



The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages

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This volume investigates the ways in which people in western Europe between the fall of Rome and the twelfth century used the past: to legitimate the present, to understand current events, and as a source of identity. Each essay examines the mechanisms by which ideas about the past were subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) reshaped for present purposes. As well as written histories, also discussed are saints' lives, law codes, buildings, Biblical commentary, monastic foundations, canon law and oral traditions. The book thus has important implications for how historians use these sources as evidence: they emerge as representations of the past made for very special reasons, often by interested parties. This was the first volume to be devoted fully to these themes, and as such it makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the role of the past within early medieval societies.

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