



"FAIR FLOWERS OF SPANISH CHIVALRY"

THE IBERIAN CHIVALRIC TRADITION FROM EL
CID TO DON QUIXOTE

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Introduction: What Is Chivalry?

Code of conduct - associated with medieval Christian knighthood - popularized in medieval literature

code of chivalry, as it stood by the Late Middle Ages, was a moral system which combined a warrior ethos, knightly piety, and courtly manners, all combining to establish a notion of honor and nobility

Pre-1100 CE:

Habitus - uncodified code of noble conduct that focused on the *preudomme* (honest, sensible man)

- **Qualities of the *preudomme***
 - Loyalty - reputation
 - Forbearance - self-control towards other warriors/lords
 - Hardihood - physical resilience & aptitude for war
 - Largesse/liberality - generosity
 - Davidic ethic - benevolence of the strong toward the weak
 - Honor - achieved by living up to the standard of the *preudomme*

12th c. - chivalry evolves into moral, religious & social code of knightly behavior

- Developed in northern France
- Based on early medieval warrior class

Basic Values of Chivalry (from literature)

1. Duties to countrymen and fellow Christians: this contains virtues such as mercy, courage, valor, fairness, protection of the weak and the poor, and in the servant-hood of the knight to his lord. This also brings with it the idea of being willing to give one's life for another's; whether he would be giving his life for a poor man or his lord.
2. Duties to God: this would contain being faithful to God, protecting the innocent, being faithful to the church, being the champion of good against evil, being generous and obeying God above the feudal lord.
3. Duties to women: this is probably the most familiar aspect of chivalry. This would contain what is often called courtly love, the idea that the knight is to serve a lady, and after her all other ladies. Most especially in this category is a general gentleness and graciousness to all women.

Branches of Chivalry

1. warrior chivalry
 - a. chief duty is to his lord
 - b. example: Sir Gawain (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*)
2. religious chivalry
 - a. chief duty is to protect the innocent and serve God,
 - b. example: Sir Galahad or Sir Percival (the Grail legends)
3. courtly love chivalry
 - a. chief duty is to his own lady, and after her, all ladies
 - b. example: Sir Lancelot (the Grail legends), Sir Tristan (*Tristan and Isolde*)

The Influence of the Moors on European Chivalry

“In classical Arab culture, to become a genuine Knight (Fáris) (فارس), one had to master the virtues of dignity, eloquence, gentleness, horsemanship and artistic talents, as well as strength and skill with weaponry. These ancient chivalric virtues were promoted by the Moors, who comprised the majority population of the Iberian Peninsula by 1100 AD”

The famous Spanish author Blasco Ibáñez says: "Europe did not know chivalry, or its adopted literature or sense of honor before the arrival of Arabs in Andalusia and the wide presence of their knights and heroes in the countries of the south."

Andalusian Ibn Hazm and his famous book *The Ring of the Dove* (Tawq al-Ḥamāmah) had a great impact on poets in Spain and southern France

Spanish Chivalry

Santiago de Compostela

Legend of St. James the Greater

- From 12th century manuscript *Historia Compostelana*
 - St. James preached the Gospel in Spain
 - 40 CE: Virgin Mary appeared to James at Caesaraugusta
 - James returned to Judea; was executed by Herod in 44 CE
 - After his martyrdom, his body was carried to Spain, landed on the coast of Galicia, and was buried at the future site of Santiago de Compostela
- Remains were discovered during the reign of Afonso II (791–842) and Bishop Theodemir of Iria
- Santiago Matamoros Legend
 - St. James miraculously appeared to fight in (mythical) Battle of Clavijo against the Moors
 - Santiago Matamoros = “St. James the Moor-Slayer”

9th century: pilgrimage route of Camino de Santiago began to be established

10th century - chivalric concepts arrive in Iberian Peninsula

- Connected to Reconquista - Frankish knights travel to Peninsula to protect Christian pilgrims on the route to Santiago from Muslim soldiers

11th century - Spanish society captivated by concept of “knight of Christ” (miles christi)

Major Factors of Spanish Chivalric Tradition

1. The Reconquista

- a. Unlike other European Christian kingdoms, the “enemy” during the Reconquista was neither imaginary or geographically distant
 - b. Also unlike other Christian kingdoms, the bulk of warfare in Iberia was not between Christian kingdoms, but rather between united Christian kingdoms against a common enemy
2. Military Orders of Knighthood
 - a. Order of Calatrava
 - b. Order of Santiago
 - c. Alcántara
 - d. Montesa
3. Chivalric romances
 - a. El Cantar de Mio Çid
 - b. Amadís de Gaula
 - c. Don Quixote

The Reconquista

- Began under Alfonso II (791-842), completed under Isabella I (1492)
- Lasted nearly 700 years
- Northern Christian kingdoms eventually expelled Southern Moorish population from the Peninsula

The Military Orders of Knighthood (Confraternities)

Military orders were greater social and philosophical framework for Spanish chivalry
 Spanish knights obligated both to Church and to State

Leading role in the struggle of Christian kingdoms against the Muslims, in the repopulation of large territories, especially between the Tagus and the Guadalquivir and became a political and economic force of the first magnitude, besides having great role in the noble struggles held between the 13th and 15th centuries, when finally the Catholic Monarchs managed to gain its control.

Prominent Knightly Orders of Spain

1. Order of Calatrava
 - a. First military order founded in Castile
 - b. Named for: Fortress of Calatrava (Qal’at Rabah) taken from the Moors in 1147
 - c. Founded: Pope Alexander III, Sept. 1164
 - d. Purpose: Defense of southern borders of Castile
 - e. Seat of worship:
 - f. Religious rule: Cistercian

- g. Livery: white Cistercians mantle with red Cross of Calatrava (during union with Order of Calatrava)
2. Order of Santiago
 - a. Named for: St. James of Compostela (Sant Iago)
 - b. Founded: 12th century
 - c. Purpose: Supported the eviction of the Moors from Spain, protection of Christian pilgrims from Muslim forces, and participated in the maritime wars against Muslim kingdoms
 - d. Seat of worship: Santiago de Compostela
 - e. Religious rule: Augustinian
 - f. Livery: White mantel with red Cross of Santiago
 3. Order of Alcántara
 - a. AKA Knights of St. Julian de Pereio
 - b. Named for: City taken by King Alfonso IX of León 1214
 - c. Founded: 1166, confirmed by Pope Alexander III in 1177
 - d. Purpose: defense of borders, support of the Castilian Knights of Calatrava
 - e. Seat of Worship: Alcántara, Valencia
 - f. Religious rule: Cistercian
 - g. Livery: Cistercian white mantel with green Cross of Calatrava
 - h. Affiliation: Order of Calatrava
 4. Order of Montesa
 - a. Dedicated to Our Lady
 - b. Originally began as detachment of Templars bequeathed territory by King Alfonso I (1128) - was overturned by populace in 1131.
 - i. James II of Aragon appealed to Pope John XXII to restore Templar territories in Aragon & Valencia
 - ii. Created new order (basically the same as the Templars)
 - c. Named for: St George of Montesa
 - d. Founded: Pope John XXII in 1317
 - e. Purpose: defense of the frontier against Moors and pirates
 - f. Seat of worship: Montesa in Valencia
 - g. Religious rule: Cisterican
 - h. Affiliation: Order of Calatrava

Badges of the Major Knightly Orders



Cross of Santiago

- Three fleurs-de-lis represent “honor without stain” (reference to Apostle James’ character)

- Sword represents St. James & his martyrdom by the sword - also symbolizes taking the sword in the name of Christ



The Cross of Calatrava

- Red Greek cross with four fleurs-de-lis shaped like stylized letter M to represent devotion to the Virgin Mary



The Cross of Alcántara

- Green Greek cross with four fleurs-de-lis



The Cross of Montesa

- Red Greek cross within a black Cross of Calatrava

Minor Knightly Orders of Interest

1. Confraternity of Belchite
 - a. 1122: founded by Alfonso the Battler, King of Aragon and Navarre
 - b. Experimental community
 - i. Members could enlist temporarily or permanently
 - ii. Granted all booty taken from Muslims & exempted from “fifth quarter”
 - iii. Permitted to colonize depopulated lands, but property held in trust for God
 - c. October 1136: granted indulgence for supporters - explicitly connected idea of *reconquista* to Holy Crusades
 - d. 1136: no evidence of the confraternity after this date
 - e. 1143 - castle at Belchite transferred to Templars
2. Order of Monfragüe
 - a. 1196: founded by knights of Order of Montjoy (dissented from merger with Templars)
 - b. 1221: merged into Order of Calatrava
3. Order of St. Mary of Spain
 - a. 1270: founded by Alfonso X of Castile
 - b. 1280: integrated into Order of Santiago to rebuild membership after Battle of Battle of Moclín

4. Order of Truxillo
 - a. 1170: founded by ? (possibly same founder as Alcántara)
 - b. 1195: Castle captured by Almohads; order ceased to exist

5. Orden del Hacha (Order of the Hatchet) (1149)
 - a. Female honorific order
 - b. Bestowed on women of Tortosa, who defended city from Moorish attack

Chivalric Literature

Background

Chivalric romance: prose and verse narrative popular in noble courts of High Medieval and Early Modern Europe. They were fantastic stories about marvel-filled adventures, often of a chivalric knight-errant portrayed as having heroic qualities, who goes on a quest. It developed further from the epics as time went on; in particular, "the emphasis on love and courtly manners distinguishes it from the chanson de geste and other kinds of epic, in which masculine military heroism predominates." -Wikipedia

Originally written in Old French, Anglo-Norman, Occitan, Provençal - expanded to Portuguese, Spanish, English, Italian, German

El Cid

Summary:

El Cid married the cousin of King Alfonso VI, Doña Ximena, but for certain reasons (according to the story, he made the king swear by Santa Gadea that he had not ordered the fratricide of his own brother), he fell into the disfavor of the king and had to leave his home country of Castile.

The story begins with the exile of El Cid, whose enemies had unjustly accused him of stealing money from the king, Alfonso VI of Castile and León, leading to his exile. To regain his honor, he participated in the battles against the Moorish armies and conquered Valencia. By these heroic acts he regained the confidence of the king and his honor was restored. The king personally marries El Cid's daughters to the infantes (princes) of Carrión. However, when the princes are humiliated by El Cid's men for their cowardice, the infantes swear revenge. They beat their new wives and leave them for dead. When El Cid learns of this he pleads to the king for justice. The infantes are forced to return El Cid's dowry and are defeated in a duel, stripping them of all honor. El Cid's two daughters then remarry to the principes (crown princes) of Navarre and Aragon. Through the marriages of his daughters, El Cid began the unification of Spain.
-Wikipedia

Historical background:

Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (1043-1099) - Castilian knight & warlord

- Arabic honorific *al-sīd* = El Cid ("the lord"), El Campeador ("the champion")
- Fought with both Christian & Muslim armies
- Reclaimed Taifa of Valencia from the Moors during Reconquista
 - Ruled as Prince of Valencia 1094-1099
 - Became legendary hero - national hero of Spain
- Poem is art of *Mester de juglaría* tradition: poetry passed down through oral transference, intended to be performed in public - usually cantar de gesta ("songs of heroic deeds")

Amadis de Gaula

Summary:

The story narrates the star-crossed love of King Perión of Gaula and Elisena of England, resulting in the secret birth of Amadís. The place called Gaula is a fictional kingdom within Brittany. Abandoned at birth on a raft in England, the child is raised by the knight Gandales in Scotland and investigates his origins through fantastic adventures.

He is persecuted by the wizard Arcaláus, but protected by Urganda la Desconocida (Urganda the Unknown or Unrecognized), an ambiguous priestess with magical powers and a talent for prophecy. Knighted by his father King Perión, Amadís overcomes the challenges of the enchanted Ínsola Firme (a sort of peninsula), including passing through the Arch of Faithful Lovers.

Despite Amadís' celebrated fidelity, his childhood sweetheart, Oriana, heiress to the throne of Great Britain, becomes jealous of a rival princess and sends a letter to chastise Amadís. The knight changes his name to Beltenebros and indulges in a long period of madness on the isolated Peña Pobre (Poor Peak or Mountain). He recovers his senses only when Oriana sends her maid to retrieve him. He then helps Oriana's father, Lisuarte, repel invaders. A short time later he and Oriana scandalously consummate their love. Their son Esplandián is the result of this one illicit meeting.

Oriana and Amadís defer their marriage for many years due to enmity between Amadís and Oriana's father, Lisuarte. Amadís absents himself from Britain for at least 10 years, masquerading as "The Knight of the Green Sword". He travels as far as Constantinople and secures the favor of the child-princess Leonorina, who will become Esplandián's wife. His most famous adventure during this time of exile is the battle with the giant Endriago, a monster born of incest who exhales a poisonous gas and whose body is covered in scales.

As a knight, Amadís is courteous, gentle, sensitive, and a Christian, who dares to defend free love... a handsome man who would cry if refused by his lady, but is invincible in battle and usually emerges drenched in his own and his opponents' blood. -Wikipedia

Historical background:

- the most representative Iberian hero of chivalric romance
- very influential amongst the Spanish conquistadores. Bernal Díaz del Castillo mentioned the wonders of Amadís when he marveled at his first sight of Tenochtitlan (modern Mexico City) – and such place names as California come directly from the work

Don Quixote

Summary:

The plot revolves around the adventures of a member of the lowest nobility, an hidalgo from La Mancha named Alonso Quijano, who reads so many chivalric romances that he either loses or pretends to have lost his mind in order to become a knight-errant (*caballero andante*) to revive chivalry and serve his nation, under the name Don Quixote de la Mancha (in modern-day Spanish, spelled Quijote). He recruits a simple farmer, Sancho Panza, as his squire, who often employs a unique, earthy wit in dealing with Don Quixote's rhetorical monologues on knighthood, already considered old-fashioned at the time, and representing the most droll realism in contrast to his master's idealism. In the first part of the book, Don Quixote does not see the world for what it is and prefers to imagine that he is living out a knightly story that's meant for the annals of all time.

Historical background:

Published 1605/1615: *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-11616)

- Considered greatest writer in Spanish language; one of world's preeminent authors
- DQ considered first modern novel; one of the pinnacles of world lit
 - Lasting influence on literary community

“Cervantes declared that his aim was to put an end to a genre that most critics of the time condemned because it was believed to represent a primary source of “distraction” from good behavior, not just for noble gentlemen and ladies but also for the general public” (Demattè)

The Evolution and Decline of Chivalry

The Decline of the Knightly Orders

Theories on the decline of chivalry:

1. Miguel de Cervantes “smiled Spain’s chivalry away” with his satirical novel Don Quixote (published in two parts, 1605 and 1615) - reflected Renaissance humanist dismissal of romances as childish
 - a. 1823 - Lord Byron declared that “chivalry is dead - and Cervantes killed it.”
2. Expulsion of the Muslims in 1492 combined with
3. Centralization of political power under the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella

Once the Moors were expelled, the four orders were perceived as powerful subjects and it became a priority for the Crown to gain control over them – particularly at a time when the Crown was struggling to establish its central authority. If one subscribes to this latter view (the earlier fall of chivalry and knightly orders at the end of the 15th century), then clearly Cervantes did not so much contribute to that event, as to document (at the beginning of the 17th century) its prior occurrence, a point that is central to Don Quixote, that this decline had already occurred at the time of Quixote's adventures.

The Conquistadors

Later centuries saw the rise of the Spanish Empire, and the chivalric ideals of the knights reappeared in the guise of the conquistadors in the New World.

“The rewards for the conquistador were similar to those of his medieval predecessor, the reconquistador: land to conquer, people to convert to Christianity, and glory or fame. The one major difference was that the conquistadors and reconquistadores were real people who also sought wealth whereas the knight-errant of the romances was a fictional creature indifferent to material gain. Bernal Díaz de Castillo, a soldier who took part in the conquest of Mexico, put the conquistador’s objective succinctly: ‘we came here to serve God and the king and also to get rich’”

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