Revisiting one of the great puzzles of European political history, Jennifer Davis examines how the Frankish king Charlemagne and his men held together the vast new empire he had created during the first decades of his reign. Davis explores how Charlemagne overcame the two main problems of ruling an empire, namely, how to delegate authority and how to manage diversity. Through a meticulous reconstruction based on primary sources, she demonstrates that rather than imposing a pre-existing model of empire onto conquered regions, Charlemagne and his men learned from them, developing a practice of empire that allowed the emperor to rule on a European scale. As a result, Charlemagne’s realm was more flexible and diverse than has long been believed. Telling the story of Charlemagne’s rule using sources produced during the reign itself, Davis offers a new interpretation of Charlemagne’s political practice, free from the distortions of later legend.

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Charlemagne’s Practice of Empire

Jennifer R. Davis

The Catholic University of America
In memory of my grandfather
Irwin Isroff
1920–2014
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About ten years ago, Rosamond McKitterick told me that what I thought was a dissertation about Charlemagne founded on an analysis of the capitulary (royal law) manuscripts really needed to be two separate books, one analyzing Charlemagne’s rulership and a second on the capitulary tradition as it emerges from the manuscript evidence. I did not take her advice at the time, but I have now done as she so sagely suggested, and turned my overstuffed dissertation into a book on Charlemagne and a book on capitularies. It seems then a fitting place to begin my thanks to those who have helped shape this book with Rosamond. From the time I first came to work with her at Cambridge, she has often seen the contours of my work more clearly than I did. Both this book and, even more so, the capitularies volume depend on an analysis of the manuscript tradition that I could never have undertaken without her guidance.

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believes in me enough that he usually convinces me too. It is profoundly insufficient, but I can only thank my mother, Judy Isroff, for her constant love and support. My grandfather, Irwin Isroff, passed away while I was completing final revisions of this book. It is dedicated to his memory, with love.
Note on terminology

I will consistently refer to King Charles the Great as Charlemagne, given that this is traditional English usage. I will also typically call him “king” rather than “emperor,” as I will argue below that the royal title is the one which was used most consistently by the court itself and is the title that best expresses Charlemagne’s sense of his own power.

I will refer to places by their common English names, when such exist: For example, Cologne, rather than Köln. When there is not a familiar English equivalent, I will use the modern name employed in the country in which the place is now located, for instance, Reisbach. I will use a hyphenated form to distinguish a religious institution from the saint for which it is named, in countries where such usage is typical. So, for example, Saint-Denis refers to the monastery, and St. Denis to the saint. This does not hold for manuscript shelfmarks, which are cited using the standard form for each institution.

For personal names, I will employ traditional English usage, when such exists, for example, Alcuin or Wala. Figures with names which can be easily translated into English will be referred to as such, for example, William of Gellone. Other names will be left in the form in which they are found in the sources. When alternate spellings are used for the same individual, I will choose one form that seems to best fit the sources. All references to a given individual will therefore be consistent, but alternate spellings of the same name for different people may be employed. I have also standardized, for the sake of consistency, certain words regularly spelled in alternate ways, for example, I persistently use medioevo, rather than medio evo or Medio evo, and so on.

All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated. There are English-language translations of many of the sources for the reign of Charlemagne; these are indicated not in the Notes, but in the Bibliography.
Abbreviations

AfD  Archiv für Diplomatik: Schriftgeschichte Siegel- und Wappenkunde
BdF  Beihefte der Francia
CC   Corpus Christianorum
     CM: Continuatio Medievalis
CDL  Codice diplomatico longobardo (with volume number)
     Vol. 1, ed. L. Schiaparelli, Fonti per la storia d’Italia LXII
           (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo, 1929)
     Vol. 2, ed. L. Schiaparelli, Fonti per la storia d’Italia LXIII
           (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo, 1933)
     Vol. 3.1, ed. C. Brühl, Fonti per la storia d’Italia LXIV
           (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo, 1973)
     Vol. 4.1, ed. C. Brühl, Fonti per la storia d’Italia LXV
           (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo, 1981)
     Vol. 4.2, begun by L. Schiaparelli and C. Brühl and completed by H. Zielinski, Fonti per la storia d’Italia LXV
           (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo, 2003)
     Vol. 5, begun by L. Schiaparelli and C. Brühl and completed by H. Zielinski, Fonti per la storia d’Italia LXVI
           (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo, 1986)
DA   Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters
EHR  English Historical Review
EME  Early Medieval Europe
FMS  Frühmittelalterliche Studien
Hfj  Historisches Jahrbuch

xvi
Abbreviations

HZ  Historische Zeitschrift

MGH  Monumenta Germaniae Historica


EP: Epistolae

LL: Leges
   Capit. I: Capitularia regum Francorum, vol. I, ed. A. Boretius (Hanover: Hahn, 1883)
   Capit. II: Capitularia regum Francorum, vol. II, ed. A. Boretius and V. Krause (Hanover: Hahn, 1897)


SS: Scriptores

MIOG  Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung

NCMH  The New Cambridge Medieval History

OAWD  Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften philosophisch-historische Klasse Denkschriften

FGM: Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters


QFIAB  Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RH</td>
<td>Revue historique</td>
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<tr>
<td>Settimane</td>
<td>Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TF</td>
<td>Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Freising, vol. 1 (744–926), ed. T. Bitterauf, Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen und deutschen Geschichte, neue Folge IV (Munich: Rieger, 1905)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TP</td>
<td>Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Passau, ed. M. Heuwieser, Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen Geschichte, neue Folge VI (Munich: Verlag der Kommission für bayerische Landesgeschichte, 1930)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRHS</td>
<td>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIOG</td>
<td>Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZSSR</td>
<td>Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte</td>
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Map 1 The Carolingian Empire in 814 (drawn by Margaret Marshall Andrews)