

HISTORY OF THE PROVINCE OF BURGOS

Prehistory

The province of Burgos, with its present borders, dates back to the mid-19th century, and its capital, the city of Burgos, to the year 884 when Count Diego Rodríguez Porcelos founded as the repopulating efforts progressed down from the mountains in the north to the plains of the center of the northern Meseta (central plateau).

The Paleolithic Age

But the history of this area, and especially its pre-history, extends much further back; the archaeological site with Europe's oldest human settlement is located only 15 km from the capital. The **Sierra de Atapuerca**, to the east of the province, holds the oldest remnants of the presence of our most remote ancestors, and its pits, shelters, and caves guard the secrets of a long prehistory that began 1.2 million years ago and continued until the dawn of history, five thousand years before our times.

Beginning in those distant times, and for thousands and tens of thousands of years, the inhabitants of the **Sierra de Atapuerca** little by little learned to hunt and fish, select the best fruits of the fields for their food, articulate their first words, control fire, develop an awareness of their collective and historical personality through veneration of the dead, decorate their bodies, build huts outside, and leave a record of their symbolic and spiritual world through drawings and pictures, which can also be seen in the **Ojo Guareña** caves.

The Neolithic Age

The next step came with the domestication of plants and animals in middle of the Neolithic Age, which began approximately 5,000 years B.C. This allowed the development of more organized human groups and more complex social and spiritual life, as demonstrated by the extensive network of funeral monuments – megaliths: dolmens and menhirs – which dot the landscape, with one especially expressive example found at the **Paramera de Sedano**.

The Metal Age

The Metal Age was a period of cumulative development in several different areas of human activity: the handling of increasingly harder and stronger metals; the assimilation of writing, which marks the passage from Prehistory to History; the expansion of crops and livestock, which gave rise to the settlement of groups in villages; the formation of permanent armies, and the consequent development of social hierarchy; the establishment of supra-tribal groups, or *towns* and the organization of the territory around several newborn cities built on hilltops, also known as *castros* (encampments).

The names of the corresponding ages are taken from the historical sequence of the development of metals: the Calcolithic (2500-1600 B.C.), when humans progressed from the use of stone to copper as the raw material of their tools, weapons, and household utensils. The Bronze

period (1600-750 B.C.) was characterized by the development of advanced alloying techniques, with the Iron age (750-150 B.C.) giving way definitively to History and civilization.

During these different ages, the last prehistoric peoples left a record of their complex symbolic world in the burial fields and cave paintings. They perfected farming implements, and discovered the ploughshare; they invented the pottery wheel and the circular mill; minted coins, and finally learned to write, as a complex society ready to welcome History.

And lastly, the *towns* that fall partially or entirely within the present-day borders of the province. The Arévacos, important herders and metalworkers, settled to the southeast, with **Clunia** as one of their most important cities. The Autrigones, who built forts at **Poza de la Sal**, **Briviesca**, Cerezo de Río Tirón, and **Monasterio de Rodilla**, occupied the eastern part of the province, from the Sierra de la Demanda, extending to the northern end. The Cántabros dominated the mountainous north, settling in **Amaya**, Los Ordejones, or Humada. The center of the territory of Burgos belonged to the Turmogodos – farmers and herders, whose most important settlements were **Sasamón**, **Tardajos**, and perhaps **Lerma**. And lastly, the Vacceos, who also occupied the southwest section of the province, with **Castrojeriz** and **Roa** as their most important cities, with highly developed agriculture that even produced surplus for trade.

History

Ancient Times

The Roman conquest of the territory of Burgos took place slowly over the course of almost two centuries from 195 to 19 B.C. Little by little, Pre-Roman Hispanians were assimilated into the Roman model of political and territorial organization, and their cities became the centers of the different territorial districts that made up the Empire's provincial mosaic. Of all the known Iron Age sites, **Roa** appears to have survived as a stop in the progressive conquest, while **Clunia**, capital of a large jurisdiction district or Legal Court, and **Sasamón**, a military camp that served as the base for the wars against the Cántabros, reached their historical zenith under the Romans.

Under Roman rule, the province of Burgos completely assimilated the political, economic, and cultural systems of its conquerors: municipal organization and the expansion of the urban network, law, currency, agricultural and artisan developments, the Latin language, building systems, public works – the most important of which included forums, theaters, baths, water supply systems and inter-urban roadways – artistic canons, religion – in short, everything that falls under the generic heading of classical culture, which nourished the inhabitants of the territory of Burgos once they had become fully Romanized. Remnants of that splendor have been conserved, below and above ground, in what were once the most important Roman cities – first **Clunia**, followed by **Sasamón** Villavieja de Muñó, **Lara de los Infantes** Tardajos, **Poza de la Sal** **Roa** **Briviesca** **Monasterio de Rodilla**, and Cerezo de Riotirón.

The Middle Ages

By the 4th century, this opulent, grandiose world began to show signs of weakening. First in the cities, as in the case of Clunia, and later in rural areas, where the lifestyle of the large mansions declined in the early decades of the 5th century. In 476, the Romans gave way to the Visigoths, who

governed the entire territory of Hispania until 711 but were unable to prevent its general decline. Some material remnants of their presence of varying quality remain in our lands: ruins of fortifications – **Tedeja**, in Trespaderne – church foundations – **Santa María de Mijangos**– and above all, the head of the **Santa María de Quintanilla de las Viñas** church, a sublime example of the art in the dying years of the Visigoth kingdom.

The panorama did not improve with the Muslims, who dominated these lands for less than 30 years, from 714 to 742. Following this, they entrenched themselves to the south of the Central Mountain Range, while the Asturian kings on the coast and northern face of the Cantabrian mountain range temporarily held back from conquering the flatlands of the Duero and the southern valleys of the Cantabrian Range; these were left to their fate, which proved to be none other than general destruction.

With this as the panorama, when the first movements towards the recovery of sustained stable population and agriculture south of the Cantabrian Mountains were detected in the 9th century in northern Burgos, the general feeling was one of starting practically from scratch. And that is what they did. Just after the year 800, under the leadership of the warlords of the mountains, the territory of the valleys to the north of what is today the province of Burgos began to be reorganized, and would soon be given the expressive name of Castilla, from Latin *Castella* (=the castles). In the year 860, the border had been extended south to the cliffs of Amaya and the hilltops of the Obarenes, where plans were made to occupy the spreading plains below. In a few decades, advancing valley by valley, the Castilian counts, always in connection, and generally in agreement with the Asturian monarchs, reached the line of the Duero in 912, strengthening their presence at **Clunia**, **Peñaranda de Duero**, **Roa**, and **Aza**. During this advance, the corresponding line of fortifications was constructed in each valley to protect the rearguard of the agriculture and livestock installed in the villages sprang up as the conquest advanced.

An unexpected setback came when the Christians arrived at the Duero; the Islamic rulers in Córdoba were disquieted, and ceaselessly harassed the Duero line throughout the entire 10th century led by the caliph Abderramán III and the eminent warrior Almanzor. However, following the death of Almanzor in the early decades of the 11th century the warring impulses of Córdoba's armies dissipated and the Christians immediately crossed the river to conquer the plateau flatlands south of the Duero. The process culminated in 1085 with the conquest of Toledo and the definitive shifting of the Christian-Muslim border to south of the Tajo.

Far from the Muslim threat, the region of Burgos began a spectacular rise in all areas of human activity: economic, demographic, social, cultural, political, and religious, which was personified by the successful escapades of **Cid Campeador** in the lands of Castilla, Zaragoza, and Levante in the second half of the 11th century. This century, followed in sequence by the 12th and 13th, was the first witness of this development it began with the expansion of crops and livestock and continued with the expansion of the population. This was followed by the establishment social relations between lords and peasants that had a relatively stimulating effect on production, and was then reinforced by the importation of systems of religious life – the monastic lifestyle of the Benedictines – that had a renewing effect, and culminated with the elevation of Castilla to the category of kingdom (1037). This development was expressed in a series of wide-reaching artistic and cultural movements, such as the **Romanesque** in the 12th and 13th centuries – the monasteries of **San Salvador de Oña**, **San Pedro de Arlanza**, **San Pedro de Cardeña**, **Santo Domingo de Silos**--, the **Cistercian** (end of the 11th and start of the 13th centuries – monasteries of **Las Huelgas de Burgos**, **Santa María de Bujedo de**

Juarros--) and the **Gothic** (13th century, **Catedral de Burgos, Santa María de Sasamón, Santa María de Grijalba--**).

Driven by this growth, the population consolidated itself and several especially developed cities sprang up, including the start of the city of Burgos, followed by others such as **Belorado, Miranda de Ebro, Frías, Medina de Pomar, Lerma, Aranda de Duero, and Santa Gadea del Cid**, which were helped by the Crown to affirm themselves as the economic leaders of the surrounding rural area. The **Camino de Santiago** also contributed to making the economy and culture of the Burgos area more dynamic, giving life to towns such as the aforementioned Belorado, **Villafranca Montes de Oca, and Castrojeriz**. At the same time, the policy of the recovery of the Castilla's regional identity following the battle of Atapuerca (1054), the establishment of the Episcopal see of Burgos (1075) and the later reorganization of the dioceses are phenomena that converge in the internal definition of the Burgos territory and its recognition as the central core and backbone of both the kingdom and the diocese.

The 14th century was a time of crisis that saw the rupture of all the aforementioned growth parameters. Hunger, war, and disease feasted on western Europeans and the lands of Burgos were no exception. Life slowed and culture withered.

The golden Age of Burgos Trade

In the mid-15th century, the prospects of the inhabitants of Burgos changed once again, this time for the better. New fields were tilled, livestock herds were expanded, fields and grazing areas were better organized, wine-growing was selectively intensified, communications improved, the market, a sector in which Burgos would lead for more than a century, was buoyant, and efforts were made to enrich the area of culture with highly notable works of art. In terms of art, masterpieces abounded, in architecture as well as in the fields of sculpture and painting. The styles followed one another relatively quickly, moving from **Flemish Gothic** in the 15th and start of the 16th centuries – seen in the spires and Condestable Chapel in the Catedral de Burgos, the cloister of the monastery of **San Salvador de Oña, Santa María de Aranda de Duero** – to the **Renaissance** – in the gilded staircase and dome of the **Catedral de Burgos**, palaces on the Burgos streets of Fernán González and Calera, Puerta de los Romeros of the **Hospital del Rey**. In this creative frenzy, ecclesiastical institutions competed with the nobility in their initiatives and desire for renewal, as was becoming the norm. These groups were also joined by the urban oligarchies, especially in the city of Burgos, which had earned great riches in the wool trade and were generously disposed to participating in the sponsorship of the arts in Burgos.

The ups and downs of the Modern Age

The cycle of expansion that began in the mid-15th century broke in the 1680s, giving way to a period of generalized recession and sluggishness characterized by dropping production, shrinking demographics, and slowing trade, and showing the effects of the crash of the Spanish wool market with Flanders. The population of the city of Burgos dropped by half, and there was a notable decrease in **Miranda de Ebro and Aranda de Duero**, more significant in this case given the relatively good health of the economy of **La Ribera**, thanks to the good performance of the wine business throughout the entire 17th century. The district of **La Sierra**, with its buoyant livestock production and wheelwrights, offset the drop in agricultural production and managed to avoid this general atrophy that extended through the 17th century and into the 18th. Another notable exception was the town of

Lerma, which at the start of the 17th century, thanks to the building and urban development spurred by the Duke of Lerma, contrasted with this lethargic atmosphere by presenting the most shining and svelte image of the city of its entire history.

Following along these same lines, artistic production was also affected by the crisis, most clearly seen in the drop in building construction, as art selectively took refuge in sculpture and painting. With the exception of isolated cases, more frequent in the aforementioned areas where the effects of the crisis were less, the Baroque style, which was dominant during this time, moved indoors, mainly into religious buildings, giving birth to a rich artistic heritage embodied in the altar-pieces, sculptures, and paintings with great expressive force and visual impact.

As the 18th century progressed, trends shifted once again, giving way to a new period of growth, which brought with it new developments that would have transcendent historical significance. In terms of ideology, the Illustration encouraged a secular lay culture and called for a break from the past. In terms of the economy, the manufacturing companies were established – in **Burgos, Pradoluengo, Frías, Espinosa de los Monteros**, Valdenoceda, and **Melgar de Fernamental** – with only the draper's shops of Frías and the capital, and especially in Pradoluengo, managing to establish themselves as part of the province's economic panorama.

With the ideas of the Illustration, state involvement began in the teaching of art and the implementation of a series of insipid academic aesthetic guidelines that took shape in **Neoclassicism**. It even inspired some religious construction, including the monastery church of **Santo Domingo de Silos**, although its projection was more clearly noted in many of the public buildings constructed in the latter half of the century, which include a good number of Town Halls – **Burgos, Sotillo de la Ribera, Miranda de Ebro**...- jails, corn exchanges, inns, hospitals, hospices, schools, and theaters.

The Contemporary Age

The 19th century

The 19th century awoke with thunderous start in the lands of Burgos: in 1807 military contingents from France camped in the capital and in Espinosa de los Monteros under the pretext of assuring their passage to Portugal, though they were clearly intent on integrating the entire peninsula into the Napoleonic Empire. Burgos, as an advantageous center of communications with Portugal and Madrid, and Espinosa as the base of operations for the domination of the northern region of Cantabria, became improvised campsites for the French troops, which had to apply all of their efforts to stifle the attempted uprisings in the local towns overwhelmed by the weight of the aggressive presence of the invading army.

As we know, the fight against this foreign occupancy, known as the War for Independence, lasted for six years (1808-1814), bringing with it a long string of misfortunes to all areas of Spanish life. For the region of Burgos, the effects of the presence of Napoleon's armies were deeply etched in the many monasteries and convents that were raided and sacked, in the artistic jewels and historic documents stolen and taken to France, and in the systematic subjection of the population of Burgos to arbitrary and abusive seizures, and the consequent general impoverishment of the population. Several examples demonstrate these phenomena: in terms of raiding, we know that the monks of San Pedro de Cardeña were forced from the cloister by the French troops and the monastery itself was brutally sacked, with the remains of El Cid and his wife Jimena savagely desecrated by the soldiers. And in

terms of destruction, this conflict, with the final battles with the French and the English as protagonists on the Castillo and San Miguel hills of the capital, brought an end to the heritage of Romanesque architecture that still survived in the churches of Santa María la Blanca, San Martín, and San Román, located on the peak and hillsides of El Castillo. The **Cathedral** and the church of **San Esteban** were also indirectly damaged by the warring artillery on the neighboring hills in their walls and windows.

In the midst of all of this disaster, the War for Independence served as a testing ground for a new mode of military tactics: guerrilla warfare, inaugurated in the lands of Burgos by the brilliant Cura Merino and El Empecinado, and destined to enjoy unparalleled success throughout the contemporary age.

With the fires of the war against the French barely cooled, Spain began the effective transition from the Old Regime, based on privilege, to Liberalism, under the banner of the declaration of equality of all citizens before the law. Of course this change did not take place without its trauma. The most significant effects were first noted at the start of the reign of Isabel I (1833-1868), with the suppression of the ecclesiastic tithe and all of the privileges that affected the nobility, professional corporations – *Concejo de la Mesta*, *Cabaña Real de Carreteros* -, certain boards, and church bodies, and with the disentailment projects that had a significant effect in the years 1836-37 on all religious institutions, especially monastic communities. Monks were suddenly expelled from the monasteries, their property expropriated and disentailed – put up for sale – and the cloister buildings abandoned to their fate, which in many cases meant definitive abandonment and subsequent ruin, as in the case of **San Pedro de Arlanza**, **Santa María de Obarenes**, and **Santa María de Rioseco**. In addition, communities of nuns, the Episcopal See, with its bishop and council, and the parishes, with their priests, remained standing, but were deprived of the tithe and the immense majority of their assets and income, becoming dependent in some cases on the profits from their work, in others on state allowances, and in general, on voluntary contributions from their followers.

The Disentailment, in addition to other effects, undoubtedly had a clearly negative effect on the Artistic heritage, since the monasteries, the traditional centers for the cultivation and renovation of the arts, disappeared from the cultural map at that time, and the material sources that sustained the artistic sponsorship of the rest of the religious entities were cut off; in the best case, they were forced into a policy of conserving the heritage inherited from the past. The Episcopal Church remained beyond this somber panorama. It knew how to compensate the loss of economic power by maintaining, and at the end of the 19th century, intensifying its religious, political, and social influence. This allowed it to recompose its institutional figure to its advantage, as demonstrated by the newly constructed buildings that were built in the diocese of Burgos at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century: the Seminario Mayor de San José, the Mayor de San Jerónimo – currently the **Faculty of Theology** – and the **Archbishop's Palace**. Still in the 1960s, in the middle of Franco's rule, a new and emblematic building was added to the diocesan church to house the Seminario Mayor, the last link in a long expansive cultural and religious stage, which gave way in the last decades of the century, to a clearly defensive policy, shared by public powers, of conserving and restoring its heritage.

In terms of other aspects, the 19th century continued to animate the political and social life of Burgos with successive military episodes – the Carlist Wars, the First (1833-1840) and Second (1846-1849), above all – and repeated political upheavals, which only relented in 1874 with the start of the Restoration, the political system that allowed a smooth transition from the 19th to the 20th centuries. Between crises and times of peace, the population of Burgos hardly increased over the 19th century, growing from 240,000 to 338,000 inhabitants for the province as a whole, and from 13,000 to 30,000

in the capital. This tepid growth, which in the case of the city of Burgos was due more to immigration than to the dynamics of the city's own demographics, occurred intermittently and spasmodically, characteristic of a society still living within the economic parameters of the Old Regime, with an agricultural sector that was dominant but stagnant in its technology and management, and a secondary sector that refused to move beyond the framework of traditional artisanry, with the exception, perhaps, in **Pradoluengo**, **Miranda de Ebro**, and the capital of Arlanzón.

At the end of the century, the city of Burgos was debating between the nostalgia for the past and the uncertainty of the future. In the first place, the development of communications – first roads and then rail – put it in an excellent strategic position in the northern third of the peninsula, which was due more to the demands of the emerging industrial centers on the periphery than to its own internal dynamism. And in the second place, the consolidation as a city – the center of the institutions of the Liberal State – Territorial Superior Court and Provincial Council – and of the most traditional power centers, now renewed – the Captaincy General with its neighboring barracks, the Archbishopric See – gave the capital a generally conservative functionary air, with its streets filled with the clergy, military, high functionaries, and a minority of local tradesmen and artisans, and with social life contained within the casinos and clubs of the upper class.

Thanks to these more affluent institutions and groups of the population, the city improved its appearance by constructing new official buildings and restoring the immense majority of the houses in the lower neighborhoods of the Medieval city, while at the same time, with the removal of the sections of the wall adjacent to the river, opening to the southern light by projecting new streets to give shape to collective recreational areas that adorn the banks of the Arlanzón. Of course, the example was repeated in numerous cities in the province, in which the model of medieval villages, walled and squeezed, gave way to broad streets and open neighborhoods where members of the emerging local bourgeoisie would settle.

The 20th century

The first decades of the 20th century fed off of large doses of the inertia that characterized the 19th century, barely altered by the incipient industrialization taking place in the capital and in the city of Miranda, and the subsequent consolidation of the employer associations and class-conscious or integrating labor associations. This social dichotomy was reflected, as would be expected, in housing: while the bourgeoisie leaders were identified with the most avant-garde artistic developments, as seen in some of the buildings in the Plaza Mayor, the Paseo del Espolón, and the Paseo de la Isla, the first immigrants to join the proletariat in the capital began feverish construction of “Cheap housing” in the city's suburbs, with a single floor and adjacent rooms that gave them an unmistakable rural character.

As a counterpoint to this marked trend of continuance, the middle years of the century were characterized by two truly traumatic events – the Civil War of 1936-39 and the rural exodus of the 50s-70s. In terms of the crudest realities of war, as a battlefield the province of Burgos was hardly touched, with the exception of the front in the barren lands and valleys of the north. This is not to say that the drama of the war went unnoticed by the population of Burgos as a whole, which was shaken daily by the calls for new soldiers, the news of the deaths on the different Spanish fronts, and above all, by the atmosphere of terror that was sown among the civilian population of the immense majority of the province's towns and cities by the most aggressive sectors of the warring bands. In the territory of Burgos, which fell entirely within the so-called “National” band, the protagonism in this sense corresponded, and was especially intense, to the groups who sympathized with the uprising, whose programs of purges, cleansing, and summary executions gave the conflict violent connotations

universal in scope and with brutal intensity. On the other side of this situation, in these years, the capital lived with a bittersweet sensation of protagonism and vitality, by becoming the center of the governmental institutions of the national zone and housing a large number of functionaries, to the satisfaction of the economic leaders responsible for the urban supply.

The War ended, and the territory of Burgos, including its capital – abandoned by the victorious military as soon as they could move to Madrid – stagnated, curing the wounds left by the fratricidal conflict in melancholy isolation. The rural world was revived demographically in the 50s, but the economic trends of the group left little room for hope. Industrialization continued to show minimal vitality, and factories were built in a timid, discontinuous stream, intermittent and disconnected, with no capacity to change the general panorama: in 1960, agriculture still employed 52% of the active population, with industry supporting a mere 22% of the province's production.

This imbalance gave rise to the second traumatic episode in the recent history of Burgos: the depopulation of the rural areas, which began in the 50s with the mass exodus of groups from the towns to the areas that at that time were already showing an attractive industrial vitality and that required labor: Madrid and the Basque Country, where many Burgos families settled at the end of the 50s and the beginning of the 60s.

The declaration of Burgos as a “Pole of Development” in 1964 and the later official development of the industrial centers of Miranda de Ebro and Aranda de Duero redirected the flow of the rural population to those cities, which allowed the province to maintain its overall demographic potential, which increased from 344,000 in 1900 to 349,000 in 2001, of which approximately 65% were concentrated in the province's three large cities: Burgos, Miranda de Ebro, and Aranda de Duero, which have been joined in recent decades, with force but still trailing in terms of demographic potential, by Briviesca, demonstrating its capacity to attract those from inside and outside the province to work in its industries.

Rural depopulation was particularly intense in the Burgos districts of Loras, los Páramos, Valles de Sedano, and the Tierra de Lara, while the other areas have remained at the levels required to continue working the fields, which, thanks to the increase in the size of farms and mechanization has far exceeded the production potential of the first half of the century. Likewise, the abandonment of the towns by the traditional laborers has not, except on rare occasions, resulted in the ruin of their buildings, which have been restored and refurbished in recent decades as second homes for the inhabitants of the outlying towns during vacations and weekends.

With the main cities and towns of Burgos firmly entrenched in the development of the 60s, the future was cleared definitively with the official establishment of democracy in 1978 and the incorporation into the European Union in 1986. Both of these events symbolized the support for a general desire for progress and development, which in all of our cities and towns has translated into a decided will to recover local civic pride, which has in turn made it possible to maintain a sustained policy of clean public image of each urban center, by renovating streets, remodeling antiquated houses, restoring and beautifying the most representative historic monuments, moving industrial and livestock activities from the city centers to better suited peripheral areas, concern for quality of life in laying out urban developments, the multiplication of cultural possibilities and sports and recreational installations open to the citizens, and the support of the social life in each town by caring for its associative framework. **F.J.P.P.**