

How feudalism took on antiquity's culture into the middle ages in eastern spain a...

[History](#)



As would be expected for history, much of the past continues to be part of the present. During the rich era of cultural diversity from ancient times to the middle ages, this was especially true. So many significant changes and events occurred throughout history; leaving their mark on traditions that show today. Many of the ordinary patterns of life that we are used to were born from happenings in the first and second centuries in Europe. Whether or not the traditions and customs of ancient and medieval civilizations are still blatantly present, their existence in the past has molded society; noticeable specifically in the religion, architecture, and food of eastern Spain and southern Germany.

Beginning with a religion about which I have recently come to know more, the Islam culture and the presence of the Mosque are all based upon history. The origin of the Mosque is symbolic of the Prophet Muhammed's house with an open air courtyard, water points, and an extensive prayer area. Having visited the Córdoba Mosque in Spain, I can vouch for the worth that the Muslim influence left on the Iberian Peninsula. Moreover, Muhammed's escape, or *hirja*, from prosecution to Mecca in 622 A. D. became a pilgrimage that was incorporated into the Islamic pillars of faith, of which there are five. The other four include *zakat* or alms, the presence of prayer five times a day, the Koran, and a period of fasting, like Ramadan. Not only is the Islamic religion still in full practice, but also many mosques, such as the one previously mentioned in Córdoba and the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, stand as a source of aesthetic history and reminders of world heritage that are important to all of humanity - regardless of a person's religious affiliation.

Until 1238 A. D., the area of Valencia, Spain was untouched by feudalism and the Muslims lived there in peace. While feudalism is fortunately no longer a way of life, it is historically important that this decentralized political system occurred. The feudal era was initiated after the French Normand conquered England and awarded land in proportion to those soldiers who assisted him in this endeavor. Lordships, or territories of land, grew out of this arrangement, as did the social stratification order of aristocracy, knights, clergy, and peasants. During this time, effectual agriculture and demographic proliferation were the most imperative grounds for the economic success of medieval Europe. England and northern Europe aside, feudalism was a large part of Northern Spain's history and perhaps even more significant particularly to Valencia's past. After King James I, with Catalan and Aragon troops, took over the city of Valencia from the Muslims, two new levels in their feudal structure were added: the Jewish and the Moriscos, the latter which were Muslims that remained in Valencia after James I's conquest. As if the takeover of the Muslim's home was not heartbreaking enough, both low class sectors of society were then relocated to outside the city's walls, as to not pose a threat to the high class and peasantry living inside. Like all unfortunate historical events, the bad is balanced out with good. In this instance, the silver lining was Valencia's golden age in the 15th century; allowing for the city to flourish and structures like el Miguelete, la Patriarca, and the Torres de Serranos and Quart to be built. This history and these buildings are some of the reasons that Valencia is such a popular tourist destination today. Without the cultural significance of this city, there is little chance that an American study abroad

location would have been situated in this area and therefore an even smaller chance that I would have ever lived in this magnificent city.

Another result of James I's conquest was the incorporation of ham into the diet of those living within the city, in order to distinguish Christians from Jews and Moriscos, for whom eating ham is forbidden. As a vegetarian living in Valencia, I can more than confirm that the presence of jamón here is unprecedented; the occurrence of the Valencia conquest created a permanent mark in food society. Besides the ungodly amount of ham in Valencia, there is also a continuation of the Mediterranean diet; a triad of wine, olives, and cereals, of which I am more than happy to partake in. While the presence of these crops are largely because the area along the Mediterranean Sea is prime for harvesting these products, Valencia as a port city and commerce during the High Middle Ages reinforced the triad.

Studying ancient and medieval cultures has been made so much more interesting and significant by simultaneously living in Spain because I was finally able to picture what the other portion of modern-day Europe was experiencing before the 15th century. Although the culture of my home in Germany shares some similarities with Spain's culture, such as heavy Christian influence, the impact of the Muslim's presence sets Spain apart from Germany and any other cultures I have learned of previously. Whereas Spain has a mix of mostly Islamic- and Christian-influenced traditions, Germany has an odd and glorious combination of pagan- and Christian-related customs. For example, one of my favorite events in Germany is Fasching, a pagan holiday celebrated by atheists and Christians alike. This

carnival stems from a tradition of driving out wicked winter spirits with grotesque masks; masks that are worn in parades celebrated currently.

Unique to Germany and an influential part of history is the existence of Benedictine monks in Bavaria during 1040 A. D., when the world's oldest continuously-operating brewery - and one of my favorite I might add - was established. Before the Weihenstephan Abbey in Freising, Germany began an official brewery, the monks living there would brew beer for their consumption during the religious holiday of Lent, a fasting which lasts several weeks. While Weihenstephan happens to be the oldest brewery, there are many other cloister-originated beer houses sprinkled throughout Germany. Another singularity of southern Germany is the meat-filled, pasta-dough dumpling dish called maultaschen. This creation was conceived by unordained monks who ground meat and hid it in dough in order to conceal the meat from ordained monks, who were strict about adhering to the Benedictine vows. Both maultaschen and beer are outcomes of a much earlier incident. Travelling back in time almost a half of a century, around 550 A. D., the Romans swept central Europe and the Frankish tribe living there converted to Christianity, which led to the creation of abbeys, the existence of monks, and the brewing of beer, all three which can be found predominantly throughout southern Germany today.

Beer brewing, while obviously very significant, is not the only result of the Roman founding of certain settlements, like Trier, Rottenburg am Neckar, and Bamberg in modern-day Germany. Typical to most colonization, Roman or otherwise, all three towns are conveniently located near rivers; the

Moselle, the Neckar, and the Regnitz. Apparent of the Roman presence in Germania are structures characteristic to their architecture, such the amphitheater in Trier which tourists can visit. Also located in Trier are the ruins of Roman baths and an ancient city gate, lending proof that it is the oldest Roman city in Germany. Rottenburg, slightly younger in foundation than Trier, houses a Roman Catholic cathedral and is a diocese, or rather is under the authority of a Roman Catholic bishop. Bamberg is similar in this fashion; it, too, is home to a Gothic style cathedral and other remains found within the historic city center are depictive of the Roman encampment there. I would highly recommend all three cities to someone who appreciates historical monuments from Roman times as well as gorgeous views of river towns.

Continuing with the theme of the Roman Catholic Church, the presence of it is one of the biggest causes for western civilization. Although theocracy is not a form of government used today, the existence of this government system resulted in a plethora of cultural milestones. For example, the misused power of the church clergy during the 15th century gave way to an equivalent of millions of dollars being taken from the poor society over time and then this money being sunk in to the creation of breathtaking churches and cathedrals, which we can still enjoy today. Moreover, the corruption of the church led to Martin Luther tacking his 95 theses to the church as a form of protest and thus sparking the Protestant Reformation. In turn, this created a new Christian sect of religion, called Protestantism. In this instance, history clearly plays a role in today's society, given that this branch of Christianity continues to have a following.

<https://assignbuster.com/how-feudalism-took-on-antiquitys-culture-into-the-middle-ages-in-eastern-spain-and-southern-germany/>

Based on my experience having lived in Germany and studied in Spain, I was able to comprehend more of what I learned in the class of ancient and medieval civilization. The facts and figures made more sense because I could put an image to the place where some of these historical events transpired. In my opinion, the most momentous effect on western civilization during this time period was the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church as well as the Roman conquest of present-day Europe. These two events played a vital role in the settlement of certain towns, apparent in the architecture, religion, and beer brewing of lower Germany. Furthermore, the presence of the Roman Catholic Church had an effect on the importance of the church and clergy during feudalism. Consequently, feudalism significantly affected Valencia's population, architecture, and food history and helped to turn this area into the culturally rich city that it is today.