Historical Writing, Historical Thinking and Historical Consciousness in the Middle Ages[1]

Escrita Histórica, Pensamento Histórico e Consciência Histórica na Idade Média

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Resumo

O artigo tenta dar uma visão geral sobre alguns aspectos importantes e abordagens recentes do pensamento e da escrita históricos na alta Idade Média. Baseado no reconhecimento de que a historiografia não é apenas a narração dos fatos, mas reflete os conceitos e percepções do autor, é antes de tudo um reflexo do conceito de história do autor e uma expressão de sua consciência histórica. Sob estas premissas, o artigo examina (1) o significado medieval de história, (2) a relevância do passado, e (3) a função de recordar o passado. Ênfase é colocada sobre uma análise do que "passado" realmente significava para os escritores medievais. Não havia clara fronteira entre "passado" e "presente", sendo ambos não só fortemente relacionados uns aos outros, mas tendo o passado também de grande importância para o presente. Assim, por um lado, havia um enorme interesse na história e uma profunda confiança de que a história poderia (e deveria) ser interpretada, porque era a revelação divina. A consciência histórica medieval era completamente orientada para o passado (como modelo), que, contudo, era percebido e medido por padrões modernos: o interesse medieval no passado estava enraizado no presente e era inspirado por interesses e intenções atuais: historiografia era uma "busca" do passado para o presente. Assim, cronologicamente, o passado era claramente incorporado em uma seqüência temporal, e era considerado importante para se referir às origens remotas ou mesmo míticas de certo sujeito histórico, enquanto que, em seu conteúdo, o passado adquiriu o caráter de uma "edificação atemporal" e foi usado (e abusado) para fins do presente. O resultado foi uma constante "presença do passado" e, mais ainda, uma "atualidade do passado". Esta não é uma contradição: a referência ao passado para fins atuais só foi possível porque o passado havia adquirido um caráter de respeito e legitimador, não menos com o propósito de criticar o presente – e crônicas foram escritas muitas vezes em momentos de crise.

Palavras-chave: historiografia medieval; consciência histórica; passado e presente

Abstract

The article tries to give an overview over some prominent aspects and recent approaches on historical thinking and writing in the early and high Middle Ages. Being based on the recognition that historiography is not just narration of facts, but reflects the author's concepts and perceptions, it is first of all a mirror of the author's concept of history and expression of his historical consciousness. Under these premises, the article examines (1) the medieval meaning of history, (2) the relevance of the past, and (3) the function of remembering the past. Particular emphasis is laid on an analysis of what „past" actually meant for medieval writers. There was no clear „border-line" between „past" and „present", both being not only strongly related to each other, but the past had also a strong relevance for the present. Thus, on the one hand, there was an enormous interest in history and a deep trust that history could be (and should be) interpreted, because it was divine revelation. The medieval historical consciousness was completely orientated towards the past (as a model), which, however, was perceived and measured by modern standards: the medieval interest in the past was rooted in the present and inspired by current interests and intentions: historiography was a "search" for the past for the sake of the present. Thus, chronologically, the past was clearly embedded in a sequence of time, and it was considered to be important to refer to the remote or even mythical origins of one's historical subject, whereas, by its contents, the past acquired the character of a „timeless edification" and was used (and abused) for present purposes. The result was a constant "presence of the past" and, even more, a "topicality of the past". This is not a contradiction: a reference to the past for present purposes was only possible because the past had acquired a respected and legitimizing character, not least for the purpose of criticising the present – and chronicles were often enough written in times of crisis.

Keywords: medieval historiography; historical consciousness; past and present

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[1] I wish to thank the organizers, Fatima Regina Fernandes and Renan Frighetto, for inviting me to give this paper on August 27th 2010 at Paraná State University. I have left it in its oral form and provided just some major references. Since this paper summarizes my own long-time research, it is inevitable that I refer to and quote from my own publications. I apologize for this drawback.

Historical writing, historical thinking and historical consciousness is a subject which has fascinated me for a long time and that I have dealt with from various perspectives. Of course, in a short paper, I can only raise some questions on this vast theme. For the present purpose, I thought it might be better not to deal just with one particular aspect which might be worth being discussed among medievalists, but rather give a more or less extensive survey of what is worthwhile discussing on this topic. So I shall raise some general questions and illustrate them by particular cases which, due to my own specialization, are restricted to the Early and High Middle Ages.

Let me begin with a few remarks on historiography itself.[2] Medieval historiography has always been a primary source for medievalists who, since the 19th century, have been equally aware of the difficulties which derive from the (political) bias of its authors. Since then, however, or, strictly speaking, during the last decades, our approach towards historiography has considerably changed and been extended. A medieval chronicler has not just written down „facts" (although he himself may have believed that he has), but has handed down a personal „construction" of his own perception of the historical process.[3] He does not report what actually happened, but how he believed that it happened, or how he imagined what happened or even how he wanted to see (or wanted his readers to believe) that it happened. Consequently, a chronicle is not so much a means for analyzing historical facts (although we, of course, *also* continue to use it for that purpose), but, in the first place, it gives us access to the perception and thinking of its author. Knowing that there is (and always will be) a gap between the chronicler's representation and the "real" history about which he is writing (and into which we are inquiring), but also due to our modern interest in anthropological perspectives, such as human thinking and perceiving, historians today lay much more emphasis on the analysis not only of the historical past but of its historiographical representation as such (not on history as facts, but on history as "memory").[4] In other words, we have become interested in the chronicler himself, his narrative and perception. For recent medievalists, the historiographer is not just a source, that is, a medium to get to the events and structures he is writing about, but has become interesting as an author, as a person, as a "concerned

[2] From the vast research on medieval historiography, I mention just a few titles: Benoït LACROIX, *L'historien au Moyen Âge*: Institut d'Études Médiévales, Montréal-Paris 1971; Bernard GUENÉE, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval:* Aubier Montaigne, Paris 1980; Franz-Josef SCHMALE, *Funktion und Formen mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreibung. Eine Einführung*: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1985 (repr. 1993); Deborah Mauskopf DELIYANNIS (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages*: Brill, Leiden-Boston 2003; Nancy PARTNER, *Writing Medieval History*, London-New York: Hodder Education, 2005. Reference may also be given to the meanwhile five volumes by Erik KOOPER (ed.), *The Medieval Chronicle*, Amsterdam-New York: Editions Rodopi B.V, 1999-2008.

[3] Cf. Gabrielle M. SPIEGEL, *The Past as Text. The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography,* Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997; Johannes LAUDAGE (ed.), *Von Fakten und Fiktionen. Mittelalterliche Geschichtsdarstellungen und ihre kritische Aufarbeitung*, Cologne-Weimar-Vienna: Böhlau, 2003.

[4] Cf. Rosamond McKITTERICK, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

observer" of his world and as a "time witness" (of his epoch). The medieval perception of the world has become an important perspective and has always been my own favourite subject which I have tried to discuss theoretically and methodically as well as analyzing special authors and questions. In German I call it „*Vorstellungsgeschichte*", history of conceptions (as one might translate this untranslatable expression).[5]

Although we can investigate any kind of perception (and any objects), the most obvious aspect to inquire into when dealing with historiography seems to be to analyze the historical thinking and the historical consciousness of an author. Since all historiography is "reflection of discourses on the past"[6] and is written with the intention of memorizing the past for the present and for posterity, it is inevitably based on a certain concept of history (*Geschichtsbild*) and a certain historical consciousness (*Geschichtsbewusstsein*). There is no historiography without these elements. The first term covers a mental act of organizing the amorphous mass of historical information and knowledge into a more or less systematic process. The second term needs more explication. In my opinion it seems to be the wrong approach to believe, like some medievalists do, that medieval authors had no historical consciousness, or that they did not know any adequate criticism of the sources. What is meant is, in fact, that the authors did not have our modern consciousness: for example, they were not aware of the "historicity" of facts and their dependence on the epoch and on the historical context. Medieval history, therefore, was not historical science, but historiography. So far we can agree. This difference, however, is not what I am interested in. If these assumptions are true at all (and nowadays, we are aware of our own inadequacy in obtaining objectivity), this does not mean that medieval authors had no historical consciousness at all. It was rather just different. So what I prefer to do is to take terms like "historical consciousness" (or "state", or "society") as wide categories in order to ask what their specific character in the (Early) Middle Ages was. For example, medieval epics (such as the "*Nibelungenlied*" or the epics of Chrétien de Troyes or Hartmann of Aue) are an excellent indicator for the existence of a medieval historical consciousness, because they almost always adapt a historical plot (and this is significant), although they present it as if it happened in their own time (or at any time) – and this is also significant. I shall come back to that. So what I mean by "historical consciousness" is first, having a (certain) sense of history (and historicity) and of historical change, second, having a (theoretical and practical) concept of history as a process, and, third, having a (present) interest in history (which, for its part, results from ideological convictions and functions, for example, a search for a –

[5] Cf. Hans-Werner GOETZ, *Vorstellungsgeschichte. Gesammelte Schriften zu Wahrnehmungen, Deutungen und Vorstellungen im Mittelalter*, ed. Anna AURAST, Simon ELLING, Bele FREUDENBERG, Anja LUTZ und Steffen PATZOLD, Bochum: Verlag Dr. Dieter Winkler, 2007.

[6] Cf. SCHMALE, *Funktion* (n. 2), pp. 55 ff: „Reflektierter Umgang mit der Vergangenheit".

historical – identity), or, in other words: it includes a "topicality" of the past.[7] The historical consciousness is responsible for a close relation between the present and the past which is significant for all historiography which, indeed, is "re-presentation" of the past (in the double sense of this word). I have called this "the presence of the past".[8] "Historiography reveals the past as if it were present and it estimates the future by imagining it from the past", as Henry of Huntingdon writes in his "Historia Anglorum" in the 12th century.[9] To analyze the historical consciousness of former times (such as the Middle Ages), however, is an important subject, because historical thinking is an anthropological factor. There is no human being without history and – almost – no civilization without historical memory.

In the following I shall deal (exemplarily) with just three aspects (or questions):
– First, what does "history" mean in the Middle Ages and what are the criteria and methods of medieval chroniclers?
– Second, what does history (or the past) mean to them?
– Third, what is the function of their remembering the past?

1. What does "history" (and what does "historiography") mean in the Middle Ages?

It seems worthwhile to clarify (briefly) the meaning of history first, because this is a term used quite differently nowadays than in the Middle Ages. (Modern) Roman languages have only one word for "history": "history" (or, in Portuguese, "historia") whereas German has two words: "*Geschichte*" and "*Historie*", which makes quite clear that there are (at least) two (or three) inherent meanings of "history": the historical development and the historical narrative. (Moreover, nowadays, the sentence "I am studying history" can either mean "I am studying *the* history" or "I am studying history as a subject".) In the Middle Ages, *historia* does not mean "history" in this sense. According to the famous definition of Isidore of Seville in his widespread "Etymologies", "History is the narration of facts by which we learn what happened in the past".[10] This brief definition (which was repeated again and again throughout the Middle Ages) tells us much about

[7] For a more detailed discussion, see GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewußtsein im hohen Mittelalter* (Orbis mediaevalis. Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters 1), Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999, pp. 13-31.

[8] Hans-Werner GOETZ, *Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit im früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Geschichts-bewußtsein*,in: Historische Zeitschrift 255, 1992, pp. 61-97.

[9] Henry of Huntingdon, Historia Anglorum. The History of the English people prol., ed. Diana GREENWAY, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 4: *Historia igitur preterita quasi presentia uisui representat, futura ex preteritis imaginando diiudicat.*

[10] Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae sive Origines 1,41, ed. William LINDSAY, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911 (repr. 2008), p. 81: *Historia est narratio rei gestae per quam ea, quae in praeterito facta sunt, dinoscuntur.*

the medieval concept of history: First, *historia* is *not* history, but the narration of history, or, in other words, *historia* is historiography. Second, it deals, however, with historical events (*res gestae*), that is, *real* events (*res* – and not just "words") which distinguishes it from fiction: historical events are "facts". Third, it deals with facts that happened in the past (*in praeterito*). Finally, it makes us acquainted with the past: we learn history from *historia*, from historiography. This closes the circle: *Historia*, as historiography, is the result of a kind of medieval historian's work inquiring into the past which informs others (the readers) about this past. Thus, in the Middle Ages, there is a strong cohesion between history, historical studies and historiography (all included in the same word).

And there is still another relation: *historia* is (not by chance) also the literal understanding of the Bible in exegesis (as opposed to an allegorical, that is figurative, and a tropological, that is, moralizing interpretation).[11] When, in the 12th century, Hugh of Saint Victor, uses Isidore's definition of (secular) history to explain the exegetical method (and mind that he does so in his chronicle),[12] this is a strong indication of the theological understanding of history: The Bible, in medieval thinking, is not just the "holy scripture" about God (and his people), but it is believed to have been written by God himself and thus to be divine revelation.[13] History, however, *is* biblical history and its continuation. So it also reveals the deeds and will of God. In Hugh's concept, history leads us from words and voices to their meaning (or significance) and thus to the "real things" (*res*). It has to do with time and comprises the "series of events" (*series rerum gestarum*). From here, Hugh continues, allegory leads to "mystical deeds", and tropology leads to "how to do mystical deeds". History (and allegory) derive from knowledge (*scire*, or "what should be known"), whereas tropology derives from "imitation" and leads to "what should be done".[14] All this has to be seen as a whole.

This concept of history, however, has strong effects on the understanding of a historian's (or historiographer's) work and its result: historiography as a literary genre. It would be completely misleading to say that medieval chronicles had no concept or no principles. According to Hugh of

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11 For the medieval theory of exegesis, cf. Henri DE LUBAC, *Exégèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, 2 vols., Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1959-1964.

12 Hugh of Saint Victor, De tribus maximis circumstantiis gestorum prol., ed. William M. GREEN, in: Speculum 18, 1943, p. 491: *Hystoria est rerum gestarum narratio per primam litterae significationem expressa.*

13 There are many works about the Bible in the Middle Ages, for example, La Bibbia nell'alto Medioevo (SSCI 10), Spoleto: CISAM, 1963 ; Willem LOURDAUX / Daniel VERHELST (eds.), *The Bible and Medieval Culture* (Mediaevalia Lovaniensia I 7), Leuven : Leuven University Press, 1979; Beryl SMALLEY, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, ^{3}1986 (^{1}1941); Pierre RICHÉ / Guy LOBRICHON (eds.), *Le Moyen Âge et la Bible* (Bible de tous les temps 4), Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1984; Guy LOBRICHON, *La Bible au Moyen Âge* (Les Médiévistes français 3), Paris: Picard, 2003. Cf. now also Oliver RAMONAT, *Lesarten der Schöpfung. Moses als Autor der Genesis im Mittelalter* (Wissenskultur und gesellschaftlicher Wandel, ed. by the Forschungskolleg 435, vol. 36), Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010.

14 Hugh of Saint-Victor, De sacramentis Christianae fidei prol. 4 f, Migne PL 176, col. 184 f; Id., Didascalicon 5,2, ed. Charles H. BUTTIMER, Washington: Catholic University Press 1939, p. 96.

Saint Victor, history was determined by four factors: fact (*negotium*), man (or "person": *persona*), space (*locus*), and time (*tempus*).[15] Medieval historiography, however, was not so much the result of research but of search: it was compiled from other (and often from many) sources. Nevertheless, every chronicle was a new work which had its own characteristics. The author mainly had three possibilities to be original, namely choice, order and interpretation of the "facts" he gathered.[16] These aspects reveal his intentions. When, for example, Bernold of Saint-Blasien (a Gregorian reformer and chronicler at the end of the 11th century) rewrote and continued the chronicle of Herman of Reichenau, he selected those facts that dealt with papacy and Church reform, thus turning Herman's "imperial chronicle" into a "papal chronicle", by beginning with Christ (and Saint Peter, the first bishop of Rome), numbering the popes and emphasizing their deeds in contrast to the decay of the Empire because of the incompetence of the kings.[17] It is significant that medieval authors were not content with continuing the old chronicles which they appreciated, but they always desired to conceive their own, new versions to meet their needs, and it is these intentions that should interest us. Thus, while former historians asked what was new in Bernold and regarded those reports which they did not know already from Herman (as the better source), we should rather ask what is different in Bernold and why it is so.

The chronicler's main principles were recalled in many prefaces to chronicles.[18] These were: his object, namely the facts (*res gesta*) from which he selected those which seemed memorable to him (*memorabilia gesta*); then, a retrospective into the past; further, his wish to hand down the memory of the past to future generations (although he actually was writing for his contemporaries); next, time and chronological order, and, finally, the duty to report only that which was true. Truth is a very important criterion that was often mentioned, no matter how many lies were actually handed down and with what bias the author was writing. Facts, time and truth (or credibility) were the decisive criteria of medieval authors. With these criteria, however, the medieval author was well aware (and eager to emphasize) that historiography was *not* fiction, although he included remote reports that (in our perspective) were myths and fables: Just as in medieval eyes the Creation was not a "myth", but a fact, so also was the legendary foundation of Rome by Romulus and Remus or Alexander's search for paradise at the eastern end of the world (where the Middle Ages supposed its site to be).

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15 Hugh of Saint-Victor, De tribus maximis circumstantiis gestorum (n. 12), p. 491; Id., Didascalicon 6,3 (n. 14), pp. 113

16 Cf. Gert MELVILLE, *System und Diachronie. Untersuchungen zur theoretischen Grundlegung geschichtsschreiberischer Praxis im Mittelalter*, in: Historisches Jahrbuch 95, 1975, pp. 33-67 and 308-341; GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung* (n. 7), pp. 141 ff.

17 Cf. GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung* (n. 7), pp. 250-258.

18 Cf. ibid., pp. 146-159.

In this sense, historiography had several functions:[19] It rendered knowledge about the past, about the "deeds of God", it memorized past events (in order to prevent oblivion), gave moral examples (for imitation), had a practical benefit (as an instruction for government and policies), was at the same time edification *and* entertainment[20] and it praised one's own institution. Medieval historiography, therefore, was practical (without lacking theory), it was political (there was no interest in social history or anthropology), it was universal history (even church chronicles or urban chronicles tended to integrate their institution and its beginnings into universal history). Thus it was also institutional history:[21] this was not so much "the Church", as one might think, or Christianity as a whole, but, within a Christian society, rather various parts of it: the kingdom, particular churches or monasteries, later on also noble families, cities, or territories. Last but not least, medieval historiography was, of course, integrated into the basic convictions about God's plan for the salvation of mankind: it was "a history of salvation". Of course, this is a fact that has been known for a long time, but we can add that it is already founded in the medieval (theological) concept of "history" and in the exegetical understanding of historiography. History is subject to time, and time is subject to the earth (whereas God, the angels and life after death are eternal). Consequently, all history has a goal, namely its end, and is moving directly towards this aim.

There are, of course, chronicles in which the intention is to interpret the whole history in the light of Christian theology. One of these (early) chronicles is Orosius in the early 5th century, a student of Saint Augustine, who tries to show that Roman history has become much more fortunate in Christian times.[22] Another is Otto of Freising in the 12th century, who interprets the whole history in the light of Augustine's theory of the two "states" (the "City of God" and the "City of the Devil").[23] Both chronicles were not written "by chance": In the 5th century, it was necessary to provide a Christian system of history. In the 12th century, it was necessary to find explanations for the great changes of the so-called Investiture Contest when Emperor and Pope became enemies and "State" and "Church" did not work together any more in perfect unity. (In fact, it was only then that people learned to distinguish between both, state and church.)

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19 LACROIX, *L'historien* (n. 2), pp. 133-207; SCHMALE, *Funktion* (n. 2), pp. 143-164; GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung* (n. 7), pp. 130 ff.

20 Cf. the significant title of the book by Nancy F. PARTNER, *Serious Entertainments. The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England*, Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

21 Cf. GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung* (n. 7), pp. 336-378.

22 Orosius, Historiae adversum paganos, ed. Carl ZANGEMEISTER (CSEL 5), Vienna 1882. Cf. Hans-Werner GOETZ, *Die Geschichtstheologie des Orosius*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980; Eugenio CORSINI, *Introduzione alle* Storie *di Orosio*, Torino: G. Giappichelli, 1968; Benoït LACROIX, *Orose et ses idées*, Montréal-Paris: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1965.

23 Otto of Freising, Chronicon, ed. Adolf HOFMEISTER, MGH SSrG 45, 1912. Cf. Hans-Werner GOETZ, *Das Geschichtsbild Ottos von Freising. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Vorstellungswelt und zur Geschichte des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Cologne, Vienna: Böhlau, 1984.

Certainly, chronicles like Orosius's or Otto of Freising's remain an exception. In the meantime, it was not necessary to find new systems of interpreting history in a new way or create a new theology of history. Nevertheless, God was present everywhere: He is the Creator, the Governor and the Judge of the world, and he is reigning over his Creation according to a predestined plan.[24] Even in chronicles that seem to be very political and secular, or abound in stories of power and cruelty, like the "Histories" of Gregory of Tours about the Frankish kingdoms at the end of the 6th century, God is almost always present.[25] Significantly, Gregory begins his chronicle with a Creed (and not just the well-known Nicaean Creed, but one that interprets the Nicaean Creed according to the Catholic belief in Trinity, clearly directed against the Arian heresy).[26] Gregory, therefore, is a good example of what I want to emphasize. He believes in a providential plan by which God is reigning over history (concentrating on Creation, the Fall and Redemption, all three of which are seen in close connection). God protects "his people" (that is, in a religious sense, the Christians, and, in a political sense, the Franks) against their enemies (as, in a famous episode, he granted Clovis a victory over the Alamans as soon as the pagan Frankish king promised to be baptized).[27] God proves his existence and government by his interventions and miracles (and, beside his Histories, Gregory has handed down a lot of miracle stories) and he warns his people by these same miracles and by his prophecies. It may be disturbing, but, in fact, it is an integral part of his concept of history that Gregory scorns fortune tellers (who are not inspired by God himself), but strongly believes in celestial prophecies. When a woman had predicted the death of a king, he does not believe her, but goes to Church to open the Bible in order to find out whether the verse he opened "by chance" (but not really by chance) would predict something about the king or about his son who usurped his throne.[28]

Above all, although mankind would be judged in the Last Judgment, God is already constantly judging misdeeds in this world, particularly when the secular courts turned out to be ineffective. Gregory's histories are filled with divine judgments (or "ordeals"). Thus a priest who rebelled against a bishop to become bishop himself died during a banquet (inappropriately celebrated even before his election) and, moreover, his death was predicted in a servant's dream.[29] When a queen poisoned the king's son from his first marriage (in order to warrant the succession of

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24 Forthcoming: Hans-Werner GOETZ, *Gott und die Welt. Religiöse Vorstellungswelten des frühen und hohen Mittelalters*, vol. 1,1: *Das Gottesbild*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011.

25 For Gregory's theological concept, cf. Martin HEINZELMANN, *Gregor von Tours (538-594). „Zehn Bücher Geschichte". Historiographie und Gesellschaftskonzept im 6. Jahrhundert*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994, particularly pp. 136-167.

26 Gregory of Tours, Historiae 1 praef., ed. Bruno KRUSCH, MGH SS rer. Mer. 1, 1937-1951, pp. 3 ff.

27 Ibid. 2,30, pp. 75 f.

28 Ibid. 5,14, p. 212.

29 Ibid. 2,23, pp. 68 f.

her own son), she lost her son "by the judgment of God".[30] There are many stories like this in Gregory's "Histories". Even more, people were expecting and relying on divine judgments. When an apparent son of King Chlothar I, Gundowald, rebelled against the king, but finally was left by his own followers and seized by the king's officers, he raised his hands and eyes to heaven and said, "Eternal judge and true avenger of innocence, God, from whom derives all justice [...], to you I entrust my case and I beg you to rush over for revenge on those who have surrendered me, who am innocent, into the hands of my adversaries". His wish was fulfilled (although this rebelling prince equally died).[31]

In the 12th century, historiography "systematized" the theology of history, by emphasizing, for example, in a kind of exegetical historiography, that history was divided into six ages (so the sixth age, beginning with Christ's Incarnation, must be the last one) or into four great realms. Here, equally, when Rome, according to the prophecy of the prophet Daniel in the exegetical interpretation of Saint Jerome, was the fourth and last empire, people must still live in the Roman Empire which, meanwhile, had been "transferred", first to the Greeks, then to the Franks, and finally to the Germans.[32] Or they believed that history, like the sun, rose in the East (Babylon) and ended in the West, the "Occident". All this is widely known, but nevertheless it is very significant in characterizing the medieval way of historical thinking. Instead of expanding on this point, I would like to turn now to my second aspect:

2. The Concept of the Past in Medieval Historiography

A first point may be the question what "past" actually meant for medieval writers. Although the past played an important part, there is (almost) no term corresponding to our term "past", or, rather, there is a term, *praeteritum*, which, however, was seldom used in this sense but meant "last year", referring to a past that had only just "passed". And there is no medieval definition of the "past". (There is only the famous definition of Saint Augustine that the only real time is the present, which, however, does not really exist, because as soon as it arrives it immediately becomes past in the next moment.[33]) That is why, in a recent article, I tried to find out the medieval perception of "the past" (which, astonishingly enough, has never been done before).[34] I can only summarize some

30 Ibid. 4,25, p. 156.
31 Ibid. 7,38, p. 360.
32 Cf. Werner GOEZ, *Translatio Imperii. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Geschichtsdenkens und der politischen Theorien im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1958.
33 Augustinus, Confessiones 11,20 (27), ed. Lucas VERHEIJEN (CCL 27) Turnhout: Brepols, 1981, p. 207.
34 Hans-Werner GOETZ, *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Mittelalterliche Wahrnehmungs- und Deutungsmuster am Beispiel der Vorstellungen der Zeiten in der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Historiographie*, in: Hartmut BLEUMER / Hans-Werner GOETZ / Steffen PATZOLD / Bruno REUDENBACH (eds.), Zwischen Wort und

of the results here in a few sentences. For lack of a clear term, we can only grasp the medieval perception of "past" indirectly, for example, by temporal expressions, such as "formerly", "at that time" or "once" or just "old" (*vetus*) or "ancient" (*antiquus*). Viewing all this evidence together, it seems impossible to say where the past begins and where it ends: it could mean something very remote, but also something that happened just recently. Obviously, the time in between is not decisive. Decisive is rather the subject (or content), the fact that something does not exist any more (in this sense) in the present. In the meantime, therefore, there had been a change. (That is why "then" and "now" are very often contrasted.) This could refer to a past kingdom, or a past office, or a past title (for example, when the present "emperor" still was a "king"), but it was still the same person so, in spite of this change, the past could continue until the present as well, or have repercussions on the present; it could mean "being past" or "still being valid". The same applies to the term "old". Ancient buildings could be venerable as well as dilapidated objects of decay (and yet worthy of conservation). So past things (or events) were normally esteemed, although not everything which was old was worth being admired. This left some scope for interpretation. Such observations may seem rather vague, but it is significant for the medieval understanding of the past as a "relative" (or relational) thing being always related to the present (while at the same time being distinguished from it): by comparing past and present events (Orosius, for example, does this constantly), by stressing continuity, by restoring decayed objects, or by contrasting an ideal past with a declining present. Thus it sheds light on my other aspect: the relevance of the past.

It is an obvious fact (and will become clearer by my following examples) that medieval authors regarded the past not only as being something very important, but as a kind of "authority". An old custom had the same legal validity as a law. Moreover, medieval chroniclers had a developed consciousness of a historic nature of the world. "He who does not look back to the origins will not discern the future," Saint Augustine had taught.[35] This attitude explains the widespread appreciation of history and historical writing during the Middle Ages. It also explains the huge number of historiographical works and manuscripts that survived, the variety and development of historiographical genres and the distribution of texts: while most so-called "contemporary chronicles", which are esteemed by modern historians, were barely copied in the Middle Ages and are often preserved in no more than just one or two manuscripts, histories of the past were often widespread,[36] above all the short chronicles ("*Imago mundi*"): The "Historiae adversum paganus" of Orosius have been handed down to us in 107 manuscripts, the chronicle of

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Bild. Wahrnehmungen und Deutungen im Mittelalter, ed., Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2010, pp. 157-202.

35 Augustine, De civitate Dei 7,7, ed. Bernhard DOMBART and Alfons KALB, Leipzig: Teubner, 1928/29, p. 283: *In omni enim motu actionis suae qui non respicit initium non prospicit finem.*

36 Cf. GUENEE, *Histoire* (n. 2), pp. 248-274.

Jerome in 63, the 'Imago mundi' of Honorius in 39 manuscripts from the 12th and 13th centuries alone, the late medieval "Flores temporum" in 120 manuscripts (and, of course, many other manuscripts which existed have been lost). So our estimation of medieval historiography seems completely different from that of medieval people themselves who were much more interested in past events than in their own present. Also (what is hardly known) the majority of records of saints' lives are dealing with past saints and not with those who have recently died.[37]

3. The medieval historical consciousness

Three (or rather four) aspects characterize the medieval historical consciousness: First, it had a (very particular) sense of historicity; second, it had a consciousness of the present that was orientated towards the *past*, but, third, this was at the same time a consciousness of the past completely orientated towards (or according to) the *present.* Finally, fourth, it may be added that this was equally a historical consciousness orientated towards the future (although I am not entering into this point here). The most famous example is the chronicle of Otto of Freising who ends his work with an eighth book on the – eschatological – future by collecting all – biblical, exegetical and philosophical indications about the end of time. So even eschatology could become a part of chronicles. I shall deal with the first three aspects to illuminate the relation of past and present in medieval historiography.

a. A sense of historicity

Medieval authors were aware of at least four important factors: that history consisted of "facts" (and not of "fiction");[38] that it was strictly tied to time and meant constant change and development (which, in those times, of course, was seen as a political development); that history had a sense; and, therefore, that history (or facts) should be interpreted (to find out this sense). This made it worthwhile investigating the past.

Nevertheless, we observe an ambiguous relation towards time.[39] On the one hand, we find a perception of historical (political) change (for example, the rise and fall of kingdoms) and observe

[37] Cf. Hans-Werner GOETZ, *Vergangenheitswahrnehmung, Vergangenheitsgebrauch und Geschichtssymbolismus in der Geschichtsschreibung der Karolingerzeit*, in: Ideologie e pratiche del reimpiego nell'alto medioevo (Settimane distudio 46), Spoleto: CISAM, 1999, pp. 177-225, particularly pp. 197 f.

[38] Cf. GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung* (n. 7), pp. 134-159.

[39] Cf. Hans-Werner GOETZ, *The Concept of Time in the Historiography of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, in: Gerd ALTHOFF / Johannes FRIED / Patrick J. GEARY (eds.), Medieval Concepts of the Past. Ritual, Memory, Historiography (Publications of the German Historical Institute), Washington-Cambridge: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002, pp. 139-165.

great efforts to find out the exact chronology, by establishing chronological tables, an annalistic order, giving several dates for important facts or making chronology visible: Hermann of Reichenau noted the years of the incarnation (Anno Domini) on the left margin of the page, whereas on the right margin he noted the names of the kings or emperors with the duration of their reign so that the events were framed by this chronology**.** Frutolf of Michelsberg presented his chronicle even in the form of chronological tables: the columns name the single kingdoms of the epoch (the biblical history being placed in the first column) and contain the year of the rule of the single kings. A new king is mentioned on the margin and the number I (his first year of reign) as well as the first letter of his name stand out in red. The kings of the great realms were numbered. In Christian times, Frutolf followed the incarnation era (even when there was no event to be entered), adding the year of the king's reign on the outer margin. When a new king took office, he added furthermore the era from the beginning of Rome (*ab Urbe condita*).

On the other hand, medieval historical thinking is characterized by a sort of "timelessness": it lacked an understanding of a structural alterity and individuality of historical epochs, by emphasizing continuities, immediate comparability and structural similarities. It was not the "pastness of the past" that was of interest, as Janet Coleman says, but a "timeless edification".[40] Medieval pictures, therefore, were never portraits; people did not wear the livery of their epoch, but were shown in contemporary dress. In the chronicle of Otto of Freising we find illuminations representing the important "stages" in history, for example the transfers of power to new realms and dynasties. So Augustus, Charlemagne and Otto I represent three of these major changes in history; nevertheless, the three emperors look identical and wear the same regalia (Augustus, for example, does not bear a diadem, but a crown, not a toga, but a medieval coronation dress held together by a fibula)**.** So the various persons can never be recognized by their appearance, but only by the titles or texts which explain the pictures. However, Otto's drawings demonstrate neither ignorance nor negligence, but are an expression of a figurative historical consciousness which stresses the continuity of the Roman Empire, while at the same time this empire has been transferred to new realms and dynasties (this is the famous doctrine of the *translatio imperii* converted here into pictorial representation).[41] All this seems rather anachronistic in our eyes: In medieval chronicles, for example, Roman forts become medieval castles, Germanic peoples become Germans; Charlemagne was not only a great emperor, but later on also regarded as a knight and a crusader to

[40] Janet COLEMAN, *Ancient and Medieval Memories. Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 294 and 324.

[41] Cf. Walther LAMMERS, *Ein universales Geschichtsbild der Stauferzeit in Miniaturen. Der Bilderkreis zur Chronik Ottos von Freising im Jenenser Codex Bose q. 6*, in: Alteuropa und die moderne Gesellschaft. Festschrift Otto Brunner, Göttingen 1963, pp. 170-214 (repr. ID., Vestigia mediaevalia. Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur mittelalterlichen Historiographie, Landes- und Kirchengeschichte, Wiesbaden: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979, pp. 45-87).

the Holy Land (long before the crusades began).[42] For medieval writers and readers, however, this was not anachronism, but direct expression of the sense of the past. The authors realized historical changes, but integrated them into the framework of continuity. This relation made it possible, and even desirable, to constantly compare past and present events (which could also be related to each other by typology and symbolism, former events serving as "symbols" or "types" of their later fulfilment). For the same reason, contemporary affairs or situations could be described with words borrowed from ancient authors and the names of ancient peoples were used for modern ones if they were seen in an immediate sequence (thus, the Hungarians were still called, and seen as, Huns).

b. Historical consciousness orientated towards the past

When chroniclers turned to the past, it was because the past was considered to be important. Paul the Deacon wrote his history of the Lombards when their kingdom no longer existed (but was conquered by Charlemagne)[43] and he might have conceived it as a continuation of Roman history, about which he had written another chronicle before, his "Historia Romana".[44] In fact, all his (three) chronicles[45] are histories of the past (and in writing about the past, Paul turned out to be very "normal"). It may also be considered significant that Paul does not end his history of the Lombards with their last king, Desiderius, but with Liutprand, the last ideal king. Frechulf of Lisieux even ended his universal chronicle when the power of Romans and Goths shifted to Franks and Lombards.[46]

A very important aspect is the fact that chroniclers started with the very beginning (of their subject). "He who knows the source (or spring)," Walter of Marchthal wrote, "will easier find and pursue the courses of its river."[47] However, they were not only searching for the origins, but sought to find them with preference in a very remote past. These origins were often enough "invented" (if not by the chroniclers themselves, then by a long tradition, which is all the same when looking for the historical consciousness). "Inventing the past", however, means in itself that it seemed to be

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42 Cf. Bernd BASTERT (ed.), *Karl der Große in den europäischen Literaturen des Mittelalters. Konstruktion eines Mythos*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004; Matthew GABRIELE / Jace STUCKEY (eds.), *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages. Power, Faith, and Crusade*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

43 Paulus Diaconus, Historia Langobardorum, ed. Ludwig BETHMANN and Georg WAITZ, MGH SS rer. Lang., Hanover 1878, pp. 12-187.

44 Paulus Diaconus, Historia Romana, ed. Hermann DROYSEN, MGH SS rer. Germ. 49, Hanover, 1879.

45 His third work is the Gesta episcoporum Mettensium, ed. Georg H. PERTZ, MGH SS 2, Hanover 1829, pp. 260-270.

46 Frechulf of Lisieux, Chronicon, ed. Migne PL 106, col. 915-1258; ed. Michael I. ALLEN, *Frechulfi Lexouiensis episcopi Opera omnia*. 2 vols. (Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaeualis 169-169A), Turnhout: Brepols, 2002.

47 Historia monasterii Marchtelanensis prol., ed. J.A. GIEFEL, Vierteljahrshefte für Landesgeschichte 13, 1890 (Württembergische Geschichtsquellen 4), p. 5: *cognito fonte, facilius rivulos eiusdem inveniamus.*

extremely important to *have* a long history and a remote past! One of the most significant examples for this feature is, of course, the fact that universal chronicles begin with the Creation. In the Early Middle Ages, nearly all Germanic peoples derived their origins from (very) ancient peoples (whereas none of these peoples thought or knew that they were "Germanic", which is indeed a historical construction of the Renaissance and, again, of German nationalism of the 19th century). So, according to Fredegar, the Franks believed that their ancestors had come from Troy (just as, according to Vergil, the Romans had).[48] By this construction, the Franks made themselves "brothers" of the Romans (and thus overcame the fact that they only succeeded the ("falling") Roman Empire in Late Antiquity: It was considered much more important to be as old as the Romans than to draw one's self-awareness from their victory over the Romans. Other peoples invented similar origins.[49] This was not only continued throughout the Middle Ages, but writers even tried to surpass their sources. According to the Gesta Treverorum, the chronicle of Trier, a son of the first Assyrian king Ninus named Trebetas was expelled by his stepmother Semiramis and came to the river Moselle to establish a city and realm here (his name, Trebetas, was seen as a proof that he must be the founder of Trier, Treveri).[50] Consequently, the history of Trier was perceived as being much older than Roman history (and the Roman buildings – still existing today –, such as the famous Porta Nigra, the "Black Portal", are attributed to this mythical figure Trebetas). Moreover, according to the same chronicle, the city was founded in the seventh year of Abraham (thus giving it a biblical parallel). A second origin of Trier was Christian: The author of the *Gesta*, like so many others, believed that the bishopric was established by a follower of Saint Peter, Eucharius, whereas, in fact, Gaul had not been Christianized before the 3rd century. There are numerous examples like this. To mention only one more: The city of Merseburg, a bishopric since Otto I (in 968), is interpreted as the "City of Mars" (the Roman god of war) and imputed to Caesar by the episcopal chronicle of this city.[51] The question, however, is: Why did they do this?, which leads us to our last aspect:

48 Fredegar, Chronicon 2,4 ff, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, MGH SS rer. Merov. 2, Hanover, 1888, pp. 45 ff; ibid. 3,9, p. 94.

49 For the Origines gentium, cf. Alheydis PLASSMANN, *Origo gentis. Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen* (Orbis mediaevalis. Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters 7), Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006; Magali COUMERT, *Origines des peuples. Les récits du Haut Moyen Âge occidental (550-850)*, Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2007.

50 Gesta Treverorum 1 ff, ed. Georg WAITZ, MGH SS 8, Hanover, 1848, pp. 130 ff.

51 Annales Magdeburgenses a. 938, ed. Georg H. PERTZ, MGH SS 16, Hanover, 1859, p. 143.

c. The topicality of the historical consciousness

In fact, the consciousness of the past was rooted in and strictly orientated towards the present. In most (or many) cases, the reference to the past served current or topical aims.[52] This is not a contradiction: a reference to the past for present purposes was only possible if the past was respected and had gained a legitimizing character; thus, it presupposes a historical consciousness (of the past). Nevertheless, the past was not (only) an end in itself, but used for present purposes. The authors did not just "write" history, but they used (and also "abused") it with certain aims and purposes, not only to explain, but also to justify the present. The ancient origins were emphasized in order to maintain (or, more often, regain) a pre-eminence (which had been lost in the meantime – or sometimes even never existed). The "origin legend" of Trier that has already been mentioned, for example, served to claim that Trier was the oldest of the three "Rhenish" archbishoprics (Trier, Cologne, and Mainz),[53] and it is significant that it did not seem sufficient that Trier actually was the oldest see, but that the chronicler transferred its origins (as I have mentioned) into a dim and distant past. This has to be seen, however, against the background that the three archbishops competed for priority, and in the 12th century, Trier had already distinctly fallen behind the others. So the chronicle tried to compensate this loss. When, in the 1060s, Adam of Bremen complemented his chronicle of the archbishops of Hamburg by a fourth book on the ethnography and Christianization of Scandinavia, he did so against the historical background that the claim of Hamburg to be archbishopric for all Scandinavia had been increasingly threatened (*if* this superiority had ever existed at all in the past) – and a few decades later, in 1104, the foundation of the archbishopric in Lund in Denmark did indeed mean ecclesiastical independence for Scandinavia.

A famous (although complicated) case for "national" self-awareness is Geoffrey of Monmouth's "Historia regum Britanniae" (the basis for the literary and vernacular epics on King Arthur). Like the other "origines gentium", Geoffrey defers the beginning of the Britons to a certain Brutus who (again) came from Troy and founded London.[54] The enormous success of this chronicle, which is handed down in 217 manuscripts, reveals the broad impact of such thinking (and it is not by chance that from such a tradition even nowadays England is still called "Britain"). Thus, Britain refers not to the Anglo-Saxons, but to the Britons before them and to the huge realm of King Arthur, which, at the same time, means: to a far remote, but also to a Christian past (in comparison

52 Cf. GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung* (n. 7), pp. 243-409.

53 Cf. Egon BOSHOF, *Köln, Mainz, Trier – Die Auseinandersetzung um die Spitzenstellung im deutschen Episkopat in ottonisch-salischer Zeit*, in: Jahrbuch des Kölnischen Geschichtsvereins 49, 1978, pp. 19-48.

54 Cf. Francis INGLEDEW, *The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth's* Historia regum Britanniae*,* in: Speculum 69, 1994, pp. 665-704. For the topicality of Geoffrey's report see Julia CRICK, *Geoffrey of Monmouth, Prophecy and History*, in: Journal of Medieval History 18, 1992, pp. 357-371.

with the pagan Anglo-Saxons). Geoffrey's History is a legitimization of the British population, but also of the English people directed against the Anglo-Norman conquerors since William I (and his conquest in 1066). Nevertheless, it was soon adopted by the Anglo-Normans who (at the latest after Brittany became part of the Angevin realm under Henry II) claimed to be the true heirs as descendants of the British people who had been expelled from Britain to Brittany by the Anglo-Saxons, but now had returned from Gaul to rule over England. So this very complicated case proves the importance of legitimization through history in each of its branches.

Another important example is provided by the polemical literature (or treatises) of the Investiture Contest.[55] Although the two "parties" (those who favoured the king and those who were in favour of the pope) had a strictly contrary bias and followed different intentions, both were completely united in their methods and arguments (and, moreover, both sides condemned the discord and disunity as such): historical arguments were used side by side with biblical, legal, and theological ones. The authors tried to prove that their own case was right by indicating historical precedents, for example: Gregory VII had the right to excommunicate and depose Henry IV because former popes had done so before (whereas pro-royal authors tried to show that such precedents had not been depositions etc.). The examples were seldom correct (the Roman Emperor Theodosius, the most famous example, had not been excommunicated by Ambrosius, but had only been imposed to do penance; Lothar II, in his "marriage affair", equally had never been excommunicated by a pope; nevertheless they were interpreted this way, whether the papal authors wanted to see it like this, whether they followed older traditions or whether they simply misinterpreted their sources by applying modern standards. As far as the royal right to invest bishops was concerned, we find the same argumentations, only in an opposite direction: now the royalists searched for precedents, whereas the papists denied their existence or their reliability. So both sides interpreted their sources differently, although they were often the same, but nobody doubted the probative value of history; rather both sides completely agreed in admitting that history (the past) provided examples that were legally binding for the present. Even more, both sides based on the same historical ideals (such as Constantine or Charlemagne). So behind the historical argumentation we find a distinctive historical consciousness (albeit one that does not conform with our sense of historicity).

Another aspect (only seemingly different, but, in fact, related) is *criticism* of the present by referring to past ideals. Thus Nithard, a follower of Charles the Bald in the hefty struggles between the sons of Louis the Pious and the narrator of these fights, begins and ends his "Histories" by

55 Cf. Hans-Werner GOETZ, *Geschichte als Argument. Historische Beweisführung und Geschichtsbewußtsein in den Streitschriften des Investiturstreits*, in: Historische Zeitschrift 245, 1987, pp. 31-69.

referring to Charlemagne: when he died in old age, he left the whole of Europe filled throughout with good after he had tamed the ironed hearts of the Franks and the barbarians.[56] And he closes with a warning not to neglect the welfare of the realm; in the times of Charlemagne, he writes, there was peace and unity all around, whereas now there is discord and quarrel.[57] It is completely clear that a dreadful present, confronted with the model of the past, should criticize and admonish the contemporaries. Probably the so-called Astronomer (the biographer of Louis the Pious) also wrote this life story in order to confront the quarrelling sons with the mirror of an ideal king-father.[58] So the past, again, is the model according to which the present should be shaped (and this also explains the function of historiography: to *present* a past that should be imitated – or avoided, because the past held not only good examples in store, but also bad ones; thus it is not true that old times were good in themselves, as former research believed). When Notker the Stammerer began his "Deeds of Charlemagne" with an original interpretation of the dream of Daniel of a statue in four parts indicating the four empires of the world, claiming that Charles had established a new head of a new statue in the Franks,[59] it seems as if the author excels the present over the ancient past. However, he wrote 70 years after Charlemagne's death. So he, again, creates a past ideal. Moreover, by alluding to the former realms, he puts Charlemagne in a continuation with universal history from the beginning. Nevertheless, this ideal past could be a far remote one, but also a rather recent one.

The origins of the author's own institution (whether invented or historical) were linked with the present, for example, by the series of office-holders (bishops or abbots) in ecclesiastical chronicles. Here again, the past was often distinguished (once more) by stylizing (early) bishops or abbots as being holy. In the chronicle of the diocese of Toul nearly all the former bishops had been saints (or so the chronicle claimed).[60] It was no less important to keep their memory (or that of the founder or other important persons) alive. Here we find a close connection between commemoration by prayer ("*Gebetsgedächtnis*") and historiography. To mention another example for "institutional history" of a different kind, one could refer to the "Historia Welforum",[61] the oldest German "family history", namely the history of the Welfen, a noble family from Suavia who

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56 Nithard, Historiae 1,1, ed. Ernst MÜLLER, MGH SSrG 44, Hanover, 1907, p. 1.

57 Ibid. 4,7, pp. 49 f.

58 Cf. Hans-Werner GOETZ, *The perception of "power" and "state" in the Early Middle Ages. The Case of the Astronomer's 'Life of Louis the Pious'*, in: Björn WEILER / Simon MACLEAN (eds.), Representations of Power in Medieval Germany, 800-1500, (International Medieval Research 16), Turnhout: Brepols, 2006, pp. 15-36.

59 Notker Balbulus, Gesta Karoli Magni imperatoris 1,1, ed. Hans F. HAEFELE, MGH SSrG n.s. 12, München ²1980, pp. 11 ff.

60 Gesta episcoporum Tullensium, ed. Georg WAITZ, MGH SS 8, Hanover, 1948, pp. 631-648; cf. GOETZ, Geschichtsschreibung (n. 7), pp. 304-311.

61 Historia Welforum, ed. Erich KÖNIG (Schwäbische Chroniken der Stauferzeit 1), Stuttgart, Berlin: Kohlhammer, 1938 (repr. Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1978). Cf. GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung* (n. 7), pp. 361-371.

temporarily became dukes of Bavaria and then also of Saxony (around Henry "the Proud" and Henry "the Lion"). The "Historia" transfers the origins of this family to Roman times (referring to Catilina, because "Welf", the leading name of the family, means "little pup or whelp" (*catulus*). In my opinion this chronicle is characterized by three elements: first, a dynastic consciousness (being interested in the series of generations), second an "official" consciousness (consciousness of the office) (being mainly interested in the office-holders of the family, the counts and dukes), and, third, a "princely consciousness", trying to show the equality of the *Welfen* with the royal family (thus claiming the status of a king for its own dynasty). Similar things might be said about urban chronicles and an "urban (or rather patrician) historical consciousness", beginning in the 12th century in Italy. It is not by chance that Caffaro began his Annals of Genoa[62] in 1099, the year of the foundation of the urban municipality ("Kommune"), but also with the First Crusade which made Genoa rich and at the same time supplied a religious background. When he regards Genoa as the institution which maintained the "customs of the Romans" (*mos Romanorum*), Caffaro stylizes his city to be the successor of the Roman tradition.

My examples display two further elements which may be briefly mentioned because they highlight the function of the chronicles. On the one hand, historiography creates (or intends to create) a historical identity (or, rather, a whole set of identities of which a "national", or "pre-national", identity was not the most important element). Nevertheless it is significant that in Northern and Eastern Europe, we find "national chronicles" after the establishment of independent kingdoms. Since each human being has several identities, it is interesting to note what happened when these came into conflict with each other. Adam of Bremen had a "German" identity (in the political sense of the word) as long as this was not in disfavour of Saxony, and he was Saxon as long as this did not concern his church (the archbishopric of Hamburg and Bremen). Helmold of Bosau was concerned with the Christianization of the Slavs, but even after their baptism maintained a strong antagonism between "Germans" and Slavs: for him the "national" (or ethnic) distinction was obviously more important than the religious contrast between Christians and pagans.

On the other hand, most chronicles were not written in the heyday of their institution. Quite on the contrary, they were written in times of crisis, when it was necessary to recollect the former status (whether with justification or invented) and to legitimize these claims. Adam of Bremen recalled Hamburg's past when its (ecclesiastical) domination over Scandinavia was threatened (and Adam began his chronicle with a lamentation about the desperate state of his see); Bonizo of Sutri wrote his "papal chronicle" when Gregory VII had reached his low point and was captured by the Normans, in order to justify the just cause of the Gregorians and to strengthen his followers and

[62] Caffaro, Annales Ianuenses, ed. Luigi Tommaso BELGRANO (Fonti per la storia d'Italia 11), Rom, 1890, pp. 3-75. Cf. GOETZ, *Geschichtsschreibung* (n. 7), pp. 373-378.

encourage them to continue fighting for their principles; and Otto of Freising even believed that the end of time was near, and so on (one could mention many more examples). Looking back to one's past was obviously often stimulated by a sad and catastrophic present.

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The aim of my paper was to give just some impressions of the broad spectrum inherent in the question of a historical consciousness in (medieval) historiography and to reveal something of its underlying conditions. Historiography is a complex genre with many functions. It is (always) the result of a historical consciousness and often meant to create or confirm such a consciousness. In the Middle Ages, this is based on an enormous interest in history, the conviction of an outstanding relevance of history and a deep trust that history could be (and should be) interpreted, because it was divine revelation. (Historiography was kind of exegesis, with a literal, an allegorical, or figurative, and a moral "message".) Nevertheless, it remained political historiography, in a medieval manner that might be called a "secularized sacrality". Consequently, this was a medieval kind of consciousness that seemed completely orientated towards the past and was focused on old ages and ancient (or even mythical) origins rather than on the "real" historical beginnings. If history could not only be used, but also be "abused", this is because it was relevant. (This is one of the paradoxes historians have to live with.) Nevertheless, the medieval interest in the past was always (or nearly always) rooted in the present, inspired by current interests and intentions and written for contemporary people. Consideration of the past was explanation, legitimization and formation of the present; it meant coming to terms not with the past (as in Germany after the Nazi period), but coming to terms with the present by means of the (better, or even ideal) past. It is here we have to look for its functions. Historiography was a "search" for the past for the sake of the present and in a modern perspective. Its result is a constant "presence of the past" and, even more, a "topicality of the past" that could be used directly without regarding the difference in times and conditions. That is why ancient times and persons were seen (and dressed) in contemporary perspectives (and clothes). Medieval historiography was not "research" in a modern sense (although it did not lack any criticism). But perhaps we should not exaggerate this difference, because historical sciences today are also firmly rooted in the present – and, no doubt, further generations will easily notice our modern misinterpretations.