

Ralph V. Turner, Richard H. Heiser. *The Reign of Richard Lionheart: Ruler of the Angevin Empire, 1189-1199.* Harlow, Essex: Longman, 2000. xii + 292 \$21.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-582-25659-0.



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Richard I: Defender of the Empire

Popular perception of Richard I has always been one of the warrior and the crusader, defending his continental possessions and fighting the infidel, with little time for anything else. In almost every study of the period, one is given the old gem that Richard I was only in England for six months of a ten-year reign, the implication being that he cared more for warfare than for ruling. However, in Ralph Turner and Richard Heiser's new study of the period, *The Reign of Richard Lionheart: Ruler of the Angevin Empire, 1189-1199* (Harlow, 2000), this idea is challenged -- or, at the very least, given far more perspective than previously. According to Turner and Heiser, there is much to admire about Richard's rule beyond acts of war. Starting with a well-founded chapter on the reign's previous treatment by historians, the authors then go on to outline the nature of the Angevin empire, the problems with growing power of the French kings, and rise of Philip Augustus. Having thus set the stage, they examine Richard's early experience of governing his father's conti-

nental lands prior to his accession to the throne in 1189.

But the meat of the book comes with the authors' examination of Richard's method of governing his empire. Detailing Richard's government prior to his departure on crusade, during crusade, and upon his return, they examine not only his governance of England, but also of the other parts of the Angevin empire, Normandy, Anjou and Aquitaine - areas which have tended to be noted but neglected by modern historians, but which were, of course, of vital interest to Angevin kings. And the picture Turner and Heiser paint of Richard's control of the Angevin empire as a whole puts a new light on a familiar outline. Though they concede that developments in the French monarchy restricted Richard's ability 'to shape his inheritance into a coherent political entity or to foster any sense of dynastic loyalty among its polyglot subjects' (p.56), nonetheless they make clear that Richard believed the empire a unit, however sprawling, and more importantly, a unit he was duty bound to defend by all means at his disposal. His apprenticeship as count of

Poitou helped him with this, both in training in the arts of political management and patronage and in his arrangements for the protection of the empire when he was away on crusade. Though these were not always effective, contemporaries criticizing both the way he raised money for the crusade and those who he had initially left in charge upon his absence, nonetheless, "the empire's defenses were in order; disturbances that did occur in his absence were contained by the arrangements that Richard made before his departure" (p. 86). Indeed, though there were problems during his absence, the fact that Richard I's imperial administration both produced and allowed to flourish the likes of Hubert Walter and Geoffrey FitzPeter, two of the most talented of high medieval administrators, says much. However, while the administration, which could be robust and sometimes ruthlessly efficient (especially in Normandy), kept things running, the threat of military force always appeared as an effective back-up and that, once back from the crusade, it was this which tended to keep the empire intact. Of course, as the authors note 'Much larger structural questions about the resources of the Plantagenet and Capetian antagonists, the nature of their two governments, and the attitudes of their subjects would determine the fate of Richard's territories' (p. 240), but for the time being, Richard's brand of imperial rule was beginning to succeed, in however ephemeral a manner, by the time of his death in 1199.

This book is both useful and important. It is useful in that it draws together most of the recent research over the last couple of decades, and effectively synthesizes and makes sense of what is, in fact, a very complex subject. It is important in that it deals with the Angevin Empire as a whole in a manner not previously attempted, detailing the way administrations in the localities were run and the problems local officials faced, as well as recognizing Richard's contribution to the running of his empire. If there is a flaw, it is that, though we get a firm sense of how Richard I's Angevin

empire was run, there is little about the role played by the character and motivations of the man who headed it. Of course, such is the problem with much of the history of the period due to the lack of detailed personal sources - how to know where the situation ends and the individual begins. That said, Turner and Heiser do much to clarify our view of the Angevin Empire and how it functioned under Richard I, and for that, the authors should be commended.

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