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978-0-521-63638-4 - Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century

Martin Heinzelmann

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## GREGORY OF TOURS

For over 1,400 years the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours (538–94) – the principal work of Merovingian history – have been understood as a ‘history of the Franks’. The work has also been viewed as an objective portrayal of history, albeit told by a naive narrator: incapable of endowing his material with any sort of internal order, he succeeded only in the chronological organisation of this ‘colourful muddle’.

A completely new interpretation of the *Histories* is put forward in this book, in which the bishop of Tours can be seen to be giving each of his ‘Ten Books’ a self-contained topic, and also making use of the patristic method of typological biblical exegesis. By appreciating these elements, one can clearly see the often antithetical connections between apparently unconnected, adjacent chapters, and also begin to make out their function within a universal, Christological concept of history. Gregory’s historiographical interests can be seen as focusing on the development of a socio-political concept of society, one which wishes to see the leadership of the Christian state entrusted to the joint government of bishops and king (*christianus princeps*).

MARTIN HEINZELMANN is a research historian at the Deutsches Historisches Institut, Paris.

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*History and Society in the Sixth Century*

MARTIN HEINZELMANN

TRANSLATED BY CHRISTOPHER CARROLL



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## *Preface*

The project for a volume about Gregory of Tours with the *Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft* dates from 1978 and was contracted in 1979, but my work on this subject goes back to the beginning of my academic career. With the exception of a few supplements produced in the first six months of 1993, the manuscript of this book was essentially completed in December 1992.

It has been a long time since I began this work and this is an appropriate place to record my thanks, first, to the publishers for their patience and care in the printing and, secondly, to friends and colleagues for their encouragement and suggestions, which have been directly or indirectly beneficial to this project. This support has been led by the German Historical Institute in Paris, which has been a generous employer, and my extremely tolerant wife, Anneliese. From among my friends, I should thank Dr Hartmut Atsma, with whom I was already discussing Gregory of Tours in the 1960s, and also Karl Ferdinand Werner (Rottach-Egern), who was my teacher in Heidelberg and Mannheim and later the director of the Institute in Paris. More recently I have benefited from conversations with, and suggestions from, Dr Leopold Auer (Vienna), Pascale Bourgain (Paris), François Dolbeau (Paris), Jean Durliat (Toulouse) and Joseph-Claude Poulin (Québec); not forgetting Christian Settiani and Jean Vezin (both Paris). The suggestions of my good friend Walter Goffart (Toronto) come from his magnificent book, to which I shall refer frequently in the following pages.

Special thanks for the efficient completion of this volume is due to three women: Pascale Bourgain, professor at the Ecole nationale des Chartes, who produced a table of the *Histories'* manuscripts on her computer; Ursula Hugot (Deutsches Historisches Institut, Paris), whose work on the production of maps and Gregory's genealogical tables was irreplaceable; and last but not least, Birgit Martens (Maisons Laffitte),

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without whom – as without her husband, Dr Stefan Martens – my own computer would have remained unused up to the present day. I would sincerely like to thank them all.

I think I should just say a few words on the special nature of my citations. In order to reduce the number of footnotes, I have included straightforward citations in the text; the notes themselves contain further bibliographical references and also additional explanations of the text. The shortened forms used appear in the abbreviations following this preface.

The citations of Gregory's works naturally follow the authoritative Monumenta editions: the *Historiarum libri decem* (Hist.) in the second edition in three facsimilies from 1937, 1942 and 1951 (cf. *Greg. Hist.* in the abbreviations); the hagiographical work in the edition of 1969 is based on the 1885 version (*Greg. Mirac.*); while references are given as precisely as possible by listing the book, chapter, page and line numbers (e.g. Hist. v 5: 200, 11).

The abbreviations used for the hagiographical works are as follows:

- GM: *Liber in gloria martyrum*  
 VJ: *Liber de passione et virtutibus sancti Juliani martyris*  
 VM: *Libri I–IV de virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi*  
 VP: *Liber vitae patrum*  
 GC: *Liber in gloria confessorum*

(See the following pages for a full list of abbreviations.)

## NOTE ON THE 2000 TEXT

After mature consideration, I have decided not to revise the 1994 text completely. Consequently, other than a few rather insignificant corrections, only a few minor changes have been made, linked to the translation. In the same way, work done since 1994 has not been included either, as it has no real impact on the conclusions: the subject-matter of the book remains as pertinent now as in 1994. This applies equally to the results of my research as they are described in the first book. In the Postscript, therefore, I have provided only a short summary of my work that has subsequently appeared on the theme of 'Gregory of Tours'.



## *Abbreviations*

<i>AfD</i>	<i>Archiv für Diplomatik</i>
<i>AnalBoll</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
BHL	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Antiquae et Mediae Aetatis
<i>Chronica</i>	Otto of Freising, <i>Ottonis episcopi Frisingensis Chronica sive historia de duabus civitatibus</i>
CLA	Codices Latini Antiquiores
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
DSAM	<i>Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique. Doctrine et histoire</i> , M. Viller (ed.), Paris, 1932–
Fort.Carm.	<i>Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteris italici opera poetica</i>
<i>Greg. Hist.</i>	<i>Gregorii episcopi Turonensis historiarum libri X, editionem alteram curavit Bruno Krusch, Facs. I and II, Hanover, 1937–42; Facs. III Praefatio et Indices, B. Krusch and W. Levison (and W. Holtzmann), Hanover, 1951</i>
<i>Greg. Mirac.</i>	<i>Gregorii episcopi Turonensis miracula et opera minora, Bruno Krusch (ed.), Hanover, 1885 (reprint, 1969), (MGH Greg. Mirac.)</i>
<i>HJb</i>	<i>Historisches Jahrbuch</i>
<i>HVj</i>	<i>Historische Vierteljahrschrift</i>
<i>HZ</i>	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
Loyen	<i>Sidoine Apollinaire. Lettres</i> , A. Loyen (ed.), vols. II and III, Paris, 1970
<i>LThK</i>	<i>Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche</i> , J. Höfner et al. (ed.), 10 vols., Freiburg, 1957–65
Mansi	J.-D. Mansi, <i>Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio</i> , 31 vols., Venice, 1759–98

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<i>M-A</i>	<i>Moyen-âge. Revue d'histoire et de philologie</i>
<i>MEFRM</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'École française de Rome</i>
<i>MIÖG</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>MGH AA</i>	<i>Auctores Antiquissimi</i>
<i>MGH Capit.</i>	<i>Capitularia Regum Francorum</i>
<i>MGH Conc.</i>	<i>Concilia Aevi Merovingici</i>
<i>MGH Ep.</i>	<i>Epistolae Aevi Merovingici</i>
<i>MGH SRM</i>	<i>Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum</i>
<i>MGH SRL</i>	<i>Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum</i>
<i>Mjb</i>	<i>Mittelateinisches Jahrbuch</i>
<i>NA</i>	<i>Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus series Latina</i> , J.-P. Migne (ed.)
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> , Theodor Klauser et al. (ed.), 1950– .
<i>RBPH</i>	<i>Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire</i>
<i>RE</i>	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
<i>RGA</i>	<i>Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde</i> (2nd edition), Heinrich Beck, Heiko Steuer and Dieter Timpe (eds.)
<i>RSI</i>	<i>Rivista storica italiana</i>
<i>Ruricius Ep.</i>	<i>Fausti aliorumque epistulae ad Ruricaim aliosque. Ruricii epistulae</i> , ed. Bruno Krush
<i>Settimane</i>	<i>Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 1</i> – (Spoleto, 1954– )
<i>ThLL</i>	<i>Thesaurus linguae Latinae</i>
<i>ZKG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
<i>ZRG GA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Germanistische Abteilung</i>