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HIST 100-50

21 October 2016

Bernard S. Bachrach, “Charlemagne and the Carolingian General Staff” *The Journal of*

*Military History,* Vol. 66 No. 2, 313-357 (April 2002)

**Thesis:** Bacharach argues that the Frankish king Charlemagne, demonstrated a military leadership system that is not only comparable to later strategies that emerged during the1700’s and 1800’s in Europe, but also was uncharacteristically advance when compared to other medieval military systems.

**Supporting:** Bacharach’s first example of the Frank’s complex military system, is a written description from a man named Adalhard, who served under Charlemagne and his father before him, describing how the Frankish rulers would hold annual gatherings of all the kingdom’s leaders. Particular note is given to Adalhard’s explanation that everyone who came to these meetings was required to bring with them detailed intelligence of the areas they lived in, so that the king could personally interview them, in order to obtain information that required either domestic mediation by the military or the shipment of soldiers into foreign territories. In either scenario, the ruler would be searching for the early warning signs of anything that could pose as a threat. Furthermore, the newly obtained information was then sorted by highly specialized workers. Plans were then crafted, approved by the king, made top secret and set into motion, often times months in advance of the plan’s actual execution. Bacharach also strongly emphasizes how highly educated Charlemagne’s military commanders were, as he details how they studied geography, arithmetic, and history.

**Contrary:** While Bacharach does refute the claims that Pippin II had a court system similar to the one ascribed to Charlemagne, but a full two centuries before Charlemagne, he fails to discuss the idea that Charlemagne may have been influenced by any of his predecessors. Particularly his father, who Adalhard also mentions holding annual meetings of military leaders.