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The Gift Economy of the Princes of Rus

The power of non-verbal, demonstrative actions in the Middle Ages is evident in medieval literature as a non-verbal means of distinguishing the elite and creating hierarchy¹. Hunts, processions, acclamations, dining, the distribution of largesse were, for example, opportunities for public demonstrations of both consensus and the superiority of the ruling group, and were represented as peaceful social events, designed to strengthen group bonds. In the case of the chronicles of Rus, these bonds are depicted as largely personal and dependent on face-to-face contact between princes, and princes and subjects².

The uses of symbolic actions are nowhere more apparent than in rituals attached to commensality, used as a means of dispute resolution, to strengthen already existing bonds, and to create distinction within in the elite and between the elite and their subjects. In Rus, rituals to bring about peace following a conflict or to prevent a conflict featured oath-taking ‘by kissing the Cross’, dining and merrymaking, and gift-giving or gift-exchange, which were means to either establish good relations or prolong an alliance³. Of these rituals, oath-taking ‘by kissing the Cross’ and dining are by far the most prevalent in the chronicles of Rus and gift-giving or gift-exchange is featured in a restricted number of examples, often to underline the prince’s capacity to source and provide luxury goods and/or his exceptional willingness to make to peace.

Although this article focusses on gift-giving and gift-exchange, it should not be taken as separate from other rituals of commensality. I define the “gift” as a luxury good that might have been difficult or very costly to source/produce, thereby creating value and, by extension, prestige due to scarcity. My further definition of a “gift”, based on early Rus sources, includes land and labour-power (the productive forces of a given place), which in turn produce further wealth for

1 G. Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 136–159.

2 See: L. Roach, “Submission and Homage: Feudo-Vassalic Relations and the Settlement of Disputes in Ottonian Germany,” *History* 97.327 (2012), 355–379.

3 See: G. Althoff, “Königsherrschaft und Konfliktbewältigung im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 23 (1989), 265–290.

the princely clan. This article focuses on princely gifts, but a note should be made of princely provisions for their entourage and subjects in the form of princely dining and distribution of largesse in the form of food and drink during feasts. In this scenario, the prince is depicted as eating and drinking with his subjects and entourage without losing esteem because he controls and provides hospitality⁴. Furthermore, the provision of food also functions as a form of charity, as the distribution of food and communal dining exist within the framework of Christian charity⁵. Medieval sources relate a general confidence in the capacity of meal or feast to establish and maintain an alliance and, in the case of Rus, many bonds involving people or groups seem to have been concluded at a celebration or banquet. It was not the actual acts of eating and drinking that were important, but the simple holding of a peaceful and convivial meeting: it demonstrated that such a relationship was possible between participants⁶. Rus chronicles, Old Norse sagas, and all form of heroic song expound on the “pleasure of the hall” enjoyed by rulers, warrior elites, and their entourage. The narrative of the chronicles of Rus depicts ritualized dining and the gift of food as attended by other forms of gift-giving and gift-exchange that includes gifts of luxury goods, but often includes gifts of land and the labour power of a scarcely represented subaltern.

Gift-giving or gift-exchange appears both as an extension of dining rituals, as it also emphasises the socio-political hierarchy of Rus. The general message of gift-giving and gift-exchange is one that sets apart the prince(s) giving and exchanging gifts and the presence of gifts elevates the narrative. These ritual acts structured relations between princes and/or with others and enabled the princes of Rus to rule by consensus within the dynasty, as the *Kievan Chronicle* intimates⁷. Accounts of princes honouring each other with gifts and honouring others with gifts, then departing in peace, invest accounts of the conclusion of alliances with an added indicator that good relations and good rapport had been established between parties. In chronicle entries, principally from the *Kievan Chronicle*, gift-giving appears to underline already established bonds in order to make them firmer⁸. Beyond the usual

4 On food as gift, see: L. Roach, “Gifts of food in late medieval England,” *Journal of Medieval Studies* 37 (2011), 6–18; M. Dietler, “Feasts and Commensal Politics in the Political Economy. Food, Power and Status in Prehistoric Europe,” *Food and the Status Quest: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, (eds.) P. Wiessner and W. Schiefelhövel (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996), 89–125, 90–91; for a discussion on reciprocity in giving, see also: A. Weiner, *Inalienable possessions. The paradox of keeping while giving* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

5 On this point, see: B. Rogers, “Feast, Famine and Eating ‘Every Nauseous Thing’: Portrayals of Food in the *Primary Chronicle*,” *Ruthenica* XIV (2017): 26–33.

6 G. Althoff, “Fest und Bündnis,” *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter. Paderborner Symposium des Mediävisten-Verbandes*, (eds.) D. Altenburg, J. Jarnut, and H.H. Steinhoff (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1991), 29–38.

7 See: B. Schneidmüller, “Konsensuale Herrschaft. Ein Essay über Formen und Konzepte politischer Ordnung im Mittelalter,” *Reich, Regionen und Europa in Mittelalter und Neuzeit. Festschrift für Peter Moraw*, (eds.) J.-P. Heinig, et al., *Historische Forschungen* 67 (Berlin: P.-J. Heinig, 2000), 151–220, 53–87.

8 See: Althoff, “Der friedens-, bündnis- und gemeinschaftstiftende Charakter des Mahles,” 14; and Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 111.

demonstrative character of medieval behaviour represented as collective and socially inclusive — such as collective dining, attending mass, and hunting, which were opportunities for a demonstration of solidarity — gift-giving and gift-exchange was highly personalised. Gift-giving or exchange demonstrated personal bonds and horizontal relations between parties in times of peace, and peaceful vertical relations between members of the dynasty⁹. Furthermore, the exchange of gifts functioned as a veritable economy, transferring precious goods, in the form of rare luxury objects, buildings, lands, and, very likely, people to another institutional or proprietary context. This was certainly the case in the transfer of objects, land, income, and people in marriage payments between princes. There is a certain ambiguity in the depiction of gifts and gift-giving or gift-exchange in the chronicles of Rus. Gifts are often presented willingly to princes and yet, in narratives involving princes and subordinates or princes under duress, gifts take on the function of tribute (or bribes). The scarcity of information about the materiality of a gift prevents any precise conclusions, but hints at a system of tribute that was facilitated by the proliferation of the Rurikid dynasty and by princely itinerancy both within and between the polities of Rus.

The final section explores princely cultural patronage (the endowment of churches and monasteries) as a form of gift-giving. The spiritual economy of the gift reflects the economic role of institutional charity and the practices of philanthropy and euergetism by princes for social and cultural capital¹⁰. In the Byzantine tradition, these gifts — initially civic gifts that became religious endowments — were an investment made by the elite to commemorate their social role and political authority and to enhance their moral authority when their political authority had yielded enough of an economic return¹¹. The act of endowment of churches and monasteries with individual gifts was an extension of foundation and patronage by the elite and strengthened bonds between the benefactor and the institution receiving the benefaction, displayed the wealth of the benefactor, demonstrated the benefactor's moral authority through personal gifts to institutions, and acted as an investment in the benefactor's personal

9 A general outline of gift-exchange and its relationship with charity can be found in M. Godelier, *L'énigme du don* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1996), 1–16, discussing: M. Mauss, *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés primitives*, in *L'Année sociologique, seconde série, 1923–1924* (Paris: PUF, [1925] 2012); for recent studies on gift theory, see: *Revue du MAUSS* 11, 1–2 (1991); G. Carvalho and S. Dzimira, *Don et économie solidaire*, (Rouen: Presses universitaires, 2000); G. Algazi, V. Groebner, and B. Jussen, *Negotiating the Gift. Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange* (Göttingen: Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 2003).

10 On charity and patronage, see: J. Lieu, “Charity in early Christian thought and practice,” *The Kindness of Strangers. Charity in the Pre-Modern Mediterranean*, (ed.) D. Stathakopoulos (London: Centre for Hellenic Studies, King's College London, 2007), 13–21.

11 On the Christian context, see: J.L. Boojamra, “Christian *Philanthropia*. A Study of Justinian's Welfare Policy and the Church,” *Byzantina* 7 (1975), 345–373; D.J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Rutgers University Press, 1991); and on the personal character of patronage to enhance prestige and reputation, see: R. Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals. Topography and Politics* (Berkeley: Berkeley University Press, 1983), 6–40.

salvation¹². Furthermore, the giving of gifts to large institutions, such as the Church or monasteries (for example, the extensive Kievan Caves Monastery), allowed for transfers of wealth into regulated institutional contexts that often functioned in tandem with princely courts, offering each other legitimacy and extending each other's power and influence¹³. Cultural patronage in Rus appears both as a social event (the ceremony of giving) and as a process designed to strengthen group bonds, establish hierarchy, and promote the moral authority of princes.

The Politics of the Gift

The general description of gift-exchange in Rus is largely horizontal since it occurs between parties who have already negotiated an alliance. Gift-exchange is represented as a cultural comportment taking place in a ritualized framework within which the giving and receiving of gifts occurs between parties already bound to each other in friendship. The gifts exchanged are attributed a global value and emphasis is placed on equality between parties in terms of the value of the gifts they have exchanged. This observation is illustrated by the following exchange described in the *Kievan Chronicle* for the year 1148:

В то же верема Изаславъ поиде на Гюрга стрѣя своего а брата своего Володимира
встави в Киевѣ . а сѣна своего Мѣстислава . встави оу Переяслави . а самъ поиде
напередь къ братоу Ростиславу . а полко^{си} повелѣ по собѣ ити . а вси^{си} са снати оу
Смоленскѣ . оу Ростислава . и приде Изаславъ къ братоу Ростиславоу и похвали-
ста Ба и стую Бѣю и силуо животворащаго хѣ видившеса брата въ здоровьи и
пробыста оу велицѣ любви и въ весельи . с моужи своими . Смолнаны . и тоу
даристаса дарьми многьми . Изаславъ да дары Ростиславоу что ѿ Роускьи землѣ
и ѿ вси^х цѣрски^х землѣ . а Ростиславъ да дары Изаславоу что ѿ верьхнихъ землѣ .
и ѿ Варагъ¹⁴.

In that time, Iziaslav went against Iurii, his uncle, and he left his brother Vladimir in Kiev and his son Mstislav at Pereiaslavl. And he himself went ahead to his brother Rostislav and ordered his regiment to come after him all meet in Smolensk at Rostislav's place. And Iziaslav went to his brother Rostislav and they both praised God and the Holy Mother of God and the power of the lifegiving cross when each of them saw his brother in health. And they abided with great love and happiness with their men and the people of Smolensk. And there they both gave many gifts. Iziaslav gave gifts to

12 See: T. Johnson, et al., "Patronage: relation and system", in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, (ed.) A. Wallace-Hadrill (London and New York: Routledge: 1989), 219–241; A. Weingrod, "Patronage and Power," *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, (eds.) E. Gellner and J. Waterbury (London: Duckworth, 1977), 41–52; for Byzantine imperial patronage, see: R. Morris, "The Byzantine Aristocracy and the Monasteries," *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII centuries*, (ed.) M. Angold (Oxford: B.A.R., 1984), 112–137.

13 See: A. Wallace-Hadrill (ed.), *Patronage in Ancient Society*, introduction; and M. Mullett (ed.), *Founders and Refounders of Byzantine Monasteries* (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 2007).

14 PSRL 2: 368-369.

Rostislav that were from the Russian land and all the Greek lands. And Rostislav gave gifts to Iziaslav that were from the upper (Northern) lands and from the land of the Varangians.

During the period of prolonged conflict for control of Kiev between the Mstislavichi and the princes of Vladimir-Suzdal, this account describes a princely alliance within the Mstislavichi branch against the Iurevichi and their allies. In this entry, the princes — Iziaslav Mstislavich and his brother Rostislav Mstislavich — meet in Smolensk (which belongs to Rostislav Mstislavich) to plan their offensive against Iurii Vladimirovich of Suzdal. Good relations and a military alliance are established between princes through communal prayer and invocations of the Lord, the Holy Mother of God and the “life-giving Cross”, which are all tropes present in instances of oath-taking “by kissing the Cross”. The princes then exchange valuable and foreign gifts: Iziaslav provides gifts “from the lands of Rus and all the Greek lands”, and Rostislav presents gifts “from the upper lands and of the Varangians”. The objects exchanged are never defined, but their value is implied based on provenance from the major areas of contact and exchange, such as the Byzantine Empire and Scandinavia.

The scant information about these gifts does not allow for speculation as to the real objects being exchanged. The main message is that objects of equal value and prestige were exchanged amongst princes in a horizontal military alliance to seal their bond of friendship. After these gifts are exchanged, the princes leave for Novgorod to meet Iziaslav’s son, Iaroslav who is prince of Novgorod and a member of the alliance against Iurii Vladimirovich. Following their meeting at Novgorod, the princes attend Vespers at the Novgorodian St. Sophia, followed by dining. However, no gifts are exchanged between the two senior princes and Iaroslav. It is possible that since Iaroslav is a junior prince, and Iziaslav’s son, commensality is sufficient.

Horizontal gift-exchange occurs in the 1187 entry describing a princely wedding, which details ritualised gift-exchange, commensality, procession, and the setting of the ceremony. Many common ritual elements of alliance and association are described without any evocation of the religious content of the marriage ceremony¹⁵. The description of the ceremony comprises: the negotiation between princes, the evocation of holy days for the marriage, the procession of the young bride (an eight year old princess) and her parents, the exchange of gifts (presented as a form of dowry and received by the bride and her father), the attendance of princes and boyars at the ceremony (which is not described), a marriage and attendance of twenty other princes, the wedding ordained by the Bishop Maksim at the wooden church dedicated to the Holy Apostles at Belgorod, and the sending of envoys bearing gifts. The ritual elements of dining, gift-exchange, processions, commensality, and the rhetoric of peace and concord

15 PSRL 2: 368–369.

are emphasised, likely due to the eminence of the princes involved and the age of the bride¹⁶:

Того же лѣтѣ с велика днѣ посла кнѣзь Рюрикъ Глѣба кнѣза шюрина своего с женою . Чюрыною с женою . инѣи многи богарѣ с женами . ко Юрьевичю . к великому Всеволодоу . в Соуждалѣ . по Верхоуславоу . за Ростислава . а на Боришѣ днѣ . ѿда Верхоуславоу дщерь свою . великѣи кнѣзь Всеволодѣ . и да по неи многое множество бе-щисла злата и рѣбра . а сваты подари велики дары и с великою чѣтью ѿпоусти Еха же по милое своей дочери до трехъ становъ . и плакаса по неи шѣи и мѣи . занеже бѣ мила има . и млада соущи осми лѣтъ . и тако многи дары давѣ и ѿпоусти и в Роусѣ с великою любовью . за кнѣза Рос[тис]лава . посла же с нею сестричича своего Ыкова с женою . и инѣи богарѣ с женами . приведоша же ю в Бѣльгородѣ . на Ѡфросѣнѣинѣ днѣ . а заоутра Бѣгослова . а вѣнчана оу стѣхъ апѣль . оу деревяной цркви блжнѣимъ епѣпомъ Максимомъ . створи же Рюрикъ . Ростиславоу велми силноу свадбоу ака же несть бывала в Роуси . и бѣша на свадбѣ . кнѣзи мнози за . к . кнѣзи . сносѣ же своей даль многи дары и городѣ Брагинѣ тако ж и свата с богарѣ ѿпоусти ко Всеволодоу . в Соуждалѣ с великою чѣтью и дары многими шдаривѣ¹⁷.

That same year, during Easter, Prince Riurik sent Prince Gleb, his brother-in-law, with his wife and many other boyars with their wives to the great Vsevolod Iurevich in Suzdal to collect Verkhslava for her marriage to Rostislav. On St. Boris's feast day (May 2), the great Prince Vsevolod gave away his daughter, Verkhslava, and he gave along with her a great many things and countless gold and silver. He bestowed great gifts and great honour upon his in-laws before sending them away. He followed his dear daughter as far as three days' walk [from his principality]. Her father and mother wept for her because she was dear to them and young, being eight years old. Having given them many gifts, he sent [his daughter] to Rus with great love, to marry Prince Rostislav. He sent with her, his sister's son Iakov and his wife and other boyars and their wives. They brought her to Belgorod on Euphrosyne's day, and the next day, which was the feast of St. John the Theologian (May 8), she was wed at the wooden church of the Holy Apostles, before the blessed bishop Maksim. Riurik arranged a very great wedding in honour of Rostislav, such as had never been seen before in Rus. There were many princes at the wedding, approximately twenty. He gave many gifts and the city of Bragin to his daughter-in-law and the wedding was celebrated. He sent boyars to Vsevolod in Suzdal with great honour and many gifts.

16 S. Franklin and J. Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus', 950–1300* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 296–298; and on the role of the Church in marriage: A.F. Litvina and F.B. Uspenskii, “Ne dostoit' eia poiati”: Pochemu Novgorodskii episkop Nifont ne khotel venchat' Sviatoslava Ol'govicha?,” *Drevniaia Rus'. Voprosy medievistiki* 3 (2013): 79–80.

17 On the legal age of marriage and interdictions in Byzantium, see: J. Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4^e–7^e siècle) I. Le droit impérial* (Paris: De Boccard, 1990), 25–26 (on theory); J. Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4^e–7^e siècle), II. Les pratiques sociales* (Paris: De Boccard, 1990), 97–102 (on practice); A. Laiou, “Marriage Prohibitions, Marriage Strategies and the Dowry in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium,” *La Transmission du patrimoine: Byzance et l'aire méditerranéenne*, (eds.) J. Beaucamp and G. Dagron (Paris: de Boccard, 1998), 129–160. Byzantine legal codes were adopted in Rus and it is possible that the age of consent would have formally been 12 for girls and 15 for boys: *EP*, articles 12–13; see: E. Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900–1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 225–226.

The alliance between the two princes, Riurik Rostislavich and Vsevolod Iurevich (of the ascendant principality of Vladimir-Suzdal in the North-East of Rus)¹⁸, is the principal concern of the account. This is evident in the grand display of largesse: first Prince Vsevolod sends “множество бещисла злата и серебра” (a great many things and gold and silver) with his daughter to her future husband and in-laws; then Prince Riurik reciprocates by sending “многи дары” (many gifts) and gifting the city of Bragin to Verkhuslava, his daughter-in-law, and with “дары многими” (many gifts) for Vsevolod Iurevich. The senior princes do not meet, but they establish a personal bond through intermediaries: boyars, children, close family members, spouses, and bishops. Due to the high stakes of the alliance¹⁹, the marriage details are salient and the involvement of women is pronounced, albeit within the political framework and under the supervision of their male kin²⁰. However, it is notable that Verkhuslava is presented with personal gifts and a town (probably with all of its labour power and output) by her father-in-law.²¹ The emphasis on peace and concord between the principalities of Kiev and Suzdal permeating the account of this marriage and gift-exchange further promotes the notion of dynastic equity²².

Dates, holy days, and feast days are provided with great care: the evocation of Easter (“с велика дени”) is the starting point for the rituals of the marriage ceremony; Verkhuslava is sent to Belgorod on the feast of SS Boris and Gleb (May 2); she arrives in Belgorod on St. Euphrosyne’s feast day²³; and she is married at the church of the Holy Apostles the following day on the feast of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist St. John the Theologian (May 8). Mention of the feast of SS Boris and Gleb follows the general trope of concord and peace between princes of the dynasty²⁴, while the evocation of feast days is a staple of the chronicles of

18 PSRL 2: 658–659.

19 On the historical context of the marriage, see: P.P. Tolochko, *Dinasticheskie braki na Rusi XII–XIII vv.* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2013), 42–46.

20 Tolochko, *Dinasticheskie braki na Rusi*, 46.

21 See: Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus’*, 296–298. On women and property: E. Levin, “Women and property in medieval Novgorod: dependence and independence,” *Russian History* 10 (1983), 160–168; and Pushkareva, *Zhenshchiny Drevnei Rusi* (Moscow: Mysl’, 1989), 155–176.

22 Tolochko, *Dinasticheskie braki na Rusi*, 70, 75, and 58–80.

23 Compare with the other alliance that Vsevolod Iurevich makes with Iaroslav Vsevolodich of Chernigov, see: PSRL 1: 405 and PSRL 2: 660. Both accounts are rather thin and the marriage is mentioned only in passing. The *Laurentian Chronicle* provides the added detail that the marriage took place on the feast of the holy martyr, St. Euphemia (July 11th). Similarly, for the year 1190, the *Laurentian Chronicle* provides an account of a marriage between the senior branch and the cadet branch of the dynasty: when David Olgovich was married, by his grandfather Sviatoslav, to a daughter of Igor Sviatoslavich whose identity is not given. Due to the laconic character of the *Laurentian Chronicle*, it is unsurprising that there are few details; however, it is notable that information about the marriage is shaped unilaterally and the dissymmetry between Prince Sviatoslav and Igor Sviatoslavich is made salient, see: PSRL 1: 668.

24 There is an apparent problem with St. Euphrosyne’s feast day since Euphrosyne (the fifth century transvestite nun, Euphrosyne of Alexandria) does not have a feast day that directly precedes the feast of St. John the Theologian. The feast of the nun, Euphrosyne of Polotsk (Sviatoslav Vseslavich) was commemorated in late May (23rd–25th). The calendrical sources for twelfth century Rus offer on the Commemoration of the Apparition of the Sign of the Precious Cross over Jerusalem in 351 AD, and the

Rus and is evocative of the medieval arrangement of time and the organisation of a ruler's movements and appearance, and important events such as marriages. The feast days act as time markers and indicate the ruler's geographical position on certain days; however, it is the evocation of ideological concepts through feast days that is emphasised through these indications²⁵, such as dynastic concord for the feast of SS Boris and Gleb. Furthermore, liturgical feasts provide the setting for the performance of ceremonies and rituals to further endow these events with a more venerable aspect and religious or moral value²⁶.

Consistently, the horizontal nature of bonds that are further validated through gift-exchange is determined by established bonds of friendship, previously concluded alliances, the absence of hostilities, and close family ties. It is notable that the exchange of gifts across lateral relationships occurs within the closest family circle: between germane brothers, between fathers and sons, and between fathers and sons-in-law. The following example illustrates this observation:

и приде Чичьрьску к зати Шлгови ту бо бѣ Шлегъ ждалъ его с женою и поа Шлегъ Ростислава на вобѣдѣ . и бы^ѣ ра^ѣсть велика въ тѣ днѣ межи . Шлегъ же многы дары вдасть Ростиславу . и дчи ему вда многы дары на оутрии же днѣ възва Ростиславъ к собѣ Шлга и дчерь и паче болшими дарми оучредивъ всихъ иде Смоленску . и начаша и срѣтати лутшии мужи Смолнаны . за тѣ версты . и за тѣмъ оусрѣтоша и внуци и за тѣмъ оусрѣте и снѣ Романъ . и епѣтъ Мануиль . и Внѣздъ . и малѣ не весь градъ . изиде противу ему и тако велми вбрадоваша^ѣ вси приходу его . и множество даровъ подаваша ему . и ѡтудѣ в Торопечь²⁷ .

And he went to the city of Chichersk to his father-in-law Oleg, for Oleg had awaited him and his wife there. And Oleg had Rostislav to dinner, and there was great happiness on that day between them. Oleg gave many gifts to Rostislav and to his daughter. The next day, Rostislav invited Oleg and his daughter to him and, having given many even greater gifts, he went to Smolensk. And the best men of Smolensk began to meet him at a distance of three hundred versts from the city, and after that his grandsons met him, and after that, his son Roman and bishop Manuel and Vnezd, a boyar of Smolensk, met him, and almost all the city came out to meet him. And thus they all rejoiced greatly at his arrival; and they gave him many gifts. And from there he went to the city of Toropech.

analogous Byzantine sources offer the feast of the Martyr Acacius as possibilities for the 7th of May. The reference to St. Euphrosyne here is unclear. However, the translation of St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk from Jerusalem to Kiev appears to have taken place in 1187 (perhaps on the 7th of May) and it may be that the chronicler wanted to commemorate this event by mentioning St. Euphrosyne in conjunction with SS Boris and Gleb to rhetorically celebrate the inter-dynastic alliance with reference to their saintly kin. On the date, see: E.E. Zhakevich, *Myslitseli i asvetniki Belarusi: Entsycl. davdnik*. (Minsk: Belarus. Entsycl., 1995), 16.

25 See: Tolochko, *Kniaz' v Drevnei Rusi: vlast'*, ch. 3.

26 The Virgin's feast cycle could be used to meditate on marriage and purity, see: H.M. Schaller, "Der heilige Tag als Termin mittelalterlicher Staatsakte," *Deutsches Archiv* 30:1 (1974), 1–24, esp. 8, n. 24.

27 PSRL 2: 659. St. Philip's feast (November 27th) and the dedication of the church of St. George in Suzdal are evoked in the celebrations organised for the birth of a son to Vsevolod Iurevich of Suzdal.

The entry for 1168 describes a series of gift exchanges between Oleg Sviatoslavich and his son-in-law, Rostislav Mstislavich, at Chichersk, and between Rostislav and his son, Sviatoslav, at Novgorod. The exchanges occur between closely related male family members and do not respond to the quelling of internecine hostilities or to the making or prolongation of alliances. The gifts, which are not described in any detail, take the form of tribute. To some extent these “gifts” shape social relations between senior and junior princes and between princes and subjects. The absence of coercion, the chronicle narrative either emphasizes good relations or neutral relations, and this ambiguity obfuscates the potentially exploitative character of this princely peregrination and the role of these “gifts”. Prince Rostislav and his wife visit the latter’s father, Oleg, where they dine and receive gifts. Rostislav, in turn, receives gifts as the seniormost prince of his branch as he moves amongst Rus principalities. For example, he receives gifts from his son, Roman, and the people and bishop of Toropets when he visits them en route to Novgorod. As opposed to commensality for alliance and association — where dining is exchanged and primacy is affirmed and reaffirmed — the presentation of gifts to Rostislav demonstrates his seniority within the context of peaceful and friendly relations between princes. This entry provides a further example of this type of exchange when Rostislav visits his son, Sviatoslav, in Novgorod:

и цѣловаша Новгородци хрѣтъ к Ростиславу на то⁸¹. ꙗкоже имъ имѣти сѣна его собѣ
кнземъ а иного кнза не искати . или са с ни⁸² смртью розлучити . и много даровъ
вза оу сѣна и оу Новгородецъ²⁸.

And the people of Novgorod kissed the cross to Rostislav that they would have his son as their prince, and that they would not seek another prince until they were parted from him death. And he took many gifts to his son and from the people of Novgorod.

Rostislav, who is unwell, confirms his son’s rule at Novgorod and negotiates with the people of Novgorod who swear an oath to maintain Sviatoslav as their prince. Sviatoslav and the people of Novgorod honour Rostislav with gifts. The horizontal rules of gift-exchange do not apply to Rostislav who, as the seniormost prince of his dynastic branch, is honoured through gift-giving, which acts as a further affirmation of his elevated status. The modes of multilateral gift-exchange (horizontal relations) and unilateral gift-giving (vertical relations) follow previous observations about the practice of commensality in early Rus. Where horizontal relations exist, a practice akin to that of Marcel Mauss’s “Potlatch” can be discerned, wherein the presentation of a gift necessitates a “contre don” or reciprocation through a gift of equal or greater value²⁹. In vertical relations

28 PSRL 2: 528.

29 Mauss, *Essai sur le don*, 148; and Godelier, *L’Énigme du don*, 9–10.

between princes where internecine conflict is not the context for affirming or reaffirming bonds of friendship, gift-giving is represented as a unilateral act and a means of recognising or promoting the primacy of a prince. However, it should be noted that this final example is part of a much longer account of the deeds and virtues of Rostislav Mstislavich preceding the final account of his death. Here, the practices of gift-giving, honouring the elder princes of the dynasty, and being honoured as a peace-loving prince — one concerned with promoting and upholding the values of patrimony and primacy³⁰, and endowed with spiritual virtues—form a complete rhetoric that leads to a final panegyric in honour of Rostislav at the time of his death. Unilateral gift-giving is presented as a dynastic virtue that both exists within the religious rhetoric of charity and the political rhetoric of the dynastic supremacy of the Riurikid clan. The scant information provided on what constitutes a “gift” in the above passages, limits a sophisticated analysis of the economic regime depicted and the economic significance of these “gifts”. Where these “gifts” a form of tax or rent? From this perspective, the analysis of the political categories deployed (senior/junior prince, the prince as a moral ideal, etc.) can make salient the mode of extraction of labour and labour-produced goods, probably in the form of a ‘surplus’ by the princely elite.

The Transgressive gift

In accounts of gift-exchange and commensality between princes and foreign allies, gift giving is represented as a means of further demonstrating the firmness of an alliance (horizontal relations) and honouring an ally or senior prince (vertical relations). However, in an account for the year 1152, gift-giving — by Vladimir of Galich to the Hungarian king and ally of Iziaslav Mstislavich — is represented as a subversive act, that is, as a bribe. In the chronicles, the princes of Rus are depicted as either good or bad, virtuous or briefly possessed of the devil, and thus behaving in a way unbecoming of a Christian ruler³¹. Direct violations of ritual are followed by disquisitions on oath-taking, on peace between brothers, and patrimonial rule. Thus, the breach of ritual is revised rhetorically and used as an example to affirm the political values and interactions between princes in Rus. The account for the year 1152 is of particular interest here since it depicts an act of gift-giving by a prince who has transgressed the “kissing of the Cross” in which the gifts provided are a bribe to arrest the advance of the Hungarian king and his army³²:

Володимерь же поча слатиса . къ королеви мира проса на ту же ночь . высласа
Володимерь къ арцибискупу и къ вьвеодамъ королевымъ и створиса своею во-
лею акы бодень . и ре⁶ имъ молитеса ш мнѣ королеви . ранень есмь велми . а ѓзь

30 Tolochko, *Kniaz' v Drevnei Rusi*, 77–102.

31 See: PVL I, 104; PSRL 2: 328.

32 See: N.F. Kotliar, *Diplomatia iuzhnoi Rusi* (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2003), 161–121.

са каю того королю вже есмь тобѣ срѣце вередилъ и пакы вже противу сталъ тобѣ ныѣ же королю Бѣ грѣхы ѿдавать а ты ми сего ѿдай . а не въдай мене . Изаславу . зане болень есми велми . да аще мене Бѣ поиметь а сѣна моеѣ прими к собѣ . и то ему помануть мужи рекуще ему шѣ твои баше слѣпъ . а ѣзь ѿцю твоему . досѣти послужилъ своиѣ копиемъ . и своими полкы за его ѿбиду и с Ляхы са есмь за нь билъ а помани на мнѣ то и сего ми ѿдай . и многы дары высла арципискупу . и мужемъ тѣмъ . златомъ и серебромъ . и съсуды златыми . и сребренными и порты . да быша оумолили корола . а бы не стоаялъ на немъ . и волѣ королевы не створилъ³³ .

Vladimir began to send to the king, asking for peace. On that same night Vladimir sent to the archbishop and to the king's military commanders and acted as if wounded, and said to them: "Petition the king for me. I am badly wounded and I repent this to the king: that I wounded you in the heart, and moreover, that I opposed you. Now, king, God forgives sins, and you forgive me this one. And do give me over to Iziaslav since I am very ill. And if God takes me, take my son to you and men will remind him, saying to him: your father was blind and I served your father to his satisfaction with my spear and my troops. When offence was done to him, I fought with the Poles for him. Remember that of me and forgive me this." And he sent many gifts to the archbishop and those men: gold and silver, and golden and silver dishes, and fabrics, so that they would beseech the king not to oppose him and not to do what the king wanted.

Vladimir, having fled following the capture of Peremyshl, pretends to be wounded ("акы боден") in order to negotiate a false peace and cunningly offers to swear a truce with the Hungarians (and Iziaslav) to check their advance. Gifts of gold and silver, gold and silver dishes, and fabrics³⁴ are sent as part of the negotiation with the Hungarian king. The value of the gifts is determined by the evocation of precious metals, vessels crafted out of precious metals, and possibly, rare commodities. Contrary to previous examples, unilateral gift-giving does not serve to amplify established norms, boundaries, and relations between parties. The ritual is subverted by the deception of Vladimir of Galich and, rather than endowing the ritual with an honourable character, the gift becomes a bribe and the ritual act is subverted. Following this exchange, the *Kievan Chronicle* provides a further disquisition on oath-taking "by kissing of the Cross", which Vladimir of Galich has transgressed. As in the Vseslav episode in the *Povest' vremennykh let*, the transgression of a ritual act is followed by a discussion of oath-taking thereby shaping the episode into a morality tale³⁵.

Previous exchanges between the princes of Rus and their foreign allies were represented as ostentatious displays of wealth, with rhetorical emphasis placed on horizontal relations between rulers of equal rank. The presentation of gifts within

33 PSRL 2: 450.

34 The value of fabrics is evoked in the Russo-Byzantine treaties of the tenth century, see: I. Sorlin, "Les traités de Byzance avec la Russie au X^e siècle (I)," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 2.3 (1961), 313–360, 349.

35 PVL 1: 29, 38, 109, 115–116.

this framework is a circumscribed form of ritualised exchange with the implication of equality and normality³⁶. Within the context of ritualised exchange in the chronicles of Rus, Vladimir of Galich subverts the normal and circumscribed ritualised exchange of gifts and hospitality. Accounts of ritual were shaped to convey a message and to limit plural interpretations where possible³⁷. Rituals in the chronicles of Rus transmit correct forms of behaviour, and transgressions of ritual by princes external to the central narrative allows for extended narratives on correct and transgressive behaviour for princes. Control of interpretations of ritualised crisis appears in the chronicles of Rus at times of internecine conflict in order to provide specific and circumscribed readings of events that promote certain princes over others, endowing certain princes with greater moral authority despite seniority. The ultimate functions of this account in the *Kievan Chronicle* are the restoration of order, the quelling of an international conflict through subversion, and the promotion of Iziaslav Mstislavich and his allies as morally superior to Vladimir of Galich who functions a character foil. Furthermore, here again, the princely elite of Rus is shown to be capable of gifting precious metals and other riches, to contract international alliances. The moral implications of this account, laying out a narrative landscape to favour Iziaslav Mstislavich, further create the possibility of a moral seizure of Vladimir of Galich's patrimony, including wealth in kind and productive dependencies of the polity.

The Political economy of the gift

Patronage in the Byzantine World initially evolved from the model of civic foundation and donation in the Roman Republic and Empire³⁸ to Byzantine imperial patronage — the transition is notable in the period of Late Antiquity — in which the emperor and the imperial elite became the main founders and refounders of churches and monasteries, and purveyors of religious gifts. Initially, patronage distinguished the emperor as a provider for his people, embodying the Hellenistic ideal of ruler as *euergetes*, *soter*, and *philanthropos*³⁹. In the Middle Byzantine cultural framework, which Rus inherited,⁴⁰ Christian and Hellenistic ideals were integrated within the Roman virtues of *providentia* and *liberalitas*, wherein the

36 For example: PSRL 2: 385 (between Iziaslav and his allies).

37 See: P. Buc, "Ritual and interpretation: the medieval case," *Early Medieval Europe* 9.2 (2000): 1–28.

38 See: P. Fröhlich and C. Müller (eds.), *Citoyenneté et participation à la basse époque hellénistique*, Hautes études du monde gréco-romain 35 (Geneva: Droz S.A., 2005), 225–257.

39 See: J.-L. Ferrary, "De l'évergétisme hellénistique à l'évergétisme romain," *Actes du Xe Congrès international d'épigraphie grecque et latine, Nîmes*, (eds.) M. Christol and O. Masson (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997), 199–225. See the excellent discussion of P. Veyne, "Panem et circenses: l'évergétisme devant les sciences humaines," *Annales. Économie Société Culture* 24 (1969): 785–825; and P. Schmitt, et al., "Paul Veyne et l'évergétisme," *Annales. Économie Société Culture* 33 (1978): 307–325.

40 See: A.S. Preobrazhenskii, *Kiitorskie portrety srednevekovoi Rusi XI — nachalo XVI veka* (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2010).

ruler displayed great liberality towards the people and acted generously towards his friends. The ruler assumed the role of father to his subjects and undertook acts of patronage for the moral edification of his subjects⁴¹.

Personal patronage that included personal endowments to monasteries and churches could be articulated as a charitable undertaking to enhance the moral reputation and authority of the patron. In the *Kievan Chronicle* entry for the year 1158, the consort of Gleb Vseslavich and daughter of Iaroslav Iziaslavich (she is not identified otherwise) ruled after his death, for forty years, before choosing to become a nun, prior to her death at the age of eighty-four. The patronage of the princess, along with Gleb Vseslavich, is detailed in the account of her charitable acts as patron of the Kievan Caves Monastery:

Том же лѣтѣ престави^ѣ . блѣжнаѧ княгини Глѣбоваѧ . Всеславича . дочи Ярополча Изаславича . сѣдѣвши по кнѣзи своемъ . вдовою лѣтѣ . мѣ . а всихъ лѣтѣ ѿ ржѣтѣва . пѣ . и . дѣ . лѣтѣ . и положена бы^ѣ в Печерскомъ манастири . съ кнѣземъ въ гробѣ оу стго Федосьѧ оу головахъ . бы^ѣ же преставление еѧ . мѣца генвара . въ г днь а въ ча^ѣ в ноци . а въ дѣ . вложена въ гробѣ . си бо блѣжнаѧ княгини . велику имѣаше любовь . съ кнѣзѣмъ своимъ . къ стѣи Бѣи и къ ѿцю Федосью . ревнующи ѿцю своему Ярополку . сии бо Ярополкъ . вѣдѧ всю жизнь свою . Небльскую волость . и Деревьскую . и Лучьскую . и около Киева . Глѣбъ же вѣдѧ въ животѣ своемъ . съ княгинею . х гривень серебра . а . н . гривень золота . а по княжи животѣ княгини вѣдѧ . р . гривень серебра . а . н . гривень золота . а по свое^ѣ животѣ вѣдѧ княгини . е . сель и съ челядью . и все да и до повоѧ⁴².

In that year, the blessed princess, Gleb Vseslavich's wife, daughter of Iaropolk Iziaslavich, who had been ruling forty years in the place of her prince as a widow, died. And she was eighty-four years old. And she was laid in the Pechersk monastery in the tomb at St. Theodosius's monastery with the prince, next to him. Her demise was in the month of January, on the third day, in the second hour of the night, and on the fourth day she was laid in the grave. This blessed princess and her prince had great love for the Holy Mother of God and Father Theodosius, emulating her father Iaropolk, for Iaropolk had given all his possessions to the Nebl' territory and the Dereva land and Lutsk and the territory around Kiev. Gleb and the princess during their lives gave six hundred grivnas of silver and fifty grivnas of gold, and after the prince's life the princess gave one hundred grivnas of silver and fifty grivnas of gold; and after her life, the princess had given five villages with their dependencies, and she gave all before she became a nun.

The narrative places emphasis on the princess's good deeds as a patron who has followed the precedent set by her father, Iaropolk Iziaslavich, and that of her husband. It can be surmised that the unilateral giving or making of provisions for monasteries and churches was among the moral duties of the princes of Rus.

41 See: A. Zuiderhoek, *The Politics of Munificence in the Roman Empire: Citizens, Elites and Benefactors in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and P. Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1976).

42 PSRL 2: 492-493.

According to this passage, women were also implicated in such charitable acts that had both a wider social and political character since the patron would tangibly benefit from their virtuous undertaking⁴³. In this instance, the princess is entombed at the Caves Monastery next to her husband, perhaps by the cell of St. Theodosius (“у святого Феодосия у головах”). The giving of gifts benefited the female donor by allowing her access to spaces normally barred to women and displayed her high rank within the ruling dynasty. It is also notable that the princess controlled property and that she possessed the authority to give away largesse, villages, and their dependencies. This example is a further illustration that the social logic of Rus gave primacy to the princely clan. Belonging to the princely clan meant control of resources and, in the absence of a prince, women belonging to the princely group (by birth and/or marriage) could exercise the same privileges and authority as men of similar rank.

Patronage in Rus depended on belonging to the ruling dynasty, according to the chronicles, and in all likelihood, the members of the dynasty exclusively would have held the economic means to engage in patronage on a large scale. The act of patronage was meant to perpetuate foundation, and refounders adopted the authority and, to some extent, the identity of the founder⁴⁴. The entry for the year 1155 includes many of the elements discussed above:

Том же лѣтъ . иде Андрѣи . ѿ вѣща своего из Вышегорода в Суждаль . безъ стнѣ волѣ . и взѣ из Вышегорода . икону стѣоѣ Бѣи юже принесоша . с Пирогошею исъ Цѣраграда . въ шдиномѣ корабли . и въскова на ню боле . ѿ . гривень золота проче серебра . проче камени дорогого . и великого жемчюга . оукрасивъ постави ю въ цркви свои . стѣоѣ Бѣи Володимири⁴⁵.

In that year, Andrei went from his father from Vyshgorod to Suzdal against his father's will; and he took from Vyshgorod the icon of the Holy Mother of God, which they had brought with the Pirogoshch' from Constantinople in a ship. And he endowed it with more than thirty grivnas worth of gold, silver, precious stones, and large pearls. Having adorned it, he placed it in his church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God at Vladimir.

This act of theft prefigures the ascendance of Vladimir-Suzdal under Andrei Iurevich even though it transgresses the peaceful relations established following the “kissing of the Cross” between Prince Iurii and Iziaslav Mstislavich⁴⁶. Andrei's gifts to the icon of the Holy Mother of God⁴⁷ with more than thirty grivnas worth

43 Morris, “The Byzantine Aristocracy and the Monasteries,” 112–138.

44 Mullett, “Refounding Monasteries in Constantinople under the Komnenoi,” in eadem, *Founders and Refounders of Byzantine Monasteries* (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 2007), 366–378.

45 PSRL 2: 482.

46 PSRL 2: 481–482.

47 On the icon, its historiography, and subsequent copies, see: I.A. Kochetkov, “Drevnie kopii ikony “Bogomater' Vladimirskaia”,” *Drevniaia Rus'. Voprosy medievistiki* 13.3 (2003), 44–62.

of gold, silver, precious stones, and large pearls demonstrate the possibility of appropriating an object through gifts and endowment. The icon is then transferred to Andrei's church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God at Vladimir⁴⁸. The icon's political value is constructed through adornment, whereas chronicle entries provide the object with historicity⁴⁹. Andrei Iurevich's oeuvre follows the general pattern of dynastic patronage leading to the extended entry for the year 1158, which provides an account of the prince's foundation and endowments of churches and monasteries to establish his moral authority⁵⁰. The theme of continuity through benefaction is accentuated by the tithe attributed to the church of the Holy Mother of God at Vladimir — following the model provided by Vladimir Sviatoslavich in Kiev — and the foundation of a bishopric at Vladimir.

The principal assertion of Mauss's theory of gift-giving is that gift-exchange exists in all societies and is not only a means of sharing what one possesses. Rather, possessing a gift is a means of combat since giving *necessitates* reciprocity⁵¹. Mauss attempted to create a universal theory of the gift to describe the bilateral relationship (un double rapport) between the giver and the receiver, which is a relationship of solidarity (solidarité) since the giver shares what he has or what he is with the receiver. This relationship can also be characterised as one that instills superiority (supériorité) because one party acts as the provider and creates a relationship of debt vis-à-vis the receiver⁵².

The cancellation of dependance⁵³ appears to be the focus of gift-exchange between senior princes or rulers of equal rank. The appearance of equality between parties and the maintenance of order without the establishment of new forms of hierarchy is expressed and legitimated in these accounts. Within this context, Vladimir of Galich's bribe becomes a flagrant case of transgression since it exists outside the accepted modes of gift-exchange and diplomacy articulated by the chronicles of Rus. The exchange of gifts is represented primarily for events of greater significance in the context of dynastic politics and it underlines the impossibility of a breakdown of relations, since the relationship represented is that of an entrenched friendship or the formation of firmer bonds⁵⁴. Furthermore, all of

48 This church was probably the Cathedral of the Dormition. See: K. Onasch, "Die Ikone der Gottesmutter von Vladimir in der Staatlichen Tretjakov-Galerie zu Moskau," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 5 (1956), 56–66. On the synaesthetics of icons, see: A. Kazhdan and A. Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley: Berkeley University Press, 1985), 199; and E.A. Fisher, "Image and Ekphrasis in Michael Psellos," *Byzantinoslavica* 55.1 (1994), 44–55.

49 See: K. Onasch, "Die Ikone der Gottesmutter von Vladimir in der Staatlichen Tretjakov-Galerie zu Moskau," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 5 (1956), 56–66. On the synaesthetics of icons, see: A. Kazhdan and A. Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley: Berkeley University Press, 1985), 199; and E.A. Fisher, "Image and Ekphrasis in Michael Psellos," *Byzantinoslavica* 55.1 (1994), 44–55.

50 PSRL 2: 490–491.

51 Godelier, *L'énigme du don*, 15.

52 Godelier, *L'énigme du don*, 25.

53 Godelier, *L'énigme du don*, 24.

54 Althoff, "Der frieden-, bündnis- und gemeinschaftstiftende Charakter des Mahles," 14.

these examples, though glib and unsatisfying, provide an insight into the political economy of Rus, at least as represented in chronicles. The story articulated via ritualized encounters between princes and between princes and subordinates is one of the appropriation, destitution, and transfer of wealth, wherein the latter two reproduce dynastic control over people, institutions, and resources.

Unilateral gifts to churches and monasteries in the form of acts of patronage including donations of money, objects, and land had an important role in the circulation and display of wealth and largesse⁵⁵. Acts of gift-giving demonstrated the influence of magnates as a social group on the production of the visual arts, while patronage was also a means of expressing acceptance of the most important spiritual values of the adopted religion and the socio-political legitimacy of the ruling dynasty⁵⁶. The “testaments” of princes and the occasional princess in the chronicles of Rus suggest that steps were taken to promote the spiritual fortunes of, and association of an individual with, a church or a monastic house that would concern itself with the deceased’s soul, constituting an important incentive to gift-giving and patronage⁵⁷. I did not focus on gender in the example I provided of a gift-provision in a princely testament, as the *Kievan Chronicle* makes no distinction between genders in terms of its representation of elite women as patrons of religious institutions. Furthermore, the treatment and shaping of information in the chronicles of Rus creates further barriers to retrieving the “real voices” of women. Finally, it is the class/economic distinction that features most prominently in the transfer of wealth from the princely elite to the ecclesiastical elite. It is entirely probable that many princes and princesses in Rus made material provisions for religious centres that they had founded in their principalities or those that carried an important dynastic significance, but it is difficult to evaluate the extent of this form of wealth transfer in Rus. Based on existing sources, religious patronage was undertaken by the princely group and created lasting connections (certainly in the case of the Kievan Caves Monastery) between the dynasty and religious centres. To some extent, the gift/provision of land and wealth for religious foundations was reciprocated by elevating the princely clan through art (*ktitor*’s portraits), text, and prayer. The transfer or investment of princely wealth in religious institutions further served to safeguard princely gifts by moving them to a potentially more secure, longer-lasting institution. This is certainly the case if we take into account the amount of elite gifts that still remain in the monasteries and churches of the Orthodox world.

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55 Morris, “The Byzantine Aristocracy and the Monasteries,” 112–138.

56 Preobrazhenskii, *Ktitorskie portrety srednevekovoi Rusi*, 61–81.

57 Morris, “The Byzantine Aristocracy and the Monasteries,” 112–138.