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## Early History of the Violin in Spain

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Oral Presentation 1.5

**EARLY HISTORY OF THE VIOLIN IN SPAIN**

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In 1238, the Spanish Christians captured the principal Moorish city in the south of Spain. Even under Christian rule the Moors were able to maintain their rich culture, including the use of their finely crafted instruments. The most popular instrument of the time was the rabab, which was modified to produce other stringed instruments during the 14th and 15th centuries in Spain. The rabab, different forms of the vihuela, and the viol of Valencia were all stringed predecessors of the modern violin variously produced through Medieval Times and through the 17th century.

The word rabab refers to a group of stringed instruments, but my interest is in the rabab popular in the region of Aragon, Spain in the 14th and 15th centuries. Another instrument of the time, the vihuela, is recognized as a "pure" Spanish instrument invented and produced principally in Aragon during the 15th century. There are two types: the vihuela de mano and the vihuela de arco. The former is bowed, while the latter is a plucked instrument. The viol of Valencia is a closer representation of the modern violin, although it has many unique characteristics. Its popularity and modification of design became more sophisticated in Italy, however, the instrument proved less popular than the rabab and vihuela in Spain.

There is no doubt the coexistence of the Moors and the Christians in the 14th and 15th centuries had a profound effect on the production of stringed instruments. Experts generally disagree in determining how the instruments influenced one another. However, by comparing the basic features of these instruments, it becomes evident that the rabab, vihuela and viol existed as earlier versions of the modern violin.