

# Merovingian Kings

## Legendary Origins

According to the seventh century chronicler Fredegar, the wife of semi-legendary King Clodio had an encounter with a sea creature known as a Quinotaur. From this encounter came the ruler Merovich after whom the Merovingians were named. The son of Merovich was said to be Childeric, and his son was Clovis I (465 - 511).

According to Laurence Gardner, "Bloodline of the Holy Grail", Element Books, 1996, the Merovingians were descended from Jesus. This concept was popularized in the novel "The Da Vinci Code" by Dan Brown. Claiming a descent from a diety is not a new concept. Over 1000 years ago, the Anglo Saxon Chronicle claimed such a descent for the Kings of Wessex; while the pre-Christian Kings of Wessex claimed a descent from King Priam of Troy through the Viking god Thór. (See *England, Legendary Origins*)

The details of the lives and deeds as well as the actual relationship between Chlodio, Merovich and Childeric are shrouded in myth and legend. However these Salic chieftains were related, they were certainly part of the leading family of the Salian Franks. They were distinguished, like other Germanic aristocratic families by the fashion of allowing their hair (and sometimes beards as well) to grow long, and they became known as "the long haired kings".

## Merovingian Genealogy

Some details of the earlier genealogy shown here must be considered legendary. Generations One to Nine are said by Dr. Fredrick L. Weis to be "questionable" and are based on information found sources listed at the end of this chapter. The persons shown in Generations One to Nine certainly existed, but many of the details are uncertain. As well, while all the persons are definitely related; it is difficult to say with complete certainty exactly how they were related. For example, there is the possibility that some persons were perhaps "nephew of" rather than "son of" as shown.

Generations Ten and later are considered "good" and are based on Fredrick L. Weis and Walter L. Sheppard: *Ancestral Roots*, Baltimore, 1999, Lines 240 and 140.

## Generation One

### Chlodio, Chieftain of the Salian Franks

Flourished early to mid 5th century

Often described as "King of the Franks", Chlodio may be more accurately referred to as a "Chieftain of the Salian Franks". Frankish warriors served as Roman soldiers; and this service was rewarded as the Salians were allowed to spread out from their "reservation" known as Toxandria (Tiesterbant near Campine in the southern Netherlands) into what is to-day Begium, northern France as well as along the lower Rhine. Much of this expansion was peaceful, although in 428 and again in 450 the Roman general Ælius crushed Frankish uprisings led by Chodio. At other times, there was close co-operation as in the Frankish support given Ælius in his defeat of the Huns near Orléans in 451.

. . . Patrick J. Geary: *Before France and Germany*, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 80

. . . Norman F. Cantor: *Encyclopædia or the Middle Ages*, New York, 1999, p. 307

Chlodio's successor, possibly a son, and certainly a relative, was:

- **Merovich**, mentioned next.

## Generation Two

### Merovich, Chieftain of the Salian Franks

Flourished mid 5th century

As for Chlodio before him, Merovich is often described as “King of the Franks”. He is also known as Merovech, Merovæus, Merové, and Merowig. The Merovingian kings were named after Merovich.

The uncertainty surrounding these early chieftains is illustrated by the legend that Merovich was said to have been born of two fathers. When already pregnant by King Chlodio, his mother went swimming in the ocean where she was seduced by an unknown marine creature, a “bestæ Neptuni Quinotauri similis”. This creature, part man, part bull, and part marine creature, impregnated the Queen a second time. Thus Merovech is said to have carried the blood of the Frankish rulers as well as that of an aquatic creature. Merovech is said by some to be the original “father” of all vampires!

Merovich was succeeded by a relative, possibly a son:

- **Childeric I**, mentioned next.

## Generation Three

### Childeric I, Chieftain of the Salian Franks

Died in 481

Also referred to as “King of the Franks”, Childeric was one of several tribal leaders of the kindred of Chlodio and Merovech. He began to lead the Franks prior to 463 and was the last Frankish chieftain to continue the tradition of service under Roman commanders. Although he had some sort of falling out with the Roman commanders in Northern Gaul, he remained intimately involved in the world of late Roman civilization. He may have received direct subsidies from Constantinople as well.

. . . Patrick J. Geary: *Before France and Germany*, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 80

Childeric married to Basina, and they had a son:

- **Clovis I**, mentioned next.

## Generation Four

### Clovis I, King of the Franks

Born circa 466

Died in 511.

Clovis is also referred to as Chlodowech, Chlodovech, Chlodovic, Chlodovicus, and Chlodwig; but “Clovis” is used most frequently.

Clovis is considered the founder of the French State. In 486, in co-operation with other Frankish chieftains, he defeated the last great Roman army in Gaul under the commander Syagrius near Soissons. He then went on to defeat many minor princes, kings and tribal chieftains to form the first Frankish Kingdom. However, the exact chronology of Clovis’ reign is hopelessly obscure; even the identity of the various peoples he is said to have defeated and absorbed into his kingdom is debatable.

Clovis married in 493 to Clotilda (475 - 545), later St. Clotilda, daughter of Childperic, King of the Burgundians. Clotilda was a Christian and is said to have been instrumental in the conversion of Clovis to Christianity. According to legend, an angel gave Clovis an iris flower or “fleur-de-lis” after accepting the Christian faith, and Clovis then used fleur-de-lis as his symbol. However, it is entirely unlikely that Clovis underwent an experience of profound enlightenment during which he renounced the many Celtic, Germanic and Roman deities to embrace Jesus Christ. He more likely viewed Christ as another powerful god; an ally he could call upon to give him victory in battle.

At the time of his death, his kingdom covered most of what is now France and the western part of Germany. According to ancient Frankish law and tradition, the kingdom was split up among his sons Theuderic I (also Thierr I), Clodomer, Childebert I and Clothaire I. The situation was far from peaceful as the Merovingian Kings spent much of the next two centuries squabbling over the various thrones. Although a temporary union of the Frankish Kingdoms occurred several times when a single heir survived, the situation was chaotic as various kings sought to displace one another.

Clovis married in 493 to Clotilda (475 - 545), and they had the following sons:

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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theuderic I (also Thierr I)</li> <li>• Chlodomer</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childebert I</li> <li>• <b>Clothaire I</b>, mentioned next</li> </ul> |
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**Frankish Kingdoms of the 6th Century**

The Main Divisions of the Frankish Kingdoms under the Merovingian Kings were:

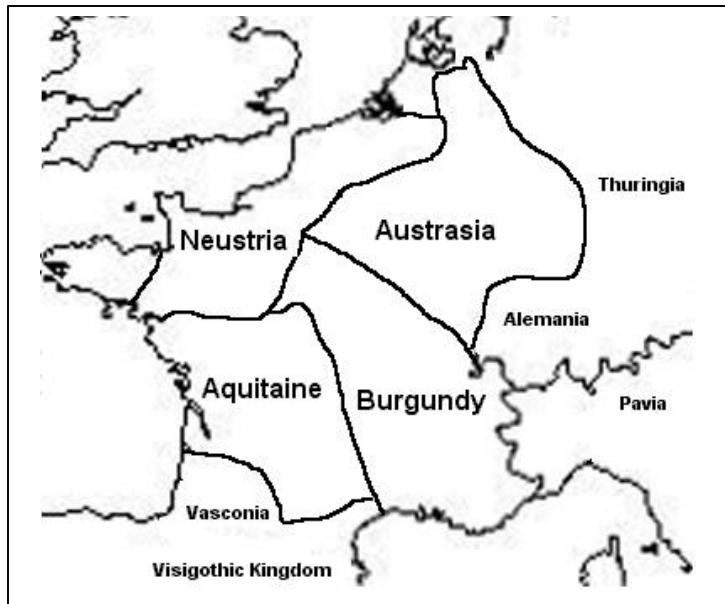
**Neustria:** modern Belgium and N.W. France.

**Austrasia:** modern N.E. France and N.W. Germany; sometimes including Neustria.

**Burgundy:** modern S.E. France.

**Aquitaine:** modern S.W. France.

Some borders such as the Loire River between Neustria and Aquitaine were fairly certain while others seemed to shift slightly as various rulers sought to displace one another.



**Life in the Sixth Century**

Germanic tribesmen living close to the North Sea tended to have fairly large timber houses supported by four rows of posts that divided the house into three rooms. The family lived in the centre room, while a smaller room on one side was used for storage and a larger room on the other side was used to house the animals whose body heat helped warm the living quarters.

From this arrangement comes the story that “the people lived in the barn” or that “the cattle lived in the house.”

Further inland, people tended to inhabit dwellings that were supported by upright posts but without interior supports. These dwellings varied in size from 20 feet X 12 feet up to perhaps 25 feet square. Long, narrow buildings about 12 feet X 25 feet housed the cattle while smaller structures 12 feet square were used for storage. Some of these smaller storage buildings were partially underground.

The main crops were barley, wheat, oats, peas and beans. Crop rotation was practiced, and fields were improved by adding limestone and manure. Depleted soil was abandoned and new land brought into use using the slash and burn technique. Simple scratch ploughs pulled by oxen were most common, and they didn’t actually turn the soil. Grain was left attached to the hay and was roasted slightly to preserve it. Grain was separated from the hay as needed and ground using simple hand grindstones. Once ground, flour was used to prepare porridge and flat bread. Grain was also used to make beer.

Cattle were very important and were an indicator of wealth. Pigs, sheep, goats, horses, chickens and geese were also kept. Every portion of the animals was used either for food or for the production of clothing, shelter and utensils. Wild animals were hunted and killed for sport and to eliminate nuisance animals. Wild animals are thought to have made up less than 5% of the total animals used.

Iron was produced using small, crude but effective charcoal furnaces made of earth. These ovens held about a litre of ore, and only 200 grams of iron could be made at a time from the very best ore. This iron was worked into very high quality steel, far superior to the equipment of the Roman troops. However, the Germanic tribes were iron poor, and weapons such as long swords were rare.

Each individual household was dominated by the father who held authority over all the members. A number of households, sometimes as many as fifty, were grouped into a family clan-like organisation. A number of clans formed a tribe which was sometimes overseen by a “king” who was really a tribal chieftain. The “king” was usually chosen from one family that was most closely identified with the ethnic, cultural and historical traditions of the tribe - that is, from a “royal family.” Some tribes had several kings, one to preside over meetings, one for religious ceremonies and one for military command. Other tribes didn’t have a king at all.

In order to survive and prosper, a tribe had become almost completely militarized; that is, the tribe had to become an army. This is what appears to have happened with the Salian Franks whose Merovingian Kings dominated the region from the fifth century onwards.

... from Patrick J. Geary: *Before France and Germany*, Oxford University Press, 1988

## Generation Five

### Clothaire I, King of Neustria and Austrasia

Died in 561

Clothaire had the following sons:

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|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charibert I</li> <li>• Gunthchramn</li> </ul> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sigibert I</li> <li>• <b>Chilperic I</b>, mentioned next.</li> </ul> |
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## Generation Six

### Chilperic I, King of Neustria

Died in 584

Chilperic had the following sons:

- **Chlothar II**, mentioned next.
- Merovich, sometimes shown as a son of Chlothar II
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## Generation Seven

### Chlothar II, King of the Franks

Died in 629

The Frankish Kingdoms of Neustria, Austrasia and Burgundy were united briefly under Clothaire II from 613 and 629.

Clothaire had the following sons:

- **Dagobert I**, mentioned next.
- Charibert II, King of Aquitaine, 629/30 – 632.

## Generation Eight

### Dagobert I, King of the Franks

Died in 638

The Frankish Kingdoms of Neustria, Austrasia and Burgundy were united briefly under Dagobert I from 629 until his death in 638. According to ancient Frankish law and tradition, the kingdom was split up among his sons. Dagobert I was the last great Merovingian ruler. After his death, powerful officials and aristocratic families played an ever increasing role in ruling the various kingdoms of the Franks.

Dagobert had the following sons:

- **Clovis II**, King of Neustria and Burgundy who married Baldechildis and had children:
  - Chlothar III, King of Neustria and Burgundy
  - Childeric II, King of Austrasia
  - **Theuderic (Thierry) III**, King of the Franks who married and had children:
    - Clovis IV, King of the Franks
    - Childebert III, King of the Franks
    - Chlothar IV, King of Austrasia
    - **Bertha**, a Merovingian Princess who was perhaps a daughter of Theuderic (Thierry) III; her son:
      - **Caribert** (or Herbert), Count of Leon had a daughter:
        - **Bertha II**, wife of **Pepin the Short** and mother of Charlemagne the Great, Emperor of the West. (See *Charlemagne, Generation Twelve*) . . . George Andrews Moriarty: *The Plantagenet Ancestry of King Edward III and Queen Philippa*, Mormon Pioneer Genealogical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1985, page 232
- **Sigibert III**, mentioned next.

## The Decline of the Merovingian Kings

From the middle of the seventh century on, their power declined and the real authority rested to an ever increasing extent with the Mayors of the Palace. The king became a figurehead distinguished by his beard, long hair, crown and throne. When King Theuderic IV died in 737, he was not replaced. Charles Martel ruled instead as Mayor of the Palace. (See *Charlemagne*, Generation Eleven) Charles Martel died in 741 and was succeeded by his sons Pépin the Short and Carloman. The brothers Pépin and Carloman instituted another king, Childeric III in 743, largely to ease the concern of other Frankish leaders about their growing power. Carloman withdrew from politics in 747 and retired to the monastery of Monte Casino. In 751, Childeric III also wisely decided to retire to a monastery and Pépin the Short had himself proclaimed king in November 751, thus officially ending the Merovingian Dynasty.

Having displaced the Merovingians, it was in the interests of the Carolingian Kings to depict their predecessors as useless anachronisms. Hence, the earlier Merovingians were depicted as evil and brutal tyrants while later Merovingians were propagandized as lazy and simple incompetents. If a Merovingian could be deposed and sent to a monastery, and a new king consecrated in his place, so too could a Carolingian. Less than a century later, Louis the Pious was temporarily displaced; and by the tenth century, the Carolingians were replaced altogether by the Capetian Kings. (See *Capet*)

## Generation Nine

### Sigibert III, King of Austrasia.

Died in 656

Sigibert had a son:

- **Dagobert II**, mentioned next.

Sigibert adopted the following child:

- Childebert, King of Austrasia who was a son of Grimoald and a grandson of Pépin the Old of Landen, Mayor of the Palace of Austrasia in 623 and a counsellor of Dagobert (I), King of Austrasia. (Note: Grimoald's sister was St. Bégue; see *Charlemagne*, Generation Nine)

*Note:* Generations Ten to Seventeen are considered reliable and are from Fredrick L. Weis and Walter L. Sheppard: *Ancestral Roots*, Line 240 (Baltimore, 1999)

## Generation Ten

### Dagobert II, King of the Franks

Died in 680

While Dagobert II was “King of the Franks”, palace officials were by this time playing an ever increasing role in ruling the kingdom. Following Dagobert's death in 680, a confusing series of ever weaker kings, beginning with Dagobert's cousin Theuderic (Thierry) III, (See Generation Eight) sat on the throne.

Dagobert had a daughter:

- **Adela**, mentioned next.

## Generation Eleven

### Adela

Adela had a son:

- **Aubri I**, mentioned next.

## Generation Twelve

### Aubri I, Count of Blois

Aubri I had a son:

- **Aubri II**, mentioned next.

## Generation Thirteen

### Aubri II, Count of Blois

Aubri II had a daughter:

- **Theidlindis**, mentioned next.

## Generation Fourteen

### Theidlindis

Thiedlindis married Count Gainfroi who flourished circa 795 and was a son of Mainier, Count of Sens, Duke of Austrasia (791 - 796, died in 800), and his wife, a daughter of Duke Haudre.

Thiedlindis and Count Gainfroi had a son:

- **Giselbert**, mentioned next.

## Generation Fifteen

### Giselbert, Count in the Massgau

Died in 842

Massgau is in the valley of the Meuse river. Giselbert probably married a sister of Echard, Count of Hesbaye, and they had a son:

- **Giselbert**, mentioned next.

## Generation Sixteen

### Giselbert, Count of Darnau

Died in 863

Giselbert married **Helletrude of Lorraine** (also called **Ermengarde**), a daughter of the Emperor Lothaire I (See *Flanders*, Generation One) and they had a son:

- **Régnier I**, mentioned next.

*Note:* Generations Seventeen to Nineteen are considered reliable and are from Fredrick L. Weis and Walter L. Sheppard: *Ancestral Roots*, Line 140 (Baltimore, 1999)

## Generation Seventeen

### Régnier I, Count of Hainaut

Born circa 850

Died between October 25, 915 and January 19, 916

Régnier married first to **Hersent**, a daughter of Charles II “The Bald”, King of France (See *Flanders*, Generation Two) and they had the following sons:

- Régnier II, Count of Hainaut who married Adelaide, a daughter of Richard of Burgundy.
- **Giselbert**, mentioned next.

## Generation Eighteen

### Giselbert, Duke of Lorraine

Died in 939

Giselbert married Gerberga of Saxony, a daughter of Henry I “the Fowler”, King of the Saxons. Giselbert and Gerberga had a daughter:

- **Gerberga of Lorraine**, mentioned next.

## Generation Nineteen

### Gerberga of Lorraine

Born circa 935

Gerberga married Albert I “the Pious”, Count de Vermandois (see *Charlemagne*, Generation Nineteen)

For the continuation of this line, see *Charlemagne*, Generation Nineteen

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