





LOS MONJES  
Y EL CAMINO

# The Christian Kingdoms

## (8th-15th Century)

The Christian kingdoms were shaped by the territorial changes that occurred between the eighth and 13th centuries, culminating in the hegemony of Castile and Aragon. The Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) marked a turning point in the Christian advance on the lands under Muslim rule that would conclude with the conquest of Granada in 1492, in which the military orders were actively involved.

Several historical and cultural milestones were achieved during this time, including crucial developments such as the consolidation of the Way of Saint James and intensified relations with Europe and the Mediterranean in the Late Middle Ages (13th-15th century).

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The Kingdom of Asturias emerged with the goal of re-establishing its Visigothic past. Asturian art combined elements from the Roman and Visigothic traditions with those of the influential Carolingian culture, which was translated into slender, vaulted constructions and exquisite gold and silver pieces. The exhibition features architectural fragments from the Church of San Miguel de Lillo.

In the northeast of the peninsula, Charlemagne's advance towards the south gave rise to the Spanish March, a region made up of small counties and a first kingdom, Pamplona.

The Mozarabs –Christians living in Hispano-Islamic territory– introduced Islamic influences into the Christian lands of the north. Several gravestones, including a bilingual specimen from Córdoba, and sculptural elements from Zaragoza are on display.

There are also emblematic works such as the Crucifix of Ferdinand and Sancha and the Romanesque Beatitudes Casket, as well as objects from hoards of San Isidoro Hoard in León and San Millán de Cogolla and the fragments of the chest of San Felices.



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^ Plate from Manises

Building activity was mainly concentrated on monasteries, conceived as self-sufficient microcosms. Many of them line the Way of Saint James. The architectural and sculptural elements on display come from the monasteries of Sahagún, San Pedro de las Dueñas, Aguilar de Campoo and San Pedro de Arlanza.

Pilgrims principally journeyed to Rome («romeos»), Jerusalem («palmers») and Santiago de Compostela («jacobean»). Compostela acquired international fame in the 11th century within the context of the worship of relics, facilitating economic, cultural and artistic exchange and providing a channel for spreading the Romanesque style, as exemplified by the enamel workshops at Limoges and Silos.

Stone sculpture is represented by several objects, including Galician examples such as the statue-columns from the monastery of San Payo de Antealtares and two sculptures made by Master Mateo from the choir of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

Although power rested with the king, he was greatly influenced by the nobility and the church, and due to the need to finance wars the crown also increasingly protected the burghers. Great swathes of the conquered land were allocated to the nobility, whose economic and political power grew thanks to the system of entailed estates.

Castles became places of residence and aristocratic mansions became more sumptuous as they adopted the Islamic ornamental style and were emblazoned with coats of arms.

The praying statue of Peter I of Castile presides over this part of the exhibition, which also features the tomb of his granddaughter Constanza and distinctive elements of the different social classes, such the pendants that adorned the harnesses of horses and the heraldic tiles of the nobility and bourgeoisie.

Some medieval cities grew out of pre-existing settlements while others were new creations, based either on a planned layout or the spontaneous emergence of an irregular layout.

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Population growth and trade both contributed to the expansion and enrichment of medieval cities, consolidating the status of the bourgeoisie and strengthening the guilds. The city councils were the mainstays of civic power, as reflected in their buildings. Two corbels from the old city hall in Zaragoza have been preserved.

The exhibition also features an interesting collection of pottery from eastern Spain, produced in Manises and Paterna, as well as handsome items from Teruel, Toledo and Seville.

Another fascinating exhibit is the Gothic cross from eastern Spain, which fulfilled a civic function as a boundary marker but also had, in view of its iconography, a devotional function.

In the Late Middle Ages the spirit of the Catholic Church was all-pervasive in Spain, manifested in the churches situated at the heart of every city, dictating their layout.

As a symbolic reference, the Latin cross was the predominant floor plan, although there were other types as well. Pictorial and sculptural altarpieces



filled the churches, and the rites were celebrated using illuminated liturgical books and sacred vessels and ornaments such as chalices, patens and incense boats, all made of noble materials.

Kings and queens were buried in monasteries, forming royal pantheons, or in funerary chapels in cathedrals. The nobility paid to be buried on sacred ground, providing funds for the building and their own chapels, for which they supplied sacred ornaments, altarpieces and the tombs themselves.

The iconography on the sarcophagi reflects the funerary liturgy of the day and includes animal figures, symbols of strength or loyalty. This is clearly illustrated by the two ossuaries from Valencia. In the 15th century praying statues were introduced.

The exhibition includes the back wall of a loculus depicting the funeral and the Mass of Saint Gregory, fragments from the royal tombs at Poblet, and items of the burial attire of Prince Philip and one of his wives from their tombs at Villalcázar de Sirga.

The Iberian Peninsula cultivated ties with Europe between the 13th to the 15th century: initially with France and Italy and later, in the 15th century, with Flanders, due to the wool trade. The tapestry of the Virgin and Child comes from the latter territory.

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England exported its famous alabasters, mainly in the form of altarpieces like the one from the Cathedral of Santa María la Vieja in Cartagena. The cape from Daroca, embroidered with the technique known as *Opus anglicanum*, was also made in England.

The European ivory industry is reflected in the objects made by German, French and Italian workshops, in the latter case most notably by the Embriachi.

The gold and silver objects of the day are represented by the crosier of Pope de Luna, the chalice from Strasbourg and various enamelled liturgical ornaments.