

### Theoderic's Complex Claim to Authority

In the three commissioned works he wrote between c. 1010 and 1022, Theoderic made it clear to his German readership that he was writing to them as a fellow countryman. He spoke their language and was able to rely on his personal experiences when comparing their liturgical and other practices to West Frankish ones. Furthermore, he also knew what aspects of the vocabulary and customs in West Frankish monasteries would sound unfamiliar to them<sup>89</sup>. Consider, for instance, the opening paragraph of the *Illatio*:

*You have demanded, my reverend Father Richard, that I should not delay to explain ... for your convenience, briefly and to the best of my ability, for what reason there is that feast of the most blessed father of the monks Benedict, which in Gaul is celebrated not in a moderate but in a prominent fashion in the days of the Advent of the Lord, in which the monks from East [Francia], like they do during Lent, have the habit of living austerely and of waiting with great vigilance and under the strictest discipline of monastic observance for the birth of the Lord*<sup>90</sup>.

But at the same time, Theoderic also included in these works clear indicators of his intention to be more than a reliable interpreter of foreign cults and customs. Strewn across the three texts are several statements to the effect that he was claiming the authority to instruct his German readers on the superior nature of Fleuriac practices and attitudes, as well as on the need to study these in an unfiltered form and, if possible, imitate them. The prologue to the customary contains what is his most explicit statement on these points:

*Your fatherhood asks me, in accordance with a power that stems from the Rule, to briefly describe ... the customs and observance of the French monasteries in which I declare to have been educated, and more specifically of the abbey of Fleury, which is like the head and the mother abbey of all other*

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89) DAVRIL, Un moine (as in n. 23) p. 101f.

90) Theoderic of Fleury/Trier/Amorbach, *Illatio sancti Benedicti Floriacum* (as in n. 57) p. 219: *Exigis a me, mi Pater Reverende Richarde, quatinus aliquo tibi compendiosae commoditatis stilo, pro modulo ingenii mei, palificare quantocius non differam: quatenam causa existat illius Festivitatis Beatissimi Patris Monachorum Benedicti, quae apud Gallias non mediocriter, sed praecipue celebratur, in diebus Dominici Adventus, in quibus Orientales Monachi, velut in Quadragesima, austerius solent vivere: et sub maxima institutionis Monasticae disciplina, vigilantius Natale Domini expectare.*