

The History of the Crusades Podcast presents
Reconquista: The Rise of Al-Andalus and the Reconquest of Spain
Episode 66
Succession Drama Part 3

Hello again. Last time, we saw King Alfonso VII of Leon and Castile emerge as the clear winner out of the chaos following the death of Alfonso of Aragon. In recognition of the fact that most of the Christian regions of the Iberian peninsula are now under his control, and that his influence has now extended over the Pyrenees into France, King Alfonso VII had himself crowned as Emperor in the year 1135.

The runner-up in the battle for spoils is the new Count of Barcelona, Ramon Berenguer IV, who has managed to score himself a new baby bride in the form of baby Petronila, the infant daughter of the new King of Aragon, King Ramiro II. Well, to be fair, Count Ramon Berenguer hasn't actually married his baby bride, but they are betrothed, and in acknowledgement of the fact that Count Ramon Berenguer will one day inherit the Kingdom of Aragon, King Ramiro II has pretty much handed the reigns of the kingdom over to his future son-in-law. This outcome suited everyone involved. King Ramiro II became king in name only. Having handed all his kingly duties over to the Count of Barcelona he went back to being a monk. He was still happily living his best life in a monastery when he died twenty years later. His wife, Agnes of Poitiers, returned to Poitiers, and baby Petronila concentrated on being a baby. She won't in fact be married to the Count of Barcelona until she comes of age in the year 1150. So everyone's happy.

Getting back to the players on the ground, the other, more distant runner-up in the post-Alfonso of Aragon scramble, is the new King of Navarre Garcia Ramirez IV, who looks like he will succeed in leveraging Navarre away from Aragon and hanging on to his new kingdom. The clear loser out of the whole event is Pope Innocent II, who is currently stomping around in Rome, furious that the Kingdom of Aragon is no longer a direct vassal of Rome and that King Alfonso of Aragon's plan to gift his kingdom to three military orders in Jerusalem has apparently come to nothing.

Now I should point out that although King Garcia Ramirez IV of Navarre has been awarded the prize of distant runner-up, his hold on power at this point in time is by no means secure. Navarre's neighbour and recent overlord Aragon is now under the control of the experienced and competent Count of Barcelona, who would no doubt like to see Navarre come once again under the control of Aragon. Likewise, King Alfonso VII of Leon and Castile is also making trouble in the borderlands between Castile and Navarre. In fact, the likelihood of Navarre losing its status as a kingdom and once again being split between Aragon and Castile currently looks like a pretty good bet. Fortunately for Navarre, their new king is proving himself to be pretty competent on the battlefield, but it's a real David and Goliath situation, with the tiny Kingdom of Navarre facing the united front of Aragon, Catalonia, Leon, and Castile as its adversary.

In February of the year 1140, King Alfonso VII and Count Ramon Berenguer IV sat down and divided Navarre between them, but to their surprise Navarre refused to sit back and accept its fate. Instead, under the leadership of its new king, it pushed back against its powerful neighbours, so much so that only eight months after the division of Navarre, King Alfonso VII was forced into a rethink. Likely wanting the conflict on the borders with Navarre and Castile to die down so he could get back to focusing on Portugal, King Alfonso VII drew up a treaty with King Garcia Ramirez, whereby Navarre could keep all the

territory on its side of the Ebro River, while Castile held on to the territory on the Castilian side. To seal the deal King Alfonso VII agreed to betroth his eldest son Sancho, who you might recall recently missed out on scoring a betrothal to baby Petronila, to Blanca, the daughter of King Garcia Ramirez of Navarre. Both children are only around six years old at this point in time, but the betrothal was a huge leap forward for the Kingdom of Navarre. It effectively ensured the survival of the kingdom. It was now not only recognised as a kingdom in its own right by the powerful King and Emperor Alfonso VII, but Leon and Castile now has an interest in ensuring the survival of Navarre so that young Sancho may one day become its King.

In recognition of this fact, a truce was also negotiated between Navarre and Aragon / Catalonia, although in his book "The Contest of Christian and Muslim Spain" Bernard Reilly notes that the truce between Navarre and Aragon didn't stop border fighting between the two regions which continued until the year 1146. Still, it meant that Navarre was officially back, baby. It was smaller than the previous Kingdom of Navarre, but small or not it was still a kingdom, and it was here to stay. As stated by Bernard Reilly, and I quote "this modest kingdom would continue to survive all vicissitudes down until its incorporation into early modern Spain in the year 1512" end quote. So we can officially welcome the Kingdom of Navarre back to the narrative. Woohoo!

So, does that mean the fallout from Alfonso of Aragon's will is at an end? No, it's still going. After resolving the Navarre issue, Count Ramon Berenguer then worked to consolidate his hold over the Kingdom of Aragon. He did this in two ways. His first task was to make sure that he had the support of all the people who mattered inside Aragon, in particular the power-brokers, the leading noblemen, and anyone else who could take a stand against the kind of unusual situation which was currently playing out. It's not every day, after all, when your king goes back to being a monk while handing the rule of your kingdom over to one of your traditional enemies. The Count of Barcelona, however, managed to get all of the important personages inside Aragon on his side, and managed to keep them there. As Bernard Reilly notes, and I quote "despite the most unusual character of his ascension there is no evidence of resistance to his role in Aragon" end quote.

Why was there no resistance? Well, basically, because Ramon Berenguer let the noblemen of Aragon have exactly what they wanted. They wanted stable rule by a competent administrator, they wanted their privileges and power to remain as they were under Alfonso of Aragon, and they wanted the autonomy to make decisions over their own land and regions, and that's exactly what the Count of Barcelona gave them. In return, they gave him their loyalty.

The second manner in which Count Ramon Berenguer secured his rule over Aragon was to resolve the outstanding issue of the non-enforcement of Alfonso of Aragon's will with both the Pope and the three military Orders who were the beneficiaries of the will. During the years 1140 and 1141, the Count of Barcelona embarked on a charm offensive with the three military orders in Jerusalem, offering them land and other benefits inside the Kingdom of Aragon. As stated by Bernard Reilly, and I quote "they received castles and fields, fiefs and villages, parts of villages and towns, the income from offices or parts of it, parts of the income from judicial proceedings, rents, and even a fifth portion of the booty from future raids into Muslim territory" end quote. These revenues were used to support the operations of the three Orders in Jerusalem, and it turns out that this was exactly what they wanted. By the end of the year 1141 all three military Orders had formally renounced their claims to the throne of Aragon.

Unfortunately though, it will take Rome much longer to forgive and forget the fact that Alfonso of Aragon's will had been completely ignored. It wasn't until the year 1158, more than two decades after Alfonso of Aragon's death, that Pope Hadrian IV formally affirmed Count Ramon Berenguer's title to the lands held by Alfonso of Aragon.

So now, after more than twenty years of uncertainty, we can finally declare the succession drama following Alfonso of Aragon's death to be over. Whoa.

There's one more region we need to examine though, before we declare this period of kingdom creation in the Christian portion of the Iberian Peninsula to be over, and that region is of course Portugal. When we last left Portugal back in the year 1128, Alfonso Henriques had knocked his mother, Queen Theresa of Portugal, off her throne, forcing her into exile in Galicia. Alfonso Henriques then began to rule Portugal, but was careful not to refer to himself as King, partly due to the fact that his mother, the self-proclaimed Queen of Portugal, was still alive, and also due to the fact that Portugal's claim to be a kingdom was far from rock solid. It had become a kingdom solely due to Queen Theresa's desire to be a Queen like her sister Urraca, so Alfonso Henriques, while stressing his right to rule Portugal, did not refer to himself as the "King of Portugal". Instead, at the commencement of his rule, he styled himself as "Infans", a term in Latin meaning a person who does not yet speak. Queen Theresa died in the year 1130, and Alfonso Henriques' hold on power must have seemed more secure, but he faced the first real test of his rule in the following year, when Vermudo Perez staged a rebellion in an attempt to seize power.

Who was Vermudo Perez? Well, he was the brother of Queen Theresa's lover, Fernando Perez, and he claimed ties to the throne of Portugal due to the fact that he had married Queen Theresa's daughter from her former marriage to Count Henry of Portugal, which made him Theresa's son in law and also sort of her brother in law, which must have been a bit confusing. Anyway, the revolt was spectacularly unsuccessful. Alfonso Henriques stamped it out with ease, and Vermudo Perez and his wife were forced into exile in Galicia in a similar manner to the fate of Vermudo's mother in law / sister in law, Queen Theresa.

By the year 1135 everyone inside Portugal appeared to accept Alfonso Henriques as their new ruler. No more rebellions looked likely to break out, and Alfonso Henriques began work on an impressive fortress at Leiria, 70 kilometres to the south-east of Coimbra, a move which was designed to block the approach to Coimbra from Muslim Lisbon.

It was around this time that Alfonso Henriques began calling himself "Portugalenses Princeps", or "Leader of Portugal".

As Bernard Reilly points out, at this point in time conflict between Portugal and its large neighbour, the Kingdom of Leon and Castile, became pretty much inevitable for two reasons. Firstly, no one really knew where the boundaries were between Portugal and Leon and Castile, with the border between Portugal and Galicia being particularly fluid. Secondly, Emperor Alfonso VII was likely put out that his cousin Alfonso Henriques was refusing to play ball and allow Portugal to be subsumed under the umbrella of Leon and Castile, which had by this point in time subsumed just about everywhere else.

Alfonso Henriques, though, held his ground. He reached out to the only other player in Christian Spain who wasn't bowing to King Alfonso's demands, that player being, of course, the new King of Navarre. It seems that the King of Navarre and the ruler of Portugal decided to keep King Alfonso VII on his toes by invading the border regions of the

large and powerful Kingdom of Leon and Castile at its opposite ends. Portugal invaded into Galicia and Navarre invaded into Castile. In the year 1137 Alfonso Enriques managed to successfully conquer the southern Galician town of Tui. King Alfonso VII couldn't let this stand, so he marched his armies all the way to Galicia and retook Tui. This prompted Alfonso Enriques to come to terms with his cousin, King Alfonso. He swore fealty to King Alfonso, then raced southwards to deal with a threat from the Almoravids.

For the next few years, Alfonso Henriques was kept busy, racing from the southernmost parts of Portugal to the northernmost parts, pushing back against encroachments onto his territory, and attempting to push the boundaries of Portugal as far as his neighbours would let him. It turns out that the noblemen in southern Galicia were no match for the Portuguese forces, so Alfonso Enriques, despite his pledge of fealty to the King of Leon and Castile, found himself scoring a bunch of regions in southern Galicia. Once again, King Alfonso VII of Leon and Castile, found himself racing westwards to push back against Portuguese encroachment.

Keen to teach his upstart cousin a lesson, King Alfonso VII invaded Portugal, pushing southwards from Galicia towards the key Portuguese town of Braga. In summer of the year 1141 this invasion led to the two cousins facing each other on the battlefield. Embarrassingly for King Alfonso VII, it turned out that Alfonso Henriques was a pretty solid military commander, and King Alfonso was forced into initiating peace talks. The talks, which were presided over by the Archbishop of Braga, were successful. A bunch of castles and strongholds were exchanged, and the cousins agreed where the border line was to be drawn between the two territories.

It was around this time that Alfonso Henriques began calling himself "Portugalensium Rex" or "The King of Portugal". Not everything was going his way, though. Shortly after the declaration of peace between Portugal and Leon, the new King of Portugal was forced to race southwards, due to the fact that the Almoravids had just taken the fancy new stronghold he had constructed at Leiria.

By the following year, 1142, peace had been declared between Leon and Castile and Navarre, so at last we can finally see where things have ended up following the death of Alfonso of Aragon. The Christian portion of the Iberian peninsula is now divided amongst four kingdoms: the Kingdom of Leon and Castile; the Kingdom of Aragon / Catalonia; the Kingdom of Navarre; and the Kingdom of Portugal. So these are the players in Christian Spain as we move forward to the next phase of the Reconquista.

We will leave Christian Spain now to dust itself off and take a bit of a breather, while we return to the Muslim south. It's been a while since we have focused on events in the Muslim portions of the peninsula, and things are about to get very interesting there, as the leader of the Almoravids, Ali Ibn Yusuf, will die early in the year 1143, plunging the region into crisis. Join me next time as we catch up on events in the Almoravid-ruled regions. Until next time, bye for now.

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