

Clovis ruled his nation until 511. His political power came to a dramatic head in 507 with a strong victory over Alaric II, the Visigoth ruler. It proved a better power base and Clovis supported the church and worked to unity the Frankish tribes.

The ruling family of Clovis is known as the Merovingian line. They were the virtual governors of the nation throughout the sixth century and into the seventh...but the Franks were not given to great loyalty on a family line basis. About 687 there developed the Carolingian line of leadership, another Frankish family of tribal chieftains. The two families together ruled what we may call "France" for the next three-quarters of a century but the Carolingians, through marriage, compromises, family promotions, etc. became increasingly more recognized in leadership. Pippin (or Pepin...d. 714) was the first of their outstanding leaders and he was followed by Charles Martel (d. 740). Apart from a hard feeling now and then the changeover was accomplished without civil war...but the key is that everyone was willing to take the needed time.

Charles Martel made an important contribution to European history when he gathered an army and defeated the Islamic forces at Tours and Poitiers. The Islamics had conquered North Africa and were on the road to sweeping Europe until blocked by Martel and all of us once date-conscious historians recall it thus:

At 732 at the Battle of Tours,  
Charles Martel defeated the Moors.

This was an age of legendary heroes...Roland...et al but it was a very important victory for western civilization. Charles Martel was a loyal churchman and both enjoyed the services of it for himself and took advantage of them when it was in his interest to do so.

The Carolingian/Merovingian complex was settled after the death of Martel and during the reign of his son, Pepin the Short. (d. 771) Pepin came to the political leadership when his brother Carloman elected for serving the church and in 747 entered a monastery. Pepin was the sole Carolingian ruler and his Merovingian contemporary was Childeric III. In a peaceful way, Pepin persuaded Childeric to yield