



Charlemagne Unites Germanic Kingdoms

MAIN IDEA

EMPIRE BUILDING Many Germanic kingdoms that succeeded the Roman Empire were reunited under Charlemagne's empire.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Charlemagne spread Christian civilization through Northern Europe, where it had a permanent impact.

TERMS & NAMES

- Middle Ages
- Franks
- monastery
- secular
- Carolingian Dynasty
- Charlemagne

SETTING THE STAGE The gradual decline of the Roman Empire ushered in an era of European history called the **Middle Ages**, or the medieval period. It spanned the years from about 500 to 1500. During these centuries, a new society slowly emerged. It had roots in: (1) the classical heritage of Rome, (2) the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church, and (3) the customs of various Germanic tribes.

Invasions of Western Europe

In the fifth century, Germanic invaders overran the western half of the Roman Empire (see map on page 351). Repeated invasions and constant warfare caused a series of changes that altered the economy, government, and culture:

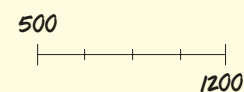
- **Disruption of Trade** Merchants faced invasions from both land and sea. Their businesses collapsed. The breakdown of trade destroyed Europe's cities as economic centers. Money became scarce.
- **Downfall of Cities** With the fall of the Roman Empire, cities were abandoned as centers of administration.
- **Population Shifts** As Roman centers of trade and government collapsed, nobles retreated to the rural areas. Roman cities were left without strong leadership. Other city dwellers also fled to the countryside, where they grew their own food. The population of western Europe became mostly rural.

The Decline of Learning The Germanic invaders who stormed Rome could not read or write. Among Romans themselves, the level of learning sank sharply as more and more families left for rural areas. Few people except priests and other church officials were literate. Knowledge of Greek, long important in Roman culture, was almost lost. Few people could read Greek works of literature, science, and philosophy. The Germanic tribes, though, had a rich oral tradition of songs and legends. But they had no written language.

Loss of a Common Language As German-speaking peoples mixed with the Roman population, Latin changed. While it was still an official language, it was no longer understood. Different dialects developed as new words and phrases became part of everyday speech. By the 800s, French, Spanish, and other Roman-based languages had evolved from Latin. The development of various languages mirrored the continued breakup of a once-unified empire.

TAKING NOTES

Following Chronological Order Note important events in the unification of the Germanic kingdoms.



Germanic Kingdoms Emerge

In the years of upheaval between 400 and 600, small Germanic kingdoms replaced Roman provinces. The borders of those kingdoms changed constantly with the fortunes of war. But the Church as an institution survived the fall of the Roman Empire. During this time of political chaos, the Church provided order and security.

The Concept of Government Changes Along with shifting boundaries, the entire concept of government changed. Loyalty to public government and written law had unified Roman society. Family ties and personal loyalty, rather than citizenship in a public state, held Germanic society together. Unlike Romans, Germanic peoples lived in small communities that were governed by unwritten rules and traditions.

Every Germanic chief led a band of warriors who had pledged their loyalty to him. In peacetime, these followers lived in their lord's hall. He gave them food, weapons, and treasure. In battle, warriors fought to the death at their lord's side. They considered it a disgrace to outlive him. But Germanic warriors felt no obligation to obey a king they did not even know. Nor would they obey an official sent to collect taxes or administer justice in the name of an emperor they had never met. The Germanic stress on personal ties made it impossible to establish orderly government for large territories.

Clovis Rules the Franks In the Roman province of Gaul (mainly what is now France and Switzerland), a Germanic people called the **Franks** held power. Their leader was Clovis (KLOH•vihs). He would bring Christianity to the region. According to legend, his wife, Clothilde, had urged him to convert to her faith, Christianity. In 496, Clovis led his warriors against another Germanic army. Fearing defeat, he appealed to the Christian God. "For I have called on my gods," he prayed, "but I find they are far from my aid. . . . Now I call on Thee. I long to believe in Thee. Only, please deliver me from my enemies." The tide of the battle shifted and the Franks won. Afterward, Clovis and 3,000 of his warriors asked a bishop to baptize them.

The Church in Rome welcomed Clovis's conversion and supported his military campaigns against other Germanic peoples. By 511, Clovis had united the Franks into one kingdom. The strategic alliance between Clovis's Frankish kingdom and the Church marked the start of a partnership between two powerful forces.

▼ Illuminated manuscripts, such as the one below, were usually the work of monks.



Germans Adopt Christianity

Politics played a key role in spreading Christianity. By 600, the Church, with the help of Frankish rulers, had converted many Germanic peoples. These new converts had settled in Rome's former lands. Missionaries also spread Christianity. These religious travelers often risked their lives to bring religious beliefs to other lands. During the 300s and 400s, they worked among the Germanic and Celtic groups that bordered the Roman Empire. In southern Europe, the fear of coastal attacks by Muslims also spurred many people to become Christians in the 600s.

Monasteries, Convents, and Manuscripts To adapt to rural conditions, the Church built religious communities called **monasteries**. There, Christian men called monks gave up their private possessions and devoted their lives to serving God. Women who followed this way of life were called nuns and lived in convents.

History Makers



Benedict 480?–543

At 15, Benedict left school and hiked up to the Sabine Hills, where he lived in a cave as a hermit. After learning about Benedict's deep religious conviction, a group of monks persuaded him to lead their monastery. Benedict declared:

We must prepare our hearts and bodies for combat under holy obedience to the divine commandments. . . . We are therefore going to establish a school in which one may learn the service of the Lord.

In his book describing the rules for monastic life, Benedict emphasized a balance between work and study. Such guidelines turned monasteries into centers of stability and learning.

Scholastica 480?–543

Scholastica is thought to be the twin sister of Benedict. She was born into a wealthy Italian family in the late Roman Empire. Little is known of her early life, except that she and Benedict were inseparable.

Like her brother, Scholastica devoted her life to the Church. She is thought to have been the abbess of a convent near the monastery founded by Benedict and is considered the first nun of the Benedictine order. She was a strong influence on her brother as he developed rules that guide Benedictine monasteries to this day. They died in the same year and are buried in one grave.



INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

RESEARCH LINKS For more on Benedict and Scholastica, go to classzone.com

Around 520, an Italian monk named Benedict began writing a book describing a strict yet practical set of rules for monasteries. Benedict's sister, Scholastica (skuh•LAS•tik•uh), headed a convent and adapted the same rules for women. These guidelines became a model for many other religious communities in western Europe. Monks and nuns devoted their lives to prayer and good works.

Monasteries also became Europe's best-educated communities. Monks opened schools, maintained libraries, and copied books. In 731, the Venerable Bede, an English monk, wrote a history of England. Scholars still consider it the best historical work of the early Middle Ages. In the 600s and 700s, monks made beautiful copies of religious writings, decorated with ornate letters and brilliant pictures. These illuminated manuscripts preserved at least part of Rome's intellectual heritage. **A**

Papal Power Expands Under Gregory I In 590, Gregory I, also called Gregory the Great, became pope. As head of the Church in Rome, Gregory broadened the authority of the papacy, or pope's office, beyond its spiritual role. Under Gregory, the papacy also became a **secular**, or worldly, power involved in politics. The pope's palace was the center of Roman government. Gregory used church revenues to raise armies, repair roads, and help the poor. He also negotiated peace treaties with invaders such as the Lombards.

According to Gregory, the region from Italy to England and from Spain to Germany fell under his responsibility. Gregory strengthened the vision of Christendom. It was a spiritual kingdom fanning out from Rome to the most distant churches. This idea of a churchly kingdom, ruled by a pope, would be a central theme of the Middle Ages. Meanwhile, secular rulers expanded their political kingdoms.

An Empire Evolves

After the Roman Empire dissolved, small kingdoms sprang up all over Europe. For example, England splintered into seven tiny kingdoms. Some of them were no

MAIN IDEA

Making Inferences

A What role did monasteries play during this time of chaos?



Charlemagne's Empire, 768–843

INTERACTIVE

- Frankish Kingdom before Charlemagne, 768
- Areas conquered by Charlemagne, 814
- Papal States
- Division by Treaty of Verdun, 843

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

1. **Region** By 814, what was the extent of Charlemagne's empire (north to south, east to west)?
2. **Region** Based on the map, why did the Treaty of Verdun signal the decline of Charlemagne's empire?

larger than the state of Connecticut. The Franks controlled the largest and strongest of Europe's kingdoms, the area that was formerly the Roman province of Gaul. When the Franks' first Christian king, Clovis, died in 511, he had extended Frankish rule over most of what is now France.

Charles Martel Emerges By 700, an official known as the *major domo*, or mayor of the palace, had become the most powerful person in the Frankish kingdom. Officially, he had charge of the royal household and estates. Unofficially, he led armies and made policy. In effect, he ruled the kingdom.

The mayor of the palace in 719, Charles Martel (Charles the Hammer), held more power than the king. Charles Martel extended the Franks' reign to the north, south, and east. He also defeated Muslim raiders from Spain at the Battle of Tours in 732. This battle was highly significant for Christian Europeans. If the Muslims had won, western Europe might have become part of the Muslim Empire. Charles Martel's victory at Tours made him a Christian hero.

At his death, Charles Martel passed on his power to his son, Pepin the Short. Pepin wanted to be king. He shrewdly cooperated with the pope. On behalf of the Church, Pepin agreed to fight the Lombards, who had invaded central Italy and threatened Rome. In exchange, the pope anointed Pepin "king by the grace of God." Thus began the **Carolingian** (KAR•uh•LIHN•juhn) **Dynasty**, the family that would rule the Franks from 751 to 987.

Charlemagne Becomes Emperor

Pepin the Short died in 768. He left a greatly strengthened Frankish kingdom to his two sons, Carloman and Charles. After Carloman's death in 771, Charles, who was known as **Charlemagne** (SHAHR•luh•MAYN), or Charles the Great, ruled the kingdom. An imposing figure, he stood six feet four inches tall. His admiring secretary, a monk named Einhard, described Charlemagne's achievements:

PRIMARY SOURCE

[Charlemagne] was the most potent prince with the greatest skill and success in different countries during the forty-seven years of his reign. Great and powerful as was the realm of Franks, Karl [Charlemagne] received from his father Pippin, he nevertheless so splendidly enlarged it . . . that he almost doubled it.

EINHARD, *Life of Charlemagne*

Charlemagne Extends Frankish Rule Charlemagne built an empire greater than any known since ancient Rome. Each summer he led his armies against enemies that surrounded his kingdom. He fought Muslims in Spain and tribes from other

Germanic kingdoms. He conquered new lands to both the south and the east. Through these conquests, Charlemagne spread Christianity. He reunited western Europe for the first time since the Roman Empire. By 800, Charlemagne’s empire was larger than the Byzantine Empire. He had become the most powerful king in western Europe.

In 800, Charlemagne traveled to Rome to crush an unruly mob that had attacked the pope. In gratitude, Pope Leo III crowned him emperor. The coronation was historic. A pope had claimed the political right to confer the title “Roman Emperor” on a European king. This event signaled the joining of Germanic power, the Church, and the heritage of the Roman Empire.

Charlemagne Leads a Revival Charlemagne strengthened his royal power by limiting the authority of the nobles. To govern his empire, he sent out royal agents. They made sure that the powerful landholders, called counts, governed their counties justly. Charlemagne regularly visited every part of his kingdom. He also kept a close watch on the management of his huge estates—the source of Carolingian wealth and power. One of his greatest accomplishments was the encouragement of learning. He surrounded himself with English, German, Italian, and Spanish scholars. For his many sons and daughters and other children at the court, Charlemagne opened a palace school. He also ordered monasteries to open schools to train future monks and priests. **B**



▲ Emperor Charlemagne

Charlemagne’s Heirs A year before Charlemagne died in 814, he crowned his only surviving son, Louis the Pious, as emperor. Louis was a devoutly religious man but an ineffective ruler. He left three sons: Lothair (loh•THAIR), Charles the Bald, and Louis the German. They fought one another for control of the Empire. In 843, the brothers signed the Treaty of Verdun, dividing the empire into three kingdoms. As a result, Carolingian kings lost power and central authority broke down. The lack of strong rulers led to a new system of governing and landholding—feudalism.

MAIN IDEA

Drawing Conclusions

B What were Charlemagne’s most notable achievements?

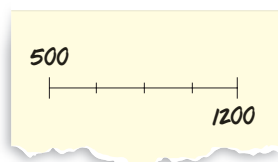
SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

TERMS & NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Middle Ages
- Franks
- monastery
- secular
- Carolingian Dynasty
- Charlemagne

USING YOUR NOTES

2. What was the most important event in the unification of the Germanic kingdoms? Why?



MAIN IDEAS

3. What were three roots of medieval culture in western Europe?
4. What are three ways that civilization in western Europe declined after the Roman Empire fell?
5. What was the most important achievement of Pope Gregory I?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** How was the relationship between a Frankish king and the pope beneficial to both?
7. **RECOGNIZING EFFECTS** Why was Charles Martel’s victory at the Battle of Tours so important for Christianity?
8. **EVALUATING** What was Charlemagne’s greatest achievement? Give reasons for your answer.
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **EMPIRE BUILDING** How does Charlemagne’s empire in medieval Europe compare with the Roman Empire? Support your opinions in a three-paragraph **expository essay**.

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY INTERNET ACTIVITY

Use the Internet to locate a medieval monastery that remains today in western Europe. Write a two-paragraph **history** of the monastery and include an illustration.

INTERNET KEYWORD
Medieval monasteries