World History Units 2/3:

Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter (500-1200), Global Interactions (1200-1650) Second Edition

by Jonathan D. Kantrowitz



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CHARLEMAGNE AND THE RESTORATION OF THE EMPIRE IN THE WEST

HOW DUKE PEPIN BECAME KING OF THE FRANKS

Charles Martel, whose tremendous blows at Tours earned for him his significant surname, died without ever having borne the title of king, notwithstanding he had exercised all the authority of that office.

But Charles's son Pepin, called "le Bref" (the Short), on account of his diminutive stature, aspired to the regal title and honors. He resolved to make himself king. Not deeming it wise, however, to do this without the sanction of the Pope, he sent an embassy to represent to him the state of affairs, and to solicit his advice.

Mindful of recent favors that he had received at the hands of Pepin, the Pope gave his approval to the proposed scheme by replying that it seemed altogether reasonable that the one who was king in power should be king also in name. Pepin, whose own deeds together with those of his illustrious father had done so much for the Frankish nation and for Christendom, was anointed and crowned king of the Franks (752), and thus became the first of the Carolingian line, the name of his illustrious son Charlemagne giving name to the house.

BEGINNING OF THE TEMPORAL POWER OF THE POPES

In the year 754 Pope Stephen II, who was troubled by the Lombards, besought Pepin's aid. Quick to return the favor which the head of the Church had rendered him in the establishment of his power as king, Pepin straightway crossed the Alps with a large army, expelled the Lombards from their recent conquests, and made a donation to the Pope of these captured cities and provinces (755).

This famous gift may be regarded as having laid the basis of the temporal power of the Popes; for though Pepin probably did not intend to convey to the Papal See the absolute sovereignty of the transferred lands, after a time the Popes claimed this. The Popes finally came to exercise within the limits of the donated territory all the rights and powers of independent temporal rulers. It was the beginning of the celebrated "Papal States," and of the story of the Popes as temporal princes.

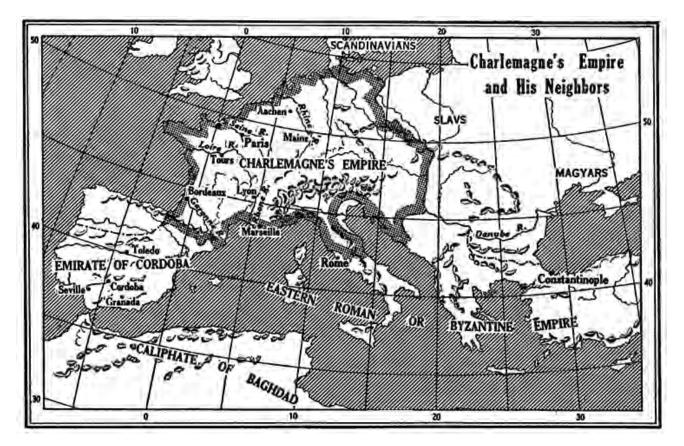
ACCESSION OF CHARLEMAGNE

Pepin died in the year 768, and his kingdom passed into the hands of his two sons, Carloman and Charles; but within three years the death of Carloman and the free votes of the Franks conferred the entire kingdom upon Charles, better known as Charlemagne, or "Charles the Great."

HIS CAMPAIGNS

Charlemagne's long reign of nearly half a century—he ruled forty-six years—was filled with military expeditions and conquests, by which he so extended the boundaries of his dominions, that at his death they embraced the larger part of Western Europe. He made fifty-two military campaigns, the chief of which were against the Lombards, the Arabs and the Saxons.

Among Charlemagne's first undertakings was a campaign against the Lombards, whose king, Desiderius, was troubling the Pope. Charlemagne wrested from Desiderius all his possessions, shut up the unfortunate king in a monastery, and placed on his own head the iron crown of the Lombards. While in Italy he visited Rome, and, in return for the favor of the Pope, confirmed the donation of his father, Pepin (774).



In the ninth year of his reign Charlemagne gathered his warriors for a crusade against the Arabs in Spain. He crossed the Pyrenees, and succeeded in wresting from the Muslims all the northeastern corner of the peninsula. As he was leading his victorious bands back across the Pyrenees, the rear of his army under the lead of the renowned warrior Roland, while hemmed in by the walls of the Pass of Roncesvalles, was set upon by the wild mountaineers (the Gascons and Basques), and cut to pieces before Charlemagne could give relief. Of the details of this event no authentic account has been preserved; but long afterwards it formed the favorite theme of the tales and songs of the Troubadours of Southern France.

But by far the greater number of the campaigns of Charlemagne were directed against the pagan Saxons, who almost alone of the German tribes still retained their ancient beliefs. Thirty years and more of his reign were occupied in these wars across the Rhine. Reduced to submission again and again, as often did the Saxons rise in desperate revolt.

Finally, Charlemagne, angered beyond measure by the obstinacy of the barbarians, caused 4,500 prisoners in his hands to be massacred. The Saxons at length yielded, and accepted Charlemagne as their sovereign, and Christianity as their religion.

RESTORATION OF THE EMPIRE IN THE WEST (800)

For a considerable time a variety of circumstances had been fostering a growing feeling of enmity between the Italians and the emperors at Constantinople. Disputes had arisen between the churches of the East and those of the West, and the Byzantine rulers had endeavored to compel the Italian churches to introduce certain changes and reforms in their worship, which had aroused the most determined opposition of the Roman bishops, who denounced the Eastern emperors as schismatics and heretics. Furthermore, while persecuting the churches of the West, these unworthy emperors had allowed the Christian lands of the East to fall prey to the Arabian Muslims.

Just at this time, moreover, the Empress Irene had deposed her son Constantine VI and put out his eyes, that she might have his place. The Byzantine throne was vacant, in the estimation of the Italians. They contended that the crown of the Caesars could not be worn by a woman. It was time that the Pope should exercise the power reposing in him as Head of the Church, and take away from the Greeks the Imperial crown, and bestow it upon some strong, orthodox, and worthy prince in the West.

CHARLEMAGNE CROWNED EMPEROR



Charlemagne crowned Emperor

Now, among all the Teutonic chiefs of Western Christendom, there was none who could dispute the claims to the honor with the king of the Franks, the representative of a most illustrious house, and the strongest champion of the young Christianity of the West against her pagan foes. Accordingly, as Charlemagne was participating in the festivities of Christmas Day in the Cathedral of St. Peter at Rome, the Pope approached the kneeling king—who declared afterwards that he was wholly ignorant of the designs of his friend—and placing a crown of gold upon his head, proclaimed him emperor of the Romans, and the rightful and consecrated successor of Caesar Augustus and Constantine (800).

The Greeks of the East, disregarding wholly what the Roman people and the Pope had done, maintained their line of emperors just as though nothing had occurred in Italy. So now from this time on for centuries there were two emperors, one in the East, and another in the West, each claiming to be the rightful successor of Caesar Augustus.

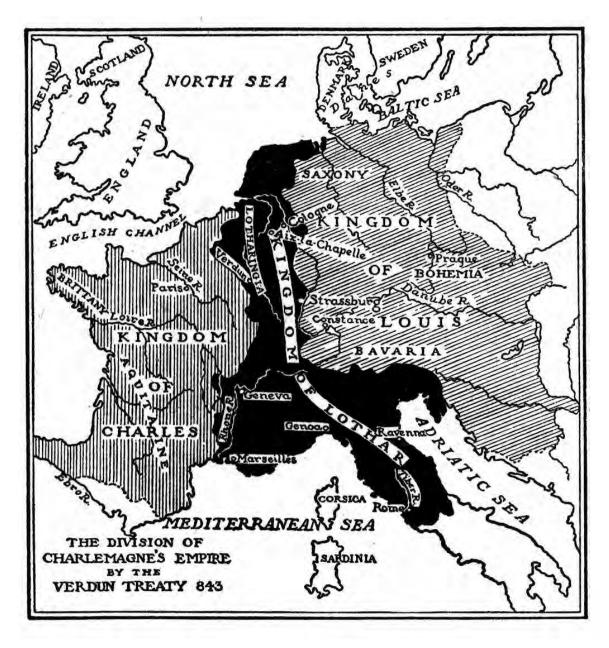
CHARLEMAGNE'S DEATH; HIS WORK

Charlemagne enjoyed the role of Emperor for only fourteen years, dying in 814. Charlemagne was not merely a warrior. His most noteworthy work was that which he effected as a reformer and statesman. He founded schools, reformed the laws, collected libraries, and extended to the Church a patronage worthy of a Constantine.

DIVISION OF THE EMPIRE; TREATY OF VERDUN (843)

Like the kingdom of Alexander, the mighty empire of Charlemagne fell to pieces soon after his death. After a period of dissension and war, the empire was divided, by the important Treaty of Verdun, among Charlemagne's three grandchildren—Charles, Lewis, and Lothair. To Charles was given France; to Lewis, Germany; and to Lothair, Italy and the valley of the Rhone, together with a narrow strip of land extending from Switzerland to the mouth of the Rhine. With these possessions of Lothair went also the title of Emperor.

This treaty is celebrated, not only because it was the first great treaty among the European states, but also on account of its marking the divergence from one another, and in some sense the origin, of three of the great nations of modern Europe—of France, Germany, and Italy.

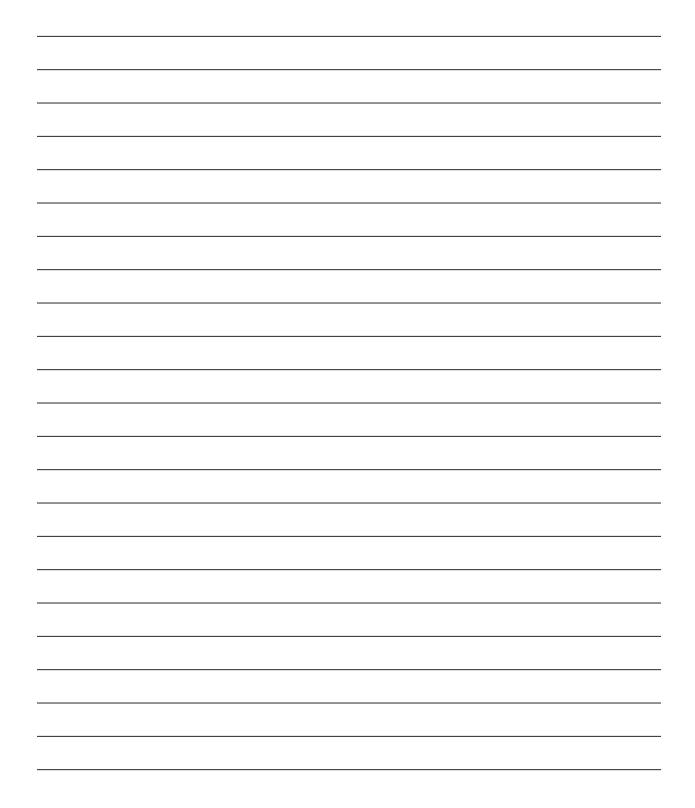




- 1. The first King of the Franks was
 - a. Charles Martel (The Hammer).
 - b. Pepin le Bref (The Short).
 - c. Pope Stephen II.
 - d. Charlemagne (Charles the Great).

- 2. The Papal States originated in a gift from ______ of conquered Lombard states on the Italian peninsula.
 - a. Charles Martel (The Hammer)
 - b. Pepin le Bref (The Short)
 - c. Pope Stephen II
 - d. Charlemagne (Charles the Great)
- 3. The Song of Roland commemorates
 - a. Charlemagne's victory over the Lombard King Desiderius.
 - b. Charlemagne's victory over the Arabs in Spain.
 - c. Roland's victory over the Gascons and Basques in the Pass of Roncevalles in the Pyrenees.
 - d. Roland's death in the Pass of Roncevalles in the Pyrenees.
- 4. Charlemagne fought the Saxons,
 - a. a pagan German tribe living across the Rhine.
 - b. a pagan German tribe living on the Frank's side of the Rhine.
 - c. a Christian German tribe living on the Frank's side of the Rhine.
 - d. a Christian German tribe living across the Rhine.
- 5. Charlemagne was surprised when Pope Leo III
 - a. asked him for help against a hostile faction in Rome.
 - b. objected to a woman occupying the Byzantine throne.
 - c. called him the strongest champion of Christianity in the West.
 - d. crowned him Emperor of the Romans.
- 6. The title of Emperor of the Romans passed by the Treaty of Verdun to Charlemagne's grandson
 - a. Charles, who was also given France.
 - b. Louis, who was also given Germany.
 - c. Lothair, who was only given the Valley of the Rhone.
 - d. Lothair, who was given Italy and other possessions.

7. The Treaty of Verdun is hailed as the foundation of three great European countries. Compare the map showing how Charlemagne's empire was divided with a map of the same area of Europe over 1,000 years later. Which division do you think most nearly encompasses a modern European nation? Which two do not? Why?



8. Charlemagne fought the Moslems in Spain, the Saxons in what is now Germany, and the Lombards in Italy. Why did he fight each of these, and what was the result? Why didn't he fight the Byzantines, since he seemed to have a legitimate claim to their throne? Cite specific examples from the tex

