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Back to the Roots: The Rediscovery of Gregory of Tours in French Historiography*

Maïke Priesterjahn

Today Gregory of Tours (538-594) is considered the father of Frankish history.¹ It is not, however, his style and language that have won him this distinction, but rather the fact that his *Historiarum libri decem* is the first and indeed the only extant primary source for early Merovingian times.² Yet only in the sixteenth century did historians of France begin to make direct use of Gregory in their work.

A large, and perhaps the most decisive, role in Gregory's rediscovery in French historiography was played by the Italian humanist Paolo Emilio Coimo (1460-1529).³

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¹ Jean Verdon, Grégoire de Tours, and Claude Fauchet, *Antiquitez françoises et gauloises*, Paris 1610, fol. 147^v.

² Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum Libri Decem / Zehn Bücher Geschichte*, auf Grund d. Übers. v. W. Giesebrecht, neu bearbeitet v. Rudolf Buchner, 2 vols., Darmstadt 2000; Bruno Krusch (ed.), *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 2: Fredegarii et aliorum Chronica. Vitae sanctorum*. (Monumenta Germaniae Historica) Hannover 1888, pp. 215–328; G. H. Herz, J. Grimm, R. Lachmann, L. Ranke, R. Ritter (eds.), *Die Geschichtsschreiber der deutschen Vorzeit. VI. Jahrhundert. Gregor von Tours. Zehn Bücher fränkischer Geschichte*. B. VII – X. Sagen aus Fredegar und der Chronik der Frankenkönige. Berlin 1851; Bernard S. Bacharach, *Liber Historiae Francorum*. Lawrence, Kansas 1973; Herbert Haupt (tr.), *Liber Historiae Francorum*. Das Buch von der Geschichte der Franken, in: Andreas Kusternig, Herbert Haupt (eds.), *Quellen zur Geschichte des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts (Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 4a)*. Darmstadt 1982, pp. 338ff.

³ On Paolo Emilio see Kathrine Davies, *Late XVth Century French Historiography, as Exemplified in the ›Compendium‹ of Robert Gaguin and the ›De Rebus Gestis Francorum‹ of Paulus Aemilius*, PhD Dissertation, Edinburgh 1954; Raffaella Zaccaria, *Paolo Emili*, in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana), vol. 42, 1993, pp. 593–596; Thomas Maissen, *Von der Legende zum Modell. Das Interesse an Frankreichs Vergangenheit während der italienischen Renaissance* (Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft, vol. 166), Basel / Frankfurt a. M. 1994; Luciano Rognoni and Gian Maria Varanini, *Da Verona a Parigi: Paulus Aemilius autore del ›De rebus gestis Francorum‹ e la sua famiglia*, in: *Quaderni per la storia dell'università di Padova* 40 (2007), pp. 163–180.

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Born in Verona, Emilio studied *humaniores* and law in Rome and Padua, went to Paris to pursue a degree in theology, and soon joined the Parisian humanist circle around Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples. Emilio first found employment in Paris as the secretary of Cardinal Charles de Bourbon, to whom he owed his later position as royal court historian. It was in this capacity that he spent the rest of his life in the service of King Charles VIII, inscribing the history of the Franks from 420 to 1488 into the ten books of a work entitled *De rebus gestis Francorum*. It was, incidentally, only one of many national histories that Italian humanists wrote for transalpine monarchs.⁴

Emilio's use of Gregory of Tours to compose this fresh history of the Franks highlights the degree to which various elements of the traditional view of French history were based on the unreliable constructions of medieval authors. Emilio's complex attempt to transform French history has many fascinating facets, including his style and his biographical method, but here I would like to focus particularly on his critical approach to sources. In what follows I will first paradigmatically compare Emilio's reliance on Gregory of Tours with the method of earlier and non-humanist authors. Then I will discuss the influence Emilio's use of Gregory had on early modern French historiography.

Authors of French history from the eighth to the fifteenth century do not seem to have relied directly on Gregory of Tours's work, which chronicled world history from Creation down to the sixth-century Frankish kings. Instead, medieval authors like those of the thirteenth-century *Grandes Chroniques*, and non-humanist historians from the fifteenth century, such as Nicole Gilles, took their bearings from the compilations of Gregory composed by Fredegar (the so-called *Fredegar Chronicle*, ca. 660),⁵ by the anonymous author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* (727), and by Aimoin of Fleury, whose *Historia Francorum* dates to the eleventh century. These compilers radically transformed Gregory's narrative, as they selected from it isolated

⁴ See for example Polydor Vergil in England, Antonio Bonfini in Hungary or Lucio Marineo Siculo in Spain.

⁵ Book 3 contains Gregory's history until the sixth book, with Book 4 beginning with the end of Gregory's sixth book.

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passages, treating their contents with less precision, and at times even altered them.⁶

Earlier medieval authors' general disregard for Gregory can be explained by the fact that they had very specific interests. In general they dealt with more precise themes rather than writing broadly sweeping histories of the Franks. The anonymous author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* (727), for example, focused not on the Austrasians, as Gregory had, but on the Neustrians; for he wrote his history from their perspective. Other authors with predominantly religious interests borrowed only from the passages dealing with Christianity – passages that were hardly lacking considering that Gregory was bishop of Tours.⁷ Furthermore, the strong presence of monasteries in the lay world also tended to put authors' focus on church history and hagiography.⁸

It was especially due to the great significance enjoyed by Fredegar and Aimoin of Fleury, however, that medieval authors depended exclusively on their works.⁹ Thus, elements of Gregory's history that his compilers had taken up and transformed in their own writings were passed down in this new form over the centuries, finding their way into the *Grandes Chroniques* and becoming essential components of French history, and ultimately turning up in historical works of the fifteenth century.

⁶ Karl Ferdinand Werner, Die literarischen Vorbilder des Aimoin von Fleury und die Entstehung seiner *Gesta Francorum*, in: *Beihefte der Francia*, vol. 45, 1999, pp. 192–226, at pp. 202f.

⁷ *Inter alia* Marius of Avenches, bishop of Avenches (*Chronica minora*, 6th cent.), Paulus Diaconus (*Historia Langobardorum*, 8th cent.), Adon de Vienne, bishop of Vienne (*Martyrologium*, 9th cent.), Hermann of Reichenau, Benedictine monk (*Chronicon*, 11th cent.: universal history from the birth of Christ to 1054), Adam of Bremen, cleric and chronicler (*Geste Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, 11th cent.: ecclesiastical history of Hamburg and Bremen), Hugo of Flavigny (*Chronicon Viridunense*, 12th cent.: universal history from the birth of Christ to 1102), Sigebert of Gembloux, theologian and historian (*Chronica cum continuationibus*, 1106: a universal history beginning in 381 and ending in 1111), Aymeric de Peyrac, abbot of Moissac (*Chronique de Moissac*, ca. 1400 – compilation of his history of the popes, the Frankish kings, and the abbots of Moissac and Toulouse), Sulpicius Severus (*Vita Martini*), Odo of Cluny (9th-10th cent.), Venantius Fortunatus (6th cent.).

⁸ Virginia Brown, *Gregorius Turonensis*, in: Virginia Brown, James Hankins, Robert A. Kasterj (eds.), *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries. Annotated lists and guides*, vol. 9 (Union Académique internationale), Washington, D.C. 2011, p. 57.

⁹ Fredegar's chronicle was the most important historical source for the seventh century; in the Carolingian period it was expanded, as an official chronicle, to cover the eighth century. Aimoin of Fleury's work was highly valued during the Middle Ages and into the early modern period on account of its multifariousness and its numerous anecdotes. See Karl Ferdinand Werner, Die literarischen Vorbilder des Aimoin von Fleury und die Entstehung seiner *Gesta Francorum*, in: *Beihefte der Francia*, vol. 45 (1999), p. 194.

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The humanist Paolo Emilio was the first to once again take up Gregory of Tours directly as a main source and, on that basis, to highlight the clear discrepancy between the traditional view of French history and Gregory's text. Emilio's decision to use Gregory certainly had to do in part with the fact that the latter's *Historiarum libri decem*,¹⁰ also known under the title *Liber historiae Francorum*, was printed for the first time¹¹ while Emilio was in the process of writing his own work. The *editio princeps* issued from the press of Jodocus Badius in Paris, who five years later would print the first four books of Emilio's own *De rebus gestis Francorum*.¹²

Typical of Emilio's procedure in elaborating his new vision of a French national history is that he does not uncritically adopt the stories of previous historians but rather returns to Gregory's original version. Although Emilio does not explicitly name his sources, his use of Gregory is nevertheless clear.¹³ I would now like to demonstrate this on the basis of three examples:

¹⁰ No manuscript from Gregory's time is extant. Nevertheless, more than forty medieval manuscripts survive; see Christoph Wieselhuber, *Gregor von Tours' "Geschichten" als Rechtsquelle. Methodische Probleme der Forschung*, in: *bonjour. Geschichte* 2 (2012), p. 2. (<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:gbv:46-00102558-19>); Walter Goffart, *Rome's Fall and After*, London 1989, p. 256. The oldest attested complete manuscript, from the monastery of Monte Cassino, dates to the eleventh century, whereas only fragments survive from earlier (seventh and eighth century) manuscripts. Rudolf Buchner, *Gregor von Tours. Zehn Bücher Geschichten*, vol. I, Darmstadt 1990, p. XXXIV.

¹¹ The edition was dedicated to Francis I's confessor and royal librarian, who used royal funds to acquire numerous manuscripts and oversaw the publication.

¹² Gregory's work was subsequently the object of various new editions and translations. Further editions: 1522 Jodocus Badius, Johannes Parvus and Johannes Confluentino (Paris), 1561, 1563 Guillaume Morelium (Paris), 1568 Mathias Flach (Basel), 1583 René Laurent de La Barre (Paris), 1583 Maternus Cholinus (Cologne), 1589 Marguerin de La Bigne (Paris), 1610 Nicolaus du Fosse, ed. Laurent Bouchel (Paris), 1610 Petri Chevalerii (Paris), 1610 French edition Claude Bonnet Dauphinois (Paris), 1613 ed. Marquard Freher (Hannover), 1618-1622 Marguerin de La Bigne (Cologne), 1640 Jean Balleldens (Paris), 1636-49 André Duchesne (Paris), 1640 Jean Gilles (Paris), 1668 French translation by Michael de Marolles, 1677 Philippe Despont (Lyon), 1699 Thierry Ruinart (Paris), 1851 German edition M.W. Giesebrecht (Berlin). See Gabriel Monod, *Études critiques sur les sources de l'histoire mérovingienne 1: Grégoire de Tours, Marius d'Avenches*, in: *Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études* 8 (1872), p. 58.

¹³ Emilio mentions Gregory of Tours in this context only once in his work – and not as an historian but in his function as bishop and his role in the dispute between the Frankish kings. Emilio writes that Chilperic I was hostile to Gregory after the deposition of Merovech (Chilperic's son), whom Gregory supported: »Qua ex re Gregorio Turonum Episcopo post eam diem nunquam aequus pater [...].« Paolo Emilio, *De rebus gestis Francorum*, liber I, fol. xiv^v. »On that account the father was never again positively disposed to Gregory of Tours.«

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Pharamond

The first example is Pharamond. In addition to tracing the Franks back to the first king, Francio, it was also common in the French tradition to attempt to make a connection between the Franks and the historically unattested figure of the Merovingian king Pharamond. The fictive genealogy from Priam to Marcomer and thus to the latter's son Pharamond is found nearly without exception in all historical works preceding the age of humanism, including in the central work of French history, the *Grandes Chroniques de France*.¹⁴ It was also still found in the work of Emilio's contemporary Nicole Gilles, the latter not a humanist.¹⁵ Emilio, in contrast, devotes a mere four lines to the legendary king of the Franks in the first complete edition of his work, printed in 1539, and continues his history with the next king, Chlodio. He remarks laconically: »Pharamond, the son of Marcomer, was pronounced the first king of the Franks in the year of salvation 420 [...]«. ¹⁶ The brevity of this passage alone, which differs sharply from the in-depth depictions devoted to other rulers, illustrates the distance Emilio puts between himself and this topic.

The fact that Emilio nevertheless mentions Pharamond, albeit in a single sentence, likely stems from the expectations of his patron and audience. For Pharamond was a traditional element of French history, one that, like the story of Troy, had to be included in order for the author to be accepted as a French historian.

In the *Libri historiarum*, Gregory begins Frankish history with Chlodio and never mentions anyone named Pharamond anywhere. And indeed it has been demonstrated that the Pharamond genealogy is a construction of the eighth century, appearing first in the anonymous *Liber historiae Francorum*¹⁷ and then applied stereotypically by French authors down to the sixteenth century. Emilio's decision to

¹⁴ See, e.g., in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, Antoine Vérard: Paris 1493, p. iii^r.

¹⁵ Gilles and Gaguin also connect Pharamond with the introduction of the Salic Law into France. Nicole Gilles, *Les tres elegantes & copieuses Annales*, Galliot du Pré: Paris 1547, fol. x^v; Robert Gaguin, *Les Grandes Chroniques*, Galliot du Pré: Paris 1514, fol. ii^v.

¹⁶ Paolo Emilio, *De rebus gestis Francorum*, liber I, fol. ii^r. »Faramundum Marcomiri filium primum omnium Regem gentis, anno salutis quadringentesimo vicesimo appellatum [...]«

¹⁷ *Liber Historiae Francorum*, IV–V, pp. 344–346, in: Quellen zur Geschichte des 7. und 8.

Jahrhunderts, eds. Herwig Wolfram, Andreas Kusternig and Herbert Haupt (*Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters. Freiherr-vom-Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe 4a*), Darmstadt 1982, pp. 338–379.

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distance himself from this genealogy can thus be seen as justified; like many humanist authors throughout Europe, however, he opted not to attack the historiographical tradition with one mighty blow but rather to undermine it slowly.

Brunhilda

The second example on which I would like to focus in order to demonstrate Emilio's reliance on and development of Gregory's work is that of Brunhilda, queen of Austrasia. Gregory is Emilio's source for explicitly claiming that the traditional view of Brunhilda was a fiction: »Some spin a tale of tragedy and ascribe to Brunhilda alone not only every sin ever committed impiously against God or criminally against mortals but also whatever can be made up or said about the most profligate people who have ever lived.«¹⁸

Gregory depicts Brunhilda quite differently. His loyalty to his queen made it inconceivable that he would speak poorly about her. On the contrary, he depicted the Austrasian queen as a virgin, as culturally refined, as beautiful, modest, and well-behaved, as intelligent and as a graceful speaker.¹⁹

Authors from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries, however – as Emilio complains – described Brunhilda without exception as cruel and obsessed with power. In his seventh-century *Vita Columbani*, for example, Jonas of Bobbio designates her a ›second Jezebel²⁰, the prototype for the malicious wife from the First Book of Kings in the Old Testament.²¹ In the ninth century, Notker Balbulus called her a wild beast (›Indomabilis bestia‹) and a whore (›meretrix‹). And in the *Grandes Chroniques*, which dates to the thirteenth century, Brunhilda is described as

¹⁸ Paolo Emilio, *De rebus gestis Francorum*, Paris 1539, liber I, fol. xix^r. »Alii meram tragoediam concinunt, & non modo quicquid usquam impie scelestive in numen mortalesve peccatum est, sed quaecunque fingi dicive de perditissimis quibusque possunt, ea uni Brunechildi adscribunt [...]«.

¹⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum Libri*, Book IV, ch. 27. »Erat enim puella elegans opera, venusta aspectus, honesta moribus atque decora, prudens consilio et blanda colloquio.«

²⁰ *Ionae Vitae Columbani Liber Primus*, in: *Quellen zur Geschichte des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts*, 198, vol. I, p. 454: »Cumque iam ad viri Dei imperium regis sermo obtemperaret et se omnibus inlicitis segregare responderet, mentem Brunichildis aviae, secundae ut erat Zezabelis, antiquus anguis adiit eamque contra virum Dei stimulatam superbiae aculeo excitat [...]«.

²¹ 1 Kings 18, 19; 1 Kings 21, 8.

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conniving (>malice<) and disloyal (>desloiaus<),²² an infamous witch²³ who poisoned her grandson Theuderic the Second.²⁴

Here, too, Emilio chooses to follow Gregory. Distancing himself from his predecessors, Emilio rehabilitates Brunhilda and sketches an image of her that corresponds quite closely to that found in Gregory. In addition, Emilio clarifies a contradiction introduced by Fredegar. The latter had claimed in one place that Brunhilda had poisoned her grandson Theuderic the Second,²⁵ but in another that Theuderic died of dysentery.²⁶ Following his own line of thought, Emilio adopts only the dysentery variant, although this story is not found in Gregory, writing: »A little later he says that she poisoned her grandson, but I have authorities who say that he died of dysentery.«²⁷

Dove and Lilies

In a third example I would now like to highlight a factual congruence between Emilio's and Gregory's texts with regard to two familiar legends. One, relating to the baptism of Clovis, reports that the necessary anointing oil was bought by a dove; the other relates to the symbol of the lily on the royal coat of arms. Once again, we are dealing with fictional constructions dating to the ninth and thirteenth centuries that were adopted uncritically by medieval authors – fictions that do not appear in Gregory.

The first story goes back to Hincmar of Reims in the ninth century, according to whom Remigius of Reims, who was conducting the baptism of the first Christian king of the Franks, Clovis, at the turn of the sixth century, could not get to the anointing oil because the church was so full and received it instead from the beak of a dove that flew in.²⁸ This story is consistently found in later French historiography.²⁹

²² Les Grandes Chroniques de France, ed. Jules Verard, Paris 1922, pp. 45 and 50.

²³ Ibid., p. 53.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 65.

²⁵ Fredegar, *Chronica* IV, 42.

²⁶ Ibid., 39.

²⁷ Paolo Emilio, *De rebus gestis Francorum*, Paris 1539, liber I, fol. xix^v. »eandem tunc intercursum optimatum servatam, paulo post veneno nepotem sustulisse, quem dysenteria decessisse authores habeo.« Fredegar (*Chronica*, IV, 3) and Sisebut (*Vita Desiderii*, ch. 19) mentioned dysentery.

²⁸ Hincmar of Reims, *Vita Remigii Episcopi Remensis*, 15. »Et quia propter populi pressuram ulli non patebat egressus ecclesiae vel ingressus sanctus pontifex oculis ac manibus protensis in coelum, coepit tacite orare cum lacrimis. Et ecce subito columba nive candidior attulit in rostro ampullulam,

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As for the legend of the *fleur-de-lys* crest, it is attested in written as well as in pictorial sources for French history as early as the eleventh century. According to this tale, the three frogs that had been on the crest were transformed by divine intervention into three golden lilies against a blue field. Although it cannot be demonstrated with certainty that Emilio followed Gregory in his treatment of these stories, his generally critical attitude towards legends makes it likely that he gave more credence to Gregory's authority – and Gregory says nothing about either the dove or the coat of arms. Emilio disentangles himself from such legendary elements, as opposed, for example, to his rival Robert Gaguin, who designates these stories as legends but nevertheless relates them.³⁰

Emilio's Heirs

With his new history, the *De rebus gestis Francorum*, Emilio composed a monumental work of literature that displaced the *Grandes Chronique* as an official history and that set the standard for the next generation. Thus, after the publication of Emilio's complete work in 1539, French historians increasingly made direct use of Gregory of Tours. This can be seen, for example, in the subsequent treatment of the Pharamond passage. Thus Papire Masson writes: »There is a persistent tradition according to which Pharamond succeeded Marcomer. But I do not even find his name in Gregory, the most ancient of our historians, and thus I begin with Chlodio.«³¹

chrismate sancto plenam, cuius odore mirifico super omnes odores quos ante in baptisterio senserant, omnes qui aderant inaestimabili suavitate repleti sunt. Accipiente autem sancto pontifice illam ampullulam species columbae disparuit.«

²⁹ Aimon of Fleury, *Historia Francorum*, liber I, cap. xvi: »Nam cum forte qui chrisma gerebat, interclusus a populo, deesset, ecce subito non alius sine dubio quam sanctus apparuit Spiritus, in columbae visibili figuratus specie; qui, rutilanti rostro sanctum deferens chrisma, inter manus deposuit sacerdotis, undas fontis sanctificantis.« *Grandes Chroniques*, Paris 1493, fol. xii^r: »No[s]tre seigneur monstra bien appertement combien il avoit agreable la foy du roy nouvellement converti par le grant miracle luy advint car droit en ce point que on d'eust faire l'oncion et c'il qui le saint cre[s]me devoit administrer ne peut venir avant pour la presse du peuple un[g] coulou avola soudainement de devers le ciel non pas coulou mais saint esperit en semblam ce de coulou aporta en son bec qui moult e[s]toit cler reluisant et replendissant.«

³⁰ Robert Gaguin, *De origine et gestis francorum*, Paris 1500, liber I, fol. v^v.

³¹ Papire Masson, *Res Gestae Francorum*, Paris 1578, Book I, p. 4. »Marcomiro filium Pharamundum successisse constans fama est, cuius ne nomen quidem reperio apud antiquissimum rerum nostrarum scriptorem Gregorium: itaque ordior a Clodione.«

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This kind of reference to Gregory of Tours was not restricted to the Pharamond passage. Emilio's rehabilitation of Brunhilda also found an echo in his humanist successors. These later writers tend to depict the Austrasian queen rather as an innocent victim of her antagonist Fredegund, and they refer explicitly to Gregory when doing so.³² Etienne Pasquier, furthermore, follows Gregory of Tours as an authoritative source for his depiction of the Merovingians:

Among our historians I respect only our Gregory, bishop of Tours, especially regarding the lives of kings Chilperic and Sigebert and their wives Fredegund and Brunhilda. For he was not only their contemporary but also participated in public affairs.³³

Yet another connection to Emilio emerges in the work of Jean du Tiller, who writes:

According to Paolo Emilio, when Theuderic II fled to Cologne he was captured and taken to Chalon. Others report that he was killed during the aforementioned war. Theuderic died of dysentery; some say he was poisoned.³⁴

With regard to king Clovis, however, French authors continued to repeat what was reported in medieval authors, although noting that Gregory's history differs considerably.³⁵ For example, Jean de Serres writes:

³² Papire Masson, *Res Gestae Francorum*, Paris 1578, Book I, pp. 49f.: »Fortunatus libro sexto, & Gregorius Brunehildi formam, modestiam, humanitatem, gratiam, & acumen ingenii tribuunt. [...] Ego vero Brunehildem chrismate delibutam miror [...]. Ob eam causam immortales inimicitiae inter Brunehildem & Fredegundem in reliquum vitae tempus fuere.«

³³ Etienne Pasquier, *Les Recherches de la France*, 1621, Book X, p. 931. »Or entre nos Historiographes j'honore singulierement no[s]tre Gregoire Evesque de Tours; par especial en ce qui regarde vies des Roys Chilperic et Sigebert, et de Fredegonde et Brunehaud leurs femmes. Car il estoit non seulement de leur temps, mais qui plus est avoir bonne part aux deliberations publiques.«

³⁴ Jean du Tillet, *Chronique de Roys de France*, 1550, fol. xiiiv-xiiir. »Theodebert, lequel en s'enfuyant à Coulogne, fut prins et mené prisonnier à Chaallons, selon Paul Emile: les autres disent qu'il fut tué en ladicte guerre. Theodoric meurt d'une dissenterie: aucuns pensent qu'il fut empoisonné.«

³⁵ François de Mézeray, *Histoire de France* I, Paris 1685, p. 5: »Gregoire de Tours a escrit que [...]«. Bernard Girard Du Haillan, *Histoire générale de Rois de France*, livre I, Paris 1627, p. 31: »Gregoire Archevesque de Tour escrit que le Roy Clovis après son baptesme fut couronné, et ne parle point qui

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Aimoin says that, ever since a dove brought a vial of holy oil in its beak, the kings were anointed with it when elevated to the throne. But Gregory of Tours, an earlier author, says merely that Clovis was baptized.³⁶

The legend of the divine transformation of the coat of arms, on the other hand, no longer appears in histories of France. Instead, the coat of arms is briefly mentioned, as is the fact that the images it bore had changed after Clovis's baptism. When describing the various symbols used, Jean de Serres and Bernard Giryard du Haillain even clearly rely on Emilio: »It is said that at this time Clovis changed the royal coat of arms, replacing the three frogs (or, as the learned say, three red crowns on a silver field) with countless lilies.«³⁷

Such examples illustrate the fact that Emilio's French humanist heirs grasped Gregory's central importance for French historiography. These authors followed Gregory especially when it came to dealing critically with traditional stories and to disavowing the mythical, legendary, and, in the light of the new humanist source criticism, unacceptable aspects of traditional historical works written during the Middle Ages. This reliance on Gregory of Tours was made possible by the broad study and reception of his work. Ultimately the need was felt for a French translation of Gregory, and this desideratum was met in 1610.³⁸ As a result, the development of critical historiography in France became embedded in the humanist movement then being patronized by Francis I (1515-1547) and his successors. Ultimately it was Paolo Emilio, whose work was translated into French in 1581 (and thus three

fut oingt ny sacré, ains seulement baptize, et ne fait aucune mention de la sainte Ampoule, bien qui parle assez d' autres miracles.«

³⁶ Jean de Serres, *Inventaire Général de l'histoire de France depuis Pharamond jusques à présent*, Paris 1600, p. 71. »Aimoïus dit que lors une colombe apporta en son bec une Ampoule pleine d'huile, de laquelle nos Rois sont oincts quand ils sont installez. Mais Gregoire de Tours plus ancien auteur, dit seulement que Clovis fut baptisé.«

³⁷ Jean de Serres, *Inventaire Général de l'histoire*, p. 71. »On tient aussi que Clovis changea lors d'escu Royal, et qu'au lieu de trois crapaux (ou, comme distent les Doctes, de trois Diademes de gueulles en champ d'argent) il print des fleurs de lis sans nombre.«

³⁸ The first French translation, by Claude Bonnet Dauphinois, was published in 1610, the year of Henry IV's death, and contains a royal privilege to the printer and the librarian of the University of Paris, Pierre Chevalier. In the dedication to Henriette de Balsac, Henry IV's mistress, Seigneur d'Hemery d'Amoises emphasizes the usefulness of Gregory of Tours's work for examples of moral virtue. See Virginia Brown, James Hankins, and Robert Andrew Kaster (eds.), *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*, vol. 8, p. 69; Henri Omont and Gaston Collon (eds.), *Grégoire de Tours. Histoire de France. Texte des Manuscrits de Corbie et de Bruxelles*, Paris 1913, p. xxiv.

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decades before Gregory), who was one of the first French historians to recognize Gregory of Tours as an authority for the nation's past, and thus to become a kind of forefather of French history.