**[The Norsemen: Germanic & Scandinavian](http://donlehmanjr.com/Politics/politics%2006/politics%2006c.htm" \l "ToC)**

Who were these Norsemen, that spread down from the North to conquer Europe? These nomadic warriors, who became the military elite, included the Germanic tribes, who lent their name the ‘Germani’ to all of the Northern tribes in the Roman histories. There were many branches: the Burgundians and Franks, who conquered and settled in France providing names - the Goths & Vandals, whom harassed the Roman and Byzantine Empires – the Ostrogoths, who conquered Spain – the Lombards, who conquered a section of Italy - the Jutes, Angles & Saxons, who kept migrating and conquering until they reached the British Isles, where they settled, conquering or driving back the indigenous tribes. This branch of the Germanic tribes ruled much of England prior to the Norman invasion. They gave their name to my racial type, i.e. Anglo-Saxon.

The last of these North men were the highly influential Scandinavian tribes called Vikings as a group. There were the Danes of Denmark, who periodically invaded and ruled England in the 200 years preceding the Norman invasion. Another major group were the Norwegians and Swedes who systematically raided the coastal cities of England and Europe as well as sailing down the rivers of the mainland to wreck havoc on their inland cities.

The Normans, a branch of the Danish Vikings, had a huge influence on Europe and England. They profoundly affected the development of Medieval Europe by providing the hereditary leadership of many kingdoms for hundreds of years. The Normans first took a chunk of France from the Franks in 911 CE, appropriately called Normandy. Then in 1066 William the Conqueror, the bastard son of the king of Normandy, took over England from the ruling Danes, Angles and Saxons. In each of the places that these nomadic warriors settled they became the military elite, providing protection from themselves and their fellow Nordic tribes in exchange for tribute.

These invaders brought with them all their warrior gods, but more importantly their warrior ethic. If the warrior died in battle he went straight to Valhalla, heaven, where he fights on for eternity without ever being afraid of injury or death. To avoid the disgrace of dying at home it became a ritual for the Viking warriors to wound themselves in the side on their deathbed to trick the gods so that they might reach Valhalla. The long term and immediate consequences of this attitude infested the history of Europe with almost continuous warfare – with residuals even unto the 21st century.

**[Tolerant Northern invaders become Christian](http://donlehmanjr.com/Politics/politics%2006/politics%2006c.htm" \l "ToC)**

The Norsemen first came as raiders, and then as conquerors. Instead of forcing their polytheistic religion and Nordic culture on the kingdoms they conquered they were assimilated – becoming Christians. This allowed them to take advantage of the incredible organization of the Roman bishopric system. However the Norman warriors remained the hereditary rulers and the indigenous populations with their agricultural roots were suppressed – becoming the underclass of society. The territories ruled by the Normans included France, England, Sicily and Southern Italy.

As recent converts to Christianity the Norsemen, still subconsciously or consciously held to the ideals of their aristocratic war gods, who favored the warrior, of course. This was in direct opposition to the literature of Christianity, which espoused peace and cooperation. The nearly universal Catholic Christian Church worshipped this guy who was crucified on a cross, saying “Forgive them Father for they know not what they do.” & ‘Turn the other cheek’. This mentality was totally unacceptable to these ruthless raiders.

However this military aristocracy based in the warrior cult didn’t care what the peasant population believed as long as they were supported in power. The Normans were remarkably adaptable to local customs, shedding all of their Scandinavian traditions. “I’m not going back home. It’s too cold up there.” Wherever they went they adapted to the local religion and customs. If the local population wanted to remain Christian that was all right with them. Just because the local population wanted to worship this wimpy guy who dies without a fight doesn’t mean that they had to. The Norman rulers were incredibly tolerant as long as their rule wasn’t challenged. While they brought their customs and values with them, the Nordic tribes were relatively tolerant of any religion as long as they got their gold. They respected the local traditions as long as they didn’t threaten their dominance.

As an example of their adaptability: After conquering the city of Antioch and its environs during the first Crusade the Norman Tancred assumed an Arab title, a Greek name, wore Persian clothes, and minted coins in his honor. He only remained Christian in name and as only as long as it furthered his political ends.