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HISTORY AS PROPAGANDA, PROTO-FOUNDATION MYTH AND “TRACT FOR THE TIMES” IN THE LONG ELEVENTH CENTURY (c. 1000 — c. 1130)

Abstract: The long eleventh century saw a flurry of historical writing across Europe for a wide variety of reasons. In Byzantium, periods of political instability tended to prompt narratives giving a partisan account — often purporting to be objective — of recent events. Newly established regimes and conquerors in western Europe tended to commission self-glorifying and -justifying historical texts. This holds true of the Normans in Southern Italy and Sicily and England and of some Rus’ princely regimes. However, elements of criticism of the conduct of rulers may be detected in works that appear at first sight to be encomiastic or propagandist. Works written in a monastic milieu could serve the local interests of their religious house while recounting a more general narrative. Equally, they could set out norms and taboos of political culture by means of cautionary tales. Instances of such literary techniques are noted in Anglo-Norman England and Rus’, with reference made to the Bayeux Tapestry, and the works of Eadmer, William of Malmesbury and the “Povest’ Vremennykh Let”. The intimations of disapproval by churchmen of a ruler’s actions could bring him serious political embarrassment, even if it could not unilaterally topple him. In all the polities under consideration the validity of Christian oaths was deemed to be an absolute, transgression being correspondingly heinous and potentially incurring general catastrophe. The appearance of Halley’s Comet and its direct connection with broken oaths and subsequent disasters appears to be a theme in the Bayeux Tapestry and the “Povest’ Vremennykh Let” alike.

Keywords: Anglo-Norman England, Byzantium, chronicle, criticism, encomia, historical writing, Kievan Cave Monastery, kissing of the Cross, monastery, ethical norms, oaths, political culture, Rus’

Introduction: the spectrum of historical writing in the long eleventh century

There was a profusion of historical writing in the course of Europe’s long eleventh century. Rather than trying to explain this solely in terms of “state-formation”, one must bear in mind a few other developments that were propitious to historical writing around that time. This was a

period of rapid demographic and economic growth. Europe was for the first time interconnected by “Three Circuits”, commercial waterways spanning the North Atlantic, the “Way from the Varangians to the Greeks”, and the Mediterranean, facilitating the circulation not only of travellers and commodities but also of writings¹. And precisely because the long eleventh century saw so many challenges to the status quo, with new centres of economic resources and of military power seeking legitimacy, attempts at dignifying political structures by means of an admirable — often Providential — “historical” record were numerous, and sometimes mutually competitive. These attempts formed part of a greater tendency to resort to the written word for “authority” and the “force of law” than in preceding centuries. What Brian Stock has called “the implications of literacy” were ambivalent and even contradictory, allowing opportunities for articulate dissent alongside the justification and consolidation of authority². And, of course, the long eleventh century saw the expansion across northern and eastern Europe of Christianity, propagating an ideology of respect for “writings” — Scriptures — and their authors and keepers throughout the continent³.

What is so unusual about the long eleventh century is the contemporaneous existence of Christian polities at markedly different stages of development, and their use of historical writing for very different purposes. At one end of the spectrum are the nouveaux

¹ *Moore R.I.* *The First European Revolution, c. 970–1215.* Oxford, 2000; *Fossier R.* *The Rural Economy and Demographic Growth // New Cambridge Medieval History.* Vol. IV.1 / Ed. D. Luscombe and J. Riley-Smith. Cambridge, 2004. P. 12–14, 27–29, 35, 40–46; *Keene D.* *Towns and the Growth of Trade // New Cambridge Medieval History.* Vol. IV.1. P. 47–52, 60–61, 64–70; *Epstein S.A.* *An Economic and Social History of later Medieval Europe, 1000–1500.* Cambridge, 2009. P. 63–65, 74–78, 93, 100–103, 112; *Garipzanov I.H.* *Wandering Clerics and Mixed Rituals in the Early Christian North, c. 1000 — c. 1150 // Journal of Ecclesiastical History.* 2012. Vol. 63. P. 3–5, 10–13; *Shepard J.* *Rome, Constantinople and Newly-Converted Europe: Archaeological and Historical Evidence. Some Introductory Remarks // Rome, Constantinople and Newly-Converted Europe. Archaeological and Historical Evidence / Ed. M. Salamon, M. Wołoszyn, A. Musin and P. Špehar.* Cracow; Leipzig; Rzeszów; Warsaw, 2012. Vol. I. P. 25–26.

² *Stock B.* *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries.* Princeton, 1983. P. 35–37, 46–49, 54–56, 59–77, 88–90, 517–521; *Moore R.I.* *Literacy and the Making of Heresy, c. 1000 — c. 1150 // Heresy and literacy, 1000–1530 / Ed. P. Biller and A. Hudson.* Cambridge, 1994. P. 19–20, 22–23, 33; *Epstein S.A.* *An Economic and Social History.* P. 38–39.

³ *Berend N.* *Introduction // Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus’ c.900–1200 / Ed. N. Berend.* Cambridge, 2007. P. 6–10, 16–19, 28–30, 37–39.

regimes, bedecking themselves with encomia and narratives comparable to the *origines gentium* underlying some of the works of barbarian historians in the early middle ages⁴. These are, largely, triumphalist. Obvious examples would be the praises skalds sang of Knut, master of a sea-empire encompassing Denmark and England⁵; the “official histories” of the Norman Conquest of England after 1066 (See below); and the works celebrating “The Deeds Done” of Robert Guiscard and Count Roger in southern Italy and on Sicily⁶. One may also cite those sections of the “Povest’ Vremennykh Let” which provide answers to the questions posed at its outset: “Whence came the Rus’ land, which prince first reigned in Kiev, and how did the Rus’ land come to be?” These sections include the Rus’ imposition of “tribute (дань)” on the Slavs and Finns, but also those peoples’ request for someone to come and rule over them and to adjudicate “acording to the law (*no pravu*)”⁷. At the opposite end of the spectrum are writers operating within the political cultures of long-established states. They tend to use the past as a means of criticising current or recent governments, writing “tracts for the times” rather than full and balanced exegeses of past events. They do not need to justify the existence of the political structure within which they operate. On the contrary, their aim is to restore the body politic, presupposing a fairly wide circle of readers or hearers and that History is an ingredient of everyday political discourse.

Byzantium is a prime example of a polity too self-assured to feel in need of extensive self-justifying narratives. What is notable there is the dearth of “official histories” that were regularly kept up by the imperial court⁸. Encomia, rather than extensive narratives

⁴ *Goffart W.* The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800). Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon. Princeton, 1988.

⁵ *Lawson M.K.* Cnut. England’s Viking King. 2nd ed. Stroud, 2004. P. 74–75, 202.

⁶ *William of Apulia.* Gesta Roberti Wiscardi / Ed. and tr. M. Mathieu, La geste de Robert Guiscard. Palermo, 1961; *Geoffrey Malaterra.* De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius / Ed. E. Pontieri. Bologna, 1925–1928; *Wolf K.B.* Making History. The Normans and their Historians in Eleventh-Century Italy. Philadelphia, 1995. P. 123–169; *Chibnall M.* The Normans. Oxford, 2000. P. 117–119.

⁷ ИВЛ. С. 7, 12–13.

⁸ *Shepard J.* The Uses of “History” in Byzantine Diplomacy: Observations and Comparisons // Porphyrogenita. Essays on the history and literature of Byzantium and the Latin East in honour of Julian Chrysostomides / Ed. C. Dendrinos, J. Harris, E. Harvalia-Crook and J. Herrin. Aldershot, 2003. P. 101–104, 113–114; *Kaldellis A.* The Corpus of Byzantine Historiography. An Interpretive Essay // The Byzantine world / Ed. P. Stephenson. London, 2010. P. 212–214.

of the emperor's doings, tended to do the business of maintaining and propagating a positive image of the current regime. Indeed, Byzantine historical writings (about the distant or the fairly recent past) tended to proliferate in times of political instability, when a regime was weak or no one faction was dominant at court. They could be celebrations of an individual's personal achievements, setting out his qualifications for the Purple, or their reviews of recent events could amount to criticism of the present-day regime. Hints of such oblique criticisms surface in the later tenth century, for example Leo the Deacon's remarks about the inadvisability of invading Bulgaria through its densely-wooded passes, ostensibly in praise of Nikephoros II's perspicacity but with implicit imputation of folly to the reigning emperor Basil II. Basil's defeat at Trajan's Gates in 986 is the subject of eyewitness reporting by Leo himself⁹. And there was an outpouring of versions of the recent past in the mid-eleventh century, when interest-groups and opinionated individuals like Katakalon Kekaumenos jockeyed for prominence if not the throne itself; and, in Michael Psellos' case, this entailed the claim to be writing objective "History" so as to justify one's behaviour under previous regimes and to highlight one's importance to them¹⁰. To describe levels of output of historical writings in Byzantium as a barometer of political instability is only a slight exaggeration. Equally, such writings register a lively political culture, and their responses to socio-economic change could even envisage reconstitution of the body politic¹¹.

Here, then, is a spectrum of political structures and the historical writing they inspired in the long eleventh century. The contrasts between them reflect differing stages of development, the old East Roman State as against a plethora of polities new to Christianity or still at an embryonic stage of formation. What is more striking is that in the newly-forming polities, too, critiques of regimes and "tracts for

⁹ *Leo the Deacon*. *Historiarum Decem Libri* / Ed. C.B. Hase. Bonn, 1828. P. 62–63, 171–173.

¹⁰ *Jeffreys M.* Psellos and "his Emperors": Fact, Fiction and Genre // *History as Literature in Byzantium* / Ed. R. Macrides. Farnham, 2010. P. 73–74, 77–81, 89–90; *Shepard J.* *Memoirs as Manifesto: the Rhetoric of Katakalon Katakakon* // *Reading in Byzantium and Beyond*. Festschrift for Professors Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys / Ed. T. Shawcross and I. Toth. Cambridge (forthcoming).

¹¹ *Krallis D.* *Democratic Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium: Michael Attaleiates' "Republicanism" in Context* // *Viator*. 2009. Vol. 40.2. P. 47–53.

the times” emerged, couched in the form of histories of the recent or more distant past. And a certain correlation is discernible between the writing of such works and bouts of political instability or disputes over the succession, as in Byzantium. One should emphasise that the scope of the works emanating from the newer polities is generally narrower than Byzantium’s, reflecting the outlook of the monks who were the principal authors and whose concerns were often local. Nonetheless, they tended to link these concerns with broader issues of “law”, justice and governance and, as in Byzantium, to couch criticism of rulers in ambiguous or ostensibly “apolitical” terms. All this suggests a certain sense of the “common weal” and it presupposes an audience for such tracts, a political nation with a forum of discourse, if not yet a fully-fledged polity. There is scope here for only two case-studies, Anglo-Norman England and the land of Rus’. But one may note en passant that Geoffrey Malaterra, although commissioned to commemorate Roger’s feats in Sicily and southern Italy, apparently wove negative aspects of the Normans’ overweening ambitions and greed into his narrative¹².

Anglo-Norman England

One cannot elaborate here on the various “triumphalist” works written after the Normans’ victory over the English, beyond noting that within a few years they were portraying it in terms of the feats of classical antiquity. Bishop Guy of Amiens’ “Song of the Battle of Hastings”, written perhaps only a year or so afterwards, portrays the slayers of King Harold in gory but Homeric terms, repeatedly terming his own nephew “a son of Hector” (*Hectorides*)¹³. And William of Poitiers compares the invasion plans favourably with those of the Romans: Julius Caesar’s preparations had been less provident and systematic than Duke William’s¹⁴. Similar claims for William’s careful preparations and war-leadership occur in the Bayeux Tapestry, a work designed for propagandistic purposes, and probably woven by Englishmen or -women at St Augustine’s monastery, Canterbury

¹² *Wolf K.B. Making History*. P. 164–168.

¹³ *Guy, Bishop of Amiens*. The *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* / Ed. and tr. F. Barlow. Oxford, 1999. P. 32, 34 (text); xxii–xxiv, xxxii, xl–xlii.

¹⁴ *William of Poitiers*. *Gesta Guillelmi* / Ed. and tr. R.H.C. Davis and M. Chibnall. Oxford, 1998. P. 172–173.

in King William's lifetime¹⁵. Scenes such as William's lifting of his helmet to reassure his men that he is still alive demonstrate his decisive role in the battle of Hastings.



Illustration 1. William lifts helmet to show his face

And, in line with contemporary Norman historians, the Tapestry shows Harold as an oath-breaker, who has broken the *sacramentum* sworn on holy relics to William some years earlier in Normandy and duly suffers divine punishment for this, in the form of death and bloody defeat.



Illustration 2. Harold swears an oath on relics

Nonetheless, the “message” is more ambivalent, and perhaps more critical of the Normans, than a hasty glance reveals. Not only does the Tapestry show Harold's courage, as in the scene where he drags two of Duke William's men from the quicksand near Mont-Saint-

¹⁵ Pastan E.C. Building Stories: the Representation of Architecture in the Bayeux Embroidery // Anglo-Norman Studies. 2010 [2011]. Vol. 33. P. 162–163, 165–166.

Michel, during his visit to Normandy. E.C. Pastan has noted the brutality in the depiction of Harold's brothers' deaths at Hastings, with the earlier marginal pastoral and animal scenes giving way to dismembered Anglo-Saxon corpses that "begin to overwhelm the lower borders"¹⁶.



Illustration 3. Killing of Harold's brothers, Leofwine and Gyrth



Illustration 4. The Saxon dead

In Pastan's words, "The horror of battle and the depiction of all the dead to be buried ... mirror the emphasis of the Martyrology of St Augustine's which, for 14th October, records the deaths of Harold, king of the English, 'and so many of our brothers'¹⁷. She sees ambivalence even over the key question of whether — as Norman historians strenuously assert — Edward the Confessor wished Duke William to succeed him. The Tapestry represents Edward on his deathbed, reaching out to touch Harold with his

¹⁶ Ibidem. P. 175.

¹⁷ Ibidem, citing BL Cotton MS Vitellius B.xii, fol. 145v.

fingertips, perhaps as if commending his widow and his kingdom to him¹⁸.



Illustration 5. Edward reaches out, apparently to Harold

There is similar ambivalence towards the conquerors, and also some outright criticism of their conduct, in the earliest Anglo-Norman historical works, notably those written in monasteries in the 1120s — Eadmer’s “History of Recent Events in England”, and William of Malmesbury’s works on the kings and the bishops of the English. In fact Eadmer, who could remember life as a boy in Canterbury’s Christ Church on the eve of the Conquest, shows sympathies for the Saxons akin to those of the Martyrology of St Augustine’s cited a moment ago: “what treatment [William] meted out to those leaders of the English who survived the great slaughter, I forbear to tell, for it could do no good”¹⁹. Eadmer’s abhorrence at the Norman ruler’s ruthlessness and sympathy for the losers runs through his entire work. He pictures a golden age under King Edgar in the mid-tenth century, commenting darkly that the correctness of a Saxon prophecy of “invasions of foreign foes and all their horrible oppression” “can be seen all too easily...in our own afflictions by those who know how

¹⁸ Ibidem. P. 154–155, 173 and n. 158. See also *Brooks N.P. and Walker H.E. The Authority and Interpretation of the Bayeux Tapestry // Anglo-Norman Studies. 1978 [1979]. Vol. 1. P. 11–13; Gameson R. The Origin, Art and Message of the Bayeux Tapestry // The Study of the Bayeux Tapestry / Ed. R. Gameson. Woodbridge, 1997. P. 203; Baxter S. Edward the Confessor and the Succession Question // Edward the Confessor. The Man and the Legend / Ed. R. Mortimer. Woodbridge, 2009. P. 112.*

¹⁹ *Eadmer. Historia novorum in Anglia / Ed. M. Rule. London, 1884. P. 9. See Williams A. The English and the Norman Conquest. Woodbridge, 1995. P. 166 and n. 62.*

to discern them”²⁰. Instead of the golden age, malpractices prevail, the worst being what he brands a Norman innovation, lay investiture: “From the time when William, Duke of Normandy, conquered England...no one was ever made a bishop or abbot there without first being made the king’s man and receiving from the king investiture by the presentation of the pastoral staff”²¹. Eadmer declares that his purpose is to record Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury’s bid “to put an end to this practice of investiture by the king, as being contrary to God and to the canons of the Church”²².

One might discuss how far Eadmer’s “History of Recent Events” — recounting Anselm’s stand against royal policies and lay investiture, and consequent spells in exile — amounted to a polemic against the Norman regime, and compare it with the “Anglo-Saxon Chronicle”, which was written, in the vernacular, until the mid-twelfth century. But worth more attention for our purposes is Eadmer’s interweaving in his “History” of universal issues of justice and church law with Christ Church monastery’s local interests — its objections to royal officials’ seizure of lands and revenues²³. The “History” essentially recounts how a holy man, Archbishop Anselm, opposed the malpractices of a wicked ruler, William II, invoking against him “the canons of the church” and relying on *external* authority — the papacy — for support. There are constant references to the rule of “law”, and much of the “History” is taken up with correspondence between Anselm and the pope, with many citations of church councils’ decrees. In writing his “History”, Eadmer sets out the basics of what he considers to be lawful in the internal affairs of the church, relations between churchmen and the ruler, and governance of the English kingdom²⁴. External spiritual authority, in the form of the pope, may lack power, but its role as guarantor of good practice is nonetheless invaluable. In that sense, Eadmer’s work is less a “History of Recent Events” than “a tract for the times”.

William of Malmesbury’s “Histories” reach back far into the past, and they contain many favourable remarks about Henry I, the king at the time he wrote his “History of the kings of the English”. Here I

²⁰ *Eadmer*. *Historia novorum in Anglia*. P. 3.

²¹ *Ibidem*. P. 1–2.

²² *Ibidem*. P. 2

²³ *Southern R.W.* *St Anselm and his Biographer*. Cambridge, 1963. P. 274–276, 302–304, 309–312.

²⁴ *Williams A.* *The English and the Norman Conquest*. P. 166.

shall just make three observations, bearing on what may perhaps also be seen in Rus'. Firstly, the early 1120s was a time of uncertainty as to the succession, because Henry's only son to be born in wedlock had perished in 1120, and there were several possible contenders for the succession. William's "History" offered a compendium rich in lively stories and basic data about kings that was also a historical handbook and a guide to kingship. William dedicated it to those most likely to play a part in determining the succession and in counselling the new ruler²⁵. And he went much further than any of his contemporaries in trying to align a kingdom's history to a set of fixed principles of political conduct²⁶. William expected quite a wide audience, dedicating his work to those most likely to succeed Henry or to be leading players in a succession-dispute or a new regime, what one might call "the political nation". Secondly, William uses the distant past by way of criticising current malpractices. His major "Histories" constitute a defence of his home-monastery, Malmesbury, which had lost its lands and "liberty" to the local bishop, Roger of Salisbury. Quite recently, P. Hayward has shown how lengthy — and largely fictional — stories about Anglo-Saxon bishops serve to illustrate misconduct in the church. Recounting ninth-century bishops' extravagance funded by their ill-gotten gains from monastic property, William has the present-day bishop of Salisbury in his sights²⁷. Pointedly, he compares the Saxon bishop Ealhstan, who had infringed on Malmesbury Abbey's rights yet had been a generous lord, with modern predators: "our plunderers oppress as well as rob us, so that open talk of suffering is not allowed..."²⁸. Thirdly, in signalling that Bishop Roger has both despoiled his abbey and suppressed dissent, William casts indirect aspersions on the current ruler: Roger was Henry's righthand man, administering England during the king's absences in Normandy and exercising substantial political weight. So his mismanagement reflects badly on Henry, counterbalancing the conventional words of

²⁵ *Weiler B.* William of Malmesbury, King Henry I, and the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* // *Anglo-Norman Studies*. 2008 [2009]. Vol. 31. P. 172–173.

²⁶ *Ibidem*. P. 174.

²⁷ *Hayward P.A.* The Importance of being Ambiguous: Innuendo and Legerdemain in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum* and *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* // *Anglo-Norman Studies*. 2010 [2011]. Vol. 33. P. 93–97.

²⁸ *William of Malmesbury*. *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* / Ed. and tr. M. Winterbottom. Oxford, 2007. Vol. I. P. 278–279; *Hayward P.A.* The Importance of being Ambiguous. P. 95.

praise William has for Henry's performance of his kingly duties. The apparently "apolitical" stories about Anglo-Saxon bishops turn out to have highly contemporary overtones. William veils his critique in what is essentially rhetoric. He claims to be objective, writing in accordance with "the true law of the historian", piously echoing the Venerable Bede²⁹. One should note that Bede's "History" itself amounted to a "tract for the times". Monasteries could better defend their properties and independence by setting essentially local disputes on the level of universal significance, through the writing of "true", seemingly apolitical, history and the invocation of sacred rules. This seems to me to hold true not only of Saxon and Anglo-Norman England but also of Rus'.

Rus'

Turning to the land of Rus', one must concede that few subject groupings or literary centres besides those at Novgorod and Tmutarakan' were capable of oblique criticism of the ruling elite's conduct in the manner of the Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Normans. There are, nonetheless, articulate commentaries on the rulers' conduct, sometimes amounting to critiques, with assessments being made against a set of clear-cut ethical criteria. And in Rus', much as in Anglo-Norman England, one may find an association between these independent assessments and the institution of monasteries, as also invocation of an external authority, beyond the land of Rus', by way of validating the right of a church or monastery to broadcast critiques. I have in mind the Kievan Cave Monastery and those of its brethren who contributed to the composition of the "Povest' Vremennykh Let" whilst also writing the story of their own house, the Paterik. Even to phrase the interrelationship between the Paterik and the Chronicle in these general terms (and, indeed, to label the "Povest'" a "Chronicle") is to invite controversy and, as with all discussion of the composition of Rus' chronicle-writing, an English saying springs to mind: "fools rush in where angels fear to tread" — and all the more so in the homeland of the giant Shakhmatov and of subsequent

²⁹ *William of Malmesbury. Gesta regum Anglorum / Ed. and tr. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom. Oxford, 1998. Vol. I. P. 796–797; Hayward P.A. The Importance of being Ambiguous. P. 100–101.*

generations of textologists³⁰! The difficulty of unpeeling the layers of texts incorporated within the “Povest” and other early Rus’ works may not, however, deprive the observations of mere general historians of all sense and purpose. Indeed, the sheer multiplicity of texts and overlays in the “Povest” tends to support a general characterisation: the vitality of political discourse. In early twelfth-century Rus’, as in contemporary England and indeed Byzantium, historical writing could amount to tracts for the times, perhaps read by few but whose essence might be disseminated orally, a “ripple effect”. Here one can only outline a comparison that deserves fuller exegesis³¹.

As in Anglo-Norman England, so in Rus’, lack of a binding order of succession to the preeminent throne provided openings for strife. At one in a lengthy series of family gatherings, in Liubech in 1097³², the princes made a solemn arrangement as to which of them should hold Kiev and the other established throne-cities, swearing jointly to uphold it. The difficulty of observing a somewhat ambivalent, foreseeably obsolescent, agreement seems to have triggered various historical writings that were also tracts for the times. The arch-manipulator of such writings is, of course, one of the chief political players: Vladimir Monomakh, whose “Pouchenie” recounts his campaigns, almsgiving, church-going and equitable judgements as models for his sons and other members of the governing elites to imitate. Monomakh seemingly wrote the earlier drafts around 1100³³.

³⁰ *Шахматов А.А.* Разыскания о русских летописях. М., 2001. See, e. g., *Насонов А.Н.* История русского летописания: XI — начало XVIII века. Очерки и исследования. М., 1969; *Милотенко Н.И.* Летописание Ярослава Мудрого (Древнейший свод) // *Rossica Antiqua*. Исследования и материалы / Отв. ред. А.И. Дворниченко, А.В. Майорова. СПб., 2006. С. 156–169; *Гимон Т.В., Гитиус А.А.* Русское летописание в свете типологических параллелей (к постановке проблемы) // *Жанры и формы в письменной культуре средневековья*. М., 2005. С. 174–200; *Гитиус А.А.* «Рекоша дружина Игоревы» — 3. Ответ О. Страховой (Еще раз о лингвистической стратификации Начальной летописи) // *Palaeoslavica*. 2009. Vol. XVII/2. P. 152–195; *Шайкин А.А.* Заглавия и вводные тексты двух старших русских летописей: идеология и повествование // *ТОДРЛ*. 2010. Т. LXI. С. 398–418; *Вилкул Т.Л.* О происхождении «Речи Философа» // *Palaeoslavica*. 2012. Vol. XX/1. P. 1–15; *Петрухин В.Я.* Русь в IX–X веках. От призвания варягов до выбора веры. М., 2013.

³¹ For fruitful comparison of various aspects of historical writing in Rus and Anglo-Saxon England, see now *Гимон Т.В.* Историописание раннесредневековой Англии и Древней Руси. Сравнительное исследование. М., 2012.

³² *Щавелёв А.С.* Съезд князей как политический институт Древней Руси // ДГ. 2004 год: Политические институты Древней Руси. М., 2006. С. 272–273.

³³ *Гитиус А.А.* Сочинения Владимира Мономаха: опыт текстологической реконструкции. I // *Русский язык в научном освещении*. 2003. № 6. С. 91–92.

He highlighted his own recent rejection of an invitation instigated by the senior prince, Sviatopolk Iziaslavich, to attack the two Rostislavichi, junior princes, thereby breaching the agreement he had sworn on the Cross at Liubech³⁴. In emphasising the inviolability of all such agreements sworn to one's brethren or anyone else and the need for utter fidelity to them, Monomakh strikes a high moral note³⁵. Yet he could already have been positioning himself for an eventual bid to succeed Sviatopolk on the Kievan throne, putting his own particular interpretation on what was agreed at Liubech and thereby straining the spirit, if not the letter, of the arrangement.

It can hardly be coincidence that identical themes — especially the inviolability of oaths sworn on the Cross — pervade the text of the “Povest”³⁶. That the editing of the “Povest” into something like its present-day form occurred under the aegis of Monomakh seems most likely. But — and this is quite a big “but” — the “Povest” was not simply a mouthpiece for Vladimir Monomakh. It occasionally makes a positive allusion to his rival, Sviatopolk, noting the latter's custom of visiting the Cave Monastery “before he went forth to war or for some other purpose,” and of venerating the tomb of Feodosii and receiving the abbot's prayers³⁷. The Chronicle's entry for the year 6615 even ascribes a victory over the Polovtsy under Sviatopolk's leadership to “the prayers of the Mother of God and our holy father, Feodosii”, clearly a reflection of the text's incubation within the walls of the Cave Monastery. Conversely, Vladimir Monomakh is criticised quite directly for the killing in 1095 of the Polovtsian chief Itlar' after he had come to Pereiaslavl' so as to negotiate peace, an incident with no obvious bearing on the monastery's fortunes. The Chronicle describes Itlar' as losing his life “in evil fashion” on a particularly holy day, “the first Sunday in Lent”. Reportedly, Monomakh was heeding what western chronicles would call “evil counsellors”³⁸, but the message that princes should keep even the oaths they had sworn to pagans is plain enough.

A claim amounting to special moral authority to comment on such matters may also be found in the “Povest' Vremennykh Let”. The

³⁴ ПБЛ. С. 98.

³⁵ Ibidem. P. 101; *Mikhailova Y. and D.K. Prestel*. Cross-kissing: Keeping one's Word in Twelfth-Century Rus' // *Slavic Review*. 2011. Vol. 70:1. P. 8–9.

³⁶ *Mikhailova Y. and D.K. Prestel*. Cross-kissing. P. 6–7.

³⁷ ПБЛ. С. 120.

³⁸ Ibidem. P. 95–96; *Mikhailova Y. and D.K. Prestel*. Cross-kissing. P. 9, n. 52.

claim is made on behalf of the Cave Monastery as a whole, rather than specifically for the contributors to the Chronicle³⁹. But the Cave Monastery's right to self-determination was closely bound-up with its role as, in effect, keeper of the conscience of the princes. And the contributors to the "Povest'" linked a prince's personal morality with matters of public concern — the keeping of agreements, whether they were sworn on the Cross with other princes, or made with the Polovtsy. This aspect of autonomy in the claim made by the "Povest'" for the Cave Monastery's unique status tends to escape notice because of the seemingly "apolitical" context in which it occurs — the tale of Anthony's return from Mount Athos and foundation of a house at Kiev "with the blessing of the Holy Mount", a phrase used repeatedly in the story, whose original source is not of prime concern to us here⁴⁰. However, the Chronicle goes on to recount Prince Iziaslav's foundation of a monastery and his apparently arbitrary transfer there of the Cave Monastery's Abbot Barlaam, "wanting to make it superior to this monastery (i. e. the Pecherskii. — *J. Sh.*), trusting in riches". The Chronicle continues: "many monasteries have indeed been founded by emperors, nobles and riches, but they are not such as those founded by tears, fasting, prayer and vigils"⁴¹. The unfavourable comparison with the Cave Monastery of the house founded by Iziaslav and, by implication, of all mere princely foundations is carefully phrased, yet clear. Similar comparisons to the Cave Monastery's advantage follow from the Chronicle's next statement but one. Reportedly, Barlaam's successor, Feodosii, obtained the text of the Stoudite Rule, copied it out and introduced it, so that the monastery's liturgy, fasting practices and in fact "everything", might function "by institution (*все съ уставленьем*)"⁴².

³⁹ For the brethren's responsibility for updating and reshaping the Chronicle in its more or less final phases, see, e. g. *Timberlake A.* Redactions of the Primary Chronicle // *Русский язык в научном освещении.* 2001. № 1. С. 207–214; *Гунтуц А.А.* К проблеме редакций Повести временных лет. II // *Славяноведение.* 2008. № 2. С. 22; *Гунтуц А.А.* «Рекоша дружина Игоревы» — 3. С. 267.

⁴⁰ ПВЛ. С. 68–69. On the existence of some sort of Life of Anthony, see, e. g. *Подскальски Г.* Христианство и богословская литература в Киевской Руси (988–1237 гг.). Изд. второе, исправленное и дополненное для русского перевода / Перевод А.В. Назаренко, под редакцией К.К. Акентьева. СПб., 1996. С. 85–88, 263–264, 526.

⁴¹ ПВЛ. С. 69.

⁴² *Ibidem.* P. 70. See also the somewhat different version of Nestor in his "Life of Feodosii": *Нестор.* Житие Феодосия Печерского / Подготовка текста, пер. и коммент. О.В. Творогова // БЛДР. СПб., 1997. Т. 1: XI–XII вв. С. 378–381; *Пентковский А.М.* Типикон патриарха Алексия Студита в Византии и на Руси. М., 2001. С. 155–158.

My concern here is neither with the literal truth of these claims made for Feodosii nor with possible differences in emphasis between links with Athos and links with the house of Stoudios. It is in any case clear that a translation was made in Rus' of the newly-composed "Typikon of Alexios the Stoudite"⁴³. More significantly, the claims serve to establish the Cave Monastery's moral authority for judging all others: it functions in accordance with the regulations in force at the Stoudite monastery in Constantinople, *and* it benefits from the blessing and on-going prayers of "the fathers who are on the Holy Mount"⁴⁴, invoked for them by Anthony. There is, I suggest, an analogy between this invocation of external good practice and holiness on behalf of the Cave Monastery and that made by Eadmer and other Anglo-Saxon monks to defend their own houses against kings and despoliation by their "evil counsellors". Anglo-Norman writers, like the hero of Eadmer's "History", Anselm, looked to the Roman papacy to safeguard "the canons of the church"⁴⁵. For them, as for the monks in Rus', universally valid rules could be found in loci of authority situated beyond the reach of a nation's princes or, indeed, churchmen. And they, too, were moved to write of the more distant past, so as to put present-day rulers firmly in their place. In England as in Rus', there was a close link between concern for maintaining present-day standards and interest in the writing of history.

The "Povest' Vremennykh Let", then, establishes an independent platform for itself by means of recounting the origins of the Pecherskii monastery, Anthony's stay on "the Holy Mount", and his spiritual father's injunction to return to Rus' to propagate true monasticism. The tale is self-serving, in that this foundation-myth renders princes superfluous, however pious or beneficent they might be. But from this position of relative autonomy, contributors to the "Povest'" could more readily pass judgement on public doings as well as the personal life of princes, refashioning past events so as to instruct contemporaries. One instance of this is worth considering. By the time the Chronicle gained something like its present form, the activities of the "Triumvirate" of Iaroslav's sons lay a generation or so in the past. The abundance of precise dates and topographical details about Kiev

⁴³ *Пентковский А.М.* Типикон патриарха Алексия Студита. С. 160–161, 165–173, 176.

⁴⁴ «сущихъ отецъ иже в Свягѣй Горѣ» (ПВЛ. С. 69).

⁴⁵ *Eadmer.* *Historia novorum in Anglia.* P. 2.

in its account of the events of 1067–1068 may well be the produce of a detailed record, kept at the time: the strife between the Iaroslavichi and Prince Vseslav of Polotsk; their breach of an oath sworn on the Cross of safe-conduct and their imprisonment of Vseslav, followed by the Polovtsy's invasion and victory over the princes "because of our sins"⁴⁶; the populace's freeing of Vseslav from jail, prompting the flight of Iziaslav to the Poles; and, for seven months, the reign of Vseslav in Kiev. But it seems likely that the contemporary record was later amplified to serve as prelude to the Chronicle's discursive treatment of oaths on the Cross in its entries for the 1090s, notably the aftermath of Liubech⁴⁷. Contributors to the Chronicle refashioned the events of 1068 so as to demonstrate how Vseslav benefited from staying true to the Cross and observing his oath sworn on it. Vseslav gained his freedom whereas God punished the Triumvirate, giving victory to the Polovtsy. The moral of the story for Rus' in general and for princes in particular is clear: "God demonstrated the power of the Cross as a warning to the land of Rus' that one should not violate the true Cross after kissing it"⁴⁸. The Chronicle lays most blame for the breaking of the oath upon Iziaslav, but Sviatoslav and Vsevolod — the father of Vladimir Monomakh — do not wholly escape blame.

These remarks raise questions as to the mechanics of the composition of the "Povest'", and I am certainly not claiming that the extant text represents the mouthpiece of the Cave Monastery any more than that it is the exclusive mouthpiece of Monomakh. My point is that there emerged a "tract for the times", recalling a golden age of internal peace and success against the steppe-nomads, especially after Vladimir's baptism and during Iaroslav's heyday. This stands out in contrast with the age of princely disunity and defeats at the hands of the nomads presaged by Halley's Comet (which also features prominently in the Bayeux Tapestry)⁴⁹, and beginning in earnest with the events of 1067–1068. Prime responsibility for defeat at the Polovtsy's hands lies with those princes who had broken their oath on the Cross. The passage on 1067–1068 interlocks well with the Chronicle's account of the Council of Liubech and its aftermath. There, Vladimir

⁴⁶ ПБЛ. С. 73.

⁴⁷ Ibidem. P. 110, 114–115.

⁴⁸ Ibidem. P. 74.

⁴⁹ Ibidem. P. 71–72.



Illustration 6. Halley's Comet overshadows Harold on his throne

Monomakh is depicted in glowing colours, upholder of inter-princely concord and decrifier of the opportunities that strife would give the Polovtsy to “come and take the land of Rus”⁵⁰. However, the lengthy text recounting the events of 1067–1068 is unlikely to have been refashioned wholly by Monomakh or his sympathisers. Well before his time, the Cave Monastery had been championing themes like the special status of oaths sworn on the Cross, and advocating the model of princely love and respect for one’s elder brother embodied in Boris and Gleb. Indeed, we have evidence of the political role the abbots could play from the “Life of Feodosii”’s account of his objections to Sviatoslav Iaroslavich’s seizure of the Kievan throne: he was “sitting on this throne not by law (*не по закону*)”; even after reluctantly agreeing to let Sviatoslav’s name be mentioned in the liturgy, Feodosii still had the “Christ-loving” Iziaslav named in first place, as being the legitimate prince of Kiev⁵¹. Liturgical recognition by leading monasteries could not alone secure a prince’s throne, yet no prince could do comfortably without it.

This is not to claim for the Cave Monastery the role of active enforcer of norms of conduct. It did not house an equivalent of Archbishop Anselm, nor did it keep up in the mid-twelfth century an acute historical commentary, in the manner of William of Malmesbury. Equally, Vladimir Monomakh was liable to bend the rules, especially if one accepts the respective theses of Professors Gippius and Nazarenko: these, once collated, would suggest that Monomakh issued the third version of his “Pouchenie” in 1117, and

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*. P. 112.

⁵¹ *Нестор*. Житие Феодосия Печерского. С. 420–421, 424–425.

thus around the time of breaching an agreement that Sviatopolk's eldest son Iaroslav should inherit the Kievan throne upon his own death⁵². Considering his formidable reputation and the ample material resources then at Monomakh's disposal, one can scarcely wonder at his success in reserving the Kievan succession for his own son, Mstislav. More remarkable is the fact that he still found it worthwhile to bring out a new version of his "Pouchenie", presenting his lifestyle even more emphatically in quasi-monastic tones. This implies a continuous political discourse, which rendered even Monomakh vulnerable to damaging commentary on his power-play, perhaps opening up the possibility that he would not receive liturgical prayers in key monasteries like the Pecherskii. The new version of Monomakh's "Pouchenie" could, I suggest, represent an attempt to parry this, presenting his lifestyle as a kind of monastic Typikon.

Monasteries such as the Pecherskii may not have maintained a tradition of nuanced narratives of the deeds of princes throughout the twelfth century. Yet political commentary did carry on, with judgements being expressed in literary form on princes according to norms of conduct and models drawn from the Rus' own past, in non-monastic milieus. One may glance at just a couple of instances here. The overriding validity of oaths sworn on the Cross is proclaimed in the "Discourse concerning Princes", which holds up as exemplary the senior prince of Chernigov, David Sviatoslavich, who "did not harbour hostility towards anyone"⁵³. His other virtues included willingness to make concessions for the sake of peace and, above all, fidelity to agreements sealed by kissing of the Cross⁵⁴. Reportedly, David upheld such standards even when dealing with persons who breached their oaths made with him. It seems to me quite possible that the "Discourse" has undertones of criticism of that flamboyantly "happy warrior", Vladimir Monomakh, whose approach towards oaths may have been more elastic than his "Pouchenie" would have us suppose. And, somewhat more explicitly, the "Lay of Igor" criticises Prince

⁵² Гунтуц А.А. Сочинения Владимира Мономаха. С. 86–87, 90, 92; Назаренко А.В. Владимир Мономах и киевское столонаследие: традиция и попытка реформы // ДГ. 2004 год. М., 2006. С. 284–285, 288–289.

⁵³ Слово о князьях / Подготовка текста Т.В. Рождественской; пер. и коммент. И.П. Еремина // БЛДР. СПб., 1997. Т. 4: XII век. С. 226–227; Mikhailova Y. and D.K. Prestel. Cross-kissing. P. 9.

⁵⁴ Слово о князьях. С. 226–229; Mikhailova Y. and D.K. Prestel. Cross-kissing. P. 9–10.

Igor Sviatoslavich for folly in trying to defeat the Polovtsy on his own, rather than joining forces with the other princes against them, whilst also criticising their tardiness and urging united action⁵⁵. The poet compares contemporary princes' conduct unfavourably with what seems to him the golden age of "Vladimir the old" and his son Iaroslav⁵⁶. Given the odds against the survival of the "Lay of Igor"'s text to the modern era (and setting aside doubts as to its ultimate authenticity⁵⁷) one may suppose it to represent the tip of an iceberg of written and, importantly, oral commentary on the feats, virtues, yet also policies and shortcomings of individual princes. Such works, of varying levels of literary accomplishment, could well have circulated between courts, whose "custom" of minstrels playing and also, presumably, singing before princes was noted in passing by Nestor⁵⁸. Indeed, in so far as one may infer from the audience or readership seemingly addressed by the Lay's author, compositions could even have circulated beyond princely courts, to the households of wealthy families of status, not least in Novgorod⁵⁹.

Conclusion

As was stated at the outset, the long eleventh century comprises a spectrum of European polities at varying stages of development. One might expect historical writing in the newer polities such as Rus' to have differed markedly from that in an ancient political order like the East Roman State. What is more remarkable is the speed with which critical literary voices emerged in Rus', not merely passing judgement on the deeds of individual princes but also proposing norms of conduct, good faith and non-aggression secured by oaths taken on the Cross. And the ways in which criticism was conveyed by monastic writers in the later eleventh and earlier twelfth centuries bear a striking resemblance to those of writers like William of

⁵⁵ Слово о полку Игореве / Подготовка текста, пер. и коммент. О.В. Творогова // БЛДР. СПб., 1997. Т. 4: XII век. С. 256–257, 260–263, 266–267.

⁵⁶ Ibidem. P. 254–255, 258–259.

⁵⁷ Зализняк А.А. «Слово о полку Игореве»: взгляд лингвиста. М., 2004. С. 163–173, 176–179, 206.

⁵⁸ *Нестор*. Житие Феодосия Печерского. С. 422–423.

⁵⁹ On the author's detachment from "any specific centre of authority", see *Флоря Б.Н.* Представления об отношениях власти и общества в Древней Руси (XII — начало XIII вв.) // *Власть и общество в литературных текстах Древней Руси и других славянских стран (XII — XIII вв.)* / Отв. ред. Б.Н. Флоря. М., 2012. С. 87.

Malmesbury, the ostensibly “apolitical” carrying a coded message, while literary formulations of correct political conduct spread beyond the cloister. There was in Rus’, as in Anglo-Norman England and Byzantium, an ongoing political discourse of considerable subtlety, in which historical writing and invocation of a supposed golden age had their part to play. So, too, did criticism masquerading as (or intermingling with) praise, together with works of self-glorification, such as those of Michael Psellos, Katakalon Kekaumenos and Vladimir Monomakh.

In these spheres of discourse, local monastic and ecclesiastical interests and personal and political rivalries were interwoven with avowals of lofty concern for “canons of the church”, “law”, and the wellbeing of the body politic. And in all these polities the validity of oaths, whether sworn on holy relics or the Cross or by more general Christian invocations, was deemed an absolute, transgression being correspondingly heinous and potentially incurring dire consequences for everyone. As already noted, Harold’s breach of the *sacramentum* he had sworn to William of Normandy supposedly brought down divine judgement, in the form of the Normans’ victory over him and the English at Hastings. The theme is dramatized in the Bayeux Tapestry with the appearance of Halley’s Comet immediately after Harold’s coronation in breach of his alleged oath⁶⁰. While such discourse is not tantamount to the functioning of an advanced institutional structure, the body politic presupposed by the conception of a “land of Rus’” to which God issues “warning” against the violation of oaths sworn on the Cross⁶¹ is that of a sophisticated, and self-critical, political culture.

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⁶¹ ПБЛ. С. 74; above P. 347.

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ИСТОРИЯ КАК ПРОПАГАНДА, МИФ О ПРОТО-ОСНОВЕ И «ТРАКТАТ
ДЛЯ НАШЕГО ВРЕМЕНИ» В ДОЛГОМ ОДИННАДЦАТОМ СТОЛЕТИИ
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Аннотация: Долгий одиннадцатый век был веком расцвета историописания по всей Европе. Тому было немало причин. В Византии вслед за периодами политической нестабильности обычно появлялись повествования, подающие недавние события с позиции сторонников режима, зачастую сохраняя видимость объективности. Вновь созданные режимы и завоеватели в Западной Европе заказывали исторические сочинения, прославлявшие их и оправдывавшие их действия. Это справедливо в отношении норманнов в Южной Италии и на Сицилии, а также в Англии и в отдельных древнерусских княжествах. Однако и в сочинениях, на первый взгляд хвалебных или пропагандистских, можно уловить элементы критики правителей. Сочинения, написанные монахами, могли служить местным интересам их монастыря, даже сообщая более общие исторические сведения. Точно так же, они излагали нормы и табу политической культуры в рассказах, служащих предостережением правителям. Примеры такого литературного приема встречаются в англо-нормандской Англии и в Древней Руси: гобелен из Байё, а также сочинения Эадмера, Уильяма Мальмсберийского и «Повесть временных лет». Монахи не могли по своей воле свергнуть правителя, но осуждение духовными лицами его действий могло доставить ему как политику серьезные неприятности. Полагают, что во всех упомянутых государствах христианские клятвы имели абсолютную юридическую силу, и клятвопреступление мыслилось причиной страшной всеобщей катастрофы. Похоже, прямая связь кометы Галлея с клятвопреступлениями и последующими катастрофами стала одной из тем гобелена из Байё, что прослеживается и в «Повести временных лет».

Ключевые слова: Англо-нормандская Англия, Византия, историописание, Киево-Печерская Лавра, клятвы, критика, монастырь, политическая культура, Русь, хроника, целование креста, центр торговли, этические нормы