



Charlemagne

Matthias Becher

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Charlemagne—ruler of the vast Frankish kingdom from 768 to his death in 814 and Holy Roman emperor from the year 800—is considered the father of Europe. He founded the first empire in western Europe after the fall of Rome, and his court at Aix-la-Chapelle was a center of classical learning and a focus of the Carolingian Renaissance. This book is a splendid introduction to Charlemagne's life and legend.

Matthias Becher describes Charlemagne's rise to emperor and traces his political and military maneuvering against the Saxons, the Lombards, and others, as Charlemagne incorporated these lands into his own realm. Becher points out that under Charlemagne, jury courts were introduced, the laws of the Franks revised and written down, new coinage introduced, weights and measures reformed, and a Frankish grammar begun.

Charlemagne tried to give his kingdom a spiritual basis by referring to antique traditions, says Becher, and he explores the tensions that existed in Charlemagne's court between modern ideas and traditional thinking. He concludes by discussing Charlemagne's kinship network, the evolving arrangements for his succession, the effects of his reign, and his posthumous fame.

Concise, insightful, and eminently readable, this biography of Charlemagne provides a wealth of information about a remarkable man and his times.

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