FOREWORD

Hagiography is a difficult genre for historians, but it is also the genre in most plentiful supply for the notoriously under-documented later Merovingian period. Both the genre and the period have recently been undergoing a revival of scholarly interest and Paul Fouracre and Richard Gerberding, connoisseurs of both, have been at the forefront of the revival. In *History and Hagiography* their skilled readings of the hagiographical evidence yield a plausible reconstruction of what has hitherto often been seen as a dauntingly repellent age of economic decline and political chaos. Later Merovingian Francia emerges here as a world with its own structures, values and rhythms of change – distinctively interesting, not just as a prelude to the Carolingians, but on its own terms. Fouracre and Gerberding, far from skirting the methodological problems of their material, tackle them with zest, and invite readers to share the effort and the rewards. Language and structure are explored with rare finesse. Since much of the material translated here is relatively little known and has seldom been used in teaching, this book will be indispensable to scholars as well as students, offering new approaches to an exceptionally interesting period.

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