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Merovingian and Carolingian Empires: An Analysis of Their Strengths and Weaknesses

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Introduction

In this research paper I will analyze the achievements and the destruction of the Merovingian Empire to demonstrate how both provide a basic structure of government for the Carolingians to adopt. Conventionally the later Merovingian period is characterized as one of political decline, especially militarily; particularly when it is compared to the achievements of the succeeding Carolingian period that culminates in 800 with the coronation of Charlemagne as the first emperor in the west since 476 A.D. I propose to examine the strengths and weaknesses, or the differences and similarities, of the two dynasties, to see whether the view that the Merovingian were weak and without success is true. I will also be questioning whether the achievements that mark the Carolingian period imply ingenuity on their part, or if they are due, at least in part, to the preceding Merovingian period.

In my analysis I will show that the strengths of the Merovingians included the military successes of Clovis who helped shape the basic geographic structure of what would be known as the Merovingian kingdom. This kingdom would become a major source of power and influence in the Western Empire. I will assess whether the Merovingian empire had *Gallo-Roman* attributes in its government. I want to demonstrate a relationship between Roman and Merovingian titles of nobility and authority, as well as the use of Latin, both spoken and written. The main weakness of the Merovingian that I will analyze focuses on is their line of succession. By depicting this weakness I will be able to show that although it was destructive to the survival and longevity of the Merovingian Empire, it was also an example from which the Carolingians learned.

My analysis will show examples of how a weakness for the Merovingian usually lead to a success for the Carolingians. All of which will clearly demonstrate that although the Carolingian Empire continues long after Charlemagne, their reign would not be possible without the structure established by the Merovingians.

Analysis of Primary Sources

Gregory of Tours (c. 538-594) is the primary historian for the Merovingian period. A Gallo-Roman aristocrat from Auvergne, he acquired the Bishopric of Tours in western Gaul, due in part to his familial connections. In 575-591 A.D. Gregory wrote *Libra Historiae Francorum* [History of the Franks]. From the perspective of the modern historian Gregory's shortcomings lay in his provincial way of thinking. First and foremost he was a devout Catholic, "Gregory's account...seems to be more concerned to create the image of a catholic [dynasty which their] successors could be [compared to], then with any desire to provide an accurate account of [the Merovingian] reign."^[1]

After Clovis' death Gregory seems to lose interest in the events surrounding Merovingian history. He sees their preoccupation with civil war as sinful because it does not benefit the church or spread the word of God. "... [He] is no more 'modern' [than] is Bede... [and he] makes...severe demands on the intelligence of the historian..."^[2] by completely leaving out events in the Merovingian period that do not interest him.

The primary historian for the Carolingians was Einhard (c.770-840). His career begins as a tutor for Emperor Louis I, after which he becomes abbot of several monasteries and is granted land as a reward for his services. He spent approximately 23 years as a historian and secretary for Charlemagne, during which time he writes *Vita Karoli Magni* (The Life of Charlemagne).

There are several aspects of Einhard's work on the Carolingian period that has caused contemporary historians to question the validity of his knowledge, the first being that he chooses to model his work after Suetonius' (c. 2nd century A.D.), a Roman historian, who wrote biographies of the first twelve Roman emperors. It is speculated that because he used such an example to format his work his perspective might have been focused on trying to appeal to a Roman audience. They would be impressed by their ruler's devotion to God, or how saint-like he may be.

Another issue that arises when analyzing Einhard is political and cultural propaganda. In his work, Einhard writes about the latter part of the Merovingian period. "It may well be that the Carolingian [source] exaggerates the degree of paganism in order to make the [achievements of their] missionaries more notable."^[3] The possibility that Einhard may have exaggerated the accounts of paganism in the Merovingian period completely ignores Gregory's assessment of the impact that Clovis' conversion to Catholicism had in the west. It must be acknowledged however that during this time history was recorded to promote the spread of Christianity. The more positively the Carolingians were perceived, the more likely it would be that their beliefs and ideals, like their religion, would be accepted, and, for the most part, adopted by others. Yitzhak Hen describes the Carolingian propaganda as a way "...to undermine and discredit the Merovingian dynasty and to pave the way for legitimizing the Carolingian usurpation."^[4]

There is a clear bias in the tone Einhard uses to reflect the end of the Merovingian period: "Though this dynasty may seem to have come to an end only with Childeric III, it had really lost all power years before and it no longer possessed anything at all of importance beyond the empty title of king."^[5] If Einhard's description were true, then the

Carolingians would have been able to usurp the throne long before Childeric III. Instead Charles Martel is forced to sponsor Merovingian kings into power at the urgings of the nobility in order to assert the legitimacy of his position as Mayor of the Palace. Although Merovingian rulers at this time are now referred to as *rois fainéants* [idle kings] they were still influential in the governmental aspects of their kingdom.

Historians are only now beginning to analyze the motives of our primary sources, but no matter what kind of bias or feeling these primary sources bring into their work, they are still the best and most reliable source for these two periods in history.

A sign of Weakness for the Merovingian

The Carolingian Empire is remembered as one of strength and fortitude, and is marked by the impressive accomplishments of its rulers. Most importantly it is remembered as successful. On the other hand the Merovingian Empire is mostly remembered for its conquest of territory and its problems with maintaining continuity in their lines of succession. The accepted reasoning among historians is that this problem is at the root of their decline.

The historian Fredegar wrote that at the beginning of Childeric I's rule he had a vision on his wedding night where he saw animals in the sky. That evening he saw lions, unicorns, leopards, bears, wolves, and dogs. Modern historians have come to view this as a vision of the degeneration of Childeric's descendants in contrast to how strong the Merovingian rulers were in the beginning of this era.^[6] The Merovingian kingdom would have many rulers but there would be only four whose rule would make a strong impact: Clovis I, Chlothar I, Chlothar II, and Dagobert I.

Our first coherent account of the Merovingian Empire begins with the reign of Clovis I. According to Gregory Clovis' reign lasted for 30 years and he became king by defeating and removing the Roman leader Syagrius from Northern Gaul. Through this victory, Clovis proves himself in the eyes of the Roman Empire, as is demonstrated by the use of *rex* in some Byzantine records. As Ian Wood points out, it is clear that "[his] reign was crucial, but not decisive in the development of Frankish power."^[7]

By the time of Clovis' death, the Frankish kingdom is the most powerful in Gaul, and its king is favored by Roman emperor Anastasius. This friendship with Anastasius provided the Merovingian with political influence throughout Gaul and in the Mediterranean. Clovis spent the last four years of his life killing relatives who were chieftains of neighboring tribes to ensure that there would be no one to dispute his sons' successions to the throne. He went to great lengths to secure their inheritance. For example in one tribe Clovis convinced a prince to rise up and murder his father. After the prince killed his father, Clovis had the prince killed. He then presented the death as an act of revenge to the people of that tribe for the murder of their fallen king. He endeared them to him and his family and becoming their new ruler.

Although a ruthless conqueror, he did not plan for all aspects of his sons' reign. The confusion that follows his death in 511 A.D. is a clear sign of how unorganized the administration of the Merovingian kingdom was at this time. Clovis divided his kingdom into four equal parts for his surviving sons, Theuderic I, Chlodomer, Childebert I and Chlothar I. Although the decision to divide the kingdom sets a precedent for future kings, there is no evidence to suggest that it was a tradition among the Merovingian.^[8] Clovis, like Charles Martel of the Carolingians, did not inherit his kingdom; he earned it

on the battle field. It is suggested by Gregory of Tours that to ensure that Clovis provided land to her sons his second wife Chlothild convinced him to divide it amongst all four sons, and not just Theuderic, Clovis' eldest and most accomplished son.

With the division of the Merovingian kingdom in both 511 A.D. and especially in 562 A.D., we begin to see the true weaknesses in the system of succession. Born out of a combination of a lack of a fixed system and greed, there seem to be constant rivalry and civil unrest between the offspring. Clovis's eldest son Theuderic (r. 511-533 A.D.) inherited Rheims (later to be known as the capital of Austrasia), Chlodomer (r. 511-524 A.D.) received Orléans (later to be known as the capital of Burgunday), Childebert (r. 511-558 A.D.) received Paris (later to be known as the capital of the Aquitaine region), and Chlothar ruled from Soissons (later to be known as the capital of Neustria). Although the four kings were left with approximately equal shares of the kingdom some were less satisfied than others.

Chlodomer was the first of the four kings to die. Childebert and Chlothar banded together to prevent Chlodomer's sons from succeeding to their fathers' throne after his death in 524 A.D. at Vézeronc.^[9] The three remaining kings divided the area amongst themselves (there is no evidence to suggest that Theuderic did not profit from the usurpation as well). When Theuderic died in 533 A.D. Childebert and Chlothar joined forces again and attempt to usurp Theuderic's throne from his son Theudebert I. However being a very accomplished military tactician like his father, Theudebert would not go peacefully. He used his *leudes* [his military following] to fend off the attempts of his uncles to lay claim to his kingdom. When he died in 547 A.D. his heir Theudebald, with military backing, fended off Childebert and Chlothar's attempts to take his throne

until his death eight years later. Theudebald left no heir. Similarly when Childebert died in 558 A.D., he did not leave an heir, thus giving Chlothar the opening to become sole ruler of the Merovingian kingdom for the next three years. It must be acknowledged that although these brothers are seemingly preoccupied with taking each others kingdoms, they are also able to band together to expand their kingdom as a whole. The brothers conquered the Thuringians in 531 A.D. and the Burgundians in 534 A.D. These acquisitions combined with their occupation of Provence in 536 extended their kingdom down to the Mediterranean coast.^[10]

One reason that we see such rivalry among these rulers is that, although the kingdom is united under one king, once it is divided, there are many hands vying for their chance to acquire the kingdom. This multitude of offspring is the result of the serial monogamy practiced by many of the Merovingian kings. Between the time of Clovis I and Dagobert I kings usually took more than one wife at a time, sometimes as many as six. The offspring that were acknowledged by their fathers were usually in competition for an equal share of the kingdom.^[11]

When Chlothar died around 562 the kingdom was divided once again among his four remaining sons. Unfortunately this second wave of rulers were completely distracted by the rivalries within their family, thus making their history read more like a dramatization at times. Charibert I inherited the Aquitaine region, Chilperic I received Neustria, Guntram receives Burgandy, and finally Sigibert I ruled Austrasia. From this point on this is the generally accepted political division of the Frankish kingdom until the Carolingians take power.^[12] The problem that arises from this confusion is the management of the Merovingian kingdoms is left to the nobility, who take over

completely, because the focus of the Merovingian kings becomes the acquisition of land and not the maintenance of its government. After Clovis's death there is not another ruler who is concerned about the bureaucracy of France until Chlothar II. Although Chlothar II and Dagobert I's achievements in government are impressive it is not enough to combat the unproductive years civil unrest of the previous two generations, and it is not enough to survive the succession of "idle kings" that follow their reign.

Unlike the predecessors of each Merovingian ruler, when the Carolingian divide their kingdom amongst their sons, there is very little interpersonal strife between heirs, and the continued practice of dividing the Franks amongst more than one ruler does not lead to weakness in the administration of the empire. The line of succession was strengthened instead by the provisions made by the preceding rulers. One such provision is the symbiotic relationship between Charlemagne's ancestors and the Roman papacy. It is because of this alliance between church and Franks that Charlemagne is able to inherit the Frankish kingdom, and, combined with his own to become emperor of the Franks. This relationship between the Carolingians and the church is more of a question of motives, not loyalty. Indeed, the papacy and the Carolingians are only loyal because it is convenient for both parties at the time.

The motive for the church was protection. It was in serious need of protection from invading forces. The Papacy did not possess any military resources of their own and relied heavily on the Byzantines. However, in the 7th century the Byzantine Empire was unable to continue to provide such services as they themselves were constantly being attacked on their own eastern borders and were unable to spare the forces to go to Italy. Due to this lack of manpower, several papal officials were massacred, and several

monasteries, abbeys, and other wealthy church centers were raided and in some cases destroyed. The Papacy was also threatened by the expansion of the Lombards especially during the reign of Liutprand from 714-744 A.D. Liutprand had several military successes in his career including taking Bologna in 728 A.D. and Rome in 739 A.D. With the taking of Rome, Pope Gregory III decided to not wait for the Byzantines any longer. He appealed instead to the Franks leader Charles Martel.

Charles Martel was born August 23, 686 A.D. He was the illegitimate son of Pepin of Herstal (Pepin II) and Apaida, a concubine. With the death of his father Charles was passed over for the position of mayor. Due to the spitefulness of Charles' step-mother Plectrude, and the Austrasian nobles who supported her hatred of him, the position was granted to his infant nephew, Theodoald. The death of Pepin of Herstal also caused the outbreak of revolts throughout the kingdom. After escaping imprisonment (at the hands of Plectrude), Charles led another faction against the uprisings, and with the help of many important clerics, he secured his position as ruler. During his career as Mayor he continually kept Merovingian kings in power until he could secure the legitimacy of his rule among the aristocracy.

Despite the help he received from the church to obtain the Mayor of Palace, Martel did not send the forces needed to expel the Lombard rule from Italy as requested. His reasoning was that in 738 he had established an alliance with Liutprand when they fought the Arabs together. Although Charles did not expel the Lombard king from Italy, he did work closely with an Anglo-Saxon missionary named Boniface to spread Christianity to pagan nations probably in exchange for the help he received from the church when he was taking control of the Frankish kingdom. Charles provided the

resources and protection needed for the missionary to do his work. In 722, after receiving consecration from the pope, the missionary Boniface was commended to Charles for protection.

Charles Martel died in 741, leaving behind three sons, Carloman, Pepin the Short (although at this time he simply referred to as Pepin III), and an illegitimate son, Grifo. He divided the kingdom among Carloman and Pepin, giving Carloman sovereignty over Austrasia, Alemannia, and Thuringia; and Pepin rule over Neustria, Burgundy, and Provence; while giving Grifo land in each kingdom, but no ruling powers.^[13] Carloman and Pepin become Mayors of Palace in Neustria and Austrasia respectively, and they essentially co-rule the kingdom(s) for the next six years.

Just as with the death of Pepin of Herstal, the death of Martel brought revolt in the peripheral regions against the young mayors. Up to this point the power of this family had come from force, and was legitimized by its ability to place puppet kings in power, who it would in turn get the church to anoint and consecrate. The puppet rulers did not take to time to establish the bonds of loyalty in those regions either. This problem of maintaining order in these surrounding kingdoms after a shift in rule would be corrected with the foresight of Pepin the Short and later Charlemagne.

It is clear that the relationship that the Carolingians develop with the church is a mark of success because it strengthens their authority. However it cannot be assumed that their instinct to utilize the church is the same as having the ingenuity to come up with the idea. For the Merovingian, the issue of the sanctity of church was not of great importance, a fact that, combined with the constant civil unrest, lends to the vulnerability of their rule. The benefits received by the Carolingians from their association with the

church can be seen in the Coronation of Charlemagne in 800 A.D. However some Merovingian rulers did maintain a close relationship with the papacy, as was the case with Clovis. His marriage to Burgundian princess Chlothild is a clear sign that he was willing to accept Catholicism in his kingdom, and his acceptance of the baptism of his children only further leads us to that conclusion. Chlothild tries to convert her “heathen” husband to Catholicism as well but is unsuccessful at it herself. Clovis does convert after a victory over the Alemanni in 486. In Fredegars’ account of Clovis, the king’s conversion is considered to be one of the driving forces behind the spread and survival of Catholicism in Gaul. By 495 “there were no major rulers in the Christian world in communion with the Pope.”^[14] In East Germany they practiced Arianism, the Byzantines were at odds with the papacy over the nature of the incarnation of Christ, and Gaul, although an expanding kingdom, was considered to be run by heathens. During the next century it is believed that nearly every Frank was converted to Catholic Christianity.^[15] Although a religious occurrence, it would be foolish to believe that Clovis did not use his acceptance of Christ to his advantage, for he was first and foremost a king and a conqueror. By the time of his rule all of Southern France was under Visigothic kings who practiced Arianism. By declaring himself a king on the side of God, he is able to use spiritual cleansing as a pretense to invading the area. In 507 A.D. he invades the south and expands his kingdom to include everything from the Pyrenees to just beyond the Rhine.

This idea of utilizing the church for legitimacy was not something that originated with the Carolingian period in Gaul. It is important to note that the Byzantines also used the church for political gain. “The emperors were not above using religion for temporal

ends.”^[16] The Byzantines recognized that if an outside ruler was newly converted to Christianity, then missionaries, or other representatives of the church, could influence the political, or tactical, decisions of that ruler. They found that this method was less costly in money, time, and most importantly, soldiers. This practice of using the church for political gain proved successful to Clovis as well. During his reign he caught the attention, and gained the approval of, the Roman Emperor Anastasius. Although in part due to his military accomplishments, there was also his relationship with the church that developed with his conversion to Catholicism. There is not much evidence to suggest that the Merovingian kept close ties with the church after Clovis’ death, but the fact that both the Byzantines and Merovingians used the church in this way indicates that there was a preexisting example of church legitimacy for the Carolingian to follow.

Military Organization

At some point during their reign rulers of the Merovingian and Carolingian empires realized that to ensure the survival and growth of their kingdoms they must have strong military organization. In their battles in the Aquitaine and other nations that they conquered, both utilized combative tactics that were similar to, if not based on, that of the Byzantine Empire to capture the area for their own.

While the Byzantines were redefining their military organization “...local government authority was perforce exercised by the military commanders responsible for defense of each region...”^[17] These regions were the garrisons, some of which were trained to be in a constant state of readiness for invasion. The Byzantine military also utilized mercenaries as well as their own highly trained troops in battle.

With both the Carolingian and Merovingian campaigns to the Aquitaine we are able to get a clear sense of how similar their military organization was to the Byzantine model thus showing that the Carolingians adopted, at least in part, their military tactics and organization from the Merovingians. The Carolingians flourished militarily because they used the Byzantine model to its fullest potential. The Merovingian however, not having the opportunity to constantly observe the Roman example before they embarked on their campaigns, used the terminology of the Byzantines more than the practical application.

During Merovingian rule, it was common practice to utilize “hired guns” to supply their military and to be their eyes and ears in their districts. These mercenaries were responsible for: keeping the peace in the districts by tracking down criminals; maintaining their rulers’ authority by terrorizing peasants; raiding monasteries; and most importantly serving as soldiers in the Merovingian military.^[18]

They did not use the Byzantine tradition of swearing loyalty to a centralized ruler, instead these men answered to which ever magnate [a powerful or influential person] employed them, and were hired by the king through that person. Their loyalty therefore was not based on honor but financial gain, making them only as reliable as the king’s ability to pay them. A common form of payment for these men was sections of land that the king would give to the noble supervising the band of mercenaries. That noble would in turn share the profits of that land as payment for his men.^[19] Clovis utilized this practice frequently during his various campaigns to expand his kingdom. Although his reign is contributed with bringing stability to the Franks by uniting them under one non-Roman ruler, his constant disbursement of land as “gifts,” along with his division of the

kingdom to his heirs, leads to the initial disintegration of their dynasty.^[20] Although an important aspect of their military organization the mercenaries were not the only source of manpower. Like the Byzantines the Merovingians had specialized units and garrisons within their military that were located within the walled cities and castra [a military camp]. Within these units were a mix of the “hired guns,” local volunteers, and even descendants of Roman soldiers.

The Merovingians, beginning with Clovis, conquered nations by force and then would leave without establishing a stable form of government themselves, instead relying on their nobles to perform that function. In doing so they were never able to ensue sincere loyalty from their subjects, as was the case in Aquitaine.

“During the later seventh century, the dukes of Aquitaine managed to usurp royal power and rule independently of the Merovingian rois fainéants. The dukes tried, however to maintain Merovingian military organization where possible.”^[21] Despite being independent of Merovingian rule, the dukes of the Aquitaine used the same example of military organization in their bureaucracy. They were unsuccessful however at keeping the Carolingians out their kingdom during the reign of Pepin the Short, mostly due to how much more he used the Byzantine combative tactics in his campaign.

“As in the days of the later Roman empire and the Merovingian era, warfare in Aquitaine focused upon the fortified cities and other strongholds in the region.”^[22] Historian Bernard S. Bachrach states that there was a direct correlation between the Byzantine Empire and the two Frankish dynasties in military strategy. So why then was one more successful than the other in securing the Aquitaine? Due to their interpersonal concerns many of the later Merovingian rulers do not bother learning effective military

strategy to maintain their holdings. It is also quite clear that Martel and his descendents are well versed in “siege technology.”^[23]

Although the Merovingian can be accredited with providing the example for the Carolingian military structure, the Carolingian rulers were much more apt to establishing true allegiance with their conquered territories by “... [securing] the loyalty of the magnates of the region and [at obtaining] the military support of their personal armed followers.”^[24] This characteristic displays the political foresight of the Carolingians, but to assume that foresight alone allowed them military success is completely ignoring the fact that it is the Merovingians who took Gaul from the Roman Empire. By the end of their dynasty it is the Merovingians who control nearly all of the Gaul. This fact alone gave the Carolingians a very strong leg to stand on when they took over the empire. The various times that two empires attempted to acquire the Aquitaine it was apparent “...that the besieging of fortified places was of the greatest tactical and indeed strategic significance. There were heavily armed horsemen in Aquitaine under the early Carolingians as there had been under the independent dukes [of Aquitaine], the Merovingian kings, and the Roman [Empire].”^[25]

...How Roman Were They?

“The long time the Franks spent on the borders of the Roman Empire, as allies and as enemies, is very likely to have affected their way of thinking and behaviour...there are very good reasons for believing that they adopted various Roman customs, including the language.”^[26] There are more records of the Carolingians attempts to be Roman than there are of the Merovingian. However there is a clear indication that Latin was at least one of the spoken languages of the empire. All written sources from this era, such as all legal documents (mostly law codes like the Merovingian version of Lex Salica), poetry, charters, as well as any “text-books” used for education,

were all in Latin. Yitzhak Hen contends that the Merovingian spoke Latin, although it was more of a colloquial than classical form of it.

The strongest evidence that the Carolingian period was one of success is the Coronation of Charlemagne in 800 A.D., which is the result of the Carolingians effort to be considered equal in power to the Roman emperor. Many of the administrative achievements of Charlemagne's reign revolve around that goal. Charlemagne seemed to believe that if he behaved more like an emperor, then he would be considered one. For example he fashioned a personal seal and monogram for himself that is believed to be similar to the Byzantine seal, although there is speculation that the design has similar features to coins used during the Merovingian era. The Carolingians are attributed with establishing a form of shared communication in the west, *Latin Lingua Franca* as well.^[27] Charlemagne promoted the use of Latin amongst all the social classes in his kingdom because he did not want them to seem ignorant to the outside world. Since the Carolingians spent their early years as administrative leaders in the Merovingian kingdom, there is a good chance that their decision to use Latin as their spoken language and in their written works was influenced by the example set by the Merovingian kings.

Conclusion

When learning about different the philosophies of history you are almost forced to adopt certain absolutes. For me it is the belief that one event cannot occur on its own. An event has several steps before becoming a reality. The reputation of the Carolingians is so great that all of France's accomplishments of the 8th century are attributed to them and not the Merovingian. The relationship that the Carolingians established with the church is seen as impressive by historians because they able to go from Mayors of Palace,

a bureaucratic underling to the Merovingian kings, to the rulers of an empire who are powerful enough to establish positions of power within the political infrastructure of the church.^[28] What is forgotten is that there is a high probability that without Clovis' conversion to Catholicism (an event that portrayed him as a king on the side of the church and thus single-handedly reestablishing Christianity in the west) the Carolingians would not have had the opportunity to become protectors of the church or emperors in the west.

When reviewing the histories of the Franks, it is important to remember that the Carolingian period, although a very successful era, was not the beginning of the Frankish people. It was simply a moment in their history. An aspect that helps perpetuate its memory more so than that of the Merovingian period is that the Carolingian empire is a more extensively documented time of Frankish history.

It is illogical to assume that because the Merovingian are perceived to have failed towards the end of their reign that they did not accomplish anything in their time as rulers, or contribute anything to the history of their people. It implies that the Carolingians originated from within themselves and spontaneously achieved greatness all on their own.

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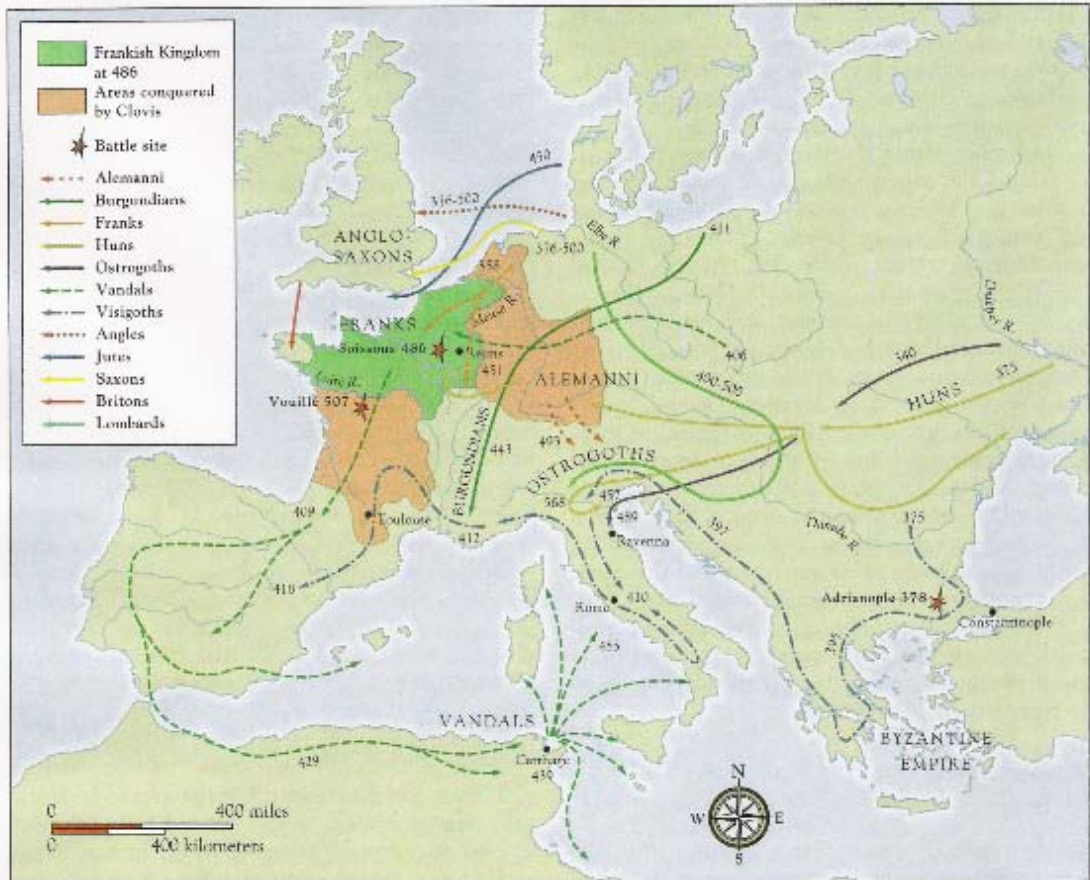
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FIGURE 6.5
Baptism of Clovis.



THINKING ABOUT GEOGRAPHY

MAP 6.1 *Germanic Invasions, Fifth Century*

This map shows the routes of the various Germanic tribes as they invaded the Roman Empire, and gives the dates of their invasions of various lands. 🗺️ Notice the various tribes entering the empire. Review where they moved and where they eventually settled. Consider what regions might be centers of continued contention. 🗺️ Notice the strategic location of Constantinople and why it would control the important trade with the Far East.

were very much in the minority, so their culture was

In many cases, two religions also existed side



FIGURE 7.2

Bronze statue of Charlemagne, ninth century.

Appendix I: Figure 3



THINKING ABOUT GEOGRAPHY

MAP 7.3 *The Empire of Charlemagne, ca. 800*

This map shows the impressive kingdom of Charlemagne with the dates of his conquests. ■ Notice the extent of Charlemagne's empire. Compare it to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms shown in Map 7.1. What would be the advantages and disadvantages faced by kings trying to administer the various realms?

■ Locate Saxony and notice its proximity to the pagan Northmen. Why might Charlemagne face particular difficulties maintaining control over that region? ■ Locate the tributary peoples on Charlemagne's eastern border. What strategic advantage might they offer the emperor?

Appendix I: Figure 4



FIGURE 7.3
Saint Peter blessing Pope Leo and Charlemagne,
ca. 798.

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