

# THE OTHERNESS OF HUNGARIAN NUMADS IN 10<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY WESTERN CHRONICLES

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**Abstract:** *Aim of the study is to highlight the otherness of 10th century Hungarian nomads by analysing a series of medieval chronicles whose authors are leading Western clerics. Our objective is to outline the image of nomads through the filter of the works of European Christian historians. In our approach we started with two research inquiries: How were the Hungarian migrants seen by Western Europeans? What was the impact of the emergence of the Hungarian warriors among the native populations? We propose to investigate written sources, such as chronicles, annals, and to analyse by comparison the obtained results. Therefore, we first turned to discourse analysis, applied to the historical sources selected for the present investigation. At the same time, we aim to identify as many descriptions of Hungarians as possible, which would highlight the viewpoint of Western Europeans towards the attitudes and behaviours of the nomads settled in the Carpathian Basin.*

**Keywords:** *Imagology, Chronography, Identity, Otherness, Migrations*

In recent years, after the migration of large numbers of people from Asia and North Africa, and more recently even from eastern Europe, Ukraine, the average European has created an image of the immigrants either through direct interaction or, more often, through the media, which is generally not positive. Going back even further in time, we can find some similarities between recent migrations and those of the 1st millennium AD, although the recent ones were rather peaceful, unlike those of the distant past. In the early Middle Ages, information circulated much more slowly and mostly orally, and common people often only heard rumours about *wild* and *pagan* migrants, forming an image of them without interacting with those peoples directly.

Nomads were often subject to the prejudices of the peoples they interacted with. Thus, they were often called Scythians, echoing the ideas of Synesius of Cyrene who said around 400 that “*there are no new barbarians; the old Scythians always thinking up new names to deceive the Romans*”<sup>1</sup>. On the same princi-

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<sup>1</sup> Pohl 2018, p. 5.

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ple as the Byzantines, the Huns were often referred to as Scythians in the Carolingian world, and the Avars and Bulgars were confused with the Huns. The same treatment was also applied to the Hungarians, who are mentioned in the chronicles as Scythians, Huns, Avars or Turks. This is not the first time that such confusion has occurred, with the Goths before those mentioned above or even the Slavs sometimes being referred to as Getae. Moreover, the warriors of the Steppes were often compared to the apocalyptic characters Gog and Magog in the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

Several major events of the migration ages have been recorded in chronicles, annals, or medieval diplomas, as well as some of the opinions of the authors of these writings, contributing to the reconstruction of the past. Thus, with the theme proposed for this paper, we intend to create the image that the migrants, called “*newcomers*”<sup>3</sup> by Jaques Le Goff, have sedimented in the European collective memory during the first Christian millennium as a result of their interaction with the native populations. Therefore, we want to find out how the Other was seen by the Christian European, to see how such different populations and cultures interacted, by analysing the Identity-Alterity relationship. We have focused on the Hungarians because they interacted in different ways with the Byzantines (in Eastern Europe) and with the Central and Western European states or peoples, thus becoming a topic of interest for scholars across the European continent. We believe that such research is also necessary to observe how the newcomers were welcomed by Europeans, in a context where cultural, political, and religious differences are evident. The Identity-Alterity relationship therefore comes into play, a phenomenon that naturally occurs in a society where terms such as *acceptance* or *discrimination* were, at the time, unknown.

At the same time, we intend to analyze a world marked by prejudices and stereotypes. Prejudice is formed by the preconceived and unfounded opinions and attitudes that influence the perception, description, and judgement of the Other. Although prejudice is often confused with stereotype, they are different concepts. The former is a moral judgement or attitude, while the latter is a fixed expression of attitude. Most of the time, representations of the Other are influenced by prejudices determined by ethnocentrism or cultural perspective. Therefore, the representation of the Barbarian is marked by prejudices that take shape without direct evidence or links (military, political, commercial, etc.).<sup>4</sup> Stereotype, on the other hand, is a generalisation about a group in which random characteristics are attributed to all its members, regardless of the differences between them. We can therefore say that the stereotype is a standardised

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<sup>2</sup> Pohl 2018, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Le Goff 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Beller 2007a, p. 404.

image of the Other. Although stereotypes are fictitious and distort reality, they nevertheless create problematic realities of their own that resist time and change.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, the aim of this study is to highlight the otherness of the Hungarian migrants from the time of their settlement in the Carpathian Basin at the end of the 9th century until the battle of Lechfeld in 955, which stopped the raids on Western Europe. Thus, we propose to outline an image of the Hungarians through the filter of chronicles whose authors are important Western clerics, starting from several research questions: How were the Hungarian migrants seen by Western Europeans? What was the impact of the emergence of the Hungarian warriors among the native populations? To what extent was the daily life of European communities affected?

Because the medieval imaginary is influenced by power, history and historiography (narrative), and the latter fixes the identity of the Self and the Other in the collective imagination<sup>6</sup>, the main sources used to answer the above questions are chronicles written by Christian prelates, two of whom were contemporaries with the events of a large number of the Hungarian raids and the battle that stopped them. I have thus opted for the work of Flodoard of Rheims, *Annales*<sup>7</sup>, that of Widukind of Corvey, *Res gestae Saxonicae*<sup>8</sup>, and *Chronicon Thietmari Merseburgensis*<sup>9</sup> of Thietmar of Merseburg.

Flodoard of Rheims (894–966) captures in his *Annales* contemporary events (919–966), providing us with a source of great interest for our topic. Thus, he describes historical events in the western kingdom of the Franks, the Ottonian Empire and Italy, the Magyar raids being marked by him in his work (Lotharingia - 919, Italy – 922 and 924, Western France - 926, 937, 951, 954), but also the defeat of the nomads at Lechfeld (955). Thus, we can draw from this work traits of the Hungarians that have become ingrained in the collective memory of Western Europeans because of the military conflicts during the 10th century. Widukind of Corvey (925–973) left to posterity *Res gestae Saxonicae*, a chronicle dedicated to the emperor's daughter Matilda of Quedlinburg, in which events during the reigns of Henry the Bold and Otto I, to whom he was a contemporary, are described. Like most 10th-century chroniclers of Central and Western Europe, Widukind is a learned cleric, who in many instances provides details of interest to our research. Thietmar of Merseburg (975–1018) recounts events of the past, using various sources, to glorify the work of German kings

<sup>5</sup> Beller 2007b, pp. 429–430.

<sup>6</sup> Mesina 2015, p. 37.

<sup>7</sup> Flodoard of Reims 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Warner 2001.

and emperors of the Ottonian dynasty, and among these are the frequent plundering raids of the steppe warriors. Even if Thietmar was not a contemporary of those actions, he takes sources not very far back in time, so we believe that the picture we can draw from analysing his work may be a relevant one.

In order to exploit the sources needed to the full potential for this research and to draw relevant conclusions we will use various research techniques. Thus, discourse analysis will allow us to understand how the steppe warriors were seen by their Christian contemporaries and to sketch an image of the Hungarians reflected in chronicles, annals, etc. So, the discourses of the chroniclers on the migrants targeted in this study are of major importance in our approach, representing the main tool for sketching the image of the nomads. At the same time, we aim to identify as many descriptions of Hungarians as possible, which would highlight the Western Europeans' view of the attitudes and behaviour of nomads settled in the Carpathian Basin.

Through a qualitative analysis we will aim to identify the most relevant information in the analyzed sources, which we will process and compare to reach suggestive conclusions for our research. We also intend to use quantitative analysis to determine the importance given to Hungarians in the chronicles. At the same time, we will compare the results of the quantitative analysis in order to observe the differences in approach between historians of the first millennium, but also to highlight the impact of the Hungarians on Europe. We aim that the research techniques presented above will lead to an imagological approach, and finally to highlight the otherness of Hungarians in the 10th century.

The imagological approach corresponds to the perception of the Other by the Self or through the filters of the Self, and these perceptions are primarily mental, producing images. Images of other peoples, cultures, etc., are the result of the human mind, their way of thinking, and are influenced by individual values and behaviours. People generally perceive the world around them through concrete experiences, but also through preconceptions.<sup>10</sup> Joep Leerssen sees the image as a mental or discursive representation of a person, group, ethnic group or people, containing moral characteristics that often take the form of social aspects. Over time the image of the Other may change, but a new image does not cancel out the old ones, but they accumulate, overlap in several layers that often contradict each other, and images that are not on the surface remain dormant and can always be reactivated.<sup>11</sup>

In order to clarify what an image is, we need to consider the five types: graphic (paintings, sculptures, etc.), optical (mirrors, projections), perceptual (appearances, impressions), mental (dreams, memories, ideas) and verbal (de-

<sup>10</sup> Classen 2020, pp. 20–21.

<sup>11</sup> Leerssen 2007, pp. 342–344.

scriptions, metaphors, etc.), but the origin of national (peoples') typologies lies in the collective memory/imagination. The term "*image*" can be understood as a mental silhouette of the Other, which is determined by characteristics such as family, community, tribe, nation, or race, and which influences the view and behaviour towards the Other. For this reason, cultural differences, whether in language, religion, customs, or mentalities alter images and judgements.<sup>12</sup>

Some images of the Other in native medieval European Christians are: the types of internal strangers (travellers, immigrants, ethnic minority groups - Christian or not); other Christian peoples, neighbouring or not; non-Christian peoples living outside the Christian world, whether known through political, military, commercial or other contacts, or known only from hearsay (Stranger, Neighbour, Pagan). The images in the categories listed may have a fluctuating status in the collective mind of a nation, from friend to foe, and may or may not be expressed in ethnic terms.<sup>13</sup>

One of the most common images in antiquity and the Middle Ages is that of the Barbarian or Savage, a mirror image of peoples considered uncivilized, vulgar, and unmannered from the ethnocentric perspective of a person, community or people who consider themselves superior. Thus, the inequality of the Other has been exposed throughout history through asymmetrical ratios such as Greeks vs. barbarians, civilized vs. savages, culture vs. barbarism. The equation of the Stranger with the Barbarian goes back as far as ancient Greece, where all non-Greek speakers were called "*barbaros*". The meaning was later expanded, being used by the Romans to designate Germanic tribes and other populations outside the empire perceived as uncivilized, and later used by Christian Europeans to identify migrants storming Europe.<sup>14</sup> The Us vs. Them dichotomy is based on ethnic or religious differences such as: peoples of the known world (Asia, Africa, Europe) vs. monstrous races or possible inhabitants of unknown continents (e.g. "*terra antipodum*"); civilized peoples vs. barbarians; Christians vs. non-Christians (heretics or pagans).<sup>15</sup>

We appreciate that the image that a community or population forms of a people or another community is also closely linked to the imaginary of otherness. Thus, Laura Mesina defines the imaginary as an internal and specific world of the collective memory, and information from reality passes through the filter of collective thought and imagination and becomes symbolic representations and images, myths and narrative structures, codes and norms of coexistence -

<sup>12</sup> Beller 2007c, pp. 3–4.

<sup>13</sup> Hoppenbrouwers 2007, pp. 53–54.

<sup>14</sup> Beller 2007d, pp. 266–267.

<sup>15</sup> Hoppenbrouwers 2007, p. 58.

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all of which ultimately have an identity value for the community.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the imaginary and the images that derive from it are part of the collective memory and are influenced by the specific symbols of each community, but also by their myths or the way they interact with each other or with others. At the same time, collective thought has long maintained rituals and symbolic structures, general mentalities, as well as fundamental mythical or historical narratives, inscribed in the material and immaterial heritage.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, Stefan Scherer considers the imaginary to be a fictional production of reality and a way of creating social images, which can be understood as a surplus of reality resulting from the oscillation between individual psychological constructions and their historical and social institutions. Ideas and concepts are this way produced.<sup>18</sup>

In the following lines we aim to extract some features of the Hungarians highlighted in a selection of medieval chronicles. Thus, we have chosen three works by Western clerics, well grounded in the Christian Germanic world, and our aim is to capture how Hungarian warriors are seen by them. At the same time, we intend to highlight the Identity-Otherness relationship, through the prism of cultural differences between the two civilizations in conflict.

In Western sources the Hungarians are first mentioned in 862, when the Franks in the east are attacked by “*ungri*”. The next mention occurs in 881, when the Hungarians fight twice against the Franks as allies of Duke Svatopluk of Moravia. However, in 892, the Hungarians change sides and ally with the Frankish king Arnulf against the Moravians. From 894 onwards, the Hungarian presence in Europe is increasing, and the Hungarians settle in the Carpathian Basin and make more and more frequent raiding forays into the western part of the continent. The most likely cause of the Hungarians moving west and leaving the Lower Danube is the pressure they were under from the attacks of the Pechenegs. At the same time, the conquest of the Pannonian Plain began in 894 as a result of military operations in which they participated with the Byzantines and Franks against the Bulgarians and Moravians. A second wave of Hungarians would arrive in the Carpathian Basin in 895 or 896 after they suffered a double defeat at the hands of the Pechenegs and the Bulgarians of Tsar Simeon.<sup>19</sup>

In the eyes of their contemporaries, whether Byzantine or Western, the Hungarians were a nomadic people par excellence, whose main occupations were war, plunder, and destruction, with identical customs to those of the Huns or Avars. Although other populations were known to undertake pillaging cam-

<sup>16</sup> Mesina 2015, pp. 14–15.

<sup>17</sup> Mesina 2015, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Scherer 2007, pp. 346–347.

<sup>19</sup> Engel 2001, pp. 10–12.

paigns, the Hungarians were considered more ruthless because they were not content with pillaging and burning settlements, like the Vikings, but massacred entire communities, destroying every trace of human activity. Only young women and children escaped with their lives and were taken prisoners and made slaves of the nomads.<sup>20</sup>

As regards the chronicles analysed in this study, we can observe different approaches of the authors to Hungarians and their introduction into history. Thus, Flodoard of Rheims gives a first information about the Hungarians by mentioning an attack on Italy and Lotharingia, without giving details about the attackers, who they are or where they come from.<sup>21</sup> The chronicler probably felt that the warriors of the Carpathian Basin were sufficiently well known to his contemporaries not to insist on their origin. At the same time, he does not treat separately from other events those in which nomads are involved.

On the other hand, Widukind of Corvey, a contemporary of the aforementioned historian, dedicates an entire chapter to the Hungarians, with the title “*Concerning the Hungarians, who are also called Avars*”. We note, therefore, that the Hungarians are called avars, but he goes on to say that “*we now call them Hungarians, a people that is exceptionally brutal in war*”.<sup>22</sup> Thietmar, Bishop of Merseburg, also calls the Hungarians Avars<sup>23</sup>, although at the time of writing the Hungarians had already been settled on the Pannonian Plain for over a century, a confusion of terminology frequently encountered in other chroniclers. It is most likely that the chroniclers of the end of the first millennium and the beginning of the next one had access to similar or even identical sources for the previous centuries, in which the Avars were presented with features similar to those they could identify in the Hungarians, hence the confusion, or it is a matter of prejudice or stereotype. Thietmar’s first mention of the Hungarians is recorded for the year 937, representing their first conflict with Otto I.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the prelate does not provide details about the origin or history of the Hungarians, perhaps because his chronicle is written at a time when the Christian kingdom of Hungary had already been formed, and the focus of his work is on the reigns of German kings and emperors.

Unlike the other two historians, Widukind of Corvey gives us a variant of the origin of the Hungarians, mixing up the peoples who came through the

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<sup>20</sup> Engel 2001, pp. 15–16.

<sup>21</sup> Flodoard of Reims 2011, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> Warner 2001, p. 63.

<sup>24</sup> Warner 2001, pp. 90–91.

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Carpathian Basin, a confusion frequently found in other chroniclers of the first millennium. So, we are told that “*the Avars, as some people believe, are the remainder of the Huns. The Huns derive from the Goths*”. As noted above, the Hungarians were called Avars, so they were seen as descendants of the Huns, which probably makes their image even more fear-inspiring, given the collective mindset that still retained memories of the destruction wrought by the Asian barbarians. Widukind goes on to explain the origins of the Hungarians, claiming that several women were banished by King Gotha, and that they ended up in the Roman province of Moesia and gave birth to children in a marshy area where:

„They lived like wild animals, uncivilized and indomitable, and became exceptionally keen hunters. After many centuries of living there, they were completely unaware of any other part of the world. But it happened that found a doe while hunting and pursued it until, following its lead they crossed through Moetian swamps on a route that heretofore had remained impassible to any man. Once through, they saw cities and fortifications, and a previously unknown race of men.”<sup>25</sup>

We therefore notice prejudices regarding the origins of Hungarians and their way of living. At the same time, consciously or not, the chronicler acknowledges their centuries-old history and agrees with their migration, without knowing the historical details, most likely due to a lack of sources at the time. As for the appearance of the “*savages*”, it was “*horrible*”, the newcomers impressing those they met, looking like “*demons*”. The chronicle tells us that, after the Hungarians initially refrained from “*murder and rapine*”, they succumbed to temptation since no one resisted them, killing many people and sparing no one and nothing. Further on we are told that the raiders returned to their homes with a rich booty, but they returned with their families and all their wealth and began to settle in Pannonia, having defeated the peoples who lived there.<sup>26</sup> We thus see that from the first contact with the Hungarians, the European communities are impressed, even frightened, by the appearance of the nomads, and later are unable to resist the force with which they are attacked.

The epic of the Hungarians continues with some historical and terminological confusion when the chronicler states that they were defeated and taken captive by Charles the Great, and later freed by Arnulf. On the other hand, Widukind confirms the Hungarian raids on Frankish territories:

“The great slaughter and tremendous injuries inflicted by the Hungarians on the Frankish empire are attested by the cities and regions that remain desolate

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<sup>25</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, pp. 28–29.

<sup>26</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, pp. 29–30.

up to present day<sup>27</sup>. Thus, at the time the work was written, the traces of the migratory incursions were visible, like an open wound to the Frankish statehood. The following records report an incursion into Saxony, which was devastated, with terms such as “*great slaughter*”, “*great plunder*”, “*dearth of food*” being used to emphasise the extent to which the attacked territories suffered.<sup>28</sup>

While Thietmar of Merseburg doesn’t give details of the Hungarian raids in the first half of the 10th century, Flodoard of Rheims and Widukind of Corvey insist on the effects of these raids. Thus, the priest of the cathedral of Reims documents the raids of 922 and 924, when the warriors of the Pannonian steppe again attacked Italy, and this time we learn from the chronicler cleric that they did so at the request of King Berengar. On this occasion the Hungarians plundered vast regions and took many common people captive. The town of Pavia suffered greatly, it was left to burn, 44 churches were burned and two priests killed by fire and smoke, and only 200 of the “innumerable multitude of inhabitants of Pavia” survived. The attackers were persuaded to retreat only after receiving “eight measures of silver gathered from the ashes”. Their return journey was marked by new events, after they attacked Cisalpine Gaul, from which they were repulsed, and in the same year (924) the Hungarians were struck by an epidemic (plague), from which few survived.<sup>29</sup>

So, the pagans, allied with a Christian king, attack the Italian peninsula, destroying places of worship and killing clerics, but also a lot of ordinary people - “*oppida*”. Instead, they are defeated by the Franks and, above all, punished by God who sends a merciless epidemic upon them. However, in this case, it is hard to give credence to the historian’s account of the number of survivors among the Hungarians because only two years later the nomads attack again, but he probably intended to emphasise the severity of the punishment they received. The chronicler shows us some harbingers of doom, such as an eclipse of the moon on Easter Saturday, and for fear of another attack holy relics are brought to the cathedral of Reims and these will contribute to multiple miracles.<sup>30</sup> We see, therefore, that people, even educated ones such as the author of the chronicle under review, are influenced by superstition and religion, which together form a Christian religious imaginary, influenced paradoxically also by pagan practices or ideas.

Widukind also dwells on the events of 924, but his attention turns to Saxony, where towns, monasteries and fortifications are burned, the whole region

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<sup>27</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, p. 30.

<sup>28</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, pp. 30–31.

<sup>29</sup> Flodoard of Reims 2011, p. 5, 11–12.

<sup>30</sup> Flodoard of Reims 2011, p. 15.

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destroyed, and therefore the historian cleric chooses not to give more details, so as not to “*repeat our calamities*”, appearing, in the tone of the times, to be superstitious, but also fearful. The difficult situation was overcome after a Hungarian leader was captured, and negotiations by Henry I and gifts led to a nine-year peace agreement,<sup>31</sup> which the king would use to strengthen his army<sup>32</sup>.

The strained relations between the two powers are again highlighted after the nine years of peace, when the king decides to face the “*ancient enemy*” on the battlefield. To underline the importance of the moment, Widukind reproduces a speech by the king to all the people in which the enemy are called “*barbarians*” or “*greedy*” and he suggests that his subjects fight so that they no longer have to give gifts to the Hungarians. In return the people pledge support against “*this most vicious of peoples*”.<sup>33</sup> As a result, the perceived gifts of tribute cease to be offered, provoking a new attack by the Hungarians. So, they invade Thuringia, but are met by a strong army, defeated, their leaders are killed in battle, and “*some were overwhelmed by hunger, others were destroyed by the cold, still others were killed or captured. As was fitting for such men, they died miserably*”<sup>34</sup>. Another Hungarian army is scattered at the sight of the heavily equipped knights and the royal banner depicting the Archangel Michael, and the rich spoils of the Hungarians are recovered, as well as the prisoners taken by them. After this victory, in gratitude for the divine help he received, Henry I gave the poor the gifts he had previously sent to the barbarians in the east.<sup>35</sup> We see, therefore, that the Hungarians are seen as an old barbaric enemy, who was defeated with the help of God, who is thanked after the victory through the gifts given to the poor. At the same time, the Hungarians are portrayed in a negative way, finally getting what they deserve from the Christian point of view, namely a miserable death.

A record from the year 927 shows the fear that the Hungarians inspired among the Westerners, who fled their homes *en masse* following a false rumour of a Hungarian attack.<sup>36</sup> Rumours of a possible Hungarian raid were therefore capable of provoking deep fears and population movements. But the next attack mentioned by Flodoard is not until 933 (after the nine years of peace), when the warriors of the steppes attack both Italy and across the Rhine, a subject also insisted on by Widukind of Corvey. The Hungarians are defeated by

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<sup>31</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, pp. 45–46.

<sup>32</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, p. 49.

<sup>33</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, pp. 54–55.

<sup>34</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, p. 55.

<sup>35</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, pp. 56–57.

<sup>36</sup> Flodoard of Reims 2011, p. 17.

King Henry I at Merseburg, and the victory is presented as a categorical one: “He cut down all of them, almost exterminating them. It is said that 36000 were killed, not including those who drowned in the river or those taken alive”.<sup>37</sup> Once again we allow ourselves to believe that the author’s subjectivity has led to some exaggerations, both in terms of the extermination of the Hungarians and the number of those who died in battle. The figures put forward by the clergyman would not have allowed the Hungarians to organize new attacks in the following years. The historian probably uses this technique to increase the prestige of the Christian triumph over the pagans. However, the Hungarian incursions continue, and in 935 Burgundy is attacked, “raging with plunderings, fire and murder”, but after the attackers learn that an enemy force is about to confront them, they choose to turn once more to Italy.<sup>38</sup> The sources thus indicate the many targets and directions of attack of the Hungarians, and the nomads’ fleeting defeats fail to stop them permanently, but at best force them to avoid certain territories.

An important event reported by Widukind is the coronation of Otto I, who is given a sword with which to defeat “all of the enemies of Christ, barbarians, and evil Christians” and is given the divine mission to protect all Christians.<sup>39</sup> So we can say that this *arming* of the king is symbolic, foreshadowing what is to come, victories against barbarians and Christian enemies, in the name of the Cross. According to the chronicler, in the following years Otto achieves several victories over the Hungarians, which will convince the latter not to attack Saxony for the next 30 years, the invading armies being destroyed.<sup>40</sup>

Thietmar of Merseburg quickly skips over the episode of Otto I’s coronation, when he informs us that “the Hungarians, once enemies of his father but long pacified, again invaded but quickly retreated”<sup>41</sup> in February 937, shortly after Otto came to the throne. In contrast, from Flodoard’s perspective, the events of 937 were to be marked by “miracles” after an ominous sign appeared in the sky: “A part of the sky seemed to be burning and afterwards there was an invasion of Francia by the Magyars from that direction, with villae and fields waste, houses and basilicas burned and, large number of captives led away.” However, miracles of divinity were to intervene on behalf of the Christians. For example, the church of St. Macre in Fismes could not be burnt down by the attackers, although they used hay to light the fire, and in the church of St. Basle a Hungarian’s hand stuck to the altar when he tried to climb it, much to the amazement of his

<sup>37</sup> Flodoard of Reims 2011, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> Flodoard of Reims 2011, p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, p. 63.

<sup>40</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, pp. 75–76.

<sup>41</sup> Warner 2001, pp. 90–91.

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countrymen, who had to chip away at the altar stone to free the captive.<sup>42</sup> Thus, according to the chronicler, the divinity intervenes to protect the faithful and, above all, the house of the Lord from the destruction of the pagans.

Other miracles have as main actors the servants of God, as was the case of the priest Adalgarius, to whom, being a prisoner of the Hungarians, a woman in the same situation as him told him that she had a vision that he would be able to free himself after the bonds on his hands and feet were loosened. Even though the vision came true, the priest was afraid to escape, and the miracle was repeated the next night when the escape took place. Once safe, Adalgarius tells those he meets about another miracle he had heard about from another prisoner. So, the monk Hucbaldus, who had fallen into the hands of the enemy, the pagans had tried to cut him down with their swords, to pierce him with arrows as he stood naked amid a crowd, defenceless, but not a trace of those attempts was visible on his skin. In the end, the Hungarians concluded that the monk was a god.<sup>43</sup> Thus, once again divine miracles are invoked which stop the pagans from their destruction and even convince them that they are dealing with the work of God, as was the case with the monk Hucbaldus.

All three chroniclers whose works are the subject of our analysis will insist on the events of 954-955, whose main hero is Otto I, who opposes the Hungarians in battle. Thus Otto, “*by the grace of God*” king, had to face the Hungarians again, this time allied with the Bavarians. So, the Christian leader assembles his army to attack the “*bitter*” enemy, who avoids a decisive confrontation but plunders the whole of Franconia, inflicting heavy losses even on his own allies. To avoid further destruction, the king receives a Hungarian delegation in Worms on Palm Sunday, to whom he offers large quantities of gold and silver to leave his territories, an offer accepted by the nomads, who head for Gaul and then their own territories by a different route.<sup>44</sup> Soon the king’s enemies, his son-in-law, his son and the Hungarians, are once again allied against him, and the historical cleric gives Otto’s speech to mobilise his loyalists:

*“He has turned my one son against me. Even this could have borne if they had not introduced the enemies of God and man into his business. They have left my kingdom desolate, captured or killed my people, destroyed my fortresses, burned down my churches and murdered my priests. The roads are now flooded with blood. The enemy of Christ now returns home [...] I cannot imagine what kind of evil, what kind of perfidy is still to come.”*<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Flodoard of Reims 2011, p. 29.

<sup>43</sup> Flodoard of Reims 2011, pp. 29–30.

<sup>44</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, pp. 115–116.

<sup>45</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, p. 117.

Henry, the king's brother, takes the floor and tells everyone that he would have preferred any other "*calamity or adversity*" to the alliance between Christians and barbarians.<sup>46</sup> So the Hungarians are seen as the fiercest enemy of all Christendom and thus of God, responsible for immense destruction and at the same time perfidious in their alliances. At the same time, the great nobles of the kingdom, like the king's brother, prefer natural disasters or to face any other enemy than the Hungarians.

The Bishop of Merseburg tells us that what follows is based on "*personal knowledge and what I have learned from books*"<sup>47</sup>. Thietmar considers the Hungarians extremely brave to invade Franconia, a territory far from their homeland, but also very well populated, a region they completely devastated. At the same time, the clergyman considers the Hungarian uprising a scourge inflicted by God, a divine punishment caused by the sins of the Christians, who, once faced with danger, show cowardice and flee from the invaders.<sup>48</sup> "*Finally, moved by the merits of the just and the cries of the wretched, God drove away the treacherous horde*"<sup>49</sup>, the chronicler tells us, invoking the divinity once again, and the king obtains a truce.

Hostilities resume, the Hungarians attack again, and King Otto I calls his men to arms with the promise that they will be rewarded by God in the next world. The first military clash of the campaign brings victory for the Hungarians, who are characterised as clever, following a manoeuvre to envelop the king's rearguard, which they quickly defeat, with many German soldiers killed and looted. The King sends reinforcements who succeed in freeing "*the captives and all the booty from the throats of the ravaging wolves*", taking their revenge on the battlefield.<sup>50</sup> Thietmar next shows a pious King Otto, who confesses and prays to Christ for a victory over the Hungarians, then "*the king took up his shield and the holy lance and led his warriors against the enemy forces, annihilating and pursuing them till evening, when they fled. [...] All Christendom [...] received such a great gift of divine piety*"<sup>51</sup>, giving thanks and prayers to the Lord, and thus the great victory at Lechfeld is marked.

We note from the above that the main actor invoked by the Bishop of Merseburg is God, who is responsible both for the defeats of Christians, who are punished by divinity for their sins, and for the victories, which are a gift

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<sup>46</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, p. 117.

<sup>47</sup> Warner 2001, p. 97.

<sup>48</sup> Warner 2001, pp. 96–97.

<sup>49</sup> Warner 2001, p. 97.

<sup>50</sup> Warner 2001, pp. 97–98.

<sup>51</sup> Warner 2001, pp. 98–99.

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of God, given to the entire Christendom, not just to the king or the Germans. At the same time, the chronicler, in his manner of exposition, considers Otto I and his army to be the defenders of all Christians. Thus, the Christian identity of the king and his army is opposed to the otherness of the pagan Hungarians, who, although they are considered brave and intelligent, at the same time show cruelty and treachery and are compared to wolves. On the one hand, the Hungarians are attributed special warrior qualities, perhaps also in order to overemphasise the value of the Germans' victories, and on the other they are portrayed in a negative light in terms of their moral and human traits, which tend to become, in the collective mind, those of pagans.

After some brief records for the years 950-951, the canon of Rheims captures the Hungarian incursion in 954, following an agreement with Duke Conrad of Lotharingia, targeting the fiefs of Ragenarius of Hainault and Bruno of Cologne, but the raid also extended to the Frankish kingdom, Burgundy and Italy.<sup>52</sup> The following year the German King Otto I defeats the Hungarians at Lechfeld, putting an end to their raids in the centre and west of the continent. The chronicler tells us that Otto "*cut down the Magyars, almost annihilating them*"<sup>53</sup>. If on other occasions the historian has marched on the annihilation of the Hungarians without it happening, this time the victory at Lechfeld was to change the historical course of the people of the Pannonian Plain. In addition, Flodoard helps to shape the image of the hero of Christianity for the future emperor.

Therefore, after analyzing the Annals of Flodoard of Rheims, we see that the Hungarians are depicted as merciless, since they kill countless people, including clerics, burn towns and churches, those who escape alive are taken into captivity, most likely to become slaves. By their actions, the Hungarians inspire fear in Westerners, a feeling that gives rise to superstitions, which invoke divine force. On the other hand, the attacks of the steppe warriors are seen as a just punishment for the sins of the Christians, but it is also God who intervenes on behalf of his flock, protecting them with his miracles, by striking down the Hungarians with a cruel epidemic. The punishments of divinity can also be justified by the fact that sometimes the Hungarians attack, being called upon by the Christians themselves against the Christians, and the victories won by the latter are often exaggerated, putting the results of the battles in a better light. Thus, we see that the work of the cleric of Rheims portrays a negative image of pagan barbarians, which is set in antithesis to Christian values, and in the end good wins.

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<sup>52</sup> Flodoard of Reims 2011, p. 58.

<sup>53</sup> Flodoard of Reims 2011, p. 61.

Widukind de Corvey gives more details on how the western raids of the Hungarians come to an end, which we consider natural given that in his work he aims to highlight the most important events in which the Saxons are involved. Thus, we learn that, after the Steppe warriors check the situation in Saxony, they prepare for a new invasion, and Otto takes the necessary measures for defence. The tactics the king prepares consider the battle strategy of the Hungarians whose arrows have “*deadly results*”. At the same time, the banner representing the Archangel Michael was to bring them the divine protection they needed in this war: “*The victory-bringing angel, surrounded by a dense formation, marched in front of the legion*”.<sup>54</sup> The first clash is a balanced one, with the Hungarians successfully hitting the rearguard of the Christian army, and the soldiers led by Duke Conrad finally succeed in recovering the prisoners and booty from the enemy. However, the whole country is gripped by forebodings that induce fear among the population. There are reports of extremely powerful storms hitting churches, monks and nuns being struck by lightning and dying, and “*many other things happened at that time, about which it is horrible to speak, so we will pass over them*”.<sup>55</sup> We see, therefore, that the Christians’ military operations are accompanied by rituals invoking heavenly help (the flag), but also by superstitions and fears.

In the preamble to the decisive battle (Lechfeld, 955) Widukind presents us with a speech by the German king in which the Christian identity of his subjects and the otherness of the pagans is again emphasized: “*they lack the aid of God. Audacity is their only protection. For us, it is the hope of divine shelter*”.<sup>56</sup> Thus, Christians are opposed to pagans, who can only be helped by their warlike qualities, but who lack heavenly support, the sacred opposed to the profane. Divinity is invoked once again when the king’s army goes into battle and the leader raises the “*holy lance*”, which is supposed to be part of the spear thrust between the ribs of Jesus Christ. Victory was to be on the side of the Christians who defeated “*this savage people*”, and the Hungarians were killed, burned, and others drowned, few escaping with their lives according to the chronicler. Three important leaders of the Hungarians are captured and executed by hanging, “*a bad death, which they deserved*”.<sup>57</sup> Once again we note certain superstitions and invocation of divinity, and the outcome of the decisive battle is seen as the king’s merit, especially in terms of his piety. At the same time, the “*savage*” enemy deserved this defeat as divine punishment.

<sup>54</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, pp. 124–125.

<sup>55</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, pp. 125–126.

<sup>56</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, p. 127.

<sup>57</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, pp. 127–128.

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Widukind believes that this victory brought Otto the glory he deserved, but also the title of Emperor, a rank to which he is elevated by his army. At the same time the chronicler writes that “*no king in the two hundred years before him had celebrated a victory of this size*”.<sup>58</sup> Here the removal of the Hungarian threat is considered a crucial moment by contemporaries of those events, and this success is of high historical importance, which shows the level of pressure to which the Hungarians subjected Europe. When Otto I dies, the chronicler tells us that “*he had conquered with arms his arrogant enemies, namely the Avars, Saracens, and Danes*”.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, in the “*Deeds of the Saxons*” the Hungarians are presented as brutal, savage, like demons, considered “*the ancient enemy*”, a term also used to designate the devil<sup>60</sup>. At the same time, they are responsible for crimes and violence that are unheard of, which can only be done by enemies of Christianity, and therefore of God. Instead, in order to defeat them, Christians invoke God’s support, often guided by superstition and various interpretable signs.

In analysing the sources for this study, we recall that Frank Ankersmit compares the role of the historian to that of a psychoanalyst, starting from the idea that just as a psychoanalyst discovers the true identity (personality) of an individual according to how he presents his memories of the past, so a researcher of history discovers the true face of a historical period according to how it is presented today. At the same time, historians are psychoanalysts of the times in which they live and write their work, being directly influenced by the way cultural currents shape the past. Thus, fears, expectations or desires of the present are brought to the surface by the way history, or the past, is presented.<sup>61</sup> If we follow this theory, we can say that the authors of the chronicles or annals of the first Christian millennium were influenced by the days in which they lived, and therefore also by the Church, whose authority was growing, and whose exponents they were, and by the monarchs, whose power was stabilising. The way in which chroniclers have portrayed the events and characters of history is often subjective, and the images they represent are therefore distorted by a particular worldview or culture. Thus, the image of the barbarian, the pagan, the savage is portrayed through the eyes of the European Christian, who lives, believes, and feels differently from the newcomer.

Therefore, the image of Hungarians is marked by prejudices and stereotypes, which is also evident from the fact that they are often called avaricious, as to the Christian European all nomads from the eastern continent seem to be the

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<sup>58</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, p. 129.

<sup>59</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, p. 152.

<sup>60</sup> Widukind of Corvey 2014, p. 110.

<sup>61</sup> Ankersmit 2001, p. 1.

same: brutal, savage, enemies of God, etc. At the same time, they were seen as merciless, fear-inspiring, vicious, often requiring tribute to give up their attacks, and were compared to wolf packs, and often the suffering they inflicted was seen as punishment from God. Also, this image is justified by the impact that the Hungarian raids had on the native populations, as they caused famine and desolation as a result of the massacres. On numerous occasions monasteries and churches fell prey to these destructive attacks, which explains why they were compared by chroniclers to demons. On the other hand, Europeans often invoked divine support and divine miracles, observing miraculous signs in nature or in everyday life. Certainly, daily life was greatly affected by the damage caused by the Hungarian incursions, with a town like Pavia left with only 200 inhabitants after a bloody attack. Another indicator of the impact of this fighting is the fear inspired in Europeans by even mere rumours of another attack.

We can conclude that the pagan barbarians are placed in antithesis with the pious Christians, highlighting the Identity-Alterity relationship, and in the end Good triumphs over Evil. Thus, the image of the Barbarian, savage, and pagan, is outlined, but also his Otherness, set in antithesis to the Identity of the civilized Christian.

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