



PROPERTY, POWER, AND AUTHORITY IN RUS AND LATIN EUROPE, ca. 1000–1236

By
YULIA MIKHAILOVA

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**PROPERTY, POWER, AND AUTHORITY IN RUS AND
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Note on Genealogical Tables

The genealogical tables (Figures 1 to 4) represent the first nine generations of descendants of Igor and Olga. The tables are not comprehensive. Female members of princely families, except Olga, are omitted, and so are some less significant princes, especially of the later generations. For the eighth and ninth generations, only selected members are included.

For many princes, the dates of births are unknown; the dates of deaths are known better, although for a significant number of princes they are not known either. The tables provide the dates of the death only; if no date is given, this means that it is unknown. The order in which the brothers’ names are listed does not necessarily represent the order of their births. The patrimonial lands are indicated in some cases, when highly relevant in the context of the book. The names of the Kievan princes are given in bold; for the purpose of the tables, the prince is considered “Kievan” even if his tenure in Kiev was brief and/or contentious.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the memory of Aleksei Konstantinovich Zaitsev.

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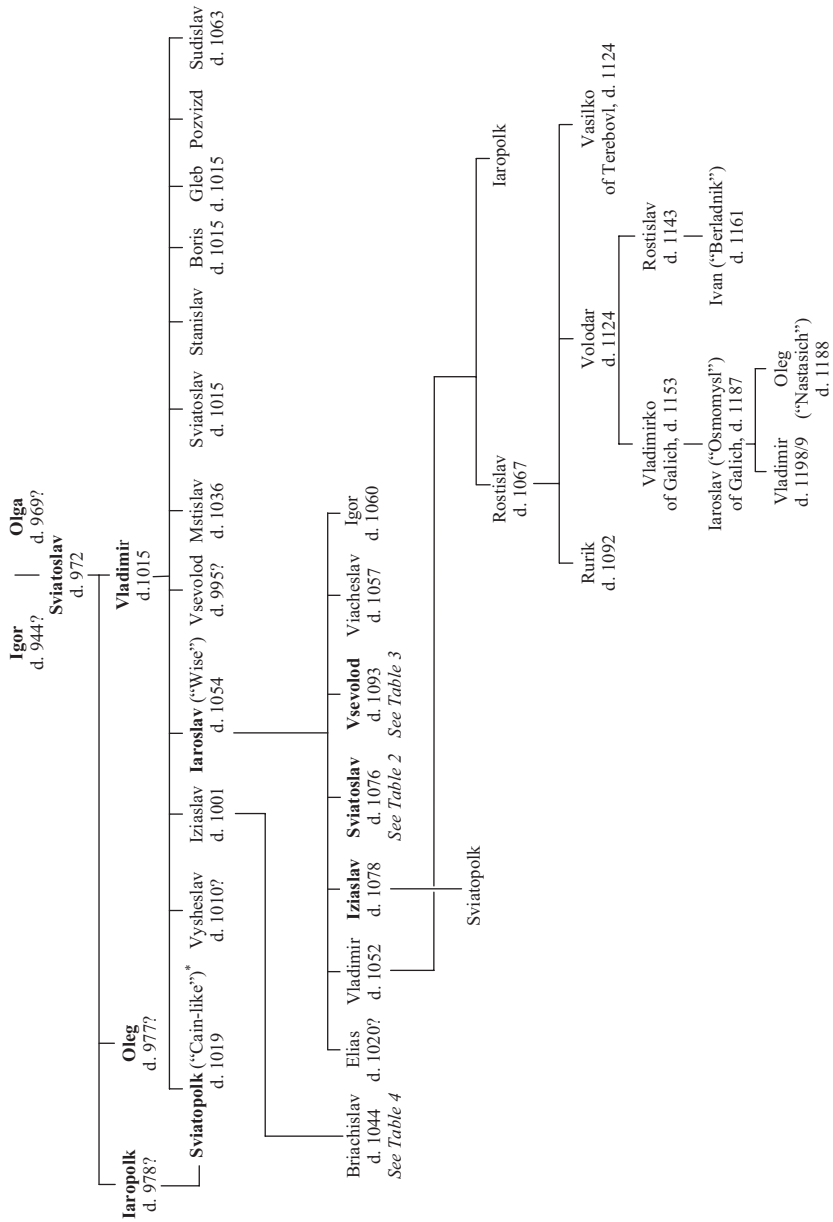


Figure 1. Descendants of Igor and Olga.

* According to the *Primary Chronicle*, Sviatopolk was "of two fathers," because his mother, Iropolk's wife, might have been pregnant by Iaropolk when Vladimir made her his concubine after Iaropolk's death. PSRL 1, 78.

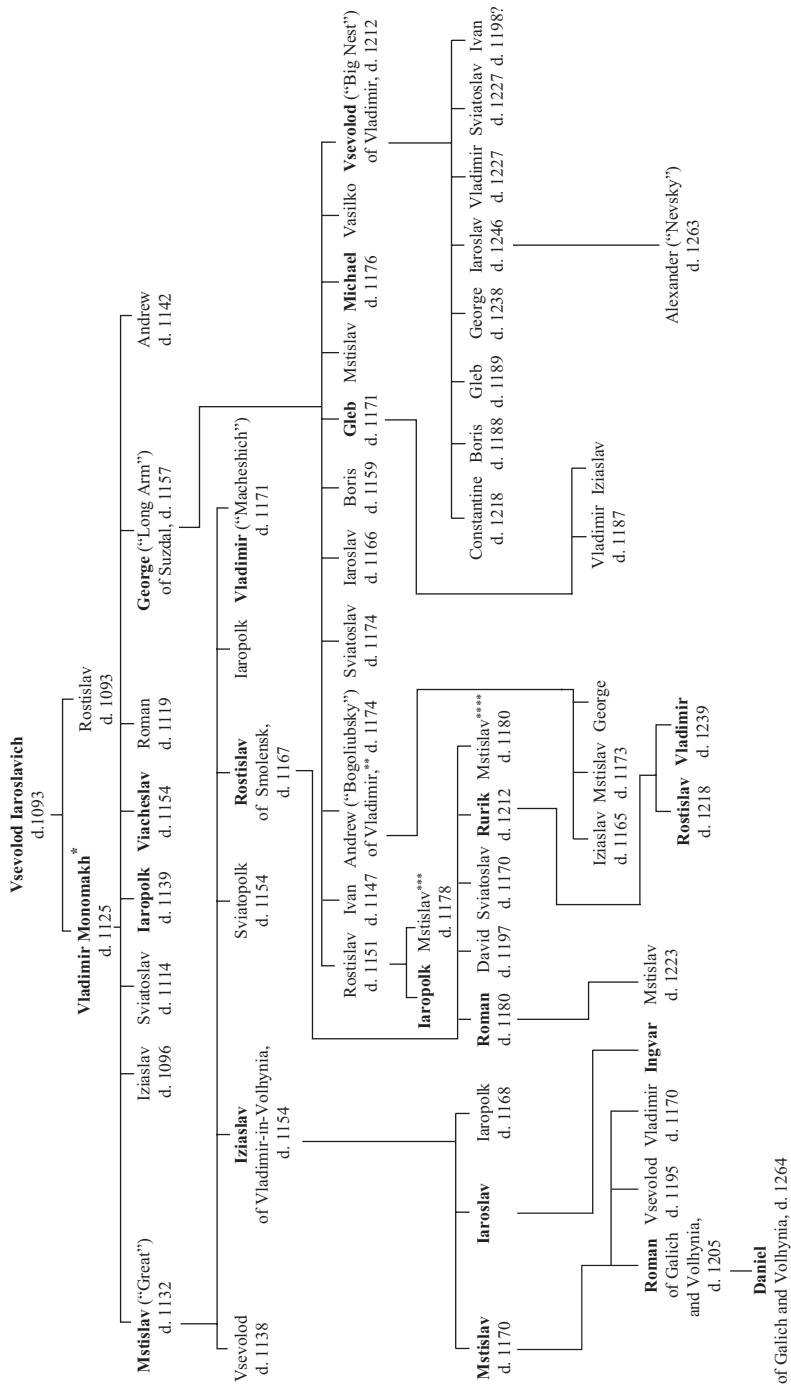


Figure 3. Descendants of Vsevolod Iaroslavich.

* The founder of the Monomakhovichi dynasty. ** Under Andrew and his brother Vsevolod the "Big Nest," Vladimir became the capital of Suzdalia (the original capital was Suzdal). Princes of Vladimir were thus supreme rulers of Suzdalia. *** The Rostislavichi who briefly ruled in Suzdalia after the murder of Andrew Bogoliubsky. **** The Rostislavichi of Smolensk.

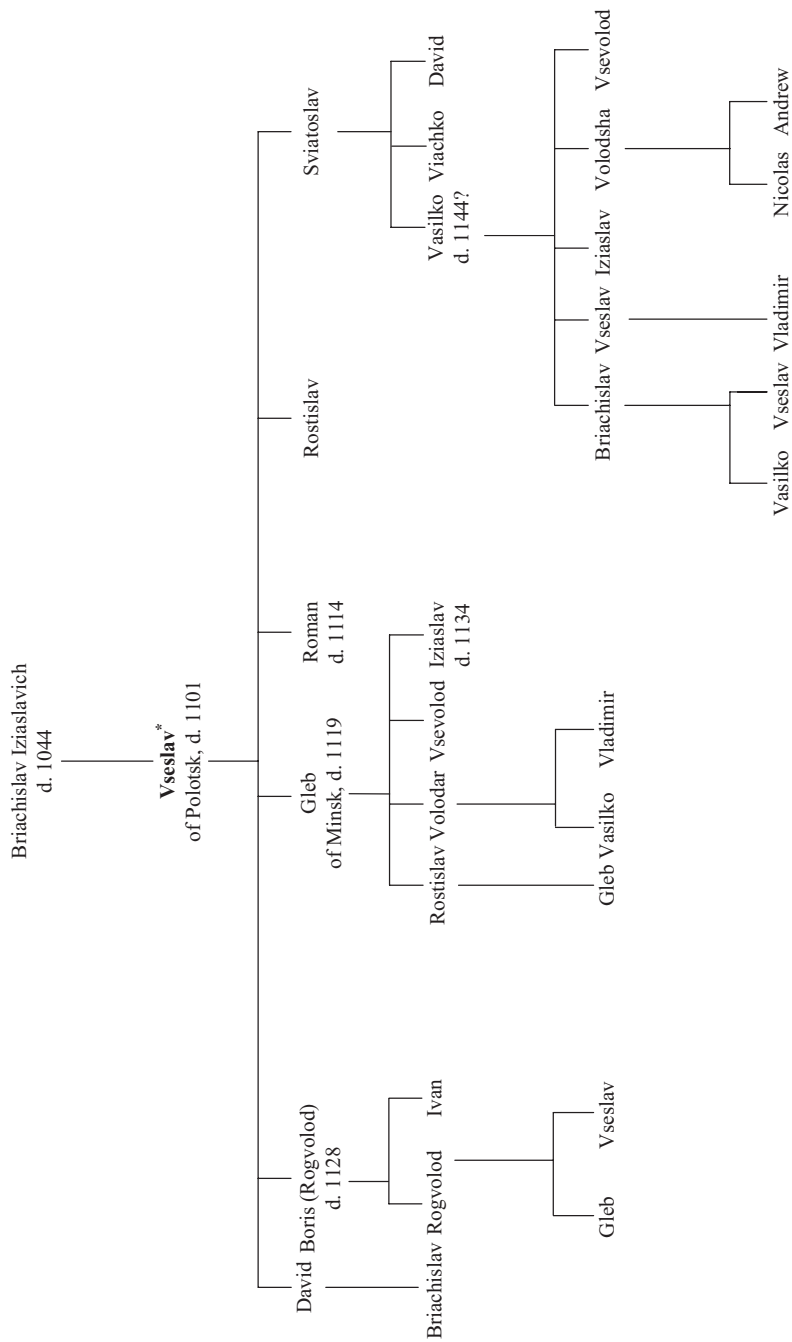


Figure 4. Descendants of Briachislav Iziaslavich.

* Vseslav was briefly made the Kievan prince during an uprising in Kiev in 1068, where he was being imprisoned at the time of the uprising. Princes and other members of the elite never recognized his legitimacy as the Kievan prince, and his descendants never claimed the Kievan throne. PSRL 1, 171–73.

INTRODUCTION

ACCORDING TO THE description of the world and its peoples in the *Primary Chronicle* compiled in Kiev in the early 1100s, when the sons of Noah divided the world among themselves after the flood, the Orient fell to the lot of Shem, the South to the lot of Ham, and Japheth received “northern and western lands.” The people of Rus belong to the race of Japheth, and they live in his lot along with other peoples, such as the Swedes, Normans, Angles, Romans, Germans, and Franks.¹ “Rus” is the name used in this book for the medieval polity located in present-day Ukraine, Belarus, and parts of Russia; in Anglophone scholarship, it is also known as Kievan Rus, medieval Russia, and medieval Ukraine.

For a twelfth-century Kievan monk, it appears self-evident that his country belongs to the cultural sphere of the Angles, Romans, Germans, and Franks. To use modern terms, the *Primary Chronicle* describes Rus as part of medieval European civilization. Most modern scholars would not agree. William Chester Jordan expressed a widely accepted opinion when he stated that medieval “Europe was where Latin Christians—Roman Catholic Christians—dominated the political and demographic landscape. A profound divide [...] separated Catholics from Greek or Orthodox Christians.”² In scholarly literature, Rus has been traditionally presented as part of a “Byzantine Commonwealth,” an area dominated by Greek Orthodox Christianity and separate from Latin Europe.³ Alternatively, some scholars have argued that Rus, a huge polity the size of Charlemagne’s empire, was not so much a Byzantine satellite as a world in itself: neither Europe nor Asia, neither East nor West. According to this school of thought, the reception of Christianity from Constantinople isolated Rus from Latin Christendom, but did not create strong ties with Byzantium, which was too distant geographically and too different culturally to become a formative influence. Thus Rus, separated from Byzantium by its geographic location and separated from neighbouring Poland, Hungary, and Scandinavia by its different form of Christianity, followed its own unique path of development. This “unique path” is often invoked to explain the apparent inability of modern Russia, which traces its origins to Rus, to adopt Western institutions and to integrate itself into Europe.⁴ Sweeping

1 *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, ed. E. F. Karskii. *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1927) [hereafter PSRL 1], 1–4; *The “Povest’ vremennykh let”: An Interlinear Collation and Paradosis*, ed. and coll. Donald Ostrowski, with David Birnbaum and Horace G. Lunt, Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature, Text Series 10 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) [hereafter PVL], vol. 1, 2–15.

2 William Chester Jordan, “‘Europe’ in the Middle Ages,” in *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*, ed. Anthony Pagden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 75.

3 Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (New York: Praeger, 1971).

4 For a connection between the “special path” of Rus and political developments in modern and contemporary Russia, see, for example, Marshall T. Poe, *The Russian Moment in World History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

generalizations about the alleged profound differences between Rus and Latin Europe are made in the virtual absence of concrete, source-based comparative studies: the last monograph that compared forms of social organization in Rus/Muscovy with the medieval West appeared in 1910.⁵

Recently, Christian Raffensperger challenged the notion of a Byzantine Commonwealth that stood in opposition to Europe, and he argued that the very concept of “medieval Europe” should be “reimagined” in such a way that it includes Rus, which had much more ties with Latin Christendom than was previously believed. While it is hard to dispute the significance of Byzantium for the polities that received Christianity from Constantinople and whose churches were originally organized under the aegis of the Byzantine emperor,⁶ it appears that past scholarship tended to exaggerate the degree to which they were separated from Latin Europe.

Raffensperger, and before him Alexander Nazarenko, argued that at least until 1204 Latin and Orthodox Christians did not perceive the divide between them as “profound” and that the lay elites in many cases were hardly aware of any divide at all.⁷ Thus, some twenty-first-century historians seem to return to the viewpoint of their twelfth-century Kievan counterpart. I am one of them. One goal of this book is to present Rus as a regional variation of European society.

I seek to achieve this goal through a comparative analysis of representations of power and property relations in high medieval Russian and Western political narratives.⁸ Thus, while other works on the place of Rus in the medieval world discuss its relations with Latin Europe or Byzantium, the focus of this book is a comparison of the inner organization of society in Rus and in the West. It is, of course, impossible to make a source-based comparison of Rus—or of anything else, for that matter—with the “West” in general. For the purposes of my analysis, the best regions are those that, firstly, produced texts typologically analogous to Russian chronicles, which are the most important source on the social and political history of Rus, and, secondly, produced them in both Latin and the vernacular.

⁵ N. P. Pavlov-Silvanskii, *Feodalizm v udelnoi Rusi* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1910); reprinted in Russian Reprint Series 21 (The Hague: Europe Printing, 1966).

⁶ See Jonathan Shepard, “Crowns from Basileus, Crowns from Heaven,” in Milana Kaïmakova, Maciej Salamon, and Małgorzata Smorag Różycka, eds., *Byzantium, New Peoples, New Powers: The Byzantino-Slav Contact Zone* (Cracow: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze Historia Jagellonica, 2007), 139–60, for a convincing interpretation of some political practices in the Orthodox polities as “a glimpse of that generally elusive concept, the Byzantine Commonwealth” (p. 159).

⁷ Christian Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus' in the Medieval World*, Harvard Historical Studies 177 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Aleksandr Vasilevich Nazarenko, *Drevniiia Rus na mezhdunarodnykh putiakh: Mezhdistsiplinarnye ocherki kulturnykh, torgovykh, politicheskikh sviazei IX–XII vekov* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kultury, 2001).

⁸ Recently, “Russian” is being increasingly used as an adjective derived from “Rus,” as opposed to “Russian” referring to Russia. It has been pointed out that referring to Rus as “medieval Russia,” as well as using the term “Russian” in connection with Rus, marginalizes Ukraine and Belarus by creating a false impression that Russia is the exclusive heir of Rus.

I argue that the widespread perception of profound differences in the social and political organization that set pre-Mongol Rus apart from Europe is, in many respects, a product of the nature of the sources. Most Western political narratives before the thirteenth century are in Latin, and they were produced by authors who were influenced by classical literature that medieval *literati* studied as part of their education. The Russian written culture was much more indigenous. Unlike Western Europe and the Balkans, which had once been parts of the Empire, Rus did not inherit any tradition of classical learning, and its literate elite had little, if any, knowledge of classical languages and literature.

It is in this area that we find an important—possibly, the most important—difference between Rus and Western Europe. As a matter of fact, in this respect Rus differed not just from the West, but from other Eastern Christian polities as well. The role of Latin in Rus was “almost negligible”; the degree to which Greek was known is a subject of debate, but all agree that it was much less than in the Balkan Orthodox polities and that it was in no way comparable to the knowledge of Latin in the West.⁹ The language of religion and learning was Church Slavonic, which was created by Byzantine missionaries for the purpose of translating from Greek.

I seek to show that in the “learned” sources written in Church Slavonic, Rus looks like a “normal” European kingdom. The idiosyncratic—or allegedly idiosyncratic—features of its social and political organization are most visible in the texts written in the vernacular East Slavonic and apparently close to the oral political discourse.¹⁰ This is the majority of the Russian chronicles, all of which apparently are compilations of various extinct texts. Many of these texts are records of disputes; they use direct speech extensively, and occasionally also report the characters’ physical location and gestures, for example, “He said, looking at the Holy Mother of God, which is above the Golden Gate, ‘It

9 On Latin in Rus, see Simon Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c. 950–1300* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 106–10. On the degree and the character of the knowledge of the Greek language and of the classical culture in Slavonic translations, see D. M. Bulanin, *Antichnye traditsii v drevnerusskoi literature XI–XVI vv.*, Slavistische Beiträge 278 (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1991); Francis Thomson, *The Reception of Byzantine Culture in Medieval Russia*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1999); Simon Franklin, “Po povodu ‘Intellektualnogo molchaniia’ Drevnei Rusi (o sbornike trudov F. Dzh. Tomsona),” *Russia Mediaevalis* 10 (2001): 262–70; Olga B. Strakhova, review of F. J. Thomson, *The Reception of Byzantine Culture in Mediaeval Russia*, *Russia Mediaevalis* 10 (2001): 245–61; Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture*, 101–6, 202–6, 223–28; Franklin, *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus’*, Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature, Translation Series 5 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), lviii–lxxiv, xcv–cix; Franklin and Shepard, *Emergence of Rus*, 238–43; A. A. Alekseev, “Koe-cto o perevodakh v Drevnei Pusi (po povodu stat’i Fr. Dzh. Tomsona ‘Made in Russia’),” *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* [hereafter *TODRL*] 49 (1999): 278–95; G. G. Lunt, “Eshcho raz o mnimyykh perevodakh v Drevnei Rusi (po povodu stat’i A. A. Alekseeva),” *TODRL* 51 (1999): 435–41; A. A. Alekseev, “Po povodu stati G. G. Lanta Eshcho raz o mnimyykh perevodakh v Drevnei Rusi,” *TODRL* 51 (1991): 442–45.

10 The language spoken in Rus is known as “Old Russian,” “Old Ukrainian,” “Russian,” and “East Slavonic.” I follow Franklin in using the latter term (*Writing, Society and Culture*, 84).

is for this most pure Lady together with her Son and our God to judge us in this and in the future life.’”¹¹

These features of the Rusian chronicles are important for another goal of this book, which is an exploration of the interplay between the language and genre of the sources and the ways in which medieval authors represent the life of their society. For this purpose, I compare sources that belong to the same, or similar, genres and that have the same, or similar, subject matters, but which are written in different languages and occupy different positions vis-à-vis oral political discourse and high “learned” culture. Hence my choice of Western sources for the comparative analysis offered in this book.

The large-scale advent of the vernacular into the writing of chronicles and histories in continental Europe started in the thirteenth century, when the West saw the rise of central governments, universities, and academic law while Rus was conquered by the Mongols. This period is outside of the chronological scope of this book. The earliest narrative from continental Latin Europe written in what is apparently quite close to the actual spoken language of the time is the already mentioned *Conventum Hugonis* from eleventh-century Aquitaine.¹² Its subject matter is also similar to that of many Rusian chronicle narratives, which display the same three elements—dispute, settlement, and orality—that make the title of the essay on the *Conventum* by its first publisher Jane Martindale.¹³ The *Conventum* can be juxtaposed with the Latin chronicle by Adémar of Chabannes written within the same time period and containing an account of the same events from a different perspective.¹⁴

11 *Ipatevskaiia letopis*, ed. A. A. Shakhmatov, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia archeograficheskaia komissia, 1908); reprinted, Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kultur, 1998, with a new introduction by B. M. Kloss and a new index) [hereafter PSRL 2], 431.

12 First publication: Jane Martindale, “Conventum inter Guillelmum Aquitanorum comitem et Hugonem Chiliarum,” *English Historical Review* 84 (1969): 528–48. Published with a parallel translation in Jane Martindale, *Status, Authority and Regional Power: Aquitaine and France, 9th to 12th Centuries*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1997), VIIIb. Martindale thinks that, in connection with the *Conventum*, “it is necessary to make some allowance for the possibility that spoken Latin survived in some form—even into the eleventh century,” and she notes that “the ‘errors’ with which the text is studded have many affinities with the ‘late’ or ‘vulgar Latin’” Martindale, *Status, Authority and Regional Power*, VIII, 4, 24; for a review of literature on the language of the *Conventum*, see *ibid.*, VIII, 3–4. Paul Hyams describes the *Conventum* as “a text, which ought perhaps to have been written in the vernacular, Occitan?” Paul Hyams, Introduction to the *Agreement between Count William V of Aquitaine and Hugh IV of Lusignan* at www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/agreement.asp.

13 Jane Martindale, “Dispute, Settlement and Orality in the *Conventum inter Guillelmum Aquitanorum Comitem et Hugonem Chiliarum*: A Postscript to the Edition of 1969,” in Martindale, *Status, Authority and Regional Power*, VIII.

14 *Ademari Cabannensis Chronicon*, ed. P. Bourgain, R. Landes, and G. Pon, *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* 79 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); *The Letters and Poems of Fulbert of Chartres*, ed. and trans. F. Behrends (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 92.

Many of the other materials for my comparative analysis come from England with its traditions of both vernacular and Latin historiography. Vernacular historiography thrived before the Norman Conquest, when it was produced in Old English, and then again in the twelfth century, when “a new vogue for writing history in Anglo-Norman” appeared more than half a century earlier than a vernacular historical culture began to emerge elsewhere in Latin Europe.¹⁵ The Old English *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* covers the period when Rus did not yet exist. I concentrate on Norman England, the history of which in the twelfth century is exceptionally well covered by a significant number of Latin historiographical works and by the first post-conquest vernacular chronicle describing contemporary events, known as *Jordan Fantosme’s Chronicle*.¹⁶ Not only is it written in a vernacular language, namely the Anglo-Norman variety of Old French, but it also belongs to the same time period as the Russian chronicles and it discusses a similar subject: a conflict within the ruling strata of society. Even though Fantosme’s work is an epic poem while Russian chronicles are written in the traditional annalistic format, both are vernacular accounts of political struggles in their contemporary societies, and as such are worth comparing.

There is one more region that produced a vernacular historiographical work in the twelfth century. This is Regensburg in Bavaria, where an unknown author wrote the Middle High German *Kaiserchronik* (ca. 1140s–1150s). However, this text does not seem to be a suitable object for a comparative analysis with Russian chronicles. It is structured as a series of imperial biographies starting with Julius Caesar. Thus, most of the *Kaiserchronik* is devoted to the distant past; it is sometimes described as an early attempt at a world chronicle.¹⁷ A small section at the end of the chronicle describes contemporary events, but, apart from a digression on Godfrey of Bouillon, the author focuses almost exclusively on emperors and bishops and provides very little information about the social organization of the lay nobility.¹⁸ The main subjects of the *Kaiserchronik* have been described as the progress of the Gospel from the heathen to the Christian

15 Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (New York: Hambledon, 2004), 138.

16 *Jordan Fantosme’s Chronicle*, ed. and trans. R. C. Johnston (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

17 Graeme Dunphy, “Historical Writing in and after the Old High German Period,” in *German Literature of the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Brian Murdock, Camden House History of German Literature 2 (Camden: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), 201–26; Alastair Matthews, *The “Kaiserchronik”: A Medieval Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1–2.

18 Even if “contemporary” is understood in the broadest possible sense as events that took place within a century preceding the time when the *Kaiserchronik* was apparently written, this “contemporary” section starting with Henry IV and ending abruptly in 1147, in the middle of the reign of Conrad III, takes only 748 lines out of the total 17,280 lines of the *Kaiserchronik*. Edward Schröder, ed. *Die Kaiserchronik eines Regensburger Geistlichen*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Qui Vernacula Lingua Usi Sunt 1 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1895), vol. 1, 378–92. For the Godfrey of Bouillon episode, see *Kaiserchronik*, 381–84 (lines 16618–789).

empire and as the *translatio imperii* from Rome to Germany.¹⁹ This imperial agenda sets the *Kaiserchronik* apart not only from Russian chronicles, but also from the historiography of other regions of the medieval West.

Therefore, the comparative analysis offered in this book leaves out the *Kaiserchronik* and concentrates on the political narratives from Aquitaine and Norman England, the two regions of the medieval West that before the thirteenth century produced texts thematically and typologically comparable to Russian chronicles and written both in Latin and in the vernacular, or in what can be considered semi-vernacular. I suggest that such a comparison, in addition to situating Rus within the broader context of medieval European history, may also contribute to a debate on feudalism that has been going on among Western medievalists since the 1990s. As a scholar of Rus and, therefore, an outsider to the subject, I enter this complicated and highly charged area with some trepidation.

The absence of feudalism in Rus has traditionally been seen as a fundamental difference that sets it apart from the West. Thus, according to a recent survey of Russian history, the Russian elite “were not [...] a feudal ruling class, since they did not possess extensive landed estates, but rather small domains and wealthy townhouses. What they levied from the rest of the community was [...] not dues based on ownership of land but rather tribute extorted by superior military power.”²⁰

In this passage, “feudal” has connotations of what is sometimes described as “Marxist feudalism.”²¹ Feudalism in its Marxist sense is concerned with the relations between nobles and peasants, while non-Marxist feudalism describes predominantly the relations *within* the noble class. In its original and most restricted meaning, “feudalism” signifies a legal system regulating tenure of land among the medieval elite. A classic definition of this system was formulated by François-Louis Ganshof:

“Feudalism” may be regarded as a body of institutions creating and regulating the obligations of obedience and service—mainly military service—on the part of a free man (the vassal) towards another free man (the lord), and the obligation of protection and maintenance on the part of the lord with regard to his vassal. The obligation of maintenance had usually as one of its effects the grant by the lord to his vassal of a unit of real property known as a fief.²²

19 Graeme Dunphy, “On the Function of the Disputations in the *Kaiserchronik*,” *The Medieval Chronicle* 5 (2009): 77–86; Alexander Rubel, “Caesar und Karl der Große in der *Kaiserchronik*. Typologische Struktur und die *translatio imperii ad Francos*,” *Antike und Abendland* 47 (2001): 146–63.

20 Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia and the Russians: A History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011), 34.

21 See Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3, 10–12, 15; Fredric L. Cheyette, “‘Feudalism’: A Memoir and an Assessment,” in *Feud, Violence and Practice: Essays in Medieval Studies in Honor of Stephen D. White*, ed. Belle S. Tuten and Tracey L. Billado (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 121–22.

22 François-Louis Ganshof, *Feudalism*, trans. Philip Grierson, 3rd English ed. (New York: Harper, 1961), xvi.

The broad definition of feudalism as a Veberian ideal type formulated by Marc Bloch includes both relations between peasantry and nobility and relations among the nobles. According to Bloch, fundamental features of feudalism are

[a] subject peasantry; widespread use of service tenement (i.e. the fief) [...]; the supremacy of a class of specialized warriors; ties of obedience and protection which [...] within the warrior class, assume the distinctive form called vassalage; fragmentation of authority; and, in the midst of all this, the survival of other forms of association, family and State.²³

Societies that had these features formed what Bloch called “the feudal zone,” to which Rus did not belong.²⁴

Most importantly, as scholars repeatedly pointed out, Rus lacked the type of social relations known as the “feudal contract,” unequal, but nonetheless reciprocal, obligations of the lord and the vassal towards each other created by the ritual of homage.²⁵ These contractual relations, as presented in much of pre-1990s scholarly literature, “befitted what was seen as the uniquely free character of European civilization,” in the words of Susan Reynolds.²⁶ In contrast with Western Europe, the absence of the tradition of a free contract between the superior and the subordinate in Rus—or in the “Byzantine Commonwealth” in general—has been connected with the failure to develop the rule of law and with authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies in Russian history. When the Soviet medievalist Aron Gurevich described Byzantine aristocrats as the emperor’s “lackeys looking for a career and a chance to enrich themselves, devoid of personal dignity,” his readers easily recognized a covert portrayal of Soviet high-ranking officials. Gurevich explained the *nomenklatura*-like qualities of the Byzantine aristocracy by the fact that “Byzantium knew nothing of the feudal treaty, the loyalty of the vassal or the group solidarity of the peers. [...] It is quite impossible to imagine anything like Magna Carta—a legal compromise between the monarch and his vassals—in a Byzantine setting.”²⁷ An implicit connection between the “feudal” relations among the nobility and

²³ Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L. A. Manyon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 446.

²⁴ Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 70, 228.

²⁵ For a classic description of “feudal contract,” see Ganshof, *Feudalism*, 70–81.

²⁶ Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, 54. According to Jacques Le Goff, “a system of loyalty” associated with vassalage “was this that would make it possible for hierarchy and individualism to coexist” in modern Europe. Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 59.

²⁷ A. J. Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture*, trans. G. L. Campbell (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 128. On the more recent position of Gurevich in regards to the debate about feudalism and on his opinion about *Fiefs and Vassals*, see A. Ia. Gurevich, “Feodalizm pered sudom istorikov, ili o srednevekovoi krestianskoi tsivilizatsii,” in *Feodalizm: poniatie i realii*, ed. I. G. Galkova et al. (Moscow: Institut vseobshchei istorii RAN, 2008), 11–51. On the absence of the “feudal contract”—or, indeed, any concept of a contract in Rus and, subsequently, Russia, see Yu. M. Lotman, “‘Dogovor’ i ‘vruchenie sebja’ kak arkhietipicheskie modeli kul'tury,” in Lotman, *Izbrannye statii*, 3 vols. (Tallinn: Alexandra, 1993), vol. 3, 345–55. For the widespread opinions about the “feudal contract”

the subsequent development of democracy and the rule of law is also present in the work of the Russian pre-revolutionary scholar Nikolai Pavlov-Silvansky, the only historian who argued for the existence of the “feudal contract” in Rus.²⁸ It is hardly coincidental that he was a member of the Constitutional-Democratic party that sought to establish Western-style democracy in Russia.²⁹

The “feudal contract” is part of the classical concept of European feudalism best represented by the works by Bloch and Ganshof. Since the 1970s this classical concept has come under critique, beginning with the famous article by Elizabeth Brown who argued that the concept of feudalism became too broad and imprecise to be a useful analytical tool; it turned into an artificial construct that distorted realities it purported to describe. She called the historians to end “the tyranny of a construct” and to discard the term “feudalism” as fundamentally misleading.³⁰ Reynolds further developed Brown’s criticisms in her famous *Fiefs and Vassals* (1994), where she argued that the concepts of vassalage and the fief “as they are generally defined by medieval historians today, are post-medieval constructs,” and as such they “distort the relations of property and politics that the sources record.”³¹

Fiefs and Vassals generated a heated discussion, the ultimate result of which was, paradoxically, a renewal of interest in the subject of feudalism. To be sure, many historians now agree that this term is too nebulous to be useful, and they prefer to talk about “feudo-vassalic relations,” that is, relations centred on a land grant made on the condition of the grantee’s performance of “honourable” service to the grantor, that is, service not involving manual labour. “Feudo-vassalic relations” appears to be the closest English equivalent of the German *das Lehnswesen*, which Jürgen Dendorfer defines as “the interplay of land grants, vassalage, and the duties resulting from them.”³² Few medievalists heeded Brown’s and Reynolds’s call to discard all these concepts; instead,

in the present-day Russian intellectual milieu see, for example, the site *Historical Personality* at <http://rus-history.ru/feodalnaya-razdroblennost-na-r/rossiiskii-feodalizm-bil-osobi.php>; Igor Kobylin, *Fenomen totalitarizma v kontekste evropeiskoi kultury* at www.dslib.net/religio-vedenie/fenomen-totalitarizma-v-kontekste-evropejskoj-kultury.html; readers’ comments to Vasilii Zharkov, “Zakreposhchennye istoriei,” at www.gazeta.ru/comments/column/zharkov/6242617.shtml.

28 N. P. Pavlov-Silvanskii, *Feodalizm v udelnoi Rusi* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1910), reprinted in Russian Reprint Series 21 (The Hague: Europe Printing, 1966).

29 On a connection between the concept of the “feudal contract” and a liberal political ideology, see Cheyette, “Feudalism,” 123.

30 Elizabeth A. R. Brown, “The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe,” *American Historical Review* 79 (1974): 1063–88.

31 Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, 2–3.

32 Introduction to *Das Lehnswesen im Hochmittelalter. Forschungskonstrukte—Quellenbefunde—Deutungsrelevanz*, ed. Jürgen Dendorfer and Roman Deutinger (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2010), 19, 21, 26. On the difference between the German concepts of *Lehnswesen* and *Feudalismus*, see Levi Roach, “Submission and Homage: Feudo-Vassalic Relations and the Settlement of Disputes in Ottonian Germany,” *History* 97 (2012): 355–79, at 356–57. For Reynolds’s objections against the validity of the term *Lehnswesen*, see “*Fiefs and Vassals* after Twelve Years,” in *Feudalism: New Landscapes of Debate*, ed. Sverre Bagge, Michael H. Gelting, and Thomas Lindkvist (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 15–26, at 23.

recent works use them much more carefully than they were used in earlier scholarship. Before the late twentieth-century critique of the classic teaching on feudalism, it was not unusual for historians to postulate the existence of the “feudal contract” every time they saw references to a fief, homage, or any notion that was associated with “feudalism” in historiography. If anyone was described in a medieval text as somebody’s *homo* (man), the assumption was that he performed the ritual of homage and entered into a “feudal contract” with the person whose *homo* he was, thus becoming his vassal, even if there was no evidence in the source that this was the case.

Currently, there is general agreement that the words, such as fief, “were used in a variety of contexts and senses in the Middle Ages, so that they seem to relate to rather different phenomena—that is, to different kinds of property entailing different rights and obligations.”³³ For Reynolds, this statement is part of her argument that the fief in the sense of a land grant from a lord to a vassal did not exist outside of late medieval legal treaties. However, for a number of scholars, Reynolds’s thesis provided a stimulus for a critical re-examination of the sources in order to see if there is, indeed, evidence for the phenomena, the existence of which Reynolds denies.³⁴ In this sense, “only recently has the process of direct engagement with the kernel of Reynolds’s work begun,” as Charles West observed in 2013.³⁵

The discussion generated by *Fiefs and Vassals* soon intertwined with the debate on the “feudal revolution,” which was started by Francophone scholars in the early 1990s. The “feudal revolution” theory goes back to the celebrated study of the society of the Mâcon in Burgundy from the ninth to the twelfth century by Georges Duby. He argued that during a relatively short period in the late tenth to early eleventh century, this region underwent a radical transformation, when the Carolingian system of public order and formalized justice collapsed, and the exercise of justice and administration was privatized by local lords, thus creating a distinctly feudal system.³⁶ A number of subsequent studies found that various regions at the turn of the first millennium experienced a similar transformation, which was deemed the “feudal revolution,” “feudal mutation/transformation,” or “mutation of the year 1000.” The systematic synthesis of the “feudal revolution” theory was presented by Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel in 1980.³⁷ In the early 1990s, it was challenged by a number of scholars who argued that the change

33 Reynolds, “*Fiefs and Vassals* after Twelve Years,” 19.

34 Charles West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution: Political and Social Transformation between Marne and Moselle, c.800–c.1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Steffen Patzold, *Das Lehnswesen* (Munich: Beck, 2012); Roach, “Submission and Homage”; Dendorfer and Deutinger, *Das Lehnswesen*.

35 West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution*, 200.

36 Georges Duby, *La société aux X^e et XII^e siècles dans la région mâconnaise*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Éditions de l’École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1971; first published in 1953; reprinted in 1988).

37 Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel, *La mutation féodale, Xe–XII^e siècles* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1980); English translation Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel, *The Feudal Transformation: 900–1200*, trans. Caroline Higgitt (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1991). For the

was more apparent than real and that features, presented by the “mutationists” as characteristic of the new feudal regime, had existed before the putative revolution.³⁸

A number of recent works display what appears to be a reaction against the radical critique of the “feudal construct” in the 1990s. Their authors do not believe that medieval society had a system of institutions as coherent, as ubiquitous, and as clearly defined in legal terms as the classic teaching on feudalism presented it; nonetheless, they tend to see in the High Middle Ages not exactly the classic feudal system, but still “something approximating” it, as Levi Roach put it in an important 2012 article.³⁹ It appears that the revisiting of the sources, largely inspired by Reynolds, is now bringing back and refining the very concepts of fiefs and vassals that Reynolds sought to annihilate. However, the 1990s movement against “feudalism” left some important legacies beyond reviving an interest in the subject. One of them is Reynolds’s objection against the claim of earlier scholarship that feudo-vassalic relations emerged already in the early Carolingian period, in the seventh and eighth centuries. Another is a rejection of the idea that a “feudal regime” emerged suddenly and violently within a few decades before or after the year 1000. It appears that there is an emerging consensus about feudo-vassalic relations developing gradually and slowly over the course of the eleventh and/or twelfth centuries, depending on the region, so that a system “approximating” textbook feudalism can only be seen in the twelfth century, especially in its later part.⁴⁰

If the development of feudo-vassalic relations was already underway in the eleventh century, that is, before universities and the revival of Roman law in Western Europe, academic lawyers could not have played the decisive role attributed to them by Reynolds. In the latest monograph-length contribution to the feudalism debate, Charles West presented feudo-vassalic relations as a long-term unintended consequence of the

most recent synthesis of the “feudal transformation” theory, see Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 22–68, 574. For the significance of Duby’s work on the Mâcon for the “feudal revolution” theory, see Thomas Bisson, “The ‘Feudal Revolution,’” *Past and Present* 142 (1994): 6–42, at 6. For a somewhat different interpretation of Duby’s findings about the Mâconnais region, see Dominique Barthélemy, *The Serf, the Knight, and the Historian*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), ix, 2–3, 8–9.

38 Dominique Barthélemy, *La société dans le comté de Vendôme: de l’an mil au XIVe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1993); Barthélemy, *The Serf, the Knight, and the Historian*; Stephen D. White, “Tenth-Century Courts at Mâcon and the Perils of Structuralist History: Rereading Burgundian Judicial institutions,” in *Conflict in Medieval Europe: Changing Perspectives on Society and Culture*, ed. Warren Brown and Piotr Górecki (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 37–68; White, *Feuding and Peace-Making in Eleventh-Century France* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Fredric L. Cheyette, “Georges Duby’s Mâconnais after Fifty Years: Reading it Then and Now,” *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002): 291–317.

39 Roach, “Submission and Homage,” 355, 378.

40 Adam J. Kosto, *Making Agreements in Medieval Catalonia: Power, Order, and the Written Word, 1000–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Roach, “Submission and Homage”; West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution*; West, “Lordship in Ninth-Century Francia: The Case of Bishop Hincmar of Laon and his Followers,” *Past and Present* 226 (2014): 3–40.

Carolingian reforms. Since the ninth century, the Carolingians “worked to formalize social interaction across the entire social spectrum,” which eventually led to a new social formation “that could conventionally [...] be termed feudalism.”⁴¹

The present book poses the question of whether there were some deeper, pan-European processes at work that contributed to the emergence of this new social formation. An analysis of Russian political narratives offered below suggests that some of them describe relations among members of the elite that are remarkably similar to feudo-vassalic. Arguably, they have not been recognized as such, because the men (all of them are men) entering into these relations belonged to the social stratum described in English as “princes,” traditionally considered to be members of an anomalously extended and exceptionally disorganized ruling dynasty. Most studies that have tried to find Russian analogies to feudo-vassalic relations examine relations between “the prince and the nobles (boyars).”⁴² However, information about the boyars in the pre-Mongol period is too meagre to see details of their relations with princes and to reconstruct these relations with any degree of precision.⁴³ The sources provide a wealth of information about the relations between the princes; however, this information has been studied primarily through the lens of kinship, because for most scholars, Russian princes are first and foremost members of an extended kin-group (*rod*).

The Soviet historian V. T. Pashuto offered a different view of Russian princes, treating them not so much as a ruling dynasty but rather as a ruling stratum somewhat analogous to the top nobility in the West. Pashuto never formulated this analogy explicitly; however, he has argued that lesser princes, along with boyars and other categories of nobles, could be “vassals” of other princes, and he has interpreted interprincely relations as “feudal.”⁴⁴ Following Pashuto, P. P. Tolochko has described relations among the princes as “based on vassalic principles.”⁴⁵ However, neither Pashuto nor Tolochko explains what

41 West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution*, 8, 260, 263.

42 For a review of literature on “feudalism” in Rus, see P. S. Stefanovich, “Boiarskaia sluzhba v srednevekovoi Rusi,” in *Feodalizm: poniatie i realii*, 180–89, at 180–83.

43 An exhaustive analysis of information on boyars can be found in P. S. Stefanovich, “Boiarskaia sluzhba”; Stefanovich, “Boiarsstvo i tserkov v domongolskoi Rusi,” *Voprosy istorii* 7 (2002): 41–59; Stefanovich, “Religiozno-eticheskie aspekty otnoshenii kniazia i znati v domongolskoi Rusi,” *Otechstvennaia istoriia* 1 (2004): 3–18; Petr S. Stefanovič, “Der Eid des Adels gegenüber dem Herrscher im mittelalterlichen Russland,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 53 (2005): 497–505. (“Stefanovich” and “Stefanovič” are alternative transliterations of the same name.)

44 V. T. Pashuto, “Cherty politicheskogo stroia Drevnei Rusi,” in *Drevnerusskoe gosudarstvo i ego mezhdunarodnoe znachenie*, ed. A. P. Novoseltsev, V. T. Pashuto, and V. L. Cherepnin (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 11–77. An example of a recent work which, in Pashuto’s tradition, describes interprincely relations in “feudal” terms is M. B. Sverdlov, *Domongolskaia Rus: kniaz’ i kniazheskaia vlast’ na Rusi VI-pervoi treti XIII vv.* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2003). Sverdlov provides even less argumentation to support his view of interprincely relations as “feudo-vassalic” than Pashuto does, and no discussion at all of feudo-vassalic relations in the West.

45 P. P. Tolochko, *Kniaz v Drevnei Rusi: vlast, sobstvennost, ideologiia* (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1992), 178.

they understand by “vassalic principles,” and their argumentation is often based on speculations and conjectures. Tolochko’s book has been largely ignored, probably both because its argumentation is not entirely satisfactory and because it was published in Ukraine during the time of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The deficiencies of Pashuto’s arguments have been criticized in recent works by Russian scholars who deny that Russian society had any significant similarities with the West. Even though Pashuto and his followers did not provide sufficient argumentation to support their view of interprincely relations, it appears to me that their suggestion about parallels between the inner organization of Russian princes and of Western aristocracy deserves further study. This book offers such a study in the form of a comparison of political narratives about Russian princes, Aquitanian aristocrats, and members of the royal family and nobility in England. I hope that the following chapters will show that such a comparison can yield interesting, and probably unexpected, results.