Christian Raffensperger, Conflict, Bargaining, and Kinship Networks in Medieval Eastern Europe. (Byzantium: A European Empire and Its Legacy 2.) Lanham, Boulder, New York, and London: Lexington Books, 2018. Pp. xiv, 221; 15 black-andwhite figures, 1 map, and 14 tables. in Kyivan Rus'. (Harvard Series in Ukrainian Studies.) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press for the Ukrainian Research Institute, 2016. Pp. x, 407; many genealogical charts.

In Russia, Piotr Chaadaev (1794–1856) used to say, guides take every foreigner to look at the bell that never rang and at the cannon that never fired. An even more difficult experience is to study the kinship network of the Kingdom of Rus', which never existed. However, Christian Raffensperger has energetically met this challenge. In his two most recent books the author continues to reimagine medieval Eastern Europe as a part of the pan-European World. In this case he adds "a further level of strangeness" to the historical record that was described by Kenneth Pomeranz as the task of historians (*Conflict, Bargaining, and Kinship Networks*, 1). The author tries to gain this level by binding local formless polities with clan ties, which further integrate them with Western Europe.

Ties of Kinship, which resembles a textbook, focuses on the dynastic marriages in Rus'. Its first part consists of biographical essays of persons involved in marriages with members of the Latin West. The material is organized by five generations of the "Volodimerovichi"—the descendents of Prince Vladimir the Saint, and covers the eleventh to the mid-twelfth century. The second part is full of genealogical stemmas and tables enhanced by chronological and bibliographical comments.

Raffensperger's second book, *Conflict, Bargaining, and Kinship Networks*, seems to be a more original investigation. According to his perception of Eastern Europe that "swallows" Central Europe, the author moves from the problem of terminology (familial conflict versus civil war) to the quasi-ritual meaning of conflict as a coercive use of power inside and outside family(-ies) maintained through the creation of kinship

networks (introduction and chapters 1–3). He then analyzes events of the 1140s as situational kinship networks "in action." The fourth chapter mainly concentrates on the relations between Polish rulers Władysław the Exile and Bolesław Wrymouth, and Rus' princes Vsevolod Olgovich and Volodimirko Volodarich, contextualizing the latter two in broader framework of foreign ties. In chapter 5, the author further breaks the chronological sequence and returns to the history of Iaroslav Sviatopolchich, prince of Volhynia (d. 1123), stressing his Hungarians connections. The final chapter argues for the central place of Hungary in the "European Kinship Web" (chapter 6). The conclusion posits the idea of alternate identities for Eastern European medieval elites who were able to move beyond an ethnic framework.

How "strange" is Raffensperger's new level of perception of medieval Eastern Europe and how "new" is his way of looking at its political history? It is not reasonable to discuss here what the books missed; more logical is to concentrate on what they contain. However, several omissions should be noted. For example, the reader might be surprised to see that a very relevant book, Zbigniew Dalewski's *Ritual and Politics: Writing the History of a Dynastic Conflict in Medieval Poland* (2008), is missing from the bibliography.

It seems that the historiography in general plays a decisive role in the construction of the two books under review. Its use also defines their academic value. In my opinion, the main challenge of both publications resides in the contradiction between the potential creativity of innovative approaches and the tyranny of concepts, which in many cases determines the vision of the past. On the one hand, the concept of Rus' that the author develops seriously questions the traditional perception of medieval Eastern Europe as *alter orbis* in respect to Latin civilization. On the other hand, the author shares the idea of the Kingdom of Rus' as a clearly identifiable entity with a unitary system of political power, law, taxation, and culture based at Kiev that spanned territory from the White Sea to the Black Sea. Today it is not necessary to specify that this geopolitical monster was only the invention of Soviet historian Boris Grekov. His concept of Kievan Rus' created in the 1930s was a "Soviet Union" projected into the medieval past. In fact, medieval Eastern Europe was more a federation of semi-independent local polities with special

identities and serious cultural differences, ruled by different branches of familial dynasties and nominally consolidated by the unity of ecclesiastical power.

The creditable intention of the author to distinguish his own perception from the late medieval mythology of the "Empire of Ruirikides" (here the author follows the approach of Donald Ostrowski; see his article "Was There a Riurikid Dynasty in Early Rus'?," in *Revue canadienne-américaine d'études slaves* 52 [2018]: 30–49) by replacing them with the "Volodimerovichi," the first Christian dynasty, and his refusal to use Russia for Rus' as an academic inaccuracy do not change the situation in general. Even the author's idea of regional nature and situational kinship networks being the result of bargaining between eastern European elites for resolving disputes of short duration coheres to the "basic myth" of the international historiography of medieval Eastern Europe—myth of its political and cultural unity. In the present case, this entity was only reshaped according to the modern perception of a Western European medieval kingdom. In other words, "the cannonball through the conceptual wall between Eastern and Western medieval Europe" as Leonora Neville called Raffensperger's *Conflict, Bargaining, and Kinship Networks* in her review quoted on its cover, missed the target if its target was the modern perception of the medieval past.

A good example (examples may be regarded as a general method of the author's narrative) is the conflict between the Kievan princes and Volodimirko, prince of Galich. The author described it as a conflict "in Rus'" while it was the conflict between Rus' and not-Rus'. The fact that Galich and its population did not regard themselves as Rus' is perfectly reflected in medieval chronicles. The reader could find proof in the excellent account of the Kievan Chronicle *sub anno* 1152 (6660) (cf. Aleksei Shakhmatov, ed., *Ipat'evskaya letopis'* [1908], cols. 446, 449, 452, 455, 463) which counterposes Galich and local elites to the Rus' land and Rus' men. The account immediately follows the narrative on the events of the 1140s analyzed by Raffensperger (see *Conflict, Bargaining, and Kinship Networks*, 120–28). This difference in identity is confirmed by the information of the Novgorod Chronicle *sub anno* 1145 (6653) which explains how the Rus' Land "went against Galich" (Robert Michell and Nevill Forbes, eds., *The Chronicle of Novgorod (1016–1471)* [1914], 18). It is of importance that the author's argument

about the situational character of the kinship network of the Volodimerovchi seems to raise serious doubts concerning the unity of the "Kingdom of Rus'."

Inter alia, the author presents this network in *Conflict, Bargaining, and Kinship Networks* not only as a means of resolving conflicts between the "main line" of Volodimerovichi and princes of "junior branches" who fell from power. According to him this network also reflects a new identity, which differs from the national/ethnic identity. Today it is broadly accepted that these identities were mainly forged in the modern period based on medieval texts and then projected into the medieval past (see, for example: Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* [2003]). However, a modern nationalistic abuse of the medieval literature does not bring into question its specific internal characteristics, first of all historical perceptions of others and themselves reflected in medieval texts. Medieval communities of Eastern Europe did not guess they were "imagined" (see the classical work by Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* [1983]); they acted according to their own set of shared values including cultural and linguistic unity. These two modes of unity were regarded during the Middle Ages as basic components of ethnos, understood according to its classical meaning, formed in antiquity. The network inside the unity was extremely important for its participants. According to Raffensperger, the main goal of a family's minor line was to obtain rule over a town. However, it could be not a goal in itself but served as a means to receive its own place in the political network of *archontes ton Rhôs*, based on the regional identity, which derived ultimately from the Byzantine perception of *ethnos*.

The decisive role of historiography also shapes his treatment of the biographies of the main actors of *Ties of Kinship* where historiographical clichés sometimes substitute for lack of historical information. It seems that the author is more familiar with the eastern European Cyrillic chronicles than with Latin sources, and this creates an imbalanced history of Eastern, Central, and Western Europe. For example, the marriage of Henry I and Anna Jaroslavna has been regarded in the historiography since the eighteenth century as an exotic decision for getting around the church's consanguinity law or for concluding a prestigious alliance with powerful Russia (*Ties of Kinship*, 48–52). However, in the light of new research this union definitely receives its place in the

complicate relationship of 1049–51 between Henry I of France, William I of Normandy, and Harald III of Norway. The latter was married to Elizabeth, the sister of Anna, and the French-Rus' alliance might be regarded as an attempt to engage the Norwegian king in the anti-Norman coalition (Cf. Aleksandr Musin, *La formation de la politique matrimoniale et la "diaspora normande" en Europe au XIe siècle: L'exemple d'Anne de Kiev*, in *Penser aux mondes normandes (911–2011)*, eds. D. Battes and P. Bauduin [2016], 177–206).

Although the difference between Rus' and Russia is rightfully noted by the author, it does not prevent him from combining early Rus' and late medieval Russian texts (for example, Nikon or Patriarch's *Chronicle* and *Tver Chronicle*, which sometimes included imaginary persons) with the historical works of the early modern period. The author borrowed the information on the marriage of prince Rostislav Volodimerich and the daughter of Béla, king of Hungary (Lanka?) from *The Russian History* by Vasilij Tatiščev (*Ties of Kinship*, 57–59). However, we have no reliable information concerning this event. My critical analysis demonstrates that scholars of the eighteenth century only invented this union in order to justify a hereditary possession of Terebovlia and Peremyshl lands near the Hungarian border by Princes Vasylko, Volodar, and Rurik, sons of Rostislav, at the end of the eleventh century.

As a result, *Ties of Kinship* has the hard task of competing with the famous compendium by Nicolas de Baumgarten dedicated to the same subject (see his *Généalogies et mariages occidentaux des Rurikides russes du Xe au XIIIe siècle* [1927]). In spite of its chronological imprecisions and old-fashioned narrative, the work by Baumgarten is still considered a touchstone in the field.

I could not say that either of Raffensperger's books is predestined for an easy future. Both may provoke discussion and even skepticism on the part of the reader. *Ties of Kinship* sometimes overestimates the significance of paradigmatic dates and events, and *Conflict, Bargaining, and Kinship Networks* in several cases tries to force modern perceptions on a pre-modern community. In several matters, both books depend on previous historiography, even if the author evidently tries to revise it. Nevertheless, Raffensperger's books are very stimulating. The huge job undertaken by the author should provoke further study of sources that will, one hopes, change the existing

academic discourse by cutting loose from the "dead weight of historiography." The Greek muse of history, Clio, states that historians are attracted to the polyphony of approaches and opinions; the task of a historian is to advance a hypothesis and replace it with a new one when new evidence comes to light. Both of Raffensperger's books obviously meet these requirements and may be regarded as interesting contributions to the academic discussion on the Eastern European medieval past until a new occasion arises.