

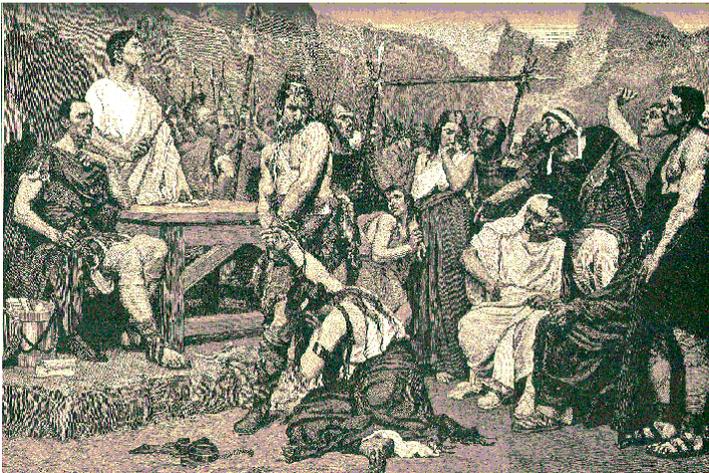
# ROMANS AND VISIGOTHS

300 B.C. to 711

PHOENICIAN COLONIES TO MOORISH CONQUEST

## Era Summary—Romans and Visigoths

**Phoenicians in Spain**—From Biblical times, many of the coastal cities of Spain were under the influence of Phoenician traders. Phoenicia controlled trade throughout the Mediterranean not by ruling over colonies, but by wielding influence through gold and intermarriage with the ruling classes of strategic cities. Over centuries, its network of ports and trading partners extended all over the Mediterranean and as far as the British Isles. Spain contained several important Phoenician trading centers and the Tartessos region in the southwest is thought to have been the wealthy mining region of Tarshish from the Bible.



By the fourth century B.C., the Phoenician capital of Tyre was destroyed and the Greeks rose as trading rivals in the east but Carthage continued to wield great influence in the Western Mediterranean. It was not until the Punic Wars, a centuries long conflict with Rome, that the Phoenicians lost their colonies in Spain as well as their home port in Africa. At the beginning of the conflict the coastal regions of Hispania were controlled Carthage and it was from

Spain that Hannibal marched across the Alps into Italy.

When Rome finally vanquished the city of Carthage she inherited the Phoenician trading ports in Spain but it took many years to subdue the entire Peninsula. And when the last stronghold of the great Canaanite nation fell it is not unlikely that many of its people fled to Spain and surrounding areas, intending to blend in with the native peoples. For example there is evidence that some of the Sephardic Jews of Spain, who played such an important role in the later history of the Peninsula, were descended from Carthaginian exiles.

**Roman Conquest of Hispania**—Rome supposedly drove Carthage out of Spain and took control of the region during the Second Punic War, yet at the time the ports that Rome controlled consisted of only a fraction of the Iberian Peninsula. The first conflicts with the interior tribes began by the 2nd century B.C., but it took several generations to subdue most of the Peninsula and some regions held out for over a century.

It is difficult to make broad generalizations regarding the course of the conflict, partly because it lasted for decades, and partly because the country was very diverse in terms of both

geography and ethnicity. The coastal cities were populated by relatively civilized peoples, including Carthaginians, Greeks, Turdetani, and Celt-Iberian but the inland regions were populated by autonomous peoples. The Roman generals included both admirable leaders such as [Scipio Africanus](#) and [Sertorius](#) and treacherous butchers, such as [Lucullus](#). Some regions submitted peacefully to Roman rule, while others held out for generations and in some cases, most famously that of Numantia, they annihilated themselves rather than submit.

The conquest of Hispania was a contentious project that played a large role in the political problems of Italy during the late Republican age. Once Spain was finally 'pacified', however, it became thoroughly Romanized, and for much of the Imperial era was one of the most prosperous regions of the empire. It played an important role during the age of the Caesars and produced a number of famous Romans, including [Trajan](#), [Hadrian](#), [Seneca](#), [Martial](#) and others.

**Visigoth Spain**—By the fifth century the Roman Empire had broken up into fiefdoms controlled by foederati, mainly from Germanic nations. Various tribes including the Suevi, Alans, Franks, Visigoths, and Vandals claimed sovereignty of Spanish territories, but eventually the Visigoths emerged as the dominant regional power. The Visigoth kingdom settled first in southern France, but eventually moved their capital to Toledo in central Spain.

The Visigoths kings reigned in Spain for 300 years, from the early 400's to 711. Instead of a strictly hereditary monarchy, however, their kings were elected from among the nobles. This method produced a few notable leaders including [Good King Wamba](#) and [Reccared](#), but generally weakened the power of the monarchy. Contentious elections resulted in a number of damaging civil wars and [Roderic](#), the last king of the Visigoths assumed the throne during such a period of internal conflict and the resulting divisions resulted in the collapse of the Visigoth kingdom at the hands of the Moorish invaders.

During the early years of the Visigoth Empire, the ruling nobles were Arian Christians and most of the Roman-Iberian citizens were Catholics. King Reccared's conversion to Catholicism, shortly after the fall of the Vandal kingdom in Africa signaled the end of Arianism as a major threat to Catholic Orthodoxy. It also, however, resulted in a worsening of Visigoth relations with the Jews, since Spanish Jews had contentious relationships with Catholics. The Third Council of Toledo in 589 A.D. proscribed the Arian heresy, but put restrictions on Jews who held Christian subjects in slavery. The discontent of Spanish Jews under the Catholic Visigoth government was an important factor in the eventual overthrow of the Visigoth kingdom.

**The Moorish Conquest**—Soon after the death of the prophet, the followers of Mohammed began a campaign of conquest, and within sixty years were masters of Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Persia, Egypt, and North Africa. By 710 the region of North Africa directly across from Spain was held by [Musa bin Nusair](#), an Arab general. Several refugees from the Visigoth Civil War fled to North Africa and asked Musa to help them overthrow Roderic. He therefore sent a Moorish army under [Tariq ibn Ziyad](#) to southern Spain and a great battle was fought near the Guadalete River. The Moors won a crushing victory over Roderick, and then, probably due to treachery, were able to take most important Visigoth towns unopposed. A few towns held out against the

Moors, but within a few years the invaders had taken almost all the Peninsula and were making their way into Gaul. Their advance was checked by the Franks at the [battle of Tours](#).

The only region of the Spanish peninsula that held off the Moslem hordes was a mountainous region in the Northwest that was under the sway of the Franks. The Christian Kingdom of Asturias was founded by [Pelayo](#), a Visigoth noble, one of a number of heroes who resisted the onslaught. Their number were few, but they were protected by Mountains, and more importantly, by their Frankish allies. In this modest kingdom in Northwest Spain the Christian resistance to Moorish Spain awaited its opportunity to reclaim its lost realm.

## Characters—Romans and Visigoths

### ROMAN HISPANIA

#### [Hamilcar](#)

d. 229 BC

Carthage's most able general in first Punic War; father of Hannibal.

#### [Hannibal](#)

247–182 BC

Carthaginian general, invaded and laid waste to Italy for sixteen years.

#### [Scipio Africanus](#)

234–149 BC

Roman hero of second Punic War. Led armies in Spain and Africa. Defeated Hannibal at Zama.

#### [Scipio Younger](#)

185–129 BC

Led the siege of Carthage during the third Punic War.

#### [Cato \(censor\)](#)

234–149 BC

Roman censor, urged destruction of Carthage before third Punic War.

#### [Carus](#)

d. 179 BC

Celt-Iberian chief of the Belli tribe during conquest of Hispania. Defeated Romans at battle of Caravis.

#### [Viriathus](#)

180–139 BC

Lusitanian chief who resisted Rome during conquest of Hispania. Won many battles and incited rebellions.

#### [Sertorius](#)

122–72 BC

Led rebellion against Rome in Spain; held out for 8 years.

#### [Trajan](#)

53–117

Second of "Five Good Emperors." Ruled with justice and integrity. Conquered Dacia.

#### [Hadrian](#)

76–138

Third of "Five Good Emperors." Talented artist and architect, good administrator.

#### [Seneca](#)

3–65

Tutor and minister to Nero. Forced to commit suicide after falling from grace

## VISIGOTH SPAIN

Ulphilas  
310–383  
Missionary bishop who translate the bible into the Gothic language and converted the Goths to Arian Christianity.

Ataulfus  
d. 410  
Leader of Visigoths after death of Alaric. Led his people out of Italy and established Visigoth kingdom in Spain .

Theodoric I  
d. 451  
Son of Alaric, who led the Visigoth army against Attila the Hun at the Battle of Chalons.

Recared  
d. 601  
First Catholic King of the Visigoth Kingdom.

Good King  
Wamba  
d. 687  
Legendary king of the Visigoths, whose reign was peaceful and prosperous.

Isidore of Seville  
560–636  
Catholic Bishop who converted Visigoths, presided at Council of Toledo.

## EARLY MOORS OF SPAIN

Tariq ibn Ziyad  
d. 720  
Berber general who defeated the Visigoths at the *Battle of Gudaleta*.

Musa bin Nusair  
640–716  
Umayyad governor of North Africa who organized and directed the Moslem invasion of the Iberian peninsula.

Exilona  
~ 711  
Christian wife of Visigoth king Roderick who later married son of Moorish governor

Abdul Aziz  
d. 716  
Son of Umayyad governor Musa. Ruled in Andalusia until murdered for marrying Exilona.

Abderrahman I  
731–788  
Last surviving Umayyad prince, escaped to Spain, became Emir of Cordova

## CHRISTIAN RESISTANCE

Roderic  
d. 711  
Last king of Visigoth Spain. Died at the *Battle of Guadaleta*.

Pelistes  
~ 711  
Gothic Knight who defended Cordova after the fall of the Visigoths at Guadaleta.

Theodomir  
~ 711  
Visigoth general who used a ruse in order to make peace with the Moorish conquerors.

Charles Martel  
686–741  
Frankish King who defeated the Moors at the *Battle of Tours*.

Pelayo  
690–737  
Visigoth hero who survived Moorish conquest in 711 and founded the Christian kingdom of Asturias.

# Timeline—Romans and Visigoths

## ANCIENT IBERIA

- 1000 Cadiz established as trading center by Phoenicians. Over time Carthage gained control of most important ports, mines, and trading centers.
- 264–214 [First Punic War](#) between Roman and Carthage.
- 236 [Hamilcar](#) makes Spain a Carthaginian province.
- 218 [Hannibal](#) captures Saguntum, a Roman ally; provokes the [Second Punic War](#).

## ROMAN CONQUEST OF HISPANIA

- 206 Carthaginian leaders driven out of Spain. Rome form Hispania provinces.
- 195 [Cato \(the censor\)](#) puts down Turdetani Uprising and other rebellions.
- 154 The Lusitanians, under Celtiberian hero [Viriathus](#) defeat the Romans.
- 146 Carthage destroyed. Migration to Celtiberian, Roman, and Jewish regions.
- 139 Death of the Lusitain rebel hero [Viriathus](#) by Roman treachery.
- 133 [Scipio the Younger](#) destroys Numantia after costly siege.
- 105 [Cimbrian](#) invasion of Hispania ended by Celtiberians.
- 97 Celtiberians under [Sertorius](#), rise against Rome.
- 71 Sertorius assassinated; [Pompey](#) reconquers Hispania for Rome.
- 61 [Julius Caesar](#) is governor of Hispania Citerior.
- 49–45 [Caesarean Civil War](#). Important battles at Massilia, Llerda, and Munda.
- 22–19 Cantabrian War: [Augustus Caesar](#) wins decisive victories over northern tribes. Provinces of Tarraconensis, Baetica, and Lusitania established.
- 0-300 Hispania a prosperous Roman province. Produces leaders such as [Trajan](#), [Hadrian](#), and [Seneca](#).

## VISIGOTH SPAIN

- 350 [Ulfilas](#), Arian missionary, converts Goths, translates Bible to Gothic language.
- 409 Waves of barbarians, including Suevi, Franks, and Vandals invade Hispania.
- 414 [Ataulfus](#) leads Visigoths into Hispania and settles there.
- 415 Wallia leads the Visigoths to victory over rivals and founds Visigoth Kingdom.

- 451 Visigoths under [Theodoric](#) fight along side the Romans against [Attila the Hun](#).
- 466 Euric improves condition of Visigoths, frames the Gothic Code.
- 506 [Alaric II](#) opposes Clovis, and loses Aquitaine to the Franks.
- 586 [Recared](#) renounces Arian Christian and embraces the Church of Rome.
- 589 Council of Toledo denounces Arianism, puts restrictions on Spanish Jews.
- 672 [Good King Wamba](#) attempts important reforms of government, but is deposed.

### MOORISH CONQUEST

- 711 The Saracens, under [Tariq ibn Ziyad](#), overthrow Visigoths at *Battle of Guadalete*.
- 716 Moorish governor, [Musa bin Nusair](#), exiled and son killed for marrying a Christian.
- 718 Christian hero [Pelayo](#) defeats Moors at *Covadonga*, founds kingdom of Asturias.
- 721 Odo of Aquitaine drives the Moorish army out of France at the *Battle of Toulouse*.
- 732 Saracens defeated by [Charles Martel](#) at Tours; retreat across Pyrenees.
- 750 Umayyad Caliphate overthrown in Damascus. Most of Royal family killed.
- 755 **Caliphate of Cordova** established by [Abderrahman I](#), last Umayyad prince.

## Recommended Reading—Romans and Visigoths

### Book Title

### Selected Chapters (# chapters)

#### CORE READING ASSIGNMENTS

- Ober - [Spain: A History for Young Readers](#) [Ancient Iberia](#) to [The Invasion from Africa](#) (5)
- Horne - [Story of the Greatest Nations: Spain](#) [Spain Under the Moors](#) to [Rulers of Spain](#) (2)

#### SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Bonner - [A Child's History of Spain](#) [From the Beginning](#) to [Abderrahman the First](#) (6)
- Abbott - [The Romance of Spanish History](#) [Early History of Spain](#) to [The Moorish Invasion](#) (3)
- Morris - [Historical Tales: Spanish](#) [The Good King Wamba](#) to [The Cave of Covadonga](#) (9)