Muslim rivals one by one, or as was often the case, merely extorting tribute from them (see Map 9.1).

The Christian kingdom of Castile first took the lead, capturing the great Muslim city of Toledo in 1085. In later years Toledo would become an intellectual entrepôt, a contact point between Islamic and Christian cultures, with local Jewish intellectuals often serving as intermediaries. From Toledo in the twelfth century would flow Arab scientific and philosophical works, newly translated into Latin and eagerly sought by Western scholars.

For decades after the capture of Toledo, Christian armies made only slow progress. In the far west, Portugal was established as a new Christian kingdom. In the center of the peninsula, Castile continued to annex areas to the immediate south of Toledo. And in the northeast, the Christian kingdom of Aragon slowly grew more powerful, capturing Muslim Saragossa in 1118 and uniting with the prosperous Christian county of Barcelona (the “Spanish March” of Charlemagne’s time) in 1137. But further progress was slowed by both stiffened Muslim resistance and internecine warfare.

Map 9.1  The “Reconquest” of Iberia, c. 1000–1300  The first of these maps shows how the Muslim caliphate of al-Andalus controlled most of the Iberian peninsula in the year 1000. The next three maps show how, in the centuries that followed the disintegration of al-Andalus in 1031, Christian states slowly extended their power southward. As the expansion of Castile and Aragon shows, the princes of some Christian states extended their territories at the expense not only of Muslim princes to their south but also of their Christian neighbors.

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