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The Myth of Charles Martel: Why the Islamic Caliphate Ceased Military Operations in Western Europe after the Battle of Tours

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A Thesis in the Field of History

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

March 2019

Abstract

The Battle of Tours and its victorious leader Charles Martel are often presented as a single event that defined the course of historical events in Western Europe. The motives that drove Arab forces to invade Gaul in 732 have their roots in a century of expansion beginning in 634 in the Arabian Peninsula. The factors that drove the success of the conquest, including the incorporation of local forces would weaken over time. By the time the Battle of Tours was fought the forces driving Arab expansion were stretched to the point of breaking. The following rebellion by the Berbers and the loss of North Africa and Spain, in addition to the loss of the majority of the Caliphate's Western manpower in the Berbers, prevented further Arab encroachment into Western Europe. The Battle of Tours and other victories by Charles Martel are not inconsequential, but it was ultimately the Berber Revolt that shattered the Western Caliphate and left the Franks free to consolidate their hold on Europe.

Dedication

Dedicated to Carly, for being more than I will ever have the words to adequately express.

Acknowledgements

Professor Kevin Madigan, for his patience and encouragement throughout this project, but especially his infectious love of history.

Professor Donald Ostrowski, for allowing a perhaps overly eager student to indulge his curiosity while always applying exacting, pragmatic standards that made this project feasible.

The many Harvard Librarians and Collection Mangers too numerous to individually name but whose help made this project both manageable and complete.

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I

Introduction

In the early seventh century, Islamic forces consolidated their hold on the Arabian Peninsula after the death of the Islamic founder Mohammed (d. 632). Abu-Bakr (d. 634) emerged as the successor to Mohammed, defeating his rivals in the Ridda Wars (c. 633-634). Honed to martial proficiency by victory in the Ridda Wars, Abu-Bakr's Arab-Islamic forces burst out of Arabian Peninsula and rapidly conquered the Middle East. Initial Arab attacks into the greater Middle East were little more than raids. Finding weakness in the established Middle Eastern Empires, the full weight of Abu-Bakr's forces soon followed. The better equipped Sasanian Empire, modern Iran, was quickly subsumed and gradually incorporated by the new Arab power. The Byzantine Empire would be thrust onto the defensive and would survive only as a remnant after losing vast tracts of territory across the Middle East and North Africa. Conquering Arab forces quickly institutionalized the mechanism of a functioning state after their initial conquest of Syria, laying the foundation of the Rashidun and Umayyad Caliphates and beginning nearly a century of additional rapid expansion.[1] The Caliphate, despite periodic defeats, would continue to expand until its collapse in 750. Caliphal expansion reached its height under the Umayyads, expanding into Central Asia where it encountered the Chinese, the Indian Sub-continent, and across North Africa and into Europe. Visigoth Spain fell to the Umayyads in

[1] Gerald R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750* (London: Routledge, 2006), 21-24.

711. The Umayyads secured the port of Narbonne in what is now Southern France in 719, securing a base for raiding and eventually the conquest of additional tracts of Europe.

In 732, significant Umayyad forces were moving further into Europe when they were unexpectedly defeated at the Battle of Tours in 732. A full Umayyad invasion of Gaul, modern France, was defeated at the battle of Avignon in 737. Two years later, further expansion attempts into Europe ceased as the Umayyad Caliphate destabilized and slide into civil war. The successor Abbasid Caliphate (f. 750) would resume efforts on virtually every front with one notable exception: Western Europe would remain free from further Arab-Islamic activity. The Abbasid Caliphate transitioned away from conquest toward trade. Western Europe was so remote to the Abbasids that it would take many decades before a delegation was dispatched to the Carolingian Court to explore trade opportunities. Western Europe had once demanded the investment of tens of thousands of soldiers, protected by an expanding network of fortifications that kept Arab forces constantly capable of raiding into Western Europe to extract its wealth or, if opportunity arose, to conquer tracts of additional territory. How did Western Europe devolve from the center of Islamic expansion into an afterthought? Surely the riches of Western Europe that compelled the vast Umayyad investments had not simply evaporated?

The question becomes more puzzling when examining the Caliphate's efforts along is other borders. Why would the Abbasid Caliphate continue military efforts against the Byzantines, through modern Afghanistan into the Gurjara-Pratihara Kingdom, modern India, but not allocate resources against the weaker states of Western Europe? This study will argue that the loss of North Africa preceding the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate fundamentally altered the strategic reality for the successor Abbasid Caliphate in the West. The creation of independent Emirate of Cordoba in 756 and, in particular, the loss of the Berber tribes of North Africa

prevented the Abbasids from continuing military efforts in the West. The Berber tribesman provided the manpower that fueled Umayyad expansion in the West through the provision of foot soldiers and supplies.[2] The loss of manpower and the inability to provision large forces as they traversed North Africa protected Western Europe from the Caliphate. These factors also prevented the Abbasid reconquest of Spain then ruled by the sole surviving member of the Umayyad ruling family.[3] Taken together, the effort required to return significant forces to Western Europe were no longer worth the investment. The need to re-conquer the Berbers, never assured, was a difficult proposition by itself. The loss of Spain to the Umayyad remnants, despite the best efforts of the Abbasids to return the Iberians to the Caliphate made further attacks into Western Europe impossible. This disastrous state of affairs, at least from the Caliphate's point of view, was not caused by Charles Martel and his victory at the Battle of Tours (c. 732). It was instead the consequences of the Berber Revolt (c. 739-743) and the Caliphate's loss of Berber support that made further operations in the West impossible.

Historiography of the Battle of Tours

Many Western historians have previously argued that the absence of Caliphal forces in Western Europe was the result of Charles Martel and the Battle of Tours. A few of these historians have gone so far as to present the Battle of Tours was one of the most decisive

[2] Michael David Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 112.

[3] Robert Spencer, *The History of Jihad: From Muhammad to ISIS* (New York: Bombardier Books, Post Hill Press, 2018), 123.

victories in history.[4] The forces of the Caliphate, then the Umayyads, were so soundly defeated that they stopped attacking the mighty Franks who were certain to defeat them if ever they returned. The thrust of the claim is that the defeats were so costly in terms of the loss of forces, that regenerating additional forces and attacking in Western Europe was, from the Caliphate's perspective, an effort obviously doomed to failure. Putting aside the unpredictability of war and its outcomes and assuming such certainty of outcome, who then would invest in a military attack that was certain to fail? This notion gained traction in the nineteenth century when historian Edward Gibbon proclaimed Charles Martel the great savior of Western Christendom.[5] Several contemporary historians continue to portray the Battle of Tours as one of macrohistorical importance, a single decisive event that stopped Arab expansion in the West.[6] These authors view the defeats themselves as militarily significant enough to deter further aggression from the Caliphate and its successors. This claim often presents the Battle of Tours as foundational to the emergence of the Carolingian Empire in the relative safety the decisive victory provided.[7]

This view is problematic for several reasons. First, Caliphal forces did return after the Battle of Tours, but were once again defeated at the Battle of Avignon in 737. Second, the Battle of Akroninon (740), itself on the heels of a crushing defeat at the second Siege of Constantinople (717-718), inflicted far heavier losses than did those suffered by the Umayyads at Tours. The severity of these defeats did not prevent the Umayyads from continuing their forays against the

[4] Edward Shepherd Creasy, *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World: From Marathon to Waterloo* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2008), 138-147.

[5] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* vol. 7 (Leipsick: Fleischer, 1829), 15.

[6] Robert Payne, *History of Islam* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1959), 142.

[7] Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* 7: 16.

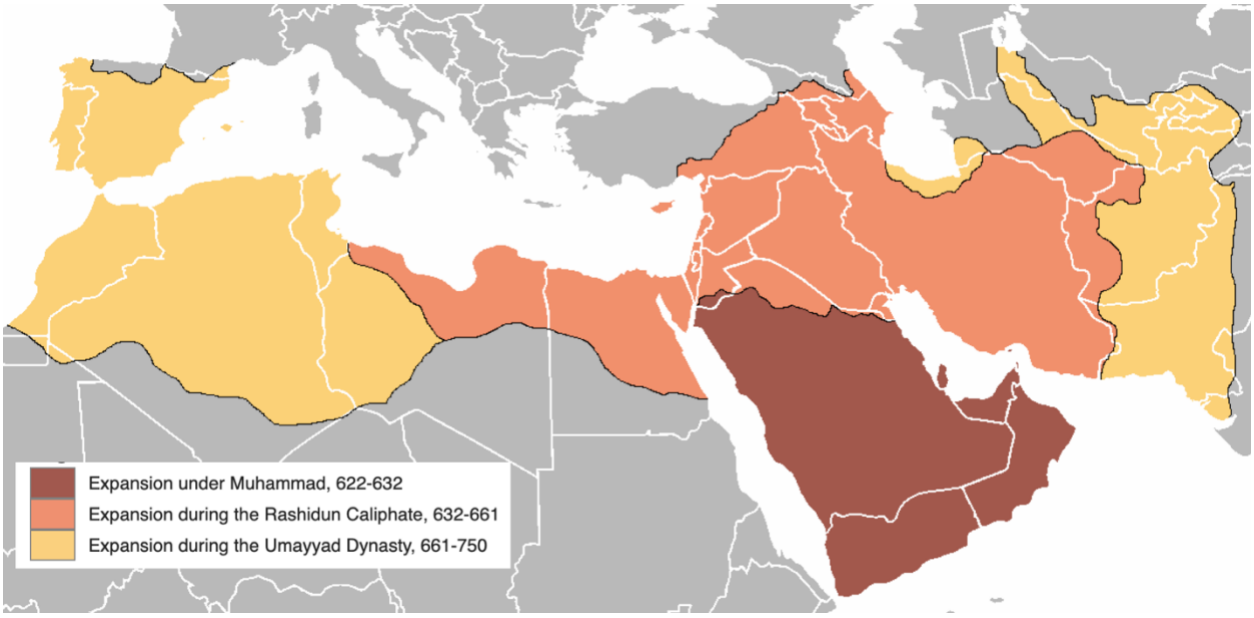
Byzantines.[8] Third, the lack of further Arab attacks allowed Charles Martel's successor, Pepin III, to conquer Aquitaine, Septimania, and Narbonne (c. 759). If the Umayyads were thoroughly crushed at the Battle of Tours732, or at least at the Battle of Avignon in 736, why then did it take a further two decades to re-capture Septimania? This removed the last beachhead of Islam West of the Pyrenees. This triumph of the Carolingians would have been difficult had the Abbasids continued the Umayyad policy of attacking the West and garrisoning the fortress at Narbonne.[9] Did the Battle of Tours scare the Abbasids into capitulation? Such a notion seems an inadequate explanation for the change in policy. Indeed, Charles Martel's attempts to retake the Umayyad garrison of Narbonne after the Battle of Avignon failed because of the sizeable Umayyad forces that remained in the region.[10] Fourth, the brief Carolingian Empire did not prevent Western Europe from again fracturing into principalities. This further assumes that the Carolingian Empire was stable and lacking in internal discord that could have been exploited, something that was certainly not the case. This further deterioration of unity made Western Europe exceptionally vulnerable to the kinds of concerted military attacks that the Byzantines continued to endure.[11]

[8] Khalid Yahya Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State: The Reign of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 200-201.

[9] Pierre Riche, *The Carolingians: A Family Who Forged Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 73-75.

[10] Riche, *The Carolingians*, 45.

[11] Kevin Madigan. *Medieval Christianity: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 78-79.



Map 1 – The Arab Caliphate at its height under the Umayyads. The Umayyads, in terms of both scope and scale, had far greater resources than the Franks in 732.[12]

If it were the martial prowess of Charles Martel that stopped the Caliphate, there was ostensibly nothing to prevent their return after his death in 741 and before the Carolingians became established. If the Caliphate desired the conquest of Western Europe, the eruption of strife following the death of Charles Martel presented a perfect opportunity. The opportunity was not taken. Why? Did the Umayyads suddenly lose their martial proclivities, but just in the West? Again, the Battle of Tours and Charles Martel does not explain changes in the Caliphate's policies in the West. Lastly, the victory at Tours did nothing to disrupt the Umayyad, or later Abbasid, ability to generate and deploy military forces. The collapse of the Umayyad dynasty less than twenty years after the Battle of Tours implies that something of greater importance than a single battle at the furthest periphery of the Caliphate transpired. Might a change the factors

[12] Age of Caliphs. September 19, 2007. Accessed February 20, 2019. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Age-of-caliphs.png.

that drove the Umayyads into Western Europe, of which the Franks had no impact, explain the absence of these forces? What then, are those factors? How do the events inside the Caliphate explain changes in Umayyad policy in the West? What was the context of the Battle of Tours within Umayyad strategies extending from Spain to India? Most importantly, did, or perhaps could, the Battle of Tours have had a strategically significant effect on the vast Caliphate?

Indeed, there are indications that events of far greater importance happening at the center of the Umayyad Caliphate according to historian Philip Harari. Harari's view is in general alignment with Arab historians who view the Battle of Tours as rather less important than their Western counterparts and certainly not historically decisive in and of itself. Arab chroniclers emphasize the rising Abbasid Revolt (c. 747-750), the decline in governance, and discrimination of non-Arab Muslims fueling revolutionary discontent that led to the fall of the Umayyads in 750.[13] It is this decline and the re-direction of efforts toward the center coupled with rising disharmony among the social and military ranks throughout the Caliphate that explains the absence of Arab forces after the Battle of Tours in the West.[14] Hitti notes that Arab raids continued into Lyon for a further nine years after the Battle of Tours, and that the Arab strategic base at Narbonne lasted until 759.[15] These are not the actions of an Empire that suffered a historically crippling defeat. In Hitti's view it is the flight of Abd al-Rahman and the establishment of Al-Andalus in Spain that prevents further encroachment from the Caliphate.[16]

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[13] Philip Khuri Hitti, *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 500-507.

[14] Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 501.

[15] Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 501.

[16] Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 505.

The establishment of Al-Andalus certainly precluded the easy transport of Arab forces from North Africa into France. However, Al-Andalus would remain vulnerable to forces traveling from Egypt and Assyria unless something prevented them from first arriving in Al-Andalus. It defies expectation that the Abbasids would leave the sole surviving member of the lineage alive if they had more effective means to eliminate him. Three centuries virtually free of such efforts on the Western frontier of the Caliphate attests to a barrier being in place that prevented the Abbasids from the easy elimination of Abd al-Rahman.[17] The Abbasids dispatched no large forces to eliminate their Umayyad rival in Spain. Instead, they relied on destabilizing agents and financial inducements to disaffected opponents of Abd al-Rahman that were ultimately ineffective in eliminating the establishment of a rival, and presumably more legitimate, Umayyad line in Al-Andalus.[18]

Additionally, had the Battle of Tours been decisive, Alphonso I of the Kingdom of Asturias in Northern Spain would likely have taken advantage of the weakened Umayyad forces and embarked upon the expansion of his realm immediately after the battle. Instead, this expansion takes place after the successful Berber revolt eight years later.[19] Presumably, Alphonso was in a position to accurately judge the strength of the Umayyads in Spain, and his success indicates that his judgment of the relative vulnerability was correct. The Arab view of the establishment of Al-Andalus does place a strategic barrier between the rising Carolingians and the Abbasid Caliphate. However, Al-Andalus was continually threatened from the North by

[17] Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 509.

[18] Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 507.

[19] Roger Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain: 710-797* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 320.

Asturias and the Franks who effectively kept Al-Andalus and its enemies in a stalemate.[20] Without significant reinforcement from the Middle East, as with the initial conquest of Spain and the incursions beyond the Pyrenees, the forces in Spain and France were at a point of strategic parity.

If the Battle of Tours was not decisive, then what caused the Umayyads and Abbasids to cease their military efforts into Gaul? Arab historians focus attention on the Abbasid Revolt rather than on battles with the Franks and Berbers. The Abbasid Revolt, given their assumption of the Caliphate's governance, is generally believed by Arab historians to be central to the understanding of the realignment of the Caliphate's resources.[21] The understandable significance of events in the core of the Caliphate are critical to explaining events on the periphery of the Caliphate. However, given the many fronts the Umayyads and Abbasids were conducting military operations, it would be inaccurate to say that the weight of these operations did not also affect the core. This would be particularly true if the Caliphate was strained beyond its capacity to support all of its operations at the periphery. This diminishment of peripheral issues is noted in dedicated studies of ancillary events such as the Berber Revolt or the push into Transoxiana. Arab historians focused on the center of the Caliphate often treat the Berber Revolt, much like the Battle of Tours, as an interesting aside.[22] Khalid Yahya Blankinship tackles this problem by arguing that it was a series of military defeats across the periphery of the Caliphate that

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[20] R. A. Fletcher, "Reconquest and Crusade in Spain C. 1050-1150," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 37 (1987): 31-33. doi:10.2307/3679149.

[21] Paul M. Comb, *White Banners: Contention in 'Abbasid Syria, 750-880* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) 5-8.

[22] Nicola Clarke, "They Are the Most Treacherous of People: Religious Difference in Arabic Accounts of the Three Early Medieval Berber Revolts," *EHumanista: Journal of Iberian Studies* 24 (2013): 518, http://www.ehumanista.uscb.edu/volumes/24.

overwhelmed its once dominate Umayyad military's ability to respond. Blankinship contends that it is these defeats that exacerbated the internal struggles that ultimately unraveled the Umayyad Caliphate.[23] How important is the Battle of Tours or Charles Martel if it is just one of a series of defeats necessary to overwhelm the Umayyad Caliphate? Despite the disruption caused by the Abbasid Revolt, a renewed Caliphate would emerge capable of generating forces on all previous military fronts save the Western region beyond Tunisia. This removal of focus on North Africa and the West would indicate that the Caliphate had previously been overextended or that the Abbasids no longer considered forays into these areas productive. We have some indication that this theater was deemed unproductive based on the amount of attention it received. The Western border with the Berbers would languish unresolved for nearly five decades before a border was established in Tunisia.[24] This is hardly indicative of a Caliphate that was deeply concerned about vulnerabilities from the Berbers or that saw opportunities for easy conquest and the re-imposition of its authority.

Additionally, particularly when viewing period sources, we must acknowledge that the absence of Caliphal forces from Western Europe was more important to the people of Western Europe than it was for the Caliphate. The Caliphate had far more pressing concerns than what it viewed as the barbarians of Europe. For the people of Western Europe, the appearance and disappearance of the Caliphate is crucial to understanding history in Western Europe. The centrality of the events at the core of the Caliphate does not explain why the Arabs would be keen to attack into Western Europe and then simply lose interest and stop attacking. There must have been something beyond the immediate interests of the core Caliphate that drove expansion

[23] Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 6-9.

[24] Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 4.

into Western Europe. Once again, the need to understand the processes that drove Caliphal expansion and what changed to make the expansion less desirable are critical to understanding the absence of the Caliphate's forces from Western Europe.

Blankinship offers further analysis that the series of military defeats at the periphery caused the Abbasid Caliphate to rely on truces with its adversaries. This shift in dealing with non-Muslim adversaries to include diplomacy lead the Abbasids to exchange of diplomatic emissaries with Constantinople, but not initially with the Franks, fundamentally ending the period of rapid conquest.[25] Curiously, Blankinship finds that it is the Berber Revolt that signals the dénouement of Caliphal expansion.[26] Unlike the Abbasid Revolt, the Berber Revolt split both the geographic and political unity of the Caliphate.[27] According to Blankinship, this lack of unity explains the rapid decline in Arab expansion following the rise of the Abbasid Caliphate. Left unexplained is why the Abbasids did not simply subsume the Berbers as it did the other territories of the Umayyad Caliphate?

After the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate, Western Europe would, for all intents and purposes, no longer be threatened by the Caliphate's forces. To conquer Western Europe, the Abbasids would have to somehow manage to cross the suddenly hostile North African territory in the aftermath of the Berber secession. However, the Abbasids contented themselves with the gradual reassertion of control over Kairouan in Tunisia. That it seems was quite profitably enough in their view. The decision to stop in Tunisia appears to be a desire to establish a bulwark

[25] Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 3.

[26] Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 212-218.

[27] Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 235-236.

against disruptive raids from, rather than alignment with, the restive Berber tribes in the region.[28] Unable, or at the least unwilling, to traverse the hostile breath of North Africa, the Abbasids left Charles Martel and his successors to lay the foundation of the Carolingian Empire. Without recognizing and placing the Berber revolt and its strategic consequences into proper perspective, there is currently no adequate explanation for the Caliphate's sudden lack of interest in Western Europe and Berber North Africa.[29]

If the current explanation is inadequate, how do we construct a better explanation? Historians researching more recent periods have access to a literal trove of information. These include a wealth of journals, memoirs, and administrative records and reports. Events occurring after 1750 often have access to comprehensive data that allows for the production of cogent, convincing economic and administrative analysis. The records from the eight-century contain none of these or at least not to any degree of completeness. Regrettably, this lack of detail leaves scholars to note only generally unsatisfyingly trends that are typically increasing or decreasing. Who, other than historians of the eighth-century could be left to mourn the loss of tax records? What has survived to provide insight to the degree possible is a host of chronicles and early histories whose original source material has been lost to time and antiquity. Very often, these accounts can differ, particularly over specific details. Culture also plays a significant role in surviving texts. Arab sources and Frankish sources often record entirely different details, as the point of view of the author, and what they consider to be important, can be widely different. The Battle of Tours, as noted above, is much more important to the Franks than it was to the

[28] Arthur Goldschmidt and Lawrence Davidson, *Concise History of the Middle East* (New York: Avalon Publishing, 2006), 79.

[29] Paul Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel* (London: Routledge, 2016), 183-184.

Umayyads. If the Battle of Tours was critically important to Western civilization, as argued by Edward Creasy, it makes little sense to conclude that Arab chroniclers lacked the intellectual capacity to properly gauge the battle's importance. This is especially the case when Arab historians, of Abbasid origin and thus not favorable to the Umayyads, records of the events continue to be dismissive of the Battle of Tours. Might we then conclude that the Creasy's sensational presentation of Tours as central might be in error?

Western Primary Source Analysis

The challenge, particularly if we reject Creasy's position, is providing an adequate explanation from the fragmentary evidence. The task then becomes that of nineteenth-century poet John Godfrey Sax's *Blind Men and the Elephant*. The poem records the observations of six blind men who report the details of the elephant from their differing point of views. The blind man describing the front of the elephant offers a very different version than the blind man describing the back of an elephant. The challenge for eighth-century historians attempting to place events in proper context for accurate analysis, is that surviving records are like a blind man's description of an elephant. One explanation for the difference between Frankish and Arab sources is that they lacked knowledge of the other actors' point of view. If the Umayyads entering Gaul were the analogous elephant, then it certainly looked quite a bit different to the Franks lying at the front of the charging elephant than it did to the Arabs who were merely watching it walk away. The elephant entering Gaul might not even been seen by those further afield. This is the case of the Asturian *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, who records their own interaction with the elephant but nothing of the elephant's subsequent journeys into Gaul. The goal then is to

gather the disparate surviving records and pull the differing view-points into as close an approximation of the elephant, or in this case the Battle of Tours and its context, as possible.

The Frankish records can sometimes be frustratingly brief and rather pointedly inaccurate in matters of detail. The *Historia Langobardum*, or *History of the Lombards*, written by Paul the Deacon, is not only brief but contains details that are inaccurate to the point of absurdity. Despite the contemporaneous recording, the records inclusion of 375,000 casualties inflicted upon the Umayyads at Tours are almost certainly erroneous.[30] The largest military forces fielded by the Umayyads with enormous effort such as the Siege of Constantinople (717-718) numbered about 120,000.[31] In the unlikely event that the Umayyads fielded a force more than three times larger than its maximum effort against it main enemy to invade far away Gaul, it seems almost certain that such a grand undertaking and its subsequent annihilation would be recorded in Arab accounts. Instead, the Battle of Tours doesn't even warrant mention in the lengthy, detailed histories of the Umayyad Caliphate including Muḥammad Ibn-Ǧarīr Ṭabarī's voluminous *History of the Prophets and Kings*.[32] As brief as Paul's mention, and despite the inaccuracy of its figures, we can nevertheless draw a few conclusions from it. First, we know that news of the Battle of Tours spread beyond the Franks. Second, upon reaching the Lombards, it was viewed by the Lombards as rather less important than their own affairs. Hardly a ringing endorsement of

[30] Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards*. trans. William Dudley Foulke and Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1907), 287.

[31] Warren T. Treadgold. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 346-347.

[32] Muḥammad Ibn-Ǧarīr Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-Ṭabarī Vol 25, The End of Expansion: The Caliphate of Hisham*, *A.D. 724-738.* trans. Khalid Yahya (Blankinship. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 69-111. This account contains numerous narratives of battles, including the disastrous Battle of the Defile in Central Asia. Events in West are rarely mentioned in Tabarí's records, and Gaul is absent entirely. Either the details of the Western Caliphate were deemed unimportant, a distinct possibility given the unequal treatment of the Berbers or were simply unknown to Tabarí from over a thousand miles away.

a battle that was ostensibly decisive in Western history. Written at the height of Frankish Charlemagne's reign, who traced their lineage through Charles Martel, its inclusion in particularly enthusiastic if very brief terms hints at a certain political practicality. This is not a record, even with its massive casualty figures, that supports Creasy's presentation of the Battle of Tours as particularly decisive against the Umayyads who barely seemed to notice the loss.

Contemporary Frankish sources regarding the early eighth-century are generally well known and rarely rely on the *Historia Langobardum* when making their case about the Battle of Tours. The four main sources are the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations*, *The Chronicle of 754*, and the *Royal Frankish Annals*. The *Liber Historiae Francorum* ends before the Battle of the Tours but does help establish context surrounding the battle at Tours from the Frankish view. Similarly, the *Royal Frankish Annals* begin after the Battle of the Tours but help explain the aftermath of the Battle of Tours and the disappearance of the Umayyads from the West. All four accounts have been reliably translated into English. The pro-Frankish author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* is unknown but appears to have been a Neustrian native with access to Merovingian Court and the Mayors of the Palace.[33] The author's presentation of the almost mythical origins of the Franks is questionable, and there is a clear bias in favor of the Frankish methodology including the primacy of the Mayors of the Palace. Nevertheless, the volume gives critical details from the reign of Clovis I (d. 511) through the rise of the Mayors of the Palace before ending its chronicle unhappily in the middle of the Frankish Civil War (c. 715-718). Charles Martel had just begun his reign as the chronicle ends, and the volume contains no mention of the Umayyads who were

[33] Bernard S. Bachrach, trans., *Liber Historiae Francorum* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1973), 12-13. Professor Bachrach's introduction to the translated volume provides a detailed synopsis of the scholarship surrounding the chronicle's origins and scholastic importance.

contemporaneously conquering the Visigothic Kingdom in Spain. The *Liber Historiae Francorum* provides details of the Frankish power struggles and contemporary concerns that drove the Franks, including repeated power struggles with the Frisians, Germans, and Aquitanians. These nearby struggles were, evidentially, of far more concern to the Franks than the Umayyads. How then did the struggles of greatest concern to the Franks react to the appearance of Umayyads in force? It is clear from this source that the Franks were unconcerned, if not unaware, of the Umayyads even as they conquered Spain.

The *Liber Historiae Francorum* overlaps with the *Chronicle of 754*, which begins in 610 and, as the title indicates, ends in 754. The author's identity is unknown but is likely a Christian living in Umayyad Spain. The *Chronicle of 754* is one of critical importance, as it details a point of view that covers both the Umayyads and, to a lesser extent, the Franks. The chronicle provides an account of events that is untethered from the political considerations of the Umayyad or Frankish court and can thus serve as an important role in both abridging and explaining gaps in of the other established records. That is not to say that the author is free from bias. As a Christian in Northern Spain the tensions with the Islamic Umayyads is palpable, and any action taken against the church, regardless of its basis, are presented negatively. Given the disaster, from the author's point of view, of the Islamic Umayyad conquest of Spain, the depiction of Charles Martel as a Christian victor would have been welcome to disaffected Christians that were either heavily taxed or driven into seclusion in the mountains. Taken with care, and contrasted with Arab sources described below, the volume provides insights that Arab authors might not find conducive to disclosure at the Caliphal court. The translated edition of the chronicle is accompanied with the Austrian *Chronicle of Alfonso III*.[34] Notably, the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*

[34] Kenneth Baxter Wolf, trans., *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, 2nd ed., vol. 9. Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1990), 129-143.

contains no record of the Battle of Tours or of Charles' many other victories. In this account, it is the Battle of Covadonga (c. 722) that is decisive in stopping the Umayyads and their encroachment into Europe. The idea that the comparatively destitute Asturias might not be deemed worth the expense of conquering evades the author's consideration. One hesitates to consider similar self-importance in Frankish narratives. Given the almost universal avoidance of events in Gaul by Arab chroniclers, this perception of self-importance who lacked a full understanding of the Caliphate, and often their neighbors, is an important consideration. Simply put, historians of this period must be acutely aware of what period authors were unaware of in their analysis and observations. However, and again taken with care, these volumes provide insights from Christians in Northern Spain as they view events in Gaul and, uniquely, from the view of the subjects of the Umayyads in the West. If the Franks are recording the front of the analogous elephant and Arabs the rear, these sources would seem to be giving a unique view from the flank of the elephant.

The *Chronicle of 754* overlaps with the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and begins in earnest with sixth-century Merovingians and ends, with its continuations, with the death of death of Pepin the Short (d. 768). The author, after much debate, remains anonymous, though he is fiercely in support for the Merovingians and the Mayors of the Palace. The chronicle is uniquely Frankish, and the author struggles with world events, which he fits haphazardly into his otherwise strictly Frankish narrative.[35] The author's appreciation of the Umayyads can succinctly be described as they came, we fought, they lost, and then they left. Little thought is spared on analysis of the Umayyads and their motives beyond their hostility to Christianity and desire for Frankish

[35] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar: With Its Continuations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960; reprint, Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1981), ix-x.

treasure. How important was Gaul in comparison to Syria, Egypt, India, and the Byzantine Empire to an analyst who had little appreciation for these areas or that the Umayyads had great conquests in each of these formidable territories? How important are these factors to an author whose main patronage is Frankish nobility and whose status in large part depended upon the favor of the Pippinids? The arrival and departure of the Umayyads, only loosely appreciated as powerful, is eventful because of the victories of Charles Martel as a Christian. Charles Martel found himself increasingly intertwined with the Western church, a relationship that only deepened during his son's reign. The victory at the Battle of Tours against the Muslims also threatening Christian Constantinople, is a happily recorded divine coincidence that just happens to favor his intended audience. The *Chronicle of Fredegar* is primarily concerned with Pippinid-Frankish affairs, and provides important insights into the, from the chronicler's point of view, annoyance of repeated rebellions by the Frisians, Germans, and Aquitanians and others Frankish nobles who challenged the Peppinids. The brief interlude of the Umayyads in Frankish affairs is, at best, a serious but temporary interruption in the rise of the Pippinids as they, unknown to the author but who likely would have considered the developments providential, lay the foundation of the Carolingian Empire.

The *Royal Frankish Annals* overlaps with the both the *Chronicle of 754* and the *Chronicle of Fredegar*. The records, created by many different but unknown authors, begin after the death of Charles Martel in 741 and record events to 829.[36] The author includes many details of the Carolingian Court and its struggles, and is credibly considered Carolingian propaganda by many scholars.[37] The *Royal Frankish Annals*, despite the reluctance to record setbacks and other

[36] Bernard Walter Scholz, trans., *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard's Histories* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 3.

[37] Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 4.

foibles, nevertheless provides a vivid record of the challenges faced by Charles Martel's successors. It offers evidence of nearly continuous struggle within the only nominally unified Frankish realm. Among these challenges are records of Pepin the Short's (d. 768) capture of Narbonne (c. 759), Charlemagne's Saragossa campaigns (c. 778), and finally Louis the Pious' capture of Barcelona (c. 801). These events, against the remnants of the Umayyads in the West, stand in stark contrast to the rapid rise and suppression of rebellion even as Charlemagne ostensibly united the realm into the *Romanorum Sive Francorum Imperium* (Empire of the Romans and Franks). The unification of the Empire would not survive the passing of Charlemagne's son, and the kingdom itself was wracked by nearly constant civil war. What this source makes clear is that the Franks were quite busy with affairs completely unrelated to the Caliphate. This is not quite the inexorable rise of the Carolingians absent the Caliph's forces. That events turned out the way they did was never a certainty as some scholars argue. The Annals makes clear that nobility throughout the realm very often sought opportunity to carve out their own realm, and that the turn of events was at many point of uncertain outcome. Why then did the Caliphate stop coming when there appeared to be so many threads it could tug upon to unravel the Carolingian Empire? This source, unfortunately, offers no response to this question. For the Franks, the Caliphate was gone, and full analysis required access to information that was unavailable, and little sought after, by Frankish chroniclers.

Arab Primary Source Analysis

The Arab point of view, or the other side of the analogous elephant, offers some insight into what they believe happened to the Umayyad Caliphate in the West. Discerning this requires

some selectivity in sources. Many records, again, including Ṭabarī's *History of the Prophets and Kings*, contain only the briefest mention of Umayyad affairs in the West if they mention them at all. One of the most prominently sighted sources, *The Muqaddimah* (Introduction) by fourteenth-century Tunisian historiographer Ibn Khaldún is not technically a primary source at all. Rather Ibn Kaldún, who is by all accounts an excellent historiographer, relies upon a wide array of sources that are no longer extent.[38] *The Muqaddimah* is considered by many scholars to be a reliable source, enough so that it is sometimes the most abundant source utilized for accounts on the Berber Rebellion (739-743).[39] This thesis, through informed by *The Muqaddimah*, will use this source sparingly, if at all. Ibn Khaldún's insights are many centuries removed for the events, and the fourteenth-century focus on analysis in support of macrohistorical theories about the rise and fall of Empire does not easily translate into the culture of the eighth-century. Ibn Khaldún's theories on the rise and fall of the Caliphate are worth consideration. However, in seeking to prove his thesis, given the loss of many of his sources, we have no method of verifying whether the excluded relevant information that is now lost. Details provided by *The Muqaddimah* will be utilized if, and only if, they can be verified in other extent sources. Although individual scholars will disagree, this study will treat Ibn Khaldún as an explanatory source rather than period account for details.

If the details of Ibn Khaldún's record must be treated with care, his analysis does offer some compelling insight into the collapse of the Umayyads and their subsequent absence from Gaul.

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[38] Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. trans. Franz Rosenthal, ed. N. J. Dawood (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 6-7.

[39] Brett Michaels and Elizabeth Fentress, *The Berbers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 90-93.

> When the (various) groups have spread over the border regions and provinces, their numbers are necessarily exhausted. This, then, is the time when the territory (of the dynasty) has reached its farthest extension, where the border regions form a belt around the center of the realm. If the dynasty then undertakes to expand beyond its holdings, its widening territory remains without military protection and is laid open to any chance attack by enemy of neighbor. This has the detrimental result for the dynasty of the creation of boldness toward it and of diminished respect for it. If the group is a very large one and its numbers are not exhausted when distributed over border regions and territories, the dynasty retains the strength to go beyond its limit (so far reached), until its expansion had gone as far as possible.[40]

Ibn Khaldún could be describing the rise and fall of the Byzantine and the Sasanian Empire in the early seventh-century, the fall of the Umayyads in the mid eighth-century, or even the fall of the Carolingian Empire in the ninth-century. This premise of conquest to the point of overextension is not specific to Ibn Khaldún and is an idea that strongly informs Khalid Blankinship's *The End of the Jihad State* and his reasoning on the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate in 750. It is certainly a lesson the Abbasids, the successors of the Umayyads, drew as they severely limited offensive military operations beyond their frontier.

The question then is whether of this realization of excess beyond capacity happened in Gaul? Was the Battle of Tours the point at which the Umayyads had finally pushed beyond their capacity for expansion? How do we interpret the alliance with the Berbers, and its sudden and violent loss, in maintaining the numbers required for expansion beyond Umayyad borders in the West? Where does the Battle of Tours fit into the draining of Umayyad capacity for expansion? The Umayyads, at their height, were attacking Constantinople with some of the largest armies in the era. The Caliphate was simultaneously conducting military operations North of the Caucasus, against the Khanates of Central Asia, running through Afghanistan and confronting the Chinese, conducting large scale operations into the Indian sub-continent, suppressing rebellion on the

[40] Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 128.

Arabian Peninsula, raiding down the Nile into Sudan, even as they attacked and conquered Spain before venturing into Gaul. Perhaps, given these commitments, the loss of 375,000 soldiers at Tours would have indeed exhausted the capacity of the Caliphate. Given the likely exaggeration of this and other figures, it is necessary to place the Battle of Tours into its proper context to discern what effect the loss at Tours, and subsequent losses in Septimania, had on the wider, and extremely capable Umayyad Caliphate.

Another widely used source is the fourteenth-century Moroccan historian Ibn Idhari. Like the *Muqaddimah*, the *History of the Maghreb and Iberia* is, is both technically a secondary source and one that relies on sources that are no longer extent. This volume, translated into French as *The History of the Muslims of Spain Until the Conquest of Andalusia by the Almoravids* by Reinhard Dozy, contains a few overt transliterations reflecting the ideology of the French Revolution.[41] The volume contains many details that are uncorroborated in other extent sources. Many of these details concern the reported brutality of the Umayyads against the Berbers as causing or fanning the revolt. In Dozy's translation, these details happily coincide with the presentation of the fraternal Berbers seeking freedom and equality, a classic good vs. evil, when such concepts rarely apply to complex historical events. Some scholars, noting that many other details in the volume are corroborated, have chosen to include these details despite the lack of similar details in other extent sources.[42] As with the previous source, details from *The History of the Muslims of Spain*, will only be used if they can be verified in extent sources be they Arab, Byzantine, or Frankish.

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[41] Reinhart Dozy, *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne Jusqu'à La Conquête De L'Andalousie Par Les Almoravides (711 — IIIO)*, vol. 1 (Leyden: J. Brill, 1932), vol. 1, 150-151.

[42] Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 203-204; Dozy, trans. *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1: 151.

The inclusion of these details, without such corroboration, is problematic. The loss of many of the sources that Ibn Idhari relied upon makes verification of his findings impossible. Living in Tunis, heir to the Berber Kingdoms, it is impossible to tell whether the details are included are accurate or part of the mythical presentation of the Berber Revolt. How much of the detail is the equivalent of George Washington chopping down the cherry tree? The brutality of the Umayyads against rebellion was neither more nor less brutal than any other regime during this period. The Pippinid repression of rebellion in Gaul and Germany, was, as with the Umayyads, war fought in all its brutality. The Berbers themselves, as allies to the Umayyads helped to repress repeated rebellion in Spain and well understood the cost and consequences of revolt. There is little doubt that the Umayyads responded violently to the Berber Revolt. It is unclear whether details of brutality pre-date the Umayyad response to the rebellion or are reprisals attempting to suppress further acts of rebellion. The Abbasid historians and their successors had little need to repress the brutality of their Umayyad predecessors, and would likely have included details of extraordinary brutality if for no other reason than to rebuff those within the Caliphate that retained some loyalty to the Umayyads. As a result, only passages that are corroborated with other sources will be utilized in this work. Specific uncorroborated details utilized in other histories will be included only when necessary and with appropriate context establishing their qualified use.

Another technically secondary source that is widely utilized by period scholars in the sixteenth-century Algerian historian Ahmed Mohammed al-Makkari. Mákkari's *History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain* also relies on sources that are no longer extent. However, in this case, there are few controversial inclusions, as most can quickly be corroborated with additional period sources. Mákkari's work, like *The Chronicle of 754*, records the violent

reaction of the Caliphate to news of the Berber Revolt, as well as details both before and after the revolt.[43] Gaps in the account give the impression of details and themes the author did not wish to include, likely, though speculatively, because he could not verify them and thus avoided them entirely. Al-Makkari includes accounts of events in both Gaul and Spain before transitioning to the Berber Revolt as a separate instance. This volume is one that is critical to understanding the Arab view of events in the Western Umayyad Caliphate. The Berber Revolt is one of central importance, more so, in the author's opinion, than defeats in Gaul even when combined with losses against Asturias. When combined with additional sources, al-Makkari's narrative is invaluable. Additional corroborating narratives includes eighteenth-century Spanish historians José Antonio Conde's *The History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*. This is decidedly a secondary source. Some of the sources used by Conde are no longer extent. However, most of his work can be reliably verified through extent sources. Taken together, these sources usefully provide a basis of context of events in Gaul, Spain and North Africa in the eighth-century.

There are, thankfully, examples of earlier surviving historians that are similar to the Frankish and Asturian Chronicles. These begin with Ibn Abd al-Hakam, the ninth-century Egyptian historian and author of *The History of the Arab Conquest of Spain*. Al-Hakam's focus on the West at so early a time stands in stark contrast to al-Tabarí who virtually ignores the Western Caliphate. Here, once again, few details are recorded of events in Gaul. If these events were of significance, it seems likely that they would have been included. The Umayyads had been out of power for decades before the publication of this work, and there were certainly criticisms of the Umayyads in virtually every other theater recorded during this period. In sharp

[43] Ahmed Ibn Mohammed Al-Makkarí, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, trans. by Pascual De Gayangos, (London: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain, 1843), 40.

contrast with Frankish chroniclers, al-Hakam affords the Berber Revolt with great significance in the West. Al-Hakam provides a critical early account of events in the Umayyad West. Left unaddressed in this volume was the effect that losses in Gaul had upon Umayyad operations. The death of the Umayyad commanders at the Battle of Tours, Abd ar-Rahman (d. 732), death is recorded, indicating some significance was attached to these events.[44] However, defeat in Gaul is presented as sorrow at the loss of an able subordinate rather than as a defeat that shook the foundation of the Caliphate. Clearly, the Franks, first receiving and then defeating Umayyad armies had a very different view than did observers from the Caliphal core. Equally so, the Caliphate grappling with the Berber Revolt garners about as much attention from the Franks as does the Battle of Tours in Arab sources. Where then does the impact of these, and other, operations reside? This source is helpful in resolving that question.

Eight-century historian Khalifah ibn Khayyat offers some insight into the Caliphal view of the Western frontier. His History on the Umayyad Dynasty provides insights into nearly every military operation on virtually every frontier around the Caliphate. Many of the reports are little more than log entries noting place and events and nothing more. The recorded events provide an astonishing account of the Umayyad vision of perpetual conquest. Very often these forces are defeated, and, at least according to Ibn Khayyat, many of these loses warranted no further attention. They are recorded alongside successful raids, the suppression of rebellion, and other full-scale attacks. Defeats within this much larger context are presented as inevitable given the reality of war. Setbacks are temporary and of little concern as new forces could be rapidly generated to replace them. Reports on events in the West are largely silent save for records of

[44] Ibn ʻAbd Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, trans. J. H. Jones (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1858), 33.

repeated raids onto Sicily after the conquest of Spain. Events in the West, as portrayed by Ibn Khayyat, are largely ignored until the stirring of the Berber Revolt.[45] There is no record of operations against the Franks at all. Until the Berber Revolt, events in Spain and Gaul did not require additional resources from the Caliphate. For Ibn Khayyat, events in Spain and along its frontier are largely out of sight and out of mind until events begin to unravel Caliphal power in the region. Given the absence of references on the series of defeats in the West, either through disinterest or of lack of importance is unknown, raises the question about how these forces effected the Berbers who made up the bulk of the Umayyad forces attacking into Gaul?

To answer this, in part, we have the tenth-century Andalusian historian Ibn al-Qútiya. Qútiya's *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andulus* has been translated into English by historian James Nichols. The source is based on Ibn Qútya's memories of previous accounts and is not grounded in sources. It is, however, the only surviving account of the earlier histories that have now been lost. It is also the closest existing account of events from Umayyad Spain. Ibn Qútiya's account of event in Gaul is different, and informative. We are told that the Caliph was worried about the Muslims in Spain, to the point of wanting to evacuate them. We are, regrettably, left to wonder why the Caliph would have such a high level of concern.[46] Ibn Qútiya's reports assurances and the strength of Spanish fortifications was sufficient to ward off or defeat any threat from the Franks and Asturians who might conceivably have the ability to attack into Umayyad Spain.[47] Ibn Qútiya's accounts, used with caution and corroboration, provide an

[45] Robert G. Hoyland and Carl Wurtzel, *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty (660-750)* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 232.

[46] James Mansfield Nichols, "*The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus* by Ibn Qútíya the Cordorban: Translation and Study" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1975), 29-31.

[47] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 31.

unique vessel for insights into the view of Gaul from Andalusia. Here once again, close to the Franks, little attention is paid to the Frankish victories in Gaul, or, for that matter, much of anything in Gaul. What once again features prominently is the Berber Revolt. For the Umayyads remaining in Spain, it is clearly the Berbers and not the Franks who charged the course of events in the West.

The Arab and Frankish sources provide us with two views. For the Franks it is the defeats that obviously cause the absence of the Umayyads. For the Arabs, it is the Berber rebellion that shatters the Caliphate in the West. The sources, with rare exception, do not allow for insights from the opposing point of view. What then was the effect of the series of defeats in Gaul? What effect did the need to keep forces in Narbonne, or draw from them in times of peril, have? How significant was the Berber alliance to Umayyad success in the West? What caused the Berbers to rebel and end the alliance? Was there a causal relationship between the disastrous series of defeats in Gaul and the decision by the Berbers who fought there to rebel? Were events further afield in the large Umayyad Caliphate, itself drifting into revolution, contributing to the breakdown in the West? There is no single source that comprehensively details, much less conscientiously explains, events during this period. All available sources, accounting for the shortcomings and biases and the interplay between those sources and informed by many more than can be analyzed here, can help us answer these questions. More importantly, given the current consensus that the removal of Umayyad forces from the West is insufficiently explained, it will allow us to test the hypothesis that the rebellion of the Berbers in the West, more than another factor, explains why the forces of the Caliphate stopped attacking Western Europe.

One final note on methodology regarding the scope of this thesis must be addressed. Our analogous elephant and its many observers would all have noted that the elephant did not exist in

a void. It went somewhere; it interacted with things in different ways and even met other elephants. The events of the eight-century did not happen without context, they took place within an environment if you will. In order to properly explain the removal of the Umayyads from Gaul, we must understand why they were there in the first place. That story, at least in this volume, begins in 634 with the Abu-Bakr's attack into the Middle East. This thesis explores these themes and presents consensus views on critical points in rise of the Rashidun Caliphate, the conquest of the Sassanid Empire and Egypt, the conquest of North Africa and the drive into Central Asia and India, and the conquest of Spain. Explaining these events in full detail would require many volumes. Treadgold's rendition of the Byzantine Empire and its interaction with other powers runs to more than a thousand pages. Al-Tabari's history of the Caliphates, exclusive of events in the West, runs to forty volumes. These positions cannot, within the length of this essay, fully explore these events. The narrative of these events is, by necessity, reduced to brief narration of the events. I have, to the extent possible, utilized primary sources to provide emphasis to certain themes or to highlight details critical to understanding the processes that drove the Umayyads to conquer so much territory so quickly. There is a wealth of sources, including the *Koran* and *Hadith*, numerous Byzantine sources, Coptic chronicles, and administrative records available for study and verification. Understanding complex interactions such as the Byzantine response to the rise of the Caliphate, its often-tense interactions with the papacy, and the papacy's subsequent turn to the Franks is merely one thread of the wider eight-century environment that must be explored. Ultimately, these are important factors in explaining why the Umayyads were in Gaul, and, with their removal, why they were no longer attacking the Franks.

II

Definition of Terms

Abbasid Caliphate. Is the successor Caliphate of the Umayyad Caliphate from 750-945.

Al-Andalus. Originally the Spanish province of the Umayyad Caliphate, but later an independent kingdom founded by Abd al-Rahman as a successor Umayyad Emirate in Spain. Also known as the Caliphate or Emirate of Cordoba founded in 756.

Aquitaine. Aquitaine was a separate body tucked between Spanish Arabs and Frankish forces in Gaul. Led by Duke Eudo (also Eudo and Odo) whose efforts to secure his own realm precipitated the clash between Umayyad and Frankish forces.

Arabs. Period sources describe the forces the Rashidun or Umayyad Caliphate as Arab, Umayyad, Saracens, and even Ishmaelite.[48] The forces of the Caliphate contained Romans, Persians, Afghans, Indians, Central Asians, Berbers, and even Visigoths. In general, these forces, when fighting for the Caliphate to750 were led by Arab-Muslim military commanders with the bulk of the foot soldiers and cavalry composed of a mix of Muslims and 'righteous' Christians and Jews of various ethnicities. As the Arabs swept North Africa, this make up would consist of increasingly higher proportions Berber subordinates. For clarity, a distinction will be made between Arabs of Middle Eastern descent and the Berber forces who would be both an important component of the Islamic forces and a bitter enemy to that same force through the progression of

[48] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 117.

this study. In general, after the initial conquest, and in contrast to many other narratives, I will refer to the Caliphate rather than the Arabs.

Asturias. Pelagius of Asturias fought and secured the independence of a Christian force that remained unconquered the Northern portion of Spain. The survival of this remnant force in the North and its subsequent advance after during the Berber Revolt is attributed as the start of the *Reconquista* in Spain.

Austrasia. The heart of the Frankish realms, Austrasia lies in what is now Northwestern France.

Berbers. Indigenous peoples of North Africa and excellent mounted warriors who made up the bulk of Arab forces in the West under the Umayyad Caliphate. The successful Berber Revolt would have profound effects on Arab military prowess in the West.

Decisive or Strategic Victory. A victory that brings long-term advantage to the victor and disturbs the enemy's ability to wage a war. The critical portion of this definition lies in a victory that changes the direction of at least one side of the conflict. Often, strategic results cannot be laid on the basis of a single battle and are the result of sustained military operations that collectively can be called a campaign.

Franks. Period sources describe the forces lead by Charles Martel and located in what is today France as Merovingians, Gauls, Franks, and Austrasians.[49] For clarity I will refer to these forces as Frankish throughout this work.

[49] Ibid.

Line of Communication. A route that connects an operating military force to its supply base. Logistical support, reinforcements, and information between field forces and their headquarters are transported along a line of communication. A secure and open line of communication is vital for any military force to operate effectively.

Macrohistorical. Refers to large-scale transitions in history between large groups and cultures. For purposes of this study the term refers to the end of Islamic attempts to conquer or engage the Franks in battle.

Regem Francorum. Charles Martel was the head of the Pippinid line that served as Mayor of the Palace to Merovingian Kings. Charles had completed a series of conquests in Gaul prior to the Arab incursion at Tours. This loose organization had not reached a level of "state" but did provide sufficient economic and military consistency to field capable military forces.

Umayyad Caliphate. Refers to the centralized Islamic state based in Damascus between 661-750.

III

The Rise of the Arabs and First Conquest

Understanding why the Arabs ceased military operations in Western Europe requires an examination of the forces that pushed the Arabs across the Pyrenees. By the time the Battle of Tours was fought in 732, the Umayyads had been expanding for nearly a century. The first burst of conquest corresponds to the Rashidun Caliphate (632-661). Although the exact reasons for the initial burst of conquest remains subject to debate, we can derive some conclusions about the success of the Arab armies. Significantly, the Arabs do not appear to have enjoyed any technological advantage over either the Byzantines or the Sasanians.[50] The Arabs went into battle with weapons, armor, and tactics that were no different than their adversaries. The exception to this rule is one of greater tactical mobility that had been honed during the Ridda Wars (c. 632-634). Arab infantry, uniquely, and cavalry forces used horses for transport, while camels were used for logistics. This allowed the Arabs to move their forces into battle more quickly than their adversaries while retaining the combined effects of infantry and cavalry.[51]

[50] Leif Inge Ree Peterson, *Siege Warfare and Military Organization in the Successor States (400-800 AD): Byzantium, the West and Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 9.

[51] Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (London: Routledge, 2005), 4.

Arab Tactical Mobility Advantage

Second, as noted in the Hadith and in contemporary accounts, was the reliance on and exploitation of reconnaissance.[52] Initial Arab incursions across the frontier are essentially reconnaissance-in-force missions. An array of forward scouts brought information to a larger main body of forces that could then raid for plunder or attack in force to destroy enemy forces and open up additional areas for raiding. If the Byzantines or Sassanians were detected in strength, Arab forces could use their superior mobility to retreat to safety or to await reinforcement.[53] Often, if conditions were favorable enough, these reconnaissance-in-force missions could seize and hold terrain.[54] The less mobile Byzantine and Sassanian forces, often unable to locate the highly mobile Arab forces, faced a difficult task in stopping these raids. Halting these raids entirely would have required them to cross into the Arabian Peninsula and destroy the Arab base of operations. Having no knowledge of the terrain and especially the watering points in the Arabian desert, Byzantine or Sassanian forces would have required some form of local guide. Guides and other assistance were extremely difficult to find in the aftermath of the Ridda Wars and the strict subjugation of the Arabian tribes to the nascent Islamic State.[55] The slower moving Byzantine and Sassanian forces were left vulnerable to Arab raids for which

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[52] Sahih al-Bukhari 2846, Book 56, Hadith 62 & Muḥammad Ibn ʻUmar Wāqidī, *The Islâmic Conquest of Syria: A Translation of Futûḥushâm: The Inspiring History of the Saḥabâhs Conquest of Syria as Narrated by the Great Historian of Islâm*, trans. Mawláná Sulymán Al-Kindí (London: Ta-Ha, 2005), 24-25.

[53] Robert G. Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 51-52.

[54] David Nicolle, *Armies of the Muslim Conquest* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2001), 8.

[55] Fred M. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 177-183.

they had little warning. Worse, the comparatively rapid ability to mass disparate forces to exploit vulnerabilities left forces garrisoned in Byzantine and Sassanid settlements away from the coast in a state of perpetual crisis.

Superior mobility was primarily beneficial in battles away from cities and fortifications but could also be brought to bear to isolate and effectively lay siege to these sites by depriving them of access to supplies. Superior mobility does not alone account for the stunning victories over the Byzantines at the Battles of Yarmúk (c. 636) and over the Sassanians at al-Qádisiya (c. 637). There is no single explanation for these victories save that they were culmination of the struggle between the Arabs and their Byzantine and Sassanid adversaries. When the decisive contests came, the Arabs won. Importantly, these victories removed the Byzantine and Sassanian ability to relieve besieged forces by denying them the ability to secure the trade routes into these cities. Why was the loss of this resupply ability important? Sieges are typically viewed as the investment and entrenchment of a fortification that eventually undermines or starves an adversary into submission. The success of a siege requires the successful elimination of resupply by whatever means available. Failure to block that resupply route or faltering before stored consumables was exhausted meant that a siege would fail. The Hadith contains instructions about entrenchment, indicating that Arab forces were not unfamiliar with this method of reducing fortifications when required.[56] Additionally, Byzantine sources indicate that Arab forces were quite proficient in building and reducing fortifications when necessary.[57]

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[56] Sahih al-Bukhari 4101, Book 64, Hadith 145 & Sahih al-Bukhari 2835, Book 56, Hadith 51.

[57] R. H. Charles, trans., *The Chronicle of John (c. 690 A.D.), Coptic Bishop of Nikiu: Being a History of Egypt before and during the Arab Conquest, Translated from Hermann Zotenberg's Edition of the Ethiopic Version* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1913), 183-184.

However, the most common method utilized by Arab forces during this period of inducing surrender was by establishing fortified camps along the roads into a city such as Damascus, and then using their mobile forces to interdict resupply or reinforcements and pillage the surrounding areas thereby establishing an effective blockade.[58] After the victories at Yarmúk and al-Qádisiya, the former garrisons of the Byzantine and Sassanian Empires could expect no relief and succumbed rapidly to the invading Arab forces.



Map 2 - The initial conquests of the Middle East is remarkable both for its rapidity and depth. The Arabs conquered three major power centers including Byzantine Syria and Egypt, and Sassanid Persia.[59]

We must also consider the ideological effects of Islam on the success of Arab forces. Resistance to an invading force requires that defenders remain cohesive and disciplined. There are

[58] Peterson, *Siege Warfare and Military Organization in the Successor States*, 261.

[59] Neil Morris and Manuela Cappon, *The Atlas of Islam* (Hauppauge, NY: Barrons Educational Series, 2003), 29.

indications that Arab forces drew remarkable levels of local support and even significant defections during the initial conquest.[60] Conversely, what were once disparate and quarrelsome Arab tribes were unified into effective, cohesive military formations under the banner of Islam.[61] This did not mean that the adversaries of the Arabs lacked similar religious or ideological strength. However, period Byzantine sources offer clear documentation of Christian conversion



to Islam, a process that appeared to be almost universally toward Islam and the Arabs.[62]

Map 3 - The extent of the Byzantine Empire in North Africa had been stable for centuries prior to the arrival of the Arabs. The area had been almost uniformly Christian if not Christian in unity.[63]

Whether driven by religious zeal or more practical issues such as a desire to be on the winning side and perhaps earn a share on the burgeoning plunder, Arab forces enjoyed widespread local support during the initial period of conquest.[64] Highly capable Arab military forces quickly defeated and subsumed vast tracts of the Byzantine Empire in Syria and the entirety of the Sassanian Empire.

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[60] Muḥammad Ibn ʻUmar Wāqidī, *The Islâmic Conquest of Syria,* 265-268.

[61] Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 269.

[62] Walter Emil Kaegi, "Initial Byzantine Reactions to the Arab Conquest," *Church History* 38, no. 2 (1969): 144. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/3162702.

[63] J. F. Ade Ajaye, Michael Crowder, Paul Richards, Elizabeth Dunstan, and Alick Newman, *Historical Atlas of Africa* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1985), 39.

[64] Kaegi, "Initial Byzantine Reactions to the Arab Conquest," 145.

Arab Conquest of Egypt

Having split the Byzantine Empire by conquering the Syria, Egypt lay open and vulnerable. Political divisions among the Egyptian-Byzantine nobles and a growing rift between Byzantine Christians in Constantinople and Alexandria were to prove disastrous. The Arabs found restive Coptic Christians and disaffected nobles agreeable, if not quite eager, to overthrow the Byzantines.[65] In 639, a small detachment estimated to be no more than 4,000 strong, crossed into Egypt. The initial force is consistent with previous reconnaissance-in-force missions. Subsequent reinforcement of this initial probe soon grew into a full invasion. Although the main fortress at Alexandria fell in 642, it would take nine years for the Arabs to completely conquer Upper and Middle Egypt.[66] The Arabs proved adept at finding and exploiting local support and inducing communities to surrender as they marched across Egypt.[67] When the Arabs could not maneuver or provoke the Byzantines into battle, they contented themselves with pillaging the countryside.[68] These raids slowly denuded the countryside of supplies and left Byzantine Egypt dependent on naval resupply from unconquered portions of the Byzantine Empire.

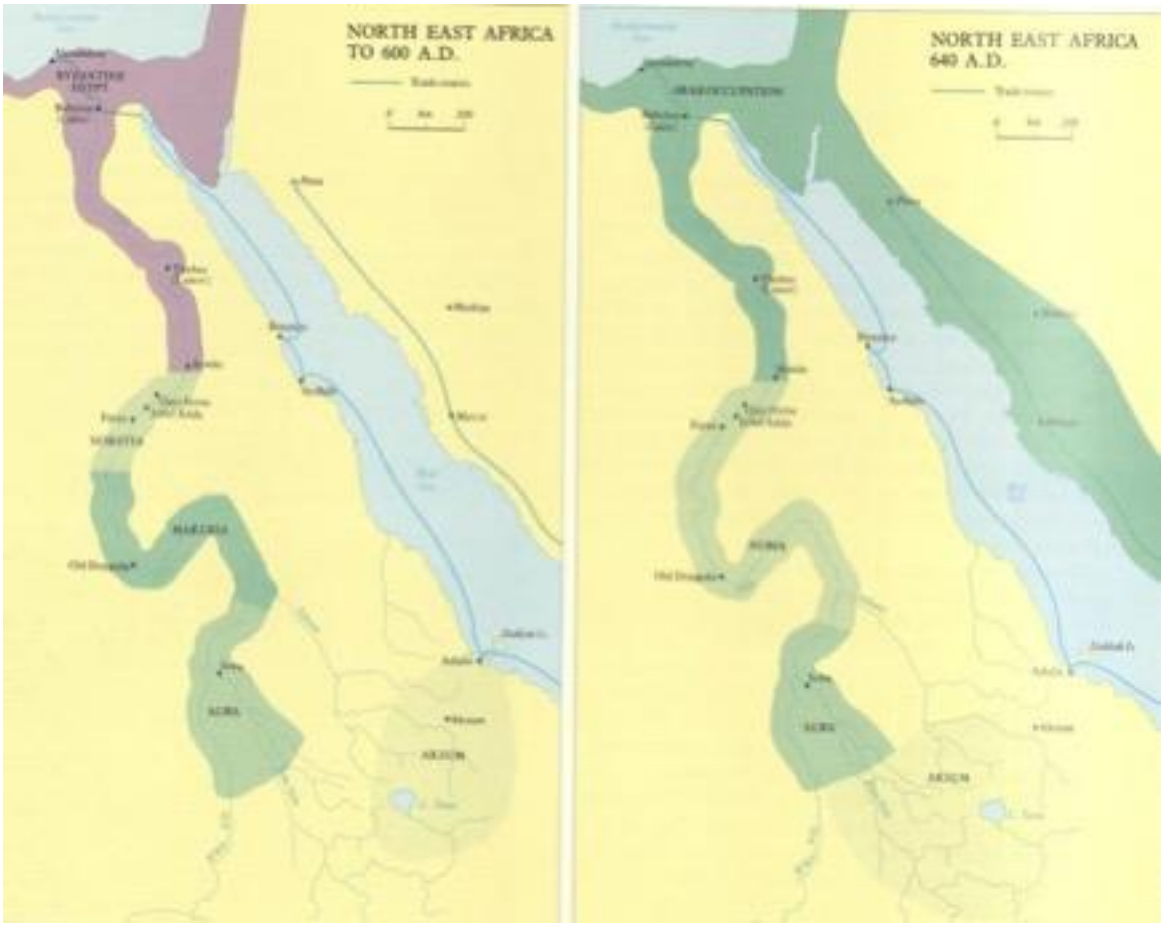
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[65] John Meyendorff, "Byzantine Views of Islam," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 18 (1964): 127. doi:10.2307/1291209.

[66] Petra M. Sijpesteijn, "The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Beginning of Muslim Rule," in *Byzantine Egypt*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 437-441.

[67] Charles, trans., *The Chronicle of John*, 184-201.

[68] Charles, trans., *The Chronicle of John*, 184.



Map 4 – The transition of Byzantine authority to the Rashidun Caliphate was complete, with the Arabs incorporating the previous Byzantine possession at almost the same boundaries.[69]

The Arab reliance on reconnaissance, aided by information from locals, gave them knowledge of where the Byzantines were located and in what strength.[70] The greater maneuverability of the Arab forces allowed them to pillage with virtual impunity, able to retreat away from superior forces or to rally and attack smaller Byzantine formations when they emerged from their fortifications. The Byzantine navy eventually attempted to reinforce Egypt,

[69] Ajaye, *Historical Atlas of Africa*, 39.

[70] Charles, trans., *The Chronicle of John*, 194-195.

and for a brief time succeeded in recapturing Alexandria (c. 644).[71] Byzantine naval superiority not only threatened the Arab conquest of Egypt but also allowed the Byzantines to raid recently captured Arab territory along the Mediterranean with virtual impunity.

Development of the Arab Navy and the End of the First Period of Expansion

Mobility, at sea at least, initially favored the Byzantines who could land forces and attack before Arab forces could rally and expel them. The brief recapture of Alexandria awakened the Arabs to this threat, and the Arabs undertook efforts to build their own fleet. The Arabs, with cooperation of previously Byzantine subjects, rapidly developed this capability. Only a year after the brief loss of Alexandria, the Arabs launched a successful naval raid of Cyprus (c. 645).[72] The rapid development of Arab naval capability turned the Eastern Mediterranean into another zone of battle. Eventually, the Byzantine threat from the Sea was greatly reduced if not entirely eliminated. The Byzantines lost the Battle of the Masts in 654 and it seemed for a time that Constantinople itself would succumb to the Arab conquest.[73]

The Battle of the Masts, however, marks the limit of the first Arab expansion. The assassination of Caliph Uthman ibn Affan in 656 precipitated a civil war and the end of the Rashidun Caliphate in 661. The defeat and subsuming of the Middle East by Arab forces is perhaps too neat a description to adequately describe the initial Arab conquest. As the Caliphate established itself, increasingly less Arab and more cosmopolitan forces of the Caliphate would

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[71] Mageb S.A. Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Religion, Identity and Politics after the Arab Conquest* (London: IB Taurus, 2014), 23.

[72] Christophe Picard, *Sea of the Caliphs The Mediterranean in the Medieval Islamic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 49.

[73] Hoyland, *In God's Path*, 108.

continue to clash with Byzantine and Sassanian forces for a period of several decades. The Byzantines would not be driven to the give up offensive military operations until they were soundly defeated at the Battle of Dhát in 655, occurring almost two decades after the Battle of Yarmúk secured initial Arab control of Syria.[74] Similarly, pacifying the former Sassanian Empire's restive inhabitants would take the better part of a generation.[75] The advent of Civil War in 656 raises the question about what condition the Rashidun Caliphate was in, or whether the rapid conquest had coalesced into something that could even be considered a state? Scholars disagree about when the Arab conquests coalesced into an organization that could be termed a state. Some scholars claim a functioning state as early as the reign of Mohammed while others date the emergence of defined and functional state with the founding of the Umayyad Caliphate in 661 or even later.[76] We can use Early Arab historian Fred Donner's criteria for defining a state and can clearly see the growing functionality of a state encapsulated in the Rashidun Caliphate. These include:

> (1) A fundamental ideology of sovereignty; (2) an acknowledged position of sovereign; (3) acknowledged subordinates (governors and the like) who exercise political power on behalf of the sovereign in defined parts of the state's domains; (4) military forces to permit the sovereign to defend the state against outside aggression, to engage in aggression against outsiders and to maintain domestic order (police and the like); (5) a civil bureaucracy to levy taxes, maintain records, draft decrees and otherwise manage the routine affairs of government; and (6) a judiciary to resolve disputes among subjects without recourse to force by the subjects themselves.[77]

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[74] Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 22.

[75] Richard Nelson Frye, *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 26-27.

[76] Fred M. Donner and Lawrence L. Conrad, eds., *The Articulation of Early Islamic State Structures* (Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 2012), xv-xvi.

[77] Donner, *The Articulation of Early Islamic State Structures,* xiv.

There is ample documentation of a state during the Rashidun Caliphate. The *jizya*, or tax on non-Muslims, was introduced around 630 and was used extensively throughout the Rashidun Caliphate.[78] The wide use of increasingly sophisticated Islamic jurisprudence throughout the Rashidun Caliphate is clear and compelling.[79] The existence of a Caliph and the widely successful Arab military needs no further citation. We can leave it to scholars such as Kennedy and Hoyland or Wansborogh in the antithesis to debate the extent and uniformity of application of these state functions. What is clear is that the Arabs were producing increasingly effective functionality. In terms of military functionality, the Rashidun Caliphate was expanding on three major fronts, Byzantine, North Africa, and Central Asia, and was able to develop a functioning navy only a year after initiating its development. The potency of the Rashidun Caliphate and its successors is indisputable.

The Rashidun Caliphate and Its Strengths

How did the Arab-Rashidun Caliphate come, seemingly out of nothing, to the heights of contemporary power? A full analysis of the Caliphate's rise is complex and, given the paucity of reliable records from the period, we must be careful when deriving lessons from the period. However, a critical examination of the available sources and scholarship does in view of the limitations nevertheless support some analysis of the spectacular rise of the early Islamic Caliphates. There are, among many complex factors, three advantages the Caliphate had over its competitors. Significantly, we have some ability to track changes in these advantages over the

[78] Ziauddin Ahmed, "The Concept of Jizya in Early Islam." *Islamic Studies* 14, no. 4 (1975): 294-297. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/20846971.

[79] Wael B. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 108.

period of expansion. These advantages were success in conquest and the reliance on plunder; taxation of non-Muslims; and inclusive, productive economic policies. Over the course of a century of expansion these advantages generated by the Caliphate's policies did change. What, for example, happens to an economy based on plunder derived from success on the battlefield if that success comes to a halt? In the early days of the Rashidun and Umayyad Caliphate's near total success, future changes that might undermine the success were overlooked as the Caliphate reinforced its success across the board.

Success in battle and expansion proved enormously profitable for the early Arab conquers. Both the Koran and Hadith contain references to one fifth of plunder being set aside for the works of God. These resources would be administered by the Caliphate on behalf of those in need.[80] The earliest Islamic legal code had numerous decrees on the division of plunder. These include strict punishment for any theft from plunder prior to its equitable division according to law and custom.[81] Unfortunately, few economic documents survive from this period, and fewer still that can be considered reliable. Alan Walmsley's scholarship on the location and dating of coin hoards offers some insight into the financial state of the early Caliphate. Walmsley argues that the location of coin hoards is indicative of social anxiety resulting in the stashing of coins until after the cause of anxiety had passed. Each stash of coins carries a unique story line, including speculation that coins remained hidden due to the death or dislocation of the those who concealed them. Although an admittedly inexact method, as a rule of thumb, the more coin

[80] Koran 8:4; Sahih al-Bukhari 3091, Book 57.

[81] Ibn Anas Mālik, *Al-Muwatta of Imam Malik ibn Anas: The First Formulation of Islamic Law* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1989) Chapter 21, Hadith 15, 16 & 22-26.

stashes found that can be dated to a known period the more upheaval and uncertainty can be inferred as driving the hiding of coins and currency.[82]

Analysis using this methodology indicates that the level of anxiety was highest during the Sassanid conquest period of the Byzantine-Sassanian War (c. 602-628). Levels of anxiety dropped thereafter and would continue to drop up to the foundation of the Umayyad Caliphate in 661.[83] It is currently impossible to ascertain the level of finances applied to the Rashidun Caliphate's military formations. We do not know whether, or to what degree, revenue supporting the military came from the central treasury, provincial governors, or from prominent tribal leaders who often occupied government positions in the Caliphate. We can ascertain that the sums were significant. The raising of a navy required funds to build or purchase ships, the payment for and provisioning of crews, ship maintenance, sails and rigging, oars and possibly slaves to man the oars. The exact size of the early Rashidun Navy is unknown. However, the size and skill of the Rashidun naval forces was sufficient to challenge the Byzantines for hegemony of the Eastern Mediterranean and eventually the Western portion. On land, Arab forces provisioned several armies including tens of thousands of soldiers and horses. The pay, equipping, and feeding of these forces would have required steady and regular payment. As the Byzantines and Sasanians fell, the Arabs evidently possessed sufficient funds to incorporate, often through financial inducement, the surviving forces directly into their own military.[84]

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[82] Alan Walmsley, "Regional Trade in the Islamic East Mediterranean," in *The Long Eighth Century*, ed. Inge Lyse Hansen and Chris Wickham (Boston: Brill, 2000), 268-269.

[83] Walmsley, "Regional Trade in the Islamic East Mediterranean," 269-270.

[84] Tūrağ Daryāyī, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris in Association with the Iran Heritage Foundation, 2014), 38-45; Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Lived In* (Boston: De Capo Press, 2007), 61; Nicolle, *The Great Islamic Conquests AD 632-750*, 31-32.

Plunder helped pay the Caliphate's warriors and the promise, often kept, of a share of future plunder bankrolled the military of the early Caliphate. So long as bounty was plentiful, the forces of the Caliphate would remain strong.

The second source of funds was plentiful tax revenues in the initial stages of the Arab conquest. The initial conquest, despite its religious undertones, was not an attempt to impose or otherwise convert the masses to Islam. The conquered people were allowed to retain their religious beliefs and customs in exchange for the payment of a poll tax, or *jizya*. The exact nature of the tax differed. In some cases, it was a single *dinar* per head of non-Muslims. In other cases, anywhere from a quarter to half of industrial, agricultural, or other output was given as a fixed tax or tribute each year.[85] Estimates of the population of the Rashidun Caliphate vary widely and range from a few million to several tens of million. We also do not know the demographic breakup, thus it is impossible to precisely estimate either tax revenue, for which there is no reliable surviving data, or the amount of deferred tax revenue exempted by excluding Muslims from the *jizya*. We do know that the non-Muslim population of the Rashidun Caliphate was extensive and can conclude that the *jizya* was a significant source of revenue for the Caliphate.

Additionally, the central Caliphate benefited from additional taxes such as *Zakát*, tax on luxury items; *Fay*, income from state lands; *Khums*, the previously described one fifth of plunder, and *Ushr*, a levy on agricultural lands and, of growing importance over the course of this study, a levy on foreign trade.[86] The administration of this revenue and other governmental functions was aided by the steady migration of Arabs into the newly conquered territories.[87]

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[85] Ziauddin Ahmed, "The Concept of Jizya in Early Islam," 301-302.

[86] Ann K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam* (London: Routledge, 1981), 215-218.

[87] Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 55-60.

Once again, given the widely divergent population data, it is impossible to discern whether this migration was caused by overpopulation in the Arabian Peninsula, as many have claimed, economic opportunity or advancement, or some other factor. It is clear that the migration was sufficient to provide Arab administration of the central government and provinces. Moreover, particularly during the early conquest, the Caliphate was comparatively non-corrupt.[88] This meant that large sums were collected by the Caliphate and then reinvested in the state and military with great efficiency. As long as there was a defined, comparatively uncorrupt ruling class with subjects willing to pay taxes, the military expenditures of the Caliphate could be sustained.

Finally, the able administration of the early Caliphate oversaw a tremendous agricultural transformation and revival of economic activity. New crops, primarily originating in India and introduced through trade with the Arabs, included, "rice, sorghum, hard wheat, sugar cane, cotton, watermelons, eggplants, spinach, artichokes, colocasia, sour oranges, lemons, limes, bananas, plantains, mangos and coconut palms."[89] Exploiting this cornucopia of additional food sources was aided by one of the earliest Rashidun infrastructure projects. The new Caliphate appeared to spare no expense in repairing and expanding irrigation systems in the conquered lands beyond Syria and including the former Sassanian lands and the former Byzantine Egypt.[90]

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[88] Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 238-240.

[89] Andrew M. Watson, "The Arab Agricultural Revolution and Its Diffusion, 700-1100." *Journal of Economic History* 34, no. 1 (1974): 9. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/2116954. Dedicated chapters on most of the crops and their effects can be found in Watson's book *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World: The Diffusion of Crops and Farming Techniques 700-1100*.

[90] Watson, "The Arab Agricultural Revolution and Its Diffusion," 12; Yossef Rapoport and Ido Shahar, "Irrigation in the Medieval Islamic Fayyum: Local Control in a Large-Scale Hydraulic System," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55, no. 1 (2012): 9-10. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/41445740.

Although the population levels of the early Caliphate are difficult to measure, it is clear that agricultural systems were generating increasing amounts of food to support an expanding population. Estimates of the population are sufficient to provide labor for agricultural production across the Caliphate, provide a steady source of manpower for the military to produce new forces and replace casualties, and fuel an increasingly diverse economy. The early disruption of the Arab conquest quickly gave way to rising trade and development, particularly in rural areas.[91] The Arabs were able to sustain and benefit from an expansion in estates, mining, and merchant trade including access to and control of the Indian Ocean trade network.[92] Goods produced locally or imported had access to the Caliphate's expansion of marketplaces, or *Súqs*, throughout the conquered territory.[93] The Arabs became increasingly sophisticated in developing networks for trade and distribution.[94] If the earliest period of conquest is the most profitable, which it arguably is, then what happens when the rate of conquest, the amount of plunder, and the number of non-Muslims drops and leads to a decline in revenue to support these functions? What happens when an empire realizes that trade is more important and more profitable than conquest?

[91] Alan Walmsley, "Economic Developments and the Nature of Settlement in the Towns and Countryside of Syria-Palestine, Ca. 565-800," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 61 (2007): 321-339. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/25472053.

[92] Michael G. Morony, "Economic Boundaries? Late Antiquity and Early Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 2 (2004): 188-189. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/25165033.

[93] Walmsley, "Regional Trade in the Islamic East Mediterranean," 276-278.

[94] Sijpesteijn, "The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Beginning of Muslim Rule," 447-448.

The answer to these questions can arguably be found in the later stages of the Arab expansion.



Map 5 – The Rashidun and Umayyad Caliphate came to dominate the Western Indian Ocean trade. The influx of new crops was perhaps the most important result of this trade in the early history of the Caliphate. Over time, more diverse and lucrative trade would continue to pull the Caliphate's attention to the East.[95]

The Rashidun Caliphate and the rise of the Umayyad Caliphate represented the height of success in Arab conquest. The advent of civil war brought an end to the first period of conquest, and its resumption under the Umayyads seemed destined to achieve similar success. The conquest of Egypt transferred a vast source of supplies, services, and taxation, estimated to have provided Byzantine with a third of its revenue, to the Caliphate.[96] As the Caliphate resumed conquest at the periphery of the empire, they had little reason to doubt at this stage that they would continue to expand and enrich themselves. In this early stage of conquest, we should note that the heights of those committed to expansion never considered the likelihood that they would

[95] Ajaye, *Historical Atlas of Africa*, 40.

[96] John Haldon, "Production, Distribution, and Demand in the Byzantine World, c. 660-840," in *The Long Eighth Century*, ed. Inge Lyse Hansen and Chris Wickham (Boston, MA: Brill, 2000), 227.

end up in far-away Gaul. Neither, at this initial stage did the Franks have any inkling that an Empire a thousand miles away would arrive at the height of the second period of conquest. The dynamics driving the Arabs toward the Franks was simply not a consideration of either party whose interests tended to be focused primarily on whatever force happened to be bordering them. An exception to this is Byzantine, whose fortunes, or lack thereof, are recorded in Western Chronicles. Arab Chroniclers paid no attention to Western Europe during this period. Arab sources would only note the Franks decades later when they came into contact with them. For the Franks, those few who cared, the Arabs were a distant trouble whose threat was mostly an ecclesiastic menace to an important center of the church in Constantinople. The idea that the Franks might have to face a force a thousand miles away was as distant to thought as it was in geography.

IV

The Rise of the Umayyads and the Push to the Pyrenees

The brief respite given to the Byzantines by the internal Arab civil war, or First Fitna (c. 656-661) and the rise of the Umayyad Caliphate was fortunate, if perhaps not divinely providential as is sometimes claimed. The Byzantines had been steadily losing on all fronts against the Caliphate. The pause caused by the First Fitna gave the Byzantines an opportunity to build a loose network of defensive fortifications along their frontier with the Caliphate and strengthen the defenses of Constantinople.[97] Maintaining these fortifications consumed the majority of the remaining Byzantine economy; its agriculture, manpower, transportation, funds, and production.[98] Shorn of its Egyptian and Syrian Provinces, the Byzantine ability to wage war had been greatly reduced. The rise of Bulgarian and other hostile forces along the Byzantine Northern frontier further drained the military might of the Byzantines.[99] The defensive strategy reversed the tide of losses, and the Byzantines successfully adapted to the continued Caliphal onslaught including successful defenses of Constantinople in 674 and 717. The battle ground between the Caliphate and Byzantines slowly stabilized into a battle of attrition on the Anatolian planes that would take another seven hundred years to resolve. In the early days of the Umayyad Caliphate, the Byzantines retained the nominal allegiance of the Berber inhabitants of the

[97] Edward N. Luttwak, *Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Harvard, 2011), 75-76.

[98] Haldon, "Production, Distribution, and Demand in the Byzantine World," 235-236.

[99] Georgije Ostrogorski, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 126-127.

Western reaches of North Africa, including Carthage.[100] As late as 683, at the Battle of Vescera in modern Algeria, the combined forces of Byzantines and Berbers were able to defeat Arab forces in North Africa. It would not be until 694 that the Arabs would be able to impose their will on North Africa and it would require a substantial military effort to do so. [101]

North Africa was not the Umayyad Caliphate's only concern during this period. Tribal politics, and, with the rise of the Shia, sectarian matters were continuous concerns. A second civil war broke out that lasted from 680 to 692 and would require extensive military campaigns to suppress.[102] The permanent stationing of 50,000 Arab soldiers in the Transoxianan town of Merv soon lead to raids deep into Central Asia and modern day Afghanistan.[103] By the end of the seventh-century, the Umayyads would begin pushing into modern day Pakistan and India where they were initially successful. Nevertheless, Afghanistan was earning its reputation as a graveyard of empires, with Umayyad forces losing 15,000 soldiers near Kabul in 700.[104] The Arabs continued their conquest in Sindh, modern day Pakistan, conquering much of area by 711.[105] The Arabs continued military campaigns into the Caucasus with nearly continuous

[100]Jonathan Conant, *Staying Roman: Conquest and Identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439-700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 250-251.

[101] Amy McKenna, *The History of Northern Africa* (New York: Britannica Educational Pub. in Association with Rosen Educational Services, 2011), 40.

[102] Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (London: Phoenix Press, 2009), 43-44.

[103] Hamilton A. R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Royal Asiatic Society, 1923), 17.

[104] Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*, 196.

[105] Gobind Khushalani, *Chachnamah Retold: An Account of the Arab Conquest of Sindh* (New Delhi: Promilla, in Association with Bibliophile South Asia, 2006), 104-121.

raiding and punitive responses lasting from 705-741.[106] The Umayyads also made successive, intermittent attempts at conquest up the Nile River with little success.[107] Friction both inside the Caliphate and along its frontiers compelled military responses in virtually every direction. The expansion across North Africa was broadly shaped by the demands of these ongoing military expenditures, particularly the continued Byzantine affiliation with the Berbers.

Berber Resistance to the Umayyads

Another key theater of operations was the continued naval conflict between the Byzantines and Umayyads. After the conquest of Egypt, the Caliphate rapidly mobilized the resources of Egypt and Syria to build coastal defenses that eventually extended into a network of fortifications along the Anatolian frontier with the Byzantines. The Arabs, or Umayyads during this period, were primarily focused on projecting naval power against the Byzantines.[108] Conversely, the land based Berbers and their Byzantine supporters largely confined themselves to disruptive raiding and blunting Arab reprisals raids in the immediate period after the conquest of Egypt.[109] The Umayyad reluctance to march into North Africa was shaped partly by the

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[106] Douglas M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), 60-84.

[107] Yusuf Fadl Hassan, *The Arabs and the Sudan: From the Seventh to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Khartoum: SUDATek Limited, 2005), 124-126.

[108] Leif Inge Ree Petersen, *Siege Warfare and Military Organization in the Successor States (400-800 AD): Byzantium, the West and Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 394-403.

[109] Phillip C. Naylor, *North Africa: A History from Antiquity to the Present*, rev. ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 54.

demands of other military theaters, but also by the daunting physical reality of North Africa. A narrow temperate belt along the Mediterranean coast was the only area suitable area for large scale military operations. The ability of this temperate band to sustain military forces was questionable and subject to unpredictable drought and rapid dehydration of plants if the Sahara heat intruded. Invading forces would have had to carry their own supplies of food and water. The longer the expected expedition, unable to resupply from local sources, the greater the baggage train required to sustain the army. The larger the baggage train the less mobility an attacking force would have. In many respects, the Arabs were now on the receiving end of the Berber forces greater maneuverability. They were, without local guides, very much akin to the Byzantines in trying to stop Arab forces emerging from the Arabian desert.[110] Operations to find and eliminate the raiding parties required local cooperation to provide knowledge of watering holes, navigational assistance along inland trading routes, and replenishment of supplies that would otherwise tie down Umayyad forces with extensive logistical trains.[111] The greatly diminished Byzantine ability to support the Berbers, coupled with general orientation of its North African officials toward Constantinople, impeded the Byzantines from organizing the disparate network of Berber tribesman to make a concerted push against Arab Egypt.[112]

The fracturing Byzantine support provided the Arabs with their first opportunity to expand beyond Egypt. Gregory the Patrician (d. 647) rebelled against the Rashidun Caliphate and initially secured the support of local Roman and Berber population in what is now Libya.

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[110] Walter Emil Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 54-66.

[111] Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa*, 66.

[112] Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa*, 61-62 & 240.

This presented a unified force and was a significant threat with local memory of the Byzantine rally to expel the Sassanians in 629. The Rashidun Caliphate rushed a force of 20,000 to the area and expelled the Byzantines and occupied the territory after the Battle of Sufetula in 647.[113] This extended the Rashidun Caliphate's control of North Africa out to present day Libya.



Map 6 – Although the initial Rashidun assault was able to extend the frontier further West, the predominantly Christian Berbers were able to repel further encroachment. Note the narrow band of territory along the coast that permitted large-scale military operations.[114]

Berber Conversion to Islam and the Alliance of the Berbers and Arab Umayyads

It would not be until after the Umayyads firmly took control in 661 that any serious effort was made to expand beyond Libya. The highly mobile Berber forces would spend the intervening period raiding into Egypt. It is during this period that conversions to Islam among the Berber tribes began to open opportunities for the Umayyads.[115] Whether these conversions were the result of trade, religion, or military pressure is unknown and probably unknowable in individual cases. However, Umayyad forces were beginning to develop a network of contacts among the local Berber tribesman. Around 670, the Umayyads began a concerted push against

[113] Denys Pringle, *The Defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest: An Account of the Military History and Archaeology of the African Provinces in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries* (Oxford: John and Erica Hedges, 2001), 45-47.

[114] Ajaye, *Historical Atlas of Africa*, 39.

[115] Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 92-103.

the Byzantines in Anatolia, at sea, and in North Africa. One of the prominent converts to Islam was a tribal leader named Kusaila (d. 688). Although there are differing accounts of this period, the Umayyads cobbled together enough Berber support under Kusaila to use a chain of oasis along the Sahara to dislodge hostile forces and established the city of Kairouan in modern day Tunis.[116] Across the Mediterranean, the Umayyads had laid siege to Constantinople by both land and sea, an operation that would last four years and end in defeat for the Umayyads.



Map 7 – Muslim converts with the Berber tribes were instrumental to the success of the Umayyads in North Africa. Kusaila's cooperation extended the Caliphate's control, and the loss of his and his followers support destroyed subsequent Umayyad incursions into the region.[117]

Flush with success in Tunis, the Umayyads under Uqba ibn Nafi (d. 683) pushed along the North African coast, crossing the Atlas Mountains into modern day Morocco.[118] In 683, for unknown reasons, Kusaila allied with Byzantine forces and attacked and killed Uqba on his return journey at the Battle of Vescera. Once again, a unified Byzantine-Berber force threatened the Caliphate in Egypt, and another force was dispatched. Kusaila was killed by the Umayyads at the Battle of Mamma (c. 688) in modern Algeria, before Byzantine reinforcements arrived and drove the Umayyads back to Egypt.[119] The Berbers than rallied around a warrior Princess named

[116] John B. Bury, *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 2, ed. Henry Melville Gwatkin (New York: Macmillan, 1913), 368-369.

[117] Ajaye, *Historical Atlas of Africa*, 39.

[118] Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa*, 240.

[119] Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa*, 243.

Káhina (d. ~ 700). Although much of the details are lost amidst the legend of Káhina, it is clear that the Berbers continued to resist the Umayyads with great alacrity until they were finally defeated around the end of the seventh-century.[120] Carthage fell in 695, and the final defeat of Káhina most likely in Tunis at the turn of the century purportedly led to the mass conversion of the Berbers to Islam.[121] Conversion was likely an acknowledgement of Byzantine decline and the opportunities available for plunder and profit by allying with the victorious Umayyad forces. What little hope there was for any resistance to the Umayyads was lost when the Byzantines were driven from the Balearic Islands, followed by Sicily in 704 in Sardinia in 710.[122] The capture was facilitated by the Byzantine removal of troops with the capture merely confirming the decline in Byzantine power in the Western Mediterranean.[123] By 709, the last visages of Byzantine power were removed from North Africa.[124]



Map 8 – The final conquest of North Africa was essentially a Berber civil war with one faction aided by the Umayyads. The Umayyad victory led to near universal conversion to Islam among the Berbers, and lead to the creation of significant military forces through an Umayyad-Berber alliance.[125]

[120] Haim Z. Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North: From Antiquity to the Sixteenth Century*. 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 89-93.

[121] Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North*, 93.

[122] Syed M. Imamuddin. "Islam in the Balearic Islands." *Islamic Studies* 30, no. 1/2 (1991): 95. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/20840027.

[123] Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa*, 220.

[124] Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa*, 255-266.

[125] Ajaye, *Historical Atlas of Africa*, 39.

The conquest of North Africa had taken the forces of the Caliphate over sixty years. The alliance, indeed the incorporation of the Berbers into the Umayyad forces, allowed for a significant boost to Caliphal forces operating in North Africa. Equally important, the allegiance of the Berber forces meant that supplies and forces from the Umayyad core could travel unmolested and with minimal baggage trains throughout North Africa. It is highly unlikely that the Umayyads would have had the capability to expand further without this critical alliance of forces and provisioning of supplies. Previous Umayyad forays into North Africa fell victim to mobile Berber horsemen who wore Umayyad forces down over time and then defeated them in large battles that drove them out of Berber territory. However, having secured the alliance of the Berbers, the Umayyads no longer faced this challenge in North Africa. The Umayyads had a willing force of Berbers to augment its Arab forces and were in a position of tremendous strength. It would not take long to exploit their next target in the form of the weakened Visigoths of Spain.

The Umayyad Conquest of Spain

Despite the intensity of conflict between the Byzantines and Umayyads in the Western Mediterranean, there is no record indicating that that the Visigoths took any additional precautions in light of the growing Umayyad threat. King Witiza (d. 710), the ruler of the Visigoths during this period of rising danger, focused instead on cultivating relationships among the Visigothic nobility.[126] There is no recorded attempt to enlarge the army, build fortifications, or deploy a navy to defend the coast, even after the Byzantines effectively abandoned the

[126] Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, 2nd ed., vol. 9. Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 104.

Western Mediterranean. The Spanish coast was undefended, and any landing force would be well established before the Visigoths could muster a force large enough to repel it. The weakness was exacerbated by tensions between the king and the nobility, helping to explain King Witiza's pre-occupation with the nobility.[127] In the later part of Witzia's reign, Umayyad forces were raiding into Spain with some frequency, providing ample warning of the increasing danger from North Africa. [128] With each successful raid, the weakness of the Visigoths was made clearer to the Umayyads. After the death of Witiza in 710, Roderic (c. 712) 'rebelliously seized the throne' with the ascent of a portion of the nobility.[129] Roderic's ascension was not uncontested, with a second faction reportedly forming under a noble named Achila (c. 712) who ruled a separate territory in the Northeast.[130] Visigothic Spain was in a state of civil war, and the nobility divided in support of Roderic and Achila while some nobles actively allied with the Umayyads when they arrived in force.[131]

The invasion of Spain follows a template that was nearly identical to the Abu Bakr's assault on the Byzantines and Sassanids in 632. Initial raiding parties exploited weaker adversaries and were eventually followed by larger more substantial forces capable of conquest. In 711, the earlier raids were followed by the arrival of a much larger force whose intent went well beyond raiding. An initial force of 1,700 landed and was soon followed by forces that

[127] Roger Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409-711* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006) 45-46.

[128] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 105.

[129] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754,*106.

[130] Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 131-132.

[131] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 106-107.

swelled their number to 12,000.[132] The initial landing was uncontested, allowing the entirety of the Umayyad forces to land and organize.[133] As the Umayyads began to move North, Roderic gathered his forces and moved to meet them. The precise location of the battle is unknown, but the Umayyads were victorious at the Battle of Guadalete (c. 711). Roderic's divided forces fled, or were driven from the field, and Roderic along with his potentially treacherous and fleeing subordinates were killed.[134] Achila was killed during this period, but there is no record of where or how this transpired. After the Battle, the Umayyads quickly occupied Toledo and proceeded to plunder virtually at will.[135] The Berber alliance with the Umayyads was proving be extremely profitable.

[132] Ibn 'Abd Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*. trans. J. H. Jones (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1858), 18. Al-Hakam records the first number as accurate and the second as inaccurate. However, the two numbers, with the larger being reported by 'others' is consistent with a reconnaissance in force to secure a beach head pending the arrival of a larger force. A force of only 1,700 would be insufficient for conquest while the later number is consistent with previous Arab forces engaged in conquest.

[133] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 18-20.

[134] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 20; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 106-107.

[135] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 21-24; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 107-108.



Map 9 – The Umayyad conquest of Spain went virtually unchallenged after the victory at Guadalete, with only the Asturias holding out in the North. Note how the terrain effects Umayyad forces crossing the Pyrenees and then after the crossing along routes in Gaul.[136]

The Weakening of Umayyad Advantages

The Umayyads continued their conquest of Spain, capturing all of Spain except the heavily mountainous region of the Asturias in the North.[137] Whether this was due to indifference after the Umayyad defeat at the Battle of Covadonga (c. 722) or from desire for greater profit in other areas is unrecorded. It was during this period of consolidation that Musa bin Nusayr (d.

[136] Morris, *The Atlas of Islam*, 35.

[137] Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain*, 33.

716.) was recalled by the Caliph. Musa left Spain with a treasure including slaves, gold and silver, gems, and others treasure deemed so abundant that they were too tedious to record.[138] Musa's reward for this great treasure was its seizure and narrow avoidance of death.[139] He would spend his remaining days in seclusion in Syria.[140] This great removal of treasure was entirely extractive, with none of the reinvestment in infrastructure or trade that accompanied the conquest under the Rashidun Caliphate. There is no record of any finances emanating from the center to the remote regions of the Caliphate. This extraction of wealth to the core was not limited to Spain. It was under the reign of Caliph Al-Walid I (d. 715) that the Umayyads saw their greatest period of expansion. The Caliphate expanded deep into Transoxiana and Sindh and plundered tremendous amounts from the newly conquered areas.[141] Flush with success, and no doubt influenced by his successors desire to stamp their own martial success, the Umayyads launched a costly attack on Constantinople in 717. The attack is said to have had at least 100,000 Umayyad combatants.[142] More importantly, it diverted large portions of the naval contingent operating in the Western Mediterranean.[143] The Second Siege of Constantinople (c. 717-718) ended disastrously for the Umayyads, who lost the majority of their fleet and land forces to a combination of disease, hypothermia, and battle.[144] As at the beginning of the Umayyad

[138] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 108.

[139] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of* 754,108-109.

[140] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 26.

[141] Carl Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples* (London: Routledge, 1939), 80-83.

[142] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 109.

[143] Warren T. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 347.

[144] Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, 346-349.

Caliphate, the Byzantines remained stubbornly difficult to conquer and the cost of offensive operations with a chance of succeeding were becoming prohibitively expensive.

This drain from the periphery was already affecting Umayyad administration in Spain. With no source of funding from the central Caliphate, the Governors of the newly formed Umayyad Province of Al-Andulus had to raise their own revenue to cover their expenses. Indications of this concern include returning lands to Christians, ostensibly so they could be taxed, and squeezing the nobility for payment to the point of protest.[145] The extent to which fiscal considerations, or desire for martial glory, influenced the Umayyads in Spain is difficult to gauge from surviving sources. However, Caliph Umar II (d. 720) abolished continued taxation of coverts to Islam, who had continued to be taxed as non-Muslims in many cases.[146] This almost certainly produced a significant reduction in revenue as non-Muslims were generally taxed at twice the rate of Muslims.[147] The returning of lands to Christians in light of Umar II's decree lends credence to contemporary accounts concerning taxation. Whether it was desire for glory or need to address a fiscal contraction, the Umayyads were quickly motivated to continue to incorporate additional territory and plunder. The Umayyads initially bypassed the Pyrenean Mountains by seizing the port of Narbonne in Southern France.[148] From there they raided further North and eventually, following established patterns of invasion, sent a larger force North that laid siege to Toulouse. Duke Eudo of Aquitaine (d. 735) rallied local forces and defeated the

[145] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 110-111.

[146] Hamilton A. R. Gibb. "The Fiscal Rescript of ʿUmar II." *Arabica* 2, no. 1 (1955): 3. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/4055283.

[147] Gibb. "The Fiscal Rescript of ʿUmar II," 13.

[148] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 112.

Umayyads in 721, killing the Umayyad leader Al-Samh ibn Malik al-Khawlani (d. 721). Whether the reported subsequent doubling of taxation on Spanish Christians was a result of defeat at Toulouse or whether it was to make up for revenue lost to Umar II's fiscal policies is impossible to ascertain. What is clear is that revenue for the Umayyads in Spain was both locally raised and the rate of taxation was rising. The Umayyads would continue to raid beyond the Pyrenees, but there would be no further attempts at conquest for a decade.

Despite the halt in large-scale offensives, the seizure of Narbonne indicated that the Umayyads were poised to continue expanding into Gaul. Despite the defeat at Toulouse, the Umayyads had no reason to believe that expansion beyond the Pyrenees would be any more difficult than the initial expansion beyond Egypt. The Franks, or so the Umayyads had every reason to believe, were not the Byzantines. The Umayyads believed that continued raiding would eventually soften the defenses in Gaul and potentially lead to defections and alliances among factions on the far side of the Pyrenees. However, examining the revenue streams funding the continuation of conquest points to some problems. Plunder remained a significant, perhaps even critical, source of revenue for the Umayyads. The significant losses at the siege of Constantinople stabilized the balance of power between the Umayyads and the Byzantines that had hitherto favored the Umayyads.[149] Successful conquest and plunder in Transoxiana, Sindh, and Spain offset the losses at Constantinople, though to what degree is difficult to determine in surviving sources. It is worth considering what would have happened after the Umayyad failure in Constantinople in the absence of the infusion of plunder.

The answer to the importance of plunder to the Umayyad Caliphate cannot be answered to any degree of certainty. However, one clear difference between the Rashidun Caliphate and

[149] Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*, 331-332.

the Umayyads was that the extraction of plunder was not reinvested in the newly conquered territories. The restoration of irrigation systems after the initial Arab conquest of the Middle East helped fuel an agricultural and economic revolution. The Umayyad conquest of Spain appears to have had the opposite effect, as many fields reverted to pasture rather than productive agriculture.[150] The diffusion of agricultural techniques from the Caliphate's core was haphazard and unorganized.[151] That meant that newly conquered territory was producing less for use by Umayyad forces both locally and throughout the Caliphate. The extraction of resources from the Caliphate's periphery to feed the core was normalized in this period. However, the failure to invest in the periphery inevitably lead to diminishing returns over time. The removal of resources would also feed local resentment along the periphery, requiring greater investment in military forces to retain the conquered territory over time. This would prove to be disastrous for the Umayyads in the later stages of the Caliphate.

Taxation and administration were also becoming problematic during this period. Schemes to avoid tax payment diffused with much greater efficiency than agricultural knowledge throughout the Caliphate. In some cases, resistance to taxation formed the basis of political movements against the Caliphate.[152] As with the Berbers in North Africa, wide spread conversion to Islam spread along with the Caliphate into Central Asia. The once steady revenue

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[150] Jonathan P. Decter, *Iberian Jewish Literature: Between Al-Andalus and Christian Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 35.

[151] Michael Decker, "Plants and Progress: Rethinking the Islamic Agricultural Revolution." *Journal of World History* 20, no. 2 (2009): 203-206. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/40542757.

[152] Kosei Morimoto, *The Fiscal Administration of Egypt in the Early Islamic Period* (Kyoto: Dohosha, 1981), 166-171.

from the *jizya*, or poll tax, was steadily eroding and also producing diminishing returns.[153] Although conversion occurred for many reasons, the economic impact meant a drop of at least a third in the amount of tax for converts.[154] With increasing numbers of conversions throughout the Caliphate, this represented a substantial, if not precisely quantifiable, drop in revenue. In many cases, local officials continued to tax converts at the pre-conversion rate producing wide spread disaffection. Umar II's official extension of tax relief to all converts occurred without addressing how officials would make up for the reduction in revenue.[155] Umar II's policies also indicate that corruption and patronage was increasingly an issue in the Caliphate.[156] Newly conquered Syrians, Egyptians, and Mesopotamians who formed the basis of the Caliphate reaped the reward of sound governance and reinvestment. Those who joined the Caliphate during the second period of rapid expansion enjoyed far less of these benefits. Continued taxation despite conversion, corruption, and extractive policies at the fringes of the Caliphate left the Caliphate vulnerable to the same processes it had once championed. The Caliphate was itself vulnerable to its adversaries raiding parties and their ability to form networks with the disaffected.

These internal divisions of the Caliphate were not understood by the Franks or are at least not mentioned in the records beyond excessive taxation. The Franks knew that the Umayyads could bring sizeable armies and navies to the very gates of Constantinople, that their navy could traverse and raid with impunity across the Mediterranean, that they had conquered North Africa and Spain with relative ease. Most importantly to the Franks was the capture of Narbonne, a port

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[153] Daniel Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 86-88.

[154] Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam*, 87.

[155] Gibb, "The Fiscal Rescript of ʿUmar II," 3.

[156] Gibb, "The Fiscal Rescript of ʿUmar II," 4.

that the Umayyads could readily supply and reinforce, and the appearance of Umayyad raiding parties. The Umayyads, in contrast, would have viewed Charles Martel as little different from Kusaila if they acknowledged him at all. The Umayyads would continue to raid into Gaul with impunity and send a larger force to exploit any weakness in due course. The Franks lacked the ability to launch offensive operations that could conceivably remove the Umayyads from Narbonne and their base of operations in Spain. They were powerless to prevent another Umayyad offensive into Gaul. All the Franks could do was prepare their forces and wait for the inevitable.

V

The Rise of the Merovingians and Consolidation in Western Europe

Western Europe after the fall of the Western Roman Empire was politically and economically fragmented to the point that some historians have labeled the decline an "end of civilization."[157] It would be imprecise to say that civilization itself ended, but previous international trade and its prosperity was greatly disrupted in the West as areas once tied to North Africa and the Byzantine Empire devolved into local economies.[158] The arrival of large "barbarian" tribes with little vested interest in the Roman system coincided with the gradual drift of the Western Roman Empire.[159] Whether the arrival of these non-Roman tribes was the result of attacks from the East, driven for example by the emergence of the Huns who drove the tribes East as refugees, or brought in deliberately by the Romans for defensive purposes remains subject to debate.[160] Western Europe after the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire devolved into principalities, frequently at war with one another, who divided up the former Roman territories. Gaul regionalized into tribes that were not dissimilar to the Germanic tribes that once bordered the Roman Empire. The dominant group, or at least the group that would

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[157] Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 87-108.

[158] Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*, 90-98.

[159] Peter Heather, "The Huns and the End of the Roman Empire in Western Europe." *English Historical Review* 110, no. 435 (1995): 39-41. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/573374.

[160] Bernard S. Bachrach, "The Alans in Gaul," *Traditio* 23 (1967): 476-484. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/27830837.

come to dominate the region of Gaul were the Franks. If there is debate about how the arrival of the Huns effected the Roman Empire against the migration of Frankish tribes into the Empire, there is little debate that the Huns pressing from the East eventually entered Gaul and encountered the Franks. The arrival of the Huns in Gaul proved rather less profitable than previous excursions into Europe had been. The question then is why?

The Huns Vanquished

One military change during this period, particularly with the Huns, was the emergence of a highly mobile, primarily cavalry force that contrasted with the infantry heavy forces of the Romans.[161] The Huns, under the so titled Attila (d. 453), were presumed by many to be invincible. The myth of Attila's invincibility was finally proven false when the Huns were defeated outside Orleans in 451 at the Battle of the Châlons.[162] Previously, the Huns stormed into Europe from the Eurasian Steppe, and successfully clashed with elements of the Roman Empire from Constantinople into modern day Germany.[163] Why were the Huns less successful in Gaul then they had been against the professional forces of Constantinople? The Germans had resisted the full weight of the Roman Empire but succumbed to Attila. Was there something in Gaul, its terrain, among the Franks, or something else, that made the Huns less effective? The Battle of

[161] Bachrach, trans., *Liber Historiae Francorum* 27-28. The Battle of Châlons is also known as the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains; Bell, M. J. V. "Tactical Reform in the Roman Republican Army," *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 14, no. 4 (1965): 406-414. The changes from temperate to arid between Gaul and Spain were problematic for the Romans even before the arrival of the Huns from the Steppe.

[162] Alexander Callander Murray, ed., *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader*. Petersborough: Broadview Press, 1999, 91-92. Translation of Proposer of Aquitaine's *Epitoma Chronicon*.

[163] Nic Fields, *Attila the Hun* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2015), 4-6 & 39-42.

Châlons and the events preceding it revealed both the strength and limitations of cavalry forces once they crossed from wide plains into thickly forested terrain. Thickly forested terrain confined cavalry forces to roads and limited the mobility advantage of cavalry in battle by preventing easy access to an adversary's rear or flanks. Similar conditions were also found in Italy and Germany, as well as further east. Gaul, however, was an extremity that lay well behind the flat grasslands of Eastern Europe. Forces penetrating so deeply into Europe would have been cut off from easy reinforcement and largely confined to roads that severely limited their mobility and mass. Cavalry forces seeking to dislodge an opponent encountered in Gaul would likely face opposing forces along these roads. When properly concentrated in formations, the thickly forested terrain would have obliged the Huns to charge directly into the front of a phalanx of infantry. Cavalry directly facing an opponent behind a wall of shields and spears, a phalanx, maximized the strengths of infantry against weaknesses of cavalry.

The defeat of Attila and his Huns at Châlons is a model for the opportunities and pitfalls of highly mobile cavalry forces in Western Europe. The Roman road network in Gaul led directly to the larger cities and settlements, which were coincidentally the areas most profitable for plunder. The Huns quickly sacked Tournai, Cambrai, Amiens, Strasbourg, Worms, and Metz before their arrival at the better-fortified city of Orleans.[164] The subjects of Orleans had indicated that they would leave their gates open.[165] Instead, the Huns arrived to find the gates secured and promptly laid siege. So long as the intent was to raid and retreat, the slower foot soldiers of the Franks would not have been able to catch the Huns. The siege of Orleans placed the Huns in one

[164] Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 89-91.

[165] Jordanes, *The Origins and Deeds of the Goths: In English Version*, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1908), 118.

spot, and the Franks could now mobilize and meet the Huns. Had the Huns simply moved on to other cities, it is unlikely the Romans, largely on foot, would have caught them. The stubborn resistance at Orleans effectively kept the Huns pinned in one location.

By the time the Huns reached Orleans their mobility was further reduced by the sheer abundance of their previous marauding. The great plunder was piled into wagons coupled with captured slaves being marched away on foot for sale in the East. This abundance of bounty both needed protection and greatly slowed the Huns.[166] The mobilization of a combined force of Romans, Goths, and Franks, mostly on foot, seem to have induced a change in tactic from Attila, who began to withdraw away from the force.[167] The retreat of the plunder laden Huns was slow and they were confined to a road network that made their egress route predictable. The combined force not only caught up to the Huns but also was able to seize the high ground between the forces. The terrain not only forced the Huns directly into the fronts of the Roman forces, but the Huns also had to attack uphill.[168] The Huns attempts to take the higher ground were repeatedly rebuffed, and the Roman forces attacked the Huns as they attempted to withdraw. The Huns were, by nightfall, pinned and largely surrounded. Nevertheless, the Huns were allowed to retreat. The exact reason for this allowance is unknown. Current scholarship indicates that the retreat was allowed either because the combined force broke apart or because the Romans hoped

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[166] Hyun Jin Kim, *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 80-81.

[167] Jordanes, *The Origins and Deeds of the Goths*, 120-128. The exact composition of the forces is unknown, but the depictions of the Romans in Jordanes' account are primarily on foot.

[168] Jordanes, *The Origins and Deeds of the Goths*, 117, 122. Jordanes records a space of 100 x 70 *lueve*, with a single *lueve* being 1,500 paces. This would have made the field of battle one hundred miles long and seventy deep. The distance is clearly improbable, as the battlefield would have extended roughly from Arras to Reims and a depth from Reims to Sedan. A reading of this passage suggests that the battlefield was a discernable and measurable clearing, if one not quite so titanic.

to reach an accord with the Huns that would secure the Western Empire from further encroachment.[169] After Châlons, it is clear that the advantages and disadvantages of cavalry in Gaul were well understood both by the Romans and the tribes settling into the region. This understanding long preceded the appearance of Umayyad cavalry in Gaul.

Clovis I and Frankish Consolidation

With the dissolution of the Hunnic Kingdom in 453 shortly after the Battle of Châlons, the threat of the Hun's highly mobile cavalry receded. The political displacement of the Roman Empire into tribal domains continued with the gradual disappearance of the Romans over time. The division of Gaul was briefly interrupted by the conquest and reign of Clovis I (c. 481-511). Clovis conquered an area roughly equivalent to modern France with the exception of Burgundy and Brentons. However, the subsequent division by Clovis of this Frankish Kingdom into like areas for each of his four sons made the consolidation temporary. The partition of the Frankish kingdom into distinctive units of Rheims, Orléans, Paris, and Soissons, ostensibly to provide equitable income for the sons of Clovis, instead created discord.[170] The continuation of this tradition among Clovis I's children only further divided the Franks and the practice would undermine central authority in Gaul for centuries.[171] The divisions, and subsequent efforts to

[169] Ian Hughes, *Aetius: Attila's Nemesis*. (Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2012), 164-174.

[170] Gregorius, *History of the Franks: By Gregory, Bishop of Tours. Selections, Translated with Notes by Ernest Brehaut* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 54-71. Gregory of Tours descriptions of discord between the divided kingdom and their associations and conflict with Visigothic and Germanic powers amply demonstrates the problems following the reign of Clovis I.

[171] Gregorius, *History of the Franks*, 87.

protect the most lucrative areas of Gaul among the various Frankish princes stands in stark contrast to the former unity of the Roman Empire.



Map 10 – Frankish realms, although unified under Clovis I, retained their local identity. The three most important realms were Neustria, Austrasia, and Burgundy. Aquitaine would remain stubbornly independent during this period. Note also that Septimania and Narbonne lie outside Frankish territory.[172]

Despite the continued political division, Clovis I's conversation to the Catholic faith, and subsequent conversion of many of his subjects, would eventually create an ecclesiastical uniformity to Gaul.[173] The influence of the Catholic Church, in competition with Paganism,

[172] Ian Barnes and Robert Hudson, *Historical Atlas of Europe* (Shirley: Arcadia Education, 1998), 40.

[173] Gregorius, *History of the Franks*, 41and 90.

steadily increased throughout this period. Agents of the church, bishops and priests, became increasingly intertwined with literate officials with sufficient levels of education required to maintain records and administer the increasingly local economic supply.[174] The residence of this ability among the clergy is without question. However, the degree of lay literacy remains subject to debate save that it was rising through the post Roman Merovingian period.[175]

Frankish Nobles and the Rise of the Church

The spread of monasteries and religious shrines throughout post Roman Gaul, administered if not always lead by literate clergy, increasingly became centers of trade and commerce.[176] Monasteries slowly acquired additional resources through procurement or when bequeathed by the nobility.[177] Increasingly, the church had access to high quality agricultural lands and sufficient labor to produce surplus goods and materials.[178] Monasteries not only generated surpluses, they increasingly managed trade along the rivers and roads to disperse those excess goods through the countryside while accumulating wealth in return. A steady decline in

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[174] Harvey J. Graff, *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 41-44.

[175] Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 1-15 & 211-227.

[176] Stéphane Lebecq, "The Role of Monasteries in the System of Production and Exchange of the Frankish World between the Seventh and the Beginning of the Ninth Century," ed. Chris Wickham, in *The Long Eighth Century*, ed. Inge Lyse Hansen (Boston: Brill, 2000), 124-126.

[177] Arnold Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey.*Vol. 2 (Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 1986), 778-779.

[178] Pam J. Crabtree, "Agricultural Innovation and Socio-economic Change in Early Medieval Europe: Evidence from Britain and France," *World Archaeology* 42, no. 1 (2010): 132. http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/25679731

the use of Roman coins during the period indicates that trade was increasingly conducted under systems of barter, with coin usage, particularly higher denominations, falling almost exclusively to the nobility and clergy.[179] As a result monasteries and the holdings of major land owners became centers of moveable wealth, including cattle, slaves, and coins.[180] Monasteries were not only increasingly important in the post-Roman economy, their concentration of wealth made them exceptionally attractive targets for hostile raiding parties.

Attacks on Monasteries were certainly not frequent, but they were also far from unheard of in post-Roman Gaul. The descent into localized principalities and the resulting competition between forces was, like their Arab counterparts, funded to some extent by the capture of plunder.[181] The capture and removal of stores of food and cattle were almost certain after a victory, but the trappings of the religious center were both highly valuable and easily transportable and routinely expropriated by victorious Frankish lords.[182] As a result, monasteries acquiring this type of wealth were increasingly well protected. The importance of success in battle was paramount to survival. Weakness, perceived or real, often invited attack from surrounding Frankish princes. If the attacking forces were successful, they frequently made off with whatever accumulated wealth they could and frequently the lives of a Frankish Lord too weak to defend himself. Alliances and intrigue sometimes pulled numerous Frankish princes into a state of general war. At such times, Frankish nobles would attempt to extract wealth from their

[179] Joachim Henning, *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 105-108.

[180] Paul Fouracre and Richard A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640-720* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 6.

[181] Bachrach, trans., *Liber Historiae Francorum*, 34-35.

[182] Bachrach, trans., *Liber Historiae Francorum*, 34-35.

churches and monasteries to pay for their forces until victory was achieved. The clergy in need of protection from the nobles and the nobles in need of the resources of the clergy increasingly became intertwined.[183] Even a hint of stirring rivals could elicit attempts to expropriate church property. Local rulers levied taxes, often successfully, as the clergy leveled protests, also often successfully.[184] In post-Roman Gaul, this marriage between church and state became increasingly codependent even as friction between the parties required constant mediation. This was not a relationship between adversaries however, but a relationship between parties that both understood the requirements of the other and needed them. Compromise was not just common but necessary. Both clergy and nobility understood that failure in the relationship meant conquest and, more likely than not, the wholesale expropriation of wealth from the territory. Kingdoms who succeeded in this era increasingly did so by protecting church property and harmonizing their relationships with the clergy. This is a simplification of a complex and nuanced relationship that varied considerably between locations. Raiding forces, given the state of perpetual struggle in Gaul, would deceive themselves if they thought church property was low hanging fruit to be plucked with little effort. An attack on a monastery or shrine would almost certainly provoke a vigorous response from the inhabitants, who had no intention of easily parting with the fruits of their labor.

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[183] Gregorius, *History of the Franks*, 99.

[184] Gregorius, *History of the Franks*, 75. Curiously, Gregory's depiction of the tax of one third of church property is only refused by a single Bishop. Although this solitary figure does not pay the tribute, Gregory pointedly fails to note the return of the remaining tribute to the other Bishops. Perhaps wisely, King Clothar having secured the majority of his desire decided not to turn an argument from single Bishop into a wider contest with the Church. Whether Gregory or the wider church accepted this bargain is unknown, but Gregory's avoidance of the collected tribute does indicate acceptance if not agreement with the collection. Resources funded the protection of the church through the local rulers, as well as the maintenance of the Church and its functions. Neither the nobles nor the church appeared to be unaware of the needs of the other, and this exchange highlights to friction between ruler and clergy whose needs were at odds by also dependent upon one another.

After the death of Clovis, areas of Gaul continued to devolve along local lines. The title of King of the Franks becoming an increasingly symbolic title while real power shifted toward the landed aristocracy.[185] The brief unification of Gaul under Clovis I, though noted as an improvement by modern historians, did not enjoy the same acclaim at the death and dissolution of his unified kingdom.[186] The division of the Kingdom was natural, unspectacular, and even desirable.[187] Moreover, this loss of political unity did not hinder the defense of Gaul when it was invaded from the outside. Whether the attacks came from Germanic tribes or Huns, Italian Lombards, or Spanish Visigoths, the Franks would set aside their differences and quickly mobilize forces sufficient to drive the invaders from their lands.[188] There was no need for an expensive permanent military force, as there was no enemy capable of invading and enforcing its writ across the countryside and thus no need to permanently defend against it. Gaul may have been politically divided, and was certainly not without political intrigue, but it was not a weak land that could be easily conquered by an outside force.[189] Gaul was a land that resisted attempts by forces either internal or external to exert control over it and had proven rather adept at forcibly expelling or suppressing such forces when they arose.

This state of political fragmentation would last over two centuries. It is tempting to think of this period as one of petty principalities constantly warring with another. Many historians, particular those of the later Carolingian period, see the unification of Western Christendom as

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[185] Ian Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London: Routledge, 1994), 41-60.

[186] Gregorius, *History of the Franks*, 50.

[187] Gregorius, *History of the Franks*, 54.

[188] Gregorius, *History of the Franks*, 90-1, 96-98 & 200.

[189] Gregorius, *History of the Franks*, 42, 190 & 240.

deliverance from this period of trivial squabbles.[190] This simplistic interpretation belies the complexity, and to a large extent the reality, of the situation. Warfare during this period was, by in large, both confined to and the duty of nobility and their non-aristocratic subordinates.[191] Over the course of time, this selectivity in warfare was honed by the aristocracy and increasingly assigned to specialized groups of warriors called *scarae*. Levies in mass were infrequent, disruptive to social and economic order, and largely ineffective.[192] Although classic open field battles of opposing armies did occur, evidence suggests that the majority of warfare surrounded the capture and defense of fortifications.[193] Masses of pressed farmers, rather than specialized *scarae*, would have been particularly ineffective in reducing and storming fortifications. The reduction of fortifications required specialized engineering assets, and the protection of skilled labor necessary to produce and use such assets was prioritized by the Frankish aristocracy.[194]

The requirement to reduce fortifications was made more difficult by a network of ever changing relationships. The danger of neighboring forces arriving to the relief of besieged forces was real, provided a noble had adequately maintained relations with his neighbors. These relationships could see neighbors either turn antagonist or protagonist to either defend the status quo or overthrow it when advantage arouse. This personal aspect of warfare could range from calculating to utterly personal and devoid of military purpose.[195] Frankish aristocrats, often

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[190] Michael Grant, *Collapse and Recovery of the Roman Empire* (Abingdon, Oxon: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 67-68.

[191] Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West* (London: Routledge, 2005), 29-32.

[192] Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West*, 54-55.

[193] Petersen, *Siege Warfare and Military Organization in the Successor States*, 200-201.

[194] Petersen, *Siege Warfare and Military Organization in the Successor States*, 220-223.

[195] Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 140-148.

orchestrating alliances between other nobles, at the head of important Frankish factions had to be capable of delivering victory in battle when called upon. They required equal, if not greater, ability in navigating relationships with retainers who might otherwise be bought off and defect to any one of a spectrum of potential rivals. Failure in either field meant being subsumed by rivals who distributed the bounty among themselves with often brutal efficiency.[196] Conversely, success in these endeavors might leave a land free from conflict for a generation or more.

If actual warfare was not a constant endured by the Franks, the threat of war and the ready use of force was a constant among the Frankish aristocracy. Gaul was far from a highly vulnerable morass it is sometimes portrayed as, and its leading nobles could prove intractably capable. Merovingian royalty, such as it was, was not the all-powerful emperor of Roman antiquity. Rather Merovingian royalty served as foci for conglomerates of landed nobles who could, or could not, be roused for specific purposes. This could be relatively easy, such as the case of rallying against a hostile invading force to protect the greater good of the Franks. Less often, and with more difficulty, Frankish forces could be rallied to conduct offensive operations either to break up hostile forces or to seize additional territory. Merovingian royalty also acted as a legal force to keep the balance between Frankish forces, ever mindful that enforcement was as much about consensus as it was with royal writ.[197] When warfare did erupt among the Franks it was largely a function of this polity. Logistical capability, often derived from surplus produced by the population or purchased by agents of military forces in advance of their arrival, was not capable of supporting expeditions of indefinite distance.[198] In fact, there appears to have been no

[196] Gregorius, *History of the Franks*, 159-160.

[197] Gregorius, *History of the Franks*, 212-13.

[198] Petersen, *Siege Warfare and Military Organization in the Successor States*, 219-220.

desire to develop such an expeditionary capability. There was no concept of a Frankish Kingdom during this period that thought, like the Arabs, of attacking neighboring kingdoms and bringing them under Frankish domains. Any hint of such a desire seems to have died along with Clovis I.

Like their Arab contemporaries bursting forth from the Arabian peninsula during this period, there was a religious aspect to Frankish warfare. Christianity co-existed with Paganism in early post-Roman Gaul and was in many respects part of the aristocratic competition between nobles. Reasons for conversion from one faith to another are always complex, vary by individual, and resist generalities. Nevertheless, we can speculate that the conversion of Clovis I, and many of his followers, embodies a portion of the religious trends in Gaul.[199] Whether religion had any practical effect on the course of battle is subject to a debate that this thesis makes no pretense of resolving. However, as Gregory of Tours makes clear on the subject of Clovis I and other conversions, the occurrence of victory was seen as indicative of divine favor. As Christian forces succeeded in battle it became to be seen as superior to Paganism for those seeking, if not in fact entirely reliant upon, the fortunes of battle for their station.[200] Given the economic role of monasteries and shrines previously addressed, it is perhaps not unsurprising that Christianity slowly gained traction among Frankish Lords and their subjects. That is not to say that the countryside was a monolith of Christian piety and uniformity. On the contrary, Pagan rituals, particularly those associated with battle, proved a stubbornly obstinate practice among the Franks.[201] By the time the Umayyads arrived in Gaul it was a rare Frankish noble who neglected his duty to the church, if not out of piety then at least out of genuine pragmatism.

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[199] Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: A.D. 481-751* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 15.

[200] Gregorius, *History of the Franks*, 53-54.

[201] Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul*, 155-158.

Charles Martel and the Unification of the Franks

When the Umayyads arrived, they would find the Franks unified behind Charles Martel. Charles was not the King of the Franks, nor was he born King. Charles did not have the power to compel the Franks to do his bidding. Charles Martel nevertheless appears to have built a loyal, unified coalition of Frankish forces. He was, in terms of Merovingian nobility, not all together exceptional if we view the fulfillment of his role as one of achieving victory for a coalition of Frankish lords. If the normative state of the Franks was loose conformity of Frankish princes aligned in name only under a king, how then did Charles emerge as the head of unified Frankish force? How fragile was this Frankish coalition? Was it, like the Frankish unity of Clovis I, a temporary event? How would the arrival of a strong unifying force like the Umayyads have disrupted the Franks, as they had the Visigoths, had they arrived in Gaul before Charles had largely unified it?

On the surface, the unity of the Franks was fragile, limited to the duration of the aristocratic personalities holding it together. Charles Martel's father, Pepin of Herstal (d. 714) was Mayor of the Palace of the Frankish Kings, where he held the real power behind the throne of a series of Merovingian Kings. Under a succession of Merovingian Kings extending from Theuderic III (d. 691) to Dagobert III (d. 715), Pepin of Herstal unified the Austrasia, Neustria, and Burgundy after the Battle of Tertry (c. 687).[202] Thereafter, he concentrated his attention on Aquitaine and the Germanic regions of Frisia, Saxony, and Bavaria with some success.[203] By the

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[202] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 85.

[203] "Annales Mettenes Priores," trans. B. von Simson, in *Late Merovingian France History and Hagiography 640-720*, ed. Paul Fouracre and Richard A. Gerberding (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 359.

time of Peppin's death, the Franks, at least on paper, were unified under a single ruler. Succession, if the Franks were indeed a centralized, stable state should have flowed to his designated heir and son Grimoald (d.714) of Pepin's first wife, Plectrude (d.718).[204] As noted by historian Guy Halsall, succession and transitions in power during the Merovingian era was a dangerous period. It was during periods of transition that rival factions and interests vied for supremacy. Without a clear and strong successor, the situation could and frequently did turn bloody.[205] The transition between Mayors of the Palace did not go well after Pepin of Herstal's death. Grimoald was assassinated shortly before the death of his father, and the succession, ostensibly due to the manipulations of Pepin's first wife Plectrude, passed to Grimoald's son Theudoald.[206] Theudoald is thought to have been no more than eight years old, and was in no position to lead the Franks. Charles Martel, son of Pepin's second wife Alpaida (d.714), was now also a lawful claimant to power, but was jailed by Plectrude as she fought to establish her rule through Theudoald.[207]

The result of the battle for the succession was the descent of this unified kingdom of Franks into civil war. Neustria and Burgundy rebelled and the previous targets of Frankish aggression in Aquitaine and Germany soon found favored factions within the rival claimants further stoking the descent into civil war.[208] Of immediate concern to Charles was securing his

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[204] Simson, trans., "Annales Mettenes Priores," 362.

[205] Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West*, 27-29.

[206] Simson, trans., "Annales Mettenes Priores," 365.

[207] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar*, 87. There is some debate as to whether Alpaida was a second wife or concubine as some sources derisively refer to her as. However, polygamy was common among Frankish nobility, and the ready acceptance of Charles indicates that he was accepted as a properly born descendant of Pepin.

[208] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 88-90.

power base in Austrasia. After escaping from prison, Charles rallied forces and began to pressure Plectrude's forces near Cologne. However, forces from Nuestria, allied with Frisians so recently attacked by Pepin, arrived in 716 and promptly defeated Charles' forces before moving onto Cologne. This is the only recorded defeat of Charles Martel.[209] Charles rallied his forces while the Neustrians and Frisians laid siege to Cologne. Plectrude and her followers were defeated and forced to turn over the accumulated wealth of the Merovingians and renounce her son's claim.[210] The Neustrians, under Chilperic II (d. 721), believed they were victorious and were returning to Neustria with their plunder when Charles attacked them.[211] Charles captured the majority of the plunder, keeping it in the hands of the Austrasians, and soon dispersed Plectrude's followers to secure his base of power.

With his base secure, Charles went about reconquering Neustria and Burgundy. Chilperic was again defeated of Vincy (c. 717) and quickly realized he lacked the forces to defeat Charles. Thereafter he successfully entreated Duke Eudo of Aquitaine for support.[212] Charles was once again victorious at the Battle of Soissons (c. 718). Paris fell, and Charles pursued the fleeing

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[209] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 88.

[210] Bachrach, *Liber Historiae Francorum*, 112.

[211] Bachrach, *Liber Historiae Francorum*, 112. The Annals of Metz contain a much more descriptive narration of the battle and the surprise inflicted by Charles and his forces. However, the details of the battle contain several errors in known detail and the narration is itself of suspect authenticity. The narration clearly depicts Charles as a heroic figure and a master of battle, a worthy sire of the Carolingian Dynasty. The details involve timing and complexity of battle meant to demonstrate this prowess, but that would be suspect in the early stages of the civil war with forces newly rallied and newly working with one another. A simpler reading would indicate that Charles ambushed and surprised his opponent who had thought him defeated. Charles, having got the drop on the Chilperc, also got the better of him when it counted most. A fine testament to battle prowess in its own right, it does not require Charles, recently defeated outside Cologne, to have suddenly mastered the most difficult forms of formal warfare on the fly.

[212] Bachrach, *Liber Historiae Francorum*, 113.

Eudo and Chilperic to Orleans.[213] The sources are unclear as to whether Charles forced Eudo to return Chilperic or to what extent his involuntary return by Eudo ameliorated Charles to strike an accord that left Aquitaine outside the control of the Franks.[214] The Frankish Kingdoms of Austrasia, Neustria, and Burgundy were only then reunified under the single leadership of Charles Martel. The Frankish civil war was over, but the wars of the Franks were not. Charles quickly shifted focus towards subduing the Germanic tribes along the border with the Franks, including the recently offending Frisians. From 718-731 Charles would launch repeated attacks against the Bavarians, Saxons, Frisians, and the Alemanni, eventually subduing them all.[215] Charles Martel's forces never lost a battle during this period, or, at least, the sources do no record any such losses. By 731, Charles arguably led the most effective military force in Western Europe. This was not, however, the only military force in Western Europe as it is sometimes presented. Nevertheless, the consolidation of Franks under Charles Martel was a remarkable achievement for a process that began with flight from a jail cell in Cologne.

The Franks, however, were left largely alone to fight through their civil war, a luxury that had not extended to the Visigoths in Spain. Only three years prior to the initiation of the Frankish civil war, the Umayyads landed in Spain and conquered the Visigoths. While the Franks were battling for control of Neustria and compelling an accommodation with Eudo, the Umayyads laid siege of Constantinople. What if the Umayyads had utilized an economy of force to keep the

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[213] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 89.

[214] The Annals of Metz, as might be expected, present Charles as unquestioned victor demanding the return of Chilperic and Eudo surviving only because of Charles' Christian mercy. The other sources, such as the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and *The Chronicles of Fredrigar* are unclear as to whether accord was reached on terms of equality, perhaps avoiding a long siege of Orleans, or whether Eudo was compelled to comply, or to what degree, by force.

[215] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 89-90.

Byzantines bottled up in Constantinople and diverted the bulk of their forces to Spain and then into Gaul? Although there is no evidence of any coordinated drive into Gaul emanating from the Umayyad core, there are indications that Umayyad forces were keen to continue exploiting divisions in Europe.

Umayyad Military Raids in Frankish Gaul

In 721, only two years after the Charles Martel secured the Frankish Kingdom, the Umayyads seized the port of Narbonne in Southern France. The Umayyads, as they had done across the Mediterranean and in Spain, clearly had the means of landing additional forces. Despite the consumption of forces around Constantinople, Umayyad forces moved Northwest into Gaul toward the city of Toulouse. The Umayyads quickly surrounded and laid siege to the city, before being driven off by Duke Eudo.[216] The Umayyad Commander, and Governor of Al-Andalus, Al-Samh al-Khawlani (d. 721) was killed either during the Battle of Toulouse or died shortly thereafter from wounds suffered during the battle. Abdul Rahman Al Ghafiqi (also and hereafter referred to as Abd ar-Rahman, d. 732) lead the remaining Umayyad forces back into Spain.[217] Umayyad forces would continue to operate out of Narbonne, eventually laying siege to and capturing Carcassonne in 725 and with it control of Septimania.[218] The capture of Carcassonne represented the high-water mark of Umayyad conquest in Europe. Nevertheless,

[216] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 112.

[217] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 112.

[218] Philippe Sénac et al., "Nouveaux Vestiges De La Présence Musulmane En Narbonnaise Au VIII[e] Siècle." *Al-Qanṭara* 35, no. 1 (2014): 64-65. doi:10.3989/alqantara.2014.003.

Umayyad forces would continue to raid North into Aquitaine, just as the previous Visigothic predecessors had done for centuries.

Umayyad military operations at this early point into Gaul do tell us something about what the Umayyads faced. Military operations into Gaul were important to the Umayyad forces conducting them, but they seem to have been little noticed by Umayyad leaders in the center of the Caliphate.[219] Aside from the replacement of Al Ghafiqi by Anbasa ibn Suhaym al-Kalbi (d. 726), there is no record of communication from the center Caliphate about the military failure at Toulouse.[220] Taken in tandem with the Caliphate's previous recall of Musa bin Nusayr and his plunder, we can see that Umayyad affairs in Spain and Gaul were largely the affairs of the governors.[221] What concern there was for this far off region appeared solely as a function of deriving revenue with little or no attention paid to the Franks. That was clearly not the case for the local Umayyad forces. The deliberate siege of Toulouse, including many engines, indicated that the Umayyads tasked with subduing Gaul did not think the Franks were simpletons defenselessly waiting to be conquered.[222] Umayyad military operations in Gaul were deliberate and initially overwhelming. However, the Umayyads seemed to have no answer to the ability of the Franks to assemble in mass and apparently without detection once they laid siege to secure a fortification. The Umayyads faced the same tactical challenge of relying on scouts in Gaul that

[219] Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 500-502.

[220] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 112.

[221] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 108.

[222] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 112. See also Bernard S. Bachrach, *Merovingian Military Organization, 481-751* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), 131-138, for Byzantine source descriptions in comparison to contemporary Frankish sources such as Gregory of Tours.

they had in their initial forays against the Berbers in North Africa. Sending scouts who are unfamiliar with the land and easily ambushed, perhaps even more so in the thickly forested approaches of Gaul, proved difficult. Additionally, these scouts frequently missed the concentration of enemy forces against Umayyad forces in terrain they were unaccustomed to operating in. This failure in intelligence gathering led directly to the Umayyad failure at Toulouse.

After the failure at Toulouse, the Umayyads fell back to raids in force as they had done with previous setbacks including their initial defeats in North Africa and Egypt. It is perhaps unsurprising that these raids, including the subsequent raids by Governor of Al-Andalus, Anbasa al-Kalbi (d. 728), featured prominently and to an extraordinary geographic distance, in ecclesiastical writings.[223] Church sites, given their concentration of wealth, were prime targets for the marauding Umayyads. However, these same sites had long been subject to raids from Visigoths, and even from Pagans such as the disruptive Frisian Duke Radbod.[224] We should bear in mind that Christianity, though relatively secure throughout Gaul by this period, had been struggling against Paganism for over a century. The conversion of Clovis and the subsequent string of military victories cemented the position of Christianity and the Church. The appearance of a rival religion, one seemingly on the edge of victory over the Byzantines and Constantinople, must have been disconcerting to ecclesiastical authorities throughout the region. The danger here was less about a single victory, and more about the dangers of conversion to Islam, or at least alliance with the Umayyads, by various Frankish nobles and the subsequent transfer of their

[223] L. Gidley, trans., *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1870), 477. See also Collins, *The Arab conquest of Spain*, 88.

[224] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 88.

fortifications to the Umayyads. This is precisely what happened with the seizure of Narbonne in 720 and Carcassonne in 725. What would happen if the new religion began to attract significant, especially noble, converts among the Franks?

Such conversions would have provided an additional method for the Umayyads to detect Frankish forces when they rallied. Either disaffected Franks or converts could provide the Umayyads with information on the rally of any significant forces. Umayyad raids into Gaul appeared to be unstoppable as well as quite profitable so long as they remained mobile. Given this pressure, there was the ever-present danger that a Frankish version of Kusaila would arise in Gaul, and, perhaps even more dangerous would be the conversion to Islam and subsequent military success of this Frankish Kusaila.

The Alliance of Aquitaine and Catalunya

Duke Eudo of Aquitaine occupied a precarious position between Charles and his unified Franks and the ever encroaching Umayyads. At least one period chronicler charges that Eudo made a deal with the proverbial devil and reaped the rewards of his treachery.[225] Aside from the religious scandal of courting Muslims, the move by Eudo was one of pragmatism. Eudo's earlier forays against the Franks during the civil war left him with no illusions about his ability to defeat the Franks outside of Aquitaine. The marauding Umayyads most frequently targeted Aquitaine and Burgundy. Without doing something to change the conditions, Eudo faced a choice of submission to either Charles Martel and the Franks or the Umayyads. With the raids growing more powerful from the Umayyads, and Charles Martel largely eliminating serious resistance in Bavaria and Saxony by 730 it seemed as if both powerful forces were ready to turn to

[225] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 90.

Aquitaine.[226] The sudden rebellion of the Berber Governor of Cataluya, Munuza (d.731) in the Pyrenean town of Cerdanya against the main Umayyad force in Cordoba appeared to offer another solution.[227] The combined forces of Eudo and Munuza might be strong enough to hold the powerful rivals to the West and North at bay. Eudo, we do not know whether he genuinely believed in the alliance or was simply desperate, sealed the alliance by marrying his daughter to Munuza.[228]

The alliance appears to have goaded both the Umayyads and Franks into action. Charles Martel broke the peace treaty between himself and Eudo and launched a series of raids into Aquitaine.[229] It appears that Charles was content to return Aquitaine to Frankish subordination, and there was no serious attempt by the Franks to occupy any territory controlled by Eudo. Charles may also have held back, concerned that Munuza and his substantial forces might otherwise be compelled to aid Eudo. Events from Spain soon overtook the Frankish consideration of Eudo. Whatever those events were to be, they would find the Franks at the pinnacle of their powers. The Franks were unified under a single, battle proven leader who had, at that moment, vanquished all of his foes. In 732 AD, Charles Martel led a force that had been honed over almost two decades of constant battle. He had trusted subordinates that fought well together and that sat atop a proven system of supply and administration. At the center of that system was the church and its resources, and the defense of that system was necessarily ruthless.

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[226] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of* Fredegar, 90.

[227] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 116.

[228] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 116.

[229] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 90.

VI

Into the Breach, the Battle of Tours and the Berber Revolt

Umayyad affairs had not been going well in Spain after the conquest. After the Umayyad failure at the Battle of Toulouse, there would be seven governors in nine years. Six of the governors would rapidly transition between 726 and 730. This troubled period began with sharp increases in taxes.[230] Although the records do not indicate a reason for the tax increase, the extraction of wealth to the Umayyad core in 718 that was followed by the defeats at Toulouse and Covadonga almost certainly had something to do with the increase. The Battle of Covadonga left an independent Christian Kingdom West of the Pyrenees. High in the mountains and relatively safe from the Umayyads, the Asturians provided an early base of resistance to the Umayyads in Spain.[231] The Umayyads in Spain could not expect any financial support from the Caliphate, and they had a steady supply of Berber tribesman from North Africa requiring provisions and expecting plunder. The Umayyads were hard pressed in Spain by the time Anbasaibn al-Kalbi passed away in 726 setting off the rapid transitions in governance. Fiscal pressures caused by defeat and only limited success in raiding continued to build. Increased tax collection was followed by outright confiscation of property, and tensions were clearly rising between the Arabs and Berbers in Umayyad Spain in the lead up to Munuza's rebellion.[232]

A brief respite occurred during the governorship of Yahya ibn Salama al-Kalbi (r. 726-728). The rapid succession of governors appears to have been triggered by a change in Umayyad

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[230] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 113.

[231] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, 133-134.

[232] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 114.

governor of *Ifríqíya*, who quickly appointed a subordinate from the same tribal confederation in Al-Andulus. Hudhaifa ibn al-Ahwas al-Ashja'I (r. June 728−December 728), ruled only six months and is recorded to have done so both without seriousness and without accomplishing anything.[233] The rapid succession of governors after Yahya was marked by a period of excess and retaliation where intrigue mattered more than effectiveness.[234] The lack of stability was enough to stir official action from the Caliphate, and orders soon arrived installing Abd ar-Rahman, who had led the defeated forces at Toulouse back into Spain, as governor.[235]

Umayyad Invasion of Aquitaine

Abd ar-Rahman was by all accounts a capable leader and administrator, and reports of discontent virtually disappear from the record after his ascension to the governorship save one exception.[236] That exception was Munuza, the Berber Governor of Catalunya who is reported to have rebelled after receiving news of the maltreatment of Berbers in North Africa.[237] The alliance between Munuza and Eudo resulted in immediate military operations against them. Abd ar-Rahman quickly mobilized his forces, and after a short siege, defeated Munuza before proceeding on to Aquitaine.[238] Eudo, still recovering from the Frankish raids, attempted to stop the Umayyad forces in the vicinity of Bordeaux. The resulting Battle of the River Garonne (c.

[233] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 114.

[234] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 115.

[235] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 88.

[236] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 116; Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain,* 33.

[237] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 116.

[238] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 116. The sources disagree about whether Munuza was captured and killed or took his own life rather than be captured.

732) is recorded as a resounding victory for the Umayyads.[239] Duke Eudo fled North, and the Umayyads quickly set out in pursuit.



Map 11 – The route to Poitiers and then Tours was along a single road, and the Franks would have had little trouble locating the attacking force and occupying defensible terrain. The Umayyad force traveling toward Tours was a distinct and separate force from those located in Narbonne, the later unable to reinforce the Umayyads headed toward Tours.[240]

There is some debate as to whether Abd ar-Rahman's incursion was an attempt at conquest or merely another raid. The pursuit of Eudo, which would have eliminated the legitimate ruler of Aquitaine, appears to indicate that Umayyads were attempting to incorporate the territory under their rule. The alliance with Munuza and the threat of Frankish forces

[239] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 117.

[240] Morris, *The Atlas of Islam*, 35.

cooperating with rebellious forces from the relative safety of the far side of the Pyrenees was a continuous concern. Aquitaine, added to Septimania, would have effectively created a French March, or buffer state, along the frontier of the Umayyad Caliphate. There is no record that the Umayyads gave any consideration to the Franks beyond the domains of Eudo. In fact, Arab sources make only passing mention of the campaigns against the Franks, if they mention them at all.[241] Up to this point, the Franks had largely been the ineffectual victims of Umayyad raids. The superior mobility of the Umayyad forces allowed them to move in quickly, strike hard, and be gone before the Franks could mobilize their forces to effectively repel them. Abd ar-Rahman and his Northern pursuit of Eudo would likely not have been fully aware of the dangers of waiting in Frankish territory. It was Eudo, not Charles Martel, who had defeated the Umayyads at Toulouse. In fact, Eudo previously driven from Toulouse had returned with a force to defeat the Umayyads. It seems logical that Abd ar-Rahman would pursue Eudo to preclude his rally and return with additional forces. Additionally, Abd ar-Rahman would also have known that Umayyad advances had hitherto been difficult for the Franks to either stop or defeat. There appeared to be little reason not to pursue Eudo. At some point in the pursuit of Eudo, Abd ar-Rahman became aware of the wealth of Poitiers and Tours. Whether, or to what degree, the desire for bounty versus political decisions drove the Umayyads deeper into Gaul is not revealed in the sources.[242]

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[241] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain,* 33 and Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 31. An unknown Arab author recorded a version of the events, now lost, in Edward Creasy's *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, 408-412.

[242] Creasy's unknown Arab author records that the desire for plunder led to a breakdown in discipline that was subsequently fatal. Whether the reported greed of the common soldiers, who would surely have heard the stories of the wealth extracted from Spain as well as previously successful raids, does not appear to have extended to Abd ar-Rahman. The latter is recorded as having trusted in the valor of his soldiers. After the resounding defeat of Munuza and Eudo, that confidence was apparently well placed.

What we do know is that Poitiers, like Bordeaux, was sacked as the Umayyads inexorably pursued Eudo.[243] The Umayyads, like the Huns proceeding to the Battle of Châlons a century earlier, were now slowed by large baggage trains swollen with plunder. Still, Abd ar-Rahman had little reason to be concerned. Charles and his Franks had, within the same season and for much the same reason as the Umayyads, attacked the Eudo-Munuza alliance.[244] It would then seem natural that Charles would be as keen to eliminate Eudo as the Umayyads. The Franks, already suffering from raids targeting the church and the Frankish economy, may not have been so keen to have a powerful Umayyad force directly on their border. The fleeing Eudo is recorded as having sought Frankish assistance, and the weaker and compliant Eudo would make a far more attractive neighbor than the powerful Umayyads.[245] What the Franks certainly could not endure would be the plundering of a major Frankish shrine such as Tours, especially at the hands of foreign religion seeking purchase within Gaul. Tours falls almost exactly on the Northern border of modern Aquitaine and it is unclear if the Umayyads knew they were crossing from Aquitaine into the realm of the Franks. Abd ar-Rahman may have considered plundering Tours and its wealth as a final guarantee against further effective mobilization from the Eastern side of the Pyrenees.

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[243] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 90.

[244] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 90.

[245] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 116.

The Battle of Tours

As a result of these competing strategies, somewhere North of Poitiers but South of Tours, the Umayyads stumbled across fully formed ranks of Frankish infantryman.[246] The Franks, occupying high ground and almost certainly tied into the forested surroundings were perfectly situated to block the Umayyad cavalry. The Frankish defenses were formidable enough to give Abd ar-Rahman pause.[247] The *Chronicle of 754* records that the Franks and Umayyads spent seven days testing each other, trying to find an advantage over the other.[248] Whichever side attacked would have been at a disadvantage. The Umayyads were pinned along a single axis of advance, and the forested terrain would have prevented them from attacking the flanks or rear of Franks. Instead, they would have had to charge directly into the spears of the armored infantryman, maximizing the damage they would take. The Franks, should they move off the high ground and attack would have themselves become vulnerable to the Umayyad cavalry. Whether there was any exchange of emissaries seeking an alternate arrangement, such as the surrender of Eudo, is not mentioned in extent sources.

What is recorded is that the proverbial first to blink in this contest of wills was Abd ar-Rahman. The Umayyad cavalry charged into the ranks of the Franks apparently without effect. Some sources record a Frankish patrol stumbling into the plunder laden Umayyad baggage

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[246] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 117.

[247] José Antonio Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*. trans. Jonathan Foster (London: Bohn, 1855), 110. Conde's account, like Creasy's, is reportedly based on Arab sources that have subsequently been lost.

[248] Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 117.

train.[249] Given that the two sides were apparently sending raiding parties prior to the battle, it is entirely possible that one of these parties stumbled belatedly onto the baggage train. These sources report that the raid triggered a call for reinforcement to protect the spoils. Forces still engaged in battle saw the reinforcement moving the opposite direction and concluded that there was a general retreat. It was then that Abd ar-Rahman personally intervened to rally his soldiers and was apparently cut down in the confusion. All sources, though differing in circumstance, record that Abd ar-Rahman was killed during the battle causing the Umayyads to withdraw to their tents.[250] Under cover of darkness, the Umayyads fled leaving behind the bulk of their plunder. Sources disagree on whether the Franks pursued the Umayyads, with the *Chronicle of 754* severely chastising Charles for his failure to pursue and eliminate the Umayyads.[251] Only one source, whose original is now lost, records the Franks pursuing the Umayyads to Narbonne, though this may have been confused with the aftermath of the Battle of Avignon (c. 734) discussed below.[252] It seems unlikely that the Franks, having mobilized to stop a raiding force would have brought cumbersome siege equipment to pursue a highly mobile Umayyad force. In point of fact, the decision to avoid pursuit may well have accompanied the realization that the Umayyad forces, shorn of their heavy plunder, were beyond the reach of the Franks. Instead, Eudo re-occupied his lands in Northern Aquitaine, and Charles pressed forward deep into Burgundy seeking to expand his domain.[253] After the death of Eudo in 735, Charles assumed title

[249] Creasy, *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, 410; Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 110.

[250] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 117.

[251] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 117.

[252] Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 110.

[253] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 91-92.

over Aquitaine, ensuring that any further encroachment by the Umayyads would be directly against Charles.[254]

The Battle of Tours was a victory for the Franks. That the Franks were victorious is without debate. However, the Battle of Tours is, by some accounts, one of the most decisive victories in history. Edward Creasy, in his depiction of Tours as the savior of Western civilization, writes of his unknown Arab chronicler as having produced an, "explicit confession of having been thoroughly vanquished."[255] The Christian *Chronicle of Fredegar* records the battle as a stunning victory in the name of Christ.[256] These triumphalist accounts are at odds with the *Chronicle of 754's* admonition to pursue the Umayyads upon retreat. The retreat itself, if recorded accurately in the previous sources, was not caused by the mighty Franks but the serendipity of a lost patrol. It is the contemporary criticism of the *Chronicle of 754* should conclusively end the debate about whether the Battle of Tours was decisive. The reality is that the bulk of Umayyad force survived, largely intact, and with the bulk of their equipment if not their plunder. Indeed, surviving Arab accounts find only the death of Abd ar-Rahman to be particularly noteworthy.[257] Far from being decisive, the situation between Frank and Umayyad remained largely the same, save for the removal of any partner other than the Franks and Umayyads from Eudo. The Umayyads still possessed Narbonne and could still cross the Pyrenees into Aquitaine with little warning. The Franks still faced the very real threat of punishing raids such as those in 729. If anything, the Battle of Tours would lead the Umayyads

[254] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 92.

[255] Creasy, *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, 411.

[256] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 91.

[257] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 33.

to avoid the head on cavalry vs. infantry battles that placed their forces at significant disadvantage. When Umayyad forces were replenished, it was a matter of when and not if they would return seeking vengeance for Tours. That result, despite the victory, is certainly not the shattering of the Umayyad Caliphate in Gaul it is too often presented as.

The Battle of Avignon and the Frankish Siege of Narbonne

The return of the Umayyads predicated on the result of the Battle of Tours materialized only two years later, perhaps less if we place the Battle in the later part of the year of 732. In 734, The Umayyads dispatched another force from Narbonne and seized the city of Avignon before ravaging the countryside.[258] The Umayyads clearly learned from their defeat at Tours. From the security of Avignon, they could raid the surrounding countryside with relative impunity. It would be incumbent upon the Franks to come to them and remove them from their fortified positions. The previous weakness of not knowing where or when the Franks mobilized was effectively negated. When the Franks did come and lay siege, as the Umayyads had at the Battle of Toulouse, the Franks would find themselves vulnerable to a relief force crossing from Spain or landing in the port of Narbonne. The Umayyads further strengthened their position by allying with local nobles eager to break from Eudo.[259] When the Franks mobilized their forces, the Umayyads retreated into Avignon to await reinforcement. Charles promptly, as predicted by the Umayyads, laid siege to Avignon. With the siege established, the Franks gathered their forces and prepared them for a direct assault upon the outnumbered Umayyads.[260] The Franks, certainly

[258] Paulus Warnefridus, *History of the Langobards*. trans. William Dudley Foulke (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1907), 296.

[259] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 93.

[260] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 94.

surprising the Umayyads, succeeded in capturing Avignon and this time the Umayyad force appears to have been utterly destroyed. Charles proceeded to drive South and lay siege to Narbonne itself, before plundering the surrounding lands of those who had allied with the Umayyads.[261] The initial relief force dispatched by the Umayyads from Spain was defeated at the Battle of River Berre (c. 737), with the bulk of the defeated Umayyad forces chased into the sea before they could reach the safety of Narbonne. The Franks were, however, unable to capture Narbonne. Even these victories, though arguably much more significant than Tours, do not appear to have decisively deterred the Umayyads from further encroachment. Narbonne and Septimania were still in Umayyad hands, and whenever the Umayyads could raise another force they would almost certainly return.

The Berber Revolt

Before the year was out, the Umayyads had already raised another force and were heading toward Gaul when news of a Berber rebellion in Tangiers reached the Governor of Al-Andulas, Uqba ibn al-Hajjaj (d. 740).[262] To what extent this force compelled Charles to abandon the siege of Narbonne, or whether the ever restive Frisians and Saxons compelled a redistribution of Frankish force is unknown.[263] We do know that the series of Umayyad defeats in Gaul caused some concern in the Caliphate. However, reassurances soon arrived from the Governors of Ifriqiya and Al-Andulus about the strength of their position.[264] Charles would never cross the

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[261] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 94.

[262] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 118.

[263] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 91-92, 93-94.

[264] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 29.

Pyrenees, and there are no records of Frankish forces raiding into Umayyad territory beyond Septimania. When Charles abandoned the siege of Narbonne, the Umayyads clearly believed that they could maintain their positions with little effort while they focused on restoring the restive Berbers to their ranks. As with Munuza's previous Berber rebellion in Catalunya, the bulk of the Berber ranks remained loyal to the Caliphate. Uqba proceeded to Tangiers and brutally crushed the revolt, instituting a military occupation of Morocco that kept the estranged Berber tribes safely out of areas critical to the Umayyads.[265] For the Umayyads, it is clear that the rebellious Berbers were a greater threat than the Franks.

The cooperation of the Berbers was imperative to the success of the Umayyads in the West. The Berbers made up the bulk of the Caliphate's soldiers in the West, as well as the vast majority of the inhabitants of *Ifriqiya*. The Berbers, like many other minorities in the Caliphate, operated under Arabs that can perhaps best be described as an aristocracy. The Arabs provided the managers and administrators, while the non-Arabs provided the labor whether it was manufacturing, agriculture, or common soldiers.[266] As Islam spread among the conquered peoples, the culture, or at least demands for changes in the culture, of the Caliphate was slowly changing it into an Islamic state rather than a state run purely by the appropriate Arabs. However, non-Arab Muslims such as the Berbers often continued to be taxed as if they were non-Muslim *mawálís*.[267] The Caliphate leveled taxes as high as 25% in Al-Andulus as annual

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[265] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 118-119.

[266] Gustave E. Von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 201-202.

[267] 'Abd-al-'Azīz ad-Dūrī, *Early Islamic Institutions: Administration and Taxation from the Caliphate to the Umayyads and 'Abbāsids* (London: Tauris, 2015), 161-162.

tribute to the state. This placed extraordinary strain on administrators to collect taxes, both for the needs of the Caliphate and for their own local use.[268] Uqba, although he is reported to have eased less scrupulous forms of taxation, instituted a census and rigorous efforts to extract taxes and tribute from his subjects in Al-Andulus.[269] Unlike the conquest of Spain, the Berbers who joined the Umayyads in Gaul were finding limited rewards for their effort. Berber subjects were increasingly subject to taxation for the benefit of the far off Caliphate. Taxes in Al-Andulus remained primarily extractive with limited reinvestment by the Caliphate in the Western regions.[270] For the Berbers, the cost benefits analysis of alliance was changing, with the costs becoming increasingly clear for benefits that appeared progressively limited to distant memory.

Adding to the unrest, or perhaps finding fertile ground in the increasingly discontented Berbers of the Western Caliphate, were Kharijite preachers. Although the beliefs of the Kharijites are complex and subject to nuance across the breath of the Caliphate, the teachings on the equality of all Muslims and the duty to resist rulers who had deviated from Islam, a deviance the Kharijites held about the Umayyad Caliphate, appears to have found increasing support among the disaffected Berbers.[271] As discussed in Section IV, Caliph Umar II had attempted to find a solution to the fiscal needs of the Caliphate while attempting to ban the continued poll tax of converted *muwálí*. Umar II also attempted to peacefully reconcile Kharijite rebellion in

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[268] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 29.

[269] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 118.

[270] Thomas F Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 60-67. The discussion and contrast surround the diffusion of irrigation techniques following the Umayyad conquest of Spain and lack of a similar agricultural revolution. Much of the improved agricultural techniques appear to spread in the ninth-century after the transition of Al-Andalus outside the control of the central Caliphate.

[271] Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 37-38.

Khorasan, or modern day Iran.[272] Umar II's death ended the diplomatic approach, as his successor Yazid II (d. 724) instituted a brutal suppression of the Khorasan revolt and the Kharijite movement.[273] The Kharijites who remained in the Caliphate accepted the rule of the Umayyads to preserve Islamic unity, if not to also avoid provoking another violent response.[274] So long as the Umayyads remained powerful, the Kharijites would remain compliant.

The Umayyads were, at least in the West, no longer in a position of unquestionable strength. The steady string of loses in Gaul, in and of themselves, called into question the leadership of the Umayyad Arabs. There was no excess of plunder from other theaters to offset the painful fiscal drain on administration as had happened when victory in other theaters offset the disastrous siege of Constantinople. Nevertheless, Uqba, as Governor of Al-Andulus, understood that a Kharijite fueled Berber rebellion represented an existential threat to the Umayyad Caliphate, at least in the West. Uqba would also have knowledge of the challenges the Umayyads faced in other theaters. The death of Umar II not only ended internal diplomacy against rebels but marked the resumption of military operations along the periphery of the Caliphate. Initially, under Yazid II, those military operations seemed to also continue broadly unchecked expansion but those expectations of easy conquest were quickly dashed.[275] In Transoxiana, the Day of Thirst (c. 724) was a crushing defeat of Umayyads by the Turgesh Khaganate. The blow left the Umayyads unable to launch offensive military operations in the

[272]Muḥammad Ibn-Ǧarīr Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-Ṭabarī Vol 24, The Empire in Transition: The Caliphates of Sulaymān, 'Umar, and Yazīd: A.D. 715-724*. Translated by David Stephan. Powers (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985), 66-69.

[273] Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-*Ṭabarī, 110 & 135-145.

[274] Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 37.

[275] Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 168.

region for decades, and, like the defeats in Gaul, undermined the reputation of Umayyad forces in the region.[276]

In India, the appointment of Al Junayd (r. 723-726) as Governor of Sindh inaugurated a period of military success. Al Junayd lead a series of raids deep into India, particularly Gujarat, that were similar to the raid into Gaul in 729.[277] Al Junayd's subsequent departure lead to a brief contraction of the frontier in Sindh. The Umayyads appointed Al-Hakam (r. 729-740), who quickly stabilized the front in Sindh. He accomplished this by establishing a fortified stronghold to serve as a base for military operations. This was the same strategy pursued at Avignon and was intended for use as a secure defensive garrison against enemy attacks from India. Unlike Avignon in 736, the strategy worked in Sindh. Critically, the stabilization of the border lead to a steady growth in increasingly lucrative trade between the Indians and Arabs.[278] As if to punctuate the point, an Umayyad raid into India in 739 was virtually wiped out, with Al-Hakam killed either during or shortly after the raid in combat.[279] Al-Hakam's raids also triggered a period of consolidation of power through the integration of the Rajasthan and Gujarat Kingdoms and the expansion of the Chalukyas.[280] Further military expansion into India would prove costly and ineffective.

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[276] Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, 66.

[277] D. R. Bhandarkar, "Indian Studies No. I: Slow Progress of Islam Power in Ancient India," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 10, no. 1/2 (1929): 35. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41682407.

[278] N. A. Baloch, "Administration of Sindh Under the Caliphate." *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 46, no. 3 (July 1, 1998): 11. http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/docview/1301947417.

[279] Brajadulal Chattopadhyay, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims: Eighth to Fourteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 33-34.

[280] Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 189-190.

On the Byzantine front, matters had not improved after the loss of Constantinople. Between 720 and 740, the Umayyads lost six battles including their resounding defeat at the Battle of Akroinon (c. 740).[281] The Byzantine-Umayyad frontier stabilized during this period, as annual Umayyad raids, sometimes accompanied by naval raids, gradually grew less effective over time.[282] Caliph Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik (d. 743) focused extensively on the Byzantine front. A major victory in 737 against the Kharzas North of the Caucuses allowed the Umayyads to shift significant resources toward the Byzantines. Raids in 738 and 739 were successful, and included the capture of Ancyra (modern Ankara).[283] In 740, Hisham assembled the largest force to face the Byzantines since the siege of Constantinople in 717-718.[284] The ensuing defeat proved costly, with an unusually high number of Arab nobles reportedly killed during the campaign and battle.[285] The sound defeat at Akroinon, particularly in concert with other defeats across the Caliphate, precluded further offensive operations against the Byzantines.[286]

[281] Michael David Bonner, *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times* (Farnham: Ashgate-Variorum, 2004), 144-145.

[282] Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, 348-350.

[283] Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, 353-355.

[284] Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes: Anni Mundi, 6095-6305 (A.D. 602-813)*. trans. Harry Turtledove (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 103.

[285] E. W. Brooks, "The Arabs in Asia Minor (641-750), from Arabic Sources." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 18 (1898): 201-202. doi:10.2307/623724.

[286] Walter Emil Kaegi, *Army, Society and Religion in Byzantium* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982), 167.



Map 12 – Raids by the Byzantines and Arabs are depicted in red and black arrows along the frontier. Arab forces operating beyond the frontier did so with heavy baggage trains, and were funneled into choke points by terrain that were increasingly occupied by Byzantine fortifications. After Akroinon, the Caliphate ceased its efforts to deliver a single decisive blow to the Byzantines and adopted a strategy of subsuming fortifications along the frontier, finally capturing Constantinople seven hundred years later.[287]

The Umayyads had been soundly checked on virtually every military front, Gaul was not an exception. The expense of maintaining military operations was no longer being offset by plunder to any significant degree. News of these defeats were almost certainly transmitted between the Arab nobles of the Umayyad Caliphate. The degree to which this information was

[287] Morris, *The Atlas of Islam*, 40.

diffused among the Berbers of the Western Caliphate is unknown. Certainly, the series of defeats in Gaul were circulating among the Berber troops, as the survivors mingled among the various Berber tribes. News of stalled campaigns in far-flung corners of the Caliphate could only have added to the angst of the Berbers about the profitability of their continued alliance with the Umayyads. An outright break with the Caliphate seemed unlikely, even after the disasters in Septimania in 737. What profit could the Berbers harvest from Gaul without the resources of the Umayyads? The cost of rebellion, with little chance of success, was made clear by Munuza's destruction in 732 and then Uqba's rampage into Tangiers in 737.[288] Although affairs were unmistakably under stress in the West, all the defeats suffered at the hands of Charles Martel had proved inadequate to alone undermine continued Umayyad military operations. News of the defeats reaching the Berbers, in and of themselves, also proved insufficient to rouse the Berbers into open rebellion against their less profitable coordination with the Umayyads.

What then caused the final break between Berbers and the Umayyad Arabs? This is a particularly difficult question to answer. Al Tabari's voluminous history tells us only that Kulthúm b. Íyád al-Qushayri (d. 741), an Umayyad military commander, was killed after being sent with Syrian cavalry to Africa because, "strife broke out among the Berbers."[289] Despite Tabari's meticulous details of the Caliphal Court, we are left to wonder at what circumstances produced this rather extraordinary deployment of Syrian cavalry? It almost certainly was not to play referee among the Berber tribes. Al-Hakam's *History of the Conquest of Spain* tells us

[288] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 118-119; Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 116-117.

[289]Muḥammad Ibn-Ǧarīr Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-Ṭabarī*, vol 2: *The Waning of the Umayyad Caliphate: Prelude to Revolution*, *A.D. 738-744*, trans. Carole Hillenbrand (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 54.

merely that the Berbers broke the treaty emplaced by Uqba in 737, but offers no insights into why.[290] Ibn Al-Qútíya states that the Berbers rebelled against their masters (the Arabs), and that the rebellion quickly spread to Spain.[291] Other Arab histories lament the death of Obeida Ben Ocba who was lost to the Berbers after having been redirected from Sicily toward Tangiers.[292] The vast majority of the Frankish Chronicles tell us nothing at all of Berber rebellions. *The Chronicle of 754* provides some insight when it states the reason for rebellion as being, "unable to tolerate the injustice of the judges," before adding that the Berbers, "openly shook their necks from the Arab yoke, unanimous and determined in their wrath."[293] Many historians rely on Arab sources, such as the 13th Century Moroccan Historian Ibn Idhari, for insight.[294] This account tells us that the decision to treat the Berbers as a conquered people, with the subsequent extraction of the fifth to include enslavement of subjects, was the trigger for the revolt.[295] Given the many centuries between events and transcription as well as continued animosity between the successor states, these details should be taken with caution. Surviving Arab sources far closer to the events contain no mention of the reasons for the Berber revolt and record no such repressive policy.[296]

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[290] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 34.

[291] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 31.

[292] Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 117.

[293] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 119.

[294] Collins, *The Arab conquest of Spain, 108-109;* Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 203.

[295] Reinhart Dozy. *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne Jusqu'à La Conquête De L'Andalousie Par Les Almoravides (711 — IIIO)*, Vol, 2 vols. (Leyde: J. Brill, 1932), 150-151. Dozy's French translation of the Arabic original reads, "ce n'était pas un crime que de se révolter centre le tyran qui leur arrachait leurs biens et leurs femmes; c'était un droit et, mieux encore, un devoir," and, "Berbères de son district de payer un double tribute, comme s'ils n'eussent pas été musulmans." This level of specificity cannot be found in other extent texts.

[296] Robert G. Hoyland and Carl Wurtzel, *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty (660-750)* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 244.

Conde's *History of the Dominion of the Arabs* in Spain, also in reliance on lost Arab sources, records no similar details.[297] However, *The Chronicle of 754* would seem to lend some credence to this interpretation by detailing that, "Hisham, seized by an iniquitous rage, loosened the bridle of his cupidity, leaving it unrestrained," which then caused the Berbers to rise in opposition to his repression.[298] This passage itself raises the question as to whether the Caliph ordered reprisal as a result of the successfully spreading rebelling?[299] With the Caliphate under strain, might Hisham have indulged the all too common temptation to lash out and crush resistance rather than address root causes of the rebellion? Whether the harsh tactics used by the Umayyad Arabs caused the rebellion or were a reaction against it, the latest attempt to violently suppress the Berber Revolt appears to have spurned greater unity and resistance to the Umayyads among the Berbers.

Clearly, as far back as 732, with the rebellion by Manuza, there was a desire among elements of the Berbers toward independence. Yet that desire was successfully throttled by the use of force then and again in Tangiers in 737. Two years later, similarly brutal tactics, if not more so, produced the opposite effect. It is entirely plausible that Munuza's early rebellion was merely the first bubble of Berber anger to boil to the surface, with the remainder merely awaiting better opportunity to strike. It is entirely plausible that Uqba's brutal repression of the rebellion in Tangiers drove the disaffected into the hinterlands from which they re-organized and attacked.

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[297] Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 119-121.

[298] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 119.

[299] Ahmed Ibn Mohammed Al-Makkarí, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*. trans. Pascual De Gayangos (London: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain, 1843), 40. Al-Makkarí makes just such a case in his rendition.

It is also plausible that the initial rebellions in 732 and 737 produced the kinds of punitive policies recorded by Ibn Idhari, provoking wide spread revolt. There can be little doubt that the spat of rebellions beginning with Munuza's produced some level of estrangement between Berber and Arab in the Umayyad West. The question then is to what extent the defeats in Gaul played into this tension? Extent Arab texts almost universally ignore events is Gaul or record them in only the slightest detail. This would seem to confirm the idea that these events were of little importance to the Umayyad Caliphate. Conversely, for the Berbers who were continually fed into the bloody battles, these events would have been a very present concern and of immediate import given continued Berber participation. The heavy Berber presence along the frontier left them vulnerable to reprisals that could result from further provocation of the Franks.[300] How then would the Berbers react to a distant Caliphate whose commands continued to send their sons to defeat while heavily taxing them with apparent indifference to their concerns?

The indifference of the Arab Umayyads, indeed outright disdain for the rebellious Berbers comes across clearly in extant texts. [301] Whatever issues were driving the Berbers into open rebellion clearly found no redress through presentation to the Arab Umayyad hierarchy. A similar indifference is also found in Frankish sources. *The Chronicle of Fredegar* records nothing of the Berber Revolt ostensibly occurring at the very borders of the Frankish realm.[302]

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[300] Pierre Guichard, *Les Berbères D'al-Andalus Dans La Ğamhara D'Ibn Ḥazm: Histoire Et Historiographie* (Salamanca: Editiones Universitdad De Salamanca, 2016), 101-106.

[301] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 31; Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 241. Both Ibn Qútíya and Ibn Khayyats refer to the leader of the revolt in Tangiers as a mere water vendor, hardly a position of respect, and as known as 'the Despicable.'

[302] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 54-55, 68-69, 91-95, 113, 119. This Chronicle contains more details of Umayyad raids against the Byzantines than it does about events in

The Chronicle of Alfonso III from the Asturian point of view is similarly self-oriented. After detailing the Battle of Covadonga in 722 it falls silent save to note the death of Pelagius in 737. The Asturians, ostensibly with even greater geographical proximity than the Franks, were apparently entirely ignorant of events of potentially great importance happening in Tangiers.[303] For these Chroniclers the evidence is clear. The Umayyads came and were defeated, and these defeats prevented the Umayyads from returning. It is a simple, if inelegant, explanation and entirely reasonable based on the facts known by those who recorded them. However, neither of the chroniclers appears to have much knowledge about events outside their immediate locality. That local focus means that the many raids, as recorded against the Basques or even against the Franks or Austrians, falls outside their notice or are at least deemed too unimportant to record. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Umayyads clearly retained significant military capability in the region after their defeats by both the Asturians and Franks. The military capabilities of both Pelagius and Charles Martel offer little to criticize. However, the simple but triumphalist presentation of heroic warriors should be rejected as it clearly fails to solely account for the animus between the Umayyad Arabs and Berbers.

What this combination of sources tells us is unfortunately also apparent in the extent records: there are no contemporary Berber sources that presents the reasoning for their rebellion. We can, from the available sources, offer a reasoned hypothesis to the cause. Regrettably, whether Charles Martel's victories created the discord, whether putative and discriminatory policies stoked the Berbers to rebel, whether the Berbers found independence from the waning Umayyad Caliphate to be more profitable, or some combination thereof cannot be arrived at with

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Spain, ostensibly because of ecclesiastical ties between East and West. It is silent about matters in the Umayyad West except when they are defeated by Frankish forces.

[303] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, 136-137.

sureness. Stated simply, what drove the Berbers into a general revolt cannot be inferred with any degree of certainty. What is certain, undeniably so, is that something provoked the Berbers into open rebellion and that this rebellion occurred well after the Battle of Tours. Indeed, the Berber Revolt occurred several years after the events at Avignon and the Battle of the River Berre, and after the initial repression of the rebellion in Tangiers. If there is a relationship between events in Gaul and the Berber rebellion, and such a link could reasonably be inferred, it should best be considered as contributive rather than universally causal. The remoteness of Tangiers and the genesis of the Berber Revolt suggests other factors, such as repressive and discriminatory policies or even opportunism amidst the weakening Caliphate, were also significant factors in provoking the rebellion.

The Battle of the Nobles and the Battle of Bagdoura

One final point of consideration on the origins of the Berber revolt is the timing between the initiation of the rebellion in Tangiers and its broad acceptance by the Berbers across North Africa and Spain. The trigger for the general rebellion appears to be the Berber victory in the Battle of the Nobles (c. 739). In 739, the Umayyads sent the bulk of their forces in Morocco under to Habib ibn Abi Obeida al-Fihri (d. 739) in an attempt to conquer Sicily.[304] Previous military excursions against Sicily had been raids seeking plunder, and it is likely that Obeida's effort was undertaken with a much higher proportion of the region's Umayyad military forces.[305] To what extent rebellious Berbers were exploiting the opportunity granted by the reduction of

[304] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 34; Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 241.

[305] Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 204, 223, 225, 228, 230, 232-233, 235.

regional military forces remains a mystery, although it is likely that forces driven underground by Uqba's earlier repression would have seized this chance. Maysara al-Matghari (d. 739), leading a confederation of Berber tribes, was the initial leader of the rebellion.[306] The slaying of the regent of Tangiers, Omar ibn al-Moradi (d. 739), and the capture of Tangiers triggered a strong Umayyad response. Obeida recalled his forces to Tlemcen, near the modern Moroccan border, and aligned with the remaining Arab forces from Tunisia in an attempt to retake Tangiers.[307] The arrival of the Umayyad force at Tangiers instigated a leadership crisis among the rebels, possibly over disagreement about how to meet the arrival of the Umayyads in force. Maysara was killed, and the tribes selected Khalid ibn Hamid al-Zanati as their new leader.[308] The Arab Umayyad forces contained the core of the Arab aristocracy in the Western Umayyad, and their resulting slaughter at the Battle of Nobles was perhaps of more significance than the tactical military defeat.[309] The ties between the tribes and Arab aristocracy were torn asunder by the slaughter, and success at the Battle of the Nobles ignited the Berbers to general insurrection.[310]

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[306] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 34; Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 119-121; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 31.

[307] Michael Brett, "The Arab Conquest and the Rise of Islam in North Africa," in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, ed. J. D. Fage. The Cambridge History of Africa. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 520; Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 241.

[308] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 34-35; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 31 & 35; Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 118-119.

[309] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 34; Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 241.

[310] Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 121; Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 241; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 31. Ibn Qútíya places the spread of the revolt as prior to the Battle of the Nobles, while the remaining sources treat the Spanish uprising as a separate event of indeterminate dating.

The arrival of the insurrection to Spain, with only nominal allegiance to the overall revolt, quickly became a localize matter. As unrest spread among the Berbers, Uqba's previous brutal conduct in Tangiers and the imprisonment of his immediate predecessor Abd al-Malik ibn Katan al-Fihri (d. 742) appears to have caught up with him. Uqba was deposed in a coup by al-Fihri in 740.[311] Al-Fihri was able to secure allegiance from the both the Arabs and Berbers in the region, while maintaining ties to the Caliphate. Despite the loss at the Battle of the Nobles, it appears that few thought that the rebellion could withstand the predictable reaction from the Caliphal core. When news of the Berber revolt and the failure of local forces to subdue it reached the Caliphate, the Umayyads quickly organized an unprecedented response.[312] A core of Syrian cavalry estimated at 30,000 joined an Egyptian contingent and began their march toward Kairouan.[313] Tensions between the Syrian and Egyptian contingent arose almost from the start.[314] The advanced Syrian forces, led by Balj ibn Bishr al-Qushayri (d. 742), were initially shut out by

[311] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 31-33; Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 244; Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 121. Conde lists Uqba as having died of natural causes with no mention of the coup. Uqba may very well have died of natural causes within whatever confines al-Fihri chose to hold him after the coup.

[312] Theophilus, *Theophilus of Edessas Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, trans. Robert Hoyland (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 235-236. The severity of the casualties is one of the rare North African events to make it into the Chronicle.

[313] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 31-33; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:153-154; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 119. Dozy (Ibn Idhari) states that there were four contingents of 6,000, one of 3,000, who joined an Egyptian contingent of 3,000 for a total of 30,000 before rising to total at 70,000 after passing through Kairouan. The later puts the total size of the force, somewhat implausibly, at 100,000.

[314] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 33; Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 34. Reports of individual activity are conflicting, but the forced billeting of Syrian forces and the roughshod treatment of the Kairouan Arabs, followed by increasingly bitter mutual recrimination is the most common theme.

local officials upon arrival at Kairouan.[315] Qushayri's displeasure at being locked out provoked angry censure, with behavior that quickly lead the local Arabs to believe the Syrians saw them as inferior.[316] Only the intervention of the overall Umayyad Commander, Kulthum ibn Iyadh al-Kushayri (d. 741) the paternal cousin of Balj ibn Bashr, prevented the parties from coming to blows.[317] Kulthum's intervention was enough to allow the nominally united Umayyad force to leave Kairouan in 741, proceeding towards Tangiers.

The Berber forces met the Umayyads in the vicinity of what is today the Sebu River in modern Morocco.[318] The divisions between the Syrians and African Arabs once again became prominent, with Kulthum dismissing the advice of the local Arabs who had far more experience fighting the Berbers.[319] The resulting Battle of Bagdoura (c. 741) is recorded in virtually all sources as one of particular brutality.[320] The tide quickly turned against the Umayyads, who lost nearly a third of their number during the battle.[321] Kulthum was killed on the field, and his

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[315] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 36. Al-Hakam lists no reason for this action, but it would have been standard for an advanced party to move ahead of the main contingent of forces to secure quarters and supplies in preparation for the arrival of the main body.

[316] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 36; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:153-154. Ibn Idhari provides a far greater level of detail than Al-Hakam, recording that the Syrians quickly resorted to threats of violence and were met with equal threats of violence in return. The forced billeting of Syrian troops without input from local Arab officials, after the initial intervention to sooth matters further exacerbated tensions.

[317] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 36; Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 244; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:154.

[318] Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 243.

[319] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 36.Al-Hakam records that Kulthum relied on cavalry to dispatch the Berber infantry against the advice from the local Arabs, a mistake not dissimilar to earlier reliance on cavalry at the Battle of Tours.

[320] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 36-37; Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 119; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:155; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 35; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 119-120.

[321] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 35.

nephew Balj ibn Bishr was wounded.[322] The remnants of the Umayyad Army were either captured by the Berbers, driven back to Kairouan, or fled toward Spain.[323] The forces that fled back to Kairouan were met with reinforcements from Egypt.[324] The Kairouan contingent occupied fortresses in the vicinity of Kairouan and, upon arrival of the reinforcements, were able to launch a counter offensive against the Berbers. The defeat of the Berbers outside Kairouan stabilized the lines between Berber and Umayyad in Africa, establishing a de facto boundary between the Berbers and Umayyads.[325] The contingent fleeing toward Spain, with Kulthum's nephew Balj ibn Bishr as their commander, wound up trapped and was quickly besieged in the Moroccan port of Ceuta.[326]

The Failure of the Berber Revolt in Spain

News of the Berber victory at Bagdoura ignited the Berbers of Spain into open revolt. Balj ibn Bishr was effectively blockaded in Ceuta, and it would seem his reputation proceeded him. The Governor of Al-Andulus, Al-Fihri, initially refused to allow Balj ibn Bishr to evacuate

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[322] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 37; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:155-156; Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 243; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 35. Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 40. The *Chronicle of 754*, an outlier, records that Kulthum was killed by his allies on the field.

[323] Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 119-120; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 35; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 120.

[324] Al-Makkarí, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 41.

[325] Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 243; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:156; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 120.

[326] Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 243; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 156; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 120.

his forces to Spain.[327] Al-Fihri had reason to believe that the Balj ibn Bashr would seek to depose him upon arrival, a concern that evidently had more than a little merit.[328] Had events in Spain remained calm, it is likely that Balj ibn Bashr and his forces would have been left in Ceuta, or that they would have faced armed resistance immediately upon arrival in Spain.[329] The revolt of the Berbers remained initially along the frontiers. However, as the Berbers began to unite and turn their attention South, they abandoned the Northern line of defense. Alfonso I (d. 757), King of Asturias, quickly dispatched forces to overwhelm the thinned defenses and occupied positions up to the Erbo River in Central Spain.[330] The initial forces dispatched by Al-Fihri to quell the revolt were defeated.[331] The Berbers then dispatched three separate armies toward Toledo, Cordoba, and to the approaches along the coast where they hoped to seize any ships in order to prevent the transport of Balj ibn Bashr's forces.[332] The sources disagree whether an alliance was secured between Balj ibn Bashr before launching successful counterattacks, or whether Al-Fihri

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[327] Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 41, Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 157; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 35; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 120. Al-Makkarí tells us that the denial of passage to the Syrians also included an embargo on supplies, and that the breaking of the embargo resulted in execution.

[328] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 35; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 120.

[329] Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 41; Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 119-120; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:159. Conde and Ibn Idhari document the dispatch of two officers to the coast whose purpose was to repulse any arrival of Balj ibn Bashr. Al-Makkari's description of the efforts to embargo the Syrians in Ceuta, and the extreme punishments meted out in violation, would seem to support the dispatch of significant forces to prevent the organized arrival of the Syrians.

[330] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, 132.

[331] Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 41.

[332] Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 41; Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 122-123; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:161; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 120.

was able to defeat the rebellious Berbers prior to the arrival of Balj ibn Bashr.[333] The sources are, however, unanimous in the portrayal of the Spanish Berbers as disorganized and poorly led.[334] All three Berber columns were destroyed. The forces in Toledo, poorly organized, were defeated almost immediately upon the arrival of a relief force. The Berber forces attempting to take Cordoba were defeated after heavy fighting. The final Berber element was defeated as it neared the coast, in what appears to have been a one sided engagement.[335]

Whether allied or not, mutual recrimination between Al-Fihri and Balj ibn Bashr quickly surfaced in the absence of any threat from the Berbers. Al-Fihri demanded that Balj ibn Bashr and his forces return to Syria. Balj Ibn Bashr, validating the previous concerns, laid claim to Al-Andulus as the lawful representative of the Governor of *Ifriqya* who traditionally appointed the governor of Al-Andulus.[336] Balj ibn Bashr struck first, attacking Al-Fihri in Cordoba. Balj had al-Fihri captured, tortured, and then executed.[337] Al-Firhi's subordinates then rallied and attacked

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[333] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 37; Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 41-42; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:159; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 35; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 120. Al-Hakam and Ibn Idhari say that the Berber attacks precipitated an alliance while Al-Makkari Ibn Qútíya, and the *Chronicle of 754* claim that Al-Fihri had already beaten the Berbers when Balj ibn Bashr arrived and attacked.

[334] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 37; Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 41-42; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:159; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 35; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 120.

[335] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 37; Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 41-42; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:159; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 35; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 120.

[336] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 37; Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 42; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:162; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 120.

[337] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 38; Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 42-43; Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 123-125; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:163-165; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 37; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 121.

Balj ibn Bashr, and Spain descended into civil war.[338] News of the fighting reached the Caliphate along with a request from the warring factions for the Caliph to adjudicate the dispute and end the conflict.[339] The Caliph dispatched Abu l-Khattar al-Husam ibn Darar al-Kalbi (d. 747) to become the new Governor of Al-Andulus and implement or otherwise impose a solution to the conflict.[340] Abu l-Khattar divided Spain into four districts granting territory and separating the warring factions, and Spain returned to a state of uneasy peace as the factions warily agreed to the settlement and separation.[341] The continued division of Umayyad forces in Spain precluded offensive operations including the restoration of the former border with Asturias. Al-Andulus was, for all intents and purposes, once again reduced to the capability of the former Visigothic administration.

[338] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 38; Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 42-43; Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 123-125; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:163-165; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 37; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 121. The sources disagree on whether Balj ibn Bashr was killed or died of natural causes during this period.

[339] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 38; Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 42-43; Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 123-125; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:163-165; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 37; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 121.

[340] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 38; Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 44-45; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:158; Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 41-43; Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 123.

[341] Al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, 38; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:158-159.



Map 13 – The aftermath of the Berber revolt splintered North Africa in Berber Principalities, and the Abbasid Revolt and subsequent establishment of Al-Andulus as an independent Emirate fundamentally altered the Caliphate in the West.[342]

The Unraveling of the Umayyad Caliphate in the West

The Umayyad Caliphate was now in a situation quite similar to the Byzantines after their loss of Syria in 634, while they attempted to hold Egypt despite its restive Coptic inhabitants. The Battle of Bagdoura gouged out North Africa from the Caliphate, breaking the lines of communication between the Caliphate and its nominal control of Al-Andulus. It is worth pondering what might have happened had the Syrian Umayyads succeeded in crushing the Berber Revolt and the tribes once again swung their resources in support of the Caliphate? It is entirely conceivable that this force would have continued into and then beyond Spain seeking revenge for the defeats at Tours, Avignon, and the River Berre. Would the Franks have been able to defeat such a force?

Answers about the military capability of the Franks after the death of Charles Martel cannot be answered except by speculation. That this was a question the Franks never had to answer was because the force capable of invading Gaul was destroyed by the Berbers. After the Battle of Bagdoura, the dispatch of significant forces from the diminished Caliphate was effectively no longer possible. The retention of political control by appointing governors would last only so long as the local factions accepted that rule. Local forces were increasingly at odds

[342] Ajaye, *Historical Atlas of Africa*, 39.

with the Umayyad Caliphate making a break with the Caliphate ever more likely, and the newly independent Berbers remained implacably hostile to the Umayyads in both Spain and Egypt. The arrival of Abu l-Khattar was the last grasp of the Umayyad Caliphate in Spain. The strategic situation in Spain was radically altered. The expansion of the Asturias meant the Umayyads in Spain faced a significantly greater threat from the North as well as from Frankish forces in Narbonne. Narbonne itself was weakened as its forces were fed into the civil war that engulfed Spain.[343] There would be no more large scale raids from Narbonne.

The Battle of Bagdoura represents a tipping point for Umayyad forces in the West. Prior to the Battle of Bagdoura, the Franks and Asturians had to contend with the threat of Syrian, Berber, and local Spanish forces amassing and attacking in force. After the Battle of Bagdoura, the Berber Rebellion, and the civil war, it would only be with extraordinary efforts and increasingly rare cooperation that would allow Umayyad forces to attack in strength. The Franks were, for all intents and purposes, free from concerns regarding the Umayyad Caliphate. The Franks had not undertaken any offensive military operation that produced a reduction in the ability of Al-Andulus to generate and deploy forces. Rather, this great reduction in capability comes from the loss of the Berbers and the splintering of the unity of Umayyad forces. That Charles Martel's victories in Gaul contributed to the pressure that caused this disunity is likely. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Charles Martel's victories alone explain the disintegration of the Umayyad Caliphate in the West. Nonetheless, the Franks were be the primary benefactors from the immensely diminished Umayyad capability in the West.

[343] Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 44-45; Dozy, trans., *Histoire Des Musulmans D'Espagne*, 1:166.

VII

The Collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate and a New Dynamic

If the Battle of Bagdoura signaled the end of the Umayyad Caliphate in the West, it was not the death bell of the Umayyad Caliphate. The resources of the Caliphate were considerable, and, if the Caliphate enjoyed another round of expansion and plunder, there was a very real possibility that they would generate and send forces to crush the Berbers or otherwise subsume them. From there, the likely renewal of military activity in Al-Andulus and Gaul would have almost certainly followed. The Umayyad Caliphate enjoyed no success on any front that could be deemed profitable. The stabilization of the fronts in Tunisia, Anatolia, the Caucasus, Transoxiana, Afghanistan, and Sindh meant that the bulk of the Umayyad forces were now situated at the periphery of the Caliphate.[344] The Umayyads had, for all practical purposes, reached the limits of a system based on conquest. Geography helps to explain the difficulty of continued expansion. Fortification along the Byzantine front made further conquest considerably more difficult.[345] Further expansion on the Byzantine front would be costly, gradual, and subject to periodic reversal. The Caucasus and Central Asia were greatly hindered by mountainous terrain that funneled attacking forces through known choke points with large, well-armed militaries with large population bases on the opposite side of the range. For example, after traversing the mountainous defiles of Afghanistan, Umayyad militaries would come into contact with either the well-armed Chinese or Steppe Khanates.[346] The frontier in Sindh was also

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[344] Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs*, 42-50; Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 161-163.

[345] John F. Haldon, *Byzantium at War, AD 600-1453* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 9-10.

[346] Huseyin Abiya and Noura Durkee, *A History of Muslim Civilization: From Late Antiquity to the Fall of the Umayyads* (Skokie, IL: IQRA International Educational Foundation, 2003), 264-267.

increasingly fortified, and began to take on the same characteristics as the Byzantine frontier.[347] The Sahara Desert, except along the Nile, largely precluded military operations into the African Sahel region during this period.[348] The transition from arid to temperate zones also required changes in military tactics.[349] This was a contributing factor to the difficulty the Umayyads faced in Gaul, one only complicated by having to navigate the Pyrenean passes.[350] Having reaching what can be described as a natural culmination point, any further significant advance along the Umayyad frontier would come at a rising cost with diminished returns.

The Caliphate Overextended

Expansion in every direction could be sustained only so long as progress was being made. Key pillars of the Umayyad Caliphate depended on steady income from plunder and conquest of non-Muslims to finance the Caliphate. With the Caliphate either stalled, on the defensive, or actively suffering setbacks, the costs increasingly fell on the Caliphate's core population unaccustomed to the weight of substantially increased taxation.[351] That is not to say

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[347] Sita Ram Goel. *The Story of Islamic Imperialism in India* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1983), 81-82.

[348] Tim Marshall, *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything about the World* (New York: Scribner, 2016), 120.

[349] John M. Collins, *Military Geography for Professionals and the Public* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2018), 102-126.

[350] Marshall, *Prisoners of Geography*, 93.

[351] Yousef Bennaji, "Echoes of the Fall of the Umayyads in Traditional and Modern Sources: A Case Study of the Final Eight Years of the Umayyad Empire with Some Reference to Gramsci's Theory of Cultural Hegemony" (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2015), 45, 52, 70-71, 164, 176, 185-187; Kennedy, Hugh. "The Middle East in Late Islamic Antiquity," in *Fiscal Regimes and The Political Economy of Premodern states, 390-403* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 393-399. Kennedy's account adds some details, including the well-developed, if haphazard, application of the land tax under the Umayyads. Bennati's account of peace on the frontier being settled by exclusion of converts

that the Caliphs were either unaware of unable to address these concerns to some extent. Caliph Hisham attempted to encourage an expansion of trade to address fiscal challenges.[352] The pull on military resources to the periphery also affected one of the pillars of Umayyad security. The Second Fitna, centered in Iraq, which nearly destroyed the Umayyad Caliphate, from 680 to 692 resulted in the imposition of Syrian forces into the region to maintain peace.[353] The sudden vacuum created by the diversion of forces to the frontiers allowed rebellious influences to go unchecked. The shifting of tax burdens and their resulting resentment coincided with opportunity based on the deployment of these forces. Just as the deployment of forces out of North Africa by Obeida al-Fihri's attempt to conquer Sicily in 739 provided opportunity to the Berbers, so too did the deployment of forces such as those sent and lost at the Battle of Bagdoura provide opportunity for rebels in the Caliphal heartland. The loss of new converts through conquest coupled with increasing relief of the *jizya* poll tax, no longer offset by plunder from conquest, and further exacerbated by significant losses on military frontiers were undermining the validity of the Umayyad Caliphate.

Signs of the unraveling of the Caliphate began to become increasingly visible. Umayyad armies had long been primarily Syrian in their composition. Losses in battle lead to increasing recruitment of non-Syrian and non-Arab forces.[354] The Umayyad core was now dependent upon local, and potentially hostile, forces as they were upon the Berbers in the West. These new forces

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from the *jizya* meant that the fiscal burden was shifted elsewhere. This shifting of tax burdens, ostensibly to be more equitable to Muslims, appears to have angered all parties while pleasing none of them.

[352] Walmsley, "Regional Trade in the Islamic East Mediterranean," 270.

[353] Kennedy, "The Middle East in Late Islamic Antiquity," 398.

[354] Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs*, 47-48.

were normally paid from the Caliphate's finances, adding still more pressure on to the Umayyad finances.[355] The death of Caliph Hisham in 743 lead to increasing discord between Umayyad nobles, whose control of substantial forces became increasingly involved in the resolution of disputes between them. [356] As long as the forces of the Umayyad Caliphate remained united, they still appeared to be the most powerful force in the region. After the death of Hisham, that unity was quickly dissipating. The rebellion of Zayd ibn Ali (d. 740) in 740 brought succession issues to the fore, even before Hisham's death gave those concerns a practical setting. The issues of hereditary succession competed with claims based on *nass*, or selection of successor by the Caliph, and the use of force by legitimate claimants whose perceived abilities were thought to allow them the right to simply seize the throne.[357] Although Zayd's rebellion was crushed, the questions of legitimacy lingered in the waning years of Hisham's rule. The Kharijites that stirred the passions of Berber discontent were active across the Caliphate and were a constant source of rebellion in the waning years of the Caliphate.[358] The Kharijite movement quickly became entangled in the succession issues upon the death of Hisham. Caliph Walid II (d. 744) ruled just over a year, before succumbing to the rising discord in the Umayyad court that lead to his assassination. Dissatisfaction with what can best be described as Walid II's moral turpitude fueled the conspiratorial coup that lead to the brief reign of Yazid III (d. 744).[359] Although Yazid

[355] Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs*, 48.

[356] Awad Mohammed Kheifat, "The Caliphate of Hishem B. 'Abd Al-Malik (105-125/72A-7A3) With Special Reference to Internal Problems" (PhD diss., University of London, 1973), 205-207.

[357] Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate a Political History* (Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 39-42.

[358] Blankinship, trans., *The History of Al-Ṭabarī Vol 25*, 62, 87, 154-160, 164, 180-181.

[359] Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67-69, 107-110.

promised relief and action on many of the Caliphate's most pressing problems, he died from a brain tumor only six months after his ascension. Ibrahim ibn al-Walid (d.750) briefly seized power before abdicating at the loss of support from the Umayyad nobility. Marwan II (d.750) then seized control, precipitating the descent into the Third Fitna (744-750) or civil war.[360]

The Abbasid Revolution

The full complexities of the Third Fitna, though fascinating, can only be covered in brief here. Marwan II's seizure of the Caliphate precipitated the civil war, and, initially it appeared that Marwan II would be successful.[361] By 747, Marwan II appeared to have successfully crushed his opponents and the Kharijite movement. One final factor in Umayyad deployments appears to have been the final bit that tipped the Umayyad Caliphate to its breaking point. The stationing of Umayyad and Arab forces in Khorasan was distinctly different from other areas of the Caliphate. Umayyad garrisons were normally garrisoned separately from the local populations. In Khorasan, Umayyad garrisons of Arabs, particularly non-Syrian Arabs, settled and intermarried with the local Persian population.[362] Overtime, the discontent of the non-Syrian Arabs and Persians became increasingly intertwined in Khorasan.[363] In many ways, the Umayyad Caliphate resembled the Byzantine Empire before the Arab conquest of Syria beginning in 632.

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[360] Stephen C. Judd, "Narratives and Character Development: Al'Abari and Al-Baládhurí on late Umayyad History," in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, ed. Sebastian Günther (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 222-225.

[361] Moshe Sharon, *Revolt: The Social and Military Aspects of the 'Abbāsid Revolution* (Jerusalem: Max Schloessinger Memorial Foundation, 1990), 125-127.

[362] Michael Axworthy, *A History of Iran: Empire of the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, a Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2016), 84-85.

[363] Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate a Political History*, 36-39; Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, 176-185.

Like the Byzantines before them, the Umayyads faced enemies on many fronts with discontent, both religious and political, erupting in key areas of the Caliphate. Marwan II's battles against his enemies in Syria and Iraq left him severely weakened, just as the battles between the Sassanids and Byzantines had left them exhausted and vulnerable. Marwan II had little time to consolidate his gains, as the Abbasid Rebellion erupted from Khorasan lead by Abu Muslim al-Khorasani (d. 755).[364] Fierce fighting between the Umayyads and Abbasids gradually shifted toward the Abbasids, with the Abbasids defeating a 50,000 strong Umayyad force at Isfahan in 749 to establish their advantage.[365] Having effectively lost control of Khorasan, Marwan II rallied his remaining forces and rushed to block Abbasid forces advancing into Syria. The resulting Battle of Zab (c. 750), named after the section of Tigris river it was fought upon, was a decisive victory for the Abbasids.[366] Abu ibn Muhammed al-Saffáh (d. 754), appointed the head of the new Abbasid Caliphate pursued Marwan II and eventually captured and executed him in Egypt as his forces took control of the conquered Caliphate.[367] With Marwan II's death, and subsequent execution of the Umayyad lineage, the Umayyad Caliphate was, almost, eliminated.

The decline and fall of the Umayyad Caliphate does much to explain why there were no additional forces sent into North Africa. The answer, simple and increasingly obvious during the course of events after the Battle of Bagdoura, was that there were no forces to dispatch. However, the region remained capable of generating significant military forces when it was consolidated. The Rashidun Caliphate used the bones of the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires to

[364] Goldschmidt, *Concise History of the Middle East*, 72-73.

[365] Turtledove, trans., *The Chronicle of Theophanes, 269.*

[366] Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 285.

[367] Wolf, trans., *Chronicle of 754*, 125.

generate the first great wave of conquest. The Umayyads survived two great Fitnas and returned to conquest with relative ease, pushing the Caliphate to become one of the largest Empires in history. It was, in fact, after the Second Fitna, that battle hardened Umayyads conquered North Africa and Spain. The Abbasid Caliphate, after the Third Fitna, assumed control of a massive system for the generation of military forces. They would resume military operations, appropriately, on a more limited scope along all the frontiers that the Umayyads had with one exception. That exception was North Africa and the Berbers.

Why would the Abbasid Caliphate not conquer or otherwise resume the alliance with the Berbers? Presumably, the alliance and subsequent conquest of Spain and raids into Gaul had been profitable, at least until they were not. The cost benefits analysis for the Abbasids thinking of a return to the West was that, in plainest terms, it was no longer worth the effort. The initial conquest of the Berbers by the Umayyads took almost 70 years and ended only when the Berbers decided to join forces rather than fight. With the Berbers having abandoned the alliance, conquest of the Berbers was an expensive and likely fruitless affair. Returning the Berbers to the unity of Islam could conceivably have remained an option. However, tribal divisions and other factors made this a difficult option. The Berbers, often more concerned about other rivals than they were about the Abbasids, could be particularly difficult to negotiate with even when dealing with agents who represented a majority of the Berbers.[368] Even if the Berbers could be returned to a unified effort, there were new questions about where that force could be sent.

[368] Michaels, *The Berbers*, 92-94.

The Flight of Abd al-Rahman and the Establishment of an Independent Emirate in Spain

Gaul seemed like the natural choice to resume operations against by a unified Muslim force. However, any desire by elements within the Abbasid Caliphate to return to Gaul almost immediately faced an additional hurdle of not quite having been able to stamp out the Umayyad Caliphate. The Abbasids pursued the surviving members of the Umayyad lineage through Egypt, with many finding sanctuary in Kairouan. Kairouan was in chaos after the Abbasid Revolt, with fissures between the Arab inhabitants made worse by continuing conflict with the local Berbers.[369] The area was initially beyond the reach of the Caliphate having devolved to the local control of its Governor Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Fihri (d. 755).[370] As the Abbasids consolidated power, al-Fihri came to see the Umayyad refugees as a potential provocation against the Abbasids and a rally point for local intrigue.[371] Only one member of the Umayyad lineage survived the subsequent purge in Kairouan, Abd al-Rahman I (d. 788). Abd al-Rahman managed to find his way to Ceuta, the same port that remnants of the Battle of Bagdoura fled Africa from. Abd al-Rahman crossed into Spain near Malaga after having navigated the Berber rivalries and securing initial allies in Spain.[372] The uneasy peace in Spain continued to erupt into occasional violence, and a rebellion in Saragossa in 755 diverted the forces of Umayyad appointed governor Yusuf ibn ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Fihri (d. 756) away from Abd al-Rahman’s arrival.[373] The

[369] Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of Al-Andalus* (London: Routledge, 2014), 29-32.

[370] Hoyland trans., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyats History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 309.

[371] Al-Makkarí, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 58-61.

[372] Nichols, trans., *The History of the Conquest of Al-Andalus*, 47-57.

[373] Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 64-65.

remnants of the Syrian forces who arrived in Spain after the defeat at the Battle of Bagdoura, quickly rallied to Abd al-Rahman, and began to consolidate into a sizeable force in Andalusia.[374] The following year, Abd al-Rahman attacked and defeated al-Fihri outside Cordoba.[375] Afterward, Abd al-Rahman I was able to establish Al-Andulus as an independent Umayyad Emirate of Al-Andulus.

The Berber Revolt initially split North Africa from the Caliphate. The establishment of Al-Andulus as an independent Emirate meant that there were now two barriers between the Abbasids and Gaul. Bypassing the Berbers and Spain to attack Gaul was not an option. Period expeditionary naval forces could only operate in the territorial waters of the realm. For example, the Umayyad forces that attacked Sicily arrived from North Africa rather than from the Caliphal core in Syria or Egypt. Similarly, Abbasid naval forces originating in Egypt or Syria could attack either the Byzantine Coast, Cyprus, or Crete. These attacks were, for the most part, raids rather than serious attempts at conquest.[376] Raising and provisioning a serious invasion force was an enormous undertaking, and one that got riskier the further the force had to travel before disembarking to attack. A naval assault against the disparate and highly mobile Berber forces was pointless, while a naval assault on Spain was utterly impractical. That left the Abbasids, with no desire to see the Umayyads remain in Spain, with no option save to send agents with funds to induce revolt on the divided peninsula through assassination, bribery, or other forms of

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[374] Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 64-65.

[375] Al-Makkarí. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, 68-70.

[376] Jamsari, Ezad Azraai, "The History of the Muslim Naval Army During the 'Abbasid Era," *Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences* 1, no. 7 (2013): 79-81.

cajoling.[377] Abd al-Rahman appeared to be particularly adroit at discovering these plots and defeated every Abbasid effort sent against him. Without a base of operations to support forces in Gaul, the Franks were safe from Abbasid incursions into Gaul.

The Abbasid Embrace of Trade and Diplomacy

The riches of Tours and Poitiers pulled Abd ar-Rahman al-Ghafiqi into the center of Gaul in 732. The plunder and profit from a successful attack may very well have sustained Umayyad forces in the West. It is doubtful that the wealth of Tours would have underwritten the massive expenditure required by the Abbasids to re-conquer both North Africa and Spain before again attempting to seize Tours. Economic changes embraced by the Abbasids made this treasure of Tours even less attractive as they developed additional sources of wealth. The Umayyads had previously reached the limits of conquest, and as the frontier established itself new relationships were created with lands that were once deemed only worthy of conquest. Trade, already rising under the Umayyads, was rigorously implemented under the Abbasids. Internal markets were built and facilitated by an expansive road network that developed successful markets in most major cities.[378] The shift of the Caliphal capital to Baghdad also placed the Abbasid Caliphate in greater contact with expanding trade networks. Ports along the Red Sea and Persian Gulf plied a trade along the Indian Ocean coast, delivering their goods up-river to Baghdad.[379] The stabilization of the frontier in the North brought the Abbasids into contact with China and the

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[377] Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *The Legacy of Muslim Spain* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2010), 20.

[378] Walmsley, "Regional Trade in the Islamic East Mediterranean," 271-279.

[379] K. N. Chuadhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 47-49.

Silk Road trade network. The expansion of trade brought access to goods from Egypt and the Middle East through Baghdad into these expanded trade systems.[380] Why undertake the enormous expense of attacking Gaul when better, more profitable, opportunities were far closer? The Abbasids had turned their attention East.

In addition to turning away from Gaul, the Abbasids also turned away from the military concepts of the Umayyads. Warfare for the sake of war and conquest was abandoned in favor of exchanges of envoys and the establishment of diplomatic missions. Military actions consisted mostly of raids meant to keep the frontiers stable and trade prosperous.[381] Major military operations that resulted in the capture of territory almost always regressed to the former frontier as diplomatic and trade relationships were repaired.[382] The Abbasids remained exceptionally potent in the purest military sense, but they utilized that power with care and comparative precision. Gains made along the frontier were made incrementally and only when the situation was deemed advantageous. Not only was an invasion of Gaul impractical from the Abbasid point of view, it was no longer desirable in any plausible sense. The Franks were quite safe from the Abbasids after the Berber Revolt and establishment of Spain as an independent Emirate.

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[380] Liu Xinru, *The Silk Road in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 96-99; Amira K. Bennison, *The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the 'Abbasid Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 137-145.

[381] Nadia Maria El-Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 83-84; Dennis Bloodworth and Ching Ping Bloodworth. *The Chinese Machiavelli 3,000 Years of Chinese Statecraft* (New York: Dell, 1977), 213-215.

[382] Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 20110, 177-182.

Papal Diplomacy in Western Europe

Many of the Frankish chroniclers did little to understand why the Umayyads and their successors had stopped coming. There was, after all, a string of battles won that explained the absence. If victory did not explain the absence, then surely divine will sufficed to cover any gaps in understanding.[383] If there were any doubts about the divine, they were laid to rest by the unprecedented arrival of the Papal envoys bearing gifts and offering an alliance with the Franks in 739 and 740.[384] This was, however, not an act of acknowledging the Franks divine support, however much the chroniclers attempted to portray the arrival of these envoys as such. Pope Gregory III (d. 741) ascended the Papacy at a time of rising tension with the Byzantines, both political and ecclesiastical.[385] Gregory's attempts to accommodate the Byzantines while maintaining his interests soon provoked the Lombards in Northern Italy, and Gregory found himself the odd man out in a party of three.[386] There is a simple logic to Gregory's outreach that had little to do with divine acknowledgment. Outnumbered two to one, it made perfect sense for Gregory to expand the party to four to re-establish balance and keep his enemies at bay. There is no evidence that the Papal outreach was in any way connected to Charles Martel's victory at

[383] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 94-95.

[384] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 96.

[385] Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 96. The Chronicle of Fredregar notes the imperial nature of the Pope's overture but makes no mention of the iconoclast controversy as it became increasingly intertwined in political affairs with the Byzantines.

[386] Horace K. Mann and Johannes Hollnsteiner, *The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages* (London: K. Paul, 1925), 217-221.

Tours or in Septimania. The totality of Frankish victory and the restoration of the Frankish Empire to a level not seen sense Clovis I, made the Franks a powerful regional force.

The power Gregory III wished to tap into would remain only so long as the unity of the Franks remained. Like Clovis before him, Charles had three sons and planned to divide the Frankish realms between them.[387] Just as Charles had to fight to secure the succession, so too did his sons. Immediately after his death in 741, Charles youngest son Grifo rebelled in the Norther French city of Laon. The ever restive Saxons and Aquitanians soon followed suit, and the Frankish Kingdom seemed destined to once again break apart.[388] There are two points that must be made here. First, the absence of the forces of the Caliphate after their defeats in battle stands in stark contrast to the rebellion of Saxony and Aquitaine. Both regions had been repeatedly defeated and occupied by the Franks but were ready to rise again at any opportunity. Second, the absence of the Caliphal forces prevented them from seeking advantage in the Frankish chaos. The Umayyads in the West were in the midst of their own civil war with the Berbers, and, if either Frank or Umayyad noted the weakness of the other, neither was in a position to exploit any advantages.

Fortunately for the Franks, the Umayyads were busy elsewhere. Providentially, despite the division of the Frankish Kingdom by Charles's sons Peppin the Short (d. 768) and Carloman (d. 754), the unity of the Kingdom was quickly restored. Grifo was quickly defeated, and the Aquitanians were rapidly defeated in 742. The Saxons and Bavarians proved more difficult but were themselves subdued by 744.[389] Carloman and Peppin then set about establishing order

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[387] Scholz, trans., *Royal Frankish Annals*, 37; Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 97.

[388] Scholz, trans., *Royal Frankish Annals*, 37; Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 97.

[389] Scholz, trans., *Royal Frankish Annals*, 37-38; Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 97.

throughout the Frankish realm. The unity of the Franks was first maintained through the combined efforts of the Martel sons. It was, after establishing order, maintained because Carloman, the elder son, was more interested in spirituality than he was in ruling. Carloman's interest in the church also served a practical purpose. The rebellious Germanic possessions remained predominantly Pagan, a religious state that the Franks viewed as contributing to the continuous rebellion in the region. Carloman's deployment of church missionaries, including the future Saint Boniface (d. 754), and the continued establishment of church diocese was a deliberate attempt to convert more Germans to the church.[390] By 745, Carloman made his desire to enter the clergy know, before accepting the tonsure and becoming a monk in 747.[391] In the subsequent years, Pepin once again overcame a rebellion lead by his younger brother Grifo involving Aquitaine, Saxony, and Bavaria.[392]

The Merovingians Replaced and the Origins of the Carolingians

After Carloman's retreat from temporal matters, Pepin became the sole ruler of the Frankish Kingdom, and saw little pretense in retaining the Merovingian figurehead. In 751, with the Pope's blessing, Pepin retired Childeric III (d. 754), also known as the Phantom King, to a

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[390] Willibald, *Life of Saint Boniface* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 72-79.

[391] Scholz, trans., *Royal Frankish Annals*, 38; Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 100-101.

[392] Scholz, trans., *Royal Frankish Annals*, 38; Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 101-102. The later volume does not mention Grifo's involvement in the rebellion.

monastery and assumed the throne of the Franks.[393] The allowance Pope Zachary (d. 752) for Pepin's coronation finally consecrated the alliance between the Papacy and the Franks. Pepin attacked the Lombard's in 755 and 756, resulting in the conquest of the Exarchate of Ravenna in what is now modern Italy on behalf of the Papacy.[394] However, Pepin's first attempt at expansion picked up where his father had left off in Septimania 15 years earlier. Pepin's initial push South secured the submission of many of the outlying Goths, while Narbonne and its contingent of Andalusian Muslims resisted.[395] In 752, the Franks laid siege to Narbonne and made almost no progress against the garrison. The Franks could not prevent the Andalusians from re-supplying the garrison by sea, and it is likely that the Franks could be kept at bay so long as their supply line remained intact. The arrival of Abd al-Rahman in 755 and the ensuing outbreak of conflict in Spain eventually lead the Andalusians to end their support for the immobile garrison in Narbonne.[396] In 759, acknowledging the inevitable, Narbonne surrendered to the Franks.

The slow pace of Frankish advances in Septimania contrasts greatly with the much more rapid progress of the Franks into Central Europe. It is a practice that the Carolingians would continue, repeatedly finding conquest in the East to be far easier than into the West. For those who ascribe the Carolingian Dynasty as the greatest achievement absent Caliphal forces, the Franks had apparently learned very little from the chaos after Charles Martel's death. Pepin's

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[393] Scholz, trans., *Royal Frankish Annals*, 38; Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 102-103.

[394] Scholz, trans., *Royal Frankish Annals*, 40-41; Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Chronicle of Fredegar*, 104-108.

[395] Archibald R. Lewis, *Development of Southern French and Catalan Society, 718-1050* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 18-26.

[396] Conde, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*, 213-214.

death in 768, despite the unity of the Carolingian lineage, once again resulted in the splitting of the Frankish realms between his sons Charlemagne (d. 814) and Carloman I (d. 771). Charlemagne and Carloman did not share the same affinity that Pepin and the previous Carloman had. Fortuitously, Carloman's rule lasted just over two years, where, despite doubts, he appears to have died of natural causes.[397] Thereafter, Charlemagne continued the Frankish conquest of Central Europe, eventually capturing all of Bavaria, Saxony, Thuringia and Carinthia. Charlemagne also expanded his forces into Southern Italy. In contrast, Charlemagne barely managed to cross the Pyrenees in the West.

Abd al-Rahman was still fighting to establish his control over the Muslims of Spain, including Barcelona. Just as the Berber Munuza had allied with Eudo in 730, so too did a subsequently rebellious Governor of Barcelona Sularman al-Arabi (d. 780) attempt to enlist the aid of the Franks against the Umayyads.[398] Charlemagne accepted and dispatched forces to secure Saragossa, only to find that Abd al-Rahman had occupied the city fearing rebellion. Upon arrival, Charlemagne was denied entry into the city and promptly laid siege. It quickly became clear that the Franks could not take the city, and an arrangement was made after a month. The Franks were attacked and suffered significant losses at the Battle of Roncevaux Pass (c. 778) as they returned to Gaul.[399] The rise of Hisham I (d. 796), signaled the return of raiding parties into Gaul for the final time. In 791, Hisham dispatched a series of raids that penetrated as far as Narbonne and are said to have captured up to 45,000 slaves.[400] In response, Charlemagne

[397] Russell Chamberlain, *Emperor Charlemagne* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004), 70-73.

[398] Lewis, *Development of Southern French and Catalan Society*, 244. This appears to be one of the rebellions spurred by Abbasid support, with al-Arabi a willing participant in the plot.

[399] Lewis, *Development of Southern French and Catalan Society*, 244-248.

[400] Roger Collins, *Charlemagne* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 73-74.

dispatched his son Louis the Pious (d. 840) in alliance with the Asturians under Alfonso II (d. 842). The force was able to capture Barcelona in 801, and with the Asturians in alliance, laid the foundation of the Spanish March as a buffer between Umayyad and Frank.[401] Only then, 70 years after the Battle of Tours, was Gaul well and truly safe from attacks originating in Spain.



Map 14 – Louis the Pious' capture of Catalunya placed a buffer, or Spanish March, in place between the Umayyads and Franks. There would be no further penetration of the Spanish Umayyads before the Frankish Empire was divided. The extensive conquest of Central Europe brought the Franks to the very borders of the Steppe from which the Huns had violently descended 400 years earlier.[402]

The establishment of the Spanish March required virtually all of the Frankish forces in the West, just as Hisham's raids required the bulk of his forces. Both combatants required relative peace to sustain their forces across the Pyrenees. The nearly constant warfare in the regions surrounding both sides of the Pyrenees meant that the major cities and most of the minor ones were heavily fortified. Advances along this frontier, as both Pepin and Louis discovered, required years of concerted effort. The Umayyads, though established in Spain, were primarily on the defensive as a constellation of Christian powers slowly grew in the

[401] Collins, *Charlemagne*, 74-75.

[402] Barnes, *Historical Atlas of Europe*, 42.

Northern reaches of Spain over the centuries.[403] It would take until Columbus had discovered the Americas for the Spanish to finally expel the last of the Umayyads from Spain 600 years after the fall of Barcelona. The Umayyads in Spain might finally be safely at bay for the Franks after 801, but they were hardly defanged. In fact, the power of the Carolingians necessary to secure Barcelona would find tradition a mightier foe. The unity of the Empire lasted through the reign of Louis the Pious, who was the sole surviving son of Charlemagne when he died in 814. Louis's three sons divided the Empire upon his death, and once again plunged Europe into civil war almost exactly as had happened after the death of Clovis I. This time, however, the combatants could focus on each other without having to worry about the arrival of powerful forces from Spain.

[403] Derek W. Lomax, *The Reconquest of Spain* (London: Longman, 1978), 32-34.

VIII

Conclusion

The Berbers are critical to understanding the rise and fall of the Umayyad Caliphate in the West. The alliance of Berber tribes fueled Umayyad expansion in the West just as their rebellion and the dissolution of that alliance pulled North Africa out of the Caliphate. The rapid expansion of the Umayyad Caliphate was the result of its ability to successfully leverage its significant military power. Initially aligned with a religious purpose in establishing Islam as a righteous authority, the Caliphate expended the majority of its power into military conquest. The Caliphate was able to avoid the exhaustion of its forces by assimilating conquered populations into the Caliphate. Assimilation allowed the Caliphate to field capabilities that were initially well beyond the capacity of the nomadic horsemen that emerged from the Arabian deserts in 642. This includes the fielding of significantly larger forces consisting of former Sassanid and Byzantine cavalry, and the creation of Caliphal fleets that rapidly grew into the most powerful naval force in the Mediterranean. The Caliphate, despite periodic internal rebellion, would continue to expand at virtually every point along its frontier, including across North Africa, through Spain, and eventually into Frankish Gaul. The process of expansion in the Umayyad West came in fits and starts. Caliphal expansion in the West was initially geared toward removing Byzantine forces who threatened to retake Egypt from North African strongholds. After the conquest of Tripoli, the Byzantine threat to Egypt was greatly reduced. Byzantine attempts to rally forces in the West persisted in coordination with local Berber forces.

The initial Umayyad military forays beyond Tripoli were unsuccessful beyond the establishment of Kairouan in Tunisia. Although Umayyad forces could, and did, penetrate almost at will into North Africa, the incursions precipitated the unification of Berber tribesmen who rallied and destroyed Umayyad forces. Gradually, Islamic conversion among the Berber tribes produced increasing levels of collaboration between the Umayyads and Berbers. Over the course of six decades, this collaboration grew in size and significance into a force capable of persistent operations in North Africa. That persistence gradually wore down resistance in North Africa, eventually yielding the mass conversion of Berbers to Islam and a partnership between the Berbers and Umayyads. Just as the combined forces of Byzantines and Berbers had been able to harass the Umayyads, so too were the combined Berber and Umayyad forces able to attack further West. Vulnerability in Visigothic Spain produced by civil war precipitated the invasion and conquest of the majority of Spain. This expansion occurred even as, or perhaps despite, Umayyad forces continued operations against the Byzantines, into Central Asia, and the Indian Sub-Continent. Without the cooperation and reinforcement of Berber forces, it is unlikely that the Umayyad forces would have had the capacity to exploit vulnerability in Spain.

In contrast to the unity of the Umayyad Caliphate, the Franks had been unified only briefly since the fall of the Roman Empire in the West in the fifth-century. Occasional strongmen, such as Clovis I, emerged too briefly unify the Franks. With no established mechanism for succession coupled with a tradition of dividing holdings among surviving children meant that Frankish unity rarely lasted longer than the reign of conqueror. Political and economic power in Frankish territory coalesced around local points of cooperation between the church and landed nobility. Monasteries increasingly became the dominant economic engine, becoming established centers of production, trade, and expertise in a symbiotic relationship with

nobility who protected and, when able, expanded the territory. Over time, some local power centers became predominant and exercised increasing influence over the Franks. At the dawn of the eight-century, Austrasia had become the dominant Frankish realm under the guidance of the Pippinid Mayors of the Palace to the Austrasian Court. Charles Martel emerged from a succession crisis and quickly imposed his authority over the Franks before turning his attention toward the expansion of Frankish authority into Central and Southern Europe. These efforts eventually brought the Franks into contact with Umayyad forces in Narbonne and Spain.

Umayyad attempts to expand beyond Narbonne were unsuccessful. Frankish settlements were often heavily fortified and capturing one required significant, sustained efforts. Additionally, Umayyad forces were optimized for operations in semi-arid or desert zones, where the mobility of their mounted forces were most effective at reconnaissance and could be applied to maximum military advantage. The heavily forested territory of Western Europe confined those forces to roads reducing the ability of mounted forces to maneuver to positions of advantage around less mobile forces. The commitment of forces to sieges required to reduce fortification also left Umayyad forces vulnerable to Frankish forces mobilizing undetected and attacking them with little warning. The superior mobility of Umayyad forces allowed them to raid into Frankish territory with virtual impunity, attacking and then disappearing before Frankish forces could mobilize to repel them. However, when these forces were immobilized, assembled Frankish forces, optimized for battle in the temperate climate, proved capable of defeating Umayyad forces. For almost two decades the pattern of successful raids and unsuccessful sieges dominated the Umayyad military efforts in Gaul. The Berbers continued to make up the bulk of Umayyad forces operating in Spain and Gaul.

An alliance of nobles located between the Franks and Umayyads triggered an attack by the Umayyads into Aquitaine where Duke Eudo was defeated and fled to territory controlled by Charles Martel. Umayyad forces pursuing Eudo were slowed by the capture and transport of significant plunder giving the Franks time to mobilize. Umayyad forces met Frankish forces somewhere north of Poitiers and South of Tours in 732. The Umayyads were unable to maneuver around the Frankish forces and were compelled to attack them head on into the heavily armored Frankish forces. Although defeated, the majority of the Umayyad force escaped and returned in 734 to capture Avignon. The Umayyads were defeated again, and their fortress in Narbonne was threatened. Initial relief forces were also defeated. A second relief force was dispatched but tuned back when the Berbers broke into revolt in North Africa. The Umayyads clearly thought the Berber revolt was a greater threat than Charles and his Franks. Charles Martel withdrew his forces from Narbonne shortly after the outbreak of the Berber insurrection, turning his attention to rebellion in Central Europe. This series of defeats and the failure to secure additional plunder almost certainly put pressure on the alliance between the Syrian Arabs and Berbers. Additional factors, such as increases in taxation, unequal treatment, and repression mingled with the defeat and the loss of plunder eventually pushed the Berbers into revolt.

The Berber Revolt quickly spread after the Battle of the Nobles in 739, prompting the Caliphate to dispatch forces from the core to put down the rebellion. The Syrian forces was defeated at the Battle of Bagdoura in 741, permanently severing the partnership between the Caliphate and the Berbers. Rebel Berber forces also abandoned frontier positions in Spain, allowing Austrian forces to seize control of portions of Northern Spain. The aftermath of the Berber Revolt profoundly altered Umayyad strategic positions in the West. The loss of Umayyad control of North Africa severed the line of communication between Spain and the Caliphate,

making the deployment of additional forces almost impossible. Umayyad forces, shorn of support from the core, drifted into factional disputes that left Umayyad Spain significantly less capable. The Battle of Bagdoura was only one in a series of defeats for the Umayyads, who suffered severe defeats on virtually every front leading to the dispatch of forces away from the core. The depleted Umayyad forces were further hindered by infighting, leaving them vulnerable to internal rebellion. The Umayyads had expanded to the limits of their capability. Earlier attempts to halt the increasingly less profitable conquests under Umar II failed. Unable, or unwilling, to alter their policy, the Umayyads eventually succumbed to the internal Abbasid revolt in 750. The loss of the Berbers alone was of little concern to the Caliphate, but the loss of the Berbers virtually ended further attempts by the Caliphate to send forces into its Western realm. Umayyad operations into Gaul required the resources of the Caliphate, Berbers, and local support to attack into Gaul. The sundering of this force, along with the loss of connecting territory, greatly reduced the effectiveness of the Umayyad forces remaining in Spain.

Events in the west were further weakened with the sole surviving member of the Umayyad family was able to establish himself in Spain. Abd al-Rahman's ascension was not uncontested, and factional fighting pulled forces into central Spain, allowing the Franks to seize Narbonne. The creation of the independent Emirate of Al-Andulus further divided the previously unified forces in the West. Any attempt by the Abbasids to restore that alliance and resume conquest in Gaul would have required the re-conquest of both North Africa and Spain. Unable to deploy forces of significant into Spain, the Abbasids were confined to sending money and assassins that created further divisions in the Emirate bordering the Franks. The surviving Umayyad Emirate was significantly less capable than the united forces that attacked Gaul in the 730's. By the time the forces of the Emirate were re-united, the Frankish Kingdom had grown

larger and more capable, amalgamating into the Carolingian Empire. Both the Franks and the Emirate found that progress against the other required significant and sustained military effort that left them vulnerable to rebellion or attack from outside. A combined effort between the Carolingians and Asturias beyond the Pyrenees eventually established an effective buffer between Spain and Gaul. With the establishment of the Spanish March, the Franks were finally freed from threats originating in Spain.

IX

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