Conclusion

THIS essay has traced the history of the three great states of western Europe from the tenth through the thirteenth centuries. The three stories have certain common characteristics. Each state started as a Germanic monarchy and eventually became a feudal monarchy. In each state the kings struggled vigorously to develop a strong royal government against the opposition of the baronage. But in each state different circumstances affected this contest and hence the results varied greatly. It is true that superficially the political structures of France and England seemed much alike at the close of the thirteenth century. Each had a strong monarchy that combined the ancient kingly rights with the prerogatives of feudal suzerainty. Each had a highly developed royal government with financial and judicial organs. In each state there existed a representative assembly, an estates of the realm. There were, however, striking differences between the two countries. England was comparatively small in area and population. The members of its feudal class were closely bound together by long years of intermarriage and by their common efforts both in serving and opposing their kings. Although there were great lords and small lords, all held much the same position in
relation to the government and had common interests. English kings had quarreled with their vassals, but with the possible exception of John no monarch had ever thought of ruling without their full cooperation. And by the end of the thirteenth century most English barons had given up trying to develop local independence—their aim was rather to control the royal government. The bureaucracy that served the English king was extremely small: some dozen judges and a few financial officers aided by a staff of clerks. The local royal government was carried on by sheriffs and other officers who were in general members of the feudal class. When Edward I negotiated with his people, it was with the “community of the realm”: the peers and representatives of shires and towns assembled in Parliament. The barons of England might quarrel with the king but not with the royal government, for of this they were themselves an integral part.

The French state was molded in a different pattern. It was still an alliance of feudal principalities, some of which were almost sovereign. The duchy of Brittany and the appanages of the Capetian princes were bound to the kingdom only by the fact that their lords were the king’s vassals. In short, the true kingdom of France was the royal demesne. By the close of the thirteenth century this demesne was large and its administration well centralized. The French kings governed through a large and complicated bureaucracy. In addition to the Parlement, the chambre des
comptes, and other central organs of government there were the baillis, the seneschals, and a host of minor officials scattered over the demesne. These men were the king's servants who lived on his pay. The Estates General was summoned by Philip the Fair to give him the support of his people in his struggle with the papacy, but it was not an integral part of the royal government. The government of France was effective and well organized, but it was something apart from the people.

Nevertheless, despite the divergencies in the political structure of the states, the kings of France and England had succeeded in developing strong monarchies. In this they had been aided by both ability and good fortune. The dynasties that ruled these two states during this period produced a remarkable number of very able men. Moreover, there was little to divert their attention from building up their power. Although the kings of France and England waged fairly continuous war against each other, they had no other dangerous foes. Neither monarchy embarked on large-scale adventures that seriously strained its resources. Neither was ever faced with the necessity of buying the support of its baronage with destructive concessions. Furthermore, they had extremely good fortune in one important respect—serious disputes over the throne were very few. From Hugh Capet to Philip IV the French crown descended from father to son without serious question. In all that long period there were but two minorities and in each of these an able and
effective regent ruled with a firm hand. The French monarchy never suffered from the anarchy of a disputed succession and no opportunity was given for a revival of the theory of elective monarchy. The English dynasty was almost equally fortunate. Except for the reign of Stephen there was no period when the English crown was in dispute in any practical form. Duke Robert of Normandy advanced his claims against his younger brothers, William II and Henry I, and Arthur had a reasonable claim against John, but neither of these claimants was taken very seriously in England. There is little doubt that the French and English monarchies owed much of their success to their good fortune in producing male heirs. The serious decline in the power of the English crown during Stephen’s reign shows clearly to what end a succession of such disputes might have led.

The German monarchy was far less fortunate than its western neighbors. Only the Hohenstaufens can be charged with deliberately neglecting their interests in Germany in order to develop their power in Italy, but many German monarchs used in Italy time, energy, and resources that might better have been spent at home. Moreover, possession of Italy meant close relations with the papacy. When the popes began their great effort to free the church from secular control, it was but natural that they should first devote their attention to the monarchs nearest at hand. It seems quite doubtful that Gregory VII would have waged so fierce a war against Henry IV merely to free
the German church from royal control. What really troubled him was Henry's dominance over the bishops of Lombardy. In short, it seems clear that directly and indirectly the Italian interests of the German kings did much to prevent them from building a strong monarchy at home. But in Germany also the question of succession to the throne played a large part. None of the dynasties that ruled Germany were able to produce sons for more than four generations. Had the line of Henry the Fowler been able to pass the crown from father to son from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries as did the Capetian house, it seems likely that the elective principle would have been forgotten as completely in Germany as in France. And every break in the royal line meant a dispersion of the demesnes and a weakening of the monarchy. Whatever the causes may have been, the result was decisive. The death of Frederick II left the German monarchy destitute of resources and authority. The king of Germany depended for his power on his own resources as a prince, and the electors who chose the monarch were usually careful to see that no very powerful prince received the office. Thus at the close of the thirteenth century Germany was in reality a loose coalition of practically independent states, ranging from important duchies like Bavaria, through small counties such as Wurttemberg and proud free cities like Hamburg and Bremen, to the tiny fiefs of imperial knights. There was no royal demesne, no royal government, and no king except in title.
In closing, a few words seem in order about the standards of royal living and the scale of royal activity in the era of the feudal monarchy. One striking feature was the peripatetic character of the kings and their courts. In the early part of the period the monarch and his entire administration roamed continuously from one demesne manor to another. In England King Henry I fixed his treasury at Winchester, and Henry II established a court to sit at Westminster where the royal treasury had been placed by that time. By the reign of Edward I there were considerable numbers of officials permanently in residence at Westminster, but the king and his court continued to travel about. In France there was no fixed center of the government until after the time of Philip Augustus. That monarch had his treasury in Paris, but it was located in the house of the Knights Templars and served by them. Only under St. Louis can one begin to call Paris the capital of France in any true sense, and the king himself was rarely there. Henry IV built a royal palace at Goslar and apparently planned a permanent capital, but the scheme was forgotten, and the German kings remained ambulatory. The fact that the courts were continually moving prevented them from being very complex. King John of England rarely stayed more than a week in one place. His court was transported by from one to three carts and perhaps a dozen pack horses. He was usually accompanied by several hundred hunting dogs and their attendants. The king had his household seneschal or steward, sev-
eral chamberlains, several wardrobe servants, a few chancery clerks, a small body of knights and crossbowmen, and a miscellaneous collection of bath masters, cooks, washerwomen, huntsmen, and grooms. There is some reason for believing that the lines between the washerwomen and prostitutes was not too finely drawn. When the queen accompanied the king, she had her own group of household officials and servants. But the kings were inclined to leave their queens in one place and wander about without them. The royal residences were like those of the great lords. In the early period they would consist essentially of two rooms—a hall and a chamber. Later somewhat more spacious dwellings appeared. But by and large royal life was extremely simple.

It is impossible to give figures for mediaeval incomes that have any meaning today. Royal and noble incomes are peculiarly deceptive because they covered the cost of government as well as private expenses. King John’s income from England ranged from £24,000 to £100,000, the variations being the result of special taxes. John’s richest vassals may have had incomes as high as £2,500 or even more. But it seems quite likely that a number of great English lords may have had as much to spend on their personal and household expenses as did the king. John believed that his archbishop of Canterbury had more. In short, most of the royal income went into the costs of government. In the time of John, Normandy yielded about the same revenue as England. The demesne of the French
kings before the conquest of Normandy seems to have brought in about the same amount. Thus Normandy, England, and the Capetian royal demesne were of about equal value.

Except in regard to residences and mistresses, all the operations of the feudal monarchs were on a small scale. King John had seventy-two castles and a dozen or so hunting lodges. Although one cannot give an exact estimate of his mistresses, he was clearly supplied with them on a scale that would satisfy a western monarch of any age. But his armies were quite small. When he invaded Ireland in 1210, he seems to have led about 1,200 knights and probably half as many crossbowmen. At the battle of Lincoln in 1217, one side had 400 knights and 300 crossbowmen while the other had 600 knights and some 1,000 miscellaneous infantry. By the latter part of the thirteenth century the English kings were using infantry drafted from the shires, and armies grew rather larger. Edward I seems to have had at times as many as 15,000 infantry and 3,000 horsemen.

Compared to the Byzantine emperors, the Moslem caliphs, and their own successors after the Renaissance, the feudal monarchs of Europe lived simply and with few of the trappings of majesty. But one gets the impression that a remarkably high proportion of them were able and vigorous rulers. Certainly the kings of France and England laid firmly the foundations for the future greatness of those states.
Genealogical Tables
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Monarch</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>768-814</td>
<td>Charlemagne</td>
<td>King of the Franks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800-814</td>
<td>Charlemagne</td>
<td>Emperor</td>
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<td>814-840</td>
<td>Louis the Pious</td>
<td>Emperor</td>
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<tr>
<td>840-855</td>
<td>Lothaire</td>
<td>Emperor</td>
</tr>
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<td>843-876</td>
<td>Louis the German</td>
<td>King of Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>843-877</td>
<td>Charles the Bald</td>
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<td>873-877</td>
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<td>881-887</td>
<td>Charles the Fat</td>
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<td>877-879</td>
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<td>855-874</td>
<td>Louis II</td>
<td>Emperor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>855-863</td>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>King of Provence</td>
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<td>855-869</td>
<td>Lothaire II</td>
<td>King of Lorraine</td>
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<td>876-880</td>
<td>Carloman</td>
<td>King of Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>887-899</td>
<td>Arnulf</td>
<td>King of Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>899-911</td>
<td>Louis the Child</td>
<td>King of Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>879-892</td>
<td>Louis III</td>
<td>King of France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>879-884</td>
<td>Carloman</td>
<td>King of France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>892-923</td>
<td>Charles the Simple</td>
<td>King of France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>936-924</td>
<td>Louis IV</td>
<td>King of France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>854-856</td>
<td>Lothaire</td>
<td>King of France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>986-987</td>
<td>Louis V</td>
<td>King of France</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table II. The Kings of France

Hugh Capet
987-996

Robert II
996-1031

Henry I
1031-1060

Philip I
1060-1108

Louis VI
1108-1137

Louis VII
1137-1180

Philip II, Augustus
1180-1223

Robert, Count of Dreux

Robert II, Count of Dreux

Louis VIII
1226-1226

Robert III
Count of Dreux

Peter
Duke of Brittany

Louis IX
1226-1270

Alphonsé
Count of Toulouse

Charles
Count of Anjou

Philip III
1270-1285

Philip IV
1285-1314

Philip V
1316-1322

Charles IV
1322-1328
Feudal Monarchies

Table III. The Kings of England

William I the Conqueror 1066-1087

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>William II 1087-1100</th>
<th>Henry I 1100-1135</th>
<th>Adele m. Stephen, Count of Blois</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Duke of Normandy</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Matilda m. Geoffrey, Count of Anjou</td>
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<td>Henry II 1154-1189</td>
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<td>Richard I 1189-1199</td>
<td>Geoffrey Duke of Brittany</td>
<td>John 1199-1216</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Arthur Duke of Brittany Count of Anjou</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Edward I 1272-1307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Genealogical Tables

Table IV. Kings of Germany

Henry I the Fowler
919–936

Otto I the Great
936–973

Otto II
973–983

Otto III
983–1002

Henry

Conrad II the Sallan
1024–1039

Henry III
1039–1056

Henry IV
1056–1106

Henry V
1106–1125

Agnes
m.

Frederick of Hohenstaufen
Duke of Swabia

Conrad III
1138–1152

Gertrude m.

Henry the Proud
Duke of Bavaria

Frederick I Barbarossa
1152–1190

Henry VI
1190–1197

Frederick II
1212–1250

Conrad IV
1250–1294

Philip
1197–1208

Otto IV
1201–1218

Loitgarde
m.

Conrad
Duke of Lorraine

Henry

Bernard of Supplinburg

Gebhard

Wolf IV
Duke of Bavaria

Lothar of Supplinburg
Duke of Saxony
1125–1137

Henry the Black
Duke of Bavaria

Henry the Lion
Duke of Bavaria and Saxony
Chronological Summary

814  Death of Charlemagne.
843  Final division of Carolingian empire.
919  Election of Henry the Fowler as king of Germany.
955  Battle of the Lechfeld.
987  Election of Hugh Capet as king of France.
1073 Accession of Pope Gregory VII.
1152 Marriage of Henry, duke of Normandy and count of Anjou, with Eleanor, duchess of Aquitaine.
1164 Constitutions of Clarendon.
1166 Assize of Clarendon.
1176 Battle of Legnano.
1204 Conquest of Normandy, Maine, and Anjou by Philip Augustus.
1214 Battle of Bouvines.
1215 Magna Carta.
1295 Model Parliament.
1302 First Estates General.
1305 Election of Pope Clement V.
Suggestions for Further Reading


An important work for the interpretation of the period of English history with which this essay is concerned is G. O. Sayles, *The Medieval Foundations of England* (Philadelphia, 1950). The same period is sur-

The development of the feudal monarchy in both France and England is discussed in an excellent work, C. E. Petit-Dutaillis, *Feudal Monarchy in France and England* (New York, 1936). A vivid account of a fascinating personality whose life concerned high politics on both sides of the channel is Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine* (New York, 1957). The student who would like to see at first hand the contemporary attitude toward the French and English kings would do well to read Joinville's *Chronicle of the Crusade of St. Louis* (Everyman's Library), or Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*, tr. by Montague R. James (Cymmrodorion record series; London, 1923).

Geoffrey Barraclough, *Origins of Modern Germany* (Oxford, 1946) is an excellent recent work covering the entire history of the mediaeval German monarchy. James Westfall Thompson, *Feudal Germany* (Chicago, 1928), contains some theories not now generally accepted, but it is highly readable and is particularly valuable for its
Index

Adèle of Blois, queen of France, 26
Albigensian heresy, 21
Alice, countess of Blois, 26
Amaury de Montfort, count of Toulouse, 32
Ancona, 112, 116
Anglo-Saxons, 1, 43, 45, 51
Angoulême, count of, 20
Anjou, county of, 11, 29-32, 35-36, 65-66
Appanages, 35-36
Aquitaine, dukes of, 9, 11, 23
Arthur Plantagenet, duke of Brittany and count of Anjou, 29-30, 128
Articles of the Barons, 68
Artois, county of, 27, 31-32, 35-36
Assize of Clarendon, 59, 80, 83
Austria, 89
Auvergne, count of, 22-23
Avignon, 40

Baillif, 35, 38, 41, 127
Bamberger, bishop of, 90
Baronial revolts, 50, 67-68, 71
Barons, 47, 68
Bavaria, 85-86, 95-96
duchy of, 89, 92-93, 113, 129
Bayeux, bishop of, 46
Bayonne, 23, 31-32
Bernard of Ahnacht, 113
Billung family, 96-98, 107, 113
Bishops, election of, 18, 38-39, 49, 63, 65-66, 103-104
Blois, county of, 12, 21
Blois, family of, 23-24, 26-27
Bohemia, 123
Boniface, VIII, pope, 39-40
Bordeaux, 23, 31-32
Boulonnais, count of, 30
Bourbon, lord of, 21-22
Bouvines, battle of, 31-32, 67, 120
Brandenburg, 123
Bremen, 88, 129
Brittany, 11-12, 24, 29-30, 36-37, 41
Brittany, duke of, 15
Burgundy:
duchy of, 35-36
kingdom of, 92-93, 110
Burgundy, duke of, 11-12, 32
Canossa, castle of, 104
Canute, king of Denmark and England, 43, 45
Carolingian family, 3, 8-11, 85
Castles, 16-17, 47, 54-56, 98, 105
Chamberlain, 77
Chambre des comptes, 38, 41, 126
Champagne, count of, 16-17, 32
Champagne:
county of, 12, 21, 36
fairs of, 16
Chancellor, 76, 78-79
Charlemagne, king of the Franks
Charlemagne (cont.)
and the Lombards and Emperor, 7-8, 10, 93, 108
Charles the Bald, king of the West Franks, 85
Charter of liberties of Henry I, 52, 70
Chartres, county of, 12
Cheshire, 46
Clement V, pope, 40
Clerici laicos, 39
Clermont, bishop of, 22-23
Cistercian reform, 100-101
Chnut, abbey of, 100
Cologne, archbishop of, 113, 117
Colonization, 89, 91-92, 113, 123
Commerce, growth of, 15-16, 110
Common law, 62, 82-83
Conrad, king of Burgundy, 93
Conrad I, king of Germany, 87-89
Conrad II, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 95-97
Conrad III, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 107-108
Constable, office of, 33
Constance, queen of Sicily and Holy Roman Empress, 114
Constantinople, Latin empire of, 4
Constitutions of Clarendon, 63-64
Count, office of, 7, 85-86
Courts:
feudal, 48, 62
popular, 7, 44, 50, 51, 53, 62, 71, 85-86
royal, 33, 36-37, 60-62, 77
Curia regis, 48, 78, 82
Cyprus, kingdom of, 4

Danegeld, 43
Demesnes, royal, 7-8, 12, 33, 35, 43, 55, 80, 86-87, 97, 109
Denmark, kingdom of, 3-4, 45
 Donation of Constantine, 109
Dreux, county of, 12
Edward I, king of England, 72-77, 81-83, 130, 132
Edward the Confessor, king of England, 45
Elbe river, 89, 91-92, 96, 113, 123
Eleanor, duchess of Aquitaine, queen of France and England, 22-23, 25, 56
England, kingdom of, 3, 5, 11, 43-83, 125-127
Essex, 55
Estates General, 40-41, 127
Exchequer, 53, 57, 77-79
Falaise, castle of, 29
Feudalism, 8, 13-14, 45-48, 57-58, 69, 74-75, 90, 105, 114
Flanders, count of, 11, 16-17, 27, 30, 32
Florence, 112
France:
duchy of, 12, 19-21
kingdom of, 3, 5, 7-42, 125-127
France, duke of, 11, 15, 17
Franconia, 85-86, 88, 95, 97
duchy of, 89-92
Frankpledge, 51, 71
Franks, East, kingdom of, 85-87
Franks, West, kingdom of, 8, 85, 93
Frederick of Hohenstaufen, duke of Swabia, 106-107
Frederick I of Hohenstaufen, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 108-114, 119
Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, king of Sicily and Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 116-123, 129
Geoffrey de Mandeville, 55-56
Geoffrey Plantagenet, count of Anjou, 21, 24, 54-56
Geoffrey Plantagenet, duke of Brittany, 29
Germany, kingdom of, 3, 5, 18-19, 39, 85-123, 128
Index

Germany, princes of, 28, 30, 66, 95-96, 103-106, 109, 113-114, 118, 122
Gero, margrave of Thuringia, 91
Goslar, 98, 112-113, 130
Grand assize, 60
Gregory VII, pope, 18, 99, 102-104, 108, 128

Hamburg, 129
Harold, king of England, 44-45
Harz mountains, 97
Hastings, battle of, 45
Henry I, king of England, 21, 24, 51-55, 76-77, 82, 128, 130
Henry III, king of England, 71-72, 80, 83
Henry I, king of France, 35
Henry, king of Germany, eldest son of Emperor Frederick II, 122
Henry I, the Fowler, king of Germany, 88-89, 91, 129
Henry II, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 94-95
Henry III, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 98, 101-102
Henry IV, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 98-99, 102-107, 128-130, 130
Henry V, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 54, 104, 106
Henry VI, king of Germany and Sicily and Holy Roman Emperor, 28, 112-116, 119-120
Henry I, count of Champagne, 26
Henry, prince of England, eldest son of King Henry II, 26
Henry the Lion, duke of Saxony and Bavaria, 107-108, 112-113, 117, 123
Henry the Proud, duke of Saxony and Bavaria, 107, 123
Herefordshire, 46
Hermann Billung, 91
Hertfordshire, 55
Hildebrand, see Gregory VII
Hohenstaufen family, 107-108, 118
Holy Roman Empire, 3, 93-123
Hugh Capet, king of France, 10-14, 127
Hugh de Puiselet, 20
Hundred Years’ War, 73
Infangentheof, 51
Innocent III, pope, 31, 65-68, 117-120
Investiture controversy, 18-19, 101-104, 123
Italy, 92-93, 104, 109, 112, 116, 123, 128
Jerusalem, see Palestine
Jerusalem, Latin kingdom of, 4
John de Balliol, king of Scotland, 73
Jury of presentment, 59-61
Justices, royal, 53, 56, 58-62, 69, 77, 83
Kent, 46
Kiev, principality of, 3-4
La Marche, count of, 29
Laon, city of, 9, 11
Lechfeld, battle of, 89
Legnano, battle of, 111
Lombard communes, 105-106, 110-112
Lombard League, 111, 121
Lombardy, 105-106, 110, 112, 121-122
Lombardy, bishops of, 94, 105-106, 129
London:
  city of, 80
  and Middlesex, 55
  Tower of, 55
Lorraine, 11, 85-86
Lothaire, Emperor, 92-93
Lothaire II, king of Lorraine, 85
Lothar of Supplinburg, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 106-107, 123
Louis VI, king of France, 14, 19-22, 24, 31, 35
Louis VII, king of France, 22-26, 33, 35, 59
Louis VIII, king of France, 27, 35-36
Louis IX (St. Louis), king of France, 36, 38, 130
Louis the Child, king of the East Franks, 87-88
Louis the German, king of the East Franks, 85-86
Lusignan family, 29

Magdeburg, archbishopric of, 91-92
Magna Carta, 68-71, 76, 80
Magyars, 86-89
Maine, county of, 65-66
Marie, countess of Champagne, 26
Marshal, office of, 33
Matilda, Holy Roman Empress, countess of Anjou, lady of England, 24, 54-55
Meaux, county of, 12
Merchant class, 17
Merovingians, 1, 8, 85
Milan, 110-112
Ministeriales, 96-98, 105
Moriscos, 7
Monarchies:
relations with church, 2, 8-9, 12-13, 18, 38, 43, 49, 62-66, 75-76, 90-91, 94, 99-100, 102
relations with papacy, 18, 38-40, 66, 99, 101-103, 111-112, 116, 121
Monarchy:
Byzantine, 2
Germanic, 1-5, 7-8, 43, 125
Hellenistic, 2
papal, development of, 18
theories about, 1-2, 4, 8, 10, 18, 79, 90, 99, 102, 108
Money economy, development of, 15-17
Mort d’ancestor, 61
Moslems, 8

Nevers, count of, 23
Nigel, bishop of Ely, 53
Normandy, duchy of, 19, 21, 28, 30, 31-32, 55-56, 65-67, 131-132
Normandy, dukes of, 9, 11, 16-17
Northumberland, 46
Norway, kingdom of, 3-4
Novel disseizin, 61

Oder river, 89, 91-92, 113, 123
Odo Capet, king of the West Franks, 9-10
Officials, royal, 17, 33-34, 44, 52-53, 96-97
Orleans, county of, 12-13
Otto I, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 89-91-93
Otto II, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 92
Otto III, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 04
Otto of Brunswick, king of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, 30-31, 66-67, 117-121
Otto of Wittelsbach, duke of Bavaria, 113

Palestine, 27-28, 65
Paris, county of, 12-13
Parlement of Paris, 37, 41, 127
Parliament, 80-83
Pepin, king of the Franks, 3
Peter of Dreux, duke of Brittany, 30, 36
Philip I, king of France, 14
Philip II (Augustus), king of France, 26-38, 65, 67, 118-120, 130
Philip IV, the Fair, king of France, 37, 39-42, 127
Index

Philip of Hohenstaufen, duke of Swabia and king of Germany, 116-118
Pisa, 112
Pleas of the crown, 53, 58, 62
Poitiers, 23
Poitou, county of, 29-30, 35, 67
Poland, 123
Polignac, lord of, 23
Possessory assizes, 61, 69
Provins, county of, 12
Provost, 33, 38

Quo warranto, 74

Ralph, king of the West Franks, 10
Ralph Basset, 53
Reclamation of waste and marshland, 15
Reims, forest of, 15
Revenue, royal, 16-17, 38, 97, 131-132
Rhêmes, archbishop of, 12
Richard de Clare, earl of Gloucester, 71
Robert I, king of France, 10, 35
Robert, duke of Normandy, 21, 51-52, 54, 128
Robert Bruce, king of Scotland, 73
Robert Capet, king of the West Franks, 9-10
Romagna, the, 111-112, 116
Roman law, 7, 43, 108
Rudolf, king of Italy and Burgundy, 93

Sac and soc, 50
St. Bernard of Clairvaux, 20
St. Denis, abbey of, 19
Salian emperors, 3, 95-99, 103, 108-109, 123
Saxon emperors, 88, 90-96, 98, 101, 108
Saxony, 85-88, 96-98
duchy of, 88-93, 112-113
Scots, 45, 73
Scutage, 48, 66-67
Seneschal, office of, 33-35, 127
Sheriff, 44, 49-50
Shropshire, 46
Sicily, Norman kingdom of, 4, 103-104, 111-112, 114-116, 119, 121
Siena, 112
Simon IV de Montfort, earl of Leicester and count of Toulouse, 32
Simon V de Montfort, earl of Leicester, 71-72, 80
Slavs, 91-92, 113
Spoleto, 112, 116
Stamford Bridge, battle of, 43
Statute of mortmain, 75-76
Stem duchies, 86, 95
Stem dukes, 86-88
Stephen, count of Blois, 54
Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury, 66, 68
Stephen of Blois, king of England, 44-45, 54-57, 128
Suger, abbot of St. Denis, 19-20, 23
Sussex, 46
Swabia, 85-86, 95-96, 110
duchy of, 80, 92, 110
Sweden, kingdom of, 3-4

Tallage, 81
Tancred, king of Sicily, 114-115
Taxation, 38, 40-41, 66
Thanes, 43-44
Theobald IV, count of Blois and Champagne, 21, 24, 64-55
Theobald V, count of Blois, 26
Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, 63-64
Thomas de Marly, 20
Thuringia, 85, 97-98
March of, 91-92
Toulouse, counts of, 9, 11, 31
Tours, county of, 12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>147</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Towns, growth of, 15-16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troyes, county of, 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuscany, 111-112</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuscany, countess of, 103-104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valois, county of, 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasti dominici, 7-8, 43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vexin, the, 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vezelay, town of, 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vikings, 8-9, 43, 86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitré, lord of, 15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welf family, 96, 107, 117</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh, 45, 72-73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weser river, 96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wessex, kingdom of, 1, 43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westphalia, 113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William I, the Conqueror, king of England, 12, 44-53, 57, 76, 99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William II, king of England, 50-53, 76, 128</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William II, king of Sicily, 114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William IX, duke of Aquitaine, 25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William X, duke of Aquitaine, 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William, son of Robert duke of Normandy, 21-22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William de Beauchamp, 71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William of Blois, archbishop of Rheims, 26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William of Blois, son of King Stephen, 96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witan, 43-44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcestershire, 71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wurttemberg, county of, 129</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Würzburg, bishop of, 90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>