Anglo-Norman

This article is about the people called Anglo-Normans. For the dialect of Norman, see Anglo-Norman language.

The **Anglo-Normans** were mainly the descendants of the Normans who ruled England following the Norman conquest by William the Conqueror in 1066. A small number of Normans had earlier befriended future Anglo-Saxon King of England, Edward the Confessor, during his exile in his mother's homeland of Normandy. When he returned to England some of them went with him, and so there were Normans already settled in England prior to the conquest. Following the death of Edward, the powerful Anglo-Saxon noble, Harold Godwinson, acceded to the English throne until his defeat by William, Duke of Normandy at the Battle of Hastings.

The invading Normans and their descendants formed a ruling class in Britain, distinct from (although intermarrying with) the native populations. Over time their language evolved from the continental Old Norman to the distinct Anglo-Norman language. Normans quickly established control over all of England, as well as parts of Wales (the Cambro-Normans). After 1130, parts of southern and eastern Scotland came under Norman rule (the Scoto-Normans), in return for their support of David I's conquest. The Norman conquest of Ireland in 1169 saw Anglo-Normans (or Cambro-Normans) settle vast swaths of Ireland, becoming the Hiberno-Normans.

The composite expression *regno Norman-Anglorum* for the Anglo-Norman kingdom that comprises Normandy and England appears contemporaneously only in the *Hyde Chronicle*.[1]
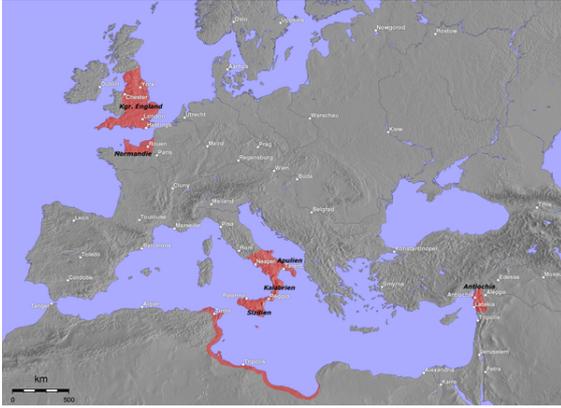
1 Norman conquest

Main article: Norman conquest of England

The Norman conquest of England, being a conquest by a people whose tongue and institutions were different from those of the English in many aspects, was an event of an altogether different character from the Danish conquest, a conquest by a people whose tongue was more akin to those of the English, but whose religion was pagan. The English were Catholic and shared this religion with the Normans and they had already an influence in England, before the conquest. Furthermore, the relationships between the sailors from both sides of the English channel had maintained a certain common culture.

The Normans were not a homogeneous group springing from Scandinavian stock, but mostly hailed from a region of France known as Normandy (Romanised Gallo-Franks). The Normans who invaded England did it with a strong contingent from a wide cross-section of (what is now) north western and central France, from Maine, Anjou, Brittany, Flanders, Poitou and "France" (today Ile-de-France), altogether non-Norman men accounted for more a quarter of the army at Hastings. In terms of culture, they represented the Northern French civilisation, who mostly only spoke Langues d'oïl as languages. The Norman settlers felt no community with the earlier Danish settlers, despite the fact that the Normans were themselves partly descendants of the Danish Vikings. However, in their own army, they did not even feel any sense of community with the Poitou, the Bretons, and other groups that had different dialects (or in the case of the Bretons and Flemish, a different language) and traditions. The association between these different troops was only occasional and corresponds to an immediate necessity for the Norman ruler. In fact, the Normans met with the steadiest resistance in a part of England that was the most influenced by the Danish. Ousting the Danish leaders who recently conquered parts of England and provided some of the stiffest resistance to the Normans, and largely replacing the powerful English territorial magnates, while co-opting the most powerful of them, the Normans imposed a new political structure that is broadly termed "feudal" (historians debate whether pre-Norman England should be considered a *feudal* government – indeed, the entire characterisation of Feudalism is under some dispute).

Many of the English nobles lost lands and titles; the lesser thegns and others found themselves dispossessed of lands and titles. A number of free *geburs* had their rights and court access much decreased, becoming unfree *villeins*, despite the fact that this status did not exist in Normandy itself (compared to other "French" regions). At the same time, many of the new Anglo-Norman magnates were distributed lands by the King that had been taken from the English nobles. Some of these Norman magnates used their original French-derived names, with the prefix 'de,' meaning they were lords of the old fiefs in France, and some instead dropped their original names and took their names from new English holdings.

The Norman conquest of England brought the British Isles into the orbit of the European continent, especially what remained of Roman-influenced language and culture. If the earlier Anglo-Saxon England was tied to local traditions, the England emerging from the Conquest

Norman possessions in the 12th century.

owed a debt to the Romance languages and the culture of ancient Rome, that was not so important before the Conquest, but was maintained at a high level by the English Catholic Church and the clerks of England. It transmitted itself in the emerging feudal world that took its place. That heritage can be discerned in language, incorporating shards of the Roman past, in architecture, in the emerging Romanesque (Norman) architecture, and in a new feudal structure erected as a bulwark against the chaos that overtook the Continent following the collapse of Roman authority and the subsequent Dark Ages. The England that emerged from the Conquest was a decidedly different place, but one that had been opened up to the sweep of outside influences.

2 Military impact

The Norman conquest of England also signalled a revolution in military styles and methods. The old Anglo-Saxon military elite began to emigrate, especially the generation next younger to that defeated at Hastings, who had no particular future in a country controlled by the conquerors. William (and his son, William Rufus), encouraged them to leave, as a security measure. The first to leave went mostly to Denmark and many of these moved on to join the Varangian Guard in Constantinople. Although the Anglo-Saxons as a whole were not demilitarised; this would have been impractical. Instead, William arranged for the Saxon infantry to be trained up by Norman cavalry in anti-cavalry tactics. This led quickly to the establishment of an Anglo-Norman army made up of Norman horsemen of noble blood, Saxon infantrymen often of equally noble blood, assimilated English freemen as rank-and-file, and foreign mercenaries and adventurers from other parts of the Continent. The younger Norman aristocracy showed a tendency towards Anglicisation, adopting such Saxon styles as long hair and moustaches, upsetting the older generation. (Note that the Anglo-Saxon *cniht* did not take the sense of the French *chevalier* before the latest period of Middle English. John

Wycliffe (1380s) uses the term *knyytis* generically for men-at-arms, and only in the 15th century did the word acquire the overtones of a noble cavalryman corresponding to the meaning of *chevalier*. The Anglo-Norman conquest in the 12th century brought Norman customs and culture to Ireland. The Carol was a popular Norman dance in which the leader sang and was surrounded by a circle of dancers who replied with the same song. This Norman dance was performed in conquered Irish towns.

3 Norman-Saxon conflict

The degree of subsequent Norman-Saxon conflict (as a matter of conflicting social identities) is a question disputed by historians. The 19th-century view of intense mutual resentment, reflected in the popular legends of Robin Hood and the novel *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott, may have been considerably exaggerated (see Whig history). Some residual ill-feeling is suggested by contemporary historian Orderic Vitalis, who in *Ecclesiastical Historii* (1125) wrote in praise of native English resistance to "William the Bastard" (William I of England). In addition, a fine called the "murdrum", originally introduced to English law by the Danes under Canute, was revived, imposing on villages a high (46 mark/~£31) fine for the secret killing of a Norman (or an unknown person who was, under the murdrum laws, presumed to be Norman unless proven otherwise).

In order to secure Norman loyalty during his conquest, William I rewarded his loyal followers by taking English land and redistributing it to his knights, officials, and the Norman aristocracy. In turn, the English hated him, but the king retaliated ruthlessly with his military force to subdue the rebellions and discontentment. Mike Ashley writes on this subject, "He [William I] may have conquered them [the English], but he never ruled them." Not all of the Anglo-Saxons immediately accepted him as their legitimate king.[2]

Whatever the level of dispute, over time, the two populations intermarried and merged. Normans began to think of themselves first as Anglo-Normans. Eventually, even this distinction largely disappeared in the course of the Hundred Years War, and by the 14th century the Anglo-Normans identified themselves as English, having been fully assimilated into the emerging English population. However, somebody like William Marshall, 1st Earl of Pembroke felt already English in the 12th century.[3]

4 Channel Islands

The Channel Islands reflect the last vestiges of Anglo-Norman culture. In fact, it cannot be considered really as "Anglo-Norman" from an historical, ethnic and cultural point of view. The inhabitants of the Channel Is-

lands were mainly of Norman descent until modern time. Before 1570, the Catholic Church there depended on the Coutances bishopric. Furthermore, the customary law on the Islands was the same as in Normandy until the French revolution. The Norman language still predominated in the Islands until the 19th century, when increasing influence from English-speaking settlers and easier transport links led to anglicisation.

5 Wales

Main article: Cambro-Norman

Anglo-Normans also led excursions into Wales from England and built multiple fortifications as it was one of William's ambitions to subdue the Welsh, however he was not entirely successful. Afterwards, however, the border area known as the Marches was set up and English influence increased steadily. Encouraged by the invasion, monks (usually from France or Normandy) such as the Cistercian Order also set up monasteries throughout Wales. By the 15th century a large number of Welsh gentry, including Owain Glyndŵr, had Norman ancestry. The majority of knights who invaded Ireland were also from or based in Wales (see below).

6 Ireland

Main article: Hiberno-Norman

Anglo-Norman barons also settled in Ireland from the 12th century, initially to support Irish regional kings such as Diarmuid Mac Murchadha whose name has arrived in modern English as Dermot MacMurrough. Richard de Clare, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, known as "Strongbow", was the leader of the Anglo-Norman Knights whom MacMurrough had requested of Henry II of England to help him to re-establish himself as King of Leinster. Strongbow died a very short time after invading Ireland but the men he brought with him remained to support Henry II of England and his son John as Lord of Ireland. Chief among the early Anglo-Norman settlers was Theobald Walter (surname Butler) appointed hereditary chief Butler of Ireland in 1177 by King Henry II[4] and founder of one of the oldest remaining British dignities. Most of these Normans came from Wales, not England, and thus the epithet 'Cambro-Normans' is used to describe them by leading late medievalists such as Seán Duffy.

They increasingly integrated with the local Celtic nobility through intermarriage and became more Irish than the Irish themselves, especially outside the Pale around Dublin. They are known as *Old English*, but this term came into use to describe them only in 1580, i.e., over four centuries after the first Normans arrived in Ireland.

7 Scotland

Main articles: Davidian Revolution and Scoto-Norman David I, who had spent most of his life as an English

Scotland from the Matthew Paris map, c. 1250.

baron, became king of Scotland in 1124. His reign saw what has been characterised as a "Davidian Revolution", by which native institutions and personnel were replaced by English and French ones.[5][6] Members of the Anglo-Norman nobility took up places in the Scottish aristocracy and he introduced a system of feudal land tenure, which produced knight service, castles and an available body of heavily armed cavalry. He created an Anglo-Norman style of court, introduced the office of justicar to oversee justice, and local offices of sheriffs to administer localities. He established the first royal burghs in Scotland, granting rights to particular settlements, which led to the development of the first true Scottish towns and helped facilitate economic development as did the introduction of the first recorded Scottish coinage. He continued a process begun by his mother and brothers, of helping to establish foundations that brought the reformed monasticism based on that at Cluny. He also played a part in the organisation of diocese on lines closer to those in the rest of Western Europe.[7] These reforms were pursued under his successors and grandchildren Malcolm IV of Scotland and William I, with the crown now passing down the main line of descent through primogeniture, leading to the first of a series of minorities.[8]

8 Anglo-Norman families

8.1 See also

- Companions of William the Conqueror

9   References

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10   Further reading

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11   External links

- Index of Tenants-in-Chief and the Families Holding of Them in England, The Origins of Some Anglo-Norman Families, Lewis Christopher Loyd, Charles Travis Clay, David Charles Douglas, The Harleian Society, Leeds, 1951

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