

A Struggle for Royal Authority

Medieval monarchs could not always count on the loyalty of their nobles and churchmen.

“A.D. 1137 King Stephen . . . seized Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, and the Chancellor Roger, his nephew, and threw [them] into prison till they gave up their castles. . . . They had done him homage, and sworn oaths, but they no truth maintained. They were all forsworn, and forgetful of their troth [loyalty]; for every rich man built his castles, which they held against [the king]; and they filled the land full of castles.”⁹⁹

— *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

Focus Question How did monarchs in England and France expand royal authority and lay the foundations for united nation-states?



1 Lord kneels and pledges loyalty to his king.

Royal Power Grows

Objectives

- Learn how monarchs gained power over nobles and the Church.
- Describe how William the Conqueror and Henry II strengthened English royal power.
- Analyze the traditions of government that developed under King John and later English monarchs.
- Explain how strong monarchs unified France.

Terms, People, and Places

William the Conqueror	Magna Carta
Common law	due process of law
Feudalism	habeas corpus
King John	Parliament
	Louis IX

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Identify Causes Keep track of how royal power increased and decreased by using a cause-effect chart like the one below.

Royal Power Changes		
William the Conqueror	Henry II	John
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•

As medieval monarchs struggled to exert royal authority over nobles and churchmen, they slowly built the framework for the European nation-states of today. Nation-states are regions that share a government and that are independent of other states. Each of these nations developed differently, and a monarch's success in establishing power could have consequences for centuries.

Monarchs, Nobles, and the Church

During the early Middle Ages, as you have read, monarchs in Europe stood at the head of society but had limited power. Nobles and the Church had as much power as monarchs. In some cases, they were more powerful than monarchs. Both nobles and the Church had their own courts, collected their own taxes, and fielded their own armies. They jealously guarded their rights and privileges against any effort by monarchs to increase royal authority.

During the High Middle Ages—about 1000 to 1300—the balance of power started to shift. Monarchs used various means to centralize power. They expanded the royal domain and set up systems of royal justice that undermined feudal and Church courts. They organized government bureaucracies, developed tax systems, and built standing armies. Monarchs also strengthened ties with the townspeople of the middle class. Townspeople, in turn, supported royal rulers, who could impose the peace and unity that were needed for successful trade.

✓ **Checkpoint** What groups gained and lost power?

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English Kings Strengthen Their Power

During the 400s and 500s, a group of Germanic tribes known as the Angles and Saxons, or Anglo-Saxons, conquered most of the Roman colony of Britain. The country became known as England. Despite Viking invasions in the 800s, a unified English kingdom emerged. In 1066, however, King Edward of England died without an heir. A council of nobles chose Edward's brother-in-law Harold to rule. But William, Duke of Normandy, in France, a tough descendant of Vikings, also claimed the English throne. He was related to King Edward, who, William claimed, had promised him the throne. The answer to the rival claims lay on the battlefield.

William of Normandy Conquers England William raised an army and won the backing of the pope. He then sailed across the English Channel to England. At the Battle of Hastings, William and his Norman knights triumphed over Harold. William the Conqueror, as he was now called, became king of England on Christmas Day 1066.

Although William's French-speaking nobles dominated England, the country's Anglo-Saxon population survived. Over the next 300 years, there was a gradual blending of Norman French and Anglo-Saxon customs, languages, and traditions.

Expanding Royal Power Now that William had conquered England, he set out to impose his control over the land. Like other feudal monarchs, he granted fiefs to the Church and to his Norman lords, or barons, but he also kept a large amount of land for himself. He monitored who built castles and where. He required every vassal to swear first allegiance to him rather than to any other feudal lord.

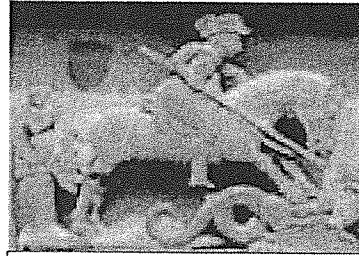
To learn about his kingdom, William had a complete census taken in 1086. The result was the *Domesday Book* (pronounced "doomsday"), which listed every castle, field, and pigpen in England. As the title suggests, the survey was as thorough and inevitable as doomsday, believed to be God's final day of judgment that no one could escape. Information in the *Domesday Book* helped William and later English monarchs build an efficient system of tax collection. William's successors also created the royal exchequer, or treasury, to collect taxes, fees, fines, and other dues.

Developing a Unified Legal System In 1154, an energetic, well-educated king, Henry II, inherited the throne. He broadened the system of royal justice by expanding accepted customs into law. He then sent out traveling justices to enforce these royal laws. The decisions of the royal courts became the foundation of English common law, a legal system based on custom and court rulings. Unlike local feudal laws, common law applied to all of England. In time, people brought their disputes to royal courts rather than to those of nobles or the Church. Because royal courts charged fees, the exchequer benefited from the growth of royal justice.

Under Henry II, England also developed an early jury system. When traveling justices visited an area, local officials collected a jury, or group of men sworn to speak the truth. These early juries determined which cases should be brought to trial and were the ancestors of today's grand jury. Later, another jury evolved that was composed of 12 neighbors of an accused person. It was the ancestor of today's trial jury.

Conflict With the Church Henry's efforts to extend royal power led to a bitter dispute with the Church over the issue of legal authority.

BIOGRAPHY



William the Conqueror

From the time he became Duke of Normandy at age seven, William the Conqueror's (1028–1087) life and position were in constant danger, mostly from jealous relatives. Four of his guardians were murdered—one in the very room in which William slept.

After William was knighted at the age of 15, he sought the help of his liege lord, Henry I of France, to put down rebellions by his barons. At 20, he led an army to defeat a rebellious cousin. His continuing efforts to gain power included putting pressure on Edward, the English king, to declare him heir to the English throne. How did William's experience as duke prepare him to be a powerful king of England?

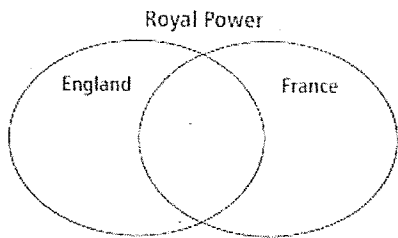
Henry claimed the right to try clergy in royal courts. Thomas Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury and once a close friend of Henry, fiercely opposed the king on this issue. The conflict simmered for years.

At last, Henry's fury exploded. "What cowards I have brought up in my court," he cried. "Who will rid me of this meddling priest?" Four hot-headed knights took Henry at his word. In 1170, they murdered the archbishop in his own cathedral. Henry denied any part in the attack. Still, to make peace with the Church, he eased his attempts to regulate the clergy. Meanwhile, Becket was honored as a martyr and declared a saint. Pilgrims flocked to his tomb at Canterbury, where miracles were said to occur.

✓ **Checkpoint** How did William and Henry II increase royal power?

Note Taking

Use a Venn diagram like the one below to show the similar and different ways royal power developed in England and France.



Evolving Traditions of Government

Later English rulers repeatedly clashed with nobles and the Church as they tried to raise taxes or to impose royal authority over traditional feudal rights. Out of those struggles evolved traditions of government that would have great influence on the modern world.

King John Makes Powerful Enemies A son of Henry II, King John was a clever, cruel, and untrustworthy ruler. During his reign, he faced three powerful enemies: King Philip II of France, Pope Innocent III, and his own English nobles. He lost his struggles with each.

Ever since William the Conqueror, Norman rulers of England had held vast lands in France. In 1205, John suffered a setback when he lost a war with Philip II and had to give up lands in Anjou and Normandy.

Next, John battled with Innocent III over selecting a new archbishop of Canterbury. When John rejected the pope's nominee, the pope excommunicated him. Innocent also placed England under the interdict—the papal order that forbade Church services in an entire kingdom. Even the strongest ruler was likely to give in to that pressure. To save himself and his crown, John had to accept England as a fief of the papacy and pay a yearly fee to Rome.

English nobles presented the Magna Carta to King John at Runnymede, a field along the Thames River. Why did King John agree to the Magna Carta?

Reading Source

“King John, when he saw that he was deserted by almost all, so that out of his regal superabundance of followers he scarcely retained seven knights, was much alarmed lest the barons would attack his castles and reduce them without difficulty, as they would find no obstacle to their so doing. . . . Accordingly, at the time and place pre-agreed on [Runnymede], the king and nobles . . . began a long discussion about terms of peace and aforesaid liberties. . . . King John, seeing that he was inferior in strength to the barons, without raising any difficulty, granted the underwritten laws and liberties, and confirmed them by his charter.”

—Roger of Wendover



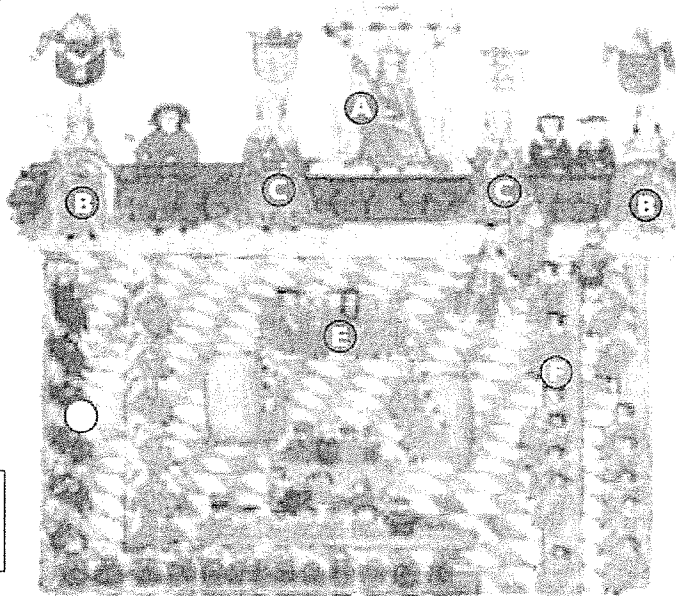
The Magna Carta Finally, John angered his own nobles with oppressive taxes and other abuses of power. In 1215, a group of rebellious barons cornered John and forced him to sign the Magna Carta, or great charter. This document contained two very important ideas that would shape English government in the future. First, it asserted that the nobles had certain rights. Over time, these rights were extended to all English citizens. Second, the Magna Carta made it clear that the monarch must obey the law.

Besides protecting their own privileges, the barons included provisions that recognized the legal rights of townspeople and the Church. Two of the most significant were in a clause protecting freemen from arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, and other legal actions, except “by legal judgment of his peers or by the law of the land.” This clause formed the basis of the right we know today as due process of law.

Evolution of English Government

- 1066 **Norman Conquest** William, Duke of Normandy, defeats King Harold of the Anglo-Saxons at Hastings.
- 1086 **Domesday Book** King William uses this census, or survey of people and property, as a basis for taxation.
- 1160s–1180s **Common Law** Henry II uses accepted customs to lay the foundation for the English legal system.
- 1215 **Magna Carta** King John approves this document limiting royal power and extending rights to nobles and freemen.
- 1295 **Model Parliament** King Edward I expands Parliament to include representatives of common people as well as lords and clergy.

Chart Skills Which of the milestones above increased the power of the monarchy? Which limited the monarch's power? Explain your answers.



Model Parliament

The king presides over nobles and clergy, above. Representatives from towns and counties met separately.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> A King Edward I | <input type="radio"/> Clergy |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> B Archbishops | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Barons (Lords) |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> C Kings of Scotland and Wales | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Judges |

It is also seen as the basis for the right of *habeas corpus*, the principle that no person can be held in prison without first being charged with a specific crime. *Habeas corpus* was later clarified and defined in the Petition of Right (1628) and the Habeas Corpus Act (1679).

The king also agreed not to raise new taxes without first consulting his Great Council of lords and clergy. Many centuries later, American colonists would claim that those words meant that any taxation without representation was unjust. In 1215, though, neither the king nor his lords could have imagined such an idea.

The Development of Parliament In keeping with the Magna Carta, English rulers often called on the Great Council for advice. During the 1200s, this council evolved into Parliament, which later became England's legislature. As Parliament acquired a larger role in government, it helped unify England.

In 1295, King Edward I summoned Parliament to approve money for his wars in France. "What touches all," he declared, "should be approved by all." He had representatives of the "common people" join with the lords and clergy. The "commons" included two knights from each county and representatives of the towns. Much later, this assembly became known as the Model Parliament because it set up the framework for England's legislature. In time, Parliament developed into a two-house body: the House of Lords with nobles and high clergy and the House of Commons with knights and middle-class citizens. Over the centuries, Parliament gained the crucial "power of the purse": the right to approve any new taxes. With that power, Parliament could insist that the monarch meet its demands before voting for taxes. In this way, it could limit the power of the monarch.

✓ **Checkpoint** How was the power of the English king limited?

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Successful Monarchs in France

Unlike William the Conqueror in England, monarchs in France did not rule over a unified kingdom. The successors to Charlemagne had little power over a patchwork of French territories ruled by powerful nobles.

The Capetian Kings In 987, these nobles elected Hugh Capet, the count of Paris, to fill the vacant French throne. They may have chosen him because they thought he was too weak to pose a threat to them. Hugh's own lands around Paris were smaller than those of many of his vassals.

Nevertheless, Hugh and his heirs slowly increased royal power. First, they made the throne hereditary, passing it from father to son. The Capetian dynasty lasted for 300 years, making the kingdom more stable. Next, they added to their lands by playing rival nobles against each other. They also won the support of the Church.

Perhaps most important, the Capetians built an effective bureaucracy. Government officials collected taxes and imposed royal law over the king's lands. By establishing order, they increased their prestige and gained the backing of the new middle class.

Philip Augustus Extends French Power In 1179, Philip II became king of France. Called Philip Augustus, he was a shrewd and able ruler. Instead of appointing nobles to fill government positions, Philip paid middle-class officials who would owe their loyalty to him. He granted charters to many new towns and introduced a new national tax.

Philip also quadrupled royal land holdings. Through trickery, diplomacy, and war, he gained control of English-ruled lands in Normandy, Anjou, and elsewhere. He then began to take over southern France. When he sent his knights to help the pope suppress a heretical group called the Albigensians (al buh JEN see unz) in the south, he was able to add this vast area to his domain. Before his death in 1223, Philip had become the most powerful ruler in Europe.

bulary Builder

in- (doh MAYN) *n.* territory under ruler

Geography Interactive
For: Audio guided tour
Web Code: nap-0811

al lands in France, 987-1328

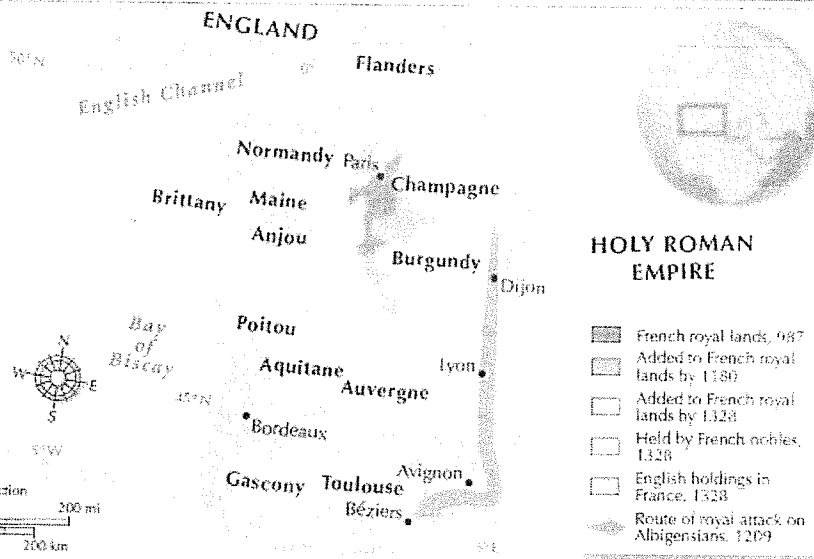
Skills From a small area and the city of Paris, Capetian monarchs gradually extended royal control over more than half of France.

Locate (a) Paris (b) Normandy (c) Avignon

Region What territories were held by the English in 1328?

Synthesize Information

- What overall trend in French royal power does the map show?
- Where and by whom might royal power be challenged after 1328? Explain your answer.



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Louis IX, King and Saint In 1226, Louis IX became King of France. A deeply religious man, Louis persecuted heretics, or those who held beliefs contrary to Church teachings. He also persecuted Jews and led French knights in two Crusades, or wars against Muslims. Within 30 years of his death, the Church declared him a saint.

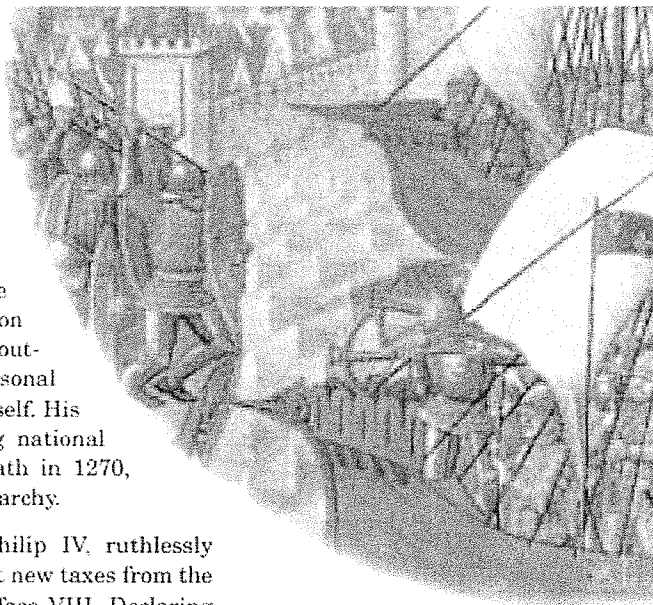
Louis did much to improve royal government. Like Charlemagne, he sent out roving officials to check on local administrators. He expanded the royal courts, outlawed private wars, and ended serfdom in his personal domain. To ensure justice, he even heard cases himself. His enormous personal prestige helped create a strong national feeling among his subjects. By the time of his death in 1270, France was emerging as an efficient centralized monarchy.

Clashing With the Pope Louis's grandson, Philip IV, ruthlessly extended royal power. To raise cash, he tried to collect new taxes from the clergy. These efforts led to a clash with Pope Boniface VIII. Declaring that "God has set popes over kings and kingdoms," the pope forbade Philip to tax the clergy without papal consent. Philip threatened to arrest any clergy who did not pay. As their quarrel escalated, Philip sent troops to seize Boniface. The pope escaped, but he died soon afterward.

Shortly after, in 1305, a Frenchman was elected pope. Four years later, he moved the papal court to Avignon (ah vee NYOHN), just outside the southern border of France, where French rulers could exercise more control over it. Eventually, this move led to a crisis in the Church when another pope was elected in Rome. The rival popes each claimed to be the true leader of the Church.

Forming the Estates General During this struggle with the pope, Philip rallied French support by setting up the Estates General in 1302. This body had representatives from all three estates, or classes of French society: clergy, nobles, and townspeople. Although later French kings consulted the Estates General, it never gained the power of the purse or otherwise served as a balance to royal power.

✓ **Checkpoint** Describe how two French kings increased royal power.



Louis IX Leads a Crusade

The forces of King Louis IX attack Damietta, a city in Egypt. *What can you tell about medieval weapons and warfare from this painting?*

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: naa-0811

Terms, People, and Places

1. What do many of the key terms listed at the beginning of the section have in common? Explain.

Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Identify Causes** Use your completed graphic organizers to answer the Focus Question: How did monarchs in England and France expand royal authority and lay the foundations for united nation-states?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Analyze Information** How were nobles and the Church obstacles for monarchs who wanted more power?
4. **Summarize** How did William increase royal power in England?
5. **Draw Conclusions** Explain the importance of (a) the Magna Carta and (b) the Model Parliament.
6. **Synthesize Information** Describe the power struggle between French kings and the pope.

● **Writing About History**

Quick Write: Define a Topic Choose a central event or trend from this section. Ask yourself: What happened? When did it begin? What led up to it? What followed? Brainstorm causes and effects. For the growth of royal power in England, you might ask:

- How did William the Conqueror increase royal power?
- How did the nobles react to King John's abuse of power?

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