

# Merovech

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Merovech** (Latin: *Meroveus* or *Merovius*) (d. 453/457) is the semi-legendary founder of the Merovingian dynasty of the Salian Franks (although Chlodio may in fact be the founder), which later became the dominant Frankish tribe. He allegedly lived in the first half of the fifth century. His name is a Latinization of a form close to the Old High German given name *Marwig*, lit. "famed fight" (cf. *māri* "famous" + *wīg* "fight") compare modern Dutch *mare* "news, rumour", *vermaard* "famous" and *vecht* "fight".<sup>[1]</sup> He is said to be one of several barbarian warlords and kings that joined forces with the Roman general Aetius against the Huns under Attila on the Catalaunian fields in Gaul. The first Frankish royal dynasty called themselves Merovingians ("descendants of Meroveus") after him, although no other historical evidence exists that Merovech ever lived.



Silvered brass mounting from 1867 depicting Merovech victorious in battle, by Emmanuel Frémiet.

There is little information about him in the later histories of the Franks. Gregory of Tours only names him once as the father of Childeric I while putting doubt on his descent from Chlodio.<sup>[2]</sup> Many admit today that this formulation finds its explanation in a legend reported by Fredegar.<sup>[3]</sup> The Chronicle of Fredegar interpolated on this reference by Gregory by adding Merovech was the son of the queen, Chlodio's wife; but his father was a sea-god, *bistea Neptuni*.<sup>[4]</sup> Some researchers have noted that Merovech, the Frankish chieftain, may have been the namesake of a certain god or demigod honored by the Franks prior to their conversion to Christianity.

It has been suggested Merovech refers to, or is reminiscent of, the Dutch river Merwede,<sup>[5]</sup> Although this river was historically a main subsidiary of the Rhine, in modern times it is a tribute of the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt delta; the area where, according to Roman historians, the Salian Franks once dwelled.

Another theory<sup>[6]</sup> considers this legend to be the creation of a mythological past needed to back up the fast-rising Frankish rule in Western Europe.

A certain ancient legend holds that Merovech was conceived under paranormal or divine circumstances. It is said that Pharamond's wife, while swimming, encountered a Quinotauror sea monster, which presumably could change shapes. Though never stated, it is implied that she was impregnated by it. This legend was related by Fredegar in the seventh century and may have been known earlier. The legend is probably a back-formation or folk etymology used to explain the Salian Franks' origin as a coastal culture, and was thus based on the name itself.

The "Mero-" or "Mer-" element in the name suggests a sea or ocean (see Old English "mere," Latin "mare," or even the Modern English word "mermaid", etc.). The "Salian" in "Salian Franks" may be a reference to salt, a reminder of their pre-migration home on the shores of the North Sea (alternatively, it may refer to the *Isala* or IJssel river behind which their homeland, the Salland, may have been located).

The legend could also be explained in a much easier way. The sea monster could have been a foreign conqueror, coming from the sea, taking the dead king's (Chlodio or Pharamond) wife to legitimise his rule. Another explanation holds that the sea monster which could change shape is metaphoric prose for the Roman governmental System, and perhaps its controlling families, still present in the area. Eventually the

Merovingians, and their Frankish legacy, would indeed continue the legal and cultural tradition of the Roman Empire throughout Central and Northern Europe (and thus the world) in direct and indirect ways.

## Contents

- 1 Reference in popular culture
- 2 See also
- 3 Notes
- 4 References
- 5 External links

## Reference in popular culture

The legend about Merovech's conception was adapted in 1982 by authors Henry Lincoln and Richard Leigh in their book *Holy Blood Holy Grail*, as the seed of a new idea. They hypothesized that this "descended from a fish" legend was actually referring to the concept that the Merovingian line had married into the bloodline of Jesus Christ, since the symbol for early Christians had also been a fish. This theory, with no other basis than Lincoln and Leigh's hypothesis, was further popularized in 2003 via Dan Brown's bestselling novel, *The Da Vinci Code*.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

There is also a fictional character called The Merovingian in the movies *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions* (portrayed by Lambert Wilson). The character is modeled as an ancient and powerful leader of exiles. He also has extensive knowledge of the inner workings of the universe and uses this knowledge to support his decadent lifestyle.

In the MMORPG Mabinogi Merrow is featured as a boss monster at the end of a Generation Quest.

## See also

- Battle of the Catalaunian Plains
- Tonantius Ferreolus (prefect)

## Notes

1. ^ Green, D.H. *Language and History in the Early Germanic World*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
2. ^ Gregory of Tours - The History of the Franks, II.9
3. ^ Christian Settiani - Addenda to Les Ancêtres de Charlemagne, 1990 [1] (<http://www.rootsweb.com/~medieval/addcharlENG.pdf>)
4. ^ Pseudo-Fredegar, Hist. III, 9.
5. ^ Emil Rückert: Oberon von Mons und die Pipine von Nivella; Weidmann'sche Buchhandlung, Leipzig, Germany. 1836
6. ^ see M. Todd's, *The Early Germans*
7. ^ *Behind the Da Vinci Code*, 2006, History Channel documentary about Henry Lincoln
8. ^ *Holy Blood Holy Grail*, Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, Henry Lincoln, 1982

## References

- *Behind the Da Vinci Code*, 2006, History Channel documentary about Henry Lincoln
- Todd, M. *The Early Germans*
- Wood, Ian. *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–751*. London: Longman Group, 1994.

## External links

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Merovech&oldid=539593502>"

Categories: Merovingian dynasty | Frankish kings | 5th-century monarchs in Europe

---

- This page was last modified on 22 February 2013 at 04:09.
- Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy.  
Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.