

Ostrogoths, plundered Europe, and some established small kingdoms. Most tribes, however, did not create strong governments. Of all the Germanic tribes, the Franks played the greatest role in European history. The Franks first entered the Roman Empire near the mouth of the Rhine River in about 250 B.C. They settled in the area of northern Gaul that corresponds roughly to the present-day nations of Belgium and the Netherlands.

Clovis and the Merovingians

In A.D. 481 an able ruler named Clovis became king of one of the Frankish tribes. He and his successors were called Merovingians because Clovis traced his family back to an ancestor named Merovech. Although brutal, cruel, and apparently without a conscience, Clovis excelled as a military leader. His troops conquered the other Frankish tribes and soon controlled all of northern Gaul.

A few years after Clovis became king, an important event took place, according to legend. Influenced by his Christian wife, he vowed to accept her religion if he won a certain battle. He won the battle, and two years later he kept his vow. He also ordered 3,000 of his warriors to receive baptism. Clovis became a strong supporter of Christianity, and he and the Franks gained the support of the church.

Later, Clovis seized southwestern Gaul from the Visigoths. Even though he ruled most of what is today France (which took its name from the Franks), Clovis failed to pass on to his successors either his strong leadership qualities or his united kingdom. In accordance with Frankish custom, Clovis's sons divided the kingdom among themselves.

The Merovingian kings who followed were weak rulers of the divided kingdom who left the business of governing to palace officials. Eventually, the chief of the royal household, called the mayor of the palace, became the real ruler of each kingdom. Pepin II, the mayor of the palace of one kingdom, ruled from 687 to 714. He and his successors united and ruled the Frankish kingdom, although they did not hold the title of king.

Charles Martel and Pepin the Short

Pepin's able son, Charles Martel (meaning "Charles the Hammer"), succeeded Pepin as the mayor of the palace. In 732 an army of Spanish Moors invaded France. Charles Martel's cavalry defeated the Moors near Tours, in central France, thus halting the Muslim advance in western Europe and removing the immediate danger of invasion, although raids continued to present a constant menace.

What If?

Battle of Tours

The Frankish victory at Tours in 732 halted Muslim expansion in Europe. How do you think modern European culture would be different if the Moors had won the battle?

When Charles Martel died in 741, he left a large and strong kingdom to his sons Pepin and Carloman, who shared power. When Carloman entered a monastery six years later, Pepin III, or Pepin the Short, became the sole ruler. In 751 the pope traveled to France and personally crowned Pepin "king by the grace of God." The coronation established what historians refer to as the Carolingian dynasty. The practice of a king using the blessing of the church to give legitimacy to his rule would eventually become common for monarchs throughout western Europe, and later popes would use it as a basis for their claim to hold authority over kings.

While the pope was in France, he asked Pepin for help against the Lombards, a Germanic tribe that was ravaging central Italy and threatening Rome. Pepin led an army of Franks into Italy and defeated the Lombards. He then took territory around Rome from the Lombard king and gave it to the pope. This gift of land, called the Donation of Pepin, created the Papal States, a region that would be ruled by popes for centuries.

History does not record whether the pope and Pepin made an agreement that Pepin would defend Rome in exchange for his coronation by the pope. Certainly, however, these events began an alliance between the Franks and the pope that greatly strengthened both sides. The way now opened for the greatest of all Frankish kings, Charlemagne.*

Charlemagne's Empire

Pepin's son Charlemagne assumed the Frankish throne in A.D. 768 and ruled until 814. Although he had little formal education, this deeply religious and highly intelligent king became one of history's outstanding rulers.

*Charlemagne's Latin name was *Carolus Magnus* (from which comes the name of his dynasty, *Carolingian*). The Germans called him *Karl der Grosse*. Translated into English, all of these names mean "Charles the Great."



Charlemagne, a patron of learning, encouraged the development of art, science, and literature during a period known as the Carolingian Renaissance.

Like many kings of his day, Charlemagne spent much of his life at war. He defeated the Lombards in Italy, the Saxons in northern Germany, and the Avars in central Europe. Although he failed in his attempt to conquer all of Muslim Spain, he drove the Moors back across the Pyrenees, thus gaining a small strip of Spanish territory. By the end of his reign, Charlemagne controlled much of western Europe. (See map on this page.)

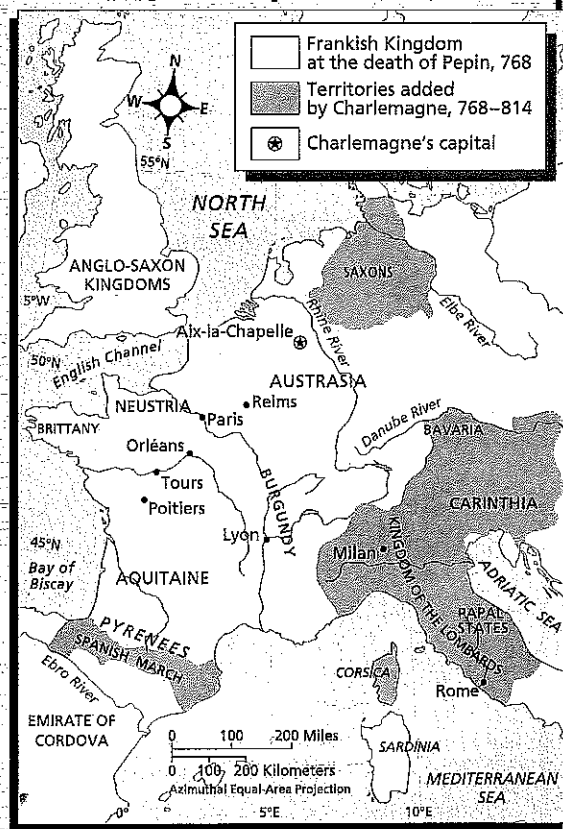
Charlemagne's ambition was to create an empire with the power and glory of the old Roman Empire. His motto was the Latin phrase *Renovatio imperi romani*, "Renewal of the Roman Empire."

On Christmas Day in the year 800, Charlemagne knelt at worship in Saint Peter's Church in Rome.

Pope Leo III placed a crown on Charlemagne's head and declared him "Emperor of the Romans." The new title had little to do with the Roman Empire, but it signified that Charlemagne, who had united much of Europe for the first time in 400 years, was regarded as the successor to the emperors of Rome. Charlemagne's coronation by the pope also dramatized the close ties between the Frankish people and the Christian church.

Government. Charlemagne's empire consisted of several hundred regions, each ruled by a representative called a count. Each count raised his own army and administered the laws within his own lands. Charlemagne established a capital at Aix-la-Chapelle (eks·lah·shah·PEL), which today is the city

Charlemagne's Empire, 768–814



Learning from Maps Charlemagne conquered much of western Europe during his lifetime.

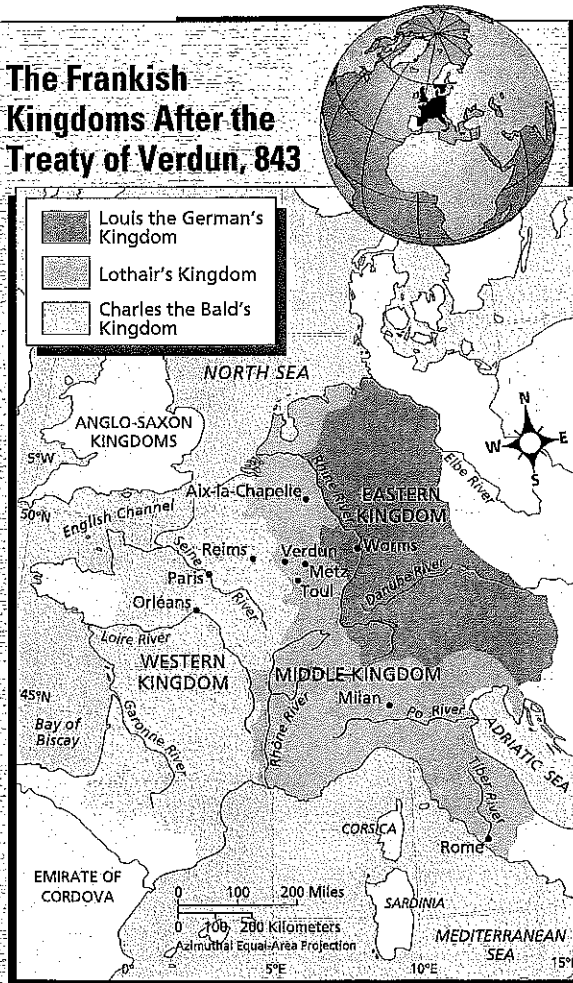
Location Where did Charlemagne establish the capital of his empire?

of Aachen (AH·kuhn), Germany, but he traveled extensively throughout his empire. His government levied no direct taxes on land or people because the emperor's vast estates produced enough revenue to cover most of the government's low expenses. Charlemagne also appointed officials called *missi dominici*, Latin for "the lord's messengers." The *missi dominici* traveled throughout Charlemagne's empire to listen to complaints, review the effectiveness of the laws, and make certain that the counts served the emperor rather than serving themselves.

Education and learning. Greatly interested in education, Charlemagne founded a school at his palace for his

own children and for other young nobles. He invited learned scholars, who were almost always monks, from all over western Europe to teach in the school. The emperor also assembled scholars from all parts of Europe to produce a readable and authentic Bible. The Carolingian Bible, as it was called, standardized the Bible for Charlemagne's empire. He ordered bishops to create libraries, by copying ancient Latin manuscripts, and to organize schools for the children of nobles and for intelligent children from the lower classes. Although Charlemagne himself never learned to write, he could read. One of his favorite books, Saint Augustine's *City of God*, urged all Christians to love God, and Charlemagne vigorously encouraged people throughout the empire to convert to Christianity.

The Frankish Kingdoms After the Treaty of Verdun, 843



Learning from Maps Charlemagne's grandsons divided his empire into three kingdoms.

Place In which kingdom was Paris located?

The Decline of the Frankish Empire

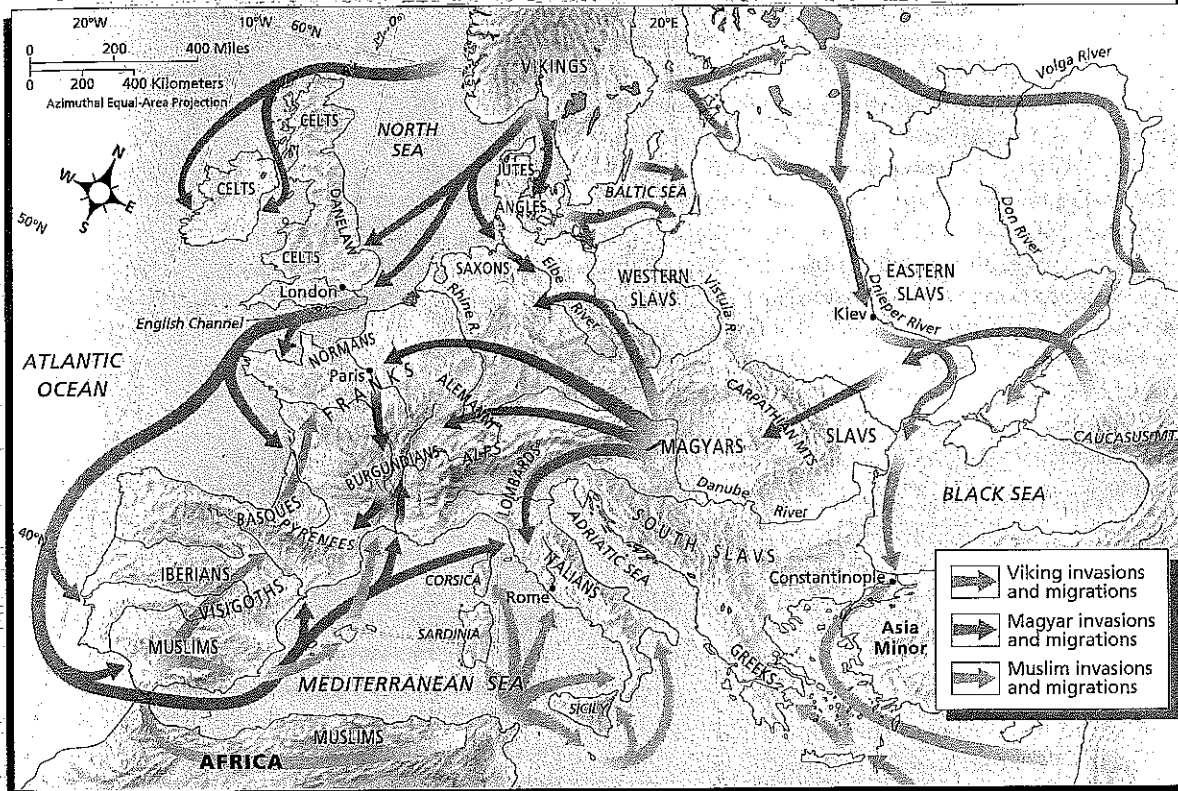
Charlemagne's energy, ability, and personality unified the empire during his lifetime. However, the empire crumbled during the reign of Charlemagne's only surviving son, Louis the Pious. After Louis died in 840, his three surviving sons, Lothair, Charles the Bald, and Louis the German, agreed to divide the empire into three parts: the eastern kingdom, the middle kingdom, and the western kingdom. (See map on this page.) Their agreement, signed in 843, was called the Treaty of Verdun.

Charlemagne's descendants were poor rulers who fought among themselves instead of uniting against powerful and ambitious local lords. By 870 the middle kingdom had broken up; it was divided between the eastern and western kingdoms. Furthermore, the great lords of these two kingdoms no longer obeyed the Carolingian monarchs. Why should they be governed by a weak central power when they could rule independently and take care of their own local interests?

Charlemagne's empire splintered not only because of internal feuds but also because invaders swarmed into the empire from every direction. In the late 800s, Europe suffered from a new round of invasions. (See map on page 229.)

The Muslims came from North Africa and terrorized the Mediterranean coast, conquering Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. From the east came the Slavs, who pressed into central Europe. Also from the east came a new group of nomads, the Magyars. Magyar tactics so resembled those of the earlier Huns that Europeans called them Hungarians. After a century of terrifying raids, the Magyars settled down and established a kingdom in what is now the country of Hungary.

Peoples of Europe, 600–1000



Learning from Maps Muslims, Slavs, Magyars, and Vikings invaded central Europe in the 800s.

Movement Across which bodies of water did the Vikings travel to settle in England and eastern Europe?

The Vikings

The most fearsome of all invaders, however, came from Scandinavia, in the north. The Germanic peoples of what are now the countries of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark called themselves Vikings. The English called them Danes, while other Europeans called them Northmen, or the Norse.

Although the Vikings were ruled by kings and nobles, their government was surprisingly democratic for its time. The Vikings were primarily farmers, but they also gathered, fished, and hunted. During the spring and summer, when the weather allowed sailing, they went “a-Viking,” that is, raiding and pillaging settlements in Europe and the British Isles. During the other months, they worked their farms, using slaves

they had captured on their raids. Assemblies of landowners made the laws.

During the 800s a growing population apparently caused a serious food shortage in Scandinavia. Many Vikings sailed from their homeland in search of food and treasure. Sturdy Viking ships, propelled by sails and by oars, skirted the coasts of Europe and plied the rivers of Germany, France, and the eastern Baltic area. They sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to Iceland and then on to Greenland and North America. In time the Vikings settled in England, Ireland, France, and eastern Europe; later, they settled in other parts of Europe. A large settlement of Vikings in northwestern France gave the region its name, Normandy, from the French word *Normans*, meaning “Northmen.”

As chaos engulfed medieval Europe, the Vikings continued their conquests, trading with the strong and pillaging the weak. Skilled in siege operations, they sometimes captured strongly fortified towns. Often savage and cruel, the Vikings seem to have enjoyed battle. They used their axes and swords to strike terror into people everywhere.

The Vikings' customs and myths centered on the pagan Norse gods. Archaeologists have excavated Viking burial mounds in Europe that include boats and implements to be used in the afterlife. Sometimes, instead of burial, the Vikings placed the dead person in a boat and burned it. In 922 an Arab, Ibn Fadlan, attended the funeral of a Viking chieftain on the Volga River. A historian wrote the following description about Fadlan's experience:

"A girl slave volunteered to be burned with her master, Ibn Fadlan relates. His ship was hauled onto land and wood placed beneath. A tent was raised on deck and a brocaded mattress set on it. The richly clothed corpse was seated on the mattress...

On the day of the burial,... the slave girl said, 'Lo, I see my lord and master he calls to me. Let me go to him.' Aboard the ship waited the old woman called the Angel of Death, who would kill her. The girl drank from a cup of nabidh and sang a long song. She grew fearful and hesitant. At once the old woman grasped her head and led her into the tent.

Inside the tent the girl died beside her master by stabbing and strangling. Then the ship was fired."

Section 1 Review

1. **Define** Middle Ages, medieval
2. **Identify** Clovis, Merovingians, Charles Martel, Pepin the Short, Charlemagne, Louis the Pious, Magyars, Vikings
3. **Locate and Explain the Significance** Papal States, Aix-la-Chapelle
4. **Summarizing Ideas (a)** What were the accomplishments of Clovis? **(b)** of Charles Martel? **(c)** of Charlemagne?
5. **Evaluating Ideas** Why did Charlemagne's empire disintegrate? What actions might his successors have taken to hold the empire together?
6. **Interpreting Ideas** Why were the Vikings feared more than other invaders?

Section 2

Feudalism and the Manorial System

Focus Questions

- How did the feudal system and the manorial system complement each other?
- What was life like for the serfs and for the nobility on the manor?
- What were the characteristics of the code of chivalry?

On the continent of Europe, organized government again disappeared within a century after Charlemagne's death, in 814. Europe became a continent of small, independent local governments. We call the political structure that evolved in Europe **feudalism**. This was a system in which kings and powerful nobles granted land to other nobles in return for loyalty, military assistance, and other services, and it was firmly established in northern France by the end of the A.D. 900s. By the middle 1000s, feudalism had become the way of life throughout most of western Europe.

Feudalism

The feudal system arose in the absence of a strong central government. Kings held large territories, but they had little power to withstand the invasions of Vikings and other peoples. In return for much-needed military help, weak kings gave grants of land to nobles. The nobles, who often had more land than they needed, then granted part of this land to their own knights—mounted warriors—in return for military service and other forms of support.

The person who granted land was called a lord. The person who received land in return for services was a **vassal**. The grant of land was called a **fief**. This term comes from the Latin word *feudum*, which gave rise to the word *feudal*. The granting and holding of a fief was really a contract between lord and vassal. Because a piece of land could also be further divided—a king's vassal might grant land to knights, for example—a person could be a lord and a vassal at the same time.

In time, the fief became hereditary. Legal ownership passed from the lord to his son, while legal possession and use passed from the vassal to his son. By about 1100, a system called **primogeniture**