

# Research paper on history the life of charlemagne

[Family](#), [Father](#)



Charlemagne, born on the 2nd of April 742 was the first Holy Roman Emperor and the first emperor in Western Europe after the fall of the Western Roman Empire three hundred years before his coronation. While his date of birth is relatively unknown, it can be calculated from numerous sources and with the help of the Lorsch Abbey calendar .

Charles the Great was also said to have been born in eastern Frankland, specifically in a district known as Moingewi (modern day Belgium). He was the oldest son of his father, Pepin the Short and his mother Bertrada of Laon. After this, he first studied in the monastery of Fulda in a school founded by Saint Bonafice the Martyr. After his initial training in said school, he was then sent by the abbot of the monastery, Baugolf, to the palace of the Mayor, the most powerful office of the Frankish people before .

Charlemagne was considered to be strong of build and tall in stature. In Einhard's description the top of his head was round and his eyes were large and piercing, his nose was slightly larger and longer than normal and he " had a fine head of white hair" with his demeanor being merry and good humored .

He rose to power after the death of his father on the 24th of September 768, when the right to rule was passed on to him and his brother. Where his father died is also in dispute as Einhard places it in Paris in his book The Life of Charlemagne while in another source, it was in St. Denis, also in Paris. Regardless of the place however, and if computed properly, Charles was 26 at the time and had already been campaigning in his father's name for several years .

Once rising to power, the first order of business that Charlemagne faced as

king was the Aquitanian War. The uprising began in 769 during the first years of the brother's split reign. In the year before, Pepin the Short had defeated Waifer, Duke of Aquitaine after a ten year war with the Aquitaine. Charles went on to finish his father's war when he first led his army Bordeaux and set up a fort at Fronsac. Hunald, then leader of the Aquitaine, was forced to escape to Duke Lupus II of Gascony. Unfortunately for him however, the duke was more afraid of Charles and handed Hunald over for a peace treaty. In the end, the uprising ended when Hunald was placed in a monastery and the Gascon lords finally surrendered to the Franks .

After the war with the Aquitaine however, Charlemagne was faced with another war when Pope Adrian I pleaded with him to wage a war with the Lombards. After the succession of Desiderius, certain cities in the former exarchate of Ravenna were to be handed back to the papacy. Desiderius however, decided to invade a few papal controlled cities instead and invaded Pentapolis with the idea of heading towards Rome.

Charlemagne complied with the emissaries that the pope sent, pleading for him to enforce the policies laid down by his father, Pepin the Short, and met with the emissaries of Desiderius in Thiornville where Desiderius denied the pope's claims. Charles however sided with the pope and demanded that Desiderius comply with the pope's wishes, to which Desiderius replied he never will do. In the end, Charles crossed the Alps in 773 with his uncle Bernard and chased the Lombards back to Pavia.

The siege lasted for till the spring of 774, with Charlemagne leaving temporarily to deal with Adelchis, the son of Desiderius, who at the time was also building an army in Verona. The prince was force to flee to

Constantinople to seek the aid of Constantine V who at the time was also waging a war with Bulgaria. After visiting the pope, he confirmed his father's grant of the land and expanded upon them falsely by also granting Venice, Emilia, Tuscany and Corsica. He then returned to Pavia where in exchange for their lives, the Lombards surrendered and let his army into the city in the early days of summer that year. Desiderius was exiled to the abbey of Corbie and his son died in Constantinople .

It did not end there however as there was still instability in Italy. In the year 776, the Duke Hrodgaud of Friuli and Duke Hildeprand of Spoleto rebelled. The Duke of Friuli was slain in combat while Duke Hildeprand signed a treaty for peace. In the end, all of Northern Italy was now under the reign of Charlemagne .

The next major war that Einhard recorded in the reign of Charlemagne was the Saxon War. Spanning across thirty three years with over eighteen battles, the Saxon War was one of the bitterest wars ever faced by Charlemagne . At the time, the Saxons were not Christians and as Einhard describes them, they “ were a fierce people, given to the worship of the devils, and hostile to our religion and did not consider it dishonorable to transgress and violate all laws, human and divine.” .

In the first campaign of the war, the Engrains were forced by Charlemagne in Paderborn to destroy an Irminsul post and submit to him in 773. The campaign was forced to end before it could be finished with his return to Italy to quell another uprising in the country. He returned again in 775 after two years to continue the campaign where he marched into Westphalia and conquered Sigiburg by overtaking a Saxon fort there. He defeats the Saxons

one more time when he went into Engria. In Easthalia he defeated the Saxons yet again where the leader of the Saxon forces, Hessi, decided to be baptized as a Christian .

Charlemagne then left encampments in important Saxon bastions, specifically, Sigibrug and Eresburg before finally returning to Westphilia. By this time, only Nordalbingia was the only Saxony that Charlemagne did not control, regardless, Saxon rebellions did not end.

Charlemagne once again returned to Saxony in 776 from Italy where he conquered the dukes of both Spoleta and Friuli after a rebellion destroyed his Eresburg fortress. The rebellion was quelled but the leader of the rebellion, Widukind, was able to flee to his wife's homeland, Denmark. Charlemagne then set up a camp in at Karlstadt and by the year 777 he instigated a diet of the nation Paderborn that fully integrated Saxony into the Frank Kingdom where many Saxons were converted to Christianity .

The war with the Saxons had not ended however, Charlemagne returned in 782 to build a foundation for the appointment of courts that were both Franks and Saxons and a set of laws. The laws however were mostly dictatorial in nature when it came to religious matters which gave birth to new conflicts and renewed old ones such as the law that prearranged death to any and all Saxon pagans that refused to become Christians .

Charlemagne himself fought in the battles, one on Mount Osning in 783 and again at the bank of the river Hase . It was then that Widukind returned from Denmark to lead a new revolution that lead to the massacre at Verden where Charlemagne ordered the deaths of 4, 500 Saxons who were still pagans. This lead to a conflict that lasted three years from the year 783 to the year

785 and it was during this insurrection that the Frisian's were finally defeated and a majority of the fleet that they had was destroyed. In the end, the revolt was quelled when Widukind was defeated and he was converted . After this three year war, peace was maintained for seven continuous years before another revolt in 792 when the Westphalia decided to rebel against their defeaters. A year later the Nordalbingians and the Eastphilians joined in the revolt but was put down in yet another year of war in 794. The fighting still did not end as by the year 776 another rebellion was instigated in Engrain but was quickly put down by the appearance of Charlemagne, the Slav (who were loyal allies at this point) and many of the converted Saxons themselves. The final insurrection for freedom was instigated in 804, thirty years to the date when the first battle was fought by Charlemagne. By this time however, the Saxons were disempowered to the point that the rebellion did not last long .

The wars that Charlemagne fought did not end there however as while he fought his war with the Saxons, he was also fighting different wars on different fronts such as his expansion into Spain. In the year 788, the Avars had settled in today's Hungary; the Avars were a pagan mass that came from Asia, decided to invade both Bavaria and Friuli. Charlemagne was busy however with his other wars and the ruling of his growing empire that he was not able to settle the matter until 790 when he marched to Danube and continued on to Gyor. At the same time, an army of Lombard led by Pippin also invaded Pannonia in the valley of Drava. It was also at this time that the Saxons rebelled in 792, ending the peace that lasted for seven years in the region .

While Charlemagne was busy with the Saxon revolt, Eric, the duke of Friuli and Pippin continued the campaign against the Avar with their main fortress being taken twice in the process. Soon enough, the Avar had given up and decided to present themselves to Charles and were converted to Christianity. Even their chief, now known as Abraham was able to keep his people from fighting the Franks but in the year 800, Khan Krum led the Bulgarians to attack the remaining Avar states. By the year 803, Charles the Great sent an army of Bavarian in Pannonia which defeated and ended the confederation of the Avars. In the month of November, Charlemagne went to visit the Avar leaders in Regensburg and they finally accepted Charlemagne as their ruler .

Charles was also able to subdue the Bretons in 786 who lived on the western coast of Gaul. When he first came to them they refused to be ruled by him and as such he conquered them and held a few of them hostage to ensure their loyalty . It did not end here however as within a year he then entered Italy again with his army and went to Capua. He then threatened the Beneventans with war if they did not submit to him. In the end, their duke, Aragis, sent his two sons with a royalty and a peace agreement that ended hostilities before they even began .

Another famous of Charlemagne was his campaign against the Slavs.

Charlemagne led his host into Obotrite territory with a joint Saxon - Austrasian army. The Slavs threw in the flag without a fight with their head, Witzin. He then acknowledged the submission of the Slavs through their leader Dragovit, and then demanded a great amount of hostages to ensure their loyalty. He also demanded that they allow his emissaries into pagan

territories for conversions without being hindered . His army then moved on to the Baltic before continuing into the Rhine. In the end the Slavs became faithful allies of the Frank kingdom, even helping Charlemagne win his battles with the Saxons .

This act also unfortunately nullified the validity of Empress Irene of Constantinople, an act that would lead to the two Empire's clash of who truly was the legitimate empire of the whole. In his book, Einhard wrote that Charlemagne was unaware of the intention of the Pope when he came to the altar to pray. Some historians however, say that it was impossible for Charlemagne to not know what the pope intended as he could not have missed the ornamented crown that was on the altar when he went there to pray .

Regardless of whether or not Charlemagne knew the pope's intention, he did go on to say that he was now the " re-newer of the Roman Empire" that fell into ruin with the rule of the Byzantines. This, along with his coronation to begin with led to the two empires quarrelling over who truly had legitimate Imperial dominance in the Roman Empire. In the Second Council of Nicaea however, the council tried to reintroduce the icons of the Empress Irene. Charlemagne did not recognize the authority of the council however as there were not Frank Emissaries that were sent . The Pope did not help matters as while he agreed with the veneration of the icons that the council introduced, he did not agree with the Byzantines when it came to their political stance . While Charlemagne did hold more than three of the provinces that belonged to the old Roman Empire, the Byzantines still held on to many key territories of Italy, including Venice, Naples, Reggio and Brindisi. This all changed



however when in 804, after years of infighting, Venice finally decided to place themselves under the rule of Charles . This led to a war between the Franks and the Byzantines which ended in 810 when Venice was finally returned to the rule of Empress Irene by the people who were pro-Byzantine within the city. In the end, peace was truly achieved when the two Roman Emperors finally agreed and came to terms. Charlemagne was given the rule of the peninsula of Istria and in 812, Emperor Michael I Rhangabes officially recognized Charlemagne's authority as emperor as well, but not as the Roman Emperor as Charlemagne had come to be known .

With the end of the Saxon wars, the next major war that Charlemagne faced was the Danish War. In the year 805, the Bohemians, and the Linonians were the next people that Charlemagne conquered and converted to Christianity. At the time, the Danes were known as pirates that raided the coast of Gaul and Germany without pause with their massive fleets. By 08, the King of the Danes, Godfred decided to invade Frisia and considered it as his own province. Unfortunately, he was murdered by one of his bodyguards before he had the chance to cause more harm to the empire that was now ruled by Charlemagne .

In 813, the waning years of his life, Charlemagne summoned Louis the Pious (his only legitimate son to have survived at this point in time) to court and crowned him as co-emperor before ordering him to return to Aquitaine. Charles the Great then spent his remaining days hunting. In January of the following year he caught pleurisy and, despite the many achievements in his life, fell into melancholy as many of the things he wished to achieve was still not fulfilled. By the 28th day of the same month, Charlemagne finally died

after taking Holy Communion. He was 72 years old and had reigned as king of the Franks for 47 years and emperor for 14 years . He was then buried on the very same day in Aachen Chapel despite the fact that his sickness and the cold weather did not truly require such a rushed burial.

## **Political and historical Impacts of Culture**

Despite being known for the innumerable conquest he led in his life, Charlemagne also took the reins in implementing many changes in economics, monetary, education, politics and the church. Such changes include the Carolingian Renaissance where art, literature, scholarship, and architecture became a staple of this reign. He was serious when it came to education and made sure that his children and grandchildren were educated in the many cultures and traditions of the different people that were part of their empire. He was also a reformer when it came to the church, specifically in its music .

It is unfortunate, however, that after his death in January 814, his empire soon started to crumble. By 843, the Empire was now divided into the reign of his three grandsons and by the 9th century CE, the Empire was no more . However, the cultural revival that Charlemagne instigated had a lasting effect on European civilization in the years to come. His empire also started the idea of a Christian empire in Europe, specifically the Holy Roman Empire which would be founded in the year 962, more than a hundred years after his death .

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