

The Merovingian Kingdoms 450â€“751

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✓ Verified Book of The Merovingian Kingdoms 450â€“751

Summary:

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Of all Rome's western successors, the Frankish kingdom that emerged in France, Belgium, the Rhineland and Switzerland was the most powerful and the longest-lasting; yet the Merovingians, who ruled it for nearly 300 years (481-751), have been harshly treated by posterity. This is partly through the hostility of the Carolingians, who usurped and succeeded them, and partly because of a family history that was lurid and bloody even by contemporary standards. Ian Wood rescues them from the shadows of obscurity and contempt in this superb survey, which covers every aspect of the age.

After considering the nature of the sources, the book begins with the rise of the Franks. It then examines the establishment of the Merovingian dynasty itself, and the structure of the Merovingian kingdomâ€”or kingdoms, since throughout its long history was both fluid and fissiparous, with borders moving to and fro under the pressures of external enemies and internal dynastic conflict. Ian Wood then goes on to consider the influence of the Merovingians on their own territories and on Europe more widely. In particular he reassesses their cultural importance (long and unjustly neglected) in the world of the sixth and seventh centuries).

Finally, he reconsiders the whole question of Merovingian decline, arguing that the later, biased, Carolingian sources so widely used by subsequent historians have misrepresented its course and character down to our own time. Indeed, one of the book's central aims is to re-evaluate Merovingian history in the light of contemporary opinion, insofar as that can now be recovered, away from the hostile historiography of the Carolingian successors.

In doing so, Ian Wood brings a remote age to life. To most of us Childeric, Clovis, Chlothar, Dagobert and their fellows are little more than names, if that, and their family ramifications are as complicated as they are unedifying; but in these deft and authoritative pages the dynastic complexities of Merovingian history disentangle, and the remote and shadowy figures within become real again as the powerful individuals on whom, for almost three hundred years, the fate of much of western Europe depended.

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The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751 Ian Wood

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