

The Age of Charlemagne

Osprey Men-At-Arms series No. 150 (1984)
Text by David Nicolle; colour Plates by Angus McBride

Review by Jonathan Aird

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The Carolingian Army 750-850 AD

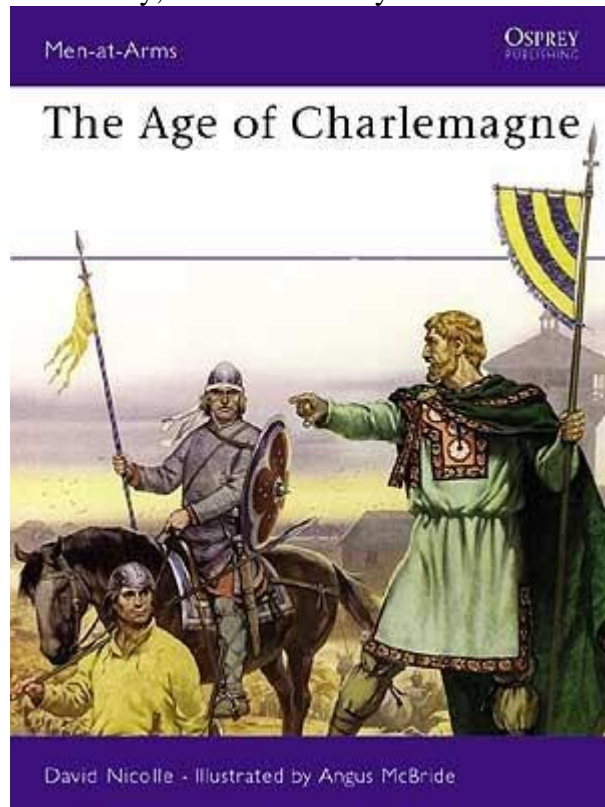
The Failure of the Carolingian System 850-950 AD

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Colour Plates:

A: Gascon light cavalryman c AD 750, Austrasian scara mounted infantryman second half of 8th century, Lombard cavalryman mid-8th century



B: Carolingian scola heavy cavalryman early 9th century, Armorican cavalryman mid-9th century, Frankish infantry levy first half 9th century

C: Avar aristocratic horseman late 8th century, Western Slav tribesman c AD 800, Saxon infantry levy c AD 800

D: The Emperor Charlemagne, Papal guardsman early 9th century, Mounted infantry Spanish March early 9th century

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F: Italian infantry levy early 10th century, Italian 'gastald' cavalryman early 10th century, North African infantry archer early 10th century

G: German infantryman first half 10th century, German cavalryman first half 10th century, Magyar nobleman first half 10th century

H: Southern French knight late 10th century, Lotharingian knight late 10th century, Western Slav warrior second half 10th century

Comments:

This is one of those slightly disappointing Ospreys which promises a lot of detail on a specific period and then expands the timeline covered to such an extent that the book becomes rather bitty. It's reasonable to say that the age of Charlemagne is roughly 750AD to 814AD - however this book covers 740AD - 1000AD and a lot can happen in 250 years! So we see the rise of the Carolingians and their defeat of Franks, Italians, Germans and Slavs who all then get to join the growing army of the Empire to face off threats from the Avars and Saxons. There is something of a crisis in the late 9th to early 10th century as the armies of Islam make inroads into the Carolingian Empire, and Magyars raid continually from the East but this is resolved by the late 10th century. The potted history does at least indicate that a Carolingian army will never lack foes. It also suggests that a wargame army could be quite

diverse -- with a core of troops supported by all kinds of allied or subjugated peoples (or mercenaries!) depending on whether one is repulsing Vikings in the North, Saracens in the South or Magyars in the East.

The plates are by Angus McBride so it goes without saying that they are excellent -- well composed and with topics ranging from battle to relatively relaxed "in-camp" scenes.