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# MEDIEVAL BRITAIN

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## 中世纪英国： 征服与同化

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John Gillingham & Ralph A. Griffiths 著  
沈 弘 译

通识教育  
双语文库

A VERY SHORT  
INTRODUCTION

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外语教学与研究出版社  
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# Chapter 1

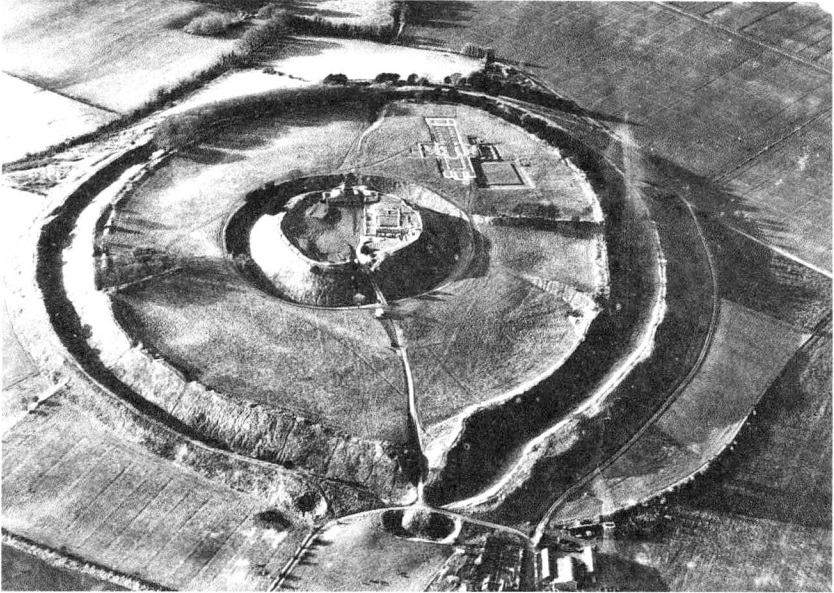
## The Norman Kings

### 1066 and All That

1

On Christmas Day 1066 Duke William of Normandy was acclaimed king of England in Westminster Abbey. It was an electrifying moment. The shouts of acclamation – in English as well as in French – alarmed the Norman guards stationed outside the abbey. Believing that inside the church something had gone horribly wrong, they set fire to the neighbouring houses. Half a century later, a Norman monk recalled the chaos of that day. ‘As the fire spread rapidly, the people in the church were thrown into confusion and crowds of them rushed outside, some to fight the flames, others to take the chance to go looting. Only the monks, the bishops and a few clergy remained before the altar. Though they were terrified, they managed to carry on and complete the consecration of the king who was trembling violently.’

Despite his victory at Hastings, despite the surrender of London and Winchester, William’s position was still a precarious one and he had good reason to tremble. It was to take at least another five years before he could feel fairly confident that the conquest had been completed. There were risings against Norman rule in every year from 1067 to 1070: in Kent, in the south-west, in the Welsh marches, in the Fenland, and in the north. The Normans had to live like an army of occupation, living, eating, and sleeping together in operational units. They had to build



1. Aerial photograph of Old Sarum: a graphic illustration of the problems facing the first post-Conquest generation. The Norman cathedral huddles close to the castle, itself built to defend a group of men too small to need the full extent of the prehistoric ramparts

castles – strong points from which a few men could dominate a subject population. There may well have been no more than 10,000 Normans living in the midst of a hostile population of one or two million. This is not to say that every single Englishman actively opposed the Normans. Unquestionably there were many who co-operated with them; it was this which made possible the successful Norman take-over of so many Anglo-Saxon institutions. But there is plenty of evidence to show that the English resented becoming an oppressed majority in their own country. The years of insecurity were to have a profound effect on subsequent history. They meant that England received not just a new royal family but also a new ruling class, a new culture and language. Probably no other conquest in European history has had such disastrous consequences for the defeated.

Almost certainly this had not been William's original intention. In the

early days many Englishmen were able to offer their submission and retain their lands. Yet by 1086 something had clearly changed. Domesday Book is a record of a land deeply marked by the scars of conquest. In 1086 there were only four surviving English lords of any account. More than 4,000 thegns had lost their lands and been replaced by a group of less than 200 barons. A few of the new landlords were Bretons and men from Flanders and Lorraine but most were Normans. In the case of the Church we can put a date to William's anti-English policy. In 1070 he had some English bishops deposed and thereafter appointed no Englishman to either bishopric or abbey. In military matters, the harrying of the north during the winter of 1069–70 also suggests ruthlessness on a new scale at about this time. In Yorkshire this meant that between 1066 and 1086 land values fell by as much as two-thirds. But whenever and however it occurred, it is certain that by 1086 the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy was no more and its place had been taken by a new Norman elite. Naturally this new elite retained its old lands on the Continent; the result was that England and Normandy, once two separate states, now became a single cross-Channel political community, sharing not only a ruling dynasty, but also a single Anglo-Norman aristocracy. Given the advantages of water transport, the Channel no more divided England from Normandy than the Thames divided Middlesex from Surrey. From now on, until 1204, the histories of England and Normandy were inextricably interwoven.

Since Normandy was a principality ruled by a duke who owed homage to the king of France this also meant that from now on 'English' politics became part of French politics. But the French connection went deeper still. The Normans, being Frenchmen, brought with them to England the French language and French culture. Moreover, we are not dealing with a single massive input of 'Frenchness' in the generation after 1066 followed by a gradual reassertion of 'Englishness'. The Norman Conquest of 1066 was followed by an Angevin conquest of 1153–4; although this did not involve the settlement of a Loire Valley aristocracy

in England, the effect of the arrival of the court of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine was to reinforce the dominance of French culture.

Whereas in 1066 less than 30 per cent of Winchester property owners had non-English names, by 1207 the proportion had risen to over 80 per cent, mostly French names like William, Robert, and Richard. This receptiveness to Continental influence means that at this time it is the foreignness of English art that is most striking. In ecclesiastical architecture, for example, the European terms 'Romanesque' and 'Gothic' describe the fashionable styles much better than 'Norman' and 'Early English'. Although churches built in England, like manuscripts illuminated in England, often contain some recognizably English elements, the designs which the architects and artists were adapting came from abroad, sometimes from the Mediterranean world (Italy, Sicily, or even Byzantium), usually from France. It was a French architect, William of Sens, who was called in to rebuild the choir of Canterbury Cathedral after the fire of 1174. Similarly Henry III's rebuilding of Westminster Abbey was heavily influenced by French models. Indeed so great was the pre-eminence of France in the fields of music, literature, and architecture, that French became a truly international rather than just a national language, a language spoken – and written – by anyone who wanted to consider himself civilized. Thus, in thirteenth-century England, French became, if anything, even more important than it had been before. From the twelfth to the fourteenth century a well-educated Englishman was trilingual. English would be his mother tongue; he would have some knowledge of Latin, and he would speak fluent French. In this cosmopolitan society French was vital. It was the practical language of law and estate management as well as the language of song and verse, of *chanson* and romance. The Norman Conquest, in other words, ushered in a period during which England, like the kingdom of Jerusalem, can fairly be described as a part of France overseas, *Outremer*; in political terms, it was a French colony (though not, of course, one that belonged to the French king) until the early thirteenth century and a cultural colony thereafter.





In western and northern Britain, beyond the borders of conquered England, lay peoples and kingdoms that retained their native identities for much longer. As independent peoples living in what were, by and large, the poorer parts of the island, they remained true to their old ways of life. Only gradually, during the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, did the Welsh and the Scots come to share in this French-led Europe-wide process of cultural homogenization. The time lag was to have profound consequences. By the 1120s French-speaking English intellectuals such as the historian William of Malmesbury were beginning to describe their Celtic neighbours as barbarians, to look upon them as lawless and immoral savages, pastoral peoples who lived in primitive fashion beyond the pale of civilized society but who occasionally launched horrifyingly violent raids across the borders. A new condescending stereotype was created, one which was to become deeply entrenched in English assumptions.

One of the ways in which English – and to a lesser extent Welsh and Scottish – society changed in this period creates special problems for the historian. This is the tremendous proliferation of written records which occurred during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Many more documents than ever before were written and many more were preserved. Whereas from the whole of the Anglo-Saxon period about 2,000 writs and charters survive, from the thirteenth century alone there are uncounted tens of thousands. Of course the 2,000 Anglo-Saxon documents were only the tip of the iceberg; many more did not survive. But this is true also of the thirteenth century. It has, for example, been estimated that as many as 8 million charters could have been produced for thirteenth-century smallholders and peasants alone. Even if this were to be a rather generous estimate, it would still be true that whole classes of the population, serfs for example, were now concerned with documents in ways that previously they had not been. Whereas in the reign of Edward the Confessor only the king is known to have possessed a seal, in Edward I's reign even serfs were required by statute to have them. At the centre of this development, and to some