**Pre-Roman Iberia**

As a result of Iberia's central location at the hub of Europe, Africa, and the Mediterranean, the peninsula has attracted foreigners for centuries. Ranging from the Phoenicians to the Celts to the Greeks, numerous groups established themselves in Iberia before the Romans arrived in 219 BCE.

After defeating Carthage in the Second Punic War, the Romans controlled the Iberian Peninsula. In 27 BCE the Roman Emperor Augustus divided the peninsula into three provinces: Hispania Baetica, Hispania Taraconensis, and Lusitania. The three provinces provided the Roman Empire with valuable exports, including olive oil, metal, and wine.

**Germanic Invasions**

After more than five centuries of Roman rule, the early fifth century saw great migrations of Germanic peoples, including the Alans, Sueves, Vandals, and Visigoths to Iberia. These invasions marked the end of Roman rule in the Iberian peninsula.

The Visigoths established control of the peninsula by 456. The Visigothic administration maintained many aspects of Roman life, including aqueducts, bridges, and roads. The Visigoths ruled the peninsula for nearly three centuries.

**Islamic Spain**

In 711, a mix of Arab and Berber forces crossed the Straits of Gibraltar from northern Africa and overthrew the Visigothic kingdom. By 718 they dominated most of the peninsula. The Muslim-controlled area of Iberia was known as Al-Andalus, and for four centuries it covered most the of the peninsula. Only small Christian kingdoms remained in the North. The Muslims brought great advancements in agriculture, architecture, science, and math to the peninsula.

By 1010 Al-Andalus was divided by civil war. Al-Andalus was fragmented into smaller parts, known as "taifa" kingdoms. A separate leader ruled each taifa, and boundaries were flexible and changed often.

**Reconquista**

As Al-Andalus was fragmenting, the Christians in the North began efforts to re-conquer their land from the Muslims. This effort was known as the "*Reconquista*." Existing kingdoms grew larger and new kingdoms formed as well. Each Christian kingdom had separate laws, customs, and languages.

As Christians began to control more territory, kingdoms began to unite. In 1137, Aragon and Cataluyna united to form the powerful kingdom of Aragon. Thereafter followed centuries of relatively unchanging borders.

In 1469 two powerful kingdoms united through the marriage of their heirs. The heir to the Argonese throne, Fernando, married the heir to the Castilian throne, Isabella, which formed the large and powerful Leon-Castile. The only remaining Muslim holding at this time was Granada. Leon-Castile captured Granada in 1492, bringing an end to the "*Reconquista*" and reclaiming all Spanish holdings for the Christians.