audiences or sometimes in the castles of the nobility. These anonymous poems, called *cantares de gesta* or songs of deeds, usually recorded some current event or the feats of local or national heroes and were transmitted orally in the languages of the listeners.

The best known epic poem in Spanish literature is the *Cantar de Mio Cid* that was probably composed and recited soon after the hero's death in 1099 and written down in the now known form around 1240. Unlike the poems dedicated to other heroes such as Rodrigo, the last Visigoth king, Bernardo del Carpio, Fernán González, the seven sons of Lara, and Sancho II, only the Cid is remembered in a single unique and complete manuscript that is located in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid. A translation of the poetry into English prose provides some understanding of the *Cantar de Mio Cid*: "Into Burgos rode my Cid, sixty lances in his company, and men ran out to see him. The citizens of Burgos, sorely weeping, stood at their windows, and each one made the same laments: 'God, what a worthy vassal, had he but a worthy Lord.'"

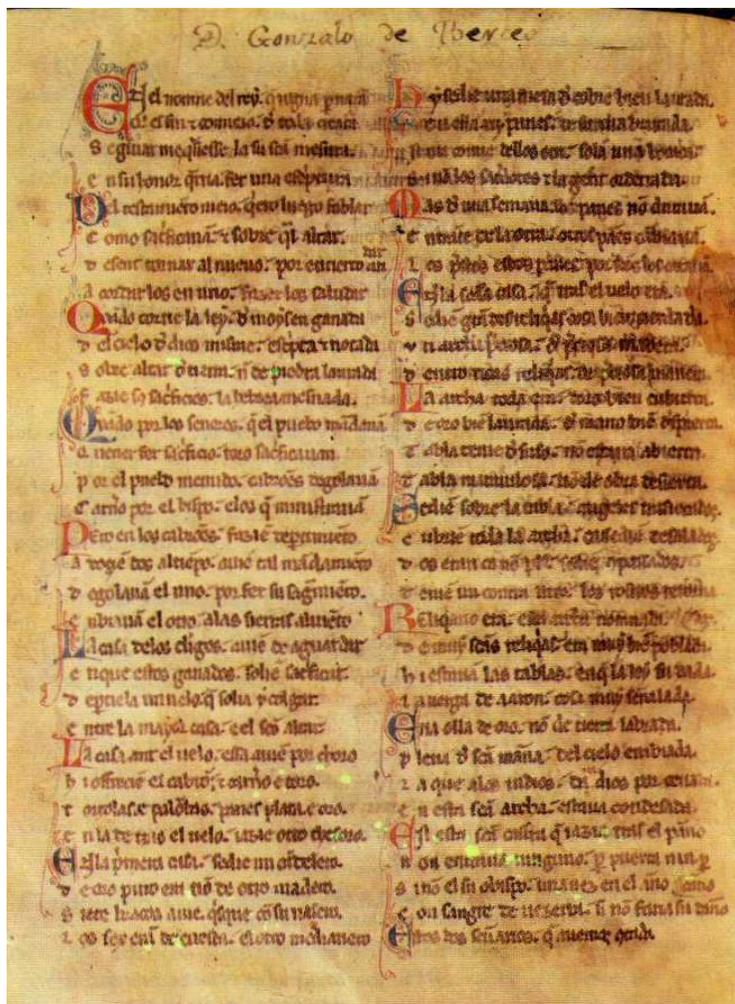
The *mester de clerecía* was also used for recording the deeds of important men but it also lent itself to other themes. The craft of the cleric (or clerk), that is of a lettered man, appeared first in Castile in the thirteenth century and owes a great deal to the influence of Italian poetry. Its main characteristic is that, unlike the *mester de juglaría*, it has a strict rhyme scheme and rhythm of quartets (called *cuaderna vía* or four line verses) in a single rhyme of fourteen syllables.

Gonzalo de Berceo is the first Castilian poet whose name is known. He lived in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and is the author of many texts including the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (Miracles of Our Lady):

Master Gonzalo de Berceo,  
While on a Pilgrimage, happened to pause in a meadow  
Green and untouched, full of flowers -  
A desirable place for a weary man.

The flowers there emitted a marvellous fragrance:  
They were refreshing to the spirit and to the body.  
From each corner sprang clear, flowing fountains,  
Very cool in summer and warm in winter.

Other important poems composed in the *mester de clerecía* style are the *Libro de Alexandre*, which deals with the biography of Alexander the Great, the *Libro de Apolonio* about Apolonius of Tyre, and the *Poema de Fernán González* that is a probable rewriting of an earlier epic poem about the Castilian hero.



This folio is part of the manuscript of Gonzalo de Berceo's *Sacrificio de la Misa* (*Sacrifice of the Mass*) in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid. This poem has both popular and cultivated elements as well as archaic and dialectic usage of language that reflects the language of the regions of La Rioja and Aragón, where the manuscript was composed.

Prose was not an unknown genre in these early days. Many historical chronicles were written in Latin or in a Romance language. These chronicles often used epic poetry as their sources, sometimes even rewriting or copying major segments of the poems into their texts.

A well-known Catalan prose writer was Ramon Llull, a philosopher who had studied Muslim and Hebrew texts as well as classical Greek, Latin, and Christian material, thereby incorporating Arabic philosophy into European thought. Literature in Catalan would disappear during the Renaissance but would be revived in the nineteenth century in the so-called Catalan *Renaixença* (Rebirth).

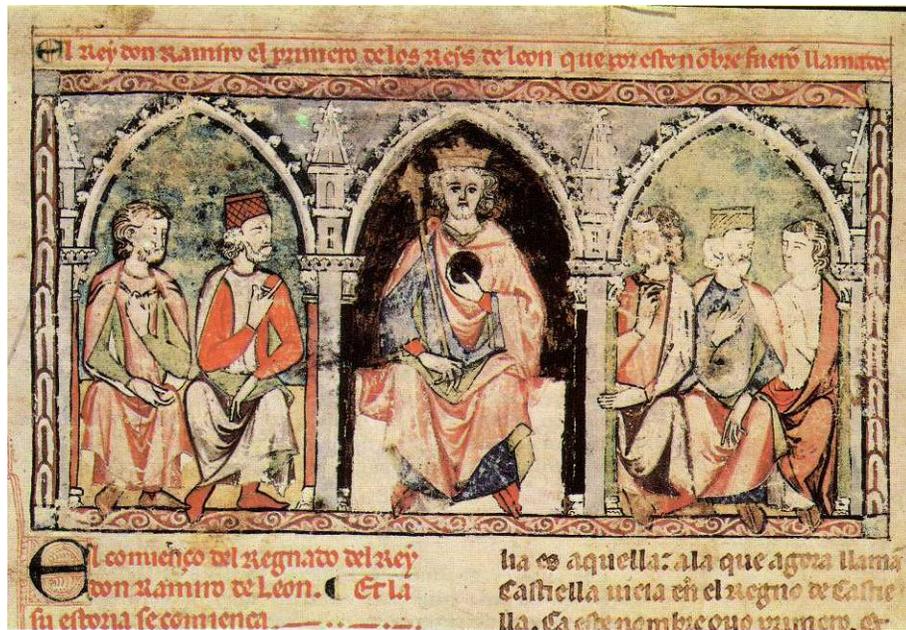
### **Alfonso X, *el Sabio* (1221-1284)**

King Alfonso X, known as *el sabio* (the wise), was personally responsible for the flourishing of Castilian culture in the thirteenth century. Besides fostering the work of many authors, scientists and musicians whom he brought to Spain, he wrote many books himself. A team of historians working under his direction wrote the *Crónica General*, the first history of Spain written in Castilian, and the *General e Grande Estoria*, a compendium of world history:

... and we composed this book of all the facts that could be found since the time of Noah until our days. And we did this so that the origins of Spaniards might be known and so that those people who mistreated Spain be known and so that the battles fought by Hercules of Greece against Spain be known, and so that the deaths caused by the Romans in Spain be recorded ...(Crónica General)

King Alfonso was also responsible for the law code of the *Siete Partidas* which reflected perhaps the king's idealistic view of how his country might be governed. He also wrote scientific texts such as the *Libros del saber de astronomía* (*Books of Astronomy*), the *Lapidario* (*Lapidary*) and the *Libro de las tablas alfonsies* (*Book of Alfonso's tables*). Alfonso X wrote books of poems and song lyrics, with their own music composed either by him or at his court, some, such as *Cantigas de Santa María* (*Songs of the Virgin Mary*) were written in Galician-Portuguese. Many *cancioneros* (song books) were written in Galician-Portuguese from the twelfth to the fifteenth century but, like Catalan, this language fell into disuse as a language for literature during the Renaissance but was revived in the nineteenth century in the Portuguese and Galician *Rexurdimento* (Rebirth). Alfonso X also wrote books for pleasure such as the *Libros de aljérez, dados y tablas* (*Books of Chess, Dice and Checkers*) - all games learned from the Muslims).

When the Roman liturgy was imposed in Spain in the eleventh century, thereby displacing the Mozarabic or Visigoth liturgy in use until then, music became an important element in the churches. A composition for three voices found in Spain is thought to be the oldest polyphonic text to exist in Europe. Like the *Cantigas* of Alfonso X, some medieval poetry was written to be sung. Unfortunately few scores to these texts have survived.



This folio is a miniature - a form of decoration of medieval manuscripts - in the *Crónica General* now located in the library of the Monastery of El Escorial. The painting depicts King Ramiro I of León surrounded by his nobles.

### Fourteenth-Century Bourgeois Morality and Didacticism.

In the fourteenth century, authors such as Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita, reflected bourgeois morality as well as urban realism, practicality and sensuality in their works. Juan Ruiz' book *El Libro de buen amor* (*The Book of Good Love*) reveals the author's sense of humour as he combines elements of everyday life with aestheticism. The title of this book is purposely ambiguous in that it can be seen as a manual to be used for seduction or it can be seen as a warning for those who concentrate exclusively on worldly love and turn away from the love of God.

I'd be contemptible, a cad, an infamous, crude boor,  
 If I should say vile things of ladies who are sweet and pure.  
 For in alluring women, lovely, gracious and demure,  
 Lie all the good on earth and all the joys life can procure.

The *Libro de Patronio o del Conde Lucanor* by Juan Manuel also figures in the didactic stream. Here the author in some fifty short stories, called *ejemplos*, or examples, has the elderly and sage Patronio answer the young Conde Lucanor's questions about life. Each *ejemplo* concludes with a didactic morale or *sentencia*.

Pedro López de Ayala in his *Rimado de Palacio*, written in *cuaderna vía* like earlier works, foreshadows in a very modern fashion for the fourteenth century, what will become religious debates and conflicts in the Renaissance.

### Courtly Poetry and Classicism in the Fifteenth Century.

The Italian influence was felt in Spanish literature of the fifteenth century as the imitation of classical Roman style and syntax was encouraged in poetry. Enrique de Villena, for example, translated both the *Aeneid* and the *Divine Comedy* into Spanish at this time. Poetry also reflects the influence of courtly love poetry brought into Spain by troubadours from Provence in southern France. Iñigo López de Mendoza, marquis of Santillana, is one of the best known composers who collected their works in song books, or *cancioneros*. These poems are either religious or secular in nature and were probably meant to be sung or recited at court. In some cases the love described is chaste and uplifting whereas in others it is impure. Some are humorous, such as the *Serranilla* (song of a mountain woman) that relates the conversation between a knight and a shepherdess:

Serranillas from Moncayo,  
 you might make into a knight.  
 .....  
 I said to her: God keep you,  
 serrana, in good health.  
 She answered me angrily:  
 Oh! Finally he is here,  
 the one who on St. Payo's day  
 will be my prisoner.  
 And he came to me like a flash  
 saying: I am your mountain prisoner.  
 (*Serranilla*, Marqués de Santillana)

The poetry of Juan de Mena in his *Laberinto de fortuna* (*Labyrinth of Fortune*) is more symbolic as the author enjoyed using neologisms (invented new words) and breaking up the traditional or logical order of words in sentences. Jorge Manrique, another fifteenth-century poet to whom we owe the *Coplas a la muerte de su padre* (*Couplets on the Death of his Father*), presents a timeless work that continues to evoke the deep emotions of lyric poetry:

Remember the sleeping soul,  
 Enliven the mind and awake,  
 To contemplate  
 how life passes by,  
 how soon death comes  
 so quietly;  
 how quickly pleasure disappears  
 how, once remembered,  
 there is pain,  
 how, it seems to us,  
 that any past time  
 was better  
 (*Coplas a la muerte de su padre*, Jorge Manrique).

Catalan poetry was also highly influenced by the troubadours who wrote in French or Provençal. In the fifteenth century one of Spain's and Cataluña's greatest poet, Ausias March, wrote his *Cants* (*Songs*). These 116 poems later became very influential in Spanish literature.

Prudent lady, I will not say that I love you,  
for, while I am certain, I doubt your certainty  
and if you think the reason is still unclear  
for our love to be unequal.

Sentimental and chivalrous novels appear in the fifteenth century as do biographical chronicles. The sentimental novel, such as *Cárcel de Amor* (*Prison of Love*) might be considered a medieval form of adventure and romance stories that were told in a loose episodic fashion and usually concerned one or two main characters who are separated from their beloved. The novels of chivalry hoped to recreate the lives of - usually fictitious - knightly heroes. One of the most famous of such novels is *Tirant lo Blanch* (*Tirant the White Knight*) written by the Catalan author Joanot Martorell. Two centuries later, Cervantes, in *Don Quijote*, would record the book as "a treasure of contentment and a mine for amusement". The worthy knight at all times sought to bring help to the needy, especially if they were damsels in distress:

I am certain that the Princess has suffered because of me. I want to return to save her, should she need me. The Viscount said: "By my faith, you are well prepared to help her!" Tirant answered: "My lord Viscount, I am no longer in pain because, as you know, a small pain is superseded by great grief, and for that reason I beg you that we might return to the city to bring help. (*Tirant lo Blanch*, Joanot Martorell)

The biographical chronicles pick up where earlier historical, national chronicles left off but now they are concerned with one individual or family. An interesting text of this type is the *Albucáxim* by Juan de Luna in which the author pretends to have found and translated a manuscript written in Arabic which supposedly recorded a series of love letters exchanged by Rodrigo and Florinda La Cava. For hundreds of years this chronicle was thought to be real. The *Crónica Sarracina* (*The Muslim Chronicle*) is based in part on this text and the author, Pedro del Corral, recreated a version of the Muslim invasion of Spain and the pain suffered by King Rodrigo, the last Visigoth monarch, when he saw how his land was lost to the invader. These biographical chronicles will be imitated later as Spaniards cross the Atlantic and record their personal or fictitious experiences in their chronicles.

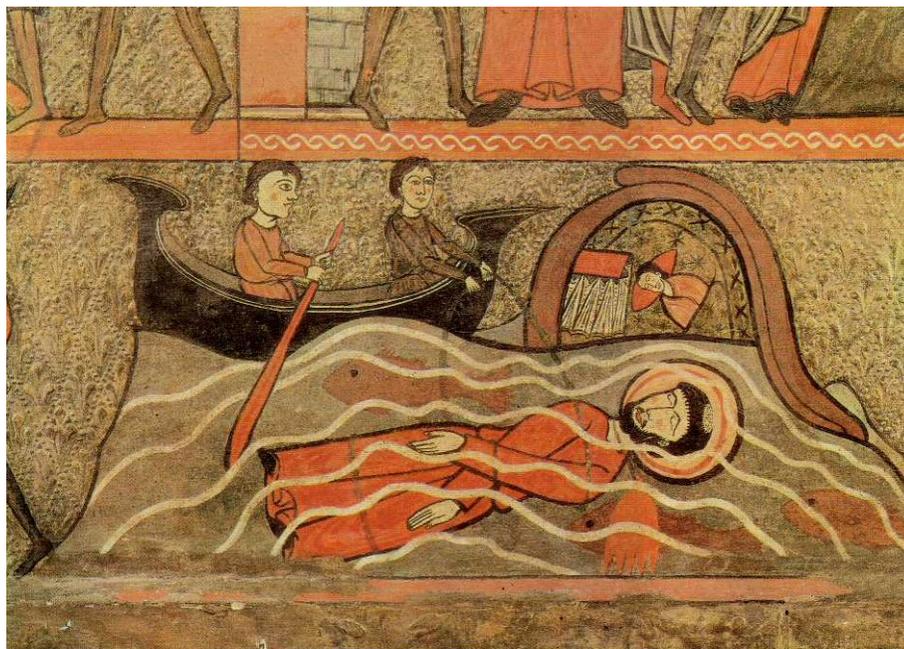
Another interesting author of this time is Alonso Martínez de Toledo, Archpriest of Talavera, who imitated the earlier *Libro de buen amor* in his *El Corbacho* where he warns of the dangers of worldly love and the traps set by the devil:

But let me tell you: the devil is much like a thief who comes upon a traveller on the road and, even when the traveller has given him all the coins he carries, he still drags him off the path to dangerous places where he is in his power. (*El Corbacho*, Alonso Martínez de Toledo).

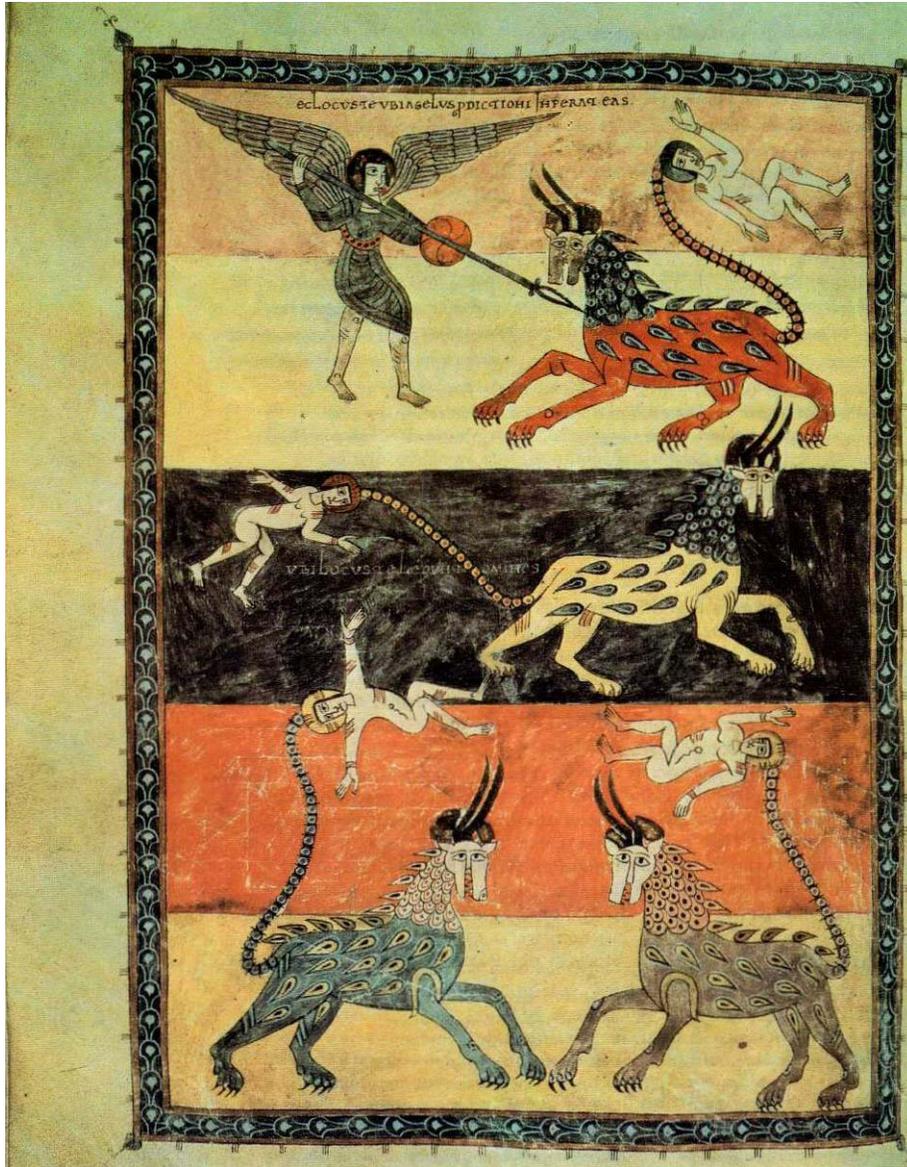
Medieval theatre was liturgical in nature and was used primarily in churches as a teaching tool so that illiterate churchgoers might learn the scriptures. One of the few extant examples is the *Auto de los reyes magos* (*Play of The Three Kings*) from the fifteenth century in which part of the Christmas story and the visit of the three magi is told. Another fifteenth-century play, written in Catalan, is the *Misterio de Elche* (*Mystery of Elche*) which is also religious in nature. This play continues to be performed until today in the town of Elche near Alicante. A form of secular drama must have existed but no manuscripts survived. It is possible that this popular drama was never written down but recited in town squares and at court, as were the epic poems, especially during feast days. The first stages would have been the altars of the churches but, especially as drama became more and more secular, the actors might have moved from the altars to the church steps and then to the village square or to streets that could have been blocked off and even covered to protect the audiences from the weather. Separate buildings used exclusively for theatre would not exist for a long time.

### **Romanesque Art.**

The Kingdom of Asturias at first maintained the Hispano-Roman and Visigoth artistic tradition but these styles, in turn, evolved into a distinctive form of architecture that is characterised first by the horseshoe arch which, in turn, became the rounded, semi-circular arch. These were used in combinations for the construction of buildings with barrel vaults and naves - as opposed to flat or simply pointed roofs - and cupolas formed by the intersection of four or more naves. The most characteristic buildings in this early Romanesque style are the churches of Santa María de Naranjo, San Miguel de Lillo and Santa Cristina de Lena.



The martyrdom of San Clemente, a frontispiece from the altar of San Clemente in Tahull. It is now located in the Museum of Catalan Art in Barcelona. It is a beautiful example of Catalan Romanesque art.



Folio of the *Beato de Gerona*, an apocalyptic text now located in the cathedral of Gerona. It is an example of Mozarabic art.

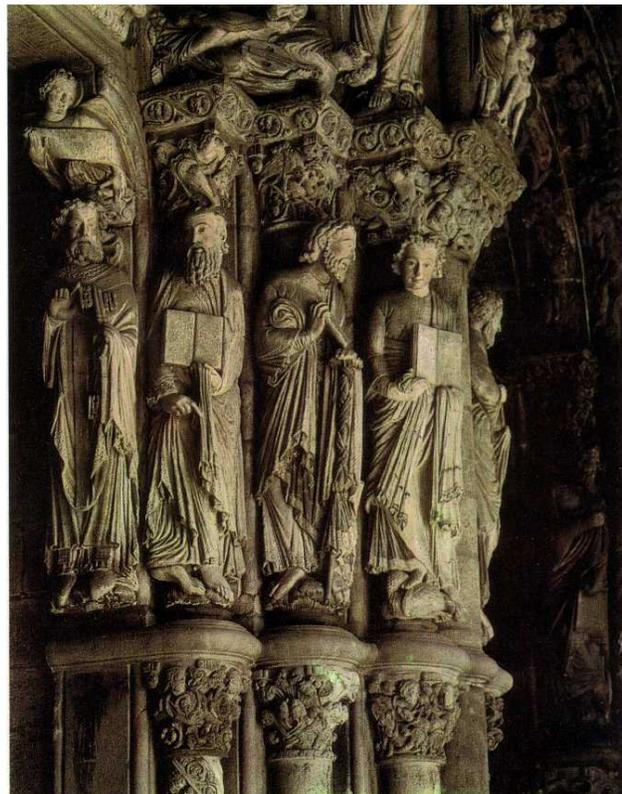
What little construction of churches that did take place in Mozarabic lands reflects the blending of Visigoth and Andalusian art. Some characteristic features are the horseshoe arch and the nerved or ribbed vaults, ceilings in which the distinctive shape of the arches that form them is visible. Mozarabic art also included less spectacular examples such as the miniature painting of manuscripts, such as the *Beato de Gerona*, as well as the painting of frescoes in churches.

Romanesque art, essentially while not exclusively religious, was appropriate to a rural, feudal society. This building style entered Spain along the pilgrimage route of Santiago de Compostela during the eleventh century. Some secular Romanesque architecture include the

walls of the cities of Ávila and Zaragoza and the fortress-palaces (*alcázar*) of Seville and Toledo. Its characteristics are the semi-circular barrel vaults, the semi-circular arches and geometrical decorative elements. Romanesque architecture is eminently solid, somewhat heavy when compared to later styles. Columns and entrances are decorated with human or animal figures that are used as symbols. Often these sculptures serve a didactic purpose in that they provide a narrative that explains the scriptures or the lives of saints.

The first Romanesque churches in Spain appear in Cataluña but the style spread quickly throughout the Peninsula as new territories were conquered and the need for new or larger churches grew. Because it sometimes took up to a century to build a cathedral, there are rarely pure examples of Romanesque art. Some cathedrals, such as that of Lleida and Tarragona, have gothic elements that were added as the churches were being completed. The cathedrals of Salamanca, Zamora and the chapter house of Toro have Byzantine cupolas. The best example of Spanish Romanesque architecture is the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela but it too suffered some Baroque details were added to the facade in the eighteenth century.

The Romanesque sculptures which serve both a decorative and utilitarian need are very symbolic. Often the sculpted columns support the heavy roofs of the churches while they tell stories to the faithful about Christ, the Virgin Mary, saints, etc. Some of the best examples of Romanesque sculpture are the carvings in the *Puerta de las Platerías*, one entrance to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela and the cloister of the monastery of Silos outside Burgos. In the twelfth century, at the *Pórtico de la Gloria*, another entrance to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, sculptors began to group the figures in a narrative, a feature that announces Gothic art.



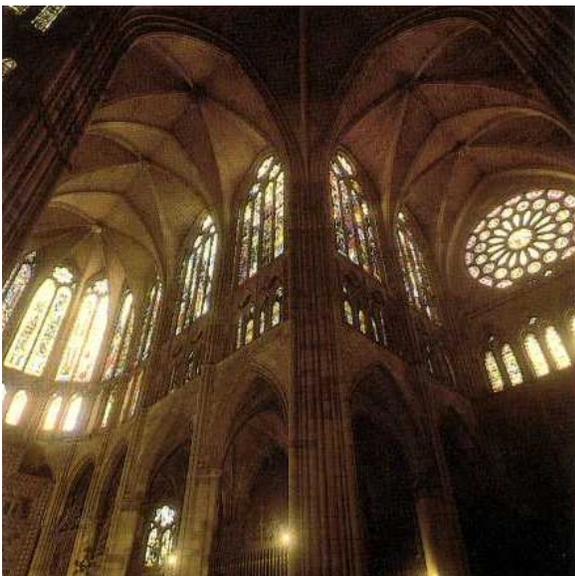
Some of the figures of the *Pórtico de la Gloria* of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. This sculpture by Maestro Mateo (Master Matthew) is from the twelfth century and is a combination of late Romanesque and early Gothic art.

Romanesque painters did not understand perspective and were content to present idealised faces that reveal intense expressivity. The apses of churches, such as that of San Clemente and Santa María de Tahull, were painted with multicoloured frescoes or wooden panels, especially for altar pieces. Due to the weather and other environmental factors, as well as vandalism by humans, many of these paintings have not survived but some have been rescued and restored.

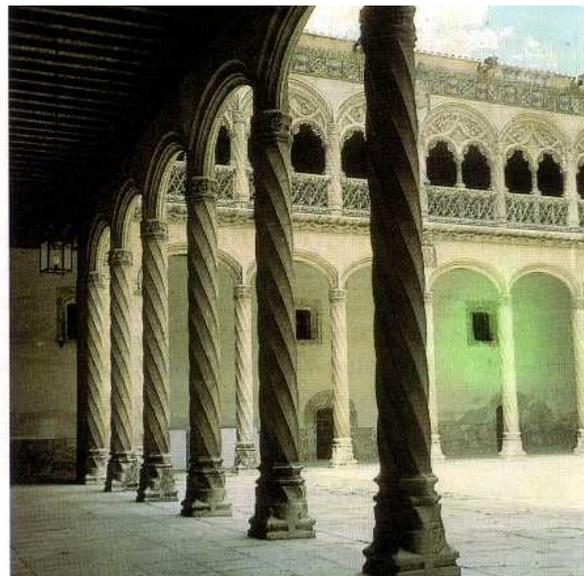
### **Gothic Art.**

Whereas Romanesque art was essentially rural, Gothic art belongs to the growing urban centres of the thirteenth century and beyond. It is a style that is expressive and allows for a sense of poetry in stone. In their buildings, architects seemed to be involved in a spiritual reaching for the sky through the twin towers of their ever taller and much larger structures. Thanks to the use of buttresses, columns were taller and thinner and walls were replaced with stained glass windows. Painters and sculptors abandoned the symbolism of the Romanesque and sought out the realism of their daily experiences. Gothic architecture reveals a more confident society.

Gothic architecture came to Spain with the arrival of the Benedictine religious order in the twelfth century. Prime examples of Gothic architecture are: the monasteries of Santes Creus in Tarragona, Las Huelgas in Burgos, and the cathedrals of Ávila (built in the twelfth century); Burgos, Toledo and León (built in the thirteenth century); Barcelona, Gerona and Palma de Mallorca (built in the fourteenth century); the fifteenth-century cathedral of Seville which incorporated *La Giralda*, the minaret of the original mosque; the sixteenth-century cathedral of Segovia and the “new” cathedral in Salamanca.



The interior of the Cathedral of León, the purest Gothic architecture in Spain. The stained glass windows take up more space, thereby providing a brighter lighter interior, but also force more weight on to the walls and columns that are supported on the exterior by flying buttresses.



The cloister of San Gregorio in Valladolid is an example of “florid” or Isabeline style of Gothic art.

Gothic art was not exclusively religious. City dwellers and nobles used this style in the building of their palaces and homes and, especially in Cataluña, in the building of civil structures such as the commercial buildings in Zaragoza and Palma de Mallorca.

By the end of the fifteenth century a “flaming” or “florid” Gothic art can be seen in Spain. This style, often called the style of the Catholic Monarchs or Isabeline style, is distinctive because it incorporated some Moorish characteristics that were observed in Andalusian architecture or decoration. The *Cartuja de Miraflores* in Burgos and the facades of the churches of San Pablo and San Gregorio in Valladolid are examples of this late Gothic art.

Sculpture was now free standing. Master Bertomeu, who decorated the church of Santes Creus in Taragona, created an indigenous school of gothic sculpture that distinguished itself by the interest it paid to the expression of the characters and to overcome the rigidity of stone. This late Gothic style was eventually supplanted by the new interest in classicism.

Painting, especially because of the work involved in the immense altar pieces, grew in importance in the second half of the fourteenth century. A new form appeared, called international Gothic, a fusion of many other national styles seen in France, the Lowlands, Italy and Spain. Like sculpture, painting was more expressive and individualistic.

### **Mudéjar Art.**

The Muslims who continued to live in lands reconquered by the Christians from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries were called *mudéjares*. This group created a distinctive and very original art form which essentially incorporated Arabic decoration to Christian structures. There are two styles of mudéjar art: one is strictly imitative of earlier Hispano-Arabic buildings, such as the *Alcázar* in Seville and the palace in Tordecillas; the other is a combination of both Arabic and Christian styles. This second style is the most original and incorporates both Romanesque and Gothic forms. The combination with Gothic architecture, from the second half of the twelfth century to the beginning of the thirteenth, is also called “brick Romanesque” because of the use of this construction material. Some outstanding examples are the churches of Santiago del Arrabal and San Román in Toledo; the churches of La Lugareja and San Martín in Arévalo and the parish church of Santerbás de Campos in Valladolid. Interestingly, this style was used in the construction of two Jewish synagogues in Toledo, the Synagogue of the Transit and the synagogue now known as Santa María la Blanca. This style spread all over the Peninsula from Aragón to Andalucía. One characteristic feature is the squared or octagonal steeples decorated on the outside with bricks and beautiful ceramic tiles as in the churches of San Martín, El Salvador, the cathedral of Teruel and Santa María and San Andrés in Calatayud. In Andalucía this style is mostly seen in Seville where Almohad features appear in Gothic portals and apses, reflecting the Arabic past as in the churches of Santa Marina and San Pablo. In Extremadura, the most representative example of this combination of styles can be seen in the cloister of the monastery of Guadalupe.

Mudéjar style survives even today in the decorative and industrial arts, such as embossed leather work called *guadamecías* (Cordoban leather), pottery and carpets as well as in carpentry and wood working.

Andalusian music also continues to please today just as it did in the eleventh century when the first conservatory was established. The combined tradition of local or native and Arabic influence was taken by mudéjar people (or *moriscos*, as they were called after the fall of Granada) to North Africa when they were forced to leave the Peninsula and where even today this music is known as “the words of Granada” or “Andalusian song.”

### **Judeo-Spanish Culture.**

An important element in medieval Spain was constituted by the Jewish community that had existed in Spain since time immemorial - some say since the fall of the Temple, others since the time of Noah.

Like their fellow Christian and Muslim citizens, the Jewish community in Spain developed greatly during the Middle Ages. All three groups had established forms of cohabitation, or *convivencia*, that were mostly useful but sometimes led to tragedy. An example of beneficial mutual exchange can be seen in the Translators´ School in Córdoba and later in Toledo where great Talmudic schools existed alongside Christian cathedral schools and Islamic centres of learning. An interesting example of this mixing of religions and cultures is provided by the *Disciplina clericalis*, a guide for scholars using tales, maxims and proverbs, written in the twelfth century by the Jewish doctor Moises Sefardi, also known by his Christian name, Pedro Alfonso, after he converted.

Jewish philosophy at this time, like that of Christians and Muslims, was essentially religious and Platonistic. Abengabirol, the author of a book called *The Source of Life*, saw God as a unique and unknowable being whereas mankind was a synthesis of all universal components. Maimonides, also known as Judah ben Maimon, was from Córdoba, and was a contemporary of the Muslim author, Averroes. He was perhaps one of the most universal of Hispano-Jewish philosophers. In his book, the *Guide for the Undecided*, he approaches the existence of God with logical arguments and defines mankind as a composite of material and form.

The Jewish population in Spain was best known for its interest in medicine and Toledo was one of the major centres for medical education, along with Montpellier in France. Hispano-Jewish doctors were employed by kings from many different countries. Because of the international contacts fostered by the Jewish people in Spain with coreligionaries all over the world, Jewish merchants and traders were also sought out by monarchs who wanted them to care for their financial interests. The Patio of the Lions in the Alhambra palace of Granada is a good illustration of how medieval Spanish *convivencia* existed: Islam forbids the fabrication or representation of human or animal figures yet in this patio we find a fountain decorated with lions, the symbol of the Levi tribe. This patio belonged to the home of the family of Juda ben Levi, the Muslim king’s financier.

### Chronology:

- 711: Muslim troops arrive in Spain.
- 722: Battle of Covadonga and the beginning of the Reconquest.
- 1070: Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela is begun as the most important centre for medieval pilgrimage and the beginning of European influence in Spain.
- 1085: Toledo is reconquered by Alfonso VI, thereby provoking new Muslim invasions by the Almohads and Almoravids from North Africa who restore some unity to Al-Andaluz but also provoke more intolerance in both religious communities.
- 1094: El Cid conquers Valencia.
- 1118: Alfonso I of Aragón conquers Muslim Zaragoza.
- 1212: Alfonso VIII of Castile overcomes the Almohads at las Navas de Tolosa, opening the frontier to Christian forces into the valley of the Guadalquivir river.
- 1220 - 1238: James I of Aragón conquers Mallorca and Valencia which had fallen back into Muslim hands three years after El Cid died and despite his widow's efforts to hold the city.
- 1236: Fernando III conquers Córdoba.
- 1243: Fernando III officially opens the University of Salamanca.
- 1248: Fernando III conquers Seville.
- 1252: Alfonso X becomes King of Castile and León.
- 1285: Pedro III of Aragón conquers Sicily, thereby establishing the trans-Mediterranean ambitions of the kingdom of Aragón.
- 1300: The General Studies Centre in Lleida is established.
- 1324: James II of Aragón conquers Sardinia.
- 1340: Alfonso XI of Castile vanquishes the Benimerines at the Battle of Salado, thereby controlling the Straights of Gibraltar and preventing further invasions.
- 1348: The Black Plague epidemic may have set off the social crisis of the fourteenth century.
- 1391: First pogrom of a Jewish community in Spain.
- 1416: Alfonso V becomes king of Aragón and Sicily.
- 1441: Alfonso V becomes king of Naples.
- 1462-1472: Social crisis in Cataluña in which the peasants (*payeses*) who are tied to the lands rebel against paying the head tax (*remensa*) in order to achieve personal freedom.
- 1469: Fernando, heir to the crown of Aragón, marries Isabel, sister of the king of Castile. Eventually both kingdoms will be united.
- 1472: The first book known to be printed in Spain.
- 1481: The wars against the Kingdom of Granada begin.
- 1486: The *payeses* are freed by the decree of Guadalupe.
- 1492: Victory over Granada; immediate expulsion of all Jews and eventual expulsion of all Muslims; the first Spanish grammar is written by Nebrija; Columbus starts his voyages.

### Topics for Discussion:

1. Analyse the most important characteristics in medieval literature and art. Mention aspects related to poetry, prose, drama, and architecture.
2. Compare and contrast the characteristics of the Islamic, Jewish and Christian populations in

medieval Spain, taking into consideration legal, literary, artistic and social factors.

3. Was the Reconquest a positive or a negative experience for the future of Spain? Explain, taking into consideration the social and cultural development of the country and how this affected its political unity.
4. What is meant by *convivencia*? What can we learn from Spain's multilingual and multicultural society?

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