

## Abstract: Early medieval hagiography as a source for the history of ideas: attitudes to dreams as an example

This article examines early medieval hagiographical texts, discussing their use as source material for approaches informed by the methodology of the history of ideas. It suggests reading hagiographical texts as arguments in lost discussions, bounded by their individual contexts, social and intertextual. First the nature of early medieval hagiographies is briefly discussed. As a case study to illustrate these methodological points, two miracle stories (from Gregory of Tours and *The Whitby life of St Gregory the Great*) are examined for the attitudes to dreams they exhibit. Through these examples the relationship between the content and the target audience of these texts is illustrated. The article argues that such stories and the attitudes they exhibit should be primarily read tightly bounded by their intended use and context, but it also discusses what contemporaries could have read from them besides their probable intentional meanings. These observations of hagiographical stories as arguments, as well as the possible range of their meanings are finally explored using a non-hagiographical text, the *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum*, and examining how it deconstructs such stories.

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