CHAPTER THREE

INDEPENDENCE ON THE PERIPHERY:
CALAHORRA’S AUTONOMOUS DEVELOPMENT, 1109–1146

3.1 Bishop Sancho de Grañón (1109–1116)

Bishop Pedro’s death on November 1, 1108, is recorded in the necrology of the Cathedral of Calahorra.¹ Sancho de Grañón was elected sometime between that date and November 3, 1109, when he was consecrated in Rome by Pope Paschal II.² His episcopate, which lasted until his own death in August 1116, coincided with the most serious political crisis to affect Christian Iberia during the first half of the twelfth century. This was sparked by the death at the Battle of Uclés on June 24, 1108, of the Infante Sancho, the only male heir of the ageing and ailing Alfonso VI, which left the king’s eldest legitimate daughter, Urraca, first in line to the Throne of Leon-Castile.³ Her qualifications for succession were far from ideal: she was not only female and single, and therefore a powerful magnet for the fiercely competitive attentions of the Leonese-Castilian nobility, but also had a legitimate son from her previous marriage to Count Raymond of Burgundy (d.1107), around whom opposition to her own position could crystallize. In June 1109, the moribund Alfonso VI officially proclaimed Urraca his heir and arranged for her marriage to Alfonso I ‘the battler’ of Aragon. By doing so, he attempted to neutralize the dangers inherent in Urraca’s imminent succession, while at the same time enlisting a powerful ruler in the defense of his southern frontiers from an increasingly intimidating Almoravid threat.⁴

In the event, neither of these measures proved sufficient to avert the violent anarchy that engulfed the Kingdom of Leon-Castile between 1110 and 1117. The marriage of Urraca and Alfonso I of Aragon took place in the autumn of 1109. A few months later, the Galician nobility revolted in the name of the queen’s son, Alfonso Raimúndez, whose chances of succeeding to the Leonese-Castilian throne had been seriously undermined by the union. The mechanism of joint sovereignty upon which the marriage of Urraca and Alfonso I was based also broke down repeatedly, and by the late summer of 1111 the empire of Alfonso VI’s creation had been entirely submerged in a violent mesh of overlapping conflicts from which barely an element within Leonese-Castilian society was excluded: while the queen alternated between armed opposition to Alfonso I in association with her son’s supporters, and reconciliations with her husband that involved her in the suppression of the Galician revolt, the bulk of the Leonese-Castilian episcopate, led by Bernard of Sédirac, the Archbishop of Toledo, mounted a fierce ecclesiastical attack on Alfonso I’s position by securing papal condemnations of his consanguineous marriage to Urraca; Diego Gelmírez, the Bishop of Santiago de Compostela, entered the fray in defense of his own enormous seigniorial interests in the face of an antagonistic Galician aristocracy, sometimes in alliance with Urraca and the Archbishop of Toledo, and at others in open opposition to them; at the same time, Count Henry of Burgundy and his wife Teresa, Urraca’s half-sister, entrenched their position in an increasingly independent County of Portugal; finally, the towns along the pilgrimage route from Burgos to Santiago took advantage of the conflict in order to rise up in Alfonso I’s name against the onerous lordship of the great, and for the most part ecclesiastical, magnates to whom they were subject.5

These multiple conflicts cooled significantly after the summer of 1117, when Urraca agreed a truce with her estranged husband that recognized his possession of the Rioja, Burgos, Castrojeriz, and Carrión de los Condes; ceded control over the southern Extremadura region, including its capital, Toledo, to her son, Alfonso Raimúndez; and

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