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# The King and His Court: The Culture of Royal Power and the Creation of the Angevin Empire Under Henry II

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THE KING AND HIS COURT: THE CULTURE OF ROYAL POWER AND THE

CREATION OF THE ANGEVIN EMPIRE UNDER HENRY II


by

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ABSTRACT

Legal codes, literature, history, and violence were necessary aspects of royal power that in conjunction with resources gained from familial inheritance and a fortunate marriage allowed King Henry II to build, govern, and legitimize his rule over the Angevin Empire, as well as attempt to create an Angevin dynasty. Examining these subjects advances ideas about medieval royal culture and its relation to political power and legal power in the twelfth century Angevin Empire.

Historiography has long examined this period as the histories of great men, but recent trends have examined the interplay of power, politics, and gender during the Middle Ages. Defining royal power requires looking at the culture that created it, as well as how the English Crown as an institution utilized royal power within this culture. Henry II and his court utilized a number of methods by which to accumulate and execute royal power. While Henry was an active agent in the creation of the Angevin Empire, he owes a portion of his success to familial bonds of marriage and inheritance, as they were what gave him the ability to claim the crown.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

Henry II was king of England from 1154 A.D. to 1189 A.D. During this period Henry and his court created and utilized developments in royal culture in order to strengthen and legitimize Henry's rule and dominance over England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and a large number of territories in what is now France. Familial bonds, violence, legal codes, and narrative propaganda in the form of history and literature were ways in which Henry and his court expressed and extended power throughout Henry's realm. This large territory that Henry ruled has been called both the Angevin and Plantagenet Empire in the historiography. There were a number of factors that allowed Henry to effectively build and rule such a wide and culturally diverse expanse of territories. Legal codes, literature, history, and violence were necessary aspects of royal power that in conjunction with resources gained from familial inheritance and a strategic marriage allowed King Henry II to build, govern, and legitimize his rule over the Angevin Empire and attempt to create an Angevin dynasty.

The historiographies of twelfth century royal power and of Anglo-Norman culture are closely related in the history of the Angevin Empire. Examining various aspects of royal culture are necessary in order to better understand what royal power was and how the intersection of legal discourse, violence, and familial ties allowed for such an empire to exist and to see how it operated. A number of ideological and theoretical studies in medieval historiography, anthropology, and culture are used to better analyze twelfth-century Anglo-Norman royal culture.

Developments in medieval historiography have led to analysis into specific aspects of medieval culture. Early medieval historiography focused on the deeds of kings and emperors as great leading men shaping the world with their actions; the period concerning the reign of Henry II of England is no different. A number of biographies have been published about Henry II that present a great man of history narrative. However, various turns in historiography have led to closer examinations about the people who surrounded him and their impact, as well as deeper examinations into the culture that Henry II operated in. For example, Richard Barber provides an account about Henry II as an individual, and his story, which quite largely plays into the great man of history trope.[1] John Hosler examines another aspect of Henry II as he looks at Henry's military career from 1147 through 1189. Hosler's study provides an intricate look into how Henry utilized his resources to exert power and accumulate power through military force.[2] However, other historians such as Robert Bartlett, Martin Aurell, and Nicholas Vincent have gone beyond only looking at Henry II the individual and instead have examined the world in which he operated in order to understand what his motivations could have been for his conquest and legal reforms, as well as to understand how and why royal power developed under Henry the way that it did.[3] Richard Huscroft takes a further step away from Henry as an individual and examines his rise to power and exploitation of that power through the records of various figures who surrounded him.[4]

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[1] Richard Barber, *Henry II* (London: Penguin Books, 2015).

[2] John Hosler, *Henry II: A Medieval Soldier at War, 1147-1189* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[3] Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire, 1154-1224* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016); Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent ed., *Henry II: New Interpretations* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007).

[4] Richard Huscroft, *Tales from the Long Twelfth Century: The Rise and Fall of the Angevin Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

The result is an examination of the king through the records of those who knew him personally. These studies provide a look at royal power under Henry II from different angles in the historiography which aid in an examination of the king in this culture.

The culture of medieval royal power stemmed not only from the actions of the nobility, but also from the authority of written works. Writing in the Middle Ages was its own source of influence that developed from certain traditions of antiquity. Writing to interpret the will of God, to produce a specific narrative for a writer's patron, and to produce an entertaining story were different ways in which this influence, or power, was exercised.[5] As such, the historiography of medieval royal power begins with historians and philosophers in the Middle Ages writing about their interpretations of power. These interpretations stem from events they witnessed or knew of, as well as being built from their own interpretations of writings from antiquity. However, these time specific writings will be discussed in the section on primary sources, where their importance to understanding medieval ideas of power can be focused on. Here the focus will be on the contemporary historiography on medieval royal power in twelfth-century England.

The theme of dynastic royal power has been examined in a myriad of ways. Discussions in this field often examine how power needed to be legitimized and the different ways this was accomplished in specific areas and time periods. Ernst Kantorowicz argued that the legitimization of power was done by claiming that a king's power was derived from the dynastic culture of power established by the monarch's

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[5] Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Divine Providence A History: The Bible, Orosius, Augustine, and Dante* (New York: Continuum, 2012); Nancy Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

predecessors.[6] This type of spiritual legitimization of power can be seen in the historiography as many historians saw Henry's creation of the Angevin Empire over the course of his reign as a continuation of the Norman Conquest, which occurred in 1066.[7] This spiritual connection was created due to the successive kings of England after the Conquest having deep ties to Normandy. Henry himself was the duke of Normandy at the time of his ascension to the English throne, as well as being count of various other territories in what is now France.[8] This type of spiritual succession was adopted into the existing dynastic rituals in which succession was a publicized affair. Dynastic succession was not only spiritual, however, and in the twelfth-century familial succession was not just for kings and emperors, but also for lords and aristocrats.[9] Henry II's attempts to legitimize his own dynasty caused turmoil within his family, as well as within the aristocracy as Henry meddled with dynastic traditions.[10] Legitimization took many forms and evolved as leaders created more ways to claim legitimate reasons for rule. Power in political and royal culture were experimented with under Henry II and were used to strengthen his rule.

 The name of the territory carved out by Henry II's conquests has been debated in the historiography. The Angevin Empire is not a term found in primary sources and was first introduced by historian Kate Norgate in her 1887 book, *England Under the Angevin*

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[6] Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

[7] Richard Huscroft, *Tales from the Long Twelfth* Century, xxii.

[8] Barber, *Henry II*, 32.

[9] Robert Bartlett, *Blood Royal: Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2020), 187.

[10] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 169-171.

*Kings*.[11] Other more modern scholars, such as Martin Aurell, have dubbed it the

Plantagenet Empire, or refer to it as England under the Norman or Angevin kings.[12]

However, these are contemporary debates, and Henry II himself did not name his

conquered territories.[13] Yet, Aurell does argue that contemporary chroniclers referred to

Henry as *imperator* in their narratives, and that is evidence enough for medieval

historians to refer to this area as the "Plantagenet Empire or Angevin Empire."[14] Part of

the debate questions whether England became a part of a growing Norman empire after

the Norman Conquest and through Henry's reign, or if England was the basis for an

empire, as Normandy was a territory technically gifted by France.[15] Henry himself even

saw that the Capetian king of France was well taken care of when he visited Angevin-

controlled territories on the continent. Yet there were times when Henry opposed the

Capetian kings and engaged in open conflict with them. When Henry experimented with

exerting his power over the territories on the continent, he was trying to see how much

control he could maintain in these sometimes culturally different territories. Had Henry

been able to maintain complete control over his continental lands, he would have had the

ability to challenge the Capetian kings for overlordship of French speaking lands.

    Ideas about the political and legal legitimization of power and rule are intricately

tied together in medieval politics. In the historiography there are numerous studies into

how Henry II and his court utilized law to expand and legitimize royal power. In *Fiefs*

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[11] Kate Norgate, *England Under the Angevin Kings* vol. ii (London: Macmillan and Co, 1887), 169.

[12] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*.

[13] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 283.

[14] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 2.

[15] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 8-10.

*and Vassals* Susan Reynolds deconstructs what land ownership looked like across the Middle Ages and focused on answering who owned the land and in what capacity, what legitimized land ownership, and what power was associated with land ownership.[16] In her examination of England, Reynolds specifically looked at language used in legal documents from the Norman Conquest through the rule of Henry and his sons and explains which developments could have been related to ideology practiced by William the Conqueror during the Norman Conquest, and what could have been Henry experimenting or deliberately acting within legal discourse. Another work, done by historian Thomas Bisson, examined how Henry II extended his royal power into the courts through law codes and the threat of violent coercion, resulting in a more uniform form of the king's justice throughout England.[17] These aid in depicting the various ways in which Henry and his court expanded royal power by utilizing legal discourse.

It is undisputed in the historiography that Henry II owed much of his good fortune to his father, his mother, and his wife, each of whom in their own way provided Henry with land to rule over, strengthening his reach with each territory. Land ownership and political marriages were both tools employed to expand power, and marriages to the right people could bring more land under someone's control. Robert Bartlett writes that choosing the right wife was one of the most important choices for a king or prince, as they could bring vast amounts of land and wealth with them.[18] Familial relationships

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[16] Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
[17] Thomas Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
[18] Bartlett, 9.

played a large role in the royal culture of the twelfth century, and it was these relations that allowed Henry to become king in the first place.

A number of other works are worth mentioning because they provide useful mental tools and historical reference in examining the written power of history and literature during the long twelfth-century. Brenda Deen Schildgen's *Divine Providence A History: The Bible, Orosius, Augustine, and Dante* offers an examination of literary traditions from antiquity to the Middle Ages that deal with the intersection of religion, politics, violence, and the attempts of authors across time to make sense of the divine guiding events in history.[19] Because medieval authors are a part of this tradition, this work aids in understanding how chroniclers interpreted history. Taking this a step further, Nancy Partner argues that history and literature in the Middle Ages shared a similar purpose in that they were both supposed to be entertaining.[20] Medieval authors used history as a way to interpret divinity shaping the events of the world, but also wrote for the purpose of telling a good story. Because histories were often contracted by kings, church, and other political officials, they presented a narrative in support for these patrons. In *The Dangers of Ritual* Philippe Buc warns of applying a modern concept of ritual, which has come to include an ambiguous variety of social acts and constructs, to medieval texts and practices because the full reality of medieval rituals in their culture cannot be understood.[21] Buc argues that what can be perceived as rituals were recorded for a specific purpose. He argues that records of good and bad rituals and their true

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[19] Schildgen, *Divine Providence A History*.
[20] Partner, *Serious Entertainments.*
[21] Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

meanings and context in society and culture may not be apparent from the record alone. Buc's work is useful when examining sources that depict social rituals and deconstructing what is in the written record for their specific narratives of power, but also as a reminder that contemporary thematic ideas are not the same as medieval thematic ideas. For example, contemporary differences between literature and history as separate genres should not be applied to medieval ideas about how literature and history were similar.

Royal power in twelfth-century Plantagenet controlled territories was a complicated affair of political maneuvering and violent actions often used with the intent purpose to strengthen the king's power. Historiographical trends have moved away from the great man of history trope and are now examining what power looked like at different stages and for different people. Advancing studies in the historiography involves examining facets of royal power such as legal discourse and violence in the twelfth century under Henry II and analyzing the roles they played in legitimizing Henry's own accumulation of power.

England in the twelfth century saw a sudden increase in production of written materials.[22] These written materials include historical chronicles, legal documents, and pieces of literature written during the long twelfth-century that are used to examine familial bonds, historical narratives, violence, and royal power during the reign of Henry II of England. The majority of the works that this study engages with are published and translated sources, however there are references to the original Latin in instances where linguistic analysis is needed for certain words and phrases.

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[22] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 92.

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Many of the chronicles used here are concerned with the rule of Henry II of England or provide the historical context necessary to understand the world in which he operated in, such as the chronicle written by William of Newburgh.[23] William of Newburgh stands out among historians from this time because he wrote about events that he personally witnessed or confirmed with multiple sources. William of Newburgh was concerned with producing a reputable history that was verifiable with firsthand sources. William's history covers the seeds of Henry II's rise to power, starting with the civil war between Henry's mother and King Stephen, and includes the full reign of Henry II, as well as an account of his final days and funeral. William is notable for including his own opinions of King Henry II throughout his work and offers a retrospective after Henry's passing. William of Newburgh's history is translated into English from Latin; however, the original Latin is examined in certain instances where it is important to convey or interpret the author's original intent.[24]

Other accounts detailing various points in Henry II's rule are vital to this study. Henry of Huntingdon's *The History of the English People* details generations preceding Henry II.[25] However, Henry of Huntingdon concludes his work with the conflict between a young Henry and his predecessor King Stephen, in which Henry II is legitimized as heir. The work provides an account of violence across England that occurred between Stephen and Henry II's mother, Matilda, as well as violence that occurred as a result of

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[23] William of Newburgh, "The History of William of Newburgh," in *The Church Historians of England* vol. 4, pt. 2, translated by Joseph Stevenson (London: Seeleys, 1853).

[24] Charles Johnson, *Selections From The "Historia Rerum Anglicarum" of William of Newburgh* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920).

[25] Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People 1000-1115*, translated by Diana Greenway (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2002).

weak royal power. This is essential for understanding the state of the kingdom when Henry II ascended to the throne and determining why Henry wished to strengthen the king's power. Furthermore, Henry of Huntingdon's history gives insight into the role that familial bonds played in the legitimization of Henry as king of England. Finally, Jordan Fantosme's chronicle of Henry II details the war with the Scots in from 1173 to 1174, which also involved warring against the king's eldest son.[26] This focused chronicle gives a detailed account of the personal and political politics involved in violent conflicts during this period.

Legal documents from the twelfth century are necessary to understand medieval political power and its uses. For instance, the *The Assize of Clarendon* was enacted by Henry II and led to a transformation of English law that ultimately allowed Henry to bring local courts across England under the reach of the crown.[27] Even though the *Magna Carta* was created long after Henry II had died, it is an essential document by which to examine the culture of royal power that Henry had operated in.[28] The *Magna Carta* was written in response to what was considered the overreach of King John's power, the son of Henry II. This document provides an examination of the royal power that John exercised as he understood it culturally and gives insight into what John may have believed about dynastic power.

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[26] Jordan Fantosme, "Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle of the War Between the English and the Scots in 1173 and 1174," in *The Church Historians of England* vol 4, 1, translated by Joseph Stevenson (London: Seeleys, 1853).

[27] "English common law: *The Assize of Clarendon* (1166)," in *Reading the Middle Ages: Sources from Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic World*, third ed., edited by Barbara H. Rosenwein, 302-305 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

[28] *Magna Carta*, translated by David Carpenter (London: Penguin Classics, 2015).

Literature is an important tool for understanding ideas about the discourse of royal power in the twelfth century. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain* is a mostly fictional narrative of the history of the kings of Britain that includes the first mentions of Merlin and King Arthur.[29] Geoffrey lived through numerous civil wars and conflicts in Britain and used this history as a way to voice his opinion of what royal power should and should not do. Geoffrey included his own personal opinions about civil wars and the effect they had on weakening kingdoms. Geoffrey's history is a reflection of a literary tradition dating back to antiquity in which authors used their works to comment on contemporary events, such as Virgil's *Aeneid* commenting on Rome's growing power.[30] *The Song of Roland* is another literary text from this period that tells of a series of battles between the forces of Charlemagne against the Saracens in Spain.[31] *The Song of Roland* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's history both depict ideas about how a good Christian king acts and exercises his power, while also giving depictions of what bad kingship looks like. These are important texts for examining what medieval writers believed and wrote about kingship, power, and violence. Furthermore, Henry II and his family used these texts as forms of political propaganda to claim certain legendary lineages, thereby providing a look into cultural imagery that the Angevins believed was beneficial to their rule.

Philosophical texts from antiquity through the Middle Ages also wrestled with ideas of royal power and violence. The *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*,

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[29] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, translated by C.V. Ruisdael (Gottfried & Fritz, Philadelphia, 2015).

[30] Virgil, *The Aeneid*, translated by Robert Fagles (London: Penguin Classics, 2006).

[31] *The Song of Roland*, translated by Glyn S. Burgess (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

written by the Roman philosopher Orosius in the fifth century, is an important source for understanding power and violence from antiquity through the Middle Ages.[32] In the text, Orosius set out to demonstrate how the state of the world had improved with the introduction of Christianity, and while he did not speak ill about pagan peoples directly, he let their violent cultures and actions demonstrate how he believed they were terrible people in comparison to the righteousness of Christian society. Orosius's works are useful not only because they were read by learned people in the Middle Ages, but also because Orosius worked like a modern historian, using verifiable evidence to prove his argument. John of Salisbury's political and philosophical treatise *Policraticus* is an important text from the twelfth century and was published during the reign of Henry II.[33] In *Policraticus* John of Salisbury wrestles with ideas about the extent of royal power, its good and bad uses, and the role that the law plays in legitimizing or limiting royal power. This is particularly useful because John of Salisbury wrote and published this during the reign of Henry II, thereby entering it into the political discourse of twelfth-century England.

Various facets of royal culture in twelfth-century England under King Henry II are examined by looking at the different ways in which Henry and his court utilized familial bonds, legal discourse, history, literature, and violence to strengthen and legitimize the rule of the Angevins. These examinations advance historiographical discussions about royal power and culture in the twelfth century, specifically under

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[32] Orosius, *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, translated by A.T. Fear (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010).

[33] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus,* translated by Cary Nederman (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Henry II. Historians Martin Aurell, Richard Barber, and Robert Bartlett have all commented on how any examination into Henry II's court is complicated because of the size of the Angevin Empire under Henry, as well as the different cultures that the court had to navigate. Each chapter here contributes to discussions about how Henry II's royal court functioned across a territory made up of numerous different cultures and traditions that were often at conflict with each other.

Chapter two focuses on defining two different forms of royal power that were essential to Henry II's reign: the power of a written narrative in histories and literature and the narrative power of legal discourse. These two forms of power were interconnected in the discourse of royal power and were essential for Henry II's rule. Using written narratives to create and legitimize royal power was not something that Henry created, nobility had done that for generations. Chapter two's contribution to the historiography is within its argument that the laws that Henry and his court created were a form of prescriptive narratives that not only depict how the ruling class wanted England and the rest of the Angevin empire to run, but also created a narrative story that depicted Henry II as a true prince who used the law for the greater good of the realm. The sources for chapter two include chronicles written during the long twelfth-century, literary works stretching from Roman antiquity through the twelfth century, and philosophical writings that examine and offer their opinion on the extent of royal power.

Chapter three focuses on the violence seen in and around Henry II's rule. The broad category of violence includes themes such as civil wars, conquests, and murder. Violence was a necessary political tool in the twelfth century used to create and enforce a king's power. The threat of violence was also a useful tool used for political intimidation.

Henry II's court may not have been any more violent than the one's preceding it or those who came after, but Henry's court is marked by the violent murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket. Using violence was an integral part of creating and ruling the Angevin Empire, and that violence was often a way that the king communicated his power. Chapter three contributes to the idea that the king's power was felt throughout his realm, even when he did not directly act, and that violence for the king was acceptable while violence against the king was against the law. The sources include a number of chronicles that document the violent struggles during Henry's rule.

Chapter four examines the role that familial bonds played in royal culture during the twelfth century and examines how under Henry II there was a change to a more patriarchal system of royal power. Under Henry II, gender politics and power changed as he attempted to establish a dynasty that was based on patrilineal descent and weakened the ability of women to exert their own political power. Because twelfth century chronicles do not include the agency of women in many of their narratives, the sources for that chapter rely upon secondary works to help fill in the silences in the record. In chapter four, the works of historians like Aurell and Bartlett, who have tended to focus on the leading men in the Angevin Empire, are synthesized with the works of scholars such as Elisabeth van Houts, Ralph Turner, and Colette Bowie who have focused on the women of the Angevin Empire. Chapter four's contribution to the historiography is with its examination into a male dominated culture, that combined with the works that examine the role of women and the agency and power they had, demonstrates how Henry II cemented male dominated power under his reign. It shows the change over time that

weakened the role of women in the Angevin Empire and strengthened the power of the king and his direct male descendants.

CHAPTER II – DEFINING ROYAL POWER AND CULTURE

In 1154, Henry, Duke of Normandy and Count of Anjou ascended to the throne of England and became King Henry II. As monarch he reigned until his death in 1189. During his time as king, Henry built what historians have called the Angevin Empire or the Plantagenet Empire; the name varied depending on whether the context is modern French or English historiography. From the outset his primary goal was to strengthen royal power, both of the king, and the institution of the crown, which included the court and his family.[34] Royal power was an aspect of royal culture itself. In an anthropological definition of culture, culture is a complex organism that includes "knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."[35] Royal culture is defined in those terms, excluding those who do not belong to royal stations. This would include nobility who fell outside of the court and the common people.

The culture of royal power in the twelfth century Angevin Empire was a complex web that tied together a number of cultural, social, political, and intellectual spheres across a large amount of territory that spanned both sides of the English Channel.[36] This web included subcultures such as political and intellectual culture. As defined by historian Martin Aurell, political culture was the "intellectual creations that written down, serve to take power, to keep it and to impose it."[37] What sets political culture apart is the

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[34] Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire, 1154-1224* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 17.
[35] Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in History and Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 198.
[36] Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.
[37] Martin Aurell, "Political Culture and Medieval Historiography: The Revolt Against King Henry II, 1173–1174," *History (London)* 102, no. 353 (2017): 752.

use of written works as intellectual creations. Public rituals and oaths were just as important as historical and literary narratives as they all were used to exercise intellectual and political power. The written record was typically recorded with specific goals in mind and served to stress the importance of various aspects of power, thereby imposing a specific narrative of a situation.

Because this study is about the specific culture found in the Angevin Empire, certain anthropological approaches are used throughout the analysis. It is the goal of an anthropological study to examine the different functions of culture, as well as what defines culture, in its own specific place in history. Anthropologist Franz Boa argued that "cultures should be understood on their own terms, and holistically," and that, "cultures had to be understood in their specific context and as a unique way of life."[38] The complicated connection between different cultural spheres in the Angevin Empire should not be overlooked or oversimplified, as some historians have done. Historians and anthropologists have imposed a number of ideas, models, and categories onto the Middle Ages that are not reflective of the source materials or medieval society. Models such as feudalism and categories such as ritual have been used as blanket terms to define aspects of the medieval world without defining what they are or what they do.[39] While these categories do provide convenient tools for examining sources from this period, they are only applied here when the terms themselves appear in the sources. The purpose is to examine and define two different facets of royal power that were essential to Henry II's

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[38] Green and Troup, 199.
[39] Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

reign, arguing that the power of a written narrative expressed through literature and history, as well as the narrative power expressed by legal discourse were forms of prescriptive power used by the king and his court to strengthen and legitimize royal power.

*The Royal Court*

At the center of political power and royal culture was the royal court, called the *curia regis*. The *curia regis* as understood in Latin is defined as three things: a court of law, a palace or fortress, and a political community.[40] As a court of law, the king's court was the center of justice and the administrator of the judicial system. A prime concern for Henry and his court was ensuring that the king's justice was uniform throughout the realm, this was in response to the English barons exercising excessive legal power in their own territories under Henry's predecessor. The result of this baronial power was that the expression of law in England was not uniform, instead it was locally controlled and influenced. Henry's court enacted a number of legal reforms that attempted to enforce the king's justice uniformly across England. The second meaning of the court, as a palace or place of residence, relates to the number of castles utilized by the Angevins in the dual roles of residential places and military strongholds.[41] These castles played important roles in the enforcement of the king's power in England and on the continent. The third meaning of the court is more complicated than the first two. The political community included an expansive range of people, including nobles and non-nobles who served in the court, as well as the royal household, which included the king, his wife, and

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[40] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 31.
[41] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 33.

his children.[42] Effectively the royal court served as the institution by which the king could amass power and execute authority over the realm. The court was fluid in nature and could be a small and temporary gathering of officials and friends, or it could be a formal large council that included important nobility and church officials.[43] Therefore, the composition of the royal court was an important factor to the king's ability to rule. However, the court was also an institution that relied upon cultural traditions of relationships and dynastic politics. Because of their places of power in the administration of the Angevin Empire, the members of the court were also active participants in the power dynamics of medieval Europe.[44]

<center>*The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century and Henry II's Court*</center>

During the twelfth century, there were widespread and fundamental developments across the medieval world known in the historiography as the "Renaissance of the Twelfth Century" that influenced the way in which royal power and royal culture developed in Western Europe. During the renaissance of the twelfth century, Western Europe rediscovered many of the Latin classics, Roman law, Greek science and philosophy, and developed its first universities.[45] This rediscovery was due to interactions between the Muslim world and the Christian world, particularly through Spain, as well as the broader Mediterranean. The intellectual renaissance was not only area that saw new developments. During this period there was also an economic, political, religious, and

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[42] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 33.
[43] C. Warren Hollister, Robert Stacy, and Robin Stacey, *The Making of England to 1399* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 146.
[44] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 1-3.
[45] Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927).

cultural renaissance that occurred due to the intersections of these spheres in the culture of the twelfth century.[46] The development of the first universities produced a new wave of education that saw the translations of ancient texts and their distribution across medieval Europe, as well as an increase of written works like literature and history as more people became educated and produced their own observations about the world.[47] Henry's education was in part a product of this renaissance, and he actively sought out men educated in this discourse to patronize and staff his court with. Henry's intent in staffing his court with educated individuals was to replace nobles who were stuck in older traditions that hinged upon inheritance and patronage based on familial ties. The nobles and barons who inherited their positions and were not as likely to be innovative as newly educated men and were more likely to have resources of their own to stand against Henry if they wished.

Henry II valued learning and education, not only for himself, but also for those he surrounded himself with in his court. Medieval nobility was often educated, and from a young age Henry had been given an education worthy of his position. He studied under philosophers such as William of Conches, who educated Henry in literature and philosophy.[48] Aurell writes that Henry's thirst for education grew as he did and that he had become a *miles litteratus*, a literal translation of which is a "literate soldier." A better translation may be that of an educated knight, someone who wields power through both warfare and knowledge. Henry projected himself as an enlightened ruler, further

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[46] Hollister, Stacy, and Stacey, *The Making of England*, 135.
[47] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 92.
[48] Susan Wise Bauer, *The History of the Renaissance World: From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Conquest of Constantinople* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013), 98.

strengthening this idea that he was a powerful king who embodied the qualities of both fighter and a learned man.[49] Henry's education played a large part in crafting certain ideas about experimenting with royal institutions and law. Henry and his court were actively trying to strengthen royal power by utilizing new and somewhat revolutionary ideas produced by their education. These new ideas were a product of the Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.

Henry's court was composed of similarly educated men, whom he patronized for their ability to aid in the development of royal power. Henry wanted people who were actively engaged with the educational developments of the Renaissance of the Twelfth Century. Henry needed educated people who could progress the development of law and other narratives that were useful and beneficial to the crown. Rank and station mattered less to Henry than merit and ability as he staffed his court. Aurell writes that Henry's court included men from the old aristocracy, educated knightly families, the urban bourgeoise, and free peasantry.[50] Henry became the patron of a number of non-noble scholars and philosophers who were indebted to Henry and his court for their successes.[51] These men owed their rank and station to Henry's patronage. Ideally these would be courtiers indebted to the crown for their success who worked to ensure that Henry's demands were carried out. While this was not always the case, Henry did manage to put enough of these men in places of power that he had the ability to ensure his reign was uniform in England. The advancement of men based on merit instead of political or familial ties was a disconnect from the previous culture of the royal court. For the most

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[49] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 94.
[50] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 59.
[51] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 29.

part this was beneficial to Henry, but his patronage of the common-born Thomas Becket as archbishop of Canterbury would eventually be detrimental to Henry's political ambitions and reputation.[52] Henry and his court represented a change in political culture as they were a younger educated court that experimented with different aspects of royal culture in their desire to accumulate and exercise power. By doing so they were able to create an effective administrative system that extended into a number of territories that held local and traditional customs.

The court of Henry II contained an important twelfth-century philosopher who was a product of the twelfth-century renaissance, John of Salisbury. John was an influential member of the intellectual culture of the twelfth century who served in Henry's court at various times in his life. John of Salisbury published his tract of political philosophy, the *Policraticus*, in the middle of 1159, just five years into Henry's reign.[53] In *Policraticus*, John examined the differences between a king and a tyrant by looking at how each used their power through narrative examples. Throughout his work, John explained that a king or prince should be an unselfish ruler who works for the good of the realm, obeys and upholds the law even if he is not legally bound by the law, and exercises just judgement in law and war. A tyrant is an oppressive ruler whose aim is selfish and who seeks to impose his power over others, he does not act for the good of the law and operates outside of it. Other important aspects of the *Policraticus* will be explored later, but here it is important to note that John indicated that one aspect of good kingship is that the king is educated and surrounds himself with educated people. John

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[52] Barber, *Henry II*, 9-10.
[53] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus,* translated by Cary Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), xix.

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wrote that wisdom is the most precious wealth in the world and "an illiterate king was like a crowned ass."[54] An illiterate king would be unable to read and understand the law that he is supposed to uphold, making him no better than an animal wearing a crown. Because this text was produced early in Henry's reign, and because John served in the court, it is likely that Henry's idea of recruiting educated individuals to his court was influenced by John of Salisbury. Henry recruited educated individuals to make the governance of the realm more organized, which was effectively for the good of the realm because the king could count on these individuals to ensure his law was upheld. While it does seem like Henry did these things in an effort to be a good king, it is also likely he did not want to be seen as a tyrant, especially with the memory of his predecessor King Stephen in mind.

Henry's ability to staff his court with a variety of educated individuals was assisted by the court's ability to travel. Henry's court never settled in one place permanently and was almost always on the move traveling across the Angevin Empire. Due to the size of the Angevin Empire, it was imperative that the court traversed it to ensure that Henry's power was felt throughout. The court's travel itinerary was one of utmost importance and was mapped out meticulously after debates between members of the court.[55] With such a massive territory to travel, it was important that the areas with less certain royal influence be visited. As a result, Henry spent more time on the continent than he did in England, where his rule was almost unchallenged due to the force that Henry exerted there and the people he put in places of institutional power. Because

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[54] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book IV, Chapter 6, 44.
[55] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 26.

of the large size of the territory he controlled, the king of England actually spent more than 60% of his time on the continent, due to certain territories there, such as Aquitaine, rebelling against Henry's governance in favor of their own local customs.[56] It is these locations in what is now France where Henry's court had a tumultuous time maintaining power.[57]

As an institution, the royal court was responsible for the application of the king's law throughout his realm. The court tried to enforce a uniform policy that was applied from the court as the center of political life and expanded out into the kingdom and territories. A court that was settled in London and ruled from a single capitol would have a more difficult time ensuring that its policies are respected and enforced on the edges of the empire. Henry no doubt understood this as his predecessors William the Conqueror and Henry I both travelled across the English Channel to manage Normandy while they were kings in England.[58] A key difference was that Henry II's territory was much larger than his predecessors and he had more to travel. Due to the size of the Angevin Empire, Henry adopted similar tactics that Charlemagne utilized when he ruled the Carolingian Empire. Charlemagne's court ruled through a combination of itinerant kingship and the use of a network of royal officials who governed territories in the name of the king.[59] Henry's court adopted a similar method where the king would travel and hold court across the Angevin Empire while also placing his own men in administrative positions to

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[56] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 12.
[57] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 189.
[58] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 12.
[59] Rosamond McKitterick, "A King on the Move: The Place of an Itinerant Court in Charlemagne's Government," in *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global perspective, Volume 1* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 168.

ensure that his power was felt when he was absent. The use of a network of administrative officials who acted for the king in his absence was the most effective way to rule an empire as large as the Angevin Empire.

*The Power of Written Narrative*

The royal court became the intellectual center of the Angevin Empire as Henry patronized educated men who became administrative clerks for the crown. It was the job of the court to strengthen and legitimize royal power through several different ways. The individuals engaged with intellectual culture exerted power using written narratives and Henry and his court often utilized those narratives for the benefit of the English crown.

The act of writing is an expression of power as the author records a specific narrative or analysis based on their evidence and own opinions.[60] In the twelfth century histories and literature were both narrative driven works designed to tell a story. Both the creation and exploitation of written narratives were powerful political tools used by the royal court in the Angevin Empire. The educated members of the royal court were not the first to come up with these tactics, and they became a part of a long tradition of men who used written works of literature and history to state their opinions of the world and produce written narratives for specific political and cultural purposes. As a result of the renaissance of the twelfth century, written works like histories, literature, and philosophical texts, were produced in Western Europe at a rate that exceeded previous generations, leading to numerous narratives being written for the purpose of strengthening the king and the royal court's importance.[61] To better understand how the

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[60] Charity Urbanski, *Writing History for the King: Henry II and the Politics of Vernacular Historiography* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca: 2013), 4.

[61] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 92.

royal court utilized the power of written narratives, it is important to look at the literary tradition in which these men were educated and how that in turn affected their use of such power. Numerous medieval texts from before the twelfth century have a noticeable focus on connecting religious experiences with observations seen in history. Guy Halsall notes that writers from 450 to 900 C.E. who were writing about violence were also concerned with trying to understand the divine meaning behind it.[62] This is a substantial part of the tradition that twelfth century intellectuals engaged with, as they often sought to understand how the world was guided by the divine. This was ingrained in their histories, their literature, and their philosophy, demonstrating that narratives were already being utilized by medieval authors for specific purposes.

An integral part of the renaissance of the twelfth century was the translation of and large-scale distribution of many classical works. Twelfth-century scholars poured over texts written by classical authors from across the Mediterranean world such as Aristotle, Virgil, Cicero, Ovid, and Orosius. The introduction of written works ranging from ancient Greece to the late Roman period had a substantial effect on twelfth-century scholars. The memory of the Roman Empire became important in this renaissance because it was remembered as a bastion of strength, unity, and advancement.[63] This idea of memory is key in the intellectual developments of the power of written narratives.[64] What gets remembered and how is just as important, if not more, than what actually happened. Roman authors and their works were important in discussions about

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[62] Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West 450-900* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 5.
[63] Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, 93- 117.
[64] M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 3.

philosophy. Educated men in the twelfth century inherited these ideas and built upon them. John of Salisbury used the late fourth century Roman author Orosius as an authority for historical legitimacy and even depicts Emperor Trajan as the ideal Roman Emperor.[65] Authors like Geoffrey of Monmouth were inspired by works such as Virgil's *Aeneid* to promulgate a mythical connection of Britain to the classical world and legitimize kingship as something natural.[66] The legacy of other authors such as Aristotle were instrumental in shaping philosophical discussions, as well as shaping how historians and other writers developed their craft.

Historical narratives written during the twelfth century played a number of important roles as they were supposed to recount historical events with the writer interpreting the reasons that they occurred, tell an interesting and entertaining story, allow the writer to offer their opinions on the world and events, and create a narrative structured around the desires of their patron. Often in these histories facts mattered less to the historian writing them than did their interpretations about why events occurred. Historians during this period would often search for and point towards signs of divinity that they could perceive guiding events by the will of God.[67] The hand of God in history guiding the world towards a divine goal was a popular theme in written narratives, because for medieval Christians God was above all, including the king.

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[65] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book V, Chapter 8, 79; Book VIII, Chapter 18, 203-204.
[66] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. C.V. Ruisdael (Gottfried & Fritz, Philadelphia: 2015); Virgil, *The Aeneid*, translated by Robert Fagles (London: Penguin Classics, 2006).
[67] Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Divine Providence A History: The Bible, Orosius, Augustine, and Dante (*New York: Continuum, 2012), 17.

The idea that a king had a divine right to rule lead to the development of a narrative known as the "King's Two Bodies". This idea of the king's two bodies was to reconcile the belief that the king had a physical body on earth, but also a second body that was spiritual in nature and was what passed from king to king, granting him his divine right to rule.[68] The use of these narratives by the king and royal court in a Christian culture provided rulers with the narrative used to convey Christ-centered kingship. This idea of Christ-centered kingship claims that the power of the king is also the power of God; making the king divine because he is the agent of God.[69] A problem occurred when there was a debate between ecclesiastical leaders and the king as to whom acts for God, such as the political battle between Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Becket in the 1160s.[70] In instances like these, the power of the narrative became increasingly important, as did the role of those who interpret the narrative.

An important intellectual construct that arose during the twelfth century and aided in the narrative of the king as God's chosen power was the body politic. The body politic, depicted by John of Salisbury, places the king as the head of the political body of the kingdom, a position that is only subservient to God, the soul of the body.[71] If the king was only under God, the use of that narrative would be beneficial to the king, unless challenged by church officials who also claimed to be God's agents. The interpretation and use of that narrative then became a topic for argument in Henry's court as he

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[68] Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 7.

[69] Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, 48.

[70] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 405.

[71] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book V, Chapter 2, 66-68.

attempted to enforce his power over church officials.[72] The seven-year conflict between

Henry II and Thomas Becket challenged the position of the king within the body politic.

Henry believed his power to be greater than that of the church, while Becket saw Henry's

attempts at controlling ecclesiastical liberties as an overstep of royal power.[73] This

conflict highlights how different interpretations of a narrative could produce conflict

between those who wield power.

Turning to historical narratives, *The History of the English People* written by

Henry of Huntingdon is a good text to start with both temporally and thematically.[74]

Henry of Huntingdon was born to an English mother and a Norman father around 1088

C.E., making him Anglo-Norman. Henry was educated as a church official and became

an archdeacon in 1110. Sometime between 1123 and 1130, Henry was patronized by the

bishop of Lincoln to write *The History of the English People*.[75] Its final version was left

completed in 1154 with the author's death, although he had intended to continue writing

further chapters. This text presents a very pro-Norman narrative. Henry began his history

decades before the Norman Conquest in order to describe the Britons in 1000 as evil and

ungodly people who had earned the wrath of God.[76] In a narrative that demonstrates

Henry's familiarity with biblical stories, Henry wrote that God sent the Danes to ravage

and weaken England so that the Normans, as God's chosen warriors, could then conquer

England as agents of God's vengeance.[77] Henry does not mince words when describing

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[72] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 405-406.
[73] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 220.
[74] Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People 1000-1154* (Oxford World's Classics, Oxford: 2002), translated by Diana Greenway.
[75] Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People*, i.
[76] Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People*, 6.
[77] Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People*, 25-35.

how brutal and violent the Normans were during the conquest and the subsequent years of King William the Conqueror's reign. However, according to Henry, because they were enacting the vengeance of God, the Normans were justified in what they were doing. This narrative actively engages with the idea of Christ-centered kingship, as the Normans were chosen by God to conquer and rule England. Henry II took the throne of England two years after this text was finished, with its narrative of divine legitimization of Norman rule in England fresh in the mind of intellectual culture.

Henry of Huntingdon closed his history by mirroring his introduction with arrival of the Normans during the conquest with another arrival of Norman forces almost one hundred years later. In 1135 after the death of King Henry I, son of William the Conqueror, there erupted a dynastic crisis and civil war for the crown of England. King Henry I had chosen his daughter Matilda to be his heir and had his barons swear their loyalty to her. Matilda, who was the future mother of Henry II, had been empress of the Holy Roman Empire until her husband's death, upon which Henry I had called her back to Normandy. Matilda's cousin Stephen of Blois, who also had a blood claim to the throne, seized the throne with the backing of various barons who did not want to see Matilda claim the throne.[78] This led to a civil war in which violence erupted across England, weakening the country and royal power alongside of it.[79] Matilda and her forces were repelled and forced back to the continent after many years of fighting, but Stephen's tenure as king was not one of peace and prosperity. Royal power under King Stephen had weakened due to several factors such as the civil war and the rebellion of his barons.

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[78] Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People*, 74

[79] Barber, *Henry II*, 33.

Henry of Huntingdon wrote that England herself had called out to Duke Henry, the future Henry II, to save her.[80] Duke Henry would be named heir after making peace with King Stephen, but Stephen would not be remembered fondly by either his contemporaries or later generations. Henry II and his court referred to Stephen's reign as a time of anarchy brought on by Stephen.[81] They also believed that legitimate kingship in England ended in 1135 when Stephen usurped the throne and did not resume until Henry was named successor in 1154.[82] Not only did this history create a pro-Norman narrative, but it also ends with the young Duke Henry looking like a savior. Henry of Huntingdon's history provided Henry II with a narrative that legitimized Christ-centered kingship, as well as proclaimed the young duke a hero who saved the realm from destruction.

The events surrounding Henry's succession are remembered as a positive development in royal culture at that time due to the narrative writings of men who worked for the king. In *Policraticus*, John of Salisbury used these events as his only contemporary evidence to depict the differences between a tyrant and a prince. John praises Henry II for his actions during this time, noting especially that Henry was still considered to be in his adolescence.[83] Because *Policraticus* was published during the early years of Henry's reign this should have been a positive narrative used in legitimizing Henry's actions. However, John was writing this work during his exile from England by Henry. John includes two passages where he wonders whether Henry's princely disposition of his youth will be betrayed to tyranny as the king grows older, "the

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[80] Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People*, 90.
[81] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 117.
[82] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 10-11.
[83] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book 6, Chapter 18, 119-122.

end of adolescence is mistrusted by some, and I hope that the good are fearful in vain!"[84] This is the role of good kingship in intellectual discourse. The princely qualities that Henry displayed in his youth were being questioned by John who wondered if those qualities would remain in adulthood as Henry amassed more power. Authors of different practices wrestled with ideas of good kingship, and these ideas were usually reflective of events that the authors had lived through. How the court used these ideas or responded to them was an important part of royal politics. By using the written narrative of Henry's virtuous youth, the court would be able to present Henry as a good king and argue that his reign was virtuous from its beginnings.

Literature played an equally important role in the royal court's legitimization of and promulgation of power by propaganda. *The Song of Roland* was a popular poem in Western Europe even before the twelfth century and played a curious role in Anglo-Norman and French royal culture.[85] The poem depicts a crusade of the Frankish king Charlemagne in Spain during the eighth century. It was a popular poem and is reported by the poet Wace in 1160 to have been performed to the Normans before the Battle of Hastings during the Norman Conquest.[86] This report by Wace was just under one hundred years after the conquest, and six years into Henry II's reign. Regardless of the truth behind the claim, the fact that Wace said that the poem was recounted to the Normans shows that the poem was still being utilized by individuals in the intellectual culture of the twelfth century for narrative purposes. These narrative purposes were to depict what the ideal king looked like and how they acted. Charlemagne was a strong king who acted

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[84] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book 6, Chapter 18, 122.
[85] *The Song of Roland* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), translated by Glyn S. Burgess.
[86] *The Song of Roland*, 8.

with the guidance of God, furthering ideas about Christ centered kingship. *The Song of Roland*, as well as other poems, histories, and pieces of literature, were acted out and sung by troubadours for the court, as well as for the public.[87] During these performances the performers would often change or add house names to the barons and lords who served under Charlemagne to claim that certain great houses were present during Charlemagne's conquests. Interestingly, when the poem began to be produced in written form during the twelfth century, it was first produced in England.[88] The intellectuals of Henry's court were producing physical copies of the poem in order to use embrace the narrative for their own purposes. The oldest known written version of the poem was written in the middle of Henry II's tenure as king of England and introduced a character named Henry, cousin of Charlemagne's bannerman Count Geoffrey of Anjou, who was not found in any other versions of the poem. This addition to the story gave Henry II and the Plantagenets an ancestral tie to the legendary figures in the poem, and as Aurell argues, allowed them to hijack *The Song of Roland* which was supposed to be "the exclusive property of the kings of France."[89] This ancestral tie would have been beneficial to legitimizing Henry II's dominion over the territories he controlled in France. This addition to the narrative was an intellectual construct that allowed for the legitimization of Henry and his dynasty through ancestral ties. However, because of his ancestor's subordinate position to Charlemagne this was not the most effective way to claim legitimization. As an unintended consequence it would also portray Henry's subordinate position to the French crown on the continent.

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[87] *The Song of Roland*, 16.
[88] Urbanski, *Writing History for the King*, 8-9.
[89] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 141.

Henry II and his court's use of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* to claim a legendary ancestry for the Angevins was a more effective form of literary propaganda. Geoffrey's history is largely a work of fiction that was not supported by twelfth-century sources and was criticized by Geoffrey's contemporary historian William of Newburgh, who did not appreciate Geoffrey passing the work off as a reliable historical text.[90] William claimed that Geoffrey's work is a, "laughable web of fiction."[91] While Geoffrey may not be the most reliable historian, his work is a fantastical history filled with legendary figures, such as Merlin and King Arthur. This captured the attentions and imaginations of members at all levels of society including writers, poets, intellectuals, royals, and commoners. Educated individuals read the stories while the commoners heard them aurally thanks to traveling troubadours.[92] Because of the wide range of people who enjoyed the stories found in Geoffrey's history, the popular narrative was useful for Henry and his court to claim. Geoffrey's history laid out his opinions of what good kingship looked like over generations and how that changes, as well as the cost of bad kingship. This history was utilized by Henry II, his court, and the Plantagenet kings that followed him as a political narrative to claim legendary lineage to King Arthur and legitimize the Angevin dynasty.[93]

Geoffrey of Monmouth lived through the civil war between King Stephen and Empress Matilda and used his history to voice his opinion of the consequences of bad kingship and the qualities of good kingship. Much like John of Salisbury's discussion of

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[90] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book I* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1988), translated by P. G. Walsh and M. J. Kennedy, 6.
[91] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book I*, Prologue, 29.
[92] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 148.
[93] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 149.

tyranny, Geoffrey identified bad kingship as that which produces civil wars. John wrote that, "by the means of tyrants, the evil are punished and the good are corrected and trained."[94] John claims that King Stephen was a tyrant and his actions led to the civil war. In *The History of the Kings of Great Britain* Geoffrey wrote accounts of a number of civil wars that occur because of bad kingship. John of Salisbury would have understood the bad kings of Geoffrey's history to be tyrants acting outside the law and for themselves. Each author had written parts of their works in response to the violence they saw during the civil war in England, using their narratives to voice their thoughts on the events. Geoffrey used his narrative to state very clearly his opinions of civil wars:

> Why foolish nation! Oppressed with the weight of your abominable wickedness, why did you, in you insatiable thirst after civil wars, so weaken yourself by domestic confusions, that whereas formerly you brought distant kingdoms under your yoke, now, like a good vineyard degenerated and turned to bitterness, you cannot defend your country, your wives, and children against your enemies? Go on, go on in your civil dissensions, little understanding the saying in the Gospel, "Every kingdom divided against itself shall fall." Since then your kingdom was divided against itself; since the rage of civil discord and the fumes of envy, have darkened your minds, since your pride would not suffer you to pay obedience to one king; you see, therefore, your country made desolate by impious pagans, and your houses falling one upon another; which shall be the cause of lasting sorrow to your posterity. For the barbarous lionesses shall see their whelps enjoying the towns, cities, and other possessions of your children; from which they shall be miserable expelled, and hardly if ever recover their former flourishing state.[95]

Geoffrey's comments are a clear response to the civil war between King Stephen and Empress Matilda that ultimately ended when Henry became Stephen's successor. He claims that the civil wars weakened Britain, which is a response to the weakening of royal power under Stephen. Geoffrey uses his clerical knowledge to evoke a passage

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[94] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book 8, Chapter 18, 201.
[95] Geoffrey, of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, 286-287.

from the bible and claim that the sins of pride and impiousness will cause lasting sorrow

for those involved in the war. His declaration that the "barbarous lionesses" will take

possession of the towns and cities could be an allegory for Empress Matilda who seized

numerous towns and cities in her war against King Stephen.[96] In one account, upon

capturing King Stephen, Matilda "put on an extremely arrogant demeanor instead of the

modest gait and bearing proper to the gentle sex."[97] The specific depiction of Matilda as

an arrogant woman successfully capturing the king and the city is similar to the barbarous

lions metaphor. This idea that Matilda was going to steal the cities and towns and expel

their residents might have been Geoffrey's real fear. He may also have been challenging

the masculinity of the barons who had seized power from Stephen during the civil war by

calling them barbarous lionesses. If they were traitors to the oaths that they had taken

under Henry I then their word as men was challenged, making their word and their status

worth less. What finally ends the terrible period in Geoffrey's history is the rise of King

Arthur, a legendary figure whom the Angevins ambitiously appropriated.[98]

      Written narratives from the twelfth century are useful for analysis into intellectual

culture, demonstrating how intellectuals in the twelfth century used written narratives to

voice their opinions of the world and contemporary history. They also show how the

intellectual culture of the court utilized written narratives in order to make connections

between the king on the throne and legendary figures of the past, legitimizing his reign

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[96] Geoffrey, of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, 287.
[97] Richard Huscroft, *Tales from the Long Twelfth Century: The Rise and Fall of the Angevin Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 41.
[98] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 149.

through ancestry. Written narratives were just one form of prescriptive narrative used in the intellectual culture of the court.

*The Law as a Narrative*

Law codes from the twelfth century are another form of prescriptive source, as they depict how the ruling class wanted the law to work ideally. The written law depicts the concerns of those who wrote it. Because the king's court was the center of law for the realm, the law enacted during this time offers a glimpse into how the court believed the law should work, what the law of the land should be, and who could enforce the law and to what extent. The narrative story that the law under Henry II tells is that the king is a true prince who used the law for the greater good of the realm.

Henry II and his court were responsible for creating one of the most well-functioning legal systems in Europe in the twelfth century. A compelling reason for this is because Henry had observed the lawlessness that occurred under King Stephen's reign. He understood that the strong enforcement of the law was an integral part of keeping the royal power of the king away from the barons. When Henry became king in 1154, he enacted a number of reforms to reassert the power of the king over the barons in England. First, Henry took back all of the land stolen by the barons during the anarchy, reducing their power to what it was under his grandfather Henry I. Second, Henry began the systematic destruction of castles that were built during Stephen's reign that were not funded by the king. Third, Henry revoked the earldoms granted by Stephen to his supporters and reclaimed those lands for the crown.[99] These actions effectively made it

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[99] Barber, *Henry II*, 33.

easier for Henry to begin to enforce his law, as he regained control over the barons by making them swear fealty to him as their king. As a result of these oaths of fealty, the barons held the land in the name of the king, instead of by seizing it. Also, the reduction of castles allowed the king to exert greater influence, as the barons had less ability to wage conflict against him.

One of Henry's top priorities was to reassert royal power and control over England through the use of written laws. At a meeting in Clarendon in 1166, Henry and his court resolved to reform the English legal system with the *Assize of Clarendon*.[100] The *Assize of Clarendon* built upon preexisting administrative institutions so that they could extend the royal law of the king into every county and local district. The goal of this was to give England a uniform legal system imposed by the king, thereby eliminating localized judicial powers that were not in line with the king. The *Assize* created a group of traveling judges called itinerant justices who were royal officials who traveled across the realm, much like the king's court, to ensure that the king's justice was being upheld.[101] The *Assize* itself states that it was written by, "King Henry, on the advice of all his barons, for the preservation of peace, and for the maintenance of justice."[102] The narrative presented in the *Assize* is that the king and his barons were acting for the peace and justice of the realm, something that they may have considered lacking, even twelve years into Henry's reign. The written declaration imbued the law with the narrative of peace and justice that the king and his court wanted to promulgate.

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[100] "English common law: *The Assize of Clarendon* (1166)," in *Reading the Middle Ages: Sources from Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic World*, third ed., edited by Barbara H. Rosenwein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 302.
[101] "English common law: *The Assize of Clarendon*," *Reading the Middle Ages*, 305.
[102] "English common law: *The Assize of Clarendon*," *Reading the Middle Ages*, 302.

The contents of the *Assize of Clarendon* identified who Henry and his court believed at that time to be causing the most disruption of the law in England: murderers, thieves, vagabonds, and anyone who has sheltered them as outlaws and criminals. Murderers and thieves caused destruction and betrayal within their communities, and if they were not held accountable by the law then those same communities would continue to suffer because those crimes were committed by neighbors. Vagabonds posed an outside threat to the community as they were not held to any one location and instead could cause dissent and lawlessness across a wide territory. The *Assize* was also a means by which to correct the previous localized forms of law and justice. The visitations of the royal justices were to ensure that private judicial practices and the misuse of power by local sheriffs were corrected.[103] Through the use of law Henry reasserted and extended royal power and control over sheriffs and royal castles throughout England.[104]

Henry also attempted to use the law to extend his influence into ecclesiastical matters. *The Constitutions of Clarendon* were part of the reforms initiated by the *Assize of Clarendon* by which Henry attempted to enforce royal jurisdiction over criminal church clerics, claiming that it was his right to do so by the "customs, liberties, and privileges" that the king held under his grandfather King Henry I.[105] The legal narrative that Henry was attempting to frame is that he held the legal right to exert the kings justice in ecclesiastical matters under specific circumstances because it had been customary to do so previously. The act of writing these long-held rights of the king was as important as

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[103] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 32.
[104] Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 375.
[105] "Henry II and Becket: *The Constitutions of Clarendon* (1164)," in *Reading the Middle Ages: Sources from Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic World*, third ed., edited by Barbara H. Rosenwein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 324.

the narrative. Writing exerted intellectual power as a tangible thing. The law could be seen and read, adding the credibility it needed to be true. If the king wanted his law to be seen and heard, then it needed to be written down and promulgated.

The narrative power of *The Constitutions of Clarendon* allowed the king to place himself above some of the highest church officials. In the event that an appeal was brought to an archbishop, and that archbishop failed to serve justice, "the case must finally be brought to the lord king, in order that by his command the dispute may be determined in the archbishop's court, in such a way that it proceed no further without the assent of the lord king."[106] The constitutions would also allow the king to control who was elected to church offices, and if the offices remained empty then the king would "receive from it all revenues and profits as part of his demesne."[107] This would allow the king to patron church officials of his own choice to positions of power, or control if the office remained empty, allowing him to obtain the wealth of the position for himself.

While the centralization of law in England was for the benefit of the king and court, the relationship between the king and the law was another matter. While Henry was creating a stronger legal system to enforce the king's justice uniformly throughout the realm, he was also increasing his own power over the law. According to John of Salisbury's depiction of the body politic, the king was above all people in the body politic, such as judges and clerks, and was only subservient to God.[108] What then was the relationship between the king and the law: was he above it or under it? The answer

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[106] "Henry II and Becket: *The Constitutions of Clarendon*," *Reading the Middle Ages*, section 8, 325.

[107] "Henry II and Becket: *The Constitutions of Clarendon*," *Reading the Middle Ages*, section 12, 326.

[108] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book V, Chapter 2, 66-68.

depended on who was interpreting the narrative of the law and of the king's power. John of Salisbury argued that the king was above the law because of divine right. John also argued that while the king was above the law, he should act within it to set the standard for the realm.[109] In contrast, legal scholars like Hugh of Fleury and Henry of Bracton asserted that the king's dual nature as being divine and mortal placed him above the law and below it at the same time.[110] What dictated the kings place in relation to the law was how the king acted. If the king was acting for the good of the realm he was acting above the law as it was right for the whole of the body politic. But if the king was acting for himself, then he was under the law as any other member of the realm. The interpretation of the narrative of law was tied to ideas about the role of the good prince as it dictated the relationship between the king and the law.

One of the most dramatic events during Henry's reign came when Henry's claim to be above the law was challenged. Henry's enforcement of his royal law over ecclesiastical matters put him in conflict with Thomas Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury, who had been a close friend of Henry's and benefitted from his patronage. Becket believed that the church should be allowed to control its own internal affairs and saw Henry's growing influence over the church as an overreach of royal power.[111] Becket opposed a number of Henry's legal reforms and was banished from England for several years. In defense of his stance, Becket attempted to remind Henry that when he was anointed king he swore to defend and preserve the liberty of the church under God.[112]

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[109] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book VI, Chapter 29, 142.
[110] Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 161-162.
[111] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 233.
[112] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 127.

Becket understood the king's political advances with the law to be perversive of that oath and unlawful. This dispute would cost Becket his life when in 1170 a group of Henry's knights murdered him after the king, in a fit of rage, wished to be rid of the cleric.[113] While Becket's murder will be analyzed further in another chapter, here it is noted that Henry and his court were not unchallenged in their pursuit of legal power and dominance. Thomas Becket was not a man of arms but an intellectual who used his resources and influence to combat what he believed was an overreach of royal power.

      The power of a written narrative and the power expressed by legal discourse were both forms of prescriptive power used by the king and his court to strengthen and legitimize royal power. The written aspect of the law created a narrative that assumed similar properties to narratives utilized by literature and histories. Written narratives were used for specific purposes to legitimize and strengthen the power of the crown. Narratives utilized by the intellectuals in the royal court promulgated what the king and his court wanted to be taken as fact. This worked for and against them as weaknesses in the narratives could be interpreted in opposition to their goals, as Thomas Becket did. The intellectuals of the renaissance of the twelfth century utilized a number of new ideas and developments to create a royal court that functioned effectively across the Angevin Empire by employing the use of written power.

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[113] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 219.

CHAPTER III  - VIOLENCE IN THE ANGEVIN EMPIRE

Studying the topic of violence offers a look into many complicated relations that governed power politics in the twelfth century. Violence was an integral part of political discourse. The civil wars, conquests, uprisings, rebellions, and murders seen throughout the twelfth century are reflective of the royal culture that used those acts of violence for political and personal advancement. Violence in royal power was also expressed by seizure, intimidation, and extorsion. Violence as a physical act or violence through intimidation were also ways to forge political alliances.[114] Violent acts were often driving forces behind political events during the twelfth century, especially during Henry II's reign. The Angevin Empire that Henry ruled over was in large part created through acts of violence such as warfare. The reputation and fame of Henry II was tied to the power he expressed through violent conquests. William of Newburgh wrote that Henry II exercised more power than any English king previously and ruled from "the furthest boundary of Scotland to the mountains of the Pyrenees, and his fame resounded in all regions."[115] Henry's fame was brought through violent warfare and conquests that expanded his territory and power and altered the power dynamics in western Europe.

Violence was not only a physical act, but also an intellectual construct used by the royal court to rule the Angevin Empire. The threat of violence was just as important as the act of violence itself. There were times when Henry and his court did not have to go to war, fight a battle, or display power through violence because of the violent reputation

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[114] Thomas Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 12.
[115] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book II*, translated by P. G. Walsh and M. J. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1988), chapter 4, 21.

that preceded them, such as when Henry claimed the territories of northern England from Malcolm of Scotland. Violence was an integral political tool used in creating and ruling the Angevin Empire, creating and maintaining political ties between sovereign powers, and was one important way that the king communicated his power. Violence in royal culture during this time was also integral to how the king's sons attempted to assert themselves into the power politics of the Angevin Empire through rebellions against their father.

*The Medieval Fascination with Violence*

Violence was a subject that transcended political and social station. Nobles, intellectuals, commoners, and clergy all engaged with violence in different ways. In historical chronicles and literature from the twelfth century, different ideas and interpretations about violence were found across a variety of writings. Violence shows up regularly because it was not only ingrained in the history of medieval people, but also because violence occurred around them on a regular basis. Medieval authors were fascinated with violence. Twelfth-century authors sought to find meaning behind the conflicts that took up a considerable amount of their politics, history, and poetry, often using detailed and colorful language to depict killing, looting, and warfare. In historical chronicles, examining violence between nations, kingdoms, and individuals was of paramount importance because the outcome of violent confrontations were how the authors perceived the invisible hand of God guiding the world. In literature, violence was an important aspect of storytelling, as it allowed the author to depict detailed battles and the power of great individuals. Decisions by authors about what to include and exclude

created objective, partial, and constructed representations of the past.[116] Telling these stories helped medieval people make sense of violence that was often outside of their control, but that could also affect their lives.

Many medieval chronicles depict the violence of leading figures in important battles and wars. That same violence often spilled over and effected the noncombative groups of people. Violence between elites became so severe that rules regarding who could be involved with violence, as well as what punishment there was for breaking those rules, entered political and ecclesiastical discourse with the Peace of God movement. The Peace of God was a doctrine that came out of the late tenth century that sought to protect certain people and places from the violence of nobility. The people and places protected under the Peace were the western Christian church, its land and people, and people who were unarmed.[117] The Peace was not intended to end violence, but to limit the damage done to clergy and working people by warring aristocrats. Peace councils began as monks and bishops gathered to limit the damage being done to the church by warring lords and knights. As such, the core principles of the Peace involved the protection of the clergy and the lands owned by the clergy, which also included the people who worked the land and any livestock.[118] The Peace of God became a powerful political tool for rulers. The Peace talks became a gathering in which the powerful ruling classes of bishops, lord, and princes would come together and negotiate the rules of good conduct in war.[119] These negotiations were always in the interest of those actually sitting at the table and the poor

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[116] Charity Urbanski, *Writing History for the King: King Henry II and the Politics of Vernacular Historiography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 5.
[117] Geoffrey Koziol, *The Peace of God* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2018), 1-2.
[118] Koziol, 48.
[119] Koziol, 58-59.

had little to no say in how the negotiations went. Instead, the clergy were essentially the voice of the poor, as they wanted to protect the poor on their lands. Regardless of their intentions, the Peace movement was a way in which the powerful, both ecclesiastical and lay, decided who could utilize violence and to what extent.

Literate people read about violence in the most popular and most circulated texts, such as the Bible, while illiterate people most likely heard these stories orally through the clergy or travelling minstrels and attempted to interpret what those depictions of violence meant for them. While these people interpreted violence that they read or heard, there were those who lived through and participated in violence. During the First Crusade, the crusaders felt like they were living through and participating in apocalyptic levels of violence ripped straight from the Bible but that were contemporary to them.[120] And in western Europe, violence between nobles continued to occur. A change was occurring in western Europe though, where the monopoly of violence began to shift away from small regional powers, as strong and energetic kings began to control more territory and impose limits on territorial violence between nobility.

Violence was not limited to clashes between kings and barons. Priests and monks believed that they engaged in real spiritual battles against demons that were just as important as the battles that crusaders were waging in the name of God.[121] Priests and monks waged spiritual battles against the temptations and demons of evil that they argued were more important than the physical battles of the world. This is due to the widespread

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[120] Jay Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven: The First Crusade and the Quest for the Apocalypse* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 199-203.
[121] Katherine Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), 3.

Christian belief that the soul was eternal and needed more protection than the physical body. Certain warriors, like knights and crusaders who became holy men, added credibility to the spiritual battle as they were warriors of God who existed in both worlds of spiritual and physical violence.[122] These warriors turned holy men were reflective of a new belief that a war, the crusades, fought in defense of the faith was a source of grace and forgiveness, not sin.[123] The priests, monks, and clerics who engaged in these spiritual battles found their inspirations in the holy texts they were reading. Much as the crusaders believed that they were living out biblical battles, so did the priests believe they were taking part in the battles described in the Bible. This is demonstrated by clerics who wrote histories and spiritual observations. The way that battles were depicted employed descriptive violent language very reminiscent of biblical texts.[124] The use of violent language found in biblical texts by clerics connected them to the culture of violence that warriors acted out. As much as violence was a physical act, it was also an intellectual construct used by authors to portray events that could not been seen but could be understood with familiar language.

The violence of non-royal groups played a part in shaping the laws of society. Murderers and thieves committed violence in their own communities, causing both physical and spiritual damage. In 1166, when Henry II and his court reformed the English law code with the *Assize of Clarendon*, they specifically identified murderers, thieves,

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[122] Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 176.
[123] Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven*, xii.
[124] Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 4.

and vagabonds as criminals who needed to be brough to justice.[125] With the *Assize of Clarendon* Henry and his court attempted to control and punish the violence that murderers, thieves, and vagabonds were committing, while also extending the nobility's monopoly on violence, as the king and his court were still allowed to kill and loot in warfare against the king's enemies. Violence was acceptable in certain circumstances, but not when it harmed the realm, or more practically the king's revenue. When the poor committed crimes that went against the *Assize,* they were expected to be punished for breaking the king's law. But when the king or his court committed similar acts of violence, it was within the law if they did it for the betterment of the realm, which also meant for the increase of royal power. Religious affiliations also aided in the development of violence and law. Christians who committed violent acts against their own communities began to be depicted as horrible "flesh-eating, blood drinking" monsters who had turned away from the Church and from God.[126] Christian knights who were supposed to defend the Christian community were seen as the worst offenders, as they broke their oaths to God and inflicted grievous wounds to the Christian faith and the community. But these knights were given the ability to repent for their actions against their community by committing violent acts on crusade. The crusades presented an opportunity for these knights to redeem themselves and display Christian virtues in repentance for their sins as they waged war against enemies of the Church.[127]

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[125] "English common law: *The Assize of Clarendon* (1166)," in *Reading the Middle Ages: Sources from Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic World*, third ed., edited by Barbara H. Rosenwein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 302.

[126] Matthew Bryan Gillis, *Religious Horror and Holy War in Viking Age Francia* (Budapest: Trivent Publishing, 2021), 35.

[127] Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven*, xii.

Violence was felt throughout the medieval world. The nobility did not hold exclusive rights to violence. It was felt by priests, kings, and commoners and exercised by each of them in different ways. The ways in which violence transcended status is reflective of the chaotic nature of violence seen throughout medieval English history. From Germanic migrations driving out the Britons, Viking raiders and armies causing carnage across the land, and Norman conquerors and civil wars, England was no stranger to violence. It was deeply ingrained in its history and remained a captivating subject for intellectuals, kings, and commoners in the Angevin Empire.

*The Court as a Center of Violence and Warfare*

At the center of political power and royal culture was the *curia regis*, the king's court. The court itself can be defined as three things: a court of law, a palace or fortress, and a political community.[128] The *curia regis* served a dual role as a palace and a fortress, both a place of residence and of waging war.[129] The court was the center of war, conquest, rebellion, and violence. It was the king and the court's attempts to control war and violence that placed them at the center of the culture of violence. The king and his representatives were responsible for upholding the king's power throughout the realm. For Henry II and his court this meant ensuring that there was peace in England between the king and his barons. Maintaining peace involved stamping out uprisings and rebellions by members of the court, or other agents moved to violence. When members of the nobility rose against their liege lord, or refused to enforce the king's law, it was the responsibility of the king to ensure that these rebellious men were defeated and punished

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[128] Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire, 1154- 1124*, translated by David Crouch (London: Taylor and Francis), 31.

[129] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire, 1154-1124*, 33.

accordingly. From Henry's sons' rebellions to the murder of Thomas Becket, the court was a place of conflict and outright violence between the king, his family, his nobles, the extended court community, and the church.

Because the court served as an extension of the king's royal power and was made up of officials that he patronized, the members of the court could act as the king's agents during times of war. The power of the king's court in warfare while the king was absent from England is at the forefront of Jordan Fantosme's chronicle of the war between England and Scotland from 1173 to 1174.[130] Jordan Fantosme was an educated Anglo-Norman cleric, historian, and poet who died around 1185. It is probable that he was a member of Henry II's court at some point in his life and wrote this chronicle for Henry, as many times in his chronicle he calls Henry "the best king who ever lived."[131] Fantosme's chronicle makes numerous references to King Henry's power, ability to lead, and his divine right of lordship. But Henry is remarkably absent from most of the chronicle because he is not in England until the end of the conflict. Fantosme's numerous references to Henry was a clear effort to convey that the king's power was felt throughout England even when he was not there, and that it is his power that protected England through his court, his barons, and his knights.

In the chronicle, Fantosme recounts the war in Northumberland in which King William I of Scotland waged war on against Henry II by attacking England in support of Henry's son, Henry the Young King. William's attack on England was done to distract and weaken Henry II so that his son may get the upper hand in his war on the continent.

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[130] Jordan Fantosme, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, translated by R. C. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

[131] Jordan Fantosme, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, Chapter 1, 3.

For most of the war, Henry II, also called Henry the Elder in the text, was away in Normandy waging a separate war against Henry the Young King and King Louis VII of France.[132] While the king was abroad, it was up to his barons to defend England not only as the king's agents, but as men sworn to Henry II in fealty. While some of the barons stayed loyal to Henry II, others sided with Henry the Younger and William of Scotland. Fantosme chose a number of Henry's barons to praise for their acts of chivalry and violence in warfare in defense of England and their liege lord. Praised above all of the English barons and knights was Randolph de Glanville, who captured William and brought the war to an end.[133] By the time that William was captured, Henry had only returned from Normandy for a short time. King Henry had not even taken part in the battles and was "propped up on his elbow just dozing off, with a servant gently rubbing his feet" when he received the news that William had been captured.[134] The stress of fighting a war in France and having to return to England in the face of another war had taken its toll on King Henry. Fantosme's focus on the various men fighting for England and for the king against the Scots demonstrates that the members of the king's court were allowed to wage war when the king was absent, as long as it was in defense of England and the crown. When they waged war against the king or against England, then there were consequences.

In addition to waging war, the king and his court attempted to control the monopoly on violence and warfare through law codes, but the law was upheld by the threat of violence from the king or his agents. If the law was the way that England ran

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[132] Jordan Fantosme, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, xiv.

[133] Jordan Fantosme, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, Chapter 193, 135.

[134] Jordan Fantosme, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, Chapter 208, 145.

ideally, then it was the threat of the king or his officials using violence to enforce the law that actually upheld the law in England. There had to be consequences for the law to be effective. The threat of violence alongside actual violent acts was both practical and necessary for peace. But there were times when the threat of violence became actual violence, such as when Henry's violent temper led to the murder of his once close friends, the archbishop Thomas Becket.

Henry II's court may not have been any more violent than those who came before him or those who came after, but there is a violent dark mark left on his court's legacy with the murder of Thomas Becket. Thomas Becket was an educated cleric who was patronized by Henry and eventually became archbishop of Canterbury.[135] Intense disagreements between Henry and Becket arose concerning the power of the king and its relationship to the power of the church. Becket saw Henry's increasing desire to control the offices of the church in England as an overreach of royal power. From 1162 to 1170 Becket attempted to stop Henry by excommunicating officials patronized by Henry.[136] Henry, "in the heat of an outburst of rage he lost control of himself and spewed out crazed words from the fullness of a seething heart," and  famously wished that someone would rid him of the troublesome cleric.[137] A group of Henry's knights heard this and took it upon themselves to immediately go to Canterbury cathedral, where Becket was, and threatened him with death if he did not comply with the king's desires.[138] Becket, who "was advised by his companions to retire into the holy basilica to avoid the madness

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[135] Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 401.
[136] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 25, 103.
[137] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 25, 105.
[138] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 404.

of their bestial fury" did not retreat.[139] Beckett refused to back down from the knights or do as they demanded, and as a result he was brutally murdered in the cathedral.

Becket's murder was a real act of violence that became symbolic for the knights and the archbishop. The knights had arrived armed and dressed in armor, signifying that they, the warrior class, were there to carry out their knightly duties in service to their king. Their actions were done with such brutality against a church official that had not been seen in England before, completely mutilating the archbishop's body and spreading his brains across the cathedral floor.[140] This brutality was not lost on the church officials when they heard of the murder, nor on Henry when he was informed of what occurred on his order. While the knights might seem bloodthirsty, there is another reason for their speed and level of violence. The knights acted with such speed and ferocity because they had served under Henry's predecessor King Stephen who had usurped the English throne from Henry's mother Empress Matilda and were ambitious to demonstrate their loyalty to Henry.[141] It is likely they believed this act would earn them some fame in Henry's court, but it instead made them infamous. Of Henry and his reputation, William of Newburgh wrote that this act, "so blackened his fame among Christian kings."[142] Henry's *fama*, his fame or reputation, had been won through violent conquest, which was more acceptable in royal culture during the twelfth century, but an assault on the Church and its officials was an offense that Christian kings were not supposed to do. For Becket, this act was in defiance of the king's growing reach of power and in defense for the Church. Becket's

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[139] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 25, 105.
[140] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 254.
[141] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 256.
[142] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 25, 107.

refusal to flee or fight back and the public nature of the murder effectively made Becket into a martyr.[143] This act of violence demonstrates that violence transcended royal culture and religious culture, as commoners rebuked the grievous act while also flocking to the site en masse to pray at the altar where Becket was murdered. With this act, the court's center of violence inadvertently drew other spheres of society into itself and involved people of all stations and ranks in England and Europe. Because of Becket's murder, Henry's fame and renown became entangled with the negative aspects of *fama*, infamy and disgrace. Bad *fama* was an aspect of public and private life.[144] The public nature of Henry's *fama* became infamous due to Becket's murder. It also extended into the private world of personal life as people made pilgrimages to the site of Becket's murder. These pilgrimages made personal connections between Henry's negative *fama*, the memory of Becket, and those who made the pilgrimage themselves.

The murder of Becket opens a wider discussion of the consequences of murder at such a high level of society. Amazingly, King Henry was not excommunicated. On May 16, 1172, Henry met with church officials in order to negotiate an amicable penance for himself and a reparation for the church. An agreement was reached and Henry had to publicly declare that he did not order nor desire Becket's death, but did have to acknowledge the role he played in it. Henry also had to send two hundred knights on crusade in Palestine, revoke certain clauses of the Constitutions of Clarendon (Henry's law code that expanded his power into the ecclesiastical sphere that the pope objected to),

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[143] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 257.
[144] Jeffrey Bowman, "Infamy and Proof in Medieval Spain," in *Fama: The Politics of Talk & Reputation in Medieval Europe*, edited by Thelma Fenster and Daniel Smail (London: Cornell University Press: 2003), 95.

restore the church's official of Canterbury, and make an oath to go on crusade in Spain against the Saracens if the situation required it.[145] Because the crusades were becoming a way for Christians to repent for murder and other violent crimes, Henry's knights were perhaps performing penance in his place, until it was necessary that Henry himself had to go on crusade. The consequences for Henry were actually fairly light. This is due in part to his station as the king of England, but also because of the Henry's immediate intention to repent and negotiate with the church. However, there were also ecclesiastical figures who argued that Henry was not at fault for the events that led to Becket's murder, and that Becket himself was mostly responsible because he had inflamed the conditions between the king and the church.[146] However, the public penance was important because it demonstrated to the Christian public that the power of God's forgiveness was paramount and showed how even the violence of murder could be forgiven.

Throughout Henry II's reign, violence was a double-edged political tool that worked for and against the king and his court. The court's attempt to control or limit the violence within England's borders was upheld by the violence of the king. But as seen in the Becket affair, uncontrolled violence was still a threat to the realm. The chaos of uncontrolled violence created consequences that were felt throughout both the court and the entire Angevin Empire. Regardless of the consequences, England and the rest of the Angevin Empire were historically intertwined with the violence and warfare of its rulers. The Angevin Empire itself owed its own existence to the violence of the nobility.

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[145] Richard Barber, *Henry II* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 76-77.
[146] Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent, *Henry II: New Interpretations* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 154-155.

*An Empire Born from Violence*

The Angevin Empire was born from a combination of inheritance and conquests during the reign of Henry II. It was the violence of warfare that the king and the court utilized to bring large amounts of territory under their control. Angevin forces fought throughout the British Isles, Ireland, and France to create the Angevin Empire. But the events leading to the birth of this empire can find their roots in a series of violent conflicts that occurred between England and France beginning with the Norman Conquest of 1066.

The Norman Conquest was a violent period that started with the arrival of the Normans in England and the Battle of Hastings between Duke William of Normandy and Harold Godwinson, king of England. After William defeated Harold, he marched towards London where he was crowned king of England. As king of England, William stamped out any resistance to his rule with quick deaths and severe punishments, sometimes burning the very land in order to ensure his destructive power was felt throughout England.[147] The Norman Conquest did not end with the seizure of the throne, but instead continued on as a war against the English people as William sought to establish Norman superiority. William's strong, albeit violent, reign established that the Normans were then the powerful lords of England. The Norman Conquest created the conditions necessary for the Angevin Empire to exist because it established a dynastic tie between a family of counts and dukes in Normandy to the throne of England and solidified their position through violence.

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[147] Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People 1000-1154* (Oxford World's Classics, Oxford: 2002), translated by Diana Greenway, 31.

The next great violent conflict that shaped England after the conquest, was the civil war that occurred between Empress Matilda, the mother of Henry II, and her cousin Stephen who usurped the throne after the death of her father, Henry I. The civil war was instrumental in shaping the power dynamics of the Angevin Empire, as the ultimate outcome of the war was the ascension of Henry II as the heir to the throne of England. The civil war was not only defined by the political power struggle between Matilda and Stephen, but also by the widespread violence across England caused by the English barons seizing land and power for themselves during the chaos.[148] It was the violence seen during the civil war that shaped Henry II's opinion of royal power and the extent that it should be enforced. Henry himself was described as the savior of England due to his arrival leading to the end of the violent civil war.[149] The widespread violence of the civil war in part led to Henry II's creation and enforcement of a universal legal code for England that was tied directly to the king's court and royal officials.

While inheritance from his mother was a significant part of Henry's creation of his empire, it was also the culture of his father's territory of Anjou that shaped the aggressive nature of Angevin expansion. Henry II's father Geoffrey Plantagenet was the count of Anjou from 1129 to 1151, and it is from him that Henry inherited lordship over Anjou, Maine, and Normandy.[150] Anjou was a territory where a culture of ambition and aggressiveness was cultivated by the counts who desired more land and more power.[151] Lordship, law, justice, and violence were tied together in the culture and the history of

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[148] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 52.
[149] Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People*, 93.
[150] Aurell, The Plantagenet Empire, 16.
[151] Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century*, 129.

Anjou. Domination by power was an expression of lordship that was not unique to Anjou but was seen frequently in this territory that had a high tolerance of baronial violence.[152] Count Geoffrey was often busy quashing internal conflicts with his own barons, during which time he captured or built castles which would eventually be used by Henry as king as bases for royal power on the continent. These castles, which were important under Count Geoffrey, became centers of Angevin royal power and served the dual purpose of fortresses and residences for Henry's court.

The castles in Anjou were places from which Henry launched campaigns to quash internal rebellions or to stage conquests and further wars against the Capetian French crown. Similarly in England, castles had been centers of baronial rebellion under Henry's predecessor King Stephen.[153] One of the first actions Henry took as king was to reclaim castles that were held by Stephen's barons. Chronicler William of Newburgh wrote that Henry ordered the destruction of a number of new castles "which had certainly not stood in the days of his grandfather."[154] These castles were the physical proof of the rebellions that occurred under Stephen's reign and were icons of weak royal power. Henry did, however, keep "a few strategically placed" castles for himself or gave them to his men "who would maintain peace for the defense of the realm."[155] Henry's seizure of these English castles and redistribution of them to his own court would serve as centers for his military exploits in England when needed. Henry's transfer of a number of these castles to his men was depicted in Jordan Fantosme's chronicle where the castles are used a basis

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[152] Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century*, 141-142.
[153] Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century*, 277.
[154] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, Chapter 2, 17.
[155] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 2, 17.

of defense of England. The king expected his men to act in his stead in defense of England, or rather in defense of Henry's land and people, important sources of revenue and power. But political and sovereign boundaries were fluid during the twelfth century. The England that Henry wanted defended was the area he claimed lordship over and the people who he was lord over. The only way that the king's men could do this was by controlling their own centers of power. What made this different than English barons under King Stephen holding these forts was that Henry gave these positions in a reciprocal fashion, whereas under Stephen they were taken, undermining the king's royal power. Henry was willing to give others power as long as it aided him in securing his own power. It was Henry's choice to patronize his men into positions of power that is indicative of his view of royal power. By strengthening his own men, he was strengthening his power in return, as they owed him service.

Henry was quick to act in strengthening and exercising royal power in order to expand his territory or reclaim what was lost. Shortly after becoming king, Henry brought his forces to northern England in order to quash the final rebellious baron from Stephen's reign, Hugh Mortimer. Hugh refused to surrender to Henry initially, and in response Henry "speedily gathered an army and laid siege to Bridgnorth."[156] After accepting Hugh's surrender, which was won through Henry's military might, Henry then sent a message to Malcolm king of the Scots stating that the territories of northern England were Henry's by right. William of Newburgh wrote that Malcolm conceded to Henry, "on the merits of the case and in the strength of his forces."[157] Henry had already made a

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[156] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 4, 21.
[157] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 4, 21.

showing of his military strength against Hugh Mortimer and William believed that demonstration of military power was enough to force Malcolm to concede. Even without that show of force there was the chance that nobles in northern England would rally to Henry against Malcolm to back his claim, strengthening what already had proven to be a powerful military force. In the exchanges between Henry and Hugh, and then later Henry and Malcolm, there is evidence that both the actual military violence and threat of military violence were both tools used to create the Angevin Empire. The actual combat against Hugh demonstrated Henry's military prowess as a king and leader, while Malcolm's concession demonstrated that the perceived violence that Henry threatened was enough to achieve submission.

Henry expanded his empire into Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and further into what is now France through numerous military campaigns. William of Newburgh wrote that after dealing with Hugh Mortimer and Malcolm, king of Scots, Henry turned his military might towards Wales where he was given lordship over several fortresses and received oaths of homage from the Welsh.[158] In the first few years of his reign Henry had already brought numerous territories under his rule through military might. In Anjou, Henry waged war against his brother Geoffrey who claimed that Anjou was his inheritance by their fathers will. With overwhelming military force Henry crushed Geoffrey's rebellion and stripped Geoffrey of his castles, absorbing them to enhance his own influence and power.[159]

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[158] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 5, 25.
[159] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 7, 33.

Seven years after Henry became king, an inheritance dispute arose in Gascony about who should inherit the region after its count had died. Henry had a claim over its lordship due to his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine. In order to ensure that he could assert his claim Henry raised a large army from all of the territories under his control and invaded Gascony.[160] Henry had also invited a number of his noble friends from outside of his territories to aid in the conquest. But Henry's conquest of Gascony did not go as easily as he had hoped. King Louis VII of France had gone to aid the count of St Gilles at the city of Toulouse with his forces in order to prevent Henry from overrunning the city. William of Newburgh wrote that Henry left the city alone "out of respect for the king's person lodged there" and instead sacked the rest of the region and its strongholds.[161] While Henry did not engage in open battle with the King Louis in this instance, he did gain control of the region and install his own people in positions of power. As a result of Henry's actions, he and Louis began to oppose each other on the continent. The following year, the two kings assembled huge armies on the continent in preparation for battle. Many nobles in both royal courts did not want a military conflict between Henry and Louis and vied for peace, knowing that violence between the two powers would cost many lives and much money. In the end, peace won out and Henry and Louis were reconciled and returned to their respective territories.[162] This event marked the beginning of a series of violent tensions that periodically marked the relationship between Henry and the French crown for the rest of his life and would persist for several generations after. Relationships between kings were often dictated by the perceived threat of

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[160] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 10, 43.
[161] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 10, 47.
[162] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 12, 55.

violence, if not actual military violence itself. But violence between two kings who could muster powerful military forces could have disastrous consequences for the territories they fought in, the people who were involved directly and indirectly, and their political positions as a whole. If one king appeared weaker than the other, then they could be threatened with invasion or destruction. The courts of Henry and Louis appeared to have known this, as they vied for peace between the two kings in order to avoid a conflict that could have been disastrous for the power of their kings, which in turn would have affected the power of the members of the court. If either king lost to the other, the political community of the losing side could have been destroyed or replaced by the victor.

In Ireland, Henry's military legend grew when he subdued the country without fighting a single battle himself. In 1171, there was infighting between several of the kings in Ireland. Ireland, unlike England, did not have a sole monarch in power, and instead was divided up into territories controlled by localized tribe like kings.[163] On the verge of defeat, one of the Irish kings requested aid from England. This aid came in the form of Richard de Clare, an English nobleman who was warned by an envoy of Henry II to not go to Ireland.[164] Richard ignored the warning and set off for Ireland, where he succeeded in subduing many local kings, making political alliances with others, and seizing fortresses of those he defeated. When Henry heard of Richard's venture, he called Richard back to England after seizing his lands and inheritance. Upon Richard's return, the king forced Richard to give the rights to city of Dublin and other important Irish cities

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[163] Francis Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1973, 2001), 270.
[164] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 26, 113.

to Henry. After dealing with Richard, Henry then sailed to Ireland with his own forces to assert his lordship over the island. William of Newburgh wrote that when Henry arrived in Ireland, he "terrified and without bloodshed subdued those kings of the island" who resisted his rule.[165] If William of Newburgh's account is taken as factual, then Henry's military prowess and fame had grown to the point that he could conquer other kingdoms with his mere presence. In actuality, the remaining Irish kings had just fought a war against Richard de Clare, as well as other Irish kings, and were not willing to fight against Henry. In this instance warfare and violence were not only physical tools used to expand the Angevin Empire, but also the perceived threat of violence that, according to William of Newburgh, inspired fear and weakness in Henry's opposition. In reality, Henry seized an opportunity where he saw a militarily weakened and exhausted territory that was easy to claim.

Henry II and his court utilized military might to ensure the expansion and maintenance of the Angevin realm. From his earliest days as king to his final years in life, Henry engaged in warfare to build his empire. Violence was at the core of Angevin political ambition and was used for political gain. The violent culture of the Angevin Empire's nobility was a response by Henry to the civil wars that plagued England until his ascension. He was attempting to ensure that royal power was not able to be undermined by the English barons or able to be usurped again. Henry and his courts use of violence and warfare were central tools to the creation of the Angevin Empire and the enforcement of royal power throughout it.

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[165] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 26, 115.

*Violence and Warfare as political tools*

The threats of violence and acts of violence were political tools embedded within the culture of royal power. Warfare was one way in which sovereign powers communicated with each other. Outside of political alliances and marriages, military might was necessary for kings in western Europe to control, maintain, and expand their territories. Inside the Angevin Empire, the king and his sons had to be effective military leaders in order for their power to be accepted and influential. Henry II and his sons Richard and John are examples of effective and respected kingship being tied to military power. Henry and Richard were effective military leaders who maintained a strong hold on their territories through military conquests and clashes. John, however, was met with a number of military debacles in which he lost much of the territory conquered by his father on the continent. As a result, John's reign was weaker than either his father or his brother's reign and he lost a substantial amount of royal power to his barons.[166]

The size of Henry's empire often dictated the balance of power between Henry and the French kings. The marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry of Anjou in 1152 shook up the power dynamics in French-speaking territories at that time. Before his marriage Henry had lordship over Anjou, Maine, and Normandy. With his marriage to Eleanor, he inherited lordship over Aquitaine, putting Henry in a position of power over a vast area of land and resources that eclipsed the Capetian king's own power on the continent.[167] Henry's expansion of Angevin territory in Europe effectively challenged

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[166] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 12.
[167] Bisson, *Crisis of the Twelfth Century*, 301.

Capetian lordship in France in a way that the disconnected nobles in French-speaking territories could not because of their own infighting.

Warfare was also a tool used to obtain inheritance. Henry II had four sons to whom he planned on giving lordship over certain territories in the Angevin Empire. His eldest son, Henry the young king, was expected to succeed Henry II as king of England, count of Anjou, and duke of Normandy. His second son Richard was set to inherit Aquitaine. Geoffrey, his third son, was intended to have Brittany. But his fourth son John was not expected to inherit anything and earned the moniker John "lackland."[168] At the time that Henry II was making the plans for inheritance, he did not yet control Brittany and was planning an invasion in order to bring it under his power and therefore pave the way for Geoffrey's inheritance. Before Henry launched his invasion, Conan, the earl of Richmond, who controlled the majority of Brittany, died and left behind a daughter, Constance, as his only heir. Henry II seized the opportunity and immediately betrothed the heiress to his son, both of whom were still not of age.[169] While marriage and inheritance were important considerations, there were also other factors at play in Brittany at the time. After Conan's death, a number of nobles attempted to seize power and fought amongst themselves for control of Brittany. Lesser lords in Brittany saw the chaos and violence unfolding and appealed to Henry II to intervene for peace, willingly subjecting themselves to Henry's rule. Henry then invaded and subdued the warring lords, bringing Brittany under his control through a combination of warfare and political strategy. The successful military seizure of Brittany and the marriage of Geoffrey to

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[168] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 18, 79.
[169] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 18, 79.

Conan's daughter successfully established the rightful inheritance for Geoffrey that Henry had sought. Violence and political legitimization were used simultaneously to create a stronger claim to Brittany.

Henry's sons' rebellions were also ways in which internal violence and warfare was used as political tools. When Henry II attempted to make peace with the young Henry and Richard in 1173 to quell their revolts, he offered the young Henry half the royal revenue in England and to Richard he offered half the revenue in Aquitaine. Both of his sons refused the offers because they did not want to settle for money and instead wanted to hold the same power that King Henry did in the government and politics of the Angevin Empire.[170] The young Henry and King Louis of France then convinced King William of Scotland to wage war against England in the north.[171] Henry the younger and King Louis utilized the war against the Scots to divide Henry II's attention and weaken him. Henry the Young's role in leading multiple wars and uprisings was a way to prove that he was a worthy successor to his father as king and was a capable military leader who was able to wage war and make allies against his enemies. The young Henry demonstrated a number of traits and abilities in warfare and leadership that his father had. Considering how Henry II came to power by engaging in conflict with King Stephen, it is apparent that the young Henry was attempting to do the same. In this way warfare, was not only a way by which nobles furthered their political ambitions, but also how Henry's sons attempted to prove themselves worthy for their inheritance to their father.

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[170] Barber, *Henry II*, 84.
[171] Barber, *Henry II*, 85.

Violent rebellions and warfare against Henry by his sons had consequences. Henry II accepted both Henry the young and Richard back after crushing their rebellions, but he made them swear fealty to him in order for them to rightfully hold their respective lands in England, Normandy, and Aquitaine.[172] Furthermore, after having them swear their oaths, Henry forbade anyone who had rebelled against him to attend the royal court unless he specifically summoned them. The king also kept the young Henry in England with him for over a year.[173] This separated the young Henry from those who had supported him in rebellion and dissuaded any chance of renewed rebellion against King Henry led by his son.

In the twelfth century violence was a tool utilized by the nobility for political gains. Henry II utilized warfare, threats, and murder to expand his empire and influence. When others under the yoke of the Angevin Empire attempted to do the same, Henry struck them down in demonstrations of power that served to strengthen his rule. Even when Henry's own sons rebelled against him, using the very same political tactics that he himself utilized, Henry responded with overwhelming force. But, as seen with his negotiations with his sons and with his response to William of Scotland's rebellions, when Henry vied for peace, he typically did so with fair intentions. Although the idea of Henry having fair intentions in peace treaties is a potentially biased point-of-view that depends on which chronicler was recording events. While Henry II openly utilized violence in his conquests when he felt it was needed, once he had claimed victory, he attempted to ensure that all parties were satisfied with his terms. In these circumstances,

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[172] Barber, *Henry II*, 86-88.
[173] Barber, *Henry II*, 88.

Henry had already won his prize and was content with letting others have concessions that did not undermine his power but could add to it or ensure peace.

## Legacy of Violence

Henry II spent most of his reign warring with other sovereign powers. By utilizing the territories he inherited as strongholds to wage war, Henry established a vast empire under his control. War and conquest were so ingrained in the culture of royal power under Henry that it should be of no surprise that he was at war until the day he died. Henry was on campaign in France against his son Richard and the king of France, Philip Augustus, when he succumbed to illness and had to make peace before he died.[174] This peace was to ensure that Philip Augustus would not continue any hostilities into Angevin territories during Richard's ascension to the throne of England.

With his record of power and violence during his reign, Henry II inadvertently inspired and influenced his greatest adversary, Philip Augustus. As Philip came to power as king, he imitated a number of actions that Henry had taken in order to consolidate royal power under himself. Philip Augustus also made it a personal mission to reduce the English king's power on the continent.[175] The threat of the Angevin king was heavy over the Capetian monarch's head, as Henry had expanded Angevin power on the continent for decades. With Henry's death, Philip Augustus had the opportunity to expand his own power just like Henry did.

Henry spent the end of his life fighting a war against his son and heir Richard, and the Capetian king Philip Augustus. In June 1189 at Le Mans, Richard, in rebellion against

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[174] William of Newburgh, "The History of William of Newburgh," in *The Church Historians of England* (London: Seeleys, 1853), translated by Joseph Stevenson, vol 4, pt. 2, 550.

[175] Barber, *Henry II*, 89.

Henry, struck a surprise attack with French forces that forced Henry to flee the city.[176] At age 56, Henry II experienced his first true flight from an enemy. Henry's health was failing, and his youngest son John had abandoned him to side with the eldest surviving son Richard. The combination of these events forced Henry to surrender for the first time as king of England. William of Newburgh wrote that Henry II saw the hand of God punishing him for the evils that he had committed in the past, and it was a combination of grief and anxiety that caused the aging king to become sick and die shortly afterwards.[177] William's analysis about Henry's death is depictive of the medieval historical tradition of looking for God's guidance in worldly events. Henry may have been a powerful king, but according to William he still committed evils that haunted him until the end of his life.

A brief period of peace occurred after the death of Henry II as truces were agreed upon in order to grieve and celebrate the late king. William of Newburgh wrote that the war on the continent was suspended and Henry's son Richard, who was one of the leaders warring against Henry, lamented at his funeral for the violence that had occurred between them. Furthermore, Henry's enemies "who had always been envious of his valor and surpassing glory, are said to have praised and lamented him when dead."[178] Henry II left behind a legacy on the continent and in England as a king and accomplished warrior. William of Newburgh wrote a chapter on the character of Henry II in which he balanced Henry's great deed with his faults and shortcomings. William wrote that the warfare and rebellion that Henry's sons had waged against him was punishment for the violent ways in which Henry acquired power for his sons, and that the murder of Thomas Becket made

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[176] Barber, *Henry II*, 95.
[177] William of Newburgh, "The History of William of Newburgh," 550.
[178] William of Newburgh, "The History of William of Newburgh," 550.

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Henry truly unhappy for the remainder of his life.[179] But William balanced these violent marks against the full tally of his life by remarking that Henry sought peace through violence only as a last resort, when money could not buy it.[180] William's remembrance of Henry II demonstrates that Henry's legacy was weighted heavily with violence and warfare, but these things were not necessarily regarded as bad and aided in the development of not only the Angevin Empire, but also Henry's own fame. Henry's *fama*, his reputation, was both fame and infamy. Henry's fame and glory could not be separate from his infamy and disgrace because they each reflected a different aspect of how he utilized royal power.

Reigning as king for thirty-five years, Henry II had an accomplished rule as a military leader and political figure. His hot temper led to the murder of his once friend Thomas Becket, and his attention to the crown and its issues left little room for his family. With his wife and each of his sons engaging in rebellion against him multiple times Henry's legacy was one of violence, warfare, conquests, and political ambition, as the empire he carved out would fall to pieces under the reign of his sons Richard and John. Violence was a necessary part of Henry's reign and served as a useful and necessary political tool used to build his vast empire.

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[179] William of Newburgh, "The History of William of Newburgh," 552.
[180] William of Newburgh, "The History of William of Newburgh,"552-3.

CHAPTER IV – FAMILIAL BONDS AND EMPIRE BUILDING

At the center of political power and royal culture was the *curia regis*, the king's court. The court itself can be defined as three things: a court of law, a palace or fortress, and a political community.[181] Earlier the court was examined as a court of law and as a palace or fortress. However, the court was also a political community made of the royal family, which was at the center of the court. The power dynamics of the Angevin Empire placed the king, his queen, and their children at the center of royal power and royal authority. The royal family's power and authority included creating political alliances, distributing land, installing family members as local governors, and attempting to establish a dynasty. Under Henry II, gendered politics and power changed as he attempted to establish dynasty that was based on patrilineal descent and weakened the ability of women to exert their own political power.

Personal relationships in royal culture during the twelfth century were also political relationships. The marriage of Henry and Eleanor of Aquitaine was a beneficial political alliance that gave Henry lordship over Aquitaine, adding to his already large inheritance of land in Anjou and Normandy, and placed Eleanor as queen of England, a powerful position by which she also participated in the power dynamics of the Angevin Empire. The children of Henry II and Eleanor engaged in the politics of England and on the continent in their own ways as well. Their daughters aided in building political alliances through marriage, expanding and creating familial bonds with other monarchs in Europe. The alliances and familial bonds created by these marriages played a role in

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[181] Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire, 1154- 1124*, translated by David Crouch (London: Taylor and Francis), 31.

personal and political life during the reign of Henry II and long after. These marriages were important for understanding how royal power worked in an international culture, and how that could affect local politics. The sons of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine often created discord within the royal power dynamics of the Angevin Empire by engaging in rebellion again Henry II and allying themselves with French kings and lords. The alliances created by their sons created relationships between the French and English crowns, that while not always beneficial, dictated royal power dynamics for generations after Henry's death. While the rebellions were not necessarily beneficial to the royal family, they demonstrate the complicated familial relations in the Angevin Empire and how they dictated politics. Issues such as inheritance, marriage, and dynastic relations between the king and his family dictated the change in power under Henry II.

The royal family of the Angevin Empire was large. It consisted of Henry II, his wife Eleanor, their children who lived to adulthood: sons Henry, Richard, Geoffrey, and John, as well as their daughters Matilda, Eleanor, and Joan. Each member of the family had important roles to play in the politics of the Angevin Empire, and of Europe more broadly. Henry II was not only king of England and lord over his continental territories, but he was also the leader of his family. His role as head of his family was due to the patriarchal nature of European society in the twelfth century.[182] Eleanor was the duchess of Aquitaine and queen of England. She was the matriarch of the family and played an influential role in the lives of their children and of the lands they ruled. As queen of England, she participated in public rituals and ceremonies alongside Henry.[183] Their

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[182] Elisabeth van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages, 900-1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 123.

[183] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 118.

children were expected to be active political agents across England and the continent as they grew. For the sons, this meant participating in war and the power politics of lordship. For the daughters, this meant that they were responsible for building political alliances with their marriages.

Because there were various ways in which family dynamics were responsible for creating and maintaining royal power in the Angevin Empire, it is important to note that sons, daughters, wives, and husbands all played a part in the royal family's developments. While historical chronicles often seem like the records of great men shaping history, this is due to the deliberate decisions of the men writing them to exclude information they did not deem important.[184] The result of these decisions is often seen in the exclusion of women and the roles that they played. Examining only the roles of husbands and sons ignores the power and agency expressed by the daughters and wives who were active participants in royal culture during the twelfth century. Henry II might not have become king of England had his mother Matilda not waged a war against King Stephen after the latter had usurped the throne after her father's death. And it was through Matilda that Henry had any claim at all to royal power in England, as his father was a count on the continent, not a lord in England.

Other than his mother Matilda, the most important woman in Henry II's life was his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Eleanor was queen of France before having her marriage annulled and then marrying Henry, which led to her becoming queen of England. As queen of England, Eleanor spent a considerable amount of time acting as regent for

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[184] Charity Urbanski, *Writing History for the King: Henry II and the Politics of Vernacular Historiography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 4.

Henry while he was on the continent, and she would return as regent during the reigns of her sons Richard and John.[185] As demonstrated by the power that she exercised over Aquitaine and England, Eleanor was arguably the most powerful woman in western Europe for most of her life and acted with agency in a political culture that favored men and patriarchy. Henry and Eleanor's sons were featured prominently in various chronicles for their rebellions against Henry. Some of these rebellions were in fact supported, and potentially initiated, by Eleanor herself.[186] Furthermore, their daughters created political alliances that stretched across Europe and affected power dynamics by marrying foreign monarchs.[187] Eleanor also had two daughters from her previous marriage with Louis VII. Because of Eleanor's previous marriage and the daughters she had with Louis, the noble houses of the Angevins and the Capetians were linked by kinship ties through Eleanor's children.

While the relationships between the members of the royal family had gendered aspects that were a part of the royal culture of the Angevin Empire, that does not mean that one gender was necessarily more important than the other. Gender as an aspect of culture and "a primary way of signifying relationships of power" is important in understanding gender roles in the Angevin Empire and how they were utilized by royal power.[188] While the patriarchy was the defining feature of family life in the twelfth century, the Angevin dynasty in England that Henry II was trying to create was rooted in

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[185] Ralph Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 1.
[186] Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 2.
[187] Robert Bartlett, *Blood Royal: Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 21.
[188] Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in History and Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 262.

his mother Matilda's bloodline. The gendered aspects of royal culture and royal power were used by Henry II and his court when they were useful for creating and legitimizing Henry's power, such as when making a claim to the English throne. But gendered politics and power would change under Henry as he expanded his influence and control and sought to establish a dynasty that was based upon him as the patriarch, claimed lineage from other men in his family, and would pass solely to male heirs. Both the men and the women of the royal family had important roles to play in inheritance and marriage that changed alongside royal culture and power.

*An "Angevin Dynasty"*

The creation of an Angevin dynasty that began with him was one of Henry II's goals as king, even though the idea of an Angevin dynasty is not mentioned in sources from the twelfth century. The family name of Plantagenet would not even be given a dynastic title until 1448 when Richard, Duke of York, was campaigning for the throne of England during the Wars of the Roses.[189] When Richard coined the term Plantagenet dynasty, he was attempting to claim a specific lineage to make his claim to the throne stronger. The action of claiming a certain royal lineage was not new, but the use of the name of the Plantagenet dynasty evoked the memory of a specific family who ruled England, a family with its own specific history, starting with Henry II. For this chapter the terms Plantagenet dynasty and the Angevin dynasty are interchangeable as they both refer to the family of Henry II, who did not use either title or name a dynasty after himself. The distinction between an Angevin dynasty or a Plantagenet dynasty generally falls under the same distinction between the phrases "Angevin Empire" or "Plantagenet

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[189] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 283.

Empire."[190] Both are used in describing the historiography of Henry II and his family, with the historian determining which is more appropriate. Generally French historiography uses the term Plantagenet, while the term Angevin highlights "the foreign origins of the dynasty ruling England."[191] While Henry, his court, and his family did not claim that they were building a dynasty in the twelfth century, their actions said otherwise. There are a number of elements associated with dynasty building that were utilized by the Angevin king and his court.

Sources from Henry II's reign are absent any claim that Henry was creating a dynasty. There are chroniclers who used to words *imperium* and *imperator* to describe Henry's realm as an empire and Henry as an emperor, but these do not denote any claim of dynasty.[192] But there is an inherent connection between an emperor, an empire, and a dynasty. An empire evokes the idea that there is some form of continuity between successive rulers of the empire. This continuity could be metaphysical such the spiritual succession expressed in the king's two bodies, or it could be through patrilineal relations. Henry II did attempt to create a dynasty through various means such as establishing dynastic origins through the use of history and myth, creating a patrilineal line of descent, and creating a patrilineal line of succession.

Henry II attempted to establish a dynasty that claimed legitimacy through his grandfather Henry I. Henry II attempted to exercise a number of customs and powers as

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[190] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 2.
[191] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 7.
[192] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 1-2.

law by claiming that they were the standard under his grandfather's rule.[193] He was using history as a way to establish legitimization for his actions and his bloodline. Furthermore, Henry II and his court's assertion that Stephen, Henry's predecessor, was an illegitimate king, and that his rule marked a break in the rightful rulership of England until Henry's ascension was a way to legitimize Henry's rule and create the historical basis of a dynasty that predated Henry II.[194] But Henry's claim to the English throne was through his mother Matilda. Henry II's effort to delegitimize Stephen's rule effectively claimed that Henry's family, through his mother's side, were the rightful rulers of England, as they were the descendants of Henry I, whose father was William the Conqueror.

Henry II relied upon his male ancestors for his claim to legitimately occupy the English throne, but Henry's direct relation to Henry I and William the Conqueror was by matrilineal descent. Henry's claim to power rested in the legitimacy of his mother's claim to the throne, which was usurped by her cousin Stephen. Stephen's own claim to the English throne was through his mother as well, Adela, the daughter of William the Conqueror.[195] These two kings both owed their claims to the throne of England to their mothers' bloodlines. Under Henry II, the role of matrilineal descent would change. As seen in the marriages of his daughters, no longer would a claim to the English throne be recognized through matrilineal descent. Patrilineal descent became the standard by which

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[193] "Henry II and Becket: *The Constitutions of Clarendon* (1164)," in *Reading the Middle Ages: Sources from Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic World*, third ed., edited by Barbara H. Rosenwein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 324.

[194] Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 10-11.

[195] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 46.

the English throne was passed down. This change under Henry was to ensure that

Henry's direct male descendants would remain in power.

History and myth were utilized simultaneously by the Angevin court in order to

craft a dynastic legend. In addition to claiming legitimacy from his grandfather, Henry I,

and his great-grandfather, William the Conqueror, Henry II and his court also attempted

to utilize the mythical figure of King Arthur to create a legendary patriarchal figure for

the Angevin dynasty to trace its ancestry to.[196] Because dynasties needed a real ancestry,

it was useful to create a dynastic legend that was old and difficult to disprove. A dynastic

tie that was old or hard to disprove would make it seem that the dynasty had been around

for a long time and that legitimacy could be assumed. Henry and his court's use of the

legend of King Arthur as a central figure in court ceremony and literature accomplished

those things.[197] Arthur was the legendary figure of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of

the Kings of Britain* who was the epitome of a good Christian king. He drove the Saxon

threat out of Britain, carried a shield that had the image of the "blessed Mary, mother of

God," and professed the Christian faith like no king had done before him.[198] Arthur's

legend was told at court and in public by troubadours and Arthur himself became a

popular figure whose fictionalized history became real in living memory. It was less

about the historical Arthur, and more about the image of the mythical Arthur and how

Henry II could utilize it. When Wace expanded and produced his own works on Arthur in

the *Roman de Brut*, he did so under Henry II's reign and created an Arthur who bore

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[196] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 149.
[197] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 384.
[198] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, translated by C. V. Ruisdael (Philadelphia: Gottfried & Fritz, 2015), 222-223.

some similarities to Henry II.[199] Henry and his court seized the new image of Arthur and adopted him into courtly ceremonies and public works. Even though the Angevins had no historical connection to Arthur, embracing the story created a connection to old noble blood of Britain and the legend of a rightful king. This connection, while fabricated, served the purpose of aiding in legitimizing the rule of Henry II and legitimizing the dynasty of the Angevins.

One of the most important factors in the creation of a dynasty is ensuring there are children who can inherit it. Historian Robert Bartlett writes that, "For a dynasty to survive, it has to reproduce."[200] But more specifically in the twelfth century, it was important that a son or male heir should be the one to inherit and carry on the dynasty. This is why Eleanor of Aquitaine and Louis VII's marriage was annulled, because it had not produced a male heir. This was not the case with Eleanor and Henry's marriage though, as they had five sons. Although the first son died in infancy, three of the four surviving sons would be King of England at different times. The oldest, the young Henry, would reign alongside his father until the young king died in 1183, six years before his father.[201] Upon Henry II's death, his next surviving heir Richard took the throne. But Richard cared little for England, using it mostly as a way to fund his crusade, and likewise did not carry the same sense of dynasty building that his father had.[202] When Richard died in 1199, John, the last surviving son of Henry and Eleanor, became king of England. But John was not the same charismatic and strong leader that his father had

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[199] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 145-146.
[200] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 9.
[201] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 5.
[202] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 114-116.

been, and royal power waned under his rule.[203] While the Angevin royal bloodline was carried on through John and his children, the Angevin Empire had been shattered by the losses of its continental lands under John's reign. And with the loss of those lands, the Angevin dynasty lost any claim to the empire that Henry II had built. This is because the dynasty needed those lands to claim legitimacy for itself and its empire.

It was Henry II's bloodline that was the basis of the Angevin Dynasty. When Henry II claimed the English throne for himself, he did so through his mother's bloodline.[204] As Henry began establishing his own dynasty, he ensured that his sons were chosen to inherit his land and power through their relation to him. His daughters and their children would not have that same ability to claim English royal power like his sons did, due to the changing gender dynamics in the Angevin Empire. Henry's dynasty became more patriarchal and less matrilineal. This may have been an attempt to ensure that Henry's own direct bloodline and descendants remained in power. It is somewhat paradoxical that Henry weakened the ability of a matrilineal claim considering that was what his own claim to the English throne was based upon. But the change was to ensure that his successors could not have their claims threatened by the descendants of his daughters and their husbands, who were foreign nobility and would create their own dynasties. By removing the threat of a foreign dynasty having a claim to the English throne, Henry ensured that the Angevin dynasty continued.

Names play an important part in a dynasty. While surnames were rarely used in the twelfth century to denote a dynastic connection between family members, first names

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[203] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 3.
[204] Colette Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2014), 183.

were very common and showed a sense of continuity and connection.[205] This is apparent as Henry II was named after his grandfather Henry I. Later kings of England would also be named Henry, creating a continuity between these rulers. Other names are used repeatedly throughout the Angevin family tree and denote specific familial ties. His first-born son who died in childhood was named William, likely after William the Conqueror and his son William Rufus. His second born son was also named Henry. His third son Richard was likely named after Duke Richard I, a famous member of the Norman dynasty. His oldest daughter was named Matilda, after Henry's mother.[206] Most of Henry's children were named after figures on his mother's side with the specific intention of creating legitimacy in his dynasty through the continuity of his Norman ancestry. This trend carried on as Henry and Eleanor's youngest son, John, named his sons Richard and Henry, after his brother and his father respectively. Henry and Eleanor's other children were also named after other members of their extended family. Their son Geoffrey was named after Henry's father Geoffrey of Anjou, their second daughter was named Eleanor after her mother Eleanor of Aquitaine, while their youngest son was named John, and their youngest daughter was named Joanna. John and Joanna's names are remarkably not Norman, Angevin, or Aquitanian and may have just been popular names at the time of their births.[207]

Family names were not the only ones used in creating a dynasty. When the Angevins began using Arthurian legends for their own benefit they also adopted names

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[205] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 289.
[206] Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 180.
[207] Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 180.

from the legends in order to deepen their connection with the characters.[208] This is apparent with the naming of Henry's grandson, Geoffrey's son, Arthur. When Geoffrey's son was named after the legendary King Arthur, it was done to create a dynastic tie between the boy and the mythical king. It was also a way to create a connection between the Angevin line and the Britons from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*. The story of Arthur was widespread because of the popularity of the Arthurian cycle, and the idea that this Angevin noble was Arthur returning to the world was popularized by the Angevin court. The use of the name Arthur was very deliberate to convince the nobles of Wales and Brittany of the legitimacy and rightness of Angevin rule, as they awaited the return of King Arthur.[209] In using Henry I, William the Conqueror, and King Arthur as historical figures whom Henry II and his family tied their lineage to, the Angevins effectively created the historical legitimacy needed for the Angevin dynasty to exist.

Henry II attempted to create an Angevin dynasty by conquering a large territory to rival any immediate kingdom and by partitioning pieces of the Angevin Empire off to his sons to ensure that his bloodline would remain in ruling positions of power. In giving his sons pieces of the Angevin Empire to have for themselves, Henry was mirroring what Charlemagne and his successors had done in the ninth century.[210] Charlemagne was responsible for founding the Carolingian Empire, a large Frankish territory that spanned much of Europe, and likely served as the inspiration for the Angevin Empire.

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[208] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 151-152.
[209] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 152.
[210] Stuart Airlie, *Making and Unmaking the Carolingians, 751-888* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2020), 91.

Charlemagne's successor, Louis the Pious, upon his death, divided his empire among his three sons not to divide them in conflict, but to ensure that each son protected and administered a specific part of the empire.[211] The Carolingian Empire was vast and required a great deal of attention to run effectively. Administration of the empire was only one problem though; it also needed to be defended. Viking raids were becoming a common problem and no one king could handle administering the entire Carolingian Empire by himself.[212] Dividing the empire created a way avoid dynastic quarrels between the brothers and ensure that the empire was protected equally. When Henry II created land and title inheritances for his sons, he was trying to do the same thing. His oldest son Henry the Young received England and Normandy, Richard received Aquitaine, Geoffrey received Brittany, and for a while the youngest John would not receive anything because Henry ran out of land to give.[213] After conquering Ireland in 1177, Henry installed John as Lord of Ireland. This was done not only to give John an inheritance, but also to ensure the establishment an Angevin kingdom in Ireland.[214] If it had worked out as Henry had wanted, Henry's sons would have controlled vital pieces of the Angevin Empire after Henry's death. However, the Angevin Empire fell apart much more quickly than the Carolingian Empire did. This is due to a number of reasons outside of the king's control. Death claimed the young Henry and Geoffrey before Henry II himself died. Henry's remaining sons Richard and John either did not have the same desire that Henry did to expand and strengthen their power and rule, or just did not have the talent for leadership

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[211] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 205.
[212] Anders Winroth, *The Age of the Vikings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 18.
[213] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, translated by P. G. Walsh and M. J. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxbow Books), chapter 18, 79.
[214] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 197.

like Henry did. The result was that the Angevin Empire and the Angevin dynasty were hindered during Henry's lifetime by the death of his progeny. After Henry's death, the Angevin Empire fell apart because of the actions of his remaining sons.

Political life in the twelfth century was dominated by the patriarchy, and any examination into royal power and culture runs the risk of becoming too male-centric. But in the creation and administration of the Angevin Empire, women played large and important roles, just as men did. The dynasty that Henry II attempted to build owed its origins to his namesake Henry I, who was his grandfather through his mother's bloodline. Matilda, Henry's mother, waged a long and costly war against her cousin Stephen for the right to her inheritance. That conflict led to Henry becoming heir to the throne of England. Eleanor of Aquitaine was the matriarch of what would have been the Angevin dynasty that began with her and Henry II. Henry and Eleanor's daughters played important roles in building international relationships with their marriages. While the chronicles of the twelfth century mainly focus on the men, the women of the Angevin Empire played just as much of a part in the Angevin dynasty as the men did.

Marriage, inheritance, and dynasty building were interconnected in the creation and administration of the Angevin Empire. Because dynasties need continuity, the purpose of inheritance and marriage was to connect the next generation of Angevin nobles to the history, the legitimacy, and the power of the founders of the dynasty. Even though the Angevin Empire fell apart under the children of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, the fact remains that the Angevin king and queen utilized these political tools to try to ensure that their dynasty persisted.

*The Changing Dynamics of Inheritance*

Inheritance played a large role in the development of royal culture during the twelfth century. Wealth in the form of land, funds, and resources was often what inheritance consisted of, and it could be divided among the inheritors in unequal ways. Nobles went to war over inheritance claims in their attempts to consolidate and seize power. Brothers fought over inheritances of land and title. Before he was king, Henry II's maternal grandfather Henry I went to war with his two brothers because of his lack of an inheritance from their father, William the Conqueror. While Henry I received nothing, his eldest brother, William Rufus, received the crown of England, and the other, Robert, became duke of Normandy. In an attempt to create his own inheritance, Henry I effectively stole Normandy from his brother Robert while the latter was on crusade. Henry I then claimed that he should inherit the English throne after the death of his eldest brother William Rufus.[215] William of Newburgh wrote that Henry I's claim was justified because, "the others were born when their father was duke, Henry was the only son born to him as king."[216] This occurred before there were clear rules of succession via primogeniture, and Henry I's claim was only as effective as his ability to enforce it. But, as William of Newburgh notes, the bishops and nobles of England supported Henry because, "they were attracted by Henry's praiseworthy character."[217] While there may be some truth behind Henry I's praiseworthy character, it is most likely that Henry received support across England due to the might he displayed in enforcing his claim to the throne.

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[215] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 194.
[216] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book One*, translated by P. G. Walsh and M. J. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1988), chapter 3, 47.
[217] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book One*, chapter 3, 47.

Leaving an inheritance for one's children was not always a certain thing in the twelfth century, even among the nobility, but it could still be obtained through other means. The legitimacy of these claims of inheritance relied upon one's ability to maintain control over them. This could be done through a number of ways such as force, bribery, or a show of good character. Henry II's use of the land and titles that he inherited was a major contributing factor to the development of the Angevin Empire, as he inherited a large territory that allowed him to express political and military power and lead military campaigns. Inheritance then became a tool utilized by Henry II and his court to ensure that power was passed down by their design and without impediment.

Henry's earliest political successes largely depended on his ability to utilize his inheritance. Henry received lordship over Anjou and Maine as inheritance from his parents and was made duke of Normandy because of his direct blood relation to the previous duke of Normandy. William of Newburgh wrote, "Henry succeeded his father, and quickly matched or even excelled him, showing himself diligent and energetic in everything he undertook."[218] From the beginning, Henry proved himself ready and willing to engage in the duties of lordship and to use the power that it gave him. Henry utilized his ability as lord of these regions to station a number of garrisons around the border of his territories to defend them from an invasion by the French king Louis VII. Having protected his continental lands, Henry sailed to England with a small force in order to claim the English throne as his rightful inheritance from his mother.[219] Henry's claim to England as inheritance from his mother and his grandfather gave him legitimacy

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[218] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book One*, chapter 29, 123.
[219] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book One*, chapter 29, 123.

in his conflict with King Stephen, who Henry saw as a usurper to the throne. His claims

drew support from across England, and the death of Stephen's son led to Henry and

Stephen seeking peace. William of Newburgh wrote that, "The king in fact adopted the

duke as his son, and solemnly declared him his rightful successor."[220] Much like his

grandfather Henry I, Henry II successfully claimed his inheritance through a military

conquest. But Henry's legitimacy was strengthened by the peace and familial bonds that

Stephen and Henry created.

When Henry became king and started unifying England under his royal power, he

sent a message to Malcolm, king of the Scots, stating that the territories of northern

England were Henry's by right of inheritance from his mother. Malcolm conceded to

Henry "on the merits of the case and in the strength of his forces."[221] Henry's claim of

inheritance was the peaceful way to gain the territories of northern England. But as seen

with Henry I, inheritances could also be claimed and maintained with force. Malcolm did

not contest Henry II's right of inheritance to the territories of northern England because

he did not want a battle. In this instance, Henry II did not need use force to extend his

empire because the perceived threat of force combined with Henry's claim of inheritance

was enough to reclaim these territories under English power.

Alongside the inheritance from his parents, Henry inherited lordship over

Aquitaine as part of his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine because it came with her as a

dowry. Henry and Eleanor's marriage was fruitful in its earlier years, but their

relationship deteriorated and caused conflict across the Angevin Empire. Henry had

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[220] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book One*, chapter 30, 127.
[221] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 4, 21.

begun to neglect Eleanor and have affairs with other women. This alongside Henry's increasing attempt to control Aquitaine, which was Eleanor's by inheritance, caused their marriage to sour.[222] Eleanor was a powerful woman who was not content with being controlled or ignored by Henry. She had been queen of France and was the queen of England, as well as the duchess of a wealthy and powerful territory on the continent, and successfully engaged in shaping the political culture of the twelfth century. Later in life Eleanor was able to use her influence over her and Henry's sons and her inheritance in Aquitaine to foment rebellions against Henry II. Because Eleanor had already had two daughters as a result of her previous marriage to King Louis, and even though their relationship had ended, she was still able to use her connection to Louis to petition aid from the French king against Henry on the continent.[223] When the rebellions were quashed, Henry forgave his sons and received them back in good faith, but he did not welcome his wife back. Eleanor was effectively imprisoned in Aquitaine until Henry died. Interestingly, neither Henry nor Eleanor attempted to annul their marriage even after Eleanor's imprisonment. For Henry, this likely because he did not want to lose lordship over Aquitaine, as it would leave the marriage with Eleanor. He also could not have her killed because the events of the Becket affair were still affecting his reputation.[224] For Eleanor it is likely that no one would hear her pleas if she desired an annulment, or she was biding her time, because after Henry died she would be freed and play a part in royal politics during her son's reigns.[225] In either case their separation

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[222] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 127.
[223] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 126.
[224] Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 2.
[225] Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 2-3.

would have caused a greater calamity in the Angevin Empire and would have called into question the inheritance of Aquitaine that was supposed to pass to one of Henry and Eleanor's children.

Throughout his reign, Henry II was concerned with who would inherit the throne of England after him. In 1170, while still holding the throne, Henry II had his oldest son, the young Henry, crowned as King of England. This was done so the young Henry's ascension could not be undermined or usurped like Matilda's had been.[226] Matilda's claim to the crown of England was able to be undermined because her father Henry I had his barons swear their loyalty to her in a private setting, whereas when the young Henry was crowned it was in a very public ceremony complete with church officials and a crowd of people.[227] The public ceremonial aspect of the young Henry's coronation was a contributing factor as to why Henry II did not revoke his son's inheritance after his son's numerous rebellions against him. The coronation publicly depicted the dynastic succession of the Young Henry, as well as the declaration that the king's power was shared between Henry II and his son. Young Henry was elevated to the highest position of the body politic, sharing it with his father, to whom he was subservient at the same time. However, when young Henry died in 1183, there was a moment when the inheritance of the English throne was in question. Richard, the next oldest son of Henry II and Eleanor, was in line to inherit the throne. But Richard was at that time in open rebellion against Henry II that would last until the king's death. In 1189, shortly before Henry II died on campaign against Richard and King Philip Augustus of France, Henry

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[226] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 25, 101.
[227] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 25, 101.

named Richard as his heir to England.[228] Somewhat ironically, Richard was more concerned with crusading and earning fame as a knight than he was with ruling England.[229] Richard's inheritance of the English throne may have meant less to him than it did to his father.

England was not the only inheritance that Henry II attempted to leave behind for his children. Henry conquered and ruled over a vast amount of territory on the continent and was planning to divide his territory among his sons as their inheritance. His oldest son, young Henry, was named king of England and received England and Normandy. Richard received lordship over Aquitaine, his mother's inheritance to give. Henry planned for Geoffrey to receive Brittany, but Henry had not conquered it yet. After arranging a marriage between Geoffrey and Constance, the heiress of Brittany, and taking lordship through a military conquest, Henry obtained the inheritance he wanted to give to Geoffrey. The youngest son, John, initially did not have any inheritance from Henry because he had run out of land to give. Henry started calling his son John Lackland because of this, a nickname which stuck.[230] In 1177, after conquering Ireland, however, Henry had obtained another grant of land that he could give to John as an inheritance.[231] Lordship over specific areas were the most important forms of inheritance to Henry, as that is what he was attempting to leave for his sons. In attempting to leave each son some form of landed inheritance, Henry was acting against a tradition that the nobility of Anjou

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[228] William of Newburgh, "The History of William of Newburgh," in *The Church Historians of England* (London: Seeleys, 1853), translated by Joseph Stevenson, vol 4, pt. 2, 550.
[229] Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 114-116.
[230] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 18, 79.
[231] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 197.

was notorious for, which was leaving insignificant land grants for the younger siblings.[232] This change enacted by Henry was to ensure that the Angevin dynasty and empire that he was attempting to establish lived on through his sons. Land and lordship were necessary for political power in the twelfth century. They were what Henry had received as inheritance from his father in Anjou and Normandy, and he utilized them for their resources to expand his power over his mother's inheritance in England, and then further onto the continent. It is likely that Henry wanted his sons to do similarly with the land and titles he gave them as inheritance. The titles would put his sons in positions of power, and the land would give them resources by which they could be successful. This would have given Henry's sons the tools to imitate his own youth and use their inheritances to expand the Angevin Empire after Henry's death, increasing the power of the dynasty.

Just as Henry II's grandfather and his brothers had conflict over their inheritance, so too did Henry's sons. Before Henry had conquered Ireland, he attempted to negotiate a marriage between John and Alice, daughter of Count Humbert of Maurienne, in order to secure an inheritance for John through marriage. In the negotiations, he promised that John would bring three specific castles in Anjou with him into the marriage.[233] These castles were already promised to the young Henry as part of his inheritance. As a response to this, the young Henry began an uprising against Henry II over the disregard of his inheritance, and the refusal by Henry II to correct it. The rebellion, which was written about by Jordan Fantosme and William of Newburgh, demonstrated how the perceived mistreatment of the young Henry's inheritance and his response of rebellion

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[232] Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 209.
[233] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 197.

was not dissimilar to his father or his maternal grandfather's actions. The young Henry was acting in defense of the inheritance that he believed was his and demonstrated the same agency that his father and his grandfather did when defending their inheritances. Just as Henry II had gone to war with King Stephen to claim England as his rightful inheritance, so did the young Henry go to war with his father to claim what was his. But inheritances could change due to other circumstances. With the deaths of the young Henry and Geoffrey, Richard and John's inheritances changed dramatically. Instead of being divided between four sons, the two surviving sons of Henry II were set to inherit the Angevin Empire, but not equally. Richard inherited the most power and the most land while John was dependent on his brother to ensure that his own inheritance was upheld.

Inheritance was just one way in which power was transferred between the nobility. Inheritance often went hand in hand with marriage because marriage brought its own form of inheritance, the dowry. A dowry was the bride's inheritance from her biological family and what she brought to the marriage. It could consist of land or other wealth that technically came with the bride, but was often under the control of the husband, and returned to the bride if she became widowed.[234] Marriage negotiations often involved the negotiation of and transfer of power, land, or riches for the nobility.[235] The results of the negotiators produced the dowry, and in some instances other forms of inheritance. In royal culture, marriage could be an effective way to ensure that a child would receive an inheritance. This is seen when Henry II negotiated a marriage arrangement for his son John to Alice, daughter of Count Humbert of Maurienne. As

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[234] Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 101.
[235] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 52.

John had not received Ireland from his father yet, the marriage negotiation would have ensured that John would receive land and wealth from Count Humbert, either as a full inheritance of title and land, or a partial inheritance of only land.[236] Inheritances were a part of the royal power dynamics of the Angevin Empire. In the twelfth century it was becoming more common for the eldest son to receive the largest share of inheritance.[237] The changing dynamics of inheritance practices altered family relationships and could be the cause for conflict. Inheritance was just one way in which royal culture functioned in the Angevin Empire. Marriages played another important role in the changing power dynamics under Henry II.

### Marriage and Changing Political Relationships

Marriages were an important aspect of royal life and royal culture because they had the ability to change local and international political relationships and power dynamics. It is for these reasons that marriages played a large role in the development of Angevin royal power. For nobility and royalty, marriages were essentially political tools used for creating alliances and expanding power. Marriages were typically arranged and settled upon based on a number of different factors that often depended on negotiations between the two families of the spouses.[238] Marriages could be beneficial to both parties involved, or more beneficial to one party depending on what the marriage agreements were. The great size of the Angevin Empire was in part created by the marriage of Henry II to Eleanor of Aquitaine, and then expanded by Henry arranging marriages for his children. The Angevin nobility would also often arrange or play a part in the marriages of

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[236] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 197.
[237] Jennifer Ward, *Women in Medieval Europe: 1200-1500* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 5.
[238] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 52.

members of the court. Marriages were a central part of royal culture and the expression of royal power in the twelfth century and depict how the royal family was attempting to create an empire and dynasty.

For a king, a lord, or a prince, negotiating a marriage arrangement was one of the most important decisions that they could make. Noble marriages were not only based on personal decisions, but political decisions as well, which were at times agreed upon without the consent of the two who were actually getting married. Marriages altered the power dynamics of the nobility as it could strengthen or weaken a family. Because marriages created new relationships between the families involved, they were equally capable of creating powerful dynasties or upsetting the relations between multiple families within the aristocracy.[239] While internal politics played a large part in marriage decisions, so did international politics.

It was not uncommon for nobles to take foreign brides. Matilda, daughter of Henry I, was a foreign bride when she was married to Emperor Henry V of the Holy Roman Empire.[240] Matilda was empress of the Holy Roman Empire until Henry V's death in 1125. She was then recalled to Normandy by her father shortly after her husband's death. Only a few years after Matilda's return to Normandy, Henry I negotiated a marriage between her and Geoffrey of Anjou in 1128.[241] This depicts the power that a patriarchal figure could exercise in the twelfth century. It was more useful for Henry I to call Matilda back into western Europe in order for him to utilize her recently widowed status to create political alliances that were more beneficial to him,

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[239] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 10.
[240] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 55.
[241] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 53.

instead of allowing her to remain in the Holy Roman Empire. The daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine followed in their grandmother's footsteps when they were married to foreign lords and kings.[242] The purpose of these foreign marriages was to intentionally build international relationships between these noble families. Foreign marriages brought useful alliances and power into the family that was free of any other agreements with local aristocracy. Power could be exchanged in treasure, land, or services that came from the marriage negotiations. International alliances allowed the nobility to extend their influence across a large territory and could give them the opportunity to receive aid from their extended families. In the case of Henry II, the marriages of his daughters gave him powerful political allies either near the borders of Angevin controlled territories or near his political opponents. Marriages, both good and bad, could effectively change local political relationships and dynamics, as well as international ones.

Men and women had their own gendered roles in marriages in the twelfth century, and age differences often did not matter in noble marriages. Henry II's mother Empress Matilda was twenty-six when she married Henry's father Geoffrey, who was himself fifteen.[243] Henry II was eighteen when he married Eleanor of Aquitaine, who was twelve years his senior. When Henry arranged a marriage between his son Geoffrey and Constance, the heiress to Brittany, the two were both children.[244] For Angevin nobility, age was not a limiting factor in marriage arrangements, and each spouse had roles that they had to fill.

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[242] Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 13.
[243] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 144.
[244] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 18, 79.

Gender roles in Angevin marriages became increasingly more patriarchal under Henry II, which caused conflict between the king and his wife. Because of the patriarchal society of western Europe, the husbands were the heads of their families and held authority over the women and children under them.[245] Husbands expected their wives to adhere to their demands, and if they did not then it was generally seen that the wife was disobedient and had to be punished. Nowhere in the Angevin Empire is this more apparent than the later years of Henry II and Eleanor's marriage. Eleanor played a large part in the rebellion against Henry led by their sons. Her punishment for disobedience was that Henry confined her to her castle in Aquitaine.[246] There were ideas about gender roles and certain expectations of how queens were supposed to act that were encoded in royal culture.[247] In the patriarchal society of the twelfth century, wives were expected to be obedient to their husbands. The man as the head of his household held the power, and his wife was supposed to act within his wishes.[248] Acts of defiance could be considered rebellion. Although Eleanor was queen of England, and considered to be above men who were lesser in status, she was still subject to her husband and king.[249] When these roles were challenged, regardless of social status, it created conflict within the family. As the Angevin Empire became increasingly more patriarchal, the relationships between the king and his wife erupted into a conflict that took place across the realm and included their sons.

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[245] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 123.
[246] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 126.
[247] Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 18.
[248] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 123.
[249] Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 21.

The marriage of Henry II to Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1152 was initially very beneficial and lucrative for the couple. Eleanor had been previously married to the king of France, Louis VII, for fifteen years until their marriage was annulled in early 1152 on the grounds that they were fourth cousins, but more likely because Eleanor had not produced a male heir for Louis.[250] Almost immediately after her annulment to Louis was finalized, Eleanor married Henry, who was the duke of Normandy at that time.[251] The year after their marriage, Henry landed in England and was recognized as King Stephen's heir to the English throne, to which Henry then ascended one year later in 1154.[252] When Henry was crowned king of England, Eleanor was also crowned queen of England. After only two years of marriage to Henry, Eleanor was now the most powerful woman in England. She also remained a powerful woman on the continent; as the duchess of Aquitaine, she held immense influence in the politics of southern France.

Henry II arguably gained the most from his marriage to Eleanor. By 1151, Henry already held a number of positions of notable power as the duke of Normandy, the count of Anjou, and the count of Maine. With his marriage to Eleanor in 1152, Henry then became the duke of Aquitaine as part of the marriage settlement, as it came with Eleanor as a dowry.[253] The lordship and land gained by his marriage, combined with his other territories, gave Henry control over a large territory on the continent whose wealth and power rivaled that of the French king Louis. This wealth and power gave Henry the backing necessary for his invasion of England in 1153 when he challenged Stephen for

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[250] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 65.
[251] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 65.
[252] Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 10.
[253] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 150.

the throne of England. And when Henry became king of England in 1154, he controlled a vast territory that extended from the northern reaches of England to the south of France. Henry II owed his throne and his empire to his marriage to Eleanor, because without the wealth and resources that Aquitaine provided him, Henry would not have been able to create the Angevin Empire.

Unfortunately, because many of the chronicles from the twelfth century were written by men in a patriarchal culture, many of the deeds of women are either passed over, played down, or bastardized. William of Newburgh wrote a narrative of Henry II that displayed his positive and negative qualities and deeds equally, such as when he stated, "Of a truth this king (as is well known) was endowed with many virtues that adorn the person of a king, and yet he was addicted to certain vices especially unbecoming of a Christian prince."[254] But William did not do the same for Eleanor. William does not devote much of his history to Eleanor, and what he does include was highly critical of Henry and Eleanor's marriage:

> When she [Eleanor] was released by law from her first husband [Louis], in defiance of the church, by a certain lawless license, if I may say so, he [Henry] soon after united her to himself in marriage -- whence it came to pass – the Almighty secretly balancing all things – that from her he begat a noble offspring to his own destruction.[255]

William of Newburgh depicted her divorce from King Louis as a sinful act that went against the will of the church. He believed that God was punishing Henry for marrying Eleanor, and that she gave Henry sons who would be his own destruction, essentially arguing that Eleanor was the reason for Henry's downfall. His marriage to her was

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[254] William of Newburgh, "The History of William of Newburgh," 551.
[255] William of Newburgh, "The History of William of Newburgh," 552

already, according to William's bias, a bad thing because Eleanor had been complicit in divorcing Louis. William's bias against Eleanor is clear, as the few times he mentions her it is not in a positive way. The real Eleanor was as complicated woman who had her own personal and political agency Eleanor was a major political figure in the twelfth century who expressed her own agency and power throughout her lifetime. Ralph Tuner writes that, "Twelfth-century society dismissed women as unfit for wielding power, and Eleanor's claim to liberty could not be tolerated."[256] In the culture of the twelfth century, her role as a wife was to be subservient to her husband.[257] But it is because of Eleanor's rebellion and agency that we can see that power that she expressed that helped shape the politics of the Angevin Empire. Because Henry II was attempting to create a dynasty that was legitimized by his power, the role of powerful women such as Eleanor of Aquitaine and Empress Matilda was undermined.

Marriages were just one portion of royal politics that helped shape the political atmosphere of the twelfth century. They created alliances that the nobility could benefit from or suffer from. Possibly more important than the initial marriage, these alliances and relations could shape the political dynamics of power for generations because of the connections that they made. Marriages were important for a number of reasons, and in the grand scheme of royal power they played an important role in the creation of dynasties.

As part of controlling the Angevin Empire, the Angevin kings often used their power to control and arrange the marriages of their nobles. During the rule of Henry II's grandfather Henry I, it was expected that the king's barons would consult the king when

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[256] Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 3.
[257] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 123.

they married off noble women, or arranged their marriages, in order to secure the kings consent for the couple.[258] This was to ensure that the king did not have other political or personal plans for the daughters and wives of his barons. Henry II and his sons expressed this power by utilizing feudal ties to assert dominance over remarriages of women and the marriages of minors under royal wardship.[259] Often this power was used to make the king or his barons more powerful by accumulating land or wealth associated with the bride's dowry or the ward's inheritance. This power was exercised so often by Henry II and Richard I that by the time the English barons rebelled against King John, they wrote in the Magna Carta that widows were then allowed to keep their dowries for themselves and could remain unmarried if they so desired.[260] The king's control of noble marriages allowed him to undermine the agency and power of noble women. By using his control over noble marriages, Henry II attempted to ensure that the female nobility was under the male-dominated power of the king.

The purpose of noble marriages in the twelfth century was also to produce children who would in turn be involved in power politics with their own marriages. Most of Henry and Eleanor's children would be married or have marriage arrangements negotiated in order to create political alliances, legitimate claims to lordship, or expand the empire. When Henry II was making plans to bring Brittany under his control through military might, Conan the earl of Richmond, who controlled the majority of Brittany, died and left his daughter Constance as his heir. Henry seized the opportunity and

[258] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 152.
[259] van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages*, 151.
[260] *Magna Carta* (London: Penguin Classics, 2015), translated by David Carpenter, chapter 7-8, 41.

arranged a marriage between the heiress and his son Geoffrey.[261] The purpose of this arranged marriage between the two youths was to legitimize the claim that Henry wanted Geoffrey to have to Brittany's lordship in order to secure his inheritance. By marrying Geoffrey to Constance, Henry was creating a dynastic tie between the Angevin nobility and the nobility of Brittany, extending Henry's influence and control through kinship ties. Neither Geoffrey or his proposed wife had a say in the matter and were effectively used as political tools in Henry's own expansion of power. Using his power to arrange a marriage between Geoffrey and Constance in Brittany shows that Henry was extending Angevin power and control into other territories to secure his dynasty and empire.

Noble children were participants in politics in the Middle Ages, with their marital arrangements being decided upon by their parents. Marriage arrangements helped expand the Angevin Empire through legitimizing claims of inheritance and lordship, as well as by creating alliances across Europe. The daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine were given in marriage to foreign nobility as a way to form international political alliances.[262] Matilda, the eldest daughter, married Henry the Lion, the duke of Saxony. As Saxony was a part of the Holy Roman Empire, Matilda was mirroring her paternal grandmother and namesake by going there. The middle daughter, Eleanor, married King Alfonso VIII of Castille. Joan, the youngest daughter, married King William II of Norman Sicily.[263] These marriages created strong political alliances that spread Angevin influence across Europe. Thanks to these marriages, the Angevin Empire obtained political alliances in the Holy Roman Empire, the Iberian Peninsula, and southern Italy.

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[261] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book Two*, chapter 18, 79.
[262] Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 194.
[263] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 22.

The dynastic tie between Henry II and Henry the Lion was beneficial in another way. The marriage between Henry the Lion and Matilda reconnected the Angevin nobility with the Holy Roman Empire, a bond that had been created with Henry II's mother's first marriage. Matilda's own status as the granddaughter of Empress Matilda also bolstered Henry the Lion's status within the empire itself.[264]

The political connections created by the marriage of Henry and Eleanor's daughters created a tie between Angevin lands and the rest of western Europe that persisted throughout Henry II's life and after. When Henry the Lion of Saxony fled from Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, he stayed in England and France in the court of Henry II, often joining the king in his travels. Henry II even served as mediator between Henry the Lion and Frederick Barbarossa when the two reconciled.[265] After Henry's death, Matilda's son Otto would also be a powerful political figure when he became Holy Roman Emperor and used his influence to aid his uncle John when he was king of England.[266] But these marriages did not always produce beneficial relationships. When Eleanor of Aquitaine died in 1204, Alfonso VIII invaded and occupied Gascony, claiming it was promised to him by Henry II when Alfonso and Eleanor the younger were married.[267] Alfonso used the agreement between Henry and himself to claim legitimate lordship over Gascony from 1204 until 1208. But his claim was contested the entire time and he was forced to defend it with a series of military engagements. Alfonso gave up the claim to Gascony after it had cost him so much time and money.[268] The marriage of

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[264] Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 69.
[265] Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 104-105.
[266] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 22.
[267] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 23.
[268] Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 121.

Eleanor and Alfonso produced a daughter named Blanche. Blanche married the French prince Louis, son of Philip Augustus, the king of France and stout adversary to Angevin power in France. Louis attempted to use his marriage to Blanche to claim the throne of England in 1216 in an attempt to usurp the throne from King John.[269] Louis's attempt ultimately failed because by 1216, patrilineal descent in England had become the norm. This was in part due to Henry II's attempt to create an Angevin dynasty that was passed down through his sons. The marriages of these Angevin princesses created lasting international relationships that were both beneficial and detrimental to the Angevin Empire. While they carried aspects of the Angevin dynasty to their new homes, their ability to exercise Angevin power, and the ability for their children to exercise Angevin power was limited, if not lost.

*The Role of the Family*

Royal power in the Angevin Empire was intimately tied to the familial relationships of Henry II. Henry's claim to the throne of England was through his mother and their relation to Henry I and William the Conqueror. The continental lands of the Angevin Empire were inherited by Henry from his father, his mother, and his wife, as a dowry through their marriage. As king, Henry extended the reach of his empire across the British Isles and further on the continent. As he expanded his territory, Henry placed his sons in positions of power as local lords over the territories that they were supposed to inherit. The daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine were married to foreign nobility across Europe in order to create familial bonds between the Angevin dynasty and international nobility. In the Angevin Empire, each member of the family played an

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[269] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 23.

important role in governing and alliance-making in the political community. But under Henry, the political power that women expressed was weakened. Henry strengthened the role of patrilineal descent and succession in his attempt to create an Angevin dynasty that was rooted in his power. He did not want his daughters or their children to be able to exercise the power that his mother, Matilda, or his wife, Eleanor, were able to. The role that the Angevin noble family was supposed to play was in service to the king. The queen was the matriarch of the dynasty who gave the king land and wealth on the continent and bore children for the dynasty. The sons of the dynasty were intended to be lords who enforced the king's power until they received their inheritances and expanded Angevin power on their own. The daughters created extended familial bonds across Europe with their marriages, uniting noble families and creating dynasties of their own. Under Henry II, the family was a personal and political tool used by the king to expand and legitimize his power.

CHAPTER IV – CONCLUSION

This examination of twelfth century royal power and royal culture under Henry II of England has demonstrated how royal culture and power were utilized in the Angevin Empire. Because royal power was created and legitimized by the culture it existed within, examining the participants in that royal culture of the twelfth century is key. The king and his family were at the center of royal power and culture, but they were not the only people who created and defined it. The *curia regis*, the king's court, was an instrumental part of creating, enforcing, and legitimizing royal power. The court, the king, and the royal family all contributed to its development in the Angevin Empire by utilizing and promulgating intellectual ideas about royal power, creating narratives that were beneficial to the ruling family, using physical violence and threats, and attempting to create a dynasty that would rule the newly formed Angevin Empire.

The idea that the *curia regis* had three distinct purposes is an important feature of the nature of royal power in the period. The *curia regis* was a court of law, a palace or fortress, and a political community.[270] As a court of law, the court was the center of creating and enforcing the king's law throughout the realm. In addition, the court's dual role as a palace and a fortress meant that it was equally a place of residence and warfare. The idea that the king was a warrior and military leader was reflected in the fact that castles were centers of military power and places where the king and the court lived. Finally, the court as a political community was more complicated than the other definitions of it, as the political community was fluid in size and membership. At

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[270] Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire, 1154-1224*, translated by David Crouch (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 31.

different times and locations, the court could be composed of the king, his immediate

family, the intellectuals patronized by him, and all the barons under him. Similarly, the

court could be composed of only the king and a few chosen individuals who travelled

with him. But the court was never only one thing at a time. It was always all three at

once; a court of law, a palace or fortress, and a political community whose purpose was

to strengthen and legitimize the rule of the king.

The creation and legitimization of royal power under Henry II relied upon a

combination of intellectual developments, violence, and Henry's own attempts at

establishing a dynasty. While these have been separated for the purposes of analysis, they

were not actually separate aspects of royal power. Intellectual culture, law, violence, and

the establishment of an Angevin dynasty were interconnected in the creation of the

Angevin Empire and all of these aspects worked together to strengthen royal power.

Henry II patronized scholars and intellectuals whose work came to define the twelfth

century renaissance. While they used the king for his patronage, he in turn used them to

create narratives that depicted Henry and his family as important figures with noble

ancestors that legitimized Angevin power and status through their historical connections.

At the same time, Henry utilized military conquests and marriages together to create

inheritances for his sons. In order to try to secure his sons' unimpeded inheritance of the

throne, Henry had them crowned and named as his successors publicly and early in their

lives. Henry II was an active political agent during the twelfth century as he created the

Angevin Empire and attempted to create an Angevin dynasty rooted in his power.

While scholars can no longer write histories that engage uncritically with the

"great man of history" trope, it is apparent that because of his success in consolidating

power for himself and the *curia regis* that centered on him, Henry II was able to act with agency and power that placed his actions above others. But there were many other individuals who had their own agency and whose actions were important in the development of power in the Angevin Empire. Two of the most important women in this history of the Angevin Empire were Empress Matilda and Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry's mother and wife respectively. Henry II owed his claim to the English throne to the agency expressed by Matilda in her war against her cousin Stephen, who usurped the throne after the death of her father Henry I. It was through her bloodline that Henry II had any claim to the throne, and it was through the education she gave him that led Henry to seek his royal inheritance. It was Henry's marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine that gave him the land, resources, and financial backing that allowed him to invade England and ultimately become king. It was the combination of Henry's inheritance of the English throne, the inheritance of his lands on the continent from his father, and Eleanor's dowry of Aquitaine that gave Henry the ability to create the Angevin Empire.

The Angevin Empire did exist, and it did so as an amalgamation of territories under the rule of Henry II. This is a dual contribution and intervention in the historiography because of the debate in French and English historiography concerning the legitimacy of the Angevin Empire. Henry was not technically king or emperor over his continental territories, nor did he claim to be an emperor. But chronicles from the twelfth century attribute Henry II's territory to that of an *imperium* and gave him the title of *imperator*. The historiography that argues that the Angevin Empire did exist points to those as evidence, as well as the idea that the Angevin Empire was an empire of the twelfth century, based on their cultural ideas of empire, not the modernist depiction of

one. States, countries, kingdoms, and empires did not have concrete borders, but because Henry claimed lordship over the territories of the Angevin Empire and held control over them with governance and military force, this is evidence that he was intentionally creating an empire with his royal power.

It was through Henry and his court that the king's power was created and reinforced through the use of law, written narratives, violence, and familial bonds. It was the consolidation of power and land under Henry II, as well as the changing dynamics of gendered power that demonstrate how the Angevin Empire was expected to exist and function. The dynasty that Henry attempted to establish relied upon the territory that extended across the British Isles and onto the continent. But the Angevin Empire fell apart after Henry's death, during the reign of his son John. The loss of Angevin continental lands under John and the weakening of royal power collapsed the empire that Henry had built. But the legacy of the Angevin Empire and of Henry II's power remained as a presence in royal culture, with successive generations of English monarchs fighting to reclaim the lands that were once held by the Angevin king. The legacy and memory of the Angevin Empire was real enough for English kings to attempt to recreate the dominance that the English crown once held in Europe.

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