

The Song of Roncevalles

1. ACTIVITIES (1 TO 3 ACTIVITIES)

1. What do you know about medieval culture? Discuss with your fellow mates which languages do you think were spoken in Navarre in the Middle Ages. Who could read and write? Do you know any literary work written in Navarre in the Middle Ages?
2. Do some internet research on the battle of Roncevalles and its main characters and answer the following questions: What does the legend tell us? How, where and when did the actual battle take place? Who were the combatants? For which other reasons is Roncevalles known?
3. Write a text commentary based on the following materials: the original text - transcribed and adapted (4); a picture of the original document (5); an introductory text for you to become familiar with the historical background (3); and a Romanesque capital from the palace of the Dukes of Granada de Ega in Estella depicting the fight between Roland and Ferragut (6).
4. Discuss with your fellow mates the following questions: Can you understand the languages and hand styles used in Navarre in the Middle Ages? Are they the same as today's?

2. TECHNICAL SHEET

1.1.	"Title" of the document	Fragment of the Song of Roncevalles
1.2.	Document date	13th c.
1.3.	Documentary typology	Poem
1.4.	Language	Navarrese Romance
1.5.	Hand style	Gothic
1.6.	Archive	Royal and General Archive of Navarre (AGN)
1.7.	Signature	CODICES_E1
1.8.	Number of folios	2 fol.
1.9.	Support material	Parchment

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the late 8th century Charlemagne, king of the Franks, led many campaigns to extend his dominions. One of these campaigns targeted the Muslim of Al-Andalus. However, on returning from the battle, the rearguard of Charlemagne's army suffered a massive defeat in Roncesvalles. The episode was immortalised by historians of the time and soon inspired songs and poems praising the emperor Charles and his battle's fallen nephew Roland.

From the 11th century on, extensive epic songs were created both in France and Italy and in the Iberian Peninsula, where this event had taken place. Thus, the Matter of France (as the works accounting for the life and exploits of Charlemagne are known) became one of the fashionable themes during the Middle Ages, their success being only comparable to that of religious literature or that of the Matter of Britain (whose chief subject is King Arthur).

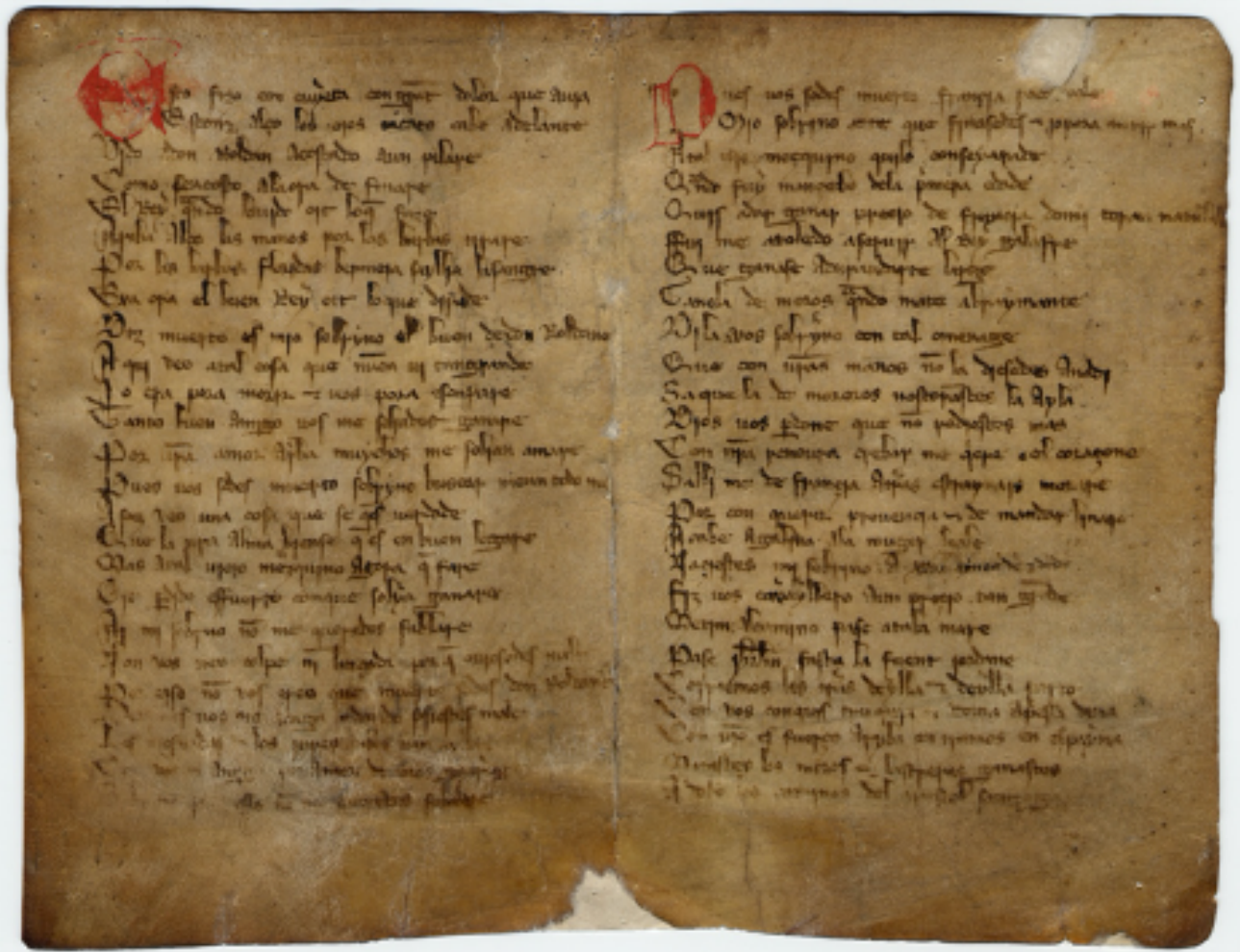
During the 12th and 13th cc. vulgar languages became more acceptable as they began to be used in love and epic poetry and in chronicles. This made it possible for a substantial part of the population to gain access (as readers but mostly as listeners) to literary works of high artistic and cultural value. This is how some of the most characteristic accounts of identity of Navarre were forged.

4. SELECTED TEXT

El emperador andava catando por la mortaldade;
 vido en la plaça Oliveros o yaze
 el escudo crebantado por medio del braçale;
 non vio sano en eyll quanto un dinero cabe;
 tornado a orient como lo puso Roldane.
 El buen emperador mando la cabeza alçare
 que le linpiasen la cara del polvo e de la sangre.
 Como si fuese bivo començolo de preguntare:
 "Digadesme, don Oliveros, cavayllero naturale,
 ¿do deyxastes a Roldan?, digadesme la verdade.
 Quando vos fiz compaineros diestesme tal omenaje
 por que nunca en vuestra vida non fuesedes partidos maes.
 Dizimelo, don Oliveros, ¿do lo ire buscar?
 Jo demandava por don Roldan a la priesa tan grande.
 Y a mi sobrino, ¿dont vos ire buscar?"
 Vio un colpe que fizo don Roldane:
 "Esto fizo con cueyta con grand dolor que aviae."
 Estonz alço los ojos, cato cabo adelante,
 vido a don Roldan acostado a un pilare,
 como se acosto a la ora de finare.
 El rey quando lo vido, oit lo que faze,
 arriba alço las manos por las barbas tirare,
 por las barbas floridas bermeja sayllia la sangre;
 esa ora el buen rey oit lo que dirade,
 diz: "¡Muerto es mio sobrino, el buen de don Roldane!
 Aquí veo atal cosa que nunca vi tan grande;
 yo era pora morir, e vos pora escapare.
 Tanto buen amigo vos me solia des ganare;
 por vuestra amor arriba mucychos me solian amare;

pues vos sodes muerto, sobrino, buscar me an todo male.
 Asaz veo una cosa que se que es verdade;
 que la vuestra alma bien se que es en buen logare;
 mas a tal viejo mezquino, ¿agora que farade?
 Oi e perdido esfuerço con que solia ganare.
 ¡Ay, mi sobrino, non me queredes fablare!
 Non vos veo colpe nin lançada por que oviesedes male,
 por esto non vos creo que muerto sodes don Roldane.
 Deysamos vos ne açaga donde prisistes male;
 ¡las mesnadas e los pares ambos van ayllae
 con vos, e amigo, por amor de a vos goardare!
 Sobirno, ¿por eso non me queredes fablare?
 Pues vos sodes muerto, Françia poco vale.
 Mio sobrino, ante que finasedes era yo pora morir maes.
 Atal viejo meçquino, ¿qui lo conseyarede?”

5. SELECTED TEXT (PICTURE)



6. ATTACHED MATERIALS

