"Videbantur Gens Effera": Defining and Perceiving Peoples in the Chronicles of Norman Italy

Hysell

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses

Part of the European History Commons

Recommended Citation

https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/394
“VIDEBANTUR GENS EFFERA”: DEFINING AND PERCEIVING PEOPLES IN THE CHRONICLES OF NORMAN ITALY

by

Jesse Hysell

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of History
Advisor: Luigi Andrea Berto, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
June 2011
“VIDEBANTUR GENS EFFERA”: DEFINING AND PERCEIVING PEOPLES IN THE CHRONICLES OF NORMAN ITALY

Jesse Hysell, M. A.
Western Michigan University, 2011

The goal of this project is to analyze the ways different cultural groups in Sicily and southern Italy were depicted in a set of historical texts associated with the Norman takeover of those regions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. To achieve that aim, I consider social vocabulary applied to three distinct peoples (native Italians, Greeks, and Muslims) in five sources written by Amatus of Montecassino, Geoffrey Malaterra, William of Apulia, Alexander of Telese, and Hugo Falcandus. Although recent scholarship has posited that medieval identity was often felt through a “self versus other” or “Christian versus non-Christian” dichotomy, I have not found that the actual language contained in my sources ever devolved into such simplistic, binary terms.

On the contrary, the images these medieval historians constructed were informed, contingent, and rational. The highly nuanced depictions of outsiders were informed by the style and content of their texts, contingent upon the demands of their patrons and audiences, and rational in that the authors made politically prudent choices about what to write. Though the perceptions and definitions applied to these groups of people were, admittedly, sometimes based on uninformed stereotypes, they were more often deliberately constructed images that were highly dependent on the cultural milieu in which they were created.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER

### I. INTRODUCTION  ................................................................. 1

  Preliminaries: Statement of Thesis and Outline of Methodology ...... 1

  Historiography ........................................................................ 12

  Sources ..................................................................................... 22

### II. PRAGMATICS AND HOSTILITY IN DEFINING THE MUSLIMS........... 31

  Introduction: Terms of Reference ........................................... 31

  Anti-Islamic Rhetoric among the Chroniclers ............................. 32

  Treachery, Pride, and Greed: Non-Religious Denigration of Muslim
  Characters ............................................................................. 48

  Positive and Ambivalent Portrayals of Muslims ....................... 61

  Conclusions .............................................................................. 78

### III. THE LOMBARDS: EMPATHY AND ODUIUM............................. 82

  Introduction: Terms of Reference ........................................... 82

  Hostile Vocabulary in the Eleventh-Century Texts ..................... 85

  Three Interpretations of Civitate ............................................ 88

  The Princely Lombard Family of Salerno ................................ 93

  Twelfth-Century Interpretations of the Lombards .................... 99

  Calabrians .............................................................................. 107

  Bari ......................................................................................... 111

  Pisa and Venice ...................................................................... 115
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CONTEMPT FOR THE <em>GRAECI</em></td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Terms of Reference</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes of the Byzantines</td>
<td>131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “Greeks” of Sicily</td>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William of Apulia and the Byzantines</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>151</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. <em>GENS, NATIO,</em> AND <em>POPULUS</em></td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoffrey Malaterra, William of Apulia, and Alexander of Teles..</td>
<td>156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gens</em> and <em>Populus</em> in the <em>Liber de Regno Sicile</em></td>
<td>163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>174</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>176</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>176</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Image of the Saracens</td>
<td>177</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Image of Italians</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Image of the Greeks</td>
<td>185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gens, Natio,</em> and <em>Populus</em></td>
<td>188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>190</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Preliminaries: Statement of Thesis and Outline of Methodology

“At first Gisulf spurned Robert’s offer, not because he might have joined his sister with a greater or nobler man, but because the Gauls seemed a savage people, barbarous, dreadful, of inhuman mind (quia Galli / esse videbantur gens efferā, barbara, dira, / mentis inhumānae”). Thus William of Apulia recounted the initial reaction Robert Guiscard faced in his marriage proposal to Sichelgaita, sister of Gisulf II, the last Lombard prince of Salerno. In this passage, the author has made a maximum statement about human relations through a minimal use of language. The words, written at the end of the eleventh century, highlight the fierce tension present in a land of cultural contact, where diverse groups of people were constantly interacting and, at times, competing. Here, the author has underscored the hostility with which the natives of the medieval Mezzogiorno perceived the region’s latest arrivals, the Normans.

Such a deeply prejudicial attitude toward these newcomers, expressed through four highly charged pejorative adjectives, reveals several important points. It suggests, to begin with, that the Lombards considered the Normans not only violent, but brutal in the extreme. Barbara emphasizes their foreignness, while efferā, dira, and inhumāna seem almost to imply that they were unthinking beasts rather than people. Yet even so, the fact that they constituted a gens makes it apparent that they were indeed one of the various

---

“peoples” who inhabited the earth, albeit possessing certain unsavory characteristics that set them apart from the rest. All of these adjectives, of course, hinge upon the word “seem,” expressed with the passive form of *videre*. William was supplying his readers with an impression, an appearance from the point of view of a Lombard observer, and simultaneously taking great care to distance himself from such attitudes. These are, nevertheless, stereotypes in the truest sense of the word, in that they refer to the image, or fixed impression, that the prince of Salerno held of the Normans.

Based on Germana Gandino’s work on the writings of Liutprand of Cremona and Luigi Andrea Berto’s analysis of John the Deacon’s *Istoria Veneticorum*, the chief aim of this ethnographic study is to analyze the social vocabulary applied to peoples in the chronicles of southern Italy and Sicily from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. During this so-called Norman period, these lands represented the quintessential frontier region of the central Mediterranean, where Latin Christian, Greek Christian, and Muslim influences collided and overlapped. Successive waves of transalpine migration added a new element to this already complex dynamic, led to the eventual establishment of a monarchy, and inspired a series of texts chronicling the area’s tumultuous history.

---

2 Germana Gandino, *Il vocabolario politico e sociale di Liutprando di Cremona* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1995); Luigi Andrea Berto, *Il vocabolario politico e sociale della "Istoria Veneticorum" di Giovanni Diacono* (Padua: Il poligrafo, 2001). In particular see chapter eight of Gandino’s study and chapter six of Berto’s. As their titles indicate, both of these works covered a wide range of political and social terms and were not restricted to ethnography, as mine is.


Assessing how the authors of these sources used language to define the “Saracen,” “Lombard,” and “Greek” inhabitants of this area represents an important step in better understanding cultural interaction in the High Middle Ages.5

The following sources6 will be used: Amatus of Montecassino’s *L’Ystoire de li Normant*, completed around 1080, which portrayed the Norman arrival in the Mediterranean as the unfolding of divine providence;7 William of Apulia’s *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*, finished probably in 1099 and composed as an epic poem focusing on the life of Robert Guiscard;8 Geoffrey Malaterra’s *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius*, which was written at about the same time as William’s *Gesta*, but as a prose narrative concerned mainly with the deeds of Robert Guiscard’s younger brother, Roger;9 the *Ystoria Rogerii regis Sicilie Calabrie atque Apulie*, written by Alexander, abbot of the Benedictine monastery of the Holy Savior in Telese, Italy in the mid-twelfth century and meant to depict Roger’s son, King Roger II, in a heroic light as an instrument of divine justice;10 finally, the *Liber de Regno Sicilie*

---


6 All of the texts are discussed more fully at the end of the introduction.


---
attributed to a certain “Hugo Falcandus,” who wrote some time between 1170 and 1180, concentrating on the reigns of William I and William II.\(^\text{11}\)

Several factors justify this selection of texts.\(^\text{12}\) To begin with, they are the fundamental sources for the period and locale under discussion, and they have sufficient homogeneity to allow meaningful comparisons to be made. The authors belonged to a common group, in that they were all learned writers in the service of the ruling “Norman” elite.\(^\text{13}\) All owed allegiance, in one way or another, to the courts of southern Italy and Sicily, and all were attached through bonds of patronage to the dukes, counts, and kings who claimed control of those lands. Three of these authors are known to have been monks (specifically Benedictine), and, for the other two, there is a lack of evidence to the contrary.\(^\text{14}\) From a geographic standpoint, moreover, their narratives were confined

---


\(^\text{12}\) Two other potential sources, Falco of Benevento’s Chronicon Beneventanum and Romuald of Salerno’s Chronicon, both from the twelfth century, have been excluded from this study. Falco’s chronicle, written outside the Norman Kingdom, was first of all meant as an attack on King Roger II, whom he described as a rex nefandus. It seemed more appropriate to select only authors who, if not Normans themselves, at least took a favorable view toward Norman rule. The text, moreover, has been transmitted indirectly, surviving in the chronicle of the Cistercian monastery of St. Mary of Ferraria, and incompletely, as the beginning and ending have been lost. Although it is true that the sole extant manuscript of Amatus of Montecassino is quite problematic as well, its importance as the earliest of the five sources meant that it could not justifiably be excluded. The chronicle of Romuald, archbishop of Salerno from 1153 to 1181, has been left out for other reasons. The text was written as a world chronicle, and therefore only part of it concerns events from the twelfth-century kingdom of Sicily, and much of that material discusses only the Peace of Venice of 1177, which Romuald attended. Certain sections, moreover, may have been the product of another author, which would complicate the task of terminological analysis. Truly, Romuald’s text deserves its own separate study. On these two sources, see Errico Cuozzo and Edoardo D’Angelo, “Falcone da Benevento,” in Dizionario biografico degli italiani 44 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1994), 321–5; G. A. Loud, “The Genesis and Context of the Chronicle of Falco of Benevento,” Anglo-Norman Studies 15 (1993): 177–198; Donald J. A. Matthew, “The Chronicle of Romuald of Salerno,” in The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to R. W. Southern, eds. R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 239–274.

\(^\text{13}\) Pierre Toubert has in this regard referred to “l’homogénéité culturelle relative” of the authors. Pierre 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), eds. Raffaele Licinio and Francesco Violante (Bari: Centro di Studi Normanni-Svevi della Università degli Studi di Bari, 2006), 32.

\(^\text{14}\) That is, Amatus of Montecassino, Geoffrey Malaterra, and Alexander of Telese. E. Pontieri, introduction to De rebus gestis Rogerii, iv; Vincenzo de Bartholomaeis, introduction to Storia, xxii–xxiii.
almost entirely to the same area, rarely straying beyond the confines of the central Mediterranean. In addition, these authors belonged to the same roughly defined period, as all of them wrote within a century of one another.

Though chronicles were, by and large, written with an obvious polemic intent, they do provide considerable information about the past that is not necessarily available elsewhere.¹⁵ All five of these particular histories were written within a century of one another, and together they offer a broad survey of many different peoples, or gentes, in one of the most diverse regions of Europe. This data, when viewed through a sufficiently critical lens, can be drawn on to learn more about how societies responded to the crises of their age. Chronicles also generally tend to cover a longer period of time, and hence include a broader assortment of cultural groups, than hagiographical texts. More importantly, for this period, there are no plausible alternatives (such as works of travel literature) concerned with southern Italy. In short, the wide time span covered as well as

¹⁵ For the purposes of this discussion, the term “chronicle” is used simply to mean a written narrative history. This is by no means to imply that medieval histories necessarily fall into neatly defined genres according to modern standards. Likewise, I refer to the authors under discussion here as “chroniclers” for the sake of stylistic variation. For a brief overview of the problems involved in classifying medieval histories based on specific criteria, see Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, introduction to Historiography in the Middle Ages, ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1–13.
the geographic and thematic connections between these texts enable detailed, comparative analyses to be made about the depiction of peoples in these histories.

Similarities aside, these sources also have sufficient diversity to allow for the discovery and analysis of fascinating variations. A determined effort has been made to balance a topical approach while paying due respect to each text – without sufficient contextualization there is a danger that all the material presented will begin to look the same. It is important to keep in mind the individuality of the authors, the audiences they were writing for, and what is known about their backgrounds. To begin with, differences in style, ranging from poetry to prose, can illustrate the effect of literary conventions on the same basic “stock” material. This is especially true for the earliest three authors—Malaterra, Amatus, and William—who often supplied three alternative versions of one episode. Paying careful attention to the ways their accounts differ helps shed light on the unique priorities of each author. In this regard, further diversity among the sources stems from patronage and authorial intent, two criteria that were, as will be shown, highly variable. Finally, from a chronological standpoint, the texts’ time range makes it possible to assess the degree to which language and attitudes resisted or embraced change between 1080 and 1180. Such an assessment holds special importance for southern Italy and Sicily, where, in this period, the social and political environment witnessed considerable transformation.

---


17 Mathieu wrote in the introduction to her edition of the *Gesta Roberti Wiscard* that “il faut donc combiner les *Gesta* avec les autres sources, surtout les chroniques d’Aimé et de Malaterra, pour obtenir une vue d’ensemble et parfois pour comprendre les faits indiqués très brièvement.” Mathieu, introduction to *Gesta*, 26–27.
With that said, there are several issues that must be acknowledged at the outset, some of which relate to medieval literature generally and some of which are peculiar to this series of sources. Four of the five texts are in Latin, but this common characteristic implies less homogeneity than first appearances might indicate.\textsuperscript{18} The epic poet William of Apulia, for example, drew his inspiration from an ancient tradition of glorifying heroic deeds in verse, and his writing testifies to a remarkably high level of learning.\textsuperscript{19} In comparison, Alexander of Telese’s language was probably less influenced by classical Latinity.\textsuperscript{20} Regardless of their education, however, the task of writing history presented these writers with both a way to demonstrate their knowledge and to celebrate their patron.\textsuperscript{21} As a result, it can be quite difficult to distinguish which material was original and which was borrowed from an earlier source. However, since the purpose of this study is not to track down and chart the intellectual heritage of the chroniclers (as important a task as that is), but rather to explore the ways in which members of a specific community perceived and portrayed the people who inhabited their central Mediterranean world, this issue should not be seen as a complete stumbling block.

\textsuperscript{18} The only existing copy of Amatus of Montecassino’s work is a fourteenth-century French translation. For more on this, see below.

\textsuperscript{19} For detailed analysis of the poet’s style and language in comparison to contemporaries see Mathieu, introduction to \textit{Gesta}, 56–70. “Les critiques postérieurs plus que l’écrivain, et tout en ne méconnaissant pas ses défauts . . . s’accordent à reconnaître en lui un poète supérieur à la moyenne de ses contemporains, et dans son œuvre une des meilleures épépées historiques du temps, par sa clarté, sa simplicité, sa versification habile et pas trop maniérée, son classicisme sans imitations serviles, et, par endroits, quelque élégance et quelque vivacité.”

\textsuperscript{20} De Nava observed, for example, that Alexander “pur tenendo presenti le regole della grammatica classica, slitta spesso nel sermo vulgaris.” De Nava, introduction to \textit{Ystoria}, xx. It would, however, be wrong to characterize this historian as uneducated.

\textsuperscript{21} Some work has been done on the intellectual history of these writers, particularly that of William of Apulia, for which see Umberto Ronca, \textit{Cultura medioevale e poesia latina d’Italia nei secoli XI e XII} (Rome: Società Laziale Editrice, 1892), 403–409; A. Pagano, \textit{Il poema} Gesta Roberti Wiscardi di Guglielmo Pugliese (Naples: S. Morano, 1909), 108–118; Mathieu, introduction to \textit{Gesta}, 61–62; Emily Albu, \textit{The Normans in their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion} (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2001), 106–144. Albu observed that the beginning of the text echoes Vergil’s \textit{Aeneid} while later sections darken to resemble Lucan’s \textit{Pharsalia}, in her view indicating the author’s disillusionment with Robert Guiscard.
The single-most important influence for all of these writers was naturally the Bible, and its presence can be found throughout the pages of these texts. No language spontaneously generates, and, for medieval authors, it was this Book that was regarded as the font of all knowledge, helping supply them with vocabulary and mental schemas. In an era when any novelty was regarded with skepticism, if not outright hostility, historians turned to the ancients as a matter of course. Thus, at the outset, there is an unavoidable gap between literary convention and the "historical reality" being described.22

Yet there is reason to be optimistic. When it comes to gauging mental attitudes, this distance between text and reality becomes less of an issue, since mentalities and realities are not necessarily one and the same. Behind the vocabulary, whether biblical or classical, lurks the actual social environment of Sicily and southern Italy in the High Middle Ages, a setting in which groups defined one another, drew boundaries, and often fiercely competed. Part of the challenge of this project necessarily requires a certain "chipping away" at the literary veneer to reveal how boundaries and definitions were created. One of the best ways to achieve that task is to search the texts for the language of hostility and intolerance, which involves evaluating the individual words employed to describe people as well as assessing the stereotypes or "images" contained in the

22 This gap has in recent years been made all the more apparent by the advent of the "linguistic turn," which questioned the mimetic capacity of language in general. It has led to some rather extreme positions, above all from Hayden White, who sees historical narratives as no more than a literary genre. According to this view, history is challenged at two levels of reality—as both event and as account. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). Others, including medievalists, are more optimistic about the historian's ability to explore human experience through the study of language, for which see Robert M. Stein, "Literary Criticism and the Evidence for History," in *Writing Medieval History* ed. Nancy Partner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 67–87. For commentary from a non-medievalist, see Georg G. Iggers "The "Linguistic Turn": The End of History as a Scholarly Discipline?" in *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, ed. Georg G. Iggers (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 118–133.
narratives. This critical approach seeks not so much to identify and interpret the presence of archaic or classicizing elements within a text, but to restore the vocabulary contained therein to the context in which it was created, and to interpret the meaning of each term with respect to the world of its author.

Coming at the texts from this direction, the extent to which the monastic worldview colored depictions of outsiders must be kept in mind. It could be argued that monks, having withdrawn from the world, would have seen anyone who led the secular life as an alien “other.” Viewed from the austere seclusion of a place like Montecassino, would any group of people have been regarded with anything but detachment? Or, to put it another way, could attachment to the Order of St. Benedict take precedence over attachment to regional or cultural loyalties? What will become evident in the following chapters is that, while a monastic (or Cassinese) perspective did (to an extent) influence some writers, rarely did these chroniclers evince any great difficulty in expressing their appreciation and aversion for different peoples, or gentes.

With regard to depictions of the Muslims, the influence of the crusades cannot be ruled out either. These authors wrote in a period when Christendom was reacting against centuries of Islamic advance and when intellectuals were beginning to look at non-

---

23 The term “stereotype” is obviously a modern expression that cannot capture the opinions of medieval people in a wholly satisfactory way. I use it because the concept (first employed by journalist Walter Lippmann in 1922) simply means prejudicial images, which are, broadly speaking, the subject of this study. Lippmann referred to the stereotype as the “image in our heads,” “its hallmark is that it precedes the use of reason; is a form of perception, imposes a certain character on the data of our senses before the data reach the intelligence.” Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991 [reprint]), 98. The category of the stereotype has been criticized in recent theoretical studies of ethnicity and is now sometimes substituted with the word “images,” for which see Kujawinski, “Le immagini,” 771–772. Although it is of course hard to be precise with regard to the duration and diffusion of judgments made about groups of people who lived centuries ago, it nevertheless seems an appropriate enough term to use here, since there are indeed preconceived opinions clearly at work in these texts.

24 In that regard, this methodology places much more emphasis on social history than intellectual history. For the thoughts expressed here I am indebted to Germana Gandino and Luigi Andrea Berto. For elaboration on the utility of this approach, see especially the introduction to *Il vocabulario politico e sociale di Liutprando di Cremona*, 1–3.
Christians in new ways. Sicily has, however, often been regarded as a land without crusade, a place where the kind of religious zealotry prevalent elsewhere in Europe never took hold. More radical interpretations have even seen it as a cosmopolitan land of toleration and coexistence. The language applied to Islam and its adherents therefore needs to be treated with some care. A thorough examination of that language, however, should help clarify the impact of a "crusader mentality" in this particular corner of Christendom.

As considerable uncertainty about the existence of national sentiment and ethnicity in the Middle Ages still lingers, a study devoted to the social vocabulary contained in these texts is, at its core, meant to advance scholarly discourse on those two topics. It goes without saying that philology is hardly unfamiliar to medievalists, yet

---


works on an entire set of texts, which look at a wide range of terms, remain rare.\(^{28}\)

Although this is intended to be a limited study, it may nevertheless lead to some refinement of understanding in what is, admittedly, an extremely vast and complex area of scholarship. It must also be stressed that this analysis, although utilizing “Norman” sources, does not address how the Normans themselves were presented, nor attempt to resolve the debate on the *gens Normannorum*, as that would be well outside the scope of this project and has been studied at length elsewhere.\(^{29}\) On the contrary, a terminological analysis of the vocabulary that these chroniclers applied to non-Norman outsiders, which has never been done before, will shed light on perceptions of the “other” and contribute to the debate on the meaning of ethnicity and the nation in this period.\(^{30}\)


Historiography

Medievalists have often questioned the significance and even the existence of nations in the Middle Ages.\(^{31}\) Because the modern nation depends so heavily on an advanced state apparatus as well as the collective imagination of its populace, historians typically place the beginnings of national sentiment relatively late.\(^{32}\) Bernard Guenée, for instance, believed that the stabilization and development of states in the twelfth century led to an increasing realization that subjects and sovereigns formed a unified community.\(^{33}\) It was only in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, he argued, that inhabitants of a kingdom came to distinguish between themselves and those born outside their political community.\(^{34}\) Bernd Schneidmüller has largely upheld Guenée’s opinion, emphasizing that national consciousness resulted only through a long and extended process.\(^{35}\) Writing of France, he argued that the nation, when it existed at all,

\(^{31}\) Robert Bartlett has denied any direct link between political and ethnic homogeneity in the Middle Ages, writing that “modern nationalism at its crudest posits primordial and irreducible units called nations, each of which has the right to its own state. Medieval thinkers often drew political conclusions from race, but not usually this one . . . A nation with its own language should have its own laws and customs; it did not insist on political sovereignty.” Bartlett, “Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity,” 51–52. Norbert Kersken held a rather different position, and highlighted a number of examples of national historical writing from as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries. See Norbert Kersken, “High and Late Medieval National Historiography,” in Historiography in the Middle Ages, ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 181–215.

\(^{32}\) On the role of “collective imagination” in shaping the modern nation, see Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New York: Verso, 1991). Anderson observed that, before the emergence of modern nationalism, the medieval world was divided primarily along religious and dynastic lines. The members of Christendom shared a sense of attachment to one another without any need for face-to-face interaction. Christians, like Muslims, created a sense of belonging, a powerful mental image of communion, partly through the use of a holy language and partly through a holy text. For Anderson, though, the boundaries of any imagined community were elastic, and subject to constant revision. Identity in his model was a process, one that was shaped by rational choice and that was contingent upon historical circumstance. Ibid., 12–36.


\(^{34}\) Guenée, States and Rulers, 64–65.

was confined to a small circle of elites throughout much of the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{36} For Schneidmuller, inhabitants came to be aware of their kingdom’s unique individuality only in the thirteenth century as monarchical power and institutions gradually expanded.\textsuperscript{37}

From another angle, Patrick Geary has examined the fluid and artificial nature of premodern ethnicity, primarily in an effort to dispute historical bases for modern nationalist sentiment. In \textit{The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe}, he contended that ethnic nationalism was an invention of the nineteenth century by showing how antique and early medieval perceptions of group identity differed from those of today.\textsuperscript{38} To that end, Geary reduced identity in the premodern world to two forms: one constitutional (or political) and one ethnic (or cultural).\textsuperscript{39} According to him, the former, more inclusive model favored by the Romans gave way to the latter as the Western Empire dissolved in the fourth and fifth centuries.\textsuperscript{40} While the \textit{populus Romanus} splintered into \textit{gentes}, kings came to rely on classical historiography for political legitimation.\textsuperscript{41} Thus Jordanes and subsequent historians, drawing on Greco-Roman history and legend, wrote barbarian origin stories to validate the ascendancy of these barbarian communities.\textsuperscript{42} While his historiographical assessments were fundamentally sound, the neatness of Geary’s theoretical approach perhaps overlooked a more complex reality. Moreover, Geary’s analysis stopped (rather arbitrarily) at the ninth century, failing to address any changes in perceptions of group membership that took place in the later Middle Ages.

\textsuperscript{36} Schneidmuller, “Constructing Identities of Medieval France,” 16.
\textsuperscript{37} Schneidmuller, “Constructing Identities of Medieval France,” 17.
\textsuperscript{39} Geary, \textit{The Myth of Nations}, 55.
\textsuperscript{40} Geary, \textit{The Myth of Nations}, 62.
\textsuperscript{41} Geary, \textit{The Myth of Nations}, 60
\textsuperscript{42} Geary, \textit{The Myth of Nations}, 61.
Regarding the histories of Norman Italy, scholarship has tended to focus on the concept of Norman identity with comparatively little attention paid to the chroniclers’ attitudes toward other groups. Although these identity studies have raised awareness of, and appreciation for, this body of sources, they have perhaps been constrained by their scope. Furthermore, although much work has been done to analyze the concept of Norman identity expressed in the histories, there has been no comprehensive ethnographic analysis of how the chroniclers perceived the other peoples described in these narratives. All too often, scholars narrow in on how a single people were viewed without considering how each author viewed every people, or how membership in general was defined. More to the point, though an effort has been made to uncover the fundamental attitudes contained in these narratives concerning the Normans and their identity, a study of the attitudes expressed about non-Normans has never been done.

In his 1982 article, “The Gens Normannorum—Myth or Reality?,” Graham Loud produced a brief but insightful overview of the topoi used by eleventh-century writers in which he evaluated the significance of ethnicity in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Looking at two of the most widely-read historians of Norman Italy, Amatus of Montecassino and Geoffrey Malaterra, he addressed the question of how ethnicity was expressed and understood in the larger medieval world. In an effort to identify the literary antecedents of these authors, Loud considered the underlying themes of the texts in terms of the ancient concepts of gens and natio. By describing the innate characteristics attributed to the gens Normannorum and by comparing those traits to other

---

43 Consider, for instance, Davis’s The Normans and Their Myth, which covered three centuries and multiple regions of Europe in less than 150 pages.
groups, he located and traced a literary tradition extending back to antiquity. Amatus and Geoffrey were, perhaps, influenced by the earlier writings of the Norman monk Dudo of Saint-Quentin, yet Dudo himself had drawn on the *origo* stories of Isidore. According to Isidore’s model, membership in a *gens* involved common descent, distinct physical characteristics, and a unique worldview. Yet these ideas were not new even in Isidore’s day, as Loud observed, since the concept of an innate character belonging to each *gens* had been expressed both by Sallust and by Aristotle before him. Although the brevity of this article prevented him from making far-reaching conclusions, Loud highlighted the fact that the process of defining and differentiating peoples in the High Middle Ages, particularly in these Italian sources, deserved greater consideration.

Thirteen years after Loud’s influential article, Kenneth Baxter Wolf attempted to reconstruct the mentality behind some of the same southern Italian sources in *Making History: The Normans and Their Historians in Eleventh-Century Italy*. In this comparative analysis, which looked at the earliest and most hostile views of the Normans found in papal and Cassinese histories alongside the later “heroic” texts, Wolf described the historiographic process involved in transforming the Normans into protagonists. By examining the literary devices available to the chroniclers, he revealed both how medieval intellectuals made sense of the past as well as how history could be used to legitimize a group of parvenu conquerors. Such efforts, as Wolf noted, were part of a longstanding tradition begun by writers such as Jordanes, Bede, and Paul the Deacon,

---

49 Loud, “The *Gens Normannorum*,” 110.
who through their own histories had helped to found this genre of barbarian apologetic.\textsuperscript{51} He concluded that the authors employed several legitimizing strategies: Amatus of Montecassino built on the concept of the Normans as monastic protectors,\textsuperscript{52} William of Apulia presented them as continuators of the Lombard legacy,\textsuperscript{53} and Geoffrey Malaterra expounded on their lust for domination.\textsuperscript{54}

Because he sought to demonstrate that narrative material reflected an author’s identity, Wolf did make a certain effort to discuss how chroniclers perceived different groups. For instance, he compared William of Apulia’s slightly more sympathetic treatment of the Lombards to the negative images of them encountered in Amatus’s and Malaterra’s histories.\textsuperscript{55} Elsewhere, Wolf described Amatus’s portrayal of Greek cruelty\textsuperscript{56} and Malaterra’s peculiar attitude toward Muslims.\textsuperscript{57} Yet although \textit{Making History} may have contained some commentary on the characterization of different groups in these eleventh-century histories, such analysis was limited in both quantity and detail.

Nevertheless, Wolf’s outstanding work, based on the careful treatment of these chronicles as textual artifacts, did much to reveal the ways in which educated minds in that period understood the people and events surrounding them.

Emily Albu carried out her own assessment of the perceptions held by Norman historians with \textit{The Normans in Their Histories: Propaganda, Myth, and Subversion}. In it, she searched for negative subthemes in a number of narratives, scouring them for

\textsuperscript{51} Wolf, \textit{Making History}, 4.
\textsuperscript{52} Wolf, \textit{Making History}, 87–122.
\textsuperscript{53} Wolf, \textit{Making History}, 123–142.
\textsuperscript{54} Wolf, \textit{Making History}, 143–171.
\textsuperscript{55} Wolf, \textit{Making History}, 127.
\textsuperscript{56} Wolf, \textit{Making History}, 97.
\textsuperscript{57} Wolf, \textit{Making History}, 160. The author saw Malaterra as wavering between ambivalence, admiration, and intolerance. “The reader of Geoffrey’s history is left to balance this deprecatory treatment of Islam with a number of other images of Saracens that range from benign to downright sentimental.” Ibid., 160.
subtle, covert condemnations of the Normans that writers had slipped between the lines of their texts. This nuanced approach led Albu to argue for what she believed to be a persistent mood of despair lamenting the effects of their desire for domination, a thread hidden in the lines of all of the works she examined. In her view, the Norman writers were not seeking to inspire their readers with confidence, but were in fact lamenting a “traitorous and violent history” that extended from England to Antioch.

Though Albu included a chapter on “The Normans in the South,” she only examined William of Apulia’s *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* in any significant detail, neglecting the other Italian chronicles previously mentioned. Borrowing from observations made by Umberto Ronca in the nineteenth century, Albu asserted that William had drawn directly from Ovid, Vergil, and Lucan in order to craft what she found to be a satirically-minded epic. Unlike other scholars, she insisted that this history was written not as panegyric, but as a way to voice the author’s unease over Robert Guiscard’s greed and cruelty. In Albu’s opinion, William’s verse contained allusions to the violence of Lucan’s *Pharsalia* that were meant to be read as an indictment of Norman aggression. Perhaps most surprisingly, she also contended that William wrote favorably of the Greeks, his story’s chief antagonists, and that he was

---

58 Albu, *The Normans in Their Histories*. See especially 239, where she spoke of “The anxiety of Wace’s narrative . . . the lupine metaphors for Dudo’s Northmen . . . the disillusionment of the *Gesta Francorum*, and the lamentations of Orderic Vitalis.” For her discussion of the Italian histories in particular, see Ibid., 138–142.


60 Albu, *The Normans in Their Histories*, 125. In reality, William of Apulia’s direct borrowings from classical writers are few and far between. Mathieu, introduction to *Gesta*, 61–62


actually quite sympathetic to the Byzantine Empire. While it is regrettable that Albu provided little discussion of the other major histories of Norman Italy, and admirable that she attempted to identify connections between classical and medieval authors, it is also notable that her work was received with a degree of skepticism.

Published in 2003, Hugh Thomas’s *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation, and Identity, 1066–1220* added to the ever-growing literature on ethnic encounters in the medieval period. It is by far one of the most significant studies carried out in this area in recent years. Focusing specifically on post-Conquest Anglo-Norman relations, Thomas addressed how and why English identity ultimately triumphed in the face of the Norman military victory. Recognizing ethnicity as a mental construct, and identity as the process used to reinforce that construct, Thomas examined references to ethnicity in medieval chronicles in order to explain the factors that led to assimilation in England.

A substantial part of his work concentrated on stereotypes and the strategies involved in classifying people into groups, showing how boundaries could be maintained or dissolved in the Middle Ages. Citing a number of histories, Thomas demonstrated the ways in which ethnic invective promoted the formation of national identity in Norman England. He contended that stock expressions about what it meant to be English,

---


whether positive or negative, ultimately strengthened Englishness as a construct and
served to maintain the image of a distinct group with distinct characteristics.68

This impressive investigation into cultural interaction drew examples of hostility
and tolerance from a wide variety of historical narratives and revealed that medieval
intellectuals often relied on stereotypes when it served their purposes. Thomas’s primary
intent, however, concerned how social status made cultural interaction more or less
likely, and therefore contained little actual assessment of the precise language used by
medieval historians in describing the Anglo-Saxons and Normans.69 Thomas certainly
sampled a portion of the cultural terminology employed by writers such as William of
Jumièges and Henry of Huntingdon, but the extent to which he used this approach was
fairly restricted.70 An account of all the instances in which terms, stereotypes, or other
opinions appeared would have been more convincing, and more reliable, than presenting
a few passages taken from a source without sufficient contextualization.

In the absence of more direct evidence about cultural relations, which medieval
writers did not necessarily address in an explicit way, one of the most effective and
convincing techniques for evaluating medieval attitudes toward nations and ethnicity has
relied on full-scale, detailed analysis of the words applied to those concepts. In Il
vocabolario politico e sociale di Liutprando di Cremona, Germana Gandino conducted a
comprehensive study of the entire political and social lexicon of Liutprand, the tenth-
century bishop of Cremona, which he employed in his Antapodosis, Historia Ottonis, and
Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana. She accounted for a wide set of terms,
including words of lordship and authority, such as potens, dives, and nobilis; words for

68 Thomas, The English and the Normans, 304.
69 Thomas, The English and the Normans, 391.
70 For example, Thomas, The English and the Normans, 34–35.
the lowest levels of society, such as *cives*, *pauper*, and *servus*; words for age, such as *puer*, *iuvenis*, and *senex*; and words for cultural groups, including *gens*, *natio*, and *populus*.\(^{71}\) In the case of *natio*, for example, Gandino observed its use seventeen times: only once to indicate birthplace or ethnic membership, three times in relation to clothing and appearance, and thirteen times in reference to language, political authority, or geography.\(^{72}\) Throughout the work, Gandino thoroughly treated the numerical frequency of each of these terms and also placed them within the context of Liutprand’s narrative.

Luigi Andrea Berto’s lexical analysis, *Il vocabolario politico e sociale della "Istoria Veneticorum" di Giovanni Diacono*, concerned the history of Venice written by John the Deacon in the early eleventh century. In this work, Berto studied the ways in which the chronicler portrayed the lagoon’s inhabitants and also scrutinized the various descriptions of their famed political institutions.\(^{73}\) He considered not only the chronicler’s descriptions of the Venetians themselves, but also how the chronicler defined and perceived the other ethnic groups with which Venice interacted, such as the *Sclavi*, *Saraceni*, and *Teutonici*.\(^{74}\) Much like Gandino, he also evaluated John the Deacon’s use of *gens*, *natio*, and *populus*, as they were contextualized into the larger history of Venice.\(^{75}\) His study proved that the words were not synonymous, as some had suggested; *gens* was applied disparagingly to outsiders, whereas *populus* was reserved solely for the inhabitants of the lagoon.

Research into the cultural lexicons employed by medieval writers provides a foundation upon which more fully substantiated observations about perceptions of “self”

\(^{71}\) Gandino, *Il vocabolario politico e sociale*, 307–308.
\(^{72}\) Gandino, *Il vocabolario politico e sociale*, 271.
\(^{73}\) Berto, *Il vocabolario politico e sociale*, passim.
\(^{74}\) Berto, *Il vocabolario politico e sociale*, 252–269.
and "other" in the Middle Ages can be made. Although sampling a source for a few examples in which a certain word or expression is applied to a set of people can be tempting, presenting all of the passages in which a group is described is necessary to understand fully how they were perceived.\footnote{Robert Bartlett has advocated this type of approach, observing that "the medieval terminology of race and ethnicity was no more straightforward than our own . . . The actual semantic field of such terms can only be mapped by detailed investigation of individual usage." Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity," 42.} For the Norman histories of Sicily and southern Italy written by Amatus of Montecassino, William of Apulia, Geoffrey Malaterra, Alexander of Telese, and Hugo Falcandus, I have attempted to conduct an ethnographic analysis of the terminology used by each author.

Having broadly outlined the most essential aspects of this project, a few last points need to be made about how exactly it has been carried out. Specifically, it has been based on a survey of the words of hostility and intolerance, as well as an analysis of different stereotypes used by each of the chroniclers in describing Muslims (Saraceni), Lombards (Longobardi), and Greeks (Graeci).\footnote{Perceptions and definitions of these three gentes are addressed in chapters two, three, and four, respectively. Particular attention has been given to the attribution of nouns (such as pagani and barbari), adjectives (like perfidus and superb) and adverbs (for example, turpiter and fraudulenter) to various "peoples" (gentes or populi). Other evidence of stereotyping, especially stories that seem to assign certain vices or virtues to an entire group, are taken into account as well.} Any relevant words and phrases, along with accompanying "stories," are considered in detail to allow the largest possible number of observations to be made. The frequency with which terms appear in the texts has been determined through computer searches carried out on electronic versions of the documents.\footnote{In this case, however, quotations have always been made by consulting the modern critical edition of the source, not simply "copying and pasting" from a computer file.} A conscious effort has been made to contextualize the data, both in terms of how it fits within the overall narrative structure, and how it reflects the specific motivations of the individual author. Finally, an effort was made to determine if the
words *gens, natio*, and *populus* were used by the writers interchangeably, or if each bore a special and unique meaning. Such a study, it is hoped, lends insight into how the “other” was viewed in Norman Sicily and southern Italy, how cultural boundaries were viewed and expressed by writers in the High Middle Ages, and may serve as a small stepping stone for future research into medieval perceptions of nations and ethnicity.

Sources

Written between 1080 and 1086, Amatus of Montecassino’s *L’Ystoire de li Normant* was the earliest text devoted to the Norman conquest of southern Italy and Sicily. This narrative predated the works of both William of Apulia and Geoffrey Malaterra by at least a decade, standing out not only as one of the most valuable sources for the study of Norman history in the Mediterranean, but also for Norman history in general. It covered the period from 999 to the death of Prince Richard of Capua in 1078, focusing primarily on the arrival of the Normans in southern Italy and their relationship with the Lombard rulers there. Amatus wrote during the abbacy of Desiderius, a time of profound intellectual revival at the monastery. Montecassino had prospered considerably in the preceding decades under the patronage of Prince Richard of Capua and Duke Robert Guiscard of Apulia and Calabria, and the prodigious activity of the scriptorium was one aspect of that development. Accordingly, the author presented the Normans as faithful Christians who earned divine favor through their virtues and good

---

79 For which see chapter five.
80 De Bartholomaeis, introduction to *Storia*, lxx. I have chosen not to utilize the text’s presumed Latin title, *Historia Normannorum*, as a reminder of the distance between the extant Old French manuscript and the original source.
81 De Bartholomaeis, introduction to *Storia*, xvi.
82 De Bartholomaeis, introduction to *Storia*, xv
Although Amatus is thought to have been a native Lombard, he considered the conquest a positive product of God's will. Conversely, he sought to portray the Lombards and Byzantines, perennial enemies of the Normans, as villains whose sins had merited their downfall. The monk dedicated his work to Abbot Desiderius (the future Pope Victor III), and it appears to have been meant for both a Cassinese and Norman audience.

Unfortunately, no Latin manuscript of this text survives and little can be said about the extant Old French translation, BN MS. Français 688, which dates from the early fourteenth century. There is virtually no evidence for the transmission of Amatus’s work during the Middle Ages, and indeed only dim hints exist of its presence in the library of Montecassino itself. For his part, the medieval translator showed no awareness that the history was written by Amatus, and referred to him simply as “cestui moine.” His vernacular was colored with numerous Italianisms, and he was in all likelihood an Italian working for a French patron. The codex containing the translation also includes the *Chronicon* of Isidore of Seville, the *Historia Romana* of Eutropius, Paul the Deacon’s *Historia Langobardorum*, and the *Historia Sicula*, a late thirteenth-century

---

84 De Bartholomaeis, introduction to *Storia*, lxiii–lxvii; Mathieu, introduction to *Gesta*, 9–10.
85 De Bartholomaeis, introduction to *Storia*, xxx.
86 For divine intervention against the Byzantines, see for example Amatus, *Storia*, II.23 and II.26. For God’s punishment of the Lombards, see ibid., III.38, 151. Their downfall was also revealed in two prophesies in ibid., VIII.1. As the modern editor of Amatus’s text colorfully put it, “contro i nemici de’ Normanni e di Montecassino ha parole di fuoco.” De Bartholomaeis, introduction to *Storia*, lxxi.
87 Amatus in fact dedicated the history to Abbot Desiderius. Amatus, *Storia*, 3.
88 De Bartholomaeis, introduction to *Storia*, lxxxv–lxxxvi.
89 Part of the history was employed by a later redactor of the *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis* of Leo of Ostia. Vague references to the text were also made by seventeenth-century researchers. It was however known in Normandy. Newton, *The Scriptorium*, 326.
90 For example, in Amatus, *Storia*, I.16 and 1.22.
91 De Bartholomaeis, introduction to *Storia*, xcvi–cii. The translator reported that he was working for a certain count of “Militrée,” otherwise unattested.
text derived from Malaterra’s writing.92 It is unclear when MS. 688 arrived in France, but it eventually came into the possession of Cardinal Mazarin and later entered the library of Louis XIV himself.93 Although the state of the text makes it impossible to conduct quite the same type of lexical analysis that might be done with a Latin original, the Ystoire can nevertheless provide some indication of Amatus’s perceptions of the various peoples of the Mediterranean. Vincenzo de Bartholomeis’s 1935 modern critical edition can be found in the source collection Fonti per la Storia d’Italia 76.

Completed around the year 1099, William of Apulia’s Gesta Roberti Wiscardi was a work written in dactylic hexameter focusing on Robert Guiscard, duke of Apulia and Calabria.94 Chronologically, it covered the years 1009 to 1085 (when Robert died). William was associated with the court of Roger Borsa, the son and heir of the duke and his Lombard wife Sichelgaita.95 He portrayed the Normans in a heroic light for defeating the Greeks and Muslims who had laid claim to the region.96 Aspects of the poem display a secular tone, and for this reason some historians have argued that its composer was a layman, although in reality nothing is known about the writer.97 The Gesta was dedicated to Pope Urban II and Roger Borsa, but the latter seems to have been the principal patron.98 While it perhaps enjoyed fairly widespread popularity in the medieval period,

---

92 De Bartholomaeis, introduction to Storia, xci–xciv.
93 De Bartholomaeis, introduction to Storia, lxxxviii–lxxxix.
94 Mathieu, introduction to Gesta, 13. Mathieu placed the date between 1095 and August 1099.
95 Mathieu, introduction to Gesta, 13.
96 Mathieu, introduction to Gesta, 13. “L’influence de Roger Borsa est sensible dans les passages où Guillaume de Pouille établit la légitimité du pouvoir qu’il avait dû défendre, à la mort de Guiscard, contre son demi-frère Bohémond.” Ibid., 22. “Je penche . . . en définitive à le croire Normand. Non qu’il fût impossible que Roger Borsa choisît un Lombard pour chanter les exploits de son père.”
97 Mathieu, introduction to Gesta, 23–25. Mathieu argued against the interpretation that William of Apulia came from a secular background, though. His epithet, Apuliensis, suggests that he was Italian, but he just as well could have been loco Appulus, gente Normannus, like Bohemond. Ibid., 17.
98 The postscript was addressed only to the duke, whom he identified as his dator. William of Apulia, Gesta, 410–414.
appearing, for example, as far north as the libraries of Bec and Mont St. Michel, it exists now in a single manuscript: Avranches, Bibliothèque municipale, MS. 162. The modern critical edition was edited and translated into French by Marguerite Mathieu in 1961.

At about the same time William of Apulia was finishing his laudatory poem, Geoffrey Malaterra wrote his *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius*, a prose work describing the conquest of Calabria and Sicily at the hands of Roger de Hauteville, Robert Guiscard’s younger brother. This history spanned nearly two centuries, from Rollo’s baptism in 911 to 1098, when Pope Urban II made Roger papal legate of Sicily. It was written independently of both William of Apulia and Amatus of Montecassino. The first chapters of Malaterra’s work dealt with the Viking invasion of Normandy in the tenth century and the initial arrival of Norman pilgrims to Italy in the early eleventh century, but the bulk of the material

---

99 Geneviève Nortier, *Les Bibliothèques médiévales des abbayes bénédictines de Normandie. Fécamp, Le Bec, Le Mont Saint-Michel, Saint-Évroult, Lyre, Jumièges, Saint-Wandrille, Saint-Ouen* (Paris: Éditions P. Lethielleux, 1971), 212. Also mentioned in Mathieu, introduction to *Gesta*, 74. Mathieu observed that “la présence de ces deux manuscrits des *Gesta* en Normandie au moyen âge s’explique par les relations intenses, dès la fin du XIᵉ siècle, entre l’Italie méridionale et la Normandie, et notamment l’abbaye du Bec.” Among medieval authors, however, Robert of Torigni (librarian of Bec and later abbot of Mont St. Michel) is the only one known to have possessed familiarity with the text. It has been suggested that he in fact brought it to Normandy from Italy. There are several Italian manuscripts of the *Gesta*, but they all derive from the *editio princeps* of 1582. There is no trace of the text’s presence in Italy during the Middle Ages. Ibid., 74–75.

There is, however, some possibility that Anna Comnena employed William of Apulia’s *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* as a source for her *Alexiad*, or else had access to another lost text that was common to both writers. Their accounts of Robert Guiscard’s war against Byzantium, although written fifty years apart, show certain similarities (especially with regard to their portrayals of the battle of Durazzo). Mathieu provided a lengthy discussion of the debate on Anna Comnena’s reliance on the *Gesta*, and concluded that, for a few episodes, her source must have been William of Apulia. Mathieu, introduction to *Gesta*, 38–46

100 Mathieu, introduction to *Gesta*, 70.

101 Pontieri, introduction to *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, x–xix. It seems that all three writers wrote without knowledge of one another.

The practice of apostolic legation effectively placed the ruler of Sicily in a position held by no other European sovereign, and set the stage for a century of confrontation between Palermo and Rome. Houben, *Roger II: A Ruler between East and West*, 21.
concerned the life of Roger. The chronicler recounted how the future count of Calabria and Sicily made his way to Apulia from his home in Normandy, and there joined forces with Robert Guiscard. The pages of Malaterra’s *De rebus gestis Rogerii* contain detailed descriptions of the whole period from 1050 to 1100: events like the siege of Reggio in 1060, Roger’s bravery in the battle of Cerami in 1063, and the fall of Muslim Palermo in 1071. Although the author boasted of the Normans’ superiority over Greeks, Lombards, and Saracens, he also candidly acknowledged a fierce rivalry between the brothers, depicting Roger as a victim of Robert’s greed. In addition, Norman shrewdness (*calliditas*) and lust for power (*aviditas dominationis*) surfaced repeatedly as the central themes of the narrative.

Malaterra identified himself in his opening as a monk and former cleric, but revealed little else. Modern scholarship commonly accepts that he came from Normandy on the grounds that he mentioned crossing into Italy *a transmontanis*.

---

103 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, I.19.
104 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, I.34; II.33; II.45.
105 Pontieri, introduction to *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, xl. This is especially clear in Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.21, where the duke refused to grant land to his brother. Open warfare between the two broke out in ibid., II.23.
107 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, 3.
108 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, 3. “Sed a transmontanis partibus venientem, noviter Apulum factum, vel certe Siculum ad plenum cognoscatis.” The text’s editor, Pontieri, argued that Malaterra was a monk of St. Evroul, but cited no other evidence than this passage. Pontieri, introduction to *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, iv. The notion was reiterated by De Bartholomaeis, introduction to *Storia*, xviii, who wrote that “Goffredo Malaterra, normanno di origine, divenuto monaco benedettino nel monastero di Saint-Evroul-sur-Ouche, in Normandia.” Lynn T. White shared in the belief. Lynn T. White, *Latin Monasticism in Norman Sicily* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), 109. More recently, Pierre Toubert has commented that “on passerait, je crois, à côté de l’un des caractères essentiels de son oeuvre si
for his purpose in writing, Malaterra expressly stated that Count Roger I of Sicily was his patron, and it is likely that he hoped to legitimate the claims of the count’s heir over those of Robert Guiscard’s son, Roger Borsa. The four surviving medieval manuscripts, the oldest of which dates from the fourteenth century, are in Palermo and Catania. This text was known in medieval Normandy too, and was mentioned by the monk of St. Evroul, Orderic Vitalis. The modern critical edition was edited by Ernesto Pontieri in 1928, and can be found in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, secunda series*, 5.

The *Ystoria Rogerii regis Sicilie Calabrie atque Apulie* was written by Alexander, abbot of the monastery of the Holy Savior at Telese in the mid-twelfth century. Focusing on the years 1127 to 1136, it was intended to depict King Roger II as a divine instrument who restored order on the southern mainland after the death of his brother Simon. Although clearly biased in favor of his story’s protagonist, the author provided some valuable information about the relationship between the Norman kingdom of Sicily and its subjects in southern Italy. Like the works of William of Apulia and Amatus of Montecassino, this text survives in just one medieval version: Barcelona, Biblioteca Central 996. The modern critical edition was edited by Ludovica De Nava and Dione Clementi and appeared in *Fonti per la Storia d’Italia* 112 in 1991.

---

on négligeait de voir d’abord en lui un élève doué de l’école monastique de Saint-Evrout d’Ouche.”

Toubert, “La première historiographie de la conquête normande de l’Italie méridionale (XI Siècle),” 26. It bears repeating that there is nothing to confirm this aside from Malaterra’s remark about having come from across the Alps.

109 Malaterra, preface to *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, 4.
110 Pontieri, introduction to *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, li–lvii.
111 Mathieu, introduction to *Gesta*, 74. Pontieri, introduction to *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, xiii.
112 De Nava, introduction to *Ystoria*, xxvii.
113 De Nava, introduction to *Ystoria*, xxxiv.
114 De Nava, introduction to *Ystoria*, xxviii.
115 De Nava, introduction to *Ystoria*, v.
The *Liber de Regno Sicilie* is the last historical narrative to describe the Norman kingdom of Sicily in detail and remains the chief source of information for the period from 1154 to 1169. Absolutely nothing is known about its author, who wrote some time between 1170 and 1180. His identity, even his very name, has been debated since the eighteenth century. The autograph version of the text has long since vanished, and the history has come down to the present through four later codices from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The first attribution of the work to a “Hugo Falcandus Siculus,” however, probably did not occur until the sixteenth century, and the German scholar Otto Hartwig believed the name to be no more than an invention of the first editor. The author supplied scant information about his motivation, other than a prefatory (and commonplace) statement that he wanted to preserve the memory of recent events, some of which he saw, and some of which he learned about through veraci relatione. Although he praised King Roger II, Falcandus was also biased against many of the principal actors in his narrative, lamenting the disorder that characterized the reign of Roger’s son and successor, William I.

Falcandus, whoever he was, did however provide an invaluable perspective on the society of the twelfth-century regnum. As a window into both the different cultures of medieval Sicily and the author’s own attitude toward them, this source can be extremely informative. The text has come down to the present in four manuscripts: V. Cod. Vat. Lat. 10690; Paris, BN MS. Lat. 5150; Paris, BN MS. Lat. 6262; Paris, BN MS. Lat. 11690; Siragusa, introduction to *Liber*, xvii. 117 Siragusa, introduction to *Liber*, x. 118 For a survey of the longstanding historiographic debate on the identity of “Hugo Falcandus” and an overview of the *Liber de regno Sicilie*’s manuscript tradition, see Jamison, *Admiral Eugenius*, 177–219. 119 Siragusa, introduction to *Liber*, viii. 120 Falcandus, preface to *Liber*, 4. 121 Falcandus, preface to *Liber*, 6–7.
14357. The earliest of these, V. Cod. Vat. Lat. 10690, is from the first half of the thirteenth century. The most recent critical edition is from 1897, edited by G. B. Siragusa.

A few final points need to be made about the ethnographic content of these texts. First, only in Geoffrey Malaterra’s text, concerned as it was with Roger I’s capture of Sicily, did the Muslims play a central role as his narrative’s primary antagonists. This author therefore had more to say about them than any of the other writers examined here, although the “Saracens” were hardly absent from the other sources. By comparison, the native Italian “Lombards” tended to be more visible in the mainland chronicles of William of Apulia, Amatus of Montecassino, and Alexander of Telese, making somewhat rarer appearances in the works of Geoffrey Malaterra and Hugo Falcandus, who were both concerned primarily with Sicilian affairs. The Graeci (referring to Greek speaking inhabitants of Sicily and southern Italy as well as the Byzantines) tended to enjoy fairly good representation throughout.

At first glance, it might seem likely that a set of Latin Christian chroniclers, writing in the era of crusade, would treat their Muslim characters with the greatest degree of scorn, second, perhaps, only to their denigration of Greek Christians within the Byzantine Empire, and that the Lombards would be positively portrayed. As will be seen, however, the demands of style, intent, and patronage all helped dictate the various depictions of the gentes contained in these texts at least as much as religious

122 Siragusa, introduction to Liber, xxxi–xxxvii. The modern critical edition was, unfortunately, edited without access to the earliest existing codex, V. Cod. Vat. Lat. 10690. This was lost in the eighteenth century and was only rediscovered several years after Siragusa finished his work. Ibid., xxvii–xxix. Evelyn Jamison has however studied this earlier codex and noted discrepancies between it and other versions. Jamison, Admiral Eugenius, 200–219.

123 Jamison, Admiral Eugenius, 219.

124 That is, with the exception of Alexander of Telese, who made no mention of “Greeks” whatsoever. For an attempted explanation of this lacuna see chapter four.
considerations. Generally speaking, the chroniclers described the Italian “Lombards” in more deprecatory language than they did the Muslims, and instances in which relations with non-Christians devolved into the clean simplicity of a black and white struggle between good and evil are, in fact, considerably rare.
CHAPTER II

PRAGMATICS AND HOSTILITY IN DEFINING THE MUSLIMS

Introduction: Terms of Reference

An analysis of the vocabulary that these authors employed reveals a common, meticulous effort on their part to categorize Muslims into different subgroups. With the exception of Alexander of Telese, who unfortunately had little to say about non-Christians, all of the chroniclers utilized a very specific set of words to define and distinguish the various Islamic peoples featured in their texts. William of Apulia, for instance, identified the Seljuk Turks as “Turchi” and “Perses,” but never called them “Agareni,” a word he reserved for the Muslims of the central Mediterranean.¹²⁵ Both he and Malaterra were also careful to distinguish between Sicilians (Sicilienses, Siculi), Arabs (Arabici, Arabes), and Africans (Africani, Afri).¹²⁶ Likewise, Amatus differentiated

¹²⁵ The fact that he differentiated between Turks and Sicilians is most apparent in the following passage, where William wrote that, after the death of Robert Guiscard, his soldiers could not have been any more afraid, even if all the peoples of the world attacked them: “Omnes si Danai, gens Persica, gens Agarena / Hos invasissent, et ab omni climate mundi / Afflueret populus, peteretque armatus inermes: / Non ilia hac formido foret formidine maior.” William of Apulia, Gesta, V.368–371. Curiously, the word Agareni was utilized as a pejorative term for the Normans in certain Italian sources from the mid-eleventh century. Mathieu, introduction to Gesta, 4.

¹²⁶ Although Malaterra referred to Africans, Arabs, and Sicilians all as Saracens, he nevertheless made an effort to distinguish between the Muslims of Sicily and their coreligionists who hailed from elsewhere in the Mediterranean. With the exception of chapter headings, Malaterra employed the term Saracenus / Sarracenus a total of 26 times. Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, I.4, 30; I.14, 33 (three times); I.16 (twice); I.20 (twice); I.29, 40 (twice); I.33, 42 (twice); II.33, 45; II.42; II.42; III.8; III.12; III.30, 75 (twice); III.32, 76; III.36, 78; IV.2, 86; IV.17, 96; IV.18, 98; IV.22, 100; IV.26, 104; IV.29, 108. He referred to the Arabici 9 times. Ibid., II.32 (three times); II.33; II.35, 45; II.46 (four times). He used Africani 5 times. Ibid., II.17; II.32, 41; II.33, 42; II.44, 45; III.8. With the exception of the title comes Siculorum, Sicilis occurred in ten cases: ibid., II.8, 32; II.17; II.32 (twice); II.33, 42–44 (twice); II.41, 49; III.20.

William of Apulia employed the term Siculi or gens Sicula 9 times. William of Apulia, Gesta, I.197; 1.201; I.244; III.199; III.203 (gens sicula); III.319; III.338; III.343; III.433. Arabes appeared once. Ibid., III.483. The words Afri or Afrī occurred twice. Ibid., III.225; III.483.
between “the Arabs and Berbers (li Arabi et li Barbare),” who could be found in Africa and Sicily, and the “Turchi,” who dwelt at the eastern fringes of the Byzantine Empire.127

Finally, Hugo Falcandus used the word Masmudi to refer specifically to the Almohads, while identifying other Muslims as Saracens (Sarracen).128 The exquisite attention to detail that these writers paid evinces a surprising familiarity with the different cultures within the dar al-Islam. Such terminology, moreover, reveals that the chroniclers were not using these terms indiscriminately, but instead recognized, in one way or another, the fact that not all Muslims were the same.129

Anti-Islamic Rhetoric among the Chroniclers

When they did choose to denigrate Islam, the authors typically portrayed Muslims as pagans, enemies of Christianity, or as recipients of divine vengeance. For monastic writers, one of the worst deeds the infidel could perpetrate was to oppress faithful members of Christ’s flock. To begin with the earliest source, it is true that Amatus of Montecassino did level this charge against Muslim characters, but he did so less often than one might expect (on only four occasions). Near the beginning of his history, he

---

127 “Arabi et Barbare” were mentioned in Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VII.1. Like Malaterra, Amatus typically identified Sicilians either as “Saracens (li Sarrazin)” or as “pagans (li Pagan, li Paen).” He employed both terms when discussing the Sicilians as well as the Muslims in Spain and the Italian mainland, and had no specific word for the inhabitants of Sicily. Contrary to Metcalfe’s observation, Amatus never in fact used the expression “Sicilien.” Cf. A. Metcalfe, Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic Speakers and the End of Islam (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 56. William of Apulia did not explicitly refer to Muslims as barbari, although he did write of a Byzantine army as composed of “Maxima barbaricae cum Graecis.” This force, in subsequent lines, was revealed to include Turks. William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.323. He also referred to Emperor Henry IV’s soldiers as barbaries. Ibid., IV.539.

128 Masmudi derives from the name of the Masmudah Berbers, the tribe from which the Almohads arose. For an etymological discussion, see F. Corriente, Dictionary of Arabic and Allied Loanwords: Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Galician, and Kindred Dialects (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 371.

129 In this regard I disagree with Alex Metcalfe on the significance attached to these words, which he believes were used in an idiosyncratic way. Metcalfe, Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily, 58. According to him, “there is no sense in which different terms came to be standardized with time and their meanings varied capriciously according to the source in which the name was applied.”

32
mentioned that the Saracens had, in the early eleventh century, ravaged the region around Salerno for the city’s refusal to pay tribute. According to the author, they “hewed, slew, and destroyed the land (talloient et occioient et gastoient la terre).”130 When a group of Norman pilgrims discovered these Christians being made “subject à li Sarrazin” in such a way, they took up arms and drove them off.131 They thereby delivered the people of Salerno “de la servitute de li Pagan.”132 Much later, as Amatus had Robert Guiscard contemplating the invasion of Sicily, he wrote that the duke wanted to stop the Muslims “who were killing Christians there most forcefully (liquei occioient li Chrestien molt fortement).”133 In that way, the author provided the necessary moral justification for the Norman expedition.134

Amatus did this again just a few chapters later, mentioning that the Saracens had formerly taken Sicily from Christian hands: “li Sarrazin, liquel avoient leve celle ynsule de la main de li Chrestien.”135 The implication, therefore, was that any military endeavor would be a wholly legitimate act of restitution. Immediately after making this comment, Amatus had Robert Guiscard address his soldiers by saying: “I would like to deliver the Christians and Catholics who are held in servitude to the Saracens; and I much desire to take them out of their servitude and to avenge the injury to God (Je voudroie delivrer li Christien et li Chatolici, liquel sont constreint à la servitude de li Sarrazin. Et desirre... 

130 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.17, 22.
131 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.17, 22.
132 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.17, 22.
133 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, V.7.
134 It could be argued that Geoffrey Malaterra made use of this theme as well, albeit to a lesser extent. Although he mentioned Christians in captivity at several points, he never used language similar to that found in Amatus. Cf. Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.14, “hic Christiani, in valle Deminae manentes, sub Sarracenis tributarii erant;” IV.2, “cives vero, christanos plurimos in captione infra urbem habentes, solutos ab urbe ejiciunt;” IV.3, “promittens etiam, sub ostentantione legis suae, nulla classe fineschristiani nominis pervasum ulterius tentare, et quos eiusdem religionis captivos tenebat, coactus est absolvere;” IV.16, “pro libitu comitis primo captivos christanos, quorum plurimam multituidinem infra urbem tenebant, redunt.”
135 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, V.10.
Amatus thus made it quite clear that the duke’s campaign met the criteria needed to wage a just war, a preoccupation of somewhat more apparent concern to this monastic writer than other authors.

Amatus condemned the Muslims on other explicitly religious grounds as well. For example, his version of Robert Guiscard accused them of “malice” stating he had worked to save Sicily, which had been corrupted by “l’error de li Sarrazin.”

During the siege of the mountain fortress of Castrogiovanni, Amatus identified the Muslim defenders as pagans and infidels. There, he had Robert tell his soldiers that the mountain on which the stronghold sat was made not of stone and earth, “but of accumulated filth and perversity.”

Outside Italy, when describing the siege of Barbastro in 1064, the author wrote that the Christian knights had come driven by a desire to destroy the “detestable folie de li Sarrazin.” Amatus also included a description of the conversion of the central mosque of Palermo, writing that, after Robert removed the “dirt and filth (ordesce et ordure) from the temple, he asked the archbishop to say Mass. Although all of this is undeniably hostile language, it is important to note that this was also as far as Amatus ever took his anti-Islamic rhetoric. As will be addressed shortly, Amatus had nothing more to say about their religion when discussing Muslims elsewhere in his narrative, which he did at some length.

---

136 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, V.12.
137 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VII.27, 321.
140 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.5, 13.
141 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VI.19, 282.
By comparison, William of Apulia treated the Muslims—especially their religious beliefs—with far more contempt.\textsuperscript{142} Focusing on the career of Robert Guiscard, the poet’s broad scope brought in Muslims from across the Mediterranean and gave consideration to Byzantium’s relations with the Turks as well as to the Normans’ involvement in Sicily. With that said, it is nevertheless true that Muslims occupied a relatively minor place in William’s text, neither center stage as they did for Geoffrey Malaterra, nor even second stage as in Amatus of Montecassino’s history.\textsuperscript{143} Yet even without assigning his Muslim characters a major role in the \textit{Gesta}, the poet was still much less restrained when it came to deriding their religion.

In the text, William called the Sicilians by a variety of slanderous names, every one of which carried an obvious religious connotation. Before turning to Robert Guiscard’s expedition in Sicily, he described the earlier efforts of the duke’s brother as a “noble war (\textit{nobile bellum})” because, he explained, Count Roger “contra Siculos divini nominis hostes semper pugnavit.”\textsuperscript{144} William went on to add that Roger had been fighting against these enemies of the divine name “desiring to raise up the holy faith (\textit{sanctam exaltare fidel cupiens}).”\textsuperscript{145} Whereas Amatus endeavored to supply a valid pretext for the invasion of Sicily (Saracen oppression), for the poet, the war against the Sicilians was a self-justified sacred enterprise and a means of exalting Christianity.

\textsuperscript{142} This has been noted by several modern scholars. Emily Albu attributed William of Apulia’s “anti-Muslim fervor” to influences of the First Crusade, launched at the time he was writing the \textit{Gesta}. Albu, \textit{The Normans in their Histories}, 131. More recently, Paul Chevedden has challenged this view, arguing that William was accurately describing holy war sentiment felt by those taking part in the Sicilian campaign during in the 1060s rather than anachronistically imposing such a theme. Chevedden, “A Crusade from the First,” 191–225.

\textsuperscript{143} As Mathieu aptly commented, the poet “s’interesse surtout aux événements de Puille et relége au second plan ceux des autres regions.” Mathieu, introduction to \textit{Gesta}, 11.

\textsuperscript{144} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, III.198.

\textsuperscript{145} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, III.200–201.
The Turks, called *Turchi* or *Perses*, were the only other Muslim group aside from the Sicilians who figured into William’s epic in any significant way. As with the Sicilians, William’s negative terminology for them was based entirely on their religion. The poet first mentioned their attacks on the Byzantine Empire during the reign of Michael VII Ducas (1067–1078). Momentarily turning his attention from Italy to events in Anatolia, he stated that a great part of the “gens cristicolarum” perished in the Seljuk onslaught, “killed by the vile swords of the Turks (*interfecta nefandis Turchorum gladiis*)”. By calling the Byzantines “Christians” rather than “Greeks,” and thereby casting the calamity in religious rather than secular tones, William undoubtedly sought to elicit greater sympathy for the victims of the Turks’ “impious” blades.

The adjective *nefas*, meaning something sinful or profane, came up once more with regard to the Turks when the poet described the capture of Constantinople in 1081 by Alexius I Comnenus (1081–1118). According to William, Alexius allowed his Turkish troops to loot the city for several days, during which the “savage Persians (*atroces Persae*)” did not hesitate “to violate (*violare*)” the holy places with their “impious hands (*nefandis manibus*)”. Since he made Alexius himself responsible for the sacrilege, it would appear that William meant this as a slight against the emperor.

---

148 Luigi Andrea Berto has observed that, by calling the victims Christians, William of Apulia put the Byzantine rulers in an especially negative light since it showed them remaining inactive in the face of enemies of Christ. Luigi Andrea Berto, “‘Non audaces sed fugaces.’ The Image of the Byzantines in Early Medieval South Italy: The Lombard and Norman Viewpoint,” unpublished article, 14.
149 On this emperor’s reign, which spanned nearly forty years, see Ostrogorski, *History of the Byzantine State*, 348–375.
who allowed such crimes to take place, as well as against the Turks. Thus, for the poet, the Turks were savage and impious violators, regardless of whether they were in the service of a Christian ruler or fighting against one.

Shortly before this episode, William also alluded to the Turks’ role as enemies in the First Crusade. Here, he began by describing a tumultuous civil war in which a rebel Byzantine commander challenged the new ruler in Constantinople, inciting the Turks to support him in his conflict with Byzantium: “from that time on, the Persarum gens perfida began to rise up against Romania with slaughter (caede) and rapine (rapinis).”\(^{151}\) The Turks were for William a gens perfida, a faithless people, and the poet went on to state that the pilgrimage routes would have remained threatened to the present day had not the gens Gallorum defeated the enemy and opened up the roads to the Holy Sepulcher.\(^{152}\) This is one of the most contemporary pieces of information contained in the poem, and, by expressly linking the Turks with the idea of the First Crusade, William clearly wanted to emphasize that they were dangerous infidels.\(^{153}\)

Although Malaterra was more hesitant than William to attack Islam, he did sometimes depict Muslims as God’s outcasts. To that end, he referred to them as a gens inimica (which could, in certain contexts, be interpreted as “diabolical people,” but which

---


\(^{152}\) William of Apulia, *Gesta*, III.100–105. “Imperii nec adhuc redigi sub iura valeret, / Gens nisi Gallorum, quae gente potentior omni / Viribus armorum, nutu stimulata superno, / Hanc libertati superato redderet hoste, / Quae spirante Deo sanctas aperire Sepulcri / Est animata via longo iam tempore clausas.” As Mathieu noted, this helps date the poem to after the preaching of the First Crusade (1095) but before the capture of Jerusalem (August 1099). Mathieu, introduction to Gesta, 12.

\(^{153}\) Cf. Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, IV.24, who wrote only that those who took up the cross were required to invade the borders of the pagans, but did not mention any preceding attacks by the Turks on Romania.
could also mean simply an enemy) and twice identified them as a gens Deo rebellis.\textsuperscript{154}

Elsewhere, the author wrote that the Saracens were a people thankless to God (gens Deo ingrata), who had wrongfully seized the land (usurpaverat) and given it over to idols (terram idolis deditam).\textsuperscript{155} Malaterra also displayed contempt for Islam itself by calling the religion a superstition (superstitio),\textsuperscript{156} at one point calling books of the Qu’ran “libri superstitionis legis suae,”\textsuperscript{157} and repeatedly identifying Muslims as pagani.\textsuperscript{158} In one less extreme instance, after Roger captured Catania, Malaterra said that the count had snatched the church there from of the clutches of an “unbelieving people (incredula


\textsuperscript{155} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.1, 29. “Si terram, idolis deditam, ad cultum divinum revocaret, et fructus vel redditus terrae, quos gens Deo ingrata sibi usurpaverat, ipse, in Dei servitio dispensaturus, temporaliter possideret.” It is worth noting that Malaterra also used the verb \textit{usurpare} when describing the rebellion of Roger’s son, Jordan. See ibid., III.36, 78. Cf. Augustine of Hippo, \textit{Epistula ad catholicos de secta Donatistarum}, in \textit{Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum}, vol. 51, ed. Michael Petschenig (Vienna: Lipsiae, 1908), V.30 : “Adiungunt etiam de loth, quod solus cum filiabus de sodomis liberatus sit, de ipso quoque abraham et isaac et iacob, quod pauci fuerint deo placentes in terra idolis et daemonibus dedita.”

There is a voluminous body of modern historiography concerned with medieval perceptions of Muslim “idolatry.” Some of the earliest work was done by Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny, who discussed the rise in libelous stories about Muhammad and depictions of Muslims as pagan idolaters that occurred at the time of the First Crusade. Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny, \textit{La connaissance de l’Islam dans l’Occident médiéval} (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994 [reprint]). Norman Daniel argued that it was a mere literary convention aimed at demonizing the enemy and was “never very serious.” Daniel, \textit{Islam and the West}, 304. Maxime Rodinson likewise viewed it as part of popular mythology. Maxime Rodinson, \textit{Europe and the Mystique of Islam}, trans. Roger Veinus (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987), 16. Benjamin Kedar was struck by the fact that, in the face of fairly accurate concepts of Islamic monotheism enunciated by writers like Guibert of Nogent and William of Malmesbury, distorted images of Muslim idolatry persisted. Kedar’s only explanation for this was that more accurate information brought back from the crusades must have circulated unevenly. Kedar, \textit{Crusade and Mission}, 87–88. Jean Flori has suggested that Saracen idolatry was a common stereotype genuinely believed by the writers who used it and was a tool that helped them justify the dominant ideology of holy war. It was part of what Flori called “une véritable révolution” that worked to transform Christians, members of a religion of peace, into soldiers of Christ who would combat the pagan infidel in the name of God. Flori, “La caricature de l’Islam dans l’Occident médiéval,” 165–178.

\textsuperscript{156} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.45, 53; ibid., III.16.

\textsuperscript{157} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.13. “Libris superstitionis legis suae coram positis, juramento fidelitatem firmant.”

\textsuperscript{158} Paganus appeared a total of nine times. Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.32, 42; II.33 (three times); III.30 (four times); IV.24.
Though referring to the Muslims as unbelievers is not in itself particularly hostile, the rest of the comment would seem to imply that they posed a threat to the Christian community there. Elsewhere, the author reported that a mosque and former church in Palermo had been “ab impiis Saracenis violata” and made into a “templum superstitionis eorum.” Yet, in comparison to William of Apulia’s account of the fall of Palermo, Malaterra’s description actually appears relatively mild.

In fact, William’s portrayal of that particular event contains the majority of his text’s anti-Islamic rhetoric. In his version of the battle for Palermo (fought in 1072), the poet called the Christian forces “cultores Christi,” “christicolae,” and “turba fidelis” while referring to the sailors of a joint fleet of Africans and Palermitans as a “perfida gens,” or faithless people. Having received communion, the Christians put the Africans and Sicilians to flight through God’s will, “nutu divino.” William later referred to the forces that sallied forth from the gates to attack the besiegers as a “populus iniquus.” Care should be taken to avoid reading too much into this expression (which, like the adjective *inimicus*, could sometimes possess diabolic connotations) since it was previously applied to the Normans themselves when they were oppressing southern Italy. In this scene though, when the Muslims began to retreat, the poet had Robert Guiscard urge his troops to pursue the enemy, and strike the backs of what he called the

---

159 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, IV.7, 90.
"perversa gens," or evil people.\textsuperscript{165} Then, as they prepared to assault the city proper, Robert told his soldiers that victory was assured because the city was hostile to God and devoted to demons: "urbs inimica Deo, divini nescia cultus, subdita daemonibus."\textsuperscript{166}

After the fighting was through, William described the surrender of Palermo, an account which stands in sharp contrast to Malaterra’s prose version of events. According to William, when the "gens Agarena" realized that they had been beaten, they gave up unconditionally, and asked the duke only to spare their lives.\textsuperscript{167} Robert appeared therefore as a benevolent victor by taking pity on the inhabitants of the city even though they were "gentiles."\textsuperscript{168} Malaterra, on the other hand, specified that the Palermitans agreed to surrender the city on the condition that their religion would remain safe.\textsuperscript{169}

In his description of the siege’s aftermath, William also displayed more willingness to attack specific aspects of Islam than Malaterra. Both authors wrote about the conversion of Palermo’s mosque into a church, but whereas Malaterra tersely referred to it as a “templum eorum superstitionis,”\textsuperscript{170} William identified the building more precisely as a “muscheta,” and said that Robert, rather than converting the existing mosque, had made sure to destroy the entire structure of this “templum iniquum” before

\textsuperscript{165} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, III.270. This could very well be a play on words, since the adjective \textit{perversus} literally means “turned the wrong way,” and these soldiers had their backs to the Normans as they tried to flee back into the city. Lewis and Short, \textit{A New Latin Dictionary}, 1361.

\textsuperscript{166} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, III.286–287.

\textsuperscript{167} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, III.321–325. “Gens Agarena, videns se viribus omnibus esse / Exutam, tota spe deficiente salutis / Suppliciter poscit, miserum miseratus ut eius / Respiciat casus, neque / dux rependant. / Cuncta duci dedunt, se tantum vivere poscunt.” Amatus of Montecassino also specified that the surrender of Palermo was made unconditionally. Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, VI.19, 281 “Et puis, quant il fu jor, dui Cayte alerent devant, loquel avoient l’ofice laquelle avoient li antique, avec autrez gentilhome. Liquel prierent lo Conte que, sans null autre condition né covenance, doie recevoir la cite à son commandement.”


\textsuperscript{169} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.45, 53. “Primores, foedere interposito, utrique fratibus locutum accedunt, legem suam nullatenus se violari vel relinquere velle dicentes, scilicet, si certi sint, quod non cogantur, vel injustis et novis legibus non atterantur.”

\textsuperscript{170} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.45, 53.
founding a completely new church. What’s more, Malaterra worked to justify the deed in a way that William did not, explaining that the building had in fact formerly been a cathedral dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The conversion of the mosque thereby became a rightful act of restoration (expressed through the verb reconciliare). William, on the other hand, made no mention of the building’s history, but wrote instead that the building’s destruction glorified (glorificans) God. For the poet, the razing of such a temple of evil needed no other explanation. By building the new church, he stated that what had once been a seat of “Machamati cum daemone” became a seat of God. Thus, by going further than just mentioning the Prophet by name, and literally demonizing him, William evinced far greater animosity toward Islam than Malaterra ever did.

Altogether, the poet applied disparaging names to the Sicilians a total of five times, and used other rhetorical strategies (such as associating Muhammad with demons and calling their mosque a temple of evil) to indicate that they were enemies of the faith a total of four times. In sum, then, there are nine instances of the poet attacking the Muslims of Sicily, which are strung together in very short order; all of these instances of

171 William of Apulia, Gesta, III.332.
172 This was an accurate observation on Malaterra’s part. Prior to becoming the main cathedral of Palermo, this building had seen use as a mosque, a Byzantine church, and an ancient Greek temple. Despite what William of Apulia recorded, it was not destroyed when the city was captured. It was actually demolished and rebuilt in the following century. See Metcalfe, The Muslims of Medieval Italy, 101.
173 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.45, 53
175 William of Apulia, Gesta, III.335.
176 William of Apulia’s familiarity with Islam is especially surprising given that R. W. Southern found no evidence that anyone in northern Europe had even heard the name of Muhammad before the year 1100. R. W. Southern, Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 15. It has become almost an academic cliché to suggest that the crusades brought increased knowledge about Muslim beliefs back to Europe. If we accept Marguerite Mathieu’s dating of William’s text, he finished writing before the end of the First Crusade. This leaves little time for returning soldiers to return with information about the religion of Islam, and the poet’s awareness of the name of Muhammad and of mosques seems more likely due to his proximity to the Muslims of Sicily.
177 In order, those names were: divini nominis hostes (William of Apulia, Gesta, III.199), perfida gens (ibid., III.240), iniquus populus (ibid., III.261–262), perversa gens (ibid., III.270), gentiles (ibid., III.330).
anti-Sicilian sentiment are religiously-based and come within 140 lines of one another.\textsuperscript{178} It would seem that, because the Sicilian campaign did not play an especially large role in William’s text, his opportunity to abuse the inhabitants of that island was fairly small.

Whereas William of Apulia’s religious invective concerned the fall of Palermo, Malaterra’s anti-Muslim rhetoric was confined primarily to his description of the battle of Cerami (1063).\textsuperscript{179} Here, however, the Muslim combatants appeared more misguided than downright evil. The chronicler explained that the Lord was punishing the Muslims because they failed to acknowledge Him in prayer, appearing ungrateful, but he was also careful to point out that they were nevertheless “His creatures.”\textsuperscript{180} The use of this phrase, \textit{deus suus} in Latin, is particularly relevant because it alludes to the existence of a single God for Christians as well as Muslims, and because it highlights the fact that Malaterra was not attempting to just broadly demonize the latter group.\textsuperscript{181}

At Cerami, Malaterra’s righteous Count Roger went on to exhort his troops as follows: “That people is rebellious to God (\textit{gens ista Deo Rebellis est}), and men who are not guided by God are quickly exhausted. They glory in their own virtue; we, however,
trust in God’s help.” In the subsequent passages, two miracles occurred: St. George led the charge mounted on a white horse and carrying a crossed banner, and a similar standard appeared tied to the count’s own lance. In a chapter already containing elements of holy war, Malaterra’s inclusion of St. George, a military saint who appeared in battles during the First Crusade, made the religious overtones all the more obvious. Needless to say, the Saraceni soon suffered a horrendous defeat at the hands of their Christian adversaries. Yet the message of the chronicler was not so much that the Saracens were evil, but rather in conflict with God—a significant difference.

There were only two notable cases in which Malaterra expressly portrayed any Saracen character as a diabolical enemy of Christ. Both of these instances concerned Benarvet, the Muslim prince of Noto, whom the author caricaturized as an archetype of impiety. Described as “christiano nomini infestus,” Malaterra’s Benarvet led an attack on Calabria that “devastated (devastat), destroying down to the roots (a radice destruendo).” He first plundered Nicotera and took men and women prisoner. In

---

182 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.33, 44. “Gens ista Deo rebellis est, et vires, quae a Deo non reguntur, citius exhauriuntur. Ipsi in virtute sua gloriantur; nos autem de Dei praesidio securi sumus.”

183 For more information on St. George’s significance to the crusaders, see Jonathan Riley-Smith, The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading (New York: Continuum, 2003), 105.

184 As Houben has observed, the religious imagery in Malaterra’s account of Cerami was incidental, as were the religious undertones of the entire mission in Sicily. The primary motives of the conquest were political and economic, and in fact had little in common with the ideals of the First Crusade. See H. Houben, Roger II: A Ruler between East and West, 20. “Was this perhaps an anticipation of a later crusade? Hardly, since the motivation for the conquest of Sicily was not primarily religious; it was not about freeing holy places or combatting Islam. It was just a by-product of the conquest, so to speak, that Sicily was won back for Christianity.” Scholars such as Pierre Touben continue to reject this interpretation, writing for instance that it is possible to see “dans les Gesta de Malaterra les éléments constitutifs d’un récit de pré-croisade.” Toubert, “La première historiographie de la conquête normande de l’Italie méridionale (XIe siècle),” 38.

185 Metcalfe has suggested that this may be a Latinized form of the name Ibn al-Ward or Ibn Abbād. Nothing is known about this figure. Metcalfe, The Muslims of Medieval Italy, 100.

186 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.30, 75. “Benarvet, apud Siciliam christiano nomini infestus.”

187 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.1. “Benarvet, Syracusiae navigio apparato, navali exercitu apud Nicotrum veniens, a radice destruendo devastat.” This idea of utter destruction was also expressed by the ninth-century southern Italian chronicler Erchempert, who reported in a similar fashion.
Reggio, he sacked the churches of St. Nicholas and St. George, disfigured sacred images, and carried off sacred vestments and vessels. Finally, at Squillace, Benarvet laid waste to an abbey dedicated to the Virgin Mary, abducted the nuns, and raped them (*turpi stupro dehonestat*).189

Grammatically, Malaterra seems to have been careful to have only Benarvet perpetrating these deeds, rather than an entire Muslim raiding party. Every verb in this episode is singular, with Benarvet as the subject. His forces, which the author ambiguously referred to as a *navalis exercitus*, were mentioned only once, and in the ablative. Thus, while others may have accompanied Benarvet, the author assigned agency to him alone. Malaterra’s indictment, therefore, appears to have been leveled against one man in particular, rather than the Saracens in general.

Even so, there is no denying that the allegation of rape directed at Benarvet is certainly one of the strongest accusations the author made against any character in his narrative. Although he alluded to it elsewhere, even among the Normans, he never described it so explicitly.190 At the same time, Malaterra loaded this episode of sexual

---

188 Nicotera was again attacked in 1122 by an Almoravid expedition, which, according to Arabic sources, sold the inhabitants off into slavery. Houben, *Roger II: A Ruler between East and West*, 38.

189 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, IV.1. “Inde progressus, quandam sanctimonialium abbatiam, in honore sanctae Dei Genitrices et Virginis Mariae, in Scyllacensi loco, qui Rocca Asini dicitur, consecratam, aggrediens, devastat; sanctimonialiales abductas turpi stupro dehonestat.”

190 The author went so far as to say that the inhabitants of Sicily, both Muslim and Christian, feared for the safety of women. In Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.11, a young man in Messina killed his sister believing that she would be violated by the Normans. In ibid., II.29, 40, the Greeks were said to be “de uxoribus et filiabus timentes,” which inspired them to revolt against the occupation of their town.
violence with powerful religious themes. He made Benarvet’s act of rape all the more severe by having it perpetrated against holy virgins — the brides of Christ. At a second level then, the crime involved the forced cuckolding of the Lord. The author filled the entire chapter with different forms of sacrilege carried out by this pagan infidel: Benarvet violated holy places, icons, and liturgical objects in much the same way that he violated the nuns. Yet by assigning agency to one Saracen ruler, and not his followers, Malaterra seems to have chosen to not to deprecate the Muslims as a whole.¹⁹¹

God did not delay punishment for the crimes, though. In the chapter that immediately followed, Benarvet, “instinctu diaboli” led his fleet into combat with Count Roger’s ships where he was promptly defeated.¹⁹² When the Muslim leader jumped into the water to flee to safety, he sank from the weight of his armor, and Malaterra explained that the injury he had arrogantly inflicted on God was thus punished with appropriate vengeance.¹⁹³ Here again it must be noted that the invective was directed against a single individual. God’s wrath fell upon this man alone, and for a very specific reason:

¹⁹¹ John V. Tolan has interpreted rape as a way underline the brutality and lust of Muslims and to shock Christian readers. He believed it was a way of demonizing the “Muslim other.” John V. Tolan, Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 93–94. Malaterra, however, seem to have villainized Benarvet not because he was a Muslim, but because he so fiercely resisted Count Roger.
¹⁹² Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.2, 86. “Benarvet instinctu diaboli, qui vitam eius jam misera morte terminare volebat, quo navem comitis eminus agnovit, magno impetu grassans, illorum circum.” It is interesting that here the devil served as both an instrument of divine vengeance and as the inspiration for wrongdoing, leading Benarvet to his death. The devil appeared fulfilling this double role in other medieval chronicles. For some examples, see John the Deacon, Istorya Venetciorum, ed. and trans. Luigi Andrea Berto (Bologna: Zanichelli Editore, 1999), III.1; Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, in Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicum, eds. George Waltz and Ludwig Bethmann (Hannover: Hahn, 1978), III.26; Liutprand of Cremona, Historia Ottonis, in Corpus Christianorum 156, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Turnholt: Brepols, 1998), c. 20. Malaterra’s basic message appears to have been that Benarvet was connected to the devil, and that the forces of evil held sway over this Muslim leader. It may be further significant that Benarvet died by drowning immediately after desecrating a church devoted to St. Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors. For relevant commentary on the devil in John the Deacon, Paul the Deacon, and Liutprand of Cremona, see Berto, “La guerra e la violenza nella «Istoria Veneticorum» di Giovanni Diacono,” Studi Veneziani 42 (2001): 15–41.
¹⁹³ Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.2, 86 “Sicque injuriam, quam Deo arroganter intulisit, divino judicio condigna ultione multatur.”
Malaterra needed to make Benarvet into a diabolically inspired aggressor who waged a ruthless war on Christianity because he represented the last obstacle to Roger’s conquest of Sicily. Just as the author made his patron into an instrument of divine wrath, he portrayed the count’s Saracen nemesis as an unholy adversary, who was willing to physically violate the church and was guided by the devil himself.

All three authors used violation and oppression as ways to denigrate Muslims, and in that respect they were similar to the later Hugo Falcandus, who voiced considerable outrage over the risks of apostasy and the oppression of Christians by crypto-Muslims within the kingdom of Sicily. This twelfth-century historian modified Amatus’s old theme of the “yoke of Islam” by making conversion or apostasy an added threat to the new Christian realm. Falcandus displayed particular loathing toward one subversive element in particular, the palace eunuchs, whose abuses he repeatedly condemned.194 Though all such officials underwent baptism, Falcandus explained that they could not be trusted since they were “Christian only in name and appearance, Saracen in spirit (nomine tantum habituque christianus erat, animo saracenus),”195 and suggested that people who gave up Christianity for Islam enjoyed the protection of the eunuchs.196

To drive home his point about their wickedness, the author reflected vividly upon the cruel misrule of several of these men, such as qa ’id Martin, who visited “rabies et furor” upon the city of Palermo.197 These are strong expressions that refer to an especially

---

195 Falcandus, Liber, c. 10, 25. The eunuchs’ Islamic faith was an open secret. It was attested to by both Romuald of Salerno and Ibn Jubayr as well. Metcalfe, The Muslims of Medieval Italy, 195.
196 Falcandus, Liber, c. 41, 115.
197 Falcandus, Liber, c. 14, 80.
inhuman, animal madness. Falcandus reported that Martin had Christians brought to trial on unsubstantiated charges, and then beaten, tortured, thrown into the arena, or publicly hanged “with Saracens watching and laughing (videntibus Sarracenis et illudentibus).” Another official, defined as a “homo sceleratissimus,” was charged with seizing Christian property, raping an unmarried woman, and (worst of all?) renovating an “antiquissimum Sarracenorum templum.” To add insult to injury, he was also said to have supported a brothel where Muslims were free to violate (constuprare) Christian women and take advantage of puers. Even qa ‘id Peter, in other respects an able administrator, jeopardized the peace of the kingdom because he could not relinquish the natural hatred his people felt for Christianity.

Although Falcandus made use of one of the same standard topoi of his predecessors (the physical and spiritual dangers of Islam), he seems to have employed it for a rather different reason. Amatus relied on it as a justification for the conquest of Sicily, while Malaterra and William took recourse to it as a means of maligning some of their stories’ antagonists. Falcandus, writing in a period of greater cultural contact, and

---

198 The late tenth-century Venetian chronicler John the Deacon also made use of rabies to describe the Slavic pirates of Narento, perceived as the worst of all enemies because of the threat they posed to Venetian commerce in the Adriatic. For a relevant analysis, see Berto, *Il vocabolario politico e sociale*, 258. “Degno di nota è che Giovanni Diacono usi proprio il vocabolo rabies e non altri come cupiditas, perché esse sembra fare riferimento ad un comportamento bestiale, non guidato dalla mente umana, anche se questo aveva come unico risultato il furto dei beni e non l’uccisione dei malcapitati.”


200 Falcandus, *Liber*, c. 41, 115. This was the castellan Robert of Calatabiano. Although Falcandus never described him as a Muslim, he did say he was “sub eunuchorum protectione” in chapter 41. Metcalfe believed he was probably a Christian convert. Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 203–205.


therefore greater tension, was instead disturbed by the social turbulence produced by Christian-Muslim rivalries within the kingdom.\(^{203}\)

Treachery, Pride, and Greed: Non-Religious Denigration of Muslim Characters

Invective could take many forms, and even when applied to the Muslims it did not always follow sectarian lines. Whereas William of Apulia largely confined himself to abusing Islam and its adherents on religious grounds, the other chroniclers sometimes attached negative attributes of another variety. For example, Amatus of Montecassino’s Saracens were associated with hubris, and for Hugo Falcandus they could be lecherous or deceitful. Geoffrey Malaterra, moreover, frequently portrayed individual Muslims as crafty, treacherous, and greedy.

Yet a thorough survey of Malaterra’s depiction of Muslims reveals just how inconsistent his attempt to disparage them actually was. To suggest that he simply divided them between “good Saracens” who allied with his patron, Roger I, and “bad Saracens” who resisted the count, would be a crude overgeneralization, but such a statement would not be all that far from the truth. At the very least, Malaterra did not depict Muslim behavior as especially worse than that of Christians, but showed, rather, that the two groups could share many of the same vices and virtues.

Sometimes, Malaterra denigrated specific Muslim characters by associating them with betrayal or deceit. One example of this theme can be found in Malaterra’s

\(^{203}\) The historian’s concerns could reflect the greater interest shown toward personal beliefs and matters of inward spirituality during his time. Whereas none of the three earlier chroniclers expressed ideas about forced conversion of the Muslims of Sicily, Hugo Falcandus repeatedly addressed the issues of conversion and apostasy. Cf. Metcalfe, The Muslims of Medieval Italy, 160. “Nor was the central Mediterranean region untouched by conceptual shifts over the nature of religious inspired hostility, in part stimulated by the preaching of Bernard of Clairvaux, as the physical focus on the Holy Land and the capture and defence of Jerusalem broadened to include personal disposition towards faith and the potentially heretical attitudes of those other beliefs.”
description of how Benarvet, the Sicilian leader in charge of the last Muslim resistance to the Normans, committed an act of fraus to gain an advantage over his enemies. In that case, the author clearly connected the act of betrayal to the antagonist’s Saracen identity. Malaterra described Benarvet as hostile to the Christian name (christiano nomini infestus), very shrewd (callidissimus), and crafty (subdolus), willing to say one thing while keeping another hidden in his heart.\textsuperscript{204} By offering many gifts, Benarvet solicited the help of Benthumen, a paganus whom Count Roger had left in charge of the city of Catania.\textsuperscript{205} This Benthumen treacherously allowed Benarvet and many of his men to enter the city at night (fraudulenter de nocte).\textsuperscript{206} Malaterra called the betrayal wicked trickery (nefandafraus), and explained that the perpetrator appropriately lived up to his pagan name: “paganus vero nominis sui competens imitator.”\textsuperscript{207} He thus implied that faithlessness was to be expected from someone who had no faith to begin with.\textsuperscript{208} When the count’s forces put Catania to siege, Benthumen and Benarvet fled in the night, leaving their soldiers behind.\textsuperscript{209} Later, rather than give Benthumen his promised rewards, Benarvet beheaded him, lest he be betrayed in the same way by such a “paganus traditor.”\textsuperscript{210} Benthumen, who betrayed not only his lord, Roger, but also his own soldiers, thereby received what he deserved.

\textsuperscript{204} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.30, 75. “Aliud lingua proferens, aliud tacito pectore occultando gerens.” It is worth noting that calliditas was attributed to the qāʿid of Malta as well in ibid., IV.16, 95.

\textsuperscript{205} Metcalfe suggested that this Benthumen was a relative of Betumen (Ibn al-Thumna), the Sicilian \textit{amir} who invited Roger I to invade Sicily. Metcalfe, \textit{The Muslims of Medieval Sicily}, 135n.13.

\textsuperscript{206} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.30, 75. “Infra urbem illum cum multitudine suorum fraudulenter de nocte accipiens.”

\textsuperscript{207} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.30, 75.

\textsuperscript{208} Benarvet, the arch-villain of this text, again acted deceitfully in Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.10, 62. In that episode, Benarvet laid an ambush that killed Count Roger’s son-in-law, Hugh.

\textsuperscript{209} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.30, 76.

\textsuperscript{210} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.30, 76.
In a similar episode involving treachery, the author again explicitly identified the traitorous character as a Saracen. In that episode, Malaterra told how a “saracenus quidam” by the name of Brachiem gained the trust of Serlo, the new Norman governor of Castrogiovanni and the nephew of Count Roger. The Saracen exploited the confidence of his Norman friend, and, as the author explained, became Serlo’s blood-brother (adoptivus frater), but only in order to deceive him more easily (facilius deciperet). After offering kind words and gifts, he lured Serlo into a deadly trap, supplying him with false information about an impending attack. The Norman went out expecting to thwart a small Arab raiding party of seven men, but instead encountered seven hundred knights and two thousand foot soldiers. Tricked and outnumbered, he and his meager escort made a valiant stand, but were quickly overwhelmed. Malaterra then went on to add that Serlo’s attackers not only eviscerated him and sent his severed head to Africa, they also ate his heart in the hopes of gaining their victim’s courage (audacia). By linking these Arabs (Arabici) with such a barbaric act as cannibalism, the author seems to have been implying that these particular Saracens were almost inhuman. Moreover, the fact that the author had Brachiem betray his own blood-brother made the act of traditio all the more severe.

211 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.46, 54. “Saracenus autem quidam, de potentioribus Castri-Johannis, nomine Brachiem, cum Serlone, ut eum facilius deciperet, foedus inierat, eorumque more per aurem adoptivum fratrem, alter alterum factum vicissim suspicerat.”

212 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.46, 54. “Hic, traditione cum suis composita, Serloni salutaria munuscula cum amicalibus verbis in dolo mandat, inter quae etiam intulit ista: “Sciat fraternitas adoptivi mei, quod, tali vel tali die, septem tantummodo Arabici ex deliberatione jactantiae ad terram tuam debent praedatum adire.”

213 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.46, 54. “Serlone eviscerato, Saraceni cor extraxerunt; utque audaciam eius, quae multa fuerat, conciperent, comedisse dicuntur.”

214 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.46, 54.

215 It is interesting to note that Hugo Falcandus described a similar practice of blood brotherhood that he described as uniquely Sicilian. Falcandus, Liber, 10.
In other cases of betrayal, though, the author sometimes chose to ignore opportunities to depict the Saracens in a negative light, and failed even to mention that the betrayers were non-Christian. Take, for example, the indifference that Malaterra displayed toward Saracen identity in describing the death of Betumen, an *āmīr* of Sicily who had allied himself to Count Roger. In the text, Betumen proved to be such a tireless advocate of Roger’s cause that his own people eventually murdered him. This happened when Nichel, the ruler of Entella, invited the *āmīr* to a meeting, sending him words of peace. The town of Entella had formerly belonged to Betumen, and, according to Malaterra, he had once granted it many benefices. Not suspecting any deceit (*fraus*), Betumen agreed to the invitation, believing that those he once treated well would now willingly submit to him, unaware as he was of the plot (*consilium*) in Nichel’s “poisonous heart (*venenosus corde*)”\(^\text{216}\) When Betumen arrived at the meeting place, the people of Entella first slew his horse to prevent any chance of escape, knocked him to the ground, and then finished him off. Having been unhorsed, Roger’s principal ally on the island thus died a particularly ignoble death *in terra* at the hands of those once subject to his authority. As for the men of Entella, they had shown their willingness to betray a member of the Sicilian nobility, an *āmīr* at that, and even one who had formerly been their lord.

In this tale of treachery, however, Malaterra never actually identified Nichel, Betumen, or his murderers as Saracens. Betumen’s name (a Latinized form of Ibn al-Thumna), and title (*admiraldus*) were the only clues the author ever gave of the man’s Saracen identity.\(^\text{217}\) The chronicler made no effort to describe the betrayal as somehow

\(^{216}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.22.

\(^{217}\) Ibn al-Thumna (d. 1062), *qāīd* of eastern Sicily, is attested to in Arabic sources. In reality, he defeated and killed the ruler of Catania, Ibn al-Maklāti, and married the latter’s wife. Ibn al-Thumna later entered into a conflict with his brother-in-law, Ibn al-Hawwās, and sought military assistance from the
imbued with specifically “Saracen” characteristics. It would seem that he willingly let an opportunity for an anti-Muslim diatribe slip past him. Since the author showed no reluctance to criticize them elsewhere, the simplest explanation is that, aside from a few instances of blustering rhetoric, the author was basically indifferent to the Saracens as a people and aware of Count Roger’s relationship with them. He kept in mind the fact that his patron frequently negotiated with Muslims, and so he did not always try to denigrate them. Although he might slip into polemic from time to time, in this instance he simply did not feel the need to do so.

As another example, Malaterra devoted an entire chapter to describing how the people of Iato resorted to *artes* and *fraus* when they chose to rebel against the Normans, but did not identify the treacherous foes as Muslim. The inhabitants of that town, Malaterra explained, were situated atop a mountain and took advantage of their strategic position to hold off Roger’s forces for many months. Although the citizens were indeed Muslim, Malaterra made no indication of this, and referred to them only as *Jatenses.*

Still, as enemies of the count, he implicated them in a bit of cunning. He reported that the people of Iato exploited the fact that there was only a single road up the mountain to their town, and that they hid their herds and flocks in secret caves in the mountain to protect them from the pillaging enemy. In the end, though, as harvest time approached, Roger destroyed their crops, leaving them crippled. After several months of fighting, the people

---


219 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii,* III.20. The practice of cave dwelling was common to the Berbers of north Africa. Rural Sicilians sometimes used caverns for shelter from cold winters and hot summers. Houben, *Roger II: A Ruler between East and West,* 13.
were drained of strength, and they ultimately settled a treaty with the count and put aside their “defenses of deceit (fraudis munimenta).”

Although it is noteworthy that Malaterra again chose to connect fraus with Roger’s enemies, it should come as no surprise that he opted against attacking, or even mentioning, their Muslim identity. As is apparent from the examples provided so far, the author only haphazardly engaged in polemic against the Saracens. Again, the most likely explanation for this inconsistency hinges on the many pragmatic relationships that Malaterra’s patron entered into with Muslims. For Roger I, as for Malaterra, the Saracens were not always the enemy. Some were indeed fierce opponents of the count, but some were also his friends and allies. Both the historian and his patron pursued a pragmatic policy toward the Muslims that was far more complex than simply categorizing them all as evil adversaries.

It is also important to note that Malaterra did not restrict his use of these expressions to the Muslims. Every one of the terms for deceit and fickleness mentioned above appear in descriptions of other groups, even the Normans. This is not to say that such words did not carry a strong negative connotation. Most of the time, Malaterra was careful not to apply these terms to his own patron, and reserved them primarily for the count’s rivals. Other Normans, including the count’s immediate family, were fair game—when they violated Roger’s trust. Occasionally, though, craftiness and ambition could

---

220 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.21, 70.
221 Albu, The Normans in their Histories, 4. “The Norman hero appears as trickster as often as warrior.”
222 For instance, when describing how Count Roger’s son, Jordan, plotted against him, he used forms of decipio, callidus, and fraus in much the same way that he had in writing about the Saracen enemy. Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.36, 78. Malaterra wrote that Jordan cleverly deceived many men: “plures callide cirumveniendo.” He then carried out a plot: “consilio peracto.” The people he deceived were described as “deceptis.” At last, he revealed his treachery by usurping the citadels of St. Mark and Mistretta, and pillaged the region: “Nam castrum Sancti Marci et Mistrectam sibi usurpans, detecta fraude,
be positive qualities, and, in a few cases, Malaterra used words for treachery when writing favorably about his patron as well as the *gens Normanorum* generally.\(^{223}\)

On the whole, it would appear that Malaterra did not regard the traits of inconstancy and treachery as peculiar to the Saracens. With that said, almost all of the phrases mentioned above seem to have borne a negative connotation. *Callidus* and *dissimulare* were virtually the only terms of deception shared by Normans and Muslims that could carry any positive meaning. The others, although not confined to the Saracens, were used when describing enemies of the count. It is safe to say that the author recognized that Normans had at least as much of a proclivity toward deceit and inconstancy as their Muslim adversaries, and that he did not hesitate to abuse them when they betrayed his patron.

In a somewhat similar manner, the twelfth-century historian Hugo Falcandus described numerous Muslim characters who engaged in treachery against the Sicilian monarchy. As seen above, for this author, the worst Muslims were those who feigned...
Christianity, and, in that regard, the palace eunuchs associated with the royal court received the brunt of his attacks. Yet this group not only oppressed Christians and encouraged apostasy, they were also guilty of sedition. He accused one of these officials, qāʿid Peter, of betraying the Norman garrison in North Africa, while other eunuchs spied on the king on behalf of the Almohads. Following Peter’s eventual defection to North Africa, Falcandus had one of his Christian characters reflect that it had been madness in the first place to promote a Muslim slave who had already betrayed one military expedition, and a miracle that the qāʿid had not tried to let Almohads into the palace or carry off the king.

As for Malaterra, the remainder of his invective portrayed Muslims more like greedy pirates than tricksters. During one Saracen raid, the author described how a group of Africani—here Malaterra did not fail to add that they were “ergo Saraceni”—sailed to Nicotera, catching the people unaware during the feast of St. Peter. They attacked in the manner of pirates, “piratarum more,” coming in the night and killing the

---

224 Most of these men were acquired in foreign slave markets or taken as prisoners in war. They adopted a Christian name upon their baptism, and many held the title of qāʿid. Their close access to the king meant that they were capable of possessing incredible power. Metcalfe, The Muslims of Medieval Italy, 193–195.
225 Falcandus placed eunuchs at the head of three separate conspiracies. Falcandus, Liber, c. 10, 27; c. 14, 50; c. 26, 93.
227 Falcandus, Liber, c. 14, 47. Falcandus’s other vituperations included a statement that the eunuchs had a “rather disgraceful spirit and awareness of their crimes (flagitious animus ac scelerum conscientia),” and a remark that the king had not made a sound decision in allowing “contemptible men, nay rather, effeminate men (viros contemptibles, immo deviratos homines)” to govern the realm. Falcandus, Liber, c. 14, 47; c. 16, 96.
228 Malaterra was the only one of the five authors to stress greediness among Muslims. Amatus and Hugo Falcandus made only two vague implications of greed. See Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, 1.15. This description of the aftermath of Manzikert was the closest the monk ever came to accusing the Saracens of avarice. Here he reported that the Byzantines bribed the Turks to betray and capture the Norman mercenary Roussel of Bailleul. While the author may have implicated these particular Muslims in a Byzantine plot, in doing so he chose not to condemn them explicitly because of it. Hugo Falcandus on the other hand described the court archers, who were Muslim, as opportunistic Falcandus, Liber, c. 55, 157. “Sagitarii curie, qui nunquam in seditionibus ubi lucri spes appareat ultimi consueverunt occurrere.”
citizens in their sleep while they were still drunk from their celebration. Having set fire to the nearby fortress, the Saracens carried their prisoners, including women and children, back to the ships along with their loot. On the following day, Malaterra added, they returned to the shore and ransomed some of their captives, but kept those they thought would be useful.

In this case, Malaterra seems to have been implying that Muslims could be a shrewd and unscrupulous people driven by greed. It is however true that, since the Saracen raid involved taking advantage of a Christian celebration, the author did make their act appear somewhat sacrilegious as well. Yet he did not emphasize the timing of their attack as a particularly profane act, and for the most part just made these Africani seem opportunistic. They came under the cover of darkness, looting and kidnapping, and acting more like cowardly bandits than either soldiers or evil fanatics. Although the fortress posed something of a military target, the author made it clear that the Saracens aimed primarily at gaining pretium and praeda—plunder and wealth.

There are three other examples of this greediness contained in Malaterra’s text. The author recalled that, in the year following the above raid, the Africani returned to Italy “plus necessario cupidine avaritiae insolentes,” but said that this time they were repulsed by Count Roger’s forces. Thus the Saracens were lured into defeat by allowing themselves to succumb to their greed. At another place in the story, the author made a

---

229 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.8. “Africani ergo Saraceni . . . navibus paratis, piratarum more . . . in vigilia Sancti Petri, apud Nicotrum de notae apulsi, cives incautos et, prae gaudio instantis solemnitatis, vino ex more somnoque gravatos, irruentes opprimunt, semisomnes alios perimunt, alios capiunt.”


231 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.8. “In crastinum, ripae proprius accedentes, pueros et imbecilliorem familiam amicis redimere volentibus, pretio accepto, navibus eicientes, partim exonerantur; reliquis, qui alicuius utilitatis videbantur, adducunt.”
point of explaining that the *Arabici* and *Africani* who came to assist their coreligionists in Sicily did so “causa lucrandi,” rather than out of any sense of moral obligation. Later, in writing about Benthumen’s surrender of Catania, he was careful to note that the Saracen had been blinded by his greed (*aviritia coecatus*) and had forgotten his oaths to the count.\(^{233}\)

This is not to say that the author singled out the Saracens as somehow more avaricious than other groups, however. Much like the terms used for treachery and fickleness, Malaterra’s terms for avarice appeared among non-Muslims too. Though he never used the term *aviritia* with reference to a Norman, he did call them a *gens dominationis avida* and identified Roger himself as *dominationis avidus*, both of which relate to a kind of greed.\(^{234}\) *Avaritia*, on the other hand, was applied to a Venetian commander as well as to the inhabitants of Rome.\(^{235}\) As for the verb *lucrari*, Malaterra stated that Robert Guiscard was motivated by “that hope of profit (*spes ea lucrandi*)” during the siege of Bari in 1071.\(^{236}\) The author also noted that *spes lucrandi* drew the Normans to Italy in the first place, and that the sons of Tancred were drawn to Capua “causa militariter aliquid lucrandi.”\(^{237}\)

William of Apulia, by comparison, made no mention of Muslims as tricksters, and only at one point did he imply that they were greedy. According to him, as the battle of Manzikert (1071) turned against the Greeks, Emperor Romanus ordered his men to

\(^{232}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.32, 41.
\(^{233}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, III.30, 75.
\(^{234}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, I.3, 8; II.1, 29.
\(^{235}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, IV.28, 74; IV.38, 81.
\(^{237}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, I.3; I.6.
scatter coins around the camp in order to distract the enemy when they arrived. The ploy worked, although it did not, in the end, save the emperor. When the “Persae” arrived at the Byzantine camp, William wrote that they allowed many soldiers to escape because they were “plures praedae quam militibus feriendis intenti.” Since this was the only time that William associated any Muslim characters with avarice, it seems likely that he was simply interested in describing a battlefield tactic and not trying to depict these Turkish soldiers as unusually greedy.

While Amatus’s Muslims were neither greedy nor treacherous, he did associate them with the sin of pride. For example, he explained that the Normans who defended Salerno wanted to fight not for money, but because they found the pride of the Saracens intolerable (non poient soustenir tant superbe de li Sarrazin). Similarly, in his account of the Byzantine expedition to Sicily under General George Maniakes, the author reflected that the stubborn bad behavior (protervité) of the Saracens could not be overcome with a weak hand (a double insult aimed at both the Byzantines and the Muslims). Fortunately for Maniakes, a contingent of Norman mercenaries accompanied the Greeks, and, through their help, the imperial forces were able to win a victory over the Saracens. According to Amatus, the pride (superbe) of the vanquished

---

238 William of Apulia, III.36-40. That is, Emperor Romanus IV Diogenes, who ruled from 1068 until shortly after his defeat at Manzikert in August 1071. This engagement, fought between Byzantine forces under the command of the emperor and Seljuk Turks led by Alp Arslan, occurred in eastern Anatolia and resulted in a decisive Turkish victory. After his release from captivity, Romanus was deposed and replaced by Michael VII Ducas. On this battle, see Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades: The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 63–65. C. Cahen, “La première pénétration turque en Asie-Mineure (seconde moitié du XIᵉ siècle),” *Byzantion* 18 (1948): 5–67.


240 If that were the poet’s message, he certainly would not have mentioned Alp Arslan’s subsequent generosity and honorable treatment of his Christian captives in such exquisite detail. The strategy of scattering loot to facilitate retreat and distract an advancing enemy was a legendary element that also appeared in the heroic legends of the Danes. Mathieu, introduction to *Gesta*, 52n2.

241 Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, I.17, 22.

242 Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, II. 8, 66.
foe was afterward strewn about the battlefield. Later on in the text, when the author had Robert Guiscard looking back on his life and reciting his many ordeals, he made sure to include mention of the “superbe de li Sarrazin, fame, et molt tribulation” that he had endured overseas.

Though not explicitly religious, the vice of pride that this author attached to the Muslims may have stemmed from what he took to be their arrogant rejection of Christ. Excessive confidence in one’s own power was a way of incurring divine wrath. In that respect, such accusations are similar to some of Malaterra’s more zealous passages in which he criticized Muslim warriors for the self-reliant attitude that so offended God. The similarity between the two writers cannot be stretched too far, though, because, whereas the Muslims in Amatus’s history might have appeared faithless and proud, they never behaved treacherously like the Muslims in Geoffrey Malaterra’s narrative.

On the contrary, Amatus’s Sicilians tended to fall victim themselves to Norman deceit. At the siege of Palermo, the “maliciouz” Norman soldiers lured some of the starving inhabitants outside the city with bread, then captured and enslaved them. At another point, after travelling by night and then laying an ambush, Count Roger and his men fell upon a Saracen convoy carrying supplies for the defense of Messina.

According to Amatus, the Normans killed everyone, including the qāʿid in charge of the

---

243 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, II. 8, 68.
244 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VII.27, 321.
245 However, the Cassinese historian also attributed pride to the Lombards. For example, superbe appeared with reference to the Lombards in six places. Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.43, 43; II.13, 70; IV.34; IV.38, 209 (twice); VIII.10, 351. Arrogance occurred in three places. Ibid., IV.27, 201; IV.34; IV.37.
246 Amatus attributed it to the Byzantines as well, interpreting their defeat in one battle to their excessive confidence—they put more faith in themselves than in God. Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, II.26.
248 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, V.16.
Later, when Robert Guiscard sent an envoy fluent in Arabic to visit the city of Palermo, he cleverly ordered the man to feign ignorance of the language so that he might spy on the city.250

In passages where he did not describe Normans deceiving Muslims, Amatus frequently depicted the latter group as wholly unable to defend themselves. Unlike Malaterra, this author glossed over the difficulties of an arduous thirty-year campaign and rarely described his Christian protagonists struggling at all in their protracted conflict with the Saracens. Often, Amatus even robbed his Muslim characters of the opportunity to die gloriously in combat. Instead, the Saracens proved to be such easy prey that they frequently found themselves captured and enslaved. For example, Amatus reported that a group of soldiers who sallied forth to defend Palermo were caught and sold by the surrounding Norman knights.251 At Castrogiovanni, Count Roger invited the Saracens to combat, then captured thirty of them, killing just fifteen.252 Amatus also found it noteworthy that Duke Robert endowed Montecassino with not just riches and mules, but with “li Sarrazin”, who were “his slaves (serve sien).”253 According to him, no one could reckon how many Saracens had been killed, seized, or sold.254 Yet aside from the variety of essentially negative portrayals described above, it is nevertheless important to recognize that Amatus did include a number of fairly ambivalent depictions of Muslims in his narrative, from his descriptions of Betumen to his mention of the Muslim soldiers who fought for Robert Guiscard.

249 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, V.16.
250 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, V.24.
251 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VI.16.
252 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VI.16.
253 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VIII.36, 375.
254 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VI.22, 285.
None of these writers, therefore, viewed greed, betrayal, or cunning as uniquely Saracen attributes, and there seems to be an overall lack of consistent stereotyping at work. Hugo Falcandus, whose work revolved around internecine court conspiracies and rebellions, did see the Muslims as treacherous, but also as one of only several groups threatening the stability of the nascent monarchy. For other writers, what made the Saracens exceptional—and then only at certain moments—was their religion. Although Malaterra did treat the Muslims as enemies of God, he did so at just a handful of points. At very specific places—for example, at the battle of Cerami, when Roger was facing a Muslim enemy—the chronicler proved himself willing to make use of religious invective to cast the count’s enemies in a negative light. In other words, only on a few occasions, when denigrating the Saracens would glorify his patron, did the author engage in polemic. Amatus too described the Saracens as sinful, but did not make them out to be truly evil. More often, both Amatus of Montecassino and Geoffrey Malaterra displayed a surprising level of neutrality toward the Saracens.

Positive and Ambivalent Portrayals of Muslims

Aside from his portrayal of certain Saracens as faithless, greedy, or treacherous, Malaterra revealed a certain interest in their commitment to honor. Although they might be a hostile people, he occasionally delved into greater detail about their martial prowess and willingness to die for their beliefs than one might expect from a monastic Christian author. Malaterra seemed almost to appreciate the Muslims’ dedication to their religion, occasionally noted their daring in battle, and at several points apparently reveled in the

---

255 This is especially clear from the fact that Amatus never associated the Muslims with the devil. He did do this, however, for individual Lombards, for which see chapter three.
fact that they found death a better alternative to apostasy. Much of this undoubtedly stemmed from the author’s need to supply his protagonists with a worthy adversary.\footnote{256 \textcite{Toubert} wrote that “A l’inverse de celle du grec, l’image du musulman est . . . celle d’un guerrier de valeur.” Pierre Toubert, “La première historiographie de la conquête normande de l’Italie méridionale (XIe siècle),” 37.}

For example, Malaterra described how one ruler’s failure to respect his subjects and willingness to needlessly dishonor them led to his downfall. According to the author, the commander at Castronovo, Bechus, was known for his \textit{levitas}, or fickleness. As the story unfolded, the inconstancy and cruelty of this “quidam saracens” led to his own downfall, beginning when Bechus chose one day to whip the local miller.\footnote{257 Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.12.} While pretending (\textit{dissimulans}) to bear the dishonor (\textit{dehonestatio}), Malaterra wrote, the miller secretly set about plotting against his lord through artifice (\textit{artibus}). He sent a message to Count Roger, promising support and inviting him to attack. When Roger’s forces arrived, the miller lowered a rope over the walls and helped them take the fortress. Terrified, Bechus fled, and, in return for his aid, the miller received many gifts from the count, who hoped to encourage similar tricks (\textit{artes}) among his enemies.\footnote{258 Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.12.}

Superficially, it might seem that a subtext of treachery among the Muslims hangs over the entire chapter, yet on closer inspection it becomes evident that Malaterra directed his criticism at Bechus alone. Malaterra condemned only him as cruel and violent, a ruler who got what he deserved. The author did not criticize the miller for betraying his lord, but suggested rather that the man had behaved appropriately. Malaterra’s criticism was thus reserved for Bechus, whom he accused of \textit{levitas}. The miller, on the other hand, employed \textit{artes}, not \textit{fraus} (a stronger word, which as shown above, the author used only for truly heinous acts). Malaterra understood the importance
that Sicilian society placed on honor, and recognized that an act of dishonor—such as an unwarranted public beating—demanded vengeance.

In a similar way, Malaterra also went into detail concerning Muslim commitment to their “lex”—Islam. He told how the men of Palermo agreed to relinquish their city to Roger only if it did not entail surrendering their religion: “legem suam nullatenus se violari vel relinquere velle dicentes.”259 The author, furthermore, repeatedly explained the custom of swearing oaths on the Qu’ran. In five cases—after the fall of Rometta, after the fall of Palermo, during negotiations with a fleet from North Africa, after the surrender of Malta, and when a treaty was made between Ifriqiya and Pisa—he described Muslims taking pledges according to their religion, or “sub ostentantione legis suae.”260

Malaterra also showed that, for the people of Sicily, death was preferable to apostasy. Indeed, a man who converted to Christianity was killed “a sua gente hostiliter” for refusing to return to Islam.261 After the fall of Messina, a certain youth killed his only sister, a tenuis virguncula, to prevent her from falling victim to Norman violation and becoming “legis suae praevicatrix.”262 Although Malaterra might have dismissed the Qu’ran as a book of superstition, he nevertheless recognized the reverence it commanded among its adherents.

One final example of the author’s interest in this people’s commitment to honor and willingness to sacrifice can be found in his account of Roger’s siege of Messina, which took place during the count’s first, abortive, expedition into Sicily. Here, the citizens, though few in number, eagerly (certatim) defended the walls and ramparts of the

---

259 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.45, 53.
260 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.3, 87.
261 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.30, 75.
262 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.11, 33. Cf. Wolf, Making History, 160. Wolf suggested that this episode was meant to appeal to a courtly audience.
city. Malaterra said that they fought “pro vita” alongside their women (*cum ipsis mulieribus*).\(^{263}\) Even more astonishing, the defense worked. Thwarted, the Normans abandoned their siege and returned to Italy. Since he chose to include an episode in which his patron was bitterly defeated, there was little Malaterra could do in the way of glorifying the count other than to whitewash the aftermath of the event—Roger’s withdrawal to Italy—as a prudent retreat. The author included no trace of invective here, religious or otherwise, and identified the city’s defenders only as *Messenenses*. There is only one truly compelling explanation as to why the author would want to mention such a disastrous affair at all: Malaterra found the episode too impressive, and the reckless daring of the Saracens too noteworthy, to leave out of the narrative altogether.\(^{264}\)

Most of the time, however, this author portrayed the Saracens not as enemies of God nor as brave warriors, but instead treated them with indifference. Malaterra employed terms of religious invective to describe Muslims a total of only eighteen times, while on seventy-nine occasions he used much blander terminology.\(^{265}\) In those cases, he called them *Saraceni, cives, incola, Sicilienses, Africani, or Arabici*.\(^{266}\) For example,

\(^{263}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.6.

\(^{264}\) Malaterra provided a similar example when discussing the Muslim defense of Centuripe against the Normans. He wrote that the inhabitants did not fear death and did not want to be thrown into servitude: “Mori tamen non abhorrentes, cum nullo modo servire volunt, in defensione urbis et sua propugnacula armant.” They resisted, and the Normans were again repelled as at Messina. Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.15. Compare this depiction of the Muslims as worthy adversaries to William of Apulia’s account of the defense of Palermo, where the Muslims “went to the battle like men, firmly resolved either to live or to die (*ad pugnam veniunt sub condicione virili *Ut quo iure viri vel vivant vel moriantur*?” William of Apulia, *Gesta*, III.233–234.

\(^{265}\) Pagani appeared in: Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.32, 42; III.33 44; II.33, 45 (twice); III.30, 75 (twice); III.30, 76 (twice); IV.24. There were ten other instances in which Malaterra made reference to their religion: ibid., II.1, 29 (*gens Deo ingrata*); II.1, 29 (*siciliam incredulam*); II.13 (*libris superstitionis*); II.33, 44 (*gens Deo rebellis*); II.35, 46 (*gens Deo rebellis*); II.41, 50 (Malaterra’s Robert Guiscard stated that a new Muslim leader was *eiusdem religionis*); III.16 (Islam referred to as a *superstition*); IV.2, 86 (Benarvet threw himself to his death *instinctu diaboli*); IV.6 (Chamut, a Sicilian leader, gave up his warlike ways upon his conversion to Christianity); IV.7, 90 (*incredula gens*).

\(^{266}\) Malaterra referred to Muslims as *incola* in: Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.36, 47; III.16; IV.16, 95. He called them *cives* in: ibid., I.7, 11; II.1, 29; II.11, 32; II.36, 47 (twice); III.11, 63; III.12; IV.6 (not counted because they were said to have had Christian captives and cannot therefore be considered
Malaterra referred to the people of Messina and the people of Iato, both enemies of Count Roger, as “Messanenses” and “Jatenses,” without using any words that would even tell the reader they were Muslim. When describing Benarvet’s rampage in Calabria, the author called the raiders nothing more than a navalis exercitus, and reserved his deprecations for Benarvet alone. Yet evidence of Malaterra’s dispassionate attitude took other forms as well. Aside from the ambivalent names that the author often applied to the Saracens, he also included episodes in which the Muslims were not depicted as enemies, but rather as partners of the count.

There are several places in Malaterra’s story where Saracen soldiers made an appearance fighting in the count’s armies. These came at the end of the text, after the death of Robert Guiscard, when Roger sent forces to the mainland to support his nephew, Roger Borsa, as the new duke of Apulia. Malaterra described the count’s response to the call for help against rebels in Cosenza by saying that he summoned “ab omni Sicilia multa Saracenorum millia.” The author said Roger Borsa’s own army included “multa millia Saracenorum a Sicilia et Calabria.” Shortly thereafter, Malaterra added that Saraceni comprised the “maxima pars” of the force that the count sent from Italy to assist his nephew. Nowhere in this discussion of the Apulian campaign did the author see fit to include any deprecation of the Muslim soldiers. Aside from these ambivalent neutral language); IV.16, 95 (also disregarded because they were said to have had Christian prisoners); IV.18, 98. They were identified according to their city name in: ibid., 1.7, 11; II.6 (twice); II.13 (twice); II.14; II.15, 33; II.36, (twice); II.37 (twice); II. 45, 53; III.20 (four times); IV.12 (twice); IV.15, 93. With the exception of the title comes Siculorum, one passage in which the word sicilienses was used with invective (“condensitatem inimicorum paganorum ac Siciliensium” in ibid., II.33, 44) and the passage in which the Africans were described as Africani ergo Saraceni (ibid., III.8), there were twenty-two non-religious references to Sicilians, Africans, and Arabs.

267 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.1.
268 Roger Borsa, son of Robert Guiscard, ruled as duke of Apulia from 1085 to 1111. Mathieu, introduction to Gesta, 11.
269 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.17, 96.
270 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.22, 100.
271 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.26, 104
descriptions of anonymous Muslims serving in Roger’s armies, Malaterra also mentioned Saracen rulers who cooperated with the count.

Among the various Muslim leaders who made an appearance in the *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, King Themin of North Africa stood out for receiving especially neutral treatment at the hands of Malaterra. This likely reflects the political realities of the late eleventh century, when Count Roger had entered into diplomatic relations with Zirid *Ifriqiya*.\(^{272}\) In the first friendly encounter between the two rulers, a Norman fleet encountered a group of fourteen ships sailing off the coast of Sicily “ab Africa.”\(^{273}\) Although they traveled *more piratarum*, they swore by their religion that they were under orders from their king only to pursue pirates. They offered assistance to the count, who invited them to meet with him and receive supplies. Soon after the Saracens accepted the generous proposal, however, a wind rose up and took them back to sea before the meeting could take place.\(^{274}\)

In comparison to some of the earlier passages, in which Malaterra portrayed Roger as leader of the “Christianae militiae tyrones,” this description seems remarkable.\(^{275}\) Although Malaterra did add tension to his account by making the reader at first believe that pirates from North Africa were once again on the attack, he quickly resolved the crisis by explaining that the sailors were “pacem portantes” and “inservire paratos.”\(^{276}\) Not only did the author have Roger enter into a brief compact, or “foedere,” with these Saracens, but he even reported that the count invited them “ad amicum

\(^{272}\) Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 128.
\(^{273}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, III.17, 66.
\(^{274}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, III.17, 67.
\(^{275}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.33, 43.
\(^{276}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, III.17, 67.
colloquium." Thus Malaterra appears to have been rather comfortable tailoring his
descriptions of the *gens Saracenorium* to fit his patron’s own political exigencies. As this
particular passage indicates, his antipathy for the Muslims may have been more
pragmatic than heartfelt.

Amatus of Montecassino could, at times, allow his ostensible dislike of the
Saracens to be more subdued as well. Especially when describing Muslims allied to the
Normans, the author’s tone could become quite benign. He told how a group of Saracens
living in Calabria under Robert Guiscard’s rule sought to prove their loyalty to the duke
by fighting against the “Pagan de Sycille.” They and their Christian neighbors
launched a naval attack on the island, fought bravely, and returned after suffering some
losses. Later, when Robert went to war with the Lombard prince of Salerno, Amatus
noted that he summoned Saracens in addition to Latin and Greek soldiers.

That religious diversity continued to be a characteristic of Sicilian armies long
after the time that Amatus wrote can be seen in Alexander of Telese’s history. This
twelth-century text reveals, moreover, the strife that such a diverse military could
engender. Alexander mentioned Muslim soldiers taking part in the siege of Montepeloso
in 1133, for example, where they helped King Roger II successfully breach the fortress’s
defenses. These troops were not always warmly regarded to say the least, as a quarrel

---

277 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, III.17, 67.
278 Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, V.11.
279 Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, V.11.
280 Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, VIII.14, 354. “II assembla troiz turmez de troiz manieres de
gent: c’est de Latin, de Grex et de Sarrazin, et commanda que venissent molt de gent et de navie a garder lo
port.”
281 Alexander of Telese, *Ystoria*, II.42. “Interim autem, dum ita utrimque pugnaretur, Saracenii per
illud instrumentum ligna, quibus fossatus repletur, iactabant.”
with Christians at Bari that led to several deaths indicates. Although this particular author had relatively little to say about Muslims in general, none of his statements contained any trace of invective. A tempting explanation for this is that Alexander of Telese remained more consistently neutral than any of the other writers. King Roger actually made far more frequent use of Muslim troops than Alexander indicated, however, and his avoidance of this subject may reveal a great degree of historical reticence on his part. He very well may have seen any serious discussion of Roger’s Saracen forces as an unwise and imprudent move. Yet, from what little he did mention of relations between Muslims and Christians, it would seem that tensions between the two were not unknown even in the era of the “multicultural” King Roger II.

Hugo Falcandus provided an even bleaker picture of the sectarian violence that occurred in this period. He recorded a fight between Muslim and Christian soldiers in which “a great many Saracens fell, with the Christians violently rushing upon them

---

282 Alexander of Telese, *Ystoria*, II.34. According to the chronicler, a group of Christians killed several Muslims who were sent to construct a fortress at Bari because they had killed a nobleman’s son: “Porro Regi inter hec Salerni moranti nuntiatur quod barenses cives ab eo se aversuros iam prepararent, eo quod nonnullos saracenorum quos ibi ad munitionis sue delegaverat, ira commoti necaverant, quoniam cuissdam nobilis filius ab eisdem ipsis sarracenis fuerat interemptus.”

283 Alexander of Telese mentioned Muslims at just one other place in his text, where he described Bohemond’s capture by the Turks, which occurred at the Battle of Melitene in 1100. In his rather murky description of that event, the abbot mentioned only that the Norman commander was fiercely intercepted, disarmed, and later died. Alexander of Telese, *Ystoria*, I.12, 12–13. “He quippe urbes Boamundi imperii fuerant, quas ipse omnemque terram suam, cum ad potiendum principatum Antiochie transmarinum peteret iter, Apostolice prius fertur tutele commisisse. Verum ille eiusdem civitatis decoratus principali infula, brevi intercapedine posita, in loco quo se tutum omnino cum suis fore putabat, subito a turcorum interclusus acie, cum multis degladiatus finem vite dedit.” This statement is misleading, since Bohemond, who did spend nearly three years as prisoner of the Turks, was ultimately freed. Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders, 1095–1131* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 78.

284 Falco of Benevento, who despised King Roger II, in fact provided a lengthy description of the atrocities carried out by the Muslim soldiers in what can only be described as a reign of terror directed against the populace of southern Italy. If his biased account can be taken as even remotely accurate, it would certainly explain why Alexander of Telese, who was writing a paean to the king, proved so reluctant to mention anything about the Saracen troops. Houben, *Roger II*, 47.

285 The text’s most recent editor, Ludovica de Nava, wrote that “v’è senza dubbio un certo sapore insincero in alcune pagine dell’*Ystoria* . . . l’autore non è riuscito a nascondere del tutto l’imbarazzo in cui si trovava nel narrare certi episodi.” De Nava, introduction to *Ystoria*, xliii.
Falcandus did not explain what caused the riot, but did add that the Christians did not stop the killings even when the king threatened them and sent his officers to help the Saracens.\footnote{Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 20.} Another uprising at the royal palace that began with the targeted murders of several eunuchs soon spilled out onto the streets of Palermo, leading to the wholesale slaughter of Muslims in their homes and shops.\footnote{Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 14, 56–57.}

Falcandus also reported that, in the 1160s, Lombard settlers began to make sudden attacks on neighboring Muslim communities, killing those living alongside Christians as well as those living on their own estates, without regard for age or sex.\footnote{Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 21, 70. "In loca finitima repentinos impetus facientes, tam eos qui per diversa oppida Christianis erant permixti, quam eos qui separatim habitantes villas propias possidebant, nullo sexus aut etatis habito discrimine, perimebant."} According to him, the Saracen dread for the Lombard people afterward remained so strong that, at the time he was writing, not only did they no longer live in that region, they also avoided going there altogether.\footnote{Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 21, 70. "Et usque nunc adeo Lombardorum gentem exhorrent, ut non solem eam partem Sicilie deinceps habitate noluerint, verum etiam accessum eius omnino devinent."}

Far removed from the conventional image of Sicily as a kingdom of cosmopolitan coexistence, Falcandus described vivid scenes of social unrest.\footnote{The event is corroborated by Romuald of Salerno. Siragusa, \textit{Liber de Regno Sicilie}, 70n2. Cf. positive portrayals of cultural synthesis in twelfth-century Sicily such as F. Giunta and U. Rizzitano, \textit{Terra senza crociati: popoli e cultura nell Sicilia del Medioevo} (Palermo: S. F. Flaccovio, 1967); Norwich, \textit{The Kingdom in the Sun}, 391.}

While the chroniclers characterized relations between Muslim and Christians on Sicily as occasionally tense, they held a happier view of relations with foreign Muslim rulers. In fact, Malaterra sometimes went so far as to portray Count Roger choosing Saracen friendship over Christian friendship. He at one point discussed a war fought between the King Themin and the Pisans, who invaded North Africa and captured its
principal city from the Muslims. Knowing that they lacked the ability to hold such a strategic location, the Pisans offered it to Roger. The count, however, turned down the proposal from his fellow Christians because “regi Thumino amicitiam se servaturum dixerat.” Malaterra went on to add that, by doing this, Roger was “legalitatem suam servans.” The idea that legality (legalitas) could be proven by honoring an agreement made with a Muslim ruler, a leader of the gens incredula, stands in sharp opposition to the sentiments expressed elsewhere in the narrative. One wonders how the author expected a people he elsewhere described as faithless to honor a foedus, a word rooted in the concept of fides. Malaterra seems to have been, if anything, unconcerned with the inconsistency, and was apparently quite capable of moving from hostile to more benign depictions of the Saracens.

At the end of the episode, the author noted that Themin resolved his conflict with the Pisans by buying peace from them. As part of the agreement, Themin released his Christian captives. The Zirid ruler even went so far as to promise “sub ostentantione legis suae” never to send warships into Christian territory again. Incredibly, here is a portrait of a Saracen who behaved almost as though he were a good Christian king. Malaterra’s Themin honored his oath, treated his prisoners well, and appeared, overall, quite rational.
Writing nearly a century later, Hugo Falcandus portrayed another North African ruler in similar terms. In his description of the surrender of a Norman garrison in Tunisia to the Almohads, Falcandus depicted the Muslim leader as an honorable and humane commander. When this Masmudorum rex potentissimus had learned that besieged soldiers continued to resist in the face of starvation, he "regarded their courage, astonished, and marveled at their bravery and perseverance (audaciam considerabat attonitus eorumque virtutem et constantiam mirabatur)." Like Malaterra, it would appear that Falcandus recognized the values of a warrior culture that, like the Normans, prized martial prowess as a virtue.

This chronicler went on to relate how the Muslim leader sent word to the defenders, saying that he knew what they were enduring, and that he wished to spare them out of respect for their bravery, then gave them the choice of either entering his employ or returning to Sicily. The beleaguered knights asked permission to send a messenger to their king before deciding, which was granted, and they thereby soon discovered that no reinforcements were coming. When the Christian soldiers finally surrendered, the ruler of the Almohads kept his word, furnished them with ships, and allowed them safe passage back across the sea. Much like Malaterra's Themin, Falcandus portrayed this Almohad ruler acting with honor.

300 Falcandus, Liber, c. 10, 27.
301 Falcandus, Liber, c. 10, 27.
302 Falcandus, Liber, c. 10, 28. For more information on the fall of Norman Africa, see Metcalfe, The Muslims of Medieval Italy, 174–175. Metcalfe observed that the surrender of this garrison, stationed at Mahdia, signaled the final failure of European plans to re-Christianize Africa. He also pointed out that, in
As for Malaterra, a similar example of his pragmatically neutral portrayal Muslim rulers who had allied with his patron can be found in his depiction of Betumen, the *amīr* of Sicily originally responsible for inviting Roger to invade the island. Although Betumen’s actions made it abundantly clear that he was a traitor to his people, Malaterra never identified him as such. On the contrary, he repeatedly stressed the man’s loyalty, calling him “fidus comes et ductor” and “vero in sua fidelitate.”303 Nor did he ever even identify him as a Saracen—not once did he use a word like *Saracenus* or *paganus* when describing this *amīr*. Instead, he chose to casually report how Betumen entered Roger’s service: Malaterra merely said that the man had killed his brother-in-law and was then forced to become an exile (*profugus*), without offering any other commentary.304 Crossing the straits, Betumen came to Reggio, where the count welcomed him warmly and soon responded to his call to attack Sicily.305 The author thereby placed responsibility for the Norman takeover squarely on the shoulders of a native Muslim ruler, but chose to ignore what would seem to be a grand opportunity to condemn the Saracens. Later, this same *amīr* acted as a guide for Roger’s army, traveled throughout the land to make his countrymen faithful to the Normans, and relentlessly fought those whom he was unable to persuade.306 The author must have found himself in a delicate situation, writing about one of Roger’s principal Muslim allies, and thus made no mention of the man’s Saracen
certain Arab sources, it was reported that King William I of Sicily had threatened the Almohad ruler with the slaughter of Sicily’s Muslim population if the Christian forces were not allowed to leave.

303 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.16; ibid., II.18, 34.
304 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.3.
305 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.3. “Rogerius vero comes, duce relicto in Apulia, Regium in prima septimana ante quadregesimam remeavit, ad quem Betumen, admiraldus Siciliae, a Belcamedo, quodam principe, proelio fugatus, eo quod maritum sororis suae, honestum suae gentis juvenem, vocabulo Benneclerum occiderat, apud Regium profugus, venit, comitem versus impugnationem Siciliae multis exhorationibus excitans.”
306 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.22. “Betumen vero per Siciliam vadens, sicuti a comite rogatus fuerat, quoscumque poterat, ad fidelitatem nostrae gentis applicat; quibus vero minus persuadere poterat, ipsos impugnationibus vexare non desistebat.”
identity. Despite the clear evidence that Betumen behaved as a traitor, Malaterra injected surprisingly little of his own commentary. Presumably, this owed much to the fact that, historically, the amīr had cooperated with Roger.

To an extent, Malaterra’s image of Betumen parallels his mixed depiction of the Muslims throughout the text. The image is confused, blurred somewhere between that of a treacherous foreigner and that of a loyal ally. The author’s multifaceted and at times contradictory portrayal of the Muslims reveals that he was, above all, a pragmatist compelled to describe these non-Christians with a measure of flexibility. There is some evidence of a superficial kind of hostility in this source, but the chronicler did not (or could not) carry it very far. Malaterra needed to balance the denigration of his patron’s Saracen adversaries with more neutral discussions of his patron’s Saracen allies. Driven by that necessity, his non-committal depiction of the Muslims is a result of the delicate balance he strove to achieve.

Somewhat surprisingly, Amatus, writing on the mainland, portrayed Betumen in much the same way as Malaterra. In his version, Betumen, amīr of Palermo, was driven from his city for no apparent reason.307 According to Amatus, Betumen went to “lo christiennissime due Robert” seeking revenge, offered him his son as a hostage, and entered into an alliance with him.308 When Betumen accompanied Robert’s forces to Sicily, the duke made certain that he was treated “honorablement.”309 Amatus went on to note that, under the amīr’s leadership, the Normans captured Rometta and mentioned him a few chapters further on serving as a guide.310 This author, like Malaterra, distinguished

307 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, V.8, 229.
308 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, V.8, 230.
309 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, V.9.
310 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, V.10, 232; ibid., V.22, 240.
between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims,” and clearly believed Benarvet belonged among the former. He never denigrated the amīr in any way, (nor even identified him as a Saracen), but only ever depicted him as a loyal ally.

The antipathy that Amatus of Montecassino showed in his narrative, although quite apparent in certain areas, was nonetheless tempered by his inclusion of a number of less hostile characterizations. Aside from the examples already provided, it is noteworthy that the ultimate failure of the Byzantine attempt to reconquer Sicily elicited only the author’s bland comment that “the Saracens recovered their lost heritage (li Sarrazin recouvrent lor heritage qu’îl avoient perdu).” Amatus, who sometimes accused Muslims of oppressing Christians, or associated them with pride and folly, more often depicted them as cowardly, hapless targets of Norman warriors. It must further be emphasized that, in his narrative, Saracens were implicated in far fewer acts of aggression against Christians than in the texts of either William of Apulia or Geoffrey Malaterra. Instead of functioning as diabolical villains, the Saracens primarily played the role of the meek and easily-defeated enemies of Robert Guiscard. As seen above, this author’s treatment of them could even be surprisingly benign, especially in describing Muslim soldiers in Norman armies and instances of cooperation between Christian and Muslim leaders.

In the case of William of Apulia, it is important to recognize that the poet did not always portray Sicilians or Turks as infidels. Aside from the siege of Palermo, the...
Sicilians made an appearance at four other places in William’s epic, but in those cases he chose to call them just *Siculi* and did not include the slightest hint of invective. Three instances concern Byzantium’s wars with Sicily in the 1030s and 1040s, decades before the beginning of Roger’s island campaign. The fourth instance of neutrality occurred in a list of Amalfi’s trading partners, who, according to the poet, included *Arabes*, *Siculi*, and *Afri*. This topos of the *locus amoenus*, or charming place, was a way for William to praise the value of this port, and William’s purpose in mentioning the Muslims there was simply to give a measure of the city’s opulence. Thus, in that case, he clearly had no need for invective, but rather saw such far-flung trade relations as a mark of distinction. Like Malaterra, it seems that William condemned the Sicilians only when they were enemies of his protagonist.

Although William referred to the Turks elsewhere in the text, nowhere else did he depict them in religious terms, concentrating instead on portraying them as worthy adversaries. Indeed, he depicted them negatively only on the three occasions mentioned above: when the Turks began to make their attacks on the Byzantine Empire in 1067; after the death of Romanus IV in 1072, when the Turks again went to war with Byzantium; and in 1081, when the victorious Alexius I allowed his Turkish mercenaries to ransack Constantinople. Beyond that, William’s treatment of the Turks was

---

313 William of Apulia, *Gesta*, III.481–485. “Hue et Alexandri diversa feruntur ab urbe, / Regis et Antiochi; gens haec freta plurima transit; / His Arabes, Libi, Siculi noscuntur et Afri: / Haec gens est totum notissima paene per orbem / Et mercanda ferens et amans mercata referre.” Amalfi had long pursued commercial relations with the Muslims, on which see Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 17.
surprisingly neutral. Even when they were enemies of his protagonist, Robert Guiscard, he made no attempt to denigrate them.

Instead, in all of the other instances in which the Turks appeared (a total of eleven places in the poem) William simply called them *Turchi* or *Persae*, with no mention of their religion, and without citing any more examples of their barbarous behavior. On the contrary—in his description of the aftermath of Manzikert, the Muslims in fact appeared quite benevolent. After the fighting, the *Persica phalanx* brought Romanus back to their camp, where he was given a seat alongside their leader, Alp Arslan. When asked what would have happened had the situation been reversed, the emperor replied that he would have had Arslan beheaded or hanged. The *rex Persarum* said that he would never commit such a bad deed (*facinus*), but that he would instead seize the opportunity to secure the peace he had sought for so long. After making plans to have his daughter baptized and married to the emperor’s son, Alp Arslan gave Romanus “maxima dona” and set him and the captured Byzantine soldiers free. Finally, the Turkish leader escorted the emperor and his men “honorifico” for some distance, and then let them leave.

Amatus, who also reported on the battle, described the situation in similar, but more concise terms. Like William of Apulia, he too decided against condemning the

---

316 William of Apulia, *Gesta*, III.56–58. “Direptis castris Romanum Persica ducit / Ad sua castra phalanx, et cum statuere sedili / Egregio, iuxta Persarum rege sedente.” Alp Arslan (1029–1072), who led the Seljuks to victory at Manzikert in 1071, was never actually identified by name in William of Apulia’s text.  
319 William of Apulia, *Gesta*, III. 66–70. The marriage alliance was also mentioned by Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, I.11. It also appeared in Byzantine sources, for which see de Bartholomaeis, *Storia*, 18n2.  
Turks for their defeat of the Christian army. Incredibly, he wrote that the Turks had received victory by “lo just jugement de Dieu.”  

321 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.8, 17.

322 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.8, 17.

323 William of Apulia, Gesta, V.70.

324 The battle of Durazzo was fought in October 1081 between the Byzantines, Venetians, and Normans for control of the Straits of Otranto, for which see F. Chalandon, Essai sur le règne d’Alexis Ier Comnène: (1081–1118) (New York: Franklin, 1971 [reprint]), 78–81; Ostrogorski, History of the Byzantine State, 357–359.

325 William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.331–337.

He went on to admit that, despite the “grant mortalité de Chretiens,” the Turkish leader received both the emperor and the Norman mercenary captain Roussel of Bailleu “honorablement.”

Yet it was not only when the Turks were enemies of Byzantium that William refrained from deprecating them, as the same absence of invective is apparent when he had Norman soldiers struggling against them. There is a certain air of neutrality toward the end of his epic, when Bohemond pursued Alexius to the city of Larissa. The emperor’s forces were defeated, and took refuge in the town. Here the poet mentioned the Byzantines’ Turkish allies without trying to denigrate them, saying only that they fled into the city too: “Nee minus et Turchi clauduntur in urbe fugaces.”

323 Although it is true that William mentioned them fleeing, this does not seem particularly noteworthy. He did not portray them as especially flighty (certainly not in comparison to the Greeks), and made no explicit mention of their cowardice.

According to the poet, Turks were present at the battle of Durazzo (1081), fighting the Normans on behalf of Emperor Alexius I, and there too he did not denigrate them. William, chose only to mention that many of Robert’s men were wounded by the arrows of the “Turchorum,” and that, when the Normans resisted them, the Turks fled.

325 Once again, the poet did not even pause to revel in the moment as an example of their cowardice. When the battle was over, William simply reported that a large number of
Turks had died with the Byzantines: “pars quoque Turchorum cum Graecis interit ingens.”326 It would seem that the poet wanted his protagonist to have an enemy worth defeating, and therefore chose not to deprecate the Turks, taking a more ambivalent tone in this particular episode.

Conclusions

Muslim characters figured into these five chronicles in a variety of ways, yet no author chose to portray them in precisely the same light. Scattered invective aside, none of these writers consistently reduced the relationship between Christianity and Islam to a schematic clash between good and evil. Elements of a holy war theme can be found in certain texts, but can hardly be said to have dominated any of the narratives. Without exception, each author presented a nuanced image of the “Saracen people,” although some devoted more attention to this group than others. As will become apparent in the following chapters, moreover, the chroniclers frequently treated other, Christian, groups with greater contempt than they did the Muslims.

Although Geoffrey Malaterra needed to make the Saracens into the prime antagonists of his narrative, he never tried to deprecate them in any consistent way. He often displayed complete ambivalence, and only sporadically engaged in anti-Muslim rhetoric. When his Muslim characters did function as villains, the author occasionally portrayed them as deceitful, fickle, and greedy. In those cases, he employed different forms of the words dissimulare, lucror, fraus, levitas, ars, traditio, and callidus. He did not apply these words exclusively to Saracens, however, but to a number of other groups as well, including the Normans. At a few moments in the chronicle, he came close to

326 William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.416.
embracing the language of holy war, depicting them as God’s outcasts. More often, though, the author contented himself with a passing comment about their religion—referring, for instance, to Muslims as pagans, or to the Qu’ran as a book of superstition.

Yet much more frequently, Malaterra made no attempt to denigrate the Saracens either for their behavior or for their beliefs. Further, despite the more blatant examples of hostility to the Saracens mentioned above, Malaterra also included episodes where the count negotiated a treaty (foedus) with Muslims. Juxtaposed against the invective, Malaterra occasionally mentioned Roger’s peace settlements with his Saracen enemies, his use of Muslim soldiers, and his diplomatic relations with Themin, the Zirid ruler of Ifriqiya. Especially when describing Muslims allied to Count Roger, he seems to have deliberately overlooked opportunities for invective. Presumably, this inconsistency owes much to the fact that the Saracens did not always figure into the narrative as antagonists, and so the author only saw fit to attack them occasionally, and in a haphazard manner. Malaterra’s central task was to glorify the count, and, for that reason, he tended not to engage in slander against the Muslims unless it absolutely served that purpose.

Amatus of Montecassino’s denigration of the Saracens was no more consistent than Malaterra’s, yet his monastic outlook was far more apparent. Amatus, like Malaterra, apparently had no reluctance whatsoever to discuss the use of Muslims in Christian armies. Despite this similarity, as a Cassinese monk, Amatus showed little interest in the glory of battle. He neglected major episodes like Cerami, which Malaterra chose to highlight, glossed over others, like Palermo, which William of Apulia reveled in describing, and showed no concern with depicting the Saracens as valiant fighters, which both William and Malaterra tried to do. He certainly had different priorities than either of
these writers, and it does not seem farfetched to suggest that, as a member of a Benedictine monastery that had long been the target of both Christian and Muslim aggression, the author disliked violence in general. In any event, Amatus seems to have been much more preoccupied with providing his protagonists with a moral pretext for waging their war in Sicily, and repeatedly stressed that the nonbelievers were oppressing Christians in order to justify the military campaign that was still underway at the time he was writing.

William of Apulia, on the other hand, was writing an epic poem intended to glorify the wars of Robert Guiscard, and to that end he needed to present the Muslims as worthy adversaries. Thus the poet depicted the Saracens as capable and sometimes even noble warriors. Both Turks and Sicilians inhabited William’s text, yet he never denigrated either group with complete consistency. However, when William did condemn the Muslims, he did so using highly charged anti-Islamic rhetoric that far outstripped the type utilized by either of his prose contemporaries. This writer, moreover, placed the Saracens in a more clearly antagonistic role, was careful never to mention any examples of cooperation between Christians and Muslims, and never singled out any Saracen leader by name. For William, the followers of Islam were a faceless mass of warriors who were, nevertheless, capable of displaying skill and honor on the battlefield.

Hugo Falcandus wrote in a cultural and political milieu quite different from that of his predecessors, and his image of the Saracens understandably reflected that difference. His experience with Muslims seems to have been based essentially on his attitudes toward Christian converts in the court and reports of sectarian violence scattered

---

327 He used invective for the Muslims of Sicily in nine out of thirteen instances and for the Turks in three out of thirteen instances, engaging in abusive language a little less than half the time.
across the island. It must be stressed that Falcandus was a sharply critical observer who
looked upon most of the people he discussed with equal venom. His Christian characters
fared little better than the non-Christians, and he clearly regarded the Muslim population
as just one of several threats to the stability of the Sicilian monarchy.

In short, it would be both misleading and wrong to say that these chroniclers
roundly condemned all Muslims as an evil and alien “other.” On the contrary, they
viewed the Saracens through a spectrum of different lenses, not all of which were hostile.
One finds in the sources a fairly broad range of emotions dictated partly by the individual
personality of the writer, partly by his intent in writing, and partly by the constraints of
patronage under which he operated. This is especially true of Malaterra: facing the same
political realities of eleventh-century Sicily that required his protagonist to forge working
relationships with non-Christians, this chronicler had to strike a delicate balance between
denigration and toleration. As will be seen in the following chapter, politics and
patronage would play an even larger role when it came to discussing the natives of
southern Italy.
CHAPTER III

THE LOMBARDS: EMPATHY AND ODIUM

Introduction: Terms of Reference

Mainland Italy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries witnessed tumultuous social and political transformations as the land passed between Byzantine, Lombard, and Norman hands. Historically, the sixth-century invasion of Germanic tribes known as the Lombards led to the creation of a new monarchy based in Pavia, which was subsequently replaced in the 700s by a Frankish kingdom, at least in northern Italy. The south, on the other hand, remained divided between Lombard and Byzantine rulers long after Charlemagne’s conquest of the north in 774. The principalities of Benevento, Capua, and Salerno shared the Mezzogiorno with maritime enclaves such as Bari and Naples. This political plurality prevailed past the year 1000 and paralleled similar heterogeneity of religion and language.

The terminology of eleventh- and twelfth-century authors indicates that the population retained considerable diversity. Well into the central Middle Ages, many communities in southern Italy were in fact considered “Greek,” while others throughout the peninsula were thought of as “Latin” or “Lombard.” Whether the so-called

---

328 Among medieval writers, *Greci / Graeci* could mean both subjects of the Byzantine Empire or Greek-speakers living elsewhere, outside the dominion of Constantinople. Consider, for example, the identification of people living in the Sila mountain range of southern Calabria as “Greeks” by Falcandus, *Liber*, c. 53, 138. See also Houben, “Religious Toleration in the South Italian Peninsula,” in *The Society of Norman Italy*, eds. G.A. Loud and A. Metcalfe (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 320. “Certain areas such as Campania, the Abruzzi, the northern Basilicata and northern Apulia . . . were primarily inhabited by a ‘Latin’
Lombards of the eleventh century felt any significant connection to the Germanic settlers who entered Italy five hundred years prior remains a debatable issue, and has in any event been studied at length elsewhere. The task at hand is not to assess the strength of competing “ethnic” identities, but rather to consider the exact terms in which the inhabitants of Italy were described. For the present purpose, the essential point to bear in mind is that, after the year 1000, most Latin writers continued to refer to the majority of the people of Italy as Longobardi or Itali when they did not use a regional appellation. As will be seen, the writers of the Norman period did not necessarily view these natives favorably, and this remained the case even into the twelfth century.

In discussing medieval “Italians,” the ever present danger of anachronism can best be avoided through a terminological analysis that faithfully examines the actual social vocabulary used to describe these people. To be sure, Italy in its modern sense did not come about until the nineteenth century, but the idea of being Italian, albeit in different manifestations, had existed even in the writings of antiquity. While Longobardi was the most frequent expression applied to the inhabitants of Italy in the sources under discussion here, it is not the only one. William of Apulia, who strongly preferred classicizing language suitable to epic verse, also referred to Italians as Latini, populus population. The majority of these peoples were of Lombard descent, and the conquerors had rapidly intermingled with them due to their close linguistic, cultural and religious ties. However, in the southern Basilicata, the Otranto region of Apulia and Calabria, they found a population which in the previous three centuries of Byzantine rule had acquired Greek language and culture." For my discussion of the Greek-speaking population of Sicily, see the following chapter.


Italae, and Ausoni. Writers did sometimes draw a distinction between northerners and southerners, but this was not a hard and fast rule. Usually, when the chroniclers of the Norman period described “Italians” or “Lombards,” they were referring generally to the non-Greek speaking inhabitants of the mainland. This terminology gradually changed in the twelfth century, and the transition is evident in the history of Alexander of Telese and Hugo Falcandus, who seem to have found other, region-specific expressions more useful.

Yet aside from such broad terms of reference, these authors also distinguished between groups of people based on city, region, and sect. Where appropriate, the strong local identities associated with specific cities and regions are discussed in their own sections below. Particularly because of the unique way in which certain maritime city-states figured into these texts, special consideration must be given to how the chroniclers portrayed their citizens. Among them, Pisa, Bari, and Venice will be singled out for separate discussions. In addition, the chroniclers typically identified Calabrians as a unique group, and for that reason Calabrians will be treated separately as well. Rather than anachronistically impose such divisions on the texts, these distinctions have been made carefully and deliberately based on evidence contained in the sources.

332 Malaterra used the term “Longobardi” and “Itali” and Amatus’s French translator used “Longobart.” Malaterra only used Latini in a devotional sense, in comparison to Greek Christians. Falcandus and William of Apulia, however, employed the word more generally to mean non-Greek Italians. Specifically, Amatus of Montecassino, Geoffrey Malaterra, William of Apulia, and Alexander of Telese used the word “Longobardi” (or Langobart in the case of the Old French version of Amatus) to mean the inhabitants of Apulia and the principalities of Salerno, Capua, and Benevento. William of Apulia and Hugo Falcandus both distinguished between northern and southern Italians. William employed the word Lambardus for Arduin, who was originally from Milan, and for Albert Azo II, marquis of Este. William of Apulia, Gesta, I.194, I.204, III.489.

333 Although Apulia was under Byzantine rule until 1071, the authors tended to describe them as “Longobardi;” thus, for example, Malaterra expressly linked the two, writing of “Longobardi igitur Apulienenses.” Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, I.13, 14. For that reason, perceptions and definitions of “Apulians” will be examined alongside those of the “Lombards.”
Hostile Vocabulary in the Eleventh-Century Texts

The earlier chroniclers by and large described the Italian “Lombards” in more deprecatory terms than they did the Muslims. In fact, with the possible exception of the Graeci, Geoffrey Malaterra and Amatus of Montecassino treated this group with greater contempt than any other set of people. In contrast, William of Apulia’s deprecation of the Lombards was both less severe and less frequent, although he did find a few instances in which to castigate them for their fractious behavior and military ineptitude. The other two writers, by comparison, enriched their narratives with details about what they viewed as the Lombards’ typically disloyal, conniving character. Indeed, the prose historians seem to have attached faithlessness to the very core of what might be called “Lombard identity.”

For Malaterra, these people were a race of unreliable, untrustworthy traitors, and the words he most frequently associated them with pertained to secrecy, betrayal, and hatred (occultus, perfidia, traditio, malitia, and invisus). The author, for example, referred to the Longobardi as a “most treacherous sort (genus semper perfidissimum)” when describing a Lombard conspiracy (travitio) that led to the mass murder of Normans throughout Apulia (including Robert Guiscard’s brother, Drogo). He observed that the Lombard “genus” hated “our people (nostra gens)” when describing their use of “fraus.”

335 Mathieu, introduction to Gesta, 22. The editor of the modern critical edition of the Gesta Roberti Wiscardi noted that William’s portrayal of Italians was far more positive than that of his contemporaries, writing that the poet “n’accuse jamais les Lombards en bloc, comme Malaterra . . . ne en particulier, comme Aimé.”


85
to seize the fortress of Amalfi—a citadel originally built to control the *perfidia* of the locals. Malaterra similarly wrote that Richard, the Norman prince of Capua, was ejected from his dominion because of the “treachery of the Lombards (*fraus Langobardorum*).” Roger Borsa, who had trusted this group because he was himself half Lombard, was said to have come to regret the faith he had shown these people when they rose up against him. Such heavily biased depictions likely reflect how the conquerors actually perceived the stubborn resistance of a people with a long tradition of independence. Malaterra, a new arrival in Italy, was scorning what he interpreted as native insolence.

William of Apulia took a different line of thought, and usually described the Lombards using words for fear rather than betrayal. When deprecating the people of Italy, he most frequently used forms of the word *fuga*, and sometimes forms of *tremor*, *terror*, and *pavor*. Although it is true that the majority of these instances occurred in William’s account of the battle of Civitate, discussed below, there are other examples outside of that episode that reinforce the image of a fearful people. Rarely, the poet also used words for disorganization (*discors*, *conglomerati*), extravagance (*luxuries*), and, uniquely, esteem (*virtus*, *probis*). The poet even repeatedly praised one Apulian city, Giovinazzo, for its loyalty to Robert Guiscard. None of these expressions were in

---

338 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, IV.26, 104.
340 The famous battle of Civitate occurred on 18 June 1053, when a papal coalition consisting of Italian and Swabian infantry were defeated by Norman knights under the command of Humphrey de Hauteville and Richard of Aversa, leading to the capture of the German pope Leo IX (1049–54) by the Normans. For a brief historical overview of this event, see Wolf, *Making History*, 15–17.
341 Given that the strong negative connotation of the other categories, it does not seem unlikely that William used these last two words in an ironic sense.
342 Of these numerous examples of Giovinazzo’s obedience, perhaps the most interesting is the episode in which Robert Guiscard, after embracing all the inhabitants, granted the town three years of
themselves especially vituperative, and of all the authors, William appears to have possessed the most sympathetic outlook.

For his part, Amatus chose to denigrate the Lombards from a moral standpoint, frequently accusing them of evil. Indeed, his fondest words for them (*malice, malvaiz, iniquité, perversité*) possessed rather strong connotations of sinful depravity.\(^343\) Other expressions related to the notion of religious transgression as well. Among these vices, words for pride (*superbe, arrogance*) and greed (*avarice, envidie, covoitise*), were the most common.\(^344\) It is worth noting that the author applied such language to individuals as well as the inhabitants of southern Italy as a whole.\(^345\) Writing of the people of Capua, for example, Amatus referred broadly to “the vain arrogance of the men who lived in that country,” and described its prince, Pandulf IV, as “a wicked man” who was counseled by exemption from tribute. After that, the poet specified that they would only owe half the standard rate. William of Apulia, *Gesta*, III.589 ff. Other passages stressed the *fides* and *amor* of this Apulian town. Ibid., III.539–541. “Non tamen, urbisius his hac tempestate remotis, / Gens ab amore ducis luvenaci fida recedit. / Unanimes optant parere fideliter illi.” Ibid., III.553–554. “Gens luvenacensis non obsidione vel armis / Territa stat fortis.” Ibid., III.580–581. “luvenacensis fida recept / Hinc equites aliquot.” Some have suggested that the poet could have been from Giovinazzo. The text’s most recent editor, however, dismissed this. See Mathieu, introduction to *Gesta*, 22n3. Vincenzo de Bartholomaeis likewise felt that the suggestion “non ha alcuna riprova.” De Bartholomaeis, introduction to *Storia*, xvii.

\(^343\) Forms of the word *malvaiz* appeared with reference to Lombards in twenty-five instances. Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, I.43, 46; I.37; I.41; II.5, 62; II.13, 70; II.39; III.34, 149; IV.25; IV.39, 212; IV.41, 212 (twice); IV.43, 215–216 (three times); IV.44, 216; V.3, 265; VIII.1 (twice); VIII.2, 340; VIII.4, 346; VIII.8; VIII.18; VIII.24, 365; VIII.29, 370–317 (twice). Amatus accused Lombards of perversity, or *perversité*, nine times. Ibid., I.37; I.38, 50; I.39, 52; II.13, 70; III.38,15; IV.13, 192; IV.42, 214; IV.43, 216; VIII.24, 366. He applied *iniquité* to them seven times. Ibid., I.35, 47; I.38, 50; I.38. 50; I.40; III.24, 139; IV.39, 211; IV.41, 212; IV.47.

\(^344\) *Superbe* appeared with reference to the Lombards in six places. Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, I.43, 43; II.13, 70; IV.34; IV.38, 209 (twice); VIII.10, 351. *Arrogance* occurred in three places. Ibid., IV.27, 201; IV.34; IV.37.

\(^345\) *Envidie / invide* appeared three times. Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, IV.34 (twice); VIII.21, 360. *Avarice* appeared in three places as well. Ibid., IV.34; IV.40; VIII.18. *Covoitise* was used in ibid., IV.34; IV.39, 212; VIII.3, 343.

\(^35\) In this regard I object to Lucas-Avenel’s notion that “le peuple lombard n’est pas déprécié du point de vue moral par Aimé du Mont-Cassin, qui, dans la critique de ses compatriotes, ne vise que les princes.” Although Amatus did focus heavily on the evils of specific rulers, he also made comments about the Lombards in general, as when he wrote of “la perversité” and “la vane arrogance de ceux qui habitoient en la contrée.” Marie-Agnés Lucas-Avenel, “La *Gens Normannorum* en Italie du Sud,” in *Identité et Ethnicité. Concepts, débats historiographiques, exemples (XIIe–XVIe siècle)*, eds. Véronique Gazeau, Pierre Bauduin, Yves Modéran (Caen: CRAHM, 2008), 241.
Like Malaterra, moreover, Amatus seems to have possessed a conception of the Lombards as unruly oath breakers, occasionally using words related to treachery or discord (*prodicion, traison, discord, dissimulation*). It is quite revealing that, by comparison, Amatus hardly ever used expressions of impiety when writing about the Saracens. In fact, two of the most common terms, *iniquité* and *malvaiz*, were never used with reference to Muslims at all. It would seem that, for this monastic writer, the Christian Lombards in fact represented a greater evil than did the infidel in Sicily.

### Three Interpretations of Civitate

Perhaps nowhere were disloyalty and unreliability stressed as innately "Lombard" characteristics more than in accounts of the battle of Civitate, which Malaterra, William, and Apulia all described in considerable depth. In his version of this Norman victory over a papal coalition, Malaterra attested to the betrayal (*traditio*) of the Apulian Lombards, who through "secret envoys" invited Pope Leo IX (1049–1054) to raise an army and invade the south. The pope quickly complied and brought a force composed of both Germans and Italians to combat the Normans. Though "trusting in the help of the Lombards," he and his German soldiers were soon abandoned by them, as they became

---


347 There were seven different phrases for betrayal on the part of Lombards: *prodicion, traison, discord, traitor faillie la fidelité, dissimulation, and simulatio*. *Prodicion* appeared in ibid., IV.39, 212. *Traison* was used in ibid., III.30, 147; VII.13, 305. *Discord* occurred in ibid., IV.44; IV.48 (twice). *Trait* was used in ibid., III.34 (twice). The phrase *faillie la fidelité* occurred in ibid., III.28, 143. *Dissimulatio* and *simulatio* appeared in ibid., IV.34; IV.46 (twice).

348 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, 1.14. “Apulienses vero, necdum traditionibus exhausti, per occultos legatos nonum Leonem apostolicum, ut in Apuliam cum exercitu veniat, invitam.” Although Malaterra referred to these south Italians as "Apulians" in this sentence, the passages that immediately followed made it clear he considered them Lombards as well. In the previous chapter, he had also described them as "Longobardi igitur Apulienses." Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, 1.13, 14.
“terrified (territi)” and fled early in the battle.\textsuperscript{349} When Leo caught up with his erstwhile allies, “treacherous as always (ut semper perfidissimi),” they used the pontiff as collateral, surrendering him to his enemies once they had guaranteed their own safety.\textsuperscript{350}

William of Apulia, who devoted nearly a hundred lines of verse to this battle, elaborated on the treacherous and incompetent role of the Italians in even more caustic language, but did so with rather deft precision. In summoning the pope, the people of Apulia (\textit{gens Appula}) were said to have mixed truth with lies, “accusing the Gauls with various slander.”\textsuperscript{351} Then, when Leo arrived, his German troops vainly placed their trust in “the flighty Lombard mob (\textit{Longobardorum fugax turba}),” but these “Itali,” proved unable even to draw up a proper line of battle.\textsuperscript{352} Confronting the enemy “all crowded together (\textit{omni conglomerati}),” the Lombards were soon put to flight “like pigeons chased by a hawk.”\textsuperscript{353} In the space of 150 lines, the poet applied various words relating to fear and flight to the Lombard soldiers a total of fifteen times. Yet William, careful not to carry his analysis of their shameful behavior too far, found a scapegoat on which to some of vent his scorn.


\textsuperscript{352} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, II.143–144.

\textsuperscript{353} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, II.193–209. “Itali simul omnes conglomerati, / Parte alia stabant: etenim certamine belli / Non aptare suas acies recto ordine norant. / Hos contra coepit prior arma movere Ricardus, / Et petit audacter. Non sustinuere petentem / Viribus aversis Itali; tremor arripit omnes, / Inque fugam versi per plana, per ardua, cursim / Diffugient; multis cogit subcombere stratos / Impetus ipse fugare; iaculis caeduntur et ense. / Qualiter aeria, ubi convenere, palumbes, / Dum petit accipiter, fugitivo summa volatu / Et scopulosa facit celsi iuga quaerere montis; / Quas tamen ipse capit, non possunt amplius ullum / Quaerere confugium: sic dantes terga Ricardus. / Diffugient Itali, sed quos capit ipse, vel ipsi / Haerentes socii, fuga nil iuvat. Occidit illuc / Plurima gens Latii bello, pars maxima fugit.”
Though the poet claimed that the pope’s motley force came largely from central Italy, he singled out a particular group, the people of the March of Fermo (\textit{gens Marchana}) as especially disgraceful.\footnote{The poet listed people from various places in Italy (Rome, Samnium, Capua, Ancona, Spoleto, Sabinium, Fermo, Apulia, Valva, Campania, Marsia and Chieti) as filling the ranks of the papal army. William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, II.150–151, 171–174. Kenneth Baxter Wolf suggested that, because William deprecated the “\textit{gens Marchana}” more than any other group in this episode, the poet could have been himself a Lombard. However, here and elsewhere William did in fact condemn the “\textit{Longobardi},” and “\textit{Itali},” not just the “\textit{gens Marchana},” making this hypothesis seem unlikely. See also Mathieu, introduction to \textit{Gesta}, 22n2. Mathieu argued that the \textit{gens Marchana} referred not to the people of the march of Fermo as a whole, but rather to the ruling comital dynasty. Mathieu believed that the poet acknowledge the cowardly behavior of the Italians at Civitate only because “elle fut de notoriié publique, et attestée part toutes les sources.” Ibid., 22.} He wrote that Leo was quite unwise to trust this “most unworthy dregs of the Italian people (\textit{Italae fex indignissima gentis}).”\footnote{William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, II.108–109.} William observed, moreover, that these men of the March, the lowest of the low, were innately disposed to “fear, flight, and luxury (\textit{pavor et fuga luxuriesque}),” while—perhaps disingenuously— remarking that the rest of Italy abounded in courage (\textit{virtus}).\footnote{William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, II.108–111. “Spem dabat his Italae fex indignissima gentis, / Gens Marchana, probis digne reprobata Latinis: / Cum plures Itali magna virtute redundent, / His erat innatus pavor et fuga luxuriesque.”} This statement about Italian courage (seemingly out of place in a passage describing an ignominious defeat and accompanied by phrases like \textit{Longobardorum fugax turba}) may have been a face saving gesture aimed at comforting those, such as William’s own patron, who claimed some attachment to the Lombard people. On another level, perhaps William, who was not averse to irony, meant his comments as a veiled criticism. In light of the poet’s other remarks about the Lombards’ failings, it would be difficult to interpret his statement about Italian bravery as anything other than ironic.\footnote{On William of Apulia’s use of irony, see Albu, \textit{The Normans in their Histories}, 142–143.} Indeed, William’s version of Civitate testified to just how far the Italians were from displaying “magna virtus.”\footnote{William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, II.110.}
Amatus assigned blame to the Lombards for the defeat at Civitate as well, but in a more direct and more obviously spiritual way, interpreting it as the just will of God. In his version, St. Matthew visited the bishop of Salerno in his sleep before the battle, telling him that, though the pope was bringing a force of “despicable knights (vilz chavaliers)” against the Normans, the army would be defeated. During this dream vision, the Apostle went on to explain that it had been “ordained before the presence of God” that the land should pass to the Normans “because of the perversity (perversité) of those who held it.” When the battle finally did take place, the prophecy was fulfilled, and Leo’s German soldiers were said to have looked back only to see that the Lombards had fled the field.

From a Norman perspective, Civitate was a shining victory that secured their legitimacy in the face of papal, Italian, and German opposition, and because of its significance none of these three historians could omit such a resounding success from their narratives. Yet the very fact that the Normans had faced resistance from the pope had to be treated with some care. Thus, with minor variations, each author explicitly assigned responsibility to the Lombards, in effect exculpating both Leo and his Norman enemies.

---

359 Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, III.38, 151. “Mes je te prophétize que la mort non est trop long. Li Pape vient avec vilz chavaliers pour chacier; més li sien seront destruit, et espars, et en prison, et mort. Et puiz c’est chose, retournera a Rome et sera mort.”

The Old French adjective *vil* primarily meant low or common, although it could also mean loathsome or abominable. Tobler and Lommatzch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 11, 462–463.

360 Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, III.38, 151. “Quar c’est ordené devant la presence de Dieu, quac quicunques sera contre li Normant, pour les chacier, ou tost morira, ou grant afflicciun aura. Quac ceste terré de Dieu est donné a li Normant; quar la perversité de ceus qui la tenoient.”

361 Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, III.40, 156. “Et li Thodeschi se reguardent derriere pour veoir lor companynche; més nul Longobart venoit après eauz, quar tuit s’en estoient foui.”

362 For a brief analysis of their literary efforts to rehabilitate this episode of blatant conflict with the papacy, see Wolf, *Making History*, 101, 162.
According to these three chroniclers, the Lombards alone brought about the battle and its outcome. For Malaterra, their behavior was ascribable to their cowardly and treacherous nature, made explicit when he called them *perfidissimus* and *territus*. William described them in somewhat similar terms, as cowards who had used lies to summon a foreign army to fight on their behalf, and noted their lack of martial prowess as well. Yet, regardless of his sincerity, the poet also made some attempt to shift the burden of defeat from the “Lombard people,” or *gens Longobardorum* generally, to a particular subgroup of Italians, the *gens Marchana*. With less tact than William, the Cassinese monk Amatus suggested instead that the Lombards had earned the wrath of God through their wickedness, or *perversité*, and that their loss of Italy was part of the divine plan. For Amatus, the Normans were a chosen people, coming to their promised land, and were therefore destined to succeed because they were favored by divine providence. In that sense, then, some of the more divinely inspired scenes from the military campaigns in Sicily lose much of their aura of holy war when compared against this episode.\(^{363}\) Aside from these fascinating discrepancies, the simple underlying message in all three descriptions of Civitate, however, was that the Lombards as a people had proved themselves unfit to hold the land.

\(^{363}\) Amatus wrote of the Norman victory at Civitate as the will of God, and Malaterra observed that the pope absolved the Normans of their sins following the battle. Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, 1.14. Paul E. Chevedden, who has used these authors to argue that the Sicilian campaign marked the first true instance of a crusade, failed to take Civitate into account in his analysis. He indicated that Malaterra and Amatus only mentioned papal dispensation and divine providence in battles against the Muslims, which, as seen above, was clearly not the case. Both of these two “holy war” elements were present in the accounts of Civitate, where the Normans defeated a Christian army. Chevedden, “A Crusade from the First,” 206–214.
The Princely Lombard Family of Salerno

Depictions of individual rulers, particularly the Lombard princes of Salerno, demonstrated this theme of unworthiness as well, and gave the chroniclers an opportunity to highlight their fractious and incompetent misrule.\textsuperscript{364} Malaterra reported that Guaimar IV of Salerno, who employed Norman mercenaries, eventually turned against these foreign knights because “the Lombards are a most hateful people (\textit{gens invidissima}), suspicious of any honest man.”\textsuperscript{365} Guaimar acted secretly—“\textit{animo occulte}”—but, when the Normans learned about his “treachery (\textit{dolositas})” they left his service and began the conquest of Apulia.\textsuperscript{366} Amatus reported a slightly different version of the relationship between Guaimar and his mercenaries, saying that, although the Lombard prince kept Normans knights in his service, he also imprisoned and tortured some of them, and acted against his Norman friend, Drogo de Hauteville, many times.\textsuperscript{367} After these insights into Guaimar’s character, the monk of Montecassino then proceeded to explain how the prince was murder by his relatives: surrounded and cut off from all support, he was struck first by his brother-in-law, who shouted “death to he who blinds,” a statement apparently intended to underscore the cruelty of Guaimar’s reign.\textsuperscript{368} Amatus later noted that, though

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{364} On the Lombard principality of Salerno, see Huguette Taviani-Carozzi, \textit{La principauté lombarde de Salerne (IX\textsuperscript{e}-XI\textsuperscript{e} siècle). Pouvoir et société en Italie lombarde méridionale} (Rome: École française de Rome, 1991).

\bibitem{365} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, 1.6. “Longobardorum vero gens invidissima, et semper quemcumque probum spectum habens, ipsos apud eundem principem, inimico dente rodente, occulto detrahebat, suggestentes quatenus eos a se repelleret . . . Sed princeps, quamvis, pravis consiliis suorum assentiens, quod hortabantur facere moliretur, tamen strenuitatem eorum timens, quod animo occulte agebat, minus in propatulo aperire praesumebat.”

\bibitem{366} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, 1.8, 12. “Sed dolositatem Gaimarii principis cognoscentes, ad ipsum minime transierunt; totam provinciam infestando, sibi eam subjugandi consilium capiunt.”

\bibitem{367} Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, II.34, 99. Amatus reported that Guaimar imprisoned and tortured Count Rainulf and Hugh Falloc along with many others. In ibid., II.35, 102, Amatus noted that, although Guaimar acted against Drogo, the Norman remained firm in his loyalty to the prince.

\bibitem{368} Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, III.28, 145. “Et crierent: «Soit occis cil qui ci veut cecare!» Et [de] li quatre frères de la moillier, Landulfé, plus jovegne de touz, premerement estendi la main et lo féri de

93
the Norman knights afterward avenged the prince’s death, “they did not mourn the loss.”

While both Malaterra and Amatus dwelt upon the unhappiness and discord associated with Guaimar’s reign, they made the rule of his son and successor, Gisulf II of Salerno, out to be considerably worse. For Malaterra, Gisulf was a man with “malice in his heart (animo malitia).” According to him, the prince “hurled enmity” at his brother-in-law, Robert Guiscard, captured and abused the duke’s followers, and made it no secret that he hated “our people (nostra gens).” Robert thereafter besieged Salerno and deposed this last Lombard prince of southern Italy.

Amatus, whose storyline concerned the Lombards to a much greater extent, carried this further, making Gisulf into the main villain of his history. Identifying the prince as “descended from a race of vipers,” he accused him of nearly every sin imaginable: envy, deceit, arrogance, pride, greed, gluttony, avarice, homicide, perfidy, sacrilege, returning good with evil, discord, and false chastity. In a history centered on the Normans, Amatus devoted forty-one different chapters to the various wicked deeds of this non-Norman in a demonstration of how the last Lombard prince of Salerno brought about his own downfall. Among his more severe crimes, the “loup rapace Gisolfé, maistre de toute malice” was said to have persecuted holy men and oppressed the people

---

370 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, III.2. “Versus ducem inimicitias injecit: omnesque ei adhaerentes, quos capere poterat, contumeliis deturpans, nostrae genti sese inimicari non abscondebat.”
372 Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, IV.34. Amatus described Gisulf as born from vipers in ibid., III.44.
of his own city with a cruelty that rivaled Nero and Maximian. He even replaced a holy relic, the tooth of St. Matthew, with a forgery—the tooth of a Jew. Amatus further claimed that the prince considered himself a living god, heeded the words of a false prophet, and ransacked churches to finance his war with the Normans. Having committed various sacrileges, his defeat was eventually revealed in two separate prophesies: in the first, a monk in Salerno declared that “in the reign of the son of Guaimar, prince of Salerno, the reign of the Lombards will end, and it will be conceded to a fine man from another people, through whom the city will be exalted.” In the second, Gisulf’s father, Guaimar, appeared in a dream and declared that “the unheard-of-cruelty of my wicked son Gisulf . . . will not last forty years.” The prophecies came to pass, as Salerno ultimately succumbed to a protracted siege and its prince was captured.

For Amatus, this Lombard ruler was not just cruel, but a sacrilegious tyrant who was aided by the devil. Coming from this author, that is quite a significant detail, since the only other diabolical connection he ever made involved another Lombard, the prince of Capua, Pandulf IV. It is important to point out that Amatus never accused any other character—including the Muslims—of such atrocious evil. In a narrative where the hand of God can be seen at work everywhere, Gisulf earned divine vengeance through his sins, and, as a result, his people became subjects of the Normans. For the monk of

---

374 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, IV.43. Gisulf committed sacrilege by persecuting the saintly abbot Guaiferius. In ibid., VIII.21, Gisulf also imprisoned and tortured a cleric named Gratian, because Gratian’s brother and nephew had defected. In ibid., VIII.2, Gisulf’s cruelty was compared to that of Nero and Maximian.
375 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VIII.29, 370.
376 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VIII.18. Gisulf ransacked the churches of Salerno. In ibid., VIII.9, Gisulf heeded a false prophet, a monk, who told him to attack the people of Amalfi. In ibid., VIII.5, Amatus said Gisulf’s pride was such that he seemed to be among the gods.
377 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VIII.1.
378 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VIII.1.
379 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VIII.24.
380 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.39.
Montecassino, the fall of the last Lombard prince of Salerno accorded with the divine plan and was at least as significant as the fall of Muslim Sicily.

Of all this, William of Apulia reported very little. Though the poet made vague references to the fighting between the princes of Italy that enabled the rise of the Normans, he avoided specific details. Thus he wrote in the first book of his poem that “a great desire among those princes for domination produced wars (illis principibus dominandi magna libido / Bella minstrabat),” and observed that the Normans, by playing sides, gained the upper hand, but offered little commentary beyond these succinct remarks. Although William reflected that “Gallic prudence deceived the Italians (Decipit Ausonios prudentia Gallica),” he did not voice nearly the same degree of hostility as Malaterra or Amatus. Some of his remarks about their infighting could even be interpreted as lamentation, as in the following passage: “Alas, poor wretches, whatsoever in the world they tried was useless . . . An absolute Lombard victory was never agreeable to the Normans, lest hardship come back against them (Heu miseri, mundo quicquid conantur inane est . . . Numquam Normannis, ne poena rediret in ipsos / Longobardorum placuit victoria prorsus).” As William informed his readers, it was the “discordia Latii” that restored hope among the Normans. The tone of these verses, while clearly disapproving, evinces little hostility and is, if anything, ruefully retrospective.

---

381 Indeed, William’s account of the establishment of the Normans in Campania (1018–1038) is extremely vague in comparison to the reports furnished by Malaterra and Amatus. It would indicate either that he lacked adequate sources for that period or was reticent to discuss the stormy relations between his protagonists and the Lombard rulers. See Mathieu, introduction to Gesta, 29–30.

382 William of Apulia, Gesta, I.148–149.

383 William of Apulia, Gesta, I.160.


On the few occasions when William did delve into specific details, he criticized particular cities rather than the Lombards as a whole, and never condemned their rulers. For example, the poet mentioned the murders of Guaimar and Drogo tersely. He did not make their deaths an example of Lombard treachery, as Amatus and Malaterra had, but stated only that “one was killed by the betrayal (*fraus*) of his citizens and relatives in Salerno, the other by the natives of Montilari—whom he trusted too much.” Although Gisulf also made a brief appearance in William’s epic, his role as an antagonist of Robert Guiscard was greatly scaled down, and it was principally Salerno’s population, whom the poet at one point called a *gens infida*, that he portrayed negatively. Uniquely, William did not interpret that city’s clash with Robert Guiscard as being somehow symptomatic of the shortcomings of the “Lombard people,” nor did he ever explicitly condemn an individual Lombard ruler.

Robert Guiscard’s wife, the duchess Sichelgaita, was the only member of the Lombard dynasty of Salerno whom both William of Apulia and Amatus of Montecassino singled out for praise. She was, according to William, *semper prudens, nobilis*, and *veneranda*. When her life was threatened, God saved her from death, in one of the only

---

386 William of Apulia, *Gesta*, II.75–79.
389 William, *Gesta*, IV.431; ibid., V.399.
instances of divine intervention found in the entire poem. For Amatus, Sichelgaita was noble, beautiful, and wise. As the mother of William’s patron, and a benefactor of Montecassino, it is unsurprising that the two writers would share this positive attitude toward the duchess.

Malaterra, however, had nothing favorable to relate about Sichelgaita. He praised no aspect of her, not even her lineage, and described her only as “Guaimar’s daughter.” Malaterra hardly portrayed her behavior as “semper prudens,” either, reporting instead that at one point, when Robert Guiscard was away on campaign, she became so convinced of her husband’s death that, “thinking herself a widow,” she fled. What little Malaterra reported was therefore unflattering, and here it is worth recalling that, of all the chroniclers of this period, he saw matters through a Norman-Sicilian lens. At the time he wrote, his patron was nearing the end of his life and his sons were still children.

Sichelgaita’s son, Roger Borsa, was nothing if not a threat to Sicily and to the young

---

390 There were a total of three places where the poet ascribed an event to the hand of God. William of Apulia, Gesta, I.402–405 (God did not want Emperor Michael to rule the Byzantine empire any longer and so he died); ibid., III.455 (God helped Robert Guiscard recover from wounds received during the siege of Salerno); ibid., IV.430 (God helped Sichelgaita recover from an arrow wound at the battle for Durazzo). God never intervened directly against the Muslims. In a reference to the First Crusade, however, the poet noted that the soldiers fought Deo spirante. Ibid., III.455.

391 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, IV.19. “Sa moillier, estoit noble de parent, belle de cors et sage de teste.”

392 Amatus discussed some of Sichelgaita’s donations in his final chapter. Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, VIII.36. Sichelgaita’s generosity toward Montecassino has been studied by Patricia Skinner, who argued that Amatus’s history “could be read as much as a eulogy of her as of Robert.” Although Skinner was right in pointing out this woman’s relationship with Montecassino, to claim that she represented a central character in Amatus’s text is going too far. Patricia Skinner, “‘Halt, be men!’: Sikelgaita of Salerno, Gender and the Norman Conquest of Southern Italy,” Gender & History 12, no. 3 (2000), 622–641.

393 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, I.30. “Filiamque Gaimari, Salernitani principis, Sigelgaytam nomine, sibi in matrimonium copulavit.”

394 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.27. “Uxor vero, viduationem suspicata, Tropeam aufugit.”

395 In this respect, Lucas-Avenel has correctly noted that Malaterra “n’était pas tenu, autant que Guillaume d’Apulie et Aimé du Mont-Cassin, de se soucier des réactions lombardes.” Lucas-Avenel, “La Gens Normannorum en Italie du Sud,” 241.
heirs of Malaterra’s patron. This state of affairs would certainly explain the chronicler’s lukewarm ambivalence toward the Lombard noblewoman.

Twelfth-Century Interpretations of the Lombards

By the time that the kingdom of Sicily had been established in the year 1130, the cultural environment on the southern Italian mainland was much different. Continuous waves of immigrants from northern Italy and beyond the Alps were displacing the older social configuration of the eleventh century. The ruling barons were themselves the result of several generations of intermarriage between native Lombard and transalpine elites. Terminological shifts found in the sources reflect the weakening of that simpler Norman-Lombard dichotomy that had been so readily employed by writers of an earlier era. Instead, in the texts of Alexander of Telese and Hugo Falcandus, the southern Italians were more frequently identified by their regions and cities rather than by the term *Longobardi*. It would seem that this expression, used often by eleventh-century authors, was gradually losing its meaning through an extended process of settlement in which the people defined as *Longobardi* were assimilated or marginalized. Yet although the name “Lombard” may have been going out of fashion, many of the old stereotypes about southern Italians showed no signs of decline.

To begin with, Alexander, the abbot of the monastery of the Holy Savior in Telese who wrote over fifty years after Amatus, echoed Amatus’s interpretation of the fall of the Lombard regimes in the south as divinely ordained. At the outset of his history,

---

396 For more information on the resulting Franco-Lombard nobility, see Jean-Marie Martin, *La Pouille du VIe au XIIe Siècle* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1993), 524–525. On the continued process of Franco-Norman immigration into southern Italy during the twelfth-century, and on the arrival of *transalpines* generally, see ibid., 26–529.
he compared King Roger’s conquest of southern Italy to that of the Normans in the previous century, suggesting that on both occasions the Lord had arranged for the people of that land to be defeated. Alexander explained that just as God had allowed “longobardorum nequitia” to be overcome by “normannorum violentia,” so He permitted Roger II’s use of the sword to check the “immensa malitia,” which had renewed in those regions. As seen above, Amatus applied similar expressions of evil (iniquité, malice, and malvaiz in the Old French translation) to the Lombards, and it is not unlikely that Alexander drew directly from the writings of his Benedictine brother.

The two writers certainly used similar models, and the abbot seems to have been as fond of the theme of sin and divine retribution among the Lombards as the monk of Montecassino. The author described southern Italy before the arrival of King Roger as a land of chaos full of “murder, theft, rapine, sacrilege, adultery, perjury, the oppression of monasteries, and contempt for men of God.” “Indeed,” Alexander asked, “what evil (malus) was not done at that time?” Left to their own devices, the people had reverted to their former state, as they had been before the coming of the Normans. God was offended by this, the abbot wrote, and drew Roger from Sicily like a sword from its sheath to bring the “perpetratores iniquitatum” to justice. Much like Amatus,

---

397 Alexander of Telese, preface to Ystoria, 3.
398 Although records of monastic library holdings are unfortunately quite poor for this period, it is worth noting that the Montecassino is only about fifty miles from Telese. Loud thought that the original Latin term for malice that Amatus employed was “almost certainly malitia.” G. A. Loud, “Amatus of Montecassino and his History of the Normans,” in Mediterraneo, Mezzogiorno, Europa: Studi in onore di Cosimo Damiano Fonseca, ed. Cosimo Damiano Fonseca et al. (Bari: M. Adda, 2004), 721.
399 Alexander of Telese, preface to Ystoria, 3. “Quippe omni timore abieicto, cedes hominum, furta, rapine, sacrilegia, adulteria, perjuria, necon ecclesiariarum monasteriorum oppressiones, virorum Dei contemptus, pluraque his similia fieri non desinebant.”
400 Alexander of Telese, preface to Ystoria, 3. “Quid enim tunc mali non in ipsis exercebatur?”
401 Alexander of Telese, Ystoria, 3.
Alexander saw his protagonist as a divine agent meant to deliver the wrath of the Lord to the sinful southern Italians.

Aside from iniquity and evil, fear and pride were the other principal elements in Alexander’s image of this people. In that sense too, the abbot mirrored earlier stereotypes found not just in the writings of Amatus of Montecassino, but also William of Apulia. Like the poet, Alexander used similar words for fear (forms of the nouns timor and terror and the verb fugere) when writing about them. The two words for arrogance that Alexander most frequently used in association with southern Italians were the adjectives superbus and obstinatus, as when he referred to the prince of Salerno’s “animus obstinatissimus.” Superbus, it should be noted, is particularly reminiscent of the language Amatus used when writing of pride among the Lombards.

The similarity with earlier authors does not end there, as Alexander of Telese also depicted the southern Italians as treacherous. At one point he wrote of how the people of Salerno responded to Roger’s emissary with “proud speech (superbo ore),” refusing to submit to their king. When the ambassador sternly rebuked their insolence, they became “stirred up with rage (concitati furore)” and killed the unfortunate man. The significance of such a crime can hardly be overstated. The killing of a king’s dignitary represented not only an obvious breach of diplomatic protocol, but an enormous breech of honor, a crime against the monarch himself, and therefore a major act of betrayal.

---

402 Expressions of fear occurred a total of eleven times with reference to southern Italians. Timor was used in Alexander of Telese, Ystoria, II.10; II.11; II.12; II.30 (twice). Other words included exterita, fugere, diffugere, territus, and perterritus, all of which appear in ibid., II.30.

403 Superbus occurred in five instances. Alexander of Telese, Ystoria, I.5, I.52, III.16, III.20, and III.22. Obstnatus was used in ibid., I.7, II.7, II.26, and II.27.

404 Alexander of Telese, Ystoria, I.5, 8.

405 Alexander of Telese, Ystoria, I.5, 9.

406 For a classic work on medieval attitudes toward diplomatic immunity, see Donald E. Queller, The Office of Ambassador in the Middle Ages (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).
According to Assizes of Ariano, in fact, royal functionaries were given special protection, and an attack on one of them was defined as equivalent to an attack on the king.\textsuperscript{407} The image of southern Italians as untrustworthy, depraved, and arrogant, found in the writings of both Amatus and Malaterra was therefore perpetuated by Alexander of Telese.

When discussing Roger II’s conflict with the papacy, Alexander found another instance in which the Apulians again demonstrated their unreliability. Responding to Roger’s claims to the lands of Apulia, Honorius II (1124–1130) raised an army in southern Italy and led it against the would-be monarch. In a scene reminiscent of Civitate, the Apulian soldiers under the command of the prince of Capua gradually began to desert the pope.\textsuperscript{408} When Honorius discovered that some of his allies had “secretly retreated (\textit{latenter recedunt})” and that those who remained were beginning to murmur, he cut a deal with Roger, recognizing his sovereignty over the lands of southern Italy.\textsuperscript{409} Once the remaining “barons of Apulia (Apulienses heroes)” had learned of this, they dismissed their soldiers and returned home “in disgrace (dedecore).”\textsuperscript{410} As at Civitate a century earlier, a papal coalition found itself undone by Apulian betrayal.

In a similar way, Hugo Falcandus stressed the treachery of southern Italians in his own history, the \textit{Liber de Regno Sicilie}. Like Alexander of Telese, Falcandus approved of King Roger II’s use of violence to suppress the savagery (\textit{ferocitas}) of the rebellious


\textsuperscript{408} See Dione Clementi, \textit{Historical Commentary to Ystoria}, 273. The two armies faced off in the summer of 1128 but did not do battle. They camped on opposite banks of the River Bradano.

\textsuperscript{409} Alexander of Telese, \textit{Ystoria}, 1.14.

\textsuperscript{410} Alexander of Telese, \textit{Ystoria}, 1.14. The juxtaposition of \textit{heros}, which can mean either a hero or a nobleman, with the disgraceful word \textit{dedecus} may indeed have been a subtly ironic condemnation of their behavior. \textit{Heros} was occasionally used with an ironic meaning in classical Latin. See Du Cange, \textit{Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis}, 850.
people who lived on the mainland.\footnote{Falcandus, preface to Liber, 6.} Their unruly nature was widely known, and some members of the royal court often spoke disparagingly of the Longobardi, calling them traitors.\footnote{Falcandus, c. 53, 133. According to Falcandus, these sentiments were felt especially among the foreign “Frankish” members of the court. For more information on these “Franci” in the kingdom of Sicily, see Metcalfe, Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily, 182. Metcalfe noted that the Sicilian court was dominated by a Frankish contingent during the years 1166 to 1168.} The inhabitants of Apulia were, for Falcandus, a “gens infida”—the same term William used for the inhabitants of Salerno.\footnote{Falcandus, Liber, c. 12, 30.} In addition to their faithlessness, he also described the Apulians as “shifty, inclined to commit any vile deed (mobilis pronaque sit ad quodlibet facinus perpetrandum),”\footnote{Falcandus, Liber, c. 12, 30. “Interim, dum in hunc modum Apulia turbaretur, adhuc Sicilia quiescebat, nec ullis agitabatur tumultibus; licet enim utraque gens infida, mobilis pronaque sit ad quodlibet facinus perpetrandum, Siculi tamen cautius dissimulando celant propositum et quos oderunt blandis adulationibus demulcent, ut improvisi ledant atrocius.”} easily stirred up by rumors,\footnote{The reference was made to the people of Melfi, one of the principal towns of Apulia. Falcandus, Liber, c. 11, 29. “Melfenses igitur, qui primis semper consueverant rumoribus excitari, decernunt in primis, ut nulli deinceps Maionis mandato parent, nec in urbe sua quemlibet eorum recipient, quos Apulie capitaneos idem prefecerat.” Melfenses has been erroneously translated as “the people of Amalfi” in the most recent English edition of the text. Cf. G. A. Loud and Thomas E. J. Wiedemann, trans., The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by ‘Hugo Falcandus’ 1154–69 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 82.} and willing to use false language—“fables, levity, and inane speech”—as a way to deceive.\footnote{Falcandus, Liber, c. 12, 30–127.}

Falcandus saw the southern Italians as not only rebellious, but militarily inept as well. On campaign, the Longobardi displayed “wavering loyalty (anceps fides),” and their knights were known to be “infides milites.”\footnote{Falcandus, Liber, c. 24, 77.} In another passage, Falcandus recorded how, when King William I went into seclusion in the year 1156, a rumor broke out that the monarch had died, which led to open rebellion on the mainland.\footnote{Other sources from the period indicate that William may have been ill at this time. Siragusa, Liber, 13n. The rebellion was described more fully by Romuald of Salerno and John Cinammus. Ibid., 14n.}

Unsurprisingly, the author assigned blame to the people of Apulia: “Then the Apulians, that most inconstant people (Apulorum inconstantissima gens), in vain desiring liberty—
which they would not have been capable of retaining since they were unsuccessful in war
and be restless in peace—took up arms, formed alliances, and prepared the defense of
fortresses." Inherently unreliable, the southern Italians did not even wait for certainty of
the king’s death before initiating a revolt, but were instead easily moved to sedition by
mere hearsay.

In addition to their “great inconstancy,” the image that Falcandus presented was
that of a people who were both weak in times of war and dissentious in times of peace.
This is not all that different from Malaterra’s Apulians, who behaved “as if they had no
prince,” “rising up in insolence,” but who were poor fighters because they preferred
indulgence in relaxation to arduous campaigning. In sum, Falcandus portrayed the
inhabitants of southern Italy as a rabble, a people unfit for autonomy who had to be
treated with a strong hand and watchful eye. The gens Longobardorum and gens
Apulorum, whom Falcandus saw as the source of civil war, occupied one of the most
pejorative roles of any people in the entire text.

On the other hand, this author tended to describe the northern Italians (gens
Lombardi) who had immigrated into the kingdom as faithful and courageous. In spite of
their role in armed uprisings on the island of Sicily, Falcandus did not identify them as
treachery as he did for their equally rebellious counterparts, the southern Italian
Longobardi. He emphasized instead that their violence was directed against the worst
elements of the kingdom—the crypto-Muslim officials in the royal court and the Muslim
population they protected. Rather than portray them as cowardly traitors, Falcandus

419 Falcandus, Liber, c. 3, 14. “Tunc Apulorum inconstantissima gens, libertatem adipisci frustra
desiderans, quam nec adepta quidem retinere sufficeret, ut que nec bello multum valeat nec in pace possit
esse tranquilla, capescit arma, societates contrahit, castellis muniendis operam dat.”
420 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.26, 105.
repeatedly stressed their *audacia* and *virtus* on the battlefield, even when they were fighting the king’s own troops.\(^{421}\)

The author’s apparent willingness to forgive, or even praise, clear instances of treason seem to stem from the fact that the northern Italian settlers represented a counterbalance to the power of the palace eunuchs, whom he hated. In that regard, Falcandus considered their rebellions on Sicily justifiable, apparently in a way that the uprisings on the mainland were not. He portrayed their leader, Roger “Sclavus,” a man who engineered the wholesale slaughter of Muslims in the eastern side of the island (described as *repentini impetus*, or sudden attacks), in a rather positive light despite his armed resistance to the monarchy.\(^{422}\) Referring to Roger Sclavus as a person of “bravery and boldness (*virtus et audacia*),” Falcandus reported that this rebel commander encouraged the *Lombardi* to resist “the tyranny and atrocity of the king.”\(^{423}\) For their part, the north Italians loyally responded that they would follow him “constantly and bravely (*constanter et audacissime*)” and “through any danger.”\(^{424}\)

---

\(^{421}\) Different forms of *audacia* were used for the *Lombardi* in four separate places. Falcandus, *Liber*, c. 21, 70; c. 23, 73–74 (twice). *Virtus* appeared in ibid., c. 21, 70; c. 23, 74.


\(^{423}\) Falcandus, *Liber*, c. 23, 73. “Simulque regis exponebat atrociatem et tyrannidem in subiectos.”

\(^{424}\) Falcandus, *Liber*, c. 23, 73. “At illi constanter et audacissime spoponderunt, se nunquam eius defuturos imperio neque difficultatem aliquam aut periculum, quominus ei pareant, causaturos.”
This rebellion failed, however, and according to Falcandus, the Lombardi were subsequently victimized by the king’s ministers. He reported, for example, that qa’id Peter targeted the north Italian communities of Sicily because of their wealth, calling innocent men traitors (proditores) simply in order to seize their property.425 Falcandus made certain to emphasize that the Lombardi opposed the eunuchs, writing that, far from being treacherous, they “detested the evil and wickedness of traitors.”426 In discussing the royal court’s dissolution into factions, moreover, the author noted their loyalty (fides) to the chancellor, a fierce opponent of the eunuchs, and they promised to follow him even if it meant the risk of death.427

Falcandus therefore treated the settlers from northern Italy with a combination of sympathy and admiration. Always in the right, the Lombardi generally avoided the ire of this writer’s pen. When the northern Italians massacred the Saracens, even when they fought against the king, they were never assigned labels like infida or inconstantissima, which the southerners did receive. On the contrary, the violence of the northern Italians was romanticized as courageous, and the punishment they received was portrayed as unjust. For Falcandus, this was a people who could do no wrong.

425 Falcandus, Liber, c. 14, 86. Another crypto-Muslim official was said to have given Peter this idea: “Desiring to gain more fully the favor of the eunuchs, he wrongly told qa’id Peter that there were many traitors throughout Sicily, and that they especially dwelt in the towns of the Lombardi, who both abounded in resources and possessed very bountiful estates, and he requested that he be allowed to seize them and extort whatever money they had from them (Volens autem plenius eunuchorum gratiam promereri, falso suggessit gayto Petro multos proditorum per Siciliam maximeque per Lombardorum oppida remanisse, qui et opibus affluerent et largissima predia possiderent, impetravitque ut eosdem liceret ei capere et quantam possent ab eis pecuniam extorquere).” As a result, “he condemned many innocent men throughout Sicily (multos viros innoxios per diversa loca Sicilie condempnavit).”

426 Falcandus, Liber, c. 55, 155. “Interea Randacini, Vacarienses, Capiciani, Nicosiani, Nicanenses ceterique Lombardi qui cancellarii partes ob multa eius beneficia tuebantur, haud dubiam proditorum invidiae ac scelera detestati, legatos Panormum miserunt.”

427 Falcandus, Liber, c. 42, 118. This statement came immediately after the detail that the Muslim official who suggested extorting money from the north Italians had been brutally punished by the chancellor. “Hoc factum omnibus Sicilie populis maximeque Lombardis, quos innumeris ille malis attriverat, adeo placuit ut universi faterentur, si necesse foret, pro cancellario se mortis periculum subsituros.”
Calabrians

One other southern Italian group, the Calabrians, or Calabrenses, who dwelt in the region west of Apulia, merits some discussion as well. For both eleventh- and twelfth-century writers, they tended to be depicted in a bad light. Because of his focus on Roger I, who was count of Calabria, Malaterra had considerably more commentary to offer about the inhabitants of this region than other authors, and for the most part treated them with scorn, referring to them as a “genus semper perfidissimum.” For him, Calabria was a hostile land with a hostile people, where the very air itself was bad.

Among all of its inhabitants, Malaterra singled out the people of Gerace as especially treacherous and cruel. This town in southern Calabria proved such a perennial source of unrest that it twice rebelled against the Normans, the second time nearly taking Robert Guiscard’s life. According to Malaterra, Basil, one of the leading men of Gerace, invited the duke to dine at his house, and he agreed, entering the city and not suspecting evil (malus) because the inhabitants had previously sworn their loyalty to him. When the citizens learned that Robert Guiscard himself was being hosted in their city, they rioted, killed Basil, and impaled his wife on a stake. Malaterra described the bloody scene in a clipped series of vivid expressions: “undique concurrentibus,” “tota urbs tumultuatru;” “tanto furore crudeli ense perimi,” “inordinatus furor,” “furenti

---

428 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, I.28. It is interesting to note that he used the same expression, genus semper perfidissimum, for the Byzantines and Lombards as well. Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.29, 40; ibid., I.13, 14.
429 The count and many of his men came down with a fever at Gerace due to “insolito aere corrupto” and at Scribla Robert Guiscard’s men were said to have suffered because of the “infirmitas loci et aeirs.” Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.23, 36; ibid., I.16, 16.
430 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, I.32, 73; ibid., II.24.
431 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.24, 37.
432 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.24, 37.
impetu."\textsuperscript{433} It was a vision of chaos, with people killed "cives a civibus, amicos ab amicis, praelatos a subditis."\textsuperscript{434} It should also be noted that this is the only time when this author made use of the word \textit{impietas}, meaning treason or sin, which he employed in this passage twice. The author never applied this word, which could even be interpreted as "faithless," to non-Christians.\textsuperscript{435}

In the end, the episode gave Malaterra an opportunity to describe how his hero Roger saved Robert from death, as he reportedly camped outside Gerace with his soldiers and threatened them until the "Geracenses territi" relinquished his brother.\textsuperscript{436} Afterward, Count Roger decided to build a fortress there "because he considered its citizens less faithful and more hateful than others (\textit{quia eos, quasi infideliores, caeteris exosiores habebat})," but they paid him off, dissuading him "with money rather than arms."\textsuperscript{437} Malaterra’s Calabrians were therefore not only cruel and given to horrible rage, or \textit{furor}, but also cowardly, terrified by mere words, and inclined to use money to combat their enemies.

Malaterra extended Calabrian cowardice to other, lighter episodes as well. At Bisignano, Robert Guiscard kidnapped one of its leading citizens, Peter, who was not only a man of great wealth but a man of great physical size (\textit{enormitate et mole corporis}).\textsuperscript{438} He did this, Malaterra wrote, by "sometimes carrying him, sometimes

\textsuperscript{433} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.24, 37.\textsuperscript{434} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.24, 37.\textsuperscript{435} Other eleventh-century writers did use \textit{impietas} when discussing the Saracens. For example, John the Deacon referred to their \textit{impietas} in his description of their siege of Bari. John the Deacon, \textit{Istoria Veneticorum}, III. 12: "Circa hec tempora Sarraceni advenientes, Gradensem urbem capere conati sunt; sed civibus fortier decertantibus, Sarracenorum impietas non prevaluit."\textsuperscript{436} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.26, 38.\textsuperscript{437} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.28. "Pacto cum comite facto, a castello, quod foedere ceperat, pecunia, potiusquam armis, illum avertunt."\textsuperscript{438} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, I.17, 17.
rolling him, sometimes dragging him” back to his soldiers. The Calabrians, *desperantes* and “not inclined to fight (*minime certare praenitentes*)” fled back to their fortress. After this, all Calabrians (identified as a *genus formidolosissimum*) “trembled before him (*ante eum tremebant*).” The duke’s unfortunate captive was then forced to pay his own ransom, having been abandoned by his people.

Unfortunately, Amatus of Montecassino and William of Apulia wrote almost nothing about Calabria, but, where they did mention the people who inhabited it, they depicted them as fearful. Amatus, for example, included a brief version of the story of Peter’s capture in his own history, writing that when Robert seized Peter, “the Normans ran and the Calabrians fled.” Although William of Apulia left the anecdote out of his poem, he did twice mention the Calabrians becoming terrified (*terrentur*). Cowardice was not therefore an attribute that only Malaterra ascribed to this group.

The town of Reggio was the exception to the rule. Malaterra wrote that its citizens fought against Roger bravely (*fortiter*) and “as if for their very lives.” It was not until the count personally killed one of the defenders—a giant of a man who had been insulting the Normans—that the people of Reggio became “terrifi” and made a settlement with the Normans. It was hardly a complete victory, though, as the rulers of the city and

---


440 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, l.17, 17–18.

441 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, l.17, 18.

442 Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, III.10, 123. “Et corirent li Normant, et foirent cil de Calabre.” Amatus’s version moralized the episode however, with the duke repenting for what he did, confessing that he had sinned, arguing that his poverty had compelled him to do it, and later paying Peter back. Ibid., III.10, 123; IV.17.

443 William of Apulia, *Gesta*, II.325; IV.373.

444 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, l.34.
their followers were allowed to leave and retain control of neighboring Squillace.\textsuperscript{445} Even at the end of Roger's campaigning, when he had instilled fear through the rest of Calabria and there was no other fortress that dared to resist, Squillace remained unsubdued.\textsuperscript{446} It would be wrong to call these favorable images, but the fact that the defenders had resisted, arrived at a negotiated settlement with the Normans, and retained a certain amount of autonomy does make it clear that they valued their independence.

Leaving aside Malaterra's mixed image of the Calabrians, it is interesting that, a century later, Hugo Falcandus associated the people of Calabria with a combination of vices and virtues too. On the positive side, Falcandus explained that Calabria only slowly gave in to the turmoil that was shaking the rest of southern Italy: “Calabria, whose faith had formerly been accustomed to sway (\textit{vacillare}) only with great difficulty, was beginning to tremble when the storms were now raging in Apulia.”\textsuperscript{447} This might seem to indicate that Falcandus favored the Calabrians, and even led one scholar to argue that the author must have been a native of that region.\textsuperscript{448} Yet there is more to the picture, and further into the narrative the image of this group becomes much darker.

Specifically, Falcandus later associated the Calabrians with Greek perfidy and showed them to be violent and greedy. He reported that \textit{multi quoque Calabrorum} took part in a conspiracy aimed at overthrowing the king's chancellor.\textsuperscript{449} Reflecting on this,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{445} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, 1.34.
\textsuperscript{446} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, 1.36.
\textsuperscript{447} Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 12, 31. “Calabria, iam ingruentibus Apulie procellis, quati ceperat, cuius antea fides difficillime consueverat vacillare.”
\textsuperscript{448} C. A. Garufi, \textit{Roberto di San Giovanni, maestro notaio e il 'Liber de Regno Sicilie'}, in \textit{Archivio storico per la Sicilia} VIII (Palermo: Presso la R. Deputazione, 1942), 9, 50. According to Garufi, Falcandus was “nessun siciliano di sicuro,” but rather a Calabrian. See also Loud and Wiedemann, trans. \textit{The History of the Tyrants of Sicily}, 85n58.
\textsuperscript{449} Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 53, 132–133. “Magna pars civium Henrico comiti, suadente Bartholomeo Parisino qui plurimum apud Messanenses poterat, occulte iuravit. Multi quoque Calabrorum, qui Messanam audito regis adventu confluxerant, eisdem erant sacramentorum nexibus irretiti.”
\end{flushright}
Falcandus wrote: “but the outcome of that matter showed that their faith wavered (vacillare) with Greek perfidy (Greca perfidia) and piratical fickleness (levitate piratica).”⁴⁵⁰ The passage connected the Calabrians to several undesirable characteristics, and also alluded to the earlier description of them through the use of the verb vacillare. Later, after the conspiracy was unmasked and its leader had been arrested, some of the traitors were forced across the straits of Messina. Marching through Calabria unarmed, they were set upon by Greci spe lucri and left for dead.⁴⁵¹ The people of Calabria were therefore twice linked to Greeks, a group Falcandus viewed with utter disdain. His multifaceted image of the Calabrians—perfidious, piratical, and sometimes loyal—was thus far from flattering.

Bari

There are, furthermore, some relevant observations to be made about the powerful port city of Bari, located on the western shores of the Adriatic. Long the capital of Byzantium’s Apulian catapanate, it was eventually captured by Robert Guiscard in 1071. The city put up a bitter resistance, but William of Apulia was the only author to express any admiration for the bravery of the Baresi. The other chroniclers looked at them with great scorn, evidently viewing the metropolis as a seat of rebellion. This is especially

---

⁴⁵⁰ Falcandus, Liber, c. 53, 132. “Verum exitus rei fidem eorum ostendit tam greca perfidia quam levitate piratica vacillare.”
⁴⁵¹ Falcandus, Liber, c. 53, 138. “Greci vero quoq Messane gestum fuerat audientes, spe lucri fugientibus occurrebant et multis eos verberibus affligentes, tandem saucios, nudos omniumque rerum inopes dimittebant; quorum magna pars in Solanie silve nivibus perierunt hiemis asperitate consumpti.”
clear in the three different accounts of the siege of Bari (1068–1071) offered by the
eleventh-century authors.452

Malaterra identified this *famosissima urbs* as rebellious (*rebellis*) to Duke Robert
Guiscard, despite the fact that its formal allegiance had always been to the Byzantine
emperor.453 The duke decided to take it by force, and when he had surrounded the city, its
citizens showed their contempt (*despectus*) by piling their wealth on the walls in an effort
to goad the enemy army.454 Robert simply thanked them for the offer and asked that the
treasures be kept safe until they were in his possession, then launched his attack, which
instilled the city with dread (*metus*).455 Realizing that they would be unable to defeat their
enemies with force (*vis*), the inhabitants turned to treachery and deceit, *fraus* and *dolus*,
paying a certain fickle man (*quidam laevitatis*) to stab the duke with a poisoned blade.
The man entered the enemy camp craftily (*dolose*), tried to carry out this bad deed
(*facinus*), but failed because God protected the duke.456

The Baresi were thwarted a second time when, by ostentatiously celebrating the
news that a relief force was on its way, they inadvertently alerted the besiegers, who were
then able to anticipate and drive off the incoming Byzantine fleet.457 Bari’s citizens were
therefore made to look foolish and arrogant—taunting an enemy they could not defeat
and rejoicing over aid that never came. Although, in reality, the city had held out for an
incredible three years, Malaterra was not about to recognize the bravery of the defenders

452 For general information on Bari in the eleventh century, see Vera von Falkenhausen, “Bari
bizantina: profilo di un capoluogo di provincia (secoli ix–xi),” in *Spazio, società, potere nell’Italia dei
453 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.40.
454 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.40.
455 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.40.
456 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.40.
457 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.43.
(something he did do for other enemies, such as the Muslims).\textsuperscript{458} Instead, he showed that they possessed neither cunning nor strength, two of Robert Guiscard’s most renowned attributes, and that they were overcome as a result.

Amatus was equally unflattering, and portrayed the city as increasingly divided by factions over the course of the siege. The leader of the “pro-Byzantine” party was eventually murdered by his rivals, who favored capitulation to Robert Guiscard.\textsuperscript{459} This fifth column even supplied the duke with intelligence about conditions behind the walls.\textsuperscript{460} The emperor, meanwhile, could not send relief because the Greeks were too afraid to engage the Normans in battle, and he eventually had to settle for a band of mercenaries who were easily defeated.\textsuperscript{461} In the end, the group advocating surrender seized control and handed Bari over to the duke’s forces.\textsuperscript{462} Whereas Malaterra depicted the Baresi as treacherous in their attempted assassination of Guiscard, Amatus believed treachery was internal, and reported that the fall of the city was orchestrated from within.

In the twelfth century, Alexander of Telese recognized Bari as an unruly place too. Prince Grimoald of Bari was one of King Roger II’s principal rivals and took part in an alliance of mainland nobles who resisted the monarchy.\textsuperscript{463} Grimoald had joined with enemies of the king (\textit{inimicis suis consenserat}) and scorned fealty (\textit{contempta eius fidelitate}), so Roger besieged Bari.\textsuperscript{464} Alexander took care to point out that the city fell after just three weeks—whereas it had taken Robert Guiscard three years to capture.\textsuperscript{465}

\textsuperscript{458} Consider, for example, the strong resistance at both Messina and Centuripe. Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.6; II.15.
\textsuperscript{459} Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, V.27, 251.
\textsuperscript{460} Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, V.27, 249–251.
\textsuperscript{461} Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, V.27, 253.
\textsuperscript{462} Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, V.27, 254.
\textsuperscript{463} Alexander of Telese, \textit{Ystoria}, I.10.
\textsuperscript{464} Alexander of Telese, \textit{Ystoria}, II.19, 31.
\textsuperscript{465} Alexander of Telese, \textit{Ystoria}, II.20.
The defeated prince was hauled off to Sicily in chains, but this did not prevent further trouble. Alexander reported that the *barense cives* later planned to rebel, having killed some Muslim builders sent to construct a royal citadel to oversee the city.\(^{466}\) The uprising was only averted by another personal visit from the king, who consoled the Baresi and agreed to meet their demands.\(^{467}\) Labeling the citizens *ira commoti* and *cives contradictentes*, Alexander made their disloyalty highly apparent.

Hugo Falcandus’s image of Bari was much the same. Roger II’s citadel was eventually built, but the Baresi subsequently destroyed it in a rebellion during the reign of his son and successor, William I. The king arrived with his army and informed the citizens as they begged forgiveness that “you did not spare my house and I will certainly not spare yours.”\(^{468}\) Bari was demolished and its inhabitants dispersed, an event that terrified rebels throughout Apulia.\(^{469}\) Revolts aside, it is also useful to recall that the king’s Chancellor Maio of Bari, the *amīr of amīrs* and one of the most evil characters in the narrative (he was identified as a *monstrum*), was associated with that city: Falcandus claimed that Maio’s father had been an oil vender there.\(^{470}\)

\(^{466}\) Alexander of Telese, *Ystoria*, II.34.
\(^{467}\) Alexander of Telese, *Ystoria*, II.34.
\(^{469}\) Falcandus, *Liber*, c. 8, 21–22.
\(^{470}\) Maio’s father, Leo, was actually a senior official (*protoiudex*) in Bari. Sirgagusa *Liber*, 7n2. Maio’s worst crime was plotting against the king. Falcandus, preface to *Liber*, 7–8. “[The king] made Maio of Bari the great *amīr*. He was a man of humble birth who, although at first a court notary, gradually arrived at the office of chancellor. A monster, certainly no greater curse nor any greater threat to the realm than he could be found (*Maionem quoque barensem, humili ortum genere, qui cum primum in curia notarius exitisset, gradatim ad cancellariatus pervenerat dignitatem, magnum admiratum instituit. Monstrum utique quo nulla pestis immanior, nulla ad regni perniciem ac subversionem poterat efficacior inveniri*).” For more information on the historical Maio of Bari, the *amīr of amīrs*, see Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, 182–184. Metcalfe suggested that the chancellor’s alleged plot to kill the king was “either a malicious exaggeration or a figurative flourish” on the part of Falcandus.
Only in William of Apulia’s text was Bari at all praised. For him, it was *opibus ditata, robore plena*, unrivalled in *opulentia*.\(^{471}\) The city’s defenders responded to Robert Guiscard’s demands not with contempt (*despectus*), as Malaterra reported, but stern replies (*austa responsa*). They did not hide behind their walls: “cives non intra moenia clausi.”\(^{472}\) When the duke attacked, the Baresi were “not slow to combat (*non ad certamina segnes*)” and fought back (*repugnantes*), standing in front of their walls, putting some of the enemy to flight and casting others down with their blows.\(^{473}\) William, always one for animal metaphor, compared the two sides to boars locked in combat, writing that “uterque resistit acriter, et neuter vult cedere.”\(^{474}\) While including the episode about Robert Guiscard’s attempted assassination, the poet, unlike Malaterra, made sure to point out that the would-be killer was not Barese, but a foreigner, “promtus ad omne malum, levis, iracundus et audax,” who had suffered a certain serious injury from the duke.\(^{475}\) William thus rescued Bari’s image: instead of portraying its people as “rebelles,” he highlighted their stout resistance and distanced them from the inglorious act of trying to murder an enemy in cold blood.

Pisa and Venice

Some further differences and similarities arise in how the chroniclers portrayed Pisa and Venice, the two great maritime states of the eleventh century. To begin with the former, Malaterra depicted the “*gens pisana*” as greedy and weak.\(^{476}\) They were a group

\(^{472}\) William of Apulia, *Gesta*, II.503.  
\(^{475}\) William of Apulia, *Gesta*, II.547–549.  
\(^{476}\) They were identified as a *gens* in Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.34.
intent on revenge, who twice tried to repay *injuriae illatae*, but whose military endeavors never fared well.

Malaterra reported that they sent a naval expedition to Sicily after their merchants suffered injuries from the Muslims of Palermo. Hoping for *vindicta*, they offered assistance to Roger, who told them to wait (*sustinere*). Malaterra explained that, as the Pisans were “ex consuetudine” more attached to *commercialibus lucris* than to *bellicos exercitiis*, they decided not to delay “lest their customary profits (*lucris asuetis*) be deprived any longer.” Yet, arriving at Palermo, they dreaded (*exhorrere*) the number of enemies and would not leave their ships, so they simply cut the chain that blocked the port and “as is the custom of their people (*more suae gentis*)” returned to Pisa considering this a major achievement. When the Pisans later suffered “injuriae” while doing business in Africa, they brought together a force and took over much of King Themin’s royal city. Malaterra again explained that, since they lacked “virtus,” they offered the city to Count Roger, knowing they could not hold onto it themselves. On this second occasion, the count also put them off (*differre*), and King Themin eventually bought peace from his enemies. Malaterra’s Pisans, repeatedly victimized for their lack of strength, were apparently more interested in money than anything else.

Although criticized by Malaterra, they fared much better under the pen of Amatus, who highlighted their bravery and piety. The city sent an expedition to Palermo, he reported, not seeking revenge, but because Duke Robert Guiscard had “asked and

---

477 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.34.
478 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.34.
479 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.34.
480 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, IV.3, 86. This victory, won at Mahdia in 1088, was celebrated in the *Carmen de victoria Pisanorum*, for which see E. Du Méril, ed., *Poésies populaires latines du moyen âge* (Paris: F. Didot 1847), 239–251.
481 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, IV.3, 86.
482 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, IV.3, 87.
requested help from the citizens of Pisa.\textsuperscript{483} They did not fear the enemy as in Malaterra’s account, but rather, after cutting the chain across Palermo’s harbor, some went on land and some stayed on the ships in order to attack the city on two fronts.\textsuperscript{484} Their contribution was valued by the duke, who rewarded them with \textit{grandissimes domps} before they returned home. The Pisans were also pious and—better still—enemies of the wicked Prince Gisulf of Salerno.\textsuperscript{485} Beset by stormy seas, a group of Pisan sailors called on St. Matthew, who calmed the water for them. They then went immediately to Salerno and made donations to the church where the saint’s body was housed. Gisulf, however, promptly had this lot arrested and tortured, seized their goods, and held them for ransom.\textsuperscript{486} Amatus never presented the inhabitants of Pisa as greedy merchants, and here he came close to making martyrs out of them: they risked everything, even their lives, by making a pilgrimage.

For Alexander of Telese, on the other hand, Pisa posed a visible threat to King Roger’s fledgling monarchy and earned his contempt as a result. Its citizens were a disruptive force that supplied the rebellious southern barons with mercenaries and offered refuge to those seeking asylum. Fortunately for Sicily, Pisa only sometimes delivered on its promises: King Roger’s enemies requested military support from the city four times, but assistance only materialized twice.\textsuperscript{487} The author made it equally clear that the Pisans fought for money alone—the prince of Capua expended thousands of silver marks to raise a force of Pisan mercenaries that acquired further wealth by pillaging southern

\begin{itemize}
\item Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, V.28, 255.
\item Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, V.28., 256.
\item Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, VIII.4, 346.
\item Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, VIII.4, 346.
\item Alexander of Telese, \textit{Ystoria}, II.37; II.56; III.24; IV.5.
\end{itemize}
Italy.\textsuperscript{488} Alexander called the Pisans \textit{piratae}, writing that they “invaded \textit{invaserunt}” Amalfi, which they “wickedly sacked \textit{impie depopulantur},” transporting \textit{omnia spolia} to their ships.\textsuperscript{489} From a historical perspective, such an act is unsurprising given that Amalfi was one of Pisa’s principal commercial rivals in this period.\textsuperscript{490} \textit{Impietas}, moreover, was an attribute Malaterra assigned to the citizens of Gerace when they viciously tried to kill Robert Guiscard.

In the end, the royal army finally defeated the Pisans on land, capturing or killing their soldiers, while those who had stayed behind on the ships fled \textit{timore coacti} and weighed down with \textit{innumeris spoliis}.\textsuperscript{491} Ultimately, then, the prince of Capua had summoned this mercenary force in vain, \textit{incassum}.\textsuperscript{492} The same basic vices espoused by Malaterra reappear in the pages of Alexander’s history; in times of war, the people of Pisa displayed only avarice and incompetence.

Though William of Apulia did not mention the Pisans, he (along with Malaterra) gave ample treatment to their Adriatic rivals, the Venetians. These people were depicted as a greedy but ferocious \textit{gens}.\textsuperscript{493} The poet identified Venice as “populosa Venetia,” “dives opum divesque virorum,” whose inhabitants were skilled and brave: “Non ignara quidem belli navalis et audax / Gens erat haec.”\textsuperscript{494} Living on the water, the Venetians were unrivalled in naval combat: “Semper aquis habitant; gens nulla valentior ista /

\textsuperscript{489} The author identified the Pisans as “pirates” in a disparaging sense in Alexander of Telese, \textit{Ystoria}, III.27. The description of Amalfi’s destruction can be found in ibid., III.25.
\textsuperscript{490} On Amalfi during the Norman period generally, see Mario Del Treppo, “Amalfi: una città del Mezzogiorno nel secoli IX–XIV,” in \textit{Amalfi medioevale}, ed. Mario Del Treppo and Alfonso Leone (Naples: Giannini, 1977), 1–175.
\textsuperscript{491} Alexander of Telese, \textit{Ystoria}, III.26.
\textsuperscript{492} Alexander of Telese, \textit{Ystoria}, II.22.
\textsuperscript{493} William referred to the Venetians as the \textit{Venetica gens}. William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, IV.297–298.
\textsuperscript{494} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, IV.277–279.
Aequoreis bellis, ratiumque per aequora ductu." In Byzantium’s war with Robert Guiscard, the Venetians proved themselves a gens fida, sending a fleet to intercept his ships. They attacked the Normans audacter, and, as they were more experienced in naval combat, put them to flight. In the ensuing lines, however, the poet revealed that Venetian bravery was matched by extraordinary greed.

William made this explicit when narrating their role at Durazzo, a town in Dalmatia that Robert Guiscard put to siege and which they garrisoned on the emperor’s behalf. The poet mentioned that, during the siege, the Venetian fleet inflicted cruel punishments (cruciat variis poenis) on those who deserted the duke’s camp, handing them over to the Greeks (traduntur Achivis). Although William twice emphasized Venetian loyalty to the empire (imperio parent, gens fida), he nevertheless showed that it was a Venetian who betrayed the city, allowing the duke’s troops to enter at night in exchange for rewards (which included Robert’s niece). The inhabitants cried out against the malefida Venetica, and the Venetians who were not part of the conspiracy were killed, captured, or fled without offering resistance. After taking Durazzo, Robert’s forces moved on to Corfu, and the Venetian fleet returned, spending fifteen days...

495 William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.284–285
496 William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.437.
497 William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.295–299.
498 The battle of Durazzo of 18 October 1081 was a key episode in the struggle for the Straits of Otranto, which controlled access to the Adriatic, and was fought between the Byzantine army under the command of Emperor Alexius I Comnenus and the Normans under Robert Guiscard. The imperial army, comprised of Varangians, Normans, Turks, Macedonians, and “Manicheans” was defeated, but the arrival of the Venetian fleet robbed Robert Guiscard of a total victory, as his ships were driven off and the Venetians were then able to enter the port town and guard it. Robert Guiscard managed to take the city in the following year, apparently gaining entry through intrigue. The classic work on this remains F. Chalandon, Essai sur le règne d’Alexis Ier Comnène: (1081–1118), 78–81. See also Ostrogorski, History of the Byzantine State, 357–359. On Venice’s role during this event, see Frederic C. Lane, Venice: A Maritime Republic (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 28–29.
500 William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.463–467.
looting the city. They sailed on to Corfu and met up with their Byzantine allies, but many promptly returned to Venice because they felt they were neglecting their business (negotia). They were not then, all things considered, true friends of the empire.

Identifying the people of Venice as both fida and malefida, the poet’s message would seem to have been that their loyalty was fluid, and just one of the many commodities they traded in.

For Malaterra, the Venetians were likewise dangerous to have as enemies, but even more dangerous as allies. Obeying the orders of the empire, they rushed their fleet to Durazzo iussa fideliter complentes and combated the Normans fiercely (acerrime). However, Malaterra placed substantially less emphasis on Venetian martial prowess than William of Apulia, and instead stressed their unwillingness to fight fairly. Outmatched in battle, Malaterra’s Venetians were overcome and asked for a truce, which the duke granted. The Normans were outwitted (falsa pollicatione delusi, doli ignarus), however, because the enemy silently outfitted their ships overnight and renewed the attack at dawn. After scattering the Norman fleet and gaining control of Durazzo, the Venetians again attacked acerrime, this time under cover of darkness, and made use of Greek fire, another trick, or dolus.

Malaterra, like William, similarly remarked upon the betrayal of Durazzo by a venetianus quidam, a man of avarice (avaritia), sick with cupidity (cupiditate aeger), who was easily corrupted (facile corruptus) by Robert Guiscard’s promises. Describing the capture of the city, which this Venetian had brought about, Malaterra could observe

---

502 William of Apulia, Gesta, V. 84–85.
503 William of Apulia, Gesta, V. 100–105.
with satisfaction that “there is no more dangerous enemy than a familiar one.”\textsuperscript{504} Where William of Apulia had noted Venetian bravery and skill at arms, in addition to their cunning, Malaterra pointed mainly just to the latter attribute, which he highlighted through repeated use of the word \textit{dolus}, meaning trickery or artifice. Indeed, the author reflected that, whereas the Normans had struck fear in the Venetians through their \textit{strenuitas} in battle, the Venetians struck fear through \textit{dolus}.\textsuperscript{505}

The diversity of attitudes expressed toward the cities of northern Italy in these chronicles reflect the unique concerns of these writers. Malaterra, a newcomer from across the Alps, always took the worst view of Italy’s native inhabitants. He treated the Pisans, who actually offered help to Count Roger, with contempt for their foolish and inept behavior, thereby excusing the fact that his patron twice allowed a potentially advantageous alliance to pass by him. Alexander of Telese, who saw the destruction wrought by Pisan mercenaries during the kingdom of Sicily’s civil war in the 1130s, viewed them as wicked marauders. Amatus took the most favorable outlook toward Pisa, presumably because its merchants suffered at the hands of his story’s great antihero, Gisulf of Salerno. In William of Apulia’s eyes, the people of Venice, erstwhile allies of the Byzantine Empire, belonged to that class of worthy adversaries who added drama and heroism to his epic poem’s battle scenes. Malaterra, who was writing to praise Roger I and not his brother Robert Guiscard or his abortive Aegean campaign, had little need to portray the Venetians as anything but wily tricksters who were in the end outsmarted by the even wiler duke.

\textsuperscript{504} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.28, 74.
\textsuperscript{505} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.26, 73.
Conclusions

The chroniclers of both the eleventh and twelfth centuries tended to regard the natives of southern Italy with disapproval. Geoffrey Malaterra, to begin with, clearly had no difficulty describing the Lombards in negative terms. Yet, since events on the mainland were peripheral to his storyline, which focused on Roger I’s campaigns in Sicily, he did not give them as much treatment as Amatus of Montecassino. Malaterra, as a foreigner living outside the mainland and in the employ of the count of Sicily, was not obliged to treat the Lombards with any measure of respect. It makes perfect sense that he would therefore condemn the southern Italians holistically for their apparent refusal to accept foreign dominion.

Amatus based his depiction of the Lombards on his religious interpretation of history, which treated their downfall as an act of God. He attributed their loss of divine favor to their especially sinful behavior, and was able to make examples out of the wickedness of their rulers. The fact that Montecassino had suffered Lombard depredation in both distant and living memory must surely have provided this monastic author with all the inspiration he required. Indeed, Amatus carefully described how “li pervers prince” Pandulf IV of Capua used his authority to oppress the abbey for many years prior to his defeat by the Normans. The Cassinese historian’s condemnation of the “perversity” of the Lombard people may have been slightly tempered by Montecassino’s relationship with Robert Guiscard’s wife, the duchess Sichelgaita, but it did not prevent him from castigating men like her brother, Gisulf.

506 The first attack on Montecassino was in the sixth century. For a brief historical overview, see Wolf, Making History, 70–85.
507 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, 1.35–38.
Furthermore, Amatus denigrated the Lombards despite that fact that his patron, Abbot Desiderius, was a Lombard, and even though he was himself, in all likelihood, a member of this *gens* as well. Here, therefore, is a case where monastic loyalties superseded cultural ones. Montecassino had endured the oppression of the princes of Salerno, and by the late eleventh century stood to gain more from a partnership with the Normans. Amatus made a politically wise decision by writing in favor of the new power in the region. He went so far as to depict Gisulf II in an alliance with the devil, and to interpret the collapse of Lombard autonomy as the result of divine providence. For the *inverse* reason, Gisulf’s sister, Sichelgaita, was the only one to earn his praise—because of her *positive* relationship with the monastery.

If Amatus was constrained by political concerns, William was even more so. What little denigration of the Lombards he did engage in is particularly striking given that he wrote for Roger Borsa, the half-Lombard half-Norman duke of Apulia. In that respect, William’s patron derived much of his legitimacy to rule over southern Italy from his blood connection to the native princes of southern Italy: Gisulf was his uncle, and Guaimar his grandfather. In that respect, William found himself in a far more delicate position than either Amatus or Malaterra. He had to address how the Normans came to power without blatantly dishonoring their Lombard predecessors. Thus, although he admitted that the soldiers of southern Italy acted like cowards at the debacle of Civitate, he made a scapegoat out of the men of the March of Fermo, and elsewhere avoided other

---

508 Although the poet generally positive, it is clear from this analysis that William of Apulia did occasionally find fault with the people of Italy, as when he referred to the soldiers at Civitate as a *Longobardorum fugax turba*, or when he commented on the lies that the Apulians used to lure a papal army to fight on their behalf. In that respect, Mathieu’s comment that there are no expressions of contempt for the Italians seems unjustified. C.f. Mathieu, introduction to *Gesta*, 21.
509 Mathieu, introduction to *Gesta*, 13–14.
unpleasant details (such as Gisulf's unhappy relationship with Robert Guiscard) that his prose contemporaries chose to highlight.

The hostilities and sympathies felt toward native Italians by the various authors appear to have been in large part repeated in their depictions of the citizens of the city-states of Bari, Pisa, and Venice. Malaterra, the most pro-Norman author, derided Bari even though its people put up a stalwart defense, and he degraded Pisa despite the fact that its citizens had repeatedly proffered their help to Count Roger. Venice for Malaterra was successful in its naval battles with the Normans only because its forces fought unfairly. Amatus in large part shared Malaterra's negative opinions about the Baresi, and probably only sympathized with the Pisans because of their conflict with the prince of Salerno. Alexander of Telese, on the other hand, remained quite hostile to Pisa because of the threat it posed to King Roger II's fledgling monarchy. William of Apulia was the sole source to provide a favorable view of Bari, portraying the city as a boar locked in combat with Robert Guiscard, and he similarly praised the Venetians for their bravery in battle. The poet was, in nearly every case, more favorable to the people of Italy than any of his prose counterparts.

As far as the language of the twelfth-century historians is concerned, Alexander of Telese evidently found the phrase *Longobardi* a less useful term of reference but nonetheless viewed the people of southern Italy in much the same way as his predecessors. They were sinful (as Amatus had shown), treacherous (a theme of Malaterra's), and easily frightened (William of Apulia). This would seem to indicate that Alexander drew directly on one or more of these earlier authors, but it is also plausible
that some of these concepts may have been genuine stereotypes associated with the inhabitants of southern Italy.

The frequent uprisings that Hugo Falcandus observed undoubtedly inspired him to treat the Apulians as an *inconstantissima gens* as well. Whatever his exact identity, he was a cynical witness who detested the palace officials and abhorred the unrest that he thought their misrule had created. Because Falcandus so lamented the turmoil that shook the kingdom in the middle of the century, it is somewhat surprising that he did not denounce the violent northern Italian settlers in Sicily as traitors too. In that regard, his hatred for the eunuchs (and perhaps for Muslims in general) may explain why he sided with the *Lombardi*, their bitter rivals. The possibility that Falcandus was a member of those northern Italian communities should not be ruled out either. Regardless of his motivation, this late twelfth-century chronicler clearly regarded the people of southern Italy, the *Longobardi*, in much the same way as his predecessors: a treacherous and militarily inept group who needed to be kept on a short leash.

This survey reveals important insights into the combined effects of stereotypes and patronage on medieval historical narratives. In spite of the terminological shifts reflected in the texts, a number of recurring concepts (or misconceptions) about the “Lombards” do emerge from the texts. The likelihood that Alexander of Telese and Hugo Falcandus made purely coincidental use of expressions so similar to those of earlier writers (*gens infida, nequitia, malitia*) in fact seem quite low. It is also significant that, while writers might have had access to a set of standard images about the people of southern Italy, they would not have always found it politically wise to employ them. The Lombards and their fall from power sometimes required careful handling, as William of
Apulia’s situation indicates. Such was not the case for the Greeks, however, whom the chroniclers were free to insult at great length.
CHAPTER IV

CONTEMPT FOR THE GRAECI

Introduction: Terms of Reference

The Byzantine Empire controlled parts of southern Italy for more than five centuries before the Normans brought an end to its rule there. The adjective “Byzantine” is, however, a modern convention, and medieval sources tended refer to both subjects of the empire and other Greek-speaking communities as Graeci. Examining how the “Greeks” were perceived by these enemies of Constantinople can be highly instructive, revealing Western antipathy toward non-Latin Christians prior to the twelfth century, a time when relations between Byzantium and the West are thought to have broken down in earnest. It should, furthermore, be noted that there was a prominent Greek-speaking population in Sicily, which, although no longer part of the empire, was still thought to

---

510 For my purposes, I use “Byzantine” to refer to subjects of the Byzantine Empire. I use “Greek” to mean people with Byzantine origins or who were Greek-speaking.

511 Theologically, the Great Schism of 1054 is commonly thought to mark the beginning of the decisive break between East and West, although the fallout from this watershed was not immediately felt. Ostrogorski, History of the Byzantine State, 337. “The significance of this event was not realized until later, and at the time little notice was taken of it . . . Misunderstandings between the two ecclesiastical centres were all too common and no one was to guess that the quarrel of 1054 was of greater significance than earlier disputes, or that it marked a schism which was never again to be healed.” Runciman linked the schism with the era of crusades in the twelfth century. In his view, growing hostility characterized such events as the refusal of Emperor Manuel Comnenus to take part in the Second Crusade and his alliance with the Seljuk sultan. Tensions culminated in the massacre of the Latins in Constantinople in 1182. Steven Runciman, The Eastern Schism: A Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches during the XIth and XIIth Centuries (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 124–144. From a Constantinopolitan perspective, A. Kazhdan believed that “Byzantine intellectuals began to consider the West as a unified entity” in the twelfth century. Writing in this period, for instance, both John Kinnamos and Anna Commena spoke of uniquely “Latin” habits. A. Kazhdan, “Latin and Franks in Byzantium: Perception and Reality from the Eleventh to Twelfth Century,” in The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy P. Mottahedeh (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001), 86.
possess some connection to Byzantium. Examining this second group is equally illuminating as it helps reveal the extent to which Sicilian “Greeks” were considered similar to those of the empire.

What quickly becomes clear from surveying the texts is that, among these authors, there was a profound degree of hostility felt toward this group. This antagonism was directed not only toward the Byzantine Empire, but toward the Greeks as a whole, regardless of whether they lived in Sicily or the eastern Mediterranean. The presence of such “Grecophobia” is apparent in both eleventh- and twelfth-century sources, demonstrating a persistent animosity running through the entire period under analysis. Before delving into the particulars of these sentiments, however, it is necessary to begin by looking at the ethnonyms the writers applied to this group.

Malaterra relied on the adjective Graecus to refer to both the Byzantine Greeks and their Greek-speaking counterparts in Sicily. In his words, individual Greeks were natione Graecus, their armies were exercitus Graecorum, their customs were mores Graecorum, and their language was Graeca lingua. He also occasionally used Graecus in a devotional context to distinguish between Greek Christians (Graeci Christiani) and Latin Christians (Latini Christiani). As for their homeland, Malaterra identified it

---

512 Muslim control over all of Sicily was effective as of 902. Metcalfe, The Muslims of Medieval Italy, 31.
513 The expression “natione Graecus” appeared twice in Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, I.6 and II.45, 53. “Exercitus Graecorum” appeared in ibid., III.27, 74. “Mos Graecorum” was used with reference to the Sacraments in ibid., IV.13, 92. The phrase Graeca lingua is located in ibid., IV.2, 86.
514 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.13. This episode involved a quarrel between the Byzantine emperor and the pope over the use of leavened or unleavened bread. See also ibid., IV.22, in which Roger Borsa tried to replace the local Greek bishop of Rossano with a “Latin,” and met with opposition from the “Greeks.”
variously as Graecia, Sanctum Imperium, and Romania,\textsuperscript{515} ruled by the imperator Constantinopolitanum, while Constantinople itself was the regia urbs.\textsuperscript{516} Aside from his acknowledgment of it as an empire, overseen by an imperator, there is little to indicate that he held any esteem for Byzantium.

Because of William of Apulia’s preference for classicizing terminology, he did not confine himself to referring to the Greeks as just Graeci, like Malaterra. In addition to this word, he called them Graeii, Danai, Argi, Pelasgi, Achivi, gens Argiva, gens Achaea, and gens Argolica.\textsuperscript{517} Most of these forms relate to the Trojan War.\textsuperscript{518} Furthermore, while William did refer to the Byzantine Empire as Graecia, Romania, sanctum imperium, and

\textsuperscript{515} Graecia was mentioned in Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.40, 81 and III.41. The Byzantine Empire was described as the sanctum imperium in ibid., I.7, 10. It was labeled Romania in ibid., III.24, 74, III.30, 75, and IV.24, 102.

Albu has pointed to William of Apulia’s use of the phrase “Holy Empire” as evidence that the poet was sympathetic to Byzantium and as an example of how his view of the Byzantines differed from Malaterra’s. Clearly, however, both made use of the phrase. Albu, The Normans in their Histories, 134. “Byzantium is the Holy Empire (Imperium Sanctum) . . . by implication this monarch also surpasses lesser princes, including kings (reges).” More recently, Toubert has reiterated this erroneous belief that “il est indéniable que Guillaume de Pouille inscrit dans le filon de l’historiographie sud-italienne du XIe siècle sa version la plus “byzantinisante”. Il est en ce sens le seul à nous parler de Byzance comme du sanctum imperium par excellence.” Toubert, “La première historiographie de la conquête normande de l’Italie méridionale (XIe siècle),” 25.

\textsuperscript{516} The Byzantine emperor was defined as imperator Constantinopolitanum in Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.6, IV.13, 92, and IV.22, 101. It is interesting to observe that Malaterra referred to the pseudo-emperor who claimed to be Michael Ducas as “imperator Constantinopolitanus” rather than “imperator Constantinopolitanum.” It is unclear whether this was deliberate. Ibid., III.13, 64. Regia urbs was utilized as a byword for Constantinople in ibid., III.29. Emily Albu implied that Malaterra only identified the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire as an imperator. In reality, this author treated both the Byzantine and German sovereigns as imperatores. Cf. Albu, The Normans in their Histories, 134.

\textsuperscript{517} Graii appeared in William of Apulia, Gesta, III.75. Danai comes from Danaus, the legendary founder of Argos, and was applied especially to the Greeks before the Trojan War. Lewis and Short, A New Latin Dictionary, 511. Gens Argiva, Argi, and Argolica gens are all drawn from Argos, the capital of Argolis, applied poetically to all of Greece. Ibid., 158. Gens Achaea and Achivi come from the province of Achaea, on the Gulf of Corinth. Ibid., 22. Pelasgi comes from an old name for the Peloponnesus; the Pelasgi were considered the oldest inhabitants of Greece. Ibid., 1325. The majority of these phrases can be found in Vergil’s Aeneid. Gens Achaea is not in the Aeneid but can be found in passim in Livy’s Ab Urbe Condita, the Thebaid of Statius, and Pliny the Elder’s Naturalis Historiae. Argolica gens is not in the Aeneid, but is contained in the Thebaid. Gens Argiva can be found in Isidore’s Etymologiae XIII.21. See also Etymologiae, IX.2. “Danai a Danao rege vocati. Idem et Argivi, ab Argo conditore cognominati . . . Achaei, qui et Achivi, ab Achaeo Iovis filio dicti. Pelasgi nominati, quia cum velis passis verno tempore advenisse Italiae visi sunt, ut aves. Primo enim eos Varro Italiam adulpisse commemorat.”

\textsuperscript{518} For an elaboration on William’s classical language, see Mathieu, introduction to Gesta, 61–62.
even *Imperium Romanum*, he never referred to its ruler as an *imperator*. Instead, the poet identified the ruler of the empire by the phrases *imperii rector*, *Graecorum dominus*, or, even more ambiguously, *qui regit imperium*. It should be mentioned that William never actually employed the word “emperor” at all, for German or Greek sovereigns. He did not, however, mean this as a deliberate insult to these rulers, but did so rather because the meter of the poem would not admit *imperator*.

The Old French translation of Amatus, on the other hand (which allows for only an approximation of the original terms the author employed for the Byzantines), suggests that the monk of Montecassino relied on language very similar to Malaterra’s. The text contains a variety of words equivalent to the Latin *Graecus*: *Grex*, *Grez*, *Grec*, *Greg*, and *Grezois*. The emperor appeared as *empereor*, *empereour*, and *empereor de Costebtinoble*, presiding over the *Impiere de Costantinoble*. Amatus, in a sign of contempt, referred to their language not as “Greek,” but as a barbarous tongue, or *lengue barbare*.

Although Alexander of Telese made no mention of the Greeks, Hugo Falcandus did, calling them simply *Greci*. Most of the time, the author was discussing indigenous Greeks of Sicily and rather than the Byzantines, and as a result typically juxtaposed them against the *Latini*, *Longobardi*, and *Transalpini*. Despite the fact that Falcandus made no

---

519 *Graecia* appeared in William of Apulia, *Gesta*, IV.434. *Romania* is located in ibid., III.9, and III.99. It was referred to as *imperium sanctum* in ibid., I.477, I.515, II.487, IV.87. William called it the *Imperium Romanum* in ibid., III.1–2 and IV.568. Elsewhere, the poet identified the Byzantine empire as *Danaorum terra* (ibid., III.661), *fines Graecorum* (ibid., IV.122), or simply *imperium* (passim).

520 *Imperii rector* / *rector imperii* were in William of Apulia, *Gesta*, II.38, III.661–2, IV.568, V.35. *Graecorum dominus* appeared in ibid., III.52. Other phrases used for the emperor included “sedi imperiali praesidet” (ibid., I.196–197) and “regebat imperii” (ibid., III.1–2). *Qui regit imperium* can be found in ibid., II.59; in ibid., II.14–15 is a similar phrase, “qui tempore iura regebat imperii.” Contrary to Pierre Toubert’s observation, William never utilized the expression *qui iura geret imperii*. Toubert, “La premi ère historiographie de la conquête normande de l’Italie méridionale (XIe siècle),” 30.

521 *Albu, The Normans in their Histories*, 134n.

522 The Byzantine Empire was called the “Empire of Constantinople” in Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, VII.27, 318. The other expressions occurred in passim.

reference to their spoken language, he briefly mentioned one court official as “Grecis litteris eruditus.” Finally, while the empire itself never appeared in the narrative, the emperor was referred to as the imperator Greeorum.

Stereotypes of the Byzantines

In the eleventh-century sources, fear and military ineptitude were the most recurring negative attributes applied to the Greeks. Altogether, they became frightened or fled from battle eight times in the text of Malaterra, thirteen times in the text of William, and five times in the text of Amatus. Indeed, the chroniclers consistently depicted the Byzantines as weak and effeminate, thereby putting them in diametrical opposition to the strong and virile Normans. William of Apulia recorded that Arduin, a Lombard soldier who fought with the Norman mercenaries during the Byzantine expedition to Sicily, compared the Greeks to women (quasi femina Graecus), calling them “a cowardly sort (genus ignavum)” “lost in drunken inebriation (ebrietatiscrapuladissolvat).” Arduin added that they “frequently fled before the least of enemies (minimo saepe hostefugatos)” and, “weighed down by their dress,” were “unsuited for fighting (non armis

---

524 Falcandus, Liber, c. 14, 44.
525 Falcandus, Liber, c. 3, 14.
527 William of Apulia, Gesta, I.212. “Cum sit quasi femina Graecus.” Ibid., I.224–227. “Appula multimodae cum terra sit utilitatis, / Femineis Graecis cur permittatur haberi, / Cum genus ignavum sit, quod comes ebrietatis / Crapula dissolvat.” Arduin was a soldier from Milan who served the Byzantines during their war in Sicily. For more information on the historical figure see F. Chalandon, Histoire de la domination normande en Italie et en Sicilie (Paris: Picard, 1907), 91; Mathieu, Commentaire to Gesta, 268.
aptos). Amatus evidently shared William’s view, repeating Arduin’s insult about Byzantines being “feminine men (homes feminines).”

This commentary did not always come from characters who were enemies of Constantinople, either. William of Apulia had one Byzantine general vainly remind his troops that their “manly condition (virili condicione)” should prevent them from possessing “womanly hearts (cor muliebre).” Although Malaterra did not explicitly question Greek masculinity in quite the same way, he did refer to them as timid (timidus) and weak (imbecillis), and noted that they dressed unusually, or mirifice. He wrote, moreover, that they were “a people by custom dedicated to delights and pleasures rather than to the arts of war (gens, deliciis at voluptatibus, potiusquam belli studiis ex more dedita)”. Whereas the renowned opulence of Constantinople undoubtedly explains the prevalent notion of Greek lasciviousness, their loss of southern Italy to the Normans (and

528 William of Apulia, Gesta, I.227–228. “Minimo saepe hoste fugatos / Vestituque graves, non armis asserit aptos.” Distaste for Byzantine dress can be found in the writings of Liutprand of Cremona as well. E.g. Antapodosis, III.23; Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana ad Nicephorum Phocam, I.9, I.37, I.40.

529 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, II.17. “Venez aprèz moi, et je irai devant et vous aprèz. Et vous dirai pourquoi je voz devant: qué sachiez que je vous menerai à homes feminines, c’est à homes comme fames, liqueul demorent en molt ricche et espaciouse terre.” Amatus also mentioned that when the Normans began fighting the Byzantines they learned that they were “like women (comme fames)”. Ibid., I.21. In addition, Amatus noted the unusual appearance of the Byzantines, observing that someone returning from Constantinople could inspire wonder. Ibid., IV.39, 211. “Se merveilla que vint o grant barbe, comme s’il fist de Costentinoble.”

530 William of Apulia, Gesta, I.351–354. “Prudentia vestra virili / Condicione vigens, non vos permittat habere / Cor muliebre, viri.”

531 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.24, 71. Here Robert Guiscard referred to the Greeks as imbecillis in a battle oration during his campaigns in Greece. “Non vos deterreat ignobilis vulgi et imbecillis, quamvis numerosae, multitudinis strepitus hostium.” Malaterra employed the term timidus for the Greeks on two occasions. He portrayed the bishop of Palermo as “timidus et natione graecus” in ibid., II.45, 53; he described the siege of Durazzo in verse, writing “Sed plus atteritur asperitatibus / Graecorum populus territus hostibus, / Nec reddit aspera vulnera: / Vires abstulerat timor.” Ibid., III.25. Malaterra called a Norman returning from Constantinople “mirifice graeco more praeparatum” in ibid., II.53, 51. The author also wrote that, in the one instance when Greek soldiers were fighting, it was against their custom, or contra usum in ibid., I.10.

532 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.11, 64. This view of Byzantine hedonism would appear to be further confirmed by William of Apulia’s assessment of the reigns of Michael VII and his brother Constantine, which was “destructive (perniciosa)” for the Greeks because they neglected war, led a life of luxury, and allowed the Turks to invade the eastern part of the empire. William of Apulia, Gesta, III.1–6.
before that, of Sicily to the Muslims) might best explain this commonly held belief in their delicate timidity.

The chroniclers made Greek weakness particularly apparent in their descriptions of a series of military engagements fought with the Normans over the course of the year 1041. At the battle of Olivento, Malaterra and William reported that the majority of the Byzantine troops died in their panic-stricken retreat across the river there, preferring to drown rather than fight, and Amatus wrote that their bodies overflowed the riverbanks. At Ofanto, according to the poet, the Byzantine commander almost plunged his horse into a nearby river in his haste to escape at the same time that his soldiers fled the field. Amatus, always one to look for the divine presence, added that God miraculously raised the water level during this engagement so that more of the Greeks died through drowning than through combat. Water, an element responsible for both life and death, played an important part in all these accounts, functioning as more than just an ancillary geographic detail. The authors appear to have been indicating that the very land of Italy itself was struggling to cast off Byzantine domination, which was no longer part of the natural order. For them, Greek rule in Italy was, simply put, unnatural.

Defeat followed defeat, and at a third battle, fought at Monteloso, the Byzantines were again routed. Their general was killed by Robert Guiscard, according to Malaterra,

---

533 This was fought on 17 March, 1041, along the Olivento, a tributary of the larger Ofanto. Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, 1.9; William of Apulia, Gesta, I.254–289; Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, II.21. Although Malaterra reported that initially, both sides fought acerrime, the situation soon turned against the Greeks.
534 William of Apulia, Gesta, I.300–309.
535 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, II.23.
536 William was no doubt alluding to the Greeks’ earlier water-related difficulties when, at the conclusion of his first book, he wrote that a raging river could not inspire more fear in the Byzantines than a Norman general. William of Apulia, Gesta, I.545–546.
“like an ox,” the classic sacrificial victim.\footnote{Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, 1.10, 13. “Quasi bove interfecto.” Commenting on this, Luigi Andrea Berto has pointed out the symbolism of the ox here as “an animal with no masculinity, capable only of servile deeds and good only as meat at the butcher’s.” Berto, “‘Non audaces sed fugaces,’” 17.} William of Apulia gave this same unfortunate commander a lengthy pre-battle speech in which he exhorted his troops to “remember the courage (\textit{virtus}) of your ancestors,” then listed the achievements of the ancient Greeks, from Achilles to Alexander.\footnote{William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, I.366.} As others have noted, these classical exempla only underscored the advanced state of decay that Greece’s medieval descendants now found themselves in.\footnote{Wolf, \textit{Making History}, 129–130; Berto, “‘Non audaces sed fugaces,’” 12.} Exasperated, the general finally asked his men, “what cowardice makes you always flee?”\footnote{William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, I.353–354.} In Amatus’s version, when combat began “the Greeks did not stop running,” and he attributed their loss to the fact that they had previously “put more faith in themselves than in God.”\footnote{Amatus of Montecassino, \textit{Storia}, II.26.} After this defeat, Malaterra wrote that the Greeks hid behind their walls, refusing to fight the Normans in the open again,\footnote{Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, I.10.} while William compared the Normans to a hawk that had learned it could handle larger prey.\footnote{William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, I.290–297.} The underlying message was that the Byzantines might appear threatening, but, in reality, they could be overcome with ease because of their innate cowardice.

The Greeks met further disgrace during Robert Guiscard’s invasion of the Byzantine Empire, which culminated at the battle for the port city of Durazzo in 1081.\footnote{The battle of Durazzo was fought in October 1081 between the Byzantines, Venetians, and Normans for control of the Straits of Otranto, for which see F. Chalandon, \textit{Essai sur le règne d’Alexis Fr. Commène: (1081–1118)}, 78–81; Ostrogorski, \textit{History of the Byzantine State}, 357–359. On Venice’s role during this event, see Lane, \textit{Venice: A Maritime Republic}, 28–29.} In this confrontation, only Byzantium’s allies, the Venetians, proved their bravery, whereas on land the \textit{Graecorum populus}, hiding behind their walls, were “exhausted by
adversity (*atteritur asperitatibus*)” and “terrified by the enemy (*territus hospitibus)*.”

Worse yet, the Byzantine army under the command of Alexius I Comnenus (1081–1118), who had hurried to relieve the beleaguered city, was subsequently routed. As both Malaterra and William of Apulia stressed, this catastrophic imperial defeat occurred in spite of the Greek army’s significantly superior numbers.

Malaterra, acknowledging that this *exercitus Graecorum* was a *multitudo* comprised of *multa millia*, observed nevertheless that it added up to little since “fear had stolen strength (*vires abstulerat timor)*.” Though the emperor arrived at Durazzo with a force so large that it could not be fully viewed even from a mountaintop, he became *territus* in battle and “chose flight over fight (*fugam, potius quam certamen, eligit)*.” Following his lead, the *Graeci* abandoned their tents and goods, “each hurrying to get ahead in the rout (*fuga)*.” With the defeat of “such a populous empire, and such a wealthy emperor, and so many thousands of enemies,” “fear (*timor*) caused the entire empire to tremble.”

If Malaterra emphasized Greek numbers, William took this even further, making Robert Guiscard’s victory all the more shocking—and the emperor’s loss all the more shameful. He wrote of the Byzantine force as *multi Argi, maxima barbaricae cum Graecis, gens innumerabilis, and agmina plura*, with *innumerae catervae* that covered the hills and fields “like locusts (*more locustarum)*.” William added further irony to Durazzo by discussing how Alexius initially rejoiced at the chance for battle and by

---

545 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, III.25.
546 On this emperor’s reign, which spanned nearly forty years, see Ostrogorski, *History of the Byzantine State*, 348–375.
547 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, III.25.
548 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, III.27, 74.
549 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, III.27, 74.
noting that, when the fighting at first went well for them, the Byzantine soldiers began to loot the battlefield.\(^{552}\) This confidence was premature, however, and though the situation seemed grim for Robert Guiscard, the duke rallied his followers and shattered the morale of the Greeks, killing five thousand of them.\(^{553}\) Alexius, for his part, could only retreat, wounded, weeping, and disgraced: *saucius, lacrimans, and inglorius*.\(^{554}\) The Greeks’ corpses lay unburied and rotting, and the duke’s troops soon moved on because of the stench of decay.\(^{555}\) The humiliating outcome of the battle could not have been made more apparent, and William’s vivid use of olfactory descriptors for the Byzantines seems to have been a way for him to drive home the bitter acrimony he felt for these enemies of his hero, Robert Guiscard.\(^{556}\)

At a more implicit level, Greek cowardice was further demonstrated through their constant reliance on foreign mercenaries.\(^{557}\) Alexius I employed Turkish soldiers against both domestic and foreign enemies, and even turned them loose on Constantinople, allowing them to violate the city’s holy places.\(^{558}\) The Venetians were induced to support the Byzantines at Durazzo, and the Varangian guard (a northern European section of the

\(^{552}\) William of Apulia, *Gesta*, IV.229, 392.

\(^{553}\) William of Apulia, *Gesta*, IV.413–415. The humiliation actually started shortly before the battle, when, a little earlier, one of the Byzantine leaders was captured trying to escape (*capitur fugiens*). Ibid., IV.339.

\(^{554}\) William of Apulia, *Gesta*, IV.420–425. “Lacrimatur Alexius, hostem / Praevaluisse sibi, cui nec par copia gentis, / Nec par census erat; discedit saucius ipse, / Cogitur et lacrimans inglorius ille reverti, / Gloria cui fuerat frustra sperata triumphi.”


\(^{556}\) For commentary on this, see Berto, “‘Non audaces sed fugaces,’” 13.

\(^{557}\) In William of Apulia’s poem, they made unscrupulous use of such soldiers, utilizing both heretics and barbarians. William of Apulia, *Gesta*, I.334–339. “Cum Graecis aderant quidam, quos pessimus error / Fecerat amentes, et ab ipso nomen habebant: / Plebs solet ista Patrem cum Christo dicere passum, / Et fronti digito signum crucis imprimit uno; / Non aliam Nati personam quam Patris esse, / Hanc etiam Sancti Spiraminis esse docebant.” The poet was referring to Armenian soldiers in the Byzantine army, among whom were Paulicians, a group he regarded as heretical. For elaboration, see Mathieu, *Commentaire* to *Gesta*, 271.

\(^{558}\) William of Apulia in fact reported the Turks as present at Alexius I Comnenus’s capture of Constantinople, the battle of Durazzo, and the siege of Larissa, William of Apulia, *Gesta*, IV.150–153, 331–332; V.70.
imperial army) was present there as well. During the Byzantine campaign in Sicily, the empire hired Lombards and Normans, who ultimately did most of the fighting. This policy, of course, always failed the Greeks. They alienated their Norman and Italian troops by denying them the spoils of war; the Varangians and Turks were killed or fled from combat; the Venetians went so far as to betray the emperor, handing over Durazzo to Robert Guiscard. The message, although not overtly stated by any chronicler, was that the Byzantines required others to fight for them since they themselves were incapable warriors. Such a stratagem would never succeed, because gold could not buy courage.

Cruelty was typically attributed to the Greeks as well. For example, William described how Arduin the Lombard suffered “shameful tortures (dedecores cruciatus),” explicitly defined as Greek rituals (ritus Graecorum), after speaking out against a...

---

559 For the Venetians, see William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.277–29, and IV.437–501. Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.26 and III.28. For the Varangians, see ibid., III.27, 75 and III.29; Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, II.24 and II.26.

560 William of Apulia stated that the Byzantine expedition was made up of soldiers summoned from undique and included plebs Lambardorum Gallis admixta. William of Apulia, Gesta, I.196–205. These soldiers were inspired to desert by the avaritia of the Greeks. Ibid., I.211. Malaterra wrote that the Byzantines persuaded the prince of Salerno to support their cause in Sicily by promising rewards, and so he sent them his Norman knights. The Normans distinguished themselves in Sicily, while the Greeks arrived late to battle and seized the loot. Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, I.7. The Lombard presence was therefore downplayed in Malaterra’s version, since Arduin was the only “Italus” mentioned as taking part in the expedition. Ibid., I.8. Amatus reported that the Apulians and Calabrians were induced to take part in the Sicilian campaign by the deniers de li Impereor. Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, II.8, 66. The prince of Salerno sent three hundred Normans to Sicily, who outshined “la moltitude de li Grex.” Ibid., II.8,67. Later, at Melfi, Amatus wrote that the Normans killed the Varangians, Apulians, Calabrians, and “tuit cil qui pour et pour argent estoient venut à lo peril de la bataille.” Ibid., II.26, 90.

561 For quarrels over the division of loot between Normans, Lombards, and Byzantines in Sicily, see Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, II.14, 17; Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, I.8, 12; William of Apulia, Gesta, I. 213–218. For the retreats and defeats of the Varangians, see Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, II.26, 90; Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.27, 75 and III.29. For the retreat of the Turks just before the battle of Durazzo and then later at the siege of Larissa, see William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.337–338 and V.70. On the betrayal of the Venetian garrison at Durazzo, see Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.28; William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.494–501.
Byzantine commander’s unfair division of the spoils of war. Likewise, Amatus reported that Arduin was stripped and beaten “according to the wicked custom of the Greeks (secont la pessime costumance de li Grex)” because he refused to give up a horse he had captured in battle. In some other examples of Byzantine injustice from Amatus, an innocent man was drowned at the command of the emperor and complaints were made about “la grevance” suffered from Greek lordship and “l’injure” that the Greeks did to Lombard women. Malaterra too recorded that the Byzantines had Arduin shamefully beaten for questioning the Greeks’ division of the loot in Sicily, and added that, although the commander had promised his Norman and Lombard soldiers rewards for their valiant efforts, he never intended to repay them, and in fact mocked them (subsannare) when around his own men.

For the poet, however, all this was merely a prelude to the great wave of atrocities carried out under General George Maniakes, the catapan of Italy. William introduced him as a man “full of iniquity (nequitia plenus),” “arrogant-minded (mente superbus),” and “overflowing with awful savagery (dira feritate redundans).” Maniakes was a “tyrant (tirannus),” who killed many people—hanging some, beheading others, and even

---


563 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.14, 17. “Et, secont la pessime costumance de li Grex, fu batut tout nu, et li cheval fu levé. Et ensi ot vergoingne en son cors, pur ce qu’il non voloit donner lo cheval de sa volonte.”

564 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.26.

565 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, II.16.

566 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, I.8, 12.

567 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, I.8, 12.

568 After successful campaigning in Sicily and southern Italy, George Maniakes was eventually deprived of his post by Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus. He allowed his soldiers to proclaim him emperor, then crossed over to Durazzo and waged war against the empire. He was ultimately killed in battle in 1043. For historical commentary on Maniakes, see Ostrogorski, History of the Byzantine State, 332–333.

burying children alive. With “his mind raging (furibunda mente),” he at one point killed two hundred farmers in a single day; neither old nor young, monk nor priest, was spared by this “iniquus.” Carried away by his “anger and rage (odiis et ira)” Maniakes later became a “traitor (perfidus),” rising up against the emperor. He captured an imperial ambassador who came bearing gifts, tortured him, then had this wretched victim killed by filling his mouth with horse manure (another sensory metaphor from William). Full of “great fury (furor gravus)” at his base in Taranto, he sent his troops on savage foraging expeditions to pillage the surrounding area. Maniakes eventually crossed the sea to claim the imperial throne, but not before burning “certain witches” whom he believed were stirring up the waves. His endeavors came to naught, however, and the poet wrote that, having been killed in battle in Greece, the “scelerus” paid for his crimes. William of Apulia’s repeated use of words that connote not only anger, but a particularly animalistic kind of madness, greatly underscored the brutality of Byzantine rule.

All of these sentiments about the tyrannical “Byzantine yoke” were meant to help legitimize the Norman takeover by stressing the horrible oppression of their predecessors.

571 William of Apulia, *Gesta*, I.457–460. Mathieu suggested that the phrase furibunda mente was a play on words based on the name surname Maniakes. Mathieu, *Commentaire to Gesta*, 274.
577 Thus it seems quite inappropriate to speak of “William’s Byzantine sympathies,” as Emily Albu has, or to argue that “William of Apulia has absorbed the Byzantine spirit of late eleventh-century Apulia, where the empire had lately been investing considerable attention.” Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*, 135. The poet was obviously well aware of imperial involvement in southern Italy, but his “Byzantine spirit,” from these depictions, appears rather lacking.
Whether the Byzantines truly abused their subjects in Italy to such an extent as the chroniclers suggested is perhaps less significant than the fact that they chose to depict them this way. To a degree, however, the recurring condemnation of Greek governors and Greek justice might stem from an actual administrative difference between areas under an efficient imperial military occupation and those zones outside Constantinople’s control. If there is any shred of truth to what the chroniclers reported, it was perhaps not so much that the Byzantines were more cruel than their rivals in southern Italy, but that they were more capable of meting out justice. It is therefore little wonder that one of their most successful commanders, George Maniakes, was so thoroughly demonized.

The Greeks were no kinder to their own people, and further cruelty in Constantinople itself ultimately provided Robert Guiscard with the pretext for his invasion of the Byzantine Empire. Having arranged his daughter’s marriage into the imperial family, the duke’s intended son-in-law, Constantine Ducas, was, according to Malaterra, “disgracefully castrated (turpiter eunuchizatus)” by usurpers. Robert’s own daughter was meanwhile placed under guard in the capital. The fact that Constantine was not only ousted, but literally emasculated, was probably intended to elicit particular

---

578 In this regard, see G. A. Loud’s observations in The New Cambridge Medieval History. Although his comments concern an earlier period, they may prove just as valid for the mid-eleventh century. Loud, “Southern Italy in the Tenth Century,” in The New Cambridge Medieval History, vol. 3, 634. “While the Latin chroniclers tend to ascribe instances of disaffection in the Byzantine provinces to the demands or the cruelty of particular governors, one might well conclude that it was rather the reaction of the populace to a governmental system which was far more efficient, and thus by definition more oppressive, than that in the Lombard principalities.”

579 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.13, 64. Constantine Ducas, son of Michael VII Ducas and Maria of Alania, was born ca. 1074 and betrothed to Robert Guiscard’s daughter, Helena. He died some time in the 1090s. John H. Rosser, Historical Dictionary of Byzantium (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 125.

580 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.13, 64.
shock from the author’s Norman audience, who, prizing virility, would have seen eunuchs as truly alien, and would have considered castration a fate worse than death.\textsuperscript{581} Meanwhile, Constantine’s father, Emperor Michael VII Ducas (1071–78), had been deposed and “violently (\textit{violenter})” forced to become a monk through the betrayal of his own followers (\textit{fraude suorum}).\textsuperscript{582} William of Apulia implied that he got what he deserved, though, since his “awful will (\textit{dira voluntas})” had undeservedly “raged” against his predecessor, the “innocent (\textit{insons})” Emperor Romanus.\textsuperscript{583} Reveling in the details of intrigue in Constantinople, both Malaterra and William thereby emphasized the brutal ratiocination that took place in the imperial capital, a place where sedition was always present.

Regardless of what Michael had done to merit his overthrow, however, the poet acknowledged the coup as a grave affront, or \textit{gravis iniuria}, to Robert Guiscard.\textsuperscript{584} So when a charlatan claiming to be the deposed emperor arrived in southern Italy, the duke championed his cause, knowing all along that the man was a fraud.\textsuperscript{585} William of Apulia called this pseudo-Michael a \textit{quidam seductor} who “lied about himself (\textit{mentitus se}),” and Malaterra noted that this \textit{Graecus} looked nothing like the former emperor.\textsuperscript{586} The empire, in the eyes of both chroniclers, appears to have been a place of continual, bloody

\textsuperscript{581} Berto has observed that the use of the adverb \textit{turpiter} was “probably influenced by the horror that this punishment provoked among the Normans for whom war and virility had a fundamental importance.” Berto, “‘Non audaces sed fugaces,’” 20.
\textsuperscript{582} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.13, 64. Michael VII Ducas was son of Constantine X and Eudokia Makrembolitissa. He took power after the battle of Manzikert. Rosser, \textit{Historical Dictionary of Byzantium}, 273.
\textsuperscript{584} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, IV.75–77.
\textsuperscript{585} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, IV.73–77.
intrigue, and a font of lies and deception, where people were rarely what they seemed.587 The fact that Robert Guiscard beat the Byzantines at their own game, choosing to make use of an imperial impostor to his own advantage, was thus a fitting testament to his cleverness.588

Treachery was readily apparent in other episodes concerning the Byzantines too. Amatus wrote that the Greeks had a habit of always combating their enemies “par maliciouz argument et o subtil tradement.”589 He noted that the “Greux” bribed the Turks to betray and capture their partner, the Norman mercenary Roussel de Bailleul, and later suggested that a Greek official had caused a revolt among Norman lords in Apulia by paying them a large sum of gold.590 William of Apulia described Emperor Nicephorus Botaneiates (1078–1081), perhaps the archetypal Byzantine, as “inept in war, yet wise, with an ingenious mind; on guard against secret dangers, unwarlike, and considered fearful rather than to be feared (ignavus bello, tamen ingeniosa / Mente sagax; contra furtiva pericula cautus, / Imbellis, metuens plus quam metuendus habetur).”591 His successor, Alexius I Comnenus, overcame his enemies at least partly through cunning (ars).592 For William, the Greeks employed crafty promises (callida promissio), and were like snakes that hid beneath the earth, unable to defeat the Normans “through either

587 Commentary on the violent competition for the imperial throne was not confined to Malaterra and William. In a similar way, Amatus reported that a Byzantine commander was “crudelement taillié” in Constantinople. Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.15.
588 Unlike Geoffrey Malaterra, however, William of Apulia went on to reveal that the impostor failed to impress the inhabitants of Durazzo, who mocked the charlatan from their walls. William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.265–271. This episode was almost certainly intended to indicate the insolence of the Greeks rather than highlight the naïveté of Robert Guiscard, whom both William and Malaterra assured their readers was well aware that the pseudo-Michael was a fraud. Emily Albu’s observations that the writers were trying to reveal the duke’s “blunders” or were trying to stress that this was “a humiliating moment” for him are therefore without justification. C.f. Albu, The Normans in their Histories, 130–136.
589 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.15.
590 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, I.15 and V.4.
592 William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.120–121.
treachery or arms (vel fraude, vel armis). For Malaterra, however, treachery among the Greeks, whom he labeled “always most perfidious,” was most apparent among the Greek inhabitants of Sicily.

The “Greeks” of Sicily

After the completion of the Muslim conquest of Sicily in the tenth century, a minority Greek-speaking Christian population remained on the island. Amatus of Montecassino referred to this group only as Christien, never Greeks, and for him they were victims of the Muslims par excellence. It was on their behalf, or so he wrote, that Robert Guiscard and his brother were moved to wage their war in Sicily. The Saracens were killing these Christians and forcing them into servitude, which was an insult to God. In reality, the island’s non-Muslim natives led a tenuous existence, which was, if anything, made all the more precarious by the arrival of the Normans.

Indeed, Malaterra described a rapid decline in relations between the Sicilian Greeks and the Normans. The initial encounters between the two groups were happy ones, though—the author mentioned the Greeks meeting their co-religionists joyfully, utilizing the phrases “maxima laetitia occurrentes” and “gavisi occurrerunt” and reporting

---
593 Callida Graecorum promissio was used by the poet in William of Apulia, Gesta, II.61 to refer to the emperor’s promise to pay the Normans to leave Italy and come fight the Turks, an offer they rejected. The snake metaphor was employed in ibid., I.547–549. In ibid., II.269, the poet wrote that both arms and trickery had failed the Greeks.
594 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.29, 40. “Graeci vero, semper genus perfidissimum.”
595 For background on the Greek-speaking inhabitants of Sicily, who were confined mainly to the Val Démone of the northeastern part of the island, see André Guillou, “Inchiesta sulla popolazione greca della Sicilia e della Calabria nel Medio Evo,” in Studies on Byzantine Italy, ed. André Guillou (London: Variorum, 1970), 53–68.
596 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, V.7; ibid., V.12. These comments are discussed more thoroughly in chapter two.
that Count Roger was “cum gaudio susceptus.” Yet behind these festive scenes were 
signs of a gathering storm: the Greek Christians refused absolutely to join forces with the 
Normans and instead offered an excuse (*excusatio*), claiming that they did not serve the 
Saracens because they liked them (*causa amoris*), but to protect themselves (*ut seipsos 
tuerentur*). For that reason, they would not act disloyally against their Muslim 
masters. As with the Byzantines, therefore, courage was not an aspect of the identity of 
Sicily’s Greek inhabitants.

Excuses aside, Malaterra eventually revealed that the Christian Sicilians were 
willing to go so far as to enter into an alliance with the Saracens against the Normans. 
The first real indication that trouble was brewing surfaced when the author noted that, on 
a later visit to the town of Troina, a Christian stronghold in Sicily, Count Roger was 
received “with not as much eagerness as previously (*non cum tanta, ut prius, tamen 
 alacritate suscipitur*)”. This time, Roger left behind a garrison after his departure, and 
the *Graeci* became “offended only by this: that the count’s knights were hosted in their 
homes” and they, as a result, began to fear for their wives and daughters. They then 
decided to drive the soldiers from the city, either through expulsion or murder 
(*expellendo vel certe occidendo*). Now it was the Muslims’ turn to be “pleased 
(*gavisi*),” as they brought several thousand troops to help the Greeks in their struggle
against “our forces (nostri).” Malaterra indicated it was only the coldness of the winter (which induced the Greeks to drink wine and lower their guard) that enabled the Normans to overcome them in the night. With the Greek rebels killed or captured, the Saracens (here identified only as adventicii, or outsiders) took flight.

The most fascinating aspect of Malaterra’s narration is that, as the Christian Sicilians turned against the Normans, they changed from being Christiani to Graeci. Before the uprising at Troina, they appeared almost indistinguishable from Roger’s forces, as both were identified solely as Christiani. Only later, when they met the count less eagerly than before, were they Christiani Graeci—the first time that Malaterra gave any indication that these were not Latin Christians. Finally, when peaceful coexistence failed and fighting began, they had become simply Graeci. In that way, the author seems to have been implying that such a trick (dolus) was not the behavior of Christians, but of Greeks, whom he identified as “genus semper perfidissimum.” Welcoming friends were Christiani, traitors were Graeci.

It is equally significant that Malaterra did not explicitly fault the Graeci for joining forces with the Saracens. While he commented on the treachery of their uprising as “most perfidious,” he found nothing to say about the fact that they had cooperated with the Muslims. The reason for this is obvious: Malaterra was well aware of his patron’s own alliances with non-Christians, and would not have viewed such practical

---

603 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.29, 40. “Sarraceni denique, de vicinis castris quinque millia a nebis promptiores, audientes Graecos a nostris dissentire, non minimum gavisi, auxilium laturi, se jam ad illos contulerant: quorum praevidio Graeci se perplurimum tuebantur.”
604 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.30, 41. William of Apulia noted a Byzantine army becoming sluggish from excess wine as well. William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.115
605 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.30, 41.
606 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.29, 39.
607 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.29, 40.
608 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, II.29, 40.
relationships as in any way illicit. Indeed, he could not, since to find fault with the Greek rebels for cooperating with the Saracens was to find fault, by extension, with Count Roger for doing exactly the same. The real issue for Malaterra appears then to have been that Sicily’s native Christians had, through their rebellious behavior, proven their perfidia (a word he never applied to Muslims).  

Turning to the late twelfth century, one finds that Hugo Falcandus attributed perfidy to the Greeks of Sicily as well. Specifically, he wrote that the fidelity (fides) of the people of Messina, which boasted one of the largest Greek-speaking populations on the island, wavered (vacillare) with Greca perfidia and levitate piratica. The Franks called the Greeks proditors, and, while the latter claimed to be fidelissimi semper, their repeated uprisings proved otherwise. According to Falcandus, the Greeks looked at the Franks as predones alienigenas, foreign robbers, because of the taxes they imposed, and they criticized their own temeritas and ignavia for allowing the wealth of the kingdom to be shipped to Francia. They came to resent these exactions, and falsae rumores

---

609 Nor was this the only uprising among the Greeks of Sicily that Malaterra described. He wrote that the citizens of Geraci rose up “because every type of our people was hated by them (quia omne genus nostrae gentis illis invisum erat).” When Roger brought his army to Geraci, they lost faith in their “foolish behavior (stultum propositum)” and the count was reconciled to these Graeci. Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, III.31. This is not to be confused with Gerace, a city in Calabria that also rebelled, for which see chapter three.

610 André Guillou noted an active Greek presence in the area around Messina into the twelfth century. Guillou, “Inchiesta sulla popolazione greca,” 56. “La regione di Messina e quella che é compresa fra Rometta e il mare, ospitavano nell’ XI e XII secolo una popolazione greca attiva, che manteneva costanti rapporti con i correligionari della Calabria.” See also Houben, Roger II of Sicily: A Ruler between East and West, 13. “It was only in the northeast, the Val Demone, including Messina, that Christian—Greek orthodox—communities had been preserved.”

611 Falcandus, Liber, c. 53, 132. “Verum exitus rei fidem eorum ostendit tam greca perfidia quam levitate piratica vacillare.”

612 Falcandus, Liber, c. 53, 132. “Solos Messanenses, qui regi fidelissimi semper exiterint, haberi ludibirio et eorum voces in curia non audiri.” Ibid., c. 53, 133. “Nuper enim ad eum de Francia Normanniaque clientuli multi confluxerant, qui, ut eorum mos est, in contumeliosa verba precipites et curie patrocinio licentius abutentes, Grecos et Longobardos proditores appellabant, multis eos injurias lacessentes.” The people of Messina rose up (audacter prostiliunt) in ibid., c. 53, 131. They were moved ad seditionem in ibid., c. 54, 148.

613 Falcandus, Liber, c. 54, 147.
circulated that the Franks even planned to expel all the Greeks and thereby seize their property. In time, these false rumors and resentments would bring about horrific violence.

Falcandus elsewhere elaborated on the piratical nature of Greek Messina and underlined the viciousness of its inhabitants. The author called it a city (civitas) of pirates, brigands, and thieves (piratae, latrones, predones) that contained “nearly every kind of man . . . lacking no evil deed, averse to no outrage (omne fere genus hominum . . . nullius expers sceleris, nullum abhorrens flagitium).” The iniquitous inhabitants often spent entire nights playing dice, and when a group of drunken Franks rudely (improbe) interrupted one of these games, the situation quickly escalated into an open riot among the city’s Greek population. Soon the Greci were killing every transalpinus they could

614 Falcandus, Liber, c. 54, 147. “Hanc exactiones cives molestissime ferentes, ceperunt inter se primum occulte conqueri, deinde licentius ac manifestius indignari, suamque ipsorum temeritatem et ignaviam accusare qui predones alienigenas patenteru regni thesauros et de civium injuriis conquisitam pecuniam in Franciam asportare.” Ibid., c. 54, 148. “Asserentes Francis id esse animi ut, omnibus Grecis expulsis, ipsi domos eorum, vineas ceteraque predia possiderent . . . itaque tota iam civitas falsis rumoribus perstrepebat, et evidens rebellandi pretendens indicium.” The chronicler also mentioned the people of Messina as being moved by rumors in ibid., c. 53, 133.


616 Falcandus, Liber, c. 55, 147. “Sed et Odonis Quarrelli clientes, qui per urbem ebrii vagari consueverant, forte Grecos in domo quadam ludentes invenerunt, eorumque ludos improbe perturbantes, cepere multis eos verborum iniuris irritare.” Although Falcandus did not explicitly state that these “clients” were Franks, they were working for Odo Quarrel, Canon of Chartres and advisor to Chancellor Stephen of Perche. In the following two pages of this chapter, the Greeks of Messina attacked the local stratigotus and rose up, driven by rumors that the Franks planned to expel all the Greeks on the island. The kingdom of Sicily was, in the period Falcandus was describing (1166–1168), controlled by a “Frankish” contingent led by the king’s chancellor, Stephen of Perche. Stephen had only recently arrived from Francia. According to Falcandus, he and his people were disliked because of their mistreatment of Sicily’s native Greeks and southern Italians. Falcandus, Liber, c. 53, 133. For more information on these Franci in the kingdom of Sicily, see Metcalfe, Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily, 182. See also Norbert Kamp, “The Bishops of Southern Italy in the Norman and Staufen Periods,” in The Society of Norman Italy, eds. G. A. Loud and A. Metcalfe (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 198. Kamp has argued that French ecclesiastical officials were in high demand because southern Italy lacked the institutions capable of providing qualified churchmen. Cathedral
find in this rampage, which the author described as an *importunitas piratica*, or piratical venture.⁶¹⁷ One of these Frankish victims, Odo Quarrel, was torn apart limb from limb and his head was thrown in the sewer—but before this, Falcandus did not fail to note that someone stabbed the unfortunate man in the skull and licked at the blood as an expression of *inexorabilis odium*.⁶¹⁸ For Falcandus, the Greeks were rash, full of a hatred that was fueled by false rumors, cruel, and disloyal. What one finds in these characterizations are symptoms of the deep-seated fear that the “Latin” elite likely felt toward the subject Greek population.⁶¹⁹ The slightest dissent from the unruly “pirates” of Messina demanded swift justice, lest there be a bloodbath such as the one Falcandus graphically described.

William of Apulia and the Byzantines

There are almost no instances where anti-Greek sentiment is entirely absent from these sources. In fact, only one writer, the poet William of Apulia, made any positive descriptions of the *Graeci* at all. In comparison to images of the Muslims, whom the chroniclers at times discussed with ambivalence (and occasionally even admiration) the

---

⁶¹⁹ Although Greek culture flourished in the court of Roger II (king from 1130 to 1154), Sicily’s Greeks were increasingly marginalized during the reign of Roger’s successors, William I (1154–1166) and William II (1166–1189). For more on this, see Houben, “Religious Toleration in the South Italian Peninsula during the Norman and Staufen Period,” in *The Society of Norman Italy*, 319–341. Despite Houben’s observation that “the Greek Christians showed themselves prepared to accept a subordinate position” and that “the co-existence between Greek and Latin Christians did not bring problems” this does not, as demonstrated above, appear confirmed by either Malaterra or Falcandus.
overall lack of examples in which the Greeks received similar treatment is particularly striking. In William of Apulia’s case, what little praise he delivered was reserved for specific Byzantine emperors, and should not be interpreted as evidence that he had any strong Greek sympathies. Rather, William praised certain Greek characters where the exigencies of his storyline demanded it.

Consider, for instance, the poet’s treatment of Romanus IV Diogenes (1067–1071) who personally led the Byzantine army against the Seljuk Turks in eastern Anatolia. He was, for William, a “distinguished knight (eques egregius)” who carried an “honest reputation (fama probitatis).” Romanus was ultimately unsuccessful in war, but, at least initially, he held off the enemy, as “he often routed the Turks.” The victories ended at Manzikert, where the Byzantines suffered a horrendous defeat from their Seljuk foes. Yet even here, Romanus behaved nobly: he was more concerned for the men under his command than for himself, and, as many of them escaped, he fought on.

With the golden eagle on his armor shining, “he cut away at the enemy spears, not stopping to defend himself / A chance arrow wounded the arm of the unprotected man / And thus was he captured along with a certain part of his troops.” Incredibly, the Turkish leader, recognizing the emperor’s bravery, then set Romanus free.
The purpose of this episode, however, appears to have been aimed less at glorifying the Byzantines than to juxtapose Romanus against his rivals in Constantinople. Just before going into detail about the war against the Turks, William wrote that the emperor’s son-in-law, Michael VII Ducas, was meanwhile leading a lascivious existence in Constantinople, allowing the empire to crumble around him. After Manzikert, Michael lured Romanus back to Constantinople with deceit (sedecere pace dolosa), then had him blinded and deposed in a wicked act of fraus. So, by praising Romanus, William was in effect deprecating another Byzantine, making Michael VII’s rise to power all the more grotesque.

Then there is the case of Alexius I Comnenus, the chief antagonist of the Gesta, whose final defeat at the hands of Robert Guiscard marked the culminating finale of the poem. For that reason alone, William highlighted this emperor’s virtues prior to the battle of Durazzo, but then vindictively lingered over his degrading retreat back to Constantinople. For example, before fighting Robert, Alexius was “vigorous with astute prudence and strong in arms, distinguished by his courage and of noble birth (astuta ratione vigens et strenuus armis, pectore clarus erat clarisque parentibus ortus).” This bellator had come to the throne by defeating two “enemies of the empire,” who were “distinguished Greeks, powerful in matters of war and in resources (Insignes Graeci, bellis opibusque potentes).” Following this meteoric rise came the emperor’s defeat at

neque se defender cessans. / Forte sagitta volans incauti sauciat artus; / Sic tandem capitur quadam cum parte suorum.”

625 William of Apulia, Gesta, III.70–72.
626 William of Apulia, Gesta, III.1–6.
627 William of Apulia, Gesta, III.80–91.
628 William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.81–83.
629 William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.89. Alexius was described as bellator in ibid., IV.143.
Durazzo, where William revealed that Alexius was, like any other Greek, quasi femina, reduced to tears (lacrimans) over his misfortune.\textsuperscript{630}

Conclusions

It would be difficult to characterize the images compiled here as anything other than evidence of virulent hatred. In general, the chroniclers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries alike displayed greater animosity toward the Greeks than toward the Normans’ non-Christian rivals. However much contempt William of Apulia may have shown for Islam, his great antiheroes were Byzantines—no Muslim character in any way rivals the wicked General Maniakes.\textsuperscript{631} In addition, the similarities between these depictions means that they come closer to being true stereotypes than any of the representations of other groups considered here. At least in the eleventh century, effeminacy, cruelty, and lasciviousness appear to have been core aspects of the “fixed image” that Westerners held of the Byzantines. This was in spite of the fact that the Greeks occasionally triumphed in battle, which the chroniclers sometimes had to admit. Courage was evidently thought of as antithetical to “Greek identity”—as Malaterra put it, when the Byzantines behaved bravely on the battlefield it was “against their custom (contra usum).”\textsuperscript{632}

\textsuperscript{630} William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.420–424. The fact that Alexius was mentioned as both lacrimatur and lacrimans in the space of five lines would seem to have been a deliberate attempt on the poet’s part to drive home the emperor’s disgrace. Curiously, the only other time when William repeated the verb lacrimor was with the pseudo-Michael, for whom Robert Guiscard was ostensibly campaigning. It seems quite possible that the poet wanted to draw a connection between the two characters.

\textsuperscript{631} In this regard I disagree with Emily Albu, who has contended that William was thoroughly sympathetic to Byzantium. She wrote that the worst criticism came “not from the Gesta’s narrator directly but from a disgruntled Lombard (1.210–12, 223–28). The Gesta’s view of Byzantium softens as the narrative progresses.” Albu, The Normans in their Histories, 135n56. Albu, however, ignored entirely the depiction of George Maniakes, who murdered children, other obvious villains such as Michael VII Ducas and Nicephorus Botaneiates, as well as the shameful description that the poet made of Alexius I Comnenus’s defeat.

\textsuperscript{632} Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, 1.10.
Amatus of Montecassino seems to have been slightly more restrained in his deprecation of this group. This was likely in large part because his work focused mainly on the sins of the Lombards, and for him, the Byzantines were of secondary importance. He also finished writing prior to Robert Guiscard’s invasion of the empire, which took place in the mid 1180s, and, had he included scenes like Durazzo, his hostility would undoubtedly have been more pronounced. There is, however, no evidence that this author’s perception of the Graeci was less hostile because he wrote prior to the launching of the First Crusade.

Amatus could look at the Greeks of Sicily with rather sympathetic eyes since he wrote from the vantage point of the mainland. Unlike Malaterra and Falcandus, the Cassinese historian was unconcerned with the frustrating task that the rulers of Sicily faced in trying to control a Christian population that often regarded the Normans not as liberators or wise overseers, but as foreign despots. It may seem surprising that these two Sicilian writers, theoretically closest to actual Greek communities, would have been the most hostile, yet there is some evidence to support the notion that proximity does not always engender an atmosphere of toleration. Falcandus and Malaterra’s familiarity with Greek uprisings aroused only their contempt, and, for that reason, both spoke of Greek perfidy.


While the antagonism felt toward the Greeks comes across very clearly in these sources, there is no way to substantiate Toubert’s claim that these authors wanted to justify “une véritable politique d’apartheid pratiquée contre eux par les Normands.” Toubert, “La première historiographie de la conquête normande de l’Italie méridionale (XIe siècle),” 36.
Situated chronologically midway between Malaterra and Falcandus, Alexander of Telese’s utter silence on the subject of the Greeks is difficult to understand, but there are several possible explanations. He was, to begin with, a mainland author who wanted to glorify King Roger II as a Christian paragon, which likely motivated his similar reticence about the Muslim inhabitants of the kingdom. Greek culture reached its zenith at the time Alexander was writing, and he may have wanted to avoid an aspect of life in the regnum that, as a Latin monastic writer, he perhaps viewed as another unseemly element of Roger’s reign best left untouched. It is also the case that Alexander’s narrative focused almost exclusively on events in southern Italy with practically no consideration afforded to life in Sicily or affairs in the eastern Mediterranean. In addition, for the period that he was describing (1127–1136) the Byzantine Empire under the reign of John II Comnenus had relatively little importance to southern Italy.634 This deafening silence from Alexander is nevertheless quite lamentable, as his opinions about Roger II’s grecophile monarchy would have been an extremely useful point of reference. With the exception of a passing reference to one of Roger’s Greek officials, though, there is, unfortunately, virtually nothing to go on.635

Apart from such fascinating discrepancies among the authors, it is important to note that they appear to have regarded the adjective “Greek” as something of a pejorative. William of Apulia, in discussing the Turkish invasions of the Byzantine Empire, wrote of the Muslims’ victims as Christiani, not Graeci.636 His audience, evidently, could identify

---

634 Constantinople was far more concerned with affairs in the Balkans and its eastern frontiers. For more on John II Comnenus and his foreign policy in the 1120s and 1130s, see Ostrogorski, History of the Byzantine State, 376–380.

635 Alexander, Ystoria, II.8. “Georgius Maximus Ammiratus, vir quidem Regis fidissimus atque in negotiis secularibus exercitatis.”

636 William of Apulia, Gesta, III.8–11. “Fugit gens territa cristicolarum, / Qui Romaniae loca deliciosa coelbant. / Maxima pars horum ruit interfecta nefandis / Turchorum gladiis.”
with Christians, but not Greeks. In the same way, the people who at first greeted Roger I so warmly during his initial encounters with Sicily’s non-Muslims were called *Christiani*. They only became Greeks as they turned against the count. Likewise, Amatus seems to have regarded the term Greek with such pejorative force that he avoided ever characterizing the Greek Sicilians as anything other than *li Christien*. Sympathy for the Greeks was thus in short supply.
CHAPTER V

GENS, NATIO, AND POPULUS

Introduction

The purpose of this final chapter is to analyze the range of meanings behind the words *gens*, *natio*, and *populus* in the four Latin chronicles of this study. Since Amatus of Montecassino's source can only be accessed in translation, it has been excluded from this chapter. It is hoped that the pages that follow will help unravel the variety of ways in which medieval historians divided and categorized social groups. The data is meant to assist in future inquiries into that topic, and to alleviate some of the uncertainties left over from more general, speculative works.

The precise meaning of *gens* as a particular cultural group comes across most clearly in the two Sicilian writers, Geoffrey Malaterra and Hugo Falcandus. The latter in particular never treated the word as a synonym for *populus*, but rather assigned a special significance to it, and also assigned it political connotations. Moreover, he only defined five specific "peoples"—the Franks, Lombards, Saracens, Sicilians, and Apulians—as a *gens*. Overall, however, it is clear from all four chronicles that, while, these three words could possess a multiplicity of meanings, the authors as a group evinced a common acknowledgment that the word "gens" sometimes had very specific cultural connotations.
Malaterra made frequent use of the word *gens* throughout the four books of his chronicle. The majority of these instances concerned the Normans, whom the author described variously as great, shrewd, and strong (*gens astutissima, gens adulari sciens, gens tantae astutiae tantaeque strenuitatis, and gens magna*). Most often, though, Malaterra referred to them simply as “our people (*gens nostra*)”. This chronicler, while generally stressing the vivacity (*strenuitas*) and cunning (*calliditas, astutia*) of the Normans, also acknowledged their tendency toward avarice and their lust for domination. With regard to this latter proclivity, continual reference was made to the *jugum nostrae gentis*, the “yoke” in which they came to hold the three peoples of Sicily and southern Italy: the Saracens, Lombards, and Greeks. This is not the place to discuss the multifaceted image of the Normans created by Malaterra, however, and here it is enough to note that they were always a *gens*, never a *populus*.

The other groups defined in this way were the Greeks, Lombards, Saracens, Slavs, and Pisans. While most of them revealed various vices over the course of Malaterra’s
narrative, the Muslims alone displayed bravery and martial prowess that matched that of his protagonists.\textsuperscript{643} It is impossible to deny that, of the various \textit{gentes} Malaterra mentioned, the two treated most positively were the \textit{gens Sarracenorum} and \textit{gens Normannorum}. Religious differences aside, only this pair displayed courage on the battlefield.

To put it simply, \textit{gens} for Malaterra meant an extended group with discernible characteristics. Only once did he employ the expression without reference to a specific set of people. In that instance, the word was in the plural, and evidently referred to the entire set of groups who inhabited Sicily: “praesul verba sacrae legis seminat in gentibus.”\textsuperscript{644} The religious aspect of this passage, comprising one verse in a brief poem about the founding of a new church in Troina, is quite clear, and the fact that it could be interpreted to mean the medieval inhabitants of the island and simultaneously allude to the gentiles of the New Testament was certainly deliberate.\textsuperscript{645} Aside from this double meaning, the particular and unique use of \textit{gens} in this instance may have been dictated by the metrical constraints of Malaterra’s eulogy (it is one of the only points in the narrative that the author opted against prose). Regardless of his exact reasons, however, this example does not constitute an exception to the rule that \textit{gens} referred to specific peoples,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{643} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.34. “Sed plurimam multitudinem hostium exhorrentes et ob hoc a navibus progredi minime praesumentes, catena tantummodo, quae portum ab una ripa ad alteram cladebat, abscissa, hoc sibi \textit{more suae gentis} pro maximo reputantes, Pisam reversi sunt.”
  \item \textsuperscript{644} Ibid., 11.34. “Sed plurimam multitudinem hostium exhorrentes et ob hoc a navibus progredi minime praesumentes, catena tantummodo, quae portum ab una ripa ad alteram cladebat, abscissa, hoc sibi \textit{more suae gentis} pro maximo reputantes, Pisam reversi sunt.”
  \item \textsuperscript{645} Ibid., 11.34. “Sed plurimam multitudinem hostium exhorrentes et ob hoc a navibus progredi minime praesumentes, catena tantummodo, quae portum ab una ripa ad alteram cladebat, abscissa, hoc sibi \textit{more suae gentis} pro maximo reputantes, Pisam reversi sunt.”
\end{itemize}
since it alludes to the existence of multiple (but presumably unique) groups throughout
the island.

*Genus,* on the other hand, was a word that Malaterra applied with much less
exactitude. Sometimes, he inserted it into his text as a synonym for *gens.* Writing of
Roger Borsa’s failure to notice the Lombards’ intense hatred for the Normans, for
instance, the duke was referred to as “eorum genus nostrae gentis invisum minus
discernens.” The Lombards were thus occasionally a *gens* and occasionally a *genus.*
The same was true of the Greeks. It would seem that the author was simply falling back
on this alternative word for the sake of tautology. *Genus* did not always have the same
meaning as *gens,* however—it could refer to descent (as in the phrase *quamvis inferioris
generis esset*) or even types of music (*genus musicae*). In its “ethnic” sense, *genus* was
almost always applied to non-Normans (Lombards, Saracens, and Greeks), and in the
nominative, usually juxtaposed against “nostra gens” in a “them-versus-us” manner.

---

646 The term “genus” is derived from the same root as “gens” (*gen-, gigno*). Its primary meaning is
birth, descent, and origin. By extension, it denotes “an assemblage of objects (persons, animals, plants,
inanimate or abstract things) which are related or belong together in consequence of a resemblance in
natural qualities; a race, stock, class, sort, species, kind.” Lewis and Short, *A New Latin Dictionary,* 810.
Cf. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae,* IX.2. “Gens autem appellata propter generationes familiarum, id est a
gignendo, sicut natio a nascendo.”
647 It should be noted that William of Apulia did this with *genus* as well, but in only a single
instance, writing that the Greeks were a *genus ignavum.* William of Apulia, *Gesta,* I.225–226. “Femineis
Graecis cur permittatur haberi, cum genus ignavum sit.” This was, however, the only case where he applied
it to a particular people. Elsewhere it was related to noble ancestry or simply a “type” of something. Ibid.,
I.233; I.451; II.16; II.502; III.666.
648 Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii,* IV.24.
649 The phrase *quamvis inferioris generis esset* is contained in Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii,*
III.31, 76. *Genus* was used to refer to social status based on birth in the majority (twelve times out of a total
of twenty-one) of the places where it occurred. Ibid., I.4 (twice); I.30, 22; II.19; II.24; III.10, 61; III.28, 74;
III.31 (four times); IV.8. In one instance it referred to musical variety. Ibid., IV.16, 95. In the other eight
places, it was synonymous with *gens.* Ibid., I.13, 14; I.17, 18; I.28; II.29, 40; III.27, 74; III.30, 76; IV.18,
98; IV.24.
650 There was one single instance where the Normans were identified as *nostrum genus.* This was
also the only time where Malaterra applied the word to a specific group without employing the nominative
case. Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii,* IV.18, 98. Here, the Saracens were described as “nostro generi
invisos.”
Populus, which appeared in the text just eight times, had several apparent meanings for Malaterra as well. In a handful of cases, he utilized it to mean the inhabitants of a city, that is, a populace.\textsuperscript{651} Elsewhere though, its meaning intersected more closely with that of gens. For instance, a knight in Normandy came to the citadel of Tillières, which was besieged by the Franks, because he could not bear to see such a dishonor (\textit{ignominia}) “to his people (\textit{populi sui})” and wanted to cast off this domination (\textit{imperium}) “from his people (\textit{a populo suo}).”\textsuperscript{652} Similarly, a Greek envoy, after meeting with the Normans, reported back “to the leaders of his people (\textit{principibus populi sui}).”\textsuperscript{653} Whether Malaterra meant this in a military sense (as in an armed crowd) or cultural sense (akin to a gens) is not entirely obvious. The former possibility seems most likely, though, as elsewhere he came very close to using it to mean a group of soldiers: writing of the siege of Durazzo, Robert Guiscard attacked the city “with an armed band of people (\textit{armata populi manu}).”\textsuperscript{654}

Finally, natio, employed on eight occasions by Malaterra, only ever meant a form of identity based on place of origin, a sense in which Malaterra never utilized the words gens or genus.\textsuperscript{655} It was most frequently in the ablative: a Greek was said to be \textit{natione Graecus}, a Norman was \textit{natione Normannum}, a Breton was \textit{natione Brito}, and a man from Savoy was \textit{natione Allobrogum} (a rare example of classicizing language on the

\textsuperscript{651} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, II.54 (the people of Stilo); III.25 (the inhabitants of Durazzo were the \textit{Graecorum populus}); III.18, 67 (the populace of Troina was exhausted by a siege).
\textsuperscript{652} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, I.39.
\textsuperscript{653} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, I.9, 12.
\textsuperscript{654} Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, III.25, 72.
\textsuperscript{655} \textit{Natio} occurred in Malaterra, \textit{De rebus gestis Rogerii}, I.7, 10; II.42, 50; II.43, 51; II.45, 53; III.15, 66; IV.7 (twice); IV.16, 96.
author’s part). In the genitive, Malaterra mentioned that Christian captives held in Malta returned to their homes after they were freed, travelling "through the expanses of different kingdoms, as they were of a different nation (per diversa regnorum spatia, prout nationis erant)." Thus, although not mentioning any precise natio here, the word still related to birthplace. In one last example, when the Normans in Sicily faced a Muslim force under the command of a new leader, Count Roger reassured his troops not to be concerned, since that general was "eiusdem nationis, qualitatis, sed et religionis" as all the others they had faced. The term, then, was a way of distinguishing between people, and was in that regard similar to other common characteristics such as a religio. That same essential meaning for natio was maintained throughout the text.

Though William of Apulia never employed the term natio, he made frequent use of both gens and populus. The line separating the two appears to have been considerably more tenuous, however. As with Malaterra, gens sometimes carried cultural connotations and was for example applied to the Greeks and Normans. Yet it also referred routinely to the inhabitants of cities (such as Amalfi and Giovinazzo). William further utilized gens to mean a group of soldiers, something Malaterra never did. It was in this sense that Robert Guiscard was said to have garrisoned Castel Sant’Angelo in Rome

---

656 Natione Brito and natione Allobrogum can be found in Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.7. Natione Graecus appeared twice, in ibid., I.7, 10 and II.45, 53. Natione Normannum was in ibid., II.43, 51.

657 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, IV.16, 96.

658 Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii, I.42, 50.

659 Gens occurred a total of 110 times. Populus was utilized 66 times.

660 Gens was employed with reference to specific cultural groups in seventy-two instances (roughly sixty-five percent of the total). William of Apulia, Gesta, I.iii; I.4; I.23; I.26; I.31; I.41; I.54; I.168; I.281; I.286; I.314; I.321; I.363; I.378; I.406; I.415; I.423; I.423; I.532; II.44; II.62; II.67; II.79–80; II.107; II.109; II.142; II.149–150; II.153; II.163; II.176; II.109; II.189; II.245; II.261; II.261; II.261; II.323; II.340; II.405; II.427–428; II.438; II.441; III.98; III.101; III.132; III.166; III.181; III.203; III.218; III.240; III.270; III.309–310; III.321; III.466; IV.135; IV.273; IV.276; IV.281; IV.284; IV.298; IV.300; IV.322; IV.323; IV.415; IV.438; IV.444; IV.453; V.80; V.85; V.93; V.368; V.373.

661 William of Apulia, Gesta, III.482 (Amalfi); III.540 and 553 (Giovinazzo).
with a guard of faithful people (*fidae custodia gentis*).\(^{662}\) Elsewhere, the army of Alexius I was called a *gens innumerabilis*, despite the fact that the poet earlier noted that the army contained multiple *gentes* (Turks as well as Greeks).\(^{663}\) On another occasion, a Byzantine commander ordered his scouts to report back if they heard noise from “either horses or people (*ab equis vel gente*).”\(^{664}\) This was not a hard and fast distinction; even when referring to an armed force, the word still usually involved a contrast between the various peoples (Normans, Lombards, Greeks, Saracens) since, in battle scenes, the two armies were often members of different *gentes*.\(^{665}\)

For William, moreover, *populus* functioned in largely the same ways as *gens*. It could, to begin with, pertain to a group like the *populus Normannicus* or the *Teutonicus populus*.\(^{666}\) More often, however, it referred to an army, as in “the people at the siege (*populus in obsidione*)” or “the people with the fleet (*populus cum classe*).”\(^{667}\) As with Malaterra, the line between a military force and a cultural group could easily blur: *multus Persarum populus*, for instance, evidently expressed both concepts simultaneously.\(^{668}\)

*Populus* could also mean the inhabitants of a city, a region, or even the world.\(^{669}\) Yet,

---

\(^{663}\) William of Apulia, *Gesta*, IV.357.  
\(^{664}\) William of Apulia, *Gesta*, IV.104.  
\(^{665}\) For example, consider the ambiguity involved in a phrase such as “*multa Graecorum gente,*” employed at one point to characterize the force accompanying a Byzantine general. It can be interpreted to mean both a cultural group (the Greeks) and an army (i.e. “many people,” or *multa gens*). William of Apulia, *Gesta*, I.84.  
\(^{666}\) It occurred as a synonym for *gens* in ten cases (roughly fifteen percent of the total), almost always concerning the “people of Italy.” William of Apulia, *Gesta*, I.372 (*Francorum populus*); I.432 (a Lombard, addressing the Normans, spoke of *populus vester*); II.28 (*Italae populus*); II.73 (the Normans were called *iniquus populus*); II.112 (*Teutonicus populus*); II.164 (*Italae populus*); II.276 (the Normans were described as a *populus ferox*); II.475 (*Latii populus*); III.170 (*Italae populus*); V.71 (*populus normannicus*).  
\(^{667}\) The poet employed it with this meaning in nineteen instances. William of Apulia, *Gesta*, I.382; I.431; II.97; II.213; III.28; III.44; III.311; III.315; IV.60; IV.61; IV.290; IV.296; IV.526; V.7; V.37; V.210; V.294; V.344; V.355.  
\(^{668}\) This line can be found in William of Apulia, *Gesta*, III.28.  
\(^{669}\) *Populus* was utilized for the people of a city in fourteen places. William of Apulia, *Gesta*, II.479; II.568; III.262; III.416; III.477; III.551; III.579; III.583; III.598; III.603: IV.167; IV.366; IV.506. It
most of the time, *populus* for William of Apulia meant just a collection of individuals in
the most general sense. For example, a Norman leader was said not to have oppressed the
people; a fish was dragged to the shore where the people could see it; Gregory VII
summoned faithful people away from evil.\(^{670}\)

Despite the degree of interchangeability between *populus* and *gens* for the poet,
the latter seems nevertheless to have carried, in certain cases, a distinctly cultural
connotation that the former did not. This is most apparent when William mentioned the
fact that the early Norman settlers welcomed outsiders into their *gens*. As he put it,
“whoever they saw come to them, they taught their own customs and language, so that a
single people were made (Moribus et lingua, quoscumque venire videbant, / Informant
propria, gens efficiatur ut una).”\(^{671}\) Thus a common language and shared set of customs
served to define a *gens*.\(^{672}\)

By comparison, the variety of applications for *populus* found in the two eleventh-
century sources drop away in Alexander of Telese’s twelfth-century text.\(^{673}\) For the abbot
of the Holy Savior, the expression almost always designated the populace of a city. In
those cases, it was usually accompanied by the adjectives *universus*, *cunctus*, or *totius* to

---

\(^{670}\) William of Apulia, *Gesta*, II.377 (Humphrey de Hauteville never sought to oppress the people);
III.177 (Robert Guiscard dragged a fish to the shore where the people could see it); V.264 (Gregory VII
never ceased to summon the faithful away from evil and toward moral behavior).


\(^{672}\) Cf. Bartlett, “Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity,” 52. The author included
several examples of the claim that a people should possess their own laws and customs in this article. For
example, Bartlett noted that the house of Gwynedd claimed that Edward I should let the Welsh keep their
own *consuetudines*, just as the Gascons, Scots, Irish, and English did. In another case, Duke Sobieslaw II of
Bohemia afforded his German subjects their own unique legal rights.

\(^{673}\) Alexander made no use of the words *gens* or *natio*. *Populus* occurred just thirteen times.
Alexander of Telese, *Ystoria*, I.21, 19 (twice); I.26; II.34; II.67, 55; III.4, 61; III.6, 62; III.9, 64; III.12, 66;
III.14, 67; III.32, 37; IV.10, 87; IV.10, 88.
mean the whole “populace.” Yet, at the same time, it was juxtaposed against two particular social orders, the barons and clergy, which would seem to show that the *populus* was in fact “everyone else.” It could also refer to the inhabitants of a region, as in the phrase *cunctus populus terre*, which was employed to describe all those living in the land of Apulia. Most strikingly, neither *natio* nor *gens* made there way into Alexander’s history, suggesting that these words were far less meaningful in the twelfth-century kingdom of Sicily.

### Gens and Populus in the Liber de Regno Sicile

Like Alexander of Telese, Hugo Falcandus never used *populus* to refer to a specific group of people. Instead, the word most frequently appeared (twenty-six times) with reference to the populace of the kingdom in general. A few examples suffice: when the king addressed the public, he spoke “ad populum;” a rumor was said to travel “per populum;” the king was crowned with the consent of the people, or “populi communi consilio.” Often, (sixteen times) *populus* referred to the inhabitants of a specific city.

---

674 Alexander of Telese, *Ystoria*, II.67, 55; III.6, 62; III.9; III.14; IV.10, 88.
675 Alexander of Telese, *Ystoria*, II.67, 56. “Cum ergo civitatem ipsam iam sibi subditam Rex introiturus esset, a preordinata clericorum totiusque populi processione honorifice, prout decebat, suscipitur.” Ibid., III.4, 61. “Erat autem in eadem terra Laboris civitas quedam nomine Aversa, quam Normanni cum Apuliam aggrederentur primitus condiderunt; que licet duodecim magnatibus miliitisque atque immenso populo in se cohabitantibus gloriaretur, tamen potius aggere, quam murali circumcingebatur ambitu, quo contra hostes, si necesse esset, resistere possent.” Ibid., III.6, 62. “Aversani heroes simulque universus populus, quamquam certificantibus quibusdam Regem vere vivum vereque venturum audissent, in tantam tamen devoluti sunt insaniam.” Ibid., III.9. “Cui cum de navi exeunti universus civitatis populus unanimiter occurrissent, tanto et excelsa gaudio, ut pro eo Deo gratias omnes exclamarent . . . et ab Archiepiscopio ad monasterium usque Sancte Sophie, cum ymnis et laudibus clericalis ordo processit.” Ibid., III.32. “Post hec autem Rege Capuam redeunte primitus eidem electo, deinde eiusdem Regis filio, qui supradictus est, Anfuso, clerus et populus singulas processiones facientes in urbem introducerunt.” The only other place where *populus* occurred in a different context was during a dream vision in which King Roger II found himself at the town of Paduli accompanied by a *multitudo populi*. Ibid., IV.10.
Thus Falcandus wrote of Bari and the “populum eiusdem urbis;” a written message was delivered to the people of Messina, the “Messanensi populo;” the archbishop of Palermo was elected with the people rejoicing, “gaudente populo.” Less frequently (nine times), *populus* pertained to civil unrest. It was in this sense that Falcandus wrote of the fierceness of a rebelling people as “rebellis populi ferocitas;” a disturbance of the people was called “motum hunc populi;” and on another occasion a commotion of the people was a “populi tumultus.” Out of the fifty-one occasions in which Falcandus used the word *populus*, he never employed it with reference to a particular “people.” From that word count, it seems safe to conclude that, at least for this author, *populus* and *gens* were not synonymous expressions. Although the former had several overlapping meanings, Falcandus most commonly employed it to refer simply to a large group of people.

While Falcandus utilized *populus* frequently and loosely, he used *gens* less often, and with far less ambiguity. The author employed the term *gens* a total of only nine times in his entire narrative. In seven instances, he used the word with reference to a specific group, such as the Lombards or the Franks. In the other two cases, *gens* referred more broadly to the people living outside of the kingdom of Sicily. The word first appeared in

---

681 Falcandus, *Liber*, c.55, 146.
682 Falcandus, *Liber*, c. 36.
684 Falcandus, *Liber*, c.21, 71.
686 Only once did he come close to doing so. Writing about the death of Robert of Calatabiano, an unpopular castellan, Falcandus explained that the event pleased all the peoples of Sicily, and especially the Lombards, who had suffered greatly at his hands: “hoc factum omnibus Sicilie populis maximeque Lombardis, quos innumeris ille malis attriverat, adeo placuit.” Falcandus, *Liber*, c.42, 118. Although *Lombardis* and *populis* were used within a breath of one another, there was no indication that the Lombards were actually considered a *populus*. Instead, the chronicler reserved that word for the inhabitants of the island generally, and, elsewhere, he made it clear that the *Lombardi* constitute a particular *gens*. 

164
the prologue, in which Falcandus described the virtues of King Roger II.\textsuperscript{687} Here, he stated that the sovereign had endeavored to learn about and adopt the customs of other \textit{reges} and \textit{gentes} that appeared especially fine or useful to him: "aliorum quoque regum ac gentium consuetudines diligentissime fecit inquiri, ut quod in eis pulcherrimum aut utile videbatur sibi transumeret."\textsuperscript{688} The passage raises tantalizing questions about the relationship between ethnic and political communities—were a \textit{gens} and \textit{rex} interdependent in the eyes of Falcandus?\textsuperscript{689}

To try to address that question, it is helpful to consider how Falcandus linked \textit{rex} with \textit{gens} grammatically in this passage. They were placed next to each other, and the key word, \textit{ac}, is an emphatic conjunction that typically possesses some strong copulative force.\textsuperscript{690} Unlike \textit{et}, which signifies an external relationship, \textit{ac} designates a close internal connection between the two words.\textsuperscript{691} It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that, at least in the mind of this writer, a \textit{rex} and \textit{gens} necessarily went hand in hand.\textsuperscript{692}

The alternative reading, however, would interpret the two concepts as having been distinct enough that the author felt compelled to identify both. Perhaps Falcandus

\textsuperscript{687} Siragusa noted that Falcandus appears to have been more sympathetic to Roger II than to his son, William I. As Siragusa put it, Falcandus praises Roger's achievements and justifies his excesses. Siragusa, introduction to \textit{Liber}, xvii.

\textsuperscript{688} Falcandus, preface to \textit{Liber}, 6.

\textsuperscript{689} According to Susan Reynolds, the "ideal type" of community in the central Middle Ages was the kingdom, composed of a king and his people. While endeavoring to avoid teleological presumptions about medieval nations, Reynolds has argued that a close connection existed between political and cultural identity. She suggested that, in the medieval mind, a \textit{gens} was comprised of a people who shared in a single law under the authority of a king. In Reynolds's view, though, a king who oversaw multiple peoples was a rare exception to the rule, as in the case of King Stephen of Hungary. Susan Reynolds, \textit{Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900–1300} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 250. This point has been reiterated in Reynolds, "Government and Community," in \textit{The New Cambridge Medieval History}, vol. 4, ed. David Luscombe and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 86–112. Here, she again contended that \textit{gentes} were primarily political units, not communities bound by common culture.

\textsuperscript{690} Lewis and Short, \textit{A New Latin Dictionary}, 189.

\textsuperscript{691} Lewis and Short, \textit{A New Latin Dictionary}, 189.

\textsuperscript{692} Such an interpretation would therefore seem to lend support to the political definition that Susan Reynolds ascribed to \textit{gentes}. Reynolds, \textit{Kingdoms and Communities}, 250.
simply chose *ac* as a kind of *variatio sermonis; et* does appear four times in the five preceding lines, and he might have just thought it was time for a change. This argument becomes less appealing and more problematic, though, when other instances of *ac* are taken into consideration. Broadly speaking, Falcandus utilized the conjunction to link ideas that were either complementary (*breviter ac succinte, labores ac pericula, timoris ac suspicionis, locum ac tempus, libere ac secure, preclaris ac nobilibus, comites ac potentes, regis ac regine, tubis ac tympanis, primam ac secundam*) or antonymous (*pacis ac belli, matronarum ac virginum, longobardos ac transmontanos, episcopique ac milites, viri ac mulieres*). This is certainly not indiscriminate usage, since these examples show *ac* indicating a degree of interdependency. A people and a king defined one another, just as notions of peace and war, man and woman, or matron and maiden defined one another.

If Falcandus saw a *gens* and *rex* as interdependent categories, this does not mean that he considered a single kingdom to be composed of a single people. On the contrary, in this text, the king of Sicily oversaw (and frequently subdued) multiple *gentes*. In this

---

693 Falcandus, preface to *Liber*, 4, 6; *Liber*, c. 1, 11; c. 4, 16; c. 6, 20; c. 9, 23; c. 11, 29; c. 26, 102; c. 55, 158; c. 55, 156.
694 Falcandus, preface to *Liber*, 6, 8; *Liber*, c. 9, 24; c. 34, 109; c. 55, 164.
695 Susan Reynolds has suggested, however, that the kingdom of Sicily was thought to be made up of a single people at least by the late twelfth century. She argued that a strong sense of community had emerged in the *regnum* by 1189, that is to say, around the time Falcandus was writing. In spite of the differences in languages and religions, Reynolds wrote, the population came to be seen “as constituting a single people—the people of a kingdom.” Yet the evidence contained in the *Liber de regno Sicilie* simply does not appear to support this observation. Reynolds, “Government and Community,” 109.

Contrary to Susan Reynolds, Robert Bartlett has stated that, although politics and culture could overlap, medieval writers never explicitly linked the idea of political sovereignty with the idea of cultural homogeneity. A medieval writer might embrace the notion of a king ruling over a single people if it were expedient to do so, but, then again, he might not. In Bartlett’s words, “there was not a strong or predominant line of thought that a *gens* or a *natio* with its own law and language had to be a sovereign political entity . . . There was no requirement that political boundaries coincide with linguistic or legal ones, simply a recognition that each ethnic entity had the right to its own language and law.” According to him, although a *gens* was recognized to possess its own *consuetudines* (along with its own *lex* and *lingua*), this by no means meant that it had to exist as a distinct political entity. In other words, distinct groups could
author’s view, as for Geoffrey Malaterra and William of Apulia, a *gens* possessed certain attributes. For Falcandus, *gentes* had different *consuetudines* that evidently set them apart from one another. As the direct object in the sentence quoted above (*regum ac gentium consuetudines*), *consuetudines* anchors the two genitives, *regum* and *gentium*, and further ties them together. It is curious that Falcandus chose this word over possible alternatives, such as *leges* or *mores*, but his reasons for doing so need not be dwelt upon here. The term *consuetudo* could carry both juridical and cultural meanings, which, as one might expect, varied greatly depending on context. Particularly in Frankish sources, a *consuetudo* often appeared with reference to seigniorial privileges and duties. In other cases it was synonymous with *mores*, which seems to be how Falcandus employed it. Indeed, throughout the *Liber de Regno Sicilie*, the cultural connotation of *consuetudo* was readily apparent: two men were said to swear an oath “*iuxta consuetudinem siculorum*”; there was reference to the customs of the land, “*terre ipsius consuetudinem*”; a Frank claimed his rights according to “*terre sue consuetudinem*”;
elsewhere there was mention of "Gallie consuetudinem." The author, in short, seems to have seen *consuetudines* as a defining feature of *gentes*.

*Gens* occurred without reference to a specific group in only one other instance, again encountered in the opening preface of the *Liber*. Falcandus explained that, at the time of William I’s coronation, the kingdom was so powerful that it terrified neighboring peoples, and it was thereby able to enjoy a state of peace and tranquility: "eo tempore regnum Sicilie strenuis et preclaris viris habundans, cum terra marique plurimum posset, vicinis circum quaque gentibus terrorem incusserat summaque pace ac tranquillitate maxima fruebatur."703 Just like before, the author showed a relationship between kings and peoples. Yet unlike the earlier passage, here it was the *regnum*, not the *rex*, confronting the *gentes*. It is surprising to find the abstract *regnum* as the subject of several active verbs: *posset, incusserat, fruebatur*. This is, perhaps, because at this point in the story the new king had just attained the crown and had not yet had a chance to act, or possibly because Falcandus wanted to reduce the agency of King William, whose reign he deplored. Nevertheless, why would the author have chosen *regnum Sicilie* instead of *gens Siculorum* to perform these actions? Most likely, he saw the *regnum* as a more all-encompassing expression than *gens*, since the kingdom was an entity made up of multiple *gentes*.

The first of these, the *gens Francorum*, appeared early on, in the prologue to the text. Falcandus reported that King Roger II had favored men of Frankish origin, both because he knew of their warlike reputation, and because of his own Norman descent: “Since he drew his own origin from the Normans, and knew that the Frankish people

---

703 Falcandus, preface to *Liber*, 7.
excelled against all others in the glory of war, he had readily chosen to esteem and honor very many men from across the Alps in particular (Transalpinos maxime, cum ab Normannis originem duceret sciretque Francorum gentem belli gloria ceteris omnibus anteferi, plurimum diligendos elegerat et propensius honorandos). The passage is also interesting in that it suggests a lingering connection between the kingdom of Sicily and the people of Francia, the so-called transalpini. The phrasing would seem to further indicate that Falcandus viewed the difference between Normanni and Franci to be slight, if not altogether nonexistent.

Elsewhere, Falcandus utilized gens in a negative context to describe the Apulians. He stated that, when King William I went into seclusion in the year 1156, a rumor broke out that the monarch had died, which led to open rebellion on the mainland. The Apulians took up arms in the hopes of gaining freedom: “Then the most inconstant people of the Apulians, in vain desiring liberty, which they would not have been capable of retaining because they could not succeed in war or be tranquil in peace, took up arms, formed alliances, and prepared the defense of fortresses (tunc Apulorum inconstantissima

---

704 Falcandus, preface to Liber, 6.
705 Metcalfe, Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily, 182. Metcalfe noted that the Sicilian court was dominated by a Frankish contingent during the years 1166 to 1168. See also Norbert Kamp, “The Bishops of Southern Italy in the Norman and Staufen Periods,” 198. Kamp has argued that French ecclesiastical officials were in high demand because southern Italy lacked the institutions capable of providing qualified churchmen. Cathedral schools north of the Alps furnished the Sicilian kingdom with individuals like William and Peter of Blois and Richard Palmer. See also Martin, La Pouille du VIe au XIIe Siècle, 525–529.
707 Other sources from the period indicate that William may have been ill at this time. Siragusa, Liber, 13n.
The Apulians, defined as \textit{inconstantissima gens}, desired a liberty that they were incapable of possessing. Inherently unreliable, they did not even wait for certainty of the king’s death before initiating a revolt, but were instead easily moved to sedition by simple hearsay. In addition to their “great inconstancy,” the image presented was that of a people who are both weak in times of war and dissentious in times of peace. Unfit for autonomy, this was a group that needed a foreign king.\footnote{\textsuperscript{709}}

Curiously, a later copyist evidently felt enough attachment to the Apulians to substantially revise the passage. In two of four manuscripts, \textit{inconstantissima} became \textit{constantissima}, \textit{frustria} became \textit{non frustria}, and \textit{nee adeptam} became \textit{in adeptam}.\footnote{\textsuperscript{710}} The alteration reads as follows: “tunc Apulorum constantissima gens, libertatem adipisci non frustra desiderans, quam in adepta quidem retinere sufficeret, ut que et bello multum valeat et in pace possit esse tranquilla, capescit arma, societates contrahit, castellis muniendis operam dat.”\footnote{\textsuperscript{711}} It would appear that, in one fell swoop, some anonymous hand attempted to take the sting from Falcandus’s invective.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{708} Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 3, 14.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{709} The rebellion, which did in fact happen, lasted from 1155 to 1156 and involved well-established mainland nobility as well as inhabitants of major cities like Brindisi. François Neveux, “1100–1194: le Royaume normand,” 30–31. This uprising was in fact part of a larger Mediterranean conflict that witnessed the involvement of the papacy, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Byzantine Empire. Peace was made between Pope Adrian IV and King William I in 1156. A thirty year peace was made with the Byzantine Empire in 1158.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{710} See Siragusa, introduction to \textit{Liber}, xxxi–xxxvii. These differences occur in Paris, B. N. MS. Lat. 6262 and Paris, B. N. MS. Lat. 14357. Without getting into particulars, suffice to say that Siragusa convincingly demonstrated that the latter codex was derived from the former. He dated both of these to the fourteenth century, but thought it possible that MS. 6262 could date to the end of the thirteenth century. Thus, it does seem that the pro-Apulian alterations were the work of a single individual. Later, the adulterations were faithfully, and probably unwittingly, copied from MS. 6262 into MS. 14357.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{711} Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 3, 14.}
Strong attachment to the land and people of Apulia must have compelled a later copyist to make these changes. Presumably, the revisionist was himself from the region, or had personal connections to someone who was. Loyalty to the gens, whether cultural or geographic, apparently meant something to the scribe who did this. When exactly the revisions were made will never be known. The discrepancies can be found in the second-oldest extant manuscript, which dates to around the year 1300, so the changes must have been made fairly early in the life of this text. What does not appear to be in doubt, though, is that the hostile account should be taken as Falcandus’s true original version. While it is tempting to suggest that the pro-Apulian version might belong to the original text, and that the anti-Apulian sentiments are the products of a later hand, the author’s antipathy for this group surfaced elsewhere in the narrative.

Although more outwardly loyal, the Apulians’ neighbors in Sicily emerged in an only slightly better light. Falcandus used the relative tranquility in Sicily as a chance to make an unflattering comparison between the gens Siculorum and the gens Apulorum. The Sicilians remained at peace not out of loyalty, he said, but because they were more cautious: “Meanwhile, as Apulia was in turmoil in this way, Sicily was still at peace, and not disturbed by any riots; for though both peoples (gens) are faithless, shifty, and inclined to carry out any deed, the Sicilians, however, are more cautious. By

---

712 As mentioned above, Paris, B. N. MS. Lat. 6262 dates probably from around the year 1300. The only earlier manuscript, V. Cod. Vat. Lat. 10690, was unavailable to the editor of the most recent critical edition. According to Evelyn Jamison, these discrepancies are not present in Cod. 10690. See Jamison, Admiral Eugenius, 219.

713 Specifically, Falcandus later described a second uprising that reinforces the image of the Apulians as a treacherous gens. This new revolt occurred amidst reports that the chancellor, Maio of Bari, was plotting the king’s overthrow. The reader learns how sedition first began with the people of Melfi, who were habitually roused by such hearsay. Falcandus, Liber, c.11, 29. Given that Melfi was one of the principal towns of Apulia, and that its inhabitants are said to be easily influenced by rumors, these would seem to be the same Apulians discussed previously. After the Melfenses took the first step of rejecting both Maio’s orders and his representatives, a group of nobles went further and formed a societas dedicated to the chancellor’s death.
dissimulation they conceal their intent and pacify those they hate with cringing flattery in
order to attack unexpectedly and more terribly (interim, dum in hunc modum Apulia
turbaretur, adhuc Sicilia quiescebat, nec ullis agitabatur tumultibus; licet enim utraque
gens infida, mobilis pronaque sit ad quodlibet facinus perpetrandum, Siculi tamen
cautius dissimulando celant propositum et quos oderunt blandis adulationibus demulcent,
ut improvisi ledant atrocius)."\textsuperscript{114} Both groups were identified as a fickle, faithless people,
a \textit{gens infida mobilis}, inclined to carry out any \textit{facinus}, or villainous deed. The difference
between the two \textit{gentes} was only that Sicilians concealed their intentions through \textit{blandis adulationibus}—cringing flattery.\textsuperscript{115} The deception, wrote Falcandus, allowed them to
attack unexpectedly, and all the more terribly. The verb \textit{laedo}, which can mean not only
to harm or to injure, but also to betray or to violate, completed this contemptuous portrait
of the Sicilian people perfectly.\textsuperscript{716}

Along with the Franks, the Apulians, and the Sicilians, the only other groups
Falcandus defined as a \textit{gens} were the Saracens (\textit{Sarraceni}) and northern Italian Lombards
(\textit{Lombardi}). After 1160, life in Sicily was increasingly characterized by the turmoil that
had been previously confined to the mainland.\textsuperscript{717} In the middle of the decade, the leader
of the Lombard community ordered his followers to massacre the Muslim inhabitants on
the eastern side of the island.\textsuperscript{718} As Falcandus recorded it, the \textit{Lombardi} made sudden
attacks on nearby places, killing those Muslims living alongside Christians as well as

\textsuperscript{114} Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 12, 30.
\textsuperscript{115} Lewis and Short, \textit{A New Latin Dictionary}, 46. \textit{Adulatio} is most often associated with canine
obedience. The quote provided by Lewis and Short is that of Nonius: "adulatio est blandimentum proprie
canum, quod et ad homines tractum consuetudine est." Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{716} Lewis and Short, \textit{A New Latin Dictionary}, 1029.
\textsuperscript{717} Metcalfe, \textit{The Muslims of Medieval Italy}, 189.
\textsuperscript{718} David Abulafia, \textit{Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992),
43.
those living on their own estates, without regard for the age or gender of their victims.\textsuperscript{719} Unable to count the number of that people who died, Falcandus reported that the survivors fled either in secret or by taking on the appearance of Christians.\textsuperscript{720} According to him, the Saracen dread for the Lombard people remained so strong that, not only did they no longer live in that region, they also avoid going there altogether: “And even now they hate the people of the Lombards so much that not only do they still not want to live in that part of Sicily, but they wholly avoid approaching it (\textit{et usque nunc adeo Lombardorum gentem exhorrent, ut non solem eam partem Sicilie deinceps habitate noluerint, verum etiam accessum eius omnino devitent}).”\textsuperscript{721} Far removed from the standard image of Sicily as a land of cultural harmony, this somber passage presents a deadly struggle between two competing \textit{gentes}.\textsuperscript{722}

Above all, though, this episode demonstrates the author’s rather nuanced view of Christians, Muslims, and the relationship between them. The author’s cool tone shows that his empathy for these \textit{Sarraceni} was certainly limited, but he did, at the very least, see the affair as a threat to the peace. The very fact that the event was reported at all, let alone that the Muslims were depicted as victims, would seem significant. Falcandus, while living in the age of crusade, did not interpret the as a simplistic confrontation between good and evil.

\textsuperscript{719} Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 21, 70. “\textit{In loca finitima repentinos impetus facientes, tam eos qui per diversa oppida Christianis erant permixti, quam eos qui separatim habitantes villas proprias possidebant, nullo sexus aut etatis habito discrimine, perimebant}.”

\textsuperscript{720} Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 21, 70.

\textsuperscript{721} Falcandus, \textit{Liber}, c. 21, 70.

\textsuperscript{722} The event was corroborated by Romuald of Salerno. See Siragusa, \textit{Liber}, 70n2. A recent commentator observed that the nature of the violence seems to have moved “even a sceptical and hardened observer like Falcandus.” Metcalf, \textit{The Muslims of Medieval Italy}, 185. One should, nevertheless, be careful not to read too much modern sympathy into a text written by a man who was, generally speaking, a very unsympathetic writer.

\textsuperscript{173}
Conclusions

*Gens* seems to have had far greater utility for eleventh-century authors than their twelfth-century counterparts. Both Geoffrey Malaterra and William of Apulia took frequent recourse to it, using the word in a variety of different applications. For Malaterra, *gens* typically had a particular cultural connotation, and he defined both his own people (*nostra gens*) and the enemies of the Normans in this way. This was not a universal rule for him, however. As has been shown, *gens* could mean simply a “people” in the sense of the inhabitants of a given locale. In other cases, moreover, Malaterra apparently found *genus* to be an acceptable alternative to *gens*. The word had much more versatility for William, though, who nevertheless demonstrated some notion that *gentes* were unique groups who possessed their own language and customs. Although the expression was entirely absent in Alexander of Telese’s history, Falcandus evidently thought of a *gens* as connected to the concept of a monarchy, or *regnum*, and as possessing distinct *consuetudines*.

It would also appear significant that only one of the four authors, Malaterra, used the word *natio*. He was the sole author known with certainty to have come from outside Italy. Perhaps *natio* had greater resonance in eleventh-century *Francia* than in the central Mediterranean. Alternatively, Malaterra may have been borrowing from some literary model to which his counterparts did not have access. Whatever the case, it is clear that *natio* had a distinct geographic component, relating to a place of origin, which neither *gens* nor *populus* ever carried.

Finally, *populus* bore a more precise meaning for the twelfth-century writers. Alexander of Telese and Hugo Falcandus took great care to apply it solely to the
“populace” of cities or regions, or to refer to a large body of people generally. The term never meant a specific group, as *gens* did. Such was not the case for William of Apulia or Geoffrey Malaterra, who sometimes assigned *populus* a meaning very close, or even identical, to that of *gens*. This difference in usage is particularly noticeable with William, who sometimes employed both words in a military connotation to mean an army.

In spite of these semantic fluctuations, it can nevertheless be concluded that *gens* did hold a special importance for Malaterra, William, and Falcandus. Malaterra, an immigrant from across the Alps, constantly applied the word to the Normans, *nostri*, whom he clearly identified with. William of Apulia revealed that a unified people existed through a set of shared customs and a common language. Hugo Falcandus, writing nearly a century later, displayed a unique and highly complex opinion about each of the groups he defined as a *gens*. Some of his opinions had a basis in historical events, and discrepancies in the manuscript tradition show that those opinions could also elicit a reaction from his medieval readers. The image that emerges from all of these sources is that of a diverse region comprised of several competing *gentes*, which, despite their adversity, nevertheless came in time to be united under a single king.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Preface

This study began by examining a passage from William of Apulia’s *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* that showed how native Italians perceived the Normans with hostility, viewing them as a barbarous and alien people. In the intervening pages, it has become quite apparent that non-Normans could be regarded with venomous antagonism as well. This analysis has shown that the chroniclers did, at times, apply stereotypical attributes to the peoples of Sicily and southern Italy. Yet it is equally clear that other practical considerations related to the writing of history frequently affected the extent to which these writers allowed themselves to voice their prejudices. If a stereotype is defined as discrimination based on uninformed, unthinking, irrational response, then it can safely be said that the chroniclers of Norman Italy rarely found use for them. Much more often, these authors made a careful, deliberate, and highly pragmatic choice when it came to denigrating other peoples; to quote Ludovica de Nava, “the historian dominated a pliable past, bending it from time to time according to the exigencies of the moment, justifying events.”723

723 De Nava, introduction to *Ystoria*, xxvi. “Lo storico spadroneggiava su un passato duttile, piegandolo di volta in volta secondo le esigenze del momento, nel porre le giustificazione dei fatti.”
The Image of the Saracens

Although Geoffrey Malaterra’s topic—Roger de Hauteville’s conquest of Sicily—required him to make the Saracens into the principal antagonists of his narrative, he never tried to deprecate them in any consistent way. In many cases, this chronicler displayed complete ambivalence toward this group, and his anti-Muslim rhetoric occurred, at most, in a haphazard fashion. When his Muslim characters did function as villains, the author occasionally portrayed them as deceitful, fickle, and greedy, relying on different forms of the words dissimulare, lucror, fraud, levitas, ars, traditio, and callidus. He did not apply these expressions exclusively to Saracens, however, but to a number of other groups as well, including the Normans. Thus it cannot be said that he assigned them any negative attributes that were somehow uniquely “Saracen.” In that regard, it is appropriate to speak of an absence of stereotypes about the Muslims in this eleventh-century chronicle. The most one can observe is that the Saracens were held up as a sort of mirror image of the Normans themselves, insofar as they were the only other gens singled out for bravery.

Malaterra was writing for a Norman audience that, perhaps, recognized in Muslim fighters a warrior culture not all that different from its own. At the very least, this writer was motivated by a desire to furnish his hero with enemies who were worth defeating—people concerned with honor and willing to die for their beliefs. Malaterra’s creative license (if such an anachronistic phrase can be used) was further constrained by Count Roger’s pragmatic attitude toward the Muslims—both his own subjects and the sovereign rulers of North Africa.

It cannot be emphasized enough that the consolidation of power in Sicily was an extremely drawn out process (lasting more than thirty years) and that Christian soldiers
were always a minority on the island, even into the last decade of the eleventh century. For that very reason, Roger de Hauteville was always compelled to cut deals with the local population and to incorporate its manpower into his own military. The alternative—an intransigent policy of forced conversion—would surely have provoked a widespread uprising and guaranteed his defeat. Malaterra was probably aware of these realities, and faced his own challenges in crafting a narrative that highlighted the count’s achievement without faulting him for a policy of tolerance and cooperation toward non-Christians.

Amatus of Montecassino mixed positive and negative images of the Saracens as well, although he never portrayed them as courageous. Time after time, the Muslims in his text merely succumbed to the Norman onslaught or fell victim to Norman cunning. It is apparent that, unlike other writers, this author felt less of a need to enliven his story with exciting battle scenes in which the enemy sometimes triumphed. While Amatus made it clear that he regarded Islam as no more than detestable “folie” he nevertheless admitted, like Malaterra, that the Normans had to forge working relationships with the Muslims and also acknowledged that these people sometimes fought alongside Christian soldiers in Roger de Hauteville’s armies. As with Malaterra, the Cassinese historian offered no comment about this, and never employed negative language for Saracen leaders who were allied with the count.

Amatus did, on the other hand, show a far greater preoccupation with morally justifying the war in Sicily than any of his contemporaries. By dwelling on the cruel mistreatment of li Christien, he sought to supply the Normans with a valid pretext for their military endeavor there. This theme of the “yoke of Islam,” largely absent in the other sources examined here, shows that Amatus felt compelled to legitimize the blatant

---

724 Amatus of Montecassino, Storia, 1.5, 13.
aggression of his protagonists. It suggests, moreover, that he did not see a conflict with non-Christians as somehow justified in and of itself.\textsuperscript{725}

This issue did not preoccupy William of Apulia, who, of all the chroniclers, engaged in the strongest anti-Muslim rhetoric. Referring to the Saracens with intolerant expressions like \textit{perversa gens}, he explicitly identified them as enemies of God and servants of demons.\textsuperscript{726} The poet, unique among these authors, portrayed the campaign in Sicily as a \textit{nobile bellum} that “exalted the faith.”\textsuperscript{727} He was further unlike his prose counterparts in that he never admitted to any cooperation between the Normans and Muslims, and instead always assigned the latter the role of antagonist. Even so, William did not roundly condemn all Muslims as categorically devoid of virtue. The gracious treatment Emperor Romanus IV Diogenes received following his defeat at Manzikert is testament to the notion that they could be both capable and noble adversaries on the field of battle.

In general though, the poet took an aggressive approach toward the Muslims, and the reasons for this are twofold. First, he was writing with a mainland perspective, and his primary patron, Roger Borsa, did not oversee a large Muslim majority like his uncle, Roger de Hauteville, did. William wanted to glamorize every aspect of the life of his protagonist, Robert Guiscard, and part of that effort necessarily involved presenting the duke’s involvement in Sicily as a campaign aimed at liberating the island from the infidel. The other motivator was of course Urban II (1088–1099), to whom the \textit{Gesta Roberti Wiscardi} was also dedicated. William undoubtedly hoped that adding a certain

\textsuperscript{725} It should be mentioned that Roger’s campaign was still incomplete when Amatus wrote, and so he perhaps wanted to lend moral support to an endeavor that was, in his time, still an ongoing affair.

\textsuperscript{726} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, III.270–287.

\textsuperscript{727} William of Apulia, \textit{Gesta}, III.198–201.
amount of anti-Islamic rhetoric to his poem would please that pontiff, who was responsible for preaching the First Crusade at Clermont in 1095.\textsuperscript{728}

Given that Alexander of Telese focused on King Roger II, a ruler known for his reliance on Muslim soldiers as well as for a royal court that incorporated aspects of Arab culture and learning, his overall lack of commentary would seem surprising. His chronicle, which spans four books, in fact only made two references to the Saracens, and these were almost wholly lacking in opinion. Other contemporary sources reveal that Roger II turned his Muslim forces loose on the mainland, where they wrought great destruction on the unfortunate Christian populace. It is impossible to think that the abbot, who himself lived in southern Italy, was completely oblivious to those stories. Regardless of the reliability of these reports, they do imply a degree of historical reticence on Alexander’s part. In any event, his passing remark about the \textit{ira} that southern Italians felt toward the king’s Muslim soldiers likely indicates that there was far greater tension between the members of the two religions than this historian was prepared to admit.

Writing with a slightly later perspective, Hugo Falcandus instead readily noted the breakdown of coexistence under the reigns of King Roger II’s successors. Deploring what he saw as tyrannical misrule, he directed much of his invective against the palace eunuchs of Palermo, whom he saw as a treacherous threat to the stability of the Sicilian monarchy. In a fashion reminiscent of Amatus, he portrayed these court officials as a subversive cohort of crypto-Muslims who wielded their incredible influence to oppress Christians and encourage apostasy. The \textit{Sarraceni} for Falcandus were, however, just one of several \textit{gentes} threatening to topple the existing social order. He viewed them as

\textsuperscript{728} On the dedication to Urban II and Roger Borsa, son of Robert Guiscard, see Mathieu, introduction to \textit{Gesta}, 11.
licentious, hateful, and, above all, sources of social unrest. Such was the case, at least, for the Muslims on the island, but the Almohads in North Africa were another matter. Falcandus recognized this group as talented in matters of war, and noted the benevolence with which their rex treated his defeated Christian adversaries. As with the other earlier sources, therefore, it cannot be said that the Muslims of the Liber de Regno Sicilie were universally bad.

The diverse ways in which these authors approached the Muslims indicate that no commonly held standard image of this group existed. Indeed, their different depictions seem to have been the very opposite of a stereotype, in that they were not based upon preconceived ideas about what a Saracen "should be." Rather, the images they chose to construct were informed, contingent, and rational: informed by the style and content of their texts, contingent upon the demands of their patrons and audiences, and rational in that they made politically "smart" choices about what to write, rather than operating at a purely emotional level.

This is by no means to imply, however, that religious antagonisms played no part in shaping the ways these chroniclers perceived the Muslims. Religion, it seems, constituted only one of several factors that informed their views. As has be seen, other exigencies—those of style, intent, and patronage—all helped dictate the various depictions of "Saracens" contained in these texts at least as much as religious considerations. Above all, the fundamental conclusion to be drawn from this analysis is that the authors did not see the division between Christians and Muslims in black and white terms. It would be both superficial and wrong to say that they depicted Christians positively and Muslims negatively. On the contrary, the chroniclers surveyed in this study
engaged in denigration when it was useful to them, and avoided it when such an approach was not to their advantage.

The Image of Italians

With the exception of William of Apulia, these writers generally took a hard line toward the people of Italy. Geoffrey Malaterra expressed some of the harshest opinions toward the native inhabitants of the mainland out of all the writers examined here. The southern Italians—Apulians and Calabrians alike—appeared treacherous and cowardly in the pages of his text. The citizens of Bari, one of the greatest cities of Apulia, were no more than rebelles who failed in their attempt to murder Robert Guiscard when he laid siege, then foolishly sealed their fate by alerting the Normans to the arrival of reinforcements, which were promptly intercepted. \(^{729}\) The northern city states of Pisa and Venice, by comparison, fared no better. The Pisans engaged in petty wars of retribution with the Muslims of Sicily and Ifriqiya, but were not real warriors. The Venetians showed more preoccupation with avaritia than fighting, and could only rival the Normans in combat through the use of doli. \(^{730}\)

Malaterra, a transmontanus residing in Sicily, could freely regard the people of the mainland with utter contempt and make his thoughts known in writing without consequence. He wrote for Count Roger and for a largely Norman audience. With no attachment to the land or inhabitants of the peninsula, it is little wonder that Malaterra would have perceived Lombard resistance as nothing but base treachery. The maritime powers of Pisa and Venice, on the other hand, posed a serious threat to Norman Sicily’s

\(^{729}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, II.40–II.43.

\(^{730}\) Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii*, III.26–III.28.
goal of achieving hegemony in the central Mediterranean. Without any constraint from his patron or audience, Malaterra gave his pen total freedom when it came to the natives of Italy, north and south alike.

Amatus of Montecassino, whose providential storyline focused on the sins of the Lombards, did not treat this group more positively than Malaterra. Yet the motivation behind his depiction of the southern Italians was quite different. Whereas Malaterra was reacting to the recalcitrance of an inimical alien *gens*, Amatus was attempting to explain what had brought about the downfall of his own people. With his characteristic moralizing, the monk revealed that their *iniquité* and *perversité* were the root cause of the Norman takeover, an event ordained by God Himself.\(^\text{731}\) Well aware of the hardships Montecassino had endured from Lombard rulers, Amatus knew that their impiety had incurred divine wrath. Robert Guiscard’s wife, Sichelgaita, who richly endowed his monastery, constituted an understandable exception. Thus, in writing about the history of southern Italy, the Cassinese identity of Amatus trumped whatever loyalty he may have felt toward the *gens Longobardorum*.

William of Apulia could not and would not condemn the Italians to the same degree. He wrote for a southern Italian audience that consisted of combined Transalpine and Lombard elements. His patron, Roger Borsa, was descended on his mother’s side from the ruling dynasty of Salerno. In this cultural and political milieu, to criticize the Lombards on any explicit level would be foolish. The poet therefore endeavored to gloss over the less glamorous aspects of his story, such as the debacle of Civitate, where he

\(^{731}\) Amatus accused Lombards of perversity, or *perversité*, nine times. Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia*, 1.37; 1.38, 50; 1.39, 52; 11.13, 70; 111.38,15; IV.13, 192; IV.42, 214; IV.43, 216; VIII.24, 366. He associated them with *iniquité* seven times. Ibid., I.35, 47; I.38, 50; I.38. 50; I.40; III.24, 139; IV.39, 211; IV.41, 212; IV.47.
took pains to castigate central Italians in particular rather than all Italians generally. His
evident sympathy for the Venetians and Baresi, whom he praised as courageous fighters
despite their resistance to Robert Guiscard, is perhaps attributable to a desire to populate
his epic with worthy adversaries.

Alexander of Telese hotly criticized the mainlanders for the insolent resistance
they offered King Roger II. Wittingly or unwittingly, this chronicler actually repeated a
number of the ideas expressed by Malaterra and Amatus in the previous century. The
Longobardi were sinful, cowardly traitors. Their malitia and nequitia had earned them
heavenly punishment, which King Roger, the sword of God, ably delivered.  
Unsurprisingly, Alexander also condemned the northern Italian inhabitants of Pisa
because of the military support they gave to the rebellious southern barons. Although this
author attacked the southern Italians because they opposed his patron and protagonist, it
is nonetheless fascinating that he employed the same standard images of the Lombards
found in the texts of his predecessors.

Hugo Falcandus, who carefully distinguished between northern Italian Lombardi
and southern Italian Longobardi, voiced very different opinions about each. Southerners
were an inconstantissima gens, and unreliable warriors who could be trusted neither in
times of war nor peace. The northerners who had immigrated to Sicily were instead
courageous and faithful fighters, even when engaged in open rebellion. This author’s bias
is fairly obvious, and his opinions probably owed much to the fact that he welcomed the
Lombardi as a useful counterweight to the non-Latin and non-Christian gentes of the
kingdom—the Greci and Sarraceni.

\[732\] Alexander of Telese, preface to Ystoria, 3.
These depictions seem to have been less consciously constructed and based more on a preconceived “fixed image” than were representations of the Muslims. In that respect, stereotyping does appear to have been an influential factor in shaping perceptions of the Lombards. Every one of these five authors cited military incompetence and a proclivity for betrayal when discussing the inhabitants of southern Italy. William of Apulia, it is true, wisely tempered his criticisms, but did not exclude them altogether. Amatus and Alexander, moreover, both associated the Lombards with a kind of sinful depravity that had offended God, thereby justifying their downfall. Malaterra and Falcandus, whose attitudes were more uniquely Sicilian than the rest, both unrestrainedly slandered the gens Longobardorum as a whole because they had less to lose and presumably held a more “insular” attitude toward foreigners. The similarity in their treatment of this people is all the more significant in that they wrote almost a century apart from one another, and in that these opinions seem not to have been consciously constructed, but rather, based on an emotionally charged aversion to a group viewed as hostile and foreign. In general though, all of these authors depicted the Longobardi as treacherous and militarily inept, which would therefore seem to have been genuine stereotypes.

The Image of the Greeks

Stereotypes were even more apparent in treatments of the Greeks, whom no chronicler regarded fondly. Malaterra’s Graeci—both Sicilian and Byzantine—were cowardly to a man and weak beyond belief. Courage was simply not in their nature, and to combat their foes they often turned to deceit. They were, in addition, more inclined to
luxury than the arts of war, a tendency Malaterra and his Norman audience would naturally have observed with loathing. Malaterra also noted their cruelty, writing of the abusive treatment the Norman mercenaries received from their Byzantine masters and detailing the vicious palace coups that characterized life in Constantinople.

Amatus portrayed li Grex in much the same manner. He highlighted their recurring cowardice in his descriptions of the battles of southern Italy, going so far as to compare Byzantine soldiers to women. Their brutality toward the people of Italy was likewise widely attested. They were inclined toward betrayal, and could only fight their enemies par subtil tradement or by hiring mercenaries.733 Although the main task of Amatus was to chronicle the sins of the Lombards, he nevertheless found opportunities to criticize these wicked and effeminate people.

Such ideas were hardly unknown to William of Apulia, who touched on all of these themes as well. He provided numerous examples of Byzantium’s soldiers fleeing from battle, and wrote that, after the Normans’ initial victories, the Byzantines were unwilling to come out from behind their walls. The Graeci were also lascivious and cruel, as they were for Amatus and Malaterra. Like the Cassinese historian, moreover, William compared the Greeks to women. If there are a few examples of Byzantine leaders who defied the rule and acted bravely and honorably, this was due to the poet’s stylistic needs, not his sympathy for Byzantium. The great bellator Alexius I Comnenus was, after all, reduced to tears after suffering defeat from Robert Guiscard. Most of the time, the Byzantines fit the mold of Emperor Nicephorus Botaneiates: they were “inept in war, yet wise, with an ingenious mind; on guard against secret dangers, unwarlike, and considered

733 Amatus, Storia, 1.15.
fearful rather than to be feared (ignavus bello, tamen ingeniosa / Mente sagax; contra
furtiva pericula cautos, / Imbellis, metuens plus quam metuendus habetur).”

Although Alexander of Telese had nothing to say about the Graeci, Hugo Falcandus portrayed them as cruel and treacherous. The Greek-speaking population of Sicily were piratae, latrones, and preiones who had nothing but inexorabilis odium for the island’s northern European inhabitants. As with Malaterra, Falcandus regarded the Greek subjects of Sicily as a dangerous fifth column, treating them with an especially severe brand of hostility. Whereas the mainland chroniclers could look at the Christian inhabitants of Sicily with benign ambivalence, Falcandus and Malaterra’s familiarity with uprisings on the island induced them to discuss Greek perfidy in great detail.

The chroniclers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries alike displayed greater animosity toward the Greeks than toward the Normans’ non-Christian rivals, the Muslims. Especially profound similarities are apparent in the earliest three texts, all of which attribute weakness, cowardice, cruelty, and treachery to the Graeci. Amatus, Malaterra, and William of Apulia shared a “fixed image” toward this group that was built upon these negative characteristics. Hugo Falcandus, who wrote of the Greeks as a seditious and particularly hateful sector of Sicilian society, seems in large part to have continued the stereotypes propagated by his predecessors, above all those of Geoffrey Malaterra. These authors, who were not bound by any need to treat the Graeci with care, as they sometimes were for the Lombards and Saracens, could therefore voice the uninformed misconceptions that they held about the Greeks with total liberty.

734 William of Apulia, Gesta, IV.78–80.
735 Falcandus, Liber, c. 32, 108; ibid., c. 55, 153.
Further discernible similarities and differences can be detected in the terminology employed to denote a group of people. Malaterra relied on the noun *gens* first and foremost with reference to the Normans. He was also the only chronicler to use *natio*, a word that connoted origin or birthplace in his narrative. *Populus* for Malaterra, tended to have broader meanings, and seems to have been applicable to virtually any assembly of humans. His contemporary, William of Apulia, exercised considerably less restraint. *Gens* and *populus* for him possessed multiple meanings that often overlapped. Both words could be found referring to the inhabitants of a city or to an army. The distinction is made even less clear cut by the fact that these words, when employed in a military sense, still usually involved a contrast between various peoples since the two forces typically hailed from different cultural backgrounds (Norman, Muslim, Greek, and Lombard).

Twelfth-century authors seem to have seen far less interchangeability between *gens* and *populus*. For Alexander of Telese, the latter expression never denoted a cultural group or military force, but rather referred to the populace of a city. Such was essentially the case for Falcandus as well, who employed the word to mean a body of inhabitants generally. For him, a *gens* was a special group bound together by shared customs and laws. The kingdom of Sicily in the *Liber de Regno Sicilie* was a land divided by the bloody conflicts taking place between these disparate gentes.
Concluding Remarks

Prejudice remains a difficult concept to unravel in modernity, and the task of the medieval historian who studies cultures in contact is no less problematic. Hostile attitudes toward an entire set of people can be shaped by any number of factors, and these are often illogical. In this exploration of the definitions and perceptions of different groups, there nevertheless seems to have been a certain logic to the way these authors engaged in denigration. Indeed, their patrons, their audience, and their writing style all helped shape their depictions. These considerations frequently took precedence over cruder forms of emotionally charged invective.

These authors did not merely treat every group the same, casting every people in some generic mold of alien “other.” For some of these authors, the Saracens and Lombards were sensitive topics that had to be treated with delicacy. This was, however, not the case for the Greeks, whom the chroniclers all treated as objects of scorn and derision. This study has therefore underscored the importance of respecting and contextualizing each source—appreciating the distinct qualities that set them apart from one another. The chroniclers of Norman Italy were careful in the language they selected, crafting a hierarchy of denigration in which certain gentes fared better than others. In conclusion, the perceptions and definitions applied to groups of people were rarely based on uninformed stereotypes, but were, on the contrary, often deliberately constructed images highly dependent on the cultural milieu in which they were created.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Sources


Sources in Translation

Alexander of Telese. The Deeds Done by King Roger of Sicily. Translated by Graham A. Loud. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/history/weblearning/MedievalHistoryTextCentre/medievalTexts.htm>


Other Relevant Sources


Works Cited


———. “'Non audaces sed fugaces.' The Image of the Byzantines in Early Medieval South Italy: The Lombard and Norman Viewpoint.” Unpublished article.


Kazhdan, A. “Latins and Franks in Byzantium: Perception and Reality from the Eleventh to Twelfth Century.” In *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the


———. "How 'Norman' was the Norman Conquest of Southern Italy?" Nottingham Medieval Studies 25 (1981): 13–34.


Skinner, Patricia. “‘Halt, be men!’: Sikelgaita of Salerno, Gender and the Norman Conquest of Southern Italy.” *Gender & History* 12, no. 3 (2000), 622–641.


**Reference Tools**


