CHAPTER FOUR

COMING OF AGE: CALAHORRA, 1147–1190

4.1 Bishop Rodrigo Cascante and Royal Authority

The first uncontested documentary appearance of Rodrigo Cascante as Bishop of Calahorra occurs in the dating clause of a charter issued on May 18, 1147.1 His death on October 1, 1190 is recorded in his cathedral's necrology.2 The 43 years that elapsed between those two dates witnessed the longest episcopate in the entire history of the Bishopric of Calahorra.3 They also overlapped with the reigns of three successive Kings of Leon-Castile and Castile: the ‘Emperor’ Alfonso VII, king of a united Leon-Castile from 1127 until 1157, into whose kingdom the Rioja had been re-absorbed on the death of Alfonso I of Aragon in 1134; Sancho III, his eldest son, who was endowed with the ‘Kingdom of Nájera’, comprising the Rioja and adjoining parts of Old Castile, as well as the lordship of Navarrese Artajona, by his father in 1152 and briefly occupied Castile’s throne from August 1157 to July 1158; and Sancho’s successor Alfonso VIII, who inherited the Crown of Castile at the age of three, attained his majority in November 1169 aged fourteen, and went on to outlive Rodrigo Cascante by 24 years.4

Cascante’s episcopate also coincided with the definitive consolidation of Tarragona’s metropolitan authority under a series of forceful
Archbishops between 1146 and 1193. The archiepiscopates of Tarragona’s first resident post-Reconquest archbishops Bernard Tort (1146–63), Hugh de Cervelló (1164–71), Guillem de Tarroja (1172–4), and Berenguer de Vilademuls (1174–93), marked the end of Tarragona’s administration by the bishops of neighbouring Vic and Barcelona.\(^5\) During this period, the metropolitan province of Tarragona took on a new significance as the ecclesiastical counterpart to the secular geopolitical construct that had been born of the union of the County of Barcelona and the Kingdom of Aragon under Count Ramón Berenguer IV in 1137. An ecclesiastical council summoned in Gerona by the papal legate Cardinal Guido in November 1143 had ruled that the metropolitan authority of the (then vacant) Archdiocese of Tarragona should be coterminous with the political authority of the Count of Barcelona, and when, in 1154, Tarragona first received a papal confirmation of its metropolitan province, the Navarrese Bishopric of Pamplona and the Castilian Bishopric of Calahorra were the only two of Tarragona’s suffragans that did not coincide with the secular political map of Aragon-Barcelona.\(^6\)

The Archbishops of Tarragona during the second half of the twelfth century not only enjoyed close personal ties to the rulers of Aragon-Barcelona (Hugh de Cervelló was the uncle of Alfonso II of Aragon-Barcelona, and had, together with Guillem de Tarroja and Berenguer de Vilademuls, formed part of the regency government that had ruled during the count-king’s minority), but also provided the novel political construct over which they ruled with essential ‘ecclesiastical cement’.\(^7\) It was in this context that the Archbishops of Tarragona began to summon provincial councils, exercise their jurisdictional authority at a provincial level, and, significantly, resist their submission to the primacy of Toledo.\(^8\) It was also in this context that Tarragona began to

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\(^{7}\) McCrank, *Restoration and Reconquest*, pp.448–70.

\(^{8}\) Although, in the words of Lawrence McCrank, ‘the issue of the establishment of the metropolitan jurisdiction of the archbishops throughout the Tarraconensis…must await additional study’ (ibid., p.571), his own and other works provide a clear indication that this jurisdiction, which had been conspicuous for its absence during the early period of Tarragona’s restoration, was increasingly visible as of the 1140s: Ibid., pp.402–31 & p.578 footnote 16; Josep Iglésies, *La restauració de Tarragona*, Barcelona, 1963, p.33; José Goñi Gaztambide, *Historia de los obispos de Pamplona*, Pamplona, 1979, vol.I, pp.440–1.