

**THE ROYAL FAMILY AND POLITICAL CHANGES IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND: THE  
EVOLUTION OF MONARCHY AND POPULAR MOVEMENTS**

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the policy of the English royal family during the Middle Ages and its influence on the country's socio-economic changes. The main focus is on the transformation of royal power, invasions, political reforms, and the impact of popular movements on the evolution of the monarchy. The study highlights the effects of the Norman Conquest, the Peasants' Revolt, Danish rule, and the Tudor dynasty's reforms on England's governance system.

**Keywords:** Middle Ages, English monarchy, royal authority, popular movements, feudal system, Tudors, political evolution.

**Introduction.** By the early Middle Ages, the English monarchy had emerged as the central political institution in the country<sup>1</sup>. The royal family wielded significant influence over politics, religion, and the economy, and the consolidation of royal authority shaped the structure of English society. However, external invasions, internal conflicts, and popular uprisings gradually transformed the monarchy, forcing it to adapt to new social and political realities. This article explores the evolution of royal power, the role of popular movements, and the establishment of enduring state structures in medieval England.

**Main part.** Following the withdrawal of Roman legions in 407 AD, Britain became politically independent but vulnerable to invasions. Germanic tribes, including the Angles, Saxons, and Frisians, migrated to Britain, gradually displacing native Britons to the northern and western regions. This led to the establishment of multiple Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, such as Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria. While each kingdom had its own ruler, over time political unification began to emerge, laying the groundwork for a centralized monarchy.

Land tenure during this period was largely communal. Villagers held land collectively rather than individually, and agricultural labor was organized according to local customs. By the 6th and 7th centuries, some individuals became independent landowners, which laid the foundation for the feudal system that would dominate medieval England.

The Norman Conquest of 1066, led by William the Conqueror, marked a pivotal moment in English history<sup>2</sup>. William established a centralized administration and introduced a systematic approach to land tenure, consolidating the king as the ultimate authority. The Domesday Book, compiled in 1086, exemplified this administrative control and allowed the crown to impose taxes efficiently.

<sup>1</sup> Smith, J. (2015). *The English monarchy in the Middle Ages*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, P. (2018). *A history of medieval England: From the Norman Conquest to the Tudor era*. Cambridge University Press.

Norman rule reinforced feudalism, deepening social hierarchies and widening the gap between nobility and commoners. While this system strengthened royal authority, it also generated tensions among peasants and minor landholders, who bore the burden of heavy taxation and labor obligations.

At the beginning of the 11th century, England faced a new wave of invasions. King Canute of Denmark (1016–1035) ruled England, bringing a measure of political stability and economic growth, but at the cost of national sovereignty. Danish rule ended with the accession of Edward the Confessor, a member of the Wessex dynasty, who restored English rule and strengthened the monarchy. During this period, the crown often clashed with the Church and the nobility over taxation, land rights, and governance, highlighting the delicate balance of power in the feudal system.

By the 12th and 13th centuries, growing feudal obligations, heavy taxation, and social inequality triggered widespread unrest. The Peasants' Revolt of 1381, driven by poll taxes and oppressive labor practices, demonstrated the capacity of popular movements to influence the monarchy<sup>3</sup>. Although the rebellion was suppressed, it prompted the crown to consider the welfare of commoners and signaled the beginning of limits on royal authority.

Similarly, conflicts between the monarchy and the nobility resulted in the sealing of the Magna Carta in 1215 by King John. This landmark document restricted the king's power, established legal protections for nobles, and laid the groundwork for the development of constitutional monarchy in England.

The accession of Henry VII in 1485 marked the beginning of the Tudor dynasty, which restored political stability after decades of civil strife during the Wars of the Roses. His son, Henry VIII, expanded royal authority by establishing the Church of England, separating from papal authority, and strengthening both political and religious independence.

Elizabeth I further consolidated royal power, transforming England into a centralized state capable of pursuing maritime expansion and overseas trade. The reforms enacted during the Tudor period created a more effective bureaucracy, professionalized the army, and established the monarchy as a central institution, laying the foundation for the modern English state.

**Conclusion.** The English monarchy of the Middle Ages evolved through a complex interplay of invasions, social movements, and political reforms. From the Norman Conquest and Danish rule to the Magna Carta, the Peasants' Revolt, and Tudor reforms, these events collectively shaped royal authority and limited its absolutism. By responding to internal pressures and external challenges, the monarchy gradually transformed into a constitutional system in which the power of the crown was balanced by legal frameworks and emerging parliamentary structures.

The political stability and institutional continuity of modern England are direct legacies of these medieval developments, demonstrating the enduring impact of historical reforms on the structure of governance and society.

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<sup>3</sup> ^1Harrington, R. (2016). *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381: Causes and consequences*. Oxford University Press.

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