



Jonathan Jarrett, *Rulers and Ruled in Frontier Catalonia, 880-1010: Pathways of Power*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010, ISBN: 978 0 86193 309 9, 208 pp.

In *Rulers and Ruled in Frontier Catalonia* Jonathan Jarrett focuses on the historical documentation (especially charters and hearings) of this territory from the ninth century to 1030 that has been preserved until today. Through the analysis of the lands' transactions he portrays a picture of social organization in a border area that was part of the Carolingian Empire within the so-called Spanish March (*Marca Hispánica*), which separated Christians from Muslims. Its particularity lays in the fact that, by the end of the tenth century, the Catalan counts were ruling this territory by themselves, although their power came from the Frankish kings. Indeed, Borrell II claimed repeatedly his rights over certain lands because of his role as a delegate of the royal power, even if there is no evidence of such grants from the kings.

This volume deals with the different connections that can be established between centres of power (either secular or religious) and individual's interests. It is an ambitious study, as it does not merely take into account the powerful members of a community (namely, counts and viscounts), but also people from every social stratum (vicars, the counts' officers, local magnates, landholders, peasants and all kinds of clergy men), whenever it is possible to track them in the files. In fact, Jarrett warns the reader about the lack of documents involving people or lands in which the Church had no interest. It is the case of Gurb's term, as most of the records from this place have been kept in the nearby cathedral of Vic and in the monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll, in the surrounding area (chapter 2). It is then necessary to be aware of those determinant elements when interpreting data, as Jarrett states.

The book is divided in three chapters, plus the introduction and a final conclusion. The first two chapters are devoted each one to a

border area: Vallfogona and its relation with Sant Joan de les Abadesses' valley, especially in Abbess Emma's times (a diachronic overview) and the terms of Malla, L'Esquerda and Gurb and its links with secular power (a synchronic description), respectively. The third chapter addresses controversial issues such as the counts and the viscounts' function. Jarrett argues that it does not make sense that viscounts were just in charge of the territories in which the counts were absent, because there are examples of both counts and viscounts being in the same area at the same time, for instance, in Cerdanya-Besalú from 928 to 957. Furthermore, they held public positions outside their area of jurisdiction.

He also explains the interesting cases of Viscount Bernat of Conflent (documented between 981 and 1009 in the files of Urgell's cathedral) and his brother Sal·la, bishop of Urgell, which illustrate different positions towards the counts' influence by means of the figures of a clergyman and a lay person. Bernat is never seen in the counts' company, whereas Sal·la deals with four counties. It might suggest that counts had no control over the viscounts. It seems that one was able to decide whether he wanted to be under the service of the counts and be awarded for it or not, exactly as it happened in relation to Sant Joan de les Abadesses as a focus of religious power (chapter 1). Moreover, Jarrett shows how another Sal·la, the vicar who founded Sant Benet de Bages, acquired an important amount of properties without any interaction with the counts, although he seems to have encouraged his sons to serve Borrell II.

Rulers and Ruled in Frontier Catalonia by Jonathan Jarrett brings a new perspective into the study of relations of power in Old Catalonia in the Early Middle Ages and it definitively contributes to improve our comprehension of the society of that time. Jarrett's approach achieves to bridge the gap even when the lack of documentation may be a challenge.

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