



Map 1. The Counties of Late-Carolingian Catalonia

Introduction

Aims, Historiography and Method

This thesis aims to answer, as fully as possible within the constraints of the evidence and of the limits of space, a set of important questions about the exercise and experience of power in one of the most peripheral areas of the Carolingian Empire. As Frankish royal power declined in the late-ninth and tenth centuries, the Spanish March of the Empire was, patriots argue, propelled unwillingly to independence.¹ On the other hand, as a safe place for rebel Marquises since Bernard of Septimania,² an open frontier for expansion (if not, at this stage, outright conquest) and a zone where royal officials rarely went,³ its effective independence was many years ahead of its eventual rejection of Capetian rule.⁴ Whilst not cut off from the outside world by any means, those who held power in late-Carolingian Catalonia answered, with only the rarest exceptions, to local interests only.⁵ Although their ultimate authority rested,

¹ This is the key argument of R. d'Abadal i de Vinyals, Els Primers Comtes Catalans, Biografies Catalanes: sèrie històrica 1 (Barcelona 1958; 1980), which is still the best introduction to the area's political history in this period, though see also J. M. Salrach i Mares, El Procés de Formació Nacional de Catalunya (segles VIII-IX), Llibres de l'Abast 136 & 137 (Barcelona 1978), 2 vols, or more recently, M. Zimmermann, En els orígens de Catalunya: emancipació política, afirmació cultura (Barcelona 1989). In English, see R. Collins, Early Medieval Spain: unity and diversity, 400-1000, New Studies in Medieval History, 2nd edn. (Basingstoke 1995), pp. 250-263.

² On Bernard on the March see M. Aurell, "Pouvoir et parenté des comtes de la marche hispanique (801-911)" in R. Le Jan (ed.), La Royauté et les Élités dans l'Europe Carolingienne (début IX^e siècle aux environs de 920) (Villeneuve d'Ascq 1998), pp. 467-480 at pp. 469-472. For the succession of rebellions, see R. d'Abadal i de Vinyals, "El domini carolíngi a la marca hispanica (segles IX i X)" in *idem*, Dels Visigots als Catalans, ed. J. Sobrequés i Callicó, Estudis i Documents Vol. XIII & XIV (Barcelona 1969; 1974), 2 vols, I pp. 139-152 at pp. 143-146.

³ Royal *missi* are last documented being sent to the March in 874 (Cat. Car. II ap. VII) though royal orders appear to have been issued (on request) in 908 at the election of Bishop Guiu of Girona (VL XIII ap. IX) and in 986 for the regranting of the franchise of Cardona (Cardona 7).

⁴ On which see Abadal, Primers Comtes, pp. 332-340.

⁵ On Catalonia's international connections see most concisely R. d'Abadal i de Vinyals, Com Catalunya s'obrí al món mils anys enrera, Episodis de la Història 3 (Barcelona 1960) or in the dynastic sphere, M. Aurell, Les Noces du Comte: mariage et pouvoir en Catalogne (785-1213), (Paris 1994), pp. 52-68.

even if only in name, on the Frankish king's, I attempt below to show whose authority was on a more local basis. The first question I try and answer, in terms of importance rather than of sequence, is thus not who **owned** power on the Spanish March but who **used** it. The second is how much obedience these people could command. The third is how this was achieved, and the fourth is over whom this power was used.

Such questions are universal to early medieval history or indeed history of any stripe or colour. It is therefore necessary to explain the choice of Catalonia as a target area for such an inquiry. The most obvious justification is wealth of evidence. Although the Catalan milieu is deficient of chronicles or annals until the eleventh and twelfth centuries, at least as it survives,⁶ the documentary evidence offers some seven thousand charters and other acts of practice, increasingly in printed editions.⁷ This material has been exploited, most obviously by Pierre Bonnassie,⁸ whose work thirty years later remains a standard text.⁹ It is however almost the only one to exploit it so fully as to attempt a social as well as political history of the area before the eleventh century, and then mostly as a springboard to the author's picture of later rapid

⁶ See T. N. Bisson, "Unheroed Past: history and commemoration in South Frankland before the Albigensian Crusade" in *Speculum* Vol. 65 (Cambridge 1990), pp. 281-308.

⁷ For an idea of the state of printing, consult P. Freedman & A. J. Kosto, *Bibliography for the History of Medieval Catalonia*, online at <http://www.columbia.edu/~ajk44/catbib/>, last modified June 2001 as of 10th May 2005.

⁸ P. Bonnassie, *La Catalogne du Milieu du X^e à la Fin du XI^e Siècle: croissance et mutations d'une société* (Toulouse 1975-1976), 2 vols.

⁹ In 1987 Gaspar Feliu observed that if Bonnassie's work remained standard in fifteen more years local scholars would not have been working hard enough (G. Feliu i Montfort, "Societat i economia" in F. Udina i Martorell (ed.), *Symposium Internacional sobre els Orígens de Catalunya (segles VIII-XI)* (Barcelona 1991-1992); also published as *Memorias de le Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona* Vols. 23 & 24 (Barcelona 1991 & 1992), I pp. 81-115 at p. 115). It has however not been so easy to outreach.

feudalisation.¹⁰ This has helped to anchor an idea of Carolingian Catalonia as a fixed quantity which, while the control and identity of its uppermost rulers changed and contracted, remained socially constituted in the same sort of ways until feudalisation began to dissolve its bonds.¹¹ Until then, the opportunities presented by the *terra de ningú* and concessions from landlords who wished to tame it kept the status of the peasantry in constant flux. Carolingian Catalonia has thus been framed as a society captured in a fixed dynamic, an equilibrium of movement towards the privileged border balancing subjection behind it, until such time as outside influences should tip the scales.¹²

The vast bulk of our documentation even in the areas longest conquered is from the tenth century, when the frontier was once again being opened up by hierarchical authority.¹³ The picture of equilibrium is thus mainly based on sources from a time of change, and in fact what we can most clearly describe from the sources is this change, some of which arguably prefigures, if it does not actually constitute, Bonnassie's 'transformation'. In Catalonia, this change has mostly been described in terms of political emancipation which plot the emergence of the Catalan nation, while elsewhere little attention has been paid

¹⁰ A new general synthesis still lacks; see the *mises au point* of Feliu, "Societat i econòmia", J. M. Salrach, "Entre l'estat antic i feudal. Mutacions socials i dinàmica polític-militar a l'occident carolingi i als comtats catalans" in Udina, Symposium Internacional I, pp. 191-251 & J. M. Font i Rius, "La comunitat local o veïnal", *ibid.*, pp. 491-576.

¹¹ Cf. the rather longer timescale espoused by Josep Maria Salrach, as in his Història de Catalunya Vol. 2. El procés de feudalització (segles III-XII) (Barcelona 1987) or "Entre l'estat antic i feudal".

¹² "*Terra de ningú*" the phrase of Abadal, in his La Plana de Vic en els Segles VIII i IX (Barcelona 1948), repr. as "La reconquesta d'una regió interior de Catalunya: la plana de Vic (717-886)" in *idem*, Dels Visigots als Catalans, I pp. 309-321. The equilibrium view expressed in Bonnassie, Catalogne, I pp. 316-319. Cf. M. Zimmermann, "La rôle de la frontière dans la formation de Catalogne (IX-XII^{ème} Siècle)" in Las Sociedades de Frontera en la España Medieval. Aragón en la Edad Media: sesiones de trabajo, II seminario de historia medieval (Zaragoza 1993), pp. 7-29.

¹³ That what was going on was an extension of control rather than a repopulation such as used to be held is suggested by Bonnassie, Catalogne, I pp. 106-110, and surely confirmed by the comparative study of E. Manzano Moreno, "Christian-Muslim Frontier in al-Andalus: idea and reality" in D. Agius & R. Hitchcock (edd.), Arab Influence upon Medieval Europe (Reading 1994), pp. 83-96 at pp. 93-96.

to the area.¹⁴ Spanish scholars have often fallen either side of a national divide, either considering Catalonia a Frankish annexe to the story of the Castilian *Reconquista*, or else taking the Catalan side and claiming advancement and mercantile sophistication over these isolated pseudo-Gothic kingdoms.¹⁵ Across the Pyrenees scholars have by and large plumbed the area for examples for wider theses, be they on Carolingian frontiers, the so-called feudal transformation or issues of 'Germanic' law.¹⁶ A few United States scholars have recognised the frontier society and told stories set in it, of peasant subjection or of the feudalisation of society and institutional development.¹⁷ British

¹⁴ Abadal, to his credit given his contemporaneity with the anti-Catalan Francoist régime, stresses throughout *Primers Comtes* that tenth-century Catalonia did not yet constitute a nation, and developed the formulation "pre-Catalunya" for his period, e. g. "La institució comtal carolíngia en la pre-Catalunya del segle IX" in *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* Vol. 1 (Barcelona 1964), pp. 29-75; repr. in *idem*, *Dels Visigots als Catalans*, I pp. 181-226. Later generations of scholars, in some cases spurred by celebrations of the country's supposed millennium, have not been so cautious. We can find five notables of the field willing in 1999 to declare an aim "de provar documentalment l'existència d'un poble diferenciat i conscient del que era ara fa mil anys": J. M. Font i Rius, M. Mundó i Marcet, M. Riu i Riu, F. Udina i Martorell & J. Vernet i Ginés, *Procés d'independència de Catalunya (ss. VIII-XI). La fita del 988*, Textos i Documentos 5 (Barcelona 1999), p. 9. For a critical perspective see P. Freedman, "The Symbolic Implications of the Events of 985-988" in Udina, *Symposium Internacional*, I pp. 117-129 at pp. 117-122.

¹⁵ Contrast L. Suárez Fernández, "León y Catalunya: paralelismos y divergencias" in Udina, *Symposium Internacional*, II pp. 141-157, with F. Udina i Martorell, "El llegat i la consciència romano-gòtica. El nom d'Hispania", *ibid.*, pp. 171-200.

¹⁶ Frontiers: most obviously K. F. Werner, "Les principautés périphériques dans le monde franc du VIII^e siècle" in *I Problemi dell'Occidente i Secolo VIII*, *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi di Sull'alto Medioevo* Vol. 20 (1973), Pt. 2 pp. 483-514 & 525-535; *idem*, "Missus - Marchio - Comes: entre l'administration centrale et l'administration locale de l'empire carolingienne" in W. Paravicini & K. F. Werner (edd.), *Histoire Comparée de l'Administration (IV^e-XVIII^e Siècle): actes du XIV^e colloque historique franco-allemand, Tours, 27 mars-1^{er} avril, organisée... par l'Institut historique allemand de Paris*, Beihefte der Francia 9 (München 1980), pp. 191-239, repr. in *idem*, *Vom Frankenreich zur Entfaltung Deutschlands und Frankreichs: Ursprünge, Strukturen, Beziehungen. Ausgewählte Beiträge: Festgabe zu seinem sechzigsten Geburtstag* (Sigmaringen 1984), pp. 108-157. The 'feudal transformation': see n. 52 below. Germanic law: see I. de la Concha y Martínez, *La "Presura". La Ocupación de Tierras en los primeros siglos de la Reconquista*, Publicaciones del Instituto Nacional de Estudios Jurídicos Serie 3.^a: Monografías de Derecho Español 4 (Madrid 1946), pp. 7-9 and refs there, or E. Müller-Mertens, *Karl der Grosse, Ludwig der Fromme, und die Freien. Wer waren die Liberi Homines der Karolingischen Kapitularien (742/743-832)? Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte und Sozialpolitik des Frankenreiches*, Forschungen zur Mittelalterlichen Geschichte 10 (Berlin 1963).

¹⁷ Peasants: T. N. Bisson, *Tormented Voices: power, crisis and humanity in medieval Catalonia, 1140-1200* (Cambridge MA 1998) & P. Freedman, *The Origins of Peasant Servitude in Catalonia*, Cambridge Iberian and Latin American Studies (Cambridge 1991). Feudalisation and institutions: *idem*, *The Diocese of Vic: tradition and regeneration in medieval Catalonia* (New Brunswick 1983); online at <http://libro.uca.edu/vic/vic.htm>, last modified 16th August 2000 as of 22nd November 2003, or A. J. Kosto, *Making Agreements in Medieval Catalonia: power, order and the written word, 1000-1200*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4th Series 51 (Cambridge 2001).

scholarship on the area before 1000 is almost non-existent.¹⁸

This is surprising, because there is a substantial and building body of works, essentially charter-based, on local social structures into which one on Catalonia would readily fit. Books such as Davies's or Smith's on Brittany or Innes's on the Middle Rhine join a host of Continental local studies in adding subtlety to the wider sweep of late-Carolingian historiography.¹⁹ Among these works Bonnassie's is perhaps the least challenged,²⁰ but nonetheless his work was less modern than this new breed. The new paradigms and interpretations which they develop enable the modern scholar, equipped with more printed editions, documentary scholarship and information technology, to reinterpret the Catalan data in new ways which escape some of Bonnassie's initial premises.

Using these advantages, I have taken in a large number of documents (somewhere in the neighbourhood of 3,100), looking for a variety of things. Partly I have looked simply for interesting deviations from the formulaic norm that one might expect of such documents, though in fact finding two charters which are without deviations from each other's pattern is rare. I have also looked for people and places that recur, whether in one archive alone or over

¹⁸ Mostly the work of Roger Collins, listed in the bibliography (for the section of his Early Medieval Spain covering Catalonia see n. 1 above).

¹⁹ W. Davies, Small Worlds: the village community in early medieval Brittany (London 1988); J. M. H. Smith, Province and Empire: Brittany under the Carolingians, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4th Series 18 (Cambridge 1992); M. Innes, State and Society: the Middle Rhine Valley, 400-1000, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4th Series 47 (Cambridge 2000). On the Continental work, see T. N. Bisson, "La Terre et les Hommes: a programme fulfilled?" in French History Vol. 14 (Oxford 2000), pp. 323-345.

²⁰ Barthélemy, in a sweeping attack on the scholarship of the feudal transformation, confined his remarks on this book to one footnote suggesting that Catalonia is too unusual to be seriously considered (D. Barthélemy, "La mutation féodale a-t-elle eu lieu? (Note critique)" in Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations Vol. 47 No. 3 (Paris 1992), pp. 767-777, at p. 773 n. 17).

several, and in so far as they can be identified. I have analysed such commonalities by listing them electronically, allowing searching. I have for particular cases used more sophisticated means of analysis (tables, spreadsheets and eventually a database as higher technology became available to me).²¹ I have not been uniform in my techniques and the sample is incomplete both in what I have been able to read and process and in what survives and is in print. The results I present below are therefore qualitative not quantitative, and are not a new survey of tenth-century Catalan society. I believe, though, that they do show in new detail some ways in which this society operated, by emphasising the personal connections between people through which orders were carried out and society changed.²²

The History of the Carolingian *Marca Hispanica*

Before taking the reader deep into local detail, however, the greater picture must be established. This area of *Hispania* fell under Muslim domination soon after the conquest of 711, but there is little evidence of interest in the area on the part of the rulers of Córdoba apart from as a military through route to Francia,²³ though there were *Walis* of Barcelona in the time of Charlemagne.²⁴

²¹ All computer work has been done in Microsoft programs, the listing files in Word, the spreadsheets in Excel and the database in Access. This was not a wise or intentional strategy.

²² Cf. S. Castellanos & I. Martín Viso, "The Local Articulation of Central Power in the North of the Iberian Peninsula (500-1000)" in *Early Medieval Europe* Vol. 13 (Oxford 2005), pp. 1-41, whose authors have similar goals to mine but a very different approach. If medieval power were a dialogue, as they consider it (*ibid.*, p. 1), but conducted instead by telephone, they are seeking the telephone line and its installers, while I am trying to hear the conversation and identify its participants.

²³ All the Arabic texts referring to Catalonia are usefully summarised with extended quotations in D. Bramon (ed./transl.), *De quan erem o no musulmans: textos del 713 al 1000. Continuació de l'obra de J. M. Millàs i Vallicrosa* (Vic 2000). Otherwise on the period of the Muslim domination see M. de Epalza, "Descabdellament polític i militar dels musulmans a terres catalanes (segles VIII-IX)" in Udina, *Symposium Internacional*, I pp. 49-80.

²⁴ F. Kurze (ed.), *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Scriptores Rerum Germanicum in usum scholarum separatim editi)* VI (Hannover 1895; 1950) [hereafter ARF], s. aa. 777, 778, 797.

There is little evidence of institutional continuity, though the Bishopric of Urgell at least may have functioned continuously through the Muslim dominance.²⁵ Charlemagne's ill-fated campaign of 778 into Spain was preceded by letters to Spanish towns encouraging sedition,²⁶ and the failure of the campaign may have left some locals in an untenable position. This has been used to explain the flow of Gothic refugees to Charlemagne's court from shortly after this time,²⁷ but whatever its cause we know that Louis the Pious, then King of Aquitaine, used the flow of would-be settlers to bolster his own campaigns,²⁸ which focused on Catalonia. Girona and Urgell and possibly other parts of the province had handed themselves over to Charlemagne in 785,²⁹ and several years of campaigning by Louis finally brought results when a prolonged siege achieved the capture of the area's capital, Barcelona itself, in 801. Count Bera, whom the Royal Frankish Annals call a Goth, was installed there,³⁰ and seems to have dealt fairly independently for in 820 the other principal Count of the March, Belló of Carcassonne, accused his partner of treating with the Muslims and succeeded in getting him exiled to Francia by the now-Emperor Louis.³¹

Further campaigns by Louis had meanwhile failed, and the province as secured (see Map 1) consisted of Barcelona on the Mediterranean sea-coast,

²⁵ C. Batlle, "Els orígens medieval i l'evolució urbana de la Seu d'Urgell" in *Urgellia* Vol. 2 (1979), pp. 151-152.

²⁶ K. Hampe (ed.), "*Einharti Epistolae*" in E. Dümmler, K. Hampe & A. de Hirsch-Gereuth (edd.), *Epistolae Karolini Aevi* III, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Epistolae)* V (Berlin 1899; 1995), No. 12.

²⁷ The approximate date is given by extrapolation from a precept to the Counts of the March in 812 (Cat. Car. II Particulars II), which orders them to respect occupations made by such persons thirty years before.

²⁸ See Cat. Car. II app. II & III.

²⁹ Abadal, "Domini carolíngi", p. 140.

³⁰ *ARF* s. a. 801.

³¹ Abadal, "Domini carolíngi", pp. 140-143; Aurell, *Noces du Comte*, pp. 35-37.

with Girona east of it, the smaller counties of Empúries and Peralada continuing up the coast with the larger Besalú inland, and Rosselló meeting Francia on the coast in the form of the county of Narbonne, which also marched with Count Belló's Carcassonne inland and further north. Between Carcassonne and Besalú lay, north to south, Razès, Conflent and Vallespir. Moving west along the Pyrenean foothills from Conflent lay the plateau county of Cerdanya, with the *pagus* of Berga to its south, the tall rectangle of Urgell capped by Andorra to their west, and west of Urgell an anomalous dependency of the Counts of Toulouse, the twin county of Pallars-Ribagorça.³² Barcelona, Urgell and Pallars-Ribagorça all had open borders facing Muslim Spain; also, importantly, joining the northern edge of Barcelona to the southern of Besalú and Berga lay the frontier county of Osona with its western dependency Manresa. Osona's south-western border and Manresa's southern and western sides were similarly undefined.

With Louis direct royal involvement on the March ends.³³ Charles the Bald issued many precepts to the area,³⁴ but he never went there himself, though a letter of liberties to the men of Barcelona shows that he felt enough personal connection with the area to be thankful for its loyalty.³⁵ This is

³² R. d'Abadal i de Vinyals, "Els orígens del comtat de Pallars-Ribagorça" & "Els comtes tolosans" in Dels Visigots als Catalans, I pp. 241-254, or in more detail, *idem* (ed.), Catalunya Carolíngia Vol. III. Pallars i Ribagorça, Memòries de la secció històrico-arqueològica 14 & 15 (Barcelona 1955), 2 vols, Pt 1 pp. 12*-79*, repr. as "Pallars y Ribagorça en los siglos IX y X", ed. J. M. Lacarra in Los Pirineos No. 43 (Zaragoza 1957), pp. 5-104.

³³ See Abadal's series of articles under the common title of "La Catalogne sous l'empire de Louis le Pieux" in Études Roussillonnaises Vols 4 (1955) pp. 239-272, 5 (1956) pp. 31-50, 147-177 & 6 (1958) pp. 67-75.

³⁴ Cat. Car. II Albanya I, Amer II & III, Arles III & IV, Banyoles II, III & IV, Barcelona I, Cuixà I, Girona III & IV, Les Escaules II, Sant Aniol d'Aguges I, Sant Clement de Reglella I, Sant Cugat del Vallès I, Sant Julià del Munt I, Santa Grata o Senterada II, Sureda II & III, Urgell IV & Particulars XV-XXVIII.

³⁵ Cat. Car. II ap. VIII.

understandable, as by the end of his reign the indigenous Catalan counts had upheld his claims against two or possibly three rebel *marchiones*, and another such defence would follow for his son in 878.³⁶ Louis the Pious had chosen his counts from local men, from Aquitainians and Franks of the court, and also from the family of the Counts of Toulouse, whose progenitor Duke Guilhem had served alongside Louis in the early campaigns. With Bernard of Septimania the line of Guilhem was removed from office, and the local Counts proved such staunch defenders of the Carolingians' authority in the area that in 878, the counties were given completely into their hands. The chief beneficiary was Count Guifré the Hairy of Urgell and Cerdanya.³⁷ Thereafter succession to the comital offices in the area descended within two families, Guifré's and another (except possibly in Empúries-Rosselló, where no link is clear), which rapidly became interlinked by marriage. The Counts of Pallars-Ribagorça, who, it appears, set themselves up in the wake of Bernard's fall, remained independent,³⁸ but for some time, despite the unusual strictures of the Visigothic law on the subject, the comital families' control of the area was secured by the practise of near- or actually-incestuous endogamy.³⁹

Comital rule was also characterised by continuing loyalty to the Carolingian royal line.⁴⁰ The succession of Eudes to the West Frankish throne went unrecognised for some time and Guifré was eventually forced to

³⁶ Abadal, "Domini carolíngi", pp. 143-146.

³⁷ R. Collins, "Charles the Bald and Wifred the Hairy" in J. L. Nelson & M. T. Gibson (edd.), Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom, 2nd edn. (Aldershot 1990), pp. 169-188.

³⁸ See R. d'Abadal i de Vinyals, "La independència. La divisió de Pallars i Ribagorça", ed. J. Sobrequès i Callicó in Abadal, Dels Visigots als Catalans, I pp. 255-260.

³⁹ Aurell, "Pouvoir et parenté".

⁴⁰ The dynasty's loyalty to the Carolingians, even in that family's weaker phases, is notable: see Abadal, "Domini carolíngi" pp. 145-152.

acknowledge it only by a dispute between him and Count Sunyer of Empúries over succession to a bishopric.⁴¹ King Raoul was all but ignored. In the periods of non-Carolingian rule we find charters dated by the years that the previous king had been dead, occasionally by his regnal dates as if he were still alive, and most frequently with some variation on the formula 'Christ reigning, awaiting a King'.⁴² When Hugh Capet replaced the last Carolingian ruler we find him referred to as *Hugo Magnus*, *Hugo dux vel rex*, or ignored in favour of dated mourning of Louis V.⁴³ Contact with the Carolingian Kings had been sporadic for some time by then; Catalan counts may have ridden with Carloman and Louis III against Boso of Provence in 882 but thereafter only two visits by Catalan counts to a Frankish royal court are known. Contact was maintained, if at all, by the bishops on their journeys to Narbonne or occasionally further north.

The Counts meanwhile preferred to look south; Count-Marquis Sunyer of Barcelona sent envoys to Córdoba to negotiate peaces (whilst waging effective war against more local Muslim splinter polities) and his son Count-Marquis Borrell II also sent envoys to the Muslim capital twice, a fact which is recorded with great acclaim in the counts' later dynastic history and quiet sneering in the Arabic history of Ibn Hayyān.⁴⁴ This policy stood Borrell in

⁴¹ The dispute was that over Esclúa of Urgell, on whom see J. Morera Sabater, "Un conato de secesión eclesiástica en la marca hispánica en el siglo IX" in *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Gerundenses* Vol. 15 (Girona 1962), pp. 293-315, & R.-H. Bautier, "La prétendue dissidence de l'épiscopat catalan et le faux concile de «Portus» de 887-890" in *Bulletin Philologique et Historique (jusqu'à 1610) du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques* 1961 (Paris 1963), pp. 477-498.

⁴² "*Christo regnante, rege expectante*": see for example Condal 100 & 102, Urgell 32 & 94 or Vic 143, 154 or 533.

⁴³ Condal 206, 207 or 221, or Vic 604.

⁴⁴ On this see Abadal, *Primers Comtes*, pp. 313-321; the Arabic references are given more fully in Bramon, *De quan erem o no musulmans*, pp. 310-324.

good stead for most of his rule, but in 985 Barcelona was sacked by the Muslim leader al-Mansur; several charters make note of this as “the day that Barcelona died”.⁴⁵ Borrell now dispatched envoys to the hitherto neglected King Lothar III to protest his loyalty, but by the time the second wave arrived the infant Louis V was on the throne. We have a letter of this time from the Catalan-trained cleric Gerbert of Reims, later to become Pope Sylvester II, apparently answering a request for a guess at the likelihood of military aid for Borrell, with the considered paraphrase, “our opinion seems rather to incline to the negative”.⁴⁶ Hugh Capet either inherited Borrell’s request to King Louis or received one of his own, which was used in court to try and sway his magnates into a southward campaign.⁴⁷ Presumably part of the same effort was a letter Hugh sent to Borrell in 988, saying that he was bringing an army south to Aquitaine and that if Borrell preferred “to give his loyalty to the Christians rather than the Ishmaelites” it could continue over the Pyrenees to his aid.⁴⁸ We do not have Borrell’s reply, if one was ever sent, but the army did not come, and indeed Borrell could probably see that to make trouble would invite Islamic reprisals

⁴⁵ E. g. Condal 214, 219 & 232; in discussion of 219 Udina gives references to every text that refers to the sack, El Archivo Condal de Barcelona en los Siglos IX-X: estudio crítico de sus fondos, Textos 18/Publicaciones de la Sección de Barcelona 15 (Madrid 1951), p. 406. See also M. Zimmermann, “La prise de Barcelone par Al-Mansûr et la naissance de l’historiographie catalane” in L’Historiographie en Occident du Ve au XVe siècle. Actes du Congrès de la Société des Historiens Médiévistes de l’Enseignement Supérieur. Tours, 10-12 juin 1977, Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l’Ouest Vol. 87 (Rennes 1980), pp. 191-218, at pp. 191-201. Arabic references are collected by Bramon, De quan erem o no musulmans, pp. 333-338.

⁴⁶ W. F. Weigle (ed.), Die Briefsammlung Gerberts von Reims, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (Die deutschen Geschichtsquellen des Mittelalters 500-1000: die Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit) II (Berlin 1966), No. 70; translation taken from H. P. Lattin (transl.), The Letters of Gerbert with his Papal Privileges as Sylvester II, translated with an introduction, *Records of Civilisation: sources and studies* 60 (New York 1961), No. 77.

⁴⁷ H. Hoffmann (ed.) Richer von Saint-Remi: Historiae, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Scriptores)* XXXVIII (Hannover 2000), IV.12.

⁴⁸ Cat. Car. II ap. XII, also printed as Weigle, Briefsammlung No. 112 & transl. as Lattin, Letters, No. 120, though the translation here is mine.

whereas if peace were maintained the worst had probably already happened.⁴⁹

Themes in the Historiography of Catalonia

This is the point at which the more nationalist historiography of Catalonia considers the nation to have been born. The series of successions from Guifré the Hairy to Borrell II has therefore been the principal focus of much Catalan study.⁵⁰ The subject is still debated, and scholars working in the field have often found it necessary to take a position in that debate. From outside it is possible to think that the exact situation of the March is more important to scholars than it ever was to the counts. Clearly they paid at least lip-service, at most times, to a Frankish royal overlordship. Equally clearly this lordship rarely affected them directly after the reign of Louis the Stammerer and then, largely, only when it was called upon to do so. What had been royal responsibilities, albeit administered by the counts, became purely comital ones, but these were often explicitly claimed to be the counts' by royal grant and the counts never claimed royal status as a result.⁵¹

Here a massive historiography looms with the question of the so-called 'feudal transformation', and in it Bonnassie's La Catalogne has been sufficiently well-founded that most dissenting scholars have attacked in other areas, leaving Catalonia the bastion of the late but fiercely rapid transformation from post-Roman world to high medieval one.⁵² Bonnassie's preferred timescale of

⁴⁹ Abadal, Primers Comtes, pp. 327-340.

⁵⁰ Classically P. Bofarull y Mascaró, Los Condes de Barcelona Vindicados, y Cronología y Genealogía de los Reyes de España considerados como Soberanos Independientes de su Marca. Tomo I: abraza los siete primeros, desde el año 874 al 1035 (Barcelona 1836; 1990).

⁵¹ Such claims in Barca 160 & 168, Condal 159 & Vic 55, the first three discussed in Chapter 4 at pp. 211-214.

⁵² After Bonnassie, Catalogne, one may engage the wider debate starting with J.-P. Poly & E. Bournazel,

change from 1020-1050 should leave us unaffected, as although I have followed several themes beyond the strictly Carolingian limit of 987 I have not even then much passed the millennium. There are of course aspects in which what I examine here prefigures some of Bonnassie's symptoms of transformation, and arguments about documentary change which the question has brought forth apply to changes in our period. This makes it impossible not to notice occurrences and phenomena that seem either to sit ill with Bonnassie's work or conform to it. Nonetheless it is not my aim to refute his thesis, and though I suggest how the ideas put forward in this one affect it in the conclusion, I have not considered it necessary to address myself to it exhaustively.

Structure and Outcome

Other issues with which I am more concerned are addressed in the course of the thesis. Chapter 1 thus comprises an examination of the various problems which are inherent to the material, including its partial preservation, the circumstances of its creation and its interpretation. With these cautions established I go on in Chapter 2 to get as close to the lowest levels of society as possible with this material, because as Thomas Bisson has observed, "the history of power is a matter of the experience as well as the exercise of power".⁵³ One unusually detailed source allows us to descend to peasant level

La Mutation Féodale: X^e-XII^e siècles (Paris 1980, 1992), 1st edn. transl. C. Higgit as The Feudal Transformation (New York 1991); cf. Barthélemy, "La mutation féodale a-t-elle eu lieu?", with a response by Poly & Bournazel, "Que faut-il préférer au «mutationisme»?" in Revue historique de droit français et étranger Vol. 72 No. 3 (Paris 1994), pp. 401-412; see A. J. Kosto, Making Agreements, pp. 7-15 for fuller references. In English approaches to the debate have been exemplified in a debate in Past and Present, the relevant articles being: T. N. Bisson, "The Feudal Revolution" in Past and Present No. 142 (Oxford 1994), pp. 6-42; D. Barthélemy, "Comment 1" & S. D. White, "Comment 2" in Past and Present No. 152 (1996), pp. 196-223 & T. Reuter, "Comment 3", C. Wickham, "Comment 4" & T. N. Bisson, "Reply" in Past and Present No. 155 (1997), pp. 177-225.

⁵³ Pers. comm. by e-mail, 14th December 2001.

very briefly, in the context of a detailed study of the impact on one local community, Vallfogona in the Ripollès, of the establishment and expansion of the comitally-founded monastery of Sant Joan de Ripoll. This chapter develops one of the thesis's main themes, that of the layering of strata of influence in communities, and that these layers were permeable to those with the right connections. In Chapter 3 I take another area in close-up, Gurb de la Plana near the city of Vic, and through a historical framework show what seem to be new strata atop these layers, in a story of development of localised, and indeed titled, power in the area. In Chapter 4 I examine other holders of titular power, most obviously Count-Marquis Borrell II of Barcelona, Girona, Osona and Urgell and try to show by analysis of the documents which feature him how his office was carried out and through whom. Thus we see power networks in formation and operation in terms of personal connection, exposing the variety of interactions and solutions to problems of fortune and patronage which this area's sources can be made to yield up to the historian.

This thesis presents a number of histories. The history of Sant Joan is one; that of the rise of the vicars of Gurb is another, but both involve at their edges the great men of Chapter 4. The histories, being contemporary, interconnect, and though they do this clearly through links at the top, they do so also through parallels and variations in the experience of the less important people involved. Each of these great histories contains hundreds of micro-histories and biographical fragments as we see people through the irregular magic lantern of land transfer and its documents. For some of these people, like Guimarà in Vallfogona or Adalbert in Gurb, we can construct something like a life story.

For others the evidence is too scant for us to be able to do more than briefly remark their existence. It is perhaps the great histories which make for what significance this study may have. Sant Joan's operations affected many; each individual settler in the Vall de Sant Joan changed their environment only a little. Borrell II may have changed the political direction of Catalonia and certainly helped rebuild the structures of power on its frontiers; Guallus his cook, whom we perhaps see in one charter, had a career which left less of a mark on the medieval world. All the same, in conducting this study the little stories have intrigued me as much as the big ones, and I would contend that neither makes sense without the other.⁵⁴ I hope that by briefly catching hold of these people's lives I have allowed them to say something about the society of which they were as much part as were their rulers.

⁵⁴ Cf. J. A. Bowman, Shifting Landmarks: Property, Proof, and Dispute in Catalonia around the Year 1000, Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past (Ithaca 2004), pp. 11-12.

