



UNIVERSIDAD ALFONSO X EL SABIO

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Welcome to Alfonso X el Sabio University, Madrid.

Please allow me to briefly inform you of the historic figure of the Castilian king who has given his name to our university and share with you some examples of his cultural legacy and historic importance, not only for Castile, but also for Europe during the Lower Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Alfonso X 'The Wise' was born in Toledo in 1221, and died in Seville in 1284; he is recognised by historians as the king who promoted diversity and freedom as well as respect for the three cultures that peacefully co-existed in Toledo under his reign- Christians, Jews, Muslims- and also for the strengthening of Castilian culture and language.

The great works produced under the monarch in the field of culture make his title of 'the wise' well deserved. Of special importance is the simultaneous link he forged between the East and the West. Under his reign, a culture of synthesis developed, including as many Christian elements as those from Islamic or Jewish cultures. The conquest in 1085 of Toledo and the tolerance fostered by the Castilian kings facilitated cultural exchange, permitting a philosophical, theological and scientific renaissance first in Spain and later throughout Western Christendom.

The 'wise' king surrounded himself with the most knowledgeable in his territories: Jews, Muslims and Christians, constituting genuine academies of learning. *La Escuela de Traductores* (The Translation Academy), brought together a group of Christian, Jewish and Muslim intellectuals whose scientific endeavours reintroduced the classic works of antiquity, promoting their diffusion in Western European vernacular languages, and as a result, laid the foundations of the scientific renaissance in medieval Europe. The fertile learning environment fostered by the collaboration between intellectuals of the three cultures is best illustrated by *la Escuela de Traductores de Toledo*. Within this magnificent cultural enterprise Astronomy stands out, with the most significant work being the *Tablas Astronómicas Alfonsíes* (Astronomical Tables) written in 1272.

Alfonso X 'the Wise' fostered the idea of intercultural harmony and, through the transcendental *Escuela de Traductores de Toledo*, encouraged the translation of the Classics between Greek, Latin and Arabic, and then from these languages to the new vernacular languages throughout Europe. This task of constructing a bridge between the 'classic' and the 'modern' is taken to be the starting point of the intellectual development of the Renaissance, as it fostered the circulation of these translated works throughout the system of European universities whose emergence began in the 13th Century.



In this way, the scientists who wrote the works on Astronomy, the *Lapidario*, adapted and translated a large number of Latin and Arabic words: in the *Libro de Ajedrez* a multitude of neologisms were also introduced. In the same manner this also occurred in the medieval encyclopaedia *Las Partidas*, in which all the essential aspects of life are touched upon, without failing to use lexicon and terminology with precision. The Castilian monarch promoted the study of music and in the field of recreation the seminal works included the *Libros de Ajedrez, dados y tables*. In terms of architecture, the most important work carried out under his reign was the Cathedral of Leon.

The intellectual and humanist values briefly mentioned above are those that our university adheres to, promoting development and expansion through the qualities of professionalism and academic rigour, programs of international cooperation, respect for diversity, the promotion of culture and cooperation as elements of well-being and betterment of the human condition, and also through the development of people who can contribute to progress, peace and the productive system of their regions and of their country.

Our University has adopted the legacy and open-minded vision that the Castilian king enjoyed. Our university has diverse campuses. The principal centre can be found in Villanueva de la Cañada, and is complemented with specialist centres which include the Veterinarian Hospital, Madrid Physiotherapy Clinic, University Hospital of Leganés, the Odontological Hospital of Madrid, and also the Post-graduate centre in central Madrid. Our principal campus in Villanueva de la Cañada is situated in the north west of Madrid, at the foot of the Guadarrama mountain range, an area which Ernest Hemingway described a number of times in his works and from which he delivered some of his dispatches during his time as a correspondent during the Spanish Civil War. Seventy-Five years ago, in the same place that the University now stands, a bloody battle was fought during the war. Known as the Battle of Brunete, Villanueva de la Cañada and other surrounding municipalities to the west of Madrid witnessed the heavy fighting between the army of the Second Republic accompanied by the International Brigades (volunteers who came from throughout the world to defend the republic and democracy) and, on the opposing side, the army of General Franco fighting alongside Italian troops sent by Mussolini. In fact, during the construction of the University in 1993, military armaments and the remains of some victims of the battle were uncovered. With this in mind, it gives me great satisfaction to welcome you to our university, a dynamic centre of international cooperation, as all universities should be, in a place that was once a battlefield and a scene of international confrontation.

Thankyou for your confidence in our Master in International Relations and welcome to the University Alfonso X el Sabio

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