

Moor

[**ME** *More*, **MF** *Maure*, **L** *Maurus*, an inhabitant of Mauretania] (**14c**)

- a member of a Muslim people of mixed Berber and Arab descent, now living chiefly in northwest Africa
- one of the Muslim conquerors who invaded Spain in the 8th century and established a civilization in Andalusia that lasted until the late 15th century

History and Influence of the Moors

The **Moors** were nomadic people of the northern shores of Africa, originally the inhabitants of Mauretania. They were chiefly of Berber and Arab stock. In the 8th century the Moors were converted to Islam and became fanatic Muslims. They spread southwest into Africa and northwest into Spain. Under Tarik ibn Ziyad they crossed to Gibraltar in 711 and easily overran the crumbling Visigothic kingdom of Roderick. They spread beyond the Pyrenees into France, where they were turned back at Tours by Charles Martel (732). In 756, Abd ar-Rahman I established the Umayyad dynasty at Córdoba. This emirate became under Abd ar-Rahman III the caliphate of Córdoba. The court there grew in wealth, splendor, and culture. The regent al-Mansur in the late 10th century waged bitter warfare with the Christians of northern Spain, where, from the beginning, the Moorish conquest had met with its only opposition. The cities of the south, Toledo, Córdoba, and Seville, speedily became centers of the new culture and were famed for their universities and architectural treasures. With the exception of brief periods, there was, however, no strong central government; the power was split up among dissenting local leaders and factions. The caliphate fell in 1031, and the Almoravids in 1086 took over Moorish Spain, which was throughout the whole period closely connected in rule with Morocco. These successive waves of invasion had brought into Spain thousands of skilled Moorish artisans and industrious farmers who contributed largely to the intermittent prosperity of the country. They were killed or expelled in large numbers (to the great loss of Spain) in the Christian reconquest, which began with the recovery of Toledo (1085) by Alfonso VI, king of León and Castile. The great Christian victory (1212) of Navas de Tolosa prepared the way for the downfall of the Muslims. The wars went on, and one by one the Moorish strongholds fell, until only Granada remained in their hands. Málaga was taken (1487) after a long siege by the forces of Ferdinand and Isabella, and in 1492 Granada was recovered. Many of the Moors remained in Spain; those who remained faithful to Islam were called Mudejares, while those who accepted Christianity were called Moriscos. They were allowed to stay in Spain but were kept under close surveillance. They were persecuted by Philip II, revolted in 1568, and in the Inquisition were virtually

exterminated. In 1609 the remaining Moriscos were expelled. Thus the glory of the Moorish civilization in Spain was gradually extinguished. **Its contributions to Western Europe and especially to Spain were almost incalculable—in art and architecture, medicine and science, and learning (especially ancient Greek learning).**

Lane-Poole, S. "The Moors in Spain." *Encyclopedia.com* from *eLibrary* <<http://encyclopedia.com>>



The **Alhambra** [*the red* in Arabic] is extensive group of buildings on a hill overlooking Granada, Spain. They were built chiefly between 1230 and 1354, and they formed a great citadel of the Moorish kings of Spain. After the expulsion of the Moors in 1492, the structures suffered mutilation but were extensively restored after 1828. The Alhambra is a true expression of the once flourishing Moorish civilization and is the finest example of its architecture in Spain. It comprises remains of the citadel, the so-called palace of the kings, and the quarters once used by officials. The halls and chambers surround a series of open courts, which include the Court of Lions containing arcades resting on 124 white marble columns. The interior of the building is adorned sumptuously with magnificent examples of the so-called honeycomb and stalactite vaulting; its walls and ceilings are decorated with geometric ornamentation of minute detail and intricacy, executed with surpassing skill in marble, alabaster, glazed tile, and carved plaster.

Columbia Encyclopedia. Sixth Ed. 2004.