

Thus in the eight hundred seventy sixth year from the lord's incarnation, noble Rollo, forsaking the bed of the River Schelde on the advice of his *fideles*, launched his sails before the ship-bearing winds and came by ship to Jumièges, having traversed the deep where the cerulean whirlpool of the Seine, flowing with its crystal-clear courses and lapping the fragrant grasses of its elevated banks and, going to the open main of the inundating sea, discharges itself, and is often repelled, according to the intervals of the moon, by a more swollen billow of the sea itself. And seeing the monastery of Saint Peter and reckoning the place to be holy and embellished with abodes of monkish habitation, he hesitated to linger there, but steered his ships to the other side of the river, to the chapel of Saint Vedast, and he placed upon the altar of Saint Vedast the body of a certain virgin, Hameltrude by name, which he had carried there with him, and a name from the virgin's name has forever stuck to this chapel. And that place is called at Saint Hameltrude by the residents. Thus the inhabitants of Rouen, poor men and destitute merchants, and the dwellers in that region, hearing that a plentiful multitude of Normans was at Jumièges, came of one mind to Bishop Franco of Rouen, in order to take counsel about what to do. But Franco immediately sent to Rollo, that he might give a guarantee of safety to himself and to those abiding in the district. Truly Rollo, ascertaining that there lingered in the town and in its territory none except a defenceless mass, gave the bishop a guarantee of safety on the strength of his own assurance. And then, pursuing a course of navigation beneficial to himself, he came to Rouen and secured his ships, plentifully furnished with a very large warband, at the gate which is connected to the church of Saint Martin. Moreover, coming down off the ship and surveying the town at a swift pace, he saw its monuments laid in ruins, and large stones torn away from sanctuaries, churches shaken from their foundations and walls smashed on every side, and a small and defenceless band, and he began to be perplexed in spirit. And to fasten his sight in sole contemplation, recalling the vision which he had had beyond the sea.

APOSTROPHE

Oh Rollo, mighty duke and most superior leader,
Through Christ's gift this town will flourish under your leadership,
It will be built at a future time, once the realm has been calmed by peace,
Once the Franks have been devoured by war, and the populace broken.
Behold the mount of the church where you kept seeing yourself rejoice,
Behold here the font of the bath where you were cleansed of leprosy.
This fatherland is to be built by your followers, themselves renewed in the font.
To the peoples in that town you will give laws and alliances
And rights likewise, with the fear of strict penalty.
Marvellously, then, in the coming time of your descendants
Fierce ages will grow tame, wars having been banished,
And ungodly fury, sitting on its arms, will challenge no one
With its cry, the strength of ungodliness having been undone.
Rather, let the fierce wolf graze at the same time in the sheep's field.

(Dudo of St Quentin, *Gesta Normannorum*, Chapter 10: Rollo sees the town of Rouen and determines to settle there in fulfilment of his dream-vision)

The *Gesta Normannorum* was written by Dudo of St. Quentin in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, likely between 996 and 1015.¹ It was initially commissioned by Duke Richard I of Normandy and continued by the patronage of Richard II, his successor, after his death.² The *Gesta Normannorum* is made up of sixty chapters, telling the history of the Norman ducal court. Chapter ten, this particular extract, detailed how Rollo, the first ruler of Normandy, came across Rouen, where he decided to settle and build his court.

In this extract, Dudo describes how Rollo came to Rouen. According to Dudo, Rollo sailed to Jumièges, which is west of Rouen, in 876.³ He came via the Seine, saw the monastery of Saint Peter, but went to the other side of the river to the chapel of Saint Vedast.⁴ There, he placed the body of Hameltrude on the altar, which led to the place being called Saint Hameltrude.⁵ Mentioning this was significant because it showed how the Normans made their mark on the area very early on and further intensified the importance of Norman power in the region.

Next, Dudo wrote about how Rollo offered his protection to the inhabitants of Rouen when they approached their Bishop, who then requested safety for those living in the area when

¹ Felice Lifshitz, Dudo of St. Quentin (c. 965-died before 1043): *Gesta Normannorum*, written btw. 996-1015 [Translation], Fordham University Medieval Sourcebook. Available at <https://origin-rh.web.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/dudu-stquentin-gesta-trans-lifshitz.asp>.

² Benjamin Pohl, 'Poetry, Punctuation and Performance: Was There an Aural Context for Dudo of Saint-Quentin's *Historia Normannorum*?' *Tabularia (Caen)*, no. 16 (2016) 177-216 (p. 179).

³ Dudo of St Quentin, *Gesta Normannorum*, Chapter 10.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

the Normans arrived.⁶ Dudo continued, describing the state of Rouen and mentioning how Rollo went back to his original vision to find clarity.⁷

Finally, Dudo broke out into verse. This apostrophe described the future of the Norman ducal court. He stated that the ‘town will flourish,’ that there will be a time of peace, and that this was the place that Rollo saw in his vision.⁸ While this narrative was flattering towards Rollo, he had died a century before Dudo wrote this piece. Thus, it could be assumed that Dudo’s description of these events was intended to compliment his contemporaries, Rollo’s descendants.

One theme addressed in this source was military power. As mentioned previously, Dudo mentioned Rollo’s ‘very large warband,’⁹ but Dudo expanded further on this idea. He went on to describe the future military victory of the Normans, saying that the realm will be ‘calmed by peace, once the Franks have been devoured by war.’¹⁰ What Dudo described was peacetime because of the fierceness and military might of the Norman dukes. This also played into the panegyric nature of his writing, as writing Rollo, the ancestor of his contemporaries, as powerful insinuated that they were powerful as well.

Another theme that Dudo touched on often was God’s will. When Rollo hesitated at the monastery of Saint Peter, it was due to the holiness of the place.¹¹ As mentioned previously, Dudo also strategically wrote about how Rollo contributed to Saint Hameltrude. He described how the churches in Rouen were ‘shaken from their foundations and walls smashed on every side.’¹² This was mentioned to underscore how Rollo and his followers were to bring God to the region. He called Rouen ‘Christ’s gift’ and said that ‘ungodliness [will be] undone’ by Rollo and

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

the Normans.¹³ Dudo included these because he wanted to display the piety of the Norman dukes, that their rule was God's will. This exemplified royal power and helped fulfil the purpose of his commission.

The final theme in this extract was the vulnerability of the inhabitants that Rollo found in Rouen. Dudo wrote that those who were living in Rouen when Rollo arrived were 'poor men and destitute merchants.'¹⁴ He said they 'came of one mind'¹⁵ to their Bishop, indicating their willingness to be ruled. Dudo mentioned how Rollo saw that these people were 'a defenceless mass,' that the 'monuments laid in ruins.'¹⁶ To further highlight their vulnerability, Dudo described them as 'sheep.'¹⁷ The idea that Rollo had to grant his protection to the inhabitants of Rouen emphasised the power of the Normans while diminishing the autonomy of the inhabitants, therefore asserting Norman authority over the region.

The style in which Dudo wrote this text was significant as well. He wrote a prosimetrum, a text that alternated verse and prose. This style was not very common during the period that Dudo was writing, but a new literary trend that favoured it emerged in Rouen under the rule of Richard I and Richard II.¹⁸ Still, not many works were as prosimetric as Dudo's, resulting in a reception that was considered inventive yet in line with traditional historical and political thought within the Norman ducal court.¹⁹

Another stylistic choice that Dudo chose to make was his commitment to a panegyric. His description of the dukes of Normandy was quite flattering. Rollo was 'noble'²⁰ according to

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Pohl, 'Poetry, Punctuation and Performance', p.179.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.179.

²⁰ Dudo of St Quentin, *Gesta Normannorum*, Chapter 10.

Dudo. He described Rollo's ships as 'plentifully furnished with a very large warband.'²¹ He also addressed Rollo as a 'mighty duke and most superior leader' and even compared him to a wolf.²² This characterisation would have intended to paint Rollo as powerful, well-supplied, and a strong ruler. The panegyric style of this piece also displayed explicit biases, which were essential to keep in mind in its reading.

Dudo has been assumed to have been from nobility of some sort, as, based on his literary works, his education must have been befitting a noble.²³ Dudo's education was highly influenced by literary and historical styles from the late Carolingian Empire.²⁴ With his educational background in mind, one could find the significance in Norman dukes commissioning his work—The dukes were assimilated to a degree within Northern France.

Dudo was a cleric of St. Quentin when he was first commissioned by Richard I. By the time his work was published; he held the title of Dean of St. Quentin.²⁵ Dudo also called himself Chaplain of Duke Richard II in the first few lines of a charter of the latter in 1015.²⁶ Based on the evidence, Dudo was held in high esteem in the court of both Richards and St. Quentin, regardless of his particular title.

This source would have been significant at the time due to its status as a royal-commissioned piece of literature written by someone as respected as Dudo. A text such as this would have influenced how Normans viewed the founding of Normandy in the years that

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

²³ Leah Shopkow, 'The Carolingian World of Dudo of Saint-Quentin, *Journal of Medieval History*, 15 no. 1 (1989) 19-37 (p. 21).

²⁴ Pohl, 'Poetry, Punctuation and Performance, p.179.

²⁵ Lifshitz, Dudo of St. Quentin (c. 965-died before 1043): *Gesta Normannorum*, written btw. 996-1015 [Translation], Fordham University Medieval Sourcebook.

²⁶ *ibid.*

followed its production.²⁷ It was very much an attempt to control the narrative. Other examples of this could be found in similar texts, such as Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks*²⁸ from the sixth century.

After examining the tenth chapter of Dudo of St. Quentin's *Gesta Normannorum*, it was clear that this piece of literature was both a historical account, in light of the definition during the period, and a strategic tool to legitimise the Norman line further. Through the narrative produced by Dudo about Rollo's arrival in Rouen, he displayed themes such as military might, god's favour, and the vulnerability of the inhabitants of the region. All three of these themes work in tandem to reinforce the authority of the Normans. Dudo's use of a panegyric style in combination with a prosimetric form allowed him to glorify past leaders, such as Rollo, while promoting the contemporary and future of Norman rule. He painted the Norman rulers as benevolent, powerful, and divinely ordained.

²⁷ C. Warren Hollister, 'Normandy, France, and the Anglo-Norman Regnum,' *Speculum*, 51 no. 2 (1976) 202-242 (p. 202).

²⁸ Paul Halsall, Gregory of Tours (539-594): *History of the Franks: Books I-X*, Fordham University Medieval Sourcebook. Available at <https://origin-rh.web.fordham.edu/Halsall/basis/gregory-hist.asp>

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