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The Royal Forests of Medieval England (Hardback)

By Charles R. Young, Peter Young

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The distinction between the forest and the trees is fundamental to this study, for the royal forest of medieval England was a complex institution with legal, political, economic, and social significance. To protect the beasts of the forest and their habitat, initially for the king's hunting and later for economic exploitation, an elaborate organization of officials and courts administered a system of forest law that was unique to medieval England. The subject can first be studied in detail in the records and chronicles of the Angevin kings, which reflect the restless activity of Henry II and his growing corps of officials that led to the expansion of the area designated as royal forest. At its height in the thirteenth century, an estimated one-fourth of the land area of England and its riches came under the special jurisdiction of forest law. Barons whose holdings lay within the royal forest were restricted in their use of the land, and the activity of all who lived or traveled in the forest was circumscribed. Until the institution of...



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