

Cross Kissing: Keeping One's Word in Twelfth-Century Rus'

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Dans toutes ces occasions, l'écrit peut intervenir, conserver le souvenir pour la postérité, enregistrer des témoignages dûment scellés: mais c'est le geste qui donne sa force à l'acte, qui noue les volontés, qui associe les corps.

—Jean-Claude Schmitt, *La raison des gestes*

Jean-Claude Schmitt argues that for most of western medieval society, writing, though prestigious, was inaccessible. Thus, for the majority, gestures had value and power superior to what was found on parchment.¹ There is cause, at least in one case, to apply this description of the power of gesture to medieval Rus' as well. In Rus', as in the west, a delicate balance existed between acting out ideas in public and expressing them in written form, but ritual had the advantage of making abstract ideas tangible and therefore readily comprehensible.² At all levels of medieval society nonverbal signs, which were primarily bodily actions, acquired legal force and could impose binding obligations on participants. Particularly when made in reference to a higher power, these ritualized gestures were taken very seriously.³ The most common gesture recorded in the early Kievan chronicles was cross kissing, *krestotselovanie*.

In the twelfth century, as recorded in the *Ipat'evskaia letopis'*, cross kissing was a prominent feature in princely interpersonal relations, and it occupied an important place in the dynastic ideology of the Riurikids.⁴ In the absence of a centralized state, the dynasty provided the framework for

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1. Jean-Claude Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1990), 16. The quotation used in the epigraph is taken from the same page.

2. Karl Leyser, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, ed. Timothy Reuter (London, 1994), 194.

3. John Anthony Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge, Eng., 2002), 14.

4. The *Ipat'evskaia letopis'* is useful for our purposes because it contains many "ideological" passages concerning cross kissing. A plausible explanation for this is that most of the twelfth century (1118–1199) is covered by the so-called *Kievskii svod*, which treats the interim period between the *Primary Chronicle* and the *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*. The *Kievskii svod* is a complex work compiled from the chronicles of princes who occupied the Kievan throne. As one would expect, these chroniclers sought to justify the actions of their prince and condemn those of his rivals. As the readers likely had access to other chronicles, however, further explanation was needed to advance and support the arguments.

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the political structure—a feature that Rus' shared with many early medieval monarchies.⁵ According to Janet Martin, the dynasty “engaged in a continuous quest for a functional political organization” and managed to form “the basis of a well-defined political system” by the end of the eleventh century.⁶ Simon Franklin suggests that by the early twelfth century the Riurikids developed what is the “closest we get to a political ‘system.’”⁷ He and Jonathan Shepard identify the most prominent features of the emerging political culture of the early twelfth century, such as “the exclusive legitimacy of the dynasty, divided or shared inheritance, the importance of seniority,” as well as “mutual obligations sanctified by kissing the Cross.”⁸ While some of these features, particularly princely inheritance and seniority, have been extensively studied, oaths sworn on the cross have received very little scholarly attention.⁹ Even Franklin and Shepard, who acknowledge the importance of cross kissing in their theoretical discussion of Rus' political discourse, do not account for its occurrence in their description of events related to interprincely relationships.¹⁰ What is more, general works on Rus' history largely ignore the subject.¹¹ The only individual study of cross kissing we have found was published in 1968.¹² Horace W. Dewey and Ann Kleimola provided a general review of oaths on the cross in the context of other judicial procedures in premodern Russia, but only three pages are devoted to the pre-Mongol period. They note that the “oldest Russian oaths,” unlike later Muscovite cross kissing, typically were voluntary for both parties and contained “an element of reciprocity between participants.”¹³ Their general conclusion seems to be that Rus' of every rank put “great faith” in cross kissing.¹⁴ The question we must pose, however, is how justified this faith was and, more specifically, how accurate is this assessment for pre-Mongol Rus'? According to Franklin, “chronicles of the eleventh and twelfth centuries record . . . hundreds of [agreements sealed by kissing the cross] made, and as often as not,

5. See Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980–1584*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Eng., 2007), 62, and Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus, 750–1200* (New York, 1996), 247.

6. Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 24, 35.

7. Simon Franklin, “Kievan Rus' (1015–1125),” in Maureen Perrie, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia, I: From Early Rus' to 1689* (Cambridge, Eng., 2006), 75.

8. Franklin and Shepard, *Emergence of Rus*, 275–76.

9. For a survey of literature on succession and seniority, see Janet Martin, “Calculating Seniority and the Contests for Succession in Kievan Rus,” *Russian History/Histoire russe* 33, nos. 2–4 (Summer–Winter 2006): 267–81. See also Martin Dimnik, “The Rus' Principalities (1125–1246),” in Perrie, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia, I*, 98.

10. See Franklin and Shepard, *Emergence of Rus*, 276. The one exception is a passing remark in the description of the struggle over the Kievan throne between Igor' Olgovich and Iziaslav Mstislavich in 1146 to the effect that, “Crosses kissed in one set of negotiations could be unknissed in another.” *Ibid.*, 347.

11. There is not a single reference to cross kissing in such comprehensive studies as Martin, *Medieval Russia* or *The Cambridge History of Russia*.

12. H. W. Dewey and A. M. Kleimola, “Promise and Perfidy in Old Russian Cross-Kissing,” *Canadian Slavic Studies* 3 (1968): 327–41.

13. *Ibid.*, 329.

14. *Ibid.*, 340.

broken."¹⁵ If this was indeed the case, faith in the practice does not seem to have been warranted, but we shall see.

In the present article we examine the institution of cross kissing in twelfth-century Rus', paying close attention to the respect and authority it was given by the princes, as well as, conversely, the circumstances under which it was ignored or abrogated, while also exploring the role that cross kissing played in the complex dynamics of twelfth-century Rus' politics. An examination of this institution may be relevant for the comparative analysis of Rus' and western European political cultures. Both Rus' and post-Carolingian western sources contain innumerable accounts of feuds, violence, and disorder seemingly uncurbed by any effective central authority. This does not necessarily indicate complete lawlessness and anarchy, however. In the absence of modern statist oppositions between public and private, power and violence, order and disorder, "not all violence was violation."¹⁶ Thus, according to one western historian, Thietmar of Merseburg's *Chronicon* reveals "plenty of public disorder in early eleventh-century Saxony in the form of often shockingly violent interactions between Saxon magnates, which frequently went quite unpunished. But it also reveals a kind of public order . . . without there always being a strong sense that more of one might have meant less of the other. This public order was one of norms rather than institutions."¹⁷ Collective oath-taking played an important part in maintaining this kind of public order, and oaths were held in high regard in Saxon society.¹⁸ While examining the ritual of cross kissing, we hope to find out whether this also holds true for pre-Mongol Rus'. Before turning to the twelfth century, however, let us first examine possible origins for cross kissing within the Christian tradition.

The kiss is often traced to ideas concerning the soul's transfer from one being to another.¹⁹ In Genesis 2:7 God breathes the breath of life into man; conversely, in the Jewish Haggadah, Moses' life is taken from him by God's kiss.²⁰ A variant of this idea of transference also appears later in the Old Testament in the kiss given at the anointing of a new king, as a means

15. Simon Franklin, "Literacy and Documentation in Early Medieval Russia," *Speculum* 60, no. 1 (January 1985): 23.

16. Dominique Barthélemy, "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution' I," *Past and Present*, no. 152 (August 1996): 203; Stephen D. White, "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution' II," *Past and Present*, no. 152 (August 1996): 222; T. N. Bisson, "The 'Feudal Revolution,'" *Past and Present*, no. 142 (February 1994): 10.

17. Timothy Reuter, "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution,' III," *Past and Present*, no. 155 (May 1997): 190.

18. *Ibid.*, 184.

19. Nicolas J. Perella notes that some anthropologists suggest that kissing is a reflection of the primitive idea that by eating something one assimilates what is eaten into the self. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane: An Interpretive History of Kiss Symbolism and Related Religio-Erotic Themes* (Berkeley, 1969), 1.

20. Gustav Stählin, "Fileo/filos," in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1978), 9:125–27.

of transferring power (I Kings 10:1).²¹ Generally, however, the Old Testament depicts kissing as the kiss of relationship (between relatives), the kiss of reconciliation (Jacob and Esau), or the kiss of respect. Moses, in his interaction with his father-in-law, Jothar (Jethro), provides an example of the latter: Moses “did him reverence, and kissed him.”²² Cultic kissing, no doubt because of its connection with proskynesis, was forbidden to Israel but was attributed to the “nations” (*ta ethne*), that is the pagan peoples living around them.²³ Sacred objects were kissed because of their perceived association with the divine (substitute kissing). Cicero mentions that the mouth and chin of the statue of Hercules in Agrigentum was worn away by kissing, and Lucretius, in his *De rerum natura*, notes a similar occurrence with bronze statues of the gods.²⁴ In the New Testament the kiss is often associated with honor, but it also fulfils a sacramental function almost from the beginning.²⁵ The Apostle Paul refers four times to the “holy kiss” and Peter once.²⁶ This sacramental kiss expresses love and unity and, as Nicolas Perella notes, it is often a mark of reconciliation and union after a period of discord.²⁷ Jacques Le Goff, in his study of the symbolic rite of vassalage, differentiates between the sacramental kiss and the kiss associated with vassalage in the west, although he admits that in charters of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the *osculum pacis* as well as the *osculum fidei* are often connected to various contracts, which he attributes to contamination.²⁸

In the early centuries of the church, John Chrysostom most clearly articulated the use of the “holy kiss” for reconciliation and union. In his “Homily on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians” Chrysostom comments on verse 20, in which Paul gives his final exhortations and charges the Corinthians to greet one another with a holy kiss. In Chrysostom’s view, Paul does this because the Corinthians had been in discord with one another and “having knit them together by his exhortation, he naturally bids them use the holy kiss also as a means of union; for this unites and produces one body.”²⁹ Early on, substitute kissing also appeared in church

21. Stählin, “Fileo/filos,” 9:126.

22. This quotation from Exodus 18:7 and all subsequent Old Testament references are taken from the *Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, ed. and trans. Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton (Peabody, Mass., 1997).

23. Stählin, “Fileo/filos,” 9:126. Also see Hosea 13:2.

24. Stählin, “Fileo/filos,” 9:123. Stählin suggests that kissing the earth in front of shrines probably predated kissing the object itself.

25. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane*, 12.

26. For Paul’s mentions of this sacramental kiss, see Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 16:20; II Corinthians 13:12; I Thessalonians 5:26. Peter mentions it in I Peter 5:14. For the New Testament we have used the *Authorized Version*.

27. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane*, 15.

28. Jacques Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Age: Temps, travail et culture en Occident: 18 essais* (Paris, 1977), 374–75. Le Goff maintains that the kiss of vassalage is closer to the betrothal kiss, which marks the entrance into a non-natural family community, in this case, through marriage.

29. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, vol. 12 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1999), 265.

practice, primarily as the kissing of the altar, doorposts, or threshold of the church building; later this practice spread to icons.³⁰ Perella maintains that Chrysostom's thought "strongly suggests that in kissing one another Christians are also kissing Christ. When at the celebration of the Mass, the priest kisses the altar, he is kissing Christ of whom the altar is a symbol. And every Christian who has the Spirit within him is another Christ."³¹

The cross too became a powerful symbol in the Orthodox east. It is a substitute symbol for Christ, of course, but also symbolizes the Christian's way of entry into Paradise. In the *Kontakion* "On the Adoration at the Cross," Romanos the Melodist writes:

Let us honor the cross, guardian of our life,
For it is the defender of our life in Heaven.
It defends all men from the wicked one and from his assault.
Those who have this seal have confidence in entering into Paradise.³²

When we consider the deep veneration of the cross in the east, even among the iconoclasts, and combine it with the sacramental symbolism of the kiss, as well as the power that gestures exercised in medieval societies, we can begin to understand why, sometime between Vladimir's conversion and 1059, cross kissing became a widespread symbol associated with the giving and keeping of oaths in Kievan Rus'. Although kissing the cross has long been practiced liturgically in the Orthodox Church, its origin as the guarantee of an oath is not entirely clear. Kristoffer Nyrop maintains, without reference to sources, "that in many countries it is required on taking an oath, as the highest asseveration that the witness is speaking the truth."³³ As we shall see, the *Primary Chronicle* has the Greeks sealing oaths by cross kissing in the accounts of the treaties between Byzantium and the pagan Rus', but this practice is not substantiated in other sources. Liturgically, cross kissing is practiced as a sign of respect, devotion, and fear, but it is not explicitly linked with oaths. For example, in the office for the Exaltation of the Cross, celebrated on 14 September, we read: "Today the Cross of the Lord goes forth, and the faithful welcome it with love; And they receive healing of soul and body and of every weakness. Let us kiss it with joy and fear: with fear, for we are unworthy because of sin; with joy, for upon it Christ the Lord was in His great mercy crucified, who grants the world salvation."³⁴

Exactly where and when the association with oath taking was first made

30. Stählin, "Fileo/filos," 9:145.

31. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane*, 27.

32. *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist I: On the Person of Christ*, trans. and annotated Marjorie Carpenter (Columbia, Mo., 1970), 249. In this regard also see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 2, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600–1700)* (Chicago, 1974), 139. Pelikan shows that the praise of the life-giving cross was a major theme of liturgies, citing both the *Liturgy of St. Basil* and the *Liturgy of Chrysostom*.

33. Kristoffer Nyrop, *The Kiss and Its History*, trans. William Frederick Harvey (London, 1901), 118.

34. *Festal Menaion*, trans. Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware (London, 1969), 153.

remains unclear.³⁵ In the *Primary Chronicle*, the earliest references to cross kissing and oaths were in connection with the treaties between Rus' and Byzantium in 907, 911, 944, and 971.³⁶ In 907 the Byzantine emperors Leo and Alexander are said to have made peace with Oleg, and after binding themselves with an oath, kissed the cross. Under Oleg, the pagan Rus' swore by their weapons as well as by their gods, Perun and Volos.³⁷ The treaty of 911 had a written text in two copies and the chronicler reports that the Byzantine emperor confirmed it in the name of the Holy Cross and the Holy Trinity. No mention is made of the manner in which the Rus' sealed the oath.³⁸ Once again in 944 the pagan Rus' swore on their weapons to confirm the oath, but the Christian Rus', we are told, swore on the cross in the church of St. Elias.³⁹ Finally in 971, the Rus' under Sviatoslav again swore on their gods, Perun and Volos.⁴⁰ Two things are of interest here. First, in 911 and 944 the oaths are taken to corroborate written documents supplied in two copies. It is as if the treaties do not take effect until the written texts are guaranteed by a sacred gesture, which supports our views of the importance of gesture in medieval practice and its usefulness in lending force to a written document.⁴¹ A second significant point is that on two occasions the Rus' swore by their weapons of war, in other words, the means by which they could achieve victory. The Christian Rus', however, swear by the cross, which in both east and west since the time of Constantine was viewed as the source of victory for the Christian side in both physical and spiritual battles.⁴² The office for the "Exaltation of the Cross" expresses this clearly:

We magnify Thee, O Christ the Giver of life and we honor Thy precious Cross, whereby we have been saved from the bondage of the enemy.
O Lord, Judge them that offend me: fight against them that fight against me (Psalm 34:1) . . .
Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help (Psalm 34:2).⁴³

One might argue that cross kissing appeared after 988 as a Christian substitute for the pagan practice of swearing on one's weapons, but the

35. For cross kissing among the South Slavs and in western Europe, see Dewey and Kleimola, "Promise and Perfidy," 327n1.

36. On the necessity of exercising caution about taking these documents at their face value, see Simon Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c. 950–1300* (Cambridge, Eng., 2002), 163–66.

37. *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2d ed. (Leningrad, 1927; hereafter PSRL 1), col. 32.

38. PSRL 1:37.

39. PSRL 1:52.

40. PSRL 1:73.

41. This might be compared to our modern signature, which adds authority to the text even when illegible.

42. Boris A. Uspenskii notes that Constantine, in his vita written by Eusebius, saw the sign of the cross in a vision accompanied by the words "by this conquer" (*en touto nika*) thus linking the cross, according to Uspenskii, to the invincible deity (*Deus Sol Invictus*). Uspenskii, *Krest i krug: Iz istorii khristianskoi simvoliki* (Moscow, 2006), 234.

43. *Festal Menaion*, 142.

evidence is scanty and this view remains difficult to prove. It is entirely possible, however, that Franklin and Shepard are correct when they suggest that the references to cross kissing in sealing treaties of the tenth century are a subsequent interpolation by the chroniclers and that the tradition may have originated later with the Iaroslavichi, shortly before 1059, when Iaroslav's sons reconcile with their uncle Sudislav and cross kissing is first attested among Christian Rus' princes.⁴⁴ If we agree that the practice is likely an attempt to give Christian authority to dynastic dealings, this explanation is certainly plausible and, furthermore, its success and rather rapid acceptance can be explained by its effective combination of respect for the cross and the Christian kiss of unity and reconciliation.⁴⁵

In contextualizing the sources that reveal contemporary theoretical attitudes toward cross kissing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it will be helpful to keep in mind such issues as the views of Kievan authors concerning the role of interprincipely treaties within the political system of their time and the norms and regulations that existed in relation to cross kissing. Our first source will be the *Pouchenie* (Instruction) of Vladimir Monomakh, a work that provides the theoretical basis for the political system of eleventh- and twelfth-century Rus'. Next we will examine the *Slovo o kniaziakh* (Homily on Princes), created sometime between 1161 and the Mongol invasion.⁴⁶ More exact dating to 1174 has been suggested and seems probable.⁴⁷ It is usually accepted that the *Homily* has strong links to the Chernigov lands and was, most likely, created there.⁴⁸ Finally, we will examine "ideological" statements and passages on cross kissing in the chronicles, located primarily in the *Ipat'evskaia letopis'*. Among them, and of significant importance for our topic, is the discussion between Prince Rostislav and the Kievan Caves Hegumen Polikarp, which

44. Franklin and Shepard, *Emergence of Rus*, 254.

45. With regard to its relationship to the ancient liturgical kiss, there is at least one instance in the chronicles in which cross kissing is equated with kissing a person: "Your lips have still not dried from kissing the cross [*Khrest esi tseloval a i eshche ti ni usta ne oskhla*]." *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. 2, *Letopis' po Ipat'evskomu spisku* (St. Petersburg, 1908; hereafter *PSRL* 2), 536, under 6677 (1169).

46. The *Homily* could not have been created before the death of Iziaslav Davydovich because he was the last of David's sons to die and all his sons are referred to as no longer alive in the text. Iziaslav Davydovich died in 1161. The full title of the *Slovo* or *Pokhvala* (Encomium) is, in fact, the *Pokhvala i muchenie sviatykh" muchenik" Borisa i Gleba*.

47. P. V. Golubovsky, "Opyt priurochenia drevnerusskoi propovedi 'Slovo o kniaz'akh' k opredelennoi khronologicheskoi date," *Drevnosti: Trudy arkheograficheskoi komissii imperatorskogo moskovskogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva* (Moscow), vol. 1, no. 3 (1899); A. K. Zaitsev, "Dubliruiushchie drug druga izvestiia v stat'akh 6682, 6683 i 6698, 6701 Ipat'evskoi letopisi," in B. A. Rybakov, ed., *Letopisi i khroniki* (Moscow, 1981), 69–78. For a review of the opinions on the dating of the *Homily* and additional arguments supporting its dating in the 1170s, see Yulia Mikhailova, "The Political Ideology of the *Tale of the Campaign of Igor* and the *Homily on Princes* in the Context of Their Contemporary Political Reality" (MA thesis, Michigan State University, 2002).

48. D. S. Likhachev "Slovo o polku Igoreve" i kul'tura ego vremeni (Leningrad, 1985), 162; Gail Lenhoff, *The Martyred Princes Boris and Gleb: A Socio-Cultural Study of the Cult and the Texts* (Columbus, Ohio, 1989), 74.

is interpolated into the account of Rostislav's death. Polikarp likely had a close relationship with the Kievan Monomakhovichi.⁴⁹ This is important because taken together, the *Homily on Princes* and this discussion, provide perspectives from different political and cultural centers. Unfortunately, the most relevant source for information on the interprincely treaties, *krestnye gramoty* (literally, "cross charters" or "documents of the Cross"), did not survive, although we assume they existed, from references to them in the chronicles.⁵⁰

In his *Pouchenie* Vladimir Monomakh warns his sons against numerous sins, but only four of them are said to cause the condemnation of the soul: "Beware of lying, drunkenness, and fornication, both soul and body perish because of these sins," and "If you have to kiss the cross to your brethren or to someone else, check your heart carefully and only make a treaty that you can keep, and after having kissed the cross keep it, so as not to condemn your soul by breaking your oath."⁵¹

The first three sins mentioned, lying, drunkenness, and fornication, apply to a prince no more than to any other Christian. The violation of an oath on the cross, however, deals primarily, although not exclusively, with princely duties and responsibilities. Among the many aspects of princely behavior discussed by Monomakh, *krestotselovanie* is the only one related to the question of personal salvation. All other instructions pertaining to princely politics either lack an explanation for why they should be followed or are connected with earthly rewards such as personal security, popular support, and international prestige. For example, princes are warned against allowing their men to harm villages or fields so as not to be condemned and are strongly encouraged to honor guests, because they will thus be made known in all countries by travelers. The contrast between this type of reasoning and the condemnation of the soul itself through *krestoprestuplenie* is self-evident. Thus, we can conclude that faith-

49. *PSRL* 2:530, 539, 546–48. The *Ipat'evskaia* clearly indicates Polikarp's close relationship with the Kievan Monomakhovichi as well as with Rostislav. The chronicler (perhaps the same Polikarp), describes the "great love" that Rostislav "had for the monastery of St. Theodosius and its hegumen." *PSRL* 2:530, under 6676 (1168). After Rostislav died, Polikarp continued his relationship with this princely line, as is clear from the account of the death of Iaropolk Iziaslavich, a son of Iziaslav Mstislavich. Iaropolk became ill while participating in a military campaign led by his older brother Mstislav (Mstislav and Iaropolk Iziaslavichi were sons of Iziaslav, Rostislav's older brother, and grandsons of Mstislav the Great). "And the news came to Mstislav, 'Your brother is very ill.' And Mstislav sent messages to Polikarp and to Danil, his priest, saying thus to them: 'If God takes my brother, put his body into a coffin and bring it to St. Theodore, where his father is buried.'" *PSRL* 2:539, under 6678 (1170). It is all the more remarkable that Polikarp, and not the hegumen of the St. Theodore monastery, was sent to the dying Iaropolk in spite of the fact that St. Theodore's was his family monastery as is clear from the citation. Polikarp also participated in the dramatic burial of another Monomakhovich, Vladimir Andreevich. *PSRL* 2:546–548, under 6679 (1171).

50. A full discussion of available information about *krestnye gramoty* can be found in Simon Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus*, 173–76; Franklin, "Literacy and Documentation," 23–24, 27, 31–32.

51. "Pouchenie Vladimira Monomakha," in L. A. Dmitriev and D. S. Likhachev, comps., *Izbornik (sbornik proizvedenii literatury drevnei Rusi)* (Moscow, 1969), 152.

fulness to kissing the cross occupied a significant place in Monomakh's political philosophy, a view supported by the fact that the whole *Instruction* may have arisen from a dramatic situation centered on the violation of an interprincipely treaty.⁵²

As is indicated in its opening passage, the *Homily on Princes* is directed to princes.⁵³ From the first it delivers a stern rebuke to the princes who start military conflicts with each other. The author calls on them to stop fighting and live in peace. What is more important, he proposes a practical program that instructs them in how to reach this goal. He suggests that the princes follow the example of David Sviatoslavich of Chernigov (died in 1123), who is pictured as an ideal ruler. According to the *Homily*, he "never felt hostility toward anyone."⁵⁴ Three reasons are given for this exemplary lifestyle. First, he was always willing to make peace: "If anyone started a war against him, he stopped the war by his willingness to make concessions." Second, he had attained his position properly and legally: "He was the main prince of the Chernigov land because he was the oldest among his brethren." And, finally, he always fulfilled the agreements he made: "If he kissed the cross to someone, he never in his life broke it."⁵⁵ It is worth noting that while David's peacefulness and respect for seniority are only briefly stated, his faithfulness in kissing the cross receives more thorough elaboration. And the author examines situations in which the other party violates his oath, "if anyone broke his cross kissing to him, he kept his [part of the treaty] all the same, offending no one [*nikogo priobide*] and doing no evil."⁵⁶ This attitude brought David both earthly

52. "Pouchenie," 154, 152. One might object that Monomakh's devotion to fulfilling oaths can be explained by his personal history. There is a story in the *Lavrentevskaia* under 6603 (1095) about the Cuman leaders Itlar and Kytan and their men who came to Vladimir for peace negotiations and were ambushed and killed after Vladimir gave them pledges of safety. The chronicler, as is typical in describing the morally dubious actions of princes, places the main responsibility on Vladimir's advisers who devised the plan and shared it with Vladimir. He answered, "How can I do that after I swore an oath [to guarantee their safety]?" His advisers, however, convinced Vladimir that there is no sin in violating this oath because the Cumans "constantly swear oaths to you, and then ruin the land of Rus' and constantly shed Christian blood." *PSRL* 1:227–28, under 6603 (1095). Vladimir may have regretted his treacherous action and could have been referring to his own sin when he wrote about kissing the cross, "k brat'i ili k komu [to your brethren or to anyone else]." "Pouchenie," 154 (emphasis added).

53. "Slyshite, kniazi" from "Slovo o kniaz'iax" in vol. 4 of *Biblioteka literatury drevnei Rusi*, ed. D. S. Likhachev, L. A. Dmitriev, A. A. Alekseev, et al. (St. Petersburg, 1997), 226. The *Slovo o kniaz'iax*, which is extant in a fifteenth-century manuscript, is one of three versions of this sermon. The oldest full-length version, *Pokhvala i muchenie sviatykh" muchnik" Borisa i Gleba*, is found in a fifteenth-century manuscript, and a seventeenth-century manuscript contains the *Slovo pokhval'noe na prenesenie sviatykh strastoterpets" Borisa i Gleba*. See *The Hagiography of Kievan Rus'*, trans. and with an introduction by Paul Hollingsworth (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 219–28.

54. "Slovo o kniaz'iax," 226. David Sviatoslavich has an interesting parallel in western historiography in Count Gerald of Aurillac, who is presented by his biographer "as a saint because of his extraordinary self-abnegation in, for instance, only fighting defensive wars against his neighbors." Reuter, "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution' III," 203.

55. "Slovo o kniaz'iax," 226.

56. *Ibid.*, 228.

and heavenly rewards, for “his brethren, seeing him to be like that, all respected him as their father and obeyed him as their lord. He ruled in great peace.” And when he died he had been sick for only a short period of time, by God’s will. The reward David received in Heaven was, according to the *Homily*, made clear through the miracles that occurred during his death and funeral. After a detailed description of these miracles, the author concludes, “Understand, O children, how God glorifies those who obey his will even here on Earth. What glory will he accept in Heaven!”⁵⁷

We should also note that the program of princely behavior offered in the *Homily* is presented as attainable. The story of David follows the call to live in peace and is introduced with the sentence, “Regarding this matter, I will tell you a parable that took place not in a foreign country.”⁵⁸ The latter qualification indicates the author’s intention to stress the practicality of what he is preaching. It is likely intended as a contrast to the preceding example derived from the biblical history of Israel, as if the author was concerned that his audience would find it rather distant from real life. At the end of the parable the author directly argues against those who find it is impossible to follow David’s example: “Will someone say that he did not have a wife? But he had [not only a wife] but even children. Or will someone say that he could follow God’s commandment because he did not have a home? Because I heard many times certain ignorant people saying, ‘We cannot save our souls having a wife and children.’ However, this prince had not just one home but many homes, being a prince of the whole Chernigov land. He still kept God’s commandment in this life and did not take up enmity against anyone.”⁵⁹ The story of David is clearly intended to show that his situation “in this life” was no better than that of other princes: “If someone starts a war against him . . . if someone among his brethren committed wrong against him.”⁶⁰ Thus, David was involved in the “normal” politics of his time with all its wars and wrongdoings. He nonetheless managed to rule peacefully because of the correct way he dealt with these situations, above all fulfilling the oaths he made on the cross regardless of the circumstances. Thus we see that in both the *Instruction of Vladimir Monomakh* and the *Homily*, kissing the cross is one of the chief political virtues of princes, if not the sole virtue.

Before turning to the chronicles, an apposite question would be to ask how the “political theory” of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries compares with the political practice of the time? Perhaps the best approach would be to track how the princes fulfilled the treaties they made, but the paucity of data makes this exceedingly difficult. Many interprincely treaties that were actually made are not mentioned in the surviving chronicles. Thus, when we compare those parts of the chronicles describing the same events, the *Lavrentevskaia* often lacks the information about the treaties that is found in the *Ipat'evskaia*. For example, both

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 226.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., 226–28.

chronicles describe Iziaslav's attack on the Kievan prince Igor'. Only the *Ipat'evskaia*, however, mentions that Iziaslav had previously kissed the cross, promising to acknowledge Igor' as the prince of Kiev. From the story given in the *Lavrentevskaia*, there is no way of knowing that Iziaslav committed krestoprestuplenie when he drove Igor' out of Kiev.⁶¹ The fact that the *Ipat'evskaia* is usually more detailed does not mean, however, that it gives us a complete picture. We often learn about previous treaties only when one party accuses the other of not fulfilling them.⁶² Therefore, it would be incorrect to conclude that princes were not serious about fulfilling their oaths on the cross and that they easily broke them because the chronicles often mention instances of krestoprestuplenie. In fact, we do not know how often it happened or in what proportion to the total number of oaths sworn.⁶³

Unfortunately, due to the absence of reliable data, we are forced to address what is essentially a quantitative problem using qualitative evidence.

61. *PSRL* 1:312–14, under 6654 (1146).

62. For example, the chronicle cites a warning sent by the leaders of the southern Monomakhovichi to Sviatoslav Vsevolodovich: "You, brother, kissed the cross to us to keep Roman's treaty. If you keep this treaty, you are a brother to us. If, however, you again bring up the old disputes that existed in the time of Rostislav, then you are breaking the treaty." *PSRL* 2:670, under 6698 (1190). The preceding text, however, does not contain any information about "Roman's treaty." We do not know when it was made or what it was about. The content or at least part of the content of the treaty between Iurii Dolgorukii and the Olgovichs is known only from the Olgovichs's accusation: "You kissed the cross to us promising to make a campaign against Iziaslav along with us, but you did not come." *PSRL* 2:363, under 6656 (1148). Had Iurii kept his promise, we, likely, would not have known about this krestotselovanie. To cite one more example, the obituary of Gleb Iurevich states that "if he kissed the cross to someone, then he never in his life perjured it." *PSRL* 2:563, under 6681 (1173). Neither chronicle, however, mentions any treaties made by this prince. If the obituary is accurate, it suggests that we often do not have any information about treaties that were faithfully kept.

63. A quantitative analysis of available data is further complicated by the lack of an adequate textological study of the *Kievskii svod*, which is the main source for our information about interprincely treaties. A good illustration can be found in Zaitsev's article, "Dubliruiushchie drug druga izvestiia," 69–78. He convincingly demonstrates that two different military campaigns described in the *Kievskii svod* were, in fact, one and the same campaign. The compiler of the *svod* used two different sources containing the accounts of the same event and mistakenly took them for two different events. We do not know, however, how many more of such *dublirovki* (as Russian textologists call them) exist in the *svod* because not much progress in its textological analysis has been made since 1981 when Zaitsev's work was published. A methodological difficulty also prevents successful quantitative analysis. In many cases, it is not clear whether a violation of a treaty actually took place. For example, the chronicle describes the breaking of an alliance between Rostislav Mstislavich and Sviatoslav Vsevolodich, which had been sealed by kissing the cross, as a result of the slander of some "evil men." Sviatoslav's son Oleg was staying in Kiev at Rostislav's court. "Evil men" falsely told Oleg that Rostislav was planning to capture him. Oleg believed them, left Kiev, and upon returning home told his father about Rostislav's allegedly hostile plans against him. Sviatoslav believed this story, broke his alliance with Rostislav, and kissed the cross to be an ally of Rostislav's enemy Iziaslav: "Thus was Sviatoslav involuntarily brought from an alliance with Rostislav to one with Iziaslav [*Tako nuzheiu povedesia Sviatoslav' ot Rostislavl'i liubvi k' Iziaslavu*]," concludes the chronicler. *PSRL* 2:512–14, under 6669 (1161). Should this be considered krestoprestuplenie? It is difficult to say, as the princes acted in good faith but were deceived by false information.

If we possessed a clear record of the number of agreements sealed by cross kissing and the number that were broken, our task would, of course, be much less complicated and we would not have to rely so heavily on contemporary accounts that may express opposing political or religious viewpoints. The methodology we are employing, however, is well attested for certain periods such as the eleventh and twelfth centuries in western Europe. Apposite in this regard is a debate on the “feudal revolution” in the journal *Past and Present*.⁶⁴ According to some historians, around the year 1000 Europe experienced a “quasi-revolutionary transformation of power” resulting in the disappearance of any effective royal control over local magnates and the subsequent establishment of castle-based lordship as the basis of social order.⁶⁵ In order to determine whether an abrupt and violent change worthy of the descriptor “revolution” actually took place, the participants in the debate compare the level of violence, the degree of public order, and the ratio between the two, in pre- and post-millennium Europe. These themes are not unlike our inquiry, for we seek to determine whether oaths on the cross were an effective instrument in maintaining public order and to elucidate the relationship between princes’ reliance on sheer power and their respect for treaties sealed by cross kissing.⁶⁶ The nature of the sources used in the “feudal revolution” debate is also similar to the situation we face with Rus’. In the absence of explicit normative documents, western medievalists reconstruct rules and customs on the basis of the stories found in narrative sources that contain “alleged facts that would have been meaningless unless they were interpreted in the context of an implicit normative framework.”⁶⁷

64. Barthélemy, “Debate: The ‘Feudal Revolution’ I,” 196–205; White, “Debate: The ‘Feudal Revolution’ II,” 205–23; Timothy Reuter “Debate: The ‘Feudal Revolution’ III,” 177–195; Chris Wickham, “Debate: The ‘Feudal Revolution’ IV,” *Past and Present*, no. 155 (May 1997): 196–208. These are all responses to T. N. Bisson’s 1994 article in *Past and Present*. Bisson replied to the responses in, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’: A Reply,” *Past and Present*, no. 155 (May 1997): 208–25. We are grateful to Nancy McLoughlin, University of California, Irvine, for bringing this debate to our attention.

65. Bisson, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’” (1994), 22–28, 40–42.

66. The issue of whether Bisson’s “feudal revolution” or Barthélemy’s mutationist interpretation more accurately describes the situation in post-Carolingian France is of less interest to us than the observations that both sides make concerning the proliferation of violence during the period and the means employed to control it and maintain at least some degree of order. As White observes: “When debated in ‘normative or prescriptive terms,’ the use of force to prosecute an allegedly unjust claim was certainly contested, but not the belief that violence should sometimes be used to claim a right or avenge a wrong.” White, “Debate: The ‘Feudal Revolution’ II,” 214. White also notes that “violence served not only as a method of expropriation, domination, and intimidation, but also as a way of symbolically asserting rights, pressing enemies to settle by distraining property and expressing righteous anger and justifiable enmity.” *Ibid.*, 212. This seems very similar to the oft-repeated objection of Rus’ princes: “ia v obide ne mogu byti.”

67. White, “Debate: The ‘Feudal Revolution’ II,” 214. In support of the method we employ in this study of using narrative sources for quantitative analysis, we note that one of the participants in the debate questions the use of this method in the comparison of the number of acts of violence performed before, during, and after the period of the “feudal revolution.” Even in this case, however, he himself uses narrative sources to evaluate the

One must, of course, heed the standard caveats concerning sources that reflect a monastic orientation, as the chronicles often do, or political allegiance to a particular region or prince. With this in mind, we will try to examine all the information about interprincely treaties provided by the chronicles, while identifying any references to generally accepted rules, norms, and procedures, as well as to the expectations of the parties who made the treaty. In addition, the examination of the political behavior of princes will be used to determine whether they relied on each other's oaths in actual practice.

We begin with the conversation between Prince Rostislav and Hegumen Polikarp of the Caves Monastery. In contrast to most political or moral statements made by the chronicler, it is a largely theoretical discussion not directly connected with a particular political situation. Rostislav wanted to take tonsure in the Kievan Caves Monastery, "to liberate himself from this short-term and vain life," but Polikarp objected to Rostislav's intention and advised him not to abandon his princely responsibilities: "God commanded you [plural] to do the following: to maintain law and justice in this world, to be just judges and to keep your oaths sealed by kissing the cross."⁶⁸ Thus, according to Polikarp, princes have their specific path of salvation, which is very different from that of monks. Faithfulness to cross kissing is an integral part of this path. As we can see, Polikarp's attitude is very close to the ideas of the *Homily*, which indicates that in two different political centers, two different churchmen connected with rival branches of the dynasty expressed strikingly similar ideas. This, of course, advances our developing hypothesis that these ideas must be relevant for the time.

Indeed, the opinions expressed by Polikarp and by the author of the *Homily* regarding the importance of faithfulness to krestotselovanie are frequently stressed in the chronicle. It can appear as a direct statement, "God commanded princes not to violate oaths on the cross and to honor their senior brothers," or it can be expressed indirectly, though still quite clearly, as it is in the obituary of Gleb Iurievich.⁶⁹ The chronicler praises Gleb stating: "This prince was a lover of his brethren, if he kissed the cross to someone, he never in his life broke it."⁷⁰

If fulfilling these agreements is one of the highest virtues, their violation is, correspondingly, one of the worst sins a prince can commit. A misfortune befalling Vladimir Mstislavich ("Macheshich") served him right, according to the chronicler, because he "always broke his oaths on the cross."⁷¹ To violate krestotselovanie was to risk one's soul, as we can see

attitudes toward violence, legitimacy, and power of oath-taking. Timothy Reuter, "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution' III," 177–95.

68. "Vam" Bog" tako velel" byti pravdu deiati na sem" svete v" pravdu sud suditi i v" khrestnom" tselovan'i vy stoiati." *PSRL* 2:530, under 6676 (1168). "Pravda," of course, has multiple meanings. In reference to princes, however, it most often means "law" or "justice."

69. *PSRL* 2:602, under 6684 (1177).

70. *PSRL* 2:563, under 6681 (1173).

71. *PSRL* 2:567, under 6682 (1174).

from the response given by Iziaslav and Vladimir Davidovich when they were offered the opportunity to join an alliance against Iziaslav Mstislavich, "We kissed the cross to Iziaslav Mstislavich . . . and we cannot play with our souls."⁷²

Chroniclers not only give theoretical support to the system of inter-princely treaties, they also assume that the princes relied on cross kissing in their practical affairs. The *Ipat'evskaia* explains why David Rostislavich (Monomakhovich) was hunting in an area where Sviatoslav Vsevolodovich (Olgovich) could easily attack him: "David did not expect any evil because he had an agreement with him [Sviatoslav], which was sealed by kissing the Holy Cross, and he believed in it."⁷³ Similarly, near the end of the twelfth century when the two clans had a dispute over succession to the Kievan throne and kissed the cross on an oath not to start any military action before the end of the negotiations, Iaroslav, the senior Olgovich, broke the agreement and attacked some junior Monomakhovich. The Monomakhovich were not able to properly defend themselves because the senior prince of their clan had "dismissed all his brethren and retainers, believing in the oath on the cross."⁷⁴

In actuality, such a belief was quite reasonable as the account of yet another conflict reveals. Vsevolod Sviatoslavich besieged Andrei Vladimirovich in Pereiaslavl' but could not capture the city. The two princes started negotiations and worked out a peace treaty. The treaty should have been sealed, as usual, with the ceremony of kissing the cross, but before Vsevolod had time to perform the ceremony, a fire accidentally started in Pereiaslavl'. This, of course, changed the military situation, giving Vsevolod a chance to capture the city. He did not make use of this opportunity, however, and continued with the peace negotiations. His chronicler praised him highly for doing so, underscoring that, although Vsevolod was free to attack the city because the fire had started before he actually kissed the cross, his exceptional good will and Christian feelings prevented him from taking advantage of this opportunity. Vsevolod himself proudly said to Andrei, "You see that I had not yet kissed the cross to you when God gave me this chance and you [plural] started this fire. Had I desired evil, I could have done whatever I pleased."⁷⁵ This statement makes clear that not breaking the treaty after kissing the cross was something that was quite expected and nothing to boast about.

In addition, Vsevolod's case illustrates the significance of the ceremony itself, which is also documented by an account in the *Ipat'evskaia* under 1164. The prince of Chernigov died, and the Chernigov leadership decided not to reveal his death, in order to ensure that the seat would

72. "tselovala esve krest" k' Iziaslavu Mstislalichiu . . . a dusheiu ne mozheve igrati." *PSRL* 2:377.

73. *PSRL* 2:614–15. We do not know, however, whether this is an authentic description of David's feelings or the chronicler's reaction, stressing how badly Sviatoslav acted when he violated cross kissing and attacked David. What is certainly clear is that David was caught off guard.

74. *PSRL* 2:690–91, under 6703 (1195).

75. *PSRL* 2:305–6, under 6648 (1140).

be inherited by the prince they preferred. Everyone had to take an oath not to inform other princes about the death and to kiss an icon of "Our Savior." A telling remark is made about a bishop's participation in this ceremony. "Tysiatskii George said it was not appropriate to make the bishop kiss 'Our Savior' because he is a church hierarch, and we should not have any doubts concerning him."⁷⁶ Thus, the kissing of a sacred object, whether a cross or an icon, can be compared to signing a document in modern times. It had to be a serious guarantee if the demand to perform the ceremony was considered a sign of mistrust.

All this does not mean, however, that *krestotselovanie* was never violated. Obviously it was, as are the norms of any society. The significance of a norm is indicated not by the fact that no one ever breaks it, which would very seldom be the case, but by the reaction to its violation. Therefore, it is useful for our purposes to compare the attitude toward violations of cross kissing to violations of other norms. The chronicle of Iziaslav Mstislavich presents a good opportunity for such a comparison.⁷⁷ The author seeks to present Iziaslav from the most favorable perspective while at the same time discrediting his rivals. The elaborate argumentation used for this purpose makes this chronicle a valuable source for studying the mentality of the upper strata of Rus' society. What then were the violations committed by this prince and how are they treated in the chronicle? Iziaslav, it is clear, violated two major rules: the respect due to seniority and faithfulness to kissing the cross. To understand Iziaslav's challenge to the rules of seniority, a brief outline of the political situation in Rus' in the period 1140–1150 is needed.

After the deaths of Monomakh's sons Mstislav (1132) and Iaropolk (1139), their younger brother Viacheslav became the oldest surviving male among the Monomakhovichi. He lacked the personal characteristics necessary for a senior prince, however, for he was a weak ruler and a generally unsuccessful warrior. According to the dynastic rules, he had prior claims on the Kievan throne but was never able to gain the support of the townspeople and was repeatedly defeated in his struggle for Kiev. The major competitors in this struggle were the Olgovich, Iurii Dolgorukii of Suzdal', and Viacheslav's nephew Iziaslav whose chronicle we will next consider.

Normally, when princes broke the rules of seniority they would attempt to disguise their violations. Iziaslav, however, presented the unique example of a prince who for a while openly challenged the very principle of seniority. He had a favorite saying that can be translated approximately as, "Not a place to the head but a head to the place," meaning that the Kievan throne should be occupied, not by the oldest, but by the most able prince.⁷⁸ He also boasted, "I gained the Kievan seat by risking my head,"

76. *PSRL* 2:522–23, under 6672 (1164).

77. Iziaslav Mstislavich was one of Mstislav the Great's sons and an active participant in the conflict over Kiev that broke out soon after his father died in 1132. Iziaslav's chronicle, exceptionally detailed and well written (apparently by one of his own men), survived as a part of the *Kievskaia svod*.

78. "Ne idet mesto k' golove, no golova k mestu." *PSRL* 2:442, under 6659 (1151).

thus declaring his disrespect for the seniority of his rivals Viacheslav and Iurii.⁷⁹ His chronicler justifies Iziaslav's seizure of Kiev by creating an appealing picture of his knightly virtues and declaring the unanimous support he enjoyed from the population, thereby demonstrating that Iziaslav, though young, deserved the Kievan throne more than the legitimate but inept Viacheslav did.

Another rival, Iurii Dolgorukii, could hardly be labeled weak or inept. Iziaslav, however, still argued that Iurii did not deserve the obedience due to him as a senior among the Monomakhovichi.⁸⁰ In a conversation with Iziaslav, Iurii's son Rostislav declared his intention to pronounce Iziaslav his senior, stating "Father offended me [violated my rights] and did not give me a *volost'*, and I came to you, placing my hope in God and in you, because you are the oldest among Vladimir's grandsons and I want to defend the Rus' land and ride at your side."⁸¹ Iziaslav replied: "Your father is the oldest among us but he does not know how to live with us. As for me, may God help me to treat justly all my brethren and all my clan like my own soul."⁸² Iziaslav does not even attempt to disguise his disrespect for dynastic rules. He rejects Rostislav's flattering statement, "you are the oldest among Vladimir's grandsons" and makes clear his awareness of Iurii's physical seniority. Just the same, however, seniority is not relevant because Iurii mistreats his "brethren" and thus does not deserve their obedience. Iziaslav maintains that he will make a better leader of the clan. Iziaslav's violation of *krestotselovanie* occurred soon after the death of Vsevolod Olgovich of Kiev. Vsevolod appointed his younger brother Igor' as his heir and forced the other princes to acknowledge Igor' as the Kievan prince by kissing the cross to him. Among the princes who kissed the cross was Iziaslav, who soon after attacked Igor', drove him from Kiev, and later captured him. The chronicler's depiction of these events is very different from the story of Iziaslav's struggle against his uncles. He never states Iziaslav's violation of cross kissing as openly as he does his violation of seniority rules. The fact that he kissed the cross is briefly mentioned along with the statement that Iziaslav had to make the oath against his will: "Iziaslav Mstislavich had no choice but [*nuzha byst'*] to kiss the cross."⁸³ The

79. *PSRL* 2:380, under 6657 (1149).

80. In terms of his biological age, Iurii was younger than Viacheslav. For all practical matters, however, he was considered a "senior" Monomakhovich.

81. "Otets' mia pereobidil' i volosti mi ne dal', i prishel' esm' narek" Boga i tebe, zane ty esi starei nas Volodimerikh' vnutsekh', a za Ruskuiu zemliu khochiu stradati i podle tebe ezditi." *PSRL* 2:366–67, under 6656 (1148). The translation of chronicle accounts dealing with the system of interprincely relationships presents great difficulties because the meaning of the terminology employed is often unclear. The words *obida*, *obidet'* appear to refer to actions of a prince that are detrimental to the honor of another prince or violate his rights.

82. "Vsikh nas starei otets' tvoi, no s nami ne umeet' zhiti, a mne dai Bog' vas, brat'iu svoi vsiu imeti i ves' rod' svoi v' pravdu, ako i dushiu svoiu. Nyne zhe, ache otets' ti volosti ne dal', a iaz' ti daiu." *PSRL* 2:367, under 6656 (1148). "V pravdu" is another example of an expression that is difficult to translate. It appears that "pravda" usually refers to justice, law, or some formal rules.

83. *PSRL* 2:318, under 6653 (1145).

description of Iziaslav's campaign against Igor' begins with the statement, "and the Kievans did not want Igor'," which is supported by the impressive image of the people voicing their unanimous rejection of Igor' in favor of Iziaslav. Responsibility is placed, therefore, on the population rather than on Iziaslav. Every movement he makes is presented as a response to the people's demand.⁸⁴ Another pro-Iziaslavian account of this campaign found in the *Lavrentevskaia* goes even further. It does not mention Iziaslav's cross kissing to Igor' at all and states that Iziaslav headed for Kiev because he "had pity" on the townspeople who pleaded with him to take care of their city.⁸⁵ A comparison with the Olgovich chronicle describing the same events, however, indicates that Iziaslav intended to attack Igor' even before he received an invitation from the townspeople, and it is apparent that his chronicler deliberately distorted events in order to protect his prince's image.⁸⁶

Iziaslav's chronicler uses this tactic repeatedly as he tries to mask the prince's *krestoprestuplenie*, which apparently indicates that there were

84. "And they sent their messengers to Pereiaslav' to Iziaslav and told him, 'Come to us, O Prince, we want you.' When Iziaslav heard that, he gathered his warriors and advanced against him [Igor'] from Pereiaslav' . . . Then, all the Chernyi Clobuks and all people of Poros'e sent their messengers to him and told him, 'You are our prince, and we do not want the Olgovich, come fast, and we will support you.' And Iziaslav took off for Dernovoe. And all the Clobuks and people of Poros'e gathered there, and at the same place the townspeople of Belgorod and Vasilev sent their messengers to him saying, 'Come, you are our prince, we do not want the Olgovich.' Men sent by the Kievans came to the same place and told him, 'You are our prince, come, we do not want to be like the hereditary property of the Olgovich. We are ready to be where we see your banner.' Then Iziaslav gathered both the Christians and the pagans in the field." *PSRL* 2:322–23, under 6653 (1145).

85. *PSRL* 1:313, under 6654 (1146).

86. At that time Igor' sent a messenger to Iziaslav saying, 'God took my brother's soul, are you faithful to your oath on the cross?' He, however, did not reply at all and kept his messenger and did not let him go." *PSRL* 2:322, under 6653 (1145). It is also very interesting to compare Iziaslav's speech about this campaign against Igor' to the speech he made to Rostislav cited above. Judging from his open disrespect of Iurii's seniority, we would expect Iziaslav to say something like, "Yes, I kissed the cross to Igor', but I am not going to fulfill my oath for such and such reasons." He, however, says something quite different: "Brothers! I dutifully obeyed Vsevolod as my senior brother, but with those [that is, Igor' and his "brethren"], I will rely on the will of God and the power of the life-giving cross." *PSRL* 2:323, under 6653 (1145). The reference to "the power of the life-giving cross" is apparently intended to present Iziaslav as a supporter of faithfulness to *krestotsestovanie* and to distract attention from his violation. Another example of this tactic can be found in a story about Iziaslav's attempt to form an alliance with the Davidovich. The latter had to kiss the cross promising to support Iziaslav, but the act obviously contradicted their long-term interests. The Kievan *veche* warned Iziaslav that he should not trust them and should not start a military campaign along with them. Iziaslav's reply to that supposedly was, "They kissed the cross to me, and I cannot cancel the campaign we planned together [*Tselovali ko mne khrest' a dumu esmi s nimi dumat' a vsiako sego puti ne khochiu otlozhit'*]." *PSRL* 2:344, under 6655 (1147). When the Davidovich indeed violated their oath, Iziaslav, according to his chronicler, expressed not only anger but also great surprise. *PSRL* 2:346–48, under 6655 (1147). In other words, the whole story makes the reader think that Iziaslav simply could not believe that it was at all possible for someone to violate a cross kissing. In this manner the chronicler creates the illusion that Iziaslav was a strong supporter of faithfulness to the oath in the hope that it will help his readers forget about Iziaslav's own *krestoprestuplenie*.

no possible arguments in defense of this violation, and that, although some parts of society could support a challenge to seniority, no one would have supported the violation of an oath sworn by kissing the cross.

A story about Vladimir of Galicia found in the *Ipat'evskaia* presents additional evidence of the extent to which the public held a negative view of krestoprestuplenie. In this tale, Vladimir was punished by God when he violated his oath on the cross to Iziaslav and made fun of the ritual itself. According to Likhachev, this story belongs to a genre that he calls "tales of princely crime."⁸⁷ All the other tales of this type describe violent crimes committed by princes against other princes, such as murder or blinding; the inclusion of krestoprestuplenie in such company clearly indicates that it was considered a very serious crime indeed.

There had to have been, however, a legal procedure for breaking a treaty, and, as we shall see, it was possible. When one of the princes, Sviatoslav Olgovich, was called to take up arms against Iurii Dolgorukii, he answered, "I kissed the cross to him and cannot act against him without [his] offense [*vina*]." It stands to reason, therefore, that he could ignore his oath and act against Iurii if the latter had committed offenses.⁸⁸

An example of such a *vina* can be found in the account of the conflict between Rostislav Mstislavich and Sviatoslav Vsevolodich. Sviatoslav thought that Rostislav was going to capture his son Oleg and give Chernigov, which belonged to Sviatoslav, to another prince.⁸⁹ Therefore, Sviatoslav and Oleg's retainers advised them to break the treaty with Rostislav. They argued that Oleg and Sviatoslav had a right to do so. Oleg's *muzhi* said: "O prince, is it good that they wanted to capture you in Kiev and are giving Chernigov, which belongs to your father, to somebody else? Now, you and your father are true [justified] in your cross kissing." Sviatoslav's men repeated the same arguments and added, "And you, O Prince, almost lost your *volost'* supporting Rostislav, while he, for his part, did not render you any real help."⁹⁰ Oleg and Sviatoslav were convinced by these explanations and broke their cross kissing. What is fundamental here is that they considered themselves "justified in the krestotselovanie [*pravy v krestnom' tselovan'i*]." ⁹¹ Obviously, from their point of view, Rostislav bore the guilt for this violation. The whole episode brings to mind the manner in which western medievalists describe post-Carolingian Europe: "a feuding culture is one in which questions of legitimacy . . . are constantly being posed."⁹² By

87. D. S. Likhachev, *Russkie letopisi i ikh kul'turno-istoricheskoe znachenie* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1947), 215, 232.

88. *PSRL* 2:489, under 6665 (1158). *Vina* could mean "guilt," "offence," or "reason"; here it most likely means "offence."

89. The chronicler states that all this was the slander of some "evil men." For our purposes, however, whether Rostislav was in fact going to do anything bad to Sviatoslav or not is not relevant. What is essential here is that both Sviatoslav and Oleg trusted the "evil men" and that their resulting discussion with the retainers provides a valuable source on the subject of krestotselovanie.

90. "A uzhe esi kniazhe i volost' svoiu pogubil' derzhasia po Rostislava, a on" ti vsiako lenivo pomogaet'." *PSRL* 2:513–14, under 6669 (1161).

91. *PSRL* 2:513–14.

92. Reuter, "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution' III," 183.

breaking their treaty, Oleg and Sviatoslav initiate a feud against Rostislav, and they take care to justify and legitimize their actions.

The account of the conflict between Rostislav Mstislavich and Sviatoslav Vsevolodich helps us better understand the chronicler's remark about two princes who "started looking for a *vina* between them."⁹³ In other words, they both wanted an excuse to break their treaty and start a war, and for this purpose, they were eager to accuse the other party of not fulfilling his obligations. A good example of such a formal accusation can be found in the speech delivered to Iurii Dolgorukii by his allies, "You kissed the cross to us to make a campaign against Iziaslav together with us, but you did not. Meanwhile, Iziaslav . . . sacked our land, and now Iziaslav invaded our land again and destroyed all our supplies. And you neither came to help us nor attacked Rostislav [Iziaslav's brother and ally]. Now, if you want to make a campaign against Iziaslav, do so, and we will go with you. If you do not attack Iziaslav, we are justified in the cross kissing [if we break the alliance with you] because we cannot perish in this war without any help."⁹⁴

There was a special term for making this kind of accusation: "to make oneself right [to justify oneself] in cross kissing [*opravitisia v krestnom' tselovan'e*]." This term is used, for example, in the account of a conflict between Iziaslav and Iurii Dolgorukii. At the conclusion of a war that had broken out between them, they made peace and, as usual, sealed their agreement by kissing the cross. One of the provisions was to return to each other all property captured during the war. Iurii, allegedly, did not do so. Iziaslav first sent a warning to him, "O brother, we kissed the cross and promised to return to each other all captured property. Now, brother, if you want to be faithful to the cross, may God help us to live in peace. If you, however, do not want to do so, then we will see what happens."⁹⁵ Iurii's reaction is unknown. Iziaslav's next message, stated, "If you do not want to keep your part of the agreement, I cannot tolerate this insult [*v obide ne mogu byti*]."⁹⁶ After that, he broke the agreement and started a campaign against Iurii. His chronicler, as expected, carefully presents all the evidence in Iziaslav's favor. Therefore, he not only cites Iziaslav's two messages to Iurii but refers to them again while describing the outbreak of a new war: "Iziaslav, according to what he had said before, 'I cannot tolerate this insult,' justified himself in his cross kissing and attacked [Iurii's allies]."⁹⁷

This passage from the chronicle illustrates the features of Rus' political

93. *PSRL* 2:315, under 6652 (1145). Compare *PSRL* 1:311, under 6652 (1144).

94. "Ty esi nam' khrest" tseloval' ako ti poiti s nami na Iziaslava se zhe esi ne poshel' a Iziaslav" prished". . . zemliu nashiu povoevali a se paky Iziaslav" prished" opiat' . . . vsiu zhizn' nashiu povoevali. A ty ni k nam esi poshel', ni na Rostislava esi nastoupil'. Nyne zhe ozhe khoshcheshi poiti na Iziaslava, a poidi, a my s toboiu. Ne ideshi li, a my esm' v khrest'nom' tselovan'i pravi, a ne mozhem' my odini rat'iu pogybaty." *PSRL* 2:363, under 6656 (1148).

95. "Brate na tom" esmy khrest" tselovali komu svoe poznavaiuchi imati. Nyne zhe brate ozhe khoshcheshi khrestu upraviti to dai ny Bog" pozhiti ne khocheshi li upraviti a to uzrim". *PSRL* 2:394, under 6657 (1149).

96. Ibid. Here, again, we see the term *obida*, translated here as "insult."

97. "Iziaslav zhe iakozhe biashe rek'l' perezhe: 'V' obide ne mogu byti,' i tako opravia-sia v' khrestnom' tselovanie." *PSRL* 2:395, under 6658 (1150).

culture that are similar to those of post-Carolingian Europe where “peace generating mechanisms” coexisted with and complemented “mechanisms generating feud.” Rus’ princes obviously shared the western nobles’ belief that “violence should sometimes be used to claim a right or avenge a wrong.” Such “meaningful and controlled” violence was not considered a violation, as long as it was directed “against opponents against whom coercion, force, warfare or violence (depending upon one’s point of view) had some show of justification.”⁹⁸ Iziaslav’s chronicler was exceptionally skillful at producing this “show,” and other princes, as we have seen, also took care to “justify themselves” (*opravitisia*) when they resorted to violence and to prove that their actions were a legitimate response to the offense (*vina*) of their opponents. When negotiations failed to provide peaceful resolution of the conflict over an alleged *vina*, the prince who considered himself offended signified the official breaking of the treaty and the declaration of war by the final symbolic gesture; his envoy ritually “cast” the “documents of the cross” (*krestnye gramoty*) before the offender.⁹⁹

There were, however, some rare cases when a treaty could be legitimately broken without anyone’s “offence.” This occurred when *krestotse-lovanie* was revoked by a church hierarch for a serious reason. Dewey and Kleimola call this a “clerical pardon.”¹⁰⁰ For example, Mstislav the Great had a treaty with Iaroslav of Chernigov to help him against his enemies. Iaroslav’s nephew Vsevolod attacked him and drove him out of Chernigov. Vsevolod had the Cumans as allies, and the war against him promised to be very bloody. The hegumen of St. Andrew’s monastery interfered and “prevented Mstislav from starting a war on behalf of Iaroslav, saying, ‘To violate your cross kissing and not start a war would be a lesser sin than to shed Christian blood’—and he convened a council of the church hierarchs as there was no metropolitan at that time, and they told Mstislav: ‘This sin will be on us.’ Mstislav did what they wanted and broke his oath to Iaroslav and regretted it for the rest of his life [*i plakasia togo vsia d’ni zhivota svoego*].”¹⁰¹ The latter phrase demonstrates once again how seriously cross kissing was taken.

A similar situation occurred at the end of the century, connected to the conflict between Rurik Rostislavich of Kiev and Vsevolod Big Nest. Vsevolod was then the senior of the whole Monomakhovichi clan and Rurik followed him in the hierarchy as the Kievan prince and the senior among the southern Monomakhovichi. Rurik distributed the southern (“Rus’”) *volosts* but did not give any of them to Vsevolod. Vsevolod found this disrespectful and threatened Rurik saying, “You declared me the senior of your clan, but, contrary to that, when you became Prince of Kiev,

98. White, “Debate: The ‘Feudal Revolution’ II,” 214–15; Bisson, “The ‘Feudal Revolution,’” 41; Reuter, “Debate: The ‘Feudal Revolution’ III,” 182.

99. For the discussion of this “ritual of transgression,” as Franklin calls symbolic “casting” of the *krestnye gramoty*, see Franklin, “Literacy and Documentation,” 23–24, and Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture*, 172–76. See also Vasilii Sergeevich, *Russkiiia iridiches-kiia drevnosti* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 2:204–5.

100. Dewey and Kleimola, “Promise and Perfidy,” 331.

101. *PSRL* 2:291. The remark about the absent metropolitan is made by the chronicler.

you did not allocate to me a part of the Rus' land and gave all its parts to other, junior princes from among your brethren. If no part of the Rus' land is for me, then defend this Rus' region and keep it safe with whoever has a part of it . . . and I do not care about it."¹⁰² Vsevolod further promised to take back this threat only if he received the volosts that had already been given to another prince, Roman. The situation became very complicated for Rurik because he had kissed the cross to Roman not to take the volosts back, which made it very difficult for him to grant Vsevolod's request.¹⁰³ The latter, on the other hand, was prepared to start a war to avenge his honor as a senior. Rurik consulted the metropolitan; "and the metropolitan said to Rurik, 'O Prince, God appointed us to the land of Rus' to prevent you from shedding blood . . . If you gave a volost' to a junior and violated the rights of a senior, and kissed the cross to the junior, I absolve you from your oath on the cross and take it upon myself. Give this volost' to the senior and give another one to Roman to compensate him."¹⁰⁴ After that, Rurik discussed the situation with Roman who agreed to cancel their agreement about the volosts for the sake of peace and unity among the Monomakhovichi.¹⁰⁵ The role of the metropolitan in this case and the remark about the absent metropolitan in the previous example make us think that there was likely a formal procedure for revoking cross kissing, which could normally be enacted only by the head of the Rus' church and not by any "high-ranking clergyman," as Dewey and Kleimola suggest.¹⁰⁶

From the sources that provide a more theoretical view of the importance of keeping one's oath sworn on the cross, such as the *Testament of Vladimir Monomakh* and the *Homily of Princes*, it has become clear that krestotselovanie is viewed as one of the chief virtues for Rus' rulers. The conversation between Prince Rostislav and Hegumen Polikarp as recorded in the *Ipat'evskaia letopis'* offers additional evidence of its importance and echoes the *Homily* in implying that observing cross kissing constitutes one of the means of salvation for princes. Furthermore, the more theoretical views concerning krestotselovanie are corroborated by the behavior of princes as recorded in the chronicles. They appear to trust oaths made on the cross and accept that there will be very negative consequences for those who break them. Violations threaten one's salvation, and when chroniclers are favorably disposed to certain princes they take great pains

102. "Vy este narekli mia vo svoem' plemeni . . . stareishego a nyne sedel' esi v Kyeve, a mne esi chasti ne uchiniil' v Ruskoi zemle no razdal' esi inem' molozh'shim" brat'i svoei. Dazhe mne v nei chasti net' da to . . . Ruskaia oblast' a komu esi v nei chast' dal' s tem zhe ei i bliudi i sterezhi . . . a mne ne nadobe." *PSRL* 2:683, under 6703 (1195).

103. "Gave it to Roman and kissed the cross to him not to give it to anyone else [*Dal' . . . Romanovi i krest' k nemu tseloval' azh' emu pod' nim' ne otdati nikomu zhe*]." *PSRL* 2:683 6703 (1195).

104. "Kniazhe my esmy pristavleny v Ruskoi zemle ot Boga vostiagivati vas" ot krovoprolit'ia . . . Azh' esi dal' volost' molozh'shemu v oblazne pred' stareishim" i krest' esi k nemou tseloval' a nyne az" snimaiu s tebe krestnoe tselovanie i vzimaiu na sia, a ty . . . volost' . . . dai zhe stareishemu, a Romanovi dasi inuiu v toe mesto." *PSRL* 2:684–85, under 6703 (1195).

105. *PSRL* 2:684–85, under 6703 (1195).

106. Dewey and Kleimola, "Promise and Perfidy," 330.

to demonstrate that any *krestoprestuplenie* committed by a prince was justified by an offense on the part of the prince with whom he had enacted the agreement. An offense could justify violating an oath, but an additional means of freeing oneself from this obligation was through the intervention of a church hierarch, most probably the metropolitan, who could absolve the prince and take the oath upon himself. Apparently, by virtue of their sworn obedience to God through tonsure, bishops and metropolitans did not need to confirm their oaths to another by cross kissing. For princes, on the other hand, it was a practice that went a long way toward providing trust in their relationships.

Although instances of *krestoprestuplenie* in the chronicles could lead us to doubt the effectiveness of cross kissing, we must remember that there would have been no reason to record the hundreds of times that such oaths were observed, and that the existence of violations actually testifies to the general success of the practice, since exceptions, though rare and universally condemned, are much more likely to be mentioned in the sources. We must resist the temptation to exaggerate the violations and agree with Franklin and Shepard's assessment that despite the strains on the system produced by expansion and change in the twelfth century, "there is a story of growth and success."¹⁰⁷ It is clear that cross kissing provided a strong measure of accountability in princely relationships, particularly since, by the testimony of the chroniclers, the price of a violation could very well mean the loss of one's soul. In this sense, we can say that in the twelfth century, a period often characterized as one of disunity and the absence of central authority, there was a system by which agreements could be rather effectively made and preserved.¹⁰⁸ Because of the rather dramatic expansion of Kievan Rus' during that period, additional strains were put on the system, which makes the fact that *krestotselovanie* continued to function and have the support of contemporaries all the more surprising. Even in instances of *krestoprestuplenie*, because the oath was sworn to a divine authority and had to be honored, wronged princes had recourse to sanctioned violence in order to assert their rights. As in the west, violence was often used for expropriation or intimidation, but at the same time, it could also become a means of asserting rights, expressing righteous anger, and avenging wrongs.¹⁰⁹ It might be helpful under these circumstances to see the reliance on oaths, as one western historian has put it, as "not aimed at forcing compliance on a whole class of unwilling predators. . . . Rather, the collective oathtakings offered some degree of guarantee to members of that class [to which] all would be bound."¹¹⁰ *Krestotselovanie* as practiced in twelfth-century Rus' can be viewed in this sense as the centerpiece of a system of public order established more on the basis of norms than of institutions. The inclusion of the Holy Cross and the active role of the church in the agreements only served to legitimize the norms and strengthen the ties established among the princes.

107. Franklin and Shepard, *Emergence of Rus*, 324.

108. This is a theme reiterated throughout the last two chapters of *ibid.*, 323–71.

109. White, "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution' II," 212.

110. Reuter, "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution' III," 184.