

Byzantina Symmeikta

Vol 20 (2010)

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 20



The perception of difference and the differences of perception: The image of the Norman invaders in southern Italy in contemporary western medieval and Byzantine sources

Eleni TOUNTA

doi: [10.12681/byzsym.977](https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.977)

Copyright © 2014, Eleni TOUNTA



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

TOUNTA, E. (2010). The perception of difference and the differences of perception: The image of the Norman invaders in southern Italy in contemporary western medieval and Byzantine sources. *Byzantina Symmeikta*, 20, 111–142. <https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.977>

ELENI TOUNTA

THE PERCEPTION OF DIFFERENCE AND THE DIFFERENCES OF PERCEPTION:
THE IMAGE OF THE NORMAN INVADERS OF SOUTHERN ITALY IN CONTEMPORARY
WESTERN MEDIEVAL AND BYZANTINE SOURCES

The subject of the present study is the image of the Norman invaders of southern Italy as it emerges from Western and Byzantine contemporary sources. The chronological limits of the examination will be from 1017-1018, when the Normans arrived in southern Italy to fight as mercenaries on the side of the Lombard rulers of the area who had risen in revolt against Byzantine control, to 1085, when they had succeeded in establishing their authority in the area after conquering a large part of southern Italy as well as Sicily. Contrary – as well as complementary, of course – to most studies which have focused on the reasons of the Normans' arrival in southern Italy¹, the subject under examination here is the way their presence and actions were perceived. More specifically, I will examine the conceptual notions that medieval men had at their disposal during the process of perception, which eventually shaped their view of the Norman invaders².

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 29th Pan-Hellenic Historical Congress (Thessaloniki, 16-18 May 2008). I would like to thank my colleagues P. Katsone, associate professor in Byzantine History at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and Dr. N. Chrissis, teaching associate at the Royal Holloway University of London for providing useful suggestions.

1. The relevant bibliography is extensive. See indicatively the widely accepted study of H. HOFFMANN, *Die Anfänge der Normannen in Süditalien, Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 49 (1969) 95-144.

2. Recent research has already taken an interest in the way that the Norman Kingdom was perceived by its contemporaries. See the papers in the collective volume: *Il mezzogiorno*

Επιμέλεια έκδοσης: ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΣ ΛΙΒΑΝΟΣ, ΙΒΕ/ΕΙΕ

A further point of interest for the present study is to determine to what extent the conquerors of southern Italy were seen through an ethnic perspective, i.e. whether their Otherness was described in terms of ethnicity. This examination is important, as it corresponds to a vital debate in modern historiography, as to whether belonging to a certain *gens*, an ethnic group, constituted for the medieval man a basic framework of defining the Self and the Other³.

A comparative approach, i.e. the comparison of the way Westerners and Byzantines perceived the image of the Other, was deemed necessary not only because the Normans encountered a sizeable Byzantine population in southern Italy which they eventually subdued, but mostly in order to highlight any similarities or differences in the mentalities that defined Western and Byzantine perceptions of the “Other”. In fact, on account of the Byzantine presence in Italy, the Western sources which make mention of the Norman invaders cannot but view them in conjunction with the Byzantines of the area. Therefore, at a second level, the results of such comparisons enrich the question investigated by historiography in recent years on whether to include or not certain cultures into medieval Europe⁴. They can also offer an answer to the question whether Byzantium was one of the centres or one of the peripheries of medieval Europe, or it belonged to an entirely different cultural grouping; an answer to which, as it becomes evident, determines both the perspective and the methods of modern historiography⁵.

normanno-svevo visto dall'Europa e dal mondo mediterraneo, ed. G. MUSCA [Atti delle tredicesime giornate normanno-sveve. Bari, 21-24 ottobre 1997], Bari 1999.

3. On the subject of ethnic identity in the Middle Ages, see indicatively R. BARTLETT, Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31.1 (2001) 39-56. Also, P. J. GEARY, Ethnic identity as a situational construct in the early middle ages, *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 113 (1983) 15-26.

4. Mention should be made at this point of the important research project DFG-Schwerpunktprogramm 1173 Integration und Desintegration der Kulturen im europäischen Mittelalter which operates in Germany since 2005, and for which 18 universities collaborate, with a total of – currently – 23 doctoral and postdoctoral studies. Also published within the framework of this project was the collective volume *Mittelalter im Labor. Die Mediävistik testet Wege zu einer transkulturellen Europawissenschaft*, ed. M. BORGOLTE – J. SCHIEL – B. SCHNEIDMÜLLER – A. SEITZ, Berlin 2008.

5. An attempt to write a comparative history of the medieval West and East by E. PITZ, *Die griechisch-römische Ökumene und die drei Kulturen des Mittelalters. Geschichte des*

The present study draws its materials from historical narratives written from the mid-11th to the first decade of the 12th century, and coming from the Byzantine Empire, as well as the Western Empire (including the *regnum Italiae*, i.e. northern Italy) and the Kingdom of France, with regard to the West. The choice of the geographical limits for the historiographical sources can be easily understood. The Normans came from the Kingdom of France and invaded an area which was claimed by both the Byzantine and the Western Empire, on the basis of their ecumenical authority. In fact, the Lombard rulers of southern Italy acknowledged – at least in theory, if not always in practice – the overlordship of the western emperors in their territories⁶. The study has excluded the important sources from southern Italy and Sicily narrating the Norman conquest of the area, as they exhibit a *de facto* pro-Norman stance, and for that reason they do not allow us to draw safe conclusions on the mentality and the conceptual processes of their authors⁷.

The chronological proximity of the sources under examination with the Normans' arrival and invasion of southern Italy is a crucial prerequisite in order to illuminate the image of the Normans as it was initially formed and, consequently, the *Weltanschauung* of the people who were "observing" them. Later sources, such as narratives composed after the establishment of the Norman Kingdom of southern Italy and Sicily, entail the risk of distorting the initial image, as the outlook of the authors had by that time also

mediterranen Weltteils zwischen Atlantik und Indischem Ozean 270-812, Berlin 2001. See also M. BORGOLTE, *Europa entdeckt seine Vielfalt 1050-1250*, Stuttgart 2002.

6. For the political circumstances before the arrival of the Normans, see indicatively G. A. LOUD, *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Norman Conquest*, Harlow-Munich 2000, 14-29.

7. Amato di Montecassino, ed. V. de BARTHOLOMAEIS, *Storia de' Normanni volgarizzata in antico francese* [Fonti per la Storia d' Italia, 76], Roma 1935; Guillaume de Pouille, ed. M. MATHIEU, *La geste de Robert Guiscard* [Istituto Siciliano di Studi bizantini e neoellenici. Testi 4], Palermo 1961; Gaufredus Malaterra, ed. P. PONTIERI, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius* [Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, V/1], Bologna 1925-1928. For a brief approach to these three sources, see P. TOUBERT, La première historiographie de la conquête normande de l'Italie méridionale (XIe siècle), in: *I caratteri originari della conquista normanna. Diversità e identità nel Mezzogiorno (1030-1130)*, ed. R. LICINIO - F. VIOLANTE [Atti delle sedicesime giornate normanno-sveve. Bari, 5-8 ottobre 2004], Bari 2006, 15-49.

been shaped by the actions of the Norman kings, constituting an additional prism through which the Normans' arrival was seen by later individuals. It has to be pointed out that the contemporary authors, the works of whom this study is based on, are not simply the most representative, but are actually the only ones who, fulfilling the criterion of chronological proximity, showed a particular interest in the activity of the Normans⁸.

As it has already been made evident, the main historical and historiographical subject of this study is the issue of the perception of the Other, i.e. of those belonging to a different cultural group; a question that has recently become a key issue in the context of the humanities. In the discipline of history, questions relating to the perception of Otherness do not only constitute a part of source-criticism for the reconstruction of facts, but they foremost serve to investigate mentalities of the past. Perception is, in general, a relative process. It sets the subject and the object of observation in a direct and unmediated relation to each other, allowing the integration and delimitation of both. The relative nature of perception stands out most sharply in the case of defining Otherness, since the Other can only be perceived by defining the Self. During the perceptual process, the observer comprehends Otherness through the prism of his personal *Weltanschauung*, which to a large degree has been shaped by the ideas and values he shares with the other members of the group in which he belongs. Therefore, the resulting image of Otherness provides more information about the Self and the collective mentality of one's own group, rather than information about the Other⁹.

When analysing the conceptual process, we should not overlook that the historical sources in which we seek the worldview of the observer/author do not constitute historical events (*res gestae*), but rather the narrative of events (*narratio rei gestae*)¹⁰. Decoding a historical text, more frequently than the

8. This is easy to ascertain if one examines extensively the composition of *annales* and chronicles of this period in Italy, Germany and France which have been published in the collection *Scriptores in folio* of the Monumenta Germaniae Historica, in vols. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. For sources composed in the Byzantine Empire, see below, pp. 123-128.

9. H. BLEUMER – St. PATZOLD, Wahrnehmungs- und Deutungsmuster in der Kultur des europäischen Mittelalters, in: *Wahrnehmungs- und Deutungsmuster im europäischen Mittelalter*, ed. H. BLEUMER – St. PATZOLD [Das Mittelalter. Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung 8.2], Berlin 2003, 6-7.

10. See the definition of "history" by Isidore of Seville: Isidorus Hispalensis, ed. W. M. LINDSAY, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum libri XX* [Scriptorum

question “what event took place?” we should probably pose the questions: “how was the event perceived by the author?” and “in what ways did this event undergo narrative elaboration within the text?”¹¹. The worldviews of the authors, which we wish to bring to light, form part of a narrative. That is, they appear in a written text with a specific narrative plot, constructed with specific narrative motifs. Both the plot and the narrative motifs communicate to the reader the mentality of the author who is “observing” this Otherness. Therefore, particular care is necessary to unveil these motifs, the way they are incorporated in the plot of the narrative, and how they relate to the mentality of the author of the text¹².

After this introduction, it is time to turn our attention to the medieval authors. Before attempting to investigate their thought-world categorising them by area of provenance, an overview is first necessary. What is striking, when examining the contemporary sources, both Western and Byzantine, on the arrival of the Norman mercenaries in Italy, is the paucity of particular references. The majority of the authors of the *annales* or the chronicles, even those from the areas of southern Italy directly affected by the Norman invasion, proceed to little but precious examination of this development. The Normans appear suddenly in the narrative without prior commentary

Classicum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis, 16], Oxford 1911, I, 41: *De historia. Historia est narratio rei gestae, per quam ea, quae in praeterito facta sunt, dinoscuntur.*

11. For a detailed introduction to the methodology, see H.-W. GOETZ, Wahrnehmungs- und Deutungsmuster als methodisches Problem der Geschichtswissenschaft, in: *Wahrnehmungs- und Deutungsmuster*, 23-33.

12. It is a fact that medieval historiography differs from both ancient and – mostly – modern historiography, as the medieval man had formed a specific way of thinking and consequently of perceiving the past and his contemporary reality. Given the fact that thought is expressed through words, the analysis of the language of the texts through the methodology of linguistic/literary criticism (detecting the plot, narrative motifs, etc.) is in a position to illuminate the particularities of medieval historiography, and to offer the modern scholar attempting to study medieval history a research tool for medieval historical sources. At the same time, language-based analysis brings to light the mentality of the author of the text, which, to a large extent, reflects the corresponding society's organisation, its ideology and its code of values. We should foremost note the studies by: G. M. SPIEGEL, *The Past as Text. Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*, Baltimore-London 1997; H.-W. GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewusstsein im hohen Mittelalter*, Berlin 2008. See also the collective volume *Von Fakten und Fiktionen. Mittelalterliche Geschichtsdarstellungen und ihre kritische Aufarbeitung*, ed. J. LAUDAGE, Köln-Weimar-Wien 2003.

regarding their presence in the area, and they are called by their ethnic appellation, *Normanni*, or – as *pars pro toto* – by the name of their leaders, most commonly Robert Guiscard. The authors display no interest in the Normans' origin, their customs or the reasons that led them to arrive and then settle in southern Italy and Sicily. A characteristic example concerning the area of southern Italy are the *annales* of Lupus Protospatharius (account of the events of years 855-1102), where the Normans are mentioned sporadically, without becoming the subject of any particular reflection. Nevertheless, there is a sense of Otherness, namely that a different ethnic group now dwells in the area of southern Italy. For example, when Lupus Protospatharius refers to the help that Robert Guiscard offered to Pope Gregory VII in 1084, he notes that duke Guiscard went to Rome after he mustered an army of Normans, Lombards and other ethnic groups¹³. The Normans became the subject of observation, although only sporadically in the 11th century, when they no longer limited themselves to their role as mercenaries and started to conquer territories of southern Italy.

In the area of the Western Empire, as it emerges from the sources, the stimulus for further reflection was the activity of Robert Guiscard. It is important to stress once more that all extensive references to the arrival of the Normans revealing the mentality of the contemporaries occur within the context of the description of the conquests of the duke of southern Italy. Hermann, a monk of Reichenau, (account of events of years 1-1054) referring to events of the year 1053, relates that the Normans, a foreign ethnic group (*gens adventitia*) from the Gallic shores of the Ocean, flocked to the parts of Calabria, Samnia and Campania. And as it was a *gens* with greater military skills, it was initially gladly received, because it helped the indigenous population (*indigenis*) against the raids of the Greeks and the Saracens¹⁴. Similarly, the cleric Arnulf of Milan (account of years 925-1077)

13. Lupus Protospatharius, ed. G. H. PERTZ [MGH Scriptorum, 5], Hannover 1849 (Stuttgart 1985) 61.33-34: *A.D. 1084. Robertus dux, collecta multitudine Normannorum, Longobardorum aliarumque gentium, perrexit Romam, ut papam Gregorium dura obsidione retentum liberaret.*

14. Herimannus Augiensis, *Chronicon*, ed. G. H. PERTZ [MGH Scriptorum 5], Hannover 1849 (Stuttgart 1985) 132.4-19: *A.D. 1053. Ea siquidem gens a temporibus prioris Heinrici imperatoris in Calabriae, Samniae Campaniaeque partes paulatim ex Gallici oris oceani adventitia confluebat; et quia bellicosior Italicis gentibus videbatur, primo gratanter accepta,*

noted that the Normans were called to assist the inhabitants of Apulia who were being oppressed by the Greeks¹⁵.

In the narratives mentioned above, the two basic notions can be found which defined the perceptual process in observing the Other, the Norman who entered the area of southern Italy. These notions were the ecumenical character of the Western Empire and common religion¹⁶. The notion of ecumenicity should not only be understood in its political dimensions, as it entails an important religious significance: in the image of God who rules in heaven, and by his command, the emperor rules the temporal world. Therefore, any violation of imperial rights constitutes at the same time an affront to God and to divine order¹⁷. In the narrative of Hermann, a sense of Otherness is at first discernible, as it is pointed out that the Normans were a foreign *gens* that arrived from another land. However, although foreign, this ethnic group was well-received, as it helped the indigenous population against the two enemies who were not considered to share in the cultural identity defined by the ecumenicity of the Western Empire and the Christian religion. The Byzantine emperors, who in the name of the ecumenicity of their own empire were striving to consolidate and expand their authority in southern Italy, not only impinged on the political rights of the Western Empire in this area, but also challenged at an ideological level the ecumenical authority and therefore the Roman imperial title of the western emperors¹⁸. The same was also perpetrated – and against both empires at that – by the

crebro indigenis contra Grecorum et Saracenorum incursiones audacter praeliando auxiliabatur.

15. Arnulfus, *Gesta archiepiscoporum Mediolanensium*, ed. D. L. C. BETHMANN – W. WATTENBACH [MGH Scriptores 8], Hannover 1848 (Stuttgart 1992) 10.45-11.5: *Illis in diebus primus in Apuliam Normannorum fuit eventus, principum terrae consultu vocatus, cum Graeci eam innumeris gravarent oppressionibus.*

16. Cf. B. ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London-New York 1991, 19-20.

17. See among others: F.-R. ERKENS, Vicarius Christi – sacratissimus legislator – sacra majestas. Religiöse Herrschaftslegitimierung im Mittelalter, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, kanonistische Abteilung*, 89 (2003) 1-55.

18. For the western view that the Byzantines belonged to a different cultural grouping see: B. EBELS-HOVING, Byzantium in Latin Eyes before 1204. Some remarks on the thesis of the “growing animosity”, in: *The Latin Empire, some contributions*, ed. K. CIGGAAR – A. VAN AALST, Hernen 1990, 27.

Saracens, who had conquered Sicily and frequently raided areas of southern Italy. The Saracens, furthermore, on account of their religion, belonged to a wholly different cultural grouping than that of medieval Europe, which was Christian in its basis. In the medieval period, however, when religion constituted an essential criterion of community membership, and not solely an acceptance of principles or dogma, the ethnic and religious identity were almost coterminous¹⁹.

Taking into consideration these notions, it is clear why the Normans' arrival and activity became the subject of discussion during the period of Robert Guiscard's deeds. When he raised claims of authority in the area by conquering land in his own name, he challenged the sovereign rights of the Western Empire. This behaviour provoked a surprised reaction on the part of the members of the western imperial polity, prompting them to narrate this nation's arrival in southern Italy. This is why, after this brief digression on the beginnings of the Normans' arrival, Hermann returns to the events of the Norman conquest and recounts that "as the Normans saw the riches of the Italian land and as their forces increased, they wanted to oppress with war the indigenous people, to impose their unjust rule, to seize castles, fields, villages, houses and even women from the legitimate heirs, to despoil church property, and finally to upset all the divine and human laws, with all their might, without giving in, even in name, to either the apostolic pontiff or to the emperor"²⁰. Arnulf stressed that the Normans were "most impious" (*impiissimi*)²¹, while the cleric Landulf of Milan (account of events from the

19. BARTLETT, *Medieval and Modern Concepts*, 42, 52-53. For the image of the Muslims in medieval Europe and the mentalities through which they were perceived, see J. TOLAN, *Les Sarrasins*, Paris 2003; P. SÉNAC, *L'Occident médiéval face à l'Islam. L'image de l'autre*, Paris 2000.

20. Herimannus Augiensis, 132.4-19: *A.D. 1053. Postea vero pluribus eorum ad uberem terram accurrentibus, viribus adaucti, ipsos indigetes bello premere, iniustum dominatum invadere, heredibus legitimis castella, praedia, villas, domos uxorem etiam quibus libuit vi auferre, res aecclesiarum diripere, postremo divina et humana omnia, prout viribus plus poterant, iura confundere, nec iam apostolico pontifici, nec ipsi imperatori, nisi tantum verbotenus cedere*. The same information is found in the chronicle of Bernold, monk of St. Blasien of the bishopric of Constance, who narrates the events of years 1-1100: Bernoldus, *Chronicon*, ed. G. H. PERTZ [MGH Scriptores 5], Hannover 1849 (Stuttgart 1985) 426.41-44.

21. Arnulfus, 18.6-9: *Cui cum misericorditer displiceret oppressio illa vehemens, qua impiissimi Normanni miseram affligunt Apuliam, praedicatione mixta precibus temptat il-*

4th c. to 1085) notes that they were guilty not only of injustice but also *novitas*, i.e. innovation²². With *novitas* bearing the meaning of unlawful subversion of political order, and impiety (*impiissimus*) referring to the person of the emperor as well as to God, these two characterizations reflect precisely the two notions which influenced the perceptual process.

Arnulf, who concurs with Hermann's observation regarding the wealth of Italian land as a motivation for the Normans to conquer it, compares this newly-arrived nation with two other claimants of the area, the Byzantines and the Saracens. Thus, he depicts the Normans as "crueller than the Greeks and more savage than the Saracens" (*atrociore facti Graecis, Saracenis furoriores*)²³. In this narrative, the image that the medieval Westerner had formed of the Byzantines and the Saracens serves as a perceptual and narrative model for the nature and the actions of the Normans. It appears that the cultural representation of the Byzantine and the Saracen – the former challenging the political integrity of the Western Empire, and the latter the religious integrity of western medieval society – had been firmly established in the collective consciousness. For this reason, Arnulf, by comparing the Normans with the two other nations, is able to convey the impact of their actions on the established value-system, without having to describe in detail their deeds against the western imperial rights and consequently against God.

los a tantis revocare flagitiis. Cumque nichil proficeret, armis aggreditur ipsam compescere feritatem, licet illi adversus belli fuerit exitus.

22. Landulfus, *Historia Mediolanensis*, ed. L. C. BETHMANN – W. WATTENBACH) [MGH SS 8], Hannover 1848 (Stuttgart 1992) 100.18-30: *Hic enim Apuliam et Calavriam multasque civitates marinas, exiens Nurmandiam, cuius miles pauper cum suisque sociis fuerat, noviter et iniuste cum suis multis criminibus invaserat.*

23. Arnulfus, 10.45-11.5: *Illis in diebus primus in Apuliam Normannorum fuit eventus, principum terrae consultu vocatus, cum Graeci eam innumeris gravarent oppressionibus. Quibus subactis et aequore sulcato fugatis, considerantes Normanni Apulorum inertiam, regionis quoque in omnibus opulentiam, etsi pauci, invadunt ex parte provinciam. Remissis igitur legatis in patriam ad hoc ortantibus ceteros, crescente paulatim numero, totam repleverunt Apuliam, iure quasi proprio deinde possidentes, atrociore facti Graecis, Saracenis ferociore; imo deiectis prioribus, surrexerunt principes ipsi.* Arnulf's anti-Norman stance, which is discernible in this extract, is also noted and interpreted in connection to the imperial rights by G. ANDENNA, *Il Mezzogiorno normanno-svevo visto dall'Italia settentrionale*, in: *Il mezzogiorno normanno-svevo*, 41-43.

Particularly eloquent is the testimony of the cleric Landulf when narrating the invasion of Rome by Robert Guiscard in 1084 in order to help Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), who was threatened by the army of the German king Henry IV (1059-1106). The clergyman stresses that the Norman duke raised an army which also included as many Saracens as he could muster. As his narrative progresses, the *gens adventitia* of Hermann²⁴ is turned into a *gens diversa*, a different ethnic group, which is ignorant of God (*de Deo ignara*), as well as steeped in crimes and murders, accustomed to adulteries and to various forms of fornication²⁵. The ethnic Otherness, which was of no importance in the period of the Normans' arrival and their activity as mercenaries, is emphasised once Guiscard challenges imperial rights and actually intervenes in Rome in favour of Gregory VII, the great opponent of the western emperor – king at the time – Henry IV. This action is adequate for ethnic, that is cultural, boundaries to be set between the Italians and the Normans, and for the latter to be depicted as ignorant of God. It appears that the same purpose is served by the specific mention of the Saracens that constituted part of Robert Guiscard's army.

In the aforementioned extract, quite notable are the structural features of the historical narrative. Motifs from antiquity are used both in the perceptual process and in organising the narrative. In the characterisations attributed to the Normans, namely ignorance of God, the habit of committing crimes and murders, and the inclination to various forms of fornication, one can discern the image of the tyrant as found in ancient Greek and Roman thought. The qualities that characterised the tyrant in antiquity were precisely: *vis* (violence), *crudelitas* (cruelty), *superbia* (arrogance), and *libido*, i.e. sexual excess²⁶. Thus, the image of the Normans formed is that of the tyrant who oppresses in various ways the subject population. In the 12th century the Norman kings will be widely called tyrants, and the centre of

24. See note 14.

25. Landulfus, 100.18-30: *Igitur gente coadunata inmensa et Saracenis omnibus quos habere potuit, in paucis diebus Romam veterem, Romanis sese ac filios ac uxores minime tuentibus, Rufini et Albini reliquiis deficientibus armata manu Robertus intravit. [...] Itaque gens diversa de Deo ignara, sceleribus ac homicidiis edocta, adulteriis variisque fornicationibus assuefacta, omnibus criminibus, quae ferro et igne talibus agi solet negotiis, sese furialiter immererat.*

26. J. R. DUNKLE, The Greek tyrant and Roman political invective of the late Republic, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 98 (1967) 151-171.

their administrative authority, Sicily, will be characterised as the ‘nurse’ of tyrants since the age of the Cyclopes²⁷. To this 12th-century conclusion, significant was the contribution of the image of the Normans as it emerged from the views, and the incorporation of such views in narratives of 11th-century historians. The characterisation “tyrant”, as is evident from these sources, did not refer solely to the usurpation of authority, but also denoted the moral shortcomings of the Normans²⁸.

Sigebert, abbot of Gembloux (account of years 381-1111) perceived the Normans in a different way. Although he came from the area of the Western Empire and held a pro-imperial stance in the Investiture Controversy, his perception of the Norman invasions does not appear to have been shaped by the ecumenical dimensions of imperial ideology, explaining why a negative image of the Normans does not appear in his work. On the contrary, the bravery and the resourcefulness and cunning of the Norman invaders are predominant in his narrative. Referring to the events of the year 1032, he relates that the Normans Robert and Richard left French Normandy for Apulia. As the Italians were divided, they offered military assistance, fighting at times on the one side and at times on the other; and taking this op-

27. This assessment is found in the work of abbot Otto of Freising: Otto Episcopus Frisingensis, *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, ed. W. LAMMERS [Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 16], Darmstadt 1974, II, 19, p. 140: *Sicilia enim primo Cyclopus, post tyrannorum usque in presentem diem fuisse nutrix traditur*. In the 11th c. the Normans are only sporadically characterised as tyrants. As far as I am aware, the first such mention is found in the work of Bishop Benzo of Alba who belonged to the immediate environment of Emperor Henry IV. Benzo, *Ad Heinricum IV. Imperatorem libri VII*, ed. H. SEYFFERT [MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi 65], Hannover 1996, 196: *Normannis, latronibus et tyrannis [...]* and p. 208: *Quartum Normannus, factus de plebe tyrannus*. For Benzo’s view of the Normans, see ANDENNA, *Il Mezzogiorno normanno-svevo*, 29-39. For the characterisation of the Norman kings of Sicily, especially the first king, Roger II (1130-1154), as tyrants, see H. WIERUSZOWSKI, Roger II of Sicily, *Rex-Tyrannus*, in twelfth-century political thought, *Speculum* 38.1 (1963) 46-78, where it appears that the characterisation of “tyrant” attributed to Roger II referred mostly to the usurpation of imperial rights in southern Italy and Sicily, rather than to the moral dimensions of a tyrant’s behaviour according to the models of antiquity.

28. ANDENNA, *Il Mezzogiorno normanno-svevo*, 44-45, referring to the abovementioned extract of Landulf, comments that those were exaggerations connected with political propaganda which intended to ‘demonise’ the Normans who impinged on the rights of the Western Empire.

portunity they fought the Italians bravely and cunningly (*callide et fortiter*), and by pushing forth with their advances, they expanded their fame and they prepared the way for their future prosperity²⁹. In this last observation it becomes evident that the abbot was aware of the consequent developments, which, as it appears from the narrative, he applauded. Subsequently in the narrative, the virtues of the Normans (*dolus* and *virtus*) are in contrast with the *imbecillitas*, the feebleness of the Italians. Thanks to those virtues, the abbot points out, the Normans managed to conquer the area, spreading terror to the neighbouring nations³⁰. The contrasting pairs of notions, *dolus/virtus* - *imbecillitas* around which the narrating is structured, elucidate the reasons for the Normans' success and, by extension, legitimise their authority in the area.

Moving from the Western to the Byzantine Empire, one would expect to find important information in the historiographical works coming from that area, as it was the Byzantine authority in southern Italy which mostly suffered by the activity of Norman mercenaries and subsequently by their conquests. Contrary to expectations, however, the relevant sources show practically no interest³¹. This observation is of particular importance, as

29. *Chronica Sigeberti Gemblacensis*, ed. D. L. C. BETHMANN [MGH Scriptorum 6], Hannover 1844 (Stuttgart 1980), 357.1-6: *Anno Domini 1032. Rotbertus et Richardus, minuendae domo multitudinis causa hoc tempore a Nortmannia Francorum digressi, Apuliam expetunt; et Italis inter se dissentientibus, dum alteri contra alterum auxilium prestant, hac opportunitate Italos callide et fortiter debellant, et successus urgendo suos, nomen suum dilatant, et futurae prosperitatis sibi viam parant*. As far as the division of the Italian peoples is concerned, Sigebert of Gembloux refers to the conflicts between Byzantines and Lombards and those among the Lombard rulers of the area.

30. *Chronica Sigeberti Gemblacensis*, 357.45-48: *Anno Domini 1038. Nortmanni in Apulia copiis suis a Nortmannia paulatim adauctis, ad invadendam Apuliam fortitudine sua et Italarum imbecillitate animati, castellis et urbibus aut dolo aut virtute captis, in Apulia potenter agunt, vicinisque gentibus terrorem sui nominis incutiunt*. It is difficult to explain why a pro-imperial author provides such a positive image for the Norman invasions. It is only to be stressed that Sigebert of Gembloux does not show an interest in the political course of the events in southern Italy. Even when he relates the invasion of Henry IV in Rome, he only mentions that Pope Gregory VII took refuge *ad Normannos*. See *Chronica Sigeberti Gemblacensis*, 364.42-43.

31. The lack of interest by Byzantine historiographers in the geography and culture of western Europe has been interpreted on the basis of the Byzantines' feeling of superiority

most historiographers held important positions in the empire's administrative apparatus³². For example, Michael Psellos (narrative of years 976-1077), who was not only a scholar but for a period also served as imperial secretary and, therefore, had access to the state archives³³. When he refers to the expedition of George Maniakes who aimed at putting down the revolt of the cities of Apulia, which had recruited Norman mercenaries, he provides no information on this new nation that appeared in the lands of southern Italy. He only mentions that Maniakes was sent to reclaim territories that had been taken away from the Byzantine Empire³⁴. Similar is the case of the history by Michael Attaleiates (narrative of years 1034-1079) who had also held court offices³⁵. He only notes that the Italian cities turned against Byzantium³⁶. The most extensive reference is found in the history of

towards the political entities that were outside the territory or the sphere of influence of the Byzantine Empire. See D. M. NICOL, *The Byzantine view of Western Europe*, *GRBS* 8 (1967) 315-316; A. DUCCELLIER, *L'Europe occidentale dans les textes grecs médiévaux: tradition impériale et redécouverte*, *Bsl* 56 (1995) 245-255. Nevertheless, we should also note the tendency of Byzantine historiographers to take an interest mostly in the main political developments and the military events that pertained to the capital and the central authority, and in the issues that posed a threat to the empire's existence. For example, the assault and four sieges against Thessaloniki by the Avars and Slavs in the 6th and 7th century are not mentioned in any historiographical text, but only in a hagiographical pastiche, *The miracles of Saint Demetrius*. For this observation, I would like to thank my colleague, G. Leveniotis, lecturer in Byzantine history at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

32. Besides the works mentioned below, the historiographical production of the period (11th – early 12th c.) includes the work of George Kedrenos, *Σύνοψις ἱστοριῶν*, which does not provide any information on the Normans' arrival in southern Italy.

33. H. HUNGER, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, Band I, München 1978, 373.

34. Michael Psellos, *Chronographie*, ed. E. RENAULD, T. II, Paris 1928, 2: Ἐπεὶ δὲ τὴν Ἰταλίαν ἀποσεσλήμεθα καὶ τὸ σεμνότατον τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀφηγήμεθα μέρος, πέμπει τοῦτον ὁ δεῦτερος Μιχαὴλ πολεμήσοντα μὲν τοῖς ἠρπακόσιν αὐτήν, τῷ δὲ κράτει τὸ μέρος ἐπανασώσοντα λέγω δὲ νῦν Ἰταλίαν, οὐ τὴν ἀκτὴν ξύμπασαν, ἀλλὰ μόνον δὴ τὸ πρὸς ἡμᾶς τμήμα τὸ κοινὸν ἰδiosisάμενον ὄνομα. Ὁ μὲν οὖν τοῖς ἐκεῖσε μέρεσι μετὰ παντὸς ἐπιστὰς τοῦ στρατεύματος, πᾶσιν ἐχρᾶτο τοῖς στρατηγήμασι, καὶ δῆλος ἦν τοῖς μὲν κατασχόντας ἀπελάσων, τὴν δὲ αὐτοῦ χεῖρα ἀντ' ἄλλου τινὸς ἐρύματος ἀντιστήσων ταῖς ἐκείνων ἐπιδρομαῖς.

35. HUNGER, *Die hochsprachliche*, 382-383.

36. Miguel Atalíates, *Historia*, ed. I.P. MARTIN [Nueva Roma 15], Madrid 2002, 7: Οὐ μὴν δὲ ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ ποτε σύμμαχοι καὶ τῆς ἰσοπολιτείας ἡμῖν συμμετέχοντες, ὡς καὶ

Skylitzes (narrative of years 811-1057) who noted that the Normans – called Franks by the Byzantines – captured cities of southern Italy, some of which joined them on their own will, while others by force³⁷.

The most important source on how the Byzantines viewed the Normans during the period examined, is the letter sent around August 1073³⁸ by Emperor Michael VII Doukas (1071-1078) to Robert Guiscard, in order to propose an alliance, which would be sealed with the marriage of the Byzantine emperor's brother, Constantine, to one of the Norman ruler's daughters. This letter is a formal document serving political aims, i.e. warding off the Norman threat, and perhaps acquiring Norman help to confront the Seljuk Turks in Asia Minor³⁹. Difficult as it may be to deduce the Byzantine view of the Normans from the diplomatic language used by an emperor in an official diplomatic instrument serving an alliance, the expressions of diplomatic courtesy reveal in my opinion specific mentalities which defined the way the Byzantines perceived Otherness, and specifically the inhabitants of medieval Europe.

Michael VII points out that one of the motives prompting him to form an alliance with the Norman ruler was their common faith⁴⁰. In the East,

αὐτῆς τῆς θρησκείας, Ἄλβανοί καὶ Λατίνοι ὅσοι κατὰ τὴν ἐσπερίαν Ῥώμην τοῖς ἰταλικοῖς πλησιάζουσι μέρεσι, πολέμιοι παραλογώτατοι ἐχρημάτισαν [...].

37. Ioannis Scylitzae, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. I. THURN [CFHB], Berlin 1973, 427: καὶ λοιπὸν οἱ Φράγγοι τῆς Ἰταλίας ὡς δορυκτῆτου ἀντεποιοῦντο κτήματος, τῶν ἐγγχωρίων ὄν μὲν ἐκουσίως, ὄν δὲ βία καὶ ἀνάγκη προσχωρούντων αὐτοῖς, πλὴν Βρενδισίου καὶ Ἰδρουῦντος καὶ Τάραντός τε καὶ Βάρεως. On the political ideology of Skylitzes, Psellus and Attaleiates, see T. LOUNGHIS, *Η ἰδεολογία τῆς βυζαντινῆς ιστοριογραφίας*, Athens 1993, 145-178.

38. The negotiations resulted, in 1074, in an agreement for the marriage of the Emperor Michael VII's son, Constantine, ratified by a chrysobull composed by Michael Psellus. Regarding the negotiations, two letters survive and have been published by K. Sathas: letter no. 143 and letter no. 144. I follow the opinion of A. KOLIA-DERMITZAKI, Michael VII Doukas, Robert Guiscard and the Byzantine-Norman Marriage Negotiations, *Bsl* 58 (1997) 251-268, who argues that only one of the two letters was sent, i.e. no. 143, and dates its composition in August 1073.

39. KOLIA-DERMITZAKI, Michael VII Doukas, 257-258 with references to earlier bibliography.

40. K. N. SATHAS, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. V, Venice 1876 (Athens 1972), nr. 143, 385: Τρία ταῦτά εἰσιν, εὐγενέστατε, καὶ συννετώτατε, τὰ κινήσαντά εἰς τὴν σὴν φιλίαν καὶ ἀκριβεστάτην διάθεσιν, ἡ ὁμοδοξία τῆς ἀληθοῦς πίστεως, ἡ τῆς προαιρέσεώς σου εὐγένεια, καὶ ἡ τοῦ γένους ὑπεροχή. See P. GOUNARIDIS, Η εἰκόνα τῶν Λατίνων τὴν ἐποχὴ τῶν Κομνηνῶν, *Symmeikta* 9 (1994) 158; NICOL, The Byzantine view, 327.

as was the case in the West, common faith constituted a basic criterion of perceiving the Other. Michael VII seems, in fact, to insist on this criterion, as he repeats it two more times, stressing that he had been informed that Guiscard had made piety the foundation of his authority, and that he ruled with godliness and justice⁴¹. Apart from the political reasons that led to this statement, one should not doubt the integrating power of common religious faith and the central role played by the ecumenical imperial ideology⁴²; and Michael VII's outlook is ecumenical and not European, as D. M. Nicol has stated referring to the Byzantine emperor's letter⁴³. The emperor, as – at an ideological level – the ruler of the *oecumene*, is responsible for the salvation of *christianitas*, and conducts his policy towards other rulers in the context of this role.

Furthermore, in Byzantium, as also in the West, where there was a vertically hierarchical society, the social rank of the Other also defined the way he was viewed by the Byzantines. This is why the emperor, in the preface of his letter, besides common religion, also mentions the 'pre-eminence of lineage' of the Norman invader. With regard to this point, of course, he was either misinformed or he attempted to flatter Guiscard attributing to him an aristocratic standing the latter did not possess. As is well-known, the Altavilla (Hauteville), i.e. Robert Guiscard's family, belonged to the lesser nobility, and could not claim an outstanding position within the aristocracy of their homeland, Normandy⁴⁴.

41. K. N. SATHAS, Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη, T. V, nr. 143, 386: Ἀκούων δὲ παρὰ πολλῶν τῶν τὴν σὴν γνώμην ἀκριβωσάντων, ὅτι εὐσέβειαν μὲν πρὸ πάντων τῆς ἀρχῆς ἔθου θεμέλιον, δικαιοσύνη δὲ καὶ ὁσιότητι τρόπου τὴν σὴν κατευθύνεις ἀρχὴν [...] ἡ γὰρ ταύτης τῆς κατὰ θεὸν ὁμολογίας καὶ πίστεως, τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην ἀρμονίαν τῆς διαθέσεως, ἦν ἐρεῖ προῶν ὁ λόγος, εἰργάσατο.

42. Βλ. H. AHRWEILER, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin*, Paris 1975, 9-102; I. E. ΚΑΡΑΥΑΝΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, *Η πολιτική θεωρία των Βυζαντινών*, Thessalonica 1992, 7-11. Πρβλ. E. CHRYSOS, Το Βυζάντιο και η διεθνής κοινωνία του Μεσαίωνα, in: *Το Βυζάντιο ως Οικουμενή*, ed. Id. [IBE/EIE Διεθνὴ Συμπόσια 16], Athens 2005, 59-78.

43. NICOL, *The Byzantine View*, 327 argues that "Much has been made of the flattering words addressed by the Emperor Michael VII Doukas to the Norman leader [...] as indicative of the underlying feeling of unity between Byzantines and westerners as members of a Christian and European community". Subsequently, referring to Anna Comnena: "Far from congratulating him for his understanding of the basic unity of all European peoples [...]".

44. Besides, the sources from the area of the Western Empire stressed the Normans' poverty and the fact that they were lured by the wealth of southern Italy. See notes 22 and 23.

In Michael VII's letter, we can also indirectly discern another Byzantine concept which defined the way in which they perceived the world; namely the political and cultural superiority of the Byzantine Empire towards the other political formations of the *oecumene*. The emperor, 'observing' the Normans from a position of power, at least in terms of ideology, points out that joining the Byzantine Empire is a boon for the rulers of other nations⁴⁵. The notion of the "barbarian" nature of the peoples who do not share in the political culture of the Byzantine Empire, i.e. do not acknowledge the overlordship of the Byzantine emperor, constituted a basic prism through which the Others were being perceived, and it illustrates the Byzantines' collective feeling of superiority towards the other political formations⁴⁶. The distinction between Byzantines and "barbarians" had political motives which were at least as important as the cultural ones.

The image of the Normans of southern Italy as "barbarians" would be expressed in the *Alexiad* of Anna Komnene. As this work belongs to a later period than the chronological limits set by the present study, I will only briefly refer to it, to help illuminate the mentality behind the tone of the letter of Michael VII Doukas to Robert Guiscard. Anna Komnene, writing around the time of the Second Crusade⁴⁷, had experienced not only Robert Guiscard's attack against the Balkan territories of the Byzantine Empire and the activities of his son, Bohemond, during the First Crusade, but also the anti-Byzantine policy of the Norman king, Roger II. When she refers to the Normans and specifically to their diplomatic dealings with Emperor

45. K. N. SATHAS, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. V, nr. 143, 386: *Ὀὐκ ἀγνοεῖς δὲ πάντως ὁποῖόν ἐστιν ἢ τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς Ῥωμαίων βασιλείος ἡγεμονία, καὶ ὅτι οἱ πρόρωθεν ἡμῖν κατὰ γένος συναπτόμενοι εὐτύχημα μέγιστον τὴν ἔνωσιν ἡγίηται.* And p. 387: *τοῦτο (sc. ο γάμιος) ἐμὸν μὲν ἐνθύμημα, σὸν δὲ εὐτύχημα, θεοῦ δὲ ἄνωθεν οἰκονομία ἀμφοτέροις συμφέρουσα ἰσημιότερα τε γὰρ σοι ἐντεῦθεν ἢ ἡγεμονία γενήσεται, καὶ πάντες σε θαυμάσουσι καὶ ζηλώσουσι τοιαύτης τετυχηκότα λαμπρότητος.* Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki demonstrates that the letter reflects the position of power of the Byzantine emperor towards Guiscard who at this time was facing political problems. KOLIA-DERMITZAKI, *Michael VII Doukas*, 257-268.

46. L. MAVROMMATIS, *Σημειώσεις για την εικόνα του άλλου στο Βυζάντιο*, *Symmeikta* 10 (1996) 236-238; DUCELLIER, *L'Europe occidentale*, 245-255; J. HERMANS, *The Byzantine view of the Normans – Another Norman Myth?*, *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies* 2 (1979) 81-82. Generally, for the Byzantines' feeling of superiority towards other political formations, see NICOL, *The Byzantine View*, 315-316.

47. HUNGER, *Die hochsprachliche*, 403-404.

Michael VII Doukas, references to common religion which defined to a large extent the outlook of Michael VII are entirely absent⁴⁸. The Normans, of course, did not cease to share the same faith. However, their attack against the Balkan territories of the Byzantine Empire modified for Anna Komnene the prism through which she perceived them. Their image was, at this period, primarily aimed at demarcating the boundaries between them and the Byzantines. That is why, when Anna Komnene narrates Michael VII's proposal to Robert Guiscard for a marriage alliance, she stresses that this marriage was "a marriage with a foreigner and a barbarian and ill-fitting to our own customs" (*κῆδος ἑτερόφυλόν τε καὶ βάρβαρον καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀπροσάρμοστον*)⁴⁹. Of course, she also depicts, Guiscard as "of tyrannical disposition" (*τὴν γνώμην τυραννικός*)⁵⁰, having attempted to usurp powers that belonged to the Byzantine emperor.

48. The element of the common faith is not entirely absent from the narrative of the First Crusade, where Anna presents Alexios I as not wanting to attack to crusaders that had arrived in Constantinople, precisely because they were of the same faith; and exactly on account of their shared faith, he characterises a possible conflict as a "fratricide" (*ἐμφύλιον φόνον*). Anna Comnena, *Ἀλεξιάς*, ed. D. REINSCH – A. KAMBLYS [CFHB 40/1], Berlin 2001, I, 9, 5-7. Cf. I Stouraitis' study in this volume, pp. 96-97.

49. Anna Comnena, A', 10, 2: *Ἡ δὲ Ῥωμαίων ἐχθρὸν τηλικούτον ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς εἵλκυσε πρόφασιν δεδωκυῖα τῶν ἀπ' ἐκείνου πολέμων τοῖς πρὸς ἡμᾶς κῆδος ἑτερόφυλόν τε καὶ βάρβαρον καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀπροσάρμοστον [...]. ἐκεῖνος γὰρ ὁ εἰρημένος αὐτοκράτωρ ὁ Δούκας Μιχαὴλ τὴν τοῦ βαρβάρου τούτου θυγατέρα εἰς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν κατηγγυήσατο [...] τοῦ βαρβαρικοῦ κήδους*. For the image of the Normans in Komnene's works, see M. GALLINA, *Il mezzogiorno normanno-svevo visto da Bisanzio*, in: *Il mezzogiorno normanno-svevo*, 201-204. I disagree with the author's claim (p. 204) that the characterisation ἑτερόφυλόν ('of a different race'), constitutes an "aggettivo che, in quanto riconducibile all'ambito dell'alterità, sembrava voler suggerire l'idea di un'estraneità «per natura» tra greci e normanni". In my view, the adjective denotes the cultural difference of the nations, and not an Otherness originating from natural or biological factors.

50. Anna Comnena, A', 10, 4: *Ὁ δὲ Ῥομπέρτος οὗτος Νορμάνος τὸ γένος, τὴν τύχην ἄσημος, τὴν γνώμην τυραννικός [...]*. In the 11th century, which is of direct interest to us, only one Byzantine work characterises Robert Guiscard as a tyrant: the *Stratēgikon* by Kekaumenos, which was composed between the years 1075-1078. The author, wanting to stress that the ruler ought to be mindful of the plans of his opponents, uses as an example the Guiscard's guile in capturing one of his opponents, and on this occasion calls him a tyrant. See KEKAUMENOS, *Στρατηγικόν*, ed. B. WASSILIEWSKY – V. JERNSTEDT, St. Petersburg 1896 [repr. Amsterdam 1965], 35: *ὁ δὲ Ῥουπέρδος ὁ Φράγγος κατὰ συγχώρησιν Θεοῦ γεγωνὸς τύραννος [...]*.

Moving on to the kingdom of France, the first medieval author to whom we should pay particular attention is the monk Ralph Glaber from Burgundy; and this is for two reasons. On the one hand, he provides the most detailed narrative on the reasons that drove the Normans to the south. On the other hand, as he recounted the events of the years 900-1044, having died approximately in 1046-47, he did not experience the Normans' effort to appropriate the territories of southern Italy, and therefore provides a primary image of the Normans' arrival⁵¹. Of course, during the period he is writing, the Normans had already shown their dynamic, as they had managed to receive as a fief from the Lombards the area of Aversa (1030) and they had captured the town of Melfi (1040-1042), which became their base for their assaults against both the Greeks and the Lombards⁵².

The relevant narrative starts with the deeds of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II (976-1025). According to Glaber, Basil II, who ruled the Holy Empire of Constantinople, ordered one of his *satraps*, who were known by the name of *Cataponti* because *they live by the sea*, to go and claim from the cities of southern Italy (in the text: the cities that are beyond the sea, *transmarinis civitatibus*) the tribute that they owed to the Roman Empire (sc. the Western Empire). The satrap obeyed and sent a fleet to plunder the Italian possessions. This went on for two years, and the Byzantines subjugated a large part of the province of Benevento⁵³.

In the same period, the chronicler continues, a very brave Norman, Rudolf, fell into displeasure with count Richard [sc. Richard II, count of

51. No attempt is made to analyse Glaber's narrative by O. GUYOTJEANNIN, *L'Italie méridionale vue du royaume de France (XIe - milieu XIIIe siècle)*, in: *Il mezzogiorno normanno-svevo*, 146. He only points out that the monk sets his narrative of the Normans' arrival in the context of international political circumstances, which absorb it entirely. The papacy is the driving force in an effort that was little other than a struggle against the Byzantines, and which was subsequently taken over by the western emperor.

52. For the events, see F. CHALANDON, *Histoire de la domination normande en Italie et en Sicile*, T. I, Paris 1907 (New York 1960) 76-80, 99-106; H. TAVIANI-CAROZZI, *La terreur du monde. Robert Guiscard et la conquête normande en Italie*, Paris 1996, 145-154, 168-174.

53. Rodulfus Glaber, *Historiarum libri quinque*, ed. J. FRANCE, Oxford 1989, 96: *Tunc etiam imperator Basilius sancti imperii Constantinopolitani precepit cuidam satrape suo, illi qui cognominatur Cataponti, eo scilicet quod iuxta marem inhabitet, ut a transmarinis civitatibus que Romano debentur imperio veniens tribute exigeret; qui libenter annuens misit Grecorum classem ad res Italicas sublaturas. Hoc vero pertemptatum est per duorum annorum spacium; non parva etiam pars subiugata est a Grecis Beneventane provincie.*

Normandy (996-1026)], and fearful of his wrath, took his own men (sc. his knights), went to Rome, and reported his situation to Pope Benedict VIII (1012-1024). The Pope, judging that Rudolf was a most able warrior, related to him his complaints about the invasion of the Roman Empire by the *Greeks*, and his grief over the fact that there was no one in those parts who could repel this alien nation (*viros extere nationis*). When Rudolf heard these things, he vowed to fight against the Byzantines (in the text: “those who live beyond the sea”, *transmarinos*), if the Italians would assist him, for they were the ones suffering rather than him. Then the Pope sent Rudolf and his men to the rulers of Benevento urging them to receive Rudolf peacefully, to always have him as leader in war, and to readily obey him. And so it happened. Subsequently, Rudolf attacked the Byzantine officials who were collecting the taxes and killed them. As a consequence, fighting broke out between Normans and Byzantines, in which the former repeatedly emerged victorious, taking over the castles that the Byzantines abandoned. Meanwhile, the word spread that a few Normans triumphed over the arrogant Byzantines, and many of Rudolf’s compatriots left their homeland for southern Italy, along with their wives and children⁵⁴.

54. Rodulfus Glaber, 96-98: *Contigit autem ipso in tempore ut quidam Normannorum audacissimus, nomine Rodulfus, qui etiam comiti Richardo displicuerat, cuius iram metuens cum omnibus quos secum ducere potuit Romam pergeret, causamque propriam summo pontifici exponeret Benedicto. Qui, cernens eum pugne militari elegantissimum, cepit ei querelam exponere de Grecorum invasione Romani imperii, seque multum dolere quoniam minime talis in suis existere qui repelleret viros extere nationis. Quibus auditis, spopondit se idem Rodulfus adversus transmarinos preliaturum, si aliquod ei auxilium preberent vel illi quibus maior incumbabat genuine necessitudo patrie. Tunc vero predictus papa misit illum cum suis ad Beneventanos primates, ut eum pacifice exciperent, semperque preliaturi pre se haberent, illiusque iussioni unanimes obedirent; egressusque ad Beneventanos qui eum, ut papa iusserat, susceperunt. Illico autem illos ex Grecorum officio qui vectigalia in populo exigebant inuadens Rodulfus, diripuit queque illorum ac trucidavit. His itaque auditis, illorum socii, qui iam plures civitates et castella proprie subiugaverant ditioni, coacto in unum suorum exercitu, inierunt prelium adversus Rodulfum et eos qui eius favebant parti. In quo scilicet prelio pars Grecorum occubuit maxima, insuper et castra aliqua dimisere vacua; que subsecutus Rodulfi exercitus victor obtinuit. [...] Interea cum auditum esset ubique quoniam paucis Normannorum concessa fuisset de superbientibus Grecis victoria, innumerable multitudo etiam cum uxoribus et liberis prosecuta est a patria de qua egressus fuerat [Rodulfus].*

In Glaber's narrative, the plot is structured around the actions of three protagonists: the Byzantines, Rudolf and the Pope, i.e. the Roman Church. The characteristics attributed to the protagonists and the plot of the narrative reveal how – and by the mediation of which cultural representations – the author perceived the arrival of the Normans. In his perception, the Byzantines were, for the westerners, a different cultural group who did not share in the western medieval culture. Glaber not only has the Pope calling them *viros extere nationis*⁵⁵, but also chooses specific words that denote the ethnic Otherness, the 'foreignness' of this group. The term *transmarinus* that the author uses twice⁵⁶ means the one living beyond the sea, and by extension the foreigner, with the Adriatic Sea considered as the boundary between Western Europe and the Byzantine Empire. The activities of the Byzantines turn against the Roman Empire, as they collect by force taxes belonging to the latter. At this point, again, the choice of words by which the narrative is carried forth recites: a Byzantine fleet was sent to plunder the Italian possessions (*Grechorum classem ad res Italicas sublaturas*⁵⁷); the reference to the fleet precisely signifying the use of force by the Byzantines. Later in the narrative, the Byzantines are called *superbientes*⁵⁸, arrogant. Denoting something more than merely a human moral imperfection, *superbia* held a specific position in the value-system of medieval culture, and constituted one of the mortal sins. According to the interpretation of the Old Testament, arrogance was the sin of disobedience, the sin of rising up against the power of God, and by extension, against any earthly authority, secular or spiritual, stemming from God. This is the reason why this sin was considered the foremost enemy of socio-political order⁵⁹. The Byzantines, trespassing the rights of the Roman Empire in southern Italy, turned at the same time against God who had selected the western emperor, and had appointed him to rule over the *oecumene*. Besides, reference to the few Normans who triumphed over the much more numerous Byzantines does not only allude to the superior fighting skills of the Normans. Concealed within this phrase is the notion of Otherness, as boundaries are once more delimited between

55. Ibid.

56. See notes 53 and 54.

57. See note 53.

58. See note 54.

59. W. HEMPEL, *Übermuot diu alte... Der Superbia-Gedanke und seine Rolle in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, Bonn 1970, 9-28.

the Byzantine and the Western world: the Byzantine soldier is implicitly presented as the counter-image of the Western knight, whose code of honour does not allow but for bravery and self-sacrifice in battle.

The perception of the Normans by Glaber is compared to the image of the Byzantines formed by the Westerners, as previously seen⁶⁰. The monk is not primarily interested in the Normans' ethnic origin, because he considers them members of the wider western medieval culture. It can be argued that the lack of information on the Normans' provenance is due to the fact that both they and the author came from the same political entity, the French Kingdom. This might be the reason for the particularly positive image of the Normans in the narrative. The characterisation *audacissimus*⁶¹ (most brave) that the author uses for Rudolf, the Pope's decision to recount to him the situation in southern Italy based on his judgement that Rudolf was a most able warrior (*cernens eum pugne militari elegantissimum, cepit ei querelam exponere de Grecorum invasione Romani imperii*)⁶², as well as the Pope's complaint that nobody in that area was able to repel the Byzantines (*multum dolere quoniam minime talis in suis existeret qui repelleret viros extere antionis*)⁶³, not only provide a positive image of the Normans, but also legitimise their settlement, and by extension their authority, in southern Italy.

The attempt to legitimise Norman authority in the area emerges from the process of narrating itself. Our attention should turn to Pope Benedict VIII's alleged instruction to the Lombard rulers. He urged them to accept Rudolf as their permanent army leader, and to eagerly obey his orders (*semperque preliaturi pre se haberent, illiusque iussioni unanimes obedirent*)⁶⁴. Quite aside from the fact that to command the army was essentially a position of political authority in a period when the person responsible for organising the army usually also held political/administrative powers⁶⁵, the eager obedience of the Lombards to Rudolf's orders denotes their subjection to the Normans. Therefore, thanks to their warrior skills, their fighting superiority

60. See p. 116-119.

61. See note 54. From the context it becomes evident that the adjective *audax* is not used in its negative sense, i.e. 'presumptuous'.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*

65. J. COLEMAN, *A History of Political Thought. From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, Oxford 2000, 13-18.

over the Lombards and the expulsion of the 'alien' Byzantines from Western Europe, the Normans' claims of authority in southern Italian territories are made legitimate.

These claims, as presented by Glaber, were first legitimised by the Roman Church, which led the Normans to the south, and gave the relevant instructions to the Lombard rulers. Thus, it is time to turn our attention to the third protagonist of the plot, Pope Benedict VIII. First, it is necessary to examine how Glaber's narrative has been treated by historical research with regard to the activity of the pontiff. The historians, in their effort to show how events unfolded, attempted to verify the author's information on whether the Roman Church directed the Norman knights to southern Italy⁶⁶. Although in the past it had been claimed that Glaber's narrative reflected the facts⁶⁷, research now accepts that the Roman Church played no part in the Normans' arrival and settlement in the area⁶⁸. H. Hoffmann was the first to challenge Glaber's information, scrutinizing exhaustively the relevant sources. Despite his criticism of the French monk's information, he did not attempt to explain why Glaber presented the beginnings of Norman presence in southern Italy in this way. He limited himself to noting that

66. Rudolf's meeting with Benedict VIII and his transition to southern Italy following the Pope's admonition is also mentioned by the monk Ademar of Chabannes, who narrated the events of years 508-1028, and died around 1031. The present study does not examine this source in detail, as the brevity of the reference and the lack of specific narrative motifs does not allow for any safe conclusions on the monk's conceptual process. See Ademar, *Historiarum libri III*, ed. D. G. WAITZ, [MGH Scriptorum 4], Hannover 1841 (Stuttgart 1981), 140.32-37: *Richardo vero comite Rotomagi, filio Richardi, Normannos gubernante, multitudo eorum cum duce Rodulfo armati Romam, et inde conivente papa Benedicto, Appuliam aggressi, cuncta devastant. Contra quos exercitum Basilius intendit, et congressione bis et ter facta, victores Normanni existunt. Quarto congressu cum gente Russorum victi et prostrati sunt et ad nichilum redacti et innumeri ducti Constantinopolim, usque ad exitum vitae in carceribus tribulati sunt.*

67. E. JORANSON, The inception of the career of the Normans in Italy – Legend and History, *Speculum* 3 (1948) 353-396. The same opinion by J. FRANCE, The occasion of the coming of the Normans to Southern Italy, *Journal of Medieval History* 17.3 (1991) 185-205.

68. HOFFMANN, *Die Anfänge*. See also G. A. LOUD, Betrachtungen über die normannische Eroberung Süditaliens, in: *Forschungen zur Reichs-, Papst- und Landesgeschichte. Peter Herde zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. K. BORCHARDT – E. BÜNZ, Stuttgart 1998, 115-131.

the French monk had scarce information at his disposal⁶⁹. This observation, however, does not answer the question why Glaber perceived these events in such a way, and why he composed his narrative in this specific way, using whatever information he might have had.

An answer could be found by attempting to discern the outlook through which the author approaches the Roman Church. Benedict VIII is presented as the only one who is concerned and saddened by the situation developing in southern Italy. Although the area is considered to belong to the Western Empire, something which is actually pointed out in the text⁷⁰, the western emperor himself is absent from the narrative. Through his absence, the narrating makes evident his negligence and/or inability to act⁷¹. At the same time, there is an implicit comparison with the head of the Roman Church who takes an active interest and eventually procures a solution to the problem. The Roman Church is, therefore, shown as carrying out the role of the saviour of the Christians, and her superiority over the western emperor is brought into relief. This view of the Roman Church by Glaber is in no way surprising. The author from Burgundy spent his life in the monasteries of the area, including Cluny for a brief period⁷². The Cluniac ideology is too well known to be extensively presented here. It is only worth noting that the monastery of Cluny was the breeding ground of efforts for *libertas ecclesiae* from secular interventions. In order to achieve their aim, the abbots of the monastery established close ties with the Roman Church, treating her as the sole protector of ecclesiastical affairs. As the monastery's power and influence grew, so did that of the Holy See, and their close links helped develop the notion of participation in a unitary ecumenical Church. It was precisely

69. HOFFMANN, *Die Anfänge*, 136-142.

70. See notes 53 and 54.

71. It should be noted that subsequently in his narrative, Glaber mentions Henry II's expedition to southern Italy in 1021-22, which is in fact presented as the result of a request by Rudolf the Norman to the western emperor to assist the Normans. This information is not corroborated by other sources: Raoul Glaber, III, 100: *Perspiciensque Rodulfus suos defecisse virosque illius patrie minus belli aptos, cum paucis perrexit ad imperatorem Henricum, expositurus ei huius rei negocium. Qui benigne illum suspiciens diversis muneribus ditavit, quoniam rumor quem de illo audierat cernendi contulerat desiderium. Protinus imperator, congregans exercitum copiosum, ob tuendam rem publicam ire disposuit.*

72. Glaber was only for a brief period at Cluny, but all the monasteries that he lived in, eight in total, were deeply influenced by Cluny's policy, with which in any case they had close ties. See the introduction by J. FRANCE, *Rodulfi Glabri Historiarum*, 23.

this ideology, as it has been shown, that inspired Glaber in structuring his historical narrative⁷³.

His narrative on the reasons for the Normans' arrival in southern Italy should be seen in this context. The author cannot treat an important event of the period he is recounting without connecting it to the activity of the Roman Church, which is furthermore in close proximity to southern Italy⁷⁴. Much more importantly, however, the specific description of the meeting between Rudolf and Benedict VIII, emphasises the pre-eminence of the Holy See, legitimises its claims on the ecclesiastical affairs of southern Italy, and reinforces its position against the Western Empire. It is not at all unlikely that the conceptual framework, which shaped Glaber's thought, was also influenced by contemporary developments in Rome. The monk experienced – even if from a distance – the political and ecclesiastical frictions upsetting the Holy See during the pontificate of Pope Benedict IX (pope in 21.10.1032-Sept.1044, 10.3.1045-1.5.1045, 8.11.1047-16.7.1048). The Pope had opposed the political intervention of the Western Empire in the internal affairs of the Church, and had furthermore attempted to reinforce the influence of the Roman Church in southern Italy, where it was threatened by the activity of the Byzantine Church. In fact, the expulsion of the Pope from the city in 1044 on account of an uprising incited by the Roman nobility is, chronologically, the last event mentioned in the monk's work⁷⁵. Therefore, perhaps wishing to 'cleanse' the Roman Church from its troubles, to stress its superiority over the authority of the western emperor, and to legitimise its policy, Glaber narrated the arrival of the Normans in southern Italy in this manner, attributing the 'deliverance' of the area from the Byzantines to the initiatives of Pope Benedict VIII⁷⁶.

73. FRANCE, *Rodulfi Glabri Historiarum*, 20. A point that is also stressed by HOFFMANN, *Die Anfänge*, 139.

74. The main routes – identical since antiquity – for anyone wishing to reach southern Italy from France necessitated a passage from Rome. See TAVIANI-CAROZZI, *La terreur*, 130-131.

75. Benedict IX was accused of immoral behaviour, but the information is too scant to establish this. For the Pope's activity, about which relatively little is known, see *Dictionnaire historique de la papauté*, s.v. Benoît IX (K.-J. HERMANN); *LexMA*, v., s.v. Benedikt IX (R. SCHIEFFER).

76. H. TAVIANI-CAROZZI, *La terreur*, 132-134, simply quoting the information by Glaber, notes that they reflect the claims of the Holy See to bring Apulia and all the Greek areas of

It is very difficult to establish whether Glaber's narrative was shaped by fragmented information that did not allow the monk to have a clearer picture of the early days of the Normans' arrival in southern Italy, or whether it was a deliberate effort on his part to promote the political importance of the Roman Church. The medieval historical perception understood history as evolving in a linear way, according to God's plan for the salvation of the world. For the medieval man, *historia*, i.e. the writing of history, meant the narrative of actual events, which also incorporated an effort to explicate or interpret those events in a way that made the workings of Divine Providence evident. In his interpretative scheme, the medieval historiographer does not discern any structural differences between his own time and the earlier periods, the events of which he is relating. Thus, it is a frequent phenomenon that events of the past are presented and interpreted on the basis of the cultural circumstances of the historiographer's age⁷⁷. As Glaber was aware of the efforts of Benedict IX to impose the influence of the Roman Church in southern Italy at the expense of the Greek Church, and, at the same time, his attempt to emancipate the Holy See from the interventions of the Western Empire, it is understandable that he correspondingly narrated or interpreted the arrival of the Normans in southern Italy based on whatever information he had. On the other hand, medieval historiography is institutional History, i.e. it relates not to individuals, but to the institutions they represent, such as monasteries, bishoprics, kingdoms, empires. One of its basic purposes is to promote such institutions, to stress their pre-eminence, to legitimise their claims, particularly in times of crisis. The past constitutes, for the medieval historical perception, the weightier argument and the indisputable legitimising factor. Hence, the historiographers customarily relate foundation and genealogical myths, bearing little to no relation to reality⁷⁸. Even in such cases, however, it is not easy to speak of propaganda and deliberate falsification of reality, in modern terms, as we are dealing with a historical perception that differs radically from the modern one. This is precisely the value of studying the *Weltanschauung* of medieval historians. It does not

southern Italy back into the sphere of influence of the Western Empire, and therefore under its own jurisdiction in ecclesiastical affairs, as it had been challenged by the Greek clergy.

77. On medieval historical perception, see GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 92-136, with references to earlier bibliography.

78. GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 337-347.

only contribute to source-criticism in order to reconstruct the events of medieval History, but it also provides us with a research tool for studying the thought-world of medieval people, on which we are now entirely reliant in order to compose the history of the Middle Ages.

Additionally interesting is the information provided by other authors from the French Kingdom, where the effort to legitimise the Norman conquests in southern Italy is equally evident. Reading the narrative of the monk Hugh of Fleury (narrative of years 842-1108), we can see that the author is interested neither in the ethnic origin of the inhabitants of the area, nor in the western emperors' rights over it. His approach and, consequently, his outlook are not ecumenical, but mostly limited to the boundaries of the French Kingdom. Besides, his work focuses on the French kings. In his narrative, the dominant motif is the energy/vigour (*strenuitas*) and the sharpness of wit (*ingenii acrioris*) that characterized the Normans. Referring to the years 1016/17 he relates that Richard, a vigorous man (*vir strenuus*), a freeman yet not from a particularly noble family, arrived with his knights on mount Gargano of Apulia. When the Normans realised that the inhabitants of the area were indolent and inert (*homines eiusdem terrae esse desides et inertes*), they remained there and called others from Normandy with the incentive that, if they joined them, they would win riches and honours. Then, Hugo, making a chronological leap, refers to Robert Guiscard highlighting his sharpness of wit which led him to subjugate Sicily and Calabria (*Rotbertus cum esset vir ingenii acrioris, Siciliam et Calabriam postmodum suo sibi subiecit ingenio*)⁷⁹. The antithetical pairs vigour/indolence and

79. Hugo Floriacensis, *Liber qui modernorum regum Francorum continent actus*, ed. D. G. WAITZ [MGH SS 9], Hannover 1851 (Stuttgart 1983), 389.4-14: *Hac denique tempestate quidam miles Normannus nomine Richardus, vir quidem strenuus et ingenuus, sed non magnae nobilitatis, cum quibusdam militibus suae gentis oracionis causa montem Garganum expeiiit. Sed cum peragrata Apulia animadvertisset homines eiusdem terrae esse desides et inertes, ibidem remansit et socios suos secum retinuit. Demum vero mandavit hominibus suae terrae, ut, si vellent, diviciis et honoribus ditari, ad eum confluerent. At illi deni ac viceni ceperunt crebro ad eum confluere. Inter quos nepos prefati Richardi Rotbertus eo profectus est. Qui cum numero viribusque valde crevissent, magnam provinciae partem sua sibi subposuere industria. Verum memoratus Rotbertus cum esset vir ingenii acrioris, Siciliam et Calabriam postmodum suo sibi subiecit ingenio. Et cum vivendi finem fecisset, duos reliquit filios, Rotgerium et Buiamundum. Quorum Rotgerius dux nobilis fuit, et Buiamundus pene totum orbem fama suae replevit industriae.*

sharpness of wit/inertia, around which the narrative is structured, legitimise the Norman conquest of southern Italy.

Furthermore, the internal economy of the text reveals, in my view, the collective values of French society, or more precisely those of its upper classes, in the 11th century. The virtues attributed to the Norman knights, which, at the same time, the inhabitants of southern Italy lack, should probably be seen as part of a value-system which had taken shape already since the late 10th century in French society, and particularly within the aristocracy. Manorialism led, among other things, to the creation of a class of warriors, *milites*, whose sole occupation was war, and who gradually penetrated into the aristocracy. Committed to the service of their lords through feudal bonds, this group gradually developed a collective code of values, defined by the importance of bravery, loyalty to the lord, and the active pursuit of adventure and material gain⁸⁰. It is not an unrelated development that in the 11th century, when this body of professional warriors had established itself, the French society experienced a significant movement for expansion. As it has been rightly noted, it is in the context of this movement – which in any case characterised the society of Christian Spain as well as those of the German kingdom and the Italian maritime cities – that we should interpret the arrival of the Normans in southern Italy⁸¹. The implicit comparison, in the text, of the two value-systems, i.e. of the French and the southern Italian society, aims at bringing into relief the cultural superiority of the Normans, and, as has been argued, at demonstrating the legitimacy of their conquests⁸².

80. G. DUBY, *Les trois ordres ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme*, Paris 1996, 609-619; J. FLORI, *L'essor de la chevalerie, XIe-XIIIe siècles*, Genève 1986, 119-130. Cf. the narrative of Siegebert of Gembloux, *loc. cit.*, note 30.

81. LOUD, *Betrachtungen*, 116-118; GUYOTJEANNIN, *L' Italie méridionale*, 153 stresses that the narrative of Hugh of Fleury reflects the 'common opinion' of his time, namely that the Norman expeditions constituted a rare example of social and political advancement, and are in fact presented in his work detached from the international political context of the period.

82. The *inertia* of the inhabitants of southern Italy which "convinced" the Normans to settle in the area is also mentioned by Arnulf of Milan. See note 23. ANDENNA, *Il Mezzogiorno normanno-svevo*, 41, referring to the argument of *inertia* as well as of the wealth of the Italian land, notes – but without explaining in detail – that those were two motifs of classical literature or, rather, two commonplaces. In my view, interpreting stereotypical traits as common-

In another chronicle from the French Kingdom, that of the abbot Hugh of Flavigny (narrative of years 1-1102), the atrocities committed by the Normans in Rome in 1084, when they invaded in order to assist Gregory VII, are depicted not as a characteristic trait of the *gens Normannorum*, as in the sources coming from the Western Empire⁸³, but as *mos victoribus*, the custom of victors⁸⁴. It should be taken under consideration, at this point, that the abbot of Flavigny, up to 1096, held an anti-imperial stance in the Investiture Controversy, while he subsequently endorsed the imperial position⁸⁵. This is perhaps one of the reasons why he characterised thus the brutalities perpetrated by the Normans in Rome.

It is time now to summarise the conclusions arising from the analysis of the thought-process of the medieval authors under examination. As a general principle, the conceptual process is defined primarily by the cultural proximity or distance between the observer and the observed. The process of perceiving Otherness is of strategic importance, as it is activated in a context of conflict, when the Other impinges on the interests of the Self. The difference itself is of no consequence. Otherness is of interest only when it affects power-relations, challenging the status quo. This constitutes the starting point of observation, as well as the reason for describing the Other. It is at this point that the *Weltanschauung* defining the process of perception is activated. For the medieval West, the participation in western culture and – consequently – common religious identity played an important role in the perception of the Other. This was one of the reasons why the Normans

places is a methodological error. It presupposes that they are transmitted unchangeable from one era to another. Thus, no structural differentiation (i.e. mentalities, social values) between different eras can be discerned. Cultural representations, even if similar to those of the past, ensue from contemporary ideas or cultural facts.

83. See note 25.

84. *Chronicon Hugonis monachi Viridunensis et Divionensis, abbatis Flaviniacensis*, ed. G. H. PERTZ [MGH Scriptores 8], Hannover 1848 (Stuttgart 1992), 462.48-53: *At quia Normannorum instabilitas Urbe capta et praedae data multa mala perpetraverat, nobilium Romanorum filias stuprando, et nocentes pariter innocentesque pari poena affligendo, nulumque modum, uti victoribus mos est, in rapina, crudelitate, direptione habendo: veritus ne duce recedente infidelitas Romana exagitata recrudesceret, et quos antea habuerat quasi fidos amicos, pateretur infidos, cedendum tempori arbitratus, Salernum se contulit.*

85. See the introduction to his work, in MGH *Scriptores* 8, 280-284.

were initially positively received in southern Italy, and their presence there did not become the subject of observation and analysis. Subsequently, when they impinged on the sovereign rights of the Western Empire in southern Italy with their conquests, they “incited” the conceptual process of their contemporaries, and they were seen as covetous Others, based on criteria whose political dimension could not be dissociated from the religious one.

Both the Western and the Byzantine Empire perceived the Normans through the perspective of their ecumenical claims. The imperial rights, and by extension God who is the source of their legitimacy, constituted the key notions with regard to the perception of the invaders of southern Italy. In the Byzantine Empire, the context within which the Normans were perceived was furthermore defined by the distinction between Byzantine and “barbarian”, which meant to highlight the latter’s political and cultural inferiority. The ethnic difference which was mentioned both by the Byzantines and the Westerners, does not seem to have constituted a defining conceptual notion. It was mentioned as a means of demonstrating Otherness. That is, the Normans were the *gens adventitia* in relation to the inhabitants of southern Italy, but this ethnic difference did not define the way they were perceived. The foreign nation became *diversa* when it was transformed into *de Deo ignorara*, i.e. ignorant of God, as it turned against both human and divine laws by not respecting the rights of the Western Empire. In other words, what appears to have perturbed contemporaries was not the conquest by a foreign people, but the nature of the conquest which was ‘tyrannical’.

Different was the outlook of the authors of the French Kingdom who did not perceive the Normans as Others coveting an area upon which they had no rights; on the contrary, they attempted to legitimise the Norman conquests. The basic notion apparently defining their thought-process was the chivalric culture which was just being formed in the kingdom, i.e. the image of the brave, shrewd knight. It appears, in fact, that they did not see the inhabitants of southern Italy as participating in this culture, since the latter were depicted as slothful and pusillanimous. It would be interesting to establish to what extent this perception was based on a feeling of participation in a shared cultural identity, bringing all the nations of the French kingdom together. In order to draw safe conclusions, however, one should also examine the sources of the 12th century. In any case, the absence of an ecumenical perspective in the kingdom and the recognition of the pre-

eminence of the Roman Church as *mater omnium christianorum* played a crucial part in the creation of a positive image of the Normans by the authors from the French lands.

With regard to the third question posed in the preface of the present study, namely to what extent the Byzantine Empire can be included, in terms of historiography, in the Medieval West, the answer appears to be negative. Byzantium belonged, for the medieval Westerner, to a different cultural grouping, something which, after all, facilitated the Normans' intervention in southern Italy and their initially favourable reception. It is, in fact, telling that the Byzantines, as also, of course, the Saracens, operated as narrative and conceptual paradigms for the activities of the Normans in southern Italy.

At this point, it would be useful to put forth some concluding thoughts with regard to the methodology implemented throughout this study. Analysing the plot and the narrative motifs structuring the narrative proves particularly important in exploring the mentality of the medieval man. For example, one need only remember the motif of the tyrant of the Greek and Roman antiquity, which provides structure to the narrative and, at the same time, a conceptual framework through which the Other is perceived. Detecting this motif in the plot elucidates, first of all, the content of the characterisation "tyrant" used for the Norman kings of southern Italy and Sicily during the 12th century. As was evident from the sources of the 11th century, this word did not only contain the meaning of usurping authority, but it also carried with it an entire sequence of moral and value judgments. Furthermore, this motif demonstrates the survival of ancient political thought in the medieval world. If we turn to the authors from the French Kingdom, we note that the plot is structured around the activity of two protagonists, the Normans and the inhabitants of southern Italy, and the narrating process is built on the antithetical pairs "bravery - pusillanimity" and "industriousness - slothfulness". This narrative structure not only reveals that the Norman conquests in southern Italy were applauded by the authors from the French Kingdom, but – more importantly – also brings to light a particular worldview based on collective social values that had taken shape in that area. In Ralph Glaber's narrative, examining the narrative plot and the functions of the protagonists reveals the mentality of the author and the social group he belonged in, and it offers historians investigating politi-

cal developments, a “tool” with which to study the work of the French monk. In conclusion, it would not be too daring to argue that if we take no interest in decoding the notions that defined the thought-process of medieval men, we will unavoidably keep seeing their world through our own eyes, and we will be “historiographing” our own, personal, “middle ages”.

The perception of difference and the differences of perception:
The image of the Norman invaders in southern Italy in contemporary
western medieval and Byzantine sources

The paper examines the image of the Norman invaders in southern Italy in contemporary western medieval and Byzantine sources. The comparative method and the methodology of linguistic and literary criticism are equally applied. The interest is focused on the conceptual notions that defined the perception of the Norman invaders by medieval men and, consequently, their cultural representation. In this way, mentalities and social values are revealed, and thus, historians investigating political developments are offered a research tool for interpreting medieval historical sources.