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*Gregory of Tours*

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#301029 in Books Gregory of Tours 1976-02-28 1976-02-28Original language:LatinPDF # 1 7.76 x 1.25 x 5.051, 1.09 #File Name: 0140442952720 pagesA History of the Franks | File size: 51.Mb

**Gregory of Tours : A History of the Franks (Penguin Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A History of the Franks (Penguin Classics):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Good Narrative History of the MerovingiansBy Phillip ParottiGiven the age in which this classic was written, one expects the work to be heavy, dense, and prolix. Instead the book moves forward with a lively and direct prose style that makes for am almost modern narrative. The period covered largely concentrates on political and religious developments involved with the Merovingians, down to

Dagobert.122 of 125 people found the following review helpful. Ian Myles Slater on: Dark Ages Semi-Illuminated By Ian M. Slater [Note to readers, December 2013: This is a review of the Penguin Classics translation; however, has also linked it to an edition of the old Ernest Brehaut translation of selections (described below). Take care to be sure which you are ordering.] [Note to readers, December 2014: has now linked the paperback edition to an actual Kindle edition (from Penguin) of Thorpe's translation. The Brehaut translation of excerpts is still available as a separately listed Kindle Book. As always, take care to be sure what you are ordering.] Gregory, Bishop of Tours from 573 to 594, was a member of a prominent Gallo-Roman family of aristocrats, and, like some of his relatives, was eventually canonized. His accounts of holy men, martyrs, and miracles are still extant; a work on liturgy is lost. He is best remembered, however, for a long work (which he called just "Ten Books of History") on how Gaul was conquered by the Franks, and ruled (after a fashion) by their royal dynasty, the Merovingians; with their relationships with neighboring kingdoms. It is commonly known as "The History of the Franks," although modern scholars tend to disapprove of the title. Gregory generally tells us about what involved members of the dynasty and their followers, or the Church, not the Franks in general. The various rival "Kingdoms of the Franks" corresponded very roughly to modern France and western Germany, and Gregory clearly did not have later political units in mind. The Franks were Germanic warriors -- probably from a variety of tribes mentioned by Roman historians -- who entered Roman territory as (at least mainly) pagans. The Burgundians, Ostrogoths and Visigoths, Vandals, and other predecessors, had adopted an archaic form of Christianity much earlier, and had come to be stigmatized as followers of the Arian Heresy when they insisted on following their now-traditional ways. The Franks converted -- at least in name -- directly to Post-Nicene, Trinitarian, Catholic, Orthodoxy. This gave their kings an otherwise inexplicable reputation for piety, if not exactly for virtue. (A Merovingian ruler with only one or two illegitimate children, who refrained from murdering more than a few opponents, and tried to protect his subjects, was widely regarded as a saint.) Gregory, after summarizing the history of the world (Biblical and Christian), focuses on events in the lands of the Franks and their neighbors, eventually reaching his own time, which he reports in considerable, sometimes confusing, and not always reliable, detail. He is a primary source for much of the period. Although sometimes frustrating, he is markedly superior to his immediate (and many not so immediate) successors. As a bishop, he was also an important administrator and judge. He understood practical affairs, and he knew many of the people he describes. A tendency to alleviate the blood-stained darkness with miracle stories is understandable. Given the intellectual assumptions inherited from late antiquity, they do not mark Gregory as particularly gullible or superstitious. One does miss the Venerable Bede's moderation in such matters. (And if you are interested in "Dark Age" Europe, but have not yet read Bede's "Ecclesiastical History of the English," try either the Penguin Classics or Oxford World's Classics translation.) Gregory's world is the reality behind some later medieval literature. He describes the age of Beowulf (literally; King Hygelac's raid on Frankish-allied Frisia is reported in one chapter). With its royal feuds, pursuit of buried treasure, and royalty with names like Sigibert, Sigismundis, and Brunnichildis, it is the background of parts of the "Nibelungenlied" and "Volsunga Saga." For these reasons alone it would be worth attention. It is also interesting on its own. Despite many lapses in narrative logic (from a modern point of view), and uneven command of Latin, Gregory could tell interesting stories reasonably well. (Erich Auerbach's "Mimesis" has a brilliant discussion of Gregory's failures as a narrator, but fails to mention that the analysis is of a passage -- with inconsequential details of a minor quarrel leading up to a scandalous blood feud -- in which Gregory is reporting testimony given \*in his own courtroom\*.) The late Lewis Thorpe's translation is the second complete version in English. The first, by O.M. Dalton, appeared in two volumes -- the first being an Introduction -- in 1927, and was reprinted in the early 1970s. It has a reputation for meticulous accuracy, not for enjoyable reading. (I made unsuccessful attempts to read it through, not long before Thorpe's translation became available in 1974.) And Dalton's impressive scholarship (mainly from before World War I) is nearly a century out of date. (There is a volume of selections from the "History" and other books by Gregory, translated by Ernest Brehaut, reprinted several times, and excerpted on various websites. It was published in the Columbia University "Records of Civilization" series in -- I think -- 1922; some sources say 1916. Gregory went on record opposing any excerpting or abridging of the "Ten Books" (and was right -- the longer stories are reduced to rubble), but Brehaut's offering is still worth a look.) Thorpe is readily available, less expensive, and far more enjoyable. The weird and violent world of witchcraft-fearing, God-bribing, homicidal dynasts (sometimes compared to the Wild West, but without many White Hats) presents itself to the reader, with helpful notes along the way. A superb index also help sort out characters and events, which frequently are spread over several chapters or different books, as events unfolded before Gregory's eyes. Some medievalists have challenged the accuracy of Thorpe's translation. The examples I have seen look to me (a very amateur Latinist, to be sure) more like debatable interpretations than obvious errors. Thorpe does tend to prefer the clear and interesting, but questionable, reading of the original to the cautious but obscure one. A nautical historian will be concerned that Thorpe has Scandinavian \*navi\* (ships, or large boats) prepare to "sail back" instead of "turn back," (\*reverti\*), because he suspects they were using oars, not sails. Most readers, for whom motor-driven vessels also "sail" from place to place, will not be aware of the distinction. If you need such precision (say, for a college-level course), checking a passage against Dalton, and if possible a well-edited Latin edition, would obviously be advisable. (There is an on-line Latin text, as "Historia Francorum," which is helpful, but lacks information on variants and other important

details found in full editions. Inevitably, Thorpe was not able to take advantage of the last quarter-century of scholarship, which has re-evaluated Gregory's methods, goals, and accomplishments, along with those of other early medieval historians and chroniclers. But Gregory's "History" is essential reading for anyone with a serious interest in early medieval Europe, particularly the early Germanic kingdoms, and Thorpe's translation is a fine entry into the field. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great Historical Work By Ronald Douglas Berkebile This is a great historical depiction about the French kings and the Catholic Church. It's a remarkable 6th century historical work. For those seeking genealogical information, names and family links are easily understood, but birthdates are sparse. Royal family searchers should be prepared for skeletons in their closet. The families are barbarically portrayed. These were uncivilized times of conquest and intrigue. For those seeking acts of divine intervention, Gregory introduces plenty.

This colorful narrative of French history in the sixth century is a dramatic and detailed portrait of a period of political and religious turmoil. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

Language Notes Text: English, Latin (translation) About the Author Gregory of Tours (538-94), French historian, bishop of Tours (from 573), was born in Clermont-Ferrand. He had a distinguished and successful career as bishop. Gregory wrote accounts of miracles of the saints, an astronomical work to determine movable feasts, and a commentary on the Psalms. His masterpiece, *Historia Francorum* [history of the Franks], in 10 books, is a universal history; its account of contemporary events is of great importance.