building up the authority of the ruling dynasty. Ermold the Black provides a famous and detailed description of the paintings on the walls of Ingelheim, which he had visited in the mid-820s. The chapel was lined with images from the Bible, from the Garden of Eden to the Crucifixion, and the hall of the palace was decorated with a picture cycle celebrating the deeds of great kings. Down one side were the military achievements of the Carolingians: Charles Martel conquering the Frisians, Pippin III bringing law to Aquitaine, and Charlemagne mastering the Saxons. These images served as the backdrop for important state occasions like the baptism of the Danish king Harald Klak in 826, but also for more mundane routines of daily government. The royal court, moving between a series of monumental new palace complexes in the Frankish heartlands, became the central political stage through regular assemblies at which decisions were made, patronage dispensed and friendships and alliances made and renewed amongst the king and his ruling aristocracy. At the same time, the end of expansion had potentially negative implications for the Frankish elite, who were by nature geared for war and for its reward, booty. Thus, despite using other means of ensuring loyalty and allegiance to the Carolingian crown across the realm, it is no coincidence that the empire’s demise coincides with the halting of military expansion and its monetary rewards.

Einhard gloatingly writes that by the end of Charlemagne’s reign, the Frankish empire was astonishingly wealthy. Such wealth had been accumulated by over half a century of military campaigning and was crucial to the loyalty of Charlemagne’s subjects and thus, to his success and his legitimacy. Yet, this success and loyalty was also buttressed by a supernatural web of oath, rhetoric and prayer, invoking God in support of the king of the Franks. Prayers for the king and kingdom, insisted upon again and again by the regime, tied the realm together, complementing and supplementing the oaths of fidelity sworn by free men across the realm. However, it is likely that the decline of Charlemagne’s empire was at least to some extent, linked with the end of military expansion; the wealth that Einhard boasts combined with the halting of military aggression, made the empire vulnerable to its equal, warlike neighbours, such as the Vikings and Saracens, but also the Slavs, and as the influx of tribute and booty began to slow, the loyalty of the Frankish aristocracy, which Charlemagne so fully depended upon, began to diminish.

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29 M. Costambeys, M. Innes, S. MacLean, op.cit, p. 177
30 M. Innes op.cit, p. 428
31 M. Costambeys, M. Innes, S. MacLean, op.cit, p. 172
32 M. Innes op.cit, p. 419