Early Medieval Spain
Unity in Diversity, 400–1000

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ROGER COLLINS

New Studies in Medieval History

MAURICE KEEN

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Preface

SPANISH history is not easy, and so it has perhaps been less popular outside of the Iberian peninsula than it deserves to be. For the medieval centuries the complications of a period unfamiliar, and inevitably alien in many aspects of its people's life and thought, are multiplied in Spain by the simultaneous existence of three, or occasionally more, Christian states, each with its own distinct history, culture and institutions, not to mention the one or more Muslim powers that dominated the south. In addition, the inescapable importance of the contributions of the Jewish and Basque communities only adds to the bewildering richness and complexity of the racial and cultural mix. However, neither the historian nor the inquiring general reader should be daunted by such a challenge, and indeed, it may be hoped that if they venture but a little way, they may be swept into sharing some of the enthusiasm of the small but devoted band of committed 'Hispanists'.

It has too long been assumed, and this again has been an excuse for neglect, that Spain, its history and culture, have been isolated from the mainstream of European development; that the peninsula has remained an exotic backwater, giving little, and little influenced by events beyond the Pyrenees. Yet in a world in which both Spain and Portugal may soon become members of the institutionalised European community, and in which their own creations, the states of Latin America, will come to play an increasingly prominent role, such an attitude is not only unjustified but also unwise. Nor, as will be seen, is it any more true of the Early Middle Ages, in which the study of the history of the peninsula leads us from the banks of the Danube to the deserts of Arabia. It may also be hoped that some consideration of the earlier history of Spain, of the continuities forced upon its peoples and their rulers by their past and by the geography of the land in which they live, will help in understanding the problems and aspirations of their modern successors.

A book on so limited a scale as this cannot hope to give a full and detailed treatment of all the subjects that need to be covered in the Early Medieval centuries of Spanish history. Selection is inescapable, and has to be essentially personal. My choice of topics and themes for extended treatment is in large measure a reflection of my own interests, though I have also been influenced by the prior existence of

reasonable accounts in English of uncontroversial subjects, few as these have been, and to which reference is made in the first section of the Bibliography. However, despite the necessary limitations of this book in terms of size and in the providing of references, I hope to have avoided mere repetition of the conventional and received wisdom on the topics discussed. Even when space prevents the full elaboration of the alternative interpretations that I would seek to advance, I have preferred to give them, if only in outline, rather than to repeat more established views in which I have no confidence. Those already familiar with the subject may find the results unconventional, but possibly also challenging, either to approval or to disagreement. My own first interest in early Spanish history was aroused when, in another context, I read an article on one aspect of it, which so intrigued and also enraged me that I set to work to find out more, and have never stopped since. To its author, from whose many other writings I have gained much, both in provocation and in enlightenment, I remain forever grateful.

It was Denis Bethell who first suggested to me that I might write this book, and I greatly benefited from his advice and encouragement in the slow course of its composition. As editor and friend his untimely death was a sudden and terrible loss for all who knew him. I am most grateful to Maurice Keen, his successor in this series, for invaluable help in the final stages of preparation, and I should like to thank Sarah Mahaffy of Macmillans, not least for her patience in waiting for the more than a little overdue completion of this work. However little this book may be a tribute to their skills, I should like to record my great debt to my teachers and mentors, Michael Wallace-Hadrill, Peter Brown and John Prestwich. From the correction of the numerous errors of spelling and punctuation to the discussion and clarifying of my ideas, this book has been aided and improved by my wife. The same could be said of its author.

Chronological Table

376	Admission of the Visigoths into the Roman Empire by Valens
378	Visigothic revolt – Battle of Adrianople – accession of Theodosius I, from Spain
381	Death of Visigothic ‘Judge’ Athanaric – treaty made with Emperor Theodosius I
395	Death of Theodosius – Alaric elected King of the Visigoths
406	Vandals, Sueves and Alans cross the Rhine; ravaging in Gaul 406–409 – army revolt in Britain
407	Elevation of Constantine III in Britain; leads troops into Gaul and becomes master of Spain in 408
408	Visigoths invade Italy
409	Vandals, Sueves and Alans cross Pyrenees
410	Visigothic sack of Rome – revolt of army in Spain against Constantine III
411	Vandals, Sueves and Alans established in Spain as federates by rebel emperor Maximus – fall of Constantine III – Visigoths move into Gaul
415	Visigoths control Barcelona
417	Visigoths campaigning in Spain for the emperor against the Vandals and Alans
418	Visigoths withdraw to southern Aquitaine – established there by treaty with the Empire, with their capital at Toulouse
418–429	Hasding Vandals dominant power in Iberian peninsula
422	Vandal defeat of Roman forces in southern Spain
429	Vandals invade Africa – establish kingdom there (429–533)
430–456	Suevic domination of the peninsula, except for Tarraconensis – Mérida becomes their capital
456	Visigoths under Theoderic II invade Spain – defeat and death of Suevic king Rechiarius – fragmented Suevic kingdom driven back into the north-west of the peninsula

466–484	Reign of Visigothic king Euric: completes conquest of Roman Spain, issues the <i>Codex Euricanus</i>
494, 497	Records of Visigothic settlement in Spain
506	Issue of the <i>Breviary</i> of Alaric – Council of Agde
507	Battle of Vouillé: loss of most of the Visigothic realm in Gaul to the Franks
511	Renewed Frankish attacks – Visigothic kingdom comes under Ostrogothic rule until 526
527	II Toledo
531	Frankish attack on Visigothic <i>Septimania</i> – overthrow of King Amalaric as a result
Mid sixth century	Period of weakness of royal authority and many revolts, e.g. local autonomy of Cordoba 550–572
551	Revolt of Athanagild against Agila leads to Byzantine intervention and their occupation of Cartagena and the south-east coast
561	I Braga – Suevic kingdom Catholic, probably due to work of Bishop Martin of Braga
567–590	Covered by Chronicle of John of Biclar, Bishop of Gerona
569–586	Reign of Leovigild: restoration of Visigothic royal power and unification of the peninsula, issue of law code, introduction of new regal styles, new coinage
569–572	Campaigns against the Byzantines, recovery of Cordoba
573–579	Campaigns against northern tribes and local rulers, foundation of Reccopolis
579–583	Revolt of Hermenigild
580	Arian Synod of Toledo – accentuation of religious conflict between Arians and Catholics
585	Suevic kingdom extinguished by Leovigild
587	Conversion of Reccared to Catholicism, under influence of Bishop Leander of Seville
589	III Toledo – formal conversion of the Visigothic kingdom
589–90	Suppression of Arian revolts – defeat of Frankish attack
599/600–636	Isidore Bishop of Seville
610	Synod of Toledo – Toledo recognised as metropolitan see of Carthaginiensis
612–621	Reign of Sisebut: campaigns against the Basques

	and against the Byzantines, attempt to impose conversion of the Jews
624	Final expulsion of the Byzantines
631	Usurpation of Sisenand with support of Frankish king Dagobert I
633	IV Toledo
654	Issue of the law code <i>Forum Iudicum</i> – Basque ravaging in Ebro valley
672	Revolt of Paul in Narbonne against Wamba
680–690	Julian Bishop of Toledo
680	Deposition of Wamba – Reign of Ervig: reissue of <i>Forum Iudicum</i> , with increased legislation directed against the Jews
694	XVII Toledo: enslavement of all Jews in the kingdom, other than in Narbonensis
711	Arab invasion – defeat of King Roderic on river Guadelete
711–720	Survival of Visigothic kingdom in the north-east of the peninsula and in Septimania
718 or 722	Battle of Covadonga – establishment of independent Christian realm in the Asturias
720	Arab conquest of Barcelona and Narbonne
721	Arab expedition into Frankish Gaul – death of the governor As-Samh in battle at Toulouse
728	Beginning of conflicts between the Arabs and the Berbers in North Africa
729	Suppression of revolt by Berber leader Munuza in Cerdanya, allied to Duke Eudo of Aquitaine
732	Arab invasion of Aquitaine – defeat of the Aquitanians on the Garonne – defeat and death of the governor ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ghāfeki at battle of Poitiers
739–757	Reign of Alfonso I in the Asturias: evacuation of the Duero valley
c. 740	Berber revolts in North Africa and in Spain – arrival of Syrian forces in Spain leads to civil war (741–742) between the Arab tribal confederacies of the Qais and the Kalb
742–6/7	Continuing tribal conflicts lead to the dictatorship of Yūsuf al-Fihri (746/7–756)
750	Overthrow of the Umayyad Caliphate of

	Damascus by the Abbāsids – one of the former dynasty, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, takes refuge in Africa
756	'Abd al-Raḥmān crosses to Spain and, with the aid of the opponents of Yūsuf, defeats him and establishes an independent state, the Umayyad Amirate
759	Frankish conquest of Narbonne – use of their own law guaranteed to its Gothic inhabitants
763 and 777	Failure of Abbasid inspired revolts against 'Abd al-Raḥmān I
776, 784, 786	Beatus of Liebana produced the three editions of his <i>Commentary on the Apocalypse</i>
778	Charlemagne's expedition into the Ebro valley – forced to withdraw from Zaragoza, his rearguard is destroyed by the Basques in the pass of Roncesvalles
791–842	Reign of Alfonso II in the Asturias: establishment of Oviedo as its capital, revival of Visigothic traditions in art and government, building of first church at Santiago de Compostela, contacts with the Frankish court
790s	Adoptionist controversy
801	Frankish conquest of Barcelona – beginning of the 'Spanish march'
803	Revolt of the Banu Kasim in Tudela – suppressed
806	Frankish conquest of Pamplona
c. 808/10	Frankish failure to take Tortosa and hold Tarragona limits the extension of the new march
816	Revolt against Frankish rule suppressed in Pamplona
824	Renewed revolt leads to the destruction of a Frankish army at the second Battle of Roncesvalles and the establishment of an independent kingdom in Pamplona
827	Barcelona held by Bernard 'of Septimania' against Gothic rebels with Umayyad assistance
839	Council of Cordoba
844	First Viking raid on Spain – defeated by Ramiro I, but went on to sack Seville
c. 847–862	Ascendancy of Mūsa ibn Mūsa of the Banu Kasim in the upper Ebro; 'the third king of Spain'

848–849	Seizure of Barcelona by William, son of Bernard ‘of Septimania’ (executed in 844) – suppressed by the forces of Charles ‘the Bald’
851–859	The martyr movement in Cordoba
859	Execution of Eulogius, titular Metropolitan of Toledo, its chief apologist – second Viking raid on coasts of Andalucia – they captured and ransomed King Garcia of Pamplona
862	Defeat of Mūsa ibn Mūsa at Albelda by Ordoño I of the Asturias
866–910	Reign of Alfonso III in the Asturias: beginning of Christian repopulation of the Duero valley and of Castille
878	Establishment of Wifred I ‘the Hairy’ as Count of Barcelona, which office becomes hereditary in his family
880–917	Ascendancy of <i>muwallad</i> rebel Omar ibn Hafsun, centred upon Bobastro
886–912	Reigns of Al-Mundhir and ‘Abd-Allah in Cordoba: growing violence in the south between Arabs and indigenous converts to Islam (<i>muwallads</i>), many revolts and effectively independent states created in Mérida and other regions
912–961	Reign of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III: restoration of the authority of Cordoba, suppression of revolts and the greater imposition of authority over the Christian realms in the north of the peninsula
917–927	Elimination of the sons of Ibn Hafsun
929–931	Suppression of revolt of the <i>muwallad</i> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jilliki at Badajoz
929	‘Abd al-Raḥmān III took the title of caliph
931–970	Fernan Gonzalez Count of Castille
939	Battle of Simancas
Mid tenth century	Umayyad Spain at its apogee: a centre of learning, especially under the caliph Al-Ḥakem II, with its rulers extending their power to North Africa, frequent diplomatic exchanges with Byzantium and Ottonian Germany
959	Sancho I ‘the Fat’ of Leon restored to his kingdom by the caliph
966, 971	Minor Viking raids

c. 980–1002	Ascendancy of Al-Manṣūr in Cordoba
985	Barcelona sacked by Al-Manṣūr
988	Leon, Zamora and Sahagun sacked by Al-Manṣūr
997	Santiago sacked by Al-Manṣūr
998	Al-Manṣūr's son 'Abd al-Mālik established as his deputy in Fez
1002–1008	On death of Al-Manṣūr, 'Abd al-Mālik succeeded to his power, but on his death, possibly poisoned by his half-brother 'Sanchuelo', the dictatorial power of this dynasty of Viziers collapsed
1009–1031	Almost continuous civil war around Cordoba between rival Umayyads
1010	The Catalan expedition to Cordoba
1031	Extinction of the Umayyad dynasty and suppression of the caliphate
1035	Death of Sancho 'the Great' of Pamplona-Navarre – creation of a new kingdom of Aragon
1037	Battle of Támara – unification of Castille and Leon under Fernando I

Maps

I The Roman Provinces of Spain c. 400AD

II Bishops of the Visigothic Kingdom c. 600AD

III Al-Andalus and the Christian States in the Tenth Century

IV Castille, The Upper Ebro and the Kingdom of Pamplona in the Tenth Century

V The Frankish Marches in Catalonia c. 900AD

**For Judith
and in Memory of Denis Bethell**