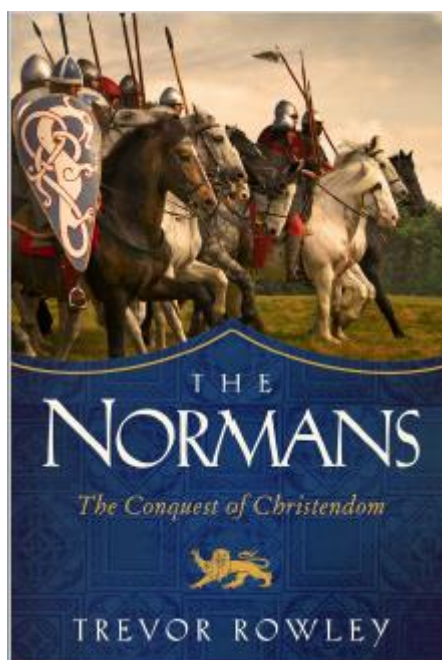


WHO ARE THESE MEN WHO COME FROM THE NORTH?

QUEM SÃO ESSES HOMENS QUE VÊM DO NORTE?



ROWLEY, Trevor. *The Normans: The Conquest of Christendom*. New York: Pegasus, 2021.

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Trevor Rowley's *The Normans: The Conquest of Christendom*, published in the fall of 2021 by Pegasus publishers, is not intended to survey Norman history related to England and Normandy, but to extrapolate those borders towards a history of these peoples throughout Europe. The author's aim is to highlight the role of the Normans since their arrival and establishment in the north of the Carolingian kingdom, until their conquest in the Anglo-Saxon region, the Levant, North Africa, the south of the Italian Peninsula and Sicily, as well as their

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participation in the First Crusade and the Norman conquests in Byzantium, Constantinople and Antioch.

A central point in this work is the relationship between the conquest of William in 1066 and the process of transformation of Medieval Britain, through the insertion of continental Christian elements, in addition to emphasizing that the evidence found in the 18th century of the Norman participation in the formation of French society help to support one of the main themes of the book, by stating that there was a process of assimilation of the Viking and Frankish characteristics giving rise to the Norman. The basis of this work is historical and archaeological. The author is British and has worked with education and archeology throughout his career. This is his first book published in America.

The title is structured in eight chapters, in which Trevor Rowley discusses points referring to the Norman characteristics, the process of conquest of Anglo-Saxon territories in present-day England, and its role during the first Crusades, besides pointing out the establishment of conquests in the Central Mediterranean. Therefore, the main thesis of his work is the idea that the Norman peoples expanded due to their ability to adapt and transform the different realities in which they lived for each period, leaving a very important legacy in the culture, politics and architecture of all the medieval world they came into contact with. "The Normans were an extraordinarily eclectic group of people who adopted and adapted the customs of the people they conquered with the result that Norman societies in different parts of the world were widely varied". (ROWLEY, 2021, p. 13)

In the First Chapter, entitled *Vikings, Norsemen and Normans*, the author establishes a preliminary discussion regarding the criticism of these concepts, highlighting the historiographical and historical meaning that each one acquired over time. His starting point is the death of Charlemagne, described as a moment of collapse in the Carolingian Kingdom. Different from the most traditional view on unification, the author emphasizes that the emperor's death started a transformation process in political and social relations in the Carolingian territory, which, in the medium term, was disrupted. "Essentially, however, the empire lacked the military base of its Roman predecessor and proved to be too large for its rural manorial foundations, and following Charlemagne's death in 800 it began the long,

familiar process of disintegration, the inevitable fate all empires meet in the fullness of time” (ROWLEY, 2021, p. 17). This process of internal disarticulation would have been a historical condition for the increase in the number of incursions of peoples coming from Scandinavia.

Then, the author draws attention to the Scandinavian expansion process, describing the incursion process in different parts of the continent, such as the Carolingian Empire, the northwest of the kingdom in the region of Medieval Britain, in addition to the attempts of Anglo-Saxon peoples to establish agreements – for instance, the creation of a tax for the establishment of peace, the Danegeld.

Finally, the author brings out an extremely relevant discussion about this period. According to his debate, the origin of Normandy dates back to a period when an agreement between Rollo and Charles the Simple took place. However, there is no proof that the marriage to Gisela has occurred, nor has the treaty been seen. The only source that suggests this process is Dudon of St-Quentin, which suggests that, possibly, these discussions are pertinent to understanding the mythic in Rollo. "He records that Rollo was given Charles' daughter Gisela in marriage, a story not substantiated by any other source" (ROWLEY, 2021, p. 28). Thus, the process of materialization of the Norman power is analyzed through alterity. Norman leaders build narratives that help legitimize their power through titles such as Count, as well as being associated with the mythical Rollo. The establishment of Norman power also took place through a political Christianity. Rollo's heirs converted to Christianity and adopted practices relating to Frankish culture, in particular, marriage and conversion.

In the Second Chapter, entitled *Normandy in the first half of the eleventh century*, the author gives a political overview of Scandinavian expansions in the 10th century. According to his discussion, the Normans established in the north of the continent adopted government mechanisms similar to those of the contemporary Franks. The Capetingian rise in Paris made room for greater autonomy for northern territories. Among them, Normandy began a process of establishing ties of independence from the French court and organized itself from a “military state”. “During the first half of the eleventh century Normandy established itself as a well-organized state with a powerful army” (ROWLEY, 2021, p. 40). This way, the Norman

power was established through its powerful army and the mixture of military elements that allowed the rise of a specific type of combatant.

Following Carolingian models, the rulers of Normandy established power through a network of churches and abbeys and a new society was formed. The Norman Church became an essential element in the process of consolidating and expanding its power, modifying a good part of the administrative and ecclesiastical structures in the British island, after the conquest. In addition, the emerging administrative regime mixed Frankish and Scandinavian characteristics. Marriages were used as political mechanisms and the title of Duke was self-declared.

The Third Chapter is one of the most recurrent themes in historiography on Norman society. Most of the studies on this theme are focused on the process of conquest of England. The author provides an overview rich in descriptions of the political and social context of the island, emphasizing the chaotic situation that the territory was experiencing at that time. Thus, he defends two points that support this hypothesis. According to Rowley, the first point was the extensive Scandinavian activity in the region; in addition to this, there was an increasing interconnection between Norman and Anglo-Saxon politics.

Finally, Rowley highlights in great detail the process of conflicts involving Anglo-Saxons, Danes and Normans, describing the victory of the Saxons at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. The author raises a hypothesis regarding the use of weapons that were effective against Scandinavian troops, but not against the Normans. According to him, “another account speaks of the battle ending when Harald Sigurdson was killed by an arrow which hit him in the throat. So why, if the English cavalry had indeed been so effective at Stamford Bridge, were they not used at Hastings? The answer probably lies in Harold's haste to move south and confront William”. (ROWLEY, 2021, p. 73).

In the following chapter, the author will accent the mechanisms of consolidation of the Norman domain and the processes of legitimization of power in England. After the establishment of the conquest, William left the administration of the region in the hands of some groups of regents, similar to the model established on the continent. In addition, the

author deals with the characteristics of the government of William II and Henry I and the period he named *Anarchy*, serving as a basis for contextualizing the island's political situation, especially for students whose focus is the interest in the region.

As a last feature of the chapter, the author questions whether there was an end to Normandy during the late 12th century. By sustaining this idea, he argues that the region has gone through several transformations, so that part of the duchy lost the political relevance from previous periods. The few barons considered Norman had to opt for one or another alliance.

In the Fifth Chapter, entitled *The Fabric of Anglo-Norman England*, the author aims to discuss the cultural contributions bequeathed by the Norman conquest to England. According to his analysis, several elements were important, such as a new dynasty, a new aristocracy, churches and fortifications. The Norman conquest instituted a social and political organization in the region, especially through the *Domesday Book*. For Rowley, one of the most significant proposals was the insertion of a series of fortified buildings with the objective of safeguarding England. "One of William's earliest tasks after the Conquest was to provide a secure political and military base in England. We have already observed that he chose the castle as the means of achieving this end" (ROWLEY, 2021, p. 109). The construction of these castles created a different lifestyle, in which a significant part of the fortifications had the emergence of communities orbiting the castles.

The impacts on the Church were effective too. According to the author, in the first moment after the conquest, there was preservation and respect for local traditions and saints. Later, there was a replacement of services and members of the upper part of the Saxon church hierarchy, as bishops began to exercise an important political and administrative function under the command of the Normans. The new ecclesiastical structure established great interference of the Norman courts in the ecclesial juridical process, as an influencing mechanism in the structure of the Anglo-Saxon church. An extremely important process for the Norman identity on the island, according to the author, was the change in the dedication of the churches. Many that were dedicated to Saxon Saints ceased to be and began to honor family saints of the Normans.

In the Sixth Chapter, the author specifically discusses aspects of Anglo-Norman social life and it is possible to note one of his main theses being taken up again: the idea that the adaptation and transformation of the Normans, according to the place in which they were inserted, was the main point of their expansion and allowed such mastery and contribution. Rowley also discusses an important situation involving the role of women, from a legal perspective, after the conquest and insertion of a new administrative and ecclesial logic. This way, female status came from being or not married. “The legal status of a woman of any social class depended on whether she was single or married” (ROWLEY, 2021, p. 131). It also occurred, from the Norman domain on, the adoption of the primogeniture, which creates a tension for female participation in the inheritance process.

The Norman insertion impacted the language. Anglo-Saxon became a vernacular language, while French-Norman-derived names spread throughout localities and among the courts. The presence of Latin came to figure in the intellectual environment. Some chronicles written in Anglo-Saxon were rewritten in Latin. Language, literature and art are influenced by the new element. According to the author, the idea of mutuality in the sharing of cultural characteristics, expressed in the literature, is one of the marks of the Normans, in every sense. “The influence was mutual: Norman art and sculpture show the influence of English design and English skills in such different areas as coinage and embroidery, and these were preserved by the Conqueror”. (ROWLEY, 2021, p. 134)

In the Penultimate Chapter, entitled *The Normans in Southern Europe*, the author's spatial frame changes, with a focus being established on the central region of the Mediterranean and its interrelationship with Byzantium and Arab culture. The author begins the chapter by highlighting the role that the Crusades played in the Norman expansion process, accenting the changes promoted by the political, administrative and military insertion of the occupation of these groups in regions such as the Italian Peninsula, Medieval Iberian Peninsula and Asia Minor.

The author stresses the relationship between the Crusades and Norman expansion into Asia. The First Crusade was a significant step in the process of Norman interconnection with other parts of the world. Although it was a particularly frank case, the Normans of the Italian

Peninsula, with the exception of the Sicilians, participated. After the conquest, the Normans adopted the title of princes of Antioch, completing the expansion to Asia, “adopting the title of the Prince of Antioch and establishing the furthest flung territory of the nonsense Norman Empire”. (ROWLEY, 2021, p. 166)

In addition to this process, their participation in the Crusades provided control of Sicily and created favorable conditions for Norman rule in central regions of the Mediterranean. According to the author, the Tunis domain did not aim at administrative control, but rather at the economic importance of the region. “But the Normans were not interested in political domination in this case. They were far more concerned with the economic and strategic advantages to be gained from possessions on the southern coast of the Mediterranean. Commercially, by occupying the main ports”. (ROWLEY, 2021, p. 174)

In the Last Chapter, entitled *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily*, the author's attention turned to the process of conquering and establishing dominion in Sicily. The conquest of Sicilian territory was promoted through a series of conflicts with the Muslim peoples who lived there. In his narrative, Rowley lists Christian sources that negatively represent Muslims, in order to defend the hypothesis that the Norman conquest represented a reconquest of Sicily for Christianity. “At the same time that the Normans were involved in campaigns both in southern Italy and the Balkans, they were also intent on winning back Sicily to the Christian world” (ROWLEY, 2021, p. 177).

Rowley's work highlights the different political and administrative processes, serving as an excellent basis for studies aimed at contextualizing the political situation in Sicily, as well as accenting the economic potential of the region for having a fertile soil, similar to southern Italy, rich in a series of nutrients that allowed agriculture, and still standing out for its contact and commercial relationship with North Africa. This made the region economically important.

At the end of the chapter, the author emphasizes the construction of a new culture from the contact among the various ethnic groups present there in the process of development of literature, thoughts and customs, and describes that there was a reduction in the Islamic



contingent. There was a process of expansion of Latin culture, reflected in buildings and literature and what the author called the latinization of Sicily.