

719–759: The *Chronicon Anianense* on the Beginning and End of Muslim Rule over Septimania

Till Kalkbrenner



Till Kalkbrenner, 719–759: The *Chronicon Anianense* on the Beginning and End of Muslim Rule over Septimania, in: *Transmediterranean History* 2.2 (2020).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18148/tmh/2020.2.2.29>.

Abstract: The article deals with the beginning and end of Muslim rule over Septimania in the eighth century from the perspective of a chronicle, which in its original form was probably produced within the confines of the temporal and spatial events which it describes. The article examines the degree to which the Muslim conquerors established their rule in south-western France and why the Carolingians then subjugated the region in a process of conquest that lasted almost three decades. The Muslim-Frankish conflicts are not interpreted as an expression of a religiously motivated "clash of civilisations," but as a military confrontation between two expanding spheres.

Source

Chronicon Anianense, ed. Walter Kettemann, in: Walter Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianense. Überlieferungs- und textgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Witiza-Benedikts, seines Klosters Aniane und zur sogenannten anianischen Reform. Mit kommentierten Editionen der Vita Benedicti Anianensis, Notitia de servitio monasteriorum, des Chronicon Moissiacense/ Anianense sowie zweier Lokaltraditionen aus Aniane*, Gerhard-Mercator-Universität – Gesamthochschule Duisburg: unpublished dissertation, 2000, supplement 2, pp. 17, 36 (Paris BN lat. 5941), trans. John Aspinwall.

Sema rex sarracenorum post VIII anno quam in Spania ingressi sunt sarraceni; narbonam obsidet obsessamque capit; uirosque ciuitatis illius gladio perimi iussit; mulieres uero vel paruulos captiuos in spaniam ducunt.

Al-Samḥ, the king of the Saracens, besieged Narbonne nine years after the Saracens had invaded Spain and conquered the besieged city. He ordered the men of that city to be put to the sword. However, they led the women and the infants into captivity to Spain.

Et in ipso anno mense tercio ad obsidendam tolosam pergunt. Quam dum obsiderent; exiit obuiam eis eudo princeps aquitanie; cum exercitu aquitaniorum uel franchorum. Et comisit cum eis proelium. Et dum preliare cepissent terga uersus est exercitus sarracenorum maximaque pars ibi cecidit gladio.

In the same year, in the third month, they advanced to Toulouse to besiege it. While they were besieging the city, Eudo, the prince of Aquitaine, went out against them with an army of Aquitanians and also Franks. He sought battle with them. And when they had begun to fight, the army of the Saracens turned to flight, and the greater part died by the sword.

Ambisa rex sarracenorum cum ingenti exercitu post V anno gallias aggreditur carcassonam expugnat et capit; et usque

After five years [in 725], 'Anbasa, king of the Saracens, attacked Gaul with a mighty army. He stormed and conquered Carcassonne,

nemauso pace conquisiuit et obsides eorum barchinona transmittit. (...)

acquired Nîmes by a peace treaty, and sent their hostages to Barcelona. (...)

Anno DCCLII Ansemundus gotus nemauso ciuitatem magdalonam; Agathen Biteris pipino regi franchorum tradidit ex eo die franci narbonam infestant Vuaifarium principem aquitanie Pipinus persequitur; eo quod nollet se dicioni illius dare sicut eudo fecerat karolo patri eius.

In 752, the Goth Ansemund gave the cities of Nîmes, Maguelone, Agde, and Béziers to Pippin, king of the Franks. From that day on, the Franks harassed Narbonne. Pippin pursued Waifar, the Prince of Aquitaine, because the latter did not want to submit to his command, as Eudo had already done to his father Charles.

Anno DCCLVIII franci narbonam obsident datoque sacramento gotis qui ibi erant ut si ciuitatem partibus traderent pipini regis franchorum; permetterent eos legem suam habere; quo facto; ipsi goti sarracenos qui in presidio illius erant occidunt ipsamque ciuitatem partibus franchorum tradunt.

In 759 the Franks besieged Narbonne after he [Pippin] had sworn an oath to the Goths who were there, according to which he would allow them to keep their laws if they handed over the city to the dominions (*partibus*) of Pippin, king of the Franks. These same Goths slew the Saracens who presided over it [the city] (*in presidio illius erant*), and delivered the city into the dominions of the Franks.

Authorship & Work

[§1] The presented excerpts are taken from the *Chronicon Anianense* or *Chronicle of Aniane*, a historical work from the southwest of modern France. Its surviving manuscript (Paris BN lat. 5941) has been dated to the twelfth century.

For a long time, it was assumed that the *Chronicle of Aniane* was largely a copy of the better-known ninth-century *Chronicle of Moissac* (*Chronicon Moissiacense*). For this reason, it was usually only consulted to fill certain gaps in the Moissac Chronicle which had been brought about by damage to the manuscript. For example, this was done by Georg Heinrich Pertz in his edition of the text for the first volume of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*.¹ Both chronicles have only one manuscript witness, and both are characterised by a wealth of information concerning the southwest of the Frankish realm, in particular Aquitaine, Septimania, and the so-called Spanish March.²

[§3] In his dissertation (published 2000) on Benedict of Aniane (c. 750–821) and the so-called Aniane Reform, Walter Kettemann produced a synoptic edition of the two chronicles based on the original manuscripts.³ On the basis of his comparative textual analysis, he posits that both chronicles are based on the same template.⁴ Kettemann gave the name *Annales Benedicti Anianenses* to this template. He argues that the work was commissioned, either by Benedict himself, or from those among his circle. Among other arguments, he shows that the coverage of events in the rest of the Frankish realm is limited in both chronicles, the passages dealing with Benedict's stay in the north seem to be very well informed about events in Saxony.⁵ If one considers Kettemann's thesis to be plausible, this would have an important bearing on the value

¹ *Chronicon Moissiacense*, ed. Pertz (MGH SS 1), pp. 280–313.

² Kettemann, *Subsidia*, p. 33, FN 1.

³ *Chronicon Anianense*, ed. Kettemann, in: Walter Kettemann, *Subsidia*, supplement 2.

⁴ Kettemann, *Subsidia*, p. 485.

⁵ Kettemann, *Subsidia*, pp. 485–486.

of the chronicle's narrative. Benedict, whose original name was Witiza (Latin: *Euticius*), was born in Septimania as the son of the Visigothic Count of Maguelone.⁶ Thus, Benedict was the son of one of the magnates around the Goth Ansemund, who had cooperated with King Pippin in ending Muslim rule in Septimania. As such, this raises the possibility that the text's author may have drawn on the testimony of those who had first cooperated with the Muslims, and then with the Franks. If so, this would make the template of the chronicles of Moissac and Aniane a contemporary and credible source for the conquest of Septimania by the Franks.

Content & Context

[§4] Until the Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 92/711, Narbonne, the centre of Septimania, had been considered to be part of the Visigothic kingdom and may have been used as a retreat by some Visigothic nobles. As late as the first two decades of the eighth century, it was still under the rule of a certain Achila II (r. 710–713/714) and his successor Ardo (r. 713/714–720).⁷

[§5] The *Chronicle of Aniane* gives no information about the events on the Iberian Peninsula and in Septimania between 711 and 720. The Muslims enter the narrative only in the passage quoted above. It begins with an account of the conquest of Narbonne by the governor of al-Andalus, al-Samḥ (r. 100–102/719–721), who is referred to as *Sema rex sarracenorum*.⁸ The conquest is dated to the year 720. The women and children were apparently enslaved, while the men were slain, but nothing is reported about contemporary events in other cities of Septimania. The chronicle claims that the Muslims then advanced on Toulouse in Aquitaine and laid siege to it. However, Eudo, the prince of Aquitaine, defeated them with an army composed of Aquitanians and Franks.⁹ The source also reports on the conquest of Carcassonne and Nîmes in 725 by the governor 'Anbasa (*Ambisa rex sarracenorum*, r. 102–107/721–726). Carcassonne is conquered by force, while Nîmes surrenders. Presumably to guarantee the loyalty of the latter's inhabitants, they are obliged to send hostages to Barcelona. Immediately afterwards, 'Anbasa is said to have carried out several raids in the surrounding regions, one of which is said to have taken him as far as Autun in central Burgundy.¹⁰

[§6] Following this, the *Chronicle of Aniane* tells us about 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ġāfiqī's (r. 112–114/730–732) accession to power as governor of al-Andalus and his raid against Eudo. The resulting battle of Poitiers against Charles Martell (r. 719–741) and the death of the governor herein are also mentioned in the source.¹¹ For the year 735, the chronicle reports that a Muslim army crossed the Rhône and devastated Provence over the next four years.¹² The chronicle notes that, after hearing of these events, Charles Martel set out with an army and drove the Muslims out of Provence and laid siege to Narbonne. He was met by a relief army from al-Andalus, but was able to defeat it, and then withdrew from Septimania laden with spoils after having devastated the region.¹³

⁶ Bacht and Semmler, *Benedikt von Aniane*, pp. 1864–1867.

⁷ Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, p. 139–140; Claude, *Geschichte*, p. 84.

⁸ The titling of the respective governor as *rex sarracenorum* is common in other contemporary sources, see also the *Continuatio hispana a. DCCLIV*, ed. Mommsen (MGH AA 11), also known as the *Chronica muzarabica*, ed. Gil (*Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabiorum* 1).

⁹ König, 731: *Chronica muzarabica*.

¹⁰ *Chronicon Anianense*, ed. Kettemann, p. 24. Also see Lewis, *Development*, p. 21.

¹¹ *Chronicon Anianense*, ed. Kettemann, p. 25.

¹² *Chronicon Anianense*, ed. Kettemann, p. 26. The source speaks of the *arelatensem prouinciam*. This refers to the area to the right of the Rhône.

¹³ *Chronicon Anianense*, ed. Kettemann, p. 28.

[§7] Two entries of the *Chronicle of Aniane* for the years 752 and 759 give a detailed account of how Pippin the Younger (r. 741–751 as *maior domus*, 751–768 as *rex*) approached the conquest of Septimania.¹⁴ According to the chronicle, a Goth named Ansemund (*Ansemundus gotus*) gave Pippin several cities (Nîmes, Maguelone, Agde, and Béziers in north-eastern Septimania). Pippin’s conflict with the *princeps* Waifar of Aquitaine (r. 745–768) is also mentioned. However, the final conquest of Septimania dragged on until 759, and Narbonne was only taken after Pippin had sworn an oath to guarantee that he would respect the rights and autonomy of the Goths in the city if they surrendered. Only then was the Muslim garrison killed by the Goths. Afterwards, the chronicle gives a brief report on Pippin’s victory over Waifar and on Pippin’s death.¹⁵

[§8] The *Chronicle of Aniane* dates the conquest of Narbonne to the year 720. In contrast, scholars have given good reasons for assuming that it happened in mid-719.¹⁶ Some Arabic sources claim that the conquest of Narbonne had taken place earlier, and had been led by Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, the first governor of al-Andalus (r. 93–95/712–714). However, all accounts of Mūsā’s conquest of Narbonne or other cities north of the Pyrenees are much later and often tend to embellish his deeds.¹⁷ According to a widespread narrative, Mūsā and his army reached a temple with an Arabic inscription north of Narbonne. It prophesied disaster for the “sons of Ishmael” if they did not turn back.¹⁸ There are also reports that Mūsā’s son ‘Abd al-‘Azīz conquered Narbonne, or that a certain ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, perhaps a son of the latter, reached the city with a detachment of troops.¹⁹ However, the chronology of the Muslim campaigns after Mūsā’s conquest of Zaragoza in the spring of 95/714 remains unclear.²⁰ The operations of ‘Anbasa in the 720s and those of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān in the 730s are nonetheless clearly echoed in the Arabic tradition.²¹ It should also be noted that Narbonne came to be mentioned in all important works of Arabic-Islamic geography as a place that had once been under Muslim rule.²²

[§9] Parallel Latin sources only briefly touch upon the Muslim conquests of Narbonne and Septimania. The *Continuatio hispana*, also known as the *Chronicle of 754* or the *Chronica muzarabica*, reports that the governor al-Ḥurr (r. 97–100/716–719) had established order throughout Spain and had been busy for almost three years winning *Gallia Narbonensis* through negotiations and military operations.²³ It also devotes a few lines to the conquest of Narbonne by al-Samḥ.²⁴ Concerning the battles of Charles Martel in the southwest of the Frankish realm,

¹⁴ The only parallel report is found in the less detailed *Annales Mettenses Priores*, ed. von Simson (MGH SS rer. Germ. 10), a. 752, pp. 43–44.

¹⁵ *Chronicon Anianense*, ed. Kettemann, p. 37.

¹⁶ Sénac, *Carolingiens et al-Andalus*, p. 16.

¹⁷ Sénac, *Carolingiens et al-Andalus*, p. 14, mentions Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 469/1076) and al-Ḥimyarī (whose work was probably written by the seventh/thirteenth century at the latest).

¹⁸ Sénac, *Carolingiens et al-Andalus*, p. 15. A detailed discussion is given in Codera, Narbona, pp. 182–183.

¹⁹ For ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, see Bearman et al., *Arbūna*; for the troops of ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, see Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/871), *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-ahbāruhā*, ed. Torrey, p. 208. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam also reports that Mūsā’s general Ṭāriq b. Ziyād received the legendary Table of Solomon in Narbonne, which is mentioned in many conquest legends of the Iberian Peninsula. See also Codera, Narbona, pp. 183–184.

²⁰ Sénac, *Carolingiens et al-Andalus*, p. 14.

²¹ Sénac, *Carolingiens et al-Andalus*, p. 14.

²² Sénac, *Carolingiens et al-Andalus*, p. 17.

²³ *Continuatio hispana a. DCCLIV*, ed. Mommsen (MGH AA 11), cap. 80, p. 356; *Chronica muzarabica*, ed. Gil (Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum 1), §52, p. 36: “Alaor [= al-Ḥurr] per Spaniam lacertos iudicum mittit, atque debellando et pacificando pene tres annos Galliam Narbonensem petit.” See also Codera, Narbona, pp. 184–185.

²⁴ *Continuatio hispana a. DCCLIV*, ed. Mommsen (MGH AA 11), cap. 86, p. 358; *Chronica muzarabica*, ed. Gil (Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum 1), §57, pp. 37–38, on al-Samḥ (*Zama*): “Postremo Narbonensem Galliam suam facit gentemque Francorum frequentibus bellis stimulat et seditas Saracenorum in predictum Narbonensem oppidum ad presidia tuenda decenter conlocat. Adque inconcurrenti uirtute iam dictus dux Tolosam usque preliando peruenit eamque obsidione cingens fundis et diuersis generum macinis expugnare conauit.”

however, there are far more and also more detailed sources available.²⁵ The same applies to the conquest of Narbonne by Pippin although here the *Chronicle of Aniane* offers the greater amount of detail.

[§10] In conclusion, it can be said that the Latin tradition on the history of Narbonne under Muslim rule is closer in time and space to the events than the Arabic tradition. An early conquest by Mūsā or his son ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, which was then reversed by the loss or abandonment of the city, is quite conceivable. In this case, the conquest of the city by al-Samḥ, which is documented in the *Chronicle of Aniane*, would have to be interpreted as a renewed conquest of the city.²⁶ All that is certain, however, is that Narbonne was conquered between 719 and 720 and came under Muslim rule for several decades. Under ‘Anbasa, other parts of Septimania were then brought under Muslim control by 725. From 732 onward, Charles Martell became active in driving Muslim invaders out of the principalities of Aquitaine and Provence, which were nominally part of the Frankish realm. This culminated in a victorious battle against a relief army from al-Andalus in 739. The following thirteen years seem to have been peaceful until Pippin invaded Septimania in 752 with the help of local Gothic elites. After another seven years, Narbonne was then conquered by the Franks in 759. Despite a massive attack by troops of the Emirate of Córdoba (established since 756) in 793, Septimania remained under the long-term control of the Frankish realm following its conquest by Pippin in 759.²⁷

Contextualisation, Analysis & Interpretation

[§11] The following paragraphs will discuss the factors that both hindered and brought about the eventual conquest of Septimania by the Muslims. This will be followed by a brief explanation of the degree to which Muslim rule was established in Septimania. Finally, this part will discuss why the conquest of Septimania by the Carolingian Franks took so long. To this end, some facets of the Gothic prehistory of Septimania must first be explained.

[§12] Under a treaty with the Western Roman Emperor, the Visigoths were settled as *foederati* in southwestern Gaul in 418, where they established a kingdom centred on the city of Toulouse (*regnum Tolosanum*) and acted on Rome’s behalf against hostile groups in the Iberian Peninsula.²⁸ The episcopal see of Narbonne came under Visigothic control in 476–477.²⁹ After the defeat of the Franks and Burgundians at the Battle of Vouillé in 507, the focus of Visigothic rule shifted to the Iberian Peninsula. As such, Septimania was the only Gallic territory to remain under Visigothic control.³⁰ In the course of the sixth and seventh centuries, the northeast of the Visigothic kingdom (which was centred on Narbonne) repeatedly demonstrated a certain degree of independence vis-à-vis the Visigoths’ Iberian dominions, which had centred on Toledo since

²⁵ For example, *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii scholastici libri IV cum continuationes*, ed. Krusch (MGH SS rer. Merov. 2), cap. 20, pp. 177–178.

²⁶ This line of argument is also followed by Bearman et al, *Arbūna*.

²⁷ Lewis, *Development*, p. 40; Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 40; Sénac, *Carolingiens et al-Andalus*, pp. 37–40. Sénac, p. 39, points out that (unnamed) Arabic sources as well as the *Annales Mettenses* date Pippin’s conquest of Narbonne to the year 133/752. The indication in the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, ed. von Simson, a. 752, p. 43, reads as follows (underlining added here): “Anno dominicae incarnationis DCCLII. Hoc anno Pippinus rex exercitum duxit in Gotiam, Narbonam civitatem, in qua adhuc Sarraceni latitabant, obsedit. Temptatis itaque plurimis argumentis illam munitissimam civitatem capere non potuit. Custodia tamen ibi derelicta, cotidianis irruptionibus illos cives afflixit et per triennium bellum Narbonam obtinuit, expulsisque de tota Gotia homines illos, Christianos de servitio Sarracenorum liberavit.” The editor von Simson consequently dates the conquest of Narbonne to the years 757–759.

²⁸ Wolfram, *Die Goten*, pp. 158–185.

²⁹ Riess, *Narbonne*, pp. 131–132.

³⁰ Riess, *Narbonne*, pp. 131–132.

the end of the sixth century. This culminated with the kingship of a certain Paulus in 673, who challenged the rule of King Wamba (r. 672–680) from Narbonne.³¹

[§13] On the eve of the Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, after the death of Witiza (r. 702–710), a succession struggle broke out. In the southwest, Roderic (r. 710–711) established himself as a ruler, but was defeated by the Muslim invaders in 711.³² In the northeast, the aforementioned Achila II governed with the support of the local elites.³³ Unlike Roderic, he was able to hold out longer against the Muslims. He was followed by Ardo, who ruled over Septimania and presumably resided in Narbonne until its conquest.³⁴ Gothic coins seem to have been minted in Narbonne as late as 719.³⁵ The existence of a separate kingship in the independent northeast of the Visigothic realm must be seen as a factor that significantly delayed the Muslim conquest of Septimania. The Visigothic army only convened in times of war and consisted mainly of the retainers of the major noble families.³⁶ The death of Roderic in battle seems to have led to a disintegration of the Visigothic army, whose noble families then pursued their own particular interests. In contrast, the royal leadership in the northeast managed to pool the forces of the nobility and to lead them effectively for a few more years. It should also be noted that the Muslim attack on Toulouse resulted in heavy losses for the belligerents, and consequently limited the military capacity of the Muslim governors for a certain period. Thus, Narbonne enjoyed some brief respite. There is also circumstantial evidence that parts of Septimania, such as Carcassonne, may have been under Aquitanian control for a time.³⁷ In sum, after encountering uncoordinated resistance in Hispania that was easily defeated in consequence, the Muslim conquerors seem to have faced both coordinated Visigothic resistance and Aquitanian troops in Septimania.

[§14] Despite these dynamics, Septimania came completely under Muslim control by 725 thanks to the capture of Nîmes and Carcassonne, which formed the natural borders of Septimania. Among other factors, this may have been due to the conditions under which local elites could submit to the conquerors. As early as 713, there is evidence of a treaty of subjection concluded between local Gothic elites and the Muslims around the Hispanic Orihuela. Here, extensive political autonomy, security guarantees, and the free practice of religion were granted by the Muslims in return for moderate taxes.³⁸ The report in the *Continuatio hispana* or *Chronica muzarabica* that al-Ḥurr had attempted to win Septimania (*Gallia Narbonensis*) by “fighting and pacifying” (*debellando et pacificando*) between 716 and 719 may suggest that a similar approach was also attempted in the northeast of the Visigothic realm.³⁹ The report of the *Chronicle of Aniane* on the conquest of Nîmes by ‘Anbasa in 725 also suggests that similar methods of subjugation were used, since the city is said to have been taken by a peace treaty (*nemauso pace conquisiuit*). Thus, at least some members of the local elites may have been able to retain a certain degree of autonomy. This might explain why Pippin was still able to work with a capable Gothic elite almost thirty years after the Muslim conquest of Septimania. It is even likely that the elites of Septimania did not undergo any significant change under Muslim rule. Indeed, there are no clear indications that a new Arab-Berber elite took root here as was the case on the Iberian Peninsula. We must concede that we know the names of several

³¹ Riess, *Narbonne*, pp. 203–204; de Jong, *Adding Insult to Injury*, pp. 381–387.

³² For further reading on the Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, see König, 711: Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam; König, 711–745: Ibn al-Qūṭīyya; König, 713: Treaty of Tudmīr.

³³ Riess, *Narbonne*, p. 221.

³⁴ Riess, *Narbonne*, p. 227.

³⁵ Riess, *Narbonne*, p. 223.

³⁶ Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, p. 141.

³⁷ Riess, *Narbonne*, p. 197.

³⁸ König, 713: Treaty of Tudmīr.

³⁹ *Continuatio hispana a. DCCLIV*, ed. Mommsen (MGH AA 11), cap. 80, p. 356; *Chronica muzarabica*, ed. Gil (Corpus scriptorum muzarabicorum 1), § 52, p. 36; Codera, *Narbona*, pp. 184–185.

governors,⁴⁰ and read of the settlement of a Berber tribe in Narbonne.⁴¹ We can also assume that a tax system was organised from Tarazona or Tarragona for the “Arab province of Narbonne.”⁴² However, the archaeological remains are of little significance,⁴³ and the *Chronicle of Aniane* suggests that the local elite remained essentially Gothic and Christian, while the Muslims mainly provided military garrisons in the region. In the given source passage on the conquest of Narbonne, there is only mention of a Muslim garrison that presided over the city (*in presidio illius erant*). No other Muslims are mentioned in Narbonne or the wider region of Septimania. Against this backdrop, it seems plausible to assume that the region’s administration and economy remained primarily in the hands of the Gothic elites.⁴⁴

[§15] A final question concerns why the Carolingian Franks only conquered Septimania after almost twenty-seven years of military activity. The Carolingians first intervened in the affairs of the duchy in around 732, when the *maior domus*, Charles Martell, responded to Duke Eudo of Aquitaine’s call for help and then defeated the army of the governor of al-Andalus near Tours or Poitiers. However, he soon handed the duchy back to his long-time rival Eudo and withdrew. Charles Martell did not become active in the south again until 737: according to the *Continuator of Fredegar*, a certain Maurontus is said to have facilitated the Muslims’ entry into the country

⁴⁰ Ibn al-Qūṭīyya (d. 367/977), *Tarih iftitaḥ al-Andalus*, ed. al-Abyārī, p. 41, mentions ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alqama as governor on behalf of the Andalusian governor ‘Abd al-Malik b. Qaṭan al-Fihri (r. 114–116/732–734). Bearman et al., *Arbūna*, claim Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Fihri, later governor of al-Andalus. (r. 129–138/746–756), had control over Narbonne in 116/734. *Chronicon Anianense*, ed. Kettemann, a. 734, p. 26, confirms that: “his temporibus iussephibin abderaman narbona perficitur.” The *Chronicle*, a. 739, p. 28, further reports that the Andalusian governor ‘Uqba b. al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ al-Salūlī (r. 116–123 / 734–741) appointed a certain ‘Amr or ‘Umar b. Ḥālid as governor over Narbonne in a defensive situation: “Ocupa rex sarracenorum ex spania amoribinailet cum exercitu magno sarracenorum ad presidium narbona transmittit.” Ibn ‘Iḍārī (d. before 712/1312–1313), *Al-Bayān al-muḡrib fī aḥbār al-Andalus wa-l-Maḡrib*, ed. Colin and Lévi-Provençal, vol. 2, p. 28, also mentions a rebellion by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alqama al-Laḥmī against the ruling governor of al-Andalus, Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Fihri, originating in Narbonne in 133/753.

⁴¹ Codera, *Narbona*, p. 183, based on Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). The latter mentions the Banū Baḡīla and claims that “their dwelling place in al-Andalus is in the area of Narbonne” (*wa-dāruhum bi-l-Andalus bi-ḡīhat Arbūna*).

⁴² Sénac, *Carolingiens et al-Andalus*, p. 17, opts for Tarragona on the basis of the reconstruction of a description by the historiographer Aḥmad b. al-Rāzī (d. 344/955) by Évariste Lévi-Provençal. See Lévi-Provençal, *Description de l’Espagne*, p. 77: “La ville de Tarazona fut la résidence des gouverneurs et des généraux dans la zone des Marches. Abū ‘Uṭmān ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn ‘Uṭmān, connu sous le surnom de ‘Seigneur de la [Grande] Terre’ (*ṣāḥib al-arḍ*), la choisit pour résidence, en la préférant aux autres villes des Marches. C’est à lui que parvenaient les dimes payées par les villes de Narbonne et de Barcelone.” See *ibid.*, p. 77, FN 1, on the potential confusion between Tarazona and Tarragona. It seems problematic that the ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Uṭmān mentioned was probably in office more towards the end of the second/eighth century, i.e. after Pippin’s reconquest of Narbonne, and according to Ibn Ḥayyān died in 186/802. Jiménez, *Dawla*, p. 162, with references. Clément, *Province arabe*, p. 21, nevertheless provides the following assessment: “La Narbonnaise musulmane est parfois qualifiée de marche (*taḡr*) (province frontière d’un Etat, jouant le rôle de zone de protection militaire), mais il est difficile de déterminer si ce terme doit s’entendre dans signification administrative ou simplement géographique. Il est difficile de savoir, également, si la région fut dotée d’une compétence administrative propre. Fiscalement, elle relevait de ce qui allait devenir la marche supérieure, puisque la dîme (*‘uṣr*) était collectée par le responsable de la terre (*ṣāḥib al-arḍ*) de Tarazona. Cependant, elle disposait d’un gouverneur (*wālī*) nommé par celui de Cordoue. On sait que ce poste était important puisque plusieurs gouverneurs de Cordoue y ont débuté leur carrière. L’étendue de la province arabe correspondait à peu près à celle des anciens diocèses d’Elne, Narbonne, Carcassonne, Béziers, Maguelonne; Nîmes et peut-être Lodève; c’est-à-dire aux actuels départements des Pyrénées-Orientales, de l’Aude, de l’Hérault et du Gard.”

⁴³ Sénac, *Carolingiens et al-Andalus*, pp. 39–40.

⁴⁴ Sénac, *Carolingiens et al-Andalus*, p. 38: “Il n’est pas inutile de souligner que contrairement aux traditions postérieures, les musulmans respectèrent le culte chrétien et qu’une partie importante de la population de Narbonne conserva ses lois et ses traditions sous domination musulmane”. Bearman et al., *Arbūna*, claim without citing sources that Jews also played a certain role in trade with al-Andalus, but place this in the Umayyad period, i.e. after 756: “Narbonne and its region still maintained relations with the Umayyad court, Jewish merchants being particularly active in this respect.”

and helped them occupy Avignon.⁴⁵ This was probably the *patricius* of Provence, as the *Annales Mettenses Priores* report that an unnamed *comes* of Provence had let the Muslims into the country.⁴⁶ It is unclear whether the alliance between Maurontus and the Muslims was seen by Charles as a threat to recently secured Burgundy and thus provoked his intervention,⁴⁷ or whether the Muslims had been drawn into the country in response to an attack by Charles.⁴⁸ In any case, this set the stage for Charles's intervention in Septimania: both the *Continuator of Fredegar* and the *Annales Mettenses Priores* report that after the conquest of Avignon, Charles crossed the Rhône and advanced into Septimania from the east. The eastern cities submitted to him, but he was unable to take Narbonne and the other cities. Nonetheless, he defeated a relief army from al-Andalus at Berre near Narbonne. This battle likely corresponds to the same victory that the *Chronicle of Aniane* ascribes to Charles.⁴⁹ As such, Archibald Lewis dates this battle to 739.⁵⁰ However, Charles seems to have withdrawn from Septimania soon after without further action. Presumably, his long supply lines were threatened by the hostile new *princeps* of Aquitaine, Hunald (r. 735–745) as well as by Maurontus, who was based in Marseille. Consequently, he seems to have opted against risking protracted and costly sieges of the cities of Septimania.⁵¹

[§16] Thirteen years later, a Carolingian army led by Pippin appeared in 752. Pippin apparently had the support of at least part of Septimania's Gothic elite, which was led by Ansemund. Unlike his father, Pippin apparently did not have to defend himself against a relief army as the Muslims of al-Andalus seem to have been too occupied with internal conflicts to worry about fighting in a border area which held little importance for them. As early as 729–731, there had been a Berber rebellion in al-Andalus, leading to the Battle of Tours or Poitiers after an alliance between a certain Munuz and the then *princeps* Eudo of Aquitaine. At the beginning of the 740s, another uprising severely questioned Arab dominance in al-Andalus.⁵² Such resulting turmoil was exasperated from 750 onwards by the overthrow of the Umayyad dynasty in Damascus as part of the so-called 'Abbāsid revolution. In 756, this led to a coup in al-Andalus by an Umayyad refugee who, as 'Abd al-Raḥmān I (r. 138–172/756–788), became the founder of an emirate in Córdoba that was ultimately independent of the caliphate. The conflicts and battles associated with these events probably ensured that in 752 there was no thought of sending a relief army for Narbonne.⁵³

[§17] Despite the absence of a Muslim relief army, Pippin only succeeded in taking Narbonne after seven years. To understand this delay, it is first necessary to look more closely at the Gothic elites who were still part of the political landscape of Septimania under Muslim rule. According to the *Chronicle of Aniane*, a certain Ansemund handed over the cities of Nîmes, Maguelone, Agde, and Béziers (located in northeastern Septimania) to Pippin in 752. He probably acted as the leader of a group of Gothic magnates who were well-disposed towards the Franks. Ansemund's negotiations with Pippin indicate that these Goths enjoyed a comparatively large degree of autonomy: Nîmes, the urban centre in northeastern Septimania, had eventually been subjugated by the Muslims by peace treaty, while Carcassonne, the urban centre in western Septimania, had been militarily conquered, as had Narbonne. Since lands conquered by military force usually became the property of the Muslim conquerors and only

⁴⁵ *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii scholastici libri IV cum continuationes*, ed. Krusch (MGH SS rer. Merov. 2), cap. 20, p. 177.

⁴⁶ *Annales Mettenses Priores*, ed. von Simson, a. 737, pp. 29–30.

⁴⁷ Lewis, *Development*, p. 22.

⁴⁸ Lewis, *Development*, p. 23.

⁴⁹ Lewis, *Development*, p. 23.

⁵⁰ Kettemann, *Subsidia*, supplement 2, p. 28.

⁵¹ Lewis, *Development*, pp. 23–24.

⁵² Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, pp. 24–25.

⁵³ Lewis, *Development*, p. 26; Collins, *Arab Conquest*, p. 112; Clément, *Province arabe*, p. 20.

those territories subjugated by treaty were granted autonomy,⁵⁴ it is likely that the southwest of Septimania, closer to al-Andalus, was under more direct Muslim control than the northeast, closer to the Frankish realm. Other than the places handed over by Ansemund to Pippin, it can be assumed that Gothic support for the Franks—perceived as an expansionary force—was rather low. Gothic support seems to have been further weakened with the death of Ansemund in 753, which probably led to a revolt in Nîmes to the effect that the city was put under the control of a Frankish count.⁵⁵ The Gothic elites of Septimania probably feared losing the autonomy and associated rights which had apparently been granted to them under Muslim rule. It is only against such a background that Pippin’s oath to respect the rights and autonomy of the Goths in Narbonne (*datoque sacramento gotis*) can be explained. However, we must also take into account, that it was not only the reluctant support of the Goths that slowed down Pippin’s progress. The behaviour of the Aquitanian elites was also a contributory factor. According to the *Chronicle of Aniane*, military clashes broke out with the *principes* Waifar of Aquitaine while Frankish troops besieged towns in Septimania. Although no further details can be gleaned from the source material, Waifar’s activities probably hampered the conquest of Septimania. After all, the Franks had to reckon with Waifar coming to the aid of the besieged cities of Septimania and cutting off the Frankish army from supplies.

[§18] Lewis sees the Frankish involvement in Septimania and the eventual conquests of this territory as part of a larger conflict between the Carolingians and the *principes* of Aquitaine.⁵⁶ Aquitaine had been part of the Frankish realm since the time of Clovis I (r. 481/482–511), but had achieved a high degree of autonomy by the beginning of the eighth century.⁵⁷ Under Charles Martell, this had repeatedly led to conflicts between the Carolingian mayors of the palace and the *principes*. Under Pippin, this conflict finally culminated in open warfare. Immediately after the conquest of Narbonne, Pippin’s army marched on to Aquitaine and occupied the southeast of the country.⁵⁸ For the next nine years Pippin seems to have waged a highly destructive war against Aquitaine, which ended in 768 in favour of the Carolingian realm.⁵⁹ As argued by Lewis, it seems quite plausible to regard the Frankish conquest of Septimania as a building block in the process of asserting a Carolingian claim to rule in the south of the Frankish realm. Pippin’s offensive following the conquest of Narbonne shows that Septimania represented a vital gateway into southern Aquitaine.

[§19] The given excerpts from the *Chronicle of Aniane* shed light on conquest practices employed during the Arabic-Islamic expansion. They show that the Muslims understood how to conquer territories through a combination of diplomacy and war. By granting degrees of political autonomy under certain conditions, they made it easier for local elites to join the conquerors because this allowed them to limit casualties while also maintaining their status under the new rulers. However, this practice also seems to have opened up opportunities for cooperation with outside forces—especially in the contested border zone between the Arabic-Islamic and Frankish domains, where the Goth Ansemund and part of the nobility of Septimania defected to Pippin. The cultural, religious, or political motivations which lay behind these defections are obscure given the limited nature of the source evidence. Yet, it can be stated that none of the sources cited here describe a fundamental enmity based on religion between Carolingian Franks and Muslims, even if the *Annales Mettenses priores* claim that Pippin “liberated the Christians from the servitude of the Saracens” (*Christianos de servitio*

⁵⁴ Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Lewis, *Development*, p. 25.

⁵⁶ Lewis, *Development*, pp. 20–33.

⁵⁷ Lewis, *Development*, pp. 3–4.

⁵⁸ Lewis, *Development*, p. 26.

⁵⁹ Lewis, *Development*, pp. 26–27.

Sarracenorum liberavit).⁶⁰ The struggles between Franks and Muslims described here rather seem to result from the confrontation of two expanding spheres—the Muslim attempt to maintain a bridgehead beyond the Pyrenees from al-Andalus, and the Carolingian attempt to gain dominance over the hitherto relatively independent southwest of the Frankish realm.⁶¹ Pippin did not act as a “defender of the West” who fought the Muslims as “infidels.” After conquering Narbonne, he moved to Aquitaine and fought fellow Christians whose desire for autonomy posed a threat to the rule of a man who had founded the Carolingian dynasty by elevating himself to king after deposing the Merovingians in 751. Septimania thus did not represent a stage where two cultures clashed. Rather, it was a mere steppingstone on Pippin’s way to Aquitaine and towards the so-called “Spanish March.”⁶²

(Translation: John Aspinwall)

Editions & Translations

Chronicon Moissiacense, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz (MGH SS 1), Hanover: Hahn, 1826, pp. 280–313.

Ex Chronico Moissiacense, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz (MGH SS 2), Hanover: Hahn, 1829, pp. 257–259.

Chronicon Anianense, ed. Walter Kettemann, in: Walter Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianense. Überlieferungs- und textgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Witiza-Benedikts, seines Klosters Aniane und zur sogenannten anianischen Reform. Mit kommentierten Editionen der Vita Benedicti Anianensis, Notitia de servitio monasteriorum, des Chronicon Moissiacense/Anianense sowie zweier Lokaltraditionen aus Aniane*, Gerhard-Mercator-Universität–Gesamthochschule Duisburg: ungedruckte Dissertation, 2000, supplement 2, pp. 1–197, URN: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:hbz:464-20080509-172902-8> (access: 25.05.2022).

Cited Primary Sources

Annales Mettenses Priores, ed. Bernhard von Simson (MGH SS rer. Germ. 10), Hanover: Hahn, 1905.

Chronica muzarabica, ed. Juan Gil (Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicomum 1), Madrid: CSIC, 1973, pp. 15–54.

Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii scholastici libri IV cum continuationes, in Fredegarii et aliorum chronica: Vitae sanctorum, ed. Bruno Krusch (MGH SS rer. Merov. 2), Hanover: Hahn, 1888, pp. 1–194.

Chronicon Ucense, in: *Histoire Générale de Languedoc*, vol. 2, Paris: Jacques Vincent, 1733.

Continuatio hispana a. DCCLIV, in *Chronica minora*, ed. Theodor Mommsen (MGH AA 11), Berlin: Weidmann, 1894, pp. 323–369.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-aḥbārūhā*, ed. Charles Torrey, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922, reprint Cairo: Madbūlī, 1999.

⁶⁰ *Annales Mettenses Priores*, ed. von Simson, a. 752, p. 43.

⁶¹ Collins, Deception, p. 227–247; Staudte-Lauber, Carlus princeps, pp. 79–100.

⁶² König, 812: Instruction; König, 815: Constitutio.

Ibn 'Idārī, *Al-Bayān al-muġrib fī aḥbār al-Andalus wa-l-Maġrib*, ed. George S. Colin, Évariste Lévi-Provençal, 3 vols, Beirut: Dār al-ṭaqāfa, 1980–1983.

Ibn al-Qūṭīyya, *Tariḥ iftitaḥ al-Andalus*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-lubnānī, 1989.

Cited & Additional Literature

Bearman, Peri; Bianquis, Thierry; Bosworth, Clifford Edmund; van Donzel, Emeri; Heinrichs, Wolfhart Peter: Arbūna, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* 1 (1960), p. 608, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0707.

Bacht, Heinrich; Semmler, Josef: Benedikt von Aniane, in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 1 (1980), pp. 1864–1867.

Claude, Dietrich: *Geschichte der Westgoten*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971.

Clément, François: La province arabe de Narbonne au VIII^e siècle, in: Mohammed Arkoun (ed.), *Histoire de l'Islam et des musulmans en France, du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, Paris: Albin Michel, 2006, pp. 18–25.

Codera, Francisco: Narbona, Gerona y Barcelona bajo la dominación musulmana, in: *Anuari del Institut d'Estudis Catalans* vol. 3 (1909–1910), pp. 178–202.

Collins, Roger: *The Arab Conquest of Spain*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.

Collins, Roger: Deception and Misrepresentation in Early Eighth-Century Frankish Historiography: Two Case Studies, in: Jörg Jarnut, Ulrich Nonn, Michael Richter (eds), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit*, Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994, pp. 227–247.

Collins, Roger: *Visigothic Spain. 409–711*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

Jiménez, Jesús Lorenzo: *La dawla de los Banū Qasī. Origen, auge, y caída de una dinastía muladí en la frontera superior de al-Andalus*, Madrid: CSIC, 2010.

Jong, Mayke de: Adding Insult to Injury. Julian of Toledo and his *Historia Wambae*, in: Peter Heather (ed.), *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century. An Ethnographic Perspective*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999, pp. 373–389.

Heather, Peter (ed.): *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century. An Ethnographic Perspective*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999.

Kennedy, Hugh: *Muslim Spain and Portugal. A Political History of al-Andalus*, Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996.

König, Daniel G.: 711: Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam zur Kollaboration Julians bei der muslimischen Invasion der Iberischen Halbinsel, in: *Transmediterrane Geschichte* 1.1 (2019), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18148/tmh/2019.1.1.9>.

König, Daniel G.: 713: The Treaty of Tudmīr as a Testimony to the Muslim Subjection of the Iberian Peninsula, in: *Transmediterranean History* 2.1 (2020), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18148/tmh/2019.1.1.9>.

König, Daniel G.: 711–745: Ibn al-Qūṭīyya zur Kooperation seiner westgotischen Vorfahren mit den muslimischen Eroberern, in: *Transmediterrane Geschichte* 1.1 (2019), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18148/tmh/2019.1.1.10>.

König, Daniel G.: 731: Die *Chronica muzarabica* zur Ehe des Berbers Munnuz mit der Tochter von Eudo, dux von Aquitanien, in: *Transmediterrane Geschichte* 1.1 (2019), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18148/tmh/2019.1.1.11>.

- König, Daniel G.: 812: An Instruction from Charlemagne Concerning Immigrant Hispani, in: *Transmediterranean History* 2.1 (2020), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18148/tmh/2020.2.1.23>.
- König, Daniel G.: 815: Eine Constitutio Ludwigs des Frommen zu angesiedelten Hispani im Frankenreich, in: *Transmediterrane Geschichte* 2.1 (2020), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18148/tmh/2020.2.1.25>.
- Lévi-Provençal, Évariste: La “description de l’Espagne” d’Aḥmad al-Rāzī. Essai de reconstitution de l’original arabe et traduction française, in: *al-Andalus* 18 (1953), pp. 51–108.
- Lewicki, Tadeusz: Ibn ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-Ḥimyarī, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* 3, (1971), pp. 675–676, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3030.
- Lewis, Archibald Ross: *The Development of Southern French and Catalan Society (718–1050)*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965.
- Reinaud, Joseph Toussaint: *Invasions des Sarrasins en France et de France en Savoie, en Piémont et dans la Suisse pendant les 8^e, 9^e et 10^e siècles de notre ère d’après les auteurs chrétiens et mahométans*, Paris: Librairie orientale de V^e Dondey-Dupré, 1836.
- Riess, Frank: *Narbonne and its Territory in Late Antiquity. From the Visigoths to the Arabs*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.
- Rouche, Michel: *L’Aquitaine des Wisigoths aux Arabes (418–781). Naissance d’une Région*, Paris: École des Hautes Études en Science Sociales, 1979.
- Sénac, Philippe: *Les Carolingiens et al-Andalus (VIII^e–IX^e siècles)*, Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2002.
- Sénac, Philippe: *Musulmans et Sarrasins dans le sud de la Gaule du VIII^e au XI^e siècle*, Paris: Le Sycomore, 1980.
- Staudte-Lauber, Annalena: *Carlus princeps regionem Burgundie sagaciter penetravit: Zur Schlacht von Tours und Poitiers und dem Eingreifen Karl Martells in Burgund*, in: Jörg Jarnut; Ulrich Nonn; Michael Richter (eds.), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit*, Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994, pp. 79–100, URL: https://www.perspectivia.net/publikationen/bdf/jarnut-nonn-richter_martell/staudte-lauber_carlus (access 16.05.2024).
- Wolfram, Herwig: *Die Goten von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des 6. Jahrhunderts. Entwurf einer historischen Ethnographie*, München: C.H. Beck, 2001.