

GREGORY OF TOURS

History and Society in the Sixth Century

MARTIN HEINZELMANN

TRANSLATED BY CHRISTOPHER CARROLL



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INTRODUCTION

The state of research into Gregory of Tours in 1992

Some years ago I reached an agreement with the *Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft* to produce a review of the literature on Gregory of Tours for the series 'Erträge der Forschung'. A long time then passed in which a great deal of work was done, but I realized that a review of the literature was needed far less than first thought. At the same time, however, the publishers encouraged me to produce an entirely new interpretation of Gregory's principal work.

I held back on the literature review because there was in fact only a small amount of literature dealing with the form of Gregory's work in a fundamental way, while the great number of general studies on Merovingian history usually only mentioned the author of the period's principal source in passing. The various problems caused by the traditional points of view concerning Gregory of Tours, his work and his so-called 'dark', 'archaic' or 'barbaric' time, are certainly of scholarly interest, but they require specific studies which cannot be entered into without first undertaking a full analysis of Gregory's main work itself. Yet an expert on Merovingian history such as Karl Ferdinand Werner, when preparing a conference on the theme of Merovingian Neustria, was able to organize the sessions *without* including Gregory. He even wrote in the published abstracts of the conference, 'this was a conscious attempt, dare I say it, to free Merovingian history from the troublesome influence of Gregory of Tours'.¹

Gregory does indeed appear to be a 'troublesome influence', providing us with a large and vital text, the importance and significance of which has yet to be fully explored. This is the problem that lies at the heart of research into both Gregory and the Merovingian period as a whole. In other words, our understanding of Merovingian history

¹ Werner 1989: xv.

appears to rely on exemplary episodes from Gregory and we regularly avail ourselves of them without questioning their special function within his work as a whole. Our ignorance of the actual, didactic intentions of this author, who as we now know had selected and edited his material in some quite extreme ways, means that his apparently naively presented exemplars have not been adequately exploited. Gregory's *Histories* were used but were neither understood nor made understandable.

John Michael Wallace-Hadrill, another great scholar of the Merovingian period, characterized this situation with regard to Gregory (and Bede) as follows: 'We use them so often as *storehouses of information* that we forget they are historians' (emphasis added).² The fate hinted at here for the historian of Tours is not exploitation proper, but rather a very particular mistreatment of his work. This began with really quite extensive manipulation of his work in the seventh century, scarcely two generations after the death of the bishop (see Chapter 4, pp. 192–201), when there was already a tendency to reduce Gregory simply to a witness of the glorious Frankish past. This approach is also found in the numerous D-family manuscripts, which from the tenth century onwards regularly assigned the work the title *The History of the Franks*.³ The tradition was revived during the rise of the French monarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the course of this renaissance of interest in Gregory, the bishop of Tours became the official historian of France and its monarchy, of 'histoire française' or 'historia nostra'.⁴ The scholarly Maurist Dom Ruinart, in the introduction to his ground-

² Wallace-Hadrill 1975: 96f.; see also Wallace-Hadrill 1962b.

³ See B. Krusch's introduction to *Greg. Hist.* ix, as well as 3, 31–8. The oldest manuscript containing this title ('liber historiarum gesta Francorum') is C2 from Namur, certainly written at St Hubert – contrary to Krusch's opinion (*ibid.*: xxviii) – in the middle of the ninth century (information from Bernhard Bischoff, see p. 196, n. 123 below). The earliest reference to the *Historia Francorum* is in Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* (MGH SRL III: 34, 112), although it is not certain that this was actually a reference to Gregory's work; however, the work is alluded to vaguely in *ibid.* III 1: 93, 9f.: 'in the books of that venerable man Bishop Gregory of Tours'. On the question of the actual title of the work see the citations in ninth- and tenth-century sources which have been listed by Bordier 1864: 265ff. and in descriptions of medieval library catalogues in Manitius 1906: 657f.; 1910: 759).

⁴ See the statements by Nikolaus Faber, Jerome Bignon ('digniorem historicum non habemus') and others in Bordier 1864: 274f. The numerous editions, beginning with the early sixteenth century, are also informative, *ibid.*: 281ff. As well as that of Faber, who had been the teacher of Louis XIII, there were also other editions produced in court circles: the editions of Jodocus Badius and Joannes Parvus (Petit) from 1512 (Bordier 1864: 283f.), produced at the instigation of Guillaume Petit, the confessor of Louis XII since 1509, as well as 'L'Histoire française de S. Grégoire de Tours...' of C[laude] B[onnet] D[auphinois] from 1610, see Bordier 1864: 292. The important manuscript collection of Philippe Hurault, including Gregory's *Historia Francorum*, was taken to the royal library in 1622 at the order of the Conseil d'Etat: McKitterick 1980: 570. The special interest in Gregory in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is still to be documented comprehensively, as McKitterick's contribution shows. For references see Voss 1972: 107 n. 15 (on E. Pasquier), 115 (J. Bodin), 143 (La Mothe le Vayer).

breaking edition of 1699, claimed that Gregory's work represented the earliest history of the 'kingdom of France'.⁵

The categorization of the historian was finally completed during the Enlightenment. The basic thrust of this judgement, articulated in the third volume of the *Histoire littéraire de la France* in 1735 and repeated later in the *Histoire littéraire de la France* of Jean-Jacques Ampère (1839), has endured right up to the present day.⁶ Already in 1735 one could find listed under Gregory's positive qualities, 'his sincerity and *naïveté* in the narration of facts, and his piety in handling their relationship to religion' (p. 392); with reference to his negative qualities, Gregory was described as, 'An incredibly gullible writer' ('*crédule*'), who 'did not select or organize his material' (p. 391). As early as 1699 Ruinart was attempting to challenge the negative impression which Gregory's non-classical Latin had made on scholars of the early-modern age, but he was unsuccessful (see the quotation in n. 5, above).

This categorization of Gregory's positive and negative qualities, which in retrospect clearly marked the beginning of an extraordinarily successful character assassination of a Merovingian author and his time, paralleled the distortions to which his work had been subject in the seventh century. Consequently, Gregory's language seemed to reflect in an ideal way the barbarism of his time (see n. 44 in Chapter 2 on Erich Auerbach, below). Also, since 1735, Gregory's apparent inability to follow a purposeful structure in his *Histories* became the accepted view, while his obsession with piety and his excessive veneration of saints was explained by his *naïveté* and limitations.⁷ This cliché was repeated *ad nauseam* and the only exceptions apparently deviating from this school of thought were presented by those who could show that this sixth-century historian had made some historical mistakes. The picture of our author was thus 'enriched' by Siegmund Hellmann's description of Gregory as malicious and tendentious (1911) and Louis Halphen's view that Gregory was prone to literary fabrication (1925).⁸

⁵ See, in Migne's reprint, PL 71: 15: 'It is fortunate for our Gregory, even though he wrote in rustic language, that no one writing about the nascent Frankish kingdom can do so without his support.' See also the *Histoire littéraire [sic] de la France*: 392, where Gregory is praised: '... there is no equal to Gregory as far as the origins of our history are concerned'. German scholarship held a similar view, as Krusch stated in the first sentence of his new edition in *Greg. Hist.*: ix: 'Gregory's *libri Historiarum* ought to have the first place in the historical monuments of Germany as the oldest and richest of all the sources...'.
⁶ *Histoire littéraire [sic] de la France*: 391f. See also Ampère 1839: 294ff. and de Nie 1987: 1 and 10f.

⁷ On the 'limitations' see Krusch 1912: 332. Krusch also writes here of Gregory's 'carelessness' and detects 'many kind touches of his [Gregory's] modesty, open-heartedness and childish piety'.

⁸ Hellmann 1911: 77: 'Gregory is neither artless, nor is he the true-hearted and naive barbarian.' Hellmann also recognized direct speech as an artistic medium used by Gregory (*ibid.*: 72ff.); see also Halphen 1925. In his review of Hellmann (Krusch 1912), Krusch took up Gregory's defence,

While the bishop's thoughts about his historical subject-matter were not even questioned (despite Gustavo Vinay's intelligent but ultimately unsuccessful attempt at interpreting Gregory⁹), immense progress was being made in providing a practical version of his work. A major part of this progress was the MGH edition of the *Histories* produced by Bruno Krusch, assisted by Wilhelm Levison and, after their deaths, completed by Walther Holtzmann. In 1955 a German translation of the text was produced by Rudolf Buchner, one of the best scholars of textual criticism.¹⁰ Unlike the English translations of O. M. Dalton (1927) and Lewis Thorpe (1974), the French translation of Robert Latouche (1963 and 1965), and the Italian translation of Maximo Oldoni (1981),¹¹ Rudolf Buchner had the considerable advantage of having at his disposal the best available Latin text – that is, the version produced by the Monumenta.

Alongside these fundamental works, which through their scholarly apparatus and indices achieved the highest standards of presentation for this historical text, further impetus was provided for my own work by two less well-known publications. Felix Thürlemann's study of Gregory's historical discourse, and his formal analysis of the structure of the text, seems to me to be very important. Its merits lie not only in the demonstration of 'speech' (*Eigenrede*/'speech of the author' and *Fremdrede*/'the speech of others') as a regularly employed medium for Gregory's interpretation of history, but also in the hitherto unappreciated significance of typological references in the work of the bishop of Tours.¹² More modest in its claims, but scarcely less important, is the word-concordance for the *Histories* published in 1979, which arranges alphabetically and statistically the 119,904 words in the text. The fact that this statistical analysis used Arndt's 1884 edition of the *Histories* detracts only slightly from its importance.¹³

but later launched his own attack on Gregory's work: Krusch 1931. K. F. Werner wrote, in the tradition of Halphen (Werner 1989: xv), 'This author has immense talent as both a story-teller and as an inventor of histories...'

⁹ Vinay 1940; for him, see Goffart 1988, as well as Chapter 4 below. For further independent work on Gregory, see Ganshof 1966, who was interested exclusively in the value of the *Histories* as a source of historical information.

¹⁰ See p. 162, n. 116 below on the work of Buchner, as well as the introduction in Buchner 1955. I regularly use Buchner's translation, except when I have changed or improved a quotation, but this has not been especially noted in all cases; the other translations named were consulted occasionally.

¹¹ For the editions, translations and secondary literature see the detailed bibliography of the *Repertorium fontium* 1984: 233–8. Other good bibliographies are provided by Vollmann 1983: 928–30; Pietri 1983: xx–xxxvii; and de Nie 1987: 301–30.

¹² On Thürlemann 1974, see especially pp. 148–52 and n. 112, below. Thürlemann's absolute division between historical and hagiographical discourse is criticized in Heinzlmann 1991b: 241–2.

¹³ *Concordance* 1979. The two volumes appear as the first part of the series 'Collectum: la collection de listes de mots en concordances'. I am indebted to Dr Setz of the MGH, who made available to

Literature on Gregory has experienced a 'boom' since the 1980s, but the interest in this Merovingian author frequently revolved round a history of mentalities and, thus, focused more on the hagiographical part of Gregory's work.¹⁴ This general occupation with the Merovingian period has occasioned further work on Gregory, especially in terms of corrections to his historical text, but these studies were not really concerned with Gregory's overall ideas.¹⁵ However, the focus on the internal exploitation of Gregory's work has continued. This has ranged from the textbook-type studies of Pietri and Weidemann (supplementing the work of May Vieillard-Troïekouff) to a number of good Lexikon entries, especially the contribution of Benedikt K. Vollmann, all of which provide a good summary of the literature.¹⁶

A real breakthrough in research on Gregory came first, I believe, with the work of Kathleen Mitchell and, even more so, Walter Goffart. Both scholars provided good counter-arguments to the long-accepted classification of Gregory by the 1735 *Histoire littéraire de la France* as gullible and incapable of any spiritual order.¹⁷ Other scholars, such as Giselle de Nie, returned to a 'non-rational element in Gregory's writings', viewing his work as that of an 'unconscious poet'.¹⁸ Meanwhile Mitchell, like Goffart, emphasized the structured use of 'sanctity' and 'saints' in Gregory's most antithetical statements. Walter Goffart expressed this in the stimulating and provocative comment: 'Gregory was no more superstitious than Augustine had been.'¹⁹

If I were to choose a device for my own book, it would surely be this sentence. Miracles and saints, or 'miracles and slaughters' (Goffart 1987: 174), not only represent a key part of Gregory's philosophy of history, but could also be used to organize a society and its history. Mitchell appreciated this and therefore recognized and described the role of the saints as both exponents and instruments of Gregory's social ideas.

me a partial exemplar of Arndt's version.

¹⁴ See the relevant bibliographies (n. 11, above), as well as Mitchell 1987: n. 1 for Peter Brown, John Corbett, etc.

¹⁵ See, among others, the criticism by Wood 1985 and 1986a (on Book III of the *Histories*); and p. 133, n. 83 below, on Breukelaar, McCormick and Carozzi.

¹⁶ See Weidemann 1982a, b and c and Pietri 1983 and 1982 on Gregory's chronological methods. The latter contribution was supplemented in some ways by Sonntag 1987 and Vollmann 1983. Another good article is Maaz 1988, which should be compared with the rather more conventional contributions of Pietri (1984) and Anton (1989).

¹⁷ See Goffart 1987 and 1988, Mitchell 1983 and 1987.

¹⁸ de Nie 1987: 8; see also *ibid.*: 23, and see my review: Heinzlmann 1991a. de Nie's recognition of the significance for Gregory of 'typological or "figural" thinking' (de Nie 1987: 12) is absolutely correct and quite thought-provoking. By this she understands freely associated thoughts in the context of images and symbols, but not the normal patterns of thought one might have expected from a bishop educated in patristic and biblical works; see pp. 146–52, below.

¹⁹ Goffart 1988: 142; also *ibid.*: 135: 'Gregory's determination to multiply the holy'.

While, for Goffart, Gregory's central theme was the contrast between human failings and the exemplary existence of the saints, Mitchell has rightly argued for the presence of an 'overarching message of redemption and reformation' as a factor in the unity and arrangement of this historical work (Mitchell 1983: 129). However, Mitchell failed to make the decisive step in her explanation of the literary and spiritual structure of the *Libri historiarum decem* because she did not see the link Gregory made between sixth-century society and the Christological society of all true believers. This Christological society is the 'ecclesia Christi'.

CHAPTER I

Gregory of Tours and his family

PREFACE: THE AUTHOR'S STATEMENTS ABOUT HIMSELF

When dealing with individual authors it seems rather banal to point out the interdependence between their literary work and their historical background. The study of Gregory of Tours is no exception: his literary activity is best understood with reference to his quality as a bishop, a leader of society. As far as his hagiographical work is concerned, this context requires no explanation, yet it is just as relevant for our interpretation of the *Histories* as a specifically Christian and authoritarian episcopal view of history and society in the sixth century. The social and prosopographical traditions to which Gregory was duty-bound, or to which he felt consciously tied, are also an important part of understanding his role as both an interpreter of history, as well as an exemplary character within history. It is therefore necessary to document Gregory's social and prosopographical background in some detail. I shall return to the problems of Gregory's 'biographical' statements in Chapter 2, but first of all it is necessary to explore the function and significance of these statements.

One of the many comments frequently found in literature on Gregory is the assumption that he constantly expressed pride in his origins from a prominent Gallo-Roman family. Most recently Walter Goffart dedicated a few well-chosen words to this subject (Goffart 1988: 192, with reference to Stroheker 1948: 112, Pietri 1983: 251 and Kurth 1919e: 104), yet Gregory makes direct reference to his family in only three of the *Histories*' 443 chapters:

- Hist. v 5: An incident involving the Burgundian branch of Gregory's family in which the major roles are played by Gregory's brother Peter, a relative called Silvester (probably his uncle) and Silvester's unnamed son. Small roles were played by Bishop Gregory of Langres ('my great-grandfather'), his son Tetricus, and Bishop Nicetius of Lyons ('the uncle of my mother').

- Hist. v 11: A reference to a certain Gundulf as ‘the uncle of my mother’. Gregory refers to his mother fourteen times in his works – twice in the *Histories*. No other relative is mentioned so often, but Gregory still only gives her name once. If we did not have Venantius Fortunatus’ Fort.Carm. x 15, then Gregory’s identification of his mother with the Armentaria who was the granddaughter of Gregory of Langres (VP vii, the biography of the older Gregory) would have remained purely hypothetical.
- Hist. v 14: A reference to Nicetius as ‘the husband of my niece’. The niece is not named, but she has been identified with the known niece of Gregory, Eusthenia, who is mentioned in the VM (iv 36). The name of her mother, Gregory’s own sister, is not known.

On the other hand, the series of family members that Gregory did *not* identify as such is far more impressive. At no point in the *Histories* does Gregory mention his relationship with his uncle, Gallus, bishop of Clermont, and he says just as little about his immediate predecessor at Tours, Eufronius, who was his mother’s cousin, or possibly even her brother. The same is true of the martyr Vettius Epagatus, the senator Leocadius of Bourges, Bishop Sacerdos of Lyons and many more. For example, the Justina mentioned by Gregory in Hist. x 15 can only be identified as his niece from Fort.Carm. viii 13 and ix 7 (verses 8iff.) (Goffart 1988: 192). Expressions of family pride, when they do appear, are usually indirect: the ‘first senator of Gaul’, Leocadius, was related to the Lyons martyr Vettius Epagatus (Hist. i 31), as was Gregory’s great-grandmother who is characterized as ‘from the family of Vettius Epagatus’, and who, together with her husband, is also described as being ‘from among the first senators’. Leocadia only appears in Gregory’s biography of his uncle, Gallus (VP vi 1), and again there is no direct reference to her connection to Gregory. The same applies to King Chlothar’s description of Gregory of Langres’ family as ‘a great lineage of the first order’ (Hist. iv 15). Gregory of Langres’ grandson, Eufronius, was elevated to the bishopric of Tours as a result of this distinction, which otherwise concerned Gregory of Tours only indirectly. No one could deny that the author of the *Histories* had a measure of pride in his family – the most important statement with reference to this issue will be considered below (Hist. v 49 on his relatives’ connections to the bishopric of Tours) – but it is also clear that he did not wish to use the *Histories*

to give literary expression to this pride; it was certainly not a subject of the work.

References to Gregory's familial connections are somewhat more frequent in his hagiographical works, but they often relate to the hagiographical purpose of the stories: the relatives who are named appear mostly as witnesses to miraculous events. The saintly Bishops Gallus, Gregory (of Langres) and Nicetius, whose *Lives* Gregory had written, are even the focus of such miracle stories. It is only as a result of our knowledge of all of Gregory's works, however, that we are aware of Gregory's family connection to these saints; contemporaries may have known of these connections as a result of their familiarity with the Gallic nobility. Certainly, the reference to the 'splendour of lineage' of Gallus of Clermont, Gregory's uncle, would have also reflected back on the author of the *Life* himself (VP vi prologue), but if Gregory was so proud of this connection then why did he include, as the leitmotif of this biography, the fact that Gallus considered his refined birth 'tamquam stercus', in other words, 'like excrement' (Goffart 1988: 192 n. 342)? As a demonstration of Gregory's own social prestige, the choice of another prosopographical connection would surely have been more suitable. Sacerdos of Lyons, for example, came from a patrician family and was the principal *Reichsbischof* of Childebert I (Hist. iv 36), yet his connection to Gregory is not mentioned in the *Histories* and is referred to only indirectly in Gregory's biography of Nicetius (VP viii 3). Gregory generally passes over his familial relationship with the majority of the bishops of Tours, too (Hist. v 49). Those bishops of Tours who are certainly known to be closely related to Gregory are the same prelates who were also related to the families of the Ruricii and Aviti. These families were part of the senatorial aristocracy, whose reputation reached beyond the boundaries of Gaul and out into the Roman world as a whole.

Finally, the remarks of Gregory's friend and contemporary, Venantius Fortunatus, are also relevant for understanding Gregory's attitude. This experienced writer of panegyrics knew well the weaknesses and preferences of his patron, and praise for the nobility of Gregory's family was not a major feature of the numerous poems that he dedicated to this bishop of Tours. This becomes especially clear if one compares these texts with the poems Venantius had written for Bishop Leontius of Bordeaux.¹

¹ George 1987.

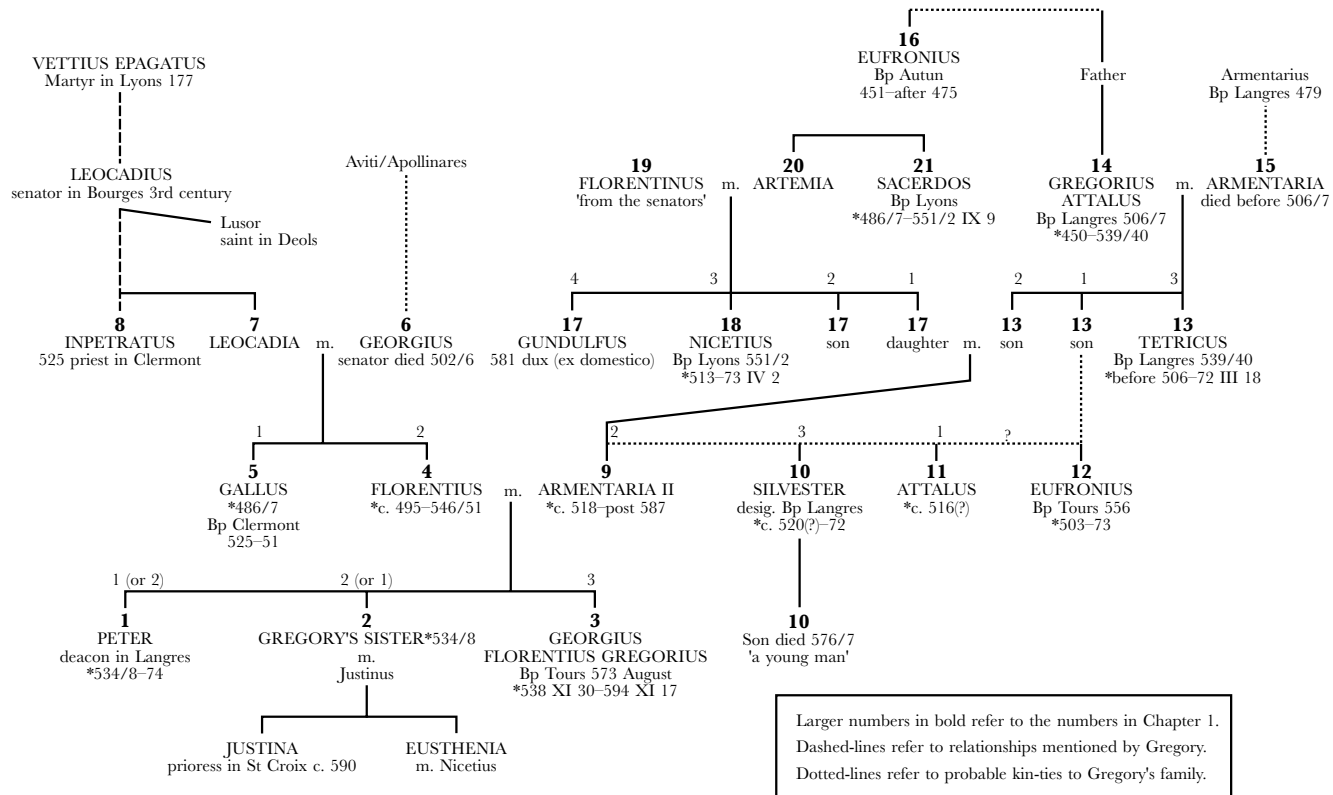


Figure 1. Prosopographical table for Gregory of Tours

Therefore, Gregory's attitude towards his family origins should not be explained exclusively by either 'noble vanity' ('vanité noble', Kurth 1919c: 104) or natural modesty (Goffart 1988: 198), especially since he was in possession of this latter quality as much as an aristocratic self-consciousness. As shall be demonstrated below, Gregory's self-consciousness as an author was formed principally from the exceptional value he placed on his quality as a bishop – a quality which placed him in a direct line back to the Old Testament prophets and, for him, the most significant saint of 'modern times', his predecessor St Martin. For Gregory there was no comparison: he viewed his origins from a great Gallo-Roman senatorial family as little more than the personal requirements for achieving his position in the world and for the exercise of episcopal office. After all, it was a background he shared with the majority of his colleagues.

GREGORY'S PROSOPOGRAPHY AND GENEALOGY

(See figure 1.)

(1) *Peter*

Born between 534 and 538, Peter was Gregory's older brother (VJ 24: 'frater meus senior'), a deacon in Langres with his great-uncle, Bishop Tetricus. According to Bishop Felix of Nantes, he tried to become bishop of Langres, but according to Gregory he had supported the candidature of his relative Silvester, probably his uncle (Hist. v 5). He died in 574, murdered by a son of Silvester, and was buried in Dijon near his great-grandfather, Gregory of Langres.

(2) *Gregory's sister and her family*

Gregory casually mentions a sister as the wife of Justinus (GM 70 and VM II 2); she was probably born before Gregory. This couple lived in Besançon for a time. It cannot be proved whether this Justinus is to be identified with the Justinus who was count of Tours under King Sigibert (VM I 40 and Selle-Hosbach 1974: no. 87). Traditional research attributes Gregory's two known nieces to this couple: the elder daughter, Justina, became prioress of the monastery of St Croix, Poitiers in 590 (Hist. x 15). That she was taking the name of her father (Stroheker 1948: no.208) reflects the high social rank of Justinus' family. By 576 the other

daughter, Eusthenia, was wife of Nicetius (Hist. v 14: 576; VM II 36: 591). Nicetius is recorded later as count of the Auvergne and governor in Provence (Stroheker 1948: no. 260).

(3) *Georgius Florentius Gregorius*

See below. He may have been the youngest child of Florentius. The birth is mentioned in VM III 10 ('On my mother's leg'): the birth had left Armentaria with a constant pain in her leg, which first went away some thirty-four years later through the help of St Martin (shortly after Gregory's elevation to Tours). This must surely be a record of the birth of Gregory himself ('the time when, after labour pains, she bore...') [MS.1a, Paris. lat. 2204, then has 'me']. Armentaria probably had no further children. For the best discussion on the date of her death see Weidemann 1982a: 219f.

(4) *Florentius*

Florentius, Gregory's father, whom he mentions four times in his hagiographical works (see Stroheker 1948: no. 163), was a younger brother of Gallus (born 486/7) and was probably born around 495: their father was still alive in 502 (see (5), below), but was certainly dead when Florentius was eleven years old (VP XIV 3). At this age Florentius either lived in, or at least close to, Clermont, where he later appears to have administered the family properties. Shortly after his marriage in 534, Florentius had to go to the Austrasian heartlands as a hostage. He died sometime between 546 and 551.

(5) *Gallus*

Gallus was born in 486/7 as *primogenitus* of the Auvergnat senator Georgius, who planned a position for him in the (secular) administration and a marriage commensurate with his class (VP VI 1: 'the daughter of a certain senator'). Gallus was probably between fifteen and twenty years old when he visited the monastery of Cournon, east of Clermont. On account of his excellent singing voice he was noticed by Bishop Quintianus (516–25) and became a cleric in Clermont. Compelled into service in the church of Trier, he later became a deacon in the palace of King Theuderic, a move which made possible his succession to Bishop Quintianus in 525. In 543 (VP VI 6: eight years before his death) he

institutionalized annual rogations from Clermont to the shrine of Julian in Brioude. The church of St Julian in Brioude also held the grave of the Emperor Avitus (d. 456), which had become a kind of national shrine for the Auvergnat aristocracy. After the death of his brother Florentius in 546/8, Gallus became guardian of the young Gregory. He himself died on 14 May 551 and was honoured as a saint; Gregory wrote his *Life* (VP VI). He was buried in a church of St Laurentius, which had been built in the 470s by the Visigothic Duke Victorius, a close friend of the family of Sidonius Apollinaris (Hist. II 20). See MGH SRM VII: 458 and also Stroheker 1948: no. 171 and Weidemann 1982a: 153–5.

(6) *Georgius*

Together with a passing reference to him as the dead father of Florentius (VP XIV 3), Georgius' social rank was underlined in the biography of his eldest son, Gallus. According to this biography, nobody in Gaul was more noble than Georgius (VP VI 1). This reference, together with his Auvergnat origins, points to a link with the Aviti/Apollinares (see p. 25 and n. 7 below on Bishop Ommatius of Tours, as well as (5) above on the burial church of his son, Gallus).

(7) *Leocadia*

Leocadia was Gregory's paternal grandmother, wife of Georgius and mother of Gallus and Florentius. She came from the family of Senator Leocadius of Bourges ('the principal senator of Gaul', Hist. I 31), who, according to Gregory, had been responsible for bringing the worship of Christian saint cults to Bourges in the third century. He made his house the first church of Bourges and later, furnished with relics of the archmartyr Stephen, it became the cathedral. Gregory traced back Leocadius' family to Vettius Epagatus, who suffered martyrdom in Lyons in 177 (Hist. I 31; VP VI 1). According to GC 90, Leocadius' son, Lusor, lay buried in Déols near Chateauroux and was revered as a saint.

(8) *Inpetratus*

Inpetratus was the brother of Leocadia. In around 525 he was active as a priest in Clermont; he must have been a leading figure here because the dignitaries of Clermont assembled in his house to find a successor to Bishop Quintianus. On this occasion he counselled successfully for his nephew, Gallus (see (5), above).

(9) Armentaria II

Armentaria II, Gregory's mother, passed on to her son the traditions of two great Burgundian families (see below for Gregory of Langres and Nicetius of Lyons) and exercised a great deal of influence over him for many years.

Armentaria, who had the name of her grandmother, was about twenty years younger than her husband, the Auvergnat Florentius, at the time of their marriage in 534. If one estimates her age at this time to be about sixteen years old, then she was probably born in about 518; she was still alive in late 587 (VM III 60; on the dating of this episode see Heinzelmann 1981: 240). The names of her parents are not known; they may have died when she was still very young because Armentaria seems to have grown up in the house of her grandfather, Gregory of Langres (see n. 18, below). She may have been the sister of Silvester (see (10), below), Attalus ((11), below) and even Bishop Eufronius of Tours ((12), below). From her marriage (534) until the 550s, she lived in the Auvergne. After the death of her husband in 546/8, she undertook the care of Gregory, his brother and sister, and the administration of the family property (GM 83: she supervised field work in the Limagne). When Gregory had entered the Church (and marriage had taken care of his sister), she lived out her widowhood (VM I 36: 'venerable mother') in Burgundian Chalon (Pietri 1983: 253 n. 40; see also Beaujard et al. 1986: 73 no. 6).

Gregory, who names his mother twelve times in his hagiographical works, was obviously influenced by her maternal and loving care. With a feeling he rarely displays, Gregory wrote that, when he was ill, his mother said, 'Today my sweet son, I will be full of sadness, for you are so ill' (VP II 2). He also wrote about her religiosity. According to Gregory, unlike many others who attend holy mass, she was capable of understanding the divine mysteries. He ascribed to her the qualities of a visionary (GM 50 and 85), as well as the ability to interpret correctly one of Gregory's own visions (GC 39). In the poem 'Ad Armentariam matrem domni Gregorii episcopi' (Fort.Carm. x 15), Venantius Fortunatus compared her to the blessed and revered mother of the seven Maccabees. Gregory had doubtless been influenced by her exceptional devotion to the saints: he stressed that it was she who sent to him the family relics acquired by his father (GM 83). It was she, too, who was probably responsible for bringing the worship of St Benignus (her grandfather was the founder of the official cult) and St Polycarp, the

teacher of Benignus, from Burgundy to the Auvergne (GM 85; see (14), below). Armentaria furnished her own oratory in Chalon with the relics of the heretic-fighting Eusebius of Vercelli (GC 3); she also possessed relics from the grave of St Silvester of Chalon. Her devotion to St Martin can be traced to an existing, familiar tradition (VM I prologue and III 10). Gregory created a monument to his special relationship with his mother in the most important prologue to his work on St Martin, where he claimed Armentaria admonished him in a vision to write down the miracles performed at the grave of this saint. She dismissed Gregory's objection that he did not possess sufficient literary skill by assuring him that, through its intelligibility ('intelligentia'), his peculiar language ('sicut tu loqui potens es') was regarded as famous among his contemporary public (see p. 99 below).

(10) *Silvester*

Silvester is the luckless hero of a drama in the 'Burgundian line' of Gregory's family. Gregory describes him as 'related to me and to saint Tetricus' (Hist. v 5). This formula could describe an uncle of Gregory's, who was simultaneously a nephew of Tetricus. It is thus very probable that Silvester was the brother of Gregory's mother (Christian Settiani has given me a hint to this effect); another possibility has him descend from Gregory of Langres' third son. Gregory's formula only confirms the ties of Silvester to Bishop Tetricus of Langres, during whose lifetime Silvester was designated his successor (c. 572), and to Gregory himself: it is not surprising that the relationship has not been defined more precisely since it is rare that Gregory gives such details (see pp. 7–11, above). The succession of the layman Silvester to the office of bishop of Langres was managed by Gregory's older brother, the deacon Peter, who therefore gave up his own claims in favour of his older uncle. Silvester died before he could be consecrated bishop, however, and Peter was accused of his death. Two years later (c. 574) Peter was killed by 'a young man', the unnamed son of Silvester, and, 'in the third year after that' (576/7) this young man was himself the victim of a blood feud (see also (11), below).

(11) *Attalus*

Attalus was a 'nepus' of Gregory of Langres. In about 532, together with the sons of a number of other senators, he was brought to the Trier

region as part of an exchange of hostages between Kings Childebert I and Theudebert. He became a state-owned slave there when hostilities were renewed. Since he is described as a boy ('puer') in 532 he may have been – like Bishop Eufronius (12) – a grandson of Gregory of Langres rather than a nephew, and may have been born shortly before or after Armentaria (9). Hist. III 15 – the only source recording his existence – relates a striking fact: it was not his parents who negotiated for his freedom, but his grandfather alone. It is therefore probable that his parents had died when he was very young, suggesting further that he may have been the brother of Armentaria and Silvester. A document of 539 for Abbot Silvester of Réomé (in the diocese of Langres) may be relevant here: an Attalus claimed and subscribed the document ('obtulit et subscripsit'; Pardessus 1843: 102 no.136).

(12) *Eufronius, bishop of Tours*

Eufronius was bishop of Tours from 556–73 and Gregory's predecessor. After the death of Bishop Gunthar in 555, the Auvergnat priest Cato was widely expected to succeed to the bishopric of Tours on the basis of old family claims, but he withdrew because he was more interested in the bishopric of Clermont (Weidemann 1982a: 203f.). Tours therefore remained vacant for a year. Since Chlothar I was king of all Merovingian Gaul at that time, he turned to the Burgundian Eufronius because of his family ties to Gregory of Langres (Hist. IV 15; see pp. 25–6, below). Eufronius, who was born in 503, was a cleric from his youth. He is perhaps identifiable with a monk of the same name who in 533–4 left the monastery of Ile-Barbe, Lyons, and who then settled for a time in the diocese of Chartres (*Vita Leobini* c. 19: 75). During his time as bishop of Tours, the Vincent basilica was built and parish churches were established in three *vici* of the area (certainly Toiselay in the diocese of Bourges), Céré-la-Ronde and Orbigny. These last two churches, both in the Tours diocese, were also dedicated to St Vincent (GM 89 and *Paroisses* 1985: 181 and n. 2, and 346), betraying Eufronius' Burgundian origin: Vincent was the patron saint of the episcopal oratory of Eufronius' grandfather in Dijon (Beaujard et al. 1986: 61; see also Ewig 1979: 163f.), and also of the cathedral churches of Chalons and Mâcon (Pietri 1983: 495f. connects the relics of St Vincent with Childebert's campaign to Spain in 541).

As the son of one of the *filii* of Gregory of Langres, Eufronius was the cousin of Gregory of Tours' mother, or perhaps even her brother, and

therefore an uncle of his later successor. In this case, too, Gregory's silence on the details of his relationship to Eufronius does not disprove this hypothesis, but since Eufronius was at least thirteen to seventeen years older than Armentaria, Attalus and Silvester, he was probably the child of an older son of Gregory of Langres. See also (14) and (16) on Gregory of Langres and Eufronius of Autun, as well as pp. 25–6, below (his alleged son, Aventius (Stroheker 1948: no. 56), can be identified as a spiritual son: Pietri 1983: 207 n. 148).

(13) *Tetricus and the filii of Gregory of Langres*

According to Gregory's biography of Gregory of Langres (VP VII 1), the older Gregory had Tetricus 'et filios' by the same wife; in other words, he had more than one son. The word *filii* should not to be understood simply in terms of 'children', since Gregory continually uses the word *liberi* for this (see VP VIII 1); indeed, the 'et' could imply that there were daughters too. It is generally accepted in the literature that there were three sons, of which Tetricus is the only one to be named. Of his two brothers, one was the grandfather of Gregory of Tours and the other was the father of Gregory's predecessor Eufronius (but see (9), above, on Armentaria). Since at least one of these brothers had a son by 503 (Eufronius), he was probably born in about 480; Tetricus was therefore one of Gregory of Langres' younger sons. Tetricus succeeded his father at Langres in 539/40 and, according to his epitaph (Fort.Carm. IV 3), was bishop for thirty-three years, so must have died in 572/3. Given the list of chapter titles in the GC, it is clear that a chapter on Tetricus was planned, but was not written (or has been lost). In a dream of King Guntram, Tetricus, together with Nicetius of Lyons and Agroëcola of Chalon, punished King Chilperic and claimed this to be the judgement of God (Hist. VIII 5); in the vision of King Guntram the three bishops clearly represented the episcopate of his kingdom.

(14) *Gregorius Attalus*

Gregorius Attalus was the most important ancestor ('Spitzenahn') for Gregory of Tours – that is to say, the emblematic figure of the family for several generations ('this is a great lineage of the first order': Hist. IV 15) – and a man to whom the great-grandson consciously tied himself, perhaps even through his Christian name (but see below and n. 23). Gregory's reasons for stressing this particular relationship lay, firstly, in

Gregory of Langres' quality as Gregory of Tours' only *direct* ancestor who had been a bishop (see below, n. 18) and, secondly, in the institutionalized links of this branch of the family with St Martin of Tours (see pp. 23–8, below). The influence of Gregory of Tours' mother may have been especially significant in this respect: she was brought up by her grandfather and may therefore have passed the traditions of this line on to her son (see (9), above).

The principal source for this bishop of Langres is the *Life* written by his great-grandson (VP VII); the epitaph for Gregory of Langres produced by Venantius Fortunatus (Fort. Carm. IV 2) was probably based on this work (or the testimony of Gregory's mother). The *Life* records Gregory of Langres' chronology: Gregory died in his ninetieth year (539/40); he had been bishop of Langres for thirty-two years (according to both the epitaph and the *Life*: he died 'in the thirty-third year of his episcopacy'); previously, he had been count of Autun for forty years. He therefore entered office in 466/7 at the age of sixteen or seventeen, which is plausible if he had inherited the leading position in the county (*comitatus*). The well-documented contemporary example of the count of Trier ('comes civitatis') shows that hereditary transmission was customary for the office, even though it had only been created in the second half of the fifth century (Anton 1986: 8 and n. 36, and 4ff. for Gregory of Langres). However, doubts exist over the chronology given by Gregory of Tours. A letter of Sidonius Apollinaris (Loyen II: 206), which has been dated to 471–4, is addressed to a certain Attalus, an 'old friend' ('familiari vestusto') of Sidonius. This Attalus was said to preside over the *civitas* of Autun. Stroheker (1948: no. 182) has suggested that Attalus was simply a second name for Gregory (see (11), above, on Gregory's grandson), while Pietri (1983: 205 n. 140) claims that Gregory of Tours had confused the age of his ancestor and that Attalus represented an earlier generation of the family. However, Pietri's argument overlooks the fact that Gregory of Langres could hardly have had a grandson in 503 (see (12)) if he himself had not been born until about 480! It is unlikely that Gregory of Tours made a mistake about this special case: his brother was a cleric with one of Gregory of Langres' sons, and his mother, who had been brought up by Gregory of Langres, was still alive when he wrote this biography of his great-grandfather. Sidonius' letter was therefore sent to Gregorius Attalus in the 470s (Loyen II: 206 n. 60 (477 at the latest)), wishing him luck in his new duties presiding over the *civitas* of Autun. We can therefore accept Gregory's claim that Gregory of Langres was already performing certain legal functions within the city

by 466/7, perhaps as a military assessor for a supra-regional count; it is with reference to this function that Sidonius Apollinaris praised him as 'just' and 'strict', virtues which clearly became a leitmotif for Gregory of Langres' activities in both his *Life* and his epitaph. Since Sidonius describes himself as a friend of this Attalus (and hence, perhaps, of his family), they may have known each other since boyhood: the description 'old friend' is possibly an ironic comment by Sidonius, provoked especially by Gregory of Langres' youth.

Gregory became bishop of Langres after the death of his wife (see (15)), but resided mostly in Dijon. He was involved with the establishment and propagation there of the cult of a disciple of Polycarp, St Benignus, to whom he built a basilica and for whom he 'found' a *Passio* (which he may have written himself) (GM 50; the text of the *Passio* corresponds to BHL, no. 4457f.; see van der Straeten 1961: 465–8 and also 466 for a reference to Polycarp, to whom Armentaria, Gregory's granddaughter, was especially devoted, according to GM 85). According to his wishes, Gregory (of Langres) was interred in his own mausoleum, which had been consecrated to the Apostle John, the teacher of Polycarp (Hist. 128). Gregory of Tours' brother, Peter, was also interred there. See further Weidemann 1982a: 163f. and Heinzelmänn 1988a: 563, as well as (15) and (16), below, on Armentaria and Eufronius of Autun.

(15) *Armentaria I*

Armentaria I was grandmother of Gregory of Tours' mother, who received her name; she was 'from a senatorial family' (VP VII 1). She was also the wife of Gregorius Attalus, who entered the Church after her death and became bishop of Langres in 506/7. On account of her name, one might conclude that she was the daughter of Bishop Armentarius of Langres, who must have been in office in about 479 (see Heinzelmänn 1988a: 560). Since her husband Gregorius Attalus clearly came from the region of Autun, this marriage may have contributed to his acquisition of the bishopric of Langres.

(16) *Eufronius, bishop of Autun*

Eufronius was a priest in Autun, but from 451 the bishop of this *civitas* (*Chronica Gallica a. DCXI*, MGH AA IX: 663 mentions his burial in this year, but this was clearly the date of his ordination; see *RE*: 1220). The

Chronicle of Hydace mentions a letter from Eufronius to the Count Agrippinus about omens in the sky in 451 (MGH AA xi: 26). Eufronius certainly remained bishop until after 475. As a priest he founded and built the Symphorian basilica in Autun, and as bishop he donated a marble slab to the grave of St Martin in Tours. Gregory mentioned this detail in a chapter of the *Histories* (Hist. II 15) following an account of the building activities of the bishops of Tours, Eustochius and Perpetuus.

There are several clues to suggest a link between Eufronius and the family of Gregory of Langres. Eufronius' gift for St Martin at Tours appears to be a sign of the institutional bond of this 'Burgundian' senatorial family with the saint's basilica; the marble slab may even signify participation in the church-building programme (VM I 6) of Bishop Perpetuus of Tours (458/9–88/9). According to the feast calendar of Perpetuus, the feast of St Symphorian was the only 'foreign' saint's feast to be celebrated in the Martin basilica – with the sole exception of that for St Hilary (Hist. x 31: no. VI in the bishops' list) – a circumstance which should doubtless be seen in connection with Eufronius' gift: the Tours liturgy therefore carried not only a *memoria* for a saint but also for a donation. The foundation of the Martin basilica in Autun, whose existence is attested about 600, may go back to this time. According to Pietri (1983: 467), the bishops Perpetuus and Eufronius had concluded a 'jumelage de leurs l'Eglises'.

Eufronius certainly came from Autun (see Pietri 1983: 205 n. 140). During his period in office, the young Gregory (later bishop of Langres) became count of the *civitas* of Autun; an appointment which would have been inconceivable without the co-operation of the bishop. A grandson of Gregory of Langres had the name Eufronius (see (12), above) and since this grandson was surely related to the bishops Eustochius and Perpetuus of Tours, we must assume that there was also some sort of family tie between these bishops and Eufronius of Autun.

(17) *Gundulf and the duo liberi of Florentinus*

In 581 the Duke Gundulf, 'from a senatorial family', was sent by the Austrasians to Marseilles and then had to travel around the kingdom of Guntram to Tours. He was received there by Gregory: 'I recognized him as the uncle [*avunculus*] of my mother' (Gregory always (a total of six times) used the term 'recognoscere' to mean 'to recognize' or 'to acknowledge', for example, 'to recognize as king'). Gundulf was therefore the brother of the mother of Armentaria ((9), above) and belonged to the