

Robbing Churches and Pulling Beards: The Rebellious Sons of Henry II

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Abstract

The unruly sons of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine: Henry the Young King, Richard I, Geoffrey of Brittany and King John, are fortunately well documented during their father's lifetime. Many contemporary chronicles detail incidents of behaviours on their part that fall outside the accepted behavioural norms for men of their status. Such behaviours range from the seemingly humorous but politically significant pulling of beards to open and organised rebellion against their father.

The article aims to explore some of those incidents in some detail and place them in context to show how they fell outside normal behaviours expected of young, high status males. It will ask how far youth could be used by contemporaries to excuse such poor behaviour and how far such episodes could damage or improve a young man's masculine status in society. It will also examine the reasons behind the behaviours, the possible purposes each young man may have felt that they served and what each prince had hoped would be the result of their wayward actions. Finally, it will examine the personal and political consequences arising from the misbehaviour of these rebellious princes.

Keywords: youth; masculinity; misbehaviour; rebellion