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# Ethnic, political and religious identity and intercultural communication according to the French historical writings of the 10th – 12th centuries

## Introduction

The Middle Ages can be described as a period when most of the existing nations and states of modern Europe were born. This process went hand by hand with the emergence of reciprocal stereotypes of perception of other peoples, ethnic, regional and religious groups. Many of these stereotypes continued to exist in later times, some of them persist till our days. This makes my subject of research relevant from the point of view of intercultural problems of contemporary Europe. The perception of aliens was only in part the product of literary tradition. Basically it was the result of real-life contacts between members of different ethnic, regional and religious groups and was closely connected with mundane conflicts and pragmatic interests. I'm trying to study both the long-termed literary traditions and everyday forms of intercultural communication of those days and their interaction.

## Chronological and geographical limits of the study.

The choice of the period of study (from the mid-10$^{th}$ to the mid 12$^{th}$ century) is motivated by two different reasons. First, this is a very special period in the history of Europe. By mid 10$^{th}$ c. the last wave of "barbaric" invasions (Normans, Hungarians and Arabs) calmed down and continental Europe finally entered into a phase of more peaceful development. For Gaul the focal point in this respect was the expulsion of the Saracens from Le Freinet, in maritime Provence, in 972. At this point international contacts of different kind and level became more regular and stable. It was also the period when Europe's old borders were swiftly and spectacularly expanded thanks to the almost simultaneous integration of several "new" heathen peoples (Slavs, Hungarians and Scandinavians) into the Christian oecumena. In general, it was the beginning of the period of stable and rapid economic and cultural growth. By the end of the 12$^{th}$ c. political centralisation is on the way in France, the reign of Philip August being the evident watershed. Second, as explained below, this period is considerably much less studied, from the chosen point of view than both the preceding and the following periods.

## Sources.

My sources are basically historical narratives: chronicles, annals, historical "monographs", biographies, also hagiographical texts, treatises, itineraries, correspondence. Occasionally I make use of legislative acts and documents.

**Historiography.**

Despite increased interest for the issues of identity and the image of the other in contemporary historiography[1] hardly any comprehensive study is available of the mentioned set of problems for the whole Europe of the chosen period or for the Romanic world or even for France in particular. Much better studied is the Carolingian period[2], on the other hand the period of the Crusades (at least the narratives of the Crusades themselves and the contacts of Western Europeans with the Moslem and Orthodox East). The image of the other is studied mostly in the context of interaction of Western Christendom with the world of Islam[3], also in the context of the history of Jewish communities in Europe[4]. Considerably less attractive for modern scholars (at least as far as my period is concerned), despite numerous and informative sources, are the perceptions of the pagans, of other Christians and of other ethnic or regional groups, close and remote. True, some of the aspects in question are dealt with in connection with the emergence of European nations, and some excellent studies to this behalf have been published more or less recently, notably in Germany[5]. Some regional studies also pay attention to the problem of self-identity[6]. Lately the scope of the problem of "the other" has been enlarged to include the perception of other types of minorities, notably heretics and deviants of other kind[7] but for the most part the questions discussed in this context are quite different from those I'm concentrating on in my thesis.

## 1. Geopolitical image of the world

It is often said that prior to the age of the Great geographical discoveries, or at least prior to the Crusades, medieval Europeans had a very limited knowledge of the world outside their homeland

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[1] See for example: Crossing boundaries: issues of cultural and individual identities in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance / Ed. by S. McKee. Turnhout, 1999; L'étranger au Moyen Âge. Paris, 2000; *Geary P.* The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe. Princeton, 2002; Strategies of Medieval Communal Identity: Judaism, Christianity and Islam / Ed. W.J. van Bekkum, P.M. Cobb. Paris, 2004; Identité et Ethnicité: Concepts, débats historiographiques, exemples (IIIe-XIIe siècle) / Dir. V. Gazeau, P. Bauduin, Y. Modéran. Paris, 2008; Religioznye i etnicheskie tradicii v formirovanii nacionalnyh identichnostej v Evrope. Srednie veka - Novoe vremja / Ed. by M.V. Dmitriev. Moscow, 2008, Identitats / Coord. Flocel Sabaté. Barcelona, 2012.

[2] See for example: *Ronin V.K.* Franki i drugie narody v karolingskoj literature // Zapadnoevropejskaja srednevekovaja slovesnost'. Moscow, 1985; *eidem.* Vizantija v sisteme vneshnepoliticheskih predstavlenij rannekarolingskih pisatelej // Vizantijskij vremennik, 1986, T. 47, S. 85-94; *eidem.* Slaviane v latinskoj literature VII – nachala IX v. // Sovetskoe slavjanovedenie, 1986, N 3. S. 43-54. *eidem.* Franki, vestgoty, langobardy v VI-VIII vv.: politicheskie aspekty samosoznanija // Odissej, 1989, s. 60-76; *Lienhard T.* "Les chiens de Dieu". La politique slave des Merovingiens et des Carolingiens. Thèse de doctorat. Universite Paris-1, 2003.

[3] See for example: *Iogna-Prat D.* Ordonner et exclure. Cluny et la société chrétienne face à l'hérésie, au judaïsme et à l'Islam (1000-1150). Paris, 2000; *Sénac Ph., Guichard P.* Les relations des pays d'Islam avec le monde latin: milieu Xe - milieu XIIIe siècle. Paris, 2000; *Sénac Ph.* L'Occident médiéval face à l'Islam : l'image de l'autre. Paris, 2000; *Flori J.* La Guerre Sainte. La formation de l'idée de Croisade dans l'occident chrétien. Paris, 2001, *Luchickaja S.I.* Obraz Drugogo: musulmane v chronikah krestovyh pohodov. Saint-Petersburgh, 2001, *Flori J.* Guerre sainte, croisade, violence et religion dans le Christianisme et Islam. Paris, 2002.

[4] *Blumenkranz B.* Juifs et chretiens dans le monde occidental, 430 – 1096. Paris, 1960, *Chazan R.* 1007-1012: Initial Crisis for Northern European Jewry // American Academy for Jewish Research (1970-71), *Bachrach B.S.* Early Medieval Jewish Policy. Minneapolis, 1977.

[5] Aspekte der Nationenbildung im Mittelalter / Ed. Beumann H., Schröder W. Sigmaringen, 1978, Beiträge zur Bildung der Französischen Nation im Früh- und Hochmittelalter / ed. Beumann H. Sigmaringen, 1983. *Schneidmüller B.* Nomen Patriae. Die Entstehung Frankreichs in der politisch-geographischen Terminologie (10.-13. Jahrhundert). Sigmaringen, 1987.

[6] *Lauranson-Rosaz Ch.* L'Auvergne et ses marges (Velay, Gévaudan) du VIII au XI siècle. Le Puy-en-Velay, 1987.

[7] *Moore R.-I.* The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250. Oxford, 1987.

and were seldom interested in remote regions, the only exception being the Holy Land. It is also maintained that medieval monks who wrote most of the historical accounts of the chosen period knew very little outside their monastery and for this reason drew their information about other countries from books, often from absolutely outdated reports of ancient authors and from the Bible. Recent studies[8] showed that this assessment, if not at all incorrect, distorts and oversimplifies the real picture of medieval geographical and ethnographical erudition.

Indeed, up to the 11th century, sometimes even later, geographical descriptions in Western European texts were for the most part taken from ancient and early medieval authors (such as Isidore of Seville). Because, as it seems, they were of limited interest to both the writer and his readers[9], these descriptions were usually quite laconic and in this sense not much different from schematic *mappa mundi* of those days. Nonetheless, authors of the 11th and 12th had a certain geopolitical picture of the world which reflected the existing political, religious and other realities.

Around 1000 AD the borders of Christian Europe widened spectacularly as Scandinavians, Hungarians, Poles and Russians accepted Christianity in the late 10th and the early 11th century. With the exception of the Polabian Slavs, the Balts, the Finns, and - a separate case - the Cumans, all European peoples by the mid-11th century were Christians and received in the eyes of the Church equal status. Marked differences of course remained between them: firstly between Eastern and Western parts of Christianity, secondly between the "old" and the "new" Christian peoples, (although it was no longer possible to treat the latter as pagans), and thirdly between dioceses of Gaul, Germany and Italy (that means of former Carolingian Empire) and marginal Mosarabic and Celtic churches.

Yet, the most interesting attempt of distinguishing between "*our"* and "*not our*" seems to be based on the recognition of Western Europe's common Roman roots, Carolingian past and adherence to Latin Christendom. This attitude is best reflected in Raoul Glaber's notion of "*Orbis romanus*" which he used to describe "*our world this side the sea*"[10]. Two other terms – *Occidens* and *Latinitas* – found in some other chronicles reflect a similar sentiment. This territory doesn't include *overseas lands* (therefore Byzantium Empire) and *barbarian provinces*. Its core consists of Gaul, Germany and Italy and all the chroniclers are unanimous in this opinion. The idea that the land of the European West as opposed to the Byzantine world and, with some reservations, the world of the Northern and Eastern barbarians, constitute a certain unity was no doubt strengthened by the role of the Roman Church and by the appreciation of the Latin culture common to the West.

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[8] For example: *Gautier-Dalché P*. Représentations géographiques savantes, constructions et pratiques de l'espace // Construction de l'espace au Moyen Âge : pratiques et représentations: XXXVIIe Congrès de la SHMESP (Mulhouse, juin 2006). Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2007. 14–38

[9] *Lacroix B*. L'Historien au Moyen âge. Montréal; Paris, 1971. P. 99.

[10] *Radulfus Glaber*. Historiarum libri quinque, I. Preface 1, in *Radulfus Glaber*. Opera / Ed. J. France. Oxford, 1989.

Other terms which seem to have received a geographical connotation by the end of the 11th century is *Christianitas* or *Regnum Christi*[11]. Thus pope Gregory VII, in one of his epistles, wrote about the limits of the Christian world (*fines Christianitatis*)[12]. Authors of some chronicles spoke, in the context of conflicts with the Moslems, in favor of expansion (*dilatio*) of Christ's Kingdom from sea to sea[13]. The Christian world is opposed to the world of non-Christians, Moslems and pagans (*paganismus*). The lands of the pagans were regarded as the object of expansion[14].

*Opposition between East and West, North and South*

Raoul Glaber gives a symbolic explanation of the existing world-order which, in his opinion, was foretold by the position of the Lord's cross on Golgotha. "The immature people of the East were hidden behind His head, but the West was before His eyes, ready to be filled with the light of the faith. His almighty right arm pointed to the North, which was to be mellowed by the holly word of the faith, while His left extended to the South, which swarmed with barbaric peoples". That's why "the infidels were converted in both the northern and western parts of the world but not in the east and the south", where "the peoples were trapped for longer in the wildness of their own errors"[15]. In fact, the South is probably identified with Africa which Western European writers of the 11th and the 12th centuries associate with hot lands populated by the Saracens. For this reason Moslem Spain and even Southern Italy sometimes fall under this definition[16].

The perception of the East was more complex. It was considered a rival and hostile corner of the Earth inhabited not only by Moslems but also by the Christian Greeks. However the right of Constantinople to govern the Eastern lands was not disputed. The East aroused contradictory feelings: pious esteem for the Holy land and admiration for the wonders and wealth of the Orient but also fear of the evil which were expected from to come from there (invasions, diseases, heresies and even the advent of Antichrist) and undesguised aversion to its inhabitants[17].

A particular case in the long-term confrontation of West and East is the competition between Rome and Constantinople for the conversion of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. The eastern limits of the Latin world were defined by the choice of those peoples between the Roman and the Greek churches: Bulgarians and Russians chose the Orient while Poles and Hungarians chose the West.

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[11] *Rousset P.* La notion de Chrétienté aux XIe et XIIe siècles // Le Moyen Age, 1963. P. 191–203; *Bartlett R.* The Making of Europe : conquest, colonization and cultural change, 950-1350. Princeton (N.J.), 1993. P. 243–269

[12] *Gregorius VII*. Registrum. 5.7, in Gregorii VII registrum. Das Register Gregors VII / Erich Caspar. MGH, Epistolae selectae, 2. Berlin, 1920

[13] For example: *Radulfus Glaber.* Historiarum. I.4 ; *Gauffredo Malaterra.* De rebus gestis Rogerii. 4.29, in *Gauffredo Malaterra*, De rebus gestis Rogerii Siciliae et Calabriae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius / Ed. Ernesto Pontieri. Rome, 1927-8.

[14] *Bartlett R.* The Making of Europe... P. 243-269.

[15] *Radulfus Glaber.* Historiarum. I.5.24.

[16] Ibid. I.5.17; II.7.13; II.9.18; IV.7.22.

[17] Ibid. IV.4.10; IV.6.21.

But there is no doubt that the geopolitical interests of the French authors we're studying were concentrated in the countries which formerly constituted the Carolingian empire. In this sense Germany was regarded as a closer land to France than Spain – with the obvious exception of Catalonia. Likewise Southern Italy which in some French sources figures as the land of the Greeks was much more an alien land than Northern and Central Italy. The British Isles and the lands of Central Europe were definitely considered as far away and quite different. And the Celtic world even though it was one of the oldest centers of propagation of Christianity, was regarded as absolutely alien.

In these circumstances the perception of different peoples, even of smaller ethnic and regional groups, underwent important changes. From now on the emphasis was made more and more on their immanent characteristic traits, both positive and negative, and the formation of stable stereotypes entered a new phase.

## 2. Self-perception and self-identity

The problem of self-identification is quite complicated itself and is difficult to explore due to the condition of the sources. Firstly we should try to understand the self-perception and the self-identity of the authors of our texts. They were determined by different factors: their social background, their social position, their education, their membership in a certain corporations (an overwhelming majority of our sources were created by clerics of different status). Secondly, we should make a distinction between the display of self-identification of the authors themselves and the people they are writing about. In both cases it's essential to discern which particular type of identity dominates in the text and under which circumstances. Are we dealing with religious, ethnic, political, regional or local identity? Or with their intricate combinations? To give but one example, the identity of mountain dwellers always overlays and coexists with other types of identities. Problems arise even as we try to range these types. Obviously it's possible to speak of identity of people belonging to a certain feudal principality; but is it possible to speak also of a common identity of those living within a particular diocese?

**Religious self-identity**

In the sources Christian self-identity is usually put in the first place before other types of self-identities but mainly in juxtaposition with peoples belonging to other religions (Moslems, Jews, Pagans). Starting from the 10th century chroniclers often use the term "*populus christianus*" or "*gens christiana*" in quasi-ethnic sense. For example, Raymond of Aguilers described the crusaders who besieged Antioch in 1098 as "*Christiana gens*"[18] while Baudri de Bourgueil in the early 12th

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[18] *Raymond of Aguilers*. Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem. Liber 10, // Recueil des historiens occidentaux des croisades (RHC Occ). Vol. 3. Paris, 1883.

century claimed that he is Christian by right of succession and that the expression "*genus nostrum*" means Christians[19].

Conversion to Christianity was one of the most powerful means of political integration. The 10th century German author Widukind of Corvey insisted that conversion to the Christian faith made Saxons in a way one race with Franks (*quasi una gens*)[20]. Several authors insist that as a result of the conversion of Normans and Hungarians they became *nostri*[21].

**Self-perception of "Franks" living outside France.**

One should examine the tiny bits of information about those people, mostly knights and clerics, who were born in Gaul but lived outside it. For example, all Latin Patriarchs of Antioch during the 12th century were of Gallic origin (Peter I of Narbonne, Bernard of Valence, Ralph I of Domfront, Aimery of Limoges, Peter II of Angoulême). Frankish knights took an active part in the Crusades and other wars in distant lands; some of them resettled in the Orient, Spain, Southern Italy and Britain where they obtained new lands and titles[22]. The following words by Fulcher of Chartres who wrote about immigrants to the Holy Land give an idea of this aspect of the problem: "He who previously was said to come from Reims or from Chartres is now called "from Tyre" or "from Antioch"; it happens that we have already forgotten the names of the places we were born in"[23]. We must try to understand whether such a change in naming meant full loss of Gallic identity and to what extent these people preserved memory of their family roots. In the Holy Land there were also many migrants from France as attested, besides other sources of information, by their names. We have at our disposal a list of settlers of Ibeline, a fortress in the Kingdom of Jerusalem; among them we find Bruno of Burgundy, Guilbert of Carcassonne, Gerard the Flemish…

**3. Intercultural communication.**

The perception of foreigners was basically the result of real-life contacts of different levels. In the first place, we are speaking of intercultural communication between the ruling elites; this communication often took the form of war and diplomacy.

Important cases of international communication include meetings of kings and other lords, both secular and ecclesiastical. Though sending ambassadors abroad was a very old practice dating back to Antiquity and the tribal period in the history of European barbarians, ambassadorial culture was still in the stage of formation. With the exception of interpreters (about whom very little is known),

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[19] *Baudri de Bourgueil*. Historia Hierosolymitana. Prologue, // RHC, Occ. 4. Paris, 1883.

[20] *Widukind of Corvey*. Res gestae Saxonicae 1.15 // MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum / Ed. G. Waitz. Hanover and Berlin, 1826.

[21] *Ademarus Cabannensis*. Chronicon, III.27, // Corpus Christianorum; Contunatio Mediaevalis / Ed. P. Bourgain. Turnhout, 1999, *Radulfus Glaber*. Historiarum, I.5.21, *Dudo*. De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum / Ed. J. Lair. Caen, 1865. II.6.

[22] *Bartlett R.* The Making of Europe... P. 106-133.

[23] *Fulcher of Chartres*. Historia Hierosolymitana. 3.37 in Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia Hierosolymitana (1095-1127) / Ed. H. Hagenmeyer. Heidelberg, 1913.

officials sent to other courts usually lacked professional training and were chosen among the most trusted and dexterous courtiers or clergymen or even among appropriate merchants and pilgrims. Little is known about the preparations of their missions as well as of their reports. The first surviving instructions to ambassadors are not older than the 13th century. Reports about ambassadorial missions are available from earlier times (for example those by Liutprand of Cremona to Constantinople and of John of Gorze to Cordova – even though the latter exists only in the form of several paragraphs in his *Vita*) but French texts of the chosen period are not overburdened with this type of data and are not very numerous in the first place.

Some of the most important diplomatic missions of those days were linked to arranging for a dynastic matrimony. The court was an important place of cultural interaction. Foreign princesses were escorted by ladies in waiting, other retainers and servants; among other consequences this lead to the diffusion of outlandish fashions.

Among other typical issues discussed by diplomats of the Middle Ages one should mention, besides peace talks, the liberation of hostages and of course ecclesiastical affairs. However attention must be paid also to reports of other men (and rarely women) who, in one way or another, happened to cross cultural borders: soldiers, merchants, missionaries, pilgrims, foreign clerics and foreign mercenaries, hostages, artists, slaves. The lion's share of information about far away lands preserved in the chronicles was received by their authors from some of these representatives of the "traveling" part of the medieval society. In particular, people of very different ethnic origin and cultural traditions met and interacted on the roads leading to popular pilgrimage centers, especially to Rome, Jerusalem and Santiago-de-Compostella, so returning home they had a lot to tell even about lands and their inhabitants which they had never seen.

Impressions left by foreign invaders and travellers on local people irrelevant of their status are also a very important source of information about aliens which eventually found their way into the extant sources, albeit often enough in a schematized and stereotyped mode.

Not less informative are the descriptions of intercultural contacts within a given country, for example between Christians and local Jews. Such information helps to understand the sense of the word *foreigner* and how the stereotypes were formed. To give but one example, the negative perception of the Italians by Raoul Glaber were the result of his personal impressions obtained during his travels across Italy as William of Volpiano's secretary. This kind of data is quite rare in the surviving sources but it should be analyzed diligently in order to introduce corrections in the otherwise one-sided information about official contacts between rulers, great lords and prelates of the Church. This data also helps us to penetrate the everyday and common folk level of intercultural communication and thus surpass to a certain degree the limitations imposed by predominantly literary or theoretical approach reflected in the texts of theologians and official royal spokesmen.

The study of migrations also furnishes valuable information. From the late 8th till the early 11th c. Catalans occasionally fled to Languedoc at the face of Arab invaders or even hunger[24]. In the 11th and especially in the 12th c., as a result of the growing success of the Reconquista numerous migrants came to settle down in Spain. Most of them came from other regions of the Iberian Peninsula itself but quite a few were natives of Gaul, mostly of its southern regions. Different sources testify about this process, including traditional historical narratives. Personal names present in Spanish documentation, such as Guillaume de Condome, Martin de Toulouse, Richard de Cahors[25], serve as supplementary proof, as well as certain Spanish place-names, among them the Castilian town Burgos. It's noteworthy that these people maintained a link to their homelands. One of the fueros of Toledo, dated to the 12th c., had in view for the foreign settlers the possibility to visit during winter France and Galicia or some other lands qualified as "their lands beyond the mountains"[26].

True, for the aims of this particular study focused on France and French authors, of relatively more importance are the recollections of Spain and of Spanish Moslems brought to France by the participants of the Reconquista. Of similar importance are the pieces of information contained in some French texts about the Norman conquest of England and of Southern Italy. It should be noted that occasionally colonies of migrants were the result not of warfare but of trade. Thus, Orderic Vitalis tells us about numerous Flemish settlers not only in England and in the German lands but even in the Byzantine world[27]. Once again, there is limited data on the interaction of such settlers abroad with their compatriots in the lands of this birth.

## 4. Perception of the "Other".

*Ethnic identity*
The criteria of ethnic identity accepted in the Middle Ages went back to the texts of Orosius and Isidore of Seville. They were formulated in the early 10 c. by the German canon Regino of Prüm: "Nations differ by origin, custom, language and law" *(diversae nationes populorum inter se discrepant genere, moribus, lingua, legibus)*[28].

Origin
Origin is a rather fuzzy characteristic which implies the ethnonym and the territory where the ethnic group lives. For example, Germans were sometimes defined as the nation living "beyond the Rhine"

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[24] See: *Abadal i Vinyals R. de.* L'abat Oliba bisbe de Vic i la seva epoca. Barcelona, 1962. P. 181.
[25] *Higounet Ch.* Mouvements de population dans le Midi de la France du XIe siecle d'apres les noms de personne et de lieu, in his Paysages et villages neufs du Moyen Age. Bordeaux, 1975. P. 421.
[26] *Bartlett R.* The Making of Europe... P. 133-167.
[27] *Orderic Vitalis*. Historia ecclesiastica. IV.7.5 / Ed. M. Chibnall. Oxford, 1968—80.
[28] *Regino of Prüm*. Epistula ad Hathonem archiepiscopum missa, in *Reginonis chronicon /* Ed. F. Kurze. Hanover, 1890, cit. ex. *Pohl W., Reimitz H*. Strategies Of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800. Leiden, 1998. P. 17–18

(*gens Transrhenana*)[29]. Sometimes origin was merged with political identity which is understandable because usually we deal not with national states but with territories subject to a particular political power. These territories have relatively fixed borders and our authors have rather clear ideas about their characteristic features. *Regnum Francorum* was built on various ethnic, regional, linguistic and cultural foundations. Some of its territories, for example Aquitania, Normandy, the county of Toulouse, are regarded as considerable political powers, also as lands with distinctive cultural identities. However though *Francia* designated the territory between the Meuse, the Loire and the Oise with the later Ile-de-France in its centre, people living outside *Francia* even in almost independent principalities in the South were aware that they belonged to the *Regnum Francorum.* Though they usually were perceived as foreigners by those who inhabited *Francia*. It seems that Provence presented a certain problem for classification: a fief of the Empire, it was culturally close to Septimania and some other regions of the French Midi with which it was also linked by dynastic and ecclesiastical ties.

Distinction by origin was quite real and is reflected, one way or another, in the sources. Thus, Ambroise, the minstrel of the 3rd Crusade, lamenting the conflicts between the crusaders which sometimes broke out because of ethnic differences, recalled with nostalgia those days in the past "when nobody asked who is a Norman and who is French, who is from Poitou and who is from Brittany, who's from Maine and who's from Burgundy, who's Flemish and who's English. All were called Franks"[30]. He referred no doubt to the times of the 1st Crusade.

Customs

The category "customs" (*mores*) understood here not as a legal but an everyday conventional category included differences in clothes, hairdo, preferences for certain foods, peculiarities in house building, to some extent even differences in liturgy since they largely defined the divisions inside the Christian community (first of all between the Western Christians and the "Greeks", also between the Western Christians and Mozarabs). Thus Ademar of Chabannes testifies that Russians, after a Greek bishop converted their land "began to grow a beard in the Greek fashion and adopted other Greek customs"[31]. It's significant that spilling out his hatred against Aquitanians Raoul Glaber brought attention to their unusual looks and ways: "They were flippant and vain fellows with strange manners and clothes; their weapons and the equipment of their horses were curious, and they were close-shaven from half way down their heads; they were beardless like actors, wore indecent shoes"[32].

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[29] *Dudo*. De moribus..., III.105.
[30] *Ambroise. L'estoire de la guerre sainte*, lines 8494-505, 8509-10 / Ed. G. Paris. Paris, 1897.
[31] *Ademarus Cabannensis*. Chronicon, III.31
[32] *Radulfus Glaber.* Historiarum III.9.40

Language

Linguistic differences are also taken into consideration when defining a person's identity. The French authors distinguished Germans in the first place by their tongue, alien and strange[33]. Dudo of Saint-Quentin left an interesting evidence that people in his times could feel the proximity of the German and the Norse. According to his account the duke of Normandy William the Long Sword could understand that the Saxons and the Lotharingians were making fun of him because he knew "the language of the Danes"[34]. Mastering the "Roman language" was considered as means of political and cultural integration, as it happened with the Normans who, as Ademar of Chabannes reports, having been converted to Christianity "abandoned the heathen language (*gentilem linguam*) and mastered the Latin tongue[35]. Ademar distinguished Berbers made captives in Narbonne from Arabs also by their tongue: "their speech not at all resembled the language of the Saracens; when they spoke it seemed as if puppies were whining»[36].

Law

The adherence to particular legal norms and traditions was also an important feature of ethnic identity. Unfortunately French chronicles make few allusions to particular differences between legal systems. Lacking proper understanding of alien legal customs and aiming to show certain nations in unfavorable light our authors sometimes claim that these nations don't have laws at all. For example, the author of the "Chronicle of Nantes" writes that the Bretons "don't abide by laws, don't respect precepts, don't obey other rules»[37].

In some texts one may discern the dichotomy "civilisation – barbarity". Rather often it's applied to the Slavs and the Celts. Raoul Glaber, for example, wrote about the Bretons that "they are absolutely strange to civilization (*urbanitas*), people with rude manners, quick to anger and ready to babble in their tongue" [38]. Bernard of Clairvaux described the Irish as barbarians with animal-like habits. He criticized their matrimonial customs, castigated them for not paying the tith and even declared that they were "Christians only in name but pagans in gist"[39].

**Religious aspect**

11th century witnessed first steps towards the comprehension of the fact that three world religions – Christianity, Judaism and Islam coexist in the oecumena.

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[33] *Ademarus Cabannensis*. Chronicon, III.23, *Radulfus Glaber*. Historiarum, III. Prefacio. 1, *Jotsaldus*. Vita Odilonis, I.17.
[34] *Dudo*. De moribus…, III.53.
[35] *Ademarus Cabannensis*. Chronicon, III.27.
[36] Ibid., III.52.
[37] Chronicon Nantense, XIX, in La chronique de Nantes (570 – 1049) publiée avec une introduction et des notes par René Merlet. Paris, 1896.
[38] *Radulfus Glaber*. Historiarum II,3.4.
[39] *Bernard de Clairvaux*. Vita sancti Malachie 8.16, in Bernardi opera / Ed. J. Leclercq et H.M. Rochais. Paris, 1963, vol. 3 P. 307-378.

*Muslims*

The border between Islamic and Christian worlds lay in the Mediterranean basin, especially in Spain and Sicily where two cultures met and where adherents of all the three religions (counting Judaism) lived in close proximity. In France this was reality (rather episodic) only in some maritime towns of the South.

During the often military clashes the reciprocal recognition took at times peculiar forms. In the Iberian peninsula, which was politically fragmented and divided between Christian kingdoms and Muslim states, alliances and temporary unions between adherents of two rival religions followed war hostilities. Even the famous epic hero El Cid as a chief of Castilian troops was an ally of the emir of Zaragoza al-Muqtadir against the king of Aragon and later offered his services to his son al-Mutamin, whose brother at the same time was in alliance with Ramon Berenguer II of Catalonia and Sancho of Aragon[40]. The relationship between Christians and Muslims was certainly much more complex than it was presented by the official, mostly church, propaganda. In the 12th century, when the success of the Reconquista and Crusades became more and more evident, the confrontation hardened and fervor for the Holy war from both sides burst out[41].

On the other hand, with this exception, direct contacts with Moslems before the age of the Crusades were scarce. Yet Islam and the Moslem peoples interested the French authors of the 10th and 11th centuries considerably, in fact much more than Judaism and the Jews. Some authors report details about the "Moslem" warfare and other customs, for example the particularities of their food and dress, and even try to understand some aspects of Islam. Though much disliked Moslems, unlike Jews, were treated with some respect.

*Jews*

The Jewish diasporas, quite numerous in the French South or the Middle Rhine, existed in many European countries of those days so it was relatively easy to obtain some firsthand information about the Jews and their religion. They were mostly disliked, sometimes feared of but strangely enough presented little interest to Christians. Hardly any serious attempt to understand their religion and culture left traces in the surviving sources, though Jews were the only legally tolerated religious minority. Meanwhile the series of papal prescriptions issued against mistreatment of the Jews show which types of violence against them existed. There was to be no compulsory baptism of Jews, no extra-judicial violence or deprivation of property against them, they should not be pushed to change their approved customs, they were not to be subject to forced labour, their cemeteries should not be desecrated, no one should dig up their dead to look for money. Our sources also describe cruelties against Jews such as "colaphisation" in Toulouse (tradition to strike a Jew's head on Good Friday)[42]. They were also regarded as the people responsible for Christ's death. Anti-Jewish stories

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[40] See: *O'Callaghan J. F.* History of Medieval Spain. New York, 1975.
[41] See: *Flori J.* Guerre sainte, jihad, croisade. Violence et religion dans le christianisme et l'islam. Paris, 2001.
[42] *Ademarus Cabannensis*. Chronicon, III. 52.

were gradually forged which made them implacable enemies of Christianity. It's a known fact that Crusades resulted in outbursts against the Jews.

**Conclusion**

My work is still in progress but I believe that the data and the considerations which I have presented in this paper are already sufficient to prove my main point. The image of "the other" and the stereotypes of foreign lands and nations reflected in the French texts of the 10th, 11th and the 12th centuries were to a much larger part the product of cultural interaction in real life than it's usually accepted by historians. The impact of learned tradition upon the formation of these images and stereotypes was of course important but in the long run secondary to impressions of contemporaries who in one way or another were actually in some form of contact with representatives of other cultures. True, in the surviving texts of that period these impressions were inevitably interpreted and transformed under the influence of the literary tradition and in compliance with the author's education, beliefs and general world-outlook.