



Friends and Advisors of  
Empress Matilda

**MATILDA**

**MUNUC 35**

Model United Nations of the University of Chicago

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## CHAIR LETTER

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Dear delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 35!

My name is Julia Ferreira, and I will be your Chair for the Friends and Advisors of Empress Matilda committee!

Before we delve into committee business, a bit about me: I am a third year Political Science major interested in international relations and international development. While I grew up in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, my family is from northeastern Brazil. At school, I serve as a board member of UChicago's International Development Society and will be CDing a ChoMUN committee about Brazil's Federal Senate in 2015. In my free time, I enjoy drawing, playing volleyball, reading Webtoons, and listening to Brazilian music.

As for committee, Esther and I are excited to see how you engage with and innovate upon Medieval themes during this fascinating time period: We are giving you the tools and agency to completely rewrite history. We are particularly drawn to Empress Matilda's story because of the challenges she faced as a female monarch, and we are thrilled to see how you plan to advance her goals, changing medieval Europe in the process.

Before we start off the weekend, Esther and I will make sure everyone is familiar with how to participate in a crisis committee, and I will especially cover frontroom skills such as giving speeches, writing directives, and demonstrating leadership and collaboration in groups. We encourage you to carefully read the background guide, take note of what particularly interests you, and explore those topics on your own to see where they might lead you.

Esther and I cannot wait to see what creative, engaging arcs you come up with, but we want to make sure you respect everyone both in and out of committee no matter their background. We want everyone to feel comfortable, included, and heard, so don't hesitate to let us know if something

doesn't feel right. I can't wait to see how you work together to advance Empress Matilda's goals and shape Europe's future, although your execs certainly won't make it easy.

If you have any questions or concerns about committee or anything else, please do not hesitate to reach out!

Your Chair,

Julia Ferreira

[jferreira@uchicago.edu](mailto:jferreira@uchicago.edu)

## CRISIS DIRECTOR LETTER

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Dear delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 35 and the Friends and Advisors of Empress Matilda committee. I'm Esther Kassel, and I'll be your Crisis Direction along with your Chair, Julia Ferreira. A bit about me: I'm a second-year from Madison, Wisconsin, and a long-time Model UN enjoyer. I'm currently double majoring in Math and Inquiry and Research in the Humanities (a create-your-own-major program) with a focus on the history of ancient mathematics and poetry. Along with MUNUC, I'll be a Crisis Director for the Burgundian Succession of 1477—another great piece of history about a woman in power because she was the last heir—at ChoMUN, UChicago's collegiate Model UN conference. Outside of Model UN, I love watching movies, collecting zines, and drawing.

Julia and I are thrilled to lead all of you through this series of events in medieval England and Normandy which is The Anarchy. This committee is packed with interesting political and social events in royal English history, female empowerment, and family drama. As a friend and/or advisor of Empress Matilda, we hope that you will help her succeed in becoming the first woman to rule England and rewrite history in favor of her highness.

In the months leading up to the conference, I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the idea of crisis notes, crisis arcs, and directives (something we will discuss a bit before committee but it will be super helpful for both you and myself if you see examples beforehand!). As your CD, I'm excited to respond to all of your crisis notes and learn about your crisis arcs. Your involvement with the backroom is integral for moving your personal agenda forward and impacting the frontroom's course of action. I can't wait to see all of your creative ideas put into action during the weekend of committee!

If you have any questions or concerns about MUNUC or the committee or anything else, please feel free to reach out.

Your CD,

Esther Kassel

[ekassel@uchicago.edu](mailto:ekassel@uchicago.edu)



## SENSITIVITY STATEMENT

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Please be aware that the following sections of the background guide, as well as the committee, contain sensitive information including discussions of war, political violence, the treatment of women, and other difficult political and social topics that arose during the Middle Ages. While we acknowledge these issues in order to provide an accurate account of the historical context of Empress Matilda's time, we also want to clarify the committee's boundaries on sensitive matters.

This committee has zero tolerance for sexism, homophobia, antisemitism, racism, religious violence of any kind, or any sort of prejudice despite the current events and political climate of the 12th century. Particularly, as the advisors to a prominent female figure, you should strive to *advance* the position of women during the Middle Ages, not hurt it. We will not tolerate delegates weaponizing Matilda's gender to subvert her power, either in the front room or backroom (for example, please do not use rhetoric such as this: "We all know that a woman can't lead us! We need a man, so make sure to support..."). If you have any questions about what is/is not acceptable, please feel free to reach out to the committee executives (we are super nice and are here to help you! We won't be mad). Discussions of gender are important and powerful in Model UN committees, but everyone must be responsible and make sure that these discussions do not slip into casual misogyny.

Additionally, a few topics will be prohibited during this committee. When delegates are thrown into a Middle Ages committee, some tend to run backroom arcs involving Vikings, the Crusades, magic, or colonialism. We ask all of you to stay away from these topics. Please do not start a war with the Vikings. Please do not try to join the Crusades. Please do not claim that your character is a wizard who uses magic to advance their goals. Additionally, please do not start a voyage to "discover" the "New World" centuries before 1492. If you have any questions about these restrictions, please reach out.

Overall, please be considerate of your words and actions in both frontroom and backroom. Fostering an inclusive and safe committee environment for every delegate is of the utmost importance to us.

## COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND MECHANICS

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This is a continuous crisis committee. Some of you may have competed in a crisis committee, but some may be new to MUN altogether. We will go over how a crisis committee works in more detail at the start of the committee, but we have also included some basics here so everyone feels prepared before the first session.

Crisis operates as a cycle, so you'll learn the rhythm of the committee very quickly. Crisis is split into two main areas: frontroom and backroom. Frontroom is where your Chair, Julia, will be. It's the public side of crisis, where you all debate together and make decisions as a group. Backroom is run by your Crisis Director (CD), Esther. Backroom is where you'll make secret moves that subvert committees and accomplish your personal goals. You'll be doing things for frontroom and backroom at the exact same time, so be ready for a lot of multitasking.

Once everyone is gathered together in frontroom, we will begin with a crisis break, which is an announcement of some crisis that affects the committee body. You'll then respond to the crisis break with speeches and directives. Directives are documents each delegate makes outlining their plan to respond to the crisis. After a while, we will move into an unmoderated caucus, during which you should get up, discuss your directives with others, and create a few larger directives that combine your ideas with the ideas of other delegates. Eventually, we will vote on which directive(s) to pass, hopefully solving the crisis!

While all of this action is happening in frontroom, you'll also be doing work that pertains to backroom. Backroom is where you can advance your character's sneaky, personal goals. You'll do this by writing notes, which are essentially letters where you ask for help achieving your goals. If your notes are particularly good and impactful, the CD might give a crisis break based on your backroom. We'll talk a lot more about how to write a good note and what happens in backroom once committee starts.



There will not be many specific mechanics in this committee beyond the typical crisis committee elements outlined above. There may be time jumps during committee, but they won't be dramatic, and we'll announce them ahead of time so you all can prepare to move a few years in the future.

## POWERS OF COMMITTEE

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As the Empress Matilda's council of advisors, your role is to do exactly that — advise Matilda on the strategic moves she should make throughout the committee. These moves will be wide-ranging. In one directive, you may be suggesting that Matilda go to war with a political entity. In another, you may propose a political marriage that Matilda can orchestrate. Whatever it may be, you should assume that any directive passed will be enacted. Your directives should specifically aid Matilda's cause.

It's important to note that you do not need to only write directives that pertain to your specific role in the committee. If there's an agricultural crisis, everyone should write a directive to address it, not just botanists and farmers! As a committee, your job is to work together to fix crises that threaten Matilda's goals, regardless of the topic's relevance to your specific character.

Additionally, remember that the powers of the committee are limited by the resources that the committee currently holds. For example, if Matilda currently has an army, you should feel free to mobilize those forces in directives. But, on the other hand, if Matilda doesn't have naval forces, you can't send ships out. You are welcome to draft a directive that recommends creating and funding a navy, but take care to remember what resources you do or do not have.

While Matilda trusts her advisors and expects them to act in her best interest, she reserves the right to override any of their decisions. Don't expect this too often — most of the time, Matilda will enthusiastically follow your advice; however, it is possible that she may disagree and act differently than what you suggest. After all, she is the Empress!

# TOPIC: FRIENDS AND ADVISORS OF EMPRESS MATILDA

## History of the Problem

### *Geography*

Throughout her life, Matilda traveled extensively through Europe. Her journeys often represented pivotal moments in her life. As Matilda's advisors, you will be responsible for knowing the geography of Europe and can use it to your own advantage.



Topography of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Europe Topography Map," Wikimedia Commons, accessed November 27, 2022, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe\\_topography\\_map\\_en.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_topography_map_en.png).

The natural landscape of Europe is incredibly varied — from the jagged peaks of the Alps to dense German forests. The English countryside is speckled with various castles and fortresses, protected with trenches and high walls. Under feudal culture, there are strict laws governing the usage of forests, which are often reserved for the hunting excursions of nobility. You will also find monasteries and churches throughout country villages — these may be useful places to take refuge or gain new allies.<sup>2</sup>

Europe, especially the territory of the Holy Roman Empire, is marked by significant geographical landmarks. You should be aware of the Pyrennees, which straddle the modern-day border of France and Spain, as well as the Alps, which stretch from modern-day France all the way through Germany and Italy and end in Slovenia. The Alps separate modern-day Italy from the rest of Europe, making it difficult to cross down from Europe towards Rome, the seat of the papacy and Church.<sup>3</sup> Besides mountains, Europe's rivers are extremely important, offering trade routes, forming borders, and providing sea access. Notable rivers include the Rhine, Danube, Seine, and Po. These rivers are wide and connected to the sea, allowing for easy transportation. Most land in Europe lies within 300 miles of a seacoast, making water an important part of European life and history.

Throughout Europe, you can find rich farms with peasants tending to the land. In winter and spring, crops such as beans, peas, barley, and oats were planted. In the summertime, peasants sheared sheep for wool and harvested grain. Throughout the European countryside, you can expect to find water mills along the rivers, which were often used to grind grain into flour.<sup>4</sup> In Germany, the landscape is speckled with mines — specifically for silver, copper, and lead — and smelting sites. As Europe advances, mining and metalwork become increasingly important, so mines become more ubiquitous.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Medieval," English Heritage, accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/story-of-england/medieval/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Pyrennees," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Pyrennees>; "Alps," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Alps>.

<sup>4</sup> "(A.D. 500 - 1475) the Geography of Europe and Feudalism and the Rise of Towns," Bellefonte Area School District, accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.basd.net/cms/lib/PA01001269/Centricity/Domain/381/Chapter19Feudalism.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Justine Bayley, "Innovation in Later Medieval Urban Metalworking," *Historical Metallurgy*, 1996, <https://hmsjournal.org/index.php/home/article/view/415>.

Forests will surely play an important role in any travels Matilda (or her army) makes. Germany's Black Forest is a mountainous region with dense trees and rich natural resources.<sup>6</sup> As mentioned above, English forests are connected to the feudal system and are often kept off-limits for non-nobility. Regardless, England's forests are significant historical and cultural places. Just think about Sherwood Forest, which still exists today and is known widely as the site of Robin Hood's exploits. Who knows what kinds of bandits may be lurking currently all over Europe's forests?<sup>7</sup>

### ***History of England and Normandy***

In the 8th century, the coast of what was then the territory of the Frankish Kingdom began to endure various raids by the Vikings. The Vikings began moving inland, and eventually, in the early 10th century Rollo, the chief of the most significant Viking group, led a battle against King Charles III of France.<sup>1</sup> The Viking army prevailed in the attack and Charles III relinquished the territory to Rollo, who became the first leader of this newly conquered territory. As more of the Scandinavian population immigrated to the coast, they adopted French customs, religion, and language as well as the feudal system and, eventually, assumed the title of the Norman people of the dukedom of Normandy. The Christened successors of Rollo built Normandy to become a powerful force over their territories, even more than France. In 1066, William, Duke of Normandy, began to forcefully expand into England in what is now known as the Norman Conquest.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Black Forest," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Black-Forest-mountain-region-Germany>.

<sup>7</sup> "The Medieval English Forest," Medievalists, January 26, 2011, <https://www.medievalists.net/2011/01/the-medieval-english-forest/>.

<sup>8</sup> "Normandy," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Normandy>.



William the Conqueror<sup>9</sup>

Before William the Conqueror invaded, the union of England and Normandy began with King Edward, son of King Ethelred II, and Emma, the daughter of Richard II, Duke of Normandy. Edward, known as Edward the Confessor in legacy, lived in exile in Normandy until 1041 when he returned to London in order to attend the court of his half-brother King Hardecnute. A year later, Edward succeeded to the throne. Although Edward held the title of King of England, Godwine, earl of Wessex, held more influence over the kingdom. Though King Edward was unpopular due to his apparent preference for Normans, such as giving them positions of power in his government, he still managed to maintain unity in his kingdom throughout his reign. In 1066, on his deathbed, Edward named Harold, son of Godwine, as his successor, though he allegedly promised the throne to William, Duke of Normandy. Despite this alleged promise, Harold overtook the throne after Edward's death, and William the Conqueror invaded England. A few months later, during the Battle

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<sup>9</sup> "William the Conqueror," Wikimedia Commons, accessed November 27, 2022, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William\\_the\\_conqueror.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_the_conqueror.jpg).

of Hastings, Harold was killed in the battle, and shortly after William was named King of England and Normandy.<sup>10</sup>

During William's reign, he imposed several changes upon England and Normandy. In England, William felt constantly threatened by neighboring Scotland and Wales. In order to secure the borders, he invaded Scotland in 1067 and later Wales in 1071. At the same time, William was occupied with repelling two invasions from Ireland during his time on the throne. Additionally, William's attitude towards religion in the government greatly differed from the previous monarchs of England. He rejected the papacy's political interference but nonetheless maintained a relatively good relationship with Pope Alexander II and Pope Gregory VII. Political conflict in England manifested itself in more than just invasions; beginning in 1067, rebellions arose throughout the country but were subsequently crushed by William in 1071. In Normandy, William immediately replaced all he deemed disloyal in his government with close friends. Despite all the conflict he dealt with in England, William spent most of his time in Normandy protecting its borders. After 1066, Normandy's continental neighbors became more hostile, thus demanding more of William's presence to protect his land. On his deathbed in 1087, William gave his eldest son Robert Curthose responsibility over Normandy and his second-eldest son William Rufus the throne of England. His youngest son Henry, however, was given no significant power over either land.<sup>11</sup>

The Norman Conquest and William's ascent to the throne of England produced several economic, political, religious, and social changes in England, which continued to develop during Henry I's reign. William's favor for Normans manifested itself in several ways. Firstly, Normans replaced the majority of Anglo-Saxon bishops, thus allowing the Norman church to thrive. In addition, William fostered monastic reform in England by importing Norman monks, thus successfully promoting monastic life in England. Similarly, the landowning noble elite became almost entirely Norman in England under his influence. The influx of Norman immigration to England imposed French culture and language on the island nation's aristocracy. The Norman way of castle-building was introduced during this time to England. As a consequence, battles became less prevalent as field engagements as the castles were

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<sup>10</sup> "Norman Conquest," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Norman-Conquest>.

<sup>11</sup> "William I," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-I-king-of-England>.



put to use militarily. Politically, changes happened both in England and internationally. Not only did William enforce a more centralized government, but he ensured that a smaller number of people would be in control of the country's wealth. In 1086, William ordered the creation of the Domesday Book, an economic survey to be made of England, the first of its kind in Europe. Additionally, since Normans held more power and land in both France and England after William's ascent, a relationship between the two countries formed. As a result, England increased contact and trade with Continental Europe. Finally, feudalism spread throughout England under William, as he exchanged land for military service. Manorialism then developed, allowing lords to gain ownership of all things — including people — on their land.<sup>12</sup>

King Henry I was the youngest of William the Conqueror's sons, and thus was not endowed with much power or land when his father died. However, when his older brother King William II was killed in a hunting accident in 1100, Henry was crowned king of England. Because many Anglo-Saxon nobles preferred his older brother Duke Robert of Normandy, Henry made an effort to gain as much support as he could during the first few years of his reign. In order to do this, Henry developed the Charter of Liberties with the purpose of ending irregular and inconsistent taxing, confiscations of church revenues, and other misuse of power that his brother previously enforced. Overall, this endeavor was a success, as his popularity did increase. In the same year of his ascent to the throne, Henry married Princess Matilda of Scotland, creating the foundations for peaceful relations with Scotland after years of conflict. In the following year, Duke Robert invaded England, believing he was the rightful heir to the throne. Henry quickly countered with his diplomatic skills, working out a settlement with Robert to relinquish his claim to England. In the years following, more Normans fled to England to escape the political and social chaos under Robert, further encouraging Henry to conquer and enforce peace. In 1106, his army defeated Robert in the Battle at Tinchebrai and captured Robert as a prisoner, thus successfully claiming the title of Duke of Normandy and reunifying the two states. While maintaining his rule over England and Normandy, Henry deemed his only legitimate son William to be his successor. During this time, Henry was challenged by Robert Clito, son of Duke Robert, and his allies Louis VI of France and the Norman barons. In 1120, they

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<sup>12</sup> Mark Cartwright, "The Impact of the Norman Conquest of England," World History Encyclopedia (<https://www.worldhistory.org#organization>, November 24, 2022), <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1323/the-impact-of-the-norman-conquest-of-england/>.

relinquished their claims. Soon after, however, William perished in a shipwreck, leaving Henry with no legitimate male heirs. In 1125, he summoned her daughter, Matilda, back to England after her husband's death, and promised her the throne after he passed. When Henry died in 1135, his nephew Stephen of Blois disregarded Matilda's claims as the heir to England and Normandy and unrightfully seized the throne, which propelled the beginning of the Anarchy.<sup>13</sup>

## **Feudalism**

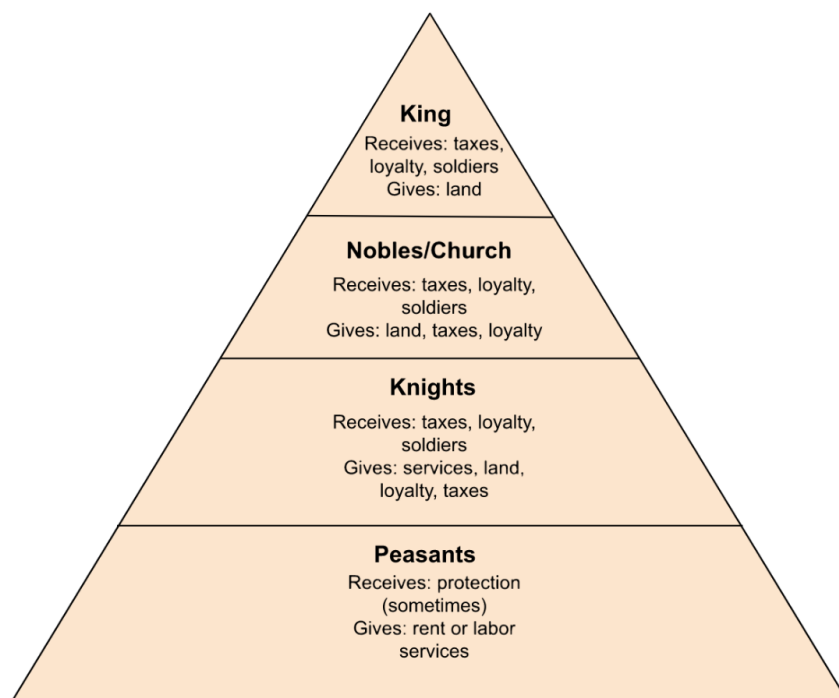


Illustration of Feudal Structure

While feudalism is a relatively new economic and political system in England, the Normans have been employing feudalism since they settled in 900. Under feudalism, the land of Normandy is under the control of the Duke, who personally utilized 20% of the land and essentially rented the other eighty percent of the land to either the Church or noblemen. About one-fourth (25%) of the land that was granted to the Church was supervised by the Bishops assigned as tenants-in-chief. In exchange for this land, the Bishops promised the Duke to provide him with knights when requested to. The last

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<sup>13</sup> "Henry I," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Henry-I-king-of-England>.

55% of the land was assigned to loyal noblemen who were also made to promise knights from their land when the Duke requested them to. Below the Church and the noblemen were the knights, called under-tenants or sub-tenants. Knights often rented land from the Church or noblemen in exchange for their services. Finally, below knights were land-working peasants, also called villeins or serfs. Villeins had little to no freedoms and were forced to provide their tenants with food, services, and labor.<sup>14</sup>

Feudalism was introduced to England by William the Conqueror and spread throughout the country after the Norman Conquest. While William was not popular among the Anglo-Saxons as their king, the feudal system became a powerful tool to control the country socially, politically, and economically. Additionally, feudalism allowed William to maintain control over his kingdom, even while he spent time in Normandy. First, William divided up England into large plots of land, similar to modern-day counties. Each plot was given to a nobleman – barons, earls, and dukes. In 1089, William summoned these land-owning noblemen to Salisbury to swear an oath to him, promising to provide soldiers to the king when necessary and to collect taxes from the citizens living on their plots.<sup>15</sup> While these noblemen, as tenants-in-chief, essentially ruled over their assigned plots, there was no mistake that they were subordinate to William, the true ruler over their land. However, these large plots of land were difficult for the individual noblemen to control; thus, each of their plots was divided up into smaller plots and assigned to Norman knights, their sub-tenants. Like the tenants-in-chief, these knights had to swear an oath of loyalty to the king and promise to collect taxes and provide soldiers from their land. William himself kept a Domesday Book that functioned as an assessment of taxes owed and a record of feudal duties across the country, and though incomplete, it was the first of its kind. Thus, this division of land and the Domesday Book allowed William to maintain political and economic control over England while simultaneously residing in Normandy whenever he pleased.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "Feudal System: Medieval Life and Feudalism," History, September 8, 2022, <https://www.historyonthenet.com/medieval-life-feudalism-feudal-system>.

<sup>15</sup> "Oath of Salisbury," Oxford Reference, accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100438100>.

<sup>16</sup> "Medieval England - Feudalism," History Learning Site, March 5, 2015, <https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/medieval-england/feudalism/>.

While ensuring political and economic control, William was able to dominate the Anglo-Saxons socially through his mostly Norman tenants. The noblemen and knights, in addition to providing taxes and men when necessary, were encouraged to keep the English subordinate to the Normans. As a consequence, people living on their land were often treated harshly and unfairly. William was able to subdue the English population in other ways as well; for example, in order to demonstrate his influence over the country, he built the Tower of London. He also built dozens of Norman castles to demonstrate superiority over the English.<sup>3</sup> Finally, William established forest laws that became to be resented by the public even after his kingship. These laws affirmed William's ownership over the king's forests, consequently driving out villagers residing in these forests and penalizing those who remained by enforcing a severe anti-poaching law. Despite the negative effects of feudalism, William was effective with his ruling and ultimately developed England to become equal with its continental neighbors on political, cultural, and economic levels.<sup>17</sup>

Under the rule of William the Conqueror's sons, William Rufus and Henry I, the centralized form of government continued and the bond between England and Normandy strengthened. However, William Rufus was often occupied with other matters, such as quelling rebellions and attempting to take land from Normandy. At the beginning of his kingship, he spent time refining his father's past laws to subdue the rebellion started by his own uncles who resided as barons. In an attempt to stop further rebellions and gain popularity, he promised to relieve the tenants of heavy taxation and decrease the severity of forest laws. During the last years of his reign, William Rufus attempted to take land from his brother, Duke Robert, in Normandy. Although he ended up buying some land for his kingdom, he died suddenly before he could reunite England and Normandy completely. On the other hand, Henry was attentive to administrative services. He not only pursued reunification but also worked to further legitimize the institution to both the oppressed people and tenants of England. Soon after his coronation, Henry acknowledged the oppressive Norman government by promising reforms, such as avoiding the exploitation of church vacancies and assuring just reliefs for fiefs paid for by vassals. Additionally, Henry formalized the exchequer, a department dealing with royal revenues, as a distinct government agency. This, along with several other strict

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<sup>17</sup> "The Normans (1066–1154)," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom/The-Normans-1066-1154>.

political and economic measures, was put into place to ensure that the system ran smoothly even in Henry's absence.<sup>18</sup>

### ***The Holy Roman Empire***

Although the term "Holy Roman Empire" only came about in 1254, the political institution that we know of as the Holy Roman Empire was present much before the name. The exact role and function of the Empire are complex and deeply intertwined with the history of Christianity in the European Middle Ages. Common understandings of the Holy Roman Empire define it as the Church's secular branch that answered to the pope, or as an institution directly under God's authority that was responsible for conquest and ruling in Europe.<sup>19</sup> According to the Catholic Church, the Holy Roman Empire was the legitimate descendant of the ancient Roman Empire.<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, it is important to note that the Holy Roman Empire does not refer to a solid and unified state; rather, it describes a collection of smaller political entities that (supposedly) worked in tandem. As one might expect, this often did not happen, and the member states of the Empire had diverging interests and political goals.<sup>21</sup>

In 768, a man named Charlemagne became King of the Franks. Under Charlemagne, the Frankish Empire expanded rapidly, coming to comprise much of modern-day France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy, among other nations in Western Europe. This expansion linked the Frankish Empire to lands under Papal control. Through a series of alliances with the papacy, Charlemagne grew in good favor with the Church. On Christmas Day of the year 800, Charlemagne was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III. Charlemagne himself described his role as *renovatio imperii Romanorum*, or

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<sup>18</sup> "The Sons of William I," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom/The-sons-of-William-I>.

<sup>19</sup> "Holy Roman Empire," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Holy-Roman-Empire>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Simon Duits, "Holy Roman Empire," World History Encyclopedia (<https://www.worldhistory.org#organization>, November 26, 2022), [https://www.worldhistory.org/Holy\\_Roman\\_Empire/](https://www.worldhistory.org/Holy_Roman_Empire/).

“renewal of the Roman Empire,” further emphasizing the Empire’s supposed roots in Roman political history.<sup>22</sup>

Most emperors were elected by an Imperial College composed of ambitious, powerful European families. Much of the Empire’s history can be understood in dynasties. Once one family held power as emperor, the family members would wield power, money, and influence to ensure that the family maintained the imperial throne. Once their favors ran out, another family had the chance to take over and begin their own dynasty. One important dynasty, the Salian Dynasty, came into power in 1024. Under the Salians, the Empire was expanded greatly, and its core building blocks were established: Germany, Italy, Bohemia, and Burgundy.<sup>23</sup>

King Henry V of Germany, Matilda’s soon-to-be husband, intended to be crowned the Holy Roman Emperor. In fact, his marriage to Matilda was an essential part of the plan, as he would receive a dowry from her that would fund his journey to Rome for the coronation. During a series of conflicts throughout the Empire shortly after the two were married, Henry V was excommunicated by Pope Paschal II, prompting Henry V and Matilda to head to Rome. Once the two — along with a formidable army — arrived in Rome, Pope Paschal fled. In his wake, the papal envoy Maurice Bourdin (later known as antipope Gregory VIII) crowned Henry V and Matilda in Rome. Because of Bourdin’s unofficial status, the validity of Matilda’s “Empress” title is disputed. Regardless, she used the title from 1117 until her death, and most people around her seemed to accept it.

### ***Religion and the Monarchy in England***

After the Norman Conquest, England became more closely connected to the culture of Continental Europe, meaning the English Church was reformed to fit Roman ideas such as implementing the canon law and reviving assemblies of clergymen called synods.<sup>24</sup> William the Conqueror reformed English monasteries and established many more.<sup>25</sup> These monasteries soon followed the Norman

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> “Church of England,” Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Church-of-England>.

<sup>25</sup> “Medieval Religion,” English Heritage, accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/story-of-england/medieval/religion/>.

religious and economic status quo. Led by the Normans, they became involved with the feudal system. As per the tenants in Normandy, bishops accepted plots of land in England from the king. The power over monasteries thus transformed from local to continental and the church became economically and politically intertwined with the monarchy. In fact, William replaced the archbishop of Canterbury for Lanfranc soon after the Norman Conquest in order to enforce better discipline and more Norman order in the church of England.<sup>3</sup> One step was to introduce several church councils to legislate the churches of England as was done in Normandy. Although William had a tight grasp on the churches, he firmly established that Pope Gregory VII, not any other pope, would be recognized in England. He did not believe in owing homage nor in the pope's papal supremacy.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, he, the king, would be in complete supervision of the religious activities and churches of his kingdom.

While William I rebuilt the church, the church did not respect or support his successor, William Rufus. Though a skilled military leader, William Rufus was extremely unpopular with the leadership of the church, though perhaps much of this distaste may have originated from his attempts to undermine their authority.<sup>27</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, a well-known archbishop, tried to resist William Rufus' attempts but was unsuccessful. Thus, he left for Rome and was compelled by the king not to return. With Anselm gone, the lands of Canterbury were in William Rufus' control as were the funds that came from it. In Rome, Anselm asked Pope Urban II to help resolve the issue, and he succeeded; however, Anselm remained in Rome. Additionally, William Rufus tended to keep the bishop's positions empty, letting them set their own incomes, which effectively allowed embezzlement.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, William Rufus' relationship with the church was tainted with exploitation, undermining, and discourse.

King Henry I attempted to undo the damage and exploitation that his brother created: he wrote a Charter of Liberties that would prevent confiscations of church revenues and he encouraged Anselm's return to Canterbury. However, like William Rufus, Henry I eventually experienced conflicting views with the archbishop of Canterbury. When Anselm returned from Rome, he was

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<sup>26</sup> "The Normans (1066–1154)," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom/The-Normans-1066-1154>.

<sup>27</sup> "William II," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-II-king-of-England>.

<sup>28</sup> "William Rufus," Historic UK, accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/William-Rufus/>.



dedicated to pursuing reforms of the church begun by Pope Paschal II, so that the church would be independent of secular sovereigns.<sup>29</sup> But Henry viewed the church leaders as both spiritual governments as well as great sources of wealth, as his brother did before.<sup>30</sup> Thus, he made an effort to maintain the feudal bond between the church and the monarchy, and Anselm once again was exiled from England. After the archbishop's second exile, Henry exchanged numerous letters with the pope and Anselm, which concluded in a compromise: Henry had to cease investing in religious leaders while Anselm was made to pay homage to Henry. This settlement was one of the factors that allowed for some relative peace and reunification that followed.<sup>31</sup>

Like Anselm of Canterbury, Bishop Roger of Salisbury was a key figure in maintaining a feudal bond between the church and the monarchy. During Henry's reign, Roger was one of the king's principal advisors. In 1100, he was appointed chancellor of England, only before becoming the bishop of Salisbury in 1101.<sup>32</sup> Though Roger gained significant political power, he simultaneously became unpopular with his contemporaries. After gaining the title of bishop, Roger increased the endowment and educational facilities in his district and held tight control of the elections in his dominion and in other monasteries. However much Roger displeased other churchmen, he became more favorable to Henry, who appointed him as the justiciar of all England. As the justiciar, Roger had the political power only second to the king and often stood as regent when Henry was abroad. Roger furthered the financial efficiency of the feudal system, such as by improving coinage, and encouraged the creation of the Board of Exchequer, a system of justices. After Henry's death, Roger swore an oath to support Matilda's succession to the throne, but Stephen of Blois received support from the pope and many other bishops to return to England and ascend the throne.<sup>33</sup> In 1135, Roger changed loyalties to Stephen and helped him seize the throne. To repay him, Stephen rewarded Roger handsomely. But, when his wealth was decreasing significantly and he realized the amount of power Roger maintained, Stephen arrested Roger and his relatives and confiscated his funds and

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<sup>29</sup> "Henry I," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Henry-I-king-of-England>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> "Roger of Salisbury," Encyclopedia.com (Encyclopedia.com, November 27, 2022), <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/roger-salisbury>.

<sup>33</sup> "Stephen," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Stephen-king-of-England>.

castles in June 1139.<sup>34</sup> As a consequence of Roger's arrest, Stephen lost the support of the church that he initially had.

### ***Gender in the Medieval Ages***

The role of women in the Medieval Ages varied depending on their marital status, family wealth, and career. Despite variations, all women experienced discrimination; they could not marry without their parent's permission, own a business, inherit land (if they had brothers), or divorce their husbands. In rural villages, mothers and older daughters were expected to fulfill domestic duties such as childcare, meal preparation, and tending to livestock. They often participated in contemporary cottage industries like baking and manufacturing textiles, while at other times they were expected to work as hard as their brothers and husbands on the land.<sup>35</sup> While working women participated in equal amounts of work as their male counterparts, they often were given lower wages; for example, men received 8 pence a day for reaping while women were only given 5 pence.<sup>36</sup> In addition to unfair compensation, rural women had less freedom than men. Since most in England and Normandy in the 12th century participated in Christianity, many based their judgments on women through the teachings of the church. In particular, it was taught that women were inferior and morally weak, based on the story of Eve. Therefore, these ideas dictated by biblical texts at the time enforced the stereotype that women were oppressed and subservient to men in the Medieval Ages.

Urban women assumed different roles in terms of trade, but essentially their level of power in their household was about equal to that of rural women. Women in larger villages or cities often assisted their fathers and husbands in their trade, which could be running shops or inns and producing textiles, metalwork, or leather goods.<sup>37</sup> Essentially, less wealthy women, rural or more urban, had similar disadvantages despite differences in trade and environment. Wealthy women, however, experienced more freedom than their less wealthy counterparts. Women from wealthy families had servants who assisted in childcare, cooking, and cleaning — all tasks that she would be expected to

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Alixe Bovey, "Women in Medieval Society," British Library (British Library Board), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/women-in-medieval-society>.

<sup>36</sup> "Medieval Women," History Learning Site, March 5, 2015, <https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/medieval-england/medieval-women>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

do herself alone or with her daughters. Because of this, they could afford to have time for leisure and participate in activities such as dancing or hunting. Nonetheless, married wealthy women still lacked autonomy over their financial resources and other aspects of their lives. Girls from wealthy families were often married in their teens while girls from less wealthy families were married in their twenties.<sup>38</sup> When they were married, they had to forfeit their personal and financial autonomy to their husbands.<sup>39</sup>

Some women, like abbesses and women from noble families, however, had more autonomy and power. One of the only places women could gain a position of power was in a church, which was somewhat surprising given the church's teachings on women's inherent inferiority. Women could assume the role of an abbess which, in some cases, indicated that they had seniority over both nuns and monks in the convent.<sup>40</sup> Many women, given the choice between marriage or a life as a nun, were able to choose the latter, as it would allow them to avoid the risks of childbirth and maintain personal autonomy. Additionally, while rarer than a male regent or monarch, some women wielded power over entire kingdoms.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Biography of Matilda***

Matilda was born around February 7th, 1102 to King Henry I of England and his first wife, Matilda of Scotland, in a village called Sutton Courtenay in Berkshire. Her father Henry was the youngest son of William the Conqueror, who had invaded England in 1066, creating a vast empire. Matilda's mother, Matilda of Scotland, was the daughter of King Malcolm III of Scotland. The marriage was politically useful, giving both husband and wife increased legitimacy and power in England.

Matilda wasn't the only child born to her mother and father. She had one legitimate brother, William Adelin. However, her father was known to have had countless extramarital relationships, and it is speculated that Matilda actually has around 22 illegitimate half-siblings.

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<sup>38</sup> History Learning Site, "Medieval Women."

<sup>39</sup> Bovey, "Women in Medieval Society."

<sup>40</sup> Bovey, "Women in Medieval Society."

<sup>41</sup> History Learning Site, "Medieval Women."

Unfortunately, little is known about the details of Matilda's early life. However, just as historians do, we can speculate that she likely was raised with her mother. She likely received an education, studying religious morals and learning how to read. At her mother's court, she was surrounded by famous nobles, namely her uncle David, her half-brother Robert of Gloucester, her cousin Stephen of Blois, and Brian Fitz Count.

When Matilda was around six or seven years old, King Henry V of Germany suggested that he marry the young girl. Their age gap was significant: at the time of marriage, Matilda would be eight, while Henry would be 24. Politically, the marriage was useful for Matilda's father, as it linked his family to one of Europe's most prominent royal families. King Henry V would, in exchange, receive a hefty dowry that would fund his coronation as the Holy Roman Emperor in Rome. Matilda left England for Germany in February 1110. She was first crowned German queen on July 25, 1110, and then spent years studying German culture under Bruno, the archbishop of Trier. Finally, in January 1114, she was ready for marriage and officially entered public life in Germany.

Due to a series of Henry's political mishaps, conflict broke out across the Empire not long after the couple was married. Eventually, Pope Paschal II excommunicated Henry, prompting the couple to march down toward Rome to restore their status. Once their status was reaffirmed, Matilda began referring to herself as Empress of the Holy Roman Empire.

In 1118, Henry returned to Germany to maintain order in the empire, leaving Matilda as regent of Italy. One can presume that the following two years during which she ruled Italy were formative in her growth as a politician and leader. In 1125, Henry died of cancer, leaving Matilda widowed and childless. As a 23-year-old woman, she was left with highly limited options for the rest of her life. Because she was childless, there was no chance that she could become an imperial agent. She could either become a nun or remarry. Despite marriage offers from German princes, she turned down these offers and returned to Normandy.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 8-14.

## *Biography of Stephen of Blois*



Stephen of Blois.<sup>43</sup>

Stephen was born around 1097 in Blois, France as the third son of William the Conqueror's daughter, Adela, and Count of Blois, Stephen.<sup>44</sup> In his youth, Stephen was mostly raised by his mother, while his father was absent for most of his childhood. When Stephen was old enough, his family sent him to serve in the court of his uncle, King Henry I. During his time in the king's court, Stephen prospered as a noble and became a favored magnate of his uncle.<sup>45</sup> In 1106, Stephen fought and helped

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<sup>43</sup> "Stephen Blois," Wikimedia Commons, accessed November 27, 2022, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stepan\\_Blois.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stepan_Blois.jpg).

<sup>44</sup> "Stephen," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Stephen-king-of-England>.

<sup>45</sup> "King Stephen and the Anarchy," Historic UK, accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/King-Stephen-Anarchy/>.

guarantee King Henry I's success in the Battle of Tichebray. Thereafter Henry was able to secure control of Normandy, and Stephen was knighted as a reward for his efforts in battle.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, King Henry I gifted Stephen land in Normandy and England.<sup>47</sup> In 1125, Stephen married Matilda of Boulogne, the daughter of a wealthy family from Boulogne, France. Through his marriage, Stephen inherited estates and wealth, as well as the title of Count of Boulogne.<sup>48</sup>

As a member of King Henry I's court, Stephen was made to pledge an oath to support Matilda's ascent to the throne after Henry's death. While Stephen, as well as several of his fellow court members, promised to ensure Matilda's succession, he believed that he was the rightful successor to Henry. He and several other magnates of the court were hesitant to support the female leader and some even outright rejected the idea. In addition, many of Henry's Norman subjects were upset that Henry married Matilda to a political rival, the Angevin family.<sup>49</sup> Because of this, along with the support from his brother, Henry of Blois, and the English Church, Stephen was able to successfully take the throne after the death of his uncle in Matilda's absence in 1135.<sup>50</sup> As king, Stephen was considered to be energetic, mild-mannered, and brave. However, despite his support across both Normandy and England, both politically and in the English Church, Stephen failed to lead a kingdom through social, political, and economic struggles.

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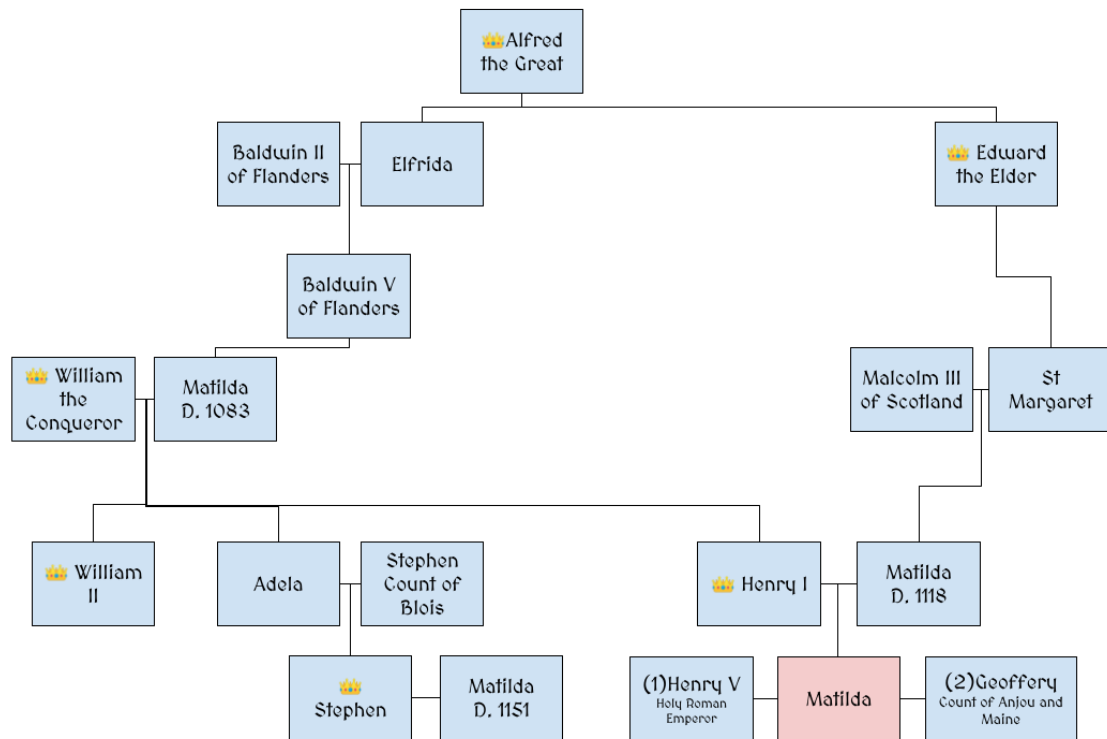
<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Britannica, "Stephen."

<sup>48</sup> Historic UK, "Stephen and the Anarchy."

<sup>49</sup> Britannica, "Stephen."

<sup>50</sup> Historic UK, "Stephen and the Anarchy."



Family Tree



## Statement of the Problem

### *The Anarchy and Current State of Affairs*



Stephen of Anglia.<sup>51</sup>

King Henry I died on December 1, 1135, and what followed was King Stephen I's ascension to the throne and his kingdom's transition into what was known as The Anarchy.<sup>52</sup> Stephen was easily able to seize power in England; most who swore an oath for Matilda's claim to the throne disregarded her as a leader because of her personality — too proud and overbearing — and her marriage. Most importantly, they believed it improper for a woman to lead. Thus, on December 22, 1135, Stephen was anointed king by the archbishop, which left little doubt for allies and enemies who had the power of the throne.

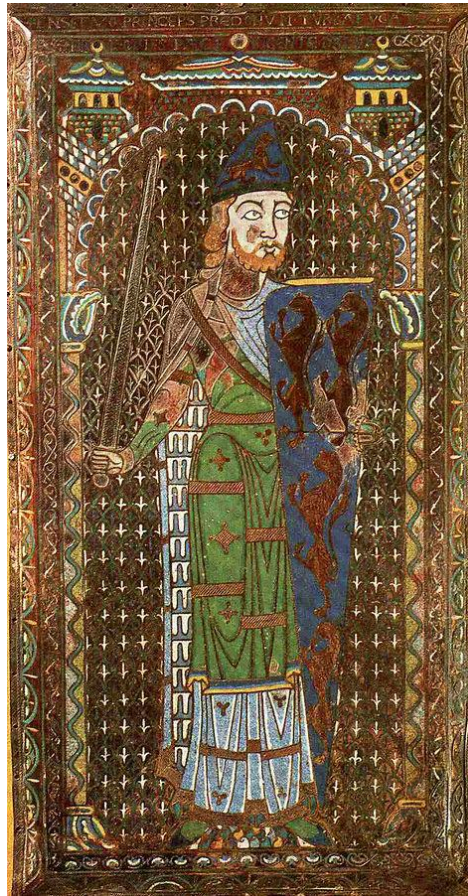
Matilda was facing more problems than Stephen's usurpation of the crown. Her unpopularity, for one, among the nobles would not have stopped her from claiming the crown initially, but now that Stephen had solidified his kingship, it will definitely make taking the crown from him much more difficult. Though her status as a woman is one of the reasons for her unpopularity, her husband Geoffery's identity as an Angevin was far more displeasing to the Normans. In fact, while Stephen was visiting Normandy for the first time as king, Geoffery invaded Normandy. However, his

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<sup>51</sup> "Stephen of Anglia," accessed November 27, 2022, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:StepanAngl.jpg>.

<sup>52</sup> Ralph H. Davis, *King Stephen: 1135-1154* (London: Longman, 1997).

motivation to conquer was not for the sake of Matilda, but for himself, as an Angevin. Stephen attempted to stop Geoffrey and his army, but he was forced to disengage when internal fighting broke out amongst his men. After this attempt, Stephen quickly left Normandy, despite the increased threats of rebellion.<sup>53</sup>



Geoffery of Anjou.<sup>54</sup>

Leading up to and during the beginning of The Anarchy, Stephen faced several problems while consolidating his power. Firstly, while Stephen's kingship was legitimate, Matilda was the rightful ruler — Stephen was in fact one of the first to make the oath to Henry. Second, Stephen was forced to please the noblemen who believed him to be unfit for rule. Many of them began rebelling after Stephen took the throne by building their own castles, free from the ownership of the king, and

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> "Geoffrey of Anjou Monument," Wikimedia Commons, accessed November 27, 2022, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Geoffrey\\_of\\_Anjou\\_Monument.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Geoffrey_of_Anjou_Monument.jpg).

ruthlessly governing their populace. It did not help that many considered Stephen to have weak leadership abilities. In addition to the rebellions, Stephen appointed new earls for his court in an attempt to gain popularity among them. His popularity among those already in the king's court ended up decreasing. Stephen was also thrown into conflicts by several neighboring political entities; rebellions erupted on the Welsh border and Scotland was similarly attacking.<sup>55</sup> In Normandy, the duchy was restless since Henry's death, and Stephen took fifteen months to respond to the discourse, which only displeased the Normans further. It was clear that what followed Stephen's ascent to the throne was social unrest, political fragmentation, and the increase of conflict in both England and Normandy, which would become what we know now as The Anarchy.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> "King Stephen and the Anarchy," Historic UK, accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/King-Stephen-Anarchy/>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

## Character Biographies

### ***King David I of Scotland, Empress Matilda's Uncle***

King David I was born to Queen Margaret of Scotland and King Malcolm III Canmore. During his early life, David attended the court of his brother-in-law King Henry I of England. While in King Henry's court, David gained an interest in Anglo-French culture, particularly in the dialect, customs, and feudalism. In 1113, David married the Matilda of Waltheof, daughter of the Earl of Northumbria, and a year later David and Matilda had their son Henry, named after Henry I of England. Through his marriage, he achieved the title of Earl of Huntingdon, acquiring land both in Huntingdon and in Northamptonshire. David succeeded the Scottish throne after the death of his older brother Alexander and did little to exercise his power in the 1120s. However, after the death of his wife and after learning of sparks of revolution in Scotland, David rose to action to subdue threats to his power with the military aid of King Henry. By the time King Henry I died, David maintained more control over Scotland than ever before. David is particularly notable in the royal family for his recognition of Matilda, his niece, as the rightful heir to the throne of England.

### ***Robert Fitzborn of Gloucester, Empress Matilda's Half-Brother***

Robert Fitzborn was born as the eldest of King Henry I's illegitimate children, and his mother's identity is speculated but not confirmed. Even as a youth, he seemed to have unending confidence and flourished as a leader, often teaching his younger brothers proper archery techniques and leading games and activities. He was arranged by his father to marry Mabel FitzHamon, a wealthy heiress, and was granted the title of Earl of Gloucester. After Henry I's death, Robert was originally loyal to Stephen, but after an argument between the two, Robert switched his loyalty to Matilda and became a leader among her supporters. Robert's switch in loyalty was of no surprise to the court, as he rarely disguised his hostility towards Stephen when Robert attended his court. Despite Robert's initial support of Stephen, he is willing to support Matilda's succession to the throne of England with his skills in leadership and battle strategy.

### ***Brian Fitz Count of Wallingford, English Noble/Knight***

Brian Fitz Count was born in 1090 as the illegitimate son of Alan IV, Duke of Brittany, and Lucie de Ballon. At a young age, Brian was sent by his father to be raised at the court of King Henry I. Henry was familiar with Brian since his youth, and Brian managed to win over the king's favor when he served in the Battle of Tinchebray in 1106. During his time at Henry I's court, Brian acquired a close and longstanding friendship with Robert Fitzborn of Gloucester. In 1127, Brian married Matilda D'Oyly, a widowed English heiress, and thus obtained the title of Count of Wallingford. Further, he owned several estates in Wiltshire and Berkshire and inherited the castle and the title of Barony of Abergavenny in Wales. During Matilda's efforts to take the throne from Stephen, Brian was one of her loyal supporters and a distinguished knight.

### ***Peter of Soissons, Schoolmaster of Oxford/Cleric***

Peter is the third son of a cleric from Soissons. Raised in a religious community, Peter chose to take the most logical route and study to become a cleric himself. While studying biblical texts and learning under clerics in his community, Peter found two passions: teaching and studying female religious figures. Although many of his contemporaries looked down upon figures such as Eve and gave little consideration to others such as Mary Magdalene, Peter found himself secretly admiring them and their tales; further, Peter refused to believe that these stories proved women to be inherently sinful or misguided, in fact, to him it showed women's strength and independence. When Peter graduated from school, he became the head of a monastic school in Soissons and a private tutor for children of wealthy families. He soon left to teach in Normandy, though he has a strong love for his community in Soissons. Despite his choice to remain anonymous on his radical views on women, he began publishing works on lesser-discussed female religious figures. After spending some years in Normandy, Peter originally planned to teach in Denmark, but instead traveled to England to support King Henry I and subsequently became a lecturer at Oxford. His public lectures attracted nearly one hundred clerics each session. Though Peter was not particularly close to the royal family, he hopes he can help Matilda gain back the throne with his religious influence.

### ***Anselm of Canterbury, Philosopher/Monk/Religious Figure***

Anselm was born in Aosta, Upper Burgundy to Ermenberga, the daughter of a noble Burgundian family, and Gandolfo, the son of a Lombardian noble family, who wanted his son to pursue a career in politics. As a youth, Anselm received a quality education and proved to be a talented writer. However, instead of pursuing politics, Anselm showed a great interest in monastery life. So, he left home at the age of 23, traveling through Burgundy, to France, and finally, to Normandy. In Normandy, Anselm joined the Benedictine abbey at Bec as a novice, but he eventually rose to a prior, and eventually was elected abbot. At the abbey, Anselm presented reputable leadership skills in his teachings and administrative duties and began writing works of philosophy and theology. Due to his reputation, he even began correspondence with rulers and nobles across the continent who desired his counseling. In 1093, Anselm became the Archbishop of Canterbury, a great position of influence for the church of England. During the reigns of William Rufus and Henry I, Anselm found himself exiled, brought back to England, then exiled again due to disagreements on the kings' monetary exploits of the church. Despite his displacement, Anselm continues to write about philosophy and theology and sometimes provides counsel to requesting nobles. He supports Matilda's right to the throne and believes he has the knowledge and skills to properly advise her to maintain a fair relationship with the church.

### ***Hildegard of Bingen, Composer/Medical Practitioner/Mystic***

Hildegard was born in 1098 to noble parents in Böckelheim, West Franconia. As a child, Hildegard began experiencing visions relating to redemption, the Church, and the connection between humanity and God. Her youth was intrinsically related to mystic practices and religion, as she was educated at the Benedictine monastery, Disibodenberg, where she currently calls home. At the age of fifteen, Hildegard began wearing the traditional Benedictine habit, a type of religious wear, and committed herself to religious life. As a part of her studies at the Benedictine, Hildegard excelled at learning proper healing techniques and medicine. In addition to religion and healing, Hildegard finds comfort in writing poetry and composing music. She hopes to someday become a prioress and found her own convent someday. Matilda became known of Hildegard when she herself traveled through West Franconia on her way to Normandy and was immediately admired for her pursuits as an artist

and mystic. When Hildegard learned of Matilda's right to the throne of England, she, as a new and loyal friend, promised to support her.

### ***Eustace Fitz John, Lord of Malton and Alnwick/Noble of Northern England***

Eustace Fitz John was born to a middle-class family and grew up with two brothers, William and Pain. Despite Eustace's relatively humble upbringing, he and his brother Pain attended King Henry I's court, and eventually both became loyal friends to the king. In their service to the court, both brothers were able to acquire noble titles and land granted by the king, and by means of their political connections. Eustace, in particular, was able to secure control over much of Northern England during Henry I's reign. Along with his court duties, Eustace worked as one of the justices of Northern England as well as a royal official representing the area. Through Eustace's first marriage to Beatrice, daughter and heir of Ivo de Vescy, Lord of Alnwick, he acquired control of a major Northumberland barony centered on Alnwick. After the death of Beatrice, he was remarried to Agnes Fitz William, sister of William Fitz William, Lord of Halton. After the death of Henry I, Eustace, in conjunction with Pain and Miles of Gloucester initially rejected Stephen's title as king, but soon went into his service. While Eustace is currently in service of Stephen, his loyalties still lay with King Henry I and the king's wishes for Empress Matilda's rightful ownership of the throne. Though Eustace's public ties are still bound with Stephen, he hopes to help Matilda to honor his old friend, patron, and king.

### ***Alice Cumin of York, Principal Lady-in-Waiting***

Alice Cumin was born the only daughter to her father Abraham Cumin of York, a moneylender, and her mother Anges, a noble and Stephen's second cousin. In her youth, Alice's parents used their relative wealth to provide a well-rounded education for Alice, including music, calligraphy, language studies, and math. After receiving her private education, Alice moved to Normandy at the request of her distant cousin, Empress Matilda. Because of the distant family relations and noble status, Alice acquired a position as a lady-in-waiting in Matilda's court. Alice currently serves as Empress Matilda's Senior Lady-in-Waiting, undertaking duties such as attending and performing in court, supervising Matilda's three other female courtiers, and assisting the Empress's daily routine and monetary



expenditures. While Alice's role as a personal assistant will be vital in guiding Empress Matilda's decision-making during this time of political and economic conflict, Alice also possesses noble affiliations and seniority over Matilda's other ladies-in-waiting, which could help maintain relative harmony in Matilda's court in Normandy.

### ***William Murdac, Court Member/Knight***

William Murdac was born as the oldest and only son of Lucy and Gerald Murdac, farmers from York. In his youth, William worked dawn to dusk, helping his father tend livestock, plant and harvest produce, and tend to their land. When William was five, he began helping his mother take care of his younger sisters. Though his childhood was lonely and often busy, William delighted in the stories his father would tell him before bed, particularly the one about King Arthur. William often dreamed of becoming a brave and noble knight like the ones in King Arthur's court, so after his chores, he would practice his fencing and joust on unassuming bales of straw. Despite this distraction from his chores, William's father recognized his budding skill and sent him at the age of seven to a wealthy noble in Leicester to train to become a knight. At age 14, William earned the title of a squire, and finally, at age 21, he became a knight of Leicester. William's skill was recognized by King Henry I, and he became one of the best knights under his command. After his death, William stood by Henry's wishes for Matilda to ascend the throne, and since has become a staunch supporter of her as well.

### ***Agnes Alton, Traveling Jester/Fool***

As an infant, Agnes Alton was left on the doorstep of a convent in Northampton. In her youth, Agnes was infamous at St. Mary's Convent for her riddles, pranks, and acrobatic performances that entertained her peers and often got her in trouble with the abbess. Though she often found life at the convent suppressing, she enjoyed writing and illustrating. At age fourteen, Agnes decided to forgo her future as a nun and ran off to follow her dreams as an entertainer. As a traveling jester, she mostly performed in plays and acrobatic shows for commoners. When she arrived in Westminster, she was fairly well-known to the public and was even invited to perform for King Henry I and his children. There, she formed a friendship with young Matilda and continued to stay in touch after

Agnes left Westminster. With her good reputation and popularity among both nobles and commoners alike, Agnes hopes that she can aid her friend Empress Matilda.

### ***Roger Comyn, Lord of Coldingham/Economic Advisor***

Roger Comyn was born in Coldingham, Scotland as the oldest child of a wealthy noble family. In his earlier years, Roger was privately tutored in grammar, science, mathematics, and art. In his free time, he enjoyed practicing archery with his younger brothers and observing his father's hand in business and moneylending. He married the daughter of a Scottish lord, Marjory of Inverallochy, and they have three children. While the marriage was officially arranged by their fathers, Marjory was Roger's childhood sweetheart, and they maintained correspondence by letter since they met as teens. After his father's death, Roger took over his position as a moneylender, doing business with various towns in England, including Bedford, Devon, and Newbury. Because of his skill and success in business, Roger became an important figure in Westminster, even recognized by Henry I's court by tutoring Henry's children in mathematics. After Henry I's death, Roger offered to assist Matilda with his skill in business and trade.

### ***Geoffrey of Oxford, Oxford Lecturer/Consultant***

Geoffrey grew up in a wealthy family in Oxford. As an adolescent, he was tutored by his scholarly father who specialized in mathematics and philosophy. At age 13, Geoffrey found a passion for art, including music and illustration, as well as history. He left home at age 15 to study at the University of Paris. Upon graduation, Geoffrey traveled around Europe, though spending most of his time in France and Italy, to observe the many cultures and record the various areas of history that he learned. In Italy, Geoffrey met an Italian poet and translator Manfred, who agreed to travel with Geoffrey back to England. When the two returned to Oxford, he began his career as a lecturer at the University of Oxford where he met his lifelong friend, Thomas Flambard, Matilda's childhood Latin tutor. As a close friend of Thomas and one of the few loyal nobles to Matilda, he hopes to utilize his worldly knowledge and academic connections as a court consultant.

### ***Thomas Flambard, Latin Tutor***

Thomas Flambard was born to wealthy Catholic farmers as the middle child of eight siblings. Much of his early life consisted of traveling to Reims with his older brothers to receive an education while his father maintained and traded farmland outside of the city. Thomas was the only child to continue school past the age of 13, choosing to pursue his passion for education rather than agriculture. Being an exceptional student in Latin and English, Thomas traveled to Paris at age 14 under the sponsorship of his teachers in Reims in order to study at the university. After graduating, Thomas traveled to Oxford, England with the intention to become a clergyman, but instead found himself hired as a scholar and lecturer at the University of Oxford. There, he met many scholars such as Geoffrey and became a well-known academic to nobles. When he was offered the position of tutoring young Matilda in her Latin studies, Thomas left his position at Oxford. Now, he is still a retired lecturer who continues to tutor nobles, but he hopes to assist his old student, Matilda.

### ***Maud, Abbess of Montivilliers/Half-Sister of Matilda***

Matilda “Maud”, Abbess of Montivilliers is one of three half-sisters of Empress Matilda named Matilda. Maud was born to King Henry I and an unknown mistress. However, she is fully related to her brother Robert de Beaumont, 2nd Earl of Leicester. While Maud and the Empress are only half-sisters, they often seek each other’s companionship, as the Empress values her opinions on various matters. Maud is an Abbess of Montivilliers, a religious commune located in the town of Montivilliers in Normandy. On the commune, during her few breaks, Maud enjoys reading illuminated texts sent by fellow abbots and participating in philosophical conversations. She has become well-known in her commune for her compelling and persuasive nature. As a leader in her community, Maud has plenty of experience discussing political and religious matters, and alleviating arguments and conflicts. Though she is unmarried, through her position she has the potential to exert great influence over the commune.

### ***Miles of Gloucester, Noble of West England***

Miles was born the son of three generations of noblemen. His father and his grandfather worked diligently in powerful positions for the royal family. In his youth, Miles received a quality education but felt that his studies in the arts were useless and boring. Sometimes, he would escape his music

classes and go hunting with his bow, a weapon that he eventually mastered. As expected, Miles inherited his father's position as a sheriff and local justiciar in Gloucestershire and became a member of King Henry I's court. Among the other members of the court, Miles often worked closely with Eustace Fitz John. Due to his excellent performance in and out of court, Henry favored Miles and in 1121, married him to Sybil, the daughter of the Lord of Brecon. Together, Miles and Sybil have eight children — five sons and three daughters. Though Miles and Eustance both pledged loyalty to Henry I, they continued to be a part of the royal court even when Stephen of Blois ascended. However, soon after Stephen's succession to the throne, Miles publicly voiced support for Matilda and escaped Stephen's court to reside in Normandy instead. He hopes that soon he and Eustace can both work together to publicly support Matilda and fulfill Henry's last wishes.

### ***Lefan Breckon, Welsh Historian/Politician***

Lefan Breckon was the son of Gruffudd Breckon, a widower and Welsh educator and politician. His early life was defined by relative peace under Owain Gwynedd until the Norman Conquest. When William the Conqueror invaded England, Lefan was forced to observe the consequences, as his village in the southern region of Wales was taken over by English lords. Bitter, but not defeated, Lefan began compiling Welsh history, poetry, and art in order to preserve his own culture. He had a particular interest in Gruffydd ap Llywelyn, the Welsh ruler who succeeded in uniting the kingdom during his reign. Lefan was a fervent opponent against the Marshes Lords who held power over the Welsh marches along the border between Wales and England and spent much of his time attempting to persuade both the Lords and the king to return the land to Wales. After Henry I continued to push his army west into Wales, Lefan, with the support of his father, moved to London in an attempt to convince Henry to make peace between the two kingdoms. Despite his unpopularity in England, Lefan maintains a good reputation as a politician and historian among the Welsh people. While England and Wales continue to remain in a stalemate, Lefan hopes he can guide Matilda to resolving the stalemate and encouraging peace.

### ***Clemence of Flamstead, Abbess***

Clemence came from a large noble Anglo-Norman family that moved to Huntingdon after William the Conqueror invaded England. Her family were both rich and influential guild merchants and they largely controlled their children's education, friends, hobbies, and marriages. Even as a child, Clemence knew her parents were going to marry her to a rich noble family to acquire more land and prestige. But, on a visit with her parents to an abbey, she was so compelled that she made a vow to dedicate her life to the church. Afterward, she even began experiencing visions. In her teens, she was proposed to several times and when she turned them down, her parents tried to marry her off. Clemence refused and escaped with the help of a hermit, Alfwen. Clemence and Alfwen fled to a monastery in Flamstead to take refuge. In Flamstead, Clemence was taken under the wing of an elderly cleric that protected and instructed her in art and theology. At the monastery, Clemence found herself to be a skillful needlewoman and fostered a calm, level-headed attitude despite her past. Her reputation grew in her own community and even outside of it, so much so that four separate nunneries invited her to become an abbess. However, she remains at Flamstead as an abbess. Although she is a woman, her Norman ancestry and impressive reputation in the church prove her to be an influential figure.

### ***Erik Nielsen II of Denmark, Danish Noble/Scientist***

Erik Nielsen II was born to Margaret and Erik Nielsen I, Danish nobles who both worked in the Queen and King's court respectively. At age eight, Erik and his older brother Christopher were sent by their parents to study in France. Two years later, Erik and his brother were orphaned after a tragic illness befell their parents in Denmark. Without significant funds to continue school, nor a familiar proxy in France, Erik and Christopher decided to travel the world together. During his travels, Erik fostered a great interest in science, particularly geometry and physics. As his family had never been affiliated with any church, he was less inclined to become involved with the numerous monasteries that they encountered. After studying physics and medicine under Avempace in Zaragoza, Erik, as per his brother's wishes, returned to Denmark to work in the royal court. Though Erik worked beside his brother for another couple of years, at age 25 he left the Danish courts for England. Having worked on Henry's court for only two years, he fully supported Henry's wishes to give the throne to Matilda

and stepped down from his court position after Stephen arrived. Afterward, Erik began publishing papers on medicine, particularly native plant medicines in England and Normandy. While he no longer resides on any court, he hopes his connections throughout Europe and beyond and his vast knowledge of science can be helpful to advise Matilda on her path to reclaiming the throne.

### ***Loretta of Blois, Economic Advisor***

Loretta grew up as the youngest and only daughter of fabric merchants in Blois. She was the baby of the family and her father's favorite, much to the chagrin of her brothers. Because of this, while her brothers took over the production of fabrics, Loretta would travel with her father and grandfather to sell them. By observing trades of all kinds, Loretta became quite knowledgeable about mathematics, spending, and trade. At the age of ten, she could effectively balance and remember numbers, quicker than both her father and grandfather. When she became old enough, she would engage in deals to sell the fabrics for more than before. Her skill and quick wit did not go unrecognized. A visiting noble witnessed her selling a blanket for thrice its worth and hired her as a personal moneylender, believing her to have great skill in economics. Soon after, Loretta became popular among the nobles of Blois for her mastery of economics and moneylending. Though she works for nobles, she is an advocate for peasant farmers and merchants, often making deals for working families for no charge. In addition to her success in Blois, she was recognized by Henry and, after his death, she became an economic advisor for Matilda and her husband.

### ***Agnes of Waiblingen, Sister-in-Law***

Agnes was born in 1072 as the daughter of Bertha of Savoy and Henry IV, the Holy Roman Emperor, and sister of Henry V. As the daughter of the Emperor, Agnes was given the most prestigious education any woman could receive and plenty of time to pursue her hobbies such as painting. By age ten, Agnes was fluent in French, Italian, German, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon. She married her first husband, Frederick I (Duke of Swabia), when she was 17. Frederick died in 1105, and widowed Agnes then married Leopold III who later became the Margrave of Austria. When her brother, Henry V, married eight-year-old Matilda, Agnes acted as an older sister to her. In 1125, Henry V died childless, leaving Agnes and her children as heirs to various enormous estates including Waiblingen where she

currently resides. Agnes also continues to communicate with Matilda even after she left for Normandy, as they have become close friends. As someone who was born and raised in a royal family, Agnes hopes she can help advise Matilda to take the throne and properly run it.

### ***Beatrix of Howden, Female Nurse***

Beatrix always wanted to help people. From a young age, she would bandage the broken wings of birds she found while walking in the woods. While she was never formally educated, she did learn her tools of the trade from working as a nurse following different armies. She has healed everyone from peasants to noble lords, a debt they are not likely to forget. However, she was horrified by the bloodshed and violence she saw and decided to do everything she can to prevent further warfare. In the meantime, Beatrix will try to help and heal anyone that she can. She is well connected with numerous healers throughout the realm. When not attending to those sick or injured, Beatrix has several hobbies. She loves to play the lute, composing masterful epics that chronicle great figures. Beatrix also loves to play chess, engaging in a battle of wits against her opponent. As a member of Matilda's cabinet, Beatrix is worried about a potential war between Matilda and Stephen. She understands that warfare may be unavoidable if Matilda plans to claim the throne, but she still hopes to stake out a middle ground: claiming the throne without bloodshed. Aware that this vision may be too good to be true, Beatrix is simultaneously working with her fellow nurses to prepare for the aftermath of a ruthless war.

### ***Juliana Giffard, Childhood Friend of Matilda***

Juliana is the daughter of one of Matilda's father's advisors. As a child, Juliana often listened to her father's conversations with other advisors to the king, through which she developed a natural instinct for politics. She sharpened this instinct of hers through education. She is also well-connected with the friends and colleagues of her father, and some of them are still active in politics. Juliana has known Matilda since childhood. While Juliana always knew that she was not as high up on the social ladder as Matilda, that did not stop the burgeoning friendship. In their youth, they played together frequently. After Matilda was married off, Juliana did not see her for several years. Nevertheless, when Matilda started assembling her cabinet of advisors, Juliana was an obvious choice. Juliana's

loyalty to Matilda, knowledge about politics, and connection to prominent figures will all be significant for Matilda.

### ***Guiscard Archambeau of France, French Mercenary***

Guiscard was born into a minor noble family as the second oldest son. This meant that he would not inherit any lands from his father. Shockingly, this did not bother Guiscard much. Owning a stuffy manor was boring to him. He much preferred the adventurous life of a knight. While this turned out to be less adventurous than he anticipated, he made a career pivot and became a mercenary. As a professional, he has proven his worth on the battlefield and become famous. Over time, he has attracted other French youths to join him; all of them aspired to become someone like Guiscard. This loyal group of followers made him even more popular among those looking to hire mercenaries. Interestingly, he does not always fight for who can pay him more, but for who he thinks would be a better ruler and, more importantly, who he thinks will give him a greater adventure. Naturally, this led him to Matilda.

### ***Richard Rolfe, Agricultural Expert***

Richard always had a bit of a green thumb. He spent his childhood playing in the woods, spending days at a time wandering along riverbeds and tree lines just to observe plants. At the age of eight, he wanted some plants of his own so he started a garden. He is now the most prominent agricultural expert in all of Kent, and no one knows crop cultivation better than he does. His expertise is important for the lords and knights as it helps them increase their crop yields and thus their wealth. Somewhat unexpectedly, however, he has gradually built a strong connection with farmers and peasants through his interaction with them as well. He joined Matilda's cabinet mainly because he understood the significance of agriculture to the economy and stability of any kingdom. His connection with peasants — the lowest rank in the feudal structure — may lead him to oppose policies that would exploit farmers and allow him to gain support for Matilda from the peasantry.



### ***Chleb Tarnowski, Polish Politician***

Chleb has traveled far and wide across the European continent. He has seen kingdoms rise and fall, good men die young, and bad men live to old age. What he has learned from all of this is that one must live in the moment. This is why Chleb hates to plan more than one or two steps ahead. When he hears an interesting rumor at the local tavern, he immediately begins to follow up on it. When he comes to a fork in the road, he flips a coin and does not look back. All of his wandering somehow led him to Matilda's cabinet. Before he ended up with Matilda, he was born in Poland. Being a smooth talker and a risk taker, politics was a natural course. He made relationships (not all of them positive) with many of Poland's most influential people. In fact, it was some of these relationships that had gone sour that caused Chleb to leave Poland for greener pastures. Nevertheless, between his cunning wit and his connections to foreign nobles, Chleb is well prepared for the future. Wherever life brings Chleb, he knows one thing: keep moving forward.

### ***Héloïse of France, High-Ranking Abbess***

Héloïse was born in Paris, France. Growing up, she was always curious about the nature of the world. At a young age she became a nun at an abbey. There, she became enamored with philosophy and the nature of being. She later befriended and married the theologian and philosopher, Peter Abelard. During this time, Héloïse rose through the ranks of the abbey and the Catholic Church, eventually becoming a high-ranking abbess, giving her control over a large piece of land as well as a great amount of respect and power within the Church. When Héloïse is not attending to her duties as abbess, she debates philosophy with her friends and writes letters to her husband Peter. She also enjoys long horseback rides through the countryside.

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