

## Magna Carta

In June of 1215, King John rode to meet his angry nobles at Runnymede, a wide meadow on the banks of the Thames River. No one present on that day could have guessed that the nobles' demands, written in the form of the document we now call Magna Carta, would later become the cornerstone of constitutional government and representative democracy.

The original purpose of Magna Carta was to limit the powers of the king. Most of its 63 clauses were designed to protect the feudal rights of the nobles; eventually, English legislative and judicial decisions extended these rights. Magna Carta included such concepts as church freedom, trial by jury, and "due process of law"—the orderly, consistent working of law.

Over the centuries, Magna Carta gradually increased in importance as later kings reaffirmed



its principles. Eventually it became a symbol of the fight against oppression. Magna Carta forms part of the British Constitution, and the ideas that originated in Magna Carta can be found in the Constitution of the United States.

from each shire and two burgesses, or citizens, from each of several towns.

De Montfort was killed in battle and the nobles' revolt was crushed, but the precedent of including knights and burgesses in the Great Council had been set. In time this representative body came to be called Parliament. It was eventually divided into two parts, or houses. The upper house consisted of nobles and clergy and was called the House of Lords. The lower house was made up of knights and burgesses and was called the House of Commons. Within a few years, this was the accepted form of representation, as it is in England today.

The early Parliament did not have the power to pass laws, but it did have the important right of refusing to agree to new and special taxes. As the cost of running the central government increased, new taxes were necessary, and Parliament's approval became vital. Over the years Parliament used this power to its advantage.

**Common law.** One of England's greatest monarchs was Edward I, who ruled from 1272 to 1307. Edward divided the king's court into three branches. The Court of the Exchequer kept financial accounts and tried tax cases. The Court of Common Pleas tried cases between private citizens. The Court of the

King's Bench heard cases that concerned the king or the government.

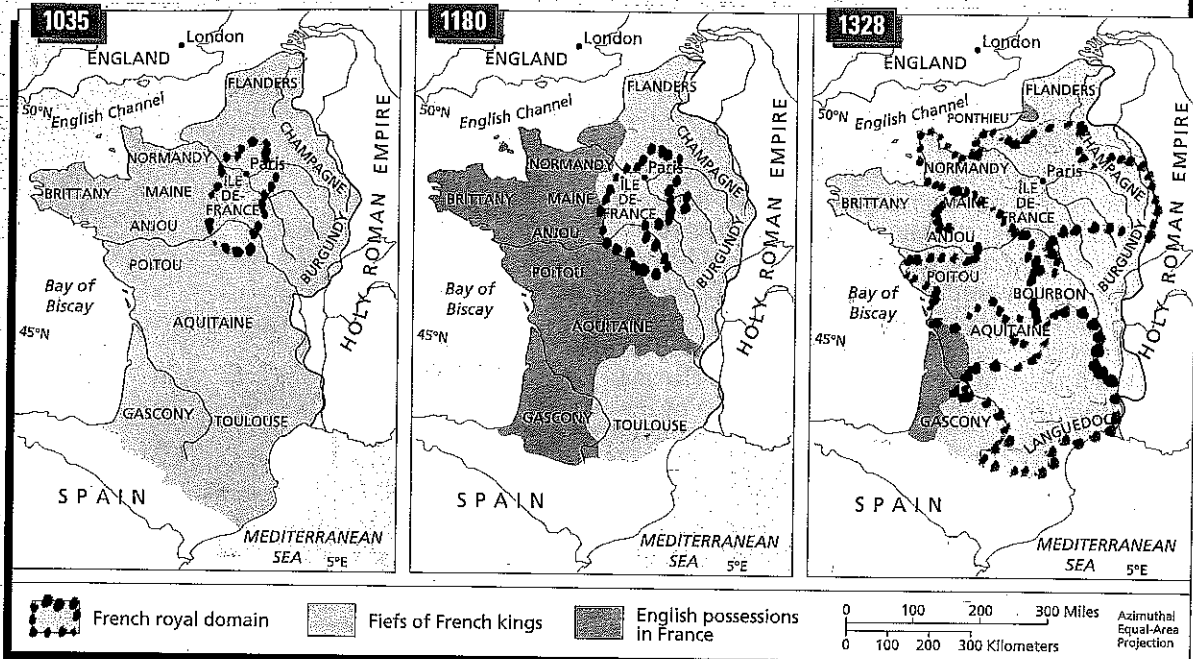
Each of the three royal courts handed down many verdicts. These decisions became the basis for future decisions made in the king's courts and in the circuit courts. This type of law, based on judges' decisions rather than on a code of statutes like Roman law, is known as **common law**. It was given this name because it was common to all the people of England. Common law forms the basis for the present-day legal systems in the United States and in England.

### Rise of the Capetian Kings in France

French kings were also engaged in struggles with their nobles during these centuries. When the last Carolingian king of France died in 987, an assembly of nobles chose Hugh Capet, a French noble, as king. Capet and his descendants, called the Capetians, ruled for more than 300 years.

As king, Hugh Capet ruled only a small region around Paris which was called the Île-de-France (eel-duh-FRAHNS). *Île* is the French word for "island," and this region was indeed an island of royal authority in the midst of feudal lands. Even in the Île-de-France, the king's vassals resisted his authority. The rest of what is now France was divided into provinces

## The Growth of France, 1035–1328



**Learning from Maps** The French royal domain grew outward from the Île-de-France.

**Region** What lands did the English possess in France in 1328?

ruled by feudal lords. (See map on page 244.) The Capetians set out to unite these provinces and to develop a strong central government.

The history of the Capetian kings demonstrates the feudal struggle for power. Strong kings increased royal lands and authority. Weak kings allowed nobles to regain power. Later Capetian kings added to the royal lands and strengthened the central government.

**The growth of royal territory.** Kings sometimes married the daughters of great feudal lords to add to the royal lands. In this way, they gained fiefs that were often included in the daughters' dowries. Kings also increased their royal territory by claiming the lands of noble families that died out.

After 1066, when William of Normandy conquered England, the territorial problems of the Capetians became even more complicated. For centuries the English kings had owned vast territories in France. Strong Capetians watched for a chance to regain these lands. The shrewd Philip II, also called Philip Augustus, king of France from 1179 to 1223, seized much English-owned land in France. By 1328, when the last Capetian

king died, the only major English landholdings in France were parts of the provinces of Aquitaine and Gascony. (See map on this page.)

**Strengthening the central government.** To maintain a strong government, the Capetians sought out loyal, well-trained officials. They could not rely on the nobility. In addition, the Capetians extended the jurisdiction of their courts. The Parlement of Paris became a supreme court, hearing appeals from all parts of the kingdom.

The Capetian Philip the Fair, who ruled from 1285 to 1314, was able to gain control over the clergy, thereby strengthening his own power. Early in his reign Philip imposed a tax on the clergy. When the pope at the time, Boniface VIII, opposed him, Philip had Boniface arrested, and the pope died soon afterward. Philip was able to influence the election of the next pope, Clement V. Philip also convened the Estates General in 1302. The Estates General was a representative body that was drawn from the three major classes of French society of the time: clergy, nobility, and commoners. Convening the Estates

General helped Philip to gain the support of the people in his conflict with the church.

By the early 1300s, the power of the king was greater than that of the nobles in France. However, the three sons of Philip IV died without a male heir, and in 1328 the long line of the Capetians ended.

#### Section 4 Review

1. **Define** shires, Magna Carta, common law
2. **Identify** Alfred the Great, Edward the Confessor, William the Conqueror, Thomas Becket, Simon de Montfort
3. **Locate and Explain the Significance** Hastings, Canterbury, Île-de-France, Aquitaine
4. **Summarizing Ideas** Summarize the contributions that the Anglo-Saxons and Normans made to England.
5. **Explaining Ideas** Explain how the following developed in England: (a) Parliament, (b) common law.
6. **Analyzing Ideas** How does the rise of the Capetian kings in France illustrate the feudal struggle for power? How were the Capetians able to add to their power?

#### Section 5

## The Clash over Germany and Italy

### Focus Questions

- How did German rulers threaten the power of the medieval popes?
- How did the Concordat of Worms propose to divide power between popes and emperors?
- Why is Pope Innocent III considered one of the church's greatest political leaders?

Although people throughout Europe recognized the spiritual authority of the church, many conflicts arose over the church's temporal authority, or its role in worldly affairs. The greatest threat to the power of the medieval popes came from the German rulers of the revived Holy Roman Empire.

### The Holy Roman Empire

Charlemagne's empire had included part of Italy, but after Charlemagne's death in 814, Italy fell into a



Pope John XII crowned Otto emperor 11 days after they signed a treaty regulating the relationship between emperor and pope. This is Emperor Otto's crown.

state of anarchy. Several of Charlemagne's descendants held the title of "Emperor of the Romans" or "Holy Roman Emperor" without really ruling Italy. Later, no one even held the title. The pope ruled the Papal States. The Byzantine Empire held some parts of Italy. Muslims held the island of Sicily and often invaded the Italian mainland.

In Germany the great feudal lords elected Otto I, known as Otto the Great, as their king in 936. A powerful and forceful ruler, Otto might have developed a strong kingdom in Germany like that of the Capetians in France, had he not been more interested in Italy. Otto marched into northern Italy and seized territory in 951. Ten years later, Pope John XII begged Otto's help in his struggle with the Roman nobles. Otto supported the pope, who crowned him Emperor of the Romans in 962.

Although Otto's title was the same one given to Charlemagne 162 years earlier, he ruled a much smaller area—just Germany and northern Italy. This

empire, called the Holy Roman Empire, lasted (in name at least) for centuries. It established a unique relationship between Germany and Italy that continued for more than 800 years.

The power of the Holy Roman Emperors reached a high point under Emperor Henry III, who reigned from 1046 to 1056. Like Charlemagne, Henry regarded the church as a branch of the royal government that should do what the emperor expected. During Henry's reign three different men claimed to be pope. Henry III deposed all three of these claimants and had a German elected to the papacy. He also chose the next three popes.

### Struggle with the Papacy

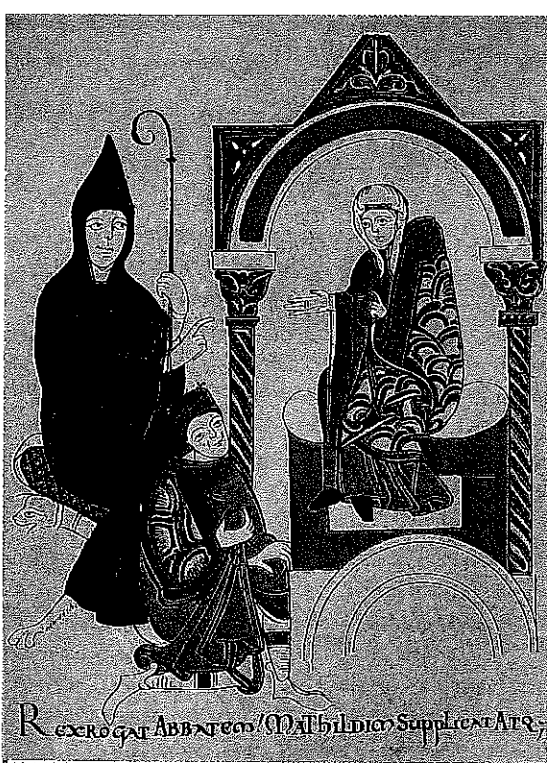
Henry III's son, Emperor Henry IV, was only six years old when his father died. Powerful nobles in Germany took advantage of Henry's youth and reestablished their feudal powers. At the same time, the church increased its powers. After Henry IV became old enough to rule, Gregory VII, one of the great medieval church leaders, became pope.

A highly devout man, Gregory set out to spiritually reform the church. In the process, he sought to restore the papacy to power. He believed that as God's representative, he had supreme power not only over the church but also over all temporal rulers and their subjects. As pope, Gregory used the terrible punishment of excommunication in his conflicts with emperors, kings, and nobles. Gregory's greatest struggle was with Henry IV.

The struggle between Gregory VII and Henry IV concerned the issue of lay investiture. Henry insisted that he had the right to appoint bishops within the Holy Roman Empire. Gregory disagreed and excommunicated the emperor. He released all of Henry's subjects from their oaths of allegiance and urged them to elect another emperor.

Fearing rebellion, Henry decided to appeal to the pope for mercy. During the bitter winter of 1077, he set off to meet the pope at the castle of Canossa, high in the mountains of northern Italy.

At great risk Henry and his attendants reached the rugged Alpine summit and began the dangerous descent down the jagged, ice-covered peaks. When Henry arrived at the castle at Canossa, he laid his royal regalia down and stood humbly, barefoot and dressed as a pilgrim, waiting for the pope's invitation to enter the castle. For three days Henry suffered the piercing chill of the freezing weather. Finally, he was admitted to the castle. He agreed to several



Although Henry IV (shown submitting to the pope) was forgiven upon repenting to Pope Gregory VII at Canossa, the balance of power between the church and state was tipped in favor of the pope.

conditions of the pope's forgiveness, and Gregory revoked his excommunication.

The struggle over lay investiture, however, continued during the reign of Henry's son. Finally, in 1122 at the German city of Worms, an assembly of church leaders, nobles, and representatives of the Holy Roman Empire reached an agreement known as the Concordat of Worms. The emperor, Henry V, agreed to grant only lands and secular powers to church officials. The church officials would elect bishops and grant them their spiritual powers.

Even though the Concordat of Worms established the popes as spiritual leaders, the bitter struggle between popes and emperors did not end. The emperors still meddled in Italian politics and continued to threaten the popes' rule in the Papal States. The popes therefore opposed all attempts of the Holy Roman Emperors to rule any part of Italy.

### Frederick Barbarossa

Frederick I, called Frederick Barbarossa (meaning "Frederick of the Red Beard"), ruled Germany from 1152 to 1190. Like the emperors who preceded him, Frederick was interested in Italy.

The rich city-states of Lombardy in northern Italy—Bologna, Padua, Verona, and Milan—had become increasingly independent trade centers. Each city-state had a wealthy merchant class. Frederick knew that if he could capture these rich city-states, he would be a very wealthy ruler. He sent representatives to take over the governments in the cities. When Milan resisted, Frederick captured the city, destroyed it, and drove out its people.

The other Lombard city-states, aided by the pope, united to form the Lombard League. They raised an army and defeated Frederick in 1176. According to the peace settlement, the cities recognized Frederick as overlord in return for his agreement that they could govern themselves. The success of the Lombard League illustrated the growing political power of cities in medieval Europe.

### Innocent III and Papal Power

European rulers met their most formidable opponent in Pope Innocent III, who was pope from 1198 to 1216. Innocent led the papacy to the height of its prestige and power. He was a skillful diplomat and one of the greatest political leaders in all church history.

Innocent III made even more sweeping claims and enforced them more successfully on behalf of papal power than had Gregory VII. Innocent III believed

himself supreme over the clergy and temporal rulers. To Innocent, emperors and kings were merely servants of the church, so the pope claimed the right to settle all political and religious problems. No other person or group could do more than advise him.

Innocent intervened in disputes throughout Europe and made free use of his powers of excommunication and interdict. In a quarrel with King John, Innocent placed England under interdict. To have the interdict lifted, John had to become the pope's vassal and pay money every year to Rome. Innocent dominated all of Italy. In Germany he overthrew two kings and put his own chosen rulers on the throne.

Innocent dominated almost all of Europe because of his seemingly superhuman ability and energy. Even so, he was successful partly because conditions in Europe were favorable to his claims and activities. Later popes were less skillful, and circumstances were less favorable. Therefore, they did not attain the power and influence that Innocent had possessed.

Nevertheless, Germany and Italy never united. The Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II attempted to bring the two regions together in the early 1200s. Like earlier emperors, however, Frederick failed.

Not only did the attempts to unite Germany and Italy fail, but both countries remained internally fragmented. Germany remained a jumble of independent cities and feudal states over which the emperor had little authority. Italy was splintered, too, with the Lombard cities in the north, the Papal States in the central region, and the Kingdom of Sicily in the south. Neither Germany nor Italy became a unified nation until the 1800s.

#### Section 5 Review

1. **Identify** Otto I, Henry III, Henry IV, Frederick Barbarossa, Pope Innocent III
2. **Locate and Explain the Significance** Canossa, Worms
3. **Identifying Ideas** How did conflict develop between Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV? How was it resolved?
4. **Analyzing Ideas** Why did the Concordat of Worms not end the struggle between popes and emperors?
5. **Evaluating Ideas** Explain why the papacy of Innocent III was especially important for Europe.