3

Expansion into Gascony and Catalonia

[37] The failure of Charlemagne's Spanish expedition of 778 had many important consequences for the Midi and the Carolingian Empire. Among them was a realization by this monarch that two regions on the southern boundaries of his empire, Gascony and the borderlands of Moslem Spain just across the Pyrenees, presented problems which demanded new solutions. This, of course, does not mean that Charlemagne felt free to devote much attention to either area. Other more pressing problems seem to have had priority: such as Saxony and the marches of Germany; Italy and the Papacy; the Church; and a necessary reorganization of the structure of his government. After 778, however, it seems clear that Charlemagne had become aware of the fact that new methods were needed to deal with the Gascons, and that there existed in Spain, beyond the Pyrenees, a Christian population, many of whom were ready for liberation from the Moslem yoke.\(^{(1)}\)

One might sum up Charlemagne's Gascon problem as follows. Here was a mountainous region too remote and difficult to conquer, over which he lacked any really effective control. True, Lupo, the Gascon duke or princeps, had submitted to him in 769, after he had crossed the Garonne in pursuit of Hunald of Aquitaine, and, according to Frankish accounts, had placed Gascony under Carolingian overlordship.\(^{(2)}\) But the events of 778 had certainly proved the limited value of such suzerainty. For, as we \(^{(38)}\) have noted, when Charlemagne was returning from Spain to France, Basques in the Pyrenees, perhaps encouraged by Duke Lupo, had risen against him and ambushed his rear guard in the mountain passes -- an action which later gave rise to the celebrated legend of Roncesvalles. Contemporary accounts tell us that Charlemagne returned to avenge this defeat with his main body and restored his authority over the region which lay on the other side of the Pyrenees.\(^{(3)}\)

But Charlemagne did more than this. He seems to have taken certain steps which had the effect of diminishing the authority of Duke Lupo and his family over Gascony. This probably explains why in 778 he appointed a certain Séguin as count of Bordeaux, for in so doing he gave Carolingian backing to a western Gascon family who seem to have been rivals of Lupo.\(^{(4)}\) More important still, a little later he organized a second county in Gascony on the borders of the Toulousain, the county of Fézensac, which we learn was entrusted to a Count Burgund, who, judging from his name, was certainly not a Gascon. When Burgund died about 801, he was replaced by a certain Liutard, who again was not of Gascon origin.\(^{(5)}\) General supervision of this Gascon frontier seems to have been placed in the hands of Chorson, count or duke of Toulouse.\(^{(6)}\)

It seems obvious that such policies displeased the Gascons, and in 787 or 789 we learn that Chorson was captured by Odalric, son of Duke Lupo of Gascony, and forced to make an agreement which Charlemagne considered so shameful that he deprived him of his honorem of Toulouse and replaced him in 790 with Count William, the famous St. Guillem, who was closely related to the Carolingian
Our sources tell us that Count William restored the Gascons to obedience and that Odalric was banished to perpetual exile. 

For the next two decades Gascony appears to have accepted Carolingian authority, though not without some grumbling, and Duke Lupo in 801-802 assisted Louis the Pious and Count William of Toulouse in their expedition against Barcelona by leading a Gascon contingent of troops into battle on the Carolingian side.

Charlemagne, however, does not appear to have been willing to rely only on a friendly count of Bordeaux, a Frankish count of Fézensac, and the military and diplomatic skill of his principal viceroy in the Midi, the count of Toulouse, to keep control over Gascony. He enlisted the Church on his side as an ally as well. This policy seems to have begun quite early, for we are told that when he had restored his authority over the high Pyrenees in 778 he divided the land between bishops and abbots and began to baptize the pagan Basques of this region. This encouragement of Church and monastic organizations in Gascony soon bore some fruit, for in 790 we hear of a Gascon bishop, Abraham of Commignes, who attended a Church conclave at Narbonne. A little later we begin to hear, for the first time, of Gascon monasteries, for the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle held in 816 speaks of three Gascon abbeys and one cella -- all unknown to us from other sources and none of which survived into a later period. Perhaps the Carolingians, with some success, were attempting in Gascony to pursue the same policy of founding abbeys which was going on in Septimania with their blessing under the leadership of St. Benedict of Aniane.

In Septimania and along its borders to the south and east of Gascony Charlemagne's 778 expedition into Spain seems to have had equally important consequences. The failure of his attempt on Saragossa seems to have caused a number of Spanish Christians, who rose in his support, to seek refuge north of the Pyrenees. Charlemagne decided to welcome these *spani or hispani*, as they were called, who, judging from their names, were of Gothic, Spanish, or even Gascon origin. He gave them waste lands, or *aprisio*, as they were called, upon which they could settle, mainly in Roussillon and about Narbonne. In doing so he accomplished two purposes which were of importance to him. In the first place he provided settlers for some of the wide expanse of deserted and uncultivated land in this part of the Midi. In the second place he assured his empire of warriors who could defend its southern borders in case of an Islamic attack.

The arrival of these *hispani*, however, and the generous Carolingian reception of them seems to have had a secondary effect. It began or at least it speeded up a liberation from Moslem rule of certain territory across the Pyrenees. Perhaps as early as 781 Pallars and Ribagorça, high in the Pyrenees, came under the control of the counts of Toulouse. In 785, we learn that Gerona had accepted Frankish control and nearby Besalu as well. A little later the Urgell-Cerdanya region, where Moslem rule had long been only nominal, accepted Carolingian overlordship. This liberation of a strip of country in Spain which was to become the Spanish March was not only hailed and welcomed by Spanish *aprisio* holders who had found a refuge on Carolingian soil, it was also probably assisted by them and by the Gothic native counts of Septimania and Roussillon.

There seems to be little doubt that these developments alarmed the rulers of Cordova. At any rate in 793 the Moors launched a counter-stroke -- a full scale invasion of the Midi. William, count of Toulouse, took to the field to oppose these Moslem invaders only to be defeated near Carcassonne. The walled cities of Narbonne and Gerona, however, stood firm and the Islamic army withdrew into Spain without accomplishing anything of a permanent nature.
Despite the Moslem invasion of 793, the general success of the Carolingians in spreading their authority over Gascony and across the Pyrenees seems to have had echoes in Christian Spain. Thus in 794 we hear of an embassy from Christian Asturias visiting Toulouse, and in 797 and 798 we learn of other ambassadors from this part of the Iberian peninsula reaching Charlemagne's capital of Aix-la-Chapelle -- all this in spite of the controversy over Adoptionism which from 794 to 799 threatened to divide the Carolingian Church from its Spanish coreligionists.

By 796 the Carolingians again had taken the offensive, and a raiding expedition was sent across the Pyrenees. Two years later Louis the Pious, now of age and, as king of Aquitaine, in official charge of the SpanishGascon border, ordered Count Borell of Urgell-Cerdanya to move south into Ausona and Berga and to repair the deserted castles of Ausona, Cardona, and Casserès. In 799 Navarre seems to have accepted Carolingian overlordship under a certain Count Velasco.

By 801 these preliminary probings gave way to a major offensive. A large force of Franks, Burgundians, Aquitanians, and Provençals was assembled, supported by important contingents of Gascons under Duke Lupo and of Goths who were commanded by Bera, probably count of Roussillon. Though Louis the Pious officially headed the expedition, actual field command seems to have belonged to Count William of Toulouse. This force crossed the Pyrenees and advanced south to capture the important city of Barcelona and the nearby castle of Tarrassa.

For the next ten years our sources tell us of regular Carolingian advances into Moslem territory. Though none of the major Islamic-held centers in the Ebro Valley like Tortosa, Lérida, Huesca, and Saragossa were captured, the frontier seems to have been moved south beyond the Llobregat River line in Catalonia and in Urgell as well. In the same period between 809 and 812 Aragón came under the control of a Frankish count called Aureolus, while Navarre under Count Velasco held to its Carolingian allegiance. Carolingian hegemony over a strip of territory stretching from Pampeluna to the Mediterranean became a reality. Nor was activity confined to land frontiers. On the sea a newly built Carolingian navy began activities, and in 813 we hear of a victory won over a Moslem Spanish flotilla by Count Ermengaud of Ampurias -- a victory which was followed by Carolingian hegemony being extended to the Balearics. In 812 and again in 815 Cordova was forced to seek peace from the war which her Frankish adversaries were waging against her with increasing success.

Such Carolingian advances south, however, were not destined to continue. By 812 Duke William of Toulouse had retired to the shelter of the abbey of Gellone to end his days as a monk, and his statesmanship and military ability were lost to the Midi. His successor at Toulouse, Count Begon, does not appear to have had his ability. Charlemagne was nearing the end of his days, and his son Pepin, who succeeded him as king of Aquitaine, was too young to rule effectively and lacked experience. So, when the revolt in Navarre spread across the mountains into Gascony in 816, all that seems to have met with little success and barely escaped ambush at the hands of hostile Gascons in the passes of the Pyrenees. Enneco remained ruler of Navarre.

After 814 the situation took a further turn for the worse. The death of Charlemagne brought Louis the Pious to Aix-la-Chapelle, too far away from Gascony to direct things there. His son Pepin, who succeeded him as king of Aquitaine, was too young to rule effectively and lacked experience. So, when the revolt in Navarre spread across the mountains into Gascony in 816, all that seems to have been done was to deprive Count Séguin of Bordeaux, whom the Carolingian chroniclers refer to as "dux Gasconorum," of his county -- either because he had collaborated with these rebels or because he had
failed to suppress the revolt.\(^{36}\)

This action of Louis the Pious seems to have had little effect on the situation for we learn that in 817 the revolt had spread to Aragón, where Count Asnar Galindo, successor to Count Aureolus and loyal to the Carolingians, was driven from power by his cousin Count García Malo who had allied himself to Enneco of Navarre.\(^{37}\) Asnar Galindo fled east to seek refuge in Frankish controlled territory. From Aragón the revolt spread still further north into central and eastern Gascony. Our chroniclers are in disagreement as to the leader of this rising. Most speak of a certain Lupo Centulle, who was probably a member of the old Gascon ducal family.\(^{38}\) One calls the leader of the rebellious Gascons, García Mucí, who it is said was elected prince in 818.\(^{39}\) Probably the latter account refers to events in Aragón, the former to a local leader in Gascony. What does seem apparent is that by 818 Navarre, Aragón, and all Gascony had been lost to the Carolingians.

It was the crisis caused by these successful revolts which was probably in part responsible for the Carolingian reorganization of Aquitaine, Septimania, and the Spanish March in 817. By this time the incompetent Begon had been succeeded by the abler Count Berengar at Toulouse, who, as viceroy for the young king Pepin of Aquitaine, had the immediate [44] responsibility of keeping order in Gascony. To fit his command new boundaries were drawn for Aquitaine so that they included the entire Gascon border to the west, Pallars-Ribagorça and the Urgell-Cerdanya-Besalu complex to the south and Carcassonne-Razès to the east. The rest of Septimania and the maritime counties of Roussillon, Ampurias, and Gerona-Besalu-Barcelona were placed under the direct control of Louis the Pious himself. This in effect gave control over these maritime regions to three counts. Count Bera controlled the counties of Barcelona-Besalu-Gerona. Count Gaucelm, son of Duke William of Toulouse, was in charge of Ampurias-Roussillon. And Count Leibulf of Provence ruled Provence and Septimania.\(^{40}\)

Once this reorganization of comital charges had been completed Count Berengar of Toulouse proceeded to act. He and Count Warin of Auvergne, we are told, led an army into Gascony, overthrew the rebel Lupo Centulle and by 820 had restored Carolingian authority over most of Gascony.\(^{41}\) Lupo Centulle's successor seems to have been a certain Count Aznar who appears to have been more loyal to the Carolingian house. It is possible, however, that this victory only restored the situation in part, since neither Aragón nor Navarre was recovered, and it is probable that the rebellion in Western Gascony also was not suppressed.

Then in 820 it was Catalonia's turn. In this year Count Bera of Barcelona-Gerona was accused of disloyalty by a certain Goth, Sanila, challenged to a judicial duel as a traitor and, when he lost, deprived of his counties.\(^{42}\) These counties were then bestowed on a Frank, Count Rampon. At about the same time Count Asnar Galindo, the exiled ruler of Aragón, was given Count Borell's old counties of Urgell-Cerdanya.\(^{43}\) Most historians have seen in the removal of Count Bera proof of the existence of a ninth-century sense of Catalan nationalism in this part of the empire -- a basic hostility to the Franks lying at the bottom of this [45] incident. More plausible, however, seems to be the view of Catalonia's distinguished historian of the Carolingian period, Abadal i de Vinyals. For him this removal of Count Bera was the work of Count Gaucelm of Roussillon, son of Duke William and brother of the ambitious Count Bernard of Septimania. It was not a nascent Catalan nationalism, then, but a family rivalry between the sons of Duke William and the family of Count Bellon of Carcassonne and his relatives which explains this incident -- a rivalry incidentally which was to last for many years. And, as he points out, in this rivalry it was the Gothic counts of the region who uniformly were to remain loyal to the Carolingian house, the Frankish ones, disloyal.\(^{44}\)

Whatever lay behind Count Bera's removal, and we can never be exactly sure, one thing seems clear. It was followed by a more aggressive policy along the Moslem frontier of Catalonia, for we learn of an
invasion of Moslem territory in 822, probably led by Rampon, the new count of Gerona-Barcelona, and Asnar Galindo, newly installed as count of Cerdanya-Urgell.\(^{(45)}\) We know nothing of the results which were achieved by this campaign, but we are told that two years later an ambitious attempt to regain Navarre led by Count Asnar of Gascony and Count Ebles, controlling one of the regions bordering on Gascony, ended in complete disaster. Both counts were captured by their enemies. Count Ebles was sent as a prisoner to the emir of Cordova. Count Aznar was released, which suggests that his interest in this expedition was at best lukewarm.\(^{(46)}\) Navarre was not regained and Carolingian control over Gascony was weakened still further.\(^{(47)}\)

It seems probable that the failure of this expedition caused Louis the Pious serious concern. At any rate, in 826 he called to Aix-la-Chapelle his son Pepin, king of Aquitaine, and the counts who controlled the Spanish border -- "custodes limitibus Hispaniae," in the words of our source.\(^{(48)}\) We do not know what transpired at this conference but soon afterwards we learn that Bernard of Septimania was given both Rampon's counties of Barcelona and Gerona and the Septimanian counties which had been the honores of Count Leibulf. Since his brother Gaucelm was already count of Ampurias-Roussillon, these two sons of Duke William of Toulouse were now in charge of the entire coastal region of the Midi from the Llobregat to the Rhone. Well does Count Bernard merit the title of dux Septimaniae given him by Nithard.\(^{(49)}\) The Carolingian frontier in the Midi was now in the hands of two viceroys, Bernard of Septimania and his rival to the west, Count Berengar of Toulouse.

A large faction in Catalonia, however, opposed Bernard's assumption of power as count of Barcelona. As a result a serious revolt broke out led by a certain Aizo and other relatives and friends of the late Count Bera. This revolt, which appears to have been given help from Cordova, did not succeed in capturing the city of Barcelona which Count Bernard defended successfully. But it did have serious results for Catalonia. Due to it much territory which had been gained from the Moslems between 802 and 815 was lost. This included Ausona with its plain of Vich, which suffered devastation, and other border land in Berga, Urgell, and to the south of Barcelona itself.\(^{(50)}\) Many decades were to pass before they were to be regained.

Worse still an attempt to send a relief expedition to Catalonia in 828 ended in failure. Armed forces were gathered together and entrusted to Pepin, king of Aquitaine and his brother Lothaire. But they never reached the Pyrenees. Two counts who were held responsible for this fiasco were degraded by the angry emperor, but the damage had been done. In Catalonia, as in Navarre, Aragón, and Gascony, the Carolingians had been forced to pull back without any effective assistance having been sent to their officials who controlled their southern marches.\(^{(51)}\) The peace made with Cordova merely ratified this fait accompli -- a shrunken Carolingian prestige and authority on the borders of the Midi.\(^{(52)}\)

There is one other aspect of Carolingian expansion into the Spanish March during these years, however, that needs to be emphasized, for in many ways it was as important as the establishment of secular non-Moslem government and authority. I refer to the reorganization and expansion of the Church in Catalonia and Pallars and Ribagorça, and particularly its monastic establishments. As in Gascony this church was strongly backed by the Carolingian monarchs who saw it as a bulwark and basis of their authority in this part of Spain.

It should be emphasized, however, that the problem of the Church in this region was quite different from that in Gascony. In Gascony the Church was weak because of the paganism of a large number of the Basques, who had never been converted to Christianity and because the simple tribal organization which seems to have prevailed there made any kind of Church organization difficult to establish.\(^{(53)}\) The task in Gascony, like that in Saxony, was to create a Church organization almost from scratch.
In the Spanish March, one finds quite a different situation. Here the inhabitants of the land were practicing Christians with a long tradition of church, parish, and monastic organizational experience behind them. On the other hand the years of Moslem occupation had borne heavily on this Church. Of the former Visigothic dioceses of the region only four, Barcelona, Gerona, Urgell, and Elne seem to have survived Moslem rule, though one might add Rhoda in Ribagorça also. And we can only be sure of two abbeys, both in Urgell, which continued their life without interruption during this same period, though a third, San-Cugat, near Barcelona, might well be added to these two.\footnote{54}

\footnote{48} Liberation by the Carolingians was followed almost immediately by a revival of such churches and abbeys and a re-establishment of religious life on the parish level also. Carolingian rulers assisted this movement almost at once by granting special privileges to cathedral churches. Before 828 the bishopric of Gerona received important immunities by imperial grant\footnote{55} and those of Urgell and Elne are mentioned in royal charters dating from 823\footnote{56} and 825\footnote{57} respectively. Barcelona's privileges were given later.\footnote{58}

More important, however, is evidence of encouragement and support given to the monastic movement, particularly during the reign of Louis the Pious. This took the form of the encouraging of the foundation of new abbeys and the granting of special privileges and lands to such establishments, as well as the revival and strengthening of older ones. Two rather distinct areas seem to have been the regions in which initially this monastic movement was most active. One was in the general region Vallespir-Besalu-Roussillon. The second further to the west consisted of Urgell, Pallars, and Ribagorça.

In the former region we find that the oldest abbey established in this period was Sainte-Maria of Arles, which seems to have been founded by Abbot Castellanus, a Spanish refugee, about 779-781.\footnote{59} In 820 Louis the Pious gave Arles special privileges and placed it under royal protection.\footnote{60} In nearby Roussillon two other new foundations, Saint-Genesius des Fonts and Saint-André de Sureda received similar privileges from the emperor in 819\footnote{61} and 823\footnote{62} respectively. So did Saint-Stephen of Banyols in Besalu in 822\footnote{63} and the nearby abbeys of Albaniya and Les Escoules which seem to date from about the same period.\footnote{64} In the more westerly region in Urgell the abbeys of Saint-André de Tresponts and Saint-Sernin de Tabernoles, which appear to have been Visigothic foundations, show new life and vigor in this period.\footnote{65} And to them in Charlemagne's last years were added two new establishments, Alão in Ribagorça \footnote{49} and Gerrí in Pallars, while in 823 Senterada in Pallars was founded on land given by the emperor Louis the Pious himself.\footnote{66} Often, however, it is clear that local counts furnished the driving force which led to the foundation of such monasteries, as the examples of Count Matfred of Urgell,\footnote{67} Count Gaucelm of Roussillon\footnote{68} and Count Rampon of Barcelona-Gerona,\footnote{69} all of whom helped found abbeys, clearly show. All of these, incidentally, were of Frankish origin. Already then as part of the Carolingian expansion into the Spanish March, we see evidence of a spread of monasticism and a more vigorous and growing Church.

Such then is the story of the Carolingian expansion into Gascony and the Spanish March during the years between 778 and 828. It is a story of a slow but steady advance under Charlemagne down to 812 or 813, and then during the time of Louis the Pious of a steady contraction of the areas under Carolingian control. This contraction began in Navarre, then affected Aragón, then Gascony, and finally Catalonia, until by 828 much of what had been gained earlier had been lost. But not all of it, particularly in Catalonia, Pallars, and Ribagorça where newly founded abbeys and re-established bishoprics gave a promise of continued life, future vigor, and expansion. But when Louis the Pious and his heirs began to quarrel over their inheritance, even such authority as still belonged to these rulers in the Midi and Catalonia began to crumble, leaving the nobility, the bishops, and the abbots of these regions the \textit{de facto} heirs of the Carolingian monarchy.
Notes for Chapter 3

1. On the initial basic problems of this era see F. Ganshof, "Une Crise dans le règne de Charlemagne, les années 778 et 779," in *Mêlanges Charles Gaillard*, and R. de Abadal i de Vinyals, "La expedición de Carlomagno a Zaragoza, el hecho histórico," in *Coloquios de Roncevalles. Augusto 1955*.


13. See the list of large *aprisio* holders, one of whom is called Wasco, who petitioned Charlemagne in 812, in R. de Abadal i de Vinyals, *Catalunya Carolingia II. Els Diplomes Carolingis a Catalunya*, pp. 313-314 (hereafter cited as *Catalunya Carolingia*, II).

14. Abadal dates this original grant in 780. It addresses his *fideles* in Aquitaine, Septimania, and Provence concerning these grants (*Catalunya Carolingia*, II, 399-410, and appendix I, p. 412).


17. R. de Abadal i de Vinyals, "La batalla del adopcionisme en la desintegración de la Iglesia visigoda," in *Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, pp. 69-74. See also F. Codera y Zaidín, "Límites probables de la dominación árabe en la cordillera pirenaica," in *Colección de Estudios Arabes*, VIII, which points out the nominal nature of Moslem control of this region.

18. *Annals of Aniane*, anno 793, col. 8-10; *Chron. of Moissac*, anno 793, p. 300; and *Chron. of Uzès*, col. 27.


21. Charlemagne's reaction to Adoptionism see *Annals of Aniane*, anno 794, col. 10-11; and Abadal, "La batalla del adopcionismo."

22. The *Chronicle of Moissac* says that this army penetrated *in fines Sarracenorum* (Chron. of Moissac, anno 796, pp. 302-303).


25. See note 9 on sources mentioning this expedition. See also R. de Abadal i de Vinyals, *Els Primers Comtes Catalans*, pp. 219-221.


30. *Annales Regni Francorum*, anno 813, p. 140. On Carolingian naval power in this region see A. Lewis, *Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean A.D. 500-1100*, pp. 176-178. Since Louis the Pious' jurisdiction did not extend over this region in 813, these expeditions are not mentioned by his biographer. He mentions only ships constructed along the Atlantic shores of Aquitaine (Astronomus, *Vita Hludovici*, ch. 15, p. 615).


34. Pérez de Urbel, "Lo viejo y lo nuevo."


(hereafter cited as Abadal, *Els Comtats de Peillars i Ribagorça*).


44. J. Calmette stresses a Catalan nationalism in "Rampon, Comte de Gerona et Marquis de Gothic," in *Le Moyen Age*, V (1901), and "Le sentiment national dans la Marche de'Espagne au IXe siècle," in Mélanges Ferdinand Lot. See the more plausible arguments against this point of view in Abadal, "La Catalogne sous l'empire de Louis le Pieux," pp. 147-152, and *Els Primers Comtes Catalans*, pp. 222-230.


47. In 828 a further Gascon revolt took place (Astronomus, *Vita Hludovici*, ch. 42, p. 632).


52. It is worth noting that the year 829 saw the beginning of a crisis in the Carolingian Empire when Louis the Pious attempted to set up a kingdom for his fourth son Charles from territory already allotted other sons (Theganus, *Vita Hludovici imperatoris*, ed. G. Pertz, ch. 35, in *Mon. Ger. Hist. Scriptores*, II, 597; Nithard, *Histoire*, p. 8; *Annales Xantenenses and Annales Vedastini*, ed. B. de Simson, anno 829, p. 7). This made any further action along the frontiers impossible except defensive ones.

53. The episcopal and monastic organization which the Carolingians set up in Gascony did not survive. Those monastic establishments mentioned at the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle in 817 are not found in the tenth century when monasteries revive in Gascony.


55. *Hist. Gén. de Lang.*, II, no. 46.


61. Ibid., pp. 206-207.
62. Ibid., pp. 268-269.
63. Ibid., pp. 45-47.
64. Ibid., pp. 205, 226.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., pp. 268-269.
69. Ibid.