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## THE PYXIS in Zamora Cathedral.



The Pyxis of Zamora was made during the Umayyad period, in the year 964, and possibly did not reach Zamora until the capture of Cordoba. However, it is known that it was first inventoried in 1367 (Martín Benito & Regueras Grande, 2003; Garín García, 2023), as part of the treasury of Zamora Cathedral (Martín Benito & Regueras Grande, 2003).

There is a theory that Ferdinand III, the King of Zamora, collected a sumptuous booty after the conquest of Cordoba, which took place in 1236. Among the items seized was a precious ivory box and other smaller boxes of lesser value that the monarch would have given as gifts to the cathedral of his homeland (Sadia, 2022).

It is worth noting that something made in the mid-10th Century was considered sufficiently valuable or beautiful to be given to Zamora Cathedral in the mid-13th or 14th Century and remain there for seven centuries, until its acquisition by the National Archaeological Museum in 1911, after a heated controversy that reached the Congress of Deputies [Lower House of Parliament] (Garín García, 2023).

Like many treasures in Hispanic churches, these ivory carvings were offered by kings and lords as the richest presents obtained from infidels and converted into sacred objects (Martín Benito & Regueras Grande, 2003). From the time it was handed over by the Castilian monarch, the pyxis would forget its original purpose and become a reliquary.

We can deduce that, at this early stage, the meaning of the pyxis was unknown, and the inscription in Kufic script on the lid had not been translated. Hence, it was not known that it was a gift intended for Subh, the Caliph's favourite, mother of the future heir Abd-al-Rahman, so that it could be used as a casket for jewellery or perfumes. It is true that it was necessary to read the inscription on the pyxis to know that it was a gallant gift and not a sacred object. In the 13th and 14th Centuries, it was unusual for clerics to know Arabic, and the Zamora prelates simply accepted the gift for its beauty and changed its use (Garín García, 2023).

Although the piece was registered and assigned to the cathedral treasury, it took centuries before it was discovered in 1904 by Manuel Gómez Moreno and his wife Elena Rodríguez Bolívar during one of their visits to Zamora Cathedral, when they were writing the volume corresponding to Zamora in the *Monumental Catalogue of Spain* (Martín Benito & Regueras Grande, 2003).

### **Bibliography.**

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