



LA RELIGIO

Il Cristo è raffigurato in un'immagine di
santa e di Dio, e non come un essere umano.
Il Cristo è raffigurato in un'immagine di
santa e di Dio, e non come un essere umano.
Il Cristo è raffigurato in un'immagine di
santa e di Dio, e non come un essere umano.

ELIHO

Il Cristo è raffigurato in un'immagine di
santa e di Dio, e non come un essere umano.
Il Cristo è raffigurato in un'immagine di
santa e di Dio, e non come un essere umano.





From Late Antiquity to Middle Age

Diocesis Hispaniarum

(3rd-5th Century)

The third century was a period of political and economic instability for the Roman Empire, which culminated with the reign of Diocletian. Under his rule, Hispania was divided into five provinces which together formed the *Diocesis Hispaniarum*. The fourth century brought a revival of economic prosperity, especially during the reign of the Hispano-Roman emperor Theodosius. The growing importance of the rural villas, the new residences of the Hispano-Roman aristocracy, would mark the course of the fourth and fifth centuries.

66 In 380 Theodosius declared Christianity the empire's official religion, creating a new ideological instrument of power with far-reaching political, administrative and social consequences. The origins of Christianity in Hispania are heterogeneous, with influences pouring in from North Africa, Rome and other places where important communities had existed since the third century.

Everyday objects like the ones in the display case incorporated Christian symbols such as the Chi-Rho. The exhibition also features sarcophagi with relief decoration, a mosaic memorial plaque and gravestone inscriptions in memory of the dead.



The Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo (6th-8th Century)

After being defeated by the Franks at the Battle of Vouillé (507), the Visigoths consolidated their power on the Iberian Peninsula and established Toledo as their capital. In 589 (3rd Council of Toledo) Reccared converted to Catholicism and renounced Arianism, as did his subjects, who were far outnumbered by the Hispano-Romans.

68 The church played an active role in government in collaboration with the monarchy, through national councils and legislative and deliberative meetings of the ecclesiastical and secular elite convened by the king. Prominent figures included St. Isidore, St. Ildephonsus of Toledo, St. Braulio and St. Leander. Basilicas, architectural remains and portable objects have survived as the witnesses of a distinctive liturgy, the Hispanic Rite, which endured until the 11th century.

From Toledo, the monarchy unified the peninsula by subduing the Suevi and expelling the Byzantines who had occupied southeast Iberia. In 654, Reccesvinth enacted the *Liber Iudiciorum*, a set of laws for the entire Hispano-Gothic population that was highly influential in following centuries. On display are his votive crown and the remains of the Guarrazar Hoard, dated to between 621 and 672. King Wamba's death (680) and the infighting among Goth nobles that ensued weakened the kingdom, facilitating the Islamic invasion in 711.

Visigothic churches were typologically varied, comprising a single nave or a nave and two aisles. Some had apses at each end, inspired by North African churches, and a few had three apses.

Cities contained cathedrals, basilicas and bishops' palaces, while monasteries spread Christianity in rural areas. Another widespread phenomenon was that of the hermitages. The exhibition features sculptural remains from buildings in Segobriga, Mérida and Toledo and liturgical objects such as small jugs and patens and a glass dish.

The aristocracy included members of the court in Toledo, the army and bishops, as well as wealthy Hispano-Roman landowners.

The military used spears, short and long swords, daggers, bows and arrows, and helmets and shields.

A large number of objects made of precious metals, nearly all found in graves, illustrate the luxury associated with this social class. Examples are the goods from a woman's grave at El Turuñuelo (Badajoz) and the pair of eagle brooches from Alovera (Guadalajara).



^ Pair of eagle brooches from Alovera

In addition to the aristocracy, society was made up of peasants, craftsmen, merchants, servants and slaves, as well as a growing number of clergymen and monks. On display are objects for everyday use, such as clay and glass wares, farming tools, knives and toiletry items. There is also a selection of personal ornaments, most notably brooches and belt buckles found in funerary contexts.

69

The outward appearance of Hispano-Roman cities was gradually transformed and the monarchs also founded entirely new towns such as *Reccopolis*, from which several architectural and sculptural fragments of immense historical value are exhibited.

The authority of the Visigothic state depended on a well-structured administration. Visigothic society, especially in rural areas, was no longer monetised. As the state's only issue, the *tremissis*, was made of gold, people used old Roman bronze coins or payments in kind for everyday transactions. A collection of writings and/or drawings on slate, some of them alluding to contracts and sums, have survived.

Necropolises in the Late Roman tradition continued to exist, with a paucity of grave goods mainly comprising small jugs and ceramic and glass vessels. However, another type of necropolis emerged in which the graves were arranged in rows and consisted of simple pits dug out of the earth and sarcophagi. These graves were filled with varied goods—brooches, pins, necklaces, earrings, rings, bracelets, knives, etc.—and a selection of the most interesting ones are on display. Danubian models of these objects were imitated by Spanish workshops and coexisted with other items of Roman origin, indicating that the population was already mixed by this time.

The End of the *Mare Nostrum*

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, the Mediterranean Sea ceased to be Rome's *Mare Nostrum* and political power disintegrated as various barbarian nations seized control.

The Germanic kingdoms fought for control of the territory and trade routes. Vandals in Africa, Ostrogoths and Lombards in Italy, Franks in Gaul and Visigoths in Spain dominated the fifth to the seventh centuries.

In the East, in the sixth century the Byzantine emperor Justinian led the *Renovatio Imperii*, re-conquering Italy and North Africa as well as the southeast coast of the Iberian Peninsula and the islands of the western Mediterranean.

70 By the seventh century the Byzantine Empire had been reduced to the eastern Mediterranean and parts of Italy, but despite successive territorial losses it survived until 1453.

The exhibition features a varied selection of objects from these nations, dated to between the fifth and 12th centuries.

