By the 10th century Central Europe, and the territory of present Poland in particular, was practically not mentioned in Western European writing—which confirms that little interest had been taken in this area and little knowledge possessed on this subject. The few texts which somehow engaged with this region, on the basis of the trace acquaintance with the erudition of classical Romans, applied the general term ‘Germania’ to this part of the Continent as if not noticing any ethnic transformations that had taken place there since antiquity and the Slavization of vast European territories in the West as far as the estuary of the Elbe, the upper Main, the summits of the Alps and the Adriatic shores. Central European territories and peoples seem to have only been noticed in works by early medieval intellectuals on account of mentioning military matters, documenting evangelizing activities, and partially, perhaps, as the reflection of the interests of merchants—in general, however, the feelings of alienation, also aversion and even hostility towards the Slavs are detectable in these texts. This attitude is understandable to a certain degree if one considers cultural and religious differences between the inhabitants of the Frankish territories, who for a long time had been Christianized and acquainted, at least to a point, with the tradition of the Mediterranean civilization, and the strangers from the East.

In the first part of our study we will attempt to identify the most characteristic traits in the description of the negative image of a Slav, presented

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both in Frankish sources and those slightly later ones, which can be named German. We will also observe how the elites of the emerging Piast state, which assumed growing importance after the mid 10th century, tried to break unpleasant associations that were attached to them and their people in order to be able to effectively cooperate with an important, in their view, political partner—the Ottonian empire.

Such co-operation was mutually advantageous; thus some circles in the empire of the Liudolfing dynasty accepted the new allies, whereas some others opposed this arrangement absolutely—a serious task to perform in this chapter will be to single out the ideological stances of both groups and to scrutinize their elements.

Our considerations will produce, let us hope, an interesting survey of the issues which on the outskirts of the Western civilization of the 10th century determined what sort of people, with their own personality features or at least the ones ascribed to them by their political partners, could be considered as ‘one of us’ and culturally ‘adopted’. Also what were the obstacles in the way of this process—even considering the perspective of significant political gains, which required co-operation. We will investigate all this following the life of the first historic duke of Poland, Mieszko, who in the oldest German sources was called the ruler of some unknown ‘barbarians’, only to deserve later, towards the end of his life, to be provided with the respectful title of ‘a European duke’.

### 1.1 Mieszko as ‘King of the North’—rex barbarorum

The oldest extant mentions of Mieszko I date back to the 960s. Their author’s name is Widukind, a monk of the monastery in Corvey, who more-or-less at the same time wrote his work concerning the history of the Saxons Res gestae saxonicae sive annalium libri tres [The Three Books of the Deeds of the Saxons], which he began from the legendary origins of this people until his day. The work was completed in 967 or 968, when it was dedicated to Mathilda, the young daughter of Otto I, then newly appointed abbess of Quedlinburg. However, in some manuscripts, the history was continued down to 973 (add-