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Elements in England in the Early Medieval World

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CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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Crime and Punishment in Anglo-Saxon England

Elements in England in the Early Medieval World

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Abstract: Arguably, more legal texts survive from pre-Conquest England than from any other early medieval European community. The corpus includes roughly seventy royal law codes, to which can be added well over a thousand charters, writs, and wills, as well as numerous political tracts, formularies, rituals, and homilies derived from legal sources. These texts offer valuable insight into early English concepts of royal authority and political identity. They reveal both the capacities and limits of the king's regulatory power, and in so doing, provide crucial evidence for the process by which disparate kingdoms gradually merged to become a unified English state. More broadly, pre-Norman legal texts shed light on the various ways in which cultural norms were established, enforced, and, in many cases, challenged. And perhaps most importantly, they provide unparalleled insight into the experiences of Anglo-Saxon England's diverse inhabitants, both those who enforced the law and those subject to it.

Keywords: Law, Old English, Anglo-Saxon, early Middle Ages, English history

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