

Introduction

The year 1000 or, to be more precise, the era which it symbolizes,¹ has proved to be a constant source of fascination for French historians for nearly 200 years. Initially, the source of their fascination lay in *les terreurs de l'an Mil*, the fear of the end of the world, which people allegedly felt at the turn of the millennium. Theologians living in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, guided by a rather vague passage from the Book of the Revelation (20:1–10), were inclined to believe that the second coming of Christ would happen one thousand years after his Birth (or Death and Resurrection),² Bearing this in mind, in the 19th century and later some historians closely studied sources from the 10th and 11th centuries, trying to find any traces of an apocalyptic mood. There were even medievalists claiming that people living at the turn of the millennium were convinced that doomsday was near and, as a result, became almost hysterical.³

Unlike their 19th-century predecessors, modern French historians usually reject such views, leaving the fascination with the “terrors of the year 1000” to their American and German colleagues. Nevertheless, the year 1000 has remained an important topic for French medievalists for more fundamental reasons than before. The discussion is now focused on the nature and speed of changes leading from the institutions of the Carolingian era to the institutions of the High Middle Ages.⁴ According to one view, which was universally accepted until recently, around 1000 there came a profound breakthrough, which some even describe as a revolution: old, that is, Carolingian, socio-political institutions, based on the public authority of counts acting on behalf of the

1 A pan-European panorama of the century ending in 1000 has recently been presented in Henryk Samsonowicz, *“Długi wiek X”. Z dziejów powstawania Europy*, Mała Biblioteka PTPN 8 (Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 2002). I should also mention a work which forty years ago provided an excellent summary of the state of research into the topic in question at the time: *L'Europe aux IX^e–XI^e siècles. Aux origines des Etats nationaux*, ed. Tadeusz Manteuffel and Aleksander Gieysztor (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1968).

2 Richard Allen Landes, “Millenarismus absconditus: L’historiographie augustinienne et le millénarisme du Haut Moyen Age jusqu’en l’an Mil,” *Le Moyen Age* 98 (1992): 355–377.

3 Among the vast literature on the subject, see e.g. Richard Allen Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and the Deceits of History. Ademar of Chabannes 989–1034* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1995); Sylvain Gougenheim, *Les fausses terreurs de l’an Mil* ([Paris]: Picard, 1999).

4 Christian Lauranson-Rosaz, “Le débat sur la ‘mutation féodale’: état de la question,” in *Europe around the Year 1000*, ed. Przemysław Urbańczyk (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2001), 11–40.

king, disintegrated completely and were replaced by feudal relations, that is, ties governed by private law. However, today this concept is firmly rejected by some scholars. They believe that there was no radical breakthrough at the time; at most we can speak of a slow evolution. In addition, it is doubtful whether changes were indeed as profound as some researchers believe. Carolingian institutions might have been only slightly modified. The stakes in this dispute are high. Its results will determine whether one can talk of feudalism (in the classical meaning of the word) at all in the history of Europe.

Historians dealing with the history of Poland face no less important, albeit completely different questions. The 10th century was a period when tribal structures in the regions of the rivers Oder and Vistula River were becoming a thing of the past and were being replaced by a new type of political association. These processes led to the emergence of the Polish state. Socio-political transformations accompanied religious and cultural changes associated with the Christianization of the country. It is thus fully understandable that for Polish medievalists the year 1000 is a symbol of processes and events of the highest importance. We can even say that it is more than a symbol, given the fact that this was the year of the Summit of Gniezno, which represented a genuine closure of the first stage of the transformations. That is why the rich and varied literature dealing with the beginnings of the Piast state is full of articles and monographs devoted to the reconstruction and interpretation of the events in Gniezno. Their number has considerably increased in recent years, a phenomenon associated to a large extent with the celebrations of the anniversary of St. Adalbert's death (997) and the 1000th anniversary of the Congress.⁵ The celebrations were all the more solemn given the fact that their significance was also political. The events from ten centuries back were seen as anticipating the contemporary unification of Europe—a process particularly important for statesmen and intellectual elites.

5 The latest findings are summed up in the following publications: *Ziemie polskie w X w. i ich znaczenie w kształtowaniu się nowej mapy Europy*, ed. Henryk Samsonowicz (Kraków: Universitas, 2000); Jerzy Strzelczyk, "Naukowe pokłosie śmierci św. Wojciecha," *Nasza Przeszłość* 98 (2002): 5–97; idem, "Naukowe pokłosie milenium zjazdu gnieźnieńskiego," *Roczniki Historyczne* 68 (2002): 157–174; Sławomir Gawlas, "Der hl. Adalbert als Landespatron und die frühe Nationenbildung bei den Polen," in *Polen und Deutschland vor 1000 Jahren. Die Berliner Tagung über den "Akt von Gnesen"*, ed. Michael Borgolte, Europa im Mittelalter. Abhandlungen und Beiträge zur historischen Komparatistik 5 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2002), 193–233; Gerard Labuda, "Posłowie," in idem, *Święty Wojciech biskup-męczennik. Patron Polski, Czech i Węgier*, 2nd edition (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego 2004), 315–331.