



Al-Andalusian Influence in Spanish Literature

The Arab-Islamic culture has had an incredible impact on Spain. From the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 711 until the end of the Reconquista in 1492, when the city of Granada finally fell to Spanish forces, the southern portion of Spain known as Al-Andalus was ruled by Arabic forces. The remnants of this culture can still be seen in Spain today in monuments such as the Alhambra in Granada or the Mezquita mosque in Cordoba. The Califates of Al-Andalus had a strong sense of nationalism under Islamic rule, but as Christian Spanish rulers led their forces further into Al-Andalus, the Muslim lands began to fracture into smaller kingdoms, each with its own ruler and court. This was a period of literary brilliance, each court rivaling others for literary accomplishments and talents. As the authors of Al-Andalus began to garner renown, their works became classics that were handed down through generations, both orally and in written form. After the reconquest of Spain at the end of the fifteenth century, these works became known to the Spanish world and their influences can be seen in Spanish literature.

The prose of Al-Andalus has strong resonances in the prose of early Spanish writings. I plan to focus on works such as the Collar Unico, La Epistola de los Genios, El Collar de la Paloma, Las Sesiones del Zaragoci and other related writings by Al-Andalusian authors to show how the genres, style, and content used often resemble later compositions by Spanish writers. The same is true for poetry. The jarchas of the moaxajas and zejels by poets living in Al-Andalus evolve from Arabic into a Romance

language, which later becomes the Castilian Spanish of Spain. Authors such as Ibn Quzman with his compilation of poems, Cancionero Andalusi, lead the poetry of Al-Andalus to a time of splendor. Centuries later, echoes of the Arabic poets can be found in the cantigas de amigo and villancicos of medieval Spanish poetry.

I will be exploring how influences from the literature of Al-Andalus are reflected in Spanish literature, focusing mainly on works of early Spanish literature but possibly continuing into later periods as well. The civilization of Al-Andalus left a remarkable impact on the culture of Spain, and early Spanish literature owes part of its formation to the traditions pioneered by Al-Andalusian authors.