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Autore	Ruiz Ana <1960->
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Sommario/riassunto	Almost a thousand years ago, when most of Europe was just edging out of the Dark Ages, the south of Spain was a brilliant center of world culture, a site of splendor, and a magnet for the talented and ambitious from all around the Mediterranean, the Near East, and beyond. In the days before Isabel and Ferdinand (and the Inquisition), the indigenous culture of Spain was enriched by the artistic, scholarly, technical and commercial contributions of Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Jews and Gypsies. Even under the Catholic Monarchs, these diverse influences continued to add spice to a vibrant society