

The brave knight of Merola

Legend tells that long ago, when King James I conquered Valencia, there was great celebration. The queen and several important ladies from Barcelona wanted to surprise their husbands and fathers, who were with the king. They organised a grand riding party and set off for Valencia without announcing their journey.

After they had ridden a long way, a group of warriors appeared and tried to take them prisoner. How frightening! Fortunately, the brave knight of Merola had seen what was happening. He had been following the party with a group of strong, determined men.

The knight and his men fought to save the queen and the other women. It was a hard battle, but they drove the attackers back and brought the women to safety.

When King James I heard, he was delighted that the queen was safe. He summoned the knight and said:

“You have done something very brave! I am so grateful that I will grant whatever you ask.”

The knight was modest and could not think what to request. The king insisted:

“Ask for anything you wish!”

At last, he asked for one of the five stripes that, according to this legend, were then on the Catalan coat of arms.

The king thought it a great request, but had given his word. He kept his promise and granted the stripe. This is how the tale explains why the Catalan coat of arms came to have four stripes, while the knight of Merola carried a red stripe on his own shield in memory of his bravery.

The queen and the ladies returned safely, and the knight’s story was told far and wide. This is a legendary explanation of the coats of arms, passed down as a tale rather than a historical account.