
Charles Martel Turns South: The Hammer's Campaigns in Southern France 733-737

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Introduction

In 732, Charles Martel defeated the Muslim Moors at the Battle of Tours and stopped the Islamic advance into Western Europe. The victory won him the cognomen Martel or “hammer” for the way he pounded his enemies. In addition to this title, his peers recognized him as the Mayor of the Palace and Prince of the Franks. With the Islamic advance halted, Charles Martel turned his strategic efforts to securing the city of Narbonne and the rest of modern-day southern France. From 720 to 732, he had campaigned extensively throughout what is today northern France, Germany, and the Benelux countries. After 732 until his death in 741, Charles Martel campaigned, almost exclusively, in Aquitaine, southern Burgundy around Lyon, the Rhone Valley to the Mediterranean Sea, and in Septimania, modern-day Languedoc.¹

Before 732, Charles Martel's primary interest was in establishing himself as the principal leader of the three Frankish kingdoms of Austrasia, Neustria, and Burgundy. After 732, he shifted his strategic focus southward. Charles Martel's southern strategy was the result of a Moorish-controlled Narbonne. From there they threatened Frankish interests in the Rhone Valley, southern Burgundy, and Aquitaine. To secure his realm, Charles Martel had to eliminate the Moors from what is today southern France.²

Historiography

The primary sources regarding Martel's move south are a collection of medieval chronicles, histories, and annals primarily written in Latin. For the most part, these works are anonymous. The most important are *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations*, likely completed in 768, the *Annales Mettenses Priores* (The Earlier Annals of Metz) compiled about 805, Paul the Deacon's *History of the Lombards* completed in the late Eighth Century, the *Liber Historiae Francorum* (The Book of the History of the Franks) completed in 727, the *Chronicon Moissiacense* (The Chronicle of Moissac) composed sometime in the

ninth century, and *The Royal Frankish Annals*, likely edited into a final form in the mid-800s. All these works, written some years after the events, used earlier written sources and oral traditions. The *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (Monument to German History) is a collection of early medieval texts edited and published in a massive set of over ninety volumes.³

For information regarding the Moors, *The Chronicle of 754*, sometimes referred to as the *Mozarabic Chronicle of 754*, is a singularly important source. A Christian, possibly a churchman, composed the Latin *Chronicle of 754* in Moslem Spain. This chronicle, translated and edited by Kenneth Baxter Wolf in 1990, gives a great deal of information about Spain under the Moors and their conflict with the Franks. Other valuable information is contained in Arab sources that are available in either French or English translations. Muhammad Al-Makkari's *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain in 2 Volumes*, completed sometime before the author's death in 1632, is a compilation of earlier written material, much of which is now lost. This work was translated into English by Pascual de Gayangos in 1840 (Volume 1) and 1843 (Volume 2). Making use of now lost sources, 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Al-Athir completed *The Prefect History* in the 1220s. E. Fagnan extracted, edited, and translated into French the sections regarding North Africa and Spain as *Annales du Maghreb et de l'Espagne*, published in 1901. Ibn Al-Qutiya's *Early Islamic Spain: the History of Ibn al-Qutiya* completed between 961 and 977 records much of the oral tradition about the Moors' early years in Spain. David James translated the work into English in 2009.⁴

Their brevity often mars the value of the above sources. Oftentimes, a few short lines cover the events of entire years. Furthermore, the "facts" presented in the chronicles cannot always be taken at face value. For example, in his *History of the Lombards*, Paul the Deacon reports that Charles Martel and Eudo, Duke of Aquitaine, fought together at the Battle of Toulouse and killed over 300,000 Moors. Paul confuses the 721 Battle of Toulouse with the 732 Battle of Tours. In addition, the number of Moors reported killed is at least an order of magnitude larger than the greatest possible number of the entire Moorish army involved in the battle.⁵

Many of the Latin primary sources, specifically the *Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations*, the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and *The Royal Frankish Annals* are unabashedly pro-Frank and pro-Carolingian and are nearly hagiographic in their praise of Charles Martel and his descendants. Christian and Muslim sources are also biased. Ibn Al-Athir's, Al-Qutiya's and Al-Makkari's works are all pro-Muslim. Clearly, none of these sources contains objective writing. Therefore, critical reading is necessary.⁶

Many secondary works explore the military organization, strategy, tactics, weapons, and motivations of the two sides as they battled for control of what is now

southeastern France. For discussions of the Frankish military and political organization Bernard S. Bachrach's *Merovingian Military Organization, 481-751* (1972) and *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire* (2001) are invaluable. Also, Paul Fouracre's *The Age of Charles Martel* (2000) is extremely useful for information on the Frankish realm and Charles Martel. Important secondary sources about Muslims such as *The Arab Conquest of Spain, 710-797* (1989) by Roger Collins and Hugh Kennedy's *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (2001) are equally valuable for information on the caliphates' military organization and the internal politics of *al-Andalus*.

The Theater of War

Franks in Francia

The year 732 marked three hundred years of established Frankish kingdoms in Gaul. The Franks first entered Gaul as Roman auxiliaries and fought the Huns at Chalon in 451. Since then, under the Merovingian kings, the Franks had, at one time or the other, either directly ruled or had formed allied or client relationships with regions from Bavaria to Gascony. However, outside the central kingdoms of Austrasia, Neustria, and Burgundy this control oscillated between direct rule and no control at all.⁷

This period was known as the time of the *rois faineants* or "Do Nothing" kings. Power centered on the *Mayor Domus*, or Mayor of the Palace. The kings remained in their position as figureheads. Though a selection process existed amongst the nobles, the death of the Mayor of the Palace often produced power struggles. Bloodlines did not guarantee the office. As a result, assassinations, a coup, or outright war decided the matter.⁸

Charles Martel was the third son of Pippin the Middle, the Austrasian Mayor of the Palace. In 715, Charles's stepmother imprisoned him to prevent him from inheriting his father's position and passed favor onto his infant nephews. However, Charles Martel managed to escape. With the Austrasian Carolingian clan defeated and the family treasure handed over the rival Neustrians, Charles Martel organized a counterstroke against the Neustrians at Ambleve near Malmedy. He ambushed and inflicted a serious defeat on them just one year after escaping his confinement.⁹

Charles Martel went on to defeat his Neustrian rival, Ragamfred, again in 717 at Vichy. In 718, Charles Martel chased an army of Aquitainians, allied to Ragamfred, back over the River Loire. Later that same year he marched east of the River Rhine and defeated the rebellious Saxons. By 724, Charles Martel was the

master of *Francia*. He began to reassert control over regions that had slipped loose from the *regnum Francorum* (Kingdom of the Franks) during the preceding years.¹⁰

Despite the chaotic conditions, the Frankish homeland was surprisingly secure, stable, and expansive when compared to other successor states of the old Western Roman Empire. The reason for this is rooted in “the Frankish System” of rule. Even on the periphery of the realm, Frankish rulers operated through local power structures when they could, and sought consensus among the powerful magnates for important decisions. The rulers called meetings of these powerful men, sometimes at the start of the campaign season as a military muster, but also at other times to discuss issues important to the realm. Consensus was an important aspect of the Frankish political system. Failure to engage in dialogue often disrupted the system.¹¹

Moors in al-Andalus

The Muslims, or Moors, as they were known to the Franks, were newcomers to the continent. In fact they were a new force in the world. Motivated by a new religion, Islam, the small, fierce Arab tribes had emerged from the desert and through conversion and conquest had, by 711, ruled half the known world. In the west, the Muslims stood on the south shore of the Straits of Gibraltar and looked north at the Visigoth kingdom of *Hispania*, modern day Spain and Portugal. Meanwhile, in the east they were fast approaching the gates of Constantinople.¹²

The Umayyad Caliphate was under a political and religious mandate to take new lands and *Hispania* was the next logical step of expansion after the conquest of the Berbers of North Africa. However, there is a myth about the Muslim invasion of *Hispania*. The tale involves the daughter of a powerful Visigoth noble raped by Roderic, the last Visigoth King of *Hispania*, and in revenge for the crime, the girl’s father invited the Muslims into Spain.¹³

Either way, the conquest of *Hispania* was swift. Before the main invasion, the Muslims in North Africa scouted, raided, and pillaged the southern coast of Spain. In 711, Tariq ibn Ziyad arrived in *Hispania* with a force of about seven thousand men for the Battle of Guadalete, the only large battle fought between the Muslim invaders and the Visigoth army. The Moors almost completely annihilated the Visigoths. A few Visigoth survivors fled. A civil war and a conspiracy within Roderick’s government weakened the Visigoths’ resistance to the Moors. Rivals for the Visigoth throne ultimately betrayed the king.¹⁴

An additional force of twelve thousand men led by Musa ibn Nusayr joined Tariq for clean-up operations. Thereafter, large-scale resistance ended. However, some cities continued to resist. Musa besieged, looted, and burned those cities. Musa

and Tariq advanced as far east as Zaragoza. Musa, recalled to Damascus, took Tariq with him, but left his son, Abd al-Aziz ibn Musa, in charge of the newly conquered territory.¹⁵

Abd al-Aziz continued the pacification of the peninsula “by subduing several important fortresses and cities.”¹⁶ However, he was just as happy to sign treaties with local Visigoth nobles; which followed the tradition of similar pacts signed by the Muslims in their earlier conquests. In 713, Abd al-Aziz signed a treaty with the Visigoth nobleman, Theodemir, called Tudmir by the Moors, in which the Muslim leader promised to respect Christian property and religion and vowed to recognize Theodemir’s sovereignty. In return, the Visigoth noble would not hide deserters, would pay an annual per capita tax of hard money, and would provide certain agricultural goods. Arrangements like this treaty allowed the small Muslim armies to deal with armed rebellions and at the same time expand their sphere of influence. These treaty arrangements were so beneficial to both sides that they maintained them for years.¹⁷

The Theater of the Conflict

Septimania

Septimania was the part of the Visigoth kingdom of Hispania that extended east of the Pyrenees along the Mediterranean coast, nearly to the Rhone River, and on the north along a line between the cities of Carcassonne and Toulouse. Septimania’s capital was Narbonne. Other important cities were Nimes, Maguelone, Agde, and Beziers. By 507, the Franks destroyed the Visigoth kingdom of Toulouse and occupied all of its territory, except Septimania. A series of back and forth wars in the early 500s saw the Franks take all of the Visigoth territory only to be dislodged again before 548. After the last campaign, the territory remained part of the Visigoth kingdom.¹⁸

Following the Muslim invasion of Spain in 711, Septimania, under a Visigoth king named Ardo, maintained some autonomy. However, independence did not last long. In 717, the Moors crossed the Pyrenees Mountains and engaged the Visigoths in frequent skirmishes. By 720, the Muslims occupied Narbonne, and were soon using it as a raiding base.¹⁹

From 720 to 759, the Moors saw Septimania as an integrated part of the Caliphate, just like the rest of al-Andalus (Muslim Spain). Furthermore, for two generations, the city of Narbonne was a valuable strategic asset of the Moors. From this stronghold, the Moors launched raids up the Rhone Valley, into Aquitaine, and along the Mediterranean coast, without having to navigate the difficult mountain

passes. As such, Narbonne was a primary strategic target for the Franks.²⁰

Aquitaine

Aquitaine, in the eighth century, was a rough pentagon, bound on the southwest by the Pyrenees, by Biscayne Bay to the west, the Loire River on the north and northeast, and an ill-defined line about halfway between Toulouse and Carcassonne on the south. The Frankish king Clovis, in an alliance with the Byzantine Empire, shattered the Visigoth kingdom of Toulouse in 507 at the Battle of Vouille. After Clovis's victory, Aquitaine became a somewhat troublesome part of the Frankish realms. Sometimes Aquitaine appeared to be an integrated part of the Frankish realms and other times nearly completely independent. Only a long series of campaigns by Charles Martel, his son, King Pippin I, and his grandson, Charlemagne, brought Aquitaine under complete control. Until then, the region enjoyed a singularly ambiguous political situation.²¹

A number of Frankish kings and queens controlled parts of the region through most of the sixth century. However, after 567, the cities of Aquitaine passed on as an inheritance in a rapid and apparently random fashion to a number of rulers. For example, in a span of just twenty years, five kings and two queens held the city of Cahors. Because of unstable leadership, Aquitaine remained politically disjointed in the late sixth and early seventh centuries.²²

When Dagobert I inherited the entire kingdom from his father in 628, Dagobert's half-brother, Charibert, tried to seize the throne. However, "Charibert ... made little headway since he was simple-minded." Rather than kill his half-brother, Dagobert gave him Aquitaine from the Loire River to the Pyrenees Mountains. This included the cities of Toulouse, Cahors, Agen, Perigueux, and Saintes. In exchange for this generous land grant, Charibert would make no further claims to any other part of his father's kingdom. During his reign, Charibert extended his rule by conquering Gascony, roughly the area between the River Garonne and the Pyrenees along the Atlantic coast. Charibert died in the ninth year of Dagobert's reign, and his infant son, Chilperic, died shortly after his father. These deaths drew some suspicion that Dagobert had arranged the assassination of both. The death of Chilperic returned the Kingdom of the Frank to single rule.²³

In the confusion that beset Francia in the late 600s, civil war raged in Neustria, open war broke out between Neustria and Austrasia, and at least two kings died a violent death. Aquitaine reclaimed a measure of political, military, and cultural independence from the Kingdom of the Franks. In 691, Pippin the Middle took sole leadership of the Franks. The Aquitainians along with the Saxons, Bavarians, Bretons and other peoples had managed to break away from Frankish

rule. During this time, the Aquitainians also reasserted a certain cultural distinctiveness from the Franks. For example, the Franks referred to the peoples that lived south of the Loire as “Romans.” In contrast, the Aquitainians called the Franks that resided north of the Loire “barbarians.” In addition, Aquitaine retained a distinct and different military tradition and organization from the Frankish lands north of the Loire. Evidence indicates that Aquitaine remained far more influenced by Roman institutions than other parts of Gaul.²⁴

However, too much may be made of this supposed separateness. The level of autonomy the Duchy of Aquitaine had is unclear. Certainly, some of the churches and monasteries that held lands in other parts of the Frankish kingdoms also had property in Aquitaine and at least one great churchman of Aquitaine, Ansoald, Bishop of Poitiers, also had land in Burgundy. In addition, a version of Latin was the common written tongue both north and south of the Loire. Through all this, Aquitaine had links to the Kingdom of the Franks through landholding, a common religion, and a common tongue, as well as common social and political structures.²⁵

Provence

Eighth century Provence ran south from Lyon along the Rhone River Valley. The region was west of the Alps and east of Moorish Septimania. The area's major walled cities on the Rhone River were Arles and Avignon, while Marseilles was the region's major Mediterranean Sea port. Roman roads that ran along both sides of the Rhone connected all of these cities, and bridges at Avignon crossed the river.²⁶ Since the early 500s, the Franks had had an interest in Provence, fighting both Goths and Lombards to take and maintain control of the area. From the sixth to the eighth centuries, two considerations drove Frankish interests. First, maintaining the lucrative trade along the Rhone River from the Mediterranean Sea into Central Gaul, which the Franks taxed. Second, controlling the Alpine mountain passes into Northern Italy. By doing so, they controlled trade and maintained a defense against possible Lombard invasion.²⁷

During the late seventh and early eighth centuries, Provence remained in the Frankish sphere of influence. However, at least some the great men of the province were decidedly anti-Charles Martel and in open conflict with him. For example, the clan headed by Duke Maurontus resisted Charles Martel's attempt to take direct control of Provence. Meanwhile, another great family headed by Patricius Abbo, supported Charles's bid to control the area.²⁸

The Hammer Moves South

For Charles Martel, the victory at Tours in 732 made him the preeminent Frankish leader. This victory also made Eudo, Duke of Aquitaine, who had previously opposed Charles Martel recognize him as his overlord. In 731, Charles Martel launched two devastating raids into Aquitaine to restrain Eudo. However, Eudo's disastrous defeat at the hands of the Moors at the Battle of the River Garonne in 732 forced him to turn to his old enemy. For the time being, the arrangement between Charles Martel and Eudo secured Charles Martel's personal control of Aquitaine. The Frankish Mayor of the Palace, Charles Martel, could now turn his attention to securing southern Burgundy and Provence against the threat posed by the Muslims holding Narbonne and Nimes.²⁹

Burgundy was the third Merovingian Frankish kingdom in importance after Neustria and Austrasia. With no Burgundian Mayor of the Palace, at times, the Merovingian kings directly controlled Burgundy. By the time of the Battle of Tours, some of the lords of northern Burgundy around Orleans were under Charles Martel's personal authority or closely allied with him, to the extent that he felt powerful enough to direct the area's churchmen to his satisfaction. However, the area in southern Burgundy around Lyon was not under such control. A year after defeating the Moors, Charles Martel invaded southern Burgundy and appointed his followers as judges and counts to take and enforce his mandate over the locals.³⁰

In 734, Charles Martel had to put down a revolt of the Frisians that included seaborne operations in the North Sea. The year 735 saw Charles Martel back in Aquitaine. Eudo died that year and Charles Martel enforced his control over the area and over Eudo's heir, Hunoald, by occupying Hunoald's territory including many of the cities and forts. Because of this military occupation of his lands, Hunoald only ruled Aquitaine with Charles Martel's "permission." Furthermore, Charles Martel made Hunoald swear allegiance to his sons, Carloman and Pippin.³¹ Charles Martel could now move his strategic focus further south.

With affairs settled in Aquitaine, in 736 Charles Martel once more moved south, this time into the Lyonnais. His attempt to exert control over the city of Lyon and the surrounding area three years earlier produced limited success. At this time he was forced to replace many of the previously appointed officials with new men. He then led his forces down the Rhone River Valley all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. This move displaced Duke Maurontus from his position of power in the area.³² With the Frankish military occupying the Rhone Valley, the Moors were now cut-off from easy raiding and further expansion to the east.

Maurontus made common cause with the Muslims of Narbonne to regain his previous position in Provence. He and his followers allowed the Moors into the

strongly fortified city of Avignon. Maurontus then used the Moors to attack his enemies, including Charles Martel's allies. The *Annales Mettenses Priores* merely reports the city's capture by deception and the devastation of the countryside by the Moors without mentioning Maurontus's role in the action. Nonetheless, in light of other evidence, Maurontus likely had some part in the Moors' capture of the city. Other sources report that the Muslims also captured Arles.³³ The capture of Avignon and Arles was a serious strategic threat to Charles Martel's position in the Rhone Valley. It cut him off from his followers in the south, and the Alpine passes into Italy. Furthermore, the Moors could now easily attack up the river into Burgundy and east to the Alps.

The Frankish response to the capture of Avignon was massive. First, Charles Martel dispatched an advanced force under his half-brother, Duke Childebrand, which had a siege train large enough to surround the well-prepared target. Charles Martel arrived with more men and decided to take the city by assault rather than wait for it to surrender, because a second Moorish army was forming near Narbonne.³⁴

The Franks had a long tradition of siege warfare. Clovis and his successors conducted sieges at Avignon in 500 and at Comminges in 585. The skills to invest and attack a city were not lost with the rise of the Mayors. Pippin the Middle conducted at least one siege at Namur in 684. The pervasiveness of fortified places throughout former Roman Gaul demanded that any effective army have the means to deal with walled cities and other kinds of fortification.³⁵ For their time, Frankish siege-techniques were no less effective than the Romans. The willingness of the Franks to engage in sieges indicates they were confident in their abilities.

At Avignon, the Franks used a combination of siege machines, such as battering rams and rope ladders, to assault the city. The battering rams were heavy logs with iron heads attached. They hung from a frame so that it swung back and forth to smash gates or walls. Affixed with wheels, the device sported a protective cover of woven branches, planks, layers of leather, wool, and sand to ward off stones and incendiary devices. The rope ladders were likely just knotted ropes with grappling hooks of some kind. The nature of rope ladders made their use in the attack on Avignon a commando-type or sneak attack. Furthermore, the use of rope ladders indicates that the defending force was relatively small. The attack scenario played out as follows: the Franks pushed battering rams into position against the city's gates and while the defenders rushed to fend off this attack, other Franks using rope ladders climbed over the now undefended parts of the wall. The Franks used ropes to climb not just the walls but also buildings. It is likely the suburbs had encroached on the city walls, giving the attackers platforms to help them slip over. The Franks captured the city and burned it. Even though the Franks killed and

imprisoned an unknown number of enemy soldiers, insurgents forced Charles Martel and Childebrand to recapture the city the next year.³⁶

After taking Avignon, he took the strategic offensive against the Moors. He “crossed the Rhone with his men and plunged into Gothic territory as far as the Narbonnaise.”³⁷ On reaching Narbonne, Charles Martel also found an unanticipated enemy army encamped outside the city. Commanded by Yusuf Ibn Abd ar Rahman al Fihri, this new army was possibly a relief force meant for Avignon that had not had time to act before that city fell. The Franks then surrounded both the city and the army camp with a rampart and blocked river traffic into the city. Charles Martel’s army also added redoubts and armed camps at intervals to combat Moorish sorties or any attempted breakouts. Furthermore, he placed catapults and batter rams in strategic locations in preparation for an assault on either the city or the camp.³⁸

The Moors of Narbonne sent a dispatch to al-Andalus asking for assistance. A large relief force gathered as the great nobles and warlords in Spain gathered another army from their combined resources. Omar ibn Chaled took command of this force. Rather than cross the dangerous Pyrenees, the relief force came by sea. Ibn Chaled landed at what today is Port-Mahon where a Roman-built dock was still useable. Thinking he had achieved surprise, the Moorish general established a fortified camp on some high ground at the base of the Port-Mahon peninsula. He then moved his main force a little distance up the river and rested for the night.³⁹

Charles Martel received word of Ibn Chaled’s approach and countered the threat to his rear. Leaving part of his force to maintain the siege of Narbonne, Charles Martel quickly marched the rest of his army along the Via Domitia to the Valley of the River Berre. On reaching the valley, he turned and moved his force toward the sea. This blocked any Moorish attempt to reach the road. Due to good intelligence, Martel knew the location of the Moors. To rest his army, Martel had his men construct the Roman-influenced Frankish camp on the banks of the Berre in the valley of the Corbieres where an earlier Visigoth palace once stood.

The next day as the Franks approached the enemy position they deployed in their traditional infantry lines and attacked. Tradition puts The Battle of the Berre in an area between the Berre River and the marsh now called the Etang de la Palme near the village of Sigean. The location made tactical sense. The Franks secured their flanks with impassable terrain when possible. At the Battle of the Berre, they used the Berre River and the Etang de la Palme Marsh. At the Battle of Tours, they used a heavily wooded hill and the Clain River. The Moors had the sea behind them with their camp occupying the only nearby high ground. Using good tactics, the Franks cut off the Moors from their camp by a straightforward pinch from their right to their left.⁴⁰

In their battle line, the Franks were like a living threshing machine, but

instead of harvesting grain, they reaped the lives of their enemies. The Frankish infantry advanced slowly, systematically stabbing and smashing anything that stood in front of them. As was their custom, they refused to allow a gap in the line and kept moving forward. Both sides fought hard, but when the Franks killed Ibn Chaled, the Moors broke and ran. The retreating Muslims, cut off from their camp, tried to swim or take small fishing boats back to their fleet still at anchor at Port-Mahon. The Franks pursued the defeated Moors in boats, many Moors drowned as they fled. The victorious Franks now turned on the Moors' camp, which quickly surrendered. The victors captured a great amount of loot and a large number of prisoners.⁴¹

After his success at the Berre, Charles Martel lifted his siege of Narbonne. It is possible that his army had suffered a number of casualties in the battle at the Berre River and he did not feel strong enough to attempt a direct assault on both the city and the nearby enemy camp. Starving out either the city or the camp was a slow process and another relief force might appear at any time from Spain. Nevertheless, on his way out of Septimania, Charles Martel and his army captured the Moslem controlled cities of Agde, Beziers, and Nimes. He destroyed the cities and their suburbs.⁴² This rendered those cities useless as military outposts.

Conclusion

When Charles Martel died in 741, he had not been able to capture Narbonne, but had left that to his son, Pippin, who accomplished the capture of the city in 759 after a long siege.⁴³ However, Charles Martel's southern strategy had largely eliminated the Moorish threat posed to the Kingdom of the Franks and, by extension, all of Christian Europe by Islamic Spain. By driving the Moors west of the Pyrenees, Charles and Pippin secured and established the southern border of what would become France. This border is still in place today.

For good or ill, Charles Martel largely established the Franks as the preeminent Christian military power in Europe. This military dominance passed to his son and his grandson Charlemagne. This power let Charles Martel's descendants build the Holy Roman Empire and sparked the Carolingian Renaissance.

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Notes

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