

Prestige to Power: Toledo's Cathedral Chapter and Assimilated Identity

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Toledo, as the former *urbs regia* of the Visigoth kingdom and seat of Iberia's primatial archbishop, represented a distinctive focal point upon which medieval Ibero-Christian identity was centered, leading it to attain a unique significance in the history of the Reconquista. Conversely, medieval Toledo has also become famous for *convivencia*, or coexistence, among its pluralistic population of Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The cultural and intellectual benefits of this exchange, however, were often deployed toward the assertion Christian verity as seen, for example, in the scholarly and architectural endeavors of Toledo's famous 13th century prelate Archbishop Rodrigo Ximénez de Rada.¹ Medieval Toledo also contained a distinctive form of intra-religious diversity. The city was home to a Christian community comprised of an arabophonic population, known as Mozarabs, as well as Franks and Spaniards who had settled in the city after Alfonso VI (r. 1072–1109) conquered it in 1085. The Mozarab population itself was quite diverse and included indigenous Christians, converts to Christianity, as well as Christian *émigrés* from al-Andalus.² This disparate community, however, had largely homogenized by the early 14th century.³

The homogenization of Toledo's Christian population was connected directly to the city's historical significance as the former capital of the Visigoth kingdom and as Iberia's primatial see. Toledo's historical, spiritual, and social prestige was transformed into real economic power in the 12th century, which,

1 For Rodrigo's sponsorship of intellectual activity see Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence: Archbishop Rodrigo and the Muslims and Jews of Medieval Spain*. For Rodrigo's contributions to the construction and design of Toledo's cathedral see Nickson, *Toledo Cathedral: Building Histories in Medieval Castile*. Both authors describe how Rodrigo used Muslim and Jewish knowledge to glorify the Christian religion and Toledo's place within Christendom.

2 See Aillet, *Les mozarabes*. Aillet offers an intriguing theory of Mozarab identity formation through shared juridical and cultural experience. For the diversity of the Mozarab population see Epalza, "Mozarabs: An Emblematic Christian Minority in Islamic al-Andalus," pp. 149–151.

3 On the assimilation of the Mozarabs of Toledo during the 12th and 13th centuries as seen through onomastic evidence see Olstein, *La era mozárabe: Los mozárabes de Toledo (siglos XII y XIII) en la historiografía, las fuentes y la historia*.

in turn, helped foster the assimilation of Toledo's various Christian communities to a distinctive type of Ibero-Christian identity. This process can be seen particularly through the shifting dynamics of Toledo's cathedral chapter during this time. The social and economic influence that came with membership in the chapter was attractive to members of Toledo's various Christian communities, and the desire for that influence brought individuals together from those different communities under the aegis of the cathedral. While Toledo represented Ibero-Christian unity in a broad sense, the symbolic importance of its cathedral had very real economic consequences that helped homogenize the people of the city.

1 **The Origins of Toledo's Prestige and Its Persistence in the Islamic Era**

King Reccared (r. 586–601) ushered in a new era of cooperation between the nobility and the clergy when he converted to Catholic Christianity in 587, a union which was codified at the Third Council of Toledo in 589. It would take more than a half a century, however, before Toledo gained preeminence over the other important political and religious centers of the Iberian Peninsula. Toledo, in fact, was not even the metropolitan see of its own province at the time of the Third Council. Toledo had been part of the ecclesiastical province Cartaginense, whose metropolitan was Cartagena, or Cartago Nova. The Byzantines had controlled Cartagena since the mid-sixth century, and they remained entrenched there despite numerous Visigoth attempts to oust them. In 610, however, King Gundamar (r. 610–612) authorized a provincial split which established Toledo as the metropolitan of the new territory of Carpetania.⁴ Toledo's position as both the political and ecclesiastical capital appears to have been finally solidified by the Seventh Council of Toledo in 646 where it was first referred to as the *urbs regia*, and where the pontifical authority of Toledo's archbishop was first recognized.⁵ The memory of Toledo's preeminence would endure during the years of Muslim rule within the city, as well as in the Christian domains of the North. Toledo's archbishops would rely upon these legal precedents and historical memories when reestablishing their control over the Iberian Church after the city's conquest by Alfonso VI in 1085.

4 Rivera Recio, *Los Arzobispos de Toledo: desde sus orígenes hasta fines del siglo XI*, pp. 60–61.

5 Julian of Toledo, *The Story of Wamba*, pp. 18–19; Rivera Recio, *Arzobispos de Toledo*, pp. 71–72.