

## Chapter 7

### The Providential Past: Visions of Frankish Identity in the Early Medieval History of Gregory of Tours' *Historiae* (sixth–ninth century)<sup>1</sup>

*Helmut Reimitz*

[Accepted Manuscript of the chapter published in: Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner, Richard Payne (eds.), *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World. The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300-1100* (London: Ashgate 2012) 109-136.]

Though for a long time Christianity (very much with a capital C) and Ethnicity have been seen as separate conceptions that excluded each other in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, recent studies have brought the interaction of the two discourses more strongly into view. In some recent articles and papers Walter Pohl has pointed out the importance of the intellectual and spiritual potential of late antique and early medieval Christianities for the formation of ethnic identity as one of the key resources of political integration in the medieval West.<sup>2</sup> Such a comparison of Christian and ethnic discourses might also be interesting on a methodological level, where the study of ethnicity can learn from historicizing Christian discourses in the late and post-Roman West. Here I am particularly thinking of Peter Brown's work, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, where he studies the history of Western Christendom as the formation of just one christendom among many possible forms and traditions of Christian belief in the post-Roman Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> As different as they were, however, the various christendoms and micro-christendoms were all linked through the idea of belonging to the wider world of a universal Christianity. Ideas of a universal Christianity, in turn, could have been as different as the christendoms whose representatives and spokesmen sought to legitimize their particular

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Peter Brown, Gerda Heydemann, Jamie Kreiner, Walter Pohl, Herwig Wolfram and Ian Wood for reading earlier versions of this chapter and for their as ever extremely helpful suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> See Walter Pohl's introduction to this volume; Walter Pohl, 'Disputed identification: the Jews and the use of biblical models in the barbarian kingdoms', in Yitzhak Hen, Ora Limor and Thomas F.X. Noble (eds.), *Barbarians and Jews – Jews and Judaism in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout, forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, 400–1000* (Oxford, 2003).

forms and traditions as embodiments of a larger Christian whole.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the implementation and legitimation of particular Christian forms of beliefs depended on broader conceptualizations of a universal Christianity to which they were linked. I would suggest thinking about late antique and early medieval ethnic identities in a similar way, as attempts to represent local realities as manifestations of grander collectivities. Thus, we need not study only the changing and varying history of an ethnic identity, but also the changing history of ethnicity as the cultural and social conception of the world to which an ethnic identification was connected.<sup>5</sup>

In order to study ethnic identities and ethnicity as conspicuous historical processes and the dynamic relationship of ethnic identities and ethnicity, it is also important to explore their interaction with other forms of social identity. As Walter Pohl has recently pointed out in a fundamental article on new perspectives for research on early medieval ethnicity, the interplays with other forms of social identities, such as Christian, civic, regional or military, have to be studied as a crucial factor in the specific formation of ethnic identities and ethnicity:

Most identities have a decisive point of reference outside the group, the city, the land, the state, the army. Symbolic strategies of identification attach themselves to these figures that seem to represent the common denominator, the essence of the community. In ethnicity, however, the principle of distinction and the symbolical essence of the community is thought to lie in the human group itself. Its symbolism builds on kinship, blood, origin and fate. Distinctive features are perceived as expressions of an innermost self, an ingrained common nature. The mystique is in the people itself, not in any foundational object. Therefore ethnic bonds are mostly regarded as resistant to loss of homeland and political organisation or to the change of language,

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 1–34.

<sup>5</sup> For the terminological distinction between ethnic identities and ethnicity, see Walter Pohl, 'Introduction: strategies of identification' and my contribution 'Cultural brokers of a common past: history, identity and ethnicity in Merovingian historiography', in Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (eds), *Strategies of Identification – Early Medieval Perspectives* (Turnhout, forthcoming).

religion, culture or even ethnonym. It is a very powerful construction of community, but also a precarious one, because the evanescent mystique of the ethnic community has to be made evident in everyday life. It seldom survives in its pure form, rather it has to attach itself to other, more tangible forms of community – a common homeland, state or religion.<sup>6</sup>

In this respect, studying the analogies between the rise of Western Christendom and the establishment of ethnicity as one of the key resources for political integration in the post-Roman West can offer more than mere methodological suggestions. The two discourses were in fact closely related to each other. Studying them both as open-ended historical processes enables us to see why. Both discourses and their respective strategies of identification shared – if for different reasons – the precarious mystique of evanescence and imperfection. Whereas ethnic identity depended strongly on the matrix of a common past, which had constantly to be accommodated to changing social and political circumstances, Christian communities looked to a no less uncertain eschatological future. Thus the respective strategies of identification, which made Christian and ethnic communities evident in everyday life, tend to overlap with and to build on other macro-social mappings, not least with each other. Their precarious nature might be one of the reasons why interactions between the two discourses seem to have been particularly important for specifically Western formations of Christendom and ethnicity.<sup>7</sup> As some recent case studies, which have been explored in the course of a larger project on ‘Ethnic

---

<sup>6</sup> Pohl, ‘Strategies of identification’.

<sup>7</sup> See Walter Pohl’s introduction to this volume; Pohl, ‘Disputed identification’; see also Mayke de Jong, ‘Ecclesia and early medieval polity’, in Stuart Airlie, Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (eds), *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 11 (Vienna, 2006), pp. 113–32; Michael Maas, ‘Ethnicity, orthodoxy, and community in Salvian of Marseilles’, in John F. Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (eds), *Fifth Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 275–84; Michael Maas, ‘Delivered from their ancient customs: Christianity and the question of cultural change in early Byzantine ethnography’, in Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (eds), *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Rochester, 2003), pp. 152–88; and his forthcoming ‘Barbarians in Late Antiquity’, in S.F. Johnson (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2011).

Identities in the Early Middle Ages' in Vienna,<sup>8</sup> demonstrate, ethnic and Christian strategies of identification constantly built on or reacted to each other:<sup>9</sup> relations between them range from direct competition in attempts to establish the one against the other as the main organizing principle of the world, to complementing each other in efforts to reconfigure the remaining resources of the Roman world.

The Frankish world of the early Middle Ages plays a special role in the investigation of these processes. Through its political success and the expansion of Frankish rule over half of Europe under the Carolingians, the Frankish world provided the medieval West with fundamental political, religious and social structures. This is particularly true for the changing meaning of ethnicity in the post-Roman world. This process proceeded through the numerous negotiations and conflicts over the role and meaning of Frankish identity, through which Merovingian and Carolingian scribes and scholars continuously invested Frankish identity with new meaning and social prestige, and thus contributed to the long-lasting success of the Frankish name. Together with the striking political success of the Franks, the discourse of Frankish identity served to filter and transmit post-Roman ethnic experiences and experiments.<sup>10</sup> Just as the christendoms in the post-Roman world developed their own ideas of a larger Christian world, which they sought to embody, articulations of Frankish identity also shaped the 'larger whole' of a tapestry of ethno-political units. They were connected to what we

---

<sup>8</sup> For this project on 'Ethnic identities in the Early Middle Ages', funded by the Wittgenstein prize, which was awarded to Walter Pohl in 2004, see Walter Pohl's introduction to this volume.

<sup>9</sup> See the contributions of Walter Pohl, Max Diesenberger, Richard Corradini, Albrecht Diem, Alex O'Hara, Marianne Pollheimer and James Wood in the forthcoming volume edited by Pohl and Heydemann, *Strategies of Identification*, and in particular Gerda Heydemann's contribution to this volume on ethnicity in Cassiodorus' *Expositio Psalmorum*, with further references to the literature on Christianity and ethnicity in the late Roman world.

<sup>10</sup> For a comprehensive investigation of this process, see Helmut Reimitz, *Writing for the Future: History, Historiography and Identity in the Early Medieval Frankish world* (forthcoming).

might call – in echoing the title *The Rise of Western Christendom* – the rise of Western Ethnicity.

The interplay and interaction of Christian and ethnic discourse in this process can be traced especially well in the historiographical texts written and revised in the Frankish kingdoms. As we shall see, their authors built different, and often competing, visions of community into their respective histories. But the medium of history also obliged their authors to embed their visions of community in a larger historical whole, where the relationship of ethnic identities to other social categories had to be taken into account. The clearest example for this also happens to be the oldest: the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours, the spectacular beginning of Merovingian historiography. In this text, the bishop of Tours, writing at the end of the sixth century, fashioned a radical Christian vision for the integration of the still young Merovingian *regnum*.<sup>11</sup> In his *Histories*, Gregory put together a colourful collage of highly varied studies of Merovingian society, for the most part set during the period of Gregory's own life.<sup>12</sup> They were

---

<sup>11</sup> For the *regnum* as institution, whose concrete forms and frameworks were still a matter of negotiation and experimentation in the post-Roman world of the sixth century, see Herwig Wolfram, *Gotische Studien. Volk und Herrschaft im frühen Mittelalter* (Munich, 2005), p. 145, with n. 28; Herwig Wolfram, 'Grundlagen und Ursprünge des europäischen Königtums', in Gerhard Dilcher and Eva-Marie Distler (eds), *Leges, Gentes, Regna. Zur Rolle von germanischen Rechtsgewohnheiten und lateinischer Schrifttradition bei der Ausbildung der frühmittelalterlichen Rechtskultur* (Berlin, 2006), pp. 185–96; see also Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450–751* (London, New York, 1994), pp. 000–0; Hans-Werner Goetz, 'Gens, kings and kingdoms: the Franks', in Hans-Werner Goetz, Jörg Jarnut, Walter Pohl and Sören Kaschke (eds), *Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Kingdoms and Peoples in the Transformation of the Roman World*, The Transformation of the Roman World, 13 (Leiden, 2003), pp. 307–44; Stefan Esders, 'Rechtliche Grundlagen der frühmittelalterlichen Staatlichkeit: der allgemeine Treueid', in Walter Pohl and Veronika Wieser (eds), *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat – Europäische Perspektiven*, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, 16 (Vienna, 2009), pp. 423–32.

<sup>12</sup> Ian N. Wood, *Gregory of Tours* (Bangor, 1994), pp. 2–4; Martin Heinzelmann, *Gregor von Tours (538–594) 'Zehn Bücher Geschichte': Historiographie und Gesellschaftskonzept im 6. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt, 1994), pp. 78–135; Adrian H.B. Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority in Sixth-Century Gaul: The Histories of Gregory of Tours Interpreted in Their Historical Context*, *Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte*, 57 (Göttingen, 1994),

written as Ten Books of Histories, presenting case histories in shorter or longer episodes and chapters, meant to analyse the perspectives and opportunities made available to Merovingian society, should its members seriously direct themselves towards a Christian vision of community.<sup>13</sup> In Gregory's *Histories*, a common future does not automatically proceed from a common past, but from a continual decision in favour of the Christian morality outlined by Gregory in his narratives. Nobody was free of flaws, not even King Gunthram, whom Gregory compared to a *sacerdos domini*; nobody was altogether lost, not even King Chilperic, the Herod and Nero of Gregory's time;<sup>14</sup> everyone made mistakes, including Gregory himself.<sup>15</sup> Gregory developed a historical drama that amounted to a continual redefinition of identity. The decisive criterion for his Christian vision of community was not a one-off decision, but the continual striving towards the morals and values of the Christendom which he defined in his *Histories*.<sup>16</sup>

---

pp. 25–70; Walter Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon* (Notre Dame, 2005), pp. 112–234; for the process of the composition of Gregory's *Histories*, see Guy Halsall, 'The preface to Book V of Gregory of Tours' Histories', *English Historical Review*, 122 (2007): 297–317; and with a different interest in the political context of the final redaction: Alexander C. Murray, 'Chronology and composition of the histories of Gregory of Tours', *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 1 (2008): 157–96.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Brown, 'Gregory of Tours: introduction', in Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood (eds), *The World of Gregory of Tours, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions. Medieval and Early Modern Peoples* (Leiden, Boston, Cologne 2002), pp. 1–28.

<sup>14</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, IX, 21, ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, *MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum*, 1,1 (Hannover, 1951), p. 441, Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, VI, 46, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 180–83. (For the different characterizations of Gunthram and Chilperic in Gregory, see Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, pp. 17–18 and Guy Halsall, 'Nero and Herod? The death of Chilperic and Gregory's writing of history', in Kathleen Mitchell and Ian N. Wood (eds), *The World of Gregory of Tours, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions. Medieval and Early Modern Peoples* (Leiden, Boston, Cologne, 2002), pp. 337–50.)

<sup>15</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, VII, 47, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 366–8; where Gregory thought that the famous feud of the citizens of Tours Sichar and Chramnesind had been solved: *Et sic altercatio terminum fecit*. But the conflict went on, as Gregory himself tells us later in *Historiae*, IX, 19, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 432–4.

<sup>16</sup> For Gregory's spirituality see Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*, pp. 154–65; on the eschatological perspective of the Histories, see Martin Heinzlmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*, trans. C.

Gregory's effort and energy in establishing a Christian vision of community in his *Histories* has been thoroughly studied in some recent works.<sup>17</sup> Yet relatively little attention has been paid to the effort and energy that Gregory devoted against alternative visions of community in his *Histories*. This is particularly true for the Frankish vision of community. As I have argued elsewhere at greater length, he actively prevented Frankish identity from unfolding in his *Histories* and from becoming a resource of integration for the Merovingian kingdom.<sup>18</sup> As historical players, the Franks only appear after Gregory had developed the spiritual and social topography of Gaul through telling the history of the Christianization of its provinces. This Christian topography provided the framework for the establishment of Frankish rulers in the former Roman provinces of Gaul. But at the same time he carefully avoids giving the Franks a common history grounded in an ancient and mythical past. In a long and lengthy discussion on the impossibility of finding reliable sources for the history of the first Frankish kings,<sup>19</sup> Gregory shows that only after their crossing of the Rhine, on Roman soil in Gaul, did the Franks first have kings; only then can they be located in time and space. For the earlier period there are only isolated and discordant reports, and the history of the Franks during that time must remain unclear and uncertain.

---

Carroll (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 153–72; for an excellent study on the role of books and writing in this continual striving towards Christian morals in Gregory of Tours' works, see Conrad Leyser, 'Divine power flowed from this book: ascetic language and episcopal authority in Gregory of Tours' *Life of the Fathers*', in Kathleen Mitchell and Ian N. Wood (eds), *The World of Gregory of Tours*, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions. Medieval and Early Modern Peoples (Leiden, Boston, Cologne, 2002), pp. 284–94; for the role of writing in the context of strategies to establish moral and spiritual authority in the broader context from the fourth to the sixth century, see also Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> See above, n. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Reimitz, 'Cultural brokers of a common past'.

<sup>19</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 9, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 52–8, the chapter which is by far the longest in the second book starts with the sentence: *De Francorum vero regibus, quis fuerit primus, a multis ignoratur*.

At the same time, Gregory denies the Franks any access to Christian resources of salvation before their contact with Gregory's Christianity and the Church of Gaul. In the chapter immediately following the lengthy discussion of the impossibility of writing a Frankish history before their arrival in Gaul, he also discusses their paganism. Nearly every paragraph in this chapter is introduced by a lament that the Franks had no prophets and teachers like the people of Israel and could not receive God's words like the chosen people had through Moses, Habakuk or David.<sup>20</sup> As there is no ancient past of the Franks as a defined community, there is also no Christian providence in the history of the Franks.

After Gregory finally let the Franks have kings on former Roman territory, their kingdoms are only part of a world of kingdoms (one of which Gregory identified as that of the *rex Romanorum* Syagrius<sup>21</sup>), which were as volatile as they were vulnerable. Such *regna* could vanish swiftly, as did that of Syagrius, or even more dramatically, like that of the Arian Vandals, whose sad history and dramatic end is summed up in two chapters in which Gregory places unusual stress on the ethnic denominator of the *regnum Wandalorum*.<sup>22</sup> For the future of a *regnum Francorum*, the turning point is the decision of their king Clovis to convert to Catholicism, a decision that Gregory portrays in a careful construction as the key factor in the king's military and political success. Other Frankish *regna*, in contrast, vanish. It is actually the newly christianized Clovis himself who kills the other Frankish kings, some of them close relatives, as Gregory states, in order to bring them under his rule.<sup>23</sup> The *Histories* clearly demonstrate that it was not the mutual bonds created by Frankish identity, but the conversion to the correct form of Christian belief that secured the providential mission of the *regnum* ruled by the kings of the Franks. This is also made explicit by Gregory after the death of Clovis. In

---

<sup>20</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* II, 10, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 59.

<sup>21</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 27, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 71.

<sup>22</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 2–3, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 39–45, ending with the sentence: *Et sic regnum decedit Wandalorum* (p. 45).

<sup>23</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 40–42, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 89–93.



summing up Clovis' victories and successes Gregory states that while the enemies of the king had lost their *regna, patriae, populi* and, what is even worse, their souls, Clovis the confessor extended his regnum *per totas Gallias* and his life to an eternal existence in the *regnum Dei*.<sup>24</sup> On Clovis' way to salvation, however, the Franks drop away as a sharply definable group in the *regnum*.

Whereas Franks appear as collectives in Gregory's narrative when he describes the establishment of their kingdoms, he avoids ascribing agency to the Franks after the conversion of Clovis. Already in the account of Clovis' baptism Gregory avoids addressing the *populus* that was baptized with the king as Franks, mentioning only 3,000 *de exercitu suo*.<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy that Gregory does not once use the ethnic denominator to describe Clovis' rule. When at war, Clovis does not lead the Franks, but his own *exercitus*, with whom he fights and defeats above all Arian kings.<sup>26</sup> *Franci* hardly appear at all, and even where they do appear, they are not under the rule of Clovis. The traitors who turned their king Ragnachar over to Clovis are described as *Franci*. The king is put to death, but Clovis betrays the king's Frankish betrayers in turn.<sup>27</sup> In the following books the name of the Franks does not appear very often. It is never used to describe the agency of a group with a particular position within the *regnum*. From the end of the second book onwards the Franks become more and more integrated in the social texture of Gaul as one social group among many.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, III, praefatio, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 97.

<sup>25</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 31, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 77.

<sup>26</sup> The chapter following the baptism reports a war against the Burgundian kings subsequently followed by the war against the Visigothic kingdom: Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 32 and 37, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 78–81, 85–8.

<sup>27</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 42, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 93.

<sup>28</sup> Martin Heinzlmann, 'Die Franken und die fränkische Geschichte in der Perspektive der Historiographie Gregors von Tours', in Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter (eds), *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, 32 (Vienna, Munich, 1994), pp. 326–44; Edward James, 'Gregory of Tours and the Franks', in Alexander C. Murray (ed.), *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and*

Gregory of Tours is famous for his idiosyncrasies, but these idiosyncrasies were well entrenched in the society for which he wrote. As a number of studies have shown, Gregory, as bishop of Tours, was tightly interwoven in the politics of the Frankish *regna* which he described and shaped in his *Histories*.<sup>29</sup> Our only source for Gregory's deep involvement in Merovingian politics is actually his own text. From the beginning of the fifth book, he is not only reporting the events as the author of the narrative, but presents himself as the bishop of the prestigious church of Tours and one of the most influential figures of the kingdom.<sup>30</sup> We may therefore assume that his literary *Spielräume* – his room/s for manoeuvre as an author – were related to his political and social experience.<sup>31</sup> This might also have been true for the *Spielräume* that were available for the coexistence of different social identities in the Merovingian kingdoms. A Merovingian king whose position was equidistant from all social and ethnic groups appears to have already conformed to the expectations of the Gaulish elites at the time of Clovis' baptism at the beginning of the sixth century.<sup>32</sup> Bishop Remigius of Reims, along with Bishop Avitus of Vienne in the Burgundian kingdom, wrote letters to the newly baptized King Clovis expressing

---

*Sources of Early Medieval History. Essays presented to Walter Goffart* (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1998), pp. 51–66; Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 119–27; Reimitz, 'Cultural brokers of a common past'.

<sup>29</sup> See above, n. 12.

<sup>30</sup> For the beginning of the fifth book as important *caesura*, see Halsall, 'The preface to Book V'; cf. Ian N. Wood, 'The individuality of Gregory of Tours', in Kathleen Mitchell and Ian N. Wood (eds), *The World of Gregory of Tours, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions. Medieval and Early Modern Peoples* (Leiden, Boston, Cologne, 2002), pp. 29–46, at 40–43.

<sup>31</sup> For a longer discussion of the concept of *Spielraum/Spielräume* in this context, see my study on Frankish identity (Reimitz, *Writing for the Future*).

<sup>32</sup> See Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 55–70.

their hope that the king as *caput populorum* and *princeps gentium* would show equal justice towards all the different individuals and groups of the kingdom.<sup>33</sup>

But this may indeed have been the policy followed by the early Merovingian kings. On the surviving seal ring of Clovis' father Childeric, who ruled as the regular and welcome Roman commander of the province of Belgica Secunda, the intitutatio *rex* appears without the ethnic denominator *Francorum*.<sup>34</sup> The title of the oldest Frankish law code – *lex Salica* – could also be evidence that they avoided identifying a Frankish or ethnic tradition too strongly with the *regnum*.<sup>35</sup> As Stefan Esders has shown, this was also the position affirmed by the general oath of loyalty that was supposed to be sworn by the entire free population, and often expressly by the different ethnic groups within a single administrative district, among them the Franks.<sup>36</sup> Thus it looks as if the *regnum*, as the focal point for the integration of the diverse groups *per totas Gallias*, was carefully and deliberately left ill-defined by the early Frankish kings themselves. Gregory at least considered it still possible at the end of the sixth century to use it as a cover for his rather radical vision of a Christian community. In his *Histories*, the *regnum*

---

<sup>33</sup> Remigius, *Epistolae Austrasicae*, 1–2, ed. Wilhelm Gundlach, *MGH EE*, 3 (Berlin, 1892), pp. 112f.; Avitus, *Epistula* 46, ed. Rudolf Peiper, *MGH AA*, 6,2 (Berlin, 1883), pp. 75–7; see comm. and trans. Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood, *Avitus of Vienne, Letters and Selected Prose* (Liverpool, 2002), pp. 362–9.

<sup>34</sup> For Childeric's grave, see Stefan Lebecq, 'The two faces of Childeric: history, archaeology, historiography', in Walter Pohl and Maximilian Diesenberger (eds), *Integration und Herrschaft. Ethnische Identitäten und soziale Organisation im Frühmittelalter*, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, 3 (Vienna, 2002), pp. 119–32; for the titles of the Frankish kings in the sixth century, see Herwig Wolfram, *Intitulatio*, vol. I: *Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel bis zum Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts*, *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, Ergänzungsband, 21 (Graz, Vienna, Cologne, 1967), pp. 108–14.

<sup>35</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 33–70; Walter Pohl, *Die Germanen*, *Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte*, 57 (Munich, 2000), pp. 112–14; see also Eugen Ewig, 'Volkstum und Volksbewußtsein im Frankenreich', in Eugen Ewig, *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien*, vol. 1, ed. Hartmut Atsma, *Beihefte der Francia*, 3, 1 (Zurich, Munich, 1976), pp. 231–72.

<sup>36</sup> Esders, 'Rechtliche Grundlagen der frühmittelalterlichen Staatlichkeit'; Stefan Esders, *Sacramentum fidelitatis: Treueid, Militärwesen und Formierung mittelalterlicher Staatlichkeit* (forthcoming).

provided the political framework for a Christian society whose constant moral exercise and efforts, for which the bishops as well as the kings were held responsible, were the decisive factor for its providence.

Gregory did not only use the social *Spielräume* available to him in the Merovingian *regnum* in writing his *Histories*. With their great success in the following centuries he also helped to maintain these *Spielräume*. Soon after Gregory's death, the *Histories* became the reference work for the history of Gaul under Frankish rule. No alternative history from the sixth century has come down to us, and all subsequent writers of Frankish history had to work either with or against his historiographical legacy. As Martin Heinzelmänn and Pascal Bourgain have pointed out, there are few other historiographical works that have a transmission 'so varied in shape and form, so fragmented and yet with so many early copies extant'.<sup>37</sup> From the Merovingian period alone, six copies survive from around 700 and the first half of the eighth century, an unusually high number for this period.

These survivals, however, are mostly witnesses not to the original, but to an early revision of Gregory's text. Though at the end of his text Gregory had threatened all who omitted or rewrote passages from his work with horrible fates, involving the Devil himself and 'the second coming of ... Christ and the Day of Judgement', this was exactly how subsequent generations treated his *Histories*.<sup>38</sup> Soon after the death of the bishop of Tours, Merovingian compilers produced a shortened, six-book version of Gregory's Ten Books of History. It includes only the

---

<sup>37</sup> Martin Heinzelmänn, *Gregory of Tours*, p. 192. For a summary of the manuscript transmission, see Pascale Bourgain, 'Gregorius Turonensis ep.', in Paolo Chiesa and Lucia Castaldi (eds), *La trasmissione die testi latini del medioevo. Medieval texts and their transmission*. TE. TRA I, Millenio medievale, 50, Strumenti e studi, n.s. 8 (Florence, 2004), pp. 152–61; Martin Heinzelmänn and Pascal Bourgain, 'L'œuvre de Grégoire de Tours: la diffusion des manuscrits', in Nancy Gauthier and Henri Galinié (eds), *Grégoire de Tours et l'espace gaulois*, 13<sup>e</sup> supplément à la Revue Archéologique du Centre de la France (Tours, 1997), pp. 273–317; Bruno Krusch, 'Die handschriftlichen Grundlagen der Historia Francorum Gregors von Tours', *Historische Vierteljahrschrift*, 27 (1932): 673–723.

<sup>38</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, X, 31, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 535.

first six books of Gregory's *Decem libri* and these, in turn, lack several chapters. The genesis of the six-book version of Gregory's *Histories* has often been explained in terms of a conscious effort to erase or reduce the clerical or ecclesiastical content of the work, in order to rewrite it for an audience who wanted to read a history of the Franks and their kings.<sup>39</sup> If this was the case, this audience must have been rather disappointed. Though it was far from how Gregory wanted his *Histories* to be transmitted, the Merovingian compilers nevertheless continued his project of historiographical experimentation within the outline he himself had defined. At no point in these manuscripts are the Franks or their kings given a firmer place in their *regnum* and their history than Gregory had allowed for. And while the numerous abridgements remove a large number of episodes pertaining to the spiritual and ecclesiastical history of southern Gaul in particular, the position of the Franks and their kings in the preserved chapters is no more clearly focused than in Gregory's original version.

Thus the aim of the Merovingian compilers does not seem to be to provide a stronger focus on the history of the Franks or their kings, but to reconfigure Gregory's stories in order to adapt them to the changed socio-political settings of the seventh century. So they had to cut the stories off from their roots in the distinctive spiritual and social networks of southern Gaul, which Gregory had used to legitimize his position as bishop, author and prophet in his narrative.<sup>40</sup> But the Merovingian compilers did not want to abandon Gregory's vision of community. It was the will to preserve the vision of community that Gregory had formulated (if

---

<sup>39</sup> Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 119–26; Walter Goffart, 'From *Historiae* to *Historia Francorum* and back again: aspects of the textual history of Gregory of Tours', in Thomas F.X. Noble and John J. Contreni (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Honour of Richard Sullivan* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1987), pp. 55–76.

<sup>40</sup> For some observations on the comparison, see Helmut Reimitz, 'Social networks and identity in Frankish historiography: new aspects of the textual tradition of Gregory of Tours' *Historiae*', in Richard Corradini, Maximilian Diesenberger and Helmut Reimitz (eds), *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources, Artefacts*, The Transformation of the Roman World, 12 (Leiden, New York, 2003), pp. 229–68; for a more comprehensive comparison see my forthcoming *Writing for the Future*.

from a distinctive Southern Gallic perspective that was no longer relevant to their times), not the intention to undermine it, that motivated (and possibly legitimized) the revision by the Merovingian compilers.<sup>41</sup>

The amount of work involved in actually combining Gregory's narrative with a Frankish vision of community is best shown by the two other historiographical texts that survive from the Merovingian period: the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, dating, in its oldest surviving version, from the 660s,<sup>42</sup> and the *Liber historiae Francorum*, compiled in the 720s.<sup>43</sup> Both texts built upon the authority of Gregory and his *Histories*, which they expressly cited as their source.<sup>44</sup> But in order to use Gregory's text for their very different versions of Frankish history, they were forced to revise it fundamentally.

The *Chronicle of Fredegar* contradicted Gregory directly to counter his claim that nothing could be said on the earlier history of the Franks. In their (sometimes word for word) excerpts from Gregory, the chroniclers provided the Franks with a mythological past that

---

41 Reimitz, 'Social networks and identity', pp. 255–60. For the reconfiguration of the social and political world in hagiographical texts of the seventh century, see Paul Fouracre and Richard A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640–720* (Manchester, New York, 1996), and Jamie Kreiner, 'About the bishop: the episcopal entourage and the economy of government in post-Roman Gaul', *Speculum*, 86, 2 (2011): 321–60.

42 Fredegar, *Chronicae cum continuationibus*, ed. Bruno Krusch, *MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum*, 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 1–193; for the date of the oldest extant redaction, see Roger Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, *MGH Studien und Texte*, 44 (Hanover, 2007), and Ian N. Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', in Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter (eds), *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, 32 (Vienna, Munich, 1994), pp. 359–66 (for a date in the early 660s).

43 *Liber historiae Francorum*, ed. Bruno Krusch, *MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum*, 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 215–328; Richard Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum* (Oxford, 1987).

44 Fredegar, *Chronicae*, III, ed. Krusch, p. 89 with note a: *liber quartus, quod est scarpsum de cronica Gregorii episcopi Toronaci*. *Liber historiae Francorum*, ed. Krusch, p. 241, with notes a and c; see below, n. 56. In both cases, however, the authors used the Merovingian six-book version.

defined them – like the Romans – as the descendants of Trojan heroes.<sup>45</sup> Little wonder that our oldest extant written narrative of a common fate and destiny for the Franks' origins was transmitted in a chronicle written from an outright anti-royal perspective. In contrast to the continuous history of the Franks from when they left Troy, the continuity of the Merovingian royal family is repeatedly and seriously called into question.<sup>46</sup> On their long path through history from Troy to the Rhine, the Franks even lost their kings, but they were still able to preserve their identity and freedom.<sup>47</sup> From the continuous history of the Franks in the past, the

---

<sup>45</sup> Eugen Ewig, 'Zum Geschichtsbild der Franken und den Anfängen der Merowinger', in Jürgen Petersohn (ed.), *Mediaevalia Augiensiensia: Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, Vorträge und Forschungen, 54 (Stuttgart, 2001), pp. 43–58; Magali Coumert, *Les récits d'origine des peuples dans le haut Moyen Age occidental (milieu VIème – milieu IXème siècle)* (Paris, 2007), pp. 295–324; Alheydis Plassmann, *Origo gentis: Identität und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen* (Berlin, 2006), pp. 116–90; Ian N. Wood, 'Defining the Franks: Frankish origins in early medieval historiography', in Simon Forde (ed.), *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, New Series, 14 (Leeds, 1995), pp. 47–57.

<sup>46</sup> Ian N. Wood, 'Deconstructing the Merovingian family', in Richard Corradini, Maximilian Diesenberger and Helmut Reimitz (eds), *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources, Artefacts*, The Transformation of the Roman World, 12 (Leiden, New York, 2003), pp. 149–71; Maximilian Diesenberger and Helmut Reimitz, 'Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Momente des Königtums in der merowingischen Historiographie', in Franz-Reiner Erkens (ed.), *Das frühmittelalterliche Königtum*, Reallexikon für germanische Altertumskunde, Ergänzungsband, 49 (Berlin, New York, 2005), pp. 214–69, at 244–8.

<sup>47</sup> Fredegar, *Chronicae*, II, 6, ed. Krusch, p. 46; the story contrasts many accounts, where the continuity of a people is linked to kingship, see, for instance, Gregory of Tours, who mentions that the Alemans after their king had been killed in the battle against Clovis, immediately submitted to Clovis (*Historiae* II, 30, ed. Krusch, p. 76). For early kingship(s) in the Roman and barbarian worlds, see Stefanie Dick, *Der Mythos vom 'germanischen' Königtums. Studien zur Herrschaftsorganisation bei den germanischsprachigen Barbaren*, Reallexikon für germanische Altertumskunde, Ergänzungsband, 60 (Berlin, New York, 2008), and Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, pp. 15–65; see also Karl Ferdinand Werner, 'Volk, Nation, III–V', in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhard Koselleck (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache Deutschlands*, vol. 7 (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 195f.; Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung. Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen Gentes* (Stuttgart, <sup>2</sup>1977), pp. 12f., 47ff., 66ff., with further references.

*Chronicle* also develops their role in stabilizing the *regnum* in the Merovingian present. Even in the fourth book of the *Chronicle*, the so-called ‘independent’ part of the narrative, the Merovingian kings can only guarantee the continuity and success of the *regnum* with the help of the Franks. When disputes between the Merovingian kings endanger stability and peace in the *regnum*, it is repeatedly a *iudicum Francorum*, an assembly of noble Franks, which has to find a solution in order to avoid a military confrontation.<sup>48</sup>

As I have argued elsewhere at greater length, in the seventh century it took more than the insertion and alteration of stories to combine Gregory’s *Histories* with a Frankish vision of community. The stories also had to be united with a vision of the world in which the identity of a *gens Francorum* made sense and could be presented as superior to other ethnic identities as well as to other forms of social identity.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, it was necessary to embed both the excerpts from Gregory and the new historical accounts in a fresh narrative structure. Whereas Gregory explicitly positioned himself in relation to the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius,<sup>50</sup> the *Chronicle of Fredegar* used another model of Christian historiography, the Christian world chronicle. This model also derived from Eusebius, but survived above all in the form of translations and continuations in the Latin West. With this ‘world chronicle’, Eusebius and later his translator and continuator for the Latin West Jerome established the model of a multi-focus history laid out in parallel columns, *fila*, dealing with several *regna* simultaneously. The Eusebius/Jerome chronicle inspired numerous continuations in the late antique and early

---

<sup>48</sup> Fredegar, *Chronicae*, IV, 37, 40 and 53, ed. Krusch, pp. 138, 140 and 146.

<sup>49</sup> For a more detailed comparison and discussion of the Fredegar chronicle with Gregory of Tours’ *Histories*, see Reimitz, ‘Cultural brokers of a common past’.

<sup>50</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, IX, 15, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 430, where Gregory explicitly refers to Eusebius’ Church History; Halsall, ‘The preface to Book V’, p. 316; Martin Heinzelmänn, ‘La réécriture hagiographique dans l’œuvre de Grégoire de Tours’, in Monique Goulet and Martin Heinzelmänn (eds), *La réécriture hagiographique dans l’occident médiéval: transformations formelles et idéologiques* (Sigmaringen, 2003), pp. 15–70, at 15–23; and Reimitz, ‘Cultural brokers of a common past’.



medieval West, which are called Christian ‘universal chronicles’ in modern handbooks. And indeed these chronicles combine the history of the Old Testament with the history of the *regna* and peoples of the world, their rise and fall and, in the centuries after Christ, their dissolution and completion in the Christian-Roman Empire.<sup>51</sup>

In post-Roman times, the model could easily accommodate ethnic diversity, too. Thus the compilers of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* reworked the text of the Eusebius/Jerome chronicle just as they rewrote Gregory’s. They integrated new histories of *regna gentium* such as those of the Franks, Burgundians, Saxons and Persians, and continued them throughout the whole compilation until the end of the *Chronicle*. Through omissions, additions and textual changes, the Franks and other ethnic groups figure as the most important composite elements of the *regnum*. With the particular profile of the Franks in this history, the agency assumed by, and attributed to, the Franks, they became the main factor for the integration of the Merovingian *regnum*, and – with their continuous history reaching back as far as that of the Romans and linked to the biblical past – its stability and providence.<sup>52</sup>

Within the context of this careful integration of the Franks into a larger historiographical world of *gentes*, the compilers combined their ethnic vision for the Frankish kingdoms with Gregory’s vision of Christendom. The story of Clovis’ conversion is briefly retold, summing up

---

51 Rosamond McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, 2006); Karl Heinz Krüger, *Die Universalchroniken*, Typologie des sources du moyen age occidental (Turnhout, 1985); Michael I. Allen, ‘Universal history, 300–100: origins and Western developments’, in Deborah Mauskopf Delyannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, Boston, 2003), pp. 17–42; Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), pp. 133–77. For an excellent discussion of the adaptation of Eusebius’ text by Jerome and its effects for the success of the chronicle, see Mark Vessey, ‘Reinventing history: Jerome’s chronicle and the writing of the post-Roman West’, in Scott McGill, Cristiana Sogno and Edward Watts (eds), *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians: Later Roman History and Culture, 284–450 CE*, Yale Classical Studies, 34 (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 261–85.

<sup>52</sup> See Reimitz, ‘Cultural brokers of a common past’. For the question of agency in definitions of ethnicity and ethnic identity, see Pohl, ‘Strategies of identification’.

the main elements of Gregory's narrative: the nearly lost battle against the Alemanni, Clovis' promise to convert if God would help him, and finally the baptism of Clovis by the bishop of Reims, Remigius. Here, however, the compilers also expanded their short summary. They added some sentences that not only doubled the number of Clovis' followers given by Gregory to 6,000, but also added that these men were Franks.<sup>53</sup> And they ended their account of the baptism with an additional anecdote: during the baptism, after Remigius had read the story of the passion of Christ, Clovis became so upset that he even interrupted the ceremony to comment: 'If I had been present with my Franks – *cum Francis meis* – I would have taken revenge.'<sup>54</sup> The chroniclers close the chapter with the statement that these words clearly proved him to be a real Christian. But they might just as well have intended to present Clovis as a real Frank.

The *Chronicle of Fredegar*, which in its oldest extant redaction was compiled in the eastern parts of the Frankish realm, was not the only conception of Frankish history in the Merovingian kingdoms to build upon Gregory's text. In the West a much more sharply defined idea of Frankishness had been articulated, in which the 'real' Franks were seen as the elites in the centres of the western Frankish kingdom.<sup>55</sup> In the first decades of the eighth century this conception of the Franks was given a historiographical account which seems to have been directed against both older visions – the broader and more open definition of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and the anti-ethnic vision of Gregory of Tours. In the *Liber historiae Francorum*,

---

<sup>53</sup> Fredegar, *Chronicae*, II, 21, ed. Krusch, p. 101: *Nam cum de prilio memorato superius Clodoveus Remus fuisset reverses, clam a sancto Remedio Remensis urbis episcopus, adtrahentem etiam Crotechilde regina, gratiam baptismi cum sex milia Francis in pascha Domini consecratus.*

<sup>54</sup> Fredegar, *Chronicae*, II, 21, ed. Krusch, p. 101: *Si ego ibidem cum Francis meis fuissem, eius iniuriam vindicassim.*

<sup>55</sup> See Wood, 'Defining the Franks'; Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians*, pp. 76, 167–72; Coumert, *Les récits d'origine des peuples*, pp. 325–40; this conception of Frankish identity is already evident in the Life of Audoin, written towards the end of the seventh century, *Vita Audoini*, ed. Wilhelm Levison, *MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum*, 5 (Hanover, 1910), pp. 553–67; Eugen Ewig, 'Die fränkischen Teilreiche im 7. Jahrhundert', in Eugen Ewig, *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien*, vol. 1, Beihefte der Francia, 3, 1 (Zurich, Munich, 1976), pp. 172–230, at 152f.

Gregory's claim is contradicted no less clearly than in the *Chronicle of Fredegar*. This text, which is presented as Gregory of Tours' own work in a number of quite early manuscripts,<sup>56</sup> begins with a sentence that made it absolutely clear that the question about the origins of the Franks and their kings should not be left open: *Principium regum Francorum eorumque origine vel gentium illarum ac gesta proferamus*.<sup>57</sup> With that sentence the text introduces an alternative version of the Frankish descent from the heroes of Troy to the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, which is set just before another réécriture of Gregory of Tours' *Histories*. The self-confidence with which the *Liber historiae Francorum* contradicted Gregory's historiographical authority, and his claims about the early Franks, is typical of this text. As briefly mentioned, its author had very clear notions as to who should count as the definitive Franks of his contemporaries: the elites of the western kingdom between the Seine and Oise.<sup>58</sup>

From the beginning until the very end of the text, these Franks, together with their kings, are the main agents of history. This is particularly obvious in the réécriture of Gregory's stories about Clovis in the *Liber historiae Francorum*. Whereas Gregory had avoided associating Clovis' agency with that of the Franks throughout his narrative, the compilers of the *Liber historiae Francorum* weaved them carefully into the verbatim quotations from Gregory. Gregory describes Clovis' rise as a series of victories over other peoples, but in the *Liber*, the victories are won by the Franks together with their king.<sup>59</sup> Thus the battle during which Clovis

---

<sup>56</sup> For example, Vaticanus Palat. 966 (ca. 800): *Incipit liber sancti Gregorii Turonensis episcopi gesta regum Francorum*; Vaticanus Ottob. 663 (ca. 800): *Incipit liber sancti Gorii (!) Toroni episcopi gesta regum Francorum*; Vaticanus Reg. lat. 713 (ca. 800): *Incipit liber hystoriae Francorum a Gregorio Turonensis urbis episcopo edita*; cf. *Liber historiae Francorum*, ed. Krusch, p. 241 with notes a and c (the manuscripts are the manuscripts B2a<sup>2</sup>B2a<sup>1</sup>, A3b in the classification of Krusch).

<sup>57</sup> *Liber historiae Francorum*, 1, ed. Krusch, p. 241.

<sup>58</sup> See n. 55 above.

<sup>59</sup> For example, *Liber historiae Francorum*, 10, ed. Krusch, pp. 250f., which relates a story about the assembly of the army; *ibid.*, 15, ed. Krusch, p. 261 (see above pp. 000–0); *ibid.*, 17, ed. Krusch, p. 267f. (the war against the Visigoths).

swore to convert to Christianity was a conflict between Franks and Alemanns.<sup>60</sup> When the *Liber* deals with Clovis' baptism it uses many direct citations from Gregory, for example for both Clovis is the new Constantine. But the *Liber* left out the sentence where Gregory compares the cleansing of baptism to the washing away of leprosy.<sup>61</sup> Instead, as in the *Chronicle of Fredegar* before it, the name of the Franks was added to the end of the story. But the author of the *Liber* does not only double the number of the baptized people as the compilers of the Fredegar chronicle did; in the *Liber* it is the whole people of the Franks – *cunctus populus Francorum* – who were baptized along with Clovis.<sup>62</sup>

This newly constructed, shared Christian future of the Franks and their kings is continued in the narrative of the next chapter. Clovis, *cum multo exercitu Francorum*, immediately turns against the Arian brother-kings of the Burgundians, Gundobad and Godegisel.<sup>63</sup> Gregory of Tours also recorded a campaign against the Burgundians. His version, however, is different. According to Gregory, Clovis allies himself with one of the Burgundian kings, Godegisel, against the latter's brother Gundobad, because Godegisel had promised Clovis tribute and territory. The embarrassing alliance with the Arian king comes to nothing in Gregory's version,

---

<sup>60</sup> *Liber historiae Francorum*, 15, ed. Krusch, p. 261: *Factum est autem pugnantis inter se Francorum et Alemannorum exercitu ...* with Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 30, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 75f., where Gregory mentions only the Alemanns and Clovis as actors.

<sup>61</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 31, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 77: *Procedit novus Constantinus ad lavacrum, deleturus leprae veteris morbum sordentesque maculas gestas antiquitas recenti latice deleturus* with *Liber historiae Francorum*, 15, ed. Krusch, p. 263: *Venit novus Constantinus ad baptismum, abnegatis diaboli pompis*.

<sup>62</sup> *Liber historiae Francorum*, 15, ed. Krusch, p. 263.

<sup>63</sup> The *Liber historiae Francorum* clearly builds here on the religious contrasts of Franks and Burgundians that go back to Gregory of Tours. For the much more complex religious situation in the regna, see Ian N. Wood, 'The Latin culture of Gundobad and Sigismund', in Dietrich Hägermann, Wolfgang Haubrichs and Jörg Jarnut (eds), *Akkulturation* (Berlin, 2004), pp. 367–80, and his forthcoming 'Arians, Catholics and Vouillé', which will be published in a collection on Vouillé edited by Ralph Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer.

which, considering the anti-Arian stance of the bishop of Tours, is hardly surprising.<sup>64</sup> In the *Liber historiae Francorum*, by contrast, the story of the united campaign of the Franks and their glorious king against the Burgundians comes to a happy ending and Clovis returns home with a great deal of treasure.<sup>65</sup>

Clearly, both texts, the *Chronicle of Fredegar* as well as the *Liber historiae Francorum*, turned Gregory's vision for the Merovingian *regnum* around. But instead of writing an entirely new history, they also built on it in several respects. Though their authors fundamentally revised the text of Gregory in their réécritures, they also explicitly referred to him as the author of the text.<sup>66</sup> It seems that they did not want to disregard the spiritual and historiographical authority of Gregory's *Histories*.<sup>67</sup> Through the authority associated with them, Gregory's stories provided a valuable resource: their providential elements merged into the visions of Frankish identity and ethnicity of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and the *Liber historiae Francorum*.

By analysing the differences between the two texts, we can also detect another reason for the appeal of Gregory's *Histories* for later historians. Precisely because Gregory did not bind his

---

<sup>64</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 32–3, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 79–81; Edward James, 'Gregory of Tours and 'Arianism'', in Andrew Cain and Noel Lenski (eds), *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity* (Farnham, Burlington, 2009), pp. 327–38.

<sup>65</sup> *Liber historiae Francorum*, 16, ed. Krusch, p. 266: *Chlodoveus vero, ablatis thesauris cum preda maxima reversus est victor*; the reworking of the text, which was made about ten years after the older version of the *Liber* in the late 730s adds *cum Francorum exercitu*.

<sup>66</sup> See above, nn. 44 and 56.

<sup>67</sup> Nearly all titles in the manuscripts of the third book of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* with Gregory's epitome and the *Liber historiae Francorum* mention Gregory as bishop of Tours; the revised version of the *Liber*, written in the late 730s, even characterizes him as *sanctus Gregorius*; Fredegar, *Chronicae*, III, ed. Krusch, p. 89; *Liber historiae Francorum*, ed. Krusch, p. 241. The spiritual authority of Gregory's *Histories* was still acknowledged in the eleventh century by Fulbert of Chartres: see Karl Ferdinand Werner, 'Gott, Herrscher und Historiograph. Der Geschichtsschreiber als Interpret des Wirkens Gottes in der Welt und Ratgeber der Könige (4.–12. Jahrhundert)', in Ernst-Dieter Hehl (ed.), *Deus qui mutat tempora. Menschen und Institutionen im Wandel des Mittelalters, Festschrift für Alfons Becker* (Sigmaringen, 1987), pp. 1–31, at 28f.

radical Christian vision to the history of a particular social group, but devised it as a vision for the integration of all the different social groups and groupings in a Christian *regnum*, his *Histories* could easily be incorporated into different concepts of Frankish identity. Gregory thus handed down to future generations of historiographers – and even those who wanted to write a Frankish history – the very flexibility he had been able to use for the articulation of his own vision of community.

In the formation, reformation and transmission of Gregory's text, these *Spielräume* were not only constantly defined and redefined, but also preserved. This pertains not only to texts merging Gregory's vision into a history of the Franks, but also to the transmission of the *Histories* (or parts of them) as he had actually written them. Particularly when investigating the interplays of Christian and ethnic visions of community in the Frankish world, we should not forget that interest was never lost in the text Gregory had actually written. The manuscript transmission clearly shows that the Merovingian six-book version must have been extremely popular at the time when the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and the *Liber historiae Francorum* were written. Two complete, two near-complete and one fragmentary copy survive from this period. Two of these were supplemented with the missing Books 7–10 during the eighth century.<sup>68</sup> The unusually high number of Merovingian copies of this version provides an insight into the competition between Gregory's vision of community and the new visions articulated by the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and the *Liber historiae Francorum* during the seventh and eighth centuries.

This process continued into the Carolingian period as documented by the transmission of the *Histories*, which saw the text completely revised afresh. The oldest of these Carolingian versions is a manuscript from Lorsch, written in the first decades of the ninth century. The manuscript appears to have been the project of several scribes, and was in many places

---

<sup>68</sup> Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours*, p. 192–201; Heinzelmann and Bourgain, 'L'œuvre de Grégoire de Tours', pp. 282f.; Reimitz, 'Social networks and identities', pp. 235–40. The above-mentioned six text witnesses (p. 000) also include the seventh-century fragments of the A-class of the manuscripts.

corrected by a proof reader after they had finished their work.<sup>69</sup> They had access to the Merovingian six-book version as well as to a longer, presumably complete edition of the *Histories*. The Lorsch compilers did not prefer one over the other version, but used both to construct a new selection of stories from Gregory's work. They took their material from all ten books, but divided the selected chapters into only nine books. As the tenth book of Gregory's *Histories* they added the fourth book of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*. This new tenth book also included the first 24 chapters of the *Continuationes* of Fredegar, added by Carolingian scribes to legitimate the Carolingian rise to power.<sup>70</sup> Thus the historical narrative ended in 741, the year of the death of the Carolingian prince Charles Martel and the start of the rule of his son Pippin, soon to become the first Carolingian king of the Franks.<sup>71</sup>

At first glance, the combination of these texts seems odd. With the fourth book of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* the compilers turned to a narrative that portrays the Franks as the leading ethnic community among several others, and the focal point of the stability and future of the *regnum Francorum*. This fits well with the Carolingian *Continuationes* which were added to the text. In the fourth book of *Chronicle of Fredegar*, the Carolingian ancestors Pippin and Arnulf are described as two eminently prominent representatives of these Franks. In a similar vein, the *Continuationes* present their successor Charles Martel and the Franks as a successful community. In a remarkably monotonous piece of rhetoric, they describe, in a series of short, successive

---

<sup>69</sup> The manuscript has been published on the homepage of the University Library of the Ruprechts Karl Universität Heidelberg, at <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpl864>. See Bernhard Bischoff, *Die Abtei Lorsch im Spiegel ihrer Handschriften* (Lorsch, <sup>2</sup>1989), pp. 31f.; description of the manuscript, p. 32; Heinzelmann and Bourgain, 'L'œuvre de Grégoire de Tours', pp. 287f.; Krusch, 'Die handschriftlichen Grundlagen der Historia Francorum Gregors von Tours', *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* 27 (1932): 673–723, at 688–70.

<sup>70</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 133–55.

<sup>71</sup> See Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours*, pp. 197 for some comments on the Carolingian version of Gregory's *Histories*. See also Krusch, 'Die handschriftlichen Grundlagen', pp. 688–700, and Bruno Krusch, 'Die handschriftlichen Grundlagen der Historia Francorum Gregors von Tours. 1. Die Handschrift von Namur und ihre Verwandten (C2\*, 3, 3\*, 4)', *Historische Vierteljahresschrift*, 28 (1933): 1–15.

chapters, the triumphal history of the Carolingian *princeps* Charles Martel. Together with all the Franks, he succeeded in reconquering territories and peoples that had been lost by lazy Merovingian kings, and in re-establishing the unity of the Frankish kingdom.<sup>72</sup> However, as the broader historiographical framework for this success story, the Lorsch compilers did not choose the first three books of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, with their ethnic rendering of the world and the mythical past of the Franks. Instead, they carefully integrated this success story into their selection of Gregory's vision.

It is still possible today to observe the care the compilers took to assemble their text. At some points, where the scribes had too hastily followed their exemplar of the Merovingian six-book version, they had obviously missed out chapters from Gregory's, which the editors of this Carolingian version wanted to include in the text. The codicological autopsy clearly shows that some folios were added later.<sup>73</sup> Most notably, in the second book, the Carolingian compilers originally skipped (like their Merovingian predecessors) the story of the flight of Bishop Quintianus to the Merovingian kingdom. Quintianus was bishop of Rodez (d. ca. 525), which at that time was under the rule of the Arian king of the Visigoths. When he was accused of wanting to bring his bishopric under the rule of Clovis and the Franks, he fled to Clermont, Gregory of Tours' home city, where he later even became bishop.<sup>74</sup> Though it was originally not included in the selection, the editors of the historiographical workshop in Lorsch later decided to include it in their version of Gregory, and inserted it into the compendium on a separate folium.<sup>75</sup> The addition reflects the general tendency of the compendium very well. The story fits

---

<sup>72</sup> For Charles Martel, see Paul Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel* (London, 2000); for Carolingian historiography on Charles, see McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 133–55; Helmut Reimitz, 'Omnes Franci: identifications and identities of the early medieval Franks', in Ildar Garipzanov, Patrick Geary and Przemyslaw Urbanczyk (eds), *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 51–70.

<sup>73</sup> See Heidelberg, Pal. lat. 864, fos. 8, 9 and 14.

<sup>74</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 36, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 84f.

<sup>75</sup> Heidelberg, Pal. lat. 864, fo. 23a v.



well with the emphasis on the Franks, an emphasis also evident through the addition of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and its *Continuations* to Gregory's work in the manuscript. But the story also underlines the fact that it was the Christendom of Gaul that formed the basis for founding and expanding mutual loyalties in the *regnum Francorum*. And just like the interest in the story of Quintianus, the selection of chapters from Gregory by the Lorsch compilers demonstrates a strong interest in the histories of the saints of southern Gaul, many of whom, like the one about Quintianus, fell victim to the abridgements of the Merovingian six-book version.<sup>76</sup>

The interests exemplified by the re-addition of the Quintianus episode make good sense when we take into account the context of the manuscript's production. The monastery of Lorsch had from its beginnings close ties to the bishopric of Metz. The monastery, founded in 764, was from the start placed under the jurisdiction of Metz, in the person of bishop Chrodegang, who also became its first abbot and sent monks from his own foundation, Gorze, to the new monastery.<sup>77</sup> As Bernhard Bischoff has shown there must also have been close contacts and lively exchange between the two libraries and scriptoria.<sup>78</sup> This was particularly true for the time when towards the end of the eighth century, the Metz community sought to establish shared origins of the bishops of Metz with the family of the Carolingian rulers. A key figure in this genealogical construction was Bishop Arnulf of Metz, who was explicitly named in the fourth book of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* as a member of the *iudicium Francorum* that mediated in the conflict between the Frankish kings Chlothar II and Dagobert I.<sup>79</sup> In the same text, Arnulf also appeared as one of the most important members of the group supporting Chlothar II against

---

<sup>76</sup> See Reimitz, 'Social networks and identities', pp. 263–4.

<sup>77</sup> Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley 400–1000* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 51–9; for Metz, Lorsch and the Carolingians, see Barbara Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 112–18.

<sup>78</sup> Bischoff, *Die Abtei Lorsch*, pp. 36f., 61.

<sup>79</sup> Fredegar, *Chronicae*, IV, 53, ed. Krusch, p. 146; for the *iudicium Francorum* in the Fredegar chronicle, see above, pp. 000–0.

his Merovingian rivals (above all the powerful Queen Brunhild) to take over the rule of all of the kingdoms in 613.<sup>80</sup> At the end of the eighth century at the latest, the Carolingians cultivated the memory of Arnulf as one of their ancestors.<sup>81</sup> In a text most likely written in Metz in the 780s, the lineage shared by Arnulf and his Carolingian descendants is described with the phrase *ex nobilissimo fortissimoque Francorum stemmate*.<sup>82</sup> Not much later, yet another genealogy written at Metz labels Arnulf's ancestry as *ex genere senatorum*.<sup>83</sup> This is precisely the phrase frequently used in Gregory's work for members of the episcopal and civic elites in southern Gaul, not least for members of his own family. As Otto Gerhard Oexle has shown, this genealogical text not only borrowed Gregory's phrase, but relied heavily on stories taken from his *Histories*.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore the later genealogy skipped the reference to a common origin from Troy<sup>85</sup> with a genealogy of Arnulf in which Aquitanian saints figured prominently as the

---

80 Fredegar, *Chronicae*, IV, 40, ed. Krusch, pp. 140f.

81 See Ian N. Wood, 'Genealogy defined by women: the case of the Pippinids', in Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (eds), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 234–56.

82 *Pauli Warnefridi liber de episcopis Mettensibus*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, *MGH SS*, 2 (Hanover, 1829), pp. 260–70, at 264; I have not had the opportunity to see the new edition of Damian Kempf, *Paul the Deacon, 'Liber de episcopis Mettensibus'*. *New edition, Translation and Commentary* (Leuven, forthcoming); for some observations on the context of its production, see Damian Kempf, 'Paul the Deacon's *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus* and the role of Metz in the Carolingian realm', *Journal of Medieval History*, 30 (2004): 279–99; and Walter Goffart, 'Paul the Deacon's "Gesta episcoporum Mettensium" and the early design of Charlemagne's succession', *Traditio*, 42 (1986): 59–93.

83 *Commemoratio genealogiae domni Karoli gloriosissimi imperatoris*, ed. Georg Waitz, *MGH SS*, 13 (Hanover, 1881), p. 245.

84 Otto Gerhard Oexle, 'Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 1 (1967): 250–364; see also Eugen Ewig, 'L'Aquitaine et les pays Rhénans au haut moyen âge', in Eugen Ewig, *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien*, vol. 1, Beihefte der Francia, 3, 1 (Zurich, Munich, 1976), pp. 553–72; Wilhelm Levison, 'Metz und Südfrankreich im frühen Mittelalter', in Wilhelm Levison, *Aus rheinischer und fränkischer Frühzeit* (Düsseldorf, 1947) pp. 139–63.

85 *Pauli Warnefridi liber de episcopis Mettensibus*, ed. Pertz, p. 264.

ancestors of the Carolingians and the bishops of Metz. Oexle also observed that particular interest in the genealogical construction and its underlying history is documented during the episcopacy of Bishop Drogo (822–55/56), the son of Charlemagne and half brother of Emperor Louis the Pious.<sup>86</sup>

Yet the construction of the genealogy and the intensified interest in Gregory's spiritual topography of Gaul both at Metz and at Lorsch went far beyond linking a single Aquitanian genealogy of the bishops of Metz to the Frankish genealogy of the Carolingians. It also connected the providential mission of Gregory's Christendom to the framework of the Carolingian Empire after 800. This involved not only the suggestion, but the moral demand that the future was to be safeguarded through continual care for this Christendom. As with Gregory, this is based upon the admonition that it is the duty of the rulers to maintain and strengthen the *religio*.<sup>87</sup> But in contrast to Gregory, through the continuation of his vision with the text of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and its Carolingian continuations, the political frame in which this moral demand is to be achieved is ultimately defined as the *regnum Francorum*.<sup>88</sup>

Even so, the historical narrative of the Lorsch compendium was conceived as a *historia ecclesiastica*, which is also clear from an alteration to the manuscript at the start of the text. The title of the first book originally ran *incipit liber primus historiarum*, but was changed by a contemporary hand to *liber primus historiae ecclesiasticae*.<sup>89</sup> By contrast, the second oldest surviving Carolingian version of Gregory's *Histories* already describes the text as the *Gesta*

---

<sup>86</sup> Oexle 'Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf', pp. 345–51.

<sup>87</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, X, 16, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 505.

<sup>88</sup> For the electric relationship of Christianity, the *gens Francorum* and the Frankish Empire in the time of the production of the compendium of Lorsch, see Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814–840* (Cambridge, 2009).

<sup>89</sup> Heidelberg, Pal. lat. 864, fo. 2r.

*Francorum*.<sup>90</sup> This manuscript was written around the middle of the ninth century in the monastery of St Hubert in the Ardennes.<sup>91</sup> Like the Lorsch manuscript, it contains a selection from the ten books of Gregory, to which the fourth book of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* up to chapter 24 has been added. It is not a copy of the Lorsch manuscript, but an equally careful and independent selection.<sup>92</sup> Whereas the Lorsch compilers were especially interested in episodes from the region of Clermont, these were largely ignored by the St Hubert scribes. Instead, some of the chapters on the prestigious bishopric of Tours were included, which had in turn been passed over in Lorsch. It also seems that the effort to present Gregory's church history as *Gesta Francorum*, as suggested by the title, had an influence on the specific compilation of the text in the manuscript. Thus, for example, the story of the baptism of Clovis breaks off after the sentence *Procedit novus Constantinus* and continues only in the middle of the next chapter with the campaign of Clovis against the Burgundians. The effect of this omission was certainly similar to the réécriture of Gregory's narrative in the *Liber historiae Francorum*: the war against the Burgundians was presented as the logical consequence of the king's recent conversion to Nicean Christianity. At the same time, the compilers of St Hubert – again like the *Liber historiae Francorum* – suppressed Gregory's comments that Clovis had, through his baptism, been washed clean of the leprosy and dirt of paganism.<sup>93</sup> The editors of Gregory in St

---

<sup>90</sup> Namur, bibl. municip. 11, fo. 68r, cf. Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, I, ed. Krusch, p. 3 with note a; for the manuscript, see Krusch, 'Die handschriftlichen Grundlagen', pp. 770f., and Krusch, 'Die handschriftlichen Grundlagen I. Die Handschrift von Namur und ihre Verwandten'.

<sup>91</sup> Bernhard Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts (mit Ausnahme der wisigothischen)*, ed. Sigrid Ebersperger (2 vols, Wiesbaden 2004), vol. 2, p. 305.

<sup>92</sup> For a comprehensive comparison of the two versions in the manuscript of Heidelberg and Namur, see my forthcoming *Writing for the Future*.

<sup>93</sup> Namur, bibl. municip. 11, fo. 91r.; cf. Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, II, 31, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 77: *Procedit novus Constantinus ad lavacrum. Deleturus leprae veteris morbum sordentesque maculas gestas antiquitas recenti latice deleturus* with *Liber historiae Francorum*, 15, ed. Krusch, p. 263: *Venit novus Constantinus ad baptismum, abnegatis diaboli pompis*.

Hubert also chose to suppress this aspect of the Frankish past at another place: the chapter in which Gregory wrote extensively about the pagan past of the Franks was similarly cut.<sup>94</sup>

The specific selection made for the manuscript from St Hubert served as a model for the editors of yet another Carolingian version. It is a large historiographical compendium that is extant in a tenth-century copy written in St Bertin, but seems to have been originally composed at the end of the ninth century in Rheims.<sup>95</sup> Without doubt, it is the most spectacular example of the rearrangement of Gregory's *Histories*. In this case, chapters were not only omitted as a whole, but continually substituted with passages from the *Liber historiae Francorum*. For instance, in place of the chapter regarding the paganism of the Franks, the Frankish origin myth from the *Liber historiae Francorum* was substituted.<sup>96</sup>

As can be seen in the edition of the narrative of Clovis' baptism in the manuscript in the Appendix to this chapter, this key moment of the history of the Frankish regnum was similarly rearranged, again relying on excerpts from the *Liber historiae Francorum*. As in the compendium from St Hubert, Gregory's characterization of Clovis' pagan prehistory was deliberately excluded. In its place, we find the passage from the *Liber*, stating that the whole people of the Franks – *cunctus populus Francorum* – were baptized. The rest of the chapter is missing, as in the manuscript from St Hubert, but the Burgundian wars are again told with help

---

94 Namur, bibl. municip. 11, fo. 86r, cf. Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, II, 10, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 58–60.

95 St Omer, Bibliothèque municipale 697+706, a codex that is today preserved in two parts, of which the first part (cod. 697) contains Eutrop, *Historia Romana*; Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*; *Notitia Galliarum*, while the second part contains Gregory of Tours, *Histories*; Fredegar IV, *cum continuationibus* c. 24; *Annales regni Francorum*; *Annales Bertiniani*. The extant manuscript was written in St Bertin at the end of the tenth century, but is a copy of a historiographical export from Rheims. For a longer discussion of the layers of the extant manuscript, see my forthcoming *Writing for the Future*; for a good description, see the edition of the *Annales Bertiniani*, *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, ed. Felix Grat, Jeanne Vieillard and Suzanne Clémencet (Paris, 1964), pp. xxii–xxxviii; see also the discussion of the manuscript tradition in the English translation of the *Annales Bertiniani* by Janet L. Nelson (trans.), *The Annals of St Bertin* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 15f.

96 St Omer, Bibliothèque municipale 706, fos 21ra–23vb.

from the *Liber historiae Francorum*. Here, however, as in the manuscript from St Hubert, Clovis' alliance with the Arian Burgundian king Godegisel is not mentioned; instead, the *novus Constantinus* Clovis fights, from the start, against the two Arian kings. The passage gives a good impression of the finesse with which the compilers chose and arranged the texts of the compendium. Many other examples could be added to demonstrate that the editors handled the spiritual and ecclesiastical resources of identity as carefully as they had integrated the Frankish origin myth.

For a better understanding of these efforts, a brief look at the manuscript context can help. The reworking of Gregory's *Histories* is part of a large historiographical compendium that tells the history of the Romans from the founding of their city – *ab urbe condita* – all the way up to the history of the Carolingian Empire until the end of the ninth century. The compendium originally ended with the *Annales Bertiniani* of Hincmar of Rheims, which continued the *Royal Frankish Annals*. The Annals' narrative starts in 741, resuming the story after the end of the Gregory–Fredegar compendium with the death of Charles Martel and the succession of his son Pippin. Friedrich Kurze, the editor of the *Royal Frankish Annals* suggested more than hundred years ago that none other than Hincmar himself may have been responsible for the formation of the compendium, and in fact there is some evidence in favour of this hypothesis.<sup>97</sup> At any rate, the texts at the beginning of the manuscript structurally match the annalistic narratives from 741 to 882 very well. Included at the beginning are Eutropius' *Breviarum ab urbe condita* and the *Chronicon Marcellini*, a chronicle arranged year by year, which corresponded to, as well as contrasted with, the Anno Domini scheme of the Carolingian annals. The choice of these two authors for the depiction of Roman history was certainly no coincidence. With the mirroring of

---

<sup>97</sup> Friedrich Kurze, 'Über die karolingischen Reichsannalen von 741 bis 829 und ihre Überarbeitung I. Die handschriftlichen Grundlagen', *Neues Archiv*, 19 (1894): 295–329, at 314f.; for Hincmar and Gregory, see Janet Nelson, 'The Merovingian Church in Carolingian retrospective', in Kathleen Mitchell and Ian N. Wood (eds), *The World of Gregory of Tours, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions. Medieval and Early Modern Peoples* (Leiden, Boston, Cologne, 2002), pp. 241–60.

the annalistic form the compilation conveys the continuation of Roman tradition as well as its renewal in the Christian kingdom and empire of the Franks. In between these is placed the compiler's adaptation of Gregory's *Histories*, introduced by a catalogue of the dioceses of Gaul – a version of the *notitia Galliarum*. Thus, the central role of the Frankish church in bringing about the *translatio imperii* to the North is underlined. At the same time, however, the primacy of the bishop of Rheims in the Frankish-Christian *imperium* and his decisive role in the Christianization of the Franks and their *regnum* is highlighted by this specific version of the text. Certainly, the compendium from Rheims represents the most radical rearrangement of Gregory's *Histories* we know of. The historical drama that unfolded in it, however, was still developed within the outlines defined by Gregory. The narrative of the *Histories* evolves into a church history, but was further transformed into a *Historia ecclesistica regni, or even imperii, Francorum*.

The wider historiographical context within which Gregory's text is presented in the Rheims compendium allows us to observe with greater clarity than in the other examples the contribution of Frankish identity to a Christian vision of community in the Carolingian Empire. With the expansion of Carolingian rule over half of Europe, the particular christendom that had been developing in the Frankish realm since the sixth century was forced, much more intensely than before, to assert itself against other forms and traditions of Christian belief.<sup>98</sup> Just as in the Frankish kingdom, other christendoms in the former Roman provinces had developed their identity as parts and representatives of a universal Christianity. Yet, through their application in different local, regional and geopolitical contexts, they had devised different forms, traditions and interpretations of Christian belief. From the end of the eighth century onwards, the question of the compatibility and convergence of these christendoms led to intensified theological disputes in the Carolingian Empire. These discussions in turn led to what may have been a sharper definition of the contours of Western Christendom than had been available in previous

---

<sup>98</sup> Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*, esp. pp. 220–66.

centuries.<sup>99</sup> In the process, the role of Frankish identity seems to have become increasingly important. The Rheims compendium appropriated the providential mission of the *regnum (Francorum)* from Gregory's vision and used it to express and preserve a Christian identity. In this respect, it built upon the general pattern of the social partitioning of the world into peoples in order to assert the primacy of this Christendom from the illustrious history of the Franks.

The interaction of Christian and Frankish visions of history in the Carolingian transmission of Gregory's *Histories* also helps us to make some observations on the early medieval history of Frankish identity. Some time ago, Walter Goffart characterized the early medieval transmission of Gregory's *Histories* as a process 'from *Historiae* to *Historia Francorum* and back again'.<sup>100</sup> But, as we have seen, the reinterpretation of Gregory's *Histories* as a *History of the Franks* required a fundamental revision. The Merovingian and Carolingian compilers of the two versions (the Merovingian six-book version and the Carolingian version) developed their histories within the outline defined by Gregory. While they, of course, also had other objectives, they held on to Gregory's episcopal positioning with the church and its representatives as the decisive moral authority. However severely they shortened the text, these versions still transmit a fair number of case histories that showed how worldly rulers ignored the theological and spiritual authority of the representatives of God's Church at their peril. In order to preserve the value of these stories for the social negotiations of the present, they were continually adapted to new political and social circumstances. What we can observe through these adaptations is that in the new circumstances of the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, the ethnic labelling of the text became ever more important.

With the increasing salience of the name of the Franks in the Carolingian transmission of the *Histories* we might also be able to better understand the success of Frankish identity. Although it was not the main objective of the compilers to put together a 'Frankish history',

---

<sup>99</sup> Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*, esp. pp. 408–62.

<sup>100</sup> Goffart, 'From *Historiae* to *Historia Francorum* and back again'.



they contributed to a process in which Frankish identities were continually invested with new meaning and social prestige, and thus to its success. Consequently we can observe, in the Carolingian transmission of the *Histories* possibly more clearly than in other texts, how this process was shaped not only by the competition between different conceptions of Frankish identity, but also by its interplays with other forms of social identity. The rewritings of Gregory's church history constitute a particularly rich body of evidence for how the compilers of his text in the Frankish world brought into focus two discrete yet complementary concepts – Christendom and ethnic identity – which were to have a long and influential future throughout the European Middle Ages.

**Appendix: Clovis' Baptism and the Burgundian War in St Omer, bibl. munic. 706, fos 28ra–28va**

normal - text by Gregory of Tours

**bold** - inserts from the *Liber historiae Francorum*

expanded - additions written by the compilers

~~striketrough~~ - omissions

Gregory, *Historiae*, II, 31, ed. Krusch, p. 77, line 8

Procedit novus Constantinus ad baptisterium sanctus Dei ait ei,

~~deleturus leprae veteris morbum sordentesque maculas gestas antiquitus recenti latice deleturus.~~

~~Cui ingresso ad baptismum sanctus Dei sic inquit~~

oro facundo:.,Mitis depone colla, Sicamber; adora quod incendisti, incende quod adorasti' .

**Erat autem sanctus Remegius vir sapientissimus** \*(fo. 28rb) **rethoricus et praeclarus in virtutibus**

~~episcopus egregiae scientiae et rethoricis ad primum inbutus studiis, sed et sanctitate ita praelatus, ut Silvestri virtutebus equaretur. Est enim nunc liber vitae eius, qui eum narrat mortuum suscitasse.~~

Igitur<sup>101</sup> omnipotentem Deum confessus in Trinitate, baptizatus est rex in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti delibutus sacro crismate cum signo sancte crucis Christi.<sup>102</sup> Baptizantur de exercitu eius amplius quam tria milia virorum. **Baptizantur et sorores eius Albofledis scilicet et Landehildis, baptizati sunt et post hæc cunctus populus Francorum,**

~~quae non post multum tempus migravit ad Dominum. Pro qua cum rex contristaretur, sanctus Remegius consolaturiam misit epistolam, quae hoc modo sumpsit exordium: Anget me et satis me anget vestrae causa tristi/tiae, quod bonae memoriae germana vestra transiit Albofledis. Sed consolare possumus, quia talis de hoc mundo migravit, ut suspici magis debeat quam lugere. Conversa est enim et alia soror eius Lantechildis nomen, quae in haeresim Arrianorum dilapsa fuerat, quae confessa aequalem Filium Patri et Spiritum sanctum, crismata est.~~

*Omission of the Alliance with the Burgundian King*

~~Tunc Gundobadus et Godegisilus fratres regnum circa Rhodanum aut Ararem cum Massiliensem provinciam retinebant. Cumque se invicem inpugnarent, auditas Godigisilus Chlodovechi regis victurias misit ad eum legationem occulte, dicens: ---~~

~~--- At ille dolum fratres, quem non suspecabatur, advertens, terga dedit fugamque iniit, Rhodanitidesque ripas percurrens, Avinionem urbem ingreditur.~~

*Insert from the Gregory Epitome of the Liber historiae Francorum, c. 16, ed. Krusch, p. 264 on the Burgundian War of Clovis*

**Post hæc Chlodoueus rex contra Gundobadum et Godogiselum fratrum eius perrexit cum magno hoste Francorum.<sup>103</sup> Illi hæc audientes populum multum Burgundionum movent adversus eum in pugnam.<sup>104</sup> Venientes vero ad Diuionem castrum super Oscaram fluvium ibique se fortiter compugnantibus<sup>105</sup> Chlodoueus videlicet cum<sup>106</sup> Gundobado ac**

---

101 Ed.: Igitur rex

102 Ed.: cum signaculo crucis

103 Ed.: perrexit cum multo exercitu Francorum

104 Ed.: pugnam praeparant

105 Ed.: conpugnantes

**Godegiselo. Burgundiones valde cesi terga verterunt ad fugam. Chlodoueus vero sicut solebat victor extitit. Gundobadus<sup>107</sup> ergo et Godegiselus in fugam versi vix evaserunt verteruntque in Auennione civitate super Rhodanum ibique ingressi se concluserunt. Chlodoueus insecutus eos obsedit civitatem ut extractos illos gladio interimeret.<sup>108</sup>**

\*(fo. 28va) Godegyselus vero cum suis ad regem Chlodoueam confugit, de relicto fratre, praemissaque aliqua parte regni sui. Chlodoueo cum pace discessit Uiennamque triumphans tanquam si iam totum possideret regnum ingreditur. Cumque adverteret Gundobadus se a fratre derelictum et a Chlodoueo rege obsessum, **pavore perterritus, metuebat, ne ei repentina mors succederet.**

Liber historiae Francorum-*version of the Narrative on the Clever Counsellor of Gundobad, Aredius (c. 16, ed. Krusch, pp. 264f.)*

**Habebat tamen secum virum inlustrem Aredium, ... Tunc missa legatione ad Gundobadum, ut ei per singulos annos tributa imposita reddere debeat, iubet. At ille et de praesenti solvit et deinceps solviturum se esse promittit.**

*The Narrative in the Manuscript Continues with Gregory, Historiae, II, 33 (ed. Krusch, p. 80)*

[33.] Post hæc ergo resumptis viribus, iam despiciens regi Chlodoueo tributa promissa solvere, contra Godegiselum fratrem suum exercitum movet eumque apud Uiennam civitatem inclusum obsedit. ...

---

106 Ed.: Chlodoueo, Gundobado et Godegiselo Burgundiones valde cesi ...

107 Ed.: Adflictoque exercitu Burgundionum Gundobadus

108 Ed.: Chlodoueus eum persequutus obsedit ut eum de civitate extractum interemeret.