



# **Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500 to 900 (The Middle Ages Series)**

*Suzanne Fonay Wemple*

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*Women in Frankish Society* is a careful and thorough study of women and their roles in the Merovingian and Carolingian periods of the Middle Ages. During the 5th through 9th centuries, Frankish society transformed from a relatively primitive tribal structure to a more complex hierarchical organization. Suzanne Fonay Wemple sets out to understand the forces at work in expanding and limiting women's sphere of activity and influence during this time. Her goal is to explain the gap between the ideals and laws on one hand and the social reality on the other. What effect did the administrative structures and social stratification in Merovingian society have on equality between the sexes? Did the emergence of the nuclear family and enforcement of monogamy in the Carolingian era enhance or erode the power and status of women?

Wemple examines a wealth of primary sources, such deeds, testaments, *formulae*, genealogy, ecclesiastical and secular court records, letters, treatises, and poems in order to reveal the enduring German, Roman, and Christian cultural legacies in the Carolingian Empire. She attends to women in secular life and matters of law, economy, marriage, and inheritance, as well as chronicling the changes to women's experiences in religious life, from the waning influence of women in the Frankish church to the rise of female asceticism and monasticism.

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