

Charlemagne

Arguably the founder of the Frankish Empire in Western Europe, **Charlemagne** was the elder son of Pepin the Short (714 - September 24, 768, reigned 751 - 768, the brother of the Lady Bertha (mother of Roland), the first Carolingian king, and his wife Bertrada of Laon (720 - July 12, 783). Pepin the Short indulged in the monopoly of the coining of money, deciding on the opening and closure of minting shops, the weight, title and the subjects represented.

European coinage began with Pepin the Short who revived the system put in place by the ancient Greeks and Romans and kept going by the Eastern Roman Empire (1 libra = 20 solidi = 240 denarii).

On the death of Pepin the kingdom was divided between Charlemagne and his brother Carloman (Carloman ruled Austrasia). Carloman died on December 5, 771, leaving Charlemagne the leader of a reunified Frankish kingdom. Charlemagne was engaged in almost constant battle throughout his reign. He conquered Saxony in the 8th century, a goal that had been the unattainable dream of Augustus. It took Charlemagne more than 18 battles to win this victory. He proceeded to force Catholicism on the conquered, slaughtering those who refused to convert. He dreamed of the reconquest of Spain, but never fully succeeded in this goal.

In 800, at Mass on Christmas day in Rome, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne emperor, a title that had been out of use in the West since the abdication of Romulus Augustulus in 476. While this title helped to make Europe independent of Constantinople, Charlemagne did not use the title until much later, as he feared it would create dependence on the Pope.

Pursuing his father's reforms, Charlemagne did away with the monetary system based on the gold sou. Both he and King Offa of Mercia took up the system set in place by Pippin. He set up a new standard, the livre (i.e. pound)— both monetary and unit of weight— which was worth 20 sous (as per the solidus, and later the shilling) or 240 deniers (as per the denari, and eventually the penny). During this period, the livre and the sou were counting units, only the denier was a coin of the realm.

Charlemagne applied the system to much of the European Continent, and Offa's standard was voluntarily adopted by much of England.

Autograph of Charlemagne

Charlemagne organized his empire into 350 counties, each led by an appointed count. Counts served as judges, administrators, and enforced capitularies. To enforce loyalty,

he set up the system of Missi Dominici, meaning 'Envoys of the Lord.' In this system, one representative of the church and one representative of the emperor would head to the different counties and every year report back to Charlemagne on their status. Europe at the death of Charles The Great 814. -"A School Atlas of English History" ed. by Samuel Rawson Gardiner, M.A. LL.D.

When Charlemagne died in 814, he was buried in his own Cathedral at Aachen. He was succeeded by his only son to survive him, Louis the Pious, after whose reign the empire was divided between his three surviving sons according to Frankish tradition. These three kingdoms would be the foundations of later France and the Holy Roman Empire.

After Charlemagne's death, continental coinage degraded and most of Europe resorted to using the continued high quality English coin until about 1100.

It is difficult to understand Charlemagne's attitude toward his daughters. None of them contracted a sacramental marriage. This may have been an attempt to control the number of potential alliances. After his death the surviving daughters entered or were forced to enter monasteries. At least one of them, Bertha, had a recognized relationship, if not a marriage, with Angilbert, a member of Charlemagne's court circle.

Cultural significance

Charlemagne's reign is often referred to as the Carolingian Renaissance because of the flowering of scholarship, literature, art and architecture. Most of the surviving works of classical Latin were copied and preserved by Carolingian scholars. The pan-European nature of Charlemagne's influence is indicated by the origins of many of the men who worked for him: Alcuin, an Anglo-Saxon; Theodulf, a Visigoth; Paul the Deacon, a Lombard; and Angilbert and Einhard, Franks. Charlemagne enjoyed an important afterlife in European culture. One of the great medieval literature cycles, the Charlemagne cycle or Matter of France, centers around the deeds of Charlemagne's historical commander of the Breton border, Roland, and the paladins who served as a counterpart to the knights of the Round Table; their tales were first told in the chansons de geste. Charlemagne himself was accorded sainthood inside the Holy Roman Empire after the 12th Century. He was a model knight as one of the Nine Worthies

It is frequently claimed by genealogists that all people with European ancestry alive today are probably descended from Charlemagne. However, only a small percentage can actually prove descent from him. Charlemagne's marriage and relationship politics and ethics did, however, result in a fairly large number of descendants, all of whom had far better life expectancies than is usually the case for children in that time period. They were married into houses of nobility and as a result of intermarriages many people of noble descent can indeed trace their ancestry back to Charlemagne.

Charlemagne Reading
Ms. Ahonen

Essential Questions: Answer these once you have read the entire article.

Why was the rule of Charlemagne so important?

What long term effects did the rule of Charlemagne have on the countries of Europe?

1. What tribe/group was Charlemagne a member of?
2. Who was Charlemagne's father?

3. Pepin the Short revived the coinage system used by...
4. What was the name of Charlemagne brother?
5. Charlemagne conquered this territory in the 8th century.
6. What happened to those Charlemagne conquered who refused to convert to Catholicism?
7. Who crowned Charlemagne emperor in 800?
8. The coinage known as deniers became the denari and then this...
9. How many countries did Charlemagne organize his kingdom into?

10. What does Missi Dominici mean?
11. What did the Missi Dominici do?
12. Name the cathedral where Charlemagne was buried.
13. Who succeeded Charlemagne?

14. What did Charlemagne's daughters enter or were forced to enter after his death?
15. What is a monastery?
16. Charlemagne's reign is referred to as this...
17. Many genealogist claim that people with European ancestry alive today are probably descendants of Charlemagne. Why?

Now go back and answer the essential questions. Write your answers below.