

# The Barbarian Invasions



# The Fall of the Roman Empire

- Beginning of the Middle Ages
- Invasions
- End of the Roman emperors



# The Fall of the Roman Empire continued

- What has been referred to as the fall of the Roman Empire marked the beginning of the Medieval era, and it also contributed to the social and political climate of Europe for centuries afterwards. Historians note that the Roman Empire, especially the city of Rome, fell for multiple reasons; however, one of the most significant reasons was the invasion of barbarian tribes. Rome was under constant threat of invasion from all sides, including Germanic tribes from north-central Europe, the Huns from Asia, and African tribes in the south. Several barbarian tribes eventually did attack, particularly in the west. Germanic invaders from the north took lands as far south as Greece and Gaul (France). Rome itself was sacked by Visigoths in 410, the Vandals in 455, and finally, in 476, Germanic invaders overthrew the last of the Roman emperors.

# The Barbarian Invasions



- From Asia: Huns and Magyars
- From the Germanic north: Saxons, Angles, and Goths

Europe in 814

# The Barbarian Invasions continued

- The founders of Europe's future nations settled in the European mainland during the early medieval period. Invaders from Asia (namely the Huns and the Magyars) and German tribes (like the Saxons, Angles, and Goths) became less nomadic and created permanent settlements. Although many of the kingdoms created were short-lived and unstable, they marked a new era of European development for population centers away from Rome.

# Rise of the Germanic Peoples



“Invasion of the Goths into the Roman Empire,”  
a 19<sup>th</sup>-century painting

- Ostrogoths: Italian peninsula
- Visigoths: modern-day Spain
- Angles and Saxons: modern-day Britain
- Franks: central Europe

# Rise of the Germanic Peoples continued

- After the Germanic invasions, Roman influence merged with the Germanic culture and people in different ways. The Ostrogoths (in the Italian peninsula) preserved Roman governmental structure and traditions. The Visigoths, located in modern-day Spain, kept Roman traditions but installed Germanic leaders. In the British Isles, the Angles and Saxons each carved out portions to create their own kingdoms. The strongest of Germanic tribes was the Franks, located in central Europe, who gained much of their strength under Clovis and Charlemagne.

# Clovis (466–511)

- Established a Frankish kingdom in central Europe
- Conquered many competing tribes and regional Roman political leaders
- Converted to Christianity





# Clovis continued

- In 486, the Franks defeated the last major Roman army in Gaul (present-day France) then subdued other tribes and minor rulers in the area to establish the first Frankish Kingdom. Clovis, the first Frankish king, had a brilliant military career and dramatically expanded the holdings of his empire through battles with both competing tribes and remaining regional Roman political leaders. During his reign, he converted to Christianity—supposedly after praying to Jesus during a battle. This helped to establish bonds with Christians now under his rule through military conquest.

**Frankish  
Kingdom  
768**



# Frankish Kingdom continued

- After the death of Clovis, Charles Martel became leader of the Franks. He continued to expand and defend the Frankish Kingdom, including the defeat of Muslim invaders in 732. After his death, his son, Pepin, asked the head of the church, Pope Zacharias, to recognize him as king. The pope agreed and Pepin became the first Frankish king to rule with papal blessing. Pepin ruled until 768. His successor, Charles, continued the relationship between the Frankish kingdom and the church and expanded it further.

# Charlemagne (742–814)

- Powerful leader, strong Christian
- Created the Carolingian Empire
- Crowned by Pope Leo III as the first Holy Roman Emperor



# Charlemagne continued

- Pepin's son, Charles, became leader of the largest empire since the Romans. Known as Charlemagne (Charles the Great), he was another fierce military leader who sought to expand the Frankish empire. The vast new territory that he created became known as the Carolingian Empire. During his rise to power, Charlemagne was summoned by Pope Leo III, who crowned him the Emperor of the Romans (or Holy Roman Emperor), uniting the Roman, Christian, and Germanic cultures and traditions.

# Conquests of Charlemagne 768 - 805

Frankish  
Kingdom



# Conquests of Charlemagne continued

- Charlemagne defeated the Lombards to the south, the Saxons to the north, and the Slavs to the east. After Charlemagne's death, his empire quickly fell apart as his grandsons fought one another for control. Powerful local nobles came to control land interests throughout Europe, leading to a decentralization of power. Adding to the disorder were constant raids carried out by Scandinavian warriors known as Vikings.

# The Vikings

- Warrior culture from Scandinavia
- Raided Europe
- Established settlements throughout Europe and even in North America



A Viking longboat



# The Vikings continued

- The Vikings were a warrior culture from Scandinavia, hailing from the areas we now know as Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Scholars disagree about the reasons why the Vikings began to aggressively raid other cultures and settle their lands. Overcrowding in the Viking homelands may have forced them to seek new territory; crop failures or a desire to find new trade outlets may also have been factors. Viking settlers ended up as far south as the Mediterranean, as far East as modern-day Russia, and as far west as modern-day Iceland, Greenland, and even Canada. They overran a large area of northwestern France and called it Norsemanland, later known as Normandy.



# Viking Invasions continued

- Charlemagne's heirs had difficulty maintaining law and order in the kingdom's fragmented territories, and the Vikings gained footholds in many areas of the Carolingian Empire. Though they had success in the 9th century venturing into the European mainland, the Vikings eventually lost their edge as the growing kingdoms of Europe developed new, more effective ways to organize and defend themselves.