



The First Medieval Synthesis

European Civilization
in the Early Middle
Ages, 750 - 1000



Europeans and the Environment

- ✦ Sparsely populated, heavily forested landscape, de-emphasis of cities
- ✦ Farming
 - ◆ Less than 10 percent of land cultivated
 - ◆ Low crop yields
- ✦ Climate
 - ◆ Improving weather after 700
 - ◆ Constant threat of natural disaster

Origins of the Carolingians

- ✦ Carolingian dynasty were Frankish nobles with origins in the 7th c
- ✦ By 751, when the Merovingians were deposed, Pepin had the power to be named King of the Franks
- ✦ His father, Charles Martel, had re-introduced heavy cavalry & horse-drawn supplies to warfare
- ✦ Franks were falling back into tribal customs
- ✦ Saxons of Northern Europe were at best nominally Christians

The World of the Carolingians

- ◆ Charlemagne from *Carolus Magnus*, or Charles the Great (742 – 814)
- ◆ Physically impressive; est. 6’3” tall
- ◆ Described as fair-haired, tall, “bull-necked”
- ◆ Favored fairly simple dress (not overtly royal)
- ◆ At first joint ruler with brother Carloman (starting 768); after Carloman’s death (771), Charlemagne ruled alone
- ◆ Biography written by Einhard (c. 775-840): *Vita Karoli Magni*



Governing Charlemagne's Empire

✦ Governing the Empire

- ◆ Income from royal estates
- ◆ Counts as administrators
- ◆ *Missi Dominici*
- ◆ 'Counts' as administrators
- ◆ Vassalage system
- ◆ Help from the Church

✦ Charlemagne as Emperor

- ◆ Pope Leo III (795 – 816)
- ◆ Charlemagne crowned emperor in 800



The Carolingian Renaissance

- ✦ The so-called Carolingian Renaissance was short-lived.
- ✦ Art and learning were encouraged and the great king nearly restored order to Europe.
- ✦ Unfortunately his successors were less capable and outside invasions destroyed his empire's unity.



The Carolingian Intellectual Revival

- ✦ Scriptoria

- ✦ Carolingian Miniscule

- ✦ Carolingian Renaissance

 - ◆ Alcuin of Northumbria

Monks as Copyists



The Carolingian Renaissance



The Supposed Sword of Charlemagne

Carolingian Texts



**St. Gall Gospel
Back Cover**

The Carolingian Renaissance

- ✦ An important development in Carolingian scriptoria was the invention of a new kind of writing – Carolingian miniscule – which used both upper and lower case letters.



abcd
klmno
uvw

The Carolingian Empire



End of the Carolingian Renaissance



- ✦ Charlemagne's death left the empire in weaker hands.
- ✦ By the treaty of Verdun, the Frankish Empire was divided among his grandsons.

End of the Carolingian Renaissance

- ✦ Outsiders also threatened the empire.
- ✦ From the North came the Vikings.
- ✦ From the East came the Magyars.
- ✦ From the South came the Moslems

