

WC 223-239 PP 248-252: "Life of Charlemagne"

Chronology

500 Clovis founds the Merovingian dynasty
c. 550-650 Anglo-Saxon invasions of England
732 Battle of Tours
735 Venerable Bede writes the *History of the English Church and People*
742 Charlemagne born
c. 750 The first great English epic poem, *Beowulf*, is written in Old English.
c. 750 Irish monks produce *Book of Kells*, a Gospel book of decorative art.
800 On Christmas Day, Charlemagne is crowned emperor by the Pope in Rome
814 Charlemagne dies without leaving competent successors to continue the glory of the Carolingian dynasty
871 King Alfred the Great of England
910 The Benedictine monastery of Cluny in Burgundy becomes a place of monastic reform.

Star Terms

- Merovingian
- Carolingian
- Charlemagne

Geog. Terms

- Carolingian Empire
- Anglo-Saxon England
- Aachen

A. Sutton Hoo Ship Burial, 6th to 7th century, England [WC pg. 226-7]

Sutton Hoo burial site has been the most important physical link to the Anglo Saxon world. The site consists of 19 or 20 burial mounds that were most likely formed between 625 and 670 AD. These graves show the technology and traditions of a culture where pagan customs were slowly being replaced by Christian ones. Along with the ship-burial, many impressive artifacts were found within mound one. The list of artifacts and treasure from this mound is as follows: An iron standard, a scepter, spears, an iron-bound wooden bucket, a bronze bowl, a hanging bowl containing the remains of a musical instrument, drinking horns, a shield, a helmet, a sword, the iron head of an axe, the remains of a coat of mail, ten silver bowls, two silver spoons (engraved respectively with 'Saul' and 'Paul' in Greek), thirty-seven gold coins, three unstuck circular blanks, two small gold ingots, and various pieces of jewelry. While Sutton Hoo itself does not have the hallmarks of a Christian burial, artifacts found at the site such as the engraved spoons suggest a distinctly Christian element intermingled with the pagan ritual. This makes sense when considering the way in which Christianity was spread throughout England. Although the British Christians made no attempt to convert the Anglo-Saxons, Rome sent envoys in the late 6th century to begin to persuade the kings. More powerful kings were often able to persuade neighboring kings to convert. Despite the many who relapsed into paganism, England, at least officially, was Christian by the early 8th century. The spoons have been identified as presents likely given during a baptismal ceremony for an adult.



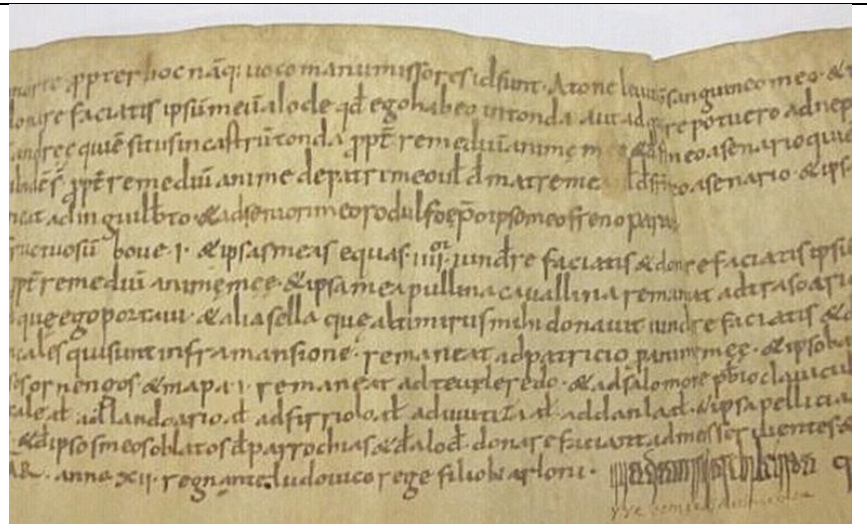
B. Equestrian Statue of Charlemagne, bronze with silver and gold gilt, 9th century Louvre Paris

On Christmas day 800 Charlemagne (768-814) was crowned Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III. The ceremony took place at St. Peter's in Rome. The imperial seal proclaimed the importance of the event with the motto: *Renovatio Romani Imperii*, or "Renovation of Imperial Rome." Charlemagne was hailed as a new Constantine and a new Augustus. Carolingians exploited the models presented by the Roman Imperial tradition to support Charlemagne's claim of an *Imperium Christianum* under his authority.

Einhard, a member of Charlemagne's court, wrote a famous biography of Charlemagne which was clearly based on the model of Roman Imperial biographies, especially that of Augustus, written by Suetonius. Review the excerpts of Einhard's biography. This page is linked to parallel passages from Suetonius's biography of Augustus. In reading this, note the priorities Einhard establishes for Charlemagne. The rider is certainly Carolingian, but the identity of the ruler remains a matter of dispute. The face does indeed correspond to depictions of Charlemagne on coins, as well as to the description of Charlemagne made by his biographer.

C. Capitulary with Carolingian miniscule, 9th century, Carolingian Empire

Charlemagne ruled more territory than any other Frankish king. The institution of monarchy among the Franks was not equipped to deal with this situation. The Merovingians had signally failed to rule other peoples, or even themselves, and it was this system that Charles had inherited. Over and above these local laws, Charlemagne began issuing laws that affected everyone and that were imposed throughout his realm. These are called capitularies, after the Latin word for chapter. They were often brief, a page or less, and treated a wide variety of subjects. Whatever their topic, however, a capitulary always superseded the local law.



One of the greatest accomplishments of the monasteries of the Carolingian era was the preservation of manuscripts. The most long-lasting result was the invention of Carolingian miniscule, developed at abbey of Corbie. This script is characterized by clear, neat letters, with each word clearly separated from one another, rather than all run together as Merovingian script often was. Alcuin formed a scriptorium, a writing office, which produced many books in the new script and influenced writers far and wide.