

The History of the Franks

author: Gregory of Tours

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Synopsis

author	Gregory of Tours
readBy	Charlton Griffin
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Gregory of Tours was a Gallo-Roman aristocrat and Catholic prelate born in 538. He died 56 years later, in 591, a period in which the brutal Merovingian rulers of the Frankish nation consolidated their power over most of Gaul. Gregory experienced the transition from the dying world of Roman antiquity to the new culture of early medieval Europe. He lived on the border between the Frankish culture of the Merovingians to the north and the Gallo-Roman culture of the south of Gaul. He struggled through personal relations with four Frankish kings: Sigebert I, Chilperic I, Guntram, and Childebert II, and he personally knew most of the leading Franks of his day.

The book opens with a recounting of the world's history from the creation but moves quickly to the Christianization of Gaul, the life and times of Saint Martin of Tours, the conversion of the Franks, the conquest of Gaul under Clovis, and the more detailed history of the Frankish kings, down to the death of Sigebert I in 575. The second part, books V and VI, closes with Chilperic I's death in 584. The third part, comprising books VII to X, is an increasingly personal account down to the year 591.

As bishop of Tours, Gregory could not have been better placed to hear everything and meet everyone of influence in Merovingian culture.

Reader's comments

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