



les séminaires d'Ausonius

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amphi Archéo (ACH005) de la Maison de l'archéologie

Alliances, hostilities and struggles for power on both sides of the Pyrenees, 846-52



Musa ibn Musa of the Banu Qasi

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‘For fools rush in where angels fear to tread’

« Car les fous se précipitent là où les anges ont peur de mettre le pied »

« Porque los locos se apresuran hacia donde los ángeles temen pisar »

« Perquè els boixos es precipiten cap allà on els àngels tenen por de trepitjar »

« Zeren, ergelak, aingeruak ibiltzeko beldur diren lekuetara lehiaz baitoatzi »

Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (1711).



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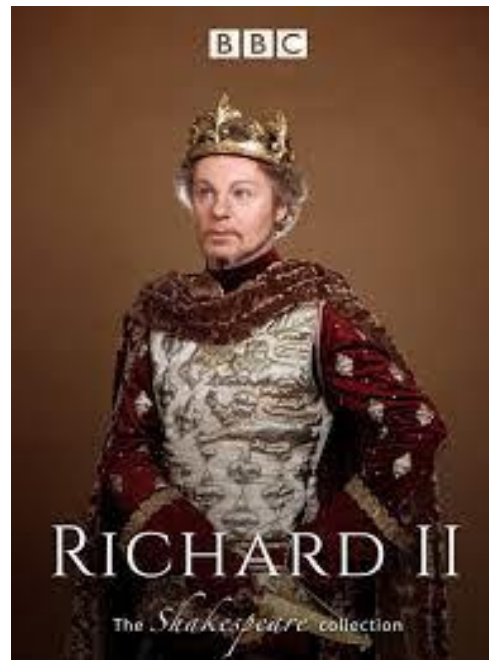
Why is this important?

« Le milieu du IX^e siècle est une période critique pour le développement futur et la forme de polites telles que la Catalogne, la Navarre, l'Aragon et l'émirat de Cordoue au sud des Pyrénées, et, au nord, le royaume franc en général, y compris l'Aquitaine, la Gascogne et la Septimanie/Gothia. Il y a eu des alliances éphémères et souvent changeantes, ainsi que de nombreux conflits armés qui ont souvent chevauché les deux côtés des montagnes. Cette présentation tentera de relier et de donner un sens à tous ces événements complexes et obscurs en utilisant des sources françaises, espagnoles et musulmanes ».

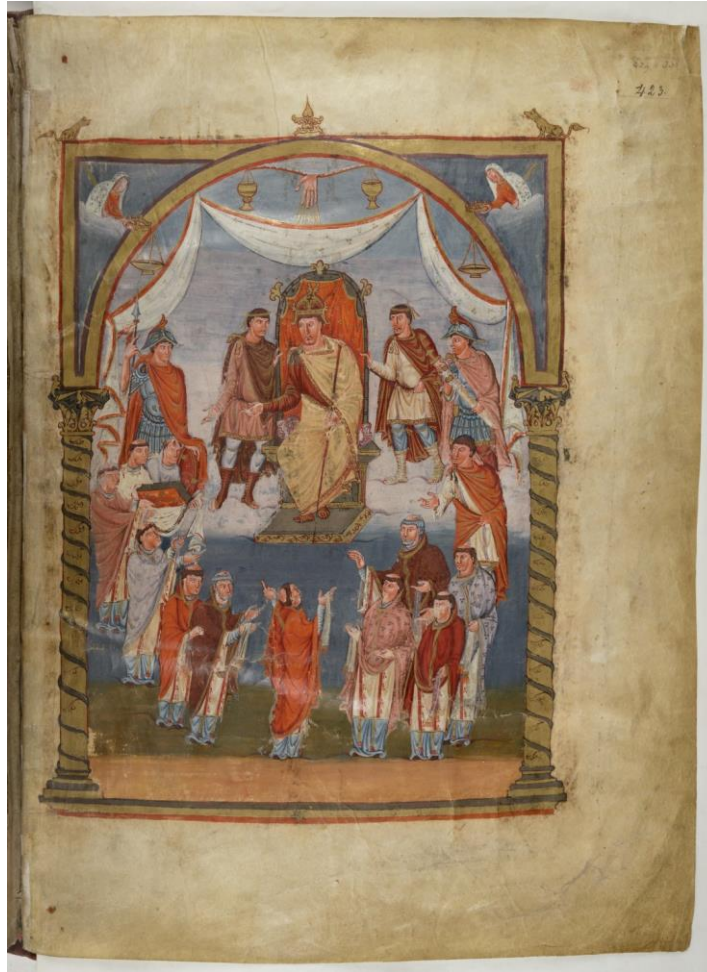
‘The mid-ninth century was a critical period for the future development and form of such polities as Catalonia, Navarre, Aragon and the emirate of Córdoba to the south of the Pyrenees, and, to the north, the Frankish realm in general, including Aquitaine, Gascony and Septimania/Gothia. There were short-lived, and often shifting, alliances and numerous armed conflicts which often straddled both sides of the mountains. This presentation will try to connect and make sense of all these complex and obscure events using French, Spanish and Muslim sources.’

A Shakespearean drama?

- If William Shakespeare had known about these events he could have written a whole cycle of historical plays.
- He would have started with the cast.
- So let us do so.



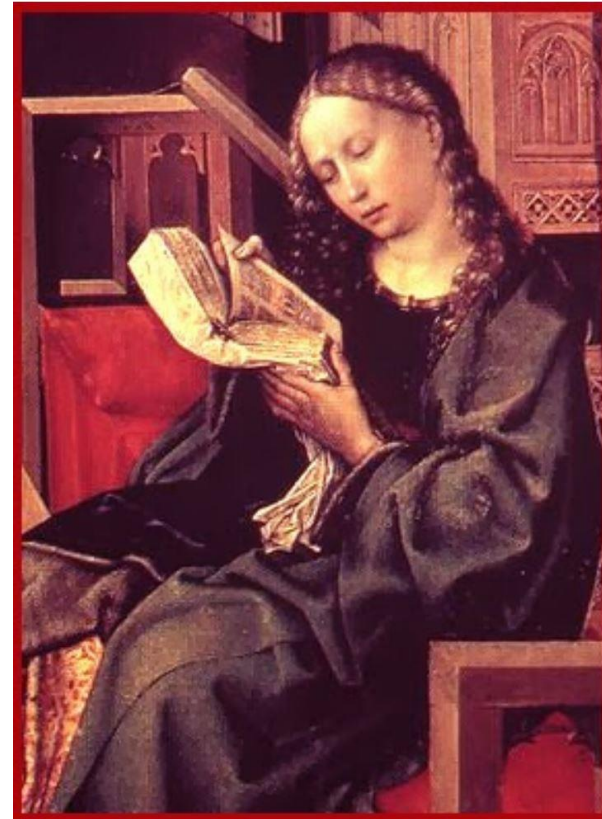
**The cast:
Charles the Bald, king of the West Franks (823 -
877)**



The cast:
Pippin II of Aquitaine (c.823 – c.864)



**The cast:
William son of Bernard of Septimania and Dhuoda
(826 – 850)**



The cast: The 'vikings'



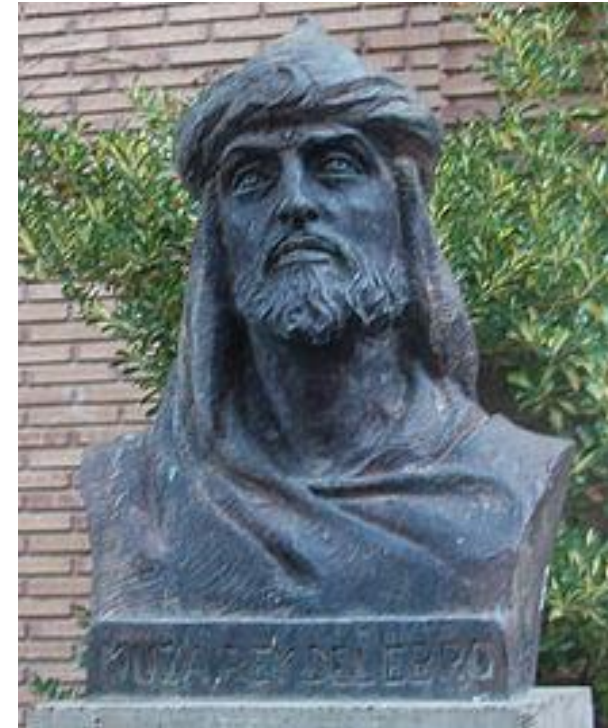
The cast:

Abd al-Raḥmān II , emir of Córdoba (792 – 852)



The cast:

Mūsā ibn Mūsā, head of the *muwallad* family of the Banū Qasī



The cast: Iñigo/Eneko 'Arista', 'first king of Pamplona'



The cast:

Ordoño I, king of Asturias (c.821 - 866)



The cast:
Sancho Sánchez 'Mitarra', count of Gascony



**So let us begin: ‘Who prologue-like your humble
patience pray, gently to hear, kindly to judge, our
play.’**



Both sides of the Pyrenees: the treaty of Verdun



Immediate Background: 844-845

- Siege of Toulouse by Charles the Bald
- Execution of Bernard of Septimania
- Pippin II of Aquitaine
- Bernard's son William
- Treaty of Fleury (Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire)
- Counts of Gascony
- The 'vikings'

‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s embassy to Charles the Bald at Reims and William’s visit to Córdoba



‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s embassy to Charles the Bald at Reims and William’s visit to Córdoba

Annals of Saint-Bertin (AB), 847:

‘Envoys of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, king of the Saracens, came from Córdoba in Spain to Charles to seek a peace and a firm treaty. [Charles] received them fittingly at Rheims, and dismissed them.’

‘Là [Reims], il reçoit les ambassadeurs d’Abd-er-Rhaman, roi des Sarrasins, arrivant de Cordoue, en Espagne, pour lui demander paix et alliance. Le roi les reçut honorablement et les congédia.’

‘Legati Abdirhaman regis Saracenorum a Corduba Hispaniae ad Karolum pacis petendae foederisque firmandi gratia veniunt, quos apud Remorum Durocortorum decenter et suscepit et absoluit.’

‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s embassy to Charles the Bald at Reims and William’s visit to Córdoba

‘Gulyālim, son of Barbāṭ son of Gulyālim, one of the great counts of Frankia, asked to make peace with the Emir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, and left for Córdoba to meet with the Emir.’

‘Gulyālim, hijo de Barbāṭ hijo de Gulyālim, uno de los grandes condes (Qūmis) de Ifran̄ya, pidió hacer las paces con el emir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, e (incluso marchó) a Córdoba para entrevistarse.’

‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s embassy to Charles the Bald at Reims and William’s visit to Córdoba

William was well received in Córdoba:

‘Abd al-Raḥmān II granted William “hospitality and showered him and the members of the delegation accompanying him with gifts” clearly seeing the potential uses of the Frank, before sending him “back to the March to fight the Frankish king”’.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān le recibió con hospitalidad y le colmó de regalos a él y a los miembros de la delegación que le acompañada. Luego le mandó que volviese a la Marca para combatir al rey de los francos Luḍrīq, hijo de Qārlu, hijo de Bibin [Pippin the Short/Pépin le Bref the father of Charlemagne, d. 768].’

‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s embassy to Charles the Bald at Reims and William’s visit to Córdoba

According to Ibn Ḥayyān ‘Umayyad support took the form of “the help of the governors of the border” allowing William to “lead victorious incursions into the lands of the Franks”’.

‘Con la ayuda de los gobernadores de la Frontera (Zaragosa) pudo Gulyalīm dirigir victoriosas incursiones en tierras francas castigando a los que, entre sus compatriotas, intentaron rebelarse contra la autoridad de Córdoba. Durante algún tiempo sus mensajes siguieron llegando al emir ‘Abd al- Raḥmān.’

This support from the Umayyad ‘governors of the border’, likely the brothers ‘Amīr and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Kulayb, was only forthcoming later when William did actually move to the Spanish March.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s embassy to Charles the Bald at Reims William’s visit to Córdoba

William’s visit to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II at Córdoba in late 846, or more likely in early 847, must have been an initiative of Pippin II, or at the least with Pippin’s agreement or encouragement.

The 'viking' siege and capture of Bordeaux, 847- 48, and the imprisonment and release of William



The 'viking' siege and capture of Bordeaux, 847- 48, and the imprisonment and release of William

AB, 847:

'Dani Aquitaniae maritime impetunt et praedantur urbemque Burdegalam diu oppugnant..'

'Danes attacked and plundered the coastal regions of Aquitaine. They laid siege to the town of Bordeaux for a long time.'

ChronFont, 848:

'Nortmanni Burdegalium urbem ceperunt, et ducem eiusdem urbis Guilhelmum noctu.'

'The Northmen captured the city of Bordeaux by night as well as its duke, William'

William attempts to regain his family's position in the Spanish March

AB, 848:

‘Guilhelmus, filius Bernardi, Imporium et Barcinonam dolo magi squam ui capit.’

‘William, son of Bernard, captured Ampurias and Barcelona by guile rather than force.’

ChronFont, 849:

‘Isto anno, Vuilhelmus filius Bernardi ducis, Barcinonam urbem Hispaniae munitissimam cepit per dolum, expulso Aledranno custode illius urbis, et limitis Hispanici.’

‘In the same year [849] William, Duke Bernard’s son, captured the heavily fortified Spanish city of Barcelona by guile, and expelled Aledramnus, the guardian of the said city and of the Spanish border region.’

William attempts to regain his family's position in the Spanish March

Had some vikings from Bordeaux assisted William?

William attempts to regain his family's position in the Spanish March

Ibn Ḥayyān gives more details:

‘In the year 234 (5 August, 848 - 26 July, 849), Gulyalīm, son of Barbat, son of Gulyalīm, who had previously conducted an embassy to the emir 'Abd al-Raḥmān, achieved several victories against the opponents of the power of Córdoba in his own country. With a powerful army, reinforced by Muslim contingents, he entered Frankish lands. He slew many enemies, burned and destroyed several towns, and carried off a number of captives. Then he besieged Barcelona and caused serious damage to the city. He then advanced towards Gerona (Yurunda) and reached its outskirts. He sent messages to the emir 'Abd al-Raḥmān in Córdoba, giving an account of his incursions and stating that he would repeat his expeditions, in response to which the emir ordered that he be answered, thanking him and promising help and reward.’

Charles the Bald finally gains control of Toulouse, 849

ChronFont, 849:

‘King Charles held a general assembly of the Franks in the city of Chartres, where Charles, Pippin’s aforementioned brother, was tonsured and sent directly to the monastery at Corbie.’

AB, 849:

‘Charles went into Aquitaine, and managed to subdue nearly everyone by peaceful means, by Christ’s favour. Then he made arrangements, at his own discretion, for the government of the Spanish March.’

ChronFont, 849:

‘Setting off on his way from there [Chartres], the King crossed the river Loire, and when he reached the city of Limoges, the Aquitanian magnates came to meet him and welcomed him with great honour. From there he went straight on to the rebellious city of Toulouse, having sent some of the leaders of his army on ahead of him to besiege the city. During this siege the venerable Herbert, abbot of the monastery of St Wandrille, and the illustrious Odo were made responsible for guarding the so-called Narbonne Gate. And Herbert’s men threw in fire, and burned down most of the said gate, which so frightened the commander of the city, named Fridolo [Fredelo], that he came to surrender the very next day. And when oaths had been sworn and the King had entered the city, the town was returned to his custody.’

Septimania and the Spanish March rally to Charles, 849



Narbonne



Albi

850: some Aquitanian magnates return to Pippin

But in 850 after Charles had left the Midi:

‘the Aquitanians broke their promise of loyalty and once again allied themselves with Pippin’ (*ChronFont*, 850)

Which Aquitanians?

Was it just Pippin’s Gascons?

The capture and execution of William at Barcelona, 850

AB, 850:

‘Guilhelmus, Bernardi filius, in marca Hispanica Aledramnum et Isembardum comites dolo capit ; sed ipse dolosius captus et apud Barcinonem interfectus est.’

‘In the Spanish March, William, son of Bernard, captured counts Aledramn and Isembard by a trick. But he himself was captured by a still craftier trick and was killed at Barcelona.’

The capture and execution of William at Barcelona, 850

ChronFont, 849/850:

‘William seized the city of Barcelona and captured Isembard, Warin’s son, and Aledramnus by deceit, under the pretence of peace. But not long afterwards, when William waged war against our men, he was defeated, and a large number of the traitors was lost. He fled in the belief that he could regain Barcelona, but was condemned to death at the instigation of Aledramnus and various Goths, and this was how the son of iniquity perished.’

The letter of Bishop Eulogius of Córdoba to Bishop Wiliesind of Pamplona



The letter of Bishop Eulogius of Córdoba to Bishop Wiliesind of Pamplona in 851

In 849 (or 848-49) the Christian bishop of Muslim Córdoba, Eulogius, wanted to visit his two ‘brothers’ in the land of Louis the German ‘of Bavaria’, ‘*Gallia Toga*’, but:

‘The way was filled with brigands, and corpses for all of Gothia was disturbed by the attack of William, who at that time opposed Charles, king of the Franks, relying on the help of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, king of the Arabs, agent of tyranny, rendering all paths impassable and inaccessible.’

The letter of Bishop Eulogius of Córdoba to Bishop Wiliesind of Pamplona in 851

- Because of this Eulogius tells us that he had ‘turned to the Pamplonian parts’ thinking that he would be able to migrate swiftly from there [into Gascony], no doubt via the pass at Roncesvalles/Roncevaux.
- But again he was thwarted because that region, ‘which makes a border between Pamplona, Seburici [Zubiri in Navarre on the river Agra] and *Gallia Comata*’ (Long-Haired Gaul), ‘raised their obstinate and insolent necks’ to ‘destroy the aforementioned Charles through the *factiones* of count Sancho Sánchez’ [count of Gascony] and contesting the authority of this *principe* (Charles) they had occupied the whole route (into Gascony or at least into later ‘Basse-Navarre’) and brought monstrous danger for travellers.

Had Pippin II incited Sancho to revolt?



The embassy of the Navarrese *duces* to Charles the Bald in 850

ChronFont, 850:

‘In the year 850 Charles held an assembly in the palace at Verberie [dep. Oise] in the month of June, where he was visited by envoys from Induo and Mitio, the Dukes of Navarre [*ducum Naverrorum*], who brought him gifts. And they returned after obtaining peace [...].’

Who were Induo and Mitio and why had they sent envoys to Charles, and what ‘peace’ had they obtained?

The embassy of the Navarrese *duces* to Charles the Bald in 850

Induo was likely Eneco/Iñigo ‘Arista’, the supposed ‘first king of Pamplona’.



The embassy of the Navarrese *duces* to Charles the Bald in 850

But who was *Mitio*?:

1. A Semeno/Xemeno/Jiméno, an early Gascon ancestor of the later Jiméñez dynasty at Pamplona?
2. Sancho Sánchez (called *Mitarra*), the Gascon count?
3. Mūsā ibn Mūsā of the Banū Qasī?

All these possibilities (and others) have been proposed.

The embassy of the Navarrese *duces* to Charles the Bald in 850

- In my (present and tentative) opinion the most likely scenario is that *Mitio* was Mūsā ibn Mūsā, but the other options cannot be excluded.
- Mūsā and his relative and his ally Iñigo Arista were rebelling against Córdoba rule at precisely this date (849-50).
- But the rebellion of Iñigo and Mūsā was extremely quickly resolved without any bloodshed because the emir of Córdoba, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, sent an army against Mūsā, who immediately submitted and gave hostages, including his own son Ismaïl, and Mūsā then became a loyal supporter of Córdoba for the rest of his life.
- That sometime before this re-submission to Córdoba rule Iñigo and Mūsā had tried to solicit the support Charles the Bald in their opposition to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II seems credible.

The capture of Sancho Sánchez by Mūsā ibn Mūsā

In the late ninth-century *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, we are told that sometime after 850:

‘Later, Musa turned his arms against the Franks and the Gauls (*Francos et Gallos*) and brought about great slaughter and pillage. He captured two great Frankish commanders (*Francorum magnos duces*) called *Sanctio* and *Epulo*, partly through battle, partly through treachery, and bound them in chains.’

Sanctio is the Gascon Sancho Sánchez. *Epulo* is likely the name Ebles, a possible relative of the Frankish count Aeblus/Eblus in 824.

The capture of Sancho Sánchez by Mūsā ibn Mūsā

One possible context: Ibn Ḥayyān (987-1076) wrote:

‘En este año (237: 851-852) fue la batalla de la Blanca (*al-Bayda*’) - la Blanca (*al-Bayda*’) está proxima a la ciudad (*madīna*) de *B.qīra* de la región de *Banbalūna* (*balad Banbalūna*) - entre los musulmanes y los infieles (*kafara*) *ŷallassiyyūn*.’

The Mosul-born Ibn-el-Athîr (1160-1233) wrote:

‘La même année, des troupes musulmanes pénétrèrent sur le territoire des polythéistes et remportèrent la victoire dans une grande bataille bien connue en Espagne sous le nom d’affaire d’El-Beyd’â.

The capture of Sancho Sánchez by Mūsā ibn Mūsā

If Ibn Ḥayyān's *yallassiyyun* (or *glashkiyun/galasqiyyun*) means Gascons, and not Asturians (often called *yilliqiyun*).

Then this victory of Mūsā could have been over Sancho's Gascons, perhaps in Gascony itself and not in Spanish Navarre as is sometimes claimed.

It could have taken place in 851, because by September 852 Sancho had captured or betrayed Pippin II and handed over to Charles the Bald.

But other dates and scenarios are possible.

The battle or battles at Albelda/Monte Laturce/Clavijo in the Rioja



The battle or battles at Albelda/Monte Laturce/Clavijo in the Rioja

Chronicle of Alfonso III, chap. 26:

‘King Ordoño moved his army against him [Mūsā] and came to the city called Albelda that Musa had just recently built with wonderful workmanship. The king arrived with his army and surrounded it with tents on the mountain called Laturce. King Ordoño divided his army into two units, one to besiege the city, the other to fight against Musa. They immediately engaged with Musa and his army and his army were put in flight. Meeting them they made such a slaughter of them that more than 10,000 of Musa’s best soldiers, along with his son-in-law by the name of Garcia, were killed, not counting the footsoldiers. Musa himself, struck by a sword three times, escaped only half alive, losing many of the battle supplies and gifts Charles, king of the Franks, had sent. Never, from then on, did he win a victory. King Ordoño then sent the army to the city of Albelda and stormed it on the seventh day of the fighting. He killed all of the soldiers with the sword. He destroyed the city itself down to its foundations and returned to his own city with great victory (...).’

The battle or battles at Albelda/Monte Laturce/Clavijo in the Rioja

- The context and date(s) of this battle(s) between Mūsā and Ordoño I of Asturias have been endlessly debated.
- Was there one battle in either 851/852, or were there two, the first in 851 and the second in 859/60?
- Or is the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* in chapters 25 and 26 an unreliable composite pastiche written as a sort of ‘praise poem’ for Ordoño I?

Summary remarks

- The very real trans-pyrenean connections and joining the dots.
- The immediate and later consequences for the development of future polities: France, Aquitaine, Gascony, 'Gothia', Catalonia, Navarre, Aragon and Asturias.

Thank you for your interest!