

# **Pathways of Power in late-Carolingian Catalonia**

## **Summary**

The archival wealth of Catalonia has been widely exploited, but current syntheses of the area's history focus on the early eleventh century and later. Previous centuries appear mainly as background either to the formation of a supposed nationality, or to the development of feudalism. This period's documentary material, if exploited to study the associations between those who held power in the area and those they dealt with, challenges this picture and shows instead a society undergoing expansion and increasing sophistication of the articulation of power. The thesis first attempts to assess the difficulties of the material, which simple judgements of authenticity have perhaps caused to be underestimated. It then proceeds to develop a pair of case studies which demonstrate a number of strata of power and influence in late-Carolingian Catalan society. The first of these studies, of the impact on one area of the foundation and expansion of the monastery of Sant Joan de Ripoll, shows something of often obscure peasant landholding, and the focus moves slowly up the social scale through independent settlers and lords' local agents, and those who showed wealth over a wider area. The second study, of the development of society around the castle of Gurb continues this climb, finally arriving at those who had the titles of organised power. It is argued that such titles do not indicate a controlled structure of delegated authority, but a more complex array of relationships in which the counts, whose power is studied in the final chapter, did not always hold the advantage even if by *c.* 1000 they had briefly achieved it. By this account power took a large number of different routes to the ground through various persons of differing status whose dealings the study goes some way to revealing.

