The Role of the Nobility in the Creation of Gallo-Frankish Society In the late fifth and sixth centuries ad

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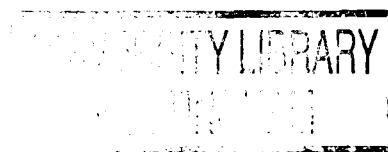for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, October 2001

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the contribution made by the nobility, both Gallo-Roman and Frankish, to the creation of a new society after the collapse of imperial authority in the west, Gallo-Frankish society.

The first chapter of this dissertation is a review of the sources, both ancient and modern, used in the research undertaken for this dissertation. It is important to realise that, while not as numerous as those of other periods, sufficient ancient material survives to make a study such as this valid. Modern issues and debates will be highlighted, including an indication of what led me to this particular thesis.

The second chapter outlines the history of Gaul and the barbarians to the middle of the fifth century. It then looks at the institutions that were the backbone of Gallo-Roman society.

The third chapter explores the lives of a number of individuals who lived in Gaul during the late third and fourth centuries. They exemplify the challenges that faced the nobility and the ways they found of facing them.

Chapter four introduces the Franks as the successors to imperial rule in Gaul. A narrative history is followed by a study of the institutions that they made use of in establishing their power.

Chapter five narrows the focus still further and looks at the role that the monarchy and the nobility had to play in the creation of Gallo-Frankish society. It will look at specific examples in order to demonstrate the vital role that the fusion taking place between Gallo-Romans and Franks played in this process.

The final chapter, chapter six reaches the conclusion that Gallo-Frankish society was based on an amalgamation of Gallo-Romans and Franks, an amalgamation that was remarkably peaceful, given the events of the period.

List of Illustrations

Abbreviations

Ammianus	*Res Gestae*
Augustine	*Confessions*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
Cap.Mer.	*Capitularia Merowingica*
Carm.	Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica, Opera Pedestria* *MGH AA* IV
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
CMH	*Cambridge Medieval History*
Conc.Gal.1	*Concilia Galliae* AD 314-506, *Corpus Christianorum*
Conc.Gal.2	*Concilia Galliae* AD 511-695, *Corpus Christianorum*
DLH	*Gregorii episcopi Turonensis libri historiarum X* *MGH SRM* I
Ep.Aust.	*Epistulae Austrasicae, MGH Epistolae* 3
Eusebius	*Ecclesiastical History*
Fredegar	*Chronicarum, MGH SRM* II
GC	*Liber in gloria confessorum, MGH SRM* I.ii
GM	*Liber in gloria martyrum, MGH SRM* I.ii
GP	*Gallische Prosopographie*, Heinzelmann 1982
LHF	*Liber Historiae Francorum, MGH SRM* II

MGH
   AA
   SRM
	Monumenta Germaniae Historiae *Auctores Antiquissimi* *Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*

Pan.Lat.	*Panegyrici Latini*
Paul	*History of the Lombards*
PLRE	*Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*
Ruricius	*Epistulae*

Sidonius	*Epistulae*
VA	*Vita Andreae, MGH SRM* I.ii
VC	*Vita Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis libri duo, MGH SRM* III
VJ	*Liber de passione et virtutibus sancti Iuliani martyris, MGH SRM* I.ii
VP	*Liber vitae patrum, MGH SRM* I.ii
VSM	*Liber I-IV de virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi, MGH SRM* I.ii

Introduction

With the collapse and withdrawal of the Roman Empire from the west and the concomitant decline of formal Roman authority within the region, a gap was left, waiting to be filled by an alternative power. The Roman provinces of Gaul constituted just one area that felt the need for a new form of leadership and there were several contenders for the role: these included the Visigoths, the Franks and even members of the old senatorial nobility. This dissertation will examine the dynamics that developed between these groups during the late fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, in an effort to discover why some succeeded where others failed.

The general impression to be gained from a number of works written during the early and mid twentieth century is that the barbarians created a world of chaos and fear and were directly responsible for the destruction of the Roman Empire. This view was derived from the writings of authors who depicted the barbarians as the evil 'other', the root of all the Empire's problems. More recent works have begun to disregard this theory in favour of the idea that the arrival of the barbarians, while certainly causing disruption, was only one of many reasons for the downfall of the Western Empire.

The collapse of the Roman Empire in the west created a power-vacuum that many contenders attempted to fill. There was upheaval, but in general the eventual transition to Frankish rule was remarkably peaceful. The key element in this was the role of the upper-classes, on both sides, in creating a new Gallo-Frankish society. Modern ethnicity

studies can be useful in coming to grips with this development. What they point up is the complexity of ethnic identity and, in particular, its subjective element. But notice has also been taken of 'strategies of distinction' - the ways by which particular groups, for their own purposes, sought to distance themselves from others within the fluidity of ethnic creation and evolution. The new Gallo-Frankish nobility and society was forged on the anvil of local politics. The crucial thing here was, in terms of strategies of distinction, the continued self-awareness and economic power of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy. But also crucial in terms of fluid ethnicity was the way in which this aristocracy accepted and was accepted by the Merovingian kings, and so contributed to the formation of a new nobility and a new ethnic identity.

This new slant on the debate generated my interest in this period and this, coupled with my interest in the Franks and in particular with the reasons for their success after the failure of the Visigoths, prompted my research in this field. My interest in the nobility, and the part that they played in the transitional period of late fifth and sixth century Gaul, was generated by studies that highlighted the importance of this class for maintaining stability, as well as their own evident motivation to remain in power.

The position of the *civitas* as an institution promoting continuity led me to look at other forces that did the same thing, and my reading led me to the Gallo-Roman nobility. They had an important part to play in the establishment and success of the *regnum Francorum* and without their support the Frankish kingdom would not have existed as we know

it today. No direct study has been made of the role of the nobility in the establishment of the *Regnum Francorum* and that led to this dissertation: the role of the Gallo-Roman nobility in the creation of Gallo-Frankish society in the late fifth and sixth centuries AD.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Modern concepts of ethnicity may be put to use in a study of this nature. (It is difficult to use ancient ethnographic terminology as evidence, since ethnicity was not a concept native to antiquity.[1]) Ethnicity is a phenomenon that has traditionally been difficult to define objectively. This is especially true in the period of late antiquity and particularly so in the region of Gaul, for there a combination of factors led to a complicated mixture of peoples living together.

A group or an individual can claim anything as an ethnic marker, as long as others recognise it as such. Ethnicity is a negotiable entity, socially constructed and subjectively perceived, both in writing and in speech.[2] Genetic, linguistic, religious and common cultural features do not define the ethnic group. Ethnic groups are distinguished from other social and associative groups by being associated with a specific territory and a shared myth of descent. Ethnic groups are frequently formed by the appropriation of resources by one section of the population at the expense of another. Ethnic groups are not static and monolithic, but dynamic and fluid and situationally constructed. When ethnic identity is under threat then the temporary suppression of individual variability leads to a positive social identity; this behaviour is

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[1] Amory 1994, 5
[2] Hall 1997, 19

more common in dominated and excluded groups. Ethnic identity can only be constituted by opposition to other groups.[3] It is clear that it is impossible to set out clearly defined criteria for defining an ethnic group.[4]

An ethnic group is a community bound together in a belief of common descent and actual common interests. Membership is always in a state of flux and so, despite common mythical descent, recruitment and desertion is always possible, through marriage, conquest and choice. We see this happening with the early Frankish tribes in particular. Ethnic differences imply cultural differences, although no specific culture - language, law, custom, dress - is necessary. Any or none of these mark the group as different.[5] It is impossible to make a concrete definition of ethnicity and this, in turn, makes it virtually impossible to establish an exact definition of what it was to be a Frank, a Visigoth, a Gallo-Roman or even a Roman. The meaning of the terms *Romanus* and *Barbarus* can be laid open to question at any given moment.[6] What was it that made a man a Roman, a Gallo-Roman, a barbarian or a Frank?

This dissertation will examine the society that existed in late fourth, fifth and sixth century Gaul in order to establish how the Gallo-Frankish society that existed at the end of the late sixth century had been created. While the modern debate on ethnicity has proved invaluable as a tool for studying the development of early Germanic

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[3] Hall 1997, 32-33
[4] Hall 1997, 19
[5] Amory 1994, 4-5
[6] Wood 1998a, 297

peoples, including the early Franks, my own interest lies in the personal and political development of this society.

The fact that ancient ethnography was so fluid allowed the opportunity for fusion and change, as long as the leadership gave the lead. While it is difficult to define ethnic divisions, it is easier to identify specific 'strategies of distinction'.[7] Senators, for example members of the old senatorial aristocracy that held power in Rome, stand out not as an ethnic group but as a self-conscious class, marked by noble descent, classical education and, later, their monopoly of the church. The major allegiances of this class were politics, class and religion.[8] These things were important to the senatorial aristocracy, and it is their allegiance to them that helped them to identify themselves in opposition to the barbarians. Strategies of distinction were important because they prevented Gallo-Roman ways from being destroyed or replaced wholesale by the various newcomers, thus allowing them to play a prominent role in the establishment of the *Regnum Francorum*. It was therefore important that they were recognised by both sides.

The dynamic for social change in this society, as in all societies, was located in the ways in which social leaders strove for local predominance. The locus of social dynamics was in the relationship between local politics and political 'cores',[9] that is, in the relationship between local, national and international politics. This resulted in the fact that the Gallo-Romans and the Franks alike relied on each other to remain in their positions of power.

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[7] Wood 1998a, 300
[8] Amory 1994, 28-29

Gradually, and not without a fight, the Gallo-Romans gave up their allegiance to Rome and established their main power bases in the *civitates*. They managed to hold onto their power bases under the Goths and the Franks. Power was based in landed wealth and the Gallo-Romans still had access to this power, both personally and through the Church. As important local power-brokers they were then able to contribute to Gallo-Frankish ethnogenesis in a big way.

Over the centuries, Gallic society had always been eager to have local men in positions of authority, whether they be governors, praetorian prefects, even usurpers and, later on, bishops. The ethnic identity of such people mattered little. What was important was that there was a powerful man in place locally and that the people did not have to rely on the distant authority of Rome to protect them. In the fifth and sixth centuries imperial authority fragmented, and private power was consolidated. Again, the ethnicity of the powerful was not important; power was.[10]

Into this fragmenting world came first the Visigoths and then the Franks. It was the latter who succeeded in establishing themselves as the most powerful successor kingdom in the west. The Gallo-Romans were willing to co-operate with them principally due to the fact that they were all Catholic Christians; religion was an important unifying factor as it gave everyone something that they could identify with. In addition, the Franks had lived on the borders of the empire for generations prior to their conquest of the region. Thus they had been Romanised and, to

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[9] Halsall 1998, 143
[10] Moreland 2000, 18

some degree, the Gallo-Romans had been Germanised. Co-operation between the two sides led to the creation of a new nobility and of a new *ethnos*.

There are two surprises here, first that the militarily and politically dominant should pay attention to the militarily and politically subservient; and second, that the culturally advanced should take on the identity of the culturally inferior. This dissertation will provide a closer examination and discussion of both events and surprises, and examine what it was that led to Frankish success and to the merging of Gallo-Romans and Franks, to create a new Gallo-Frankish, society.

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The vast majority of the research for this dissertation was undertaken during my three years at Nottingham, between October 1996 and December 1999. At that point I moved to Bristol to take up my first full-time job and to get married. During the past twenty months of completion of this project, I have endeavoured to keep up with the latest developments within this field, but I recognise that this may not always have been the case. Therefore, if anything has been missed, this is no-one's fault but my own.

Chapter 1

The Sources

Due to the fragmentary nature of much of the surviving evidence it is tempting to view the history of late antique Gaul as a puzzle into which the pieces that survive must be made to fit. However, it is better to see the extant texts and material remains as reflecting the opinion or action of an individual or a specific group, rather than as constituent elements of a narrative jigsaw, which can be re-assembled to produce a full picture.[1]

1.1   Ancient and Contemporary Sources

1.1.1 General Survey

While the sources for the history of Gaul during the time of the Roman Empire in Gaul are well documented and well known, those for the late fifth and sixth centuries are fewer and less accessible. Therefore, it is worthwhile outlining them in order to examine what they say and why they say it. It will become evident that the majority of the source material that is available for this period was written by religious figures, by bishops. That most of the material comes from this class of men should alert the historian to the likely presence of an ecclesiastical *tendenz* in them.

The first, and most prominent, of those sources are the *Historiae* of Gregorius Florentius Gregorius, better known today as Gregory of Tours. There is also the work of the poet Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus. Both of these men lived in Gaul during the

sixth century and so are contemporary witnesses to the majority of the events about which they write. In addition there are also the texts known as the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and the *Chronicle* of Fredegar, both of which draw on Gregory to some extent, and detail parts of the early history of the Franks.

Additional sources include the letter collections of men such as Sidonius Apollinaris and Ruricius, bishop of Limoges. Both of these men lived during the mid and late fifth century in the Visigothic kingdom, and served under various Visigothic kings.[2] Their correspondence gives an insight into the attitude of the nobility towards these 'barbarians' and allows us a glimpse of what life was like after the withdrawal of an imperial presence from Gaul.

Due to constraints of space, this dissertation does not include any in-depth study of hagiography. However, it should be recognised that this genre is an important source for this period. It is important to bear in mind that the authors of hagiography had more in mind that just a description of events. Hagiography must also be viewed as religious propaganda.[3] Many of the authors were bishops themselves, or at least were closely connected to the episcopacy, and so had ulterior motives in writing what they did. Gregory in particular has two volumes in which he recounts tales about holy men such as ascetics, abbots and bishops, namely the *Liber in Gloria Martyrum* and the *Liber in Gloria Confessorum*. Fortunatus has a shorter collection of just twelve lives that appear in his *Opera Pedestria*.

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[1] Wood 1997, 226
[2] See below, 105ff and 114ff, for details

The sources mentioned above are the principal ones for a study of this period. In the following sections of this chapter I shall look in more detail at what the ancient sources actually have to say about this period. As Gregory and Fortunatus are two of the most important sources, this will include a short sketch of their lives, which will help towards an understanding of their styles and motivations.

1.1.2 Individual Studies

1.1.2.1 Gregory of Tours

This section will examine the life and works of Gregory in order to establish his credentials both as a bishop and as an author. Both aspects of his life play an important part in any examination of this period, making it essential to determine exactly what his motivations were, for his actions as bishop and for his writing what he did in the way that he did.

Gregory was born in Clermont on 30 November 538 or 539.[4] His father, Florentius, was of senatorial descent while his mother, Armentaria, was from a Burgundian family that owned estates at Chalon-sur-Saône and Dijon.[5] Both were also closely connected with the church (see figure 1, below). This institution was to have a great influence on Gregory's life, and he was in close connection with it, and with Catholic Christianity, from an early age. Gregory's descent from a Gallo-Roman senatorial family was a natural prerequisite for his position

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[3] Wood 1994b, 87
[4] *VA* 38
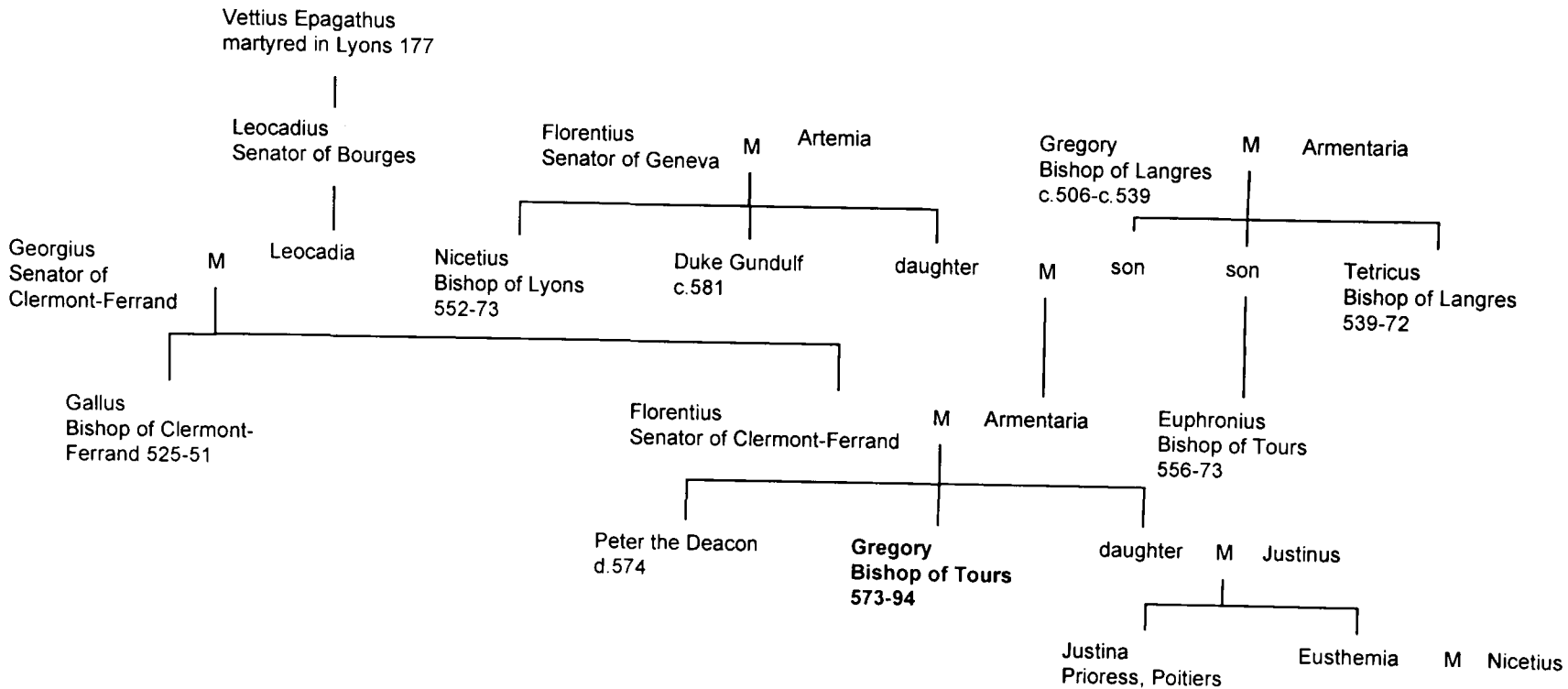
Fig.1 Gregory of Tours' Family Tree

in the world and for his position as bishop.[6] His great uncles Imperatus and Gallus were a priest and a bishop (525-551) respectively at Clermont.[7] Also, Gregory, bishop of Langres (c.506-539), Tetricus his son who succeeded him (539-572), Nicetius, bishop of Lyon (552-573) and Eufronius, bishop of Tours (556-573) were all related to Armentaria.[8]

Gregory's father died while he was still young and at the age of eight he was sent to Clermont to be brought up by his uncle Gallus. From there Gregory visited both Lyon, his uncle Nicetius' see, and Tours, where his cousin Eufronius was bishop. Gregory's life from his teens to his mid-twenties is obscure but in 563, at the age of twenty-four or twenty-five, he was ordained deacon in the see of Tours.[9] In 573 he was made bishop there.

In his major work, the *Decem Libri Historiarum*, Gregory claims a prestigious genealogy for himself, claiming to have been related to all but five of his predecessors at Tours,[10] although it is difficult to find evidence to support his claim.[11] In the final book of the *Historiae* Gregory provides a list of his predecessors at Tours.[12] His religious lineage was important to him as it served to solidify his personal claim to the bishopric of Tours. Gregory's election to the bishopric of Tours

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[6] Heinzelmann 1993, 10; see below 81ff for a discussion of the relationship of the nobility and the episcopacy.
[7] Imperatus *VP* 6.3; Gallus *VP* 6
[8] Gregory of Langres *VP* 7.2; Tetricus *VP* 7.4, *DLH* 5.5; Nicetius of Lyon *VP* 8.3; Eufronius *DLH* 4.15.
[9] *VSM* 1.32; *VP* 8.3
[10] *DLH* 5.49: '...apart from five, all the other bishops who held their appointment in the see of Tours were blood-relations of my family'.
[11] Mathisen 1984, 85
[12] *DLH* 10.31

had taken place under somewhat dubious circumstances,[13] and Gregory felt the need to establish his claim as the legitimate successor to Eufronius. Gregory was laying claim to two lineages, the first from his immediate family with its senatorial heritage, and the second from a line of holy men, the majority of his predecessors at Tours. Both were to have different, but equally important influences on his life and work as bishop.

Gregory was further influenced by the cult of the saints.[14] On his father's side the family was particularly attached to the cult of St. Julian of Brioude and annual pilgrimages were made to his tomb.[15] St. Martin was another who was to have a profound effect on Gregory's life. As one of the first bishops of Tours (371-397) Martin had been significantly responsible for the spread of Christianity in that region, and as saint was an influential patron of his former see.[16] For Gregory, as bishop of Tours, St. Martin became a focus for both his life and career. He was central to his identity both as a bishop and as a suppliant, for Gregory was not only an intermediary between the saint and the congregation but was also in need of patronage himself.

Throughout his career as bishop of Tours, until his death in November 594, Gregory played an active part in both the religious and the secular life of the *civitas*. As bishop he was responsible for the well

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[13] When Eufronius died Gregory was present at the court of Sigibert and Brunhild at Rheims, and his election was approved by the king.

[14] See below 87ff for the importance of the relationship between bishops and the cults of saints.

[15] *VP* 6.6

[16] See below 79ff for details of Martin's career.

being, both physical and mental, of his congregation and as a leader of the local community he was active in contemporary political affairs.[17]

Nearly all of our knowledge of Gregory comes to us through his own writings, for he was a prolific author.[18] All of his works are religious and through them we become familiar not only with the time in which Gregory was living and the events of his own life, but also with his spiritual and religious world. The majority of Gregory's works were hagiographic and while some useful information may be gleaned from them they are not the most reliable source materials, as they were written for particular reasons. His *Historiae*, on the other hand, provides the historian with a great deal of information, although we must be careful and take the author's motives into account before making any comment and coming to any conclusions about his contemporaries and his life.

Gregory's *Historiae*, his longest work, consists of ten books and claims to cover history from the very beginning to the present day. One of the central themes of the work is power,[19] and it is meant to establish and reinforce episcopal authority, especially moral authority. The author's opening words set out what he is going to do; he will

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[17] Concern for the morality and well being of his congregation can be seen in all his writings. His involvement in political, religious affairs can be seen at *DLH* 5.18, where he participated in the trial of Praetextatus and at *DLH* 9.39-41, 10.15-17, the revolt at the convent of the Holy Cross in Poitiers. Involvement in political, secular affairs can be seen at, for example, *DLH* 9.30 where he argues successfully for the tax-exempt status of Tours.

[18] *Liber in gloria martyrum, Liber in gloria confessorum, Liber de passione et virtutinus sancti Iuliani Martyris, De virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi, Liber de miraculis beati Andreae apostoli, Liber Vitae Patrum, Liber octo Miraculorum. Passio sanctorum Martyrum Septem Dormientium apud Ephesum, In Psalterii tractatum commentarius. Decem Libri Historiarum*

[19] Breukelaar 1994, 227

describe the wars raged by kings against hostile peoples, by martyrs against the heathens and by Churches against the heretics.[20]

Unlike many historians of the third and fourth century Gregory does not depict the Franks as barbarians, bringing chaos to the Empire; rather, despite their warlike natures, by and large they are depicted as the rightful rulers of the region.

Gregory claims that his sources were Eusebius, Jerome and Orosius,[21] and he also refers to the works of Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus and Sulpicius Alexander, neither of which are extant.[22] Book 1 runs from Adam and Eve to the death of St. Martin, Book 2 from Martin's successor to the death of Clovis, Book 3 covers the lives of Clovis' sons to the death of Theudebert in 548, and Book 4 covers the events from the death of Clotild to the death of Sigibert in 575. The remainder of the *Historiae*, Books 5 to 10, is concerned with events to which Gregory was contemporary and quite often an eyewitness. These last six books take us into a world that is familiar to the author, one where he had an immediate concern in what was happening.[23] However, it is important to remember that for many of the events that he relates Gregory is his own authority, and this will have coloured his view of events. He even participated in some of the events about which he wrote, and so his accounts should not necessarily be regarded as impartial.

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[20] *DLH* 1.preface: *bella cum regis cum gentibus adversis, martyrum cum paganis, ecclesiarum cum hereticis.*
[21] *DLH* 1.pref
[22] *DLH* II.9
[23] Heinzelmann 1993, 96, 98, 150

One serious incident that needs to be touched on here as it has implications for the way in which Gregory wrote about some of the Frankish kings is his trial at Berny-Rivière in 580. Gregory was accused of treason and had to stand trial before king Chilperic and his episcopal colleagues. He was cleared of the charges and it transpired that he had been set up, but the incident had such an affect on him that it coloured the way in which he wrote about Chilperic.[24] This incident demonstrates that, as a result of the events he witnessed and his view of them, he would not have been an impartial historian.

As a historian Gregory had few precedents to work with. He was clearly familiar with the works of Eusebius, Jerome and Orosius and on occasion he also cites Sallust and even Virgil, but he had no more contemporary historian on which to draw and use as a good example of his craft.[25] This affected both his language and his style. Gregory claims that he is going to write a universal history, but the fact that the first four books concern the history of the world from the beginning until the middle of the sixth century and the final six books deal with a period of some thirty years rather tells against this: there is a distinct narrowing of focus throughout.

Gregory's use of language is interesting. He claims that his grammar is bad and that his language is provincial and lacks polish.[26] In the prefaces of the *Historiae*, the *Vita* of St. Martin and the Glory of

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[24] See below 24ff
[25] Eusebius, *DLH* 1.preface, 1.36; Jerome, *DLH* 1.36, 1.41; Orosius *DLH* 1.pref, 1 41; Sallust's *Catilina* in *DLH* 4.13, 7.1; Virgil's *Aenid* 3.56-7 in *DLH* 8.22
[26] *DLH* Prologue, 4.6, 10.31

the Confessor, he professes *rusticitas*.[27] All of these prefaces are presented as dialogues with an imagined interlocutor and are set up on Gregory's own terms. They are designed as rhetorical instruments and in themselves demonstrate that Gregory was far from being as ignorant as he claimed.[28] His claims may have been part of a tradition that he felt he was following, where it was conventional to disclaim the ability to write. However, although Gregory's Latin is not the Latin of the Golden Age, that is the language in which he wrote and it would have been perfectly understandable to his audience.

Gregory's *Historiae* has cause to mention at least 176 bishops, and the majority of his statements are far from being passing references but are accounts of the events in their lives. This, to some extent, betrays Gregory's motives for writing, for he wrote to underline the authority of the Church and its bishops in Gaul. As a bishop himself, Gregory would have had a great deal of insight into how the Church operated and what roles his colleagues were playing in Frankish society. Gregory was interested in boosting the importance of bishops, and in outlining what he considered to be the essential characteristics of such men.[29]

Another aspect of Gregory's work is his miracle stories. These appear throughout and underline the fact, also hinted at in his discussion of the acts of the Frankish kings, that he was greatly

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[27] *DLH* Preface, *VSM* Pref., *GC* Pref.
[28] Archambault 1989, 28
[29] For example, Hilary of Poitiers was described as a good man because he defended the undivided Trinity (*DLH* 3.Preface), and Patiens of Lyon was praised for succouring his people during a famine (*DLH* 2.24). On the other hand, Priscus of Lyon was seized with a quartan ague because he persecuted the associates of his predecessor

concerned with the moral and religious well-being of his congregation. The miracles describe two forms of supernatural intervention in human affairs, relief of a supplicant's distress and punishment for wrongdoing, and the two are often connected.[30] As well as serving a didactic purpose the miracle stories also confirm Gregory's own faith and beliefs. Gregory stresses the importance of the whole congregation's participation in the life of the religious community. This was one reason why so many cures seemed to take place on Sundays and at other Church Festivals, for it was these occasions that demonstrated the community's consensus regarding the power of the saint as their intermediary with God and the bishop as their intermediary with the saint.[31]

Linked to this interest in miracle stories is Gregory's interest in the natural world. Both natural phenomena and miracles were viewed as manifestations of the same omnipotent divine will.[32] Portents were linked with precise events,[33] and divine intervention also served as punishment for past sins.[34] Ignorance of the didactic intentions of Gregory, who selected and processed material in an extreme way, can lead to a flawed use of this material. The *Historiae* is a presentation of history designed to fulfil specific objectives.

(*DLH* 4.36), and Sagittarius of Embrun and Saloninus of Gap were ostracised for, amongst other things, fighting in a siege (*DLH* 5.20, 5.25, 7.39).

[30] For example, a woman who made bread on Sunday had her hand scorched, but after devoting herself to prayer was cured (*GM* 15).

[31] See below 89ff on how this impacted on the life of the bishop in the community.

[32] de Nie 1987

[33] Gregory identifies a comet as signalling the death of the pretender Gundovald (*DLH* 8.11); see below 155ff for details. See de Nie 1987 for a comprehensive discussion of the imagery contained in the *DLH*.

[34] For example, Fredegund viewed the death of her two young sons from disease as a punishment for her former sins (*DLH* 5.34).

This brings us to a closer consideration of Gregory's motives: why he wrote what he did in the way that he did. As a bishop Gregory would have had a direct interest in the moral and religious well-being of his congregation; that, after all, was the principal purpose of his job. He had no particular political point of view;[35] his only interest in court politics comes from the way they affected the actions of the kings in relation to the Church. His strong determination to maintain the position of the Gallic Church was, in itself, a political conviction, since it would affect royal policy. As a man of the church Gregory was interested in promoting that institution in order to ensure that he and his colleagues remained in authoritative positions vis-à-vis the state. Gregory's preoccupation with Arianism provides one example of his didactic intentions.[36] By the time that Gregory was writing Arianism had all but disappeared in the Frankish kingdom and it no longer caused a serious threat to the supremacy of Catholic Christianity. However, there are several occasions early in the *Historiae* where Gregory mentions this subject, making a point of stressing that Arianism was not the 'correct' religion to follow.[37] It was in this section of the work that Gregory was describing the establishment of the Franks in Gaul. Following the conversion of Clovis, Gregory's first great king,[38] the Franks had become Catholic Christians. The Arian religion was still being practised by the Visigoths, and so the stress on Arianism was an attempt to justify

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[35] Auerbach 1953, 85
[36] Heinzelmann 1993, 112-113
[37] For example, Cyrola, an Arian bishop, is unmasked and shown not to have carried out the miracles he claimed to have done (*DLH* 2.3); Clovis hates the Arians (*DLH* 2.37); and in the Preface to Book 3 it is described as an evil sect (*DLH* III.Preface).
[38] See below 140ff

the Franks' right to rule in Gaul. It was essential to the success of the Franks that they adhered to the correct religion, for any deviation from the path would have been a disaster for the *Regnum Francorum*, therefore Gregory did not miss any opportunities to stress the primacy of Catholicism.[39]

It is impossible to deny that Gregory is one of the major sources for the history of late fifth and sixth century Gaul, and inevitably there is a danger of relying too much on his works.[40] It is important not to forget that he is not the only source and that the works of other authors can serve to balance his views and offer a different perspective on events. One such author is Venantius Fortunatus.

1.1.2.2 Venantius Fortunatus

Fortunatus was a friend and contemporary of Gregory, and his works offer the modern historian an alternative perspective to that of the bishop of Tours. Studies of individual poems to particular people, kings, bishops and secular nobles, will be used in the latter part of the dissertation to illustrate the changes that were taking place during this transitional period of history.

Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus was born c.540 in Italy at Duplavis, near Treviso in Venetia.[41] As with Gregory the majority of the information concerning this individual comes from his own pen, and it is possible to piece together a picture of his early years from the clues he provides for his audience. Fortunatus tells us almost

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[39] See below 80, 124, 137-138, 188
[40] Wood 1994b, 21

nothing of his family, mentioning only that he had a brother, a sister and some nephews.[42] He must have received his early education at home for he then moved to Ravenna where he completed his training in rhetoric, grammar, metrics and the law.[43] No mention is made of a career in Italy, and in the early 560's Fortunatus travelled to Gaul. The spring of 566 is our first firm date for his career for it was then that, at the wedding of Sigibert and Brunhild at Metz, Fortunatus declaimed a panegyric on the subject of their marriage.[44]

Subsequently Fortunatus became popular at court and was entertained by both officials and bishops alike, but there is no evidence that he was awarded any royal post,[45] and neither did he find a permanent patron. After two years at the court of Sigibert and Brunhild he moved to Paris, to the court of Charibert. The death of Charibert soon after the poet's arrival meant that Fortunatus had to move again in search of a patron; this time he travelled to Tours and from there went on to Poitiers.

In 573 a new opportunity for patronage arose when Gregory was consecrated bishop of Tours. On Gregory's arrival in that *civitas* Fortunatus wrote a poem to celebrate the occasion, helping to confirm the new bishop's position.[46] From then on a friendship developed between these two men that would last for the rest of their lives. While in Poitiers Fortunatus also became a friend of the royal nun, Queen

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[41] *VSM* 4.668-669.
[42] *Carm.* 9.6.8
[43] *VSM* 1.29-31; Auerbach 1965, 260
[44] *Carm* 6.1a; see below 220ff for a fuller discussion of this poem.
[45] Brennan 1985a, 59-60
[46] See below 182ff for the dubious nature of Gregory's election.

Radegund,[47] and the abbess of her convent, Agnes. It was within this circle that he lived out the remaining years of his life. The friendship between Fortunatus and Gregory marks the point at which Fortunatus turned away from the secular world and began to take more of an interest in the religious life. Around 590 Fortunatus was ordained a priest at Poitiers and soon become bishop of that see. He outlived all of his friends and although the date of his death is uncertain it is thought to have taken place sometime during the early years of the seventh century.[48]

Throughout his career Fortunatus wrote a great deal of poetry, and to a variety of different people. He addressed poems to members of the Frankish royal family, to members of the royal household and to bishops. His work gives us a new and different perspective on life in sixth century Gaul to that presented by Gregory, not only because Fortunatus was a poet before he was a bishop but also because his motives for writing were somewhat different. In particular, Fortunatus' poetry to the Frankish kings gives a different impression of them to that received from the works of Gregory.[49] Fortunatus drew very particular images of the kings and used different methods and genres to those he used when writing to his friend and patron.[50] Taken together, the works of these two are a valuable source for examining aspects of Frankish life.

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[47] See below 236ff
[48] Brennan 1985a, 78
[49] See below 219
[50] See below for a discussion of Fortunatus' poetry to kings 219ff and bishops 252ff

As with Gregory a note of caution must be sounded concerning the use of Fortunatus. Through his upbringing and education he was clearly familiar with the Roman panegyric tradition. We must therefore use what he presents us with care. It is necessary to distinguish original material in the poems from the stock panegyrical formulae and characterisations that were common in them.[51] Although there was a degree of originality and variety available in what might be seen as a restrictive genre, there were rules governing the composition of panegyric.[52] Fortunatus used those recognised poetic structures and adapted them to his own ends, for this was a genre he had chosen deliberately in order to convey his own artistic and political points.[53] His prestige comes from the fact that he was a purveyor of literary culture and Roman rhetoric, talents that, to judge from his works, were evidently in demand.[54]

It is also the case, as is particularly evident in the royal poems, that a number of his poems were written for specific propaganda purposes. Knowledge of the events surrounding their composition is therefore important.[55] Nevertheless, however reliable or unreliable these poems prove to be as evidence they do throw some illumination on the top levels of Frankish society, and point the way to a new society. Fortunatus provides his patrons with a commodity that makes it plain that they were not barbarians, and in doing so he further refines

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[51] George 1987, 203
[52] Roberts 1989, 347
[53] Godman 1987, 9
[54] Auerbach 1965, 260-261
[55] Godman 1987, 12

their perception of the world. His poetry represents a sophisticated attempt to influence and shape reality.[56]

It is worthwhile considering the question of who or what prompted Fortunatus to write in the way that he did. There is no doubt that he would have written his poem for the wedding of Sigibert and Brunhild before his arrival in Gaul;[57] he would have been eager to make his mark as soon as he arrived, and recognition of his skill was vital if his career was to blossom. As he moved from court to court he would probably have had poems written ready for his arrival. However, once he was established at court, it must be assumed that he was commissioned to write poetry. Fortunatus wrote poetry for noblemen,[58] presumably commissioned by them or by their colleagues. He also wrote for particular occasions, such as Gregory's arrival at Tours and the death of Galswinth, Chilperic's murdered Spanish wife.[59] In addition there were epitaphs,[60] and poetry in prise of inanimate objects such as buildings, flowers and even salvers.[61] Some of the more personal poems to Gregory, and in particular those to Radegund and Agnes at the convent of the Holy Cross in Poitiers, must have been written without prompting. However, with a poem such as Poem 9.1, to Chilperic, where he praises the king while supporting and defending the actions of Gregory, there is a question as to whether Fortunatus was

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[56] Godman 1987, 21, 37
[57] *Carm.* 6.1a; see below 220ff
[58] See below 258ff
[59] *Carm.* 5.3 - Gregory; *Carm.* 6.5 - Galswinth
[60] See Heinzelmann 1976 for detailed discussion of these
[61] Book one of his poetry alone has fifteen poems to churches, for example *Carm.* 1.2, *De templo dominis Andreae* and 1.13, *De basilica S. Eutropii. Carm* 6.6, *De horto Ultrogothae*, describes a garden; *Carm.* 7.24, *versus in gavatis*, is in praise of some dishes.

commissioned or took full responsibility for the work.[62] This poem indicates that by this stage in his career (the poem was written in 580 some fourteen years after Fortunatus first appeared at the Frankish courts), he must have felt secure enough in his position to take the risk of writing and declaiming such a work.

It is important to remember that the works of both Gregory and Fortunatus are literary productions.[63] In their works on and to bishops both authors present their audience with a standardised image; they portray the ideal bishop as the first citizen of the urban community, while at the same time underlining the legitimacy of his rule.[64] While the works of these men offer valuable insights into the life of the community and into the lives of the nobility and the monarchy, it is important to bear in mind both the particular images that they create as well as their various motivations.

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Gregory's *Historiae* and Fortunatus' poetry make a substantial contribution to our understanding of the history of the Frankish kingdom in the sixth century. However, there are other works that can be utilised to further our understanding of this period, and they will be examined below.

1.1.2.3   The *Liber Historiae Francorum* and Fredegar

The *Liber Historiae Francorum* and the *Chronicle* of Fredegar are valuable because, due to the fact that they were written in the seventh

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[62] See below 244ff for details of Gregory's trial
[63] Brennan 1992, 115

century, they contribute to our understanding of the way the Franks created their own early identity.

Some modern historians have been tempted to exploit the stories contained in these two works in the belief that, where an account is not demonstrably wrong, then it may contain nuggets of reliable oral tradition.[65] However, the real interest contained in these stories is not the possibility of recovering stray historical facts, but what the accounts reveal about the historical and literary imagination of the period and the sense of a past shared by historians and their contemporaries. That beliefs about the past failed to correspond in large degree to what we would accept as actually happened casts light on the nature of Frankish historiography, the forces shaping contemporary identity, and the character of early Frankish history.[66]

The date of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* (the *LHF*) cannot be fixed with any degree of certainty, and its author cannot be pinned down. It appears to be a historical work relating to the history of the Franks from their earliest days through to the early days of their successors, the Carolingians, with the emphasis lying on the history of Frankish Gaul during the seventh century.

The author of the *LHF* was evidently well educated by the standards of his lifetime in Gaul. He had a reasonable command of Latin and he demonstrates a commitment to the grammar and form of classical Latin.[67] From the content of the work it can be deduced that

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[64] Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 87; Brennan 1992, 115, 120
[65] See below 158ff for a discussion of the myths contained in these two works.
[66] Murray 2000, 589
[67] Bachrach 1972, 12-16

he lived for some time at the centre of political power in Neustria. He has a clear bias towards all things Neustrian, even going so far as to call Neustria Francia, and this bias is in evidence when he writes about the early history of the Franks. He provides such precise detail about the political activities of the court of Theuderic II (673-690) that it is possible to conclude that he was a member of that king's entourage. For example, his treatment of Fredegund is far more sympathetic than that of Gregory, and he treats her in a far better light than her enemy, Brunhild.[68]

The sources used by the author of the *LHF* can be identified as Gregory of Tours' *Historiae*, Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*, the addition to Marius of Avenches' *Chronicle* and the shorter prologue of the *Lex Salica*. He draws heavily on the first six books of Gregory and these provide the basic outline of his work down to 584.[69] However he does not rely exclusively on him and makes additions of his own. For instance, the early books contain a myth of descent for the Franks,[70] something that Gregory never mentions. This tale comes from a written text that is no longer extant and has little historical foundation. In addition to this story, the author of the *LHF* adds geographical details to those stories taken from Gregory. But he also omits a great deal. For example, he virtually ignores Guntram and portrays Chilperic as a fairly sympathetic character, which is very different to Gregory.[71]

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[68] Bachrach 1972, 9-10
[69] Bachrach 1972, 17
[70] See below 159ff
[71] See below, 214ff Chilpeic and 215ff Guntram, for Gregory's assessment of these two kings.

While offering little of any substance that is new, the *LHF* shows us how the later Franks viewed their predecessors, and the inclusion of the myth allows us to draw conclusions about some of the methods used to create Frankish identity during this period.

Fredegar was a chronicler rather than a historian. He tends to follow an annalistic arrangement with his material and follows where that material leads him. His work comprises four books plus a continuation, and while the first three books are taken entirely from other sources the fourth book and the continuation consist of original material covering the seventh and early eighth centuries. These last sections of the work provide a valuable source for later Frankish Gaul, for they continue the story of the Frankish dynasty from the point at which Gregory stopped.

The identity of the author of this work, traditionally known as Fredegar, has thrown up some problems. The attribution of the work to one author has been considered to be mistaken; therefore it should be regarded as a collection of separate and identifiable pieces to which others might add, rather than a completed whole. The name Fredegar is Frankish, but is not demonstrably the name of any of the authors, and in fact it was not attached to the work until the sixteenth century.[72]

In compiling his chronicle Fredegar represented himself as undertaking two separate tasks. The first of these consisted of excerpting previous written historical material such as Jerome, Hydatius and Gregory; but he did more than just excerpt, for he also abridged or

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[72] Wallace-Hadrill 1962, 15-16; Murray 2000, 447 states that this view of multi-authors is now difficult to sustain, but he gives no reason for this statement.

added material to his excerpts. Second, Fredegar also composed an original chronicle for the period from 584 to his own day.

Book 1 is drawn from the *Liber Generationis*, Nook 2 from Isidore of Seville and Book 3 is drawn from Jerome and Hydatius. Book 4 is drawn in part from Gregory and is in part original work; it picks up from the death of Chilperic and gives a narrative of Frankish history down to 642.[73]

As with the *LHF*, one interesting aspect of Fredegar's *Chronicle* is that he presents his audience with a mythic descent for the Franks. They also provide valuable information on the development of the *Regnum Francorum* in the seventh century, beyond the limit of this dissertation's time-scale. The Franks were evidently keen to underline the fact that they were the rightful rulers of the region and the natural successors to the Roman Empire, and these two works gave them a way of perpetuating that.

1.1.2.4 Other Narrative Sources

There are a number of other sources where we are able to catch a glimpse of the early Franks. They first appear in Aurelius Victor's *De Caesaribus* and also briefly in the *Panegyrici Latini*. Ammianus Marcellinus has cause to mention them in his history, when he is writing about the feats of Julian during his five year stay in Gaul.[74] The Franks next appear in Orosius' *Histories Against the Pagans*, and then briefly in the works of Prosper of Aquitaine, Hydatius, Marius of Avenches and

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[73] Murray 2000, 447
[74] See below 54ff for details.

Salvian of Marseilles, as well as the anonymous work, the *Gallic Chronicle of 511*. The scraps of information contained in these works help us to build up some sort of picture of the activities of the early Franks, although they leave us some way short of a full picture of the activities of the Frankish tribes.[75] It is tempting to try to paint a complete picture of the Franks' early history from these various scraps of information, but that could be misleading, as it would not be a comprehensive history. Nevertheless, the existence of the Franks in these works demonstrate that they were in the psyche of the Empire to such an extent, whether as a positive or a negative force, that they deserved mentioning in these historical works.

1.1.3   Other Literary Sources

There are two other types of material source that can be utilised for this study. One is the Frankish law codes, the *Pactus Legis Salicae*, otherwise known as the *Lex Salica*, and the *Lex Ribuaria*. The other source allows us to catch a glimpse of the lifestyle of the Gallo-Roman nobility during the onslaught of the barbarians: these are their letter collections.

1.1.3.1   Law Codes

Two law codes survive that throw light on the first centuries of Frankish rule in the west, the *Pactus Legis Salicae*, or *Lex Salica*, and the *Lex Ribuaria*. The first of these was promulgated by Clovis in or

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[75] See below 125ff for a full exploration of the early years of Frankish domination and the contribution these historians make to our understanding of it.

around 507, after his defeat of the Visigoths at Vouillé. There is

evidence of the assistance of Gallo-Roman lawyers, most pertinently in

the fact that the code was actually written down, but the laws contained

within it are entirely Germanic. No matching code was drawn up for the

Gallo-Roman subjects of the Frankish kingdom.[76] The *Lex Ribuaria*

was drawn up sometime later and is also a Germanic code, although

again the hands of the lawyers are evident.

It is almost impossible to consider the Frankish codes without

some knowledge of their predecessors. The Roman tradition of law

runs through the Frankish codes, as it does through the other barbarian

codes, and it was one way in which it was preserved and transmitted

through post-Roman Gaul into the Middle Ages.[77] The Franks, the

Burgundians in their *Lex Romana Burgundionum* (first issued by

Gundobad) and the Visigoths in their *Lex Romana Visigothorum* and

Breviarum Alarici (a version of the Theodosian Code), all produced

legal material within a few years of each other during the later fifth and

early sixth centuries.[78] Most of these law codes operated in one way or

another in the Frankish kingdom. The two Frankish codes are the most

Germanic, and they are also similar to each other in that they give the

impression of a people in a transitional phase, between the unwritten

customs of their past and the written word of the Gallo-Romans.[79] The

laws present in the two collections were apparently collected at random

and so both are legal collections more than true law codes. They deal

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[76] This has implications for early fusion between the Gallo-Romans and the Franks.
[77] Wood 1993b, 177
[78] Drew 1991, viii
[79] Drew 1991, viii; Rivers 1986, 1

mainly with private law, for the Franks treated all suits as private ones.[80] The two codes are concerned principally with the compensation and restitution due to individuals when a crime had been committed against them. The main force acting for law and order within the Frankish kingdoms was the bloodfeud, and evidence for this is clear in the codes. Evidence from other sources, such as Gregory, confirms that this was the case.[81] Unfortunately the relation of these codes to the law-in-practice and the administration of justice is often poorly understood.

The earliest written version of the *Lex Salica* consists of sixty-five titles, which were added to throughout the Frankish period and later. These titles had no prologue, or at least none that survives.[82] As a result this code has not been attributed to any particular king or legislator.[83] A short prologue survives in a number of manuscripts which date from the late seventh or early eighth centuries. This prologue raises the question of the extent to which the law was royal and the extent to which it was customary, the answer seeming to be that while there was some royal involvement in the drawing up of the code, it was not a piece of exclusively royal legislation.[84] The *Lex Ribuaria* is somewhat better organised and is a Frankish law book. This code originates in the early seventh century and the influence of the *Lex Burgundionum* is clear.[85]

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[80] Drew 1991, 12; Rivers 1986, 1-2
[81] See below 187ff
[82] Wormald 1977, 108
[83] Wood 1994b, 109
[84] For more details of this discussion, see Wood 1994b, 109-113
[85] Rivers 1986, 7-9

In addition to these two law codes, a small number of edicts of the Frankish kings survive, for example the decrees of Childebert I, Clothar and Childebert II.[86] Between 511 and 558 the brothers Childebert I and Clothar made a series of arrangements that dealt principally with thieves. These arrangements included the reorganisation of local watches and the establishment of *centenae* for handling the pursuit of rustlers. Their measures have clear precedents in Roman administrative practice.[87]

A letter that Clovis addressed to his bishops, Guntram's edict of 585 and Clothar II's decree of 614 are all associated with ecclesiastical legislation.[88] An extensive series of church canons also survives; for example, Orléans I (511), Epaône (517), Orléans III (538), Orléans IV (541), Mâcon I (581/3) and Mâcon I (585). These all contribute to our knowledge of Frankish law-making, as well as demonstrating how involved in Frankish church councils the kings were.[89] The Treaty of Andelot is preserved in Gregory,[90] and this demonstrates that the bishops had an equal interest in the legislative activities of the kings, unsurprising as they often had a direct impact on their activities.

The law-making activities of the Franks, and of the other successor kingdoms, demonstrate that they were keen to establish themselves as the rightful heirs to the Roman Empire in the west.

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[86] Murray 2000, 557ff
[87] Murray 2000, 557-560
[88] *Cap. Mer.* 1, 5, 9
[89] See below 65, 249, 250

1.1.3.2   Letter Collections

The Gallo-Roman nobility of the late fourth and fifth centuries that continued to reside in Gaul considered it their responsibility to preserve what they considered to be the cultural heritage of the Roman Empire. One of the ways in which they did this was to write letters to each other. This very small circle of men included members of the secular nobility, as well as some among their number who had turned to the church and were pursuing careers there.[91] The two principal letter collections extant today are those of Sidonius Apollinaris and Ruricius of Limoges. While neither lived in the *Regnum Francorum* they did live in the Visigothic kingdom. Their letters illuminate both what it was like to live under a barbarian regime and how they came to terms with it, as well as furnishing us with some clues as to why the Visigoths failed where the Franks later succeeded.[92]

1.2   Modern Literature Review

At the outset of my research, there were several introductory works that sparked my interest in the early history of the Franks, and which have since served as invaluable reference works. Published in 1994 Wood's *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, offers a comprehensive and detailed introduction to the history of the Franks, and covers their story from their first appearance on the world stage to

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[90] *DLH* 9.20
[91] See below 81ff for details of this phenomenon.
[92] See below 63ff for a discussion of the possible reasons for the failure of the Visigoths to make their kingdom a permanent presence in southern Gaul.

the end of the *Regnum Francorum*.[93]   James' *The Franks* offers an

introduction to the Franks from a more archaeological point of view,[94]

and further introductory material can be found in Lasko's *The Kingdom*

of the Franks: North-West Europe Before Charlemagne.[95]

In German we have the work of Zöllner, *Geschichte der Franken*

bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts; this first appeared over thirty

years ago but remains a valuable study of the early Franks up to the

end of the sixth century.[96] Also in German are the works of Stroheker,

whose *Der senatorische Adel in spätantiken Gallien* not only tells us a

great deal in general about the aristocracy of late Roman Gaul but who

also offers a detailed prosopography of its members.[97] Stroheker's

major articles on aspects of Frankish history have been brought

together in one volume, *Germanentum und Spätantike*.[98] More recently

Bleiber's *Das Frankenreich der Merowinger* also provides an

introduction to this period.[99] Francophone historians have also made a

valuable contribution to the field, and these include a number of

important studies, for example Durliat's *Les finances publiques de*

Diocletian aux carolingiens (284-889) and de Clerq's work on church

councils, *La législation religieuse franque de Clovis à Charlemagne*.[100]

Works on the Franks include the work of Fustel de Coulanges on the

Frankish monarchy, *La Monarchie franque* and Kurth's essays on

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[93] Wood 1994b
[94] James 1988
[95] Lasko 1971
[96] Zöllner 1970
[97] Stroheker 1948, 1970
[98] Stroheker 1965
[99] Bleiber 1988
[100] Durliat 1990; de Clerq 1936

various aspects of Frankish society, collected together in *Etudes franques*.[101]

Traditionally, the arrival of the barbarians in the west was viewed by historians as calamitous and one of the principal reasons for the downfall of the Western Empire. These attitudes are to be found in publications such as Bury's *The Invasion of Europe* and Thompson's *Romans and Barbarians*, Bloch's *La société féodale*, Demouget's *La formation de l'Europe et les invasions barbares*, Latouche's *Les grandes invasions*, Lot's *Les invasions germaniques* and Musset's *Les Invasions*.[102]

The history of Gaul up to the late fourth century has been covered extensively. Most important here are Jullian's *Histoire de la Gaule*,[103] Ewig's *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien*[104] and various works by Drinkwater, including *Roman Gaul*, *The Gallic Empire* and *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?*[105]. Also important are Planahol and Claval on the historical geography of the region, *An Historical Geography of France*,[106] and Woolf's *Becoming Roman*.[107]

For religion during this period we must turn to Brown. His works include books such as *The World of Late Antiquity*, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, *The Cult of the Saints* and *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*.[108] Also on religion, and in particular on bishops, we have

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[101] Fustel de Coulanges 1905; Kurth 1919
[102] Bury 1967; Thompson 1982; Bloch 1939; Demouget 1979; Latouche 1946; Lot 1945; Musset 1965
[103] Jullian 1920
[104] Ewig 1976-1979
[105] Drinkwater 1983, 1987a, 1992
[106] Planahol & Claval 1994
[107] Woolff 1998
[108] Brown 1971a, 1978, 1981, 1992

works such as Heinzelmann's *Bischofsherrschaft im Gallien*,[109]
Scheibelreiter's *Der bischof in merowingischer Zeit*[110] and Mathisen's
The Ecclesiastical Aristocracy of Fifth-Century Gaul and *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul.*[111]

The two main strands of recent scholarly interest in this period have been focused on ethnicity and strategies of distinction. One of the most important of these studies is Wenskus' volume, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*; he was one of the first practitioners of this method of studying history.[112] His work laid the foundation for more recent works such as that edited by Pohl, *Strategies of Distinction*,[113] and his *Kingdoms of Empire*,[114] Eriksen's *Ethnicity and Nationalism*,[115] and Wood's *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period.*[116] Also interesting, although not directly relevant to this period, is Hall's *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*;[117] the introduction to this volume contains observations that can be applied to the early Frankish period. While recognising the value of the study of ethnogenesis, in particular as a tool for the study of the early Germanic peoples and for the recognition of the fact that early Franks were Germanic and not yet Franks, my own approach is more old-fashioned, with my interest lying principally in the personal and political development of this society.

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[109] Heinzelmann 1976
[110] Scheibelreiter 1983
[111] Mathisen 1979, 1993
[112] Wenskus 1961
[113] Pohl 1998c
[114] Pohl 1997
[115] Eriksen 1993
[116] Wood 1998c
[117] Hall 1997

My initial reading of the history of the Franks prompted me to wonder why it was that the Franks were so successful in establishing themselves and the *Regnum Francorum* during the later years of the fifth century and throughout the sixth. A reading of some of the sources and of the modern works relating to the invasions of the barbarians gives the impression that the barbarians were to be regarded as a universal evil, responsible for the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west. Yet, ultimately, the Franks were responsible for maintaining some of the traditions of the Empire and passing them on to future generations through the Middle Ages and beyond; in a sense they preserved the Roman Empire. And again, why was it that the Franks were successful when, by looking at the establishment of the Visigoths in southern Gaul during the middle of the fifth century, it might have seemed that they were destined to take over where the Roman Empire had left off. These were the questions that prompted me to look further into the history of this age. Further reading led me to the nobility, and to the part that they evidently played in the establishment of the Franks and of the continuation of Roman values.

As one of the principal sources for this period and the contemporary author who wrote most about the early Franks, a large number of scholars have written about Gregory of Tours. These include Heinzelmann's *Gregor von Tours*,[118] Goffart's *The Narrators of Barbarian History*,[119] Wood's articles 'Gregory of Tours and Clovis' and

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[118] Heinzelmann 1993
[119] Goffart 1988

'The secret histories of Gregory of Tours', and his *Gregory of Tours*,[120] and de Nie's *View From a Many Windowed Tower*.[121] Works on our other principal source, Fortunatus, include George's *Venantius Fortunatus: a Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul*,[122] Koebner's *Venantius Fortunatus*,[123] Meyer's *Der Gelegenheitsdichter Venantius Fortunatus*,[124] Tardi's *Fortunat*[125] and, more recently, Reydellet's *Venance Fortunat*.[126]

In addition to modern histories a number of useful reference books exist that help in the study of this period. These include Stroheker's prosopography.[127] In addition are volumes II and III of the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*,[128] and Heinzelmann's *Gallische Prosopographie*.[129]

Recent translations of the source material have also proved invaluable to this study. The Translated Texts for Historians series includes translations of Gregory's *Glory of the Confessors*, *Glory of the Martyrs* and *Life of the Fathers*,[130] Fortunatus' *Personal and Political Poems*,[131] the testament and letters of Caesarius of Arles[132] and the letter of Ruricius of Limoges.[133] The letters of Sidonius appear in two

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[120] Wood 1985, 1993a, 1994a
[121] de Nie 1987
[122] George 1992
[123] Koebner 1915
[124] Meyer 1901
[125] Tardi 1927
[126] Reydellet 1994
[127] See above, note 97
[128] *PLRE* II, 1980; *PLRE* III 1982
[129] Heinzelmann 1982
[130] Van Dam 1988, James 1991
[131] George 1995
[132] Klingshirn 1994
[133] Mathisen 1999

volumes published in the Loeb series.[134] Finally, Murray's recently

published *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul* gathers together the vast

majority of the extant source material relating to the Franks into one

volume.[135]

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There are many other works that have contributed to the study of

this period in late antique history, a number of which may be found

listed in the bibliography. However, those detailed above are those that

generated my initial interest in the period and led to the narrowing of

focus on to the subject of this dissertation.

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[134] Anderson 1936, 1956, 1963, 1980, 1996
[135] Murray 2000

Part 1: Gaul

The first and, for a long time, the only state of western Europe was the Roman state. The continental north-western provinces of the Roman Empire, known collectively as Gaul, had long played an important part in its history. Conquered by Caesar towards the end of the first century BC, the region remained a part of the Empire until the withdrawal of Roman authority during the final years of the fifth century. The Gallic provinces served not only as a base for the invasion of Britain but also as a launching pad for attacks across the Rhine against the Germanic tribes. And it was from across the Rhine, from the north-east, that the most successful of the successor kingdoms, that of the Franks, was to begin its conquest of Gaul towards the end of the fifth century.

In addition to the barbarians, another influence for change that appeared during the third and fourth centuries was Christianity and its growth from a small, persecuted sect to the official religion of the empire. Constantine became the first Christian emperor, and from then on the adoption of this religion, as Catholic or Arian Christianity, was to have a direct impact on the success or failure of the barbarian tribes in their attempts to establish themselves within the territory of the Empire.

By the third century, Gallic society, i.e. the Gallic upper-classes, was fully Romanised and was happy to remain Roman. Its main concern was order and stability, and if the current emperor was not able to provide this then local landowners were prepared to support the usurpations of those men, soldiers or fellow-landowners, who would.

Up to the end of the fourth century any apparent support for separatism, such as the creation of the 'Gallic Empire' and the uprisings of the Bagaudae, were relatively short lived and the 'imperial habit' was soon able to reinstate itself as the dominant force in the region. However, what would be the consequences of the Empire's failure to fulfil this function of maintaining order in the long-term? Would the Gallic landowners turn to themselves, or would they turn to others, such as the barbarians and their kings? Would the Gallo-Romans choose to go-it-alone and, if so, why? And what would the role of the nobility, the local leaders of this society, be? Would they co-operate with the newcomers, or stick resolutely to the old order?

In order to be able to appreciate the full impact of both the conquest of the Franks and the consequent fusion of Gallo-Roman and Frankish peoples in Gaul, it is important to understand the history of the region and the influences that shaped the lives of its people. This section of the dissertation will consist of a, necessarily, brief overview of the history of the region, from its first appearance as part of the Empire in the first century BC to the withdrawal of Roman authority towards the end of the fifth century. This will simplify the process of exploring the impact of the Frankish conquests of the sixth century that will come later.

Chapter 2

The Gallic Background

2.1   Narrative History

2.1.1 Gaul and the Empire

It is Caesar himself, in his *De Bello Gallica*, who tells us the history of his conquest of Gaul for Rome. The southern reaches of the region, an area known as *Gallia Comata*, Provincia and later Narbonensis, had been a part of the Empire for over three-quarters of a century. What Caesar's campaign did was to bring the remainder of the territory under Roman control.

Caesar entered southern Gaul in March 58 BC and by 52 BC had succeeded in conquering the majority of the region (see Figure 1, below). In order to ease the governing of Provincia, as well as to settle his veteran legions, Caesar established four colonies in the south.[1] In the whole of the remainder of the region only three similar colonies were founded.[2] The main Gallic heartland remained untouched. Caesar promoted loyalty to himself and buttressed the power of local aristocratic leaders with valuable gifts and concessions. The power of the local aristocrats was to play an important part in the history of Gaul from these early days through to the collapse of Roman authority and beyond. It is a continuous thread that runs through the history of the Gallic people.

The assassination of Caesar in 44 BC led, eventually, to the accession of Augustus to imperial honours. Augustus first visited Gaul

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[1] Narbo (Narbonne), Arelate (Arles), Forum Iulii (Fréjus) and Baeterrae (Béziers)
[2] Noviodonum (Noyon), Raurica (Augst) and Lugdunum (Lyon)

in 39/38 BC, and on his second visit in 27 BC recognised Provincia as a separate province, now known as Narbonensis.

Fig. 2 The Four Gauls, according to Julius Caesar, taken from Drinkwater 1983, map 1, p.232

During this same visit the remainder of the region was divided into three provinces, Aquitania, Belgica and Lugdunensis, and these became known as the Three Gauls (see figure 3, below).[3]
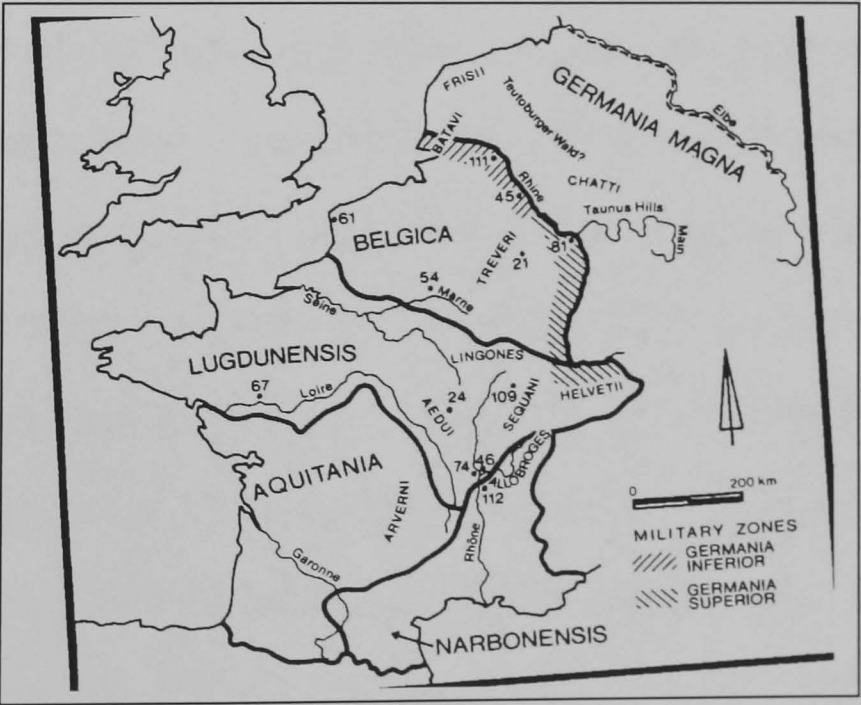
Fig. 3 The Three Gauls Under the Early Empire, taken from Drinkwater 1983, map 2, p.233

Continuing development marked the first and second centuries, and the period leading to the establishment of the Gallic Empire (260-274) was one of peace, settlement and wealth. The later third century saw a change and was an era when disruption and destruction afflicted the Roman Empire, although this was not uniform, as some areas were affected far less than others.[4] A narrative of the events of the third century is complex, due in part to the lack of good source material, but a brief sketch is necessary since what happened at the centre had a direct affect on Gaul.

The third century marked a period of 'crisis' throughout the Empire and the traditional dates for this period are 235-285. However, it is possible that it began much later, in 249, with the accession of Decius and closed well into the reign of Diocletian in the 290's.

The death of Severus Alexander in 235 brought the end of the Severan dynasty and the beginning of a period of some fifty years that saw about twenty-two legitimate emperors as well as a large number of usurpers wielding power. The main features of this period were internal political instability and external disturbances; threats came to the borders of the empire from both the Persians and the Germanic tribes. In addition, there was also religious uncertainty, for Christianity had begun to make its mark. Some emperors, such as Decius (249-251) and Valerian (253-260), instituted persecutions against Christians while others, such as Philip (244-249) and Gallienus (253-268), were far more tolerant of the new religion.

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[3] Drinkwater 1983, 20-21; Goudineau 1996, 468

The crisis of the third century has generated controversy among scholars as to its root causes. There is also a debate about whether this period should be regarded not as one of crisis but as one of accelerated change and forced evolution. Current thinking tends towards the belief that it was not foreign threats, but civil war and the tendency towards 'centripetalism', the tendency to move towards or concentrate on the centre i.e. Rome, plus the precarious nature of the imperial office, that brought about the prolonged crisis.

During the early years of the Roman Empire, particularly under Augustus, the emperor's position had been nominally that of a 'super-magistrate'. Then, in the later first and second centuries, successive emperors had used more overtly autocratic behaviour, culminating in the reign of the Severan dynasty and in particular that of Septimius Severus. He was determined to see the changes that had taken place in the emperor's position brought into the light. He openly relied on the army for its support and in this recognised a fundamental truth, that all emperors relied heavily on the armed forces and had, in fact, been from the start institutionalised war-lords. But war-lords could challenge each other; and the crisis of the middle years of the third century can therefore be viewed as a violent debate about the imperial position. It ended only under Diocletian.

After Diocletian was hailed as emperor in the East in 284 order was restored and the Empire was once again established on a sound footing. Diocletian eventually established a new imperial hierarchy, the

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[4] Britain, for example, felt few of the effects of the crisis that occurred during the middle to later years of the third century.

tetrarchy, whereby power was distributed between two pairs of senior (*Augusti*) and junior (*Caesars*) emperors. The Empire itself was not divided, but the ruling and management of it were.[5] In addition, Diocletian reformed certain aspects of the empire's administration, giving it a far more bureaucratic organisation and elevating the status of the emperor himself to that of an almost divine figure. One of the reforms he instituted was the breaking up of the larger provinces and the creation of separate military commanders, *duces*, in many of the frontier areas. Diocletian grouped the provinces into dioceses, twelve in all, which were governed by *vicarii* or deputies of the praetorian prefects. The two dioceses of Gaul, *Galliae* and *Septem Provinciae*, were administered from Trier.[6]

Until the middle of the third century the 'crisis' had little appreciable effect on the Gallic provinces.[7] However, in 250, Eutropius briefly records the suppression of a civil war in Gaul by Decius, and from then on it is possible to discern a change in the attitude of the provinces. In 252 Decius died fighting the Goths and his successor, Gallus, fell to Aemilian in 253. Shortly afterwards Aemilian was killed by his own troops and in the later summer of 253 Valerian, Gallus' general, ascended the imperial throne. Almost immediately he proclaimed his son Gallienus as his heir and shortly thereafter as his co-emperor. Valerian then took his army east to confront the Persians, leaving Gallienus to defend the west. Late in 253 or early in 254 Gallienus

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[5] See below 141ff for the significance of this for the Franks.
[6] Jones 1964, 373
[7] The following narrative of the 'Gallic Empire' is based on that given in Drinkwater 1987a

began to campaign on the Danube, where he remained until 256. It was while he was there that he proclaimed his son Valerian II his heir.

Early in 257 Gallienus moved to the Rhine with his youngest son Saloninus, leaving Valerian II on the Danube to act as the imperial figurehead; the real power was in the hands of Ingenuus, governor of Pannonia. By 258 Valerian II was dead. Gallienus worked hard to defend the Rhine frontier and by 259 considered the situation secure enough for him to move to Milan, leaving Saloninus at Trier under the guardianship of Silvanus.

Peace was not destined to last long for, during the campaigning season of 260, the Persians captured Valerian. This incident precipitated a revolt by Ingenuus but Gallienus was swift to put it down. Then, perhaps sensing the lack of imperial control, barbarians crossed the northern frontier. Frankish warriors crossed into Gaul, with the brunt of the attack coming in the provinces of Lower Germany and Belgica.[8] The Alamanni also posed a danger, for they finally succeeded in overrunning the *Agri Decumates*. The barbarians entered Italy and when they became a threat to Rome Gallienus travelled there swiftly, straight from his victory over Ingenuus, and defeated them in the battle of Milan during the summer of 260. Gallienus then began to restore his northern defences, but then Regalian, another potential usurper, revolted on the Danube. That revolt was borne down by an invasion of Sarmatians. This all left the north-west frontier of the Empire exposed. When Marcus Cassianius Latinius Postumus, a Roman general, rebelled on the Rhine, Gallienus was unable to react quickly enough

and the Gallic Empire was born. With this situation, this series of barbarian incursions into the Empire, it is easy to see how contemporary historians came to consider them as a disruptive and threatening force.[9]

Postumus did not rebel either as an imperial intriguer or in order to exploit Rome's humiliation following the capture of Valerian. Indeed, it seems that it was his initial reaction was to stay loyal to Gallienus. It was a disagreement that he had with Silvanus over how to deal with the barbarians that led to his discontent. It was as a soldier that Postumus revolted; the Gallic provinces would do better with a firm hand at the helm and with a strong imperial presence in the region. This is direct evidence of how far the Romanisation of Gaul had progressed, for this rebellion was carried out because the Gallic nobility wanted to be ruled in a Roman manner. This was to be a consistent aspect of Gallic life, with the local population preferring local to distant, imperial control.[10]

Shortly after Postumus' revolt Silvanus tried to counter it by proclaiming Saloninus Augustus and ordering the transfer of the imperial court from Trier to Cologne. Postumus besieged Cologne, that city capitulated, and Saloninus and Silvanus were handed over and put to death. Postumus was now the undisputed leader of the Gallic provinces.

Gallienus could not ignore the fact of Postumus' mastery in Gaul. He tried to provoke Postumus into battle; the latter refused the

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[8] Aurelius Victor 33; see below 126ff for the details of early Frankish history
[9] See above 36; we must not forget that these historians also had an interest in describing them as such, as the barbarian 'other'.

challenge and convinced Gallienus that he had no intention of venturing outside Gaul. As soon as he had satisfied himself that Postumus was telling the truth Gallienus left the region in peace so that he could direct his attention elsewhere. Postumus presented himself as the leader of Gaul, not of the Empire, and although he had all the trappings of imperial power he had no imperial ambitions to rule over the entire Roman Empire. Postumus was emperor of Gaul.

This is further emphasised by the fact that in 262 and 263 Postumus took the field against the barbarians and defeated them. He then returned to Trier and celebrated his victory and his fifth anniversary of coming to power. These events underline the fact that Postumus was acting as a 'Roman Emperor' for, in fighting and defeating the barbarians and in celebrating triumphs and anniversaries, he was duplicating the acts of the Roman Emperors.

During 269 Postumus was murdered by his troops and was succeeded by Marius, then Victorinus and finally Tetricus.[11] 269 also saw Narbonensis and all the territory east of the Rhône recognising Claudius II as emperor, and this led to instability within the Gallic Empire. When Claudius II died in mid-270 he was succeeded for a short time by his brother Quintillus, and then by Aurelian. It was this man who would reclaim the Gallic provinces for the Empire.

It was the year 273 that saw the beginning of the end of the Gallic Empire. Having restored peace in the east Aurelian turned his attention west. He expelled Alamannic invaders from Italy and then

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[10] See below 52, 70-76, 83-94, 103, 113, 123, 133, 146-147, 168-169, 172-176, 181, 188, 208, 274-275 for further instances of this happening.

turned to Gaul. He moved against Tetricus in northern Gaul, who soon surrendered. Tetricus participated in Valerian's triumph in Rome and was then appointed to a senior administrative post in Italy; in addition, the senatorial status of his son was confirmed. The fact that Tetricus was not put to death and was given a senatorial role is an acknowledgement of the fact that, while the Gallic Empire was considered to be a break away from the Roman Empire, in some way Aurelian recognised that it was not trying to be independent and that it had retained the Roman way of life. In reclaiming Gaul and the western provinces for the empire Aurelian was no doubt following imperial policy, but in doing so he took away from that region the direct imperial attention that it had enjoyed for the previous fifteen years and left it once more vulnerable to attack from the outside.

The Gallic Empire was based on the premise that it was only under Postumus' leadership that the citizens of Gaul would be adequately protected from the threat of the barbarians. However, there was no western or separatist feeling. Postumus' pattern of administration, followed by all of his successor, was based on purely Roman lines, with Roman titles and offices for the emperors and their subordinates, including a line of consuls. The Gallic Empire preserved Roman traditions and interests.[12] This meant that the identity of the population as Gallo-Romans was preserved throughout this period of separation from the Roman Empire, and that the Gallo-Roman way of life was preserved and was continuous in Gaul.

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[11] Aurelius Victor 33, Postumus 9.9, 9.10
[12] Stroheker 1948, 25

It is almost impossible to determine from the available sources whether or not a senate was established for these western provinces. However, if we consider that the best way of honouring and involving while at the same time monitoring the activity of the leading Gallic aristocrats would have been through the establishment of such an institution, then the possibility of some sort of assembly cannot be ruled out completely. On the surface the rulers of the west presented themselves as Roman emperors with authority over the whole of the Roman world although, in fact, their only authority lay in Gaul.

The Gallic Empire, 260-274, marks a break in Gallic history between the early and late empires, as the 'Imperial Crisis' marks a break for the empire as a whole. With the end of this period and the establishment of the tetrarchy a new period opens in the history of both the empire and Gaul. This period in Gallic history also demonstrates the continuing importance of local power for the preservation of peace in Gaul. Postumus rebelled in part because he was concerned for the safety of the region, and by having a power base in the north-east he successfully repelled barbarian invasions. This local concern for the safety of the region was something that was to come through again in the succeeding centuries as the Western Empire became ever more unstable.

The proclamation of Diocletian as Augustus on 20 November 284 marked a turning point in the history of the Roman Empire.[13] It marked the beginning of the consolidation of the emperor's position as well as the point at which the Eastern and Western halves of the Empire

began to draw further apart. His creation of two *Augusti* and *Caesarii* meant that there was a 'local' emperor in four parts of the Empire, including Gaul, and the establishment of an imperial capital at Trier emphasised this. It allowed the Gallo-Romans to feel the security that they perceived as coming from having an emperor permanently resident within the region. It also allowed the Gallo-Romans to participate in imperial politics without having to move from Gaul.

In May 305 Diocletian stepped down from the imperial office and for the next nineteen years, until the establishment of Constantine as sole ruler in 324, a continuous battle for supremacy raged between several claimants to the imperial throne.[14] Two significant developments took place during Constantine's reign; first was the re-establishment of the hereditary right to rule, for the emperor bequeathed the empire to his three sons to be shared between them.[15] Second, Constantine converted the Christianity, a fact that was to have an immense impact on the future of the Empire as a whole.[16]

Constantine died in 337 and the empire was divided between his sons; by 353 Constantius II was sole emperor, after a series of events that led to the death of his brothers.[17] He soon came to realise that he was unable to fight on two fronts and so turned to the only two

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[13] See above 46ff for brief details of his more significant reforms.

[14] There is no space here to go into the details of these events; further details of these turbulent years are to be found in Barnes 1981, Freeman 1996, Jones 1978, Le Glay 1996, 455-466, MacMullen 1969

[15] Constantine II was to rule in Gaul, Spain and Britain; Constans in Africa, Italy and Elyria; and Constantius II in the east.

[16] See below 77ff for a discussion of Constantine's conversion and of the religious disputes that he faced.

[17] In 340 Constans defeated Constantine II and reunited the west before himself being killed in 350 by the usurper Magnentius in Gaul. The latter was defeated in 351 by Constantius II and committed suicide in 353.

remaining members of his family who had survived the purge that

followed his elevation to the imperial throne, appointing each in turn a

caesar. These were, first Gallus who was soon executed and, second,

his brother Julian, who was elevated to the rank in 355 in the presence

of the emperor and sent to Gaul.[18]

Julian, despite his cousin's wishes, made a great success of his

rule in Gaul. In three campaigning seasons he defeated both the

Franks and the Alamanni and restored peace to the Rhine frontier.[19]

Ammianus Marcellinus provides us with three vivid accounts of Julian

fighting the Franks and on two of these occasions the overriding

impression is of Julian picking a fight. The first clash appears in book

seventeen, chapter two. Some 'strong companies of Frankish

skirmishers, who to the number of 600, as later emerged, were laying

waste unprotected areas.'[20] Julian returned from where he was fighting

the Alamanni and blockaded the two strongholds where the Franks had

taken refuge from the Roman army. The siege lasted for 'fifty-four days'

but eventually the Franks surrendered and a large force of Franks that

had set out to rescue them '...made no further effort and returned

home'.[21]

Julian's next encounter with the Franks comes in chapter eight of

book seventeen. Here Julian decides to fight the barbarians not during

the traditional campaigning season, which began in July, but during the

winter.

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[18] Ammianus 15.8.2-17
[19] Ammianus 16.2, 16.11-12, 17.1, 17.8; Le Glay 1996, 535-537; Jones 1966, 55-61
[20] Ammianus 17.2
[21] Ammianus 17.2

> His first objective was the Franks, those specifically who were usually called
> the Salii; they had had the temerity in the past to settle themselves on Roman
> soil at Toxandria. When he arrived at Tongres he was met by a deputation
> from this people, who supposed that they would find him still in winter
> quarters. They offered peace on condition that they should be left undisturbed
> and unmolested in what they regarded as their own territory, provided that
> they gave no trouble. After fully considering the matter Julian suggested
> some complicated conditions and sent them away with gifts; they were under
> the impression that he would remain in the same area till their return. But
> once they had gone he followed them in a flash, and sending his general
> Severus along the river fell suddenly on the whole body and smote them like a
> thunderbolt. Instead of resisting they fell to entreaties; so, using his victory as
> a favourable opportunity to show mercy, he accepted their surrender with their
> goods and families. A like fate befell the Chamavi, who had dared to behave
> in a similar way.[22]

The picture painted here is of the Franks eager for peaceful relations between themselves and Rome; they do not seem to be eager to fight with Julian for land but would prefer to negotiate with him. Unfortunately that was not possible as, in his position, Julian was motivated by the politics of the Empire to defeat the barbarians on as many occasions as possible.

The third encounter between Julian and the Franks comes in book twenty, chapter ten of Ammianus, and takes place after his elevation to Augustus. Having sent envoys to Constantius in the east, Julian

> …crossed the Rhine and suddenly appeared in the territory of the Frankish
> tribe called the Attuari, a wild people who were at that time ranging freely over
> the frontiers of Gaul.[23]

Julian defeated the Attuari, and while the majority were captured or killed a number of survivors sued for peace. Julian granted this, and then re-crossed the Rhine, recovering the places which the barbarians had taken, and improving the frontier defences. Again, the overriding impression gained is of Julian taking the initiative and attacking a

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[22] Ammianus 17.8, trans. Hamilton 1986
[23] Ammianus 20.10, trans. Hamilton 1986

Frankish tribe, not of his being on the defensive and having to defend Gaul against marauding barbarians.[24]

Late in 359 Constantius II, perhaps fearing a rebellion but also in need of troops on the eastern front, demanded that Julian send him some of his best soldiers. Julian was reluctant and gave the order; however, his men mutinied and declared his emperor. Julian marched east to meet his cousin, but before he had reached Constantinople, the latter died. Julian became sole ruler of the empire from 361 to his death mounting a campaign in Persia in 363. The death of his successor Jovian in 364 heralded the arrival of a new imperial dynasty, that of Valentinian.

Valentinian I was a Pannonian by birth. An army officer, he succeeded Jovian in February 364 at Nicaea, and later in the same year appointed his brother Valens his co-emperor. Valentinian would take charge of the West while Valens was to remain in the East.

By now an old threat to the security of the Empire had re-appeared on its north-eastern borders, the Goths. By the middle of the fourth century several tribes of barbarians were agitating to be allowed to settle within the empire. Eventually Valens gave permission for some, but not all, of the Goths to be allowed in. Having been admitted they were then treated very badly by the Romans and so rebelled, fighting and defeating their oppressors at Adrianople in August 378. Valens was killed during this encounter. Theodosius, a Spanish army

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[24] See below 128ff for further discussion of this early involvement of the Franks in Julian's campaigns and their impact on the history of the Roman Empire.

officer in retirement in Spain, was recalled and elevated to the imperial position. He was proclaimed emperor on 19 January 379.[25]

Meanwhile events in Gaul had been continuing at a rapid and often confusing rate. While Valens was campaigning against the Goths in the east, Valentinian was fighting the Germans in the west. He appointed his son Gratian emperor in 367, and died of a fit in 375. Gratian spent the majority of his reign in the west fighting the Germans and was killed at Lyons in 383, after being overthrown by the usurper Magnus Maximus. Gratian's reign marks the point at which the Gallo-Roman nobility appear briefly in positions of power within the imperial administration, due to the influence of Gratian's tutor Ausonius.[26]

When Magnus Maximus' usurpation took place Theodosius was too preoccupied in negotiating a settlement with the Goths in the east to travel west in support of Valentinian II, Gratian's brother and the new emperor in the west, who was based at Milan. It was not until 387 that Theodosius was able to travel, but when he did he defeated Magnus Maximus and confirmed Valentinian II's position on the imperial throne. He then returned to the east. In 392 Valentinian II was found dead, his position usurped by Eugenius through the machinations of Arbogast, Valentinian II's *magister militum*, a man of Germanic extraction. Again Theodosius travelled west, this time taking with him his son, Honorius. Of Theodosius' two sons Arcadius, the elder, had been proclaimed Augustus in 383, and on both of his father's trips to the west had been left behind in charge of the east. Honorius, the younger son, was

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[25] Details of the activities of the Goths and the circumstances surrounding their admittance into the Empire may be found in Heather 1991, 1996; Wolfram 1988

proclaimed Augustus in 393. Theodosius defeated Eugenius late in 394 but shortly afterwards died in Milan on 17 January 395.

Theodosius' two sons were left to inherit, Arcadius in the east and Honorius in the west. The early years of Honorius' reign were dominated by the friction between Stilicho, another man of Germanic extraction, and Alaric. The latter had become leader of the Visigoths in the years following the battle at Adrianople. In 395 he led his people into Greece, devastating the land there, and in 401 they entered Italy. The next ten years saw both diplomacy and threatening behaviour between Honorius, and Alaric. This culminated in the sack of Rome in August 410.[27] Shortly afterwards Alaric led his people south, but late in 410 he died. His successor Athaulf, led the Goths into Gaul.[28]

The situation surrounding the imperial throne in Gaul became complex during the early fifth century. In 425 Honorius died and was succeeded by Valentinian III; he in turn was murdered in 455. His death marked the end of the rule of the Theodosian house in the west. Valentinian III's successor, Petronius Maximus, was killed in the events surrounding the Vandal sack of Rome in 455. In response the Goths, who were now established in southern Gaul and known as the Visigoths, raised the Gallic aristocrat, Eparchius Avitus, to the imperial throne.[29] This was the high-water mark of Gallic participation in the affairs of the Empire. It is also significant in as much as it was the Goths, the 'barbarian invaders', who raised him to the imperial throne.

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[26] See below 101ff for details of Ausonius' career and influences.
[27] Further details of the events leading to the sack of Rome can be found in Heather 1991, 1996; Williams and Friell 1994; Wolfram 1988.
[28] See below 60ff for further details

This event has some significance for dealings between the Gallo-Romans and the Visigoths, for it indicates that there was acceptance of their presence among at least some members of the nobility.

Avitus was opposed by his own general, Ricimer, who supported Majorian; by the end of 456 Avitus was dead and Majorian was the new emperor. In 461 he in turn fell out of favour with Ricimer, was murdered, and succeeded by Severus. The death of Majorian alienated his supporters from the Roman Empire, most notably the Gallo-Roman Aegidius, who began an independent career in Soissons.[30] In 456, while Severus was still holding the imperial office, Ricimer raised Anthemius to the purple only to have him executed and replaced by Olybrius in 472. Olybrius died in the same year and was succeeded by Glycerius, who in turn was replaced by Julius Nepos in 474. In 476 both Nepos and his successor Romulus Augustulus were deposed. This brought to an end to effective Roman rule in Gaul and marked the beginning of another new period in the history of the region.

The accessions and successions of these last Roman emperors of the west were controlled first by Ricimer, a Roman general of mixed Visigothic and Suevic extraction, and then by Gundobad, a member of the Burgundian royal family. Gundobad was a loyal supporter of Ricimer and took over his position at court following his death. Their careers, and those of Arbogast and Stilicho, point to the fact that men of barbarian origin were holding important and influential positions at court and also that by the final quarter of the fifth century the history of the

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[29] See above 58 and below 62 for further details.
[30] See below 134ff for details; Wood 1994b, 14-15

barbarian tribes had become inextricably intertwined with that of the Empire.

2.1.2 Gaul and the Barbarians

The early fifth century saw events take a dramatic turn in Gaul. In late December 406 the Rhine frontier was breached and a barbarian force made up of Vandals, Sueves and Alans swept across the river into the empire.[31]

> ...the Alans, Sueves, Vandals, as well as many others with them, overwhelmed the Franks, crossed the Rhine, invaded Gaul, and advanced in their onward rush as far as the Pyrenees.[32]

They wandered through southern Gaul for three years, causing great devastation, before crossing into Spain in 409. In 407 Constantine III usurped power in Britain and crossed into Gaul, setting up his capital at Arles in May 408. Constantine III was defeated by Honorius' generals in 411.

In 412 Athaulf crossed into southern Gaul from Italy and the Visigoths established themselves in Narbonne and the surrounding territory.[33] On first arriving in southern Gaul Athaulf joined a confederacy of Burgundians and Alans that established another usurper, Jovinus, on the imperial throne. However, Athaulf soon deserted him and made his peace with Honorius and the empire, as he was determined that his people should have a legitimate position within the Empire. Soon afterwards Jovinus was defeated and executed. Ultimately Athaulf failed to gain what he wanted for his followers, but his

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[31] Prosper, *Chronicle* 1230
[32] Orosius 40
[33] Wolfram 1988, 161-162; Heather 1991, 219-220

wish to become a part of the Empire can be demonstrated by his marriage to Galla Placidia, Honorius' sister, who had been a captive of the Visigoths since 410. In 415 Athaulf led his people into Spain but was murdered shortly thereafter.

Athaulf was succeeded by Sigeric. He was succeeded in a matter of days by Wallia, who had him murdered. Wallia attempted to lead the Visigoths into Africa, but failed. Eventually he came to terms with Constantius III, Valentinian III's father who had married Galla Placidia after Athaulf died. In 418 or 419 a new treaty with the empire meant that the Visigoths moved from Spain and were settled in Aquitaine, in the area surrounding Toulouse.[34] Unfortunately Wallia died before he saw his plans coming to fruition but Theoderid, who succeeded him, saw his people settled. After generations of wandering through the empire it would seem that at last the Visigoths were able to settle.

The Visigoths remained relatively loyal to the empire but, in 422, they deserted her during a campaign against the Vandals in Spain. In 425 they attacked Arles, taking advantage of the confusion surrounding the establishment of Valentinian III to do so. In 430 they attacked Arles again, this time while there was tension between the Roman generals Aëtius and Boniface, and in 433 they supported Galla Placidia against Aëtius. In 436 the Visigoths tried to expand their kingdom into the Rhône valley, but were checked by Aëtius. In 446 they fought for Rome against the Sueves in Spain and in 451 they were the bulk of the force that faced Attila at the battle of the Catalaunian Plains. The victory over

Attila may be viewed not as a victory of Rome over the barbarians, but rather as one barbarians over barbarians, of the barbarians in the service of the empire against the barbarian invader.[35] This battle saw the end of the Hunnic invasion, as well as the death of Theoderid.[36] The Visigoths were evidently doing the Roman Empire a service in fighting the Sueves and Huns on their behalf.

Following the death of Theoderid the Visigothic kingship passed to his eldest son, Thorismund. He fought the Alans and attacked Arles, but his reign was short and he was succeeded by his brother, Theodoric II. It is this king who is described so vividly in a letter of Sidonius Apollinaris.[37]

It was Eparchius Avitus, Sidonius Apollinaris' father-in-law, who helped gain the support of the Visigoths against Attila.[38] He was praetorian prefect in Gaul from 439, and the Visigoths were influential in his elevation to the imperial throne in 455.[39] After the overthrow and death of Avitus in 456 the new emperor Majorian used force to bring the Visigoths in line.

When Majorian died in 461 the Visigoths found themselves fighting Aegidius, who was now ruling in *Belgica Secunda*, first in the south and then in the Loire valley.[40] When Aegidius died in 464 they were able to expand their kingdom into the Loire valley. At this point the Visigoths were still federates of the empire, but this changed in 466

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[34] Wolfram 1988, 170-174; Heather 1991, 220-221; Nixon 1992, 70
[35] Périn 1987a, 98
[36] Wolfram 1988, 173-178; Wood 1994b, 7-8
[37] Sidonius 1.2; see below 100ff
[38] See below 108 for details of the relationship between Avitus and Sidonius
[39] See below 108

when Euric II murdered his brother Theodoric II and seized the Visigothic throne for himself. Euric created a substantial kingdom that occupied most of France south of the Loire and to the west of the Rhône; he also brought much of the area south of the Pyrenees under Visigothic control, although there were few settlements in the region.[41] In 475 Julius Nepos conceded the Auvergne to Euric II in return for Provence. This treaty was the last imperial act that affected Gaul directly.[42] Euric II was hereby recognised as an independent sovereign. This marks a change in the attitude of the Romans towards the barbarians for, from now on, they can be recognised as an alternative, legitimate power.[43]

The history of the settlement of the Visigoths in southern Gaul demonstrates how relatively easy it was for barbarians to settle within the empire during the fifth century. A number of factors made this possible and by Euric II's death in 484 it would seem that the Visigoths were there to stay in southern Gaul. However, this was not to be the case and eventually they moved on to Spain and settled there

The Visigoths had arrived in Gaul during the second decade of the fifth century and were eventually given a kingdom around Toulouse.[44] This meant that they were established as a presence in Gaul several decades before the Franks. So why did the Visigothic

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[40] See below 134ff for further details on the life of Aegidius, his rule in *Belgica Secunda* and his relationship with Childeric.
[41] Heather 1996, 189-190
[42] Wolfram 1988; Wood 1994b, 16, 18
[43] Périn 1987a, 102
[44] See above 61

kingdom not succeed in becoming the successor to the Roman Empire in Gaul, but the Franks did? Why did *Gallia* not become *Visigothia*?

One reason must be the type of Christianity practised by the Goths, who had been converted to Arianism in the fourth century, and who had maintained their loyalty to this heresy throughout their wanderings in the Empire. The Visigoths had absorbed a large number of imperial subjects on their journey through the empire, subjects who by now would have been Catholic Christian. The Visigoths did not attempt to convert their new followers, but neither did they themselves convert to what must have been the majority religion. Was this a 'strategy of distinction', the Visigoths attempt to establish their own identity as distinct from that of the imperial, Gallo-Roman? And was it this and not their adherence to Arian Christianity that ultimately led to the downfall of their kingdom in Gaul?

By the reign of Alaric II (484-507) the Visigoths had been Arian for several generations. His father Euric II (466-84) exiled a number of bishops during his establishment of the Visigothic kingdom in southern Gaul during the latter part of the fifth century. Sidonius was exiled,[45] as was Simplicius of Bourges. Sidonius also complained about sees that were left empty because Euric refused to sanction new elections, for example Bordeaux, Périgueux, Rodez, Limoges and Auch.[46] This would have led to tension between the Visigoths and the Gallo-Romans.

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[45] See below 112
[46] Sidonius 7.6.4

However, this tension may not be immediately apparent. Euric II's measures do not reflect any general anti-Catholic policy. There was no attempt to convert Catholics, and Sidonius' exile seems to have had political rather that religious reasons, for it was he who had been instrumental in organising resistance to the Visigothic king in Provençal. The non-appointment of bishops may also have been a product of political circumstances, as Euric II tried to establish who his supporters were. On his succession Alaric II gave his approval for the sees to be filled and called councils within his kingdom.[47]

On the eve of the battle of Vouillé in 507, Clovis issued an edit promising his protection to Catholic religious foundations. Converted or not, he was making an effort to undermine the loyalty of the Catholic population of the Visigothic kingdom.[48] Alaric's reaction to Clovis' manoeuvres was to issue his *Breviary*. In it he confirms stability in such basic points of Roman elite life as property and testamentary rights. The right to hold land and to pass it on to the heir of one's choice was the basis of the secular dominance of the Gallo-Roman elite. He also reinforced their religion by inaugurating a new pattern of Catholic Church councils, the synod of Gallic bishops at Agde in 506, and the 'national' council of Gallic and Spanish bishops planned for 507. These measures reflect the pressure being brought to bear by Clovis, and in the face of Frankish pressure Alaric was seeking to create unity within his own kingdom. It would seem that to a point he succeeded, for

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[47] Heather 1998, 213
[48] See below 140

Gallo-Roman landowners fought for him at Vouillé and even after their defeat continued to resist the Franks.[49]

If, as it seems, the Gallo-Romans were willing to fight for Alaric, the bishops prayed for him and resistance continued after his death, what then led to the downfall of the Visigothic kingdom in southern Gaul? The first Gothic successor state was thrown into disarray not by religious divisions, but by the death of its king in battle. This fact in itself highlights the importance of strong leadership during this period, as well as underlining the importance of the existence of a powerful monarchy, something the Franks succeeded in establishing in Gaul but that the Visigoths did not. Nevertheless, their dealings with the Empire had set a precedent and smoothed a path that the Franks could follow and exploit to their own advantage.

The Visigoths were not the only Germanic people seeking settlement in the empire at this time. It is possible that the Burgundians were a part of the conglomeration of barbarian tribes that crossed the Rhine in December 406. In 413 they made a treaty with the empire and were settled in the part of Gaul nearest the Rhine. In 415 their leader, Guntiarius, joined Goar, leader of the Alans, and they established Jovinus as emperor. This is another example of the barbarians taking a hand in imperial politics.[50] However in c.435 the kingdom was destroyed by the Huns, who were co-operating with Aëtius. In 443 they were finally settled in Sapaudia, in southern Gaul, and from then on were allies of the Western Empire, often fighting on its side, for example

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[49] Heather 1998, 213-215

against the Huns in 451 and against the Sueves in 456. They slowly expanded their kingdom,[51] taking advantage of the political situation to their own advantage. By 457 they were in possession of the lands to the south of Lyons and in the Rhône region, although in 458 they were pushed out of the environs of Lyons by Majorian. By c.495 they also had all of the land from Champagne to the Durance. Like the Visigoths, the Burgundians were a barbarian tribe that was successful in establishing themselves within the Roman Empire, and that took advantage of the political situation to gain power and authority for themselves.

The final 'invasion' of Gaul occurred when Attila led his army of Huns into the province in the middle of the fifth century. Attila had inherited the Hunnic kingdom with his brother Bleda in 434 and had been its sole ruler from 445. For the first fifteen years of his reign Attila had concentrated his efforts on raids in the east, but suddenly in 450 there was a change and he turned his attention to the west. In 451 he went up the left bank of the Danube and crossed the Rhine in the region of Mainz. In April Metz was burned and by the end of May he was at Orléans. There he was turned back and pursued by the Visigothic leader, Theodoric I. On the 20 June 451 the two sides faced each other at the Catalaunian Plains. There Attila and his army were defeated and driven back. In 452 he entered Italy, but in 453 he died, signalling the end of the Hunnic empire.

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[50] See above 62 and below 108 for the involvement of the Visigoths with Eparchius Avitus.

This then, broadly, is the history of Gaul up the middle of the fifth century. What we witness in the years of the barbarian invasion of the Roman Empire is, initially, suspicion and fear, but in the end what we have is co-operation and the establishment of the various successor kingdoms. The various barbarian tribes even play a part in imperial politics, and members of their nobility were able to wield power and authority at the imperial court. So why, in the end, did the Romans, Visigoths and Burgundians all fail and the Franks succeed?

2.2   Institution

2.2.1   The *Civitas*[52]

The basic unit of Roman local government in Gaul, the building block of Gallo-Roman society and the main source of Romanisation, was the *civitas*, the urban centre and its surrounding territory. The *civitas* was three things: the population centre, the religious centre and the administrative and institutional centre of Gaul.[53]

The *civitates* first appear, in a highly developed form, in Caesar, but there is a possibility that they could be much older, especially if there was no massive migration into western Europe, that is if most Gauls were 'Celtic' by acculturation and not by conquest.[54] The majority of the *civitates* were certainly pre-Roman and what changes there were after the conquest were explicable in terms of the existing *civitas-*

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[51] Wood 1994b, 8-9
[52] Parts of the discussion are to be found in Lewis 2000b
[53] Haldon 1999, 3
[54] Cunliffe 1997, 273

structure and ethos, such as the division of some of the larger ones by *pagi*.

Fig. 4 <u>The *Civitates* of the Three Gaul and their Capitals</u>, taken from Drinkwater 1983, map 6, p.237

What Rome did after the conquest of 58 BC was not to create, but to organise and rationalise the structures that already existed and in 27 BC the divisions made by Augustus finalised the arrangements.[55] Gaul was divided into four provinces, but the territories of the various tribes were, by and large, left untouched.[56] Tacitus puts the number of Gallic *civitates* at sixty-four, while Strabo states that there were sixty.[57] Relatively smooth integration into the Celtic and Roman worlds would have encouraged the preservation of local social structures.

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[55] See above 43-44
[56] Planahol & Claval 1994, 34, 39
[57] Tacitus, *Annales* III.44; Strabo 192

The strength of these *civitates* derived from the fact that they were based on the natural socio-political regions of Gaul, the *pagi*, areas of land distinct from the *oppidum* or the *vicus*. Some *civitates* were relatively small, consisting of only a few *pagi*, while others could be enormous. The smallest, especially those exposed to foreign influence, could be submerged and subsumed within Greco-Roman city-structures, as for example in southern Gaul. Elsewhere, however, they survived and flourished. The northern *civitates* were recognised and used by Rome in the period of conquest and assimilation. [58] The larger *civitates* prior to Caesar's conquest were usually made up of several *pagi* and several proto-urban centres. This differed from the classical Roman model of small city-states, where political and social life was centred on a single township, to which all surrounding territory was subordinate. To help the Three Gaul conform more to Roman ideas Augustus emphasised the meaning of *civitas* as 'city-state' over that of 'tribal-area'. Each *civitas* was given a single urban centre of administration, a *civitas*-capital, which further strengthened the impression of a city-state. But, strictly speaking, the whole of each *civitas* was the city.[59]

Once the Three Gauls had been conquered by a foreign power the Gallic *civitates* lost the ambition and powers that they had held as pre-conquest states. However, following normal Roman practice, the local aristocrats were given a significant degree of freedom in running

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[58] Wolff 1989, 9ff, 15ff
[59] Indeed, the modern term 'city' derives from the *civitas*.

their communities,[60] a factor that would remain important for generations of the Gallo-Roman nobility. The government of the full colonies in the Three Gauls was based on the constitution of Republican Rome, comprising a citizen body (*populus*) which elected magistrates; these and ex-magistrates formed an 'order' (*ordo*) of local senators (*decuriones* and *curiales*) who met to discuss local affairs. The government of the *civitates* was, at the outset, different, but as time passed they came to imitate the colonies more and more until, eventually, they produced their own decurions, quaestors, aediles and duumvirs.[61]

From 12 BC *civitas*-representatives met annually at the Altar in Lugdunum (Lyon). In the pre-Roman period there had been little cohesive structure above this level, although national assemblies could be called.[62] The Altar was set up by Drusus at the confluence of the Arar (Saône) and the Rhodanus (Rhône), for the worship of Rome and Augustus. The names of the current Gallic *civitates*, about sixty in all, were inscribed on the Altar and there, on the first of August every year, their representatives met. This choice of date was not arbitrary as it marked the anniversary of Augustus' final victory over Antony and Cleopatra, an event that had given him control over the whole Empire.[63] It seems likely that the *civitates* of Caesar's Three Gauls sent representatives from among the decurions who had undertaken the full range of *civitas*-magistracies and who had also held the local *civitas*-

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[60] Jones 1964, 714
[61] Further more detailed analysis of the development of local government within the *civitates* may be found in Drinkwater 1983, 104-111.
[62] Cunliffe 1988, 120

priesthood of Rome and Augustus - men of wealth and standing. It is also arguable that the number of representatives allowed to each *civitas* varied with its size. Together these representatives made up the *Concilium Galliarum*, the 'Council of the Gauls', and allowed the Gauls the express some sort of opinion on the local operation of the imperial government. This council set the precedent that was followed in setting up the *Concilium Septem Provinciarum*, the Council of the Seven Provinces. This was established at Arles in 418, where the imperial capital had moved from Trier.

The original purpose of the Altar was purely religious, but the gathering together of so many powerful Gauls for a common purpose led to its assuming other, secular, activities such as sending complementary or consolatory messages to the emperor and the honouring of Roman governors. The annual Council was a sounding-board for Gallic feeling, but in addition it may also have accepted some responsibility for the prompt delivery of the taxation due from the Three Gauls.[64] It was an event that demanded from the elite a demonstration of their loyalty to the emperor and their acceptance of Latin culture, but it gave them an opportunity to parade their wealth, prestige and rivalries.[65] The meeting was held partly because 'Gaul' was a Roman construct, and in order to expedite the administration of the land Rome had to create a Gallic identity on top of *civitas*-identity.[66] This Gallic

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[63] Drinkwater 1983, 112
[64] Julian iv.444 (from *CIL* xiii.1694); Drinkwater 1983 112-114
[65] Goudineau 1996, 500
[66] Wolff 1989, 17ff. Augustus used provincial boundaries to divide Caesar's Celtica and to separate the powerful *civitates* of the centre; he then brought them together again at the Altar.

Council had an important part to play in the creation and maintenance of a Gallo-Roman identity in early Roman Gaul and, while the focus of the leaders was normally on their own localities it drew their attention to the wider picture in Gaul and beyond that to the wider empire.

The *civitas* under the later Empire deserves equal attention. The late Empire is usually seen as an age of growing administrative centralisation, leading to a weakening of loyalties, energies and strengths at a local level. But if one takes into account the fact that the *civitates* were able to draw leaders from classes other than from the declining curial class, then the situation may not have been so straightforward.[67] There was a continuation of the tradition of local power and authority.

If we look at Diocletian's provincial reorganisation we see that more provinces were created in Gaul, with fewer *civitates* under the administration of each. The *Notitia Galliarum*, a later fifth century document, registered two dioceses in Gaul, with a total of 114 *civitates*. This should have meant that governors were able to keep a closer eye on the *civitates*, thus making them more dependent. More provinces meant that there were more governors, which shortened the lines of communication between subjects and administrators and so - the imperial government must have hoped - accelerated the process of fiscal and legal matters. But it could also be argued that these arrangements also increased each governor's dependence on those fewer *civitates* that he had to supervise: he needed their co-operation

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[67] Drinkwater 1989a, 137, 142ff; Harries 1994, 90

and, and as a result, one may speculate that they had more opportunity of influencing him.

Another factor to consider is the long imperial presence in Gaul. The presence of emperors, readily accessible in Trier, made it possible for representatives of the *civitates* to circumvent the governors and petition emperors in person. The Aedui, for example, succeeded in wriggling out of their tax liabilities under Constantine. A common schedule of tax had been imposed on the whole of Gaul after a census taken in 306. The Aedui appealed to Constantine and he cancelled five years' arrears and reduced the *civitas'* obligations for the future by 7,000 *capita*.[68] An important fact to note here is that the case for the Aedui was argued not by weak *curiales* but by powerful imperial officials *cum* professors.[69] Here it could be said that *civitas* power corrupted the imperial system, a system that was supposedly much tighter than that of the early Empire.

Also important are the consequences of imperial breakdown in Gaul. By the late fourth and early fifth centuries the two factors described above - the role of the governors and the presence of the emperor in Gaul - were no longer significant, as legitimate emperors moved away from Gaul and as foreign invasion and civil war weakened the regular administration. However, it is clear that the west did not go down without a fight and that the usurpers and generals strove to keep together what they could, to keep the Roman Empire alive. This is a further example of the importance of the perceived need for local

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[68] *Pan.Lat.* 8.5, 11-13; Nixon and Rogers 1994, 280-286
[69] For examples of similar occurrences in the east, see Mitchell 1987, 349-352

leaders with local authority. In order to do this they needed resources, through taxation, and for taxation they continued to rely on the *civitates*, the administrative unit of the empire.[70] So, instead of withering away the *civitates* continued to be important.

We see this in Honorius' letter to the Britons and, in Gaul, in the use made by Constantine III and Constantius III of Christian bishops, increasingly the moving force there. They recognised that bishops were the key urban leaders of their day, and they put the establishment of loyal bishoprics at the centre of their efforts to control the region.[71] Both men secured the appointment of compliant Gallic bishops, especially those of the new western capital, Arles; Constantine III was patron of bishop Heros, while Constantius III was patron of bishop Patroclus. In addition, they both used bishops as pawns in their struggle for control of the *civitates* of southern Gaul.[72] They had realised the importance of these men for exploiting the *civitas* for imperial ends and for binding the *civitates* to the imperial system.[73]

A societal trait that runs through the history of Gaul in the Roman Empire is the importance of local figures of power and authority. During the third century crisis the legacy of imperial ideology became apparent in Gaul, with the elevation of Postumus and his successors to the imperial office, men who were all essentially local leaders, demonstrating the importance of the 'presence' of the emperor. Following the re-establishment of control under Diocletian an imperial

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[70] Durliat 1997, 154
[71] Frye 1991, 350; see below 84
[72] Frye 1991, 360
[73] Drinkwater 1998, 295-296

court was established at Trier and local men were used within the imperial administration. During the fourth century praetorian prefects, vicars and provincial governors were appointed to the regions where they had great private influence. This again demonstrates the importance of local 'big men' wielding power and authority.[74] The ideal of the empire was important, but in times of danger the local societies of Gaul fell back on their local leaders who, from about the middle of the fifth century were not only the Gallo-Roman nobility but also the barbarian kings.

2.2.2 Christianity

The period of Constantine's reign (306-337) saw some dramatic changes taking place in one particular, and very important, area of the life of the empire, that of religion. Traditionally, the population of the Republic and the Empire had worshipped a variety of gods and goddesses. The correct worship of the gods, especially those of the city of Rome, was viewed as vital for the continued success of the Empire. However, during the first and second centuries AD a new religion had begun to spread through the provinces. This was Christianity. At first Christianity was a minority religion and as such was often persecuted. Throughout the disruption of the third century various emperors had both supported and persecuted it.[75] Diocletian was undoubtedly opposed to the new religion and towards the end of his

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[74] Van Dam 1977, 138-154
[75] See above 45

reign issued four edicts against it, thus instituting the persecutions of the first decades of the fourth century, from 303-312.

On his way to becoming sole ruler of the Empire, Constantine fought Maxentius at the battle of the Milvian Bridge (312). According to the story it was here that he was converted to the Christian faith. This is a familiar story but one worth repeating here. On the eve of battle Constantine challenged the God of the Christians to give him victory; he then fell asleep and had a dream where he saw that victory was his. He also saw the sign of Christ, and in the morning ordered his men to carry this sign into battle. Constantine then won the battle. He was convinced that his victory had been accomplished through the good offices of God and so he converted.[76]

Constantine thus became the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire. However, this did not make his task of ruling any easier. If anything it made it more difficult. During his life he was troubled by two theological matters: the Donatist schism of north Africa and the Arian controversy. In neither case was a successful outcome reached. As regards the Donatist schism, Constantine had little or no idea about the history or the theology behind it; he was concerned only with having peace between the bishops of Africa.[77] This was the first occasion on which a Roman emperor interfered in the religious affairs of the church,[78] and it was a precedent that was to be followed by the

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[76] MacMullen 1969, 72-78. See below 140 for similarities between this story and the legend of the conversion of the Frankish king Clovis.

[77] Details of the Donatist schism may be found in Jones 1978, 91-107

[78] This is excluding persecution and secular interference with regard to the ownership of buildings etc, such as was dealt with by Aurelian.

generations to come.[79] The Arian controversy saw more direct interference by Constantine. Debate here arose over the precise definition of the Trinity, and in order to resolve the dispute Constantine gathered together a council of bishops at Nicaea. This council met in the summer of 325 and despite apparent unity at the time, in the long run it failed to settle anything. Again, Constantine interfered and set a precedent that would be followed by later generations.[80]

The fact that Constantine converted to Christianity and became the first Christian emperor did not mean that paganism and the worship of individual gods and goddesses was at an end. One of the difficulties involved in fighting paganism was that it was not a unified religion but one of many parts. The partial success of Julian (355-361) in reviving paganism, as well as the fact that the senate of Rome was still opposed to Christianity during the later years of the fourth century,[81] indicate that Christianity had a long way to go before it would be accepted wholesale throughout the Empire.

2.2.3 Monasticism and the Episcopacy

By the beginning of the fifth century, asceticism had come to play an important part in the Christianity of Gaul, as it did throughout that of the empire.[82] This was an ideal that had taken root in the east when Christianity was still young, and the first men who undertook such a life

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[79] See above 33, 65 and below 249, 250 for the influence and interference of the Frankish kings in the life of the sixth century church.

[80] Further details of the Arian controversy and the Council of Nicaea are to be found in Barnes 1981, 208-223; Jones 1978, 117-127; MacMullen 1969, 159-183

[81] Symmachus and his colleagues were engaged in a debate with Gratian and bishop Ambrose of Milan over the removal of the Altar of Victory from the Senate in Rome; see Matthews 1975, 205-208

were those who went to live in the desert in order to escape from the world. They were motivated by what they considered to be the degradation of the quality of Christian life after the persecutions had ceased. In addition, the end of persecution meant the end of the possibility of martyrdom, and asceticism came to be seen as a viable alternative.[83] The ascetics considered themselves to be carrying on the norm of Christian life as it had been from pre-Constantinian times.[84] They wanted to live free from the world in order to get closer to God.

One of the driving forces behind the spread of asceticism and monasticism in the west was Martin, bishop of Tours. He spent his formative years in the army and was a Christian all his life. He was attracted to the sort of life that Christians were expected to and encouraged to lead. On leaving the army Martin tried to lead an ascetic life but was unsuccessful and ventured back into society. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers (c.350-367/8), gave him a villa at Ligugé and this proved to be decisive in beginning the monastic movement in Gaul, for the villa attracted an ascetic community close to the episcopal city and it benefited from the guidance of the bishop himself.[85] While at Ligugé Martin spent ten years establishing a new kind of community that realised its full potential in later years at Marmoutiers, the first full-scale monastery in Gaul. At Marmoutiers a modified form of asceticism was

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[82] Parts of this discussion first appear in Lewis 1997
[83] Antony (c.251-356) and Pachomius (c.292-346) established the eremitic and coenobitic forms of monasticism respectively; see Rousseau 1985 and Lawrence 1984 for details.
[84] Brock 1973, 2
[85] Stancliffe 1983, 1

practised, as monasticism in fourth-century Gaul attracted sensitive, intelligent and educated upper-class men.[86]

Martin was elected bishop of Tours in c.370. One of the problems that faced the new bishop was not the introduction of Christianity into a pagan society but rather his own integration into Gallic society. However, due to the ever-changing political situation that existed in Gaul in the late fourth century Martin began to use military and imperial idioms of authority in order to define his own leadership. This was a language that the people could understand and it made his relationship with them intelligible.[87]

While he was bishop Martin continued to live the life of a monk at Marmoutiers. He took Christianity out of the towns and into the countryside, actively encouraging the destruction of pagan shrines and their replacement with Christian foundations.[88] In the last years of his life Martin laid the foundation for a practical system of monasticism that was to grow rapidly over succeeding generations,[89] and was to have a large part to play in training bishops and clergy in later years.[90] Religion, in particular Catholicism, was one force for continuity during this period and its adoption by the Franks, and their respect for it, went some way towards guaranteeing their success.[91]

One of the great monasteries of fifth century Gaul was that established by Honoratus at Lérins during the first decade of that

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[86] Stancliffe 1983, 27
[87] Van Dam 1985, 124-128
[88] Van Dam 1985, 131
[89] Donaldson 1980, 123
[90] See below 188ff
[91] See below 124, 137-138, 188

century, a monastery built on an island off the south coast of the region.
This monastery quickly earned a reputation as the centre of monastic
spirituality and Christian culture in Gaul and as a result attracted many
men, especially members of the nobility.

The virtues taught and preached at Lérins were principally those
of obedience and charity, as well as humility, kindness, purity of heart,
patience, gentleness, mercy and magnanimity.[92] Lérins was important
in two ways: first it played a large part in the promotion of the ideals of
monasticism in Gaul and second it trained a succession of bishops who
made a substantial impact on the Gallo-Roman church and on local
leadership, bishops such as Patroclus, Honoratus, Hilary and Caesarius
of Arles.[93]

In looking at the episcopal lists for the fourth century Church in
Gaul it is noticeable that they carry few, if any, names from senatorial
families. Throughout the Empire the majority of fourth century bishops
came from the class of *curiales* and *decuriones*, men such as Phileas of
Thumis, Augustine of Hippo, Evagrius of Antioch and Helladius of
Caesarea.[94] One of the reasons for this was that during this period men
from these classes were being called on to hold municipal magistracies
at great personal expense; they escaped from these obligations by
turning to the church and holding office there. This allowed them to
avoid the financial burden of public office holding. There was no

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[92] Klingshirn 1994, 24, 28
[93] Wood 1994b, 22. A full account of the establishment of Lérins is to be found in
Prinz 1965; details of the position of the monastery in the ecclesiastical life of fifth
century Gaul are to be found in Mathisen 1989, 69-205
[94] Gilliard 1984, 154; Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 3; Phileas, Eusebius 8.9.6-8; Augustine,
Possidius *Vita S.Aug.* 1 and *Confessions* 2.3.5; Evagrius, Libanius *Ep.* 1224, 14266;
Helladius, Basil *Ep.* 281.

expectation for the nobility to hold these offices and to bear such high financial burdens; high imperial offices were still open to them and so they did not immediately join the ranks of the clergy.[95] It was not until the fifth century that the ranks of the nobility began to turn to the church,[96] and they did so as bishops.[97] They came to the church relatively late in their careers and, more often than not, went straight into the bishopric without working their way up the church hierarchy. They often went from holding secular positions of authority within the imperial administration to wielding power within the Church, with religious idioms of authority.[98]

Examples of men who served in secular positions who then became bishops or religious leaders are Agricola, a *vir illustris* who became a priest, Felix, who held secular office before turning to religion and Ruricius, a man of noble birth and office, who became bishop of Limoges.[99]

Apart from a genuine desire for the religious life there was another reason why, in the fifth century, the nobility began to compete for office within the church hierarchy. The episcopacy was seen as a viable alternative to high imperial office and as opportunities for the latter diminished competition for the former increased.[100] The nobility perpetuated their power and wealth by monopolising the bishoprics.[101] They viewed the bishop's chair as representative of both family and

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[95] Gilliard 1984, 174
[96] Prinz 1973, 4
[97] Barnish 1988, 139
[98] See below 174ff for the development of the episcopacy in sixth century Gaul.
[99] Agricola, Sidonius 1.2; Felix, Sidonius 2.3; Ruricius, Sidonius 4.16, 5.15; see below 114ff for details of Ruricius' career.
[100] Prinz 1973, 9

status.[102] Traditionally the aristocracy's monopoly of public office had depended on the possession of certain virtues.[103] Now Christianity became one of these virtues and allowed the aristocracy relatively easy passage into positions of authority within the Church. It was also a place where the nobility could wield local power and authority.

It is significant that only one Germanic name appears among the bishops of late antique Gaul, for Latin names represent noble descent, a member of the nobility.[104] Members of the aristocracy were influential in creating a new Christian society where their old, traditional values were valid, and where their prestige was not only retained but also increased. The ease with which they did this explains, in part, why they turned to the Church, for beside the rising attraction of the office itself was the political status attached to it.[105] In addition, they did not lose their noble status when they joined the ranks of the episcopate; if anything, their noble status was enhanced.

We have evidence for this in the careers of Sidonius Apollinaris and Ruricius of Limoges.[106] Other examples are Agricola, Felix, Ferreolus, Magnus Felix Ennodius and Remigius.[107] Eventually an ecclesiastical position came to be regarded in the same light as a secular office in the aristocratic *cursus*.[108] Occasionally this meant that in order to become a bishop it was considered necessary to have

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[101] Amory 1994, 25
[102] Heinzlemann 1976, 23
[103] Heinzlemann 1976, 10
[104] Amory 1994, 25
[105] Heinzlemann 1976, 62
[106] See below 105ff Sidonius and 114ff Ruricius for details of their lives.
[107] Agricola, Sidonius 1.2, *PLRE* II 37; Felix, Sidonius 2.3, *PLRE* II 463-464; Ferreolus, Sidonius 7.12; Magnus Felix Ennodius, *PLRE* II 393-394; Remigius, *PLRE* II 938.
[108] Mathisen 1979, 543; Mathisen 1989, 7; Mathisen 1993, 90, 92; Prinz 1973, 8-9

aristocratic status.[109]   Conflicts often took place at episcopal elections as members of the nobility competed for episcopal positions.[110]

Election to episcopal office was often carried out by popular demand. The nobility had traditionally been the leaders of the *civitates* and so the population would elect them to the bishoprics so that they could continue to serve them as local leaders. This was especially true in times of danger. The election of Sidonius to the see of Clermont-Ferrand is an example of this phenomenon and the people clearly made a wise choice, for their bishop was instrumental in the defence of the *civitas* against the Visigoths.[111] Competition for such office is also evident in one Sidonius' letters. In 470 Sidonius was asked to select a new bishop for the see of Bourges and had difficulty in doing so as there were a number of candidates, some of whom were offering bribes in return for being elected. Sidonius wrote to bishop Agroecius of Sens, explained the situation and asked him to come to Bourges to assist him.

> I have arrived in Bourges, being called upon by a decree of the people: the reason for their appeal being the tottering condition of the church, which having recently lost its supreme pontiff, has, so to speak, sounded a bugle-note to the ranks of both professions to begin canvassing for the sacred office...I beg that your longed-for arrival may arm me with your companionship and sustain me with your help in this duty of mine, in which, as a novice, I am diffident and embarrassed.[112]

The situation surrounding this election was not unique and confirms that competition for episcopal office was often fierce.

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[109] Mathisen 1993, 91

[110] Mathisen 1979, 543; Mathisen 1989, 7; Mathisen 1999, 95; see below 121ff for examples of the types of conflicts that could take place within the church hierarchy.

[111] See below 112

[112] Sidonius 7.5: *Biturgias decreto civium petitus adveni: causa fuit evocationis titubans ecclesiae status, quae nuper summo viduata pontifice utriusque professionis ordinibus ambiendi sacerdotii quoddam classicum cecinit...proin quaeso, ut officii mei novitatem pudorem necessitatem exspectatisimi adventus tui ornes contubernio, tuteris auxilio.*

This leads to another factor that influenced the nobility in their search for episcopal office: the opportunity to wield power within a *civitas*. This motivation must have been twofold, both centrifugal and centripetal. On one hand the substitution would have been attractive due to the fact that the episcopal office still had great imperial status, while on the other hand it was a new means of establishing power within the *civitas*.

Not all bishops held office within their native *civitates*. Examples of men who were bishops of their native sees are Faustus at Riez, Volusianus at Tours, Gallus at Clermont, Ageric at Verdun, Litorius at Tours and Rusticus at Lyons.[113] Examples of men who held episcopal office outside their native sees are Sidonius, native of Lyons and bishop of Clermont-Ferrand and Caesarius, native of Clermont and bishop of Arles. This confirms the fact that competition for episcopal office could be great and that on occasion it was necessary to look outside one's native see for office. Other factors could also influence movement between sees. For example, Caesarius had been a monk at Lérins and then moved to Arles to recover from an illness. He was related to the bishop there, Aeonius, and the latter first appointed him abbot of a local monastery and then nominated him as his successor. Caesarius became bishop of Arles in December 502.[114]

One feature of Gallo-Roman episcopal life was that of the episcopal dynasty. A phenomenon that first appears during the course of the fifth century and becomes well established during the sixth is that

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[113] Faustus and Volusianus, Mathisen 1999; Gallus *VP* 6; Ageric *DLH* 3.35; Litorius *DLH* 10.31; Rusticus *PLRE* II 964.

of the family see.[115] This happened when the position of bishop was handed down through the family, usually from father to son but occasionally to other male members of the same family, often as a reward and culmination of a successful career.[116] One example is at Tours, where Volusianus (d.498) was related to his predecessor Perpetuus (d.490), and another is at Vienne, where Avitus succeeded his father in 494.[117] This tradition became widespread and almost invariably took place among the noble families. Gregory of Tours was related to a number of his predecessors,[118] as were Ruricius of Limoges and Sidonius Apollinaris.[119] There were also the families of Chronopius of Périgueux, Nicetius of Lyons, Euphronius of Tours and Tetricus of Langres.[120] Here the local power of particular families was confirmed by the hereditary nature of the episcopate.

The phenomenon of members of the Gallic nobility becoming bishops during the fifth century is a continuation of a factor that had always effected the outlook of the Gallic upper class. This was their concentration on local and national, rather than international, affairs. Men who held office in Rome and elsewhere outside Gaul, men such as Sidonius, were the exception rather than the rule. As bishops, men who would previously have held secular power within the *civitates* were able to continue to do so.

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[114] Klingshirn 1994, 84; see below 117ff for Caesarius' career

[115] Brennan 1992, 118; Stroheker 1948, 112-114; Heinzelmann 1976, 211-231; Scheibelreiter 1983, 45-50; Van Dam 1985, 154

[116] Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 4

[117] Volusianus and Perpetuus *DLH* 10.31, Sidonius 7.9; Avitus. Caesarius, *Letters* 2.

[118] See above 12ff for details

[119] Ruricius, *Ep.* and Mathisen 1999; Sidonius *Ep.* and Harries 1994.

[120] Chronopius, Mathisen 1999; Nicetius, *VF* 17; Euphronius and Tetricus, *VF* 3, 4

The fact that a bishop was active in secular politics points to the general depolitisation of the *civitates* in Gaul, with the bishops being well placed to fill the gap in secular power. This phenomenon is indicative not of the secularisation of the episcopate but of the addition of religious aspects to secular administration.[121] The language of secular politics was being utilised to speak of ecclesiastical office, while secular politics were coming to be envisaged within a religious setting. Church leaders were taking over secular idioms of power.[122]

From its beginnings Christianity had established itself in the major towns and cities of the lands in which it arrived and the Church's organisation was based on those urban centres.[123] The Council of Nicaea in 325 set a seal on the structure of the Church: it was an organisation based on urban bishoprics, grouped into provinces that were headed by metropolitan bishops. It is easy to see why and how ecclesiastical administration duplicated the structure of the civil administration.[124]

A bishop's life was varied. His main responsibilities were care for his congregation and the spread of Christianisation. However, a bishop's life and work actually involved a great deal more than that. One way in which a bishop could establish his authority was by promoting saints and relics within his local community. The graves of saints gradually became centres of ecclesiastical life in Gaul, and it was

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[121] Liebeschuetz 1997b, 116-118
[122] Markus 1986, 120; Van Dam 1985, 61
[123] Drinkwater 1983, 78
[124] Markus 1990a, 72

partly through their relationships with the great shrines that bishops rose to prominence.[125]

As God's representatives on earth and as the mediators between the saints and the congregations bishops were able to establish their authority in their sees. The relationship of the bishop with the saints could be understood in terms of the human relationship.[126] The saint could intervene with God on behalf of the appellants and the bishop was the link between the people and the saint; effectively he was their direct link with God. For example, Germanus of Auxerre succeeded in driving away the demons when they were causing a mysterious disease and he forced a man to confess a theft by reciting the liturgy over him thus compelling the devil, who had made him steal, to leave his body.[127]

Connected with the bishop's relationship with saints was his relationship with sacred relics. These were transported around the empire and demonstrated that artefacts could travel, often eliminating the need for pilgrimage.[128] This did not mean that pilgrimages became rare but rather that relics became more widely accessible than they would have been had they stayed in their original location. The bishop controlled the arrival of the relics within the *civitas*, thus underlining his authority within the community.[129]

The arrival of relics within a community gave the bishop a further opportunity of stating his claim for supremacy within the *civitas*. Miracles, carried out either by the bishop himself or directly through the

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[125] Brown 1981, 3, 8
[126] Brown 1981, 62
[127] Van Dam 1977, 199-200; see below 104ff for details of Germanus' career
[128] Brown 1981, 89

relics, assisted the bishop. The ceremony of *adventus*, of the arrival of the relic within the community, and religious festivals also allowed the community to show their support for the bishop. The ceremony of *adventus* had its beginnings in the triumphal processions of the emperors through Rome, and was adapted by the needs of the bishops and of Christianity to welcome a relic into a *civitas*.[130]

Illness and healing were a part of the bishop's life. When people were ill it was often considered that they were being punished for sins such as working on Sunday or another holy day. When they were cured at a religious festival or at an *adventus* ceremony this was a sign that they were being welcomed back into the community and were able to participate fully in its life again. If they were cured through the actions of the bishop or of the saint whose representative he was, then they were showing their approval of their bishop and of his activities on their behalf. This was community consensus for the authority of the bishop. It was also a means by which the bishop could control the urban masses, and it demonstrated his local authority.

One manifestation of the growing power of the episcopacy was the amount of ecclesiastical factionalism that is evident within fifth century episcopal circles. In 475 the fact that the emperor Julius Nepos sent first Epiphanius and then Leontius, Faustus, Graecus and Basilius to negotiate with Euric II would seem to suggest that the Gallic bishops did not have a completely free hand in the running of their own affairs. However, this is a rare example of imperial interference in Gallic

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[129] Brown 1982, 240
[130] MacCormack 1972, 723, 726

episcopal affairs. Gallic ecclesiastical factionalism, for a period of some seventy or eighty years, from the beginning of the fifth century up to the arrival of the Franks, was potentially explosive.[131]

Most of this factionalism stemmed not from lofty debates about theology or religious practice. It came, rather, from competition for bishoprics and especially for the position of metropolitan bishop. In particular, the relative status of the various metropolitan sees of southern and central Gaul were at issue. The events surrounding Caesarius' tenure of the bishopric of Arles provide a good example of what could take place,[132] and demonstrate how different factions of bishops, i.e. of the nobility, could, while the eye of the western emperor was distracted elsewhere, fight among themselves for power. This is a further manifestation of Gallic nobles' wish to hold local authority. The Church needed a strong hand at the helm, but that hand needed to be Catholic.

The authority of the church and its prelates made it possible for them to protect their culture and gave them access to real power, in the shape of land-holding. Initially this would have been detrimental to the relationship between the church and the barbarians, for the latter were given no opportunity or way of accessing the church and its power. The strategies of distinction employed by both sides were a barrier to co-operation and fusion. The advent of the Franks, and in particular their conversion to Christianity, opened up the channels of communication

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[131] See below 121ff
[132] See below 121ff

between the Church and the state, made them acceptable to the Gallo-Roman nobility and made their success more likely.

Weak central authority and the resultant loosening of state structures, in addition to the weakening of local government structures, meant that, once they were elected, bishops were able to fill the power vacuum left by the withdrawal of Roman authority, and that they were able to reign supreme within their own particular locality. It was only the advent of the Franks to the position of successor kingdom that halted the progress of the episcopate; despite their Catholicism and their evident respect for the church, the power of the monarchy was paramount.

2.3 The Leaders of Gaul

The traditional criteria for inclusion within the ranks of the Roman Senate were noble birth, distinction in public service, moral character, intellectual culture and wealth.[133] This did not change over the generations and inclusion within the ranks of the Gallo-Roman nobility was based on much the same principles.

The 'Gallic Empire' of the third century was very much a Roman Empire and ruled along Roman lines. There is no doubt that it demonstrates the Gaul's ability to rule themselves and also that they were keen to be ruled in the Roman manner. It also demonstrates the importance of local power in the region, i.e. the importance of visible imperial power within the locality. This is what Postumus and his successors gave the Gallo-Romans. By the middle of the third century

the Gallic upper class, at least, was fully Romanised. This is important to bear in mind in looking forward to the advent of the Franks, for the acceptance of their barbarian power was due in large part to the fact that they too were, to a certain extent, Romanised, and were therefore acceptable as an alternative power.

There is little evidence from the first to the third centuries of the involvement of Gallo-Roman nobles in the affairs of the empire at large. However there was, from the beginning of Roman occupation, an aristocracy in Gaul, replacing the old Celtic aristocracy.[134] These earliest Gallic nobles were not senators. A few possessed the necessary abilities to spend some time away from the region, but they always returned home to deal with *civitas* affairs.[135] From the reign of Marcus Aurelius to that of Diocletian only two Gallic members of the senate can be proven.[136] Some members of the nobility became involved with powerful imperial patrons, a necessary move that was to the good of the community. These connections occasionally led to the involvement of the Gallic leaders in political matters, but unfortunately the details of these affairs are lost.[137] Gaul produced relatively few senators and equestrians and no one from the region was established on the imperial throne. They accepted as the summit of their careers the priesthood of Rome and the Augusti at the Altar at Lugdunum.[138] The wealth and power of these men was broadly spread and they were

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[133] Jones 1964, 523
[134] Stroheker 1948, 7, 8
[135] For example *CIL* xiii = *ILS* 1441 (procurator at Hadrumentum); *CIL* xiii 3162; xiii 4030
[136] Stroheker 1948, 9
[137] For example *CIL* xiii 1807 = *ILS* 1330; *CIL* xiii 3162; Drinkwater 1983, 202
[138] See above 71, 92; Drinkwater 1989a, 138

generous in their expenditure at *civitas* and Altar-level. All of this points to the fact that during the first to the third centuries the nobility of Gaul were more interested in affairs at home, in their own locality, than they were in what was happening at an Empire-wide level. They were by no means indifferent to events in the Empire, but were concerned with the effects any activity might have on their own *civitates* rather than with how any such events might influence the shape and future of the Empire as a whole. Local authority was far more important to the Gallic aristocracy than was imperial authority. This encouraged the ideology of the patron, an ideology that was age old and Empire wide, for as the power of the emperor in Gaul reduced so the ordinary people put themselves and their affairs into the hands of the senatorial aristocracy.[139]

The existence of the 'Gallic Empire' during the mid-third century bears witness to this fact. It was brought about by men concerned for the welfare of their own region, at both the *civitas* and Gallic levels, men worried that they were being abandoned by the Empire and left to their own devices, open to threat from the barbarians. By not venturing beyond the confines of Gaul, the Gallic emperors demonstrated that they were not interested in ruling the whole of the Empire. However, the fact that the Gallic emperors portrayed themselves as Roman emperors speaks volumes for how far the acceptance of the Roman way of life had gone in the region. This particular trait among the Gallic nobility, caring more for their immediate locality than for the whole empire, but influenced culturally by Rome, continues throughout the

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[139] Heinzlemann 1976, 37

history of the Empire in the West and beyond. This concentration on local power can be seen manifesting itself in the reigns of the Frankish kings in the late fifth and sixth centuries.[140]

It is customary to associate the presence of the imperial court in Gaul with the re-emergence of the Gallic aristocracy. Stroheker agreed with Jullian that the 'Gallic Empire' was significant and that the fourth-century imperial residence in Gaul was vital,[141] and Matthews concluded that the reluctance of Gauls to become involved in imperial politics was only resolved when the empire came to them, with the establishment of the court at Trier.[142]

But, was this the emergence of Gallic gentry as imperial administrators, or was it already established aristocrats who chose to assume high office as an extension of their social and economic position and authority?[143] There are two possible answers to this question. First, that the political interests of the Gallic aristocracy were derived from their social and economic positions as private men, that they acquired public office on their own terms, for prestige and for the titles that would enhance their already established social position.[144] The second answer is that the Gallo-Romans sought office in quest of careers or of social advancement.[145] With this latter explanation what we see is the culmination of a movement that had been growing in

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[140] See below 135, 146-147, 168-169, 172-173, 176, 181, 188, 208, 274-275
[141] Stroheker 1948, 13
[142] Matthews 1975, 350ff
[143] Sivan 1993, 14. A similar question arises concerning the adoption of the bishoprics by the Gallo-Roman aristocracy: did they become bishops because that was the only way that they could maintain their power, or were they already powerful and saw the bishoprics as an addition to that power? See below 176
[144] Matthews 1975, 80
[145] Drinkwater 1989a, 150, *contra* Matthews 1975, 80

strength from the beginning of the fourth century, namely the natural emergence of the Gallic gentry as imperial administrators. Throughout this period Gallic society was fluid and cosmopolitan. Gallo-Romans and emperors co-operated because both were part of the accepted imperial order, and not just because their interests happened to coincide.[146] These men were not Gallo-Romans by origin and allegiance who briefly and for their own purposes chose to assume high office,[147] but were holders of office who happened to have come from Gaul.[148]

The rise of powerful aristocratic families in the late fourth and fifth centuries was not just a result of spreading senatorial status but was a mark of real Gallic engagement with the Empire. The Gallic aristocracy had become imperial, and proudly Roman.

The arrival of the barbarians in Gaul from 406-407 marked a new stage in the history of the region. From then on the nobility could rely less on support from the centre and were forced to fall back on their own resources. A new nobility was formed from those who had enjoyed careers at the centre during the late fourth century and the new land-owning classes of the same period.[149] It was this class that dealt successfully with the barbarian invaders and who, ultimately, smoothed a course for the Franks to take power in the region.

2.3.1 Education and Culture

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[146] Drinkwater 1989a, 150-151
[147] Matthews 1971, 1090
[148] Drinkwater 1989a, 151
[149] Drinkwater 1989a, 152

An examination of the education available to this class of men demonstrates many of the changes that were taking place in this society. During the fourth and fifth centuries Romans, including Gallo-Romans, still had confidence in the educational system of the Empire. To learn to read and write was necessary for those who wished to participate in its activities. The male elite that ruled the Roman Empire was educated in the schools of the grammarians and rhetors.[150]

At first Christianity had little effect on the traditional schools; it was only as it became well established that the first monastic schools began to appear. Even when Christianity did begin to make an impact it took a long time for the educational system to adapt and even longer before a purely religious and ascetic education was available.

Very few sources survive that allow direct study of late Roman education in the West. It is only by looking at those educated under the old system that it is possible to infer the sort of training they had received. There is no doubt that during the later Roman Empire classical education went into decline in Gaul as it did elsewhere, but nevertheless both a grammatical and rhetorical education were still available to all freeborn children.[151] There is evidence that teachers and rhetors continued to ply their trade in Gaul;[152] for example, Lampridius who taught at Bordeaux, c.460;[153] Domitius, who taught Latin at Clermont-Ferrand, c.465;[154] Sapaudus, a rhetor at Vienne,

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[150] Riché 1976, 3
[151] Haarhof 1920, 52-93; Kaster 1988; Riché 1976, 23
[152] Riché 1976, 35
[153] Lampridius, *PLRE* II 656-7; *GP* 633; Lampridius was also present at the court of Majorian c.460 and lived in the Visigothic kingdom from c.476.
[154] Domitius *PLRE* II 371; *GP* 592

c.476-477;[155] and Viventiolus, a rhetor at Lyons, c.501-538.[156] It was necessary that *curiales* had decent education so they could have careers in municipal affairs. More important, however, was the continuing demand for education by the upper class, who needed rhetorical training to compete for high posts in the imperial administration.[157] As the fifth century progressed imperial positions became harder to find and more difficult to achieve, resulting in a search for an alternative medium of exercising power, the Church.[158]

The Gallo-Romans of the fifth and sixth centuries deluded themselves that the culture that they were preserving and transmitting was classical, when in fact that was far from being the case. An excessive complication of form hides the fact that there was a poverty of inspiration, and the growing ignorance of Greek meant that these men had no direct contact with one half of classical culture.[159]

However, this culture was also changing into a 'Christian Classical culture' and an influx of Christian thinking re-formed and revived it. The classics were taught and given a Christian slant, and while the late antique schools remained open it was difficult for the nobility to imagine any other culture than this Christian Classical culture, for no viable, acceptable alternative was on offer. Both the classics and Christianity were embraced with each affecting the other, but during the majority of the fifth century Christianity and its ascetic side were not fully embraced by the educational system.

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[155] Sapaudus *PLRE* II 976; *GP* 689
[156] Viventiolus *PLRE* II 1179; *GP* 716
[157] Haarhof 1920, 125; Riché 1976, 51
[158] See above 81ff

The shared Christian Classical culture played an important part in the lives of the nobility, as education and literary activity remained the preserve of the upper class.[160] The nobility of Gaul regarded themselves as defenders of classical literary culture, showing how far Romanisation had progressed and how successful it had been, and the pursuit of literary interests was considered to be one of the distinctive features of a Gallo-Roman aristocrat.[161] A good education and an interest in literary culture allowed the Gallic nobility to set themselves apart from the barbarians, a strategy of distinction that had implications for how much or how little the Gallo-Roman nobles would accept the rule of the barbarians over them.

Evidence for the cultural pursuits of the Gallic aristocracy may be found in the letters of Sidonius, as well as in pastimes such as farming and hunting, the everyday concerns of the land-owning nobility. Letters were one medium used by this class of men not only to communicate with one another but also to practice their literary skills, to praise one another and to keep what they considered to be the old literary activity alive.

In the first letter of Sidonius' collection, to Constantius of Lyon, Sidonius admires him as a priest, and in letter 2.10 to Hesperius there is praise for him as a poet:

> ...the hexameters of the eminent poets Constantius and Secundinus; these verses my modesty absolutely debars from a place in this letter, for a

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[159] Riché 1976, 43-48
[160] Mathisen 1993, 93
[161] Mathisen 1993, 107-108

comparison with better poetry is too severe for a shrinking soul which is nervously exhibiting his own casual efforts.[162]

Pragmatius, a *vir illustris*, is also complimented for preserving the old traditions; Sidonius does this by having him recognise similar qualities in his correspondent, Sapaudus:

> If among the qualities of heart and head which distinguish the illustrious Pragmatius anything stands out as specially praiseworthy, it is that his love of letters inspires him with a unique love of you, for he sees that in you alone, and in the highest degree, there still abide some traces of the ancient skills and care.[163]

Similar praise may be seen in his letters to Sacerdos, Justinus and Lampridius.[164] The letters give an indication of the type of qualities that these men were aiming to preserve.

But there is also a sense of having to preserve the cultural heritage of their class. In one letter Sidonius praises his friend Syagrius for his knowledge and understanding of the German tongue, but at the same time charges him not to forget his own language,

> ...continue with undiminished zeal, even in your hours of ease, to devote some attention to reading; and, like the man of refinement that you are, observe a just balance between the two languages: retain your grasp of Latin lest you be laughed at, and practice the other, in order to have the laugh of them.[165]

It was important that they retain their link with the glorious past of Rome. In addition, such knowledge set them apart from the uncultured barbarians and helped the Gallo-Roman nobility retain their identity at a time of political upheaval and uncertainty. However, there is also in

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[162] Sidonius 2.10.3: *namque ab hexametris eminentium poetarum Constaantii et Secundini ... quos in hanc paginam admitti nostra quam maxume verecundia vetat, quam suas otiositates trepidanter edentem meliorum carminum comparatio premit.*
[163] Sidonius 5.10.1: *Si quid omnino Pragmatius illustris, hoc inter reliquas animi virtutes optime facit, quod amore studiorum te singulariter amaat, in quo solo vel maxume animum advertit veteris peritiae diligentiaesque resedisse vestigia.*
[164] To Sacerdos and Justinus, Sidonius 5.21; to Lampridius, Sidonius 8.9
[165] Sidonius 5.5.4: *ut nihilo seginus, vel cum vacabit, aliquid lectioni operis impendas custodiasque hoc, prout es elegantissimus, tempramentum, ut ista tibi lingua venerantur, ne rideaaris, illa exerceatur, ut rideas.*

Sidonius' poetry an acknowledgement of the necessary changes that were taking place in society to accommodate the barbarians. The letters hint at the significant changes that were being brought about by the rule of the Visigoths.

A powerful example of this comes in letter 1.2 to Agricola, where Sidonius gives a lengthy description of Theodoric 'king of the Goths' (453-466).[166] Having drawn a picture of Theodoric's appearance the author goes on to describe his day:

> Before dawn he goes with a very small retinue to the service conducted by the priests of his faith…The administrative duties of his sovereignty claim the rest of the morning.[167]

The remainder of the letter is a description of the king's activities throughout the rest of the day. It is an eloquent portrait, showing a conscientious man working hard on behalf of his people, but also enjoying life to the full. It is a sympathetic representation of the Visigothic king and confirms the fact that the nobility of Gaul was having to come to terms with this new power. The letter is an acknowledgement of this fact and recognises and submits to the new power.

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This chapter has set out the background against which the Franks were to make their entrance onto the world stage. Before going to look in detail at their advent and success, the following chapter will examine the lives of a number of individuals who exemplify the dramatic changes that were taking place in the fourth and early fifth centuries.

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[166] Sidonius 1.2.1
[167] Sidonius 1.2.4: *antelucanos sacerdotum suorum coetus minimo comitatu expetit…reliquum mane regni adminisrandi cura sibi deputat.*

Chapter 3

Gallo-Roman Leaders

After the collapse of the Gallic Empire in the west the Gallic aristocracy was badly disrupted. The withdrawal of imperial power meant that members of the nobility found themselves forced to find alternative routes to power if they were to remain at the top of society. These were to prove various, with varying degrees of success. The lives of the men examined in this chapter will demonstrate how the nobility adapted itself to the changes taking place in fourth and fifth century society.

3.1   Ausonius of Bordeaux (d.c.395)

Ausonius was born during the first decade and died during the last decade of the fourth century. During his lifetime, and thanks in part to his influence, the Gallic aristocracy flourished at the imperial court. This was brief moment in the history of the late empire when a significant number of Gauls held influence at the imperial court.

Ausonius pursued a career as a grammarian and, after some thirty years of teaching in his native city of Bordeaux, and on the verge of retirement, he was appointed tutor to the young Gratian, son of the emperor Valentinian I. His life then took a sharp turn. He accompanied Gratian during the latter's participation in his father's wars against the Alamanni and after holding various minor positions within the imperial administration became praetorian prefect and consul. His career seemed to point to a bright future for Gauls under Gratian, who

succeeded Valentinian I as western emperor in 375.[1] However, Ausonius had a poor relationship with both the Roman senatorial aristocracy and with the army, and the influence of these two political forces eventually combined to stunt his ascendancy.[2] After the murder of Gratian in 383 he returned to Bordeaux and there lived out the remaining years of his life.

The career of Ausonius demonstrates how a Gallic municipal aristocrat could rise to the ranks of the provincial nobility.[3] Another remarkable aspect of his career under Gratian was the rapid promotion of his family and friends to civil imperial magistracies. However, despite the fact that his relatives and friends continued to fill the highest ranks in the imperial administration throughout Gratian's career, the basis of their power was limited. This was because it was based on two things, the imperial favour showed to one man and the relative stability of the Empire during this period.[4]

A glance at the series of key offices held by Ausonius and his supporters, and at the network that they formed across the Western Empire, may at first give the impression of political strength and dominance. However, these men were faced with the decision of whether to stay in Gaul or to pursue a career in Italy at the imperial court.[5]

In 383 Gratian was overthrown and murdered by the usurper Magnus Maximus. He was in no way against the Empire; on the

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[1] See above 57
[2] Sivan 1993, 143-144
[3] Sivan 1993, 1
[4] Sivan 1993, 144

contrary, he considered himself as a legitimate Roman emperor. The Gallo-Roman nobility accepted positions at his court, and his elevation gave other Gauls than those in Ausonius' circle an opportunity to gain high office. It was these men who were seeking high office in quest of careers or of social advancement.[6]

It is significant that in Ausonius's writings there is no indication that by his promotion he became part of a deep rooted Gallic imperial establishment. His influence over Gratian was not a demonstration of a Gallic landed magnate realising the full potential of imperial patronage. Ausonius was a *parvenu*, a man with a respectable curial but not noble background, who owed his good fortune to his professional abilities as a teacher of rhetoric and to the high standing given to education in the later Empire.[7] The unseemly haste with which he secured office for himself, his family and friends is the mark of an *arriviste*, and is out of keeping with the cooler approach that would have been adopted by a landed noble.[8]

Gallic participation in the Empire was kick-started by a local imperial presence but, once begun, it seemed to have the potential to run by itself, and to produce people whose ambitions were not necessarily confined to Gaul. What Ausonius' career did was to accelerate an existing development of an aristocratic identity in late Roman Gaul. His influence allowed noble Gauls to assume a sense of their own importance, within the context of the Western Roman Empire.

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[5] Sivan 1993, 138-139
[6] See above 94-95; Drinkwater 1989a, 150
[7] Drinkwater 1989a, 142
[8] Drinkwater 1989a, 144

3.2   Germanus of Auxerre

Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, held secular office before turning to a career in the church. Born in the second half of the fourth century in the province of Lugdunensis IV, Germanus was a member of a locally prominent family, for his parents are described as *splendidissimi*.

Having received an education in the local school Germanus travelled to Rome and there studied law. He began his career at the court of a prefect, and one of the results of his success there was that he was able to marry into a wealthy and influential family. The next stage in his career was holding the position of *dux*, a military commander, and then governor of a province, presumably in Gaul, for suddenly he is consecrated into the bishopric of the see of Auxerre, his native *civitas*. His election took place c.415, shortly after the death of the previous bishop. Germanus was immediately available to take up the office, either because he was still holding office as governor in a nearby province, or because he had returned to his family's estates, having recently completed that stage of his administrative career.[9]

It would seem that Germanus took the position unwillingly, even perhaps under compulsion, but once he had accepted it his life changed dramatically. As bishop Germanus did a great deal to help the people of the *civitas*, in both secular and religious spheres. When a disease struck the very young and the very old the bishop cured them by applying some oil he had blessed and when it was discovered that the disease was caused by demons he was able to cure all those who had been possessed. On another occasion when a tax collector stopped at

the *civitas* and subsequently lost his sack of coins Germanus succeeded in finding it for him.[10] The bishop also exercised his power locally by dispensing justice.[11] This is evidence for the fact that, even as bishops, the Gallo-Roman nobility continued to be influential in the secular affairs of their sees, utilising the skills that they had picked up during their careers as secular administrators.

As with all the bishops who were one-time administrators, Germanus was well-placed to run the temporal aspects of his see. He was also admirably equipped to act as a judge in those cases which fell under his purview, although these were concerned largely with disputes concerning churchmen. Many bishops continued to possess legal expertise, and it is not surprising that they made use of their knowledge.[12]

Germanus' career is evidence that despite adopting a religious life, members of the nobility remained interested in wielding power as local magnates; that they were able to do so due to their membership of the nobility.

3.3 Sidonius Apollinaris (c.430-c.482)

The life of the nobility of fifth century Gaul is, in many ways, typified by the life of Sidonius Apollinaris. He was a member of an aristocratic family who pursued a traditional career both within Gaul and at the heart of the empire. However, his life also epitomises the

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[9] Van Dam 1977, 196-197
[10] See below 195 for an example of Gregory dealing in a very different manner with tax collectors on Tours.
[11] Van Dam 1977, 199-201

challenges that were facing this class of men and the changes that were facing them as the influence of the barbarians and the pull of the church became ever more powerful.

Sidonius lives for modern historians through his panegyrics and his letters. As formal compositions written for formal occasions the panegyrics tell us relatively little about contemporary society. It is in his letters to his friends, family and colleagues that he creates a vivid picture of what life was like for the nobility during the middle years of the fifth century in Gaul. While in some ways he was untypical of his contemporaries, his being the only instance of a man holding both the urban prefecture of Rome as well as a bishopric in Gaul, in other ways he was representative of his class of society.

Born in Lyon in c.430 Sidonius pursued a career that both looked back to the days of the high Empire, holding office as urban prefect in Rome (468), and looked forward to the days of the successor kingdoms, as bishop of Clermont (469/70-485).[13]

Sidonius was born to a powerful noble and Christian family, one of those which held the fate of fifth-century Gaul in their hands (see below, figure 5).[14] Both his grandfather and his father had held the Gallic prefecture, in 408 and 449 respectively. He received his early education at the school of a grammarian and around the age of sixteen

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[12] Wood 1994b, 76
[13] A brief sketch of Sidonius' life is presented here. For further, more detailed accounts, see Harries 1994; Stevens 1933. His works, both panegyrics and letters, appear in the Loeb series, translated by Anderson 1936.
[14] Heinzelmann 1976, 14

travelled to Arles, where he was able to complete it at a rhetorical school.

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Ommatius, Senator in
the Auvergne

Agricola
Praetorian Prefect, 418

Apollinaris
Praetorian Prefect, 408

Leontius

Ruricius
Bishop of Limoges, 485

M.

Hiberia

Eparchius Avitus
Praetorian Prefect, 439-40
Emperor, 455-56

Praetorian Prefect, 448-49

Aurelianus

Leontius

Const.

Ommatius

Agricol

Ecdicius

Papianilla

Eparchius
Cleric in the Auvergne
Bishop of Tours, 525

Sister

M.

M.

Sidonius Apollinaris
Urban Prefect of Rome, 468
Bishop of Clermont, c.470

Papianilla

M.

Parthenius

Placidina

M.

Apollinaris
Bishop of Clermont, 515

Severiana

Roscia

Alcima

Arcadius
Senator in the Auvergne

Placidina

M.

Leontius
Bishop of Bordeaux, 565

Fig.5 Sidonius Apollinaris' Family Tree

In the early 450's Sidonius married Papianilla, the daughter of Eparchius Avitus, and in doing so became a part of the family of the Avitii, to whom his mother was also related.[15] By marrying Papianilla Sidonius also became the son-in-law of a future emperor, for in July 455 Avitus seized power over the Western Empire,[16] a significant event in the history of Gallic involvement in imperial politics. On that occasion Sidonius travelled to Rome where he declaimed a panegyric for the new emperor.[17] However, Avitus did not last very long, and was murdered by his own general, Ricimer, in October 456.[18]

In the final days of 457 Leo and Majorian were proclaimed joint emperors, with the latter in charge of the west.[19] Late in 458 Majorian arrived in Gaul and Sidonius declaimed a panegyric before him at Lyon.[20] The accession of Avitus and Sidonius' support of it via his panegyric, the subsequent death of Avitus and the accession of Majorian and Sidonius' panegyric to the new emperor must have led to immense tension. Sidonius could have been regarded as a traitor to the empire by the new western emperor, but whatever suspicions might have been raised Sidonius must have been successful in allaying, for he was awarded with imperial office. Alternatively, Majorian could have been grateful for Sidonius' panegyric for its declamation confirmed his right to be regarded as the legitimate Roman Emperor. By 461 he had reached the position of *comes*. That year saw the death of Majorian

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[15] Harries 1994, 31
[16] See above 58, 62 for details of this event.
[17] *Praefatio Panegyrici Dicti Avito Augusto* and *Panegyricus*
[18] Harries 1994, 54-81; see above 59, 62
[19] See above 59
[20] *Praefatio Panegyrici Dicti Domino Imperatori Caesari Iulio Valerio Maioriano Augusto* and *Panegyricus*; Harries 1994, 84

and, like Avitus, it was at the hands of general Ricimer.[21] Majorian was succeeded by Libius Severus, who died in November 465. Anthemius was appointed to succeed him, and he arrived in Italy in April 467.

On Majorian's death Sidonius retired from public life for a period of six years. He returned to Gaul from Rome and spent his time keeping up his connections with the nobility of southern and central Gaul. This included visiting those who were in the service of the Visigothic king Theodoric II at Narbonne.[22] This is significant for it points to Gallo-Roman acceptance of the Visigothic kingdom in southern Gaul. It also suggests that the Visigoths had been successful in establishing themselves on Gallic soil and there is no hint of the fact that this kingdom would not be permanent. Despite the political circumstances that existed due to the activities of the Visigoths, Sidonius succeeded in travelling around the country to visit his friends, and in several of his letters he asks his friends to visit him. For example, in one letter he gives a vivid description of his villa at Avicatum in an attempt to entice Domitius, his correspondent, to visit him:

> On the south-west side are the baths, hugging the base of a wooded cliff... At this point there stands the hot bath , and this is of the same size as the anointing-room which adjoins it, except that is has a semicircular end with a roomy bathing tub... Next to this the cold room spreads out...[23]

Sidonius goes on to describe the swimming pool, a portico, a covered passage, the dining room and the lake. He draws an enticing picture of

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[21] See above 59, 62
[22] Harries 1994, 127; see above 100ff for details of a letter Sidonius wrote that contained details of the king's daily activities.
[23] Sidonius 2.2: *balienum ab Africo radicibs nemorosae rupis adhaerescit, et si caedua per iugum silva truncetur...hinc aquarum surgit cella coctilium, quae consequenti*

what life was like for the leisured nobility of the late fifth century and allows us to catch a glimpse of the lifestyle that was still available to the Gallo-Romans.

During this period in his life Sidonius had the leisure to read and write and it was now that he was baptised by bishop Faustus of Riez.[24] In 467 Sidonius travelled to Rome for the second time in his career, this time to assist with an Arvernian delegation that was going to petition Anthemius. On this occasion Sidonius declaimed his third and final panegyric to an emperor, to Anthemius,[25] confirming his support for imperial power in the west. Again, as was the case when Sidonius declaimed his panegyric before Majorian there was potential for him to be viewed with suspicion, or his declamation could be considered to confirm Anthemius' position, especially in view of the manner of his elevation.[26] As a result of his activities in Rome, early in 468 Anthemius appointed Sidonius Prefect of the City.

Sidonius tells us little of the activities he undertook while in this position, which he held until sometime in 469. However, the affair of Arvandus, directly or indirectly, ended his career there and precipitated his move back to Gaul. This affair amply demonstrates the difficulties that the upper class had in coming to terms with barbarian rule.

During 469 Arvandus, twice praetorian prefect of Gaul and a friend of Sidonius', was brought to Rome to face charges brought

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unguentariae spatii parilitate conquadrat excepto solii capacis hemicyclio…hinc frigidaria dilatatur…
[24] Harries 1994, 105
[25] *Praefatio Panegyrici Dicti Anthemio Augusto Bis Consuli* and *Panegyricus*
[26] See above 59, 109

against him by the Council of the Seven Provinces.[27] Sidonius wrote to Vincentius about this episode,[28] and it seems that he was unable to face a direct confrontation with his friend and so on the day of the trial he absented himself from the city.

Arvandus was accused of treason. The accusation was based on a letter that he had allegedly dictated to his secretary and addressed to Euric II, the Visigothic king. In the letter Arvandus urged Euric II not to make peace with Anthemius but rather to attack the Bretons north of the Loire and then divide the remainder of Gaul between the Visigoths and the Burgundians. The intention of the Gallic delegates was to trap Arvandus into admitting the authorship of the letter so that he could then be sentenced accordingly. They succeeded in this intention and Arvandus was thrown into prison and sentenced to death; this was later commuted to life imprisonment.[29]

What this affair indicates was that during the middle and later years of the fifth century, when the Visigoths and the Burgundians looked well established in Gaul, there was a degree of confusion among the nobility as to the best course of action to pursue. The dilemma that they faced was this: should they continue to support the Empire and all that it stood for, or would they do better to support the new barbarian powers? What is significant here is the fact that there was evidently a feeling that the Empire still had interests in the West, and also that it

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[27] See above for the role of the Council of the Seven Provinces in the life of Gaul; see Teitler 1992, 309-317 for details of this affair.
[28] Sidonius 1.7
[29] Harries 1994, 160-162

was not clear that there would never be a return to imperial power in the west.

In 469 year Sidonius returned to Clermont and to a new stage in his career, for within months of his arrival in the *civitas* he had been elected and consecrated to its bishopric. This was a position that he accepted from a sense of duty and because he saw it as the best way that he could maintain the interest of Rome in southern Gaul.[30] Whatever his doubts may have been, once he had been elected Sidonius became an active bishop on behalf of his people, in both religious and secular roles.

Between 471 and 475 Euric II besieged Clermont every summer, his intention being to stop the westward expansion of the Burgundians. The capture of Clermont was vital to his plan. Until 475 Clermont had always been Roman territory but in that year it finally fell to the Visigoths. Sidonius was active in defence of the *civitas*, so much so that when it fell Euric II exiled him to the fortress of Liviana, near Carcassone, where he remained until 477. He was then allowed to return to his see and lived there until his death in c.482.

Sidonius' life illustrates the general evolution of late antique Gallic aristocratic society - its culture and its politics - and the role of the Church in that Christian Classical society. He is also essential to discussion of Gallic attitudes to the Goths, and to the Visigoths in particular. The first Sidonius that we meet is very centripetal, a Gallic noble devoted to imperial service. However we then see him, along with Arvandus and his colleagues, struggling to come to grips with the

new order. Finally Sidonius becomes a bishop, a position that allows him to continue to use his administrative skills as well as promoting the interests of Rome in Gaul. His elevation is also a demonstration of how the local people wanted the local nobility to retain authority over them; they had clearly not come to accept the Visigoths as rightful rulers in place of the empire.

The affair of Arvandus provides evidence for the fact that some Gauls were turning a blind eye to what could be construed as treasonous behaviour. Sidonius' letter about Theodoric is evidence that although he may have disapproved of the Visigoths he too was drifting with the current and beginning to accept what can, today, be described as the inevitable. But again we return to the question of why *Gallia* did not become *Gothia*?[31]

One possible answer lies in the fact that the Visigoths were not an acceptable alternative to imperial rule, due to the fact that the latter was still relatively fresh in the minds of the nobility, and that they were not powerful enough to impose their own rule on southern Gaul. In addition, their kingdom was restricted to the south and they lacked the manpower and the ability to expand north. An added fact is the politics of the Roman Empire and the attitude of the Visigoths themselves towards the Empire. They fought both for and against it at various points during the early years of the fifth century, making it difficult for the imperial authorities to settle them. A final reason for their failure was

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[30] Hanson 1970, 9
[31] See above 63ff for some possible solutions to this problem.

their adherence to Arian Christianity.[32] Ultimately it was this that led to their failure in the region.

3.4   Ruricius of Limoges (c.440-c.510)

Ruricius provides us with another useful example for looking at the life of a fifth century noble. Ruricius was born sometime during the early 440's; his date of birth cannot be fixed with any degree of accuracy, but by the late 480's he was bishop of Limoges and he died in c.510, having lived in the Visigothic kingdom for the whole of his life.

It is impossible to determine Ruricius' place of birth as he makes no reference to it anywhere in his works; indeed he makes few references even to Limoges when he is bishop there. Ruricius was related to some of the most noble of the Gallic families through his marriage in c.460 to Hiberia, the daughter of Ommatius, an Arvernian senator and descendant of a patrician family.[33] The patrician from whom Hiberia was descended has been identified as Philagrius, whom a number of the Gallic nobility had within their ancestry. One of these was Eparchius Avitus, which means that Ruricius and Sidonius were a part of the same extended family circle.[34]

Although his date and place of birth are left in obscurity by Ruricius' letters, they do reveal some things about his background and personality. Presumably he received the classical education that was still available, for not only does he use classical allusions, but he also

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[32] See above 63ff
[33] Ommatius *PLRE* II, 804-805
[34] See Mathisen 1999, 19-28 for further details of Ruricius' family.

makes provision for his sons to be educated in the same way.[35] It seems that he may have had a legal training, for he uses legal terminology in his letters, and he may also have served as an *avocatus* (advocate), a position often held by young aristocrats at the beginning of a secular career. Apart from this, his youth will have been spent as leisure (*otium*) until he began his pursuit of religion, culminating in his consecration as a bishop.[36] Unlike Sidonius, who was consecrated directly into the episcopacy without having previously been a clergyman, Ruricius adopted the religious life and was a part of the church hierarchy before he became a bishop.

As with Sidonius, Ruricius also participated in the literary life of his day although, unlike his contemporary, the majority of his letters were written to bishops who lived nearby, all within the Visigothic kingdom. Sidonius also wrote to bishops, but these letters make up only a part of his collection.[37] Although there was an overlap between the circles of Ruricius and Sidonius, that between the circles of Ruricius and bishop Avitus of Vienne and between Ruricius and bishop Ennodius of Pavia was greater. The history of the correspondence between Ruricius and these two, both aristocratic and episcopal correspondents, indicates that by the end of the fifth century the Visigothic kingdom was well established.[38]

Despite the fact that the presence of the Visigothic kingdom must have had a great impact on the lives of Ruricius and his

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[35] Ruricius 1.3-4
[36] Mathisen 1999, 29-30
[37] Of Sidonius' 147 letters only 36 are addressed to bishops.

contemporaries, he makes no mention of contemporary historical events in his letters. This must be because his correspondents would have been aware of them, but it also indicates an acceptance of Visigothic rule belied by other contemporary sources that viewed the arrival of the barbarians as the end of the civilised world. It also suggests that Ruricius was on good terms with them. Confirmation of this may be found in the fact that several of his correspondents were either Visigoths themselves, men such as Freda and Vittamerus, or were Visigothic officials, such as Elaphius, Praesidius and Eudomius.[39] It would seem that political events had little direct impact on his everyday life, that this was in fact a period of relative peace in the history of southern Gaul, and this, added to the fact that Ruricius was not a statesman, explains why there is no mention of such things in his letters.[40]

Ruricius' letters are divided into two books of unequal length, the first containing eighteen letters and the second 63, 64 or 65 depending on how they are numbered.[41] The collection also contains thirteen letters addressed to Ruricius; all of these are personal letters. As with Sidonius' letters those in this collection show how the Gallic nobility responded to the disappearance of Roman authority and the 'barbarian' presence in the region. They also demonstrate how small the circle of educated men was that remained in contact. Letters allowed the

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[38] This returns us to the question of why the Visigoths failed and the Franks succeeded; see above 63ff
[39] Ruricius, Freda 1.11; Vittamerus 2.61, 2.63; Elaphius 2.7, Stroheker 1948, 166, no.111; Praesidius 2.12, 2.13, 2.53, Stroheker 1948, 206, no.311; Eudomius 2.39, Stroheker 1948, 168-169, no.122.
[40] Mathisen 1999, 39-40
[41] Mathisen 1999, 51

nobility to maintain ties of friendship and social intercourse at a time when this class was becoming cut off from what they considered to be their heritage, as well as from each other. Friendship is a theme that recurs throughout these letters, and the very exchange of letters was a manifestation of that.[42] At a time when travelling was considered dangerous, these men had few opportunities of meeting, making a letter a lifeline.

While Ruricius was only a few years younger than Sidonius, the tone of the two sets of letters reflects how far acceptance of the Visigoths had come in that time. During Sidonius' lifetime there was evidently a degree of uncertainty as to how to treat them,[43] but by Ruricius' day they were further towards being accepted by the Gallo-Roman population of southern Gaul.[44]

While pursuing his career almost exclusively within the church, nevertheless Ruricius' career demonstrates that the values of the nobility were still important to a person in high office. It also shows that family solidarity, social and cultural confidence, and an acceptance of as well as a good working relationship with the Visigoths were essential when pursuing a successful career in southern Gaul during this period.

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[42] See letters 2.20, 2.43, 2.49, 2.55, in Mathisen 1999
[43] See above 111ff

3.5 Caesarius of Arles (c.469/70-542)

The political world into which Caesarius was born was one in which the distant power of the Roman Empire had been replaced by a plurality of Germanic kingdoms.[45] He came from a wealthy, senatorial, noble and Christian family from Chalon-sur-Saône and was born c.469/70. Having received a basic education in Latin grammar, in 486/7 at the age of seventeen and bent on a religious life, Caesarius entered the local clergy under the direction of bishop Silvester (c.485-527).

After a period of two years Caesarius travelled to the monastery of Lérins, a popular retreat among the nobility of the fifth century. Entry to Lérins opened up the opportunity to lead the life of an ascetic, in addition to which it provided opportunities for advancement within the church hierarchy.[46]

After only a very short period of time spent at Lérins, during which time he tried to lead an ever more ascetic life in an attempt to imitate the desert fathers, Caesarius became ill and was moved to Arles to recover. The bishop there was his uncle, Aeonius.[47] Once at Arles Caesarius recovered his health and Aeonius ordained him into the clergy before appointing him abbot of the city's monastery. When he became ill Aeonius appointed Caesarius as his successor and after his death his wish was fulfilled in August 501 or 502.[48] The gap that occurs between the death of the bishop and the election of Caesarius suggests

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[44] See above 115-116
[45] Daly 1970, 18
[46] See above 81
[47] *VC* 1.7; Klingshirn 1994, 16-32
[48] *VC* 1.9

that there was a disputed election, but if that were the case no details remain.[49]

In his role as bishop, and following the precedents set by his predecessors in the episcopate throughout Gaul, Caesarius was involved in both secular and religious events during his career. He had dealings with both Euric II, the Visigothic king, and Theoderid, the Ostrogothic king;[50] Caesarius also had numerous dealings with pope Symmachus and his successor Hormsidas.[51]

In 513 Symmachus confirmed Caesarius' metropolitan rights to the see of Arles, and in 514 appointed him Papal Vicar in Gaul, enabling him to wear a pallium.[52] The latter act meant two things: first, that the pope had a connection in the region that allowed him to find out what was going on there and second, it gave the pope a voice in the affairs of the region.

Caesarius died in August 542, and one of his last acts to protect the convent that he had established was to be buried in the basilica of St. Mary, the church affiliated to that establishment.[53] He also left a

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[49] See below 181 for examples of bishops who were appointed in a dubious fashion.

[50] In 504/505 Euric II exiled Caesarius to Bordeaux following an accusation of treason, but he was soon recalled; Euric II was about to promulgate the *Lex Romana Visigothorum* or *Breviarum Alarici*, and in doing so he needed the support of the bishop of Arles. In 512 Caesarius travelled to Ravenna to meet Theoderic, after selling off church land in order to endow a convent.

[51] Caesarius was concerned to guarantee the future of his newly-established convent and on various occasions asked the popes for permission to sell church lands to allow him to do so.

[52] Kelly 1986, 51; Klingshirn 1994, 130

[53] Caesarius established the convent because he believed that women deserved an equal opportunity to men to lead an ascetic life. His sister Caesaria was the first abbess, and he wrote her a rule, that Queen Radegund subsequently adopted for the convent of the Holy Cross in Poitiers; see below 237 for details.

testament in which he requested his successors not to interfere with the convent.[54]

Caesarius stands as an important figure in the religious life of late fifth and sixth century Gaul. Unlike Sidonius he pursued a religious life from the first, pursued an ascetic way of life throughout and made strenuous efforts to persuade his fellow bishops to live in the same way. His life straddled two kingdoms in southern Gaul, that of the Visigoths until 537, and after that the rule of the Franks.

There were two issues that caused difficulties for Caesarius during his career. The first was his determination to lead the life of a monk-bishop and his attempts to persuade those of his colleagues who believed that it was possible to be a bishop and live the life of a secular noble at the same time, to do the same.[55] The second was the status of Arles as a metropolitan see.

Caesarius' values were formed during his short stay at Lérins, and they had a profound effect on his career as a bishop and as a reformer. This period of the fifth century was one when there was a debate taking place about the proper style of life for the Christian clergy and their methods of pastoral care. The question was whether bishops should live less like members of the nobility, which many of them were and continued to be, and more like monks. One manifestation of this was the problems that Caesarius encountered in trying to make the clergy preach in simple Latin. His opponents resisted because the use of language and the spoken word had traditionally been a way in which

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[54] *VC* 2.48; *Testament*, Klingshirn 1994, 71-76; Klingshirn 1994, 260-261
[55] In this he was following the example of St. Martin; see above 79-80.

social rank was determined: it was a strategy of distinction between the nobility and the masses, and they wanted it to remain that way. Their use of language was also a way that they could control their congregations, demonstrating their authority over the people.

One way in which Caesarius demonstrated his authority was by calling and presiding over church councils. In the summer of 506 he presided over a council of bishops at Agde.[56] The bishops present came from the eight Gallic provinces that were, by now, under Visigothic rule,[57] but not all of the dioceses were represented, hinting at opposition to Caesarius' reforms. The purpose of the council was not doctrinal or disciplinary but pastoral, and the canons represent an important step in Caesarius' reform programme.[58]

It was as metropolitan bishop that Caesarius came across some of his greatest political problems. The problems stemmed from the fact that at the Council of Turin in 398 the ecclesiastical province of Viennensis had been divided between Arles and Vienne, with each city exercising metropolitan rights over the cities closest to it.[59] But these cities were not specified, leaving the way open for controversy in the future. Successive bishops of Arles were successful in gaining the support of their Gallic colleagues, as well as local political support, and the see became ever more powerful.[60]

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[56] Council of Agde, *Conc. Gal.* 1.189-228
[57] See below 122, 123, 249-250 for councils called in the Frankish kingdom.
[58] Klingshirn 1994, 97-103
[59] Council of Turin, *Conc. Gal.* 1.52-60; Mathisen 1989, 25-26; Klingshirn 1994, 66
[60] Details of the power held by various bishops of Arles during the fifth century are to be found in Heinzelmann 1992, Kelly 1986, Mathisen 1989. In 412 bishop Patroclus was given metropolitan authority over the provinces of Viennensis as well as Narbonensis I and II; bishop Hilary (430-449) was instrumental in putting 'his' people

In 523 Theoderic sent an army into Burgundy that succeeded in winning a broad territory north of the Durance, thus unifying the metropolitan see of Arles for the first time since the 470's. Caesarius acted quickly to consolidate his new position and held a series of councils to further promote his reforms. In the summer of 524 there was a council at Arles, in November 527 at Carpentras, in July 529 at Orange and in November 529 at Vaison.[61] The last three were held in dioceses once controlled by the bishop of Vienne and the presence of the majority of his suffragan bishops demonstrates that Caesarius was now in a very powerful position.

However, political events would again influence Caesarius' position. In 526 Theoderic died and his successor, his daughter Amalasuntha, ceded the area won from the Burgundians in 523 back to them. This led to a shrinking in the territory of the Arelate see. Further, in late 536 or early 537 the Franks seized control of Arles. While this had little direct impact on the civil administration of the *civitas*, it had a profound effect on ecclesiastical affairs as it shifted the balance of power. With incorporation into the Frankish kingdom Caesarius became one of approximately fifteen metropolitan bishops in Frankish territory. Also, the Franks were fond of interfering in church affairs, as is evident at the councils of 538 and 541, both at Orléans.[62] Caesarius did not attend the latter of these two councils; neither did he send a representative to them. The reason for this refusal was that he believed

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into vacant sees; but during the 450's pope Leo dismembered the area governed by Arles along the lines of the agreement made at Turin in 398.

[61] *Conc. Gal.* 2: Arles 42-46, Carpentras 47-52, Orange 53-76, Vaison 77-81

that his claim to primacy, as papal vicar, was no longer being taken seriously. The choice of Orléans as a venue for the councils indicates that the church's centre of gravity had shifted from Provence to the heartland of the Frankish kingdom, further denigrating the position of the Arelate see.[63]

While the events surrounding Caesarius' episcopacy were concentrated in the south of Gaul, they do highlight the issues that were effecting the bishops of Gaul at a time when weak central authority allowed them a degree of freedom that, after the conquests of the Franks, they were not to experience again. The re-assertion of control that followed the establishment of the *Regnum Francorum*, the acceptance of Germanic rule and the consequent re-concentration on local and national affairs, led to a lessening of the bishops' power within their sees. While they were still respected as the leaders of the church, and while their support of the Frankish kings was essential to the latter's continued success, they were forced to restrict their activities to their localities, aware that the support of the kings was necessary for their continuing power and authority.

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The lives of these men illustrate how the nobility came to terms with the withdrawal of the imperial presence in Gaul, the establishment of the Germanic kingdoms, and the growing power of the church.

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[62] *Conc. Gal.* 2.113-130, 131-146. See below for further details of how Frankish kings interfered in church councils.
[63] Klingshirn 1994, 256-259

Part 2: The Franks

We must not imagine Gaul as having been 'conquered' from the north by the 'Franks', i.e. by a powerful and united people, with its own culture, history and identity. On the contrary, from the start 'Romano-Frankish' history shows the Franks as being a disunited, small, open, flexible people, still in the process of ethnogenesis. The advantage of this state was that it allowed them to be readier and more able than other Germanic settlers to bend to circumstance - to accommodate rather than overcome the established Gallo-Roman aristocracy, including becoming Catholic Christians.

By the middle years of the fifth century the Roman Empire had almost entirely withdrawn from Gaul and the Gallo-Roman population had made the choice to go-it-alone. The leaders of this society were the land-owning senatorial aristocracy and the bishops, who were becoming increasingly more powerful. However, the Frankish monarchy succeeded in maintaining a strong grip on power and authority within this society. In doing so it created the necessary landscape in which the Gallo-Roman and Frankish nobilities could merge to create a Gallo-Frankish nobility, and thus a Gallo-Frankish society.

Chapter 4

The Frankish Background

4.1 Narrative History

Until the end of the fifth century the term 'Frank' described disparate groups of peoples made up of a number of different tribes. They were a heterogeneous group that was not united until the reign of Clovis (c.481-c.511). Nevertheless 'Frank' is a useful generic term used to simplify discussion of these peoples and their early history. The lack of unity among them makes it difficult to discuss the Franks from an ethnic point of view, and the lack of good source material and the changing face of their composition also makes it almost impossible to define what it meant to be a Frank in the late fourth and fifth centuries.

An examination of the history of the establishment of the *Regnum Francorum* will help towards giving an understanding of the forces that were at play within the society of this period. It will also allow us to see what influences led to the changes and the fusion that took place between the Gallo-Roman and Frankish societies. Towards the end of the fourth century the potential for fusion or even for co-operation between the highest levels of Gallo-Roman and Germanic society was poor. On one hand was the powerful, self-aware Catholic Gallo-Roman ruling class, and on the other the powerful, self-aware Arian/pagan Germanic ruling classes; the Franks were not yet even a force to be reckoned with. The Gallo-Romans tolerated the Visigoths and the Burgundians, but they did not fuse. How is it, then, that the Franks succeeded where those that went before failed?

4.1.1 The early 'Franks'

The Franks first appear in the sources during the early years of the fourth century and the history of the Franks in the Roman Empire begins in the middle of the third century. In 253 Valerian used Franks in his army while fighting Aemilian and before the end of 254 Gallienus had defeated a band of men going by this name. It also seems that the Romans defeated some 'Franks' in 257. Aurelius Victor tells us how, during the reign of Gallienus (253-68)

> ...a force of Alamanni took possession of Italy while tribes of Franks pillaged Gaul and occupied Spain, where they ravaged and almost destroyed the town of Tarraconensis, and some, after conveniently acquiring ships, penetrated as far as Africa. Even the territories across the Danube, which Trajan had secured, were lost.[1]

During the time of the Gallic Empire Postumus fought against some Franks and various skirmishes against them took place throughout the remainder of the third century.[2] These include two references in Eutropius. The first is to Carausius 'clearing the sea along the coast of Belgica and Armorica which the Franks and Saxons were infesting'.[3] The second is to Constantine I, who was then ruling in the Gallic provinces, who had 'slaughtered the Franks and the Alamanni and captured their kings'.[4] It is clear that contemporary sources considered the Alamanni and Franks to be a threat to the integrity of the borders of the Empire, and praised the efforts of the emperors in expelling them.

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[1] Aurelius Victor 33, trans. Bird 1994
[2] Details of all these skirmishes between the Franks and the Roman Empire are to be found in Zöllner 1970, 7-14
[3] Eutropius 9.22, trans. Bird 1993
[4] Eutropius 10.3, trans. Bird 1993

However, whether they were a genuine threat or a manufactured threat is open to question.[5]

Constantine recruited Franks into his army, and these included cohorts of Amsivari, Bructeri, Chamavi, Chattuari, Sali and Tubati, all of which are listed in the fourth century document, the *Notitia Dignitatum*.[6] Although the history of the bulk of this people during this time remains shrouded in mystery a few men, who seem to have been Franks, do achieve both prominence and success within the Empire. Magnentius the usurper (350-53) was, according to the sources, a Frank.[7] He defeated Constans and claimed the imperial throne, but reigned for only just over three years before being overthrown by Constantius and Gallus.[8] Silvanus, *magister peditum* (352/3-55) was also a Frank, a Christian and a usurper.[9] His story is told by Ammianus and the reference to his origin comes when we are told that, having seized power 'his fellow-countrymen the Franks would either kill him or take a bribe to betray him.[10] Charietto, count of both Germanies under Julian (360-3), was apparently a Frank,[11] as were Merobaudes, *magister peditum* (375-88) and consul (377 and 382),[12] Merobaudes, *dux Aegypti*,[13] Bauto, *magister militum* in the west (380) and consul (385),[14]

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[5] See below 128
[6] James 1988, 39; Zöllner 1970, 15
[7] Magnentius' lineage seems to have caused problems for the sources of the period, Drinkwater 1999; *PLRE* I 1971, 532; *GP* 643
[8] Aurelius Victor 42, trans. Bird 1994; Eutropius 10.12, trans. Bird 1993
[9] *PLRE* I 1971, 840; *GP* 695; Ammianus 15.5
[10] Ammianus 15.5
[11] *PLRE* I 1971, 200; *GP* 578
[12] *PLRE* I 1971, 598; *GP* 652
[13] *PLRE* I 1971; *GP* 652
[14] *PLRE* I 1971; *GP* 570

Richomer, consul (384) and supreme military commander in the east (388-9),[15] and finally Arbogast, *magister militum* (390).[16]

Evidence exists for military activity involving the Franks, fighting both for and against the Roman Empire during the fourth century. In 341 there was an incursion of Franks into the Empire; in 350 there was a large scale invasion of Germanic groups into the Empire, with the Franks making up a part of the force; in 356 the area around Cologne was recovered by Julian; and in 357 and 358 Julian campaigned against the Quadi, Chamavi, Chattuari and Salii, all Frankish tribes.[17]

Ammianus history attempts to depict the Frankish tribes, the Salii, Chamavi and Attuarii, as evil barbarian forces that needed to be defeated by Julian in order to preserve the integrity of the Rhine frontier and of the Roman Empire.[18] However, if we delve deeper there is another interpretation: that Julian deliberately fought these tribes in order to uphold his own position and that of the infallibility of the Empire. It is possible to interpret these stories, and those of Julian's wars against the Alamanni, as a Caesar who, in order to maintain his own prestige, and to give his armies some occupation in the north-eastern region of the Empire, manufactured a threat from the barbarians. The picture of the Franks that is conveyed is actually of a number of small tribes living more or less peacefully on the borders of the empire, occasionally plundering the countryside in order to support their

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[15] *PLRE* I 1971, 765-6; *GP* 680-1
[16] *PLRE* I 1971, 95-7; *GP* 558
[17] Ammianus, 15.8.3, 15.8.4, 15.8.5, 20.10.2; James 1988, 51; Zöllner 1970, 15-25. See above 127 for evidence of the Franks fighting for the Romans in Constantine's army
[18] See above 57-58 for details

families. The fact that Ammianus gives us a figure of 600 for the size of the Salic fighting force highlights the fact that the fighting forces were not very large. It would seem that the Franks wanted to settle in the border regions, hence their eagerness to negotiate with Julian for peace. But Julian had very different ideas, and so the Franks were depicted as barbarians, forces of evil that had to be defeated.

This picture of the Franks is a part of the wider picture painted by contemporary historians, from Tacitus to Ammianus, of the barbarians of destroyers of the Empire and of its peace, and a threat to be fought off at all costs.[19] By contrast Gregory, while depicting the Franks as argumentative and always fighting, does not write about them in a manner that suggests that they are barbarians that need to be defeated. Similarly, Fortunatus also depicts the Franks in a more positive light, as successful rulers in the Roman tradition. This points to the changes that had taken place in people's attitudes in the intervening period as the power of the Empire faded and the barbarians became acceptable as the new leaders.

It is evident that Julian was successful because of the inability of the disparate Frankish tribes to co-operate in fighting the Roman army. They tried to negotiate separate peace treaties with the Romans and in doing so opened themselves up to exploitation. Their political instability, coupled with the relatively small size of the tribes, made them easy targets for Rome. By depicting the Franks and the Alamanni as the barbarian 'other' the Romans were able to portray themselves as the rightful rulers of Gaul.

Since the Roman Empire exploited the Frankish tribes to their own ends it is possible to interpret the existence of these early 'Franks' as a Roman artefact. The fact that the Franks had lived on the borders of the Roman Empire for a number of generations and had been a part of the Roman army before they finally established themselves in Gaul means that some of the distinctive features of Frankish power were, in fact, indigenous to late Roman Gaul and that their rule was derived from there.[20] Without the Roman Empire, their interaction with these 'barbarians' and their subsequent appearance in the works of contemporary historians such as Ammianus, the Franks may never have existed as a perceived threat to the peace and integrity of the Empire. The exploitation of the Franks by the Romans was a necessary factor in their creation and survival.

It is worthwhile noting that in each situation Julian is facing a different tribe of Franks. On the first occasion they are referred to as 'Franks', on the second as the Salii and the third time as Attuari. Here is early evidence for the fact that, at this point in their history, the 'Franks' were a long way from being a united people. It would also be difficult to predict that within two centuries they would have taken over as the successors to the Roman Empire in Gaul, especially as little or no mention is made of the fact that they had strong and decisive, and identifiable, leaders. In addition, the final story shows the Franks living on the far side of the Rhine, early evidence of their establishment in that area, to the north-east of the Empire.

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[19] See above 36 to see how this influenced modern historian
[20] Wallace-Hadrill 1962, 4, 9, 156; James 1988, 163; Werner 1998, 96-97

Gregory discusses the history of the early Franks to the best of his knowledge and ability. He records hostilities between the Franks and the Romans that took place in the late fourth century, episodes that were originally reported in the works of Sulpicius Alexander and Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus. In an extract from the former we are informed that,

> At that time the Franks invaded the Roman province of Germania under their leaders Genobaud, Marcomer and Sunno. As these Franks crossed the frontier, many of the inhabitants were slaughtered and they ravaged the most fertile areas...The enemy, who were heavily laden with booty, for they had pillaged the richest parts of the province, crossed back over the Rhine, but left many of their men behind in Roman territory, where they were planning to continue their ravaging. The Romans found it easy to deal with these, and a great number of Franks were cut down in the forest of Charbonnière.[21]

Gregory also depicts the Franks defeating the Romans, but there is also evidence of peace dealings between the two sides: '...the tyrant Eugenius (392-4)...renewed the old traditional treaties with the kings of the Alamanni and the Franks...'.[22] Gregory does not supply the details of the treaty. However, it is evident that while the Franks raided and ravaged the border regions of the Empire, it was possible to deal with them in a peaceful manner, and that treaties between the two sides were not uncommon.

Ammianus is not the only historian who mentions the Franks. According to Orosius the Franks were overwhelmed by the barbarian force that crossed the Rhine in the winter of 406.

> ...the nations that had been stirred up by Stilicho, as I have said, that is the Alans, Sueves, Vandals as well as many others, overwhelmed the Franks,

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[21] DLH 2.9: *Ex tempore Genobaude, Marcomere et Sunnone ducibus Franci in Germaniam prorupere, ac pluribus mortalium limite inrupto caesis, fertiles maxime pagus depopulati...Sed onusti praeda hostes, provinciarum opima depopulati, Rhenum transierunt, pluribus suorum in Romano relictis solo, ad repetendam depopluationem paratis, cum quibus congressus Romanis adcomodus fuit, multis Francorum apud Carboniaram ferro perimptis.*
[22] DLH 2.9: *Eugenius tyranus...cum Almannorum et Francorum regibus vetustis foederibus ex more initis...*

crossed the Rhine, invaded Gaul, and advanced in their onward rush as far as the Pyrenees.[23]

It is these barbarians that rampaged through Gaul for three years before crossing into Spain. It is significant that the Franks did not cause this 'invasion' and neither did they participate in it. This provides evidence that in future the Franks would not necessarily be branded with the title of 'barbarian' or 'invader', thus leaving the way clear for them to be accepted as leaders.

Despite the general scarcity of source material for this period it is evident that contact between the Romans and the Franks continued throughout the fourth century.[24] From the works of Frigeridus we have evidence that the usurpers Constantine III (407-11) and Jovinus (411-13), both came across the Franks during their brief reigns. At one point Constantine III was being besieged when

> ...messengers arrived all of a sudden from northern Gaul to announce that Jovinus had assumed the rank of Emperor and was about to attack the besieging forces with the Burgundes, the Alamanni, the Franks, the Alani and a large army.[25]

Gregory is evidently unsure of both his dating and his sequence of events here for he mentions these events before mentioning Stilicho and his defeat of the Franks,[26] events whose chronology was in fact the other way around.

There are reports of continued conflict in 413, 420 and 428 and there is also evidence that the Franks fought for Rome against the

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[23] Orosius 40, trans. Murray 2000, 35
[24] See above 54ff
[25] *DLH* 2.9
[26] *DLH* 2.9

Vandals.[27] Prosper of Aquitaine tells us that in 428 'part of Gaul near the Rhine was seized by the Franks was recovered by the forces of Count Aëtius'.[28] In c.450 the Salian Franks attacked the *civitas* of Arras and were defeated at the *vicus Helena*.[29] There is also evidence that they fought against Aëtius, but when he in turn fought against Attila and the Huns in 451 the Franks fought with him against the common enemy.[30] This incident provides further evidence that the Franks were keen to settle within the borders of the Empire, even to the point of fighting with the Roman forces against the threat of the barbarian Huns. This also points to a possible change that was beginning the take place in the attitude of certain Romans. The Franks were evidently acceptable as military allies, and could be used to fight the barbarian 'other', evidence of the possibility that they were no longer viewed as such. This opened the way to their later acceptance as leaders of Gallo-Roman and Frankish society in the late fifth and sixth centuries.

Hydatius informs us that during the reign of Valentinian III (425-55) they were 'defeated in war and were received on peaceful terms',[31]

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[27] James 1988, 54

[28] Prosper, trans. Murray 2000, 68. Aëtius was a Roman patrician and the son of Gaudentius, a high-ranking military officer. He won profound influence with Valentinian III and became the effective ruler of the Western Empire, being consul three times in 432, 437 and 446. In 433 he was appointed *patricius* and fought successfully against barbarians and rebels in Gaul. In 451 he joined force with the Visigoths to fight Attila and the Huns at the battle of the Catalaunian Plains; but he was unable to oppose Attila when he invaded Italy in 452. He was assassinated at the instigation of Petronius Maximus.

[29] Sidonius *Panegyricus* V, to Maiorianus, 219-229, 237-250; in the latter lines Sidonius furnishes his audience with a description of these Franks, or Scythians as he calls them here: "Their eyes are faint and pale, with a glimmer of greyish blue. Their faces are shaven all round and instead of beards they have thin moustaches which they run through with a comb. Close-fitting garments confine the tall limbs of the men; they are drawn up high so as to expose the knees, and a broad belt supports their narrow middle."; Wood, 1994b, 37; James, 1988, 57

[30] James 1988, 56-59

[31] Hydatius, trans. Murray 2000, 89

and the *Chronicle of 511* tells us that during the reign of Anastasius (491-518) 'Toulouse was burned by the Franks and Burgundians'.[32]

In these few existing references to the Franks up to the fifth century very few Frankish names appear. Franks who succeeded in reaching prominence in the fifth century and mentioned in Gregory are Genobaud, Marcomer and Sunno, described as 'kinglets' and as 'leaders'.[33] Also mentioned are Theudemer, king of the Franks and son of Richemer, and Clodio, also king of the Franks and an ancestor of Merovech, who in turn was 'the father of Childeric', the first attested leader of the Franks.[34]

From these early images of the Franks in the sources it would be almost impossible to predict that within less than two centuries the Franks would have become the most successful successor state to the Roman Empire in the west. So, what were the factors that would lead to them becoming so successful?

4.1.2 The Franks and the Merovingians

Little source material survives to inform modern historians about the life of Childeric (d.c.481), the first attested leader of the Franks.[35] He must have lived to the north-east of Gaul, on the borders of the Empire. One of Childeric's main rivals for power in this region was Aegidius, a Roman general, and his son Syagrius. Aegidius' relationship with Rome is uncertain. He reigned in the north-eastern

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[32] *Gallic Chronicle of 511*, trans. Murray 2000, 99
[33] *DLH* 2.9: *regalibus* and *ducibus*; Périn 1987a, 57
[34] *DLH* 2.9: *cuius et filius Childericus*
[35] The discovery of his grave in 1653 by a team of explorers confirms his existence.

region of Gaul, but whether this was on behalf of Rome, in opposition to Rome or as an ally to Rome remains hidden from view.

On the death of the emperor Majorian in 461 Aegidius refused to accept the authority of the new emperor, Severus. This led to a division of power within Gaul: Roman imperial control was confined to the south, while northern Gaul, including control of the majority of the Gallic army, remained under the control of Aegidius.[36] Despite the failure to recognise Severus, and the separation of the northern and southern parts of Gaul, the kingdom of Aegidius and Syagrius remained a bastion of Romanity.[37] It was evident that while the area was ready to accept an alternative to imperial rule, i.e. local authority, that rule had to be Roman. *Belgica Secunda*, the region where they ruled, included the *civitates* of Rheims, Soissons, Châlons-sur-Marne, Noyon, Arras, Cambrai, Tournai, Senlis, Beauvais, Amiens, Thérouanne, Boulougne and Laon. During this period Frankish expansion was taking place in a south-westerly direction, into Gaul from the north-east.[38]

The traditional view of the relationship between Childeric and Aegidius and Syagrius is that Childeric fought against them on behalf of Rome, as other barbarians had done before him.[39] However, there is an alternative way of interpreting the information that we have. This maintains that Childeric was an official in the northern kingdom of Aegidius and Syagrius. Aegidius died in 464 and was succeeded by his son. In 469/70 a battle took place between Childeric and Syagrius, but

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[36] Elton 1992, 172

[37] Périn 1987a, 137

[38] Zöllner 1970, 33; full details of Frankish expansion may be found in Zöllner 1970, 33-35

Childeric did not fight it on behalf of Rome. The battle was actually a fight for supremacy within the northern kingdom.

Given the Franks' familiarity with the Empire and their manipulation by it, the northern kingdom of Aegidius and Syagrius was not an obstacle to Frankish power but rather a necessary condition of it. The Franks did not fight as barbarians but as people who were willing to assimilate with Rome. Childeric co-operated with the Gallo-Romans both militarily and politically, although he did not fight on their behalf but his own.[40] This meant that not only was he in a position of power over his own followers, but that he was also acceptable as a leader of the Gallo-Romans. This episode is crucial in the history of the establishment and development of Frankish history in the fifth century. It demonstrates that the Franks were a capable fighting force or, at least, were able to lead an army against Aegidius. They must also have relied to some extent on the support of the Gallo-Romans, and their familiarity with the Roman Empire would have made their success acceptable. Sketchy though their early history is, the evidence that survives of the Frankish tribes' relationship with the Empire supports the supposition that their success while not guaranteed could have been foreseen.

Evidence for the duality of Clovis' role comes from Remigius' letter, where the bishop writes to him to congratulate him on inheriting his father' kingdom.[41] 'Great news has reached us that you have taken

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[39] See above 60, 61, 62, 67
[40] Zöllner 1970, 40-43
[41] *Ep.Aust.* 2; *CCSL* 117, cited in Hillgarth 1986, 76 and in Murray 2000, 260-261

up the administration of Belgica Secunda.'[42] This supports the theory that Childeric's success in defeating Aegidius and Syagrius in *Belgica Secunda* was an internal struggle for power in the region, and that Clovis was a ruler in his own right and recognised as such by Rome.[43] The letter reads much as one would to a Roman official such as a *magister militum*, and uses the language of the Roman administration.[44] If Childeric was an official within the northern kingdom of Aegidius and Syagrius the phrase 'taken up' supports this hypothesis. Bishop Remigius was familiar with the language of the Empire and so the language of his letter would reflect that. The fact that he uses such language in this letter to Clovis, with the assumption that he would understand it and its implications, supports the hypothesis that Clovis was viewed by his contemporaries as taking over as a Roman official in the north.

Clovis inherited his father's kingdom on the latter's death in c.481 (see figure 6, below). His reign is both the culmination of one process and the beginning of another, for it is with Clovis that the Franks come to the fore. His reign marks an end to the disparate references to the Franks in contemporary sources and marks the beginning of the history of their impact on the history of the west. Clovis' military achievements were the conquest of further territory in northern Gaul and his defeat of the Visigoths at Vouillé in 507. Another event was his conversion to

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[42] Murray 2000, 260
[43] See above 134-136 for details of these events.
[44] Fischer 1924, 540; Hillgarth 1986, 76; Zöllner 1970, 46

Catholic Christianity; this was crucial to the success of the Franks in Gaul.[45]

Despite Clovis' crucial role in the establishment of Frankish power in the west, contemporary sources have very little to say about him. Gregory first mentions him when he is discussing the early kings of the Franks, saying that each king is

> '...chosen from the foremost and most noble family of their race. As I shall show you later, this is proved by the victories won by Clovis.'[46]

Fig. 6 Gaul, 481-482, taken from Périn 1987, p.84

Gregory tells his audience the circumstances of his birth, saying that '...he was a great man and became a famous soldier'.[47] According to Gregory, in c.486 Clovis finally defeated Syagrius, who had been holding onto some remains of his father's kingdom in a breakaway

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[45] Clovis' conversion will be discusses at greater depth below 140ff.

[46] DLH 2.9: ...de prima et, ut ita dicam, nobiliore suorum familia. Quod postea probatum Chlodovechi victuriae tradedirunt, itaque in sequenti digerimus.

[47] DLH 2.9: Hinc fuit magnus et pugnatur egregius.

kingdom. Syagrius fled to Alaric II, the Visigothic king, who returned him to Clovis; he was subsequently killed.[48]

Gregory continues with the life of Clovis. After his defeat of Syagrius he advanced up to the Seine and sometime between 486 and 494 conquered the area around the Loire (see figure 7, below).[49] He also defeated those areas of Thuringia that were closest to the Rhine, thus expanding the Frankish territory in an easterly direction.[50]

His marriage to Clotild, a Burgundian princess and a Christian, was his next significant step, and she tried to convert her husband to her faith.
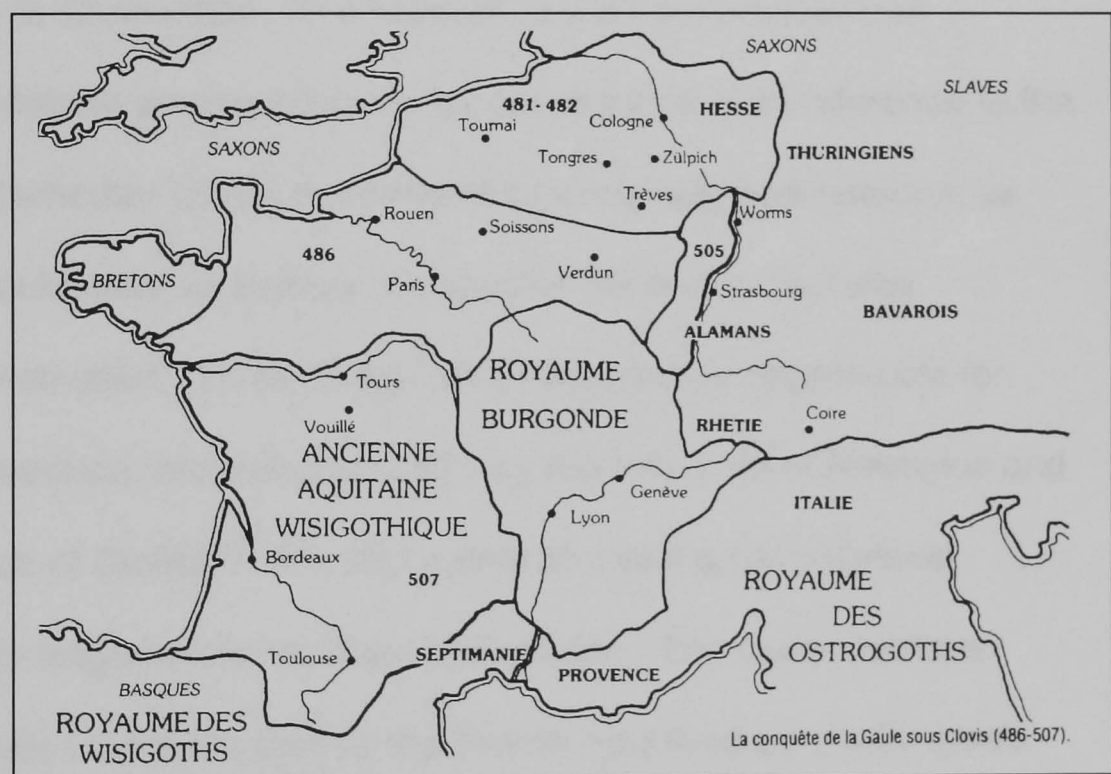
Fig. 7 Gaul, 486-507, taken from Périn 1987, p.144

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[48] *DLH* 2.27; *LHF* 9; Zöllner 1970, 48
[49] Zöllner 1970, 51
[50] Zöllner 1970, 54

It was not until his war against the Alamans that his conversion took place, in circumstances very similar to those surrounding the conversion of the emperor Constantine.[51]

According to the story, on the eve of battle Clovis prayed and stated that should he be granted victory over his enemies, the Alamans, then he would believe in God and be baptised. He won the battle and as a result bishop Remigius of Rheims was called on by Clotild to baptise her husband.[52]

Perhaps one of the greatest myths of the Franks is that of their conversion to Christianity. The topic of Clovis's conversion has generated debate among scholars for generations, with reference to the question of whether Clovis converted for purely religious reasons, as Gregory would have us believe, or whether his conversion was politically motivated. Three things were immediately responsible for Clovis' conversion: his vision and victory, the influence of Remigius and the influence of Clotild.[53] It is impossible to make a clear division between his religious and political motivations. The Gallo-Romans were Catholic Christians and as the Franks had lived on the Empire's borders for generations they would have been familiar with this faith. Also, the growing power of the bishops, in both secular and religious spheres,[54] meant that they were now regarded as advisers to kings. All of these factors gave Clovis reasons to convert.[55]

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[51] See above 77ff for a discussion of the conversion of the emperor Constantine to Christianity

[52] *DLH* 2.30, 31; *LHF* 15

[53] Geuenich 1998a, 426; see below 232 for details on Clotild

[54] See below 174ff

[55] See below 213, 239 for the significance of this hugely important act and its place in Gallo-Roman acceptance of Frankish rule.

The Frankish conversion to Christianity during the years of Clovis' reign marked the beginning of a close relationship between the Merovingian family and the Church, a relationship that manifested itself in respect on both sides, as well as frequent interference by each in the affairs of the other.[56]

Having defeated the Alamanni, Clovis went on to do the same to the Burgundians, under their kings Gundobad and Godigisel who ruled in the region of the Rhône and the Saône in the east, and then the Visigoths at Vouillé in 507.[57]

All of this activity was centred on and united northern Gaul, except for the kingdom of the Bretons, under the rule of Clovis. It is at this point in his career that Clovis receives honours from the Empire, in the form of a consulate bestowed on him by the emperor Anastasius.[58] This is another popular myth: Clovis' acceptance of a consulate from the emperor Anastasius. This incident has given rise to debate in the light of the nature of the honours bestowed on the Frankish king. Here is the story, as related by Gregory:

> Letters reached Clovis from the Emperor Anastasius to confer the consulate on him. In St. Martin's church he stood clad in a purple tunic and the military mantle, and he crowned himself with a diadem...From that day on he was called Consul or Augustus.[59]

It is evident that Clovis was not rewarded with a consulate in the traditional sense of the word but, whatever confusion Gregory felt in his use of terminology, something significant happened here. Lines of

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[56] See below 187, 240
[57] *DLH* 2.32, 33, 37; *LHF* 16, 17
[58] *DLH* 2.38

communication between Gaul and the Eastern Empire were evidently open, as some sort of office or honorary title was bestowed on the king. Roman titles still counted for something in late fifth century Gaul and conferring such a title on Clovis meant that not only was he now king of the Franks, but he was also in a position of authority over the Gallo-Romans, over those who would have recognised and valued the importance of such a title.[60]
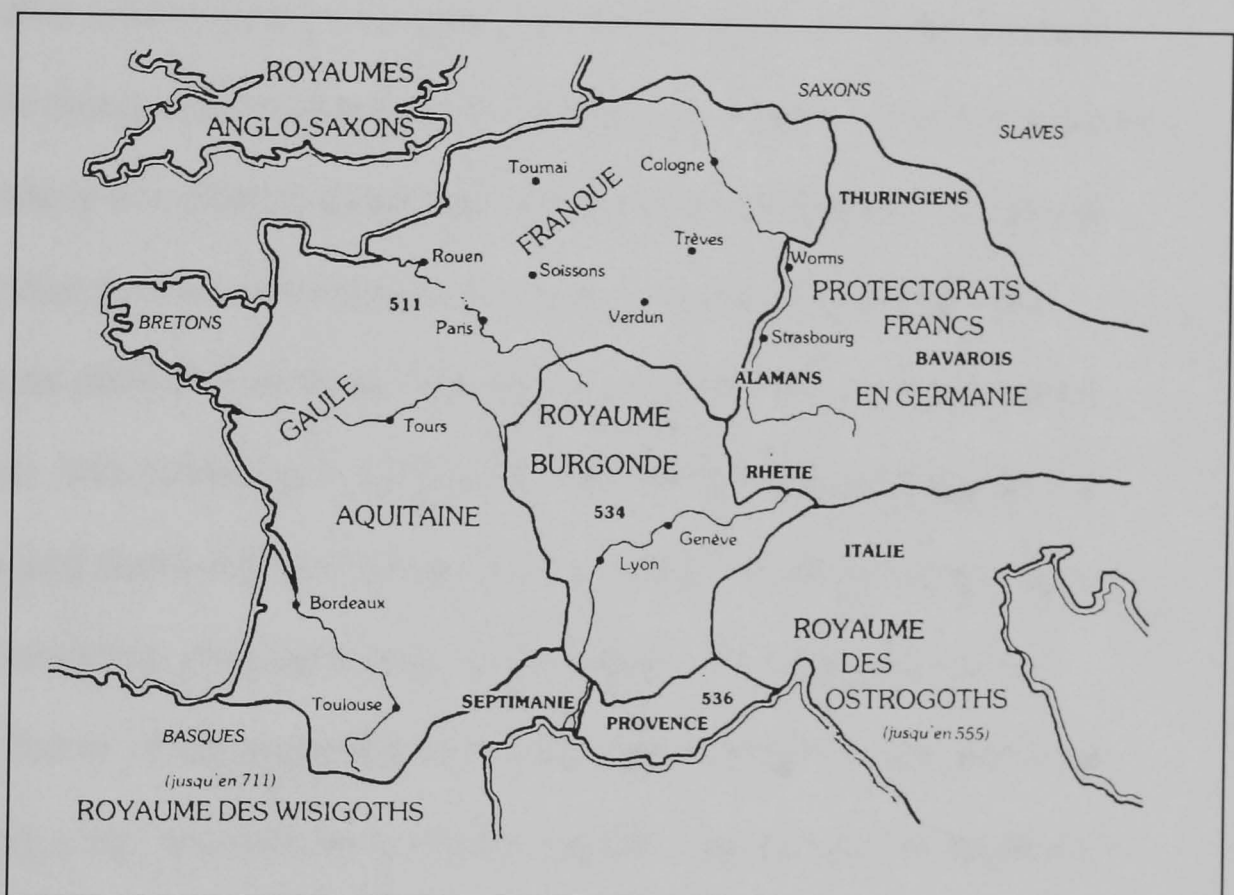
Fig. 8 Gaul 511-536, taken from Périn 1987, 176

Clovis' final achievement was the defeat of his rival Frankish kings, some of whom were his relatives.[61] By defeating them and

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[59] DLH II.38: *Igitur ab Anastasio imperatore codecillos de consolato accepit, et in basilica beati Martini tunica blattea indutus et clamide, inponens vertice diademam...et ab ea die tamquam consul et augustus est vocitatus.*

[60] Wallace-Hadrill 1962, 176; Fischer 1924, 549

[61] The first to be killed was Sigibert the Lame (*DLH* 2.40), followed closely by Chararic (*DLH* 2.41), and finally Ragnachar and his brothers Ricchar and Rignomer (*DLH* 2.42). Sigibert was king of the Ripurian Franks. Clovis persuaded Sigibert's son, Chloderic, to kill his father and Clovis' envoys then killed him in turn. Clovis then travelled to Cologne where he addressed the Ripurian Franks and they '...clashed their shields and shouted their approval. Then they raised Clovis up on a shield and made him their

uniting their followers under his own rule Clovis began the process of establishing a single, powerful, Frankish state. In doing so he established the Merovingian family as a powerful monarchy. In c.511 Clovis died, having succeeded in killing or defeating all of his enemies, and he left a united kingdom for his four sons to inherit and divide between them (see figure 8, above).

Clovis' defeat of all his rival Frankish kings and his unification of the Franks under his own rule signifies the point at which the 'Franks' become recognisable as a force to be reckoned with. From this point in their history it is difficult to see how Rome and the Empire would ever regain their former supremacy. It is now possible to recognise the Franks as distinct from other barbarians and from the Gallo-Romans. However, this emergence from the shadow would not last long as the Franks and Gallo-Romans became ever closer, finally merging into a new society that displayed both Gallo-Roman and Germanic traits.

Clovis' death created a new challenge for the Franks: with four surviving sons, all deemed eligible to inherit, how would the *Regnum Francorum* be ruled? The solution was to divide the kingdom between them, each ruling his own part, but never compromising the overall integrity of the *Regnum Francorum* (see figure 9, below).

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ruler'. Chararic was king of the Salian Franks. During Clovis' battle with Syagrius he had remained neutral in the hope of giving his allegiance to the victor. This angered Clovis to such an extent that he had Chararic and his son captured, tonsured, ordained and, eventually, executed. Ragnachar was king of the region surrounding Cambrai. Clovis marched against him and Ricchar and his brothers were captured. When they were brought before him Clovis killed them both with blows from his own axe. In addition to these Clovis also '...encompassed the death of many other kings and blood-relations of his whom he suspected of conspiring against his kingdom'.

This division points to some interesting developments in the concept of Frankish kingship. From now on inheritance was to become a hereditary concept within the Frankish monarchy, with only the sons of kings being eligible to inherit. Frankish royalty cannot be defined as a territorial sovereignty; rather, the king of the Franks, *rex Francorum*, is king of the Franks and not of the territory. The ease with which the divisions were carried out confirms this, as the kingdom was regarded as a private inheritance to be parcelled up and divided between all the sons. This was bound to lead to civil war, but these wars in themselves consolidated the idea of the *Regnum Francorum*, kingdom of the Franks.[62]

The decision of 511 to divide the Frankish kingdoms between the brothers was the solution to a problem the Franks had, naturally, not come across before. Little is known about whether or not any form of Frankish laws of inheritance existed at this point, certainly nothing survives in written form, and the concept of primogeniture was evidently unknown to them, or if known not favoured as an option. All the sons of kings became king themselves, provided that they had been recognised by their father.[63]

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[62] Périn 1987b, 7-8; see below 210ff for a more detailed discussion of the development of Frankish kingship.
[63] See below 155ff, for the case of Gundovald who was not recognised by his alleged ather
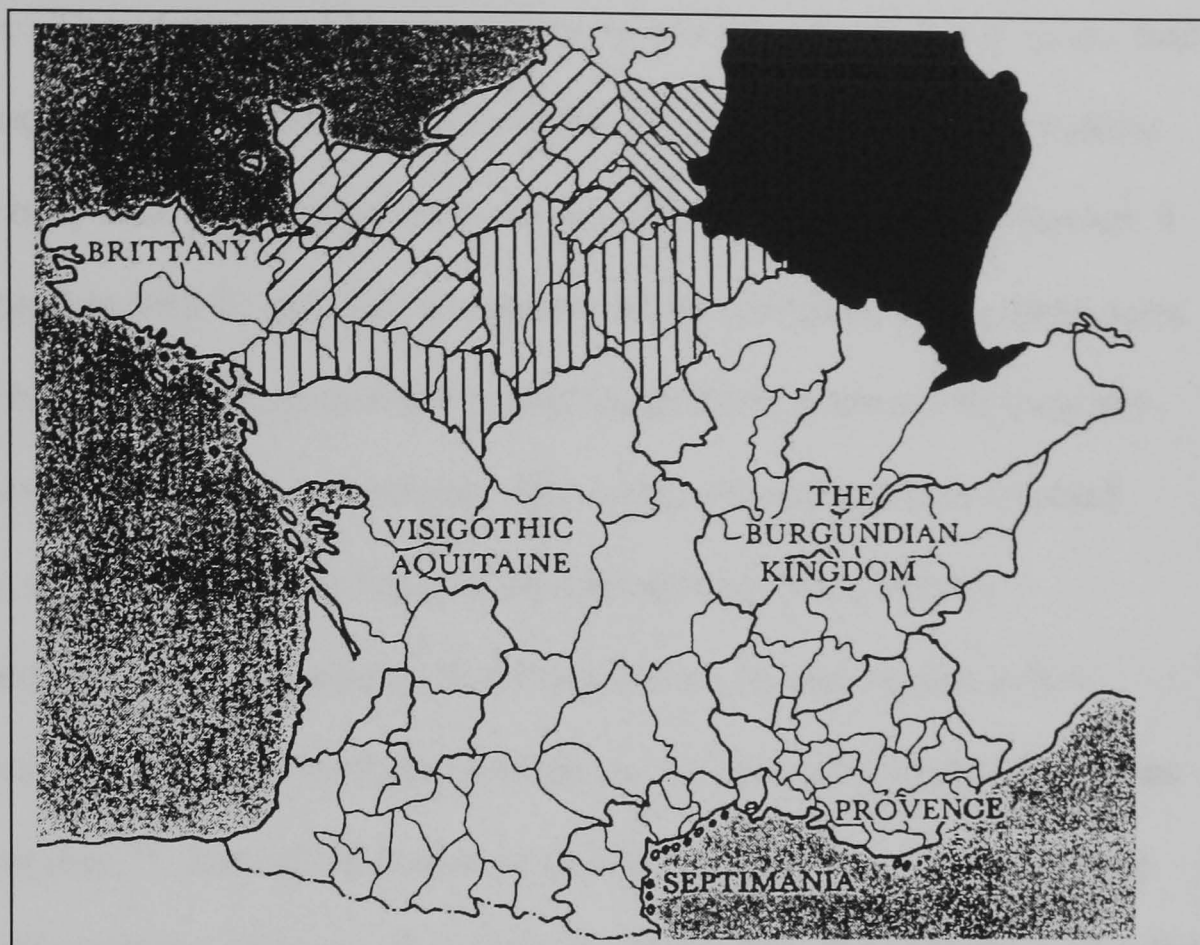
Fig. 9 The Division of 511, taken from Wood 1994b, p.367

As there were no laws governing the succession, hardly surprising

since the Frankish monarchy had only recently become so powerful, so

too were there no rules to deal with the claims of more than one son.

The Frankish territory was treated as the hereditary property of the

kings and was thus divided between the brothers.[64] This followed the

tradition established by the Roman Empire , where the Empire was

nominally divided into east and west for easier ruling, but was never

divided as an entity:[65] until the end of the fifth century there was only

one Roman Empire, and until the middle years of the seventh century

when the cracks began to appear, there was only one Frankish

kingdom.

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[64] Zöllner 1970, 74
[65] See above 53

Theuderic, the eldest son and half-brother to the other three, had during his father's lifetime proved himself an able military commander and may well have expected to inherit the entire kingdom. However, it is possible that Clotild was concerned for the position of her three sons and brought pressure to bear on her husband to ensure that they did not miss out on the succession. The solution of a four-way division may, at first, have been viewed as a temporary one, and the expectation may have been that it would not be used again in the future. The decision to divide was based on the political circumstances of the day.[66] The solution was accepted but did not engender peace, for although the integrity of the *Regnum Francorum* was maintained, the brothers did fight each other in their attempts to gain more territory.[67]

The divisions that took place led ultimately to the establishment of Austrasia in the east, Neustria in the west and Burgundy in the south and east, although these partitions did not become clear until the seventh and eighth centuries. The Frankish capitals were all established in the north, mostly within the original Frankish territory of *Belgica Secunda*. This is evidence of the political shift in gravity that took place,[68] from the Mediterranean coast and Provence to the south, to the Paris basin in the north. The cession of Provence in 536 confirmed this shift. The kings travelled little outside their own territory, and even their own capitals, and they relied on agents to do much of the administrative work in the regions that were beyond their direct control. This highlights the fact that local authority, the power of the

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[66] Wood 1977, 10, 14, 25
[67] Wallace-Hadrill 1962, 184, 185; Geary 1988, 117

local magnates, continued to be important during the late fifth and sixth centuries.

The kingdom was divided along *civitas* lines. One of the purposes of such a division was to supply the kings with equal incomes.[69] It is evident that the area of land allocated to each king was not of an equal size. However, in terms of land the early Frankish kings were well endowed with estates and palaces, many of which would originally have been part of the imperial fisc. These estates would have been run by a large staff, although there are few sources that inform us about the actual lands themselves and the uses that were made of them. The sources often refer to the king's presence on an estate and they are also evident at royal villas, but there is never any suggestion as to how big the totality of any king's estates were. An added difficulty in trying to gauge the extent of the royal estates is the fact that the kings often rewarded their followers with gifts of land, as well as frequently endowing both churches and monasteries. They also replenished their land-holdings by conquest and by the confiscation of the lands of those who were no longer deemed to be in royal favour. What is beyond question is that royal land-holdings were vast.[70]

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Clovis' eldest son, Theuderic (d.534), born to a concubine, inherited the largest section of the kingdom, which more or less corresponded with the original kingdom of *Belgica Secunda*. His capital was at Rheims. Of the three sons born to Clotild, Chlodomer (d.524)

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[68] Planahol & Claval 1994, 79
[69] See above 72, 74-75, for the importance of the *civitas* for tax purposes.

inherited the southern part of the kingdom with his capital at Orléans, Childebert (d.558) received the western region with his capital at Paris, and Clothar (d.561) received a relatively small section of land located in the midst of his brothers' territory with his capital at Soissons. The fact that all the capitals were located in the north-east and were relatively close together suggests that perhaps the four kings were willing to co-operate and that the Frankish kingdom was to remain as a single entity, undivided.[71] Over succeeding generations through the sixth century the kingdom of the Franks was not broken up, despite the divisions between the kings, and this fact was crucial for the establishment of a strong Frankish identity, as well as for a strong and powerful monarchy.

The four brothers set about conquering the remainder of Gaul, capturing Brittany and the southern regions, failing only with the strip known as Septimania on the Mediterranean coast, which was held successfully by the Visigoths. In the decade after their father's death we hear little of the activities of the four kings, apart from Theuderic's defeat of the Danes.[72] As his father had before him, so too did Theuderic also becomes involved in the affairs of Thuringia, to the east of the Frankish kingdom, for he saw the potential for expansion to the east in the region of the Rhine.[73] Thuringia had three kings, brothers, named Baderic, Hermanfrid and Berthar. Hermanfrid defeated and killed Berthar in battle; he then allied himself with Theuderic and succeeded in defeating and killing Baderic. This left only one king on

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[70] Wood 1994b, 64-65
[71] Zöllner 1970, 75-76
[72] *DLH* 3.3
[73] Zöllner 1970, 82

the Thuringian throne.[74] Theuderic then allied himself with Clothar and they defeated Hermanfrid; Thuringia then became a part of the Frankish kingdom.[75]

The fact that the Thuringian kingdom, like the Frankish kingdom, had multiple kings would seem to be significant, and demonstrates that the Frankish decision to divide was not unique to them. This suggests the possibility that this was a trait of certain Germanic barbarian tribes as they established themselves and became settled. There is a possibility that it goes back to the days of the empire when these tribes were run by a confederation of military leaders.

The defeat of the Burgundian kingdom in 534 marks the reappearance of the Frankish kings after a decade of relative inactivity. It seems that they were prompted to act against Burgundy by Clotild's pleas.[76] On the death of the Burgundian king Gundobad, Clotild's brother, in 516 his son Sigismund had inherited the kingdom. Clotild asked her sons to avenge the deaths of her mother and father, although there is no clue as to her motives. Another, more plausible reason for the campaign is that it was prompted by the crisis that occurred in Burgundy after the murder of Sigistrix, Sigismund's son by his first wife, by his second wife. The Franks saw their opportunity and decided to invade. In 523 they captured Sigismund and his kingdom but Godomar, Sigismund's brother, rallied the Burgundians and reclaimed the kingdom. Chlodomer attacked again, after having Sigismund, his wife

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[74] *DLH* 3.4
[75] *DLH* 3.7
[76] See above 139-140 for Clotild's role in Clovis' conversion, and below for a wider discussion of the place of queens in Frankish society.

and children murdered; Theuderic assisted his brother, but Chlodomer was killed during the battle.[77] Godomar reigned for ten years, but was eventually defeated by Childebert and Clothar in 534.[78]

At Chlodomer's death in 524 the Frankish kingdom was re-divided between the three remaining brothers. In 537 Provence was ceded to the Franks by the Ostrogoths, who were at that time under severe pressure from the eastern empire and who wanted to ensure peace with their western neighbours.[79] The brothers also added Aquitania, as well as parts of northern Spain and of north-west Italy to their kingdom. The acquisition of Provence was the last that the Franks made, and the borders established in 537 were to remain the furthest extent of the Frankish Merovingian realm.

Not only did the Frankish brother kings pursue war against kingdoms outside their own territory, they also fought each other for land and booty. Theuderic tried to kill Clothar;[80] Clothar and Childebert murdered Chlodomer's sons following the death of their father;[81] Childebert and Theudebert, Theuderic's son, planned to fight Clothar but were prevented from doing so;[82] and Clothar was faced with rebellion from his own son, Chramm.[83] By killing their close male relatives the Frankish kings were ensuring that they were getting rid of

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[77] *DLH* 3.6
[78] *DLH* 3.11
[79] Wood 1994b, 54
[80] *DLH* 3.7
[81] *DLH* 3.18
[82] *DLH* 3.28
[83] *DLH* 4.16, 4.17, 4.20; Marius of Avenches, trans. Murray 2000, 105

any competition and rivals to the Frankish thrones, for the fewer kings there were the more land was available for those who survived.[84]

These crises were all provoked by the race for land and, ultimately, for power. They were complicated by the fact that because inheritance was open to any son who had the recognition and support of his family and his followers, then it was inevitable that there would be attempts to kill of rivals. This type of situation was exemplified by the death of Theuderic and what followed afterwards:

> Theudebert learned that his father was seriously ill. He knew that unless he hurried home and reached his father before his death he would be cut off from his inheritance by his uncles and would never be able to return....A few days later, while Theudebert was still on his way, Theuderic died in the twenty-third year of his reign. Childebert and Clothar joined forces against Theudebert and did what they could to seize his kingdom. He bought them off and with the help of his *leudes* established himself on the throne.[85]

It is evident that the presence of the son at the death of the father increased the chances of a successful inheritance. Equally important was the support of the royal household, including the *leudes*, support that could be bought, making money an important consideration in such situations.[86]

By 558 three of the four brothers were dead: Chlodomer had died fighting the Burgundians in 524, and Theuderic and Childebert both dies of illness, in 534 and 558 respectively.[87] This meant that for three years until his death in 561 Clothar was the sole ruler of the

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[84] Périn 1987b, 10

[85] *DLH* III.23: *...nuniarur Theodoberto, patrem suum graviter egrotare, et ad quem nisi velocius properaret, ut eum inveniret vivum, a patrius suis excluderetur et ultra illuc non rediret...Cumque aabissit, Theudoricus non post multos dies obiit vicinsimo tertio regni sui anno. Consurgentes autem Childeberthus et Chlothacharius contra Theudobertum, regnum eius auferre voluerunt, sed ille muneribus placatis a leodibus suis defensatus est in regnum stabilitus.*

[86] Wood 1994b, 88, 89. See below 204ff for further discussion of the role of the *leudes*.

[87] Chlodomer *DLH* 3.6; Theuderic *DLH* 3.23l Childebert *DLH* 4.20

Frankish kingdom. Clothar's death precipitated another dilemma over the inheritance of the *Regnum Francorum*.[88] As in 511, the kingdom was divided, this time between Clothar's four sons, as none of his brothers had any surviving sons.

> In this year, King Chlothar died and his sons - that is Charibert, Guntram, Chilperic and Sigibert - divided his kingdom.[89]

Charibert (d.567) inherited the western part of the kingdom with his capital at Paris; Guntram (d.593) inherited the central and south-eastern portion with his capital at Orléans; Sigibert (d.575) inherited what had been the kingdom of *Belgica Secunda* plus the central-southern section with his capital at Rheims; and Chilperic (d.584) inherited a small section in the north-east as well as some territory in the south-west with his capital at Soissons.[90]

This division would not have taken place had Chilperic succeeded in a plan that he put into action immediately after his father's death. He captured his father's treasure that had been kept at his villa at Berny-Rivière, sought out influential Franks and won them over to his side with bribes, and then travelled to Paris. However, his brothers united and drove him from that *civitas*, and it was then that the division of 561 took place (see figure 10, below).[91]

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[88] *DLH* 4.21; Marius of Avenches, trans. in Murray 2000, 105
[89] Marius of Avenches, trans. in Murray 2000, 105
[90] Paul 2.10
[91] *DLH* 4.22
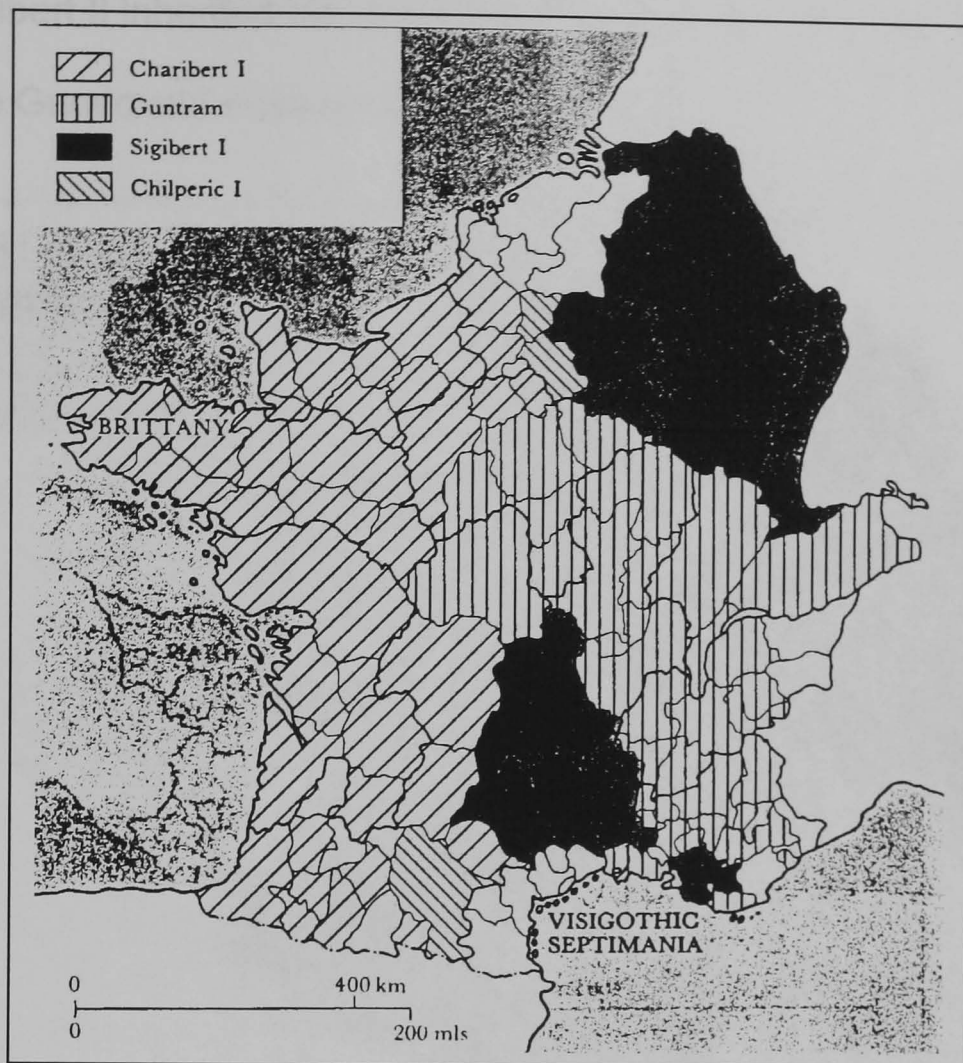
Fig. 10 <u>The Division of 561</u>, taken from Wood 1994b, p.368

Had Chilperic succeeded in his plan he would have been in a strong position to dictate what happened to his father's kingdom, but in this instance his brothers were able to unite against him and forced him to acquiesce in the division. The failure of this bold plan may well have been the reason why Chilperic was accorded two such a relatively small portions of his father's kingdom, surrounded on all sides by the territories of his brothers.

In 567 Charibert died, and the kingdom was re-divided (see figure 11, below).[92] Then in 575 Sigibert also met his death; his son

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[92] *DLH* 4.26: Gregory interpreted Charibert's death as divine punishment for his bigamous marriages to two sisters, Merofled and Marcovefa. These two had been servants to Charibert's first wife, Ingoberg, but he dismissed her and replaced her first with Merofled and then with Marcovefa as well. As a result of these actions, Charibert was excommunicated by bishop Germanus, and died shortly afterwards.

Charibert II inherited his kingdom. The support and quick thinking of Duke Gundovald ensured his succession. [93]
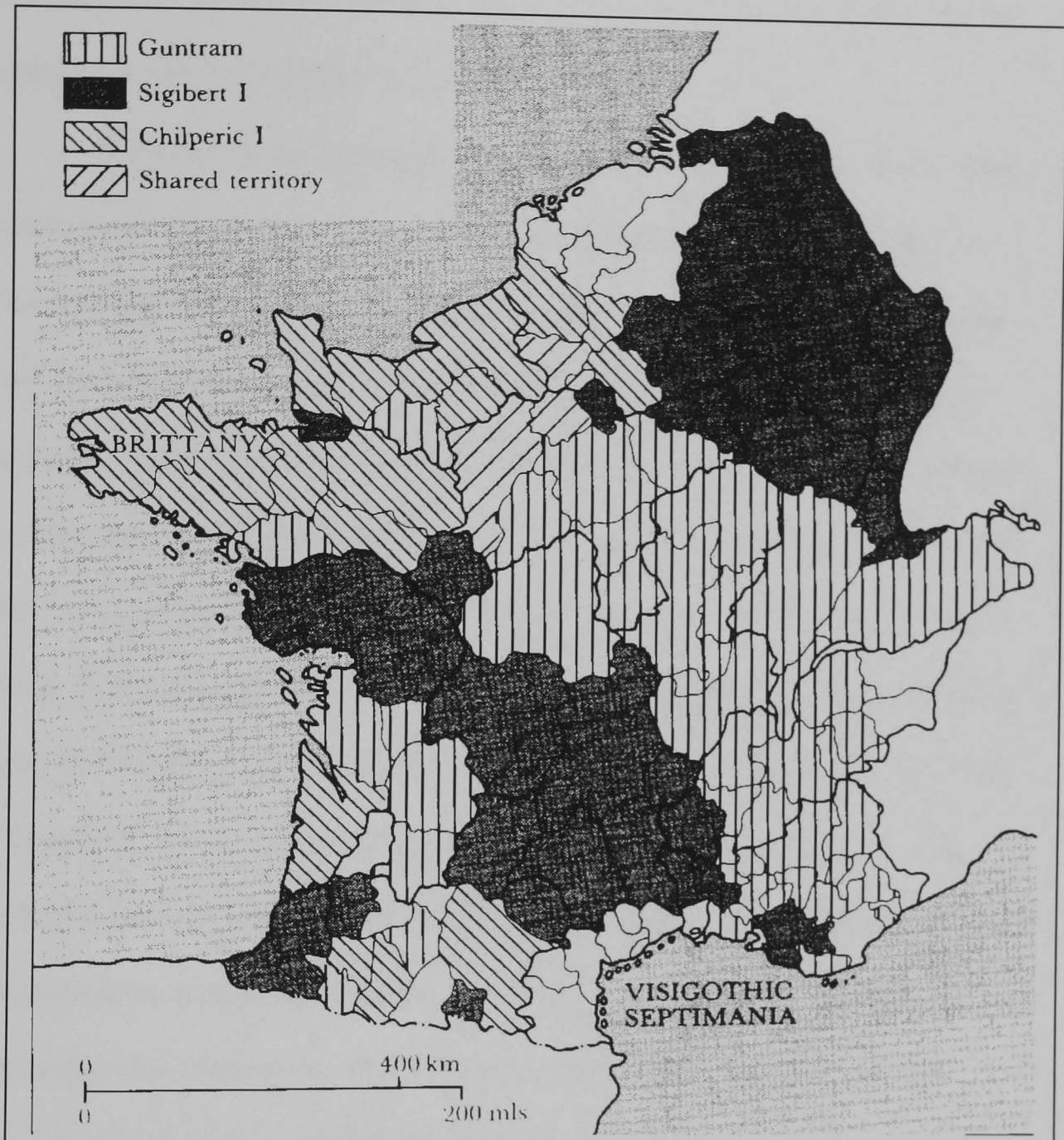
Fig. 11 The Division of 567 from Wood 1994b, p.369

From 567 there were three kings in control of the *Regnum Francorum*, three kings who were direct contemporaries of both Gregory and Fortunatus. Guntram remained in the centre and the south-east, Childebert II held on to *Belgic Secunda* and areas in the west and the centre, while Chilperic retained territory in Brittany as well

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[93] *DLH* 5.1: Sigibert was killed at the instigation of Fredegund, Chilperic's wife.

as in the north-west and parts of the south-west. In the seventh century and beyond the territories of these three would become Burgundy, Neustria and Austrasia, but for the duration of the sixth they remained united as part of the *Regnum Francorum*.

As with the preceding generations of Frankish kings these men continued to fight both external enemies and each other. However, there is one significant difference between them. Clovis and his sons had extended the borders of the *Regnum Francorum* to their widest extent, and so the challenge facing their successors was not to extend but to maintain their territory. They did fight outside the kingdom, but this was no longer on their own behalf. Now they fought as the paid army of another power. During the 570's Childebert II received 50,000 gold pieces from the emperor Maurice to rid Italy of the Lombards, but instead he made peace with them while retaining the money.[94] He entered Italy on a number of subsequent occasions, in 584 and 585, but neither time was a satisfactory conclusion reached. On the first occasion his military commanders quarrelled and returned without having gained any material advantage;[95] and in 585 he undertook to defeat the Lombards, as he had earlier promised to do, only to see his army slain.[96]

There was one other claimant to a Frankish throne: Gundovald. He claimed to be the son of Clothar, so giving him a legitimate right to be a Frankish king. There is evidence that he was born and educated in Gaul and wore his hair long, as was the custom among the Frankish

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[94] *DLH* 6.42
[95] *DLH* 8.18

kings; this custom differentiated them from their followers, and marked them out as members of the ruling Merovingian family. When Gundovald's mother presented him to Childebert I, claiming that he was his nephew, that king adopted him for he had no surviving sons of his own. When Clothar heard about this he had the boy sent to him and proceeded to have all of his hair cut off, a deeply symbolic act in the Merovingian family.[97] When Clothar died, Gundovald was taken care of by Charibert, but again he was summoned, this time to appear before Sigibert. Again he had all of his hair cut off and was then sent to Cologne. Gundovald escaped from there, made his way to Italy and finally settled in Constantinople. Some years later he was invited to return to Gaul and landed in Marseille, where he was received by bishop Theodore.[98] He took refuge in Avignon and from there travelled to Limoges, accompanied by two of his supporters, the dukes Desiderius and Mummolus.[99] At Limoges he was '...raised up as king on a shield...'.[100] Ultimately, Gundovald was unsuccessful in his bid to claim a part of the *Regnum Francorum* for himself, eventually being defeated and killed by the forces of Guntram.[101]

The story of Gundovald illustrates that in order to be accepted as a Frankish king and a member of the Merovingian family, not only was it important to have the support of dukes such as Desiderius and

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[96] *DLH* 9.25
[97] See below 270 for the significance of long hair to the sacred nature of the Merovingian kings.
[98] *DLH* 6.24
[99] See below 202ff for the continued importance of the dukes in establishing and maintaining royal authority
[100] *DLH* 7.10: *...ibique parmae superpositus, rex est levatus.*
[101] *DLH* 7.26-27, 7.30-38

Mummolus, and of bishops such as Theodore, it was also vital to have the support and more importantly recognition of the royal family itself.

Clodio
|
Merovech
d.c.456
|
Childeric
d.c.481
|
Clovis
d.c.511

Theuderic d.534 — Ingomer — **Chlodomer** d.524 — Clotild — **Clothar** d.561 — **Childebert** d.558

Theudebert d.548 — **Theudechild** d.555

Theudoald — **Gunthar** — **Chlodoald**

Chrodoswintha — Chrodoberga

Theudebald d.555

Charibert d.567 — Childeric — **Sigibert** d.575 — Gunthar — **Guntram** d.593 — Chlosthind — **Chilperic** d.584 — Chramm — Gundovald

Clothar — Chlodomer

Childebert II d.595 — Ingunc — Chlodosind

Theudebert — Merovech — Clovis — Basina — Samson — Rigunth — **Clothar II** d.629

Theudebert II d.612 — **Theuderic II** d.613

Fig. 12 Abbreviated Family Tree of the Frankish Kings

This is where Gundovald failed, for while illegitimacy was not a concern of the Merovingians, recognition as a member of the royal family was.

Guntram and Childebert II died within two years of each other, in 593 and 595 respectively, and the year 594 witnessed the death of Gregory. The deaths of these two kings and that of Gregory marks the end of the time-span of this thesis. The narrative presented above might at first suggest that the Franks had very little chance of success in establishing a powerful *Regnum Francorum*. However, by looking at Frankish myths of descent and by examining the Frankish institutions, it is possible to establish their importance for the success of the *Regnum Francorum*.

4.2 The Myths of the Franks

The myths surrounding the descent of the Franks were not written down until well into the seventh century. The Franks, and in particular the Merovingians, were eager to be conceived of as ruling in the Roman tradition, hence the alleged descent from the survivors of Troy; they were also keen to be seen as having mythical antecedents, thus adding weight to their claim to be the natural rulers of the Franks.

Written centuries after the initial conquests of the Franks, the myths of descent cast an interesting light on the creation of a Frankish identity, coming as they do in the generations after the *Regnum Francorum* had been established. There are two myths, one appearing in the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and the other in the *Chronicle* of

Fredegar.[102] A brief overview of them will help later investigation into the creation of the Frankish nation.

The *Liber Historiae Francorum* (*LHF*) begins with a story of what its authors believe to be the descent of the Franks, which appears in the first four books.[103] After the fall of Troy, the Greeks,

> Priam and Antenor, two of the other Trojan princes, embarked on ships with twelve thousand of the men remaining from the Trojan army. They departed and came to the banks of the Tanais [Don] river. They sailed into the Maeotian swamps, penetrated the frontiers of the Pannonias that were near the Maeotian swamps and began to build a city as their memorial. They called it Sicambria and lived there many years growing into a great people.[104]

The story continues with the defeat of the Alans, and states that Valentinian I then conceded the Franks remission of the tribute due from them for a period of ten years. It was from this point that the Trojans became known as Franks, as they were so called by Valentinian.[105] At the end of the ten year period the emperor sent his tax collectors to the Franks, but they refused to pay the tribute. The emperor sent an army against them, as a result of which the Franks moved to Sicambria, where they settled, to the 'farthest reaches of the Rhine where the Germans' strongholds were located'.[106] They lived there for a number of years 'with the princes Marchomir, the son of Priam, and Sunno, the son of Antenor' ruling over them.[107]

On the death of Sunno his son, Faramund, was chosen to become their king, and it was now that they began to have laws. When Faramund died, his son Chlodio became king and settled his people in

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[102] *LHF*; Fredegar; Ewig 1998, 1-30; see above 25ff
[103] Gerberding 1987, 17
[104] *LHF* 1
[105] *LHF* 2
[106] *LHF* 3, 4
[107] *LHF* 4

Thuringia. From there he attacked across the Rhine as far as the city of Cambrai. Chlodio reigned for nearly twenty years and when he died his son, Merovech, succeeded him. It was from this king that the ruling dynasty, the 'Merovingians', took its name. On the death of Merovech his son, Childeric, succeeded, and he was succeeded in turn by his son Clovis.[108] This is the line of succession of the earliest Frankish kings as told in the *LHF*. The story of Childeric brings us to the first historically attested king. This tale of familial succession adds weight to the argument that the Merovingian dynasty was eager to have its hereditary right to rule recognised.

The *LHF* tells us that Childeric reigned in the north-east at the time when Aegidius, a Roman general, was also powerful in the same region. However, it seems that Childeric was given over to debauched behaviour. As a result of his activities he was forced to leave his territory, after arranging with his friend and counsellor Wiomad that the latter would send a signal when he considered it a good time for him return. Childeric travelled east to Thuringia, where he took refuge with king Bisinus and his wife.[109] After his departure the Franks '...following bad counsel, established above them to rule the kingdom Aegidius the prince of the Romans'.[110] Aegidius oppressed the Franks so badly that they decided that they wanted their former king to return. Wiomad promptly sent the signal, Childeric returned and Aegidius was expelled. Basina, Bisinus' wife, followed Chilperic back to his kingdom and

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[108] *LHF* 4, 5, 6
[109] *LHF* 6
[110] *LHF* 7

became his wife, eventually bearing him a son, Clovis.[111] Childeric then mustered a large army and laid waste to Orléans and the surrounding region. He also took Angers before returning home. In c.481 he died and Clovis inherited his kingdom.[112]

Fredegar's myth is different. He too says that Childeric was exiled from his kingdom as a result of his profligate behaviour and that he arranged the signal with Wiomad. Again Aegidius takes over and becomes hated. An additional detail here is that Wiomad tricked the emperor Maurice into giving Chilperic a vast treasure to enable his return to his kingdom.[113] Gregory also tells of Childeric's exile and return from Thuringia and of how Basina followed him and bore him a son.[114]

Fredegar's myth also has some new details. In his story Merovech was conceived when his mother, Chlodio's wife, went for a swim and encountered a 'quinotaur', a sea monster. Although Fredegar does not state explicitly that this monster was the founder of the dynasty the suggestion made is that this was the case, implying its supernatural origins. As this myth was written centuries after the events its purports to describe, and after the Franks had become well established, it has certain implications for the role of the Merovingians as the creators of Frankishness and Frankish identity. It underlines the fact that the Franks were eager to be seen as the rightful rulers of the

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[111] *LHF* 7
[112] *LHF* 8, 9
[113] Fredegar 3.11-12
[114] *DLH* 2.9

Regnum Francorum, and their descent from a mythical creature confirmed that right.

The differences between the myths contained in the *LHF* and in Fredegar lead to some important conclusions. First, the wide divergence between them suggests that the *LHF* was written without prior knowledge of Fredegar. Second, it is likely that a variety of Frankish Trojan-origin stories were widespread at this time. Third, comparison reveals how unimportant the Roman rulers and their former hegemony were to the author of the *LHF*. The Romans appear not as the enemy, those are the Alans, but are rather used to demonstrate the Franks' ferocity and warlike qualities. Finally, comparison also reveals how exclusively Frankish the author of the *LHF* is. His concern was for the Neustrian Franks, and no-one else.[115]

4.3   Frankish Institutions

The *civitas* played a vital role in the life of sixth century Gaul, acting as the basic unit of the Frankish administration, as well as being the foundation for the division of the kingdom. When the Franks arrived in the region they had no internal administrative structure of their own, or at least none that is discernible in the sources. So, they adopted and adapted what remained of the Gallo-Roman administrative system, the *civitas*-based administration.[116] Consequently there was no sharp division between the Gallo-Roman and the Frankish administrations, an important factor in the success of the Franks. The fact that the Franks

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[115] Gerberding 1987, 18

perpetuated many aspects of the Roman administration in some ways perpetuated the Roman Empire itself,[117] and in doing so aided the integration of the two societies.

There are a number of Frankish institutions that were essential to the success of the Franks in the west. Without them they would have found it very difficult to establish themselves as they did, and they may well have failed to become the power that they did during the sixth century.

4.3.1 The Sixth Century Frankish *Civitas*[118]

The *civitas* was the institution upon which all the leaders of the *Regnum Francorum*, from the kings and queens to the secular and religious leaders, based their power.[119] The senior official in the *civitas* was the *comes*, whose role it was to hear lawsuits, enforce justice and be military leaders of local forces. Another member of the secular administration was the *centenarius*,[120] a position carrying judicial, military, administrative, security and police duties.[121] There were other

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[116] James 1988, 107ff, 163, 191; Jones 1964, 237-239; Mathisen 1993, 129-130; Van Dam 1985, 9, 38; Wallace-Hadrill 1962, 7; Wood 1994b, 60

[117] Durliat 1996, 169

[118] Parts of this discussion appear in Lewis 2000b

[119] See above 68ff for a discussion of the importance of the *civitas* in Gaul during the first to the fifth centuries.

[120] Wood 1994b, 61. For a more detailed analysis of the role of the *comites* see Murray 1986, 787-805; for the *centenarius* see Murray 1988, 59-100

[121] Murray 1988, 59, 98. There has been some debate as to the precise nature of this position, principally about whether it was a position owing its history to the centurion of the Roman army or whether it was descended from the tradition of the 'hundred' within the Frankish peoples.[121] During the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries the *centena* was considered to be a primitive Germanic institution (Murray 1988, Dannenbauer 1949, 155-161; Bloch 1939, 363). Here the hundred was thought to have been introduced into Gaul by the Franks either as a territorial unit or as a warrior association that gradually acquired territorial status. As a basic political and judicial unit of the Germanic peoples, the hundred was supposed to reflect the popular or democratic underpinnings of the Germanic state. The *centenarius* was a popular official elected by the hundred as its leader and as president of the hundred court.

local officials, among them the *defensor, curator, magister militum* and members of the local *curia*.[122] The Frankish system bore some resemblance to the late Roman system,[123] confirming the fact that when they arrived in the west the Franks had no established administrative system of their own and so adopted and then adapted what remained of the Gallo-Roman one.

The *comes* was the representative of the king in the *civitas*.[124] They were relied on to run the *civitates* smoothly and for reporting back to the king on events that took place there. As the kings rarely travelled very far from their capitals in the north-east of the *Regnum Francorum*, the *comites* were in positions of considerable importance for implementing the king's requirements in the *civitates*, as well as for spreading Frankishness and Frankish ways of life. As the position of the *comes* was based on the Roman position of *comes civitatis* this position was important for fusion, as it demonstrates that while the Franks were becoming Romanised so too the Gallo-Romans were open to the influence of the Franks.

This argument stated that the Frankish monarchy increased its own power by reducing the *centenarius* to a subordinate official of the count (Murray 1988, 59-60). Another argument states that the *centenarius* was not originally a popular Germanic official but was from the beginning a minor royal functionary whose title went back to the late Roman system of ranks and offices (Fustel de Coulanges 1905, 224-229). The *centenarius* was first appointed in a haphazard fashion by the count before becoming a regular feature of the Frankish administration. As for the *centena*, this was not originally a territorial unit but became a term for subdivisions of territory in the late Frankish and early Carolingian period (Murray 1988, 61). The third and final argument rests on theories of noble lordship and the king's freemen. Noble lordship defined the nature of the early Germanic constitutions and existed independently of royal and popular institutions. The non-noble element of society was consigned to domestic and servile appendages of the monarchy and the nobility. This was the background to which the *centenarius* must be attached (Murray 1988, 61-62).

[122] Wood 1994b, 60
[123] Mathisen 1993, 125
[124] Frye 1995, 4; Murray 1986, 787; Wood 1994b, 61

The *comites* often came into contact with the bishops. These were by now men of considerable importance in the lives of their *civitates*, and may well have clashed with the *comites* in matters relating to their administration. The sources provide us with a great deal of information relating to the activities of the bishops, but much less on those of the *comites*. There are three possible explanations for this, first that any information written about the *comites* has been lost, or second, and unlikely, that their role was so insignificant that little was deemed worthy of recording. The third explanation is that their role was minimised by contemporary historians such as Gregory, who were intent on highlighting the importance of the position of the bishop within the *civitas*. It is critical to remember that it was bishops who wrote history both during and after this period and so, in an attempt to underline the importance of the episcopacy, they may have felt it necessary to play down the importance of the *comites*, as well as of other officials, in the life of the *civitates*.

Gregory of Tours takes a great deal for granted about *civitates*. His concept of them is the traditional view of an urban centre and its surrounding territory. The *civitas* community consists of those living in the urban centre, the city, as well as the inhabitants of the city-territory as a whole. Most *civitas*-capitals derived their names from that of the people under its jurisdiction, for example Tours after the Turones. Conversely, people identified themselves, and were identified with the city-territories in which they lived.[125]

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[125] Loseby 1998, 239-241

Gregory's *civitates* generally correspond to the urban centres of the Roman past, and so indicates that there was some continuity between the Gallo-Roman and the Frankish periods. They are not a homogeneous group in anything other than their status as secular or ecclesiastical centres,[126] although in his eyes bishops were an essential part of the urban community. Ultimately, it is the bishops and saints that give the urban centres their identity, an ideal that Gregory is consistently keen to foster.[127]

It was through their control of the *civitates* that the Frankish kings were able to demonstrate the extent of their power and authority within their various kingdoms. It is also through this institution that we are best able to demonstrate the way in which Gallo-Romans and Franks were merging to create a new society.

The *civitas* represented a dominant component of late Roman society.[128] Traditionally, in the days of the Roman Empire, all Roman citizens belonged to a *civitas* and membership depended not on a person's residence or place of birth, but rather his/her *origo*.
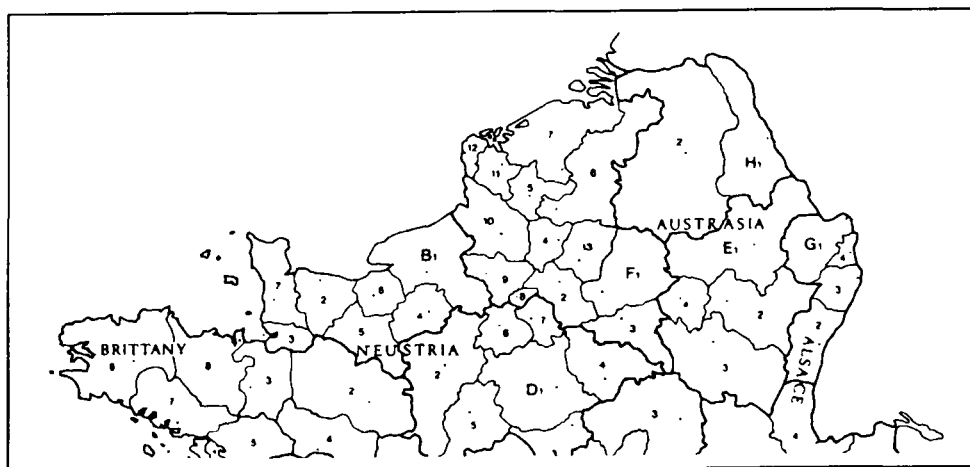
Fig.13 The Northern *Civitates* c.600, taken from James 1982

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[126] Loseby 1998, 244
[127] Loseby 1998, 256
[128] Frye 1995, 1
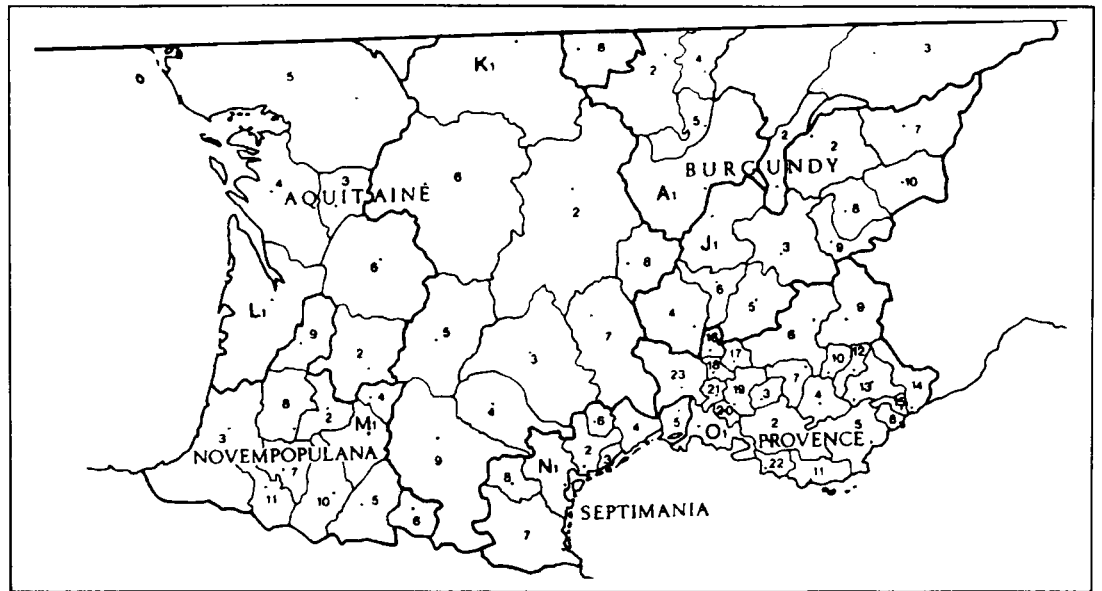
Fig. 14 <u>The Southern *Civitates* c.600</u>, taken from James 1982

A person remained a member of his/her *civitas* of origin and that *civitas*

retained a claim on his/her services.[129]

Gregory had several ways in which to identify the people about

whom he wrote. In some cases he classified people according to their

position in society, for example as kings, bishops, dukes and counts.[130]

However, according to Gregory most people saw themselves as

belonging to a *civitas*; consequently he classified people according to

the *civitas* from which they came, or with which they were most closely

associated.[131] For example, Ambrosius and Lupus are identified as

'citizens of Tours', Felix is 'bishop of Nantes' and Ennodius is count 'of

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[129] Jones 1964, 712

[130] Some examples of kings: Attila, king of the Huns, in *DLH* 2.7; Clovis, king of the Franks, *DLH* 2.27; Euric, king of the Goths, *DLH* 2.20.
Bishops: Bertram, bishop of Bordeaux, *DLH* 5.49, 7.31, 8.2, 9.33; Felix, bishop of Nantes, *DLH* 4.4, 5.5, 6.15.
Dukes: Gundovald, *DLH* 4.47, 5.1; Ragnovald, *DLH* 6.12, 7.10.
Counts: Firminus, count of Clermont-Ferrand, *DLH* 4.13, 4.30; Leudast, count of Tours, *DLH* 5.14, 5.47, 5.48-49.

[131] It was possible to be connected to more than one *civitas* during one's lifetime, but only one at a time. See below 169 for further discussion of the phenomena.

Tours and Poitiers'.[132] For Gregory, Gallic identity was synonymous

with *civitas* identity, and *civitas* was the basic focus of local loyalty.[133]

While some members of both the secular and religious hierarchy

are identified in this way, the majority of those people identified by

Gregory according to their *civitas* were bishops, a fact that implies the

growing identification of the *civitas* with the bishop, as well as the fact

that they were viewed by him as its natural local leaders.[134] However,

most of the counts mentioned by him were also identified in this

manner,[135] another indication of the importance of the *civitas* in the day-

to-day life of the citizens and their leaders. The majority of the *duces*

who appear in the *Historiae* were, by and large, identified according to

the positions they held at the court of the Frankish kings, positions such

as military commanders.[136] This difference reflects the fact that these

men held different positions at the Frankish courts and, like the kings,

had pan-*civitas* responsibilities.

From the later years of the fifth century, one of the ways in which

the people of the *civitas* sought to underline their independence, as well

as ensuring their well-being, was by monopolising the services of

leaders.[137] The inhabitants of the *civitates* relied on these men for

leadership,[138] and they succeeded in ensuring the services of their local

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[132] Ambrosius and Lupus, *DLH* 6.13; Felix, *DLH* 4.4, 5.5, 6.15; Ennodius *DLH*, 8.26, 9.7.
[133] See abovechapter 2, note 10 for the importance of the local focus for the leaders of this society.
[134] See above 17 for Gregory's motivation in depicting the bishops as he did
[135] For counts see note 131 above, and elsewhere in the *DLH*
[136] Examples of dukes in the service of Frankish kings: Audovald, military commander to Childebert II, *DLH* 10.3; Bobo, retainer to Chilperic, *DLH* 5.39
[137] Harries 1995, 35
[138] Drinkwater 1989a, 152; Harries 1992, 96; Harries 1996, 103, 170, 184, 246-247; Mathisen 1993, 50

or neighbouring senatorial families by having their scions consecrated to the episcopate, an office with a uniquely *civitas*-based identity. Examples of such local men are Cato, bishop of Clermont-Ferrand (551) and Injuriosus, bishop of Tours (529-46), while from external *civitates* there is Gregory, from Langres but consecrated in Tours (573). I would argue that the fact that they recruited these men is a sign of the strength and resilience of the *civitas*. This is how they - the *civitates* - defended themselves and stayed alive. They were not reliant on any one institution, but took advantage of whatever form of leadership offered itself at any particular time. This phenomenon coincided with an increasing interest in local affairs on the part of the leading figures in society.[139]

Identity could be centred on only one institution at a time and this definition was, by and large, a characteristic of aristocratic circles. However, although men tended to concentrate on their own localities and were identified with a single *civitas*, identification with just one *civitas* during the course of one's life was rare.[140] It was possible for members of the ruling class to live and work in more than one region during their lifetimes. For example, Caesarius of Arles was born in Chalon-sur-Saône but became bishop of Arles, and Gregory was a native of Clermont but bishop of Tours.[141] Evidently it was possible for these men to feel comfortable in a number of regions. It should be emphasised that these multi-*civitas* links were not new; examples of the

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[139] Mathisen 1993, 50; Harries 1994, 250
[140] Harries 1994, 34; see above 167

nobility serving as decurions in non-native *civitates* can be found in the high imperial period.[142]

It is possible that the prominence of the *civitas* in Gregory's work is a straightforward reflection of contemporary political circumstance. The *civitates* formed the framework for the bishop's dioceses, while the ecclesiastical territorial organisation reinforced the existence of the *civitas* and therefore of Roman administration.[143] However, it is more than likely that Gregory had an interest in highlighting the importance of the *civitas* for other reasons: after all, it was in the *civitas* that the authority of the bishop was based, and as a bishop himself he was bound to stress its importance.

The *civitas*-centred view of the world is highlighted if we consider the fact that 'outsiders' in late antiquity, those who did not live within the boundaries of one's *civitas*, were considered as 'foreign', whether they were the ruling Franks or just the inhabitants of neighbouring *civitates*.[144] There are several instances in the work of Gregory where we see the members of one *civitas* raiding the territory of a neighbour, although these actions often took place at the behest of a Frankish king in the course of his battles with other Frankish kings for territory. For example, in the *Historiae* we see Chilperic attacking the *civitas* of Rheims in the kingdom of Sigibert and he captured '...a number of other

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[141] The situation in the East was similar; for example, the brothers Basil and Gregory were natives of Neocaesarea and bishops of Caesarea and Nyssa respectively, and yet they maintained their links with their *patria*.
[142] *CIL* 13.2669 (= *ILS* 7046), Treveri and Aedui; *CIL* 13.2873 (= *ILS* 4682), Aedui and Lingons; *CIL* 13.6404, Suebi Nicretes and Nemetes
[143] Périn 1987b, 21-22
[144] Goffart 1982a, 80-99

cities which were Sigibert's by right of inheritance'.[145] Sigibert, having returned from war against the Huns, occupied Soissons where he found Theudebert, Chilperic's son, in charge; he took him prisoner and then exiled him. Sigibert defeated Chilperic in battle and brought his cities back under his own rule. Theudebert was imprisoned for a year, but at the end of that time he was freed and returned to his father.[146]

Sigibert is also found attacking Arles with the men of Clermont-Ferrand, for he wanted to take over that *civitas*. Audovarius, Sigibert's commander, marched into Arles and extracted an oath of fealty from the citizens in the name of King Sigibert. When Guntram heard of this he sent an army that captured Avignon, Sigibert's city, on the way and arriving at Arles surrounded the city and began assaulting Sigibert's army, trapped within the city's walls. Eventually Guntram defeated Sigibert, but he did return Avignon to his brother's authority.[147]

Further examples of similar behaviour appear later in the *Historiae* when the men of Orléans and Blois attack the citizens of Châteaudun,[148] and when Guntram sends a force of men from Orléans to Bruges to attack Poitiers.[149] The inhabitants of one *civitas* could express communal identity in hatred for another *civitas*.[150] This confirms the fact that the *civitas* was the basic unit of self-identification, as well as being the basic unit of politics and war.

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[145] *DLH* 4.23
[146] *DLH* 4.23
[147] *DLH* 4.30
[148] *DLH* 7.2
[149] *DLH* 7.24
[150] Wallace-Hadrill 1982, 2, 49

The instinctive reaction of modern historians of the Roman West to this phenomenon of 'local separatism' must be to treat it as odd, for two reasons: first, because we know where *civitas* history is going - towards a united Francia; and second, because we know where it has come from - from a united Gallia. It is easy to treat the prominence of the *civitas* in the pages of Gregory as a product of contemporary political circumstance. The majority of modern historians would argue that as the Roman state-structure weakened and before the consolidation of the Frankish kingdom that there was a power vacuum in Gaul and that this vacuum was filled by bishops of the Church - such as Gregory - whose dioceses happened to have been organised on Roman provincial, that is *civitas*, lines.[151] This meant that the local Church maintained the *civitas* and, as it were, preserved it for reconnection to a state structure. I would challenge that assumption and argue that there is more to the *civitas* than meets the eye. The power vacuum did not have to be filled by bishops; the *civitas* would have made use of any powerful leaders that emerged and used them to its own advantage.

The *civitas* was historically a very important institution in the life of Gaul. The *civitas* was a powerful constant in Gallic life, from possibly before Caesar to the Franks and then beyond, and it deserves to be recognised as such. In times of stress the *civitas* sought out and used 'natural local leaders', such as warriors, Roman clients and bishops. The decline of the curial class does not imply the decline of the 'big boys' who really ran the *civitates*: the *civitas* aristocracy could have

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[151] Harries 1994, 35

survived without being bishops, as the true basis of their power was wealth rather than any particular secular or ecclesiastic position. The Gallic aristocracy continued to function, while undergoing some noticeable changes, from the first to the third centuries, the third to the fourth centuries, the fourth to the sixth centuries and from the sixth century onwards.[152] The *civitas* had a life of its own.

On one occasion Gregory interferes in an affair concerning taxation in Tours.[153] It is important to consider the question of whether Gregory was taking a hand in the secular affairs of Tours as a bishop or as a local leader who happened to be a bishop. Would he have been able to interfere so successfully had he not been a bishop? Possibly. Here was a man from a powerful family who tackled both secular and religious matters and who might well have become a leader in another manner had the Church not been in existence. What we witness here is the resilience of the *civitas*, as well as a symbiosis between the two institutions. It is not the Church that supports the *civitas*, but rather that in its search for powerful leaders the *civitates* were now finding a voice within the Church.

The relationship of the *civitas* to the Church, as well as the question of its 'abnormality' as a badge of ethnic identity, is an important one to consider. It was the *civitas* by which people were identified, not by their position within or their relationship to the Church. The development of the *civitas* and the Church during the later fifth and sixth centuries must be interpreted as follows: not that a strong Church acted

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[152] Drinkwater 1983, 202; Drinkwater 1989a, 138, 141, 150, 152
[153] *DLH* 9.30; see below 195 for details of this affair

as brace for a weak *civitas*, unnaturally adrift outside a wider state

organisation; but that the naturally resilient *civitas* was able to support

and make use of the nascent Church. Had the Church not been

available then the *civitas* would not have imploded, but would have hit

on some other means of ensuring its survival.

4.3.2 The Development of the Frankish Church and the Episcopacy

The Church became an increasingly wealthy institution during

the late fifth and sixth centuries and this wealth was guaranteed.

Money came not only in donations from the kings and from the nobility

but also from the church's own increasing land-holdings. In addition,

the tax exemptions granted by the kings meant that the bishops had

control of it all. Some of this money was spent in charity to the poor as

well as in ransoming prisoners. However, that did not cover the

expenditure of all the money. One answer to the dilemma of how to

spend it was to build spectacular churches and basilicas, and another

was to have increasingly splendid ceremonials.[154]

The works of Fortunatus include a number of poems written to

buildings. For example book one includes poems to the temple of St.

Martin built by bishop Vitalis of Ravennensis, to the basilicas of St.

Stephen, St. Martin, St. Vincent, St. Denis and St Eutropius.[155] In book

two there are poems to the cross and the oratory of the episcopal

mansion at Tours, to the baptistery of Magantius, to the basilica of St.

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[154] Brown 1981, 40
[155] *Carm.*: S.Andrew, 1.2; S.Stephen, 1.3; S.Martin, 1.4,5,6,7; S.Vincent, 1.8,9; S.Denis, 1.11; S.Eutropius, 1.13.

George and to the oratory of Trasarici;[156] and in book three there is a poem to bishop Felix of Nantes written for the dedication of his church at Nantes.[157] These buildings were important in the sense that they changed the physical appearance of the urban landscape, thus becoming physical signs of the changes taking place in the religious culture of the Frankish kingdom, as well as underlining the bishop's authority.

In the works of Gregory we see that Eufronius, a priest in Autun, built the church of the martyr Symphorian; Namatius, bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, built a church in that *civitas* and Agricola, bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône built a cathedral.[158] Another example of building activity was that of Caesarius of Arles. He built a convent within the walls of Arles so that women could lead a religious life.[159] Gregory himself was a active builder, as he informs us at the end of the *Historiae*:

> When I took over Tours cathedral... it had been destroyed by fire and was in a sorry state of ruin. I rebuilt it, bigger and higher than before, and in the seventeenth year of my episcopate I re-dedicated it.[160]

The bishops of the sixth century had access to vast amounts of money and were able to spend it on great building projects. Their ability to do so added weight to their authority within the *civitates*.

One way in which Gallo-Roman aristocrats perpetuated their power and wealth was by monopolising the bishoprics.[161] Only one

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[156] *Carm.*: Tours, 2.3; Magantius, 2.11; George, 2.12; Trasarici, 2.13.
[157] *Carm.*: Felix, 3.6
[158] Eufronius, *DLH* 2.15; Namatius, *DLH* 2.16; Agricola, *DLH* 5.45
[159] Klingshirn 1994, 104; *Testament* I.35
[160] *DLH* 10.31: ...*in qua beatus Martinus vel ceteri sacerdotes Domini ab pontificalis officium consecrati sunt, ab incendio dissolatum dirutamque nanctus sum, quam*

Germanic name appears among the list of early bishops because, in the early days of the Frankish kingdom, all bishops were of aristocratic Gallo-Roman descent. Latin names in the episcopate represent not ethnicity but senatorial descent, indicating the importance of family in both the religious and secular sides of life.[162] By the end of the sixth century, the episcopate had come to be seen as a fitting conclusion to the *cursus honorum* of a senator in Gaul.[163]

The growth of episcopal power has been linked to the usurpation of comital functions by the bishops. The king, indeed, may have granted such functions, in order to facilitate administration.[164] The bishops were evidently becoming powerful, but the *civitates* remained centres for both secular and ecclesiastical affairs: it was the *civitas* that remained the basic building block of society.[165] Often the survival of the *civitas* could depend on a strong and effective bishop.[166] Was this a case of the *civitas* depending on a strong bishop, or did its survival depend on a strong local leader who happened to be a bishop? In times of stress the *civitates* had always produced leaders whose power did not depend solely on great land owning and a quiet local life. In Caesar's day these were the men with military retinues, in the third and fourth centuries power provincial aristocrats and in the fifth and sixth centuries the leaders of the Church.

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raeadificatam in ampliori altiorique fastigio septimo decimo ordinationis meae anno dedicavi.
[161] Amory 1994, 25; see above 82ff
[162] Amory 1994, 25
[163] Amory 1994, 20. See above 82ff for a discussion of the early development of Gallo-Roman senatorial interest in the Church.
[164] Wood 1983, 51
[165] Wood 1979, 61
[166] Mathisen 1993, 94; James 1982, 49

As in the fifth century the cults of the saints and of relics were able to give bishops a strong position within society.[167] Hagiography was an increasingly important part of the process of establishing and continuing these cults,[168] and both Gregory and Fortunatus wrote hagiography during their careers.[169] The writing of hagiography not only helped to perpetuate the name of the saint or the martyr to whom it was dedicated, but also helped the community where he, or she, was said to have lived. Pilgrimages were becoming ever more popular and by becoming guardians of a shrine or a relic a community could generate significant income from the donations and expenditure of the visitors. The guardianship of the cults and relics was a consistent aspect of episcopal life that continued from the fourth century, and it underlined the authority of the bishops and, through them, of the nobility.[170]

One negative aspect of being guardian of a major saint-cult was that such shrines and churches were often used as refuges by members of the ruling family or other significant figures who were out of favour.[171] One story that illustrates this is that of what happened to Brunhild immediately after the death of Sigibert.

When Sigibert died in 575 Brunhild was resident in Paris. Chilperic arrived there, seized her treasure and banished her to the city of Rouen. Merovech, Chilperic's son, soon afterwards travelled there and made the widowed queen his wife. Gregory gives no hint as to

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[167] Liebeschuetz 1997b, 122
[168] Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 78
[169] See above 9
[170] See above 87ff

what Brunhild's feelings were in this matter.[172] The marriage took place in contravention of canon law, and this made Chilperic angry. He marched to Rouen only to find that his son and his new wife had taken refuge in the church of St. Martin. Chilperic persuaded them to come out and took Merovech away with him. Merovech became a virtual prisoner while his father decided what to do with him. In the end he decided that his son should be tonsured, ordained as a priest and sent to the monastery of Anille at Le Mans. However, Merovech escaped and took refuge at the church of St. Martin in Tours. From there he travelled around Auxerre before being recaptured, escaping again and seeking sanctuary in the church of St. Germanus. Merovech then visited Brunhild but was not made welcome. Finally he was re-captured and killed.[173]

Merovech and his father, and by association the Merovingian family, had great respect for the church and would not violate its sanctuary. Thus, throughout his adventures Merovech could safely take refuge within the walls of a church. In addition, by having his son tonsured and put in a monastery Chilperic demonstrates his respect for that institution. The relationship of the Merovingians and the episcopacy demonstrates that while the bishops were in a position where they were respected by the kings as councillors and as members of the religious nobility, they had to accept the ultimate authority of the monarchy.

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[171] Wood 1994b, 87
[172] See below 229ff for the power the Frankish queens held during this time
[173] DLH 5.1-3, 5.14, 5.18

The convent of the Holy Cross at Poitiers, established by the Frankish Queen Radegund during the middle years of the sixth century,[174] was one to which pilgrims flocked. The popularity of the convent demonstrates that there was an alternative religious power base to the episcopate. However, the popularity of a convent or monastery often depended on the personality of its founder or of a particular abbess or abbot.

Through their relationships with the shrines of the saints the bishops became prominent as their power coalesced with that of the shrine; but their control of the shrines was far from automatic.[175] It was an important basis for a bishop's power, to be connected to the shrine of a particular saint. The shrines of the great saints and martyrs became one basis of the ecclesiastical power structure, and they went a long way towards securing a bishop's position, once he had control over them.[176] Both the bishop and his community considered saints to be their intimate and invisible friends, and their role in society could be understood in terms of human relationships.[177] Through their relationship with the saints the bishops were able to influence the life of their congregation and wield authority over them.[178]

As was the case in the fifth century, the discovery and then the arrival of a relic in a *civitas* remained an important event.[179] The fact that God had allowed the relic to be discovered indicated his approval

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[174] See below 236ff for further details of Radegund's life
[175] Brown 1981, 8-9
[176] Brown 1981, 10
[177] Brown 1981, 51, 62
[178] See above 88
[179] Brown 1981, 91, 93; see above 88ff

of a community , and its arrival in a *civitas* was an opportunity for community consensus not only of the relic itself but also of the bishop who was its sponsor.[180] This was a tradition that was evident in Gallic society, and throughout the empire, from the fourth century onwards. Consensus coalesced around the relic and its arrival allowed the whole community to participate in a community event.[181] The possessed were often rid of the devil on these occasions, wounds were healed and the entire community was unified. Healing allowed the healed to participate once again in community life, contributing to the feelings of consensus around the relic; acts of healing also contribute to the authority of the bishop, for it was often through their office that the acts of healing took place.[182] This was the ceremony of *adventus*.[183]

The bishop was regarded as the mediator between the relic, the power of the saint and the community, and so the ceremony of arrival was an important event for all concerned. The grip of the bishop on the reception and distribution of relics was strong.[184] This interaction between the bishop and the relic gave power and authority not only to both the relic or saint and the bishop, but also to the *civitas*, for that was the location of all the activity. This is important evidence for a degree of continuity from the Gallo-Roman to the Frankish periods, and

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[180] Brown 1981, 98; Van Dam 1985, 59
[181] See above 89 for details of similar events in earlier centuries
[182] Van Dam 1993, 86-103. There are plenty of examples throughout the works of Gregory and elsewhere of the healing properties of the relics. For example in the *Vita* of St. Martin a woman who has been blinded by her sins claimed that she was not worthy of participating in a festival with the rest of the community. She was cured and was thus reintegrated into society (*VSM* 2.28). In addition to this miracle there are examples of prisoners being released from their chains and of demons being driven out of the bodies of the possessed (*VSM* 1.11; *VJ* 9).
[183] McCormick 1986; see above 89
[184] Brown 1982, 240

demonstrates that the bishops were still respected as the local leaders within their sees.

The cults of this period were presented in the literature as being universal; they were popular because the people wanted them to be so.[185] However, a closer look at the evidence suggests that this was not, in fact, the case. There was no formal canonisation process and the bishops tended to create the saints' cults because they had a vested interest in doing so.[186] Saints' cults underlined their authority and they also hoped that one day they too would be venerated as saints, thus enabling them to continue to be the patrons of their communities. The emergence of the conception of bishop as patron is closely connected to the cult history of the bishops.[187] The power and authority of the bishop was enhanced by his future potential of being a saint. Changes in the way a cult was handled articulate changes in the leadership qualities of the Christian communities,[188] and has implications for the nature of authority within the *civitates*.[189]

It must never be assumed that the bishop's position was secure from the day he took office until the day he died; in fact, a bishop's authority was far from being unquestioned.[190] Bishops often came to office through disputed elections or through the influence of the king,

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[185] See above 9 for details on the motivation that led to the writing of hagiographic works.
[186] Pumphrey 1988, 200-202; Wood 1994b, 74
[187] Heinzelmann 1976, 35
[188] Brown 1981, 36
[189] Mathisen 1993, 93, 95
[190] Brennan 1992, 119; Wood 1983, 50

their position depended on the manner of their election, and even after their election their position was not necessarily secure.[191]

The circumstances leading to Gregory's own election and consecration were somewhat peculiar, but were not entirely out of the ordinary in this period. In 571 Cautinus, bishop of Clermont, died and was succeeded by Avitus; in 573 both Tetricus, bishop of Langres, and Nicetius, bishop of Lyons, passed away and were succeeded by Silvester and Priscus respectively.[192] It was possible that, by virtue of his family's connections with these three sees, Gregory may have expected to become bishop of one of them, but that was evidently not to be. In 573 Eufronius, bishop of Tours, died and Gregory was appointed to replace him.[193] When news of Eufronius' death was brought to the court of Sigibert and Brunhild Gregory was present and they appointed him, approving his consecration by bishop Egidius of Rheims in the *civitas*.[194] There is little doubt that the manner of Gregory's consecration was uncanonical and may have led to some of the early difficulties that he experienced in his new see. However, Gregory overcame these and lived to become an active and effective bishop at Tours.

The manner of many bishops' consecrations meant that, like Gregory, they often had to spend the first few months, even years, of

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[191] Brown 1982, 46; Wood 1994b, 82
[192] Cautinus *DLH* 4.35; Tetricus *DLH* 5.5; Nicetius *DLH* 4.36
[193] Eufronius *DLH* 4.15
[194] *Carm.* 5.3.13-16

their tenure establishing themselves in positions of power within the *civitates*.[195]

The story of the Vase of Soissons gives an early indication that the Frankish kings would respect the Church and its bishops. Having defeated Syagrius,[196] Clovis' troops plundered many churches and among their booty was a vase '...of great size and wondrous workmanship'.[197] The bishop of the church from which it had been stolen asked Clovis to return the vase; Clovis asked his men to give it to him as part of his share of the booty, but one of them did not agree and struck the vase. Clovis then returned it to the bishop. At the end of the year, when the army was gathered together for an inspection of their equipment Clovis struck the dissenter on the head with his axe and killed him, saying that that was what he done to his vase at Soissons.[198] This affair demonstrates Clovis' respect for the church and its prelates, and that the influence of a bishop could be significant. However, it is important to bear in mind that this myth is passed down by Gregory and the *LHF*, who used Gregory as a source. Gregory was always keen to underline the superiority of the bishops in the daily life of the Frankish kingdom, as well as the superiority of the Christian God and of the Catholic faith.[199]

As well as the relationship that existed between a bishop and his congregation, it is also important to consider the relationships that existed within the community of bishops. In the early and middle fifth

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[195] Wood 1983, 54
[196] See above 138 for details
[197] *DLH* 2.27
[198] *DLH* 2.27

century there was a great deal of faction fighting between bishops.[200]

One of the main reasons for this was the fact that there was a power

vacuum in secular politics that allowed the bishops to fight among

themselves for the religious positions of power, without any secular

authority to keep them check. With the coming of the Franks this power

vacuum was filled, allowing the bishops less scope for fighting. There is

evidence for some ecclesiastical faction fighting during the early years

of the sixth century, but it is far from being on the same scale as in the

previous century and was more easily controlled by the Frankish kings.

There is evidence of conflict between bishops Bertram of Bordeaux,

Praetextatus of Rouen and Gregory,[201] and also between bishops

Gregory and Bertram of Bordeaux with Leudast and the two priests

Riculf.[202]

The factionalism of the sixth century is somewhat different to that

of the late fifth. Then the disputes had stemmed from the arguments

surrounding the establishment of the primacy of Arles and various other

metropolitan sees. Now, however, the kings had become involved and

the stories have a more secular feel to them, with bishops' accused of

secular crimes such as libel and theft.

The pope did have some role to play in the establishment and

development of episcopal power in Gaul, however minor it might have

been. He was often appealed to as an arbitrator when the Gallic

bishops needed a decision; for example, Caesarius of Arles appealed to

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[199] Geuenich 1998a, 427
[200] See above 121ff for details and examples from the life of Caesarius
[201] *DLH* 5.18
[202] *DLH* 5.49. See below 244ff for details of these events.

Rome on a number of occasions. Pope Zosimus awarded extraordinary powers to Patroclus of Arles (412-426) but Pope Boniface, his successor, restored metropolitan rights to the sees of Marseilles, Vienne and Narbonne.[203] When Hilary of Arles seemed in danger of treating his see as independent of Rome Pope Leo, Boniface's successor, confirmed him to his diocese, but then obtained a rescript from Valentinian III (425-455) recognising his own jurisdiction over all the western provinces. In 450 Leo divided the bishoprics of Gaul between Arles and Vienne. Leo's successor, Hilary, frequently intervened in Gaul in an attempt to consolidate Rome's power there, and he also tried to rally the bishops around the see of Arles. His purpose was to use the bishop of Arles as his channel for information and instructions.[204] In later years Pope Symmachus succeeded in doing this when he appointed Caesarius Papal Vicar of Gaul, a means by which the pope could gain direct information about affairs there as well as a means of disseminating his own wishes.[205]

The popes in Rome were evidently interested in events as they unfolded in Gaul, but as they were heavily involved in establishing their own power base in an ever changing empire, as well as within the Ostrogothic kingdom, they were restricted in what they could actually do. In the majority of cases the papacy acted as a mediator or higher court of appeal for those involved in factionalism.[206] However, the actions of the popes in promoting or preventing the see of Arles from

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[203] Kelly 1986, 40
[204] Kelly 1986, 45
[205] See above 119
[206] See above, chapter 3 note 61

achieving primacy also indicates that the popes were keen to have their presence felt. Attempts to stop Arles from becoming an independent patrichiate suggest that the papacy wanted no rivals to its own supremacy, and support for Arles demonstrated that the popes were keen to spread their own message.

The conquest of southern Gaul by the Franks in 536 brought an end to the relative independence of the bishops of the south. The Franks maintained good relations with the popes in Rome, which enabled them to establish their own authority over the bishops in the region.

Bishops' gained their authority from a number of different places, and they needed a wide range of criteria from which to establish their status.[207] They received their secular authority from the roles they played at court and in the *civitates*, while their moral and religious authority was gained from their positions as leaders, teachers, miracle workers, healers and the guardians of relics. They also received added authority from the works of poets such as Fortunatus, whose poems performed a social function by affirming the bishop's position in society.[208] Bishops needs the support of public opinion, of a good family, of wealth, as well as of royal favour in order to be able to function effectively and survive in these turbulent times.[209] However,

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[207] Brown 1982, 243
[208] Brennan 1992, 115, 119. See below 252ff for details of some of Fortunatus' episcopal poems
[209] Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 50

once established they were largely successful in promoting a sense of unity under their patronage.[210]

A bishop's ability to interfere in the life of the *civitas* and the *comes* in the dispensing of justice, can be demonstrated by one of Gregory's stories, in which he stars. The story is one of feud between some citizens in Tours.[211] Sichar, a citizen of Tours, became involved in violence with Austregisel over the death of a servant; they were both called before a tribunal of citizens and Austregisel was found guilty. Then, Sichar heard that the goods Austregisel stole from him were in the hands of a man named Auno, his son and his brother Eberulf. Sichar sought the help of Audinus and went out and killed these three men and their servants, and stole back his property. At this point Gregory intervened and exhorted all sides to come to terms in order to stop the feud from going any further. His authority was accepted, but unfortunately his tactics did not work with Chramnesind, a relative of the dead men, who refused to accept compensation. Thinking Sichar dead, Chramnesind again stole the property; he was discovered and ordered to hand half of it back, as he had refused to accept the compensation originally offered. Sichar then was ordered to pay the remaining half of the compensation to Chramnesind.

Incidents such as this from the life of Gregory assist in illustrating the important part a bishop could play in the life of the *civitas*, although it is important to remember that as always he was keen to promote the vital position of bishops in the life of the *civitas*. In the instance given

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[210] Wood 1983, 55
[211] This story can be found in *DLH* 7.47.

above, Gregory took a keen interest in the affairs of the citizens of Tours and interfered with them in an attempt to help resolve the problem. It would seem that he acted alongside a local judge, but he did his best to resolve the feud before it got too far. Even when he failed and the situation developed further, it was money provided by the church, through him, that enabled the dispute to be resolved.

The Church and the episcopacy had a very important part to play in the establishment of Frankish power. The bishops' acceptance of the Merovingians was an example that would have been followed by their congregations, made all the easier by the Franks' conversion to Catholicism. It is apparent that the bishops were venerated as local leaders, underlining the point that the population of the *Regnum Francorum* was anxious to have recognisable figures of authority visible within the community.

4.3.3 Education

Despite the fact that the school system was in decline remnants of it survived and provided a basic education for those who needed it. The pagan classics might be suspect, but they could not be wholly dispensed with in educating the young.[212] Increasingly throughout this period education was being provided by the Church and by the monasteries; these schools were either attached to the episcopal complex within the *civitas*, or to the monasteries. The education provided was religious, and could often lead to a career within the Church. As a vast institution with a complex hierarchy the Church

needed competent administrators to ensure its affairs ran smoothly, and the episcopal and monastic schools provided these men.

During the fifth century the majority of Gallic bishops had come from noble families.[213] By the middle of the sixth century more bishops were coming from different places within the social hierarchy, which meant that their background and education would have differed from that of their fifth century predecessors.

During the late fifth and early sixth centuries the religious culture available to both lay and clerical Christians closely resembled classical culture. Aristocratic laymen saw it as their duty to deepen their faith through reading and studying, and some also put their pens to the service of the church by writing religious works such as hagiography. These Christian scholars wrote in a classical manner and through their preaching used the skills that they had learnt as rhetors. Such Christian scholars had no real interest in either theology or the philosophy of Christianity.[214]

The latter part of the sixth century saw some development in the field of religious education. During this period the centres of ecclesiastical study became centred in central Gaul, an area that coincided with the locations of the Frankish church councils, for example Paris, Lyons and Clermont-Ferrand. The majority of bishops were not interested in dogma or the Scriptures, a fact influenced by the fact that many had been educated as Gallo-Roman noblemen or had

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[212] Lawrence 1984, 33

[213] See above 82ff. It was these men who saw the Church as an alternative institution for wielding power and authority.

[214] Riché 1976, 79-86

been royal bureaucrats before commencing careers in the Church;[215] these men were principally administrators and builders. This attitude provoked a reaction, as we have seen in the life of Caesarius of Arles.[216] The rigorists presented their arguments on a moral plane and criticised the Christian scholars for the equivocal nature of their cultural formation.

In order for Christianity to develop and spread further it was necessary to have educated bishops and Christian texts. However, as there was no alternative, what little education existed was based on classical education. This made it very difficult to develop a purely Christian culture. New religious texts such as hagiography were being produced, but the pace was not fast enough. The solution was the creation of a new, completely religious culture. It was this movement that led to the establishment of the episcopal, monastic and parish schools.

A secular education was still available to a few. Men of letters are visible in the entourage of Frankish kings from an early stage. For example we see Asteriolus and Secundinus at the court of Theudebert,

> Asteriolus and Secundinus enjoyed great credit with King Theudebert. They were both of them educated men, well-trained in the humanities.[217]

There was also Celsus, a man 'learned in the law',[218] although he came to a bad end after seizing some of the possessions of the Church. These men were well known at court and supply evidence both for the

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[215] Riché 1976, 267-270
[216] See above 120 for details
[217] *DLH* 3.33
[218] *DLH* 4.24

existence of a secular education as well as for royal respect for education.

Some of the men who became abbots and bishops during this time were also men of letters. For example, Ferreolus, bishop of Uzès, was learned and had composed a '...number of volumes of Letters, in the style of Sidonius...'.[219] Unfortunately the works of these men do not survive, and this makes it difficult to reconstruct what the mid to late sixth century nobility was learning and reading. Latin was still being used as the principal written language, as evidenced by the works of Gregory and Fortunatus. The important grammatical laws were known; the study of poetry indicates that metre was still being explored; and the rhetorical tradition remained alive in the epistolography.[220]

Very little is known of the manner or content of early Frankish education. However, with the advent of Fortunatus it is possible to catch a glimpse of what was happening. The best known lettered Frank is Gogo, who is openly praised for his learning as well as for his bilingualism.[221] The presence of Fortunatus at the Frankish courts indicates that they were open to Roman literature, even if that was a somewhat debased culture. In addition the Frankish courts served as educational establishments.

A further indication of the bilingualism of this society, and the fact that the Franks had their own language, is the existence of the two terms *comites* and *graphiones* to describe one office.[222] The nature of

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[219] *DLH* 6.7
[220] Riché 1976, 197-202
[221] See below 261 for Fortunatus' poetic tribute to Gogo
[222] For a full discussion about the use of this terminology, see Murray 1986, 787-805

the office may have differed from region to region, but the term *graphio*
was Germanic and used in the north and east of the Frankish kingdom,
while the term *comes* was a throwback to the Roman Empire and was
used in the south and west.

During the sixth century two systems of education existed side
by side, the secular and the religious, the former undertaken in and
around the Frankish courts and the second within the Church. The
Frankish nobility sent their children to the courts at an early age and
although there were no rules governing such entry it would seem that
family connection was the best way for a child to gain entry. The Mayor
of the Palace was responsible for educating these children, as he was
for the education of the kings and royal children, and the education they
received prepared them for careers as officers and bureaucrats within
the Frankish administration.[223] It was also an opportunity for the king at
whose court they were resident to gain and establish the loyalty of
future supporters from a very early age.

The Frankish kings must have recognised the value of
education for producing future administrators. The production of
religious texts during the time of the Frankish kingdom would have
promoted fusion between the Gallo-Romans and Franks because they
would have been written not for one or the other but for both.

4.3.4 Taxation

Taxation was essential to the early successor states,[224] and the kings relied on the *civitates* both for taxation and for supplying levies for their armies. The funds raised by taxation were necessary for running the kingdoms as well as for ensuring the loyalty of the secular magnates, whose support added to the power and authority of the kings.

The subject of taxation and tax-exemptions is fraught with difficulties for the modern historian, due to the lack of good source material, but it clearly concerned the inhabitants of the Gallic *civitates* during this time. The details of the system do not concern me here; what is important is the fact that taxation took place at all, and continued to be based on the *civitas*. The system used by the Franks was descended partly from the Roman, but also from the Visigothic, the Burgundian and the Ostrogothic systems, each of which had been in place before the arrival of the Franks.[225] However knowledge of these goes only part of the way towards an understanding of the Frankish system.[226]

The evidence for Frankish taxation comes from two principal sources: grants of immunity and the surviving records of royal and ecclesiastical estates.[227] The problem with both of these is that they were complied during the seventh century and so are not contemporary

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[223] Riché 1976, 236-239
[224] Wickham 1984, 20
[225] Goffart 1982b, 213
[226] See Goffart 1982b for a more detailed assessment of Frankish taxation
[227] Goffart 1982b, 214

with the events of the sixth century that they record. However, they do provide some valuable clues as to what was happening.[228]

During the centuries of Roman rule taxation had been used, in part, to pay the army, and the revenues collected by the *civitates* contributed towards to the pay of the soldiers.[229] This tradition continued during the late Empire, the only difference being that it was the bishops and not the secular leaders of the *civitates*, who authorised these payments.[230] Responsibility for collecting the taxes was handed over to the landowners; they collected the money and then kept it. This meant that the kings did not have to pay them as they benefited directly from collecting tax.[231]

Many Franks considered themselves immune from the burdens of taxation, even when the land that they held had been liable for taxation while the Romans were in power. Various kings awarded grants of immunity to the churches within their kingdom, for example Theudebert remits some of the taxes due to him from 'his' churches.[232] These factors made the taxation base smaller and meant that there was more pressure on fewer people to make up the revenue expected from taxation. However, despite the fact that the Frankish ruling class did not pay tax directly there were other ways in which they made their contribution to the state; for example they paid tribute to their king, supplied him with troops and acted as magistrates in the law courts.[233]

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[228] Durliat 1990, 11-187
[229] Durliat 1993, 32-33
[230] Durliat 1993, 33
[231] Liebeschuetz 1998, 19
[232] *DLH* 3.25
[233] Goffart 1982b, 231

It was the *comites* who were responsible for tax collection within the *civitas*.[234] The story of Gaiso gives an indication of the importance of taxation, as well as hinting at the status of the Frankish church and saints. Gaiso was count of Tours and during the reign of Charibert began collecting taxes there, despite the fact that the city was immune from paying tax. Gaiso took the taxes he had collected to the king, who immediately returned them to the *civitas* due to his fear of the wrath of St. Martin.[235] This is evidence for the respect in which the kings held the church, its shrines and saints. The tax-collecting activities of the counts also underline the continuity of the *civitas* in the life of Gaul, and its continued importance for the development of society.

Gregory has cause to mention taxation several times: for example, Childebert II sends tax inspectors to Poitiers and then to Tours, where Gregory was successful in having the tax-exempt status of the *civitas* confirmed,

> An official letter came back almost immediately, confirming the immunity from taxation of the people of Tours, out of respect for St. Martin.[236]

The fact that here we see Gregory - a bishop - participating in such a matter would seem to underline the traditional idea of the increasing importance of the bishop in the life of the *civitas*, thus supporting that institution.

Taxation would normally be considered to be the business of the secular administration and not of the church. However, here we are presented with an illustration of the power of the urban bishop. Gregory

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[234] See above 164-165 for further details of the *comites* role within the *civitas*
[235] *DLH* 9.30

is able to uphold the tax-exempt status of his city not only because he is a powerful bishop but also because of the power of his patron saint, also the patron saint of the city, St. Martin. This incident points to the fact that bishops were important officials in both the religious and secular affairs of the cities.

Gregory may well have been 'writing up' the *civitas* as a means of combating what he saw as the threat of a royal administration that was growing in power and authority. By highlighting his own role in this affair he was stressing his own ecclesiastical position while making no mention of any secular administration. By doing so he is underlining the importance of the Church within the *civitas*. Conversely, this episode also confirms the continued importance of the *civitas* within Frankish society, for without the *civitas* the collection of taxes would have been impossible. However, the important thing in this instance is not so much that Tours gained tax-exempt status, but rather that the system tolerated episcopal involvement in secular affairs.

4.3.5 The Army

The Frankish army demonstrates the fusion that was taking place between the Gallo-Romans and Franks during the sixth century. The late Roman army was one of great ethnic diversity,[237] and had included men from the Frankish tribes. In addition, men of Frankish origin, such as Bauto, *magister militum* between 380 and 385 and consul in 385, were able to have successful careers within the Roman

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[236] *DLH* 9.30: *Sed protinus epistulam cum auctoritate miserunt, ne populus Toronicus pre reverentia sancti Martini discriberetur.*

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army.[238] Bauto had a son, Arbogast, who was also *magister militum* from 388-394; Arbogast had a son-in-law, whose name does not survive, who was a member of the fifth century Gallic nobility; he in turn had a grandson, also Arbogast, who was count of Tours until 471 and who ended his life as bishop of Chartres. This family provides one example of the fusion that was taking place between Gallo-Romans and Franks at this time, and this fusion was not only taking place among the higher ranks of the army but also among its lower ranking officers and men.[239]

The army consisted of a number of different elements. When it first appeared in the sources it was a band of men willing to fight on behalf of the Roman Empire and there is no doubt that as such they would have picked up some of the skills of the Roman army.[240] The military history of the Franks as conquerors of the former western province of Gaul really begins when Clovis came to power.[241] Clovis defeated Syagrius and what remained of the latter's forces became amalgamated with the Frankish army. On each subsequent occasion on which Clovis defeated a rival nation or a rival king, such as the Alamanni in 496 and the Visigoths in 507,[242] some of the men who had previously been under the command of the defeated enemy joined the Frankish army. Thus the armed following of the Franks was an

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[237] Durliat 1993, 31
[238] See above 127-128 for further details of Bauto's career and for other Franks who had careers within the Roman army
[239] Durliat 1993, 31
[240] See above 127 for details of Frankish tribes fighting on behalf of the Roman Empire
[241] See above 139ff for details

amalgamation of peoples, including also the armed forces of the Gallo-Roman magnates.[243] By the fifth century the army remained a professional body, not a force that was merely brought together when the need arose. It was paid for from the proceeds of taxation, as in Roman times,[244] and there is evidence to suggest that as much as a third of the tax income of the *civitates* went towards paying the army.[245]

The *civitates* often found themselves playing host to parts of the Frankish army, hospitality that would have proved expensive. For example, during negotiations with Childebert II, Chilperic

> ...assembled his own army and entered Paris. His stay there cost the inhabitants a pretty penny.[246]

Evidently the population was expected to support the armies of the Frankish kings by more than just the proceeds of taxation. The presence of the army within the *civitates* during times of peace would have led to fraternisation between the Frank and the Gallo-Roman inhabitants of the urban centre, leading to social integration.[247] This suggests that not only was there Romanisation of the Franks taking place but that the opposite was also true, that the Gallo-Romans would, to some extent, have been Germanised by the presence of the dominant Frankish army within their *civitas*. The army can thus be viewed as an important institution in the creation of a Gallo-Frankish society.

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[242] The name of the Alamannic leader is no longer extant and the accounts of the battle that remain make it appear to have been an insignificant battle; Geuenich 1998a, 425
[243] Bachrach 1972, 15
[244] Durliat 1993, 35
[245] Durliat 1996, 166-167, 177
[246] *DLH* 6.31
[247] Durliat 1993, 37

As well as having a standing army, the Franks also called on local levies. These men were never called on to fight outside their own locality and their military value is thought to have been negligible.[248] The first reference to such a group comes in Gregory when he tells us how, when Sigibert attacked Arles, then in his brother Guntram's territory, he ordered the men of Clermont-Ferrand to attack the *civitas*.[249]

With such a heterogeneous force of men it is not surprising to learn that the weapons used by it were diverse. The majority of the evidence we have concerning Frankish weapons comes from the graves of the Frankish nobility. The fact that weapons appear in these graves does not indicate that all Franks were buried with their weapons; rather, it was a status symbol to be buried with arms.[250] Unfortunately, a large number of early Frankish cemeteries were located between the Rhine and the Loire, in the heart of the kingdom of Clovis, and have been destroyed.[251] Nevertheless, enough evidence remains from other similar graves to demonstrate the type of weapons being used during the late fourth and early fifth centuries. These were the *angon*, long sword, the *spatha* and the shield; the graves containing these weapons also often contained a lance, a Frankish axe and a scramasaxe. The *angon* was a characteristic weapon of the Franks, not used by the Alamanni.[252] The appearance of the scramasaxe in the Frankish world,

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[248] Bachrach 1972, 36, 71
[249] *DLH* 4.30; see above 165 for details of how inter-*civitas* warfare was one way which helped the inhabitants of the *Regnum Francorum* differentiate themselves from each other and create their own identity
[250] Durliat 1993, 31
[251] Martin 1993, 395
[252] Martin 1993, 395

a weapon initially used by the Alamanni, demonstrates that the Mediterranean world influenced the Frankish kingdom, for it was from that region that the weapon originated. Its appearance also suggests the possibility that this social layer that was being buried with its weapons contained men of Gallo-Roman stock who had been incorporated into the Frankish army,[253] supporting the hypothesis that there was Germanisation of the Gallo-Romans taking place at the same time as the Romanisation of the Franks, that there was fusion taking place. Other Germanic peoples such as the Visigoths in Spain and the Ostrogoths in Italy did not bury their weapons with their warriors in the same way; this adds weight to the argument that the Franks recognised the importance of co-operation and fusion for survival, while the Gothic tribes were more interested in maintaining their own identity and traditions.

The military leaders of the Frankish kingdoms, disregarding the kings themselves, were the *duces* and the *comites*. Both were responsible for military forces of differing sizes and, in addition, the *comites* were responsible for some secular administration within the *civitas*.[254] The *duces* were more highly placed than the *comites*, for they were in charge of groups of *civitates*, they were leaders of armies, and they were engaged in other activities such as diplomatic missions.[255] They were powerful officials, some of whom ruled over

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[253] Martin 1993, 397
[254] See above 164-165 for further details of the role of the *comites* as an administrator within the *civitas*
[255] For the *duces* see Lewis 1976, 381-410

extensive districts known as *ducati*.[256] It is difficult to make an accurate guess as to how many men there were in these positions, but the surviving evidence allows us to examine their activities during the sixth century.

The duties of the *duces* were primarily military and they are visible leading the forces of the Frankish kings, both as overall commanders and commanding contingents of men raised by the *comites* in the *civitates*.[257] The *duces* fought on behalf of their kings both inside and outside the Frankish kingdoms, although the majority of evidence is of the *duces* fighting the forces of another royal family.[258]

The allegiance of these men could change, depending both on political circumstances and political expediency. Duke Desiderius provides us with a good example of this. He began in the service of Chilperic, capturing his son Clovis and also attacking Guntram and the *civitas* of Bourges on his behalf. However, Desiderius then shifted his allegiance to Gundovald, the pretender,[259] for he believed that his course of action would bring him most benefit and reward. Finally, when Desiderius realised that Gundovald was going to be unsuccessful, he abandoned him and joined Guntram.[260] Desiderius' actions

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[256] Lewis 1976, 381

[257] Lewis 1976, 390. Beppolen, a duke in the service of Guntram, was sent to fight the Bretons (*DLH* 5.29); Cedinus and thirteen other dukes fought in Italy against the Lombards on behalf of Childebert II (*DLH* 10.3); Gundovald, one of Sigibert's men, fought against Theudebert, Chilperic's son, and lost; this same Theudebert was later defeated by the dukes Godigisel and Guntram Boso (*DLH* 4.47, 4.50); and duke Desiderius, fighting on behalf of Chilperic, defeated duke Ragnovald, a military commander serving Guntram (*DLH* 6.12).

[258] In the examples given above, Gundovald, Godigisel, Guntram Boso, Desiderius and Ragnovald are all fighting other members of the royal family on behalf of their king.

[259] See above 201

[260] *DLH* 7.10, 7.34, 8.27

demonstrate that the allegiance of *duces* could be bought and that a number of factors could decide where his loyalty lay.

This points to a fissile and dangerous situation, where political circumstances dictated the allegiance of the *duces*, and not loyalty to one particular branch of the royal family. Such a situation could easily have led to civil war and the subsequent destruction of the *Regnum Francorum*, but it did not. While the political situation may have seemed dangerously unstable, the destruction of the *Regnum Francorum* was prevented by the fact that its integrity was maintained. Despite the fact of its division between different kings they all had an interest in maintaining the borders of the *Regnum Francorum* as a whole. In addition, the warfare that we witness is by and large local skirmishing where the balance of power between one king and another is in the balance. At no point is there a hint that kings set out to destroy one another; they are merely interested in the acquisition of more territory. Therefore, while the *duces* may change their loyalty from one king to another, they are always in the service of the *Regnum Francorum*.

As well as being military leader the *duces* also had a part to play in the internal politics of the kingdoms. They often served as protectors to royal children and often had a vital role to play in ensuring a peaceful succession. On the death of Sigibert Duke Gundovald

> ...took charge of her [Brunhild's] little son Childebert and removed him from her in secret, snatching him from certain death. Gundovald assembled the people over whom Sigibert had reigned and proclaimed Childebert king, although he was barely five years old.[261]

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[261] *DLH* 5.1: *Gundovaldus dux adpraehensum Childeberthum, filium eius parvolu, furtim abstulit ereptumque ab immenente morte, collectisque gentibus super quas pater eius regnum tenuerat, regem instituit, vix lustro aetatis uno iam peracto.*

The *duces* also acted as ambassadors and envoys, between other Frankish kings as well as with other Germanic kings and even Constantinople. [262] This added to their importance within the royal administration and also to their power in relation to other men in positions of authority; they can be compared to the bishops who were also sent on various secular missions.[263] The kings relied on the *duces* just as the *duces* relied on the kings to guarantee their positions.

There is a certain degree of consistency in the fates that befell the *duces* of the Frankish kingdom. All of those that appear in the sources either die violent deaths or fall from grace and are banished,[264] and demotion was not the worst fate that could be suffered.[265] The position of dux, while evidently one of power and influence, was also precarious and not a position that was held for a great length of time. The most successful *duces* were those who succeeded in remaining in favour with one part of the royal family for a long time.

The *comites* portrayed in Gregory's works are also portrayed in military situations, fighting for their position and even for their lives. In many ways the position of the *comes* was just as precarious as that of the *dux*, with many of them losing their lives after only a short period in

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[262] Chilperic sent Duke Ansovald as an ambassador to Spain (*DLH* 6.18); Guntram Boso travelled between Childebert II and Guntram, as well as to Constantinople to invite Gundovald to Gaul (*DLH* 7.14, 7.32); and Ragnovald travelled to Spain on Guntram's behalf (*DLH* 7.10).

[263] See below 239, 241 for details of bishops sent on missions as the emissaries and ambassadors of various Frankish kings

[264] Lewis 1976, 392. After the defeat of the *duces* Ursio and Berthefrid by Childebert II '...certain dukes were demoted from their dukedoms, and other were promoted to replace them.' *DLH* 9.12

[265] Beppolen, in the service of Guntram, was killed by one of Fredegund's plots (*DLH* 10.9); Ursio and Berthefried were both killed in battle (*DLH* 9.11); Dacolen was seized and killed by Dragolen (*DLH* 5.25); Guntram Boso was tried, found guilty and killed for his part in the Gundovald adventure (*DLH* 9.10); and Wintrio was driven out of his dukedom (*DLH* 8.18).

office.[266] The life of the count while varied could also be very

dangerous. It was also, as with the *duces*, a very transient position.

Again, it is possible to say that events surrounding the activities of the

comites suggest that a state of near-anarchy existed within the Frankish

kingdoms. However, as with the *duces*, it was the loyalty of the *comites*

to the Frankish kingdom that prevented the situation from deteriorating

into civil war and the destruction of the *Regnum Francorum*.

In addition to the *duces* and the *comites*, there was a body of

men known as the *leudes* who also formed a part of the military

hierarchy of the Frankish kingdom. They were men of considerable

influence and social status, and it was on their local authority that the

Frankish kings depended.[267]

The importance of the *leudes* in the Frankish administration can

be demonstrated when we look at the occasions on which they appear

in the works of Gregory. They first appear when Clovis was in the

process of uniting the various Franks under his own rule.[268] Clovis

bribed the *leudes* of Ragnachar to change their allegiance, allowing him

to defeat his enemy.[269] They then appear when Theudebert attempted

to establish himself on his father's throne following his death; it was the

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[266] Ennodius, count of Tours and Poitiers, was deposed from his countship but was soon restored to his former position. He was then promoted to the position of duke of Tours and Poitiers and to the command of Aire and Lescar, but was later stripped of both (*DLH* 5.24, 8.26, 9.7). Eunnius was elected count instead of Leudast (*DLH* 5.47); Garachar was restored to favour by Guntram having temporarily joined the pretender Gundovald (*DLH* 8.6); Gundegisel and Macco were sent to stop a revolt (*DLH* 9.41, 10.15); another Gundegisel was made count instead of Werpin, and was subsequently murdered by him (*DLH* 8.18); Marachar was a count, then a bishop, and was murdered (*DLH* 5.36); and finally Nicetius was first demoted, then appointed duke, besieged a city, patrolled a border and become a governor (*DLH* 8.18, 8.30, 8.43).
[267] Wallace-Hadrill 1962, 7
[268] See above 143 for details of these events
[269] *DLH* 2.42

support of the *leudes* that allowed him to do so successfully.[270] They

also appear when Chilperic was attempting to take over his father's

territory following his death in 561, before the territory was divided. On

that occasion 'Chilperic sought out the more influential of the Franks

and won them over to his side with bribes'.[271] Finally the position of

leudes was discussed in the Treaty of Andelot, drawn up between

Guntram, Childebert II and Brunhild.[272] In this document it was agreed

that the *leudes* who on the death of Clothar had sworn allegiance to

Guntram but had then transferred their allegiance elsewhere, would be

brought back, and that those who after Clothar's death swore allegiance

to Sigibert and then transferred their allegiance elsewhere would also

be brought back. Further,

> ...it is agreed that neither King shall invite the *leudes* of the other King to join
> him, and that, if they should come, he shall not receive them. If, as the result of
> some misdemeanour, the *leudes* of one king seek refuge in the territory of the
> other King, they shall be handed back and punished in accordance with their
> crime.[273]

The Treaty of Andelot, drawn up towards the end of the sixth century,

states in writing the importance of the *leudes* to the Frankish kings. It

also points to the fact that loyalty was hereditary, in that it was passed

from father to son, for example from Clothar to his sons Sigibert and

Guntram. However, this loyalty could not be guaranteed and, as with

the *duces*, the *leudes* changed allegiance according to political

convenience and expediency.

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[270] *DLH* 3.23
[271] *DLH* 4.22
[272] See below 226, 233 for further details of this treaty and it significance
[273] *DLH* 9.20: *Similiter convenit, ut nullus alterius leudis nec sollicitet nec venientes excipiat. Quod si forsitan pro aliqua admissione partem alteram crediderit expetenda, iuxta qualitate culpae excusati reddantur.*

The loyalty of the *leudes* to the Frankish kingdom was vital to the success of the Franks. Without their support the kings would not have been able to expand their kingdoms so rapidly, for the *leudes* made up a significant part of their military forces.[274] They were rewarded with gifts and land that the kings acquired through confiscation.[275] However, the *leudes* also had to be paid, and one way in which this was accomplished was by allowing them to raid into neighbouring kingdoms in search of booty. This satisfied them and they remained loyal.

The army was an important institution in the life of the *Regnum Francorum* for a number of reasons. It allowed the kings to cement their positions of power, its leadership by *duces* showed the continued importance of local leadership for the continuation of the Frankish kingdom, and it was an institution where fusion between Gallo-Romans and Franks took place over a number of generations. Finally, it helped to confirm the importance of the *civitas*, for without the *civitas* the necessary taxation for paying the army would not have been possible.

4.3.6 The Law Codes

Frankish law, consisting in the most part of the *Pactus Legis Salicae*, also known as the *Lex Salica*, and the *Les Ribuaria*, was a descendant of Roman law. The laws themselves were not Roman. Rather, it was the fact that these law codes were drawn up at all that betrayed Roman involvement. Frankish legislation was drawn up with

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[274] Bachrach 1972, 13; see above 204 for details
[275] Irsigler 1979, 108

some awareness of the Roman precedent, although whether that precedent was to be found directly in the Theodosian Code or in the Breviary of Alaric, or even the *Lex Romana Burgundiorum*, is difficult to say.[276]

The *Pactus Legis Salicae* was first promulgated by Clovis around 507 and he was aided in his task by Gallo-Roman lawyers. The laws themselves predate the king and originated deep in the oral traditions of the past, where customary law had existed in an unwritten form.[277] However, it was Clovis who first brought them together and in doing so perhaps modified them. It is neither a well organised nor a comprehensive law code.[278] Internally there is little evidence of the Roman influence and several vernacular terms were used throughout.[279] This may have been a deliberate ploy by Clovis to differentiate his law code from the Roman one, and in so doing differentiate his followers from the Gallo-Romans.

Both of the Frankish codes were promulgated to fulfil the judicial needs of their time, and while they offer little material for the modern historian in terms of explanation and description of their institutions, they do provide evidence of institutions not mentioned elsewhere. There is legislation concerning the king, the bloodfeud, the judicial system, composition, procedure, social class, the law of persons, family

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[276] Wood 1993b, 176
[277] Drew 1991, 8
[278] Drew 1991, 30
[279] Drew 1991, 25; Rivers 1986, 2-6

law and marriage, as well as property, inheritance, economics,

obligation and liability, violence, theft and homicide.[280]

With any law code it is always difficult to distinguish between

the law as it was written down and the law as was actually lived. The

direction of legislation can direct the modern historian towards things

that were going wrong and needed to be legislated against. The kin

group and feud were evidently the main forces in the early Frankish

justice system and were a powerful moral imperative acting for law and

order.[281] Feud was clearly not something that had descended from the

traditions of Roman law. In having the laws written down Clovis was, in

a sense, following his desire to be seen as an heir to the empire and as

the natural authority in Gaul, and the elements of Frankish and Roman

law evident in the codes confirms this.

Arbitration took place on both the secular and ecclesiastical

sides of life. Both kings and bishops had parts to play as arbitrators,

but others were also called on to act in similar roles. The works of both

Fortunatus and Gregory give us examples of cases where men are

appealed to by their friends for assistance in a particular case and this

pressure highlights the importance of the social context of the

dispute.[282] Feud and composition played a large part in the laws of the

Franks and pressure could be brought to bear when it was possible to

reach an agreement and composition outside the court without having

to appeal directly to the law.[283]

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[280] Drew 1991, 32-50; Rivers 1986, 11-28
[281] James 1988, 172
[282] Wood 1986, 8, 9; see below 187ff for details of specific cases
[283] Wood 1986, 9

The shortage of evidence for the sixth century makes it difficult to distinguish between vulgar law and the various barbarian law codes. All of the Germanic successor kingdoms had a common fund of legal tradition - imperial, vulgar, Roman and Germanic - which meant that they were all mutually comprehensible. There was a blurring of distinction between them and that undermines the idea of the personality of the law,[284] but it also demonstrates that the lines between the Gallo-Romans and the Franks were being blurred, as strategies of distinction became less necessary as the two peoples fused.

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The institutions of the *Regnum Francorum* are similar enough to those of the period of imperial rule in Gaul to conclude that the continuity of Roman ideas was both important to the Franks and helped to guarantee their success. Their adoption of the Roman system of administration demonstrates how they were able to adopt and adapt what remained of the imperial system and made the Franks acceptable to the Gallo-Romans as successors to the Empire.

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[284] Wood 1986, 20-22

Chapter 5

Frankish Leaders

Several classes of Frankish leader have become apparent in the discussion so far. The activities and beliefs of these men and women were vital for the establishment of a strong *Regnum Francorum* and for its success as successor kingdom in the north-west. A unified nobility was created, but this was only possible due to existence of a strong and powerful monarchy. This nobility was instrumental in the amalgamation of Gallo-Roman and Frank and, as a result, in the creation of Gallo-Frankish society.

5.1   The Monarchy

The monarchy had a vital role to play in this process, as they sat at the top of this society. Without a powerful monarchy the establishment of the Frankish state would not have been possible.

Kingship, as it developed among the Franks during the fifth and sixth centuries, was based on the war-leadership of loose confederations of Germanic tribes. It was only when the Franks were well established that men from the Merovingian family became kings and replaced Frankish leaders.[1] In the same way that the Goths became part of the Roman world through military kingship, so did the Franks.[2] War-leaders who had proved themselves in battle were now faced with the challenge of leading their people during times of relative

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[1] Wolfram 1998, 612
[2] Wolfram 1988, 9

peace and stability.[3] The fact that the Franks had lived on the borders of the Roman Empire for a number of generations and had been a part of the Roman army before they were finally established means that some of the distinctive features of Frankish power were, in fact, indigenous to late Roman Gaul and that their rule was derived from Rome.[4] This meant that in constructing their kingdoms the particular Germanic monarchs acted as heirs to Roman traditions of material representation.[5]

Frankish kingship was a combination of Germanic and Roman practices , with the addition of Christian thinking. Kings did not take over the activities of the bishops but rather the concept of the *Christianus Princeps*.[6]

5.1.1 Gregory's Kings

Gregory's kings were literary creations. He drew some very particular images of the Frankish kings in his *Historiae* and by looking at some of his individual portraits we are able not only to understand his motivation but also, if we make allowance for that motivation, to see how the Frankish kings operated. By looking at Gregory's portraits of three generations of Frankish kings, men such as Clovis, Clothar I, Chilperic, Guntram, Theudebert and Childebert II, some of whom were his contemporaries, it is possible to establish some of the methods by which Gallo-Frankish identity was created.

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[3] Wallace-Hadrill 1962, 156
[4] Wallace-Hadrill 1962, 4, 9; James 1988, 163; Werner 1998, 96-97
[5] Wood 1997, 223
[6] Heinzelmann 1976, 49

Despite the fact that Clovis is the first Frankish king to appear in the *Historiae* and is portrayed as one of the greatest, Gregory actually says very little about him. This is due to the lack of good source material that was available to him at that time and confirms the fact that before Clovis the 'Franks' had very little 'real' history.[7] However, it is evident from what follows that Clovis was Gregory's example of a great and good king, whose example ought to have been followed by all of his descendants. Perhaps his greatest achievement as far as Gregory was concerned was his conversion and baptism into the Catholic faith, although we also see him undertaking some ruthless acts in the elimination of rival kings.[8]

Clothar, the longest surviving son of Clovis, is portrayed very much as a military character, anxious to extend the borders of his territory as much as possible. We see him attacking Thuringia, Burgundy and Spain, as well as the Saxons, and he also kills Chlodomer's young sons and tries to obtain Theudebert's kingdom after the death of his father.[9] However, he does have some redeeming characteristics, for he restores the roof of St. Martin's church, he goes on a pilgrimage to that church before he dies, and he helps his former wife, Queen Radegund, to establish her convent at Poitiers.[10]

Clothar is portrayed as a formidable character. While in some respects he is presented as a ruthless man who evidently lusts after more power and territory, his redeeming feature is his religion. His

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[7] See above 126ff for details of the earliest history of the Franks
[8] See above 143 for discussion of these events
[9] *DLH* 3.7 - Thuringia; 3.11 - Burgundy; 3.29 - Spain; 4.10 - Saxons; 3.18 - Chlodomer's sons; 3.23 - Theudebert's kingdom.

Catholicism allows Gregory to accept him as a king. His religion would also have made him acceptable to the Gallo-Romans.

When we come to the brothers' Theudebert, Chilperic and Guntram and their nephew Childebert II we are dealing with Gregory's contemporaries.[11] Due to this fact Gregory had far more information available to him, not only from his sources but also from his own personal experiences.

Gregory's words in his preface to book five of his *Historiae*, where he moves into the familiar world of his own day, give some indication as to what he thought of the kings who were his contemporaries:

> You cannot keep peace, and therefore you do not know the grace of God. Why do you all keep stealing from each other? Why do you always want something which someone else possesses?[12]

These words were not aimed exclusively at any one king; rather, they tell us what Gregory thought of all the fighting, effectively civil war, that was going on in his day.

Theudebert, Clovis' grandson, did not rule for a great length of time and died while Gregory was still in his infancy. As a result the author had no direct knowledge about him and had to rely on second hand reports for the information that he did have.[13] Despite this fact, he portrays Theudebert as a good and just king:

> Once he was firmly established on the throne, Theudebert proved himself to be a great king, distinguished by every virtue. He ruled his kingdom justly, respected his bishops, was liberal to the churches, relieved the wants of the poor and distributed many benefits with piety and friendly goodwill. With great

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[10] *DLH* 4.20, 21; 9.40
[11] See above 134ff for details of some the activities these kings undertook as rulers of the *Regnum Francorum*.
[12] *DLH* 5.preface
[13] Collins 1983, 9

generosity he remitted to the churches in Clermont-Ferrand all the tribute which they used to pay to the royal treasury.[14]

As with Clovis Gregory conveys the image of a just king who should serve as an example to all of his descendants and family. He is portrayed as being generous to the church and he respects his bishops, something that was very important from Gregory's point of view. The relationship between the church and the Frankish kings was still developing. However it is evident, and important for the fusion that was taking place and the creation of the Gallo-Frankish society, that the kings and the bishops co-operated. It was not just Gregory who had an interest in seeing kings and bishops, Franks and Gallo-Romans, co-operate: it was vital to the establishment of a strong Frankish kingdom.

Gregory's negative assessment of Chilperic, written after his death, is the image that springs to mind when we look at the life of this king: '...the Nero and Herod of our time...'.[15] While Chilperic was alive Gregory had to be careful in what he said about him, for it was possible for him to be punished if he transgressed beyond acceptable grounds, and his trial at Berny-Rivière would have put him on his guard about speaking openly against the king while he was alive.[16] There is no doubt about the tension that existed between these two, and Gregory had no illusion about the power that Chilperic held over him as a king.

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[14] *DLH* 3.25: *At ille in regno firmatus, magnum se atque in omni bonitate praecipuum reddidit. Erat enim regnum cum iustitia regens, sacerdotes venerans, eclesias munerans, pauperes relevans et multa multis beneficia pia ac dulcissima accommodans voluntate. Omne tributo, quod in fisco suo ab eclesiis in Arvernum sitis reddebebatur, clementer indulsit.*
[15] *DLH* 6.4:...*Nero nostri temporis et Herodis...*
[16] See below 244ff for details of this incident

This in itself points to the fact that by now the Frankish monarchy was considered to have power over the bishops and the church.

However, following Chilperic's death in 561 Gregory had more freedom to say what he thought.[17] Gregory's evaluation of Chilperic was of a bad king, one who was ready to do all manner of evil deeds, but not all of his actions were bad; for example, he remitted taxes after the death of his young sons from fever.[18] Gregory was in a position to be selective in the tales that he told about Chilperic, as with the other kings who were his contemporaries. That he depicts Chilperic in the manner that he does tells us that he was not a supporter, and this could be as much because he did not consider Chilperic to be sufficiently respectful to the church and the bishops as much as was a bad king.

Guntram, Chilperic's brother, receives a rather better press. Again, Gregory had a good deal of information available to him and he took full advantage of it. Guntram is portrayed as a good king, who carries out charitable acts and who is respectful towards the church and its prelates. We are informed of Guntram's secular deeds and, more importantly for Gregory, of his pious deeds. He attends church, institutes rogations, discusses God and he is even ascribed a miracle.[19] His example was to be followed, as he was a good and virtuous king. As with Chilperic we see Gregory being selective in the stories he tells about Guntram, and because the king evidently supported the bishops and the church he was considered to be right sort of king.

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[17] Wood 1993a, 256
[18] *DLH* 5.22
[19] *DLH* 8.4, 8.7, 9.21

Finally we come to Childebert II. He is portrayed as neither particularly good, in the manner of Guntram, nor as particularly evil, as in the manner of Chilperic. We hear of him sending envoys and ambassadors to a number of different people, which suggests that he was keen to pursue a peaceable policy,[20] although he is also seen invading Spain on behalf of his sister Ingund, who had been insulted by her new family.[21]

Gregory portrayed these early Frankish kings in a number of different ways and evidently judged them and their actions according to certain criteria. If he considered that a king was evil then he had little compunction in saying so, once he was certain that no harm would come to him as a result of what he said. This points to a certain lack of objectivity in Gregory's work. If, on the other hand, he considered a king to be a good one, then he said so.

It is evident that it was easier for him to portray those kings who were not his contemporaries, men such as Clovis and Theudebert, as good kings; he would have had less information to work with when dealing with them, plus the benefit of hindsight, and it was easier for him to deal with them objectively as they could pose no personal threat to him. His contemporaries are judged harshly for their actions in fighting each other, but there is no evidence of a harsh judgement of Clovis when he defeated and killed his rival kings to ensure his own superiority.

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[20] *DLH* 6.3, 6.31, 6.45 - envoys to Chilperic; 6.42, 9.29 - peace with the Longobards in Italy; 7.14 - envoys to Guntram
[21] *DLH* 6.42; Paul 3.21

Gregory often had direct experience of the actions of his contemporaries, quite often being personally affected by them. His desire to promote the church and the primacy of the episcopate is evident throughout his portrayal of these kings. He is anxious to promote the church as being more important than the royal court. This reflects the political circumstances of the day, in so much that it is an acknowledgement of the growing power of the kings.

One of the criteria by which Gregory judged these kings was according to their religious convictions. Clovis was good because he was the king who converted to Catholic, and not Arian, Christianity. Guntram was a good king because he performed charitable acts and was generally enthusiastic about the church, and Theudebert was good because he respected his bishops and remitted taxes to the church.[22]

Further evidence that Gregory judged his kings according to their religious convictions comes when we look at the way in which he discussed and judged the Visigothic kings. Comparisons between the way he portrays the Visigothic and Frankish kings illustrate how he felt about these two aspects of Christianity. The Visigoths were Arian,[23] and Gregory was scathing in his criticism of them for this. For example, he tells us how Ingund and Clotild, Frankish princesses who marry into the Spanish, Visigothic royal family, are insulted and punished for their Catholic faith.[24] In addition, Alaric II '...refused to accept the Trinity, was therefore deprived of his kingship, his subjects and, what is more

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[22] *DLH* 9.21 - Guntram; 3.25, 3.34 - Theudebert
[23] See above 64ff for a discussion of the Visigoths and their chosen faith
[24] *DLH* 6.40 - Ingund; 3.10 - Clotild

important, the life hereafter'.[25] The Visigothic kings were not 'good' kings because they followed the 'wrong' religion. Gregory judged his kings for their morality, not for their personalities.

Gregory's preoccupation with Arianism may seem somewhat misplaced, for by the middle of the sixth century there can have been no doubt that Catholic Christianity was the dominant religion.[26] Gregory was anxious to differentiate the Franks, even those 'bad' Franks, from their neighbours in Spain, and one of the strategies he used for doing so was to criticise their religion. Even the 'bad' Frankish kings followed the 'correct' religion.

Gregory was capable of being highly critical of the Frankish kings, but he did give them credit when and where it was due. He was concerned more than anything with the moral life of his contemporaries and their descendants, and anything that promoted that or, conversely, went against it was noted in the *Historiae*. But he was also concerned with promoting the church and so would have been biased against the king as a non-religious authority, no matter how respectful they were towards that institution. Gregory's kings are evidently powerful men, but we are also left with images of men often struggling to come to terms with the new political landscape of the day. Gregory's portraits underline the fact that the Frankish kings were influenced by a number of different forces, Germanic, Roman and Christian, something that also come through strongly in the poetry of Fortunatus.

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[25] *DLH* 3.pref
[26] See above 19

5.1.2 Fortunatus' Kings[27]

Fortunatus wrote a number of poems to various members of the Frankish royal family, the majority within the first few years of his arrival in the Frankish kingdom. By examining certain aspects of his poetry we can establish how members of Frankish society, and specifically the nobility, succeeded in using it to create particular images of themselves and of the society in which they were living. This examination demonstrates the fusion that was taking place between the Gallo-Romans and the Franks, as well as how the latter wanted to be seen as fitting in to the Roman tradition.

The poems under discussion here were all written to the Frankish kings at specific points in their and Fortunatus' career. I will concentrate on the panegyrics to Sigibert (d.575) and Brunhild (d.613), to Charibert (d.567/8), to Chilperic (d.584), and to Childebert II (d.595) and Brunhild.

The poetry of Fortunatus gives modern historians an alternative impression of developments within Gallic and Frankish society to Gregory.[28] Fortunatus offers a different way of looking at and interpreting the lives of the Franks, as well as of some of the representatives of the remaining Gallo-Roman population of the region.[29] It allows us to see how the Franks, and in particular the royal family, were promoted as the natural heirs to the Romans in Gaul and emphasises the importance of the Franks as a force for continuity within Gallic society.

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[27] Parts of this discussion appear in Lewis 2000a
[28] See above 20

During the course of a long and varied career, Fortunatus wrote a great deal of poetry. Not only did he write for kings and queens but also for bishops and noblemen.[30] The best place to make an investigation of the Roman tradition and the fusion that was taking place in this society is by looking at his panegyrics and other poems written to the upper-class of Frankish society, both secular and ecclesiastic, to men who were his contemporaries and earliest patrons in the Frankish kingdom. These poems demonstrate that only did Fortunatus have a varied range of patrons but also that he was able to observe Gallo-Frankish society from a number of different angles.

5.1.2.1 Sigibert

The first poem, 6.1a, *De Sigiberctho rege et Brunichilde regina*, a short panegyric to Sigibert and Brunhild, was one of the first poems Fortunatus wrote on his arrival in the Frankish kingdom. It celebrates the glories of the king's reign and the conversion of Brunhild to Catholicism. This panegyric includes many of the traditional motifs of the genre, and opens with an image of Sigibert as a victor, a virtue in a Germanic king as it was for a Roman, essential to the success and stability of a reign:[31]

> O lordly Sigibert, glorious in splendid triumphs, on one side fresh virtue heralds you, on the other your lineage. [32]

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[29] Tardi 1927, 130ff; Reydellet 1994, 34
[30] See below 252ff, 258ff for these poems
[31] Translations of Fortunatus' poetry are taken from George
[32] *Carm.* 6.1a: *Sigibercthe potens, generosis clare triumphis,*
       hinc nova te virtus praedicat, inde genus   8

Fortunatus omits the traditional information on a ruler's country, family and nature, and concentrates instead on his virtues as a ruler in both war and peace. The manner of Fortunatus' greeting also demonstrates that the king was happy to be flattered in a traditional Roman way with the use of a Latin panegyric. The king is also pictured as the salvation of his people, giving this panegyric a religious, as well as a secular, dimension.

The qualities attributed to the king, the sequence of topics and the epic parallels all accord a classical Roman dignity to the king and queen. Present are all three strands of Frankish kingship: the Germanic warrior, the legitimate Roman ruler, and the Christian saviour and defender of the people. This demonstrates the fusion that was taking place between the Gallo-Roman and Frankish views of kingship.

> You have the highest honour, but your intellect has surpassed the honour, so that the highest pinnacle falls short of your character. Fosterer of justice, you are resplendent in your love of righteousness; both virtues dispute which occupies you more. Eloquence, dignity, virtue, goodness, intellect, grace hold sway; any one of your merits would adorn any man. You hold the cares of all in your heart, righteous concern possesses you for the tranquillity of the people. You have been granted as the one salvation for all, to whom in sacred office you restore in present times the joys of old.
> Your excellent wife is graced in Catholic ways, the house of the church grows strong through your doing.[33]

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[33] *Carm.* 6.1a: *est tibi summus honor, sed mens praecessit honorem,*
　　　　　moribus ut vestris debitor extet apex.　　20
　　　iustitiae cultor pietatis amore coruscas:
　　　　　quod te plus habeat, certat utrumque bonum.
　　　lingua decus virtus bonitas mens gratia pollent:
　　　　　ornarent cunctos singula vestra viros.
　　　cunctorum causas intra tua pectora condis.　　25
　　　　　pro populi requie te pia cura tenet.
　　　omnibus una salus datus es, quibus ordine sacro
　　　　　tempore praesenti gaudia prisca refers.
　　　catholico cultu decorata est optima coniux,
　　　　　ecclesiae crevit te faciente domus.　　30

The recognition of Brunhild as a Christian consort complements the image of the king as a Christian ruler and the poem reflects the dignity of the king's dynastic ambitions. The poet's use of the panegyric form in the poem, as well as the images he uses, suggests a shared culture, associating the king and queen with the imperial courts of Byzantium and Rome,[34] and again stressing the fusion between Gallo-Roman and Frank.

5.1.2.2 Charibert

Poem 6.2, to Charibert, *De Chariberctho rege*, a somewhat longer panegyric than the previous one, was delivered late in 567 or early in 568, just before the king's death when he was in the midst of a dispute with Germanus, bishop of Paris. The panegyric opens in the traditional manner, with a fanfare in honour of the king. The poet then goes on to give details king's family and political circumstances, and he lists his solid Roman virtues, virtues such as justice, dignity, moderation, clemency and wisdom.[35] He ends the poem by praising the king's civilised accomplishments.

What we see here again is the Frankish king as legitimate ruler in the Roman pattern and as the Christian defender of Church and people. This poem was written at a time when there was conflict between Charibert and a number of his bishops, and we see the poet acting as a mediator between the ruler and the ruled. The poet offers a synthesis between two worlds, the Roman and the barbarian, and sees

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[34] George 1992, 41-43
[35] Reydellet 1994, 35

the king acting as a unifying focus for them both: '...the barbarian applauds him on one side, the Roman on the other...'.[36] Again this demonstrates the fusion that was constantly taking place between Gallo-Roman and Frank. Fortunatus also comments,

> Charibert is at hand; administering public justice to the people, he brings back joys of old in present times.[37]

In addition, Charibert is praised for his bilingual skills:

> Though you are a Sigamber, progeny of a noble race, yet the Latin tongue flourishes in your eloquence. How great you must be in learned speech in your own language, when you overcome us Romans in eloquence? [38]

The ability to speak Latin in addition to his native language would have been an invaluable skill for any member of the Frankish royal family or the nobility; the fact that here we witness a king's ability to speak two languages is testimony to the fact that the Franks had been assimilating to the Gallo-Roman way of life for some time. Charibert is seen as a saviour of the two races, but also as embodying the virtues of both, and as having a responsibility to unify and to further their interests. This is a distinctive vision of nationhood,[39] of the Frankish king as leader of a society made up of both his own people and the Gallo-Romans. By the middle of the sixth century, when this panegyric was written, the Franks had been well established for three-quarters of a century and were ruling a united people, something made manifest in this poetry. As such, this panegyric may be interpreted as the kings projecting their ideal through this poet, but the fact that the image is there manifestly

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[36] *Carm.* 6.2: *hinc cui barbaries, illinc Romania plaudit:* 7

[37] *Carm.* 6.2: *Charibercthus adest, qui publica iura gubernans tempore praesenti gaudia prisca refert.* 20

[38] *Carm.* 6.2: *cum sis progenitus clara gente Sigamber, floret in eloquio lingua Latina tuo. qualis es in propria docto sermone loquella, qui nos Romanos vincis in eloquio?* 100

supports the hypothesis that Gallo-Romans and Franks were rapidly merging into one, the Gallo-Franks.

5.1.2.3 Chilperic

The third panegyric, Poem 9.1 to Chilperic, *Ad Chilpericum regem quando synadus Brinnaco habita est*, was written for a specific event, the trial of Gregory, recently appointed bishop of Tours and patron and close friend of the poet, on charge of slander. He was tried at the court of Chilperic at Berny-Rivière in 580.[40] At 148 lines this is one of Fortunatus' longest panegyrics and again we see some of the traditional motifs of the genre being used. The poem opens with an acknowledgement first of the bishops present and then of the king. The poet praises the peaceable virtues of Chilperic and eulogises his potential virtues.[41] The section of the poem that would normally have been used for dealing with the king's virtues in peace and war is here used as an apologia for his actions, where bad and evil deeds are put down to malign fortune, and he is then complimented on his qualities as a civilised Christian statesman. The final tableau of the king and his family links the continued success of his reign to the church, and creates a church-centred image of a pious and orthodox Christian ruler. This is similar to what Gregory was attempting to achieve in his

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[39] George 1992, 43-48
[40] See below 244ff for details of this incident
[41] For differing views of this poem see Dill 1926, 333, who criticises Fortunatus as a 'venal flatterer'; Koebner 1915, 95; Meyer 1901, 115-126; Wood 1993a, 253-270

Historiae, where kings were praised for their morality and respect for the church.[42]

In this poem Fortunatus was attempting to make an active political contribution to a situation, to shape the view of events and to influence decisions. In the poem the poet represents the interests of the bishops and his praise of Chilperic has two ends in sight: first, the early passages rewrite history so as to offer the king an acceptable picture of his past actions, for in the twenty years since he came to power in 561 Chilperic had done a lot of 'unkingly' things, or so the sources would have us believe:

> O king, renowned in war and sprung from a noble line of kings, foremost of those of old, commanding the foremost heights, as leader you inherited honour by birth, but increased it by your wise rule.[43]

Second, the praise of his virtues as a lawgiver is intended to establish an ideal for the king, in an attempt to modify his behaviour: 'What shall I say of your administration of justice, o prince?'[44] Fortunatus is offering a formula for settlement and reconciliation and the king is seen governing the *regnum christianum*, very much in the Roman style:

> Worship, o king, the King who gives you His aid, so that He may preserve and increase your good fortune. For the Prince on high Who alone possesses all is He who has given you so much.[45]

The poet uses the panegyric as a tool of political influence and speaks to the ruler on behalf of the people, in order to win justice.[46]

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[42] See above 215ff

[43] *Carm.* 9.1: *Inclite rex armis et regibus edite celsis,*   5
     primus ab antiquis culmina prima regens,
        rector habens nascendo decus, moderando sed augens,
     de radice patris flos generate potens.

[44] *Carm.* 9.1: *quid de iustitiae referam moderamine, princeps?*   85

[45] *Carm.* 9.1: *et cole, rex, regem qui tibi praebet opem,*
     ut servet cumuletque bonum; nam rector ab alto 135
       omnia solus habet qui tibi multa dedit.

5.1.2.4 Childebert II

Poem 10.8 to Childebert II and his mother Brunhild, *Ad eosdem in laude*, was written on the occasion of the signing of the Treaty of Andelot with his uncle Guntram in 587, which brought to an end years of civil strife and discord between the two sides. Poem 10.9, *De navigio suo*, written in 588, describes a trip down the Moselle to Andernach in their company.

Poem 10.8 is a relatively short eulogy. In it the poet speaks on behalf of the people, mediating between them and the king and queen:

> Your special gift is a peaceful and peace-loving kingdom, and the height of devotion in the world rests in your being. Here family, country, and guardianship are resplendent, here is dignity and rank, here are the works of piety, here is tranquil peace, here is the hope which delights the faithful; after God, the gift of their salvation abides in you. [47]

The two principals are praised for their moral and aesthetic qualities, and there is the suggestion that they have arrived at a long-awaited goal.[48]

Poem 10.9 is considerably longer. Although the majority of the poem is spent tracing the traveller's course, the poem ends with a description of a banquet at the royal castle at Andernach, with prayers for the prosperity and happiness of the king and his people:

> May the Lord long grant the lords such a sight, and may you grant that the people have such pleasant days; with your peaceful countenance may you give joy to all, and may your eminences be made joyful by your people. [49]

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[46] George 1992, 48-57

[47] *Carm.* 10.8: *praecipuum donum placidum et placabile regnum,*
　　　　ac vestro in statu est culmen in orbe pium.
　　hicque parentela et patria et tutela coruscat,
　　　　hic decus atque gradus, hic pietatis opus,　　　10
　　hic tranquilla quies, hic spes iucunda fideli,
　　　　postque deum in vobis dona salutis habent.

[48] George 1992, 57-59

[49] *Carm.* 10.9: *ista diu domius dominis spectacula praestet,*
　　　　et populis dulces detis habere dies:　　　80
　　vultibus ex placidis tribuatis gaudia cunctis,

The scene with which the poem ends presents a picture of the contemporary ideology of Frankish kingship: a Christian king with both Germanic and Roman virtues.[50]

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The panegyric was an important literary genre in the public and ceremonial life of both the Gallo-Romans and the Franks, and the ceremonial that gave panegyric its political context clearly still existed in Frankish Gaul. Without it, panegyric would have been a mere token of Roman culture. It was used as a tool of political communication and negotiation between a ruler and his people, and the orator often acted as the mediator between them.[51] In Fortunatus' use of this genre we see the poet adapting it, using more and/or less of its traditional motifs as the occasion demanded. He also adapts it to his own views of the duties of kingship and to the educational and interest level of his audience, as well as to the particular circumstances of each occasion, for these poems were often written for particular political events.[52]

The use of the form of panegyric is in itself important, for the declamation of panegyric before a ruler was a sign of legitimacy, that he had been accepted by his people.[53] Whereas in the panegyrics to Sigibert and Brunhild (6.1a), to Charibert (6.2) and the Chilperic (9.1) we can see specific examples of *romanitas*, this is not so obviously the case in the last to Childebert II and Brunhild (10.8 and 10.9); in the

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vester et ex vestrus laetificetur apex.
[50] Roberts 1994, 12, 19
[51] George 1992, 35-37
[52] George 1992, 60-61

poems to them, as to a lesser degree with the others, it is the use of the form itself that is important. Fortunatus is helping to legitimate the new powers of Frankish Gaul.[54]

Fortunatus' poetry offers us a vantage point from which to view these kings. They demonstrate the fusion of the Germanic, the Roman and the Christian elements of society, and show that these three were the vital aspects of Frankish kingship. Fortunatus created an ideal and a literary construct, but the manner in which he does it tells us something about Frankish society, the construction of the image of the kings, and consequently of the *Regnum Francorum*.[55] Further the panegyrics show that a new, Gallo-Frankish nobility was being constructed.[56]

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The histories of Gregory and the poetry of Fortunatus are valuable sources for this period, particularly so as the latter serves as a balance to the former. The discussion to this point has focused principally on the role of the Frankish kings during this period. However, the queens and royal women also had an important part to play in the creation of the new society.

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[53] George 1992, 38
[54] Roberts 1994, 22
[55] Brennan 1984, 1-10
[56] See below 252ff, 258ff for a discussion of Fortunatus' poems to bishops and secular nobles, members of this new Gallo-Frankish society

5.1.3 Frankish Queens[57]

Women played an important part in the life of the Frankish dynasties. Through the institution of marriage they were influential in creating fusion between Gallo-Romans and Franks and between other Germanic nations, such as the Visigoths, and the Franks. Women helped to create kinship ties among the upper-class families, and through marriage became a member of two kin groups.[58] They also had an important part to play in the religious life of the community, especially through the institution of female asceticism and the establishment of convents.

The upper-class women of this society could gain power through their ownership of property. It was habitual for them to receive gifts of real property from their husbands,[59] and when a wife became a widow she could inherit her dead husband's power, becoming the head of the household, controlling the family fortune and occasionally wielding considerable political power.[60] The changing laws of inheritance also allowed a woman to gain economic independence; for example, during the sixth century the *Lex Salica* was relaxed to allow women to inherit.[61]

Owing to the relatively flexible marriage laws, Frankish women were able to marry above their station, and this helped to open up the aristocracy. While princesses were expected to marry princes, the opposite was not always the case, and the Frankish kings did not necessarily marry to ally themselves to other royal houses. Marriages

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[57] Parts of this discussion appear in Lewis 1997
[58] Wemple 1981, 31
[59] McNamara and Wemple 1988, 87
[60] See below for details of this happening

were easily dissolved, and a number of women were able to make use of their seductiveness and political skills to improve their status.[62] Unfortunately, however, this could encourage arrogance and violence towards and among women.[63] For example, Charibert married Ingoberg, dismissed her and married Merofled; he also kept a mistress. Then, while remaining married to Merofled he also married her sister Marcovefa.[64] Clear double standards existed between the behaviour expected of women and that expected of men. Polygamy was an accepted practice among the Frankish kings; for example, Clothar was married to the sisters Ingund and Aregund simultaneously.[65] The position of queens could be very precarious and they used various measures to hold onto their positions of power and authority.[66]

Divorce was an issue being widely debated in the church and by the Franks during this period, and one area of conflict between them was the question of the indissolubility of marriage. Under Frankish law a man could initiate separation and repudiate his wife, but a woman was unable to do either of these. However divorce by mutual consent was allowed. Apart from regulations related to incest, secular laws were confined to the social aspects of marriage, such as family interest and the disposition of property between the bride and groom. Christian doctrine was concerned principally with the spiritual bond that existed in marriage, the spiritual equality that existed between a man and a

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[61] Wemple 1981, 89; McNamara and Wemple 1988, 89
[62] One example of such a woman is Fredegund; see below
[63] Wemple 1985, 55
[64] *DLH* 4.26; see above 153
[65] *DLH* 4.3
[66] See below 231ff for details

woman. For the church, divorce could only take place in cases of adultery. These opposing views on divorce led to tension between church and state.[67]

On the whole, the position of women within the church was not good. The only place where it was considered safe for them to pursue an ascetic life was within the walls of a convent. Over time more of these institutions were established in the Frankish kingdom, the most notable being those of Caesarius at Arles and of Radegund at Poitiers. Here, women were able to escape from what could be a dangerous and unstable world, and they could lead a contemplative life, the equals of those men who lived in the Frankish monasteries. However, there was never a complete guarantee of a peaceful life, as political situations could even overtake life in the convents.[68]

Women had an important part to play in the life of the Frankish kingdom, as wives and mothers and as political operatives. While the lives of the majority remain shrouded in mystery, there are ample examples from the lives of the Frankish queens and nobility that show women playing a vital part in the fusion of Gallo-Romans and Franks and thus in the creation of the new Gallo-Frankish society.

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The queens and consorts of the Frankish kings played an important part in the establishment of Frankish power, whether willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously. Through their acts and

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[67] Wemple 1981, 75
[68] Two examples are the warfare around Arles that forced Caesarius to relocate his convent within the walls of the *civitas*, and the situation that arose in Poitiers following the death of Radegund; see below 238-239 for details.

behaviour, and from the reactions of the kings and the population to them, a particular image of Frankish upper-class women is created in our sources.

Royal women were frequently used as pawns to cement political alliances between the Germanic kings. One of the earliest examples is the marriage of Clotild, a Burgundian princess, to Clovis. This marriage is significant for a number of reasons. When they married Clovis and the Franks had no discernible religion. Clotild was a Catholic and was instrumental in converting her husband, and therefore the Franks, to Catholic Christianity. This conversion early in the history of the Frankish Kingdom was vital to its success, for it acted as a unifying force among the Franks, and also made them acceptable to the native, Gallo-Roman population of the north-west; this in turn allowed them to be differentiated from other Germanic peoples, such as the Visigoths, who were Arians.[69] The marriage also created an alliance between the Franks and the Burgundians, but ultimately it led to the annexation of Burgundy when Clotild's sons annexed it in later years.[70]

Other marriages that took place to create political alliances were those of the Spanish sisters Brunhild and Galswinth, to Sigibert and Chilperic respectively. Brunhild and Sigibert married first, in the spring of 566,[71] and over the next fifty years she was to become a powerful and significant political figure in the Frankish kingdoms, first as a king's wife and then as mother and grandmother to Frankish kings.

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[69] See above 213 and below 239
[70] See above 149
[71] See above 220ff for the panegyric composed by Fortunatus for this occasion

Brunhild came to the fore as an active political figure following the death of her husband in 575. She acted as regent for her young son, Childebert II, and was guardian to her grandsons Theudebert II (d.612) and Theuderic II (d.613), all of whom she outlived.[72] She was also present at the signing of the Treaty of Andelot.[73] She is most prominent for her ongoing feud with Fredegund, and held her responsible for the deaths of both her sister and husband.

At the time of Sigibert's marriage Chilperic was married to Fredegund, a former servant. However, when he saw the success of his brother's marriage he too resolved to take a royal bride. He spurned Fredegund and chose Galswinth, Brunhild's sister. However, Fredegund was determined to regain her position as queen and conspired successfully to have her rival killed.[74] Fredegund's actions led to enmity between these two parts of the royal family and, as well as leading to the death of Sigibert, was also the cause of civil strife. Both Brunhild and Galswinth converted to the Catholic faith.[75] This was significant as it confirmed the establishment of the Franks as Catholic monarchs.

One way in which Fredegund demonstrated her power was by bringing about the deaths of her perceived rivals. She persuaded Chilperic to kill Galswinth, she was instrumental in the death of Sigibert, she had her step-son, Clovis, killed, she plotted to kill both Childebert II and Brunhild, and she was also responsible for the death of bishop

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[72] *DLH* 9.20
[73] *DLH* 9.11
[74] *DLH* 4.28; see Fortunatus *Carm.* 6.5 for his interpretation of the events surrounding Galswinth's betrothal marriage and death

Praetextatus.[76] However, Fredegund was not a completely one-sided and ruthless character. When her young sons became ill she believed that it was because she and Chilperic had been too greedy, and so she ordered the tax lists of her cities burnt.[77] This event demonstrates that Fredegund was a property owner in her own right in that the revenues of certain cities were set aside for their own use.

As is to be expected, just as Frankish kings married the daughters of other Germanic royal households, they also married off their daughters to those same families, again in order to create political alliances. One example is the marriage of Clotild, the daughter of Clovis, to the Visigoth Amalaric, the son of Alaric II. Soon after the wedding Clotild began to be insulted by her husband on account of her faith: she was a Catholic Christian while he was an Arian.

> Clotild...was being very badly treated by her husband Amalaric on account of her Catholic faith. Several times when she was on her way to church he had dung and other filth thrown over her. Finally he struck her with such violence that she sent to her brother a towel stained with her own blood.[78]

When her brother, Childebert I, heard of this outrage he set off for Spain to rescue her, and in doing so caused the death of Amalaric. Unfortunately Clotild died on her way home and was buried in Paris next to her father.[79] In Gregory's eyes Amalaric's death would have been viewed as a just punishment for his abuse of a Catholic princess.[80]

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[75] *DLH* 4.27 - Brunhild, 4.28 - Sigibert
[76] *LHF* 31 - Chilperic kills Galswinth; *DLH* 4.51, *LHF* 32 - Sigibert is killed; *DLH* 5.39 - Clovis is murdered; *DLH* 8.28, 8.29, 10.18 - plots to kill Childebert II and Brunhild; *DLH* 7.31 - Praetextatus killed.
[77] *DLH* 5.34; *LHF* 34
[78] *DLH* 3.10
[79] *DLH* 3.1, 3.10
[80] See above 19 for Gregory's views on the Visigoths and their Arian religion

Ingund, daughter of Sigibert and Brunhild, married a Spanish prince, Hermangild, son of Leuvigild. She persuaded her husband to convert from Arianism to Catholicism, again demonstrating the power women had to influence the spread of Catholicism.[81] However, she was insulted by her father-in-law who was at war against his son, her husband. This war led to the capture of Ingund by the Greeks, her transfer to Constantinople, and her death in Africa.[82]

It is evident that while these marriages took place with political aims in mind, more often than not they failed. From Gregory's point of view these failures would have been due almost entirely to the fact that the Arian kings persecuted their Catholic wives or daughters-in-law. Again, this is evidence of the bishop of Tours highlighting the primacy of the Catholic faith. His stories would also have ensured that the Frankish kings remained Catholic and did not convert to Arianism, an act that would have been disastrous for the fusion of Gallo-Romans and Franks.[83]

There is evidence that queens and consorts did not always come from royal families. Fredegund began life as a servant girl before using her seductiveness to capture Chilperic and become queen, and Charibert's wives, Merofled and Marcovefa, were the daughters of a wool-worker.[84]

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[81] As with Clotild, see above 139, 232
[82] *DLH* 6.40, 8.18, 8.28
[83] See above 63ff for details of the relationship between the Visigoths and the Gallo-Romans and why they failed to establish themselves successfully in Gaul.
[84] *DLH* 4.26

Several of the Frankish kings had more than one wife, although not always all at the same time; this meant that they often had a number of children with different mothers:

> By Ingund he [Clothar] had Gunthar, Childeric, Charibert, Guntram, Sigibert and a daughter called Chlothsind; by Aregund, who was the sister of Ingund, he had Chilperic; and by Chunsina he had Chramn.[85]

It was this plethora of sons and the need to provide for them all that led to the tradition of dividing the kingdom between the legitimate claimants to the throne. This may, in part, explain why their daughters were married off or put in convents, for they had to be provided for. The number of children Clothar had also made it relatively easy for Gundovald to make a claim to a throne.[86]

The Frankish queens had an important part to play in the religious life of the Frankish kingdom. Radegund (d.587) was the daughter of Berthar, king of Thuringia, and when he was defeated by Clothar and Theudebert she was taken back to the Frankish kingdom as part of Clothar's booty. She was still a young girl then, and Clothar educated her before eventually marrying her. However, from a young age Radegund had been determined to live a religious life. She lived an ascetic life while married, and eventually persuaded her husband to allow her to leave him in order to set up her own religious establishment at Poitiers.[87]

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[85] *DLH* 4.3: ...*id est de Ingunde Guntharium, Childericum, Chariberthum, Gunthchramnum, Sigyberthcum et Chlothsindam filiam; de Aregundem vero, sororem Ingundis, Chilpericum; de Chunsinam habuit Chramnun.*
[86] See above 236
[87] *DLH* 3.7; *Vita* 1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 1.25, 2.2-7

Radegund appointed Agnes to act as abbess, but in reality it was her convent, and the reaction of the nuns to her death is a testament to her influence:

> Standing around the bier was a large crowd of nuns, about two hundred of them, who had converted because of Radegund's preaching and adopted the holy life. According to the status of this world not only were they [descended] from senators, but some were [descended] from the royal family; now they blossomed according to the rule of their piety. They stood there weeping and saying: "Holy mother, to whom will you leave us as orphans? To whom do you entrust us who have been abandoned? We have left our parents, our possessions, and our homeland, and we have followed you...[88]

This demonstrates both the reverence in which Radegund was held by her followers, as well as illustrating that her followers were often the daughters of noble and royal houses. This is an indication of the power and influence that one individual could wield, and how she could shape and influence the lives of many.

Radegund adopted the rule that Caesaria followed at her establishment in Arles, the rule that Caesarius had written for the convent that he founded. She also acquired a relic of the Holy Cross from the emperor Justin and the empress Sophia in Constantinople, and this was perhaps one of her greatest achievements; it assured the future of the convent in the sense that it would generate interest and income from pilgrims to the site. Radegund's action also highlights the fact that communication between the Frankish kingdom and Byzantium was possible, and that relations between them were good.[89] This allowed the Franks to be recognised as Romans by the Gallo-Romans, and as such being acceptable to them as alternative rulers.[90]

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[88] *GC* 104
[89] See above 237
[90] See below 239-240, 257, 273, 276-279

Radegund succeeded in assuring the future of her establishment by writing to a number of bishops and asking them to guarantee it. The text of this letter survives in the *Historiae*.[91] Radegund was a powerful personality, active in the politics of her age, who continued to be influential even after her apparent retirement into a religious life.

A major event that take place in the final two books of the *Historiae* and that demonstrates the power that women were able to yield in both the religious and the political spheres is the revolt at the convent of the Holy Cross shortly after Radegund's death.[92] Due to the fact that the convent had been established by a queen, the Holy Cross was viewed as a royal convent, and it housed several princesses, including Basina, daughter of Chilperic and her cousin Clotild, daughter of Charibert.

Shortly after Radegund's death Basina and Clotild became dissatisfied with the rule of the new abbess, Leubovera. They revolted against her, left the convent with a group of nuns and travelled as far as Tours on their way to appeal to Guntram about their treatment. Gregory persuaded them to stay in Tours until the spring. Clotild then continued on her journey, leaving Basina behind in charge of the nuns. Guntram granted her an audience, honoured her with gifts and she returned to Tours. She and her followers then returned to Poitiers, where in their absence the trouble had escalated. Eventually Guntram and Childebert II appointed a commission to try to sort the problem out.

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[91] *DLH* 9.42
[92] *DLH* 9.39-43, 10.15-17

A number of envoys were chosen and sent to Poitiers. Childebert II chose Ebregisel, bishop of Cologne, Maroveus, bishop of Poitiers and Gregory as his envoys, while Guntram chose Gundegisel, bishop of Bordeaux, together with the bishops of his province.[93] This is an example of church and state working together to resolve a dispute that was essentially a religious one; it was the presence of princesses that involved the kings, as well as their interest in consolidating their power over the church. The bishops succeeded in resolving the dispute, and they punished Basina and Clotild, the instigators of the problems, by suspending them from communion.[94]

As well as demonstrating the power of princesses, this episode also illustrates the co-operation that took place between kings and bishops and shows where the real power lay. The bishops would have viewed this dilemma as a problem to be dealt with by the Church, but Basina's appeal to Guntram and her royal status involved the kings. Clovis' conversion to Catholic Christianity made him and Frankish rule acceptable to the Gallo-Romans, but it also meant that the bishops had to be given a voice in the community.

The noble women of the late fifth and sixth centuries acted as forces pushing the Franks into greater proximity with both the Church and Gallo-Roman society. They also enabled the Franks to legitimate and articulate their power as Romans.

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[93] *DLH* 10.15
[94] *DLH* 10.16

5.2   Bishops

Bishops had a vital role to play in the creation of the Gallo-Frankish identity, and it is in their relations with the Frankish kings that this is best demonstrated. The extent of the fusion that took place between Gallo-Romans and Franks can also be viewed in the poetry of Fortunatus.

5.2.1 Bishops and Kings

The relationship between the Frankish kings and the bishops is one of the crucial factors in the establishment of the Franks as the successor to the Roman Empire, and to their acceptance as such by the native Gallo-Roman population. The conversion of the Frankish dynasty to Catholic Christianity meant that the bishops could have a legitimate voice in the kingdom, and they were listened to and respected by the kings. The kings interfered in the affairs of the Church as much as the bishops interfered in the secular life of the kingdom. Each relied on the other for support, but neither forgot that it was the kings who held the ultimate power within the *Regnum Francorum.*

Gregory was involved in the secular affairs of the kingdom on several occasions, for example, the episode where he re-established Tours' tax-exempt status and his presence at the signing of the Treaty of Andelot. Other bishops who became involved in the secular affairs of the kingdom were Bertram of Bordeaux, who was involved in the affair of the pretender Gundovald;[95] Egidius of Rheims was often used as an

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[95] *DLH* 7.31, 8.2, 8.6, 8.20

envoy by Childebert II to both Chilperic and Guntram;[96] Felix of Nantes was involved with the Bretons;[97] Maroveus of Poitiers refused Guntram entry to his city, asked for tax inspectors and was involved in the revolt at the convent of the Holy Cross;[98] and Theodore of Marseilles, to whom Guntram was hostile, was imprisoned by him but eventually allowed to go free.[99]

Bishops were also liable to be ordered around by certain kings. For example, Aetherius of Lyons, Syagrius of Autun and Flavius of Chalon-sur-Saône, who were ordered to Paris by Guntram to take part in the baptism of his nephew, Fredegund's son.[100] Guntram also sends three bishops to Clothar, another son of Chilperic and Fredegund; these were Anthemius of Sens, Veranus of Cavaillon and Agricius of Troyes.[101]

As well as bishops participating in the affairs of their *civitates* there is ample evidence to show that secular officials of the *Regnum Francorum*, from the kings to the *comites*, interfered in the affairs of the Church.

On some occasions there is evidence for a *comes* interfering in the election of a bishop, as for example when count Firminus tried to stop Avitus being elected bishop of Clermont-Ferrand.[102] These occasions were rare and we are forced to conclude that on the whole the relationship between the bishops and the *comites* was a co-

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[96] *DLH* 6.3, 6.31, 7.14
[97] *DLH* 5.31
[98] *DLH* 7.24 - refuses entry; 9.30 - tax inspectors; 9.39-40, 10.15 - revolt
[99] *DLH* 8.5, 8.12, 8.20
[100] *DLH* 10.28
[101] *DLH* 8.31
[102] *DLH* 4.35

operative one. Rather than being opposed their duties would have complemented each other within the *civitates*. Bishops were religious magnates, and their primary concern was with the religious life of the *civitas* and the power that they could wield, while the *comites* were concerned with their position and their loyalty to the king.

The manner in which a bishop came to office could be of remarkable significance for his career. Bishops were still elected by the congregation, or by a combination of the congregation and clergy of the *civitas*.[103] In addition the consent of the king was becoming necessary for episcopal appointments and in this way many bishops owed their position to kings.[104] Another way in which a bishop could come to office was by appointment by a king, and Frankish kings often elevated royal bureaucrats to the bishoprics in their territory. Bureaucrats were becoming bishops and the Gallo-Roman episcopacy was becoming populated with Frankish political appointees, men such as Gregory of Langres and Leontius of Bordeaux.[105] By appointing bishops from the ranks of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy the Frankish kings found a place for them within their administration,[106] and thus of perpetuating Roman ideals of imperial rule.[107]

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[103] Eufronius, bishop of Tours, was elected by the citizens of Tours before being appointed by Clothar (*DLH* 4.15); Quintianus was elected by the people to the see of Clermont-Ferrand (*DLH* 3.2); and Sulpicius was elected to the see of Bourges, with the support of Guntram (*DLH* 6.39).

[104] Mathisen 1993, 139; Wood 1994b, 78

[105] Riché 1976, 270; Russell 1994, 153; Wood 1994b, 75

[106] Prinz 1973, 21

[107] Ageric, bishop of Verdun, was replaced by Charimer, 'by royal decree' (*DLH* 9.23), and Agricola, bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône was replaced by Flavius, 'a Referendary of King Guntram' (*DLH* 5.45). Other bishops who were appointed in much the same manner were Bertram, bishop of Bordeaux, replaced by Gundegisel, Count of St.es, by order of the king (*DLH* 8.22); Desiderius, a layman, replaced Laban, bishop of Eauze (*DLH* 8.22); Dinifius, bishop of Tours, was replaced by Ommatius, who was ordained at the command of Chlodomer (*DLH* 3.17); Eufronius was appointed bishop

The kings were evidently interfering in what should have been the affairs of the Church, exerting their royal authority, but there were few open protests to their actions. By involving themselves in Church politics the kings kept themselves at the forefront of local politics. Even Gregory makes no comment about what was happening, implying perhaps that that would have been a dangerous thing to do, or that the king's power was so great that there was no point of protesting.[108] The kings were selecting bishops not only because they wanted the support of the Church for their actions, but also because they wanted the Church to be administered effectively.[109] The growth of episcopal power has been linked to the usurpation of the power of the *comes civitatis*, and it is possible that this took place with the sanction of the king.[110] The *civitas*, where the bishop traditionally wielded power, was being brought under direct control of the Franks.

Kings frequently interfered in the disciplining of bishops. There are several instances in the *Historiae* of a bishop being on trial not only before his colleagues but also before his king. Praetextatus of Rouen, Egidius of Rheims and Gregory are all tried in this way.

Praetextatus was accused of bribing the people to act against the interests of Chilperic, and he was also found to be in possession of goods belonging to Fredegund. Chilperic ordered Praetextatus to be banished until his case could be heard by a council of bishops. This

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of Tours by Clothar (*DLH* 4.15); Innocentius, bishop of Le Mans, was replaced by Domnolus, appointed by Clothar (*DLH* 6.19); and Pientius, bishop of Poitiers, was replaced in a decree issued by Charibert with Pascentius, abbot of the monastery of St. Hilary (*DLH* 4.18).

[108] We already have evidence that Gregory was careful in what he said of Chilperic while he was still alive; see above 16, 214-215

[109] Riché 1976, 270

was called and it was Chilperic who opened the questioning. During the proceedings Gregory came into conflict with both Chilperic and Bertram of Bordeaux. Eventually Praetextatus was imprisoned, beaten and exiled.[111] This trial provides a demonstration of the extent of the king's political power and was, for Gregory, a symbol of the relationship between kings and bishops in Frankish society.[112]

Before his trial Egidius of Rheims had been sent on a number of embassies from Childebert II to both Chilperic and Guntram.[113] This in itself is an indirect indication of the power and influence of the bishops. Egidius' trial resulted from his being implicated in a plot to kill Childebert II, another indication of the possible power and influence of the bishops. The king called a council of bishops to hear the case, and bishop Ennodius, who had once been a *dux*, took on the prosecution. Egidius eventually confessed his guilt and was convicted of treason, of plotting to kill Guntram and of charges of forgery. As with Praetextatus he was condemned to exile.[114] Egidius was charged with crimes against the king and the kings played a central role both in calling the trial and in subsequent events.

In the trial of Gregory, as with the other two bishops, he was charged with a crime against the royal family. In this case he was alleged to have stated that Fredegund was having an affair with bishop Bertram of Bordeaux. As in the other trials the king, Chilperic, convened a council of all the bishops of his kingdom and ordered the

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[110] Geary 1988, 131; Harries 1978, 34, Wood 1983, 51
[111] *DLH* 5.18
[112] Heinzelmann 1993, 44
[113] *DLH* 6.3, 6.31 - to Chilperic; 7.14 - to Guntram

affair to be investigated thoroughly. The bishops met at the king's villa at Berny-Rivière, and the case against Gregory was heard before him. The final judgement was that Gregory should say mass at three altars and clear himself of the accusation by a sworn statement. This was carried out and eventually the men who had brought the charges against the bishop, Leudast and Riculf, were caught and dealt with.[115] While the bishops did have a voice in these councils, the king held the controlling hand in all these procedures.

The fact that bishops could be disciplined and exiled in the way that they were by the Frankish kings points to something very important: it was a measure of their political power.[116] The kings must have felt sufficiently threatened by the power of the bishops to have to wield their authority over them in this way; the mere fact that they were banished from their *civitates* shows that they must have held considerable political and military, as well as religious and moral, authority. Meanwhile the fact that the kings could convene councils of bishops indicates the level of authority that they could wield within their kingdoms.

These stories of the trials of bishops by kings as they appear in the *Historiae* cast the bishop in the role of the unfortunate innocent accused of crimes that he did not commit, while the kings and their supporters are portrayed as the persecutors. We know that Gregory was determined to promote the Church as the ultimate institution of authority within the *civitates* and within Gaul, and so it is not surprising

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[114] *DLH* 10.19
[115] *DLH* 5.39

that he tells his stories in this way. However, it is possible to consider these cases from the point of view of the kings. They too were interested in promoting authority, their own authority, throughout the Frankish territory, and any threat to that had to be countered. In all of the cases cited above the principals, Praetextatus, Egidius and Gregory, were accused of planning or executing crimes against the royal family. It is therefore natural to expect that the kings would then prosecute them for those crimes. The kings were determined to stamp out dissent and opposition to their rule, regardless of the fact that these men were bishops as well as being potential allies with the *civitates*. The fact that Gregory makes relatively few comments besides reporting on these cases hints at the fact that the kings were capable of coming down heavily on anyone who questioned their right to rule.

As was the case in the fifth century, the bishops of the sixth century were called on to act as envoys and ambassadors for the Franks. They travelled between kings such as Childebert II and Guntram, and between a king and another people, for example the Bretons, as well as between the kings and the Gallo-Romans.[117] This practice also involved members of the secular administration. It is not surprising that the Franks used the most authoritative members of their courts to broker treaties with their neighbours and enemies as well as to travel East in order to maintain good relations with the Emperor there. The practice of using bishops as emissaries and ambassadors demonstrates that they were considered to be reliable, as well as the

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[116] Prinz 1973, 21
[117] Mathisen 1993, 138

fact that they were entrusted with positions of considerable responsibility and power. This illustrates the fact that the Frankish kings were unable to maintain diplomatic relations without the assistance of their bishops, thus placing the bishops in positions of considerable importance in the negotiation of power relations in the sixth century.

An example of this happening is with Egidius of Rheims before he was brought to trial.[118] Egidius took part in a number of embassies for Childebert II, first to Chilperic and then to Guntram, as these kings made alliances with each other. On one occasion that Egidius travelled to Chilperic he agreed plans with him to deprive Guntram of his kingdom.[119] At another time he travels between the same kings to confirm a treaty,[120] and later he visits Guntram on behalf of Childebert II in order to sort out the conflicts that had been brought about by the earlier deals between Childebert II and Chilperic.[121] These incidents demonstrate not only the precarious nature of the relationship between the Frankish kings during the second half of the sixth century, but they also show how bishops could play an active political role. They were figures of authority in their own right within Frankish society, but they could also be used by the kings for their own purposes. The bishops had a part to play in the secular administration of the Frankish kingdoms, and the kings selected the bishops for these roles as they were the best educated and most appropriate men for the job.

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[118] See above 240-241 for details
[119] *DLH* 6.3
[120] *DLH* 6.31
[121] *DLH* 7.14

The Frankish kings often treated bishoprics as pieces of patronage.[122] Every bishop's relationship with his king was different and depended largely in his character and the way in which each attempted to gain authority over the other, as well as over his kingdom or his congregation. While the support of the bishops was essential to the Frankish royal family as they needed the backing of the Church at both an administrative and religious level, they did not let the bishops dominate them or their policy.[123] The kings were always the ones in control, whatever Gregory may have wanted his audience to believe.

The Franks continued to maintain good relations with the bishops of Rome, a relationship that stemmed from the days of the conversion of Clovis, but there is little direct influence from Rome in the affairs of the Franks and their kingdom during this period.[124] Towards the end of the *Historiae* Gregory does mention pope Gregory the Great, giving a short summary of his career and the manner of his election. It was Gregory of Tours' deacon who witnessed this event in Rome, where he had been sent to obtain some relics, so the bishop had an eye witness account of what happened.[125] This is the only occasion on which Gregory speaks about the papacy at length. This lack of interference from Rome in the affairs of the Frankish kingdom indicates that the popes were happy for them to continue their rule. The lack of religious controversy in the *Regnum Francorum* during the sixth century also meant that there was little motive for papal interference. In addition, the

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[122] Jones 1964, 920
[123] Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 42
[124] Ullmann 1972, 37, 73
[125] *DLH* 10.1

popes and the eastern emperors were involved in war with the Ostrogoths and so would have little time to consider what was going on over the Alps. This lack of time and ability to interfere meant that the Franks were relatively free to develop their own religious identity and policy as well as their own unique relationship with the Gallic Church.

One place where bishops may be observed working together and in opposing factions was in council, but the influence of the kings can also be felt here. During the sixth century seven general councils were held in the Frankish Kingdom, as well as a number at national, regional and metropolitan level. This tells us that travel was still possible around the region and that the bishops were eager to keep in touch with each other.

The issues discussed at the councils were usually doctrine, discipline and cults, and they were usually the preserve of bishops.[126] One of the strengths of the councils from the bishops' point of view was the fact that they were more able to say as a body what they could not say as individuals.[127] There was mutual support in the group. The council also worked to hold the kingdom together, for when the bishops came together in council they could work towards some unity of purpose and action, thus cementing the kingdom together.[128]

However, as we have seen, kings could interfere with church councils both by convening them and then deciding on what was to be discussed there.[129] The first great council of the Frankish church was

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[126] Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 94
[127] Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 102
[128] Liebeschuetz 1997b, 35
[129] See above 33, 65 and below 250

called by Clovis and held at Orléans in 511.[130]   The Council of Orléans

held in 533 was called by royal order, Theudebert I authorised the

meeting of the council of Clermont in 535, and the council of Orléans of

549 was summoned by Childebert I.[131] This involvement was very much

in the tradition of the Roman Emperor and confirmed the position of the

Franks as their successors and their desire to rule in the Roman mould.

Their interference may well have led to the loss of the sense of unity

that had existed among the episcopacy of the fifth century when there

was a power vacuum in Gaul. Then, the lack of a strong central

authority led to the strengths of the bishops, and the one place where

they could express that strength and their unity was in council. The

advent of the Franks brought an end to those feelings.

The Frankish kings also published legislation to coincide with the

church councils. The range of laws covered by ecclesiastical legislation

is impressive.[132] Clovis' letter, sent in the aftermath of Vouillé in 507

decreed that no-one should harm the Church, those who had entered

the religious life, those living with them or slaves of the Church. Further

the power of the bishops to defend others was confirmed.[133]   The

edicts of Guntram in 585 and of Clothar II in 614 were issued in the

aftermath of church councils, confirming the interest the kings had in

these occasions, and also raising the possibility that other royal

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[130] Murray 2000, 565-571
[131] *Chron.Gal.* 2, Clermont 535, 104-112; Orléans 549, 147-160
[132] See above 33 and below 251
[133] *Cap.Mer.* 1

legislation was attached to other councils but which is no longer extant.[134]

The location of the council coincided with the centres of ecclesiastical study that were located in the centre of the *Regnum Francorum*.[135] This indicates that the strength of the Gallic episcopacy lay in the centre of the region and that a shift had occurred away from the south, where once the sees of Vienne and Arles had been strong, to the area centred around Paris to the north, Clermont to the south, Auxerre and Autun to the east and Tours to the west. That this is the area from which most of the surviving sixth century literary evidence originates supports the fact of this shift.

This shift in the centre of gravity of the church is reflected in the world of secular politics. The Frankish kings had their various capitals at Rheims, Metz, Paris, Orléans and Paris. Power and authority was now emanating principally from the central and north-eastern regions. This shift has certain implications for the new society that was being created, for the influences shaping it now were not southern or Mediterranean and so Gallo-Roman, but rather northern and more Germanic. So, while the Romanisation of the Franks was taking place, a simultaneous process of Germanising the Gallo-Romans was taking place.

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[134] *Cap.Mer.* 5, 9; Wood 1994b, 104-105
[135] Riché 1976, 267-268

5.2.2 Fortunatus' Bishops

Fortunatus ended his life as bishop of Poitiers and throughout his life bishops proved to be his best patrons. Consequently he had a peculiar insight into their lives. He wrote the majority of his poetry to figures within the Church, and although there are poems to deacons, priests and abbots, as well as about church buildings such as basilicas and churches, a significant number of the poems are to bishops. As with those written to the kings and noblemen,[136] the poems demonstrate the process of fusion that was taking place and how far it had progressed by the closing years of the sixth century. I will concentrate here on three bishops, Leontius of Bordeaux (d.c.565), Felix of Nantes (d.582) and Gregory of Tours (d.594). All three were devoutly religious men, but they were also members of powerful noble families. In these poems Fortunatus responds to each individual in his particular circumstances, giving an internally consistent and vivid picture of their ambitions, attitudes and characters.[137]

5.2.2.1   Leontius of Bordeaux

A native of Aquitania and a member of a Gallo-Roman noble family, [138] Leontius of Bordeaux had an illustrious career, first in military and diplomatic circles and then in the Church.[139] He became bishop

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[136] See above 219ff and below 258ff
[137] George 1987, 189
[138] *Carm*.1.15.1-4 - native of Aquitania; 1.15.15-18, 4.9.11 - noble family
[139] *PLRE* IIIB, 774; Stroheker 1948, no.219, 188

sometime after 541, was present at a number of church councils and was an active builder and restorer of churches and villas.[140]

In the panegyric Fortunatus wrote to him, Poem 1.15, *De Leontio episcopo*, the poet uses the full conventional structure to set the out the splendour of his lineage, his virtues and his achievements. We are presented with the picture of a proud, sophisticated Gallo-Roman of great wealth and power, who unconsciously saw himself as a descendant of his Roman forebears in his cultural values and life-style, and who exercised his pastoral responsibilities with almost imperial zeal.[141] In the poem Leontius is at the pinnacle of episcopal power, and it seems that to exercise such power is to rule:

> Now you rule with the authority of the Church, reverend bishop: a second nobility is thus added to you. [142]

There is an element of *consensus*, of the people affirming the bishop's authority, adding further regal overtones to the panegyric. Leontius was proud of his *romanitas* and his powerful autocratic character comes through in this poem.

Leontius is presented as a Gallo-Roman of great wealth and power and as a champion of orthodoxy. Poem 1.15 is an assertion of authority, not an appeal for acclaim,[143] and all of the poems addressed to him confirm the impression found in the panegyric, that he prized his *romanitas*. This is reflected by the fact that the poems were written and

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[140] Orléans 549, *Conc.Gal.*2, 161; Paris 552 and sometime before 573, *Conc.Gal.*2 168, 209; *Carm.* 1.6.8-13, 1.6.18-20 - restorer of churches
[141] Reydellet 1994, 27
[142] *Carm.* 1.15.31-32   *ecclesiae nunc iura regis, venerande sacerdos: altera nobilitas additur inde tibi.*
[143] George 1992, 70-74, 108

declaimed by a Latin poet.[144] Poem 1.15 is Fortunatus' longest and most elaborate panegyric to a bishop and gives the impression of a very aristocratic bishop. In this and his other poems to Leontius, Poems 1.16 *Hymnus de Leontio episcopo*, 1.17 *Ad Placidinam*, addressed to his wife Placidina, and his epitaph 4.9 *Epitaphium Leonti episcopi anterioris civitatis Burdegalensis*, we are presented with a very formal picture of this man. These poems were literary tributes to a Gallo-Roman that were intended for his personal appreciation.[145]

5.2.2.2 Felix of Nantes

Like Leontius, Felix of Nantes was a native of Aquitania and although little is known about his family, it is certain that he was of noble descent.[146] Felix was a vigorous and able administrator and, as with so many sixth century bishops, was a leading citizen as well bishop of Nantes.[147]

The eulogy on Felix written by Fortunatus, Poem 3.8 *Item ad eundem in laude*, dates to around 567 or 568, when the cathedral of Nantes was completed. It follows the normal sequence of topics: introduction and comment on the occasion, family, deeds and virtues, and then the epilogue. The bishop is praised for his care and protection of his people, his learning, his eloquence, his justice and his *romanitas*: 'in your qualities, Rome lives here anew'.[148] In his other poems to this bishop, Poems 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.9 and 3.10, his achievements are

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[144] George 1992, 113
[145] George 1987, 191, 196
[146] *PLRE* IIIA, 481-482; Stroheker 1948, no.148, 172-173
[147] McDermott 1975, 6, 23

seen as restoring the glorious Roman past. For example, Felix is seen as a champion of Roman traditions:[149] 'bringing olden joys to our times'.[150]

5.2.2.3 Gregory of Tours

Gregory of Tours was consecrated bishop of Tours in 573.[151] Shortly after his consecration Gregory became a friend and patron of Fortunatus, and this led to a large number of poems being written for and on his behalf. Poem 5.3 *Ad cives Turonicos de Gregorio episcopo*, a panegyric, and the other poems create a different to that given in the poems to Leontius. This poem was written to the people of Tours on the occasion of Gregory's arrival there as the new bishop, and in it we are presented with the image of a great pastoral bishop who is loved by his people. The poems to Gregory were more personal, warm, familiar and friendly, no doubt in part because the men were friends. Perhaps one of Fortunatus' most important poems for Gregory was Poem 9.1 *Ad Chilpericum regem quando synadus Brinnaco habita est*, written when he was standing trial before Chilperic at Berny-Rivière.[152] Fortunatus has been described as a 'venal flatterer' for writing this poem,[153] but in fact it demonstrates the friendship between these two men and the risks that the poet was prepared to take on behalf of his friend.

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[148] *Carm.* 3.8.20: *cuius in ingenium hic nova Roma venit* 20
[149] George 1992, 77, 113-123
[150] *Carm.* 3.5.4: *Temporibus nostris gaudia prisca ferens*
[151] *PLRE* IIIA 548-549; Stroheker 1948, no.183, 179-180; see above for the details of Gregory's life
[152] See above 244, 255 for further details of both the trial and this poem
[153] Dill 1926, 333

In his poems to Leontius, Felix and Gregory, and in his poems to other bishops,[154] Fortunatus has no active political purpose, as he did in his poems to the kings.[155] Rather, his role as poet was to glorify them and to further their designs by consolidating support for them.[156] In the panegyrics to the kings, the characters and images of the kings themselves were largely idealised and the poems had an advisory dimension that is lacking in those to the bishops.[157] Fortunatus was working to challenge the course of events and to hold out an ideal to which the kings could aspire. However, in the poems to the bishops the poet accepted that he was unable to do this, as the bishops were on a different plane to the kings. Part of the poet's intention in writing for bishops was to guide public opinion on their behalf, for the bishops did not always enjoy the level of support and respect that we might expect from some of the sources.[158] The bishops were lauded as the first citizen of the *civitas* and any such individual who found he needed bolstering could turn to Fortunatus to reinforce their social standing.[159]

The language used in the poems to Leontius, Felix and Gregory contains a combination of secular and religious language and terminology, and the same happens in the poems to the kings. As there was fusion taking place between Gallo-Roman and Franks so it was taking place between the secular and religious hierarchies. Fortunatus' use of language reflects the blurring that was slowly taking place

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[154] For example Eufronius of Tours, *Carm.* 3.1, 3.2, 3.3; Nicetius of Trier 3.11, 3.12; Vilicius of Metz 3.13; Egidius of Rheims 3.15; Avitus of Clermont 3.21
[155] George 1992, 79; see above 227-228
[156] George 1992, 84
[157] See above 219ff for kings
[158] Some of the stories related in Gregory might lead us to believe that support for bishops was always very strong

between secular and sacred subject matters, for he combines secular panegyric with biblical language.[160]

In the poems to the bishops the sense of *Romanitas* conveyed by Fortunatus overwhelms the notions of *Germanentum* which are more clearly apparent in the poems to the kings. This reflects the strength of the cultural traditions that existed in this society and which the Franks had to take into account as they established their rule. The three bishops discussed here were members of Gallo-Roman aristocratic families, and so the emphasis on their *romanitas* would be natural. However, it is also an indication of how pervasive such ideas were and may have led, inadvertently or not, to the emphasis on *romanitas* that we have seen in the poems to the royal family and that also appears in those to the nobility. In order to be accepted by the Gallo-Romans as the heirs to the Roman Empire in Gaul the Franks had to be depicted as ruling in a recognisably Roman fashion, and the poems give some hint as to the type of tradition into which they were keen to fit.

Consideration must also be given to the fact that Fortunatus was on closer terms with the bishops than he was with the kings, and that he himself hailed from Italy. These two factors may also have led to a stronger emphasis on *romanitas* in these poems. Comparisons between the two sets of poems also show how far the Franks had gone to be seen to belong in the Roman tradition. While the poems to the bishops highlight this particular aspect it is only one side of the society that existed at this time, and the poems to the royal family and to the

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[159] Brennan 1992, 115
[160] Roberts 1994, 4

nobility show other aspects of what was becoming a Gallo-Frankish society.

5.3 The Secular Nobility

While it may seem from the sources that the bishops were the nobility of the *Regnum Francorum* we must remember that, although by and large they remain in the shade, there was a secular nobility operating in the kingdom. As Gregory's work makes scant reference to them, the best place to find them is in the poetry of Fortunatus.

5.3.1 Fortunatus' Noblemen

Fortunatus wrote a number of poems for men who were members of the Frankish courts, men who were a part of the secular administration. They further demonstrate the fusion that was taking place between the Gallo-Roman and Frankish societies. I will concentrate on four of those individuals: Lupus (d.c.590), Condan, Gogo (d.581) and Dynamius (d.c.593).

5.3.1.1 Lupus

Lupus was a native of Aquitania, an eminent member of Sigibert's court at Metz, who befriended Fortunatus on his arrival.[161] He was duke of Champagne, with his main residence at Rheims, and he served Sigibert in both military and diplomatic spheres throughout his kingdom. He took part in an embassy to Marseilles, and he contributed

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[161] *Carm.* 7.8.49-50, 7.9; *PLRE* IIIB, 798-799

to a military victory over the Saxons and Danes.[162] He was a supporter of Brunhild, for which he suffered severe harassment after the death of Sigibert; and in 581 he was forced to leave his post as duke. He fled to the court of Guntram, where he waited for Childebert II to come of age. In 587 he returned to the court of Childebert II, where he regained his title of duke.

Fortunatus wrote three poems to duke Lupus. The first of these, Poem 7.7 *De Lupo duce*, is a panegyric and is most likely to have been written in 567 or 568, while Lupus was at court to have the title of *dux* conferred on him. He is spoken of as possessing Roman qualities - *gravitas*, eloquence, persuasive wisdom - and it is these that have allowed him to achieve success:

> With these men as consuls, Rome's might shone in splendour; but with you as Duke, Rome has now here returned for us.[163]

The poet also identifies Lupus' bilingual skills,[164] a virtue necessary for uniting the two nations:

> You who are glorious in two matters, well grounded in both, your tongue can give forth whatever you conceive in your head.[165]

Lupus is complimented for his support for his king which, in an indirect manner, also compliments on his choice of adviser:

> The authority of the king is strengthened in your heart, the cares of state are fortified by your aid.[166]

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[162] George 1992, 79; *Carm.* 7.7.25, *DLH* 4.46 - embassy; 7.7.49-60 - defeat of the Saxons and Danes

[163] *Carm.* 7.7: *illis consulibus Romana potentia fulsit,*   5
    te duce sed nobis hic modo Roma redit.

[164] See above 191, 223 for further instances of the importance of the skill of bilingualism

[165] *Carm.* 7.7: *qui geminis rebus fulges, in utroque paratus,*
    quidquid corde capis prodere lingua potest.

[166] *Carm.* 7.7: *pectore sub cuius firmantur pondera regis,*
    pollet et auxilio publica cura tuo.   20

A number of the features of the traditional panegyric are evident in the poem, for example, the sequence of topics, but the structure has moved away from the traditional form and has been adapted to match the political situation.

Poem 7.8 *Ad eundem* was written to thank Lupus for his friendship over a long period of time:

> When Germania, a strange land, filled my gaze, you were like a father, and were there to take thought for my homeland.[167]

Poem 7.9 *Item ad Lupum ducem* was a response to a letter and gifts. Both of these poems were written some ten years after the initial contact between the two men and are evidence of a long-standing friendship. All the poems suggest that Lupus was proud of his *romanitas*, and wanted to see his public duties interpreted as being carried out in the Roman tradition.[168]

5.3.1.2 Condan

Condan is known from no other source except the works of Fortunatus, but from the poet's account of his early career he was clearly a Frank of considerable eminence and ability. His first post was that of tribune to Theuderic; next he became *comes* to Theudebert, and then *domesticus* and tutor to Theudebald. On Theudebald's death in 555 Clothar took over his kingdom as well as the services of Condan. His final honour was his appointment as *convivia regis* at the court of Sigibert. In old age he took part in a battle against the Saxons, where

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[167] *Carm.* 7.8: *cum peregrina meos tenuit Germania visus.*
　　　　　tu pater et patriae consuliturus eras.　　　　50
[168] George 1992, 79-82, 132-136

he lost both his sons. He was a self-made man and his *cursus honorum* marks him as a man with wide experience in the financial and administrative matters of the various Frankish kings.[169]

Fortunatus writes just one poem to this remarkable man, an encomium, Poem 7.16 *De Condane domestico*. The poet lets Condan's career speak for itself, and it reflects the pride of a self-made man.[170] 'For long years rich splendour has been glorious in the king's court through your merits, Conda',[171] and

> Starting from humble beginnings, you have always advanced to the heights and through all stages held to the lofty pinnacles.[172]

Fortunatus says nothing about Condan's desire for *romanitas*, but the poet's use of the full range of panegyric topics is a compliment to Condan, as well as being evidence of the Roman tradition that the members of the Frankish court were so keen to uphold.

5.3.1.3   Gogo

Gogo, like Lupus, was one of Fortunatus' early patrons at the court of Metz and was acquainted with him as well as being his colleague in government. He too was a man of influence and served in a position of trust for Sigibert. He was of Frankish origin and was one of the king's trusted counsellors. There is a possibility that he was a mayor of the palace, and he was the envoy sent to escort Brunhild from Spain to Metz prior to her marriage. Gogo lived sometimes at court and

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[169] George 1992, 82-83; *PLRE* IIIA, 330-331
[170] George 1992, 82-83
[171] *Carm.* 7.16: *Temporibus longis regali dives in aula*
enituit meritis gloria, Conda, tuis.
[172] *Carm.* 7.16: *a parvo incipiens existi semper in altum*   15
perque gradus omnes culmina celsa tenes.

at other times at various places throughout the Frankish kingdom. After the death of Sigibert in 575 Gogo continued to play an important part in the life of the court: Brunhild appointed him as *nutricus* to her son, the young Childebert II, which meant that he was both his tutor and adviser, and she also brought him into her chancery. He died in 581.[173]

Fortunatus wrote four poems to Gogo, Poems 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4, and the first of these, *Ad Gogonem*, can be dated to 566 or 567, as it refers to Brunhild's arrival in Gaul:

> Just now you bring the greatest joy for the noble king from the lands of Spain, through a myriad dangers.[174]

In it he is praised explicitly for his Roman eloquence and wisdom:

> You are considered great in the judgement of the prince, Sigibert; no-one can deceive the judgement of the king.[175]

Gogo is viewed strolling along in a landscape that evokes the Gallo-Roman world of the fourth century, a cultural model to which the Frankish aspired. He is associated with the royal palace and with the administration of justice. What we see are the Germanic court and Gallic *romanitas* combined.[176]

Poem 7.2 *Ad eundem cum me rogaret ad cenam* also compliments Gogo on his *romanitas*.[177] Gogo's lifestyle is depicted as that of a civilised Roman magnate, and he is depicted leading the life of a Roman gentleman, despite the fact that he is a Frank and serves at

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[173] George 1992, 136; *PLRE* IIIA, 541-542
[174] *Carm.* 7.1: *nuper ab Hispanis per multa pericula terris*
  egregio regi gaudia summa vehis.
[175] *Carm.* 7.1: *principis arbitrio Sigibercthi magnus haberis:* 35
  iudicium regis fallere nemo potest.
[176] Roberts 1994, 3
[177] For example *Carm.* 7.2.3: *tu refluus Cicero*

the Frankish court. All the details underline this distinction, and the very structure of the poems associate him with the Roman way of life.[178]

5.3.1.4 Dynamius

Dynamius was a Gallo-Roman nobleman and another of Fortunatus' early patrons. He was a native of Provence and came from Marseilles. Dynamius would probably have met Fortunatus at the wedding of Sigibert and Brunhild in 566, where it is likely that a large contingent of Provençal was present.[179] He held office in Marseilles soon after his return there after the royal wedding; Dynamius held a position concerned with the administration of justice, and in 581 he was appointed to the position of *rector Provinciae*. By 593 he was governor of Provence, and he was appointed *rector* of the papal patrimony in Gaul by pope Gregory. By September 595 he had left both offices, and he is believed to have died shortly afterwards.[180]

The two poems written to him, Poem 6.9 *Ad Dynamium de Massilia* and 6.10 *Item ad Dynamium*, were both written after his return to Marseilles in 566, after the royal wedding: 'The kingdom of Marseilles finds your approval, Germany mine'.[181] He and Fortunatus had clearly struck up a friendship of sorts at that event, and these poems were written because the poet was anxious that he had not heard from Dynamius for some time. That there are only two poems lead to the conclusion that the relationship between poet and patron

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[178] George 1992, 136-140
[179] George 1992, 141
[180] *PLRE* IIIA, 429-430
[181] *Carm.* 6.9: *Massiliae tibi regna placent, Germania nobis.*   5

must have died. However, what is significant is the fact that Fortunatus corresponded with Dynamius, a member of a literary circle in southern Gaul that was eager to preserve as much as it could of *romanitas* and Roman culture in the south. The poems again underline the fact that the Roman tradition continued to be highly regarded in parts of Gaul.

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The images of the noblemen in Fortunatus' poems are far more fragmentary than those to the kings and bishops.[182] We are introduced to more distinct individuals, but the images presented are somewhat vague and imprecise. In the poems to the kings and bishops we have pictures of specific behaviour and events, as well as of personal ambitions and characteristics, but the images of the noblemen are more complex and elusive images.[183] Nevertheless these poems do contribute to the process of image-making that was going on in Frankish Gaul. These men were all member of the royal courts and as such were as eager as their royal masters to be seen as a part of the Roman tradition.

5.4   Frankish Ethnogenesis

The concept of ethnicity is related to the self-identification of a person,[184] in relation to a group. When looking at the ethnogenesis of a tribe we have to ask: by whom was it constructed, for whom, out of what? If we start by looking at Gregory, and in particular his *Historiae*, it is immediately apparent that a large part of the Frankish history we

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[182] See above 219ff, 252ff
[183] George 1992, 151

have comes from his pen.[185] Gregory constructed his own version of Frankish and Merovingian history in order to confirm God's position as the Almighty, to underline the importance of the bishops in late sixth century society, and also in order to highlight his own position in authority as bishop of Tours. However, Gregory is not the creator of Frankish ethnogenesis, for that began much earlier.

Fortunatus was also influential in creating a vision of the Franks for he set about writing poetry that identified them not only as German and Christian, but also as Roman.[186] His was a very distinctive view of Frankish kingship and his poetry contributed to the image of a new Gallo-Frankish people that was emerging, which had aspects of *Germanentum*, *Römertum* and *Christentum* in its make-up. What both Gregory and Fortunatus did was to explain and refine on-going ethnogenesis.

Frankish tribes, as with other barbarian tribes during this period, were created out of political and social communities amalgamating, collapsing and re-amalgamating.[187] Perhaps the clearest example of this is the success of Clovis in defeating and killing all those that he considered to be his rivals for the Frankish throne, and then uniting their followers with his. This demonstrates that while the formation of a tribe or people may retrospectively be derived from a myth of common descent, as with the Franks and Troy, in reality it relies on political

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[184] Dairn 1998, 71
[185] Wood 1997, 223
[186] See above 219ff, 252ff, 258ff for discussions of Fortunatus' work.
[187] Wood 1997, 223

decision.[188] The concept of the formation of a tribe or people is later encapsulated in myth, and this conceals the realities of the struggle for political power.[189]

The creation of a Frankish people was helped along in the early years of the existence of the Frankish tribes by the Roman Empire itself and the way in which it exploited these peoples for its own ends. It is arguable that without the Roman Empire Frankish ethnogenesis would not have taken place: the former was a necessary condition of the latter.

The Franks of the late third and fourth century were not a particularly dangerous or intimidating people and it would seem that they were happy to live on the borders of the empire, occasionally carrying out skirmishes across the border for the purpose of gathering booty. They do not appear as major figures on the Gallic political scene until the middle years of the fifth century. It is impossible to distinguish with any accuracy between the various tribes and, due to this relative weakness, it can be conjectured that far from what the sources would have us believe, from the later third to the early fifth century there was no real threat of a catastrophic invasion on the Rhine. However, the Roman Empire exploited the Franks disordered state in order to confirm its own superiority. We see this happening in the campaigns of Julian in Gaul between 355-360.[190]

The number of Frankish generals in the Roman army and their inability to transform professional success into political power has

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[188] Wolfram 1988, 5
[189] Davies 1994, 2

attracted some attention. The Franks were the bogeymen of later Roman Gaul, as is evident in the works of Ammianus Marcellinus. Frankish political instability made it impossible for their leaders to make lasting agreements with the emperors. Also, they may well have been hated because they were opportunistic raiders who occasionally succeeded in defeating a force of Roman soldiers.

The Franks were only able to succeed on Roman soil and the Frankish kingdom was only able to succeed as a result of its relationship with the Roman Empire. The long-haired kings only appear after the Franks crossed the Rhine into Gaul,[191] and the Franks only establish their ethnic identity in Gaul.[192]

Ethnic identity is constructed through the process of interaction between people,[193] and through a dialectic between past experience and current social, economic and power relationships.[194] This can be seen in the construction of Frankish and then Gallo-Frankish society. If the Franks were indeed exploited by the Roman Empire, as has been posited above, then the subsequent interaction between small Germanic tribes may well have led to the emergence of a 'Frankish' tribe. When it comes to the construction of the Gallo-Frankish people during the late fifth and sixth centuries we see each side adopting some of the ideas and traditions of the other side until it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between Gallo-Roman and Frank. We see this happening most clearly in the adoption by the Franks of the Gallo-

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[190] See above 54ff
[191] Wolfram 1998, 610
[192] Wolfram 1994, 35
[193] Moreland 2000, 21

Roman religion, Catholic Christianity, and also in their adoption of what remained of the Empire's administration.[195] As the Franks adopted Roman traditions and habits it may seem odd that they succeeded in becoming as powerful as they did, but while adopting certain aspects of the Gallo-Roman way of life they also held onto their own Frankish identity.

It is possible to trace the development of the ethnicity of the Franks from the time that they first appear in the sources to their domination in the west.

Terms such as Franci, Alamanni, Burgundian and Goth appear originally in connection with kings and with war.[196] It is only later that these names take on ethnic connotations for the modern historian. The peoples of the migration period acquired their identity through their adherence to particular royal or ducal families alongside whom they fought and whose traditions they obeyed. The actual circumstances in which ethnic designations seem to have been felt most acutely were largely political.[197]

Large ethnic communities were abstract, culturally constructed ways of categorising people. They might differ a lot from each other, but not as much as from people not in the category.[198] The term Franks, used by Roman writers, functioned as a generic, Roman, and ethnographic

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[194] Moreland 2000, 22
[195] See above 162-163
[196] Geary 1988, 22; quoted in Moreland 2000, 26
[197] Moreland 2000, 26
[198] Pohl 1998a, 3-4

category.[199] In addition, the kingdoms of the Franks, Goths and Lombards had grown, and could only grow, on Roman territory.[200]

Ancient ethnography distinguished groups by their ethnic names. These views corresponded to widespread feelings of identity among the barbarians and were based on small groups. Large ethnic communities, such as the Franks, were not natural phenomena.

Very few people up to and including Gregory are identified according to their ethnicity.[201] For the most part people are identified according to their *civitas* or place of origin; for example, Ambrosius and Lupus, both 'citizens of Tours', Felix 'bishop of Nantes', and Ennodius 'count of Tours and Poitiers'.[202] It is only with the appearance of the Germanic tribes that we see individuals identified according to the tribe to which they belonged rather than the place from which they hailed; for example, Childeric, Clovis and Guntram and identified as 'Franks', Baderic, Berthar and Hermanfrid as 'Thuringians', and Chanao and Warroch as 'Bretons'.[203] Gregory has a complete disregard for ethnic and racial differences: he makes no distinction between Merovingians and Gallo-Romans of his own generation as if there were, at that time, no such distinctions.[204]

Power, and who held it, had a very important part to play in the construction of all of these late antique societies, including the Frankish

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[199] Hummer 1998, 11; quoting Wenskus 1977, 515-516
[200] Pohl 1998a, 2
[201] Geary 1988, 21
[202] Ambrosius and Lupus, *DLH* 6.13; Felix, *DLH* 4.4, 5.5, 6.15; Ennodius. *DLH* 8.26, 9.7. See Lewis 2000, 69
[203] Childeric *DLH* 2.12, Clovis *DLH* 2.27, Guntram *DLH* 4.22; Baderic *DLH* 3.4, Berthar, *DLH* 3.4, Hermanfrid *DLH* 3.4, 3.7; Chanao *DLH* 4.4, 4.20, Warroch *DLH* 5.16, 5.26, 9.18, 10.9
[204] Goffart 1988, 212; Wallace-Hadrill 1962, 60

and Gallo-Frankish societies, as it was the basis for all social relations. The fragmentation of state authority and the consolidation of private power gave the Gallo-Romans and the Franks the opportunity of creating a new society.[205] Ethnicity was moulded in the context of the operation of power relationships.[206] However, it was not the ethnicity of the powerful that was important; power itself was.[207]

The Merovingians' insistence on long hair was part of the essential pre-requisite of being a king. Their long hair was a symbol of their sacrality, of their God-given right to rule, and it was also a sign of their legitimacy. The story of Gundovald and his efforts to have his claim recognised illustrates this point.[208]

In late antiquity the need for ethnic identification grew because identities had become increasingly insecure. Ethnicity gave people an opportunity to reinforce their loyalties to their leaders and to facilitate integration with others. Given the heterogeneous nature of the new kingdom, a clear definition and demarcation of ethnic identity would have excluded the majority of the population and the army. Thus, ethnicity remained difficult to define precisely, and few concepts can be so nebulous, slippery and insubstantial as that of a 'people'.[209] Hence Gregory's use of the *civitas* as an identifier. The identities of the population had to be flexible and virtual in order to accommodate all

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[205] Moreland 2000, 12
[206] Moreland 2000, 26
[207] Moreland 2000, 18
[208] See above 155ff; Gundovald had his long hair cut off as a symbolic gesture of disinheritance, *DLH* 6.24.
[209] Davies 1994, 2

those whose loyalty the Frankish, and the Visigothic, kings wanted to encourage.[210]

The polyethnic basis of late antique Gaul was eventually transformed into a single ethnic identity, and this was expressed in the name of the kingdom. As the Gallo-Romans and Franks merged, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish the Gallo-Roman from the Frankish upper-class.

It may be surprising that the culturally more advanced should take on the 'national' or 'ethnic' identity of a ruling minority that had already accepted its language and religion. Nevertheless, this is what happened in the Frankish Kingdom, in Lombard Italy and in Burgundy. The sense of identity of the ruling minority, powerfully entrenched and in alliance with the Church, became attractive to the subject people.[211] In addition, it must be remembered that essentially there had never been a 'Gallic' identity; by the end of the fourth century the Gallic upper-class was essentially Roman, therefore Gallo-Roman. However, in the fifth century the Roman Empire disappeared from the region, leaving the civitas as the local basis for power. But this was too small, especially for the Church, and so the only framework open for the nobility was the Germanic kingdom. Moreover, the fact that the Franks had lived on the border of the Empire in the fourth and early fifth centuries meant that the Franks were a bit Romanised and the Romans were a bit

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[210] Pohl 1998b, 63
[211] Liebeschuetz 1998, 151

Germanised, leading to cultural fusion. The adoption of Frankish identity was a powerful social strategy in early Merovingian Gaul.[212]

What it meant to be a Frank was constantly made and remade.[213] Early Frankish society was flexible, dynamic and diverse, and took place via armies and peoples on Roman soil.[214] It is not possible to discuss this society in monolithic terms such as pagan versus Christian or Roman versus barbarian.[215] Society did not remain static, it was constantly evolving, and the interaction of the Frankish and Gallo-Roman nobility led to the creation of the Gallo-Frankish society of the late sixth century.

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[212] Halsall 1998, 152
[213] Hummer 1998, 9
[214] Wolfram 1998, 624
[215] Halsall 1998, 141

Chapter 6

Why were the Franks successful?

Early Frankish society was flexible, dynamic and diverse. It is not possible to discuss it in monolithic terms such as pagan versus Christian or Roman versus barbarian.[1] Christianity had spread far enough and been in existence for long enough that the debate did not hinge on a man's religious affiliation, despite Gregory's interest in Arianism. In addition the line between Roman and barbarian had been blurred to such an extent by the end of the sixth century that it was becoming difficult to distinguish between a Gallo-Roman and a Frank. It is this that allows us to posit the existence of a new, Gallo-Frankish, society and culture.

Members of the nobility played an important part in the royal administration. Even magnates with huge *de facto* powers derived their social position from royal office. The creation of effective aristocratic identities relied heavily on royal favour.[2] The power of the monarchy was essential to the survival of this class. And yet, it was this class of men that had welcomed the Franks and allowed them to become so powerful. This is the irony of late antique Gallic society: without the acceptance of the Franks by the Gallo-Romans the *Regnum Francorum* would never have existed, and yet once it had become established the nobility were dependent on its continued success for their own survival.

The nobility of late antiquity was a class marked out by family pride, classical education and a monopoly of the church. Their major

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[1] Halsall 1998, 141
[2] Halsall 1998, 149

allegiances were to politics, class, religion and locality.[3] It was these categories that the senatorial aristocracy used as strategies of distinction to differentiate themselves from the barbarians and that were later put to use in the amalgamation of Gallo-Roman and Frank. The Franks took over the Gallo-Roman system of government via the *civitas* and the church, they adopted the dominant religion, Catholic Christianity, and the two peoples lived side-by-side in the *civitates*. Other activities such as hunting also created a link between the Gallic and German leaders.[4] This society was divided not by ethnicity, but by profession and class,[5] as it had been during the days of the high empire. The existence of barbarians forces had led the Romans to design strategies of distinction in order to distinguish themselves from them and in order to underline their own superiority, but by the time the Franks arrived on the scene this was no longer so paramount.

During this period the dynamic for social change was located in the ways in which people strove for local predominance over their neighbours and rivals. The locus of social dynamics was situated in the relationship between local politics and the political 'cores',[6] i.e. the relationship between the *civitates* and the royal courts. The population was keen to see prominent local men wield authority, which they did, usually as bishops. But they were unable to wield this power within a vacuum, for they had to take into account and respect the power of whichever Frankish king happened to be in authority over them at any

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[3] Amory 1994, 28-29
[4] Drinkwater 1999, 11-12
[5] Amory 1994, 3
[6] Halsall 1998, 143

given moment. Which king it was does not seem to have mattered, only the fact of the authority of the Frankish monarchy.

The nobility would have been keen to establish their local pre-eminence independently of the power of the local court, but it may not have been possible for them to establish such local power without the assistance of central government legislation. Conversely, central authority would have wished its rule to be effective in the localities, but this may not have been possible without the active support of the local *de facto* powerful men. This is what happened between the Gallo-Romans and the Empire and between the Gallo-Romans and the Franks. The Gallo-Romans maintained their hold on power, thanks to the establishment of the *Regnum Francorum*, but that kingdom would not have been so successfully established without the co-operation of the Gallo-Romans.

The dependence of the aristocrats on the kings was heightened by the extermination, largely by Clovis,[7] of rival noble lineages. The creation of effective aristocratic identities relied on royal favour.[8] Relationships of power during the early years of the Frankish rule were inter-dependent. Church bureaucracy, civil loyalty and classical rhetoric: these were all aspects of the culture of the Gallo-Romans and the Franks, and they were all exploited to assure survival and new positions of power.[9]

As the sixth century progressed the ethnic identity of the local powerful men, whether Gallo-Roman or Frank, mattered little. What did

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[7] See above 143
[8] Halsall 1998, 149

was the construction of power against a relationship with the authority of Rome.[10] The waning of Roman authority within Gaul had led to the establishment of the *Regnum Francorum*. Monarchical power was the anvil of a new Gallo-Frankish identity.

By the end of the sixth century the Franks had established themselves as the rightful successor kingdom to the Roman Empire in Gaul, and their reign looked set to continue for generations. However this success would have been impossible to predict a mere two centuries earlier. Then the Roman Empire was undoubtedly in decline in the west, but there was no suggestion that it would not become resurgent, there was no 'Frankish' people, and the barbarian tribes were viewed as trouble makers, to be eliminated from the empire at all costs.

So, what led to Frankish success? Without the Frankish monarchy there would have been no Frankish State. The native population of Gaul would not have accepted as leaders anyone that they did not feel would lead to a benefit to their own situation. While Clovis may have had the necessary guile and cunning to subjugate the north-east, without the acceptance of the population, and of the Gallo-Roman nobility in particular, he and his sons would not have been able to forge such a large, dynamic and successful *Regnum Francorum*.

The two surprises evident within the society of late antique Gaul are first, that we find the militarily and politically dominant paying attention to the militarily and politically subservient; and second, that the culturally advanced take on the identity of the culturally inferior.

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[9] Amory 1994, 4
[10] Moreland 2000, 12

What we see happening is the transformation of barbarian Germanic tribes into the Franks, the successful successor kingdom. The Franks were amalgamated, and thus transformed, by the Gallo-Romans, not the Gallo-Romans by the Franks. The success of the Franks lies not so much in the willingness of the Gallo-Romans to accept their rule as in the fact that they were open to change and were themselves influenced by the Gallo-Romans.

The Merovingian kings and their officials took responsibility for the defence of the *Regnum Francorum*, but they depended on *civitas* taxation for their income. Therefore they were happy for the *civitas* to continue. *Civitas* administration was nominally under Frankish royal officials, but effectively it was just as much, if not more, in the hands of the bishops, who were Gallo-Romans. Bishops also operated on a national level, alongside royal court officials. What we find is a simple but effective balanced system that encouraged, and even necessitated, Frankish and Gallo-Roman co-operation and fusion.

Our principal sources, the contemporary historians Gregory and Fortunatus, both wrote up the history of the Franks and demonstrated how successful they were at creating a new kingdom. But it was not that new. The *civitas* still formed the basic unit of the community, taxation continued, and the Church maintained its position. It is tempting to say that all that happened with the advent of the Franks was the addition of a new level to the administration of the region.

We can argue that Gregory and Fortunatus were 'writing up' the history of the Franks in order to demonstrate that it was not that the

Franks were successful at amalgamating the Gallo-Romans to their rule, but that the Gallo-Romans amalgamated and accepted the Franks. Fusion was essential, but not so much for the survival of the Gallo-Romans as for the establishment, development and survival of the Franks.

Nevertheless, because of this fusion the Franks were able to take Gallo-Roman acceptance and turn it to their own advantage. It is they, after all, who give their name to this period in the history of north-west Europe.

The diversity that existed within Gallo-Frankish society is what comparative history suggests, common sense demands and the evidence demonstrates. Change took place over time, and the attractions and pressures of external exemplars, plus the necessity of adjustment as peoples expanded, migrated and absorbed others, were only the most important reasons for that.[11]

So, what was the role of the nobility in the creation of Gallo-Frankish society? There is no doubt that the Gallo-Romans' dealings with and gradual acceptance of barbarian rulers over time, beginning with the Visigoths in the fourth century,[12] contributed to the success of the Franks. Coupled with this is the familiarity of the early Frankish nobility with the Gallo-Roman way of life, a knowledge gathered largely through their recruitment into the Roman army and their proximity to Gallo-Roman society. There is no doubt that the two societies were

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[11] King 1988, 147-148

[12] This is despite the Visigoths adherence to Arian Christianity; the important point here is that they were a foreign power that the Gallo-Romans had to deal with when they lived on their territory.

dependent on each other for mutual support and to maintain their relative positions of power. Without Gallo-Roman acceptance of the Franks and in particular the monarchy, the Gallo-Roman nobility would have been unable to continue its dominance of this ever-changing society. Just as the kings and bishops needed each other in order to rule successfully within their own spheres, so too were the Gallo-Romans and Franks inter-dependent.

<div align="center">*　　*　　*</div>

In the century that followed the death of Gregory, politics came to be dominated by the bishops and the military elite, and the monarchy became marginalised. Seventh century society was competitive and violent. Churchmen and laymen were equally involved and it was a society that gained from consensus.[13] The royal family became less and less influential until eventually the *Regnum Francorum* was being run by a combination of secular and religious noblemen, the bishops and Mayors of the Palace.

During the fifth and sixth centuries the Franks were in control of local and national politics. However, in the continued dominance of the nobility in whatever guise, it is possible to see the seeds sown that would ultimately lead to the downfall of the Merovingian kingdom and the establishment of a new power, the Carolingians. Just as in the middle of the fourth century it would have been impossible to predict the downfall of the Roman Empire in the west, someone standing in the *Regnum Francorum* in the sixth century would have found it very

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[13] Wood 1998b, 4

difficult to predict that within less than two hundred years that kingdom would have come to an end.

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