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Charlemagne's Practice of Empire

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.

JENNIFER R. DAVIS is Assistant Professor in the Department of History at the Catholic University of America.

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In memory of my grandfather
Irwin Isroff
1920–2014

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Acknowledgments

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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Charlemagne got wrong. My years at Harvard were eased and enriched by the friends I made there. I thank Genevieve Abravanel, Jonathan Conant, Alan Cooper, Justine Firnhaber-Baker, Heather Kopelson, Liz Mellyn, Lauren Ratcliffe, Gregory Smith, and Debbie Tor for all their support along the way.

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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.

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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.

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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)
CdV	*Capitulare de Villis. Cod. Guelf. 254 Helmst. der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel.* ed. C. Brühl (Stuttgart: Müller und Schindler, 1971)
ChLA	*Chartae Latinae Antiquiores: Facsimile Edition of the Latin Charters*, ed. A. Bruckner, et al., (Zurich: Urs Graf Verlag, 1954–)
DA	*Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*
EHR	*English Historical Review*
EME	*Early Medieval Europe*
FMS	*Frühmittelalterliche Studien*
HJ	*Historisches Jahrbuch*

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HZ	*Historische Zeitschrift*
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
	AG: Die Admonitio Generalis Karls des Grossen, ed. H. Mordek, K. Zechiel-Eckes, and M. Glatthaar, MGH, *Fontes iuris germanici antiqui in usum scholarum separatim editi* XVI (Hanover: Hahn, 2012)
	Diplomata: Die Urkunden Pippins, Karlmanns und Karls des Grossen, MGH, Diplomata Karolinorum I, ed. E. Mühlbacher, with A. Dopsch, J. Lechner, and M. Tangl (Hanover: Hahn, 1906): Diplomas of Charlemagne: DK; of Pippin: DP; of Carloman II: DCarloman
	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)
	CEP with volume no.: *Capitula Episcoporum*, vol. 1, ed. P. Brommer (Hanover: Hahn, 1984); vol. 2, ed. R. Pokorny and M. Stratmann, with W.-D. Runge (Hanover: Hahn, 1995); vol. 3, ed. R. Pokorny (Hanover: Hahn, 1995); vol. 4, ed. R. Pokorny with V. Lukas (Hanover: Hahn, 2005)
	Conc. II: *Concilia: LL* III, *Concilia*, vol. II, part I, *Concilia Aevi Karolini*, vol. I, part I, ed. A. Werminghoff (Hanover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1906)
	SS: Scriptores
	SRG: Scriptores rerum Germanicarum
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
PL	*Patrologiae cursus completus . . . series . . . ecclesiae latinae*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: 1844–64)
QFIAB	*Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*

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RH	*Revue historique*
Settimane	Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo
TF	*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)
TP	*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)
TRHS	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
VIOG	Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung
ZSSR	*Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*

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Map 1 The Carolingian Empire in 814 (drawn by Margaret Marshall Andrews)

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