The Indomitable Queen

Among the women of her own age, and for virtually the entire history of the medieval West, Urraca is unique. That is, she was both a woman and the crowned head of a major western kingdom who ruled in her own right. Even given the many redoubtable women of the Middle Ages who functioned within the political arena with appreciable effect, that verdict stands. Blanche of Castilla was, after all, never more than queen mother and regent of France. Eleanor of Aquitaine was never more than the ablest of intriguers.

More serious contenders to a rough parity of position are closer to Urraca's own time. Still, Matilda of England never did supplant Stephen I in that realm, although she tried mightily and seemed briefly in 1141 to be about to do so. Not just English history but English historiography records the failure. Though ruling in her own right, Countess Matilda of Tuscany (1076-1115) was nevertheless not of the same rank. Nor was the extent of her territories comparable, for Urraca had inherited a kingdom larger than that of England and with probably a comparable population. But despite her dissimilar arena, achievement, and temperament, Matilda has begun to find historians. Perhaps the best analogue to Urraca's own career is that of her rival and half sister Teresa of Portugal (1109-1128), although the latter also has yet to be accorded a study equal to her importance.

The study of the reign of Urraca, for all her prominence, remains a study of her public acts and the public institutions of the realm itself. There is as yet no feasible method of penetrating her thoughts or her councils. Unsatisfactory though such an approach may be, the sources of information for the early twelfth century are not, by and large, personal ones.

It may be that the architect of all her policies was Bernard, the great archbishop of Toledo. He was almost always with her. Or it may be that her hand was guided by Pedro González, Count of Lara. He was her lover and her companion until her death. Some contemporaries apparently thought that such was the case in 1119, and that conviction or fear sparked a brief and unsuccessful rising. But the public records and fitful private observations that survive portray the queen herself in control. When abominations occur the sources hold Urraca ultimately responsible. When things go well, they credit her sense of equity or her acceptance of sound advice. Throughout the period Urraca is the queen and the crown, and all decisions were ultimately her decisions. There were a variety of attempts to change that simple fact but all of them failed.

It is from this necessarily remote viewpoint that a summary appraisal of her achievements must proceed. If we cannot penetrate to the inner workings of the policy making of the royal court or the agents that shaped it, that is not an unusual condition for a number of early twelfth-century monarchs. The substantial, public record is surely to be preferred to the insubstantial conjectures of personal biography, psychology, economics, or sociology when applied to the available data on her reign.

In such a sense, Urraca can be said to have made four great policy decisions in light of which her performance must be judged. That is, although most of her government proceeded along lines already
laid down at least as far back as the reign [354] of her father, the developing conditions of her rule brought her to certain points at which she made decisions that either broke consciously with the policy of her father or for which the policy of her father offered no substantial guidance. In the order of occurrence, these are: (1) the decision in 1110-1112 to break with the Aragonese marriage in favor of her own, personal rule; (2) the decision in 1111, and more fully in 1116, formally to associate her son with herself in the government of the realm; (3) the policy of truce with Aragón from 1117 in order to secure the remainder of the realm; and (4) the attempt to resolve the political tangle in Galicia by the seizure of Archbishop Gelmírez in 1120. My own considered judgment is that the first three represented difficult but essentially correct judgments and the fourth a clear error. Even the last did not bring down her government, however. Such a record seems defensible, but let us review it in some detail.

The overall assessment of the reign of Urraca must begin with an understanding of the condition of the realm at the death of her father. As with every monarch, the queen could start only from the ground on which she stood, and the directions in which she could proceed were largely determined by that most basic of facts.

In one respect above all the queen was fortunate. Although it was not to be apparent for better than a decade, the Murâbit threat had reached its peak at the end of the reign of Alfonso VI and the very beginning of her own. Given the present state of research into the internal history of al-Andalus and North Africa, the reasons why that should have been so remain obscure. A great deal of work remains to be done in the areas of demography, economics, institutions, and politics itself before a satisfactory answer can be adumbrated.(3) The slackening of Muslim vigor, however, is clear from the record.

[355] Even during the period of León-Castilla's greatest weakness and vulnerability between 1109 and 1117, the successes of Sagrajas in 1086 and Uclés in 1108 were not to be repeated. Following the latter victory the Murâbits did reclaim control over the route that followed the old Roman road from Sevilla to Zaragoza, especially in the lands to the east of Toledo. That process allowed them finally, in early 1110, to introduce their governor into Zaragoza, eliminating the independent rule of the taifa on the middle Ebro. It proved to be their last advance.

Despite the loss of outlying territories to the west, south, and east, Toledo itself withstood the sieges of 1110 and 1114, apparently with purely local resources. In the far west the rebellious county of Portugal also had to survive on its own resources and lost Santarem to the Murâbits in 1111. But although the valley of the Tajo was lost, farther north on the Mondego Coimbra successfully withstood the siege of 1117.

The truce worked out by Urraca and Alfonso I in that year at Burgos allowed the latter to proceed to the definitive reconquest of Zaragoza and all its surrounding territory in 1118-1119. The next five years Alfonso spent in consolidating the results of that victory, and in 1125-1126 he was able to conduct a great razzia into the heart of al-Andalus. As for Urraca, her attention was more immediately directed to the west. By 1124, however, León-Castilla had been sufficiently stabilized to allow her to realize the reconquest of Sigüenza, Atienza, and Medinaceli, securing the eastern flank of Toledo and closing off the route from Seville to Zaragoza.

But although Urraca was fortunate in that the Murâbit power had passed its peak at the beginning of her reign, the realm she inherited in 1109 had been developing manifest strains of its own. To a considerable extent, the kingdom of León-Castilla was a new creation of her father's. Castilla itself had a well-known history of separatism and had been a separate kingdom as recently as 1065-1072 under her uncle, Sancho II. The Rioja had been wrested from Navarra only in 1076. In addition, to the south, between the Duero and the Tajo and from the Atlantic to Medinaceli and Osma, a [356] huge block of new land that effectively doubled the size of the kingdom still needed to be properly assimilated and
provided with the full machinery of government at her accession. Problems arising from these factors alone would have taxed the abilities of any monarch.

Additionally, however, the marriage and dynastic policy of her father had eventuated, by 1109, in the creation of factions within the kingdom and the very dynasty. The realm had too many potential heirs, all with obvious disabilities. Urraca's rule was threatened by the fact of her being a mere woman, but the immediate transfer of the realm to her four-year-old son, Alfonso Raimúndez, offered only the alternative of a regency and rule by cabal. The queen's half sister Teresa was illegitimate, but in Count Henry she had a powerful and able husband and the pair had already produced a male heir, Alfonso Enríquez. Writing little more than a century later, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada says that, in these circumstances the magnates of the realm counselled Alfonso VI to marry Urraca to a Castilian noble, Count Gómez González.\(^{(4)}\) What exactly they had in mind by that choice is not made clear beyond the provision of male leadership and, perhaps, a balancing of factions within the realm. Such a choice, however, would inevitably have introduced the tensions inherent in Urraca's possible production of another, roughly coequal heir and claimant to the crown. It would also have reinforced the latent particularisms in the kingdom by suggesting the primacy of Castilla within it.

Alfonso VI rejected their advice in favor of the marriage of Urraca to Alfonso I of Aragón. This solution had the advantages of the promise of strong masculine rule by a proven warrior who stood outside and, by virtue of his kingly rank, above the factional divisions of León-Castilla, yet who was also a member by blood of its reigning dynasty. The old king's resolution of the dynastic problem was to founder on [357] no less than three rocks. First, Alfonso of Aragón proved to have insufficient power to compel acceptance of the arrangement. Second, the marriage did not result in the queen's conceiving a new heir with the requisite dispatch. Third, in these circumstances especially, the papal condemnation of the marriage on grounds of consanguinity made its continuance a political impossibility.

In a larger context, modern evaluations of the potential of the marriage have been unrealistic. Menéndez Pidal's assertion that "parece que la cooperación de los cuatro reinos cristianos va a ser eficacísimo y que su unión va a ser gloriosa y definitiva tres siglos antes de los Reyes Católicos" could be made only with the benefit of hindsight.\(^{(5)}\) The crucial, if unconscious, assumption is that Portugal and Aragón would have continued to develop essentially as they subsequently did. The more likely eventuality, however, would have been a rallying of the west, including the provinces of Portugal, Galicia, and a large part of the north of modern Extremadura, around Alfonso Raimúndez, with Count Henry and Teresa as leaders of a regency. As their subsequent actions make quite clear, the initial ambitions of the two latter were focused on the throne of León-Castilla, not simply on an independent Portugal.\(^{(6)}\) In the east, Rioja and Castilla would have adhered to Urraca and Alfonso with the possession of Asturias, León, the trans-Duero, and Toledo depending on [358] the fortunes of war. Under such circumstances, the conquest of Zaragoza might well have been impossible and the resultant rise of Aragón prevented.

Something of this sort very nearly occurred. By midsummer of 1110 Alfonso of Aragón had already failed to subdue Galicia by force, being unable to proceed beyond Lugo to Santiago de Compostela, and on his retreat from that province Astorga itself closed its gates to him. Papal condemnation of the marriage had already been secured and Urraca had not, evidently, conceived. Only that eventuality could have promised a possible reconciliation to the marriage by the church. In the county of Portugal, Count Henry bided his time.

Urraca's decision to end the marriage was thus the only acceptable political course left open to her. Together with the coronation of her son, which implied recognition of his position as eventual successor, it was her only means of retaining for herself the political leadership of the realm. But the sporadic support of Galicia, thus secured and added to the unwavering allegiance of Asturias and León,
produced its own tensions when she bound the Castilian house of Lara to herself by a personal liaison. Such an act was not only likely to, but did indeed, result in the birth of a possible alternative heir. In any event, her policy initially met disaster in the twin defeats of Candespina and Viadangos in late 1111.

Urraca's new policy had forced the hand of Count Henry and Teresa, for the Leonese queen could offer a much less ambiguous alliance to the supporters of Alfonso Raimúndez in Galicia than could the latter couple as parents of the potential rival, Alfonso Enríquez. Count Henry joined with Alfonso of Aragón at Candespina on the promise of a partition of the realm that would have given him control of the west.

[359] In defeat, however, Urraca displayed a marked ability as a diplomat that was, perhaps, her most remarkable talent. To detach Count Henry from her husband, she herself offered him control of the west and command of her forces. Because the count would secure much better title under such circumstances, he accepted even though war with Aragón must result. This truly desperate solution produced its own difficulties, and by the spring of 1112 Urraca retained leadership only in Asturias and, uneasily, in Galicia. Count Henry and Teresa had added the control of Zamora and Astorga to that of Portugal, and probably that of Salamanca as well. Alfonso of Aragón had overrun Castilla and León, the trans-Duero, and Toledo had recognized him. It was the timely death of Count Henry at Astorga in April 1112 that opened a way out of the impasse.

Teresa of Portugal may be presumed to have held the same ambitions as her late husband but she possessed two liabilities in her sex and her illegitimate birth. The Galicians now had little recourse but to detach Count Henry from her husband, she herself offered him control of the west and Leon swung back to her as well. Alfonso of Aragón negotiated with both Teresa and Urraca by turns but found himself forced back on Castilla by the end of 1112. The next four years saw a stalemate between the former royal couple, with neither side able to gain a decisive advantage.

This situation was ended by the Council of Burgos in February of 1117. There Urraca negotiated a truce that was to endure until her death nine years later and open the way to consolidation of her authority in most of the western and central portions of the peninsula. To that end she had to surrender the old policy of her father of protecting the former taifa of Zaragoza against Aragón, a policy that had marked out that region as the future prey of León-Castilla itself. Alfonso of Aragón had become increasingly convinced [360] that the conquest of the important city on the middle Ebro was the key to his future fortunes. This conviction is understandable given the fact that the new possessions of tiny Aragón stretched in a great arc around Zaragoza from Rioja through Castilla to the trans-Duero and, ultimately, Toledo. The capture of the city would consolidate his holdings and remove the ever-present threat of attack anywhere along that perimeter. But to effect it he would need massive assistance, summoned from beyond the Pyrenees, and peace with Urraca.

The step taken at Burgos contributed directly to the emergence of the kingdom of Aragón as a power capable of threatening the hegemony of León-Castilla in the peninsula, resulting in an uneasy balance of power until their union under Ferdinand and Isabella. Urraca could hardly have foreseen so much, and indeed would have surrendered nothing if El Batallador had failed to take and hold Zaragoza. As it was, the Aragonese monarch's success in December 1118 involved him in the consolidation and rounding out of his new possessions southward through Calatayud and Daroca. This giant project occupied him almost entirely until 1124 and drew him into a great razzia into Andalusia in 1125 and 1126.

The Leonese queen meanwhile made brilliant use of her time. By associating her son, Alfonso Raimúndez, more closely with herself in 1117 and making Toledo and the trans-Duero an appanage for him, she drew him away from Bishop Gelmírez and Count Pedro Froilaz in Galicia, opening the way to a reassertion of her authority there. By satisfying her son's supporters and drawing upon legitimate
dynastic feeling, she was able to make him an instrument of her policy in the south. In November 1117, when the king of Aragón was already securely enmeshed in his plans to conquer Zaragoza, she introduced the twelve-year-old into Toledo. During the following summer she regained control of the remainder of the trans-Duero. When in 1124 she reconquered Sigüenza, Atienza, and Medinaceli, Urraca was not only closing off not only the road northeast to Islam but also the road southwest to El Batallador. It does seem that the conditions of her realm and the geography of the peninsula permitted little more.

In the west she was less successful. Her victory over Teresa near Braga in 1120 encouraged her to the most serious mistake of her career. Her brief seizure of the person of the great prelate Gelmírez exposed her to the threat of excommunication, which would certainly have meant her deposition in favor of her son. But by appealing directly to the pope she was able to disarm her enemies at home. By 1123 she had imprisoned the great Count Pedro Froilaz and isolated Gelmírez.

At the end of her reign her half sister Teresa was still independent in Portugal and held the valley of the Miño in southern Galicia as well. Alfonso of Aragón retained the Rioja and a long salient into Castilla from Burgos through Castrojeriz to Carrión de los Condes. Urraca, however, was able to leave to her son almost all Galicia and better than half of Castilla in addition to the provinces of Asturias, León, the trans-Duero, and Toledo. The threat of an independent Portugal was clear and a greater Aragón had already appeared, but given the initial conditions of her reign, it is difficult to see that the queen could have done much better.

The policy of Urraca is best described as traditional and conservative. Typically, she followed the potentially disastrous course of the marriage with Aragón, arranged by her father, until it became an impossibility. So, too, the intimates of her government had been the chosen counsellors of her father as well. The greatest of these was Archbishop Bernard of Toledo (1085-1125). Once the Aragonese marriage, which he opposed, had been dropped, Bernard was the queen's most constant support, frequently her successful intercessor at the Roman court, and the mentor of her son from 1117, in which capacity the primate was really vice-regent south of the Duero. Both Bishop Pelayo of Oviedo (1100-1130) and Bishop Pedro of Palencia (1108-1138) served the queen for the entire reign as the next most important clerical counsellors.

Of the lay figures of her government, Count Pedro González of Lara, her consort and the cornerstone of her strength in Castilla, had been her father's alférez as early as 1087. His brother, Rodrigo, had likewise been prominent in Alfonso's court. Count Pedro Ansúrez returned to court with the Aragonese marriage, in which he had probably been instrumental, and survived its breakup to serve the queen until 1118. Count Froila Díaz served the monarchy from 1086 until his death in 1119. Count Suero Vermúdez did likewise from at least 1097 until 1125. The list is longer, but the point is clear that a remarkably stable group of magnates continued to form the core of the royal court from the reign of the father through that of his daughter.

There was, of course, disruption resulting from the dynastic problem. Bishop Gelmírez and Count Pedro Froilaz are the most obvious examples of men who had served her father but organized a party around Urraca's son after the death of Alfonso VI. What is perhaps most striking is their inability to gain adherents outside the province of Galicia itself, and even there the strength they could muster was limited. Another example is Guter Fernández, who was Urraca's majordomo until 1117 but who led the attempted coup in 1119 against the power of Count Pedro González and the policy of peace with Aragón. He too had been a court figure in her father's time. But again, he was able to find no substantial support and had to retire to private life as long as Urraca lived.

In the next most visible organ of royal government, the chancery, change and continuity appear to have been rather evenly balanced. The Visigothic remained the script of royal documents but there appears
to have been no carryover of actual chancery officials from father to daughter. Also, the chancery of Urraca seems to have been larger and its activity greater. Still, the chancery of Alfonso VI has not been studied at all, and the style and usual substance of their charters do not differ appreciably.

The ecclesiastical policy of Urraca also reflects this traditionalism. There was no slackening of the crown's efforts to restore the bishoprics of the trans-Duero as the surest props of its authority there. To Alfonso VI's Toledo, Salamanca, and Osma, Urraca added Ávila, Zamora, Segovia, and Sigüenza. The primate of Toledo remained the chosen instrument of the crown for most purposes, lay and ecclesiastical, and Bernard and Urraca worked together both to elaborate a suitable metropolitan province for Toledo and to maintain its primatial and legatine authority over the whole peninsula. That effort necessarily involved Urraca in Toledo's quarrels with Braga and Santiago de Compostela, which coalesced with her political problems in Portugal and Galicia. In the end neither the papacy nor the crown could entirely withstand the popular and political pressures, and the ecclesiastical provinces of the peninsula were developed in the early 1120s in a way that reinforced the tendency toward political particularism for the remainder of the century. The center of Iberia, however, was brought firmly under Toledo's leadership.

[364] Alfonso VI himself had had to recognize the growing papal authority in the western Church effected by the Gregorian reform. Under the difficult conditions of contemporary political challenges, however, Urraca was still able to secure papal support for essentially her own purposes. She avoided excommunication over the marriage question in 1110-1111 and was able to secure support at Rome in 1116 to quell revolt at Sahagún and so undermine the Aragonese position there. She got the papacy to bless her truce with Aragón in 1117 and even secured recognition for her rule and the predominance of Toledo from Calixtus II in 1121, when it seemed her excommunication for imprisoning Gelmírez was inevitable. The old connection with Cluny was generally maintained by a judicious extension of its authority over this or that Spanish monastery, although on the crucial question of the elevation of Santiago de Compostela to an archbishopric in 1120 the great Burgundian monastery yielded to the blandishments of Gelmírez.

(11) Despite constraints from abroad and rivalries at home, Urraca seems to have been as effective in placing her choices in vacant bishoprics as her father had been. Even at Burgos, bitterly contested by Alfonso of Aragón, her candidates prevailed in both vacancies. Of the episcopate of the kingdom of León-Castilla, only Braga and Santiago de Compostela eventually escaped the royal net and maintained a sturdy independence. Toward the close of the reign the fortunes of war would compel the bishops of Túy and Orense to recognize the patronage of Teresa of Portugal but Urraca's advantages were well utilized nevertheless. Even at Coimbra she could employ the rivalry with Braga to secure that bishop's recognition of Toledo as [365] metropohitan. The royal largesse was used to attach Bishop Muño of Mondoñedo to the royal camp even though he had been originally the protégé of Gelmírez. Finally, the choice of Toledo as primary instrument meant that Archbishop Bernard would fill the sees of the trans-Duero with bishops of French origin like himself. But it is to be noted that Urraca took care that such a practice did not extend to the key bishoprics of Burgos, León, or Astorga, in the royal heartland.

The civil administration of the countryside of the kingdom offers an even more static picture. Castilla was the exception. Due to the emergency conditions created there by the Aragonese seizure of the lands along the pilgrim road, the authority of the Lara counts, Pedro and Rodrigo, seems to have been greatly extended to the north and south of that salient. In the province of León comital power was almost unknown, and when the death of Pedro Ansúrez offered the opportunity, Urraca seems to have pursued the breakup of the large Ansúrez holdings, resuming the policy adopted by Alfonso VI from 1103. Nor did Urraca depart from her father's practice in not appointing a count in Asturias de Oviedo, governing in that province also by means of castellans.
In Galicia the comital structure remained strong and well developed, and Urraca maintained her strength there by alliance with the counts of the eastern part of the province and the bishops of Lugo and Mondoñedo. The shifting fortunes of war and rebellion made any structural change impossible. The attempt to reclaim the secular señorío of Gelmírez in 1120 had to be abandoned, and even after the imprisonment of Count Pedro Froilaz in 1123 his county remained intact and in the hands of his son, Fernando Pérez.

The only evidence of peaceful, deliberate changes comes from the territories of Astorga and Bierzo. In the former, apparently no count was named after the death of Froila Díaz in 1119. On the other hand, in Bierzo about the same time the authority of Count Suero Vermúdez of Luna was extended [366] north into western Asturias around Tineo and perhaps eastward as well.

It is clear that the comital structure was not extended into the trans-Duero. Until his death in 1114, Alvar Fáñez enjoyed almost viceregal authority in and around Toledo. For the next three years that city and the trans-Duero generally were almost lost to Urraca's authority. From late 1117, though, the royal government of the area rested with Archbishop Bernard of Toledo, acting in the name of Alfonso Raimúndez, and with his new suffragan bishops being emplaced from Zamora to Sigüenza. There was, however, a steady strengthening of the señorío of Fernando Garciaz, probably a cousin of Urraca, in the upper basin of the Tajo.

Overall, then, while Urraca seems to have maintained the structures she inherited from her father, she seems also to have realized some small gains in bringing the center of the kingdom under more direct royal control. Here above all, however, it must be recalled that the history of her father's reign has yet to be written. When that has been done, more contrasts may appear.

This consideration of rural administration is, from another perspective, a revelation of the royal policy toward the nobility of the realm as well. As discussed above, the great magnates of the court remained largely unchanged from the reign of Urraca's father. But it has also been asserted that Urraca was particularly and increasingly dependent on the great nobles and the bishops in a struggle against the minor nobility and theburghers of the towns, a strife that represented a more fundamental social phenomenon than did her battle with Alfonso of Aragón, whose partisans these latter were. Such generalizations appear to me to be partial and premature when they are not simply wrong.

Current comparisons of the contents of the charters of Alfonso VI and Urraca do not reveal greater alienations under the latter. It is clear that the queen depended on the great house of Lara in Castilla, on the house of the López of Haro in Rioja, on the near-hereditary counts of Astorga, the Bierzo, and eastern Galicia, and on the episcopal power everywhere. But against this must be set her alliances with the minor nobility of western Galicia, Asturias, and the Leonese territory itself. Moreover, it is increasingly clear that the bishops were, for the most part, creatures of the crown. On the whole, it appears that the magnates and the prelates were quite as divided and particularist as the society as a whole and that the existence of any unified social class with a definite consciousness of its interests remains a hypothesis yet to be satisfactorily demonstrated.

Generalizations about the relationship of the towns and the crown during the reign of Urraca seem subject to the same reservations. It does seem a fairly established fact that the eastern and central trans-Duero had been largely populated by a southwestward drift from Castilla la Vieja and that an economy marked, in some measure, by an emphasis on stock herding was coming into being there. But that these two factors had combined by Urraca's time to produce unique governmental institutions in that area simply cannot be documented. If anything, the documents illustrate that traditional and political necessities led to a replication in that region of the castellan-bishop-council triad of urban authorities quite as common north of the Duero. Current investigations seem to suggest that it was the extent of the authority exercised rather than its nature that was distinctive. The great extent of the urban alfoz seems
not to be called into question by the problems surrounding the nature of the fueros. Rather, it is even suggested by the silence of other documents concerning the presence of other officials in the countryside.

Indeed, the region marked most strongly by a distinctive [368] variety of urban government was Galicia, where every city seems to have been an episcopal señorío. That institutional peculiarity also parallels the extraordinary vigor of the countship there. But again, both phenomena seem to have been an earlier development and were, by the beginning of Urraca's reign, already established institutions.

Caution also is in order in characterizing the much-discussed town revolts along the Camino de Santiago during the reign. To what extent they were the product of identical forces remains to be investigated. The scholarship of this century has tended to see them all as a manifestation of the burgher class and its desires for greater autonomy in both the political and economic spheres. (14) Ultimately that hypothesis may be proved sound.

In the present state of research, however, some limitations remain. In the revolts at Lugo in 1110 and León in 1119, we cannot be certain even that the burghers were the directing force. At Burgos, Castrojeriz, and Carrión de los Condes we are told by "Las crónicas anónimas" only that they were. What they hoped to achieve and how they intended to achieve it are matters on which we can only speculate. Given that the urban concejo seems to have been a familiar phenomenon, some additional powers for it or some greater influence vis-à-vis the officers of the crown may well have been at issue. On the other hand, the possibility exists that even the burghers had properly political loyalties and preferences. The revolts of Toledo in 1114 and 1117 and of Segovia in 1114 and 1118 may offer an analogy. In these cases it is certain that the general need for protection by a strong monarchy was the predominant consideration.

Finally, even in the revolts at Santiago de Compostela in 1116-1117 and at Sahagún in 1111-1116, investigation to date has concentrated on the valuable accounts preserved in the "Historia Compostelana" and "Las crónicas anónimas de [369] Sahagún." Much remains to be done in the sifting of the documentary evidence, even in the case of Santiago de Compostela, and at Sahagún particularly the evidence needs to be reexamined, for some of it was obviously fabricated. Even so, it is clear that the conditions of the two communities diverged significantly. At Compostela a concejo already existed, and the struggle for its control demonstrated that the burghers had allies within the cathedral chapter itself. At Sahagún there is no evidence for the existence of a concejo at all, and the opposition between the abbot and monks of the monastery and the burghers of the town appears to have been clear-cut. Broad characterizations, then, remain tentative and provisional, pending future study.

Here as everywhere, the first essential in an evaluation or understanding of the significance of the reign of Urraca is a sense of the novelty of the situation she confronted. Our tendency is to take the realm of León-Castilla as a given and the emergence of an independent Portugal and Aragón as inevitable. But León and Castilla themselves had been separate kingdoms as recently as both the beginning and the end of the reign of her grandfather, Fernando I. They would resume separate status following the reign of her son, Alfonso VII.

To this unstable center, the conquests of Fernando I had added the trans-Duero and northern Portugal, those of Alfonso VI the Rioja and the taifa of Toledo. These accretions more than doubled the total area that had then to be ruled with essentially the same political instruments. And throughout this territory a process of growth and development was at work that reflected itself in the relationships both within and among the church, the nobility, and the towns.

Under the most regular of circumstances a period of consolidation and adjustment would have been necessary for the newly swollen realm of León-Castilla during the first quarter of the eleventh century.
It is not at all surprising that the government of Urraca should prove to be traditional and largely concerned with elaborating and extending proven institutions,[370] striving to hold past gains, and making marginal additions to them as circumstances permitted. What is surprising, given the magnitude of the dynastic crisis that she inherited and the novelty of her own position as reigning queen, is the great extent to which she succeeded in these endeavors.

In 1126 Urraca left to her son a realm internally at peace. That in itself is remarkable. On the other hand, in the as yet tiny territory of Portugal, her half sister Teresa maintained a stubborn defiance and a de facto independence, unbroken since 1109. The solution of that essentially dynastic fracture had defied Urraca's best efforts. It was perhaps not yet irreparable but it was eventually to frustrate her son as well.

To the east Urraca's policy had allowed scope to the remarkable talents of El Batallador, who had more than doubled the size of Aragón by the conquest of the taifa of Zaragoza and retained Rioja and part of Castilla as well. But the queen, despite her difficulties, had denied to the Aragonese monarch the trans-Duero and Toledo. Rather than him, her son was to be El Emperador. In addition, she had so maintained the prestige and influence of the Leonese monarchy that Aragonese control in eastern Castilla would prove brief and Rioja itself could be reclaimed easily at Alfonso I's death in 1134.

It is difficult to see, given where she started, that Urraca could have done more. Reflecting that her son, Alfonso VII, who began with markedly fewer disabilities, was unable to reclaim either Portugal, even after Teresa and Alfonso Enríquez became avowed enemies in 1127-1128, or Zaragoza, after the death of Alfonso I in 1134 fractured the Aragonese kingdom, it is possible to wonder whether anyone could have done more, given the limitations of central government in the early eleventh century.

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Notes for Chapter Twelve


2. Nora Duff, *Matilda of Tuscany* (London, 1909), is merely quaint. But in Alfred Overmann, *Gräfin Mathilde von Tuscien* (Innsbruck, 1895), and the recent *Studi Matildici* (Modena, 1971) her career may be fairly said to have begun to find adequate treatment.

3. The more recent work is reported and employed in Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1979), but both processes illuminate best the piecemeal nature of our present knowledge.


6. On the whole, our perceptions of the past are still colored by the nineteenth-century conviction that lurking beneath all the surface phenomena were the national states of western Europe awaiting some monarch "modern" enough to perceive them. Even a moderately revisionist work such as A. H. de Oliveira Marques, *History of Portugal* (New York, 1972), 1:39, sees independence as the aim, rather than the unintended result of the frustration, of Henry's policy. The most recent and most detailed study by Peter Feige, "Die Anfänge des portugiesischen Königtums und seiner Landeskirche" *GAKS 29"
recognizes more clearly than most the extent of Henry's ambitions in León-Castilla but is hampered in its evaluation of their prospects by an incomplete knowledge of developments outside the county of Portugal.

7. Like his ultimate intentions, the real extent of the role of Count Henry of Portugal in León-Castilla has never been appreciated. The assertion of "Las crónicas anónimas" that both Alfonso of Aragón and Urraca purchased his assistance in turn only at the price of a partition of the realm has generally been ignored, perhaps because it lacked a convincing context. But the evidence for Count Henry's activities needs only to be brought together as, for instance, in José María Lacarra, "Dos documentos interesantes para la historia de Portugal," RPH 3 (1947):291-305.

8. Archbishop Bernard still lacks an adequate biography. The best present account of his career, in Juan Francisco Rivera Recio, La iglesia de Toledo en el siglo XII (Rome, 1966), badly slights his political role because of its own particular focus.

9. Almost alone among the nobility of the period, the count has had the attention of a recent biographer, Justiniano Rodríguez Fernández, Pedro Ansúrez (León, 1966). The work is helpful as a preliminary attempt to draw together the many facets of his activity, but it makes inadequate use of the abundant documentary evidence and necessarily suffers from any but the most old-fashioned perception of the historical environment in which the count lived and worked.

10. Count Pedro Froilaz needs a modern biography, and the materials are adequate for one. The limitations of Antonio López Ferreiro, Don Alfonso VII, Rey de Galicia, y su ayo el Conde de Traba (Santiago de Compostela, 1885), almost a century old, are obvious. Anselm Gordon Biggs, Diego Gelmírez, First Archbishop of Compostela (Washington, D.C., 1949), is only thirty years old but depends almost exclusively on the "Historia Compostelana" and the published sources. It requires extensive revision. Reyna Pastor de Togneri, "Diego Gelmírez, une mentalité à la page: A propos du rôle de certaines élites de pouvoir," Mélanges offerts à René Crozet (Poitiers, 1966), 1:597-608, is based almost solely on the HC.

11. Cluniac influence in the peninsula has been the object of a wide variety of studies by Charles Julian Bishko, the single, most important of which is "Fernando I y los orígenes de la alianza castellano leonesa con Cluny," CHE 47-48 (1968):31-135, and 49-50 (1969):50-116. Most recently Peter Segl, Königttum und Klosterreform in Spanien (Kallmünz, 1974), has extended Bishko's work and emphasized the similarity of Urraca's policy in this area to that of Alfonso VI.

