

Henry I, “Lion of Justice”: A Norman Approach to English Law

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Abstract

The administrative changes made in both England and Normandy by King Henry I of England provided an invaluable bridge between the two cultures. In England, he cemented the feudal system through his expert manipulation of the upper class, enforced a single legal standard, and founded the exchequer with its attendant taxation and currency reforms. These Norman innovations to Anglo-Saxon systems strengthened the English monarchy.

Key words: Henry I, England, Normandy, law, medieval history

The prevalent view characterizing the reign of King Henry I of England as diplomatically dubious, fiscally severe, and judicially harsh contradicts the opinions of his contemporaries, who admired the leadership behind thirty years of peace.¹ These apparent disparities can be understood in the context of Henry’s pragmatic efforts to establish his authority by centralizing his government’s administrative powers. During his thirty-five-year reign, the king enhanced his claim to the throne by emphasizing Anglo-Saxon traditions to create a more stable environment for the legal changes inspired by his Norman heritage. Particularly influential were his manipulation

of the patronage system, his institution of minor officials to enforce more efficient laws, and his foundation of the exchequer with its attendant reform of English coinage. These traditionally strong English systems allowed Norman ideas of feudal government to take root.

As the youngest son of the Conqueror, Henry faced brothers united to deprive him of the titles won by his moderate wealth and striking charisma.² Henry proved a more capable administrator than incompetent Robert or negligent Rufus, managing to earn a place in the latter’s court within a decade. When Rufus died in a hunting accident in 1100, Henry proclaimed himself king of En-

¹ Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 630; Brooke, *Alfred to Henry III*, 160-61; Hollister, *Henry I*, 347, 350, 442, 493; Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, XI.23, XIII.19; Green, *Henry I*, 238; Barlow, *Feudal Kingdom*, 181; *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, VIII.33; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, V s.a. 1119; *Gesta Stephani*, I.1-2, 8.

² Henry had received only a few thousand pounds at his father’s death in 1087. In contrast, his oldest brother, Robert Curthose, inherited Normandy, and his second brother, William Rufus, received England (Hollister, *Henry I*, 38, 46-48; Green, *Henry I*, 24-25).

gland. To bolster his dubious position, Henry appealed to his status as the only son born to William I after he became the king of England; to strengthen this precarious claim to the throne he married Edith-Matilda, the great-grandniece of Edward the Confessor, in 1100.³ By marrying Matilda, Henry hoped to create a more legitimate base for his dynasty, appeasing natives likely to turn to this last representative of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy.⁴ The marriage identified Henry with an English heritage, enabling him to exploit native traditions to establish his authority.⁵ Though the common memory of Edward the Confessor's reign as a time of peace and prosperity was misleading, conveniently ignoring the era's violence, it provided Henry with a foundation for reconciliation in his war-torn land. After the Conquest, William the Conqueror had awarded his Norman fol-

lowers with plunder; further violence, corruption, and disorder ruined England and Normandy under the rules of Curthose and Rufus.⁶ Henry ultimately aimed to restore and consolidate William I's territory in England and Normandy, so he used his capable military, clever diplomacy, and the marital alliances of his many illegitimate children to defeat French ambitions in Normandy. Throughout his realm, Henry used his connection to Anglo-Saxon monarchs to enforce Old English traditions, fostering tranquility.⁷ As a legal descendent of the English kings through marriage, he could boast in their legacy and uphold their standards without being seen as hypocritical.

The first step in Henry's scheme to strengthen the Norman rule over England was to win supporters among both the upper and lower classes. During the Old English period, society had been arrayed in loose strata, as Anglo-Saxon *thegns* who swore fealty directly to the king included members of all classes of society. Under the Normans, however, feudalism was systematized with rigid class structure.⁸ Henry enforced this new structure while taking full advantage of the Anglo-Saxon ideal of a king who cared for his followers by granting patronage. As a result of his expert manipulation of political and financial incentives, his administration relied on his loyal, intimate group of *curiales*, members of the *curia regis*, the royal court. These effective officers included both experienced nobles and "men of base stock," each offering skills without which the king could not have accomplished his great reforms.⁹

³ This theory of succession, inheritance by the first son born during the king's rule, is known as porphyrogeniture. Though Anglo-Saxon succession customs did not require primogeniture in the selection of the English king, it often provided more legitimacy for the candidate selected by the Witan, who confirmed the successor chosen by the previous king (Barrow, *Feudal Britain*, 29; Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 274, 294; Brown, *Norman Conquest*, 115); Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, X.19; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regnum Anglorum*, V s.a. 1100; Green, *Henry I*, 31, 38-41; Hollister, *Henry I*, 83, 89, 99-106, 309; Davis, *Normans and Angevins*, 119.

⁴ Matilda was the daughter of King Malcolm III of Scotland and the niece of Edgar the Ætheling, who, as the grandson of Edmund Ironside, had relinquished his right to the crown after the Battle of Hastings. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 1100; Henry of Huntington, *Historia Anglorum*, VII.22; Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, VIII.22, X.16; *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, VIII.10; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regnum Anglorum*, II.13 s.a. 1065, V s.a. 1100; William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*, I s.a. 1126; John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, s.a. 1100; Hollister, *Henry I*, 309, 437; Thomas, *Ethnic Hostility*, 62, 88, 140; Loyn, *Governance*, 91-92; Brown, *Norman Conquest*, 121.

⁵ In fact, Henry and Matilda were nicknamed Godric and Goddiva, traditional English names meant to taunt the king with his link to Anglo-Saxon culture, which was perceived as inferior (William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regnum Anglorum*, V s.a. 1100; Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 297; Barlow, *Feudal Kingdom*, 174; Durant, *Age of Faith*, 669; Thomas, *Ethnic Hostility*, 63); *ibid.*, 88, 140-42, 359; William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*, I s.a. 1126; Hollister, *Henry I*, 309; Keynes, "Ætheling," 62; Lindsay, *Normans*, 251.

⁶ Lindsay, *Normans*, 231; Hollister, *Henry I*, 207-08, 327-29, 327, 329, 350, 356; Davies, *Europe*, 339; Brooke, *Alfred to Henry III*, 10; Wilson, *Anglo-Saxons*, 37-38; Brown, *Norman Conquest*, 52, 54-55, 58-59; Loyn, *Governance*, 170.

⁷ Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, XI.21; Hollister, *Henry I*, 207-08, 232-33; Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 198-99; Davis, *Normans and Angevins*, 69; Tierney, *Western Europe*, 331.

⁸ Hollister, *Henry I*, 207-08, 327-28, 335; Tierney, *Western Europe*, 196; Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 199; Brooke, *Alfred to Henry III*, 104-05; Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, XI.21; "Charter of Liberties," 12.

⁹ Quotation from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Orderic Vitalis, XI.2; Barrow, *Feudal Britain*, 27; Hollister, *Henry I*, 329, 349, 368; Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 294, 306; Green, *Governance*, 19, 174; Green, *Henry I*, 15.

Henry's *curia* functioned primarily as a council. Following cultural expectations that lords would accept their vassals' advice, Henry customarily held council assemblies in England two or three times a year, gathering the great men of the church and the government to centralize his control over his scattered nobles. This tradition had been set by the English, whose irregularly-summoned Witan, or "council of wise men," was responsible for electing the king—usually a mere formal acknowledgement of the obvious heir—and advising the ruler on domestic and international policy. Disbanded in 1066, the Witan survived in Anglo-Norman tradition as their three customary meeting times of Easter, Whitsun, and Christmas continued to be preferred for the king's councils. Under the Norman kings, these feast days held crown-wearing ceremonies that allowed the elite from throughout the land to discuss important matters, from the auditing of sheriffs and bailiffs to the coronation of the heir to the throne.¹⁰

Henry's councils were comprised of an unusual mix of the upper and lower classes. The king's noble supporters stabilized his reign by providing him with a network of powerful allies across the country. As Henry rose to power, he had been constantly and openly thwarted by members of his brother's unruly court, who continued to exploit their subjects. The powerful barons of England and Normandy had to be won over if Henry wished to rule in efficient peace. To do so, Henry, after conquering Normandy to demonstrate his power, punished rebellious members of his court fiercely.¹¹ He claimed the English lands of those barons whom he knew he could never trust, including families as powerful as the influential counts of Mortain. However, the king rarely attempted to control his nobles through threats or thievery. He seldom disseized a family of its lands permanently, preferring to restore territory as members of the family

proved their loyalty. For example, the de Clares proved reluctant to support the king, rebelling against Rufus twice and often insulting Henry himself. In 1110, Henry granted the heir, Gilbert FitzRichard de Clare, a holding in Wales, which the de Clares knew they would lose if they ever sided with Henry's enemies; they became some of Henry's best supporters in his wars in Normandy.¹² Similarly, William II of Warenne joined Curthose's rebellion against the king in 1101. Henry disseized him of his English lands but returned them in 1103, at which point William "throve as one of [Henry's] closest friends and councilors."¹³

Despite his reputation for harsh punishments, Henry recognized that providing incentives such as stability and wealth could bring the nobles to his side. Thus, where his father and brother had earned fearsome reputations by relying on plunder from the towns they passed through to provide for their increasingly large court, Henry provided for his courtiers from the royal income. With monetary allowances and royal favoritism, Henry honored only those who attended court and served him well, rewarding the most helpful or powerful with marriages to his illegitimate children.¹⁴ These methods created an incredibly loyal corps of nobles, bringing peace to England and providing him with an assured group of administrators. His cadre of newly-powerful supporters included his master of the exchequer and sometime regent, Roger Bishop of Salisbury; political genius Robert of Meulan; Henry's illegitimate son Robert of Gloucester; and the king's nephew and unintended successor

¹⁰ Crown-wearing ceremonies were rituals at which the king wore his full regalia. They often included feasts and religious celebrations that aimed to emphasize the king's legitimacy through displays of wealth and power (Green, *Henry I*, 289; Hollister, *Henry I*, 113); Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 274, 294; Brown, *Norman Conquest*, 115; Whitelock, *English Society*, 54-55; Barrow, *Feudal Britain*, 29; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 143-45.

¹¹ Eadmer, *Historia Novorum*, 205; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regnum Anglorum*, V s.a. 1100, 1102-06; Hollister, *Henry I*, 132, 213-15, 331, 347; Green, *Henry I*, 61, 111.

¹² Green, *Henry I*, 226; Strevett, *Divided Lordship*, 178; Hollister, *Henry I*, 144-45, 339, 488.

¹³ Quotation from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Orderic Vitalis, XI.2; *ibid.*, X.19; Hollister, *Henry I*, 138, 143, 340-41; Strevett, *Divided Lordship*, 29; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regnum Anglorum*, V s.a. 1102.

¹⁴ Henry's twenty-four known illegitimate children make him the most prolific English king; he acknowledged most of these children, ennobled many of them, and used all of them to cement his relationships with powerful allies or rivals. His only legitimate children were Maud, the mother of Henry II, and William Adelin, who drowned in the wreck of the White Ship in 1120. (Green, *Henry I*, 27, 118, 164-67, 309; Hollister, *Henry I*, 41, 42 n. 73); *ibid.*, 43-45, 144-45, 214-15, 331, 340, 349, 347, 493; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regnum Anglorum*, V s.a. 1106; Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, X.92, XII.45; Barlow, *Feudal Kingdom*, 189; Green, *Henry I*, 27, 110-11, 309; Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 306

Stephen of Blois.¹⁵ He had turned the power of his dynamic barons to his own purposes, leaving a more submissive aristocracy behind.

Henry's bureaucratic improvements extended past the high aristocracy, however, as he solidified his hold on individual communities by centralizing the administration of justice and investing members of the lower class as local officials. On August 5, 1100, King Henry issued his famous Coronation Charter, or Charter of Liberties, in writing to every shire, promising his uncertain citizenry that he would "restore...the law of King Edward" the Confessor.¹⁶ Like his English predecessors, Henry swore to keep the peace, punish lawbreakers and forgers, and uphold justice; unlike those forebears, he actually did enforce his words.¹⁷ This promise to enforce the Confessor's customs firmly established Henry's progressive, dynamic monarchy on Anglo-Saxon traditions, which would enable the king to gradually expand his authority over all aspects of his realm.

Strengthening Old English structures to unify his domain under one law, Henry set a precedent for royal involvement in local affairs. The actual government of the king and council during the Anglo-Saxon period had been mostly limited to military leadership, with rare judicial duties. Local county courts had settled almost all legal problems, from land quarrels to murder feuds. The country had been divided into shires, hundreds, and hides, each with its own courts; these systems were re-

tained throughout the Norman era.¹⁸ Both Norman *vicomtes* and English sheriffs provided royal justice and financial organization to local counties, although the sheriffs may have been more influential because of their longstanding authority. The Old English office of "shire-reeve" had been established in the tenth century in order to support the earls, who commanded increasingly large groups of shires.¹⁹ Shrieval service as the king's or the earl's representative in each shire, collecting tribute and dispensing justice, spanned terms which could stretch for years. Under the Norman kings, the Anglo-Saxon shire groups were split into smaller counties so that no one noble held too much power. This defined, efficient system of vassalage replaced the loose Anglo-Saxon *comitatus* relationship and presented a model of feudalism for Europe.²⁰ William I had chosen influential men as his sheriffs in order to enforce his decrees on reluctant Anglo-Saxons, but the increasingly powerful officials threatened the sovereign's authority. To avoid this situation, Henry preferred to raise men "from the dust" to

¹⁵ Hollister, *Henry I*, 145, 247-48, 315, 347, 487, 493; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 178.

¹⁶ "Charter of Liberties," 13; John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, s.a. 1100; Har, "Coronation Charter"; Pollock, "King's Justice," 233; Davis, *Normans and Angevins*, 119.

¹⁷ The vows of this earliest extant coronation charter were used against King John in 1215 as an example of an English king's promising a stable, receptive rule to his barons with an explicit list of assurances. "Charter of Liberties," 5; Stubbs, *Select Charters*, 84-88, 97, 142, 157-58; Thomas, *Ethnic Hostility*, 278; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 30, 64, 371; Green, *Henry I*, 15; Davis, *Normans and Angevins*, 119-20; Durant, *Age of Faith*, 676; Cannon, "Character and Antecedents," 37; Har, "Coronation Charter"; Brooke, *Alfred to Henry III*, 220; Lindsay, *Normans*, 250-51; William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*, I s.a. 1135-37; Barlow, *Feudal Kingdom*, 173, 424; Hollister, *Henry I*, 351; Blackburn, "Coinage and Currency," 51; Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 296.

¹⁸ The Anglo-Saxon "hide" represented the area of land needed to sustain one family; a "hundred" was a hundred of such plots. Though the size of the plot continued to increase, hides and hundreds remained units of organization in the Norman era (Brooke, *Alfred to Henry III*, 104-05; Baker, *Normans*, 54-55; *Dialogue of the Exchequer*, I.17); Harvey, "Domesday Book," 189; Hollister, *Henry I*, 207-08, 327-28, 335, 351; Tierney, *Western Europe*, 196; Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 199; Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, XI.21; "Charter of Liberties," 12; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 177-78.

¹⁹ A "reeve" simply refers to a government agent or clerk; Whitelock, *English Society*, 77-80; Barrow, *Feudal Britain*, 25; Green, *Henry I*, 238; Hollister, *Henry I*, 357; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 149; Green, *Government*, 194; Hollister, "Administrative Kingship," 897; Brown, *Norman Conquest*, 68.

²⁰ Loyn, *Governance*, 145; "Leges Edwardi Confessoris," 22.5, 23.4, 24.3-4; *Dialogue of the Exchequer*, I.3; Whitelock, *English Society*, 81-82; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 149, 155; Brown, *Norman Conquest*, 74; Brooke, *Alfred to Henry III*, 104-05; Baker, *Normans*, 173; Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 310; Green, *Government*, 194; Morris, "Sheriff and Justices," 238.

the shrieval office to ensure their loyalty to the crown by raising their income and status.²¹

Henry's loyal new justices prevented private feuds over breaches of justice and gave the kingdom a unified legal system by the time of his grandson, Henry II. As he attempted to rein in the corruption of the disorganized reigns of William I and II, Henry I mandated that local courts be organized "as in the days of King Edward."²² To facilitate this legal regeneration, some justices were assigned to certain counties as sheriffs; others were commissioned individually for unique cases. Still others travelled extensively. Henry established a precursor to his grandson's system of the General Eyre, which sent travelling judges through a circuit of counties. Itinerant justices usually relied on local customs to make their decision, but as they moved from place to place they began to judge by a comprehensive law, placing each county under more direct royal authority by the 1120s.²³

The Norman adaptation of English laws solidified Henry's hold on local communities. To "restore...the law of King Edward," Henry sponsored the *Leges Henrici Primi*, which appear to simply be traditional English law codes translated into Latin.²⁴ Anglo-Saxon law recorded locally Christianized Germanic customs; it was never collected comprehensively until after the Conquest, so the customs of Wessex, Mercia, and the Danelaw were extremely diverse. Henry I's single standard, used by his sheriffs and justices across the country, compiled

English and Norman customs to create a uniform order.²⁵ His *leges* provided a Norman whitewashing of the Anglo-Saxon legal foundation. The Old English laws were applied in most cases, with some few changes, such as the wider application of the murder fine and a larger role for royal administration.²⁶ Though application of the king's authority to violence had been relatively rare under the original system, changes from the Norman Conquest were slowly implemented. William I protected his followers regardless of their crime, gradually leading to an assumption during Henry's time that royal protection should apply to everyone. Because the English king had controlled some violent feuds through fines, the post-Conquest kings had a foundation upon which to strengthen their control over the entire legal system.²⁷

Where Anglo-Saxon restrictions, even on serious violence, had been minimal, the Norman idea gave the sovereign far more authority. On the Continent, the idea that kings were responsible for stopping violence in their kingdoms was becoming more prevalent, and Henry promised to enforce this peace across his realm.²⁸ In England, murder had required the king to solve a feud only in drastic cases, relying on the family to enforce order through a system of vengeance feuds, but in Normandy, murder was considered a federal crime because it was a breach of peace. In his Coronation Charter, Henry responded to Norman expectations as he promised to "justly compensate" all future murders and maintain

²¹ Henry did rely on some barons, members of his trusted household staff, or dependable clergymen to fill the office, but he was noted for raising commoners to the position (Baker, *Normans*, 172; Brooke, *Alfred to Henry III*, 110; Hollister, "Administrative Kingship," 885, 889; Tierney, *Western Europe*, 321; Barrow, *Feudal Britain*, 52); Quotation from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Orderic Vitalis, XI.2; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 149; Green, *Henry I*, 15; Lindsay, *Normans*, 180.

²² *Regesta Henrici Primi*, no. 892, May-July, 1108, Reading; Davis, *Normans and Angevins*, 139; Hollister, *Henry I*, 212-13, 351; Green, *Henry I*, 110-11.

²³ An "eyre" is simply the circuit travelled by such a judge; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 178-79; Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 308; Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 188, 199; Hollister, "Administrative Kingship," 882-83, 885; Tierney, *Western Europe*, 321; Hollister, *Henry I*, 350; Pollock, "King's Justice," 237; Brooke, *Alfred to Henry III*, 110.

²⁴ "Charter of Liberties" 13.

²⁵ In fact, even the *Leges Edwardi Confessoris* appear to have been recorded during Stephen's reign (O'Brien, introduction); Whitelock, *English Society*, 134-36; Davis, *Normans and Angevins*, 137; *Regesta Regis Stephani* no. 10, 1139-54, London; Thomas, *Ethnic Hostility*, 278; Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 197-98; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 506.

²⁶ Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 196-198; Hollister, *Henry I*, 351; Thomas, *Ethnic Hostility*, 278.

²⁷ *Dialogue of the Exchequer*, I.10; Whitelock, *English Society*, 39-40, 43, 46, 52, 145; Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 75, 168, 172, 196-98, 224, 232; O'Brien, "Morðor to Murdrum," 350; "Laws of King Alfred," 5, 6-7, 38-39, 42.

²⁸ *Regesta Henrici Primi*, no. 1908, 1135, Rouen; Whitelock, *English Society*, 52; Durant, *Age of Faith*, 571-72; Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 196, 210-11, 213, 220, 232; O'Brien, "Morðor to Murdrum," 348; Hollister, *Henry I*, 467; Lindsay, *Normans*, 180.

a “strict peace.”²⁹ Fines for breaking the king’s peace were more strictly enforced and more broadly applied under Henry I. Communities were held responsible for bringing murderers to the king’s justice, under threat of a large fine; more severe violations of the peace were punished by mutilation, a lenient punishment when compared with execution. In Normandy as well as in England, Henry’s peace was strictly enforced to prevent plundering and to secure property ownership, in contrast to the lawless violence that had operated throughout the land since Hastings.³⁰

Doubt has been cast on Henry’s ability to fully enforce his coronation promise of peace because of the disparate Anglo-Norman laws, but by sending his justices to enforce the strong customs of vengeance and protection, he did form a practical, nation-wide peace where problems were brought to the king instead of solved individually.³¹ By the time of Henry’s grandson, all serious crimes, such as murder, were punishable by law because they thwarted the king’s peace. Similarly, violent but non-lethal altercations were soon forbidden and punished with the murder fine.³² Henry’s expansion of the Norman sanctions on murder shaped Anglo-Saxon traditions to solidify royal power. Under this more centralized government, Henry could “maintain his subjects in peace and modesty,” so he was recognized as the “Lion of Justice.”³³

Henry’s enlarged administration was sustained by the development of an efficient exchequer. The new exchequer was created in 1110 as Henry’s trusted advisor, Roger of Salisbury, reformed the English treasury to finance the marriage of the princess, Maud, to Holy Ro-

man Emperor Henry V.³⁴ Under Anglo-Saxon administrations, the treasury had tested coins for purity and tried to regulate the accounts of each county, but the king’s court was more concerned with spending the money than recording it. After the Conquest, the Norman kings awarded territories to their supporters, organizing land ownership and allowing more efficient tax collection. The court of audit became an influential branch of the government with modifications imported from Normandy, including a novel method of accounting, pipe rolls to record revenue, and revised feudal dues.³⁵

The very title of the new treasury, or “exchequer,” reflected a noticeable improvement in the accounting process. It was derived from *scaccarium*, the Latin term for “chessboard,” because of the use of a chequered cloth as an abacus to record the sheriffs’ payments. Counters representing thousands of pounds to the paltry pence of the sheriffs’ accounts were arranged on the cloth and recorded efficiently.³⁶ Specialized officials managed the procedures. Under William, a simplistic system of sheriffs had reported to the dual chamberlains of the treasury at Winchester. Henry connected the treasury more firmly to his household by appointing members of his *curia* to oversee financial matters and adjudicate financial quarrels.³⁷ The court of the exchequer did not meet continually under Henry I; instead, biannual audits took place at Easter and Michaelmas at the treasury in Winchester. At the cumulative Michaelmas audit, the barons of the exchequer personally examined the sheriffs for honesty before final accounts were recorded on the pipe roll

²⁹ “Charter of Liberties,” 8-9, 12; Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 197, 211-12, 220; Whitelock, *English Society*, 39, 46, 145.

³⁰ O’Brien, “Morðor to Murdrum,” 339; Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 168, 197; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 185; Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, XI.21; Hollister, *Henry I*, 207-208; Lindsay, *Normans*, 231.

³¹ Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 155-56, 166, 184, 197-99, 211-12, 224; Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 308.

³² Dialogue of the Exchequer, I.10; Hollister, *Henry I*, 331, 442; Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 308; Lambert, *Protection, Feud and Royal Power*, 188, 196, 198-99, 212-13, 223; Pollock, “King’s Justice,” 235; Barlow, *Feudal Kingdom*, 284; Brooke, *Alfred to Henry III*, 110.

³³ Richard of Hexham, “Account of King Stephen,” 66-67; Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, 46; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *British History*, VII.3; Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, XII.47; Har, “Coronation Charter”.

³⁴ *Regesta Henrici Primi*, no. 963, 1110, Westminster; *ibid.*, no. 1471, 1123-6, Westminster; *ibid.*, no. 1000, September 30?, 1111, Winchester ‘in thesauro’; Hollister, *Henry I*, 216, 315, 357; Green, *Government*, 40-41; Tierney, *Western Europe*, 323; Hollister, “Administrative Kingship,” 877, 879; Green, *Henry I*, 15, 113, 237; Barlow, *Feudal Kingdom*, 189, *Dialogue of the Exchequer*, I.5; Harvey, “Domesday Book,” 193.

³⁵ Baker, *Normans*, 173-74; Green, *Government*, 38, 40-43; Brown, *Norman Conquest*, 59; Hollister, *Henry I*, 216, 315, 357; Barrow, *Feudal Britain*, 43-53; *Regesta Henrici Primi*, no. 1000, September 30?, 1111, Winchester ‘in thesauro’; Green, *Henry I*, 237.

³⁶ *Dialogue of the Exchequer*, I.1; Green, *Government*, 40; Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 307; Hollister, *Henry I*, 26.

³⁷ Baker, *Normans*, 173-74; Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 307; Tierney, *Western Europe*, 323.

and the money stored in the Winchester treasury.³⁸ As a means of systematizing the oversight of minor officials and efficiently collecting revenues, the exchequer made Henry's ambitious reforms possible.

The improved organization of Henry's finances enabled him to use his revenue more effectively. Aside from allowing Henry to annually inspect his many officials, the auditing process provided a subtle opportunity to distribute patronage to the more important ones, this time by forgiving conspicuous debts. When repeatedly uncollected, firmly recorded dues became an incentive for loyalty to the creditor. Thus, Henry made a practice of pardoning debts and ignoring taxes owed him in order to cement his followers' loyalty.³⁹ In 1130, his revenue was about £23,000, but many thousands of pounds' worth of exemptions and pardons remained unpaid; that year alone, around three hundred writs for tax exemption were granted.⁴⁰ Equally important, the exchequer's organized account of revenue proved vital to replace the income lost in these tax exemptions, as well as land grants distributed to reward the king's favorites. Under the Old English system, the king had lived on the income from his own demesnes and the set revenues collected by sheriffs, including the shires' tribute, the fees for his justice, his right to issue currency, and other taxes. Henry's patronage gifts reduced his demesnes, requiring him to find new sources of revenue and more efficiently manage his old ones.⁴¹

Henry's efficiency can be clearly observed because of the most important change made to the exchequer: its method of annual record-keeping using pipe rolls, a Norman innovation. The early audits of the new exchequer were recorded in the Pipe Roll of 1130. As the first available report of European royal revenue and the only surviving example from Henry's reign, the Pipe Roll records the court's audit of Michaelmas 1130, the

thirty-first year of Henry's reign.⁴² Income from the sheriffs' farms, taxes, fines, and fees for other privileges, was recorded by shire.⁴³ Other revenue sources remain unreported; for example, Norman income and loans are not recorded in the Pipe Roll. Though Henry's Norman holdings used a similar but separate system to audit the treasury, constant upheaval in France destroyed any records kept there.⁴⁴

The English Pipe Roll reveals that a slight majority of the royal revenue was derived in some form from the king's lands. Although Henry continued to grant lands as patronage, he more effectively managed his lands and collected taxes through the sheriffs and the exchequer, so he gained more money from his remaining properties than his father and brother had.⁴⁵ The remainder of the recorded income came from legal charges and other forms of taxation. The revenues received from this new system of eyres proved very remunerative, for like his English predecessors, Henry could charge for granting secular and religious offices, caring for wards of the state, authorizing influential marriages, and facilitating normal judicial proceedings.⁴⁶ Long-established taxes included the *danegeld*, an antiquated tax originally levied on some counties as tribute to the Danes and maintained as part of the royal income, and the *auxilium burgi*, its equivalent in non-threatened principalities. Despite some additional taxes on individual communities, the total recorded in the Pipe Roll of 1130 remained comparatively light because its precise accounts allowed greater accuracy.⁴⁷ The incredible success of the exchequer in part accounts for Henry's avaricious reputation,

³⁸ Norman accounts were settled simultaneously but separately (Hollister, *Henry I*, 357); Sayles, *Medieval Foundations*, 307; Tierney, *Western Europe*, 323; Hollister, "Administrative Kingship," 878; Green, *Government*, 44.

³⁹ Green, *Government*, 74; Hollister, *Henry I*, 26, 335, 343, 357.

⁴⁰ Calculations of Henry's wealth in 1130 vary; some estimate it as nearly £23,000 (Green, *Government*, 55; Hollister, *Henry I*, 358), £24,200 (ibid., 335), or £24,500 (Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 176-77); Hollister, *Henry I*, 504-05.

⁴¹ Hollister, *Henry I*, 334-35, 451-52; Harvey, "Domesday Book," 189; Baker, *Normans*, 172-73; Barlow, *Feudal Kingdom*, 183; Green, *Henry I*, 248.

⁴² Barlow, *Feudal Kingdom*, 191; Hollister, *Henry I*, 26; Green, *Henry I*, 1-2; Green, *Government*, 54.

⁴³ *Dialogue of the Exchequer*, I.3; Morris, "Sheriff and Justices," 237-38; Hollister, *Henry I*, 26; Tierney, *Western Europe*, 323.

⁴⁴ Green, *Government*, 48, 51; Green, *Henry I*, 12; Hollister, "Administrative Kingship," 878, 882; Hollister, *Henry I*, 357.

⁴⁵ *Dialogue of the Exchequer*, I.7; Whitelock, *English Society*, 64; Green, *Government*, 55, 61-63, 66; Hollister, *Henry I*, 358; Durant, *Age of Faith*, 669.

⁴⁶ It is the sizeable payment for miscellaneous justice fees that allows the revenue recorded in the 1130 Pipe Roll to surpass that of many later years (Green, *Government*, 78); ibid., 6, 55, 80-87; Hollister, *Henry I*, 335, 58; Whitelock, *English Society*, 64-65.

⁴⁷ Hollister, *Henry I*, 352-53; Whitelock, *English Society*, 68, 70; Green, *Government*, 55, 69-70, 75-76, 78; Dowell, *Taxation and Taxes*, 49; *Dialogue of the Exchequer*, I.11.

as it enabled him to raise vast sums of money without excessively burdening his subjects. The efficiency of his treasury had not been equaled in previous reigns, and would not be consistently maintained for nearly a century; Henry's recorded income in 1130 was matched only four times before the reign of John.⁴⁸ Due to his exchequer, Henry could finance his efforts to solidify the Norman hold on England.

The efficient exchequer operated yet more effectively after one of Henry's most vital reforms: the issuing of England's silver pennies. Anglo-Saxon coins had been periodically collected and reminted in a new style. This "managed coinage system" served the double purpose of increasing the silver content of the coins with a continually-improving refining process and replenishing the king's treasuries, as minters levied a fee to pay the king for the newest dies. Old pennies and foreign currency were not acceptable in official transactions, so people could not avoid the recirculation, but they tended to retain some old coins for private use. The remarkable organization of this tedious English process facilitated the Normans' reform of the exchequer's structure.⁴⁹ William had marginally changed the process, levying a flat tax *de moneta* on minters instead of requiring them to buy new dies. Henry repealed the *de moneta* and relied solely on reminting for a while, but despite the revenue brought in by recoinings, Henry stopped the Anglo-Saxon system around 1125 in order to uphold the quality of all coins.⁵⁰ Because money was scarce during this period, Henry also hoped to stop his citizens' chronic hoarding of old coins. A wide-spread, reliable currency would encourage the use of coin instead of barter for

more efficient trade and taxation.⁵¹ By providing a uniform, trustworthy currency, Henry extended the control of the exchequer, and by extension, his regime, over the kingdom.

Both Anglo-Saxon and Norman kings jealously guarded their right to issue money in order to maintain both their profits and their authoritative image. The constant reminder of the state provided by a single source of currency unified England as nothing else would.⁵² Because forgeries weakened the royal reputation and cut into profits, Henry, like his English forebears, vowed at his coronation, "[i]f any one [sic]... be taken with false money, let due justice be done for it."⁵³ He re-emphasized the importance of maintaining pure currency in a charter of 1100. By 1108, forgery was again prevalent, so Henry decreed that each coin must be "snicked" with a small cut when minted to show that it was true silver throughout. In response to complaints about broken coins, he also introduced round halfpennies to replace the custom of cutting pennies in halves and quarters.⁵⁴ Complaints of inflation in Normandy from English coins made mostly of tin instead of silver led Henry to issue his infamous order of 1124. His wrath fell with particular severity on ninety-four careless moneyers whose coins were not up to par: in December of 1124, he had them mutilated.⁵⁵ Henry's contemporaries praised the just punishment of the forgers who "had ruined this land with the great quantity of bad metal" and the zeal of the

⁴⁸ Henry II surpassed this amount thrice, in 1177, 1185, and 1187; Richard only managed it once, in 1190 (Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 176-77); Green, *Government*, 54; Durant, *Age of Faith*, 669; Hollister, *Henry I*, 357, 496.

⁴⁹ Blackburn, "Coinage and Currency," 51; Harvey, "Domesday Book," 193; Lindsay, *Normans*, 201; Hollister, *Henry I*, 352, 354-55; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 371.

⁵⁰ Henry reinforced William's standardization of the coins' weight, allowing English money to retain unusually high quality throughout the period. The process relied on silver from Germany which came in trade for England's cattle and wool (Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, I.1; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 370-71; Blackburn, "Coinage and Currency," 74); *ibid.*, Blackburn, "Coinage and Currency," 50, 52, 75; Thomas, *Ethnic Hostility*, 277.

⁵¹ Hollister, *Henry I*, 354-55, 358; *Dialogue of the Exchequer*, I.7; Blackburn, "Coinage and Currency," 50, 75.

⁵² Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 371; Thomas, *Ethnic Hostility*, 277.

⁵³ "Charter of Liberties," 5; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 371; Blackburn, "Coinage and Currency," 51.

⁵⁴ *Regesta Henrici Primi*, no. 501, December 25, 1100, Westminster; Blackburn, "Coinage and Currency," 49, 51, 63; Eadmer, *Historia Novorum*, 206; John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, s.a. 1108; Simeon of Durham, "History of the Kings of England," 1108; Hollister, *Henry I*, 212, 354; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regnum Anglorum*, V s.a. 1119.

⁵⁵ Each coin carried the name of one of the forty-four mints where it was made, so fraudulent moneyers were easily caught. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 1125; *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, VIII.23; Simeon of Durham, "History of the Kings of England," 1126; Hollister, *Henry I*, 297-98; Blackburn, "Coinage and Currency," 51, 64; Lindsay, *Normans*, 201; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, 185, 371; *Annales Monastici*, 11; John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, s.a. 1125; Durant, *Age of Faith*, 625.

"guardian of justice and scourge of crime."⁵⁶ Though this defense of his currency has been remembered as overly harsh, his perceived ruthlessness can also be understood as a vehement defense of his practical system to centralize the economic policy of England.

Though understood as a harsh, greedy monarch by many modern scholars, Henry I was remembered by his contemporaries as a strong king who guided a golden era. Pragmatic to the core, he was able to firmly ensconce the Norman dynasty in England by implementing lasting changes to the patronage, legal, and economic systems. Henry's purposeful connection to Anglo-Saxon customs, begun by his marriage and extending to his supporters, his laws, and his finances, began to bridge the gap between English and Norman society. Making the justice system more efficient, Henry also raised revenue through renovated methods and united the country. His frequent pledge to support English traditions was supported by his attention to details such as the choice of minor officials and his standardization of record-keeping in the treasury. The "Lion of Justice" created a lasting kingdom with his Norman approach to English customs.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 1125; *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, VIII.23; Blackburn, "Coinage and Currency," 64.

⁵⁷ Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, 46.

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