

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF BRITAIN: I
MODULE I-EARLY HISTORY BRITISH ISLES
NORMAN FEUDALISM



DEBATES ON NORMAN FEUDALISM
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- Different opinion about the origin of English feudalism and impact of Norman conquest on English society over a century.
- Debates related with the question of feudal practices before Norman conquest of Britain have analyzed by famous historian on medieval England named **Warren Hollister**.
- He authored a book, *The impact of Norman Conquest*(1969) and an article titled, *The Norman Conquest and the Genesis of English Feudalism*.
- This works give us extensive bibliographical references about the ongoing debates concerned with the origin of feudalism in England.

❑ **J.H.Round :**

- A theory about Norman feudalism was formulated in 1891 by **J.H.Round**, in his book ***Feudal England*** claimed that “ William I introduced the feudal system in England, Where it had not previously existed”.
- He also postulated that the Norman Conquest resulted in a cataclysmic break with Anglo- Saxon past.

❑ **F.W Maitland:**

- questioned the arguments of J.H Round in his work “ ***Domesday Book and Beyond : Three Essays in the Early History of England***”.
- Maintained that “a form of feudalism had existed in pre- Norman England”.

- Most of historians in the first half of the 20th century like **F.M. Stenton** (*The First Century of the English Feudalism 1066-1166*) agreed with the postulations of J.H Round.
- This group of scholars was called “ Orthodox” school.
- Recently historians have challenged the so called “ orthodox” interpretation.
- Claimed that Norman Feudalism had some pre-Norman or Anglo- Saxon roots.
- Changes occurred in English society between 1050 and 1200 were caused not simply by the Norman conquest, but also by more general factors that transformed much of western Europe during the same period.

❑ **Alan Brown :**

- In his book, ***Origins of English Feudalism*** tries to establish the validity of the orthodox interpretation.
- Brown regards the conquest as cataclysm that destroyed a ‘ pre- feudal society and created a feudal one
- He says “ of the many characteristic features of feudal societies , only four are fundamental or essential”
 1. **the Knight, 2. Vassalic Commendation 3. the fief**
 4. **the Castle.**

- He argued that all of these fundamentals of feudalism are absent from Pre- Norman England, but present in England soon after the Norman-conquest.
- Thus Brown concludes that “ the introduction of feudalism into England by the Norman rulers moulded the English society into a feudal pattern which was to last for centuries”.