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SOCIAL SCIENCE

UNIT 4. THE MIDDLE AGES I

The Visigoth Kingdom and Al-Andalus

Exam Date: _____

UNIT 4. THE MIDDLE AGES I

The Visigoth Kingdom and Al-Andalus

In this unit we are going to learn about:

1. History and historians
2. Before the Middle Ages...
3. The Middle Ages
4. The Fall of the Roman Empire
5. The Visigoth Kingdom
 - The Germanic Tribes
 - The Visigoth kingdom
 - The Visigoth Society
 - Visigoth culture and art
6. Al-Andalus
 - The Muslim Conquest
 - The Independent Emirate of Córdoba
 - The Caliphate of Córdoba
 - The Taifa Kingdoms
 - The end of Al-Andalus
 - Al-Andalus Society
 - Life in Al-Andalus
 - The Legacy of Al-Andalus
 - Art in Al-Andalus

1. HISTORY AND HISTORIANS

History is the study of things that happened in the past. History tells us about how our ancestors lived: the food that they ate, the clothes that they wore and the tools they used. History also tells us about **important events**, like the discovery of a new land or a new machine.

The things that happened in the past affect our world today. History helps us understand the present.

Our culture dates all events from the birth of Christ. Events that happened before the birth of Christ are indicated with the abbreviation **BC** (Before Christ) and those that occurred after Christ birth are indicated with the date only or with the abbreviation **AD** (Anno Domini). Historical time is usually divided into different periods called ages, which are separated by important events.

Historians have divided the past into **five** periods or ages. They are separated by important events that transformed people's way of life:

- Prehistory (4,4 million years ago - 3000 BC)
- Ancient history (3000 BC- 476 AD)
- The Middle Ages (476 AD - 1492)
- The Modern Age (1492 - 1789)
- Contemporary Age (1789 - present day)

2. BEFORE THE MIDDLE AGES...

PREHISTORY

Prehistory began when the first human beings appeared. It is the most extensive historical period. It is divided into two main periods: the **Stone Age** (Paleolithic- Mesolithic – Neolithic) and the **Metal Ages** (Bronze Age – Iron Age)

The first human beings were **nomads**. They hunted, fished and gathered fruit and vegetables from the land to survive. Later, they developed agriculture and farming. They became **sedentary** and built houses and villages.

They made tools out of **stone** and animal bones. They learned to make pottery and to work **metals**.

ANCIENT HISTORY

Ancient history began around 5.000 years ago, when written language was invented. The first civilizations appeared during this period, such as the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans. The Romans conquered the Iberian Peninsula between the 3rd and the 1st centuries BC. They called it Hispania.

The Romans organized Hispania into provinces and imposed their customs and laws. Latin became the official language. They founded cities and introduced Christianity.

3. THE MIDDLE AGES

The Middle Ages began in 476 AD (5th century) with the Fall of the Roman Empire and ended in 1492 AD (15th century) with the Discovery of America. It is a very long historical period that lasted almost 1000 years. During this period, different civilisations lived on the Iberian Peninsula: the Visigoths, the Muslims and the Christians.

The Visigoths, one of the Germanic tribes that came from the north of Europe, invaded Hispania and established a kingdom on the Peninsula. They stayed in the Peninsula for about two centuries.

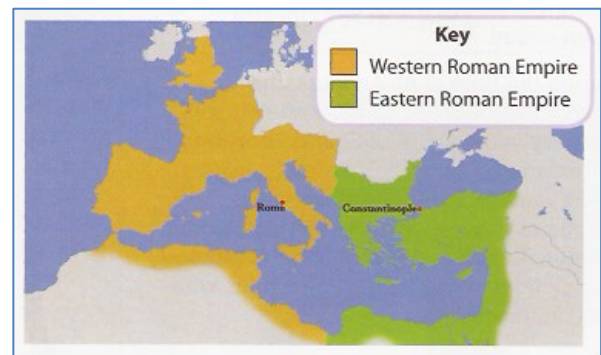
In 711, the Muslims conquered the Visigoth kingdom and founded Al-Andalus. They stayed more than seven hundred years in the Peninsula. The Visigoths had to retreat to the mountains in the north where they created small Christian Kingdoms. The Christian kingdoms joined together to expel the Muslims and expand their territory. This is known

as the **Reconquest**. It finished at the end of the Middle Ages, when the Catholic Monarchs conquered the Kingdom of Granada (1492).

During this period, cities grew and castles and monasteries were built. There were two main artistic styles: **Romanesque** and **Gothic**.

4. THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

After the 3rd century, the Roman Empire became too big to control. It started to lose its territories and power. It was invaded by **Germanic tribes** who came from the north and east of Europe. Roman called them *barbarians*, or *foreigners* in Latin. To defend the empire against invasions, Emperor **Theodosius** divided it in two: the **Western Roman Empire**, which kept its capital in Rome and the **Eastern Roman Empire**, whose capital was Constantinople.



In **476 AD**, the last of the Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustus, was defeated when the Ostrogoths took Rome. This marked the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the beginning of the Middle Ages. With the empire defeated, the Germanic tribes were in control and it was divided into small independent kingdoms. Hispania was ruled by the **Visigoths**, Gaul by the **Franks**, the **Burgundians** and the **Visigoths**, Italy by the **Ostrogoths** and the **Lombards**, Britain by the **Angles** and the **Saxons** and North Africa by the **Vandals**.

5. THE VISIGOTH KINGDOM

1. THE GERMANIC TRIBES

In 411, taking advantage of the decline of the Roman Empire, **three Germanic tribes** invaded the Iberian Peninsula:

- The **Suevi**: They settled in the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula, in the Roman province of Gallaecia.
- The **Alani**: They occupied the centre of the Iberian Peninsula, the provinces of Lusitania and Carthaginensis.
- The **Vandals**: They settled in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, in the province of Baetica.



To defend themselves, the Romans asked for help from another Germanic tribe, the **Visigoths**. In 415 AD, the Visigoths came to the Iberian Peninsula and agreed to protect the Roman Empire against invasions by these tribes in exchange for land. They expelled the Alani and the Vandals, but not the Suevi.

2. THE VISIGOTH KINGDOM (415 AD - 711 AD)



The Visigoths occupied most of the Iberian Peninsula and founded a powerful kingdom with **Toledo** as its capital. In the 6th century, **King Leovigildo** defeated the Suevi and took control of the whole territory.

In 711 AD, the Visigoth kingdom was in **chaos** over who would be the next king and this **internal fighting on succession** weakened the kingdom.

Muslims from the north of Africa took advantage of the confusion and invaded the Iberian Peninsula. They defeated King Ruderic, the last Visigoth King, which marked the end of the reign of the Visigoths in Spain.

3. THE VISIGOTH SOCIETY

Visigoth society consisted of a king, noblemen and peasants.

- The noblemen came from wealthy families, often relatives of the king. They owned the land and had a lot of power. The kings and nobles **held councils** to discuss any problems in the kingdom. They also elected their king.
- The peasants worked the land and took care of the cattle in exchange for food and a place to live.

The Visigoths were farmers. They abandoned the cities and settled in the countryside.

4. THE VISIGOTH CULTURE AND ART

There were not many Visigoths in comparison to the Hispano-Roman population in the Iberian Peninsula. Therefore, the Visigoths adopted the Hispano-Roman culture:

- They adopted the **Roman language** (Latin) as their official language.
- They converted to Christianity. The first Visigoth to be converted was **King Recaredo** in the Third Council of Toledo in 589.
- They adopted the **Roman law**.

San Isidoro de Sevilla was a prominent Visigoth **writer**. He wrote the *Etymologiage*, and encyclopaedia in which he tried to include all the knowledge of his times.

The Visigoths built **small churches** made of stone with thick walls. The major contribution to architecture was the **horseshoe arch**.



The Visigoths were excellent goldsmiths (metal workers). They made buckles, brooches, crowns made with gold, bronze and precious stones.

6. AL-ANDALUS

1. THE MUSLIM CONQUEST (711 - 1492)

After two centuries of ruling the Iberian Peninsula, the Visigoth Kingdom came to an end with the Muslim invasion. The **Muslims defeated the Visigoths** in the Battle of Guadalete in 711 AD (8th century).



Muslims from northern Africa conquered most of the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands. The only remaining Christian territory was in the north. They called their conquered territory Al-Andalus and they made **Córdoba** the capital city. They stayed in the Peninsula for more than seven hundred years and they created one of the most advanced societies in Europe.

At first, Al-Andalus was a dependent emirate, ruled by a governor or emir. It was a province controlled by the Caliphate of Damascus in Asia.

2. THE INDEPENDENT EMIRATE OF CÓRDOBA

Later, in 756, Al-Andalus became an independent emirate. This meant it recognised the caliphate's religious authority, but not its political authority. The first independent emir of Córdoba was **Abd-al-Rahman I**, who ordered the construction of the Mezquita of Córdoba.



3. THE CALIPHATE OF CÓRDOBA

In the 10th century, the **Caliphate of Córdoba** was established, making the territory politically and religiously independent. It was ruled by caliph **Abd-al-Rahman III**. A caliph was a powerful political and religious leader. This was a time of great cultural growth for Al-Andalus. During the caliphate, Al-Andalus also made great military conquests. **Córdoba** became one of the most important cities in the world. Brilliant doctors, poets, astronomers, philosophers and musicians lived there.

4. THE TAIFA KINGDOMS

In the 11th century, the caliphate of Al-Andalus ended and the territory was divided into small kingdoms called **Taifas** (28 rival kingdoms)

The **Taifa kingdoms** fought each other continuously. The Christian Kingdoms of the north took advantage of the divisions between the Taifas to conquer lands from the Muslims.



5. THE END OF AL-ANDALUS

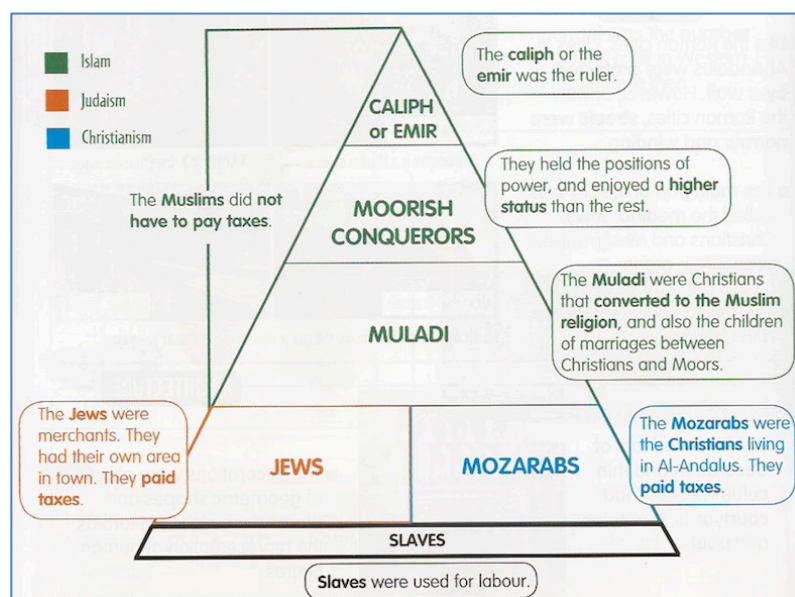


In 1212, the unified armies of the **Christian kings** defeated the Muslim armies in the **Battle of Navas de Tolosa**. Al-Andalus was reduced to the territory of the **Nasrid kingdom of Granada**. This territory included the areas known today as Málaga, Almería, Granada and part of Cádiz.

In 1492, the **Catholic Monarchs**, Isabel de Castilla and Fernando de Aragón, conquered the last remaining Muslim kingdom, the Kingdom of Granada.

6. AL-ANDALUS SOCIETY

After conquering the Peninsula, the Muslims were **tolerant** towards Christians and Jews and respectful of their beliefs. They allowed them to continue to practise their religions and customs. As a result, many Christians stayed in Al-Andalus. Only a few went to the north of the Peninsula. Al-Andalus society was very **diverse**. It was made of people from different religions: **Muslims**, **Christians** and **Jews**. Arabic was the official language.



MUSLIMS

- Muslims were the **most powerful group**. They practised Islam and worshipped in mosques. They held positions in the government and owned the best land.

CHRISTIANS

- Christians were divided into:
- Muladis were Christians who converted to Islam. They adopted the Islamic customs and language. Muladis had a better social position and paid no taxes.
- Mozarabs were Christians who carried on practising their own religion. They were required to pay taxes, but were fully protected by the Muslims rulers. They lived in districts separated from the other inhabitants.

JEWS

- Jews were a minority group who also paid a tax to the Muslims rulers. However, like the Christians, they played important roles in society and culture too. They lived in districts separated from the other inhabitants.

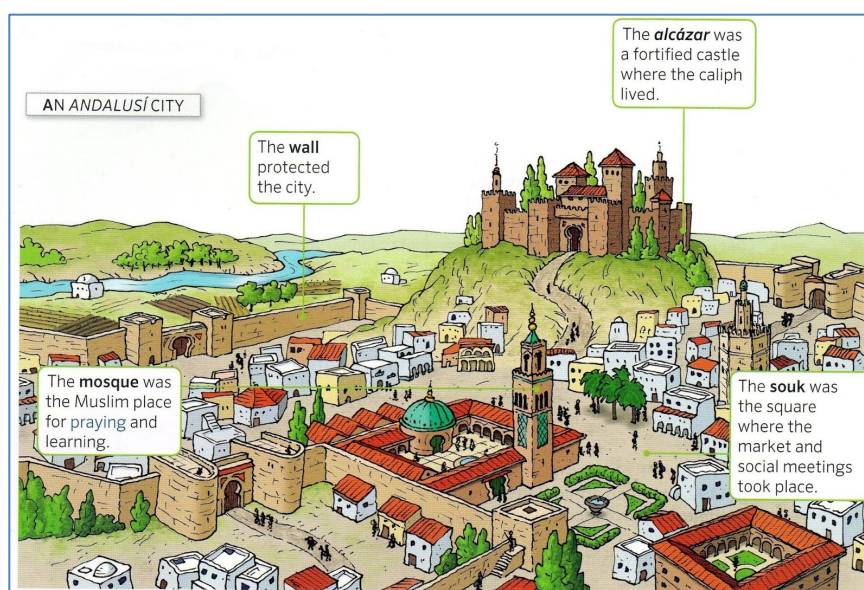
ISLAM

The Arabic word *Islam* means submission or surrender, and, in the context of the religion, it means to the one God, **Allah**. Muslims practise Islam. The doctrine is contained in a sacred book called the **Koran**.



7. LIFE IN AL-ANDALUS

- Most of people in Al-Andalus lived in walled towns and cities, which were centres of politics, trade and culture. Their main activities were crafts and trade.
- Cities were protected by high walls and had narrow, winding streets. Inside the walls there was usually a fortress (fort) called alcázar that stood on a hill to protect the city; there was also a fortified palace called alcázar. At the heart of a typical city lay the medina, the area where artisans and merchants lived. Trade was carried in public markets called zocos (souqs) that were in the centre of the city. There were mosques or mezquitas, where inhabitants pray, large warehouses, called alhóndigas, libraries, universities and hospitals.
- The cities were surrounded by fields where farmers grew cereals, olives and grapes. Many people worked in farming and, as a result, farming methods improved. They introduced new crops and built water-wheels and irrigation channels to irrigate the fields.
- Poorer people lived outside the city walls in neighbourhoods called arrabales.



8. THE LEGACY OF AL-ANDALUS

The Muslims gave a lot to Spain. Perhaps the most important contribution from the people of Al-Andalus was their **knowledge**. They were responsible for great advances and contributions to the fields of **medicine, botany, astronomy, geography** and **mathematics**. They introduced the **Arabic numerals**, a numerical system, which included the number zero.

One of the most important scholars of the Middle Ages was **Averroes**. He wrote about medicine, philosophy, astronomy and physics.



The Muslims also developed **methods of irrigation** (wheels and irrigation ditches) and introduced **new crops**, such as rice, oranges and aubergines.

Al-Andalus also contributed to **gastronomy, architecture** and **culture**. Today, we still use many words of Arabic origin, especially place names. Many words starting with **Guad**, such as Guadalajara, or **Al**, such as Alcalá, almena or alcalde are of Arabic origin.



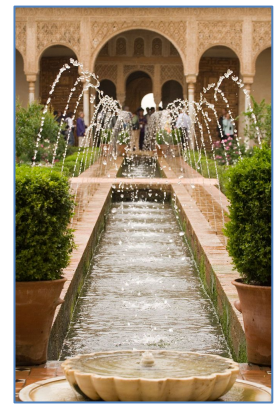
The Muslims introduced many useful **materials and objects** to the Iberian Peninsula. Some of these are silk, cotton, paper, carpets, gunpowder, chess and the compass.

They built libraries and established universities.

9. ART IN AL-ANDALUS

Architecture played a significant role in Al-Andalus. They built beautiful buildings. However, Muslim architects used poor materials (clay or plaster), which were not very durable. Its main characteristics are:

- the use of **bricks** in construction.
- the decoration of buildings with **paintings, tiles and carvings**, depicting **geometrical** shapes, **plant** shapes and Arabic writings, as Islam forbids the representation of human figures.
- different types of **arches**: the horseshoe arch, the pointed arch, the transverse arch and the multifoil arch.
- Most buildings had **thin columns, fountains, waterfalls, pools and yards**.



Some of the most renowned Muslims buildings were mosques, palaces and *alcázares* (fortresses)

Córdoba was one of the most important cities in the world during the Middle Ages. It had an important role in shaping Al-Andalus culture. The city was famous for the local traders who exhibited their crafts of leather and wood.

Two of the most emblematic buildings that still exist today are the **Mezquita of Córdoba** and the **Palace of Medina Azahara**.



Mezquita de Córdoba



Palace of Medina Azahara

UNIT VOCABULARY

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