

**Lecture 15: Carolingian Culture and Kingship -- The Formation of Europe**

**1. Charlemagne (The ‘Great King’) and the Carolingian Empire**

- A. Rise of the Carolingian Dynasty
- B. “Charles the Great”
- C. An Empire Revived

**2. The Culture of the Carolingians**

- A. Political Culture
  - Sacral Kingship
  - Administration of the Realm
- B. The Carolingian Renaissance: Literature and Literacy
  - Monks and Record Keeping
  - Book Production in a New Script

**3. The Division of the Empire**

- A. Louis the Pious and his Sons
- B. Treaty of Verdun, 843 – Empire Divided

**4. The Devastation of the Pagans**

- Vikings, Magyars, and Muslims

Harun-al-Rashid, Muslim Caliph ruling from Baghdad, in 800 sends a diplomatic gift of Abul-Abbas, the great elephant, to Charlemagne’s court.

The Carolingians come to power following the last powerful Merovingian King, Dagobert I (d. 638/9) – thereafter *Francia* effectively ruled by **Mayor of the Palace**

Rise of the Carolingian Dynasty occurred for two reasons:

- 1) Military consolidation of *Francia*
- 2) Strategic Alliance with the Papacy

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***Charlemagne (The ‘Great King’) and the Carolingian Empire***

**Charles Martel**, (r. 714-41) – gives his name to the Carolingian dynasty; from *Carolus* = Charles in Latin.

**Pippin III**, (r. 741-68) + brother **Carloman**, both rule as Mayors of the Palace. (Carloman retires as a monk, 747)

-- Alliance with the Papacy = *Amicitia, pax et caritas* = “mutual friendship, close relations and Christian love,”

-- 756 = **Donation of Pippin**, creates Republic of Saint Peter = forges close bond with the papacy

**Charlemagne (r. 768-814)** = Charles “le Magne”, “Charles the Great”

-- He had a vision for a united Christian Empire that embraced Roman and German military and cultural traditions

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### *Carolingian Administration and Political Culture*

**Sacral Kingship** = anointed kings, model of the Old Testament – served to legitimate Carolingian claims to royal power.

- 1) Creation of **Counts**, who administered Counties
- 2) Creation of **Dukes**, who controlled Duchies on the frontier zones
- 3) Royal commissioners = *missi dominici* = “those sent out by the lord king”
  - to transmit royal instructions and decrees
  - oversee regional counts and dukes, an administrative check
  - rise of royal bureaucracy

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### *Carolingian Renaissance – Literature and Learning*

**Carolingian Renaissance** = re-birth of Roman past and Christian faith

- 1) Expansion of literacy among the clergy (monks and priests) and among lay aristocratic circles.
- 2) Introduced a new **Carolingian Miniscule** Script – facilitates copying of books = a written script that forms the basis for our modern typeface.
- 3) Copying of **manuscript books** = history, hagiography, Christian literature, and Classical literature – role of monks and monastic *scriptoria* = centers of writing
- 4) Artistic production = creation of illuminated books

**Alcuin** (ca. 732-804), Anglo-Saxon scholar and royal advisor to Charlemagne  
-- aided in the moral and cultural reform of the church and the administration of the realm

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## *Carolingian Rulers in the Ninth Century*

Charlemagne (r. 768-814)

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Louis the Pious (r. 814-840)

(1. marriage to Ermengard)

Lothar (r. 840-855)

Pippin (d. 838)

Louis the German (r. 843-876)

+

(2. marriage to Judith)

Charles the Bald (r. 843-877)

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Treaty of Verdun (843) = division of Carolingian Empire among three brothers