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# UNIT 6: THE CHRISTIAN KINGDOMS

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# 1. What are we going to learn?

**This unit deals with the Christian Kingdoms during the Al-Andalus period, the unit that we have previously studied, so both units occur in the same period of time. So let's learn:**

- The first Christian kingdoms in the far north of the Iberian Peninsula, and how they were united into bigger kingdoms**
  - The expansion of the Christian kingdoms southwards**
    - Life in the Christian kingdoms**
    - Toledo, the city of three cultures**
    - Art in the Christian Kingdoms.**



## 2. The northern Christian Kingdoms

- After invading in 711, the Muslims conquered almost all of the Iberian Peninsula. However, a few Visigothic noblemen resisted in the Cantabrian mountains. They eventually formed the kingdoms of Asturias, León and Castile.
- In 795 Charlemagne invaded, and created the Spanish March along the south of the Pyrenees, to protect his empire against Al-Andalus.
- As the Carolingian Empire got weaker, these gradually became independent. There were three main centres: Navarre, Aragón and the Catalan counties.





**Asturias y León:** In the Cantabrian Mountains, a Visigothic nobleman called **Pelagius** resisted the Muslims. According to legend, he won the battle of Covadonga in 722, and created the Kingdom of Asturias. This was the first Christian kingdom in the north of Spain after the Muslim invasion. Gradually the kingdom grew until it reached the River Duero with Alfonso III. His son, García I, moved the capital of the kingdom of Oviedo (Asturias), to León. Later it will be called the Kingdom of León only, replacing that of Asturias. The Leonese monarchs divided their territory into counties, ruled by feudal lords (counts) vassals of the king. One of these counties was that of Castilla.

**Castilla:** Originally, Castile was a county of León, but in the 10th century, Fernán González made Castile independent. In the 11th century it became a kingdom under Ferdinand I. Ferdinand united it with León in 1038. The most important period came with Alfonso X "el Sabio".



- **IMÁGENES DE LOS REINOS DE ASTURIAS, LEÓN Y CASTILLA**

Pelayo



Alfonso III



García I



Fernán González





**Navarra:** In the 9th century, the Arista family founded a kingdom with its capital city in Pamplona. At first it was called the Kingdom of Pamplona, but later it was renamed Navarre. The most important King of Navarre was Sancho III (1004-1035), who controlled much of northern Spain

**Portugal:** Portugal was initially a county of the Kingdom of Castile and León. In the 12th century, it declared independence, and Alfonso Henriques became the first King of Portugal.

**Condados Catalanes:** In the 9th century, Wilfred the Hairy gained control of all of the Catalan counties. The Catalan counts continued to pay homage to the French kings for quite a long time, but in practice they were independent. In the 12th century, due to matrimonial ties, they joined the Crown of Aragon. Each territory (Aragon and Catalonia, later Valencia and the Balearic Islands), had their own laws but the same king.



**Aragón:** was part of Navarre until the 11th century. Then Ramiro I created an independent kingdom, which soon grew more powerful. In the 12th century it was united with the Catalan counties.



- IMÁGENES DE LOS REINOS DE NAVARRA, ARAGÓN, CONDADOS CATALANES Y PORTUGAL**

Iñigo Arista



Sancho III



Wilfredo el Velloso



Ramiro I



Alfonso  
Enriquez



# Ejercicios en la libreta:

Para la próxima clase hay que traer los apuntes  
en tu libreta.





# 3. Expansion of the Christian kingdoms

The Christian kings, who considered themselves the heirs of the Visigoth kings, were constantly trying to expand their kingdoms southwards. Gradually they managed to take territory from Al-Andalus, but only very slowly.

- In the beginning, there were many small and weak Christian kingdoms in the north of the Iberian Peninsula. They were often fighting against each other, and not against the Muslims.
- Meanwhile, the Caliphate of Córdoba was very rich and powerful, and had a strong army.

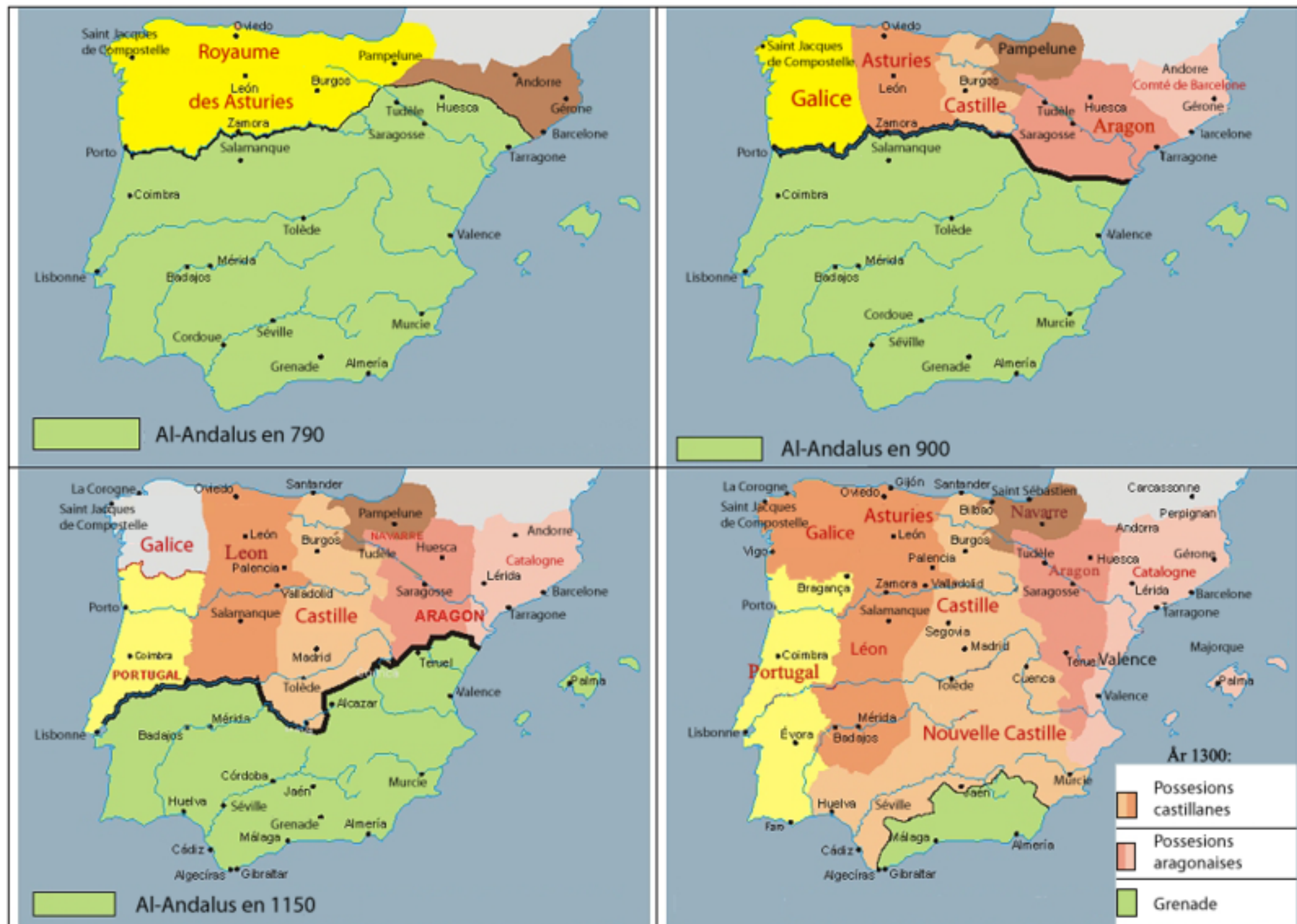












## Mapas de la evolución de la Reconquista



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- The causes of the expansion of the Christian Kingdoms were several, among which are:
  - In 1032, the Caliphate collapsed into many smaller taifas. Each taifa was much weaker on its own.
  - They need new farmland with the arrival of the crisis and the Black Death.
  - Ideal of "Reconquest" or Crusade to recover the Peninsula from the invasion of the Muslims. Many believed that fighting Muslims would have religious blessings.

Slowly, the population in the north increased, as Christians fled persecution in Al-Andalus.

When the Christian kingdoms expanded and conquered new territories, a repopulation process took place: the northern settlers settled in the new conquered lands.





Now the Christian kingdoms were stronger than the taifas in Al-Andalus, and so the taifas asked Muslims from North Africa to help them. The Almoravids, and later the Almohads, took control of Al-Andalus. At first they were successful against the Christians, but finally the Almohads were defeated at the battle of Navas de Tolosa in 1212.

Subsequently Fernando III and Alfonso X conquered most of what is now Andalusia. Soon Granada was the only Muslim kingdom left. For 200 years Granada remained independent by paying tribute to the Christian kings. In 1484, the Catholic Monarchs started a war against Granada, and in 1492 they conquered the city. You already know the history of the delivery of keys to the city of Boabdil to the Catholic Monarchs.





# 4. The Cid Campeador

When Rodrigo Díaz Vivar was young, he led the army of King Sancho II of Castile, obtaining many victories. When Sancho was assassinated, Rodrigo joined the army of his old enemy, Alfonso VI, Sancho's older brother. After arguing with Alfonso, he helped the Muslim king of Zaragoza to defend himself against the army of the Christian Kingdoms of Catalonia and Aragon.

The Muslims gave him the name of as-Sid ("Knight"), which in Spanish has been renamed El Cid. The word Campeador comes from the nickname "expert in pitched battles."



After two exiles by the king, in 1094 El Cid conquered the city of Valencia, which he ruled as an independent manor, and after his death, his wife Jimena ruled it.

When he died in 1099, the people considered him a hero, which has led to numerous writings about him and the famous poem "El cantar del mío Cid".



Despite being considered a hero, he was really a mercenary, a professional soldier who rendered his services in exchange for pay. He is a historical and legendary figure of the Reconquest. Currently, his body and his wife rest on the transept of the Burgos Cathedral.





# 5. POLITICS IN THE CHRISTIAN KINGDOMS

- **POLITICAL ORGANISATION:** The Christian kingdoms were feudal kingdoms: the king ruled with the help of nobles who paid homage to him, and provided him with soldiers. The Christian kingdoms were at war most of the time, so the nobles were very powerful. The clergy also had many privileges.
- Parliaments (Cortes) were created, representing the nobility, clergy and bourgeoisie, who advised the king on new laws and taxes. Sadly, very few citizens were represented in the Cortes.
- Councils were created: city governments chaired by the mayor and made up of nobles and urban bourgeoisie.
- People who lived in towns elected a town council to govern them. Towns also had their own laws and taxes.





# 6. ECONOMY IN THE CHRISTIAN KINGDOMS

- **ECONOMY:** To start with, the Christian kingdoms were much less prosperous than Al-Andalus. Most people were peasant farmers who lived in the countryside. The towns were small, and their main purpose was as military bases. There were few artisans, and luxury goods were imported from Al-Andalus.
- Later, the Christian kingdoms became richer. Now trade increased, and the towns grew. This was because:
  - The Christian kingdoms exported merino wool to other countries. Castilian wool was famous for its high quality
  - Artisans who had lived in Al-Andalus brought new skills and technology to the north
  - The taifas paid tribute to the Christian kings



# 7. Castile and Aragón

Eventually, Castile and Aragón became the two most powerful Christian kingdoms. Castile occupied a large part of the Iberian Peninsula, while Aragón had a Mediterranean empire. There were many important differences between them, which are shown here:

## **CASTILE:**

### **King:**

- Powerful king

### **Parliament:**

- Weak parliament

### **Society:**

- Mainly rural, with powerful nobles

### **Agriculture:**

- Sheep-farming for wool and Cereals

### **Industry:**

- Mining

### **Trade:**

- Mainly with the Low Countries

## **ARAGÓN:**

- King had less power

- Parliament had more power

- Many towns, with lots of merchants and artisans

- Vines and Olives

- Textiles and ship-building

- In the Mediterranean



## Lo que el señor da al vasallo



Defensa judicial.



Protección militar.

Sustento asegurado por las tierras donadas en feudo.



## Lo que el vasallo da al señor

Ayuda económica en caso de matrimonio de su hija, pago de rescate si el señor es hecho prisionero y para el viaje a las cruzadas.



Consejo.



Ayuda militar.

# La sociedad en los Reinos Cristianos



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Jaime I  
presidiendo las  
Cortes



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Recreación de la feria de Medina del Campo (Valladolid): Algunos mercados experimentaron un mayor desarrollo y creció la afluencia de mercaderes. Así, nacieron las ferias, celebradas en fechas fijas y auspiciadas por monarcas o señores, garantizando el orden y la seguridad.







Expansión de los reinos de Castilla y Aragón: En este mapa se pueden observar las distintas rutas seguidas por las coronas de Castilla y Aragón para ampliar sus fronteras.



# Ejercicios en la libreta:

Para la próxima clase hay que traer los apuntes  
en tu libreta.



## 8. TOLEDO, a city of 3 cultures

Toledo was the old Visigothic capital of Hispania. For many centuries it was ruled by the Muslims, but in 1085 it was conquered by Alfonso VI. Although it was now a Christian city, there were also many Muslims and Jews. It was therefore known as the city of the three cultures. These three cultures lived together peacefully, sharing their knowledge and skills, so Toledo prospered.

Many of the Jews and Muslims were artisans, so they had a big influence on the style of architecture and art in Toledo. The Christians who had lived in Toledo under the Muslims (the Mozarabs) had also learned Muslim techniques. Toledo was therefore home to a unique combination of Christian, Muslim and Jewish styles.





- **MOZARABIC ART:** it was used by Christians of Muslims influence. They built churches with typical horseshoe arches, and they covered with wood ceilings
- Toledo has a great defense walls, whose gates are horseshoe arches.



Monasterio de San Millán, con típicos arcos de herradura



Puertas de Toledo

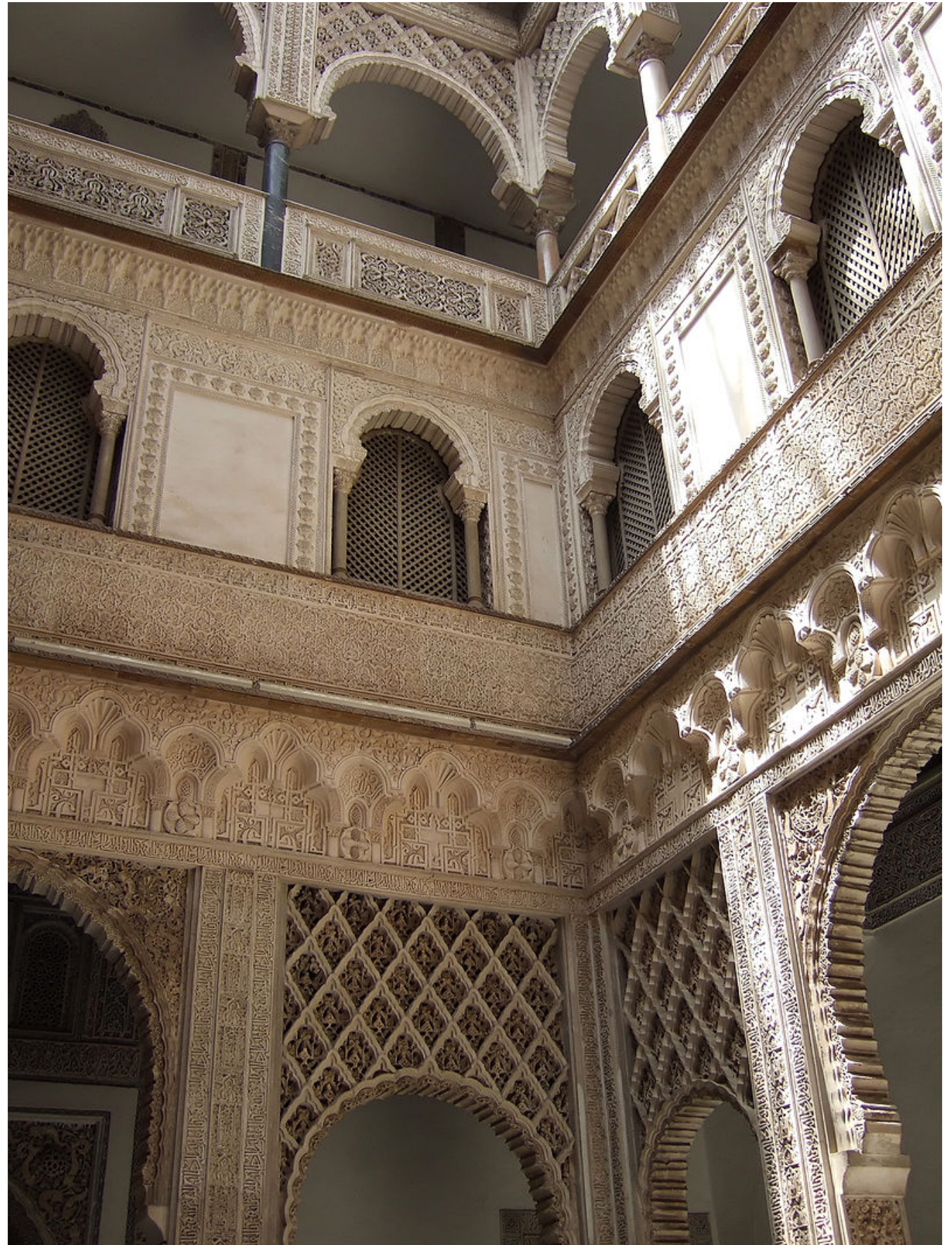








- **MUDÉJAR ART:** It was used by Muslims could live in Christian lands. Also used the horseshoe arches, and are usually Christian buildings.
- We found some Jewish synagogues decorated with typical Moorish art.
- The most emblematic example of this art is the Real Alcázar of Seville.







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## 8.1 A city of learning

The mixture of cultures encouraged learning in Toledo. As well as the university, there was also a school of translators. Philosophical and scientific works were translated into Latin from Arabic, Greek, and ancient Hebrew. Scholars in the Christian kingdoms could now read about many ideas that had been forgotten since the fall of the Roman Empire, as well as some newer ideas from Al-Andalus

## 8.2 Religious persecution

In the 14th century, the Christians started to persecute the Muslims and the Jews. This was partly because of the Black Death, which many people blamed on the Jews. People were also envious of the Jews, because some of them had important jobs in the government, and because many of them were wealthy. In 1391, the Jewish quarters in several Spanish towns were attacked by Christians, and many thousands of Jews were killed





# Ejercicio en el blog:

Para la fecha que indique la profesora, hay que realizar el siguiente ejercicio en el blog:

- Investiga en internet y publica una entrada hablando sobre la convivencia entre judíos, cristianos y musulmanes en los Reinos Cristianos, o sobre la expulsión de los judíos de España.

**Recuerda:** Adjunta imágenes para que quede el blog completo y elegante.





# Ejercicios en la libreta:

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en tu libreta.



# Glosario

peste negra, taifas, moriscos, mozárabes,  
mudéjar, el Cid, Reconquista, Concejos,  
Parlamento.



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